

# „ZIMNIK” the Ice Road

Additional 31 Photo.



Taking photographs after the temperatures have dropped to  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  is no easy task. Almost no electronic equipment works for longer than two hours. Everything freezes, batteries run out twice as fast as they normally do. Recalling the freezing fingers or cheek that touched the camera provokes shivers even now. If frostbite isn't serious, the skin turns red and peels off over time, just like sunburn.

Steam condenses on a frozen camera lens. When you take a frozen camera into a warmer environment, you have to be especially aware of condensation. A single breath alone can be enough to destroy a good morning's worth of pictures, or hold back work for a few hours. So, after a period of shooting in cold temperatures, it's important that the camera equipment should be warmed up.



Route Tura-Cherenda, the distance—500km. The MI-8 makes the journey from the capital Tura once every two weeks—bringing with it both people and deliveries. It's the fastest means of communication with the capital, and, at the same time, the most exciting event in town—large groups congregate at the landing site and wait for the helicopter's arrival. During the helicopter's short stop-over, the people exchange parcels and receive news from the capital. Alongside the passengers, the helicopters also transport the wooden boxes that carry the dead. The MI-8 doesn't fly in conditions of poor visibility or at night as it isn't equipped with an advanced navigation system. It's only in exceptional circumstances or emergency calls, so-called "San-reis", that the pilot will choose whether or not to take the risk. On one such occasion the pilot took to the sky at night to rescue a lumberjack who had been injured by a falling tree.





The "zimnik" is alive both day and night. The moon's reflection on the snow and the northern lights provide extra illumination for travellers.



„Ledenaja pereprava“, the ice crossing of the Kotui River, is about 70km south of Cherenda village. The snow has to be removed from the rivers and lakes that litter the "zimnik" road to prevent the ice from becoming hard. Vehicles must keep at a safe distance from one another and not exceed the speed limit.



You can tell that you are approaching Evenkia's capital Tura by the increasing number of fishermen's cabin houses that line Nizhnyaya Tunguska River. Inside each there is usually a metal stove, heated with wood, a small table, chair and even a bed. Patiently awaiting their catch, the fishermen spend the winter season in a warm and cosy mini-home environment.



The "zimnik" road extends through the Evenkian hills. The workers are met by the highland's frozen and stagnated nature.



The drivers strive to wear clothes that are as light as possible—this is what constitutes local fashion. Such clothes make driving—which often lasts days with no decent breaks—easier. It is only when the drivers emerge from their cars to welcome each other that they put on a jacket. Fuel is the most common cargo on the "zimnik" road. For reasons of safety the drivers often travel in convoys consisting of three cars. According to unwritten etiquette, if you see a fellow driver on the roadside, you should stop and offer help.



A wolf here can often weigh up to 80 kg (an average weight of a wolf is 50kg). Wolves draw inexperienced domestic dogs from their homes so that they can hunt them, but they usually back away from people. It is pretty easy for them to survive during the deer migration period. According to the government, the area is overrun with wolves, so hunters get paid for each wolf they shoot. Wolves' fur can also be used or sold.



Reindeer migrate every year. In spring the herds make their way north in search of food. The Evenks hunt the deer in March, even though the female deers have only a few months left until they give birth—such are the long held local traditions. Being a hunter requires great stamina. They track the reindeer over long distances—up to a 100 kilometres or more. The hunter Oleg Tomofejevich has chosen a different tactic— he waits for the herd to arrive at Lake Diupkun.





To catch a fish, you must first cut through 2m of ice. To make a hole in the ice, simple instruments are used: a wooden stake with a well-sharpened metal tip.



Hunters migrate alongside the reindeer. They live in tarpaulin tents, so-called “chumik”, which each have a metal stove, a “burzhuika”, inside. Despite the freezing temperatures outside, the stove, which is kept going throughout the day, sustains the heat inside the tent. Such Spartan conditions are not enough to scare away the hunter Piotr Sofjenikov—he and his friend Vladimir have been hunting here for a years—simply erecting their tents by the side of the “zimnik” road.



After a successful hunting trip Oleg returns home to have some rest. The bodies of the reindeer freeze in an hour and are preserved naturally. To disembowel them in such a short period of time he needs some helpers.



The village eccentric. Under the influence of alcohol, a Chirinda village local greets the sun dancing and performing martial arts. Although the locals find this slightly suspicious, the village dogs happily join in on her morning exercise.



The local petrol station assistant, in spite of his frost-bitten amputated hands, manages to serve all the vehicles that traverse the “zimnik”. The petrol station has no official working hours—you have to call in advance and arrange with the station manager how much fuel you require and how long you want to stay.



The dual-track snowmobile “Buran” has been produced in Russia for over 40 years. The design of the “Buran” has remained almost unchanged since it first came off the assembly line. This snowmobile is the hunter’s favoured mode of transport and local villager’s main means of communication.



Alcoholism is one of the Evenks' greatest problems. Unattended children need to know how to keep themselves busy. Experienced in machinery from an early age, the children rejoice every time they get a chance to ride snowmobiles.



The village dogs are the best friends of Speridon, a deaf-mute boy. The white dog named Snezhinka (Snow White) is his closest friend.





Around 150 residents inhabit Cherenda village. The village has one shop, a bakery, a post office and even a library. The recently installed street lights illuminate the chimney smoke that drifts up into the sky undisturbed by wind.



Fires caused by careless drinking are, unfortunately, a common phenomenon. This block of flats, which had caught fire for the second time, could not be saved.



Lake Harpitch in winter. The cracking ice summons forth the most remarkable sounds. These phenomena are caused by changes in temperature: when it's cold, the road contracts, and when it's warm--it expands. As the ice fractures, it emits fantastic auditory phenomena—in some moments, it sounds like a giant whip is being cracked.



“Naledi” is another important Siberian word; one which yields no simple explanation. When the river bed freezes to its bottom, the water which flows from the mountains has nowhere to go; this places pressure on the ice underneath, and cracks appear. The water that flows from these cracks creates a new thin surface above the old ice. This thin layer can prove especially treacherous, with the result that unsuspecting travellers can quickly find themselves submerged in frozen water.



The waterfalls which surround Lake Harpitch become frozen during cold temperatures. The water bodies that form at these waterfalls are unable to withstand the weight of the ice—they break leaving striking indentations on the ice surface.