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Latest Dispatch

Moscow. Humid, the odd rainshower, plenty of mosquitos, noise and heavy pollution.

17 Jul, 04

"No!" yelled our guide terrified, "I am not going with you into the Devils Nest!"

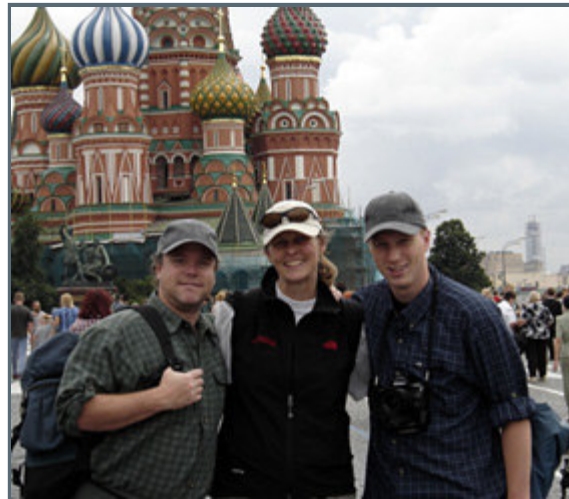
The guide was referring to the Mausoleum of the Bolshevik leader Lenin, one of the initiators of the Soviet Empire. It was on top of this concrete building, that the hard eyed, coldly staring and arrogant Soviet leaders overlooked their massive troops and nuclear weapons passing below them on the Red Square, a concentration of power that terrified the West. It is this image of Russia that we, like most westerners, have carried around since we first heard the word Russia.

"A lot of us", continued our guide hotly, "believe that Lenin is the main reason for the chaos we live in at the present. And who believe that we will stay in this chaos until that day someone drags that devil out of the mausoleum and bury him half a meter underground!"

Gee, this is an exciting time to be in Russia!

On one side there's a great feeling of pioneering, where many people can't hide their joy over this newfound freedom to basically do whatever comes to their mind. They can travel if they have the funds, they can have opinions without having to worry, they can be religious without being persecuted and they can write and read whatever they like. They're proud to be Russian! On the other side, there seems to be at least as many Russians who doesn't like the chaos which have erupted since the perestroika. They don't like the westernization with young people lightly dressed, drinking and kissing openly, they experience lots of insecurity, they note that the gaps between the rich and poor are enormous, crime is rising fast, as are prices on most things which they even during the Soviet time took for granted, for example traveling cheaply on the subway or always being able to buy bread, and they feel ashamed over the inaptitude of their country. They seem to lack a sense of belonging. These two opposites can be experienced everywhere when meeting Russians in Moscow.

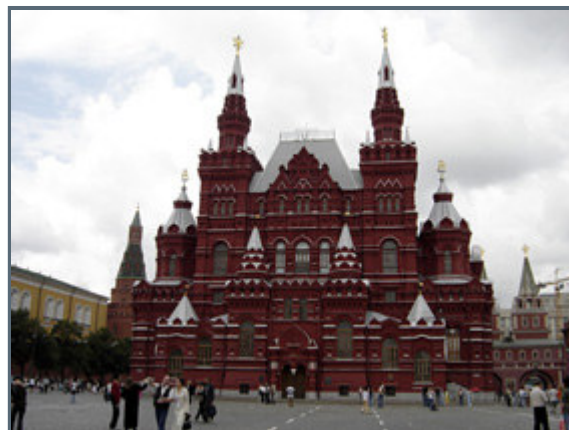
If you talk to two different Russians, apparently good friends, they seem to have two totally opposite opinions. One of them is terrified for everything new and they miss the Soviet stability when everybody knew exactly what would happen or what could be done. The other one he sees possibilities in everything insecure and loves the new commercialism, even though all gigantic commercial signs dotting every street corner in Moscow are littered with really rough looking beggars. Moscow is a place of all opposites it seems like. It is difficult not liking it, even though poverty and the clear gaps between people's fortunes is a misery to see. If you on top of this consider the way we three have decided to live, you'll understand if we definitely like this feeling of pioneering, where there's a will to try whatever turns up and realizing that nothing is impossible. We have never



Visiting the Red Square and Kreml



The Expedition has already taken it's toll on Johan!



One of many impressive buildings on the Red Square

experienced this pioneering feeling as clear as here in Russia.

Russia is, so far, a tremendous experience!

Rapport # 3 Moskva. Fuktigt, småregnigt, en hel del mygg, mycket oväsen och alldeles för många avgaser.

"Usch!", utbrast vår guide, "jag går inte in dit!"

Det var Lenins mausoleum hon menade. Det var ovanpå denna de sovjetiska ledarna hårdögt, iskallt och överlägset betraktade de enormt stora trupper och kärnvapen som passerade framför dem på Röda Torget. En maktkoncentration som skrämde västvärlden. Det är den uppvisningen som präglat vår egen, och många andra västerlänningars, bild av Ryssland och ryssarna.

"Vi är många", fortsatte guiden, "som tycker att det är Lenins fel att vårt land befinner sig i ett kaos. Och som tror att det kommer att förbli så tills den dag man drar ut honom ur hans grav i mausoleet och gräver ner det aset en halv meter under marken."

Det är en spännande tid att vara i Ryssland!

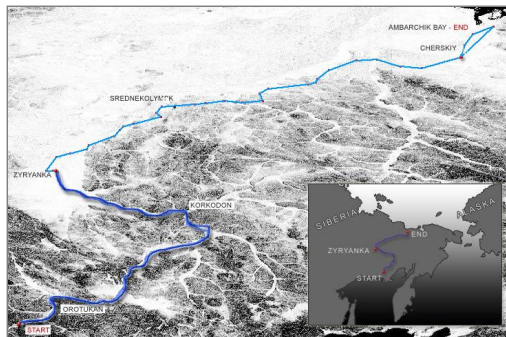
Å ena sidan upplever man en pionjäranda utan like, människors lycka över en ganska nyvunnen frihet, men lika många tycker inte om den röra som uppstått efter perestrojkan. De gillar inte den västerländska kommersialisering som påbörjats i hög fart, där ungdomar är lättklädda, dricker sprit och kisser varandra öppet, de upplever stor otrygghet, prishöjningarna är sanslösa, klyftorna mellan fattiga och rika är tydliga, den ökande brottsligheten skrämmer och de skäms många gånger över sitt lands brister. De vet inte riktigt var de hör hemma. Detta förhållande syns överallt.

Pratar man med två olika personer så har de oftast två helt skilda åsikter. Den ene är rädd för allt nytt och saknar den sovjetiska stabiliteten när alla exakt visste vad som skulle hända eller vad som kunde göras, den andre ser möjligheterna i allt och älskar kommersialismen trots att under de enorma reklamskyltarna för västerländsk elektronik sitter otaliga, märkbart utslagna, tiggare. Allt verkar vara ett motsatsförhållande. Med tanke på det liv vi själva valt att leva så gillar vi den där känslan av pionjärskap, viljan att man vill våga prova och att ingenting är omöjligt.

Ryssland är en mycket positiv upplevelse!

Expedition Tracking Center

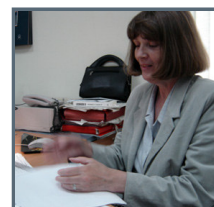
[CLICK MAP TO ZOOM]



Previous Dispatches

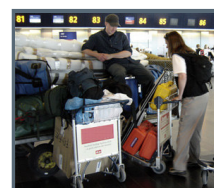
Moscow, cloudy, the odd rainfall, warm, noisy and strong smells of pollution. 16 Jul, 04

We've just spent the first night in weeks without waking up, worrying that something important has been forgotten regarding the logistics of what equipment we need and how to get it into Russia.



Dispatch 1 - Offices of the Adventure Club of Russia 15 Jul, 04

Finally, after many days of sleepless nights, we feel totally at peace! We're lying on the floor of an office belonging to the Adventure Club of Russia and suddenly we've realized that the adventure h



A week before leaving! 6 Jul, 04

A mere week to go before we're off to Kolyma. There's no great feeling of happiness, we're just tired. Knackered due to all the busy preparations, all the worries regarding permits, overweight and, th



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