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Latest Dispatch

Accused of terrorism

Zyryanka, the 24th of October, -15°C, sunny with a slight wind from the south.

There's no doubt that Johan and myself have one of the most fortunate life's one can have. To be able to travel the way we do, to a relatively unknown part of the world and report what we see and how we think, that is a real privilege. But, it is, of course, extraordinarily important that one tries to report as objectively as possible. Which is almost unachievable. Since everything you see, discover and the opinions one makes, is based on who you are. Your past experiences, your background, one's mentality and the way you see things. And, it goes almost without saying, of course all the people you come across whilst exploring, who share their opinions and experiences of life.



Many ordinary citizens worry far more after the fall of the Soviet empire than before

Before we set off on this Expedition, we (Titti, Johan and me) had the attitude that basically all the reporting in the global media today, regarding Russia, and including Russias own media, was one-sidedly negative. It all concerned terrorism, anti-Islam, corruption, mafia, dictatorship, incomprehensible politics, almost only regarding Moscow and the big Russian cities and as a whole, exceedingly pessimistic. We therefore, since we have very positive attitude to life, agreed that we would try to focus on the positive aspects of what we would experience. Within reason. To balance all the negative reporting. But we knew it would be very difficult, since everything we read before leaving were extremely negative. All books I read, as an example, painted a picture so negative, dull (especially regarding the local people) and gloomy, that I had to ask myself:

"Why in earth have we decided to go there?"

I hope our Expedition has revealed the truth, as we see it. And will continue to do so. Showing that the Kolyma and its nature, animals and people are with the best the world has to offer! I have to ask myself, since I doubt that the rest of the Siberian outback can be any different, have other travelers and reporters been blind? This shows that any reporting is a question of who you are and what your attitude to life is.

But, this said, one has to add that most of the Siberians along the Kolyma, they are themselves very negative to how life has transformed since the fall of the Soviet Empire. (I have to add here, that we get plenty of reactions regarding the way we report, which we like a lot, and the most negative feedback we get, is from Russians. Most of them think that we paint a far to positive side of Russian life. Or that we as foreigners don't have a clue to the workings of the Russians. And, believe this or not, most of them have never even been close to the Kolyma Region! I mention this just to show you how difficult it is to be objective!) We have as you well know, reported on the decaying and dying societies along the Kolyma. This cannot be avoided. But we have still tried to find the light in this darkness. Which have been extremely easy, since the Siberian is a true fighter and survivor. But, of course, at times it have been difficult to understand some of their constant worries. Lack the lack of security, that they're often mentioning.

"I can't imagine a safer place!", I've expressed.
We did understand this past Friday. We forgot the Small popes.

We've spent the last three nights awake, since we've together with my wife Titti in Sweden, have tried to sort out all the difficulties involved in getting our winter equipment transported from Sweden to Moscow and on to Zyryanka. Johan have for this reason spent a lot of time outdoors in the freezing cold (he have asked me to add this) with the satellite phone and the rest of the transmitting equipment. Calling and sending E-mails. On Friday night, when doing this, he got aggressively attacked by the local police passing by in a dark vehicle. He got aggressively accused of being a spy and a terrorist. It would have been manageable, since we know and understand the worry over terrorist attacks which runs through the whole country, if it hadn't been for that the police in charge was drunk and stinking of cheap vodka!

"They want our passports", yelled Johan when he came indoors with three Small Popes in tow.

By the way, a Small pope is a person who totally lacks a brain, but wants to show his authority and wield his power because he's a police, bureaucrat or other such occupation. Treating people detest fully. I have met so many of these bastards on my travels. (Sorry for swearing, but this time I have too!) And back home in Sweden. Since I am hot tempered and truly hate such behavior, I have had many problems and often been close to fist fights. The problem is, you never know what they will do. Using a weapon is very common. And they always use an aggressive manner. As this policeman, the person in charge, the drunk, he was physically aggressive in his way to get us to do what he wanted.

He was oily and dirty and this can easily be seen on the pages of our passports, which he read upside down. Since our Russian is not good enough to properly explain things, we tried to make a phone call to our great friend Sergei, in the middle of the night, but the drunk did everything to stop this. Finally his men understood that they were behaving non-Siberian. And we managed to place a call to Sergei, who, as always, sorted it out. When Sergei showed up the next day, slightly embarrassed due to the behavior of the police, and I mentioned I wanted to report the behavior of these creeps and told him how worried, upset and scared we'd been, Sergei said:

"It is like this all the time here."

Gee, I thought, who am I to complain! But, one thing is for sure, we do understand much better now!

Det är den 24 oktober, det är 15 minusgrader med en lätt sydlig vind och en hel del sol.

Visserligen har Johan och jag ett av de mest privilegierade livet man kan ha. Att få resa runt så här i en förhållandevis okänd del av vår värld och berätta vad vi upplever och hur vi tänker. Det innebär också att det är oerhört viktigt att man försöker rapportera så objektivt som möjligt. Vilket egentligen är en omöjlighet. Allt man ser och upptäcker och de slutsatser man drar baseras mycket på egna tidigare upplevelser, erfarenheter, ens bakgrund och ens läggning. Och naturligtvis alla de människor man möter längs vägen, som delar med sig av åsikter och erfarenheter.

Innan vår avfärd ansåg vi, dvs. Johan, Titti och jag, att rapporterandet i den globala median angående Ryssland var osannolikt enahanda negativt.

Bara terrorism, interna stridigheter, anti-islam, korruption, maffia, enväldshärskare, politisk obegriplighet, nära nog bara om Moskva och andra stora städer och överhuvudtaget mycket nedslående. Vi, eftersom vi har en mycket positiv läggning, kom fram till att vi skulle centrera oss på det positiva. Inom rimliga gränser. För att balansera den negativa rapporteringen. Men vi förstod att det skulle bli svårt. Alla böcker jag, exempelvis, läste om Sibirien innan avfärd var oerhört dystra, negativa (i synnerhet beträffande folk) och bara fick mig att fundera:

"Vad i hela friden skall vi dit att göra?"

Jag hoppas att vår färd avslöjat sanningen, nämligen att området längs Kolyma är med det mest fantastiska som finns! Både gällande natur, djur och människor. Man kan undra, har andra rapportörer varit blinda? Det är bara att konstatera att det här med rapportering är en läggningfråga.

Men, det skall också konstateras att sibiriern längs Kolyma i gemen, är mycket negativa till hur samhället utvecklats sedan sovjet imperiets fall. (Låt mig också tillägga att vi får en hel del reaktioner på vår rapportering, vilket vi uppskattar mycket, och de mest negativa är från ryssar. De tycker att vi skönmålar problemen! Och, häpnadsväckande nog, de flesta har aldrig ens varit i dessa trakter! Jag nämner detta för att ni skall förstå hur svårt detta med objektiv rapportering är!) Vi har självklart rapporterat om hur samhällena längs Kolyma håller på att dö. Det går inte att undvika. Men vi har ändå försökt hitta ljuset i allt mörker. Vilket också varit lätt, eftersom sibiriern av hävd är en av de tuffaste kämpar som finns. Men ibland har vi haft problem att förstå, bland annat detta med folks otrygghet när det gäller den egna säkerheten.

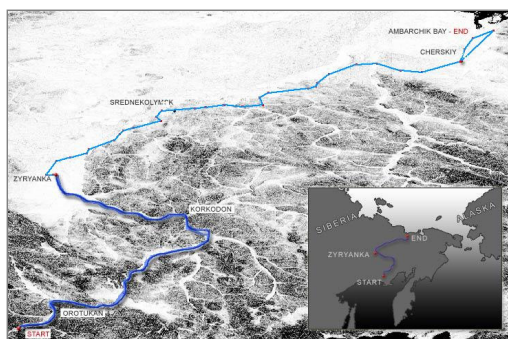
"Tryggare ställen måste vara svåra att hitta!" har vi påpekat.
Fredagsnatt förstod vi vad de menade. Vi glömde småpåvarna.

De sista nätterna har vi varit vakna, för att tillsammans med Titti, samordna så att vi kan få ned all vinterutrustning från Sverige och

Moskva och hit. Därför har Johan tillbringat en hel del tid ute i kylan med satellittelefonen. Ringande och mejlande. I fredagsnatt blev han påhoppad av den lokala polisen som anklagade honom för spioneri och terrorism! Det var tre tungt beväpnade poliser, varav en, chefen över de andra, var rejält berusad! "De vill se våra pass!" utropade Johan när han kom innanför dörren ledd av de tre poliserna, varav den berusade skrek och uppträdde obehagligt aggressivt. Den fulle som stank av billig vodka vägrade höra på våra argument, vägrade först låta oss ringa till Sergei, vår vän och hotade oss på det mest otrevliga. Det är svårt att hålla sig kall under sådana situationer. Jag har ju mött dessa småpåvar världen över och alltför många gånger, hamnat, milt sagt, i konflikt med dem till följd av mitt heta humör. Problemet är att när de är fulla kan allt hända. De kan dra vapen, ja, vad som helst. Nu gick det bra, förutom att vi blev rädda och att våra pass blev lortiga av den fulles oljiga händer. Sergei fixade det som vanligt och när jag berättade för honom, svarade han: "Så här är det här hela tiden." Tänk att man måste uppleva för att riktigt förstå.

Expedition Tracking Center

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Previous Dispatches

[Visit to a yakut family](#)

Our apartment in Zyryanka, 21st of October, temperature is freezing cold at -25°C, overcast, no wind.

"At least we're proud to be yakut today", explains Anatolij at his kitchen table, "which



[Reflections regarding the ice and the winter](#) 19 Oct - 16.35

Written by Johan Ivarsson

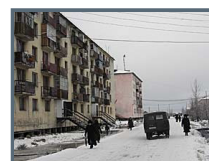
Zyryanka, -20°C, sunny. A decimeter of snow covering the ground.

It is Tuesday the 18:th of October and the sun is shining strongly through the window.



[An insight through Olga and Vadim](#)

Zyryanka, October the 17th. Snowing, temperature is -10°C. Snowing, of course, is no good when it comes to the ice settling the way we want. It will only give us a dangerous double ice with water in b



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