

ROAD OF BONES

VLADIVOSTOK TO MAGADAN



GILLESLEOROBERT.WORDPRESS.COM
GILLESLEOR@ICLOUD.COM

I want to thank my amazing family for supporting me during this trip.



I dedicated this trip to Jo-Ann, loving friend, who passed away.



RUSMOTOTRAVEL



BMW Motorrad

Thanks to Claude Gagné

Certified Instructor BMW Germany

On Road / Off Road / Marshal GS Trophy

BMW MOA Amdassador World / Ridaventure.ca Ambassador



Thanks to my good friend Alain Laliberté.

My second experience in Russia



I have spent much time traveling throughout the world. Such as the America's, further down to Mexico, Central America, all South America to Ushuaia, Brazil. one year later, I did two months solo in the Amazon : French Guiana, Suriname, British Guiana and the Devil's Island (Papillon).

Through Europe, then North Africa, into the Himalayan countries. Finally, I decided to travel to Eastern Europe and which brought me to Russia. I went from Saint-Petersburg to Moscow and further East then through Siberia to Vladivostok in the far East along the Trans-Siberian Route. This tour has been an exciting 10,000 K.M. In the Taiga region after Lake Baikal, we stopped at the crossroads to Magadan (Road of Bones). We continued along our journey to Vladivostok. Two years later my guide Alex from Rusmoto Travel informed me that he was doing a tour to Magadan on the Road of Bones, I was the first to sign up.

For the past 50 years, I had a lot of experience riding enduro bikes, which was a necessity for this trip. I could have done this route solo, but doing it with guides and support it was safer and a more reliable option for me. Conditions were tough mentally and physically, it was the hardest adventure I have ever done even after riding solo for two months in the Amazon. I hope you will enjoy reading this.

My name is Gilles Robert from Quebec, Canada

My story...



Kolyma Highway

Lena Highway

Amuz Highway

Khandyga
Yakutsk

Kubeme
Tomtor
Ust-Nera
Susuman

Ust-Omchug
Magadan

Kamchatka

SEA OF OKHOTSK

Sakhalin Island

Soloviesk

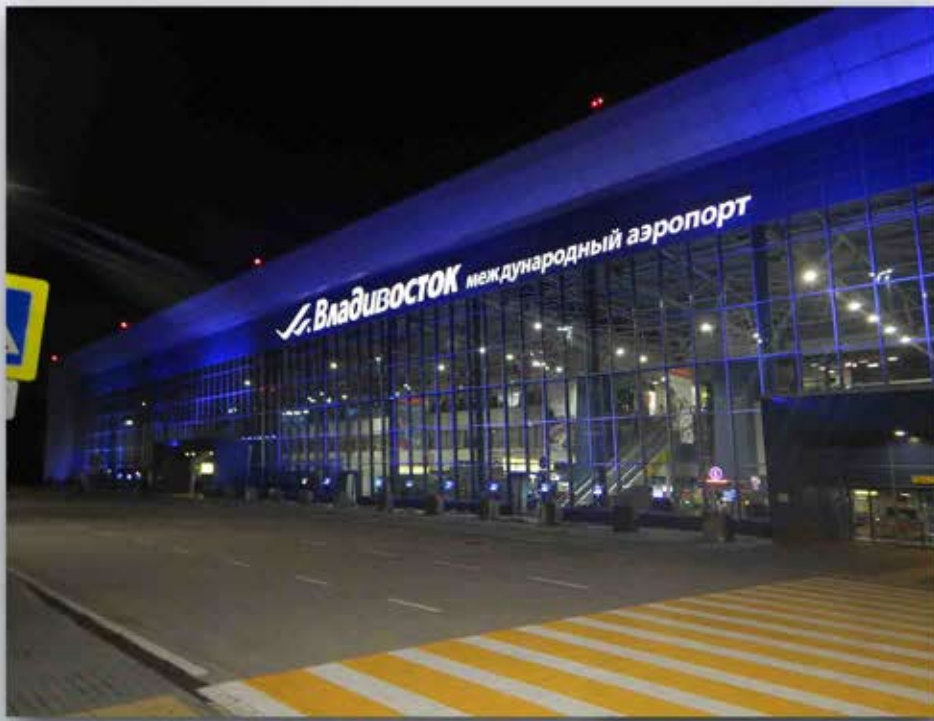
Blagoveshensk

Khabarovsk

Vladivostok

JAPAN

CHINA



**Arrived in Vladivostok,
Russia in the far East on
June 26, 2019 at 4:40 A.M.
14 hours difference
with Montréal.**



**First morning I walked
around the City Center.**





The current trend in Russia is the English language.



Pizza place was English, so was the funny quote.



We had a meeting at our hotel the night before the trip to talk about the adventure we were about to start. People of all trade were on this trip : Alex our lead guide is an Automotive Engineer, Anton is a Tour Operator in St-Petersburg and Max our Support Vehicle Operator is a Lawyer. Then as our guests, Graham who has been a been a Helicopter Pilot in the Army for 43 years and commercial pilot, Alexis a mining Engineer and myself.



Our guide Anton with our English guest and myself.

My new moto, a BMW F850GS arrived, they took off the top panniers but kept the sides panniers for safety. I installed my tank bag, safety bars were installed in case of a fall: it's easier on the legs, but most importantly I applied all of my Canadian trademarks.





Alex, our lead guide adding petrol to his moto.

Leaving in two days, our support vehicle filled with gas and parts is ready. On the way to Magadan we will change our road tires for off-road ones.



Last photos in Vladivostok as we start this adventure

They named my Moto Lena, which is the name of my good friend Bernard's wife who always said I was a bad influence on him for drinking beer which she is wrong but I still like her.





**Geologists unloading equipment,
similar to the Army.**



**On a lunch stop, met a group of
motorcyclists, one of them was from
San Antonio, Texas.**





With lot of rain and a bit of sunshine we reached Blagoveshchensk a city located far east or Europe and right next to China's border.

We changed our regular tires to the off-road tires before entering Kolyma Highway (Road of Bones) on the bank of Lena River. It is a very rough road with loose gravel, sand and dust.

At 2,824 kilometres, the Amur River known in China as the Heilong Jiang or "Black Dragon River", is the 10th longest in the world. For much of its length it forms the border between Russia and China.

At its confluence with the Zeya are two cities of roughly equal size which face each other across the Amur, less than 600 metres apart.

These are the Russian city of Blagoveshchensk, administrative capital of the Amur region, and the Chinese city of Heihe in Heilongjiang province.

Although brought together by geography, these two cities have been separated by history and are very different from each other.

RUSMOTOTRAVEL
Explore Russia





↑ БЛАГОВЕЩЕНСК 159
РАЙЧИХИНСК 2 →

**Drove by a coal mine
in Siberia.**



**Bikes have several different
tires, some have Michelin,
Anakee Wid, others Mitas Shinko
and Karoo 3. Personally, I think
Anakee Wild are the best for
off-road.**



Last full service gas station as we enter Lena Highway.



A-360 Highway (Lena Highway) begins in the city of Never and ends in Yakutsk. This region is a permafrost area, with short summers from middle of June until end of August. It is only possible to ride on it with a motorcycle during the summer. Winter is long and very cold with temperatures going down to -40-50°. The road itself is half paved and half grave. It is a Federal Highway with many trucks coming from Yakutsk with fuel and mining products. Very dangerous driving conditions. Very primitive infrastructure, the hotels are either 0-1 stars or camping.

The road is treated as a memorial, as the bones of the people who died while constructing it were laid beneath or around the road. As the road is built on permafrost, interment into the fabric of the road was deemed more practical than digging new holes to bury the bodies of the dead.

**We slept in a no name hotel,
in a Gold mining town called
Solovievsk.**



**The sidewalks are made with
timber!**



Anton preparing our dinner.



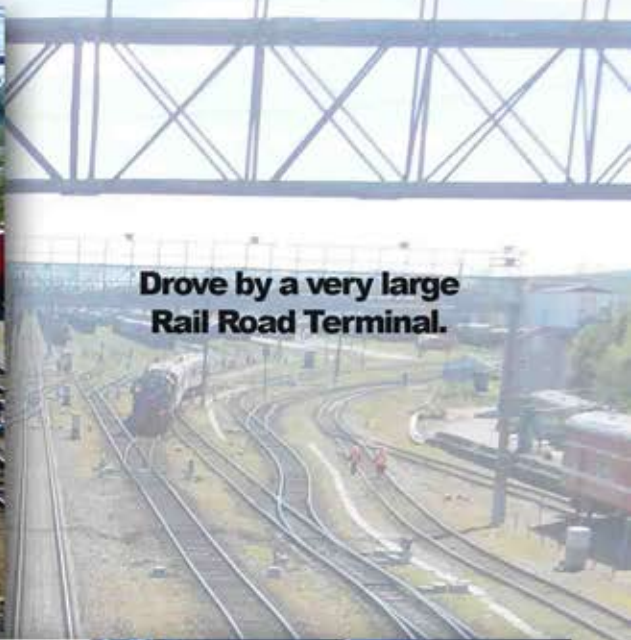


On our way to Aldan.



Max with the support vehicle.





Drove by a very large Rail Road Terminal.



Anton and Alex fixing a flat tire.



Burnt truck on the side of the road.



On our way to Aldan, we stopped for lunch in a fruit Market.



Today we had lots of gravel and mud on the road, it was raining at some point. In the evening we reached the border of Republic of Sakha Yakutia.



In Neryungri where there is the largest Coal mine in the Far East Russia.

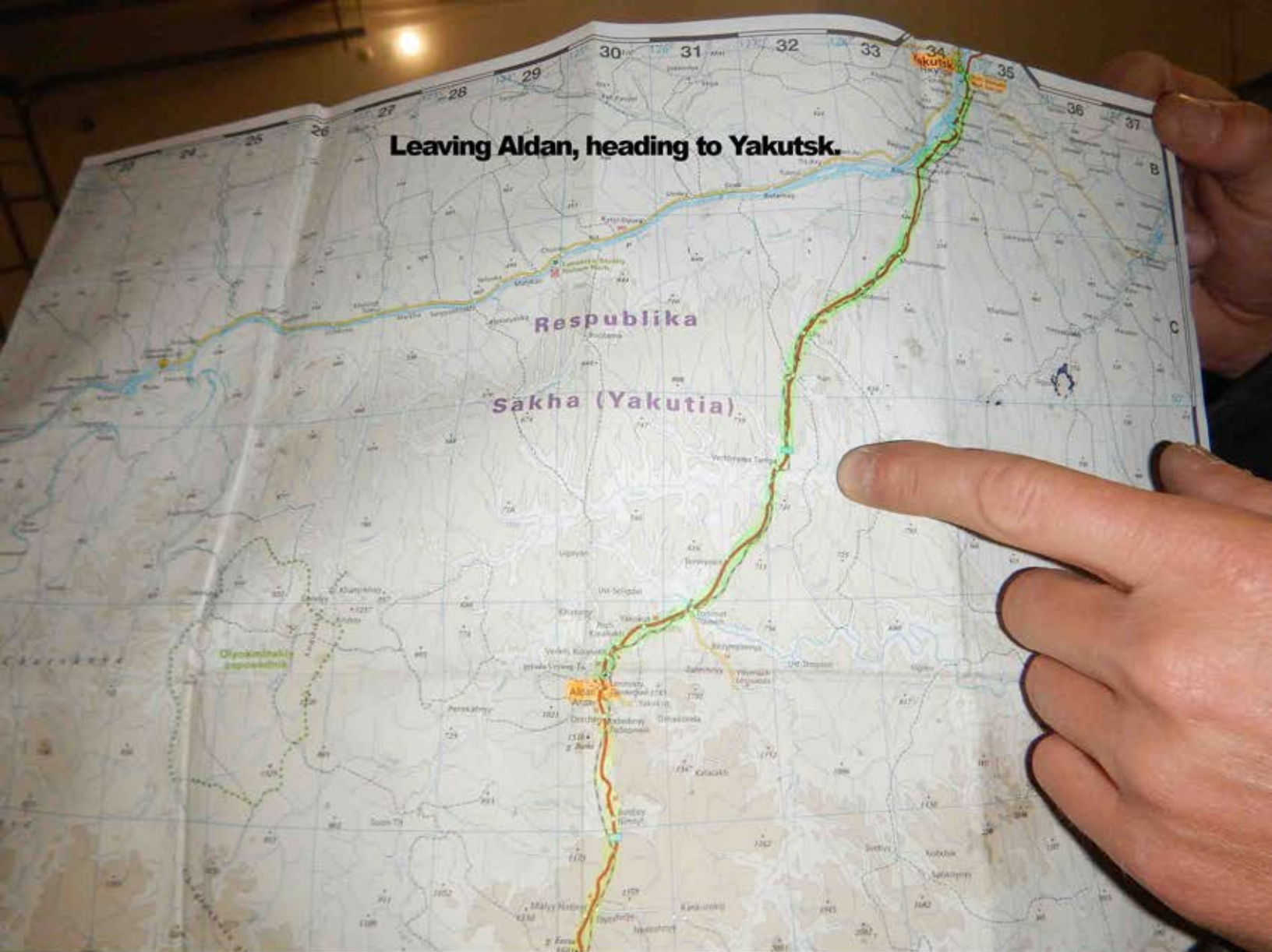


**Tit mountain pass is halfway
between Neryungri city and
Aldan City.**



Beautiful view of Neryungri city.





Leaving Aldan, heading to Yakutsk.

Heading on Lena Highway nicknamed Road of Bones

The Road of Bones is the nickname given to the R504 Kolyma Highway in Russia due to the horrific history of its construction. The R504 Kolyma Highway is 1,262-mile long Russian Federal Highway which traverses the Russian Far East and is part of M56 Route. The highway is in a region where the coldest temperatures outside Antarctica have ever been recorded, and people consider as the coldest road in the world.

The road was constructed from the 1930s to the 1950s by prisoners using hand tools during the Stalin regime of the Soviet Union. During this time, political prisoners in gulag provided the labor force needed for construction. During its construction, thousands of inmates died because of the unfavorable working conditions and the harsh cold weather. They shot many inmates dead for not working hard enough while others died from brutal freezing conditions of the gulags' camps. The bodies of the dead inmates were buried beneath the road or around the road. They thought it to be easier to bury the dead bodies in the permafrost than digging holes to bury them. So, the highway is a memorial and therefore the name "the Road of Bones."

The road is extremely dangerous especially during winter, which is ten months long. This is because of the reduced visibility, the ice, and the heavy snow. During summers the conditions become even more extreme when mud becomes the worst enemy. Because of the permafrost during these months, there is no asphalt, leading to traffic jams because of mud every time summer rains fall.



Last passenger Train Station before Yakutsk as you need to use a ferry to reach the town.





Gas bars and towns very scarce. Stopped by a road side café who didn't had a big choice of food on the menu.

Another flat tire.





Ferry crossing the Lena River is one of the only ways into Yakutsk.

In the winter months when temperature goes down to -50°C the ferry is closed because Lena River, the largest in Russia, is frozen with ice that goes down 10 feet deep/3,5 meters.

In winter you can only access Yakutsk by a small airport.

Most people here are descendants of Mongolia. It is also the second largest region of diamond mining in the world.



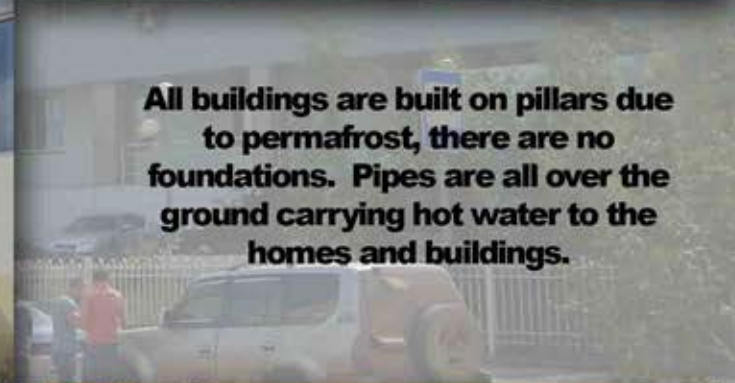
In Yakutsk the Mammoth is an important part of history in this area since they have found several of their remains.

Over the years, the warming climate has flushed dozens of mammoth parts to the surface. Their emergence has turned the remote region into a magnet for scientists, tour operators and ivory traders.



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The exhibit is part of the exhibition
complex. Information on the
acquisition of the property you can get
at the museum - store "Pole of
attraction" on the right wing of the
hotel "Polar star"



All buildings are built on pillars due to permafrost, there are no foundations. Pipes are all over the ground carrying hot water to the homes and buildings.

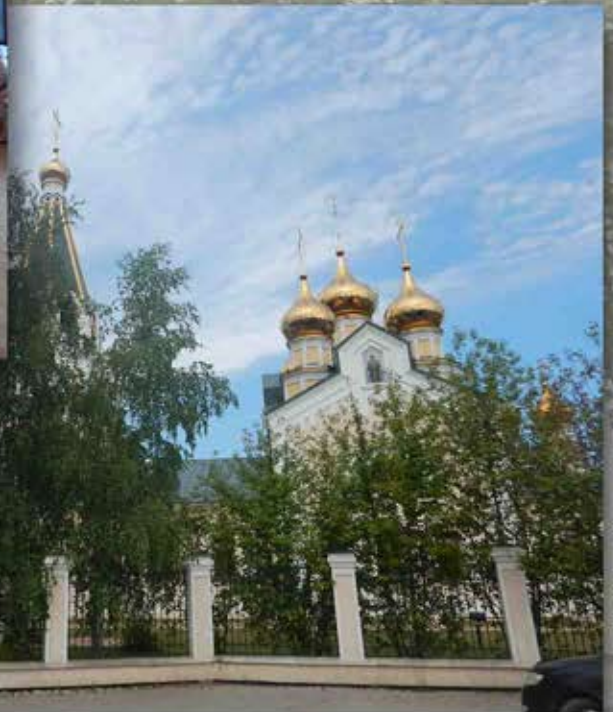




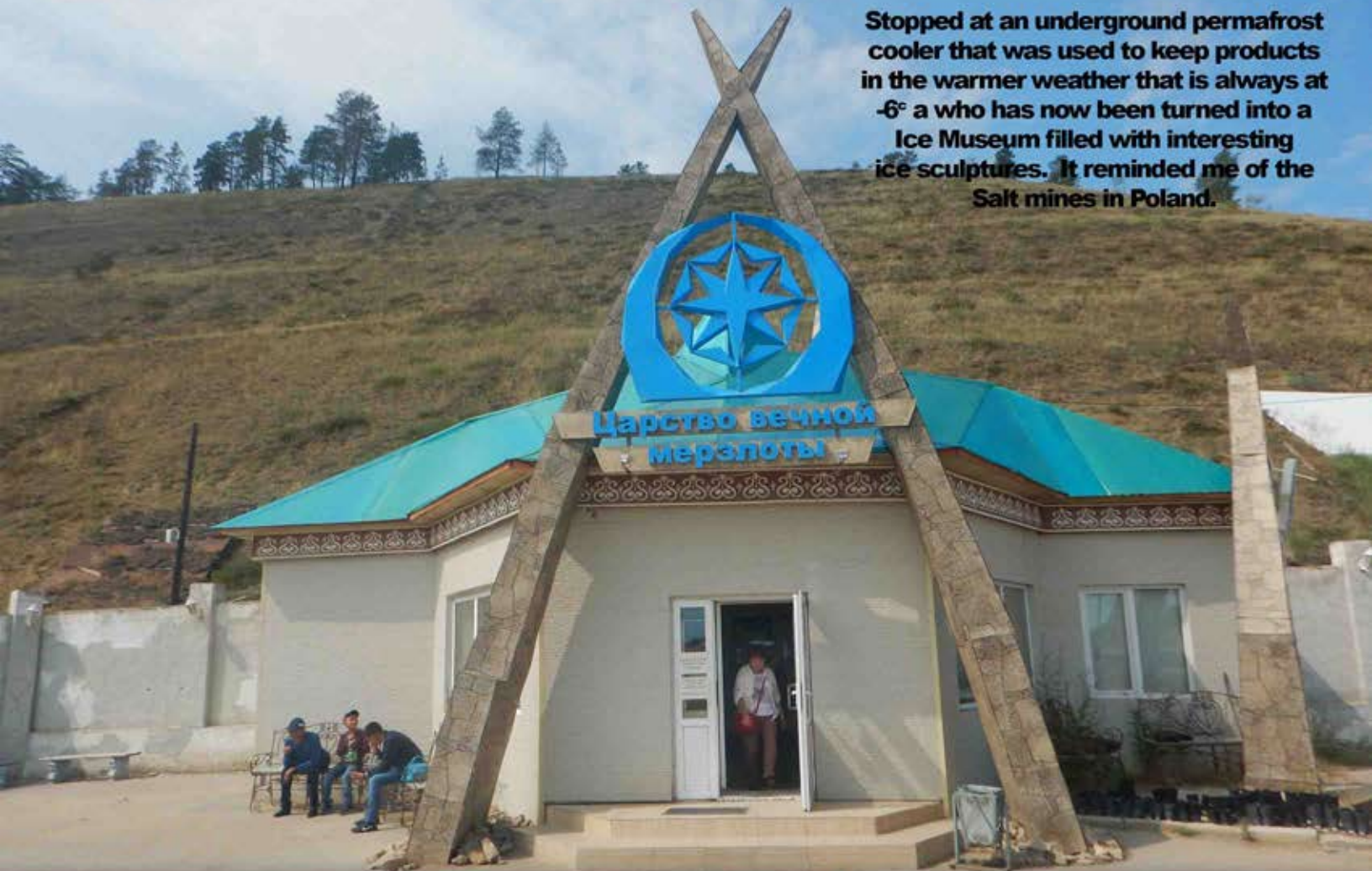
The square of the Fallen Warriors, where located a memorial and lit an Eternal flame in honor of the heroes of the Civil war. Eternal flame is a symbol of remembrance to the fallen, the eternal light of love and kindness.



Visited a local Church.



Stopped at an underground permafrost cooler that was used to keep products in the warmer weather that is always at -6° a who has now been turned into a Ice Museum filled with interesting ice sculptures. It reminded me of the Salt mines in Poland.



Музей вечной мерзлоты
Музей вечной мерзлоты - это уникальный музей, посвященный истории и культуре Севера. В музее представлены различные экспонаты, связанные с жизнью и деятельностью человека в условиях вечной мерзлоты. Музей был основан в 1980 году и с тех пор стал одним из самых популярных туристических объектов в регионе.

Музей расположен в городе Дудинка, в 100 км от Красноярска. Музей открыт для посещения с 10:00 до 18:00. Стоимость входного билета составляет 100 рублей. Для посещения музея необходимо иметь при себе паспорт.



Ice Cave of Thule

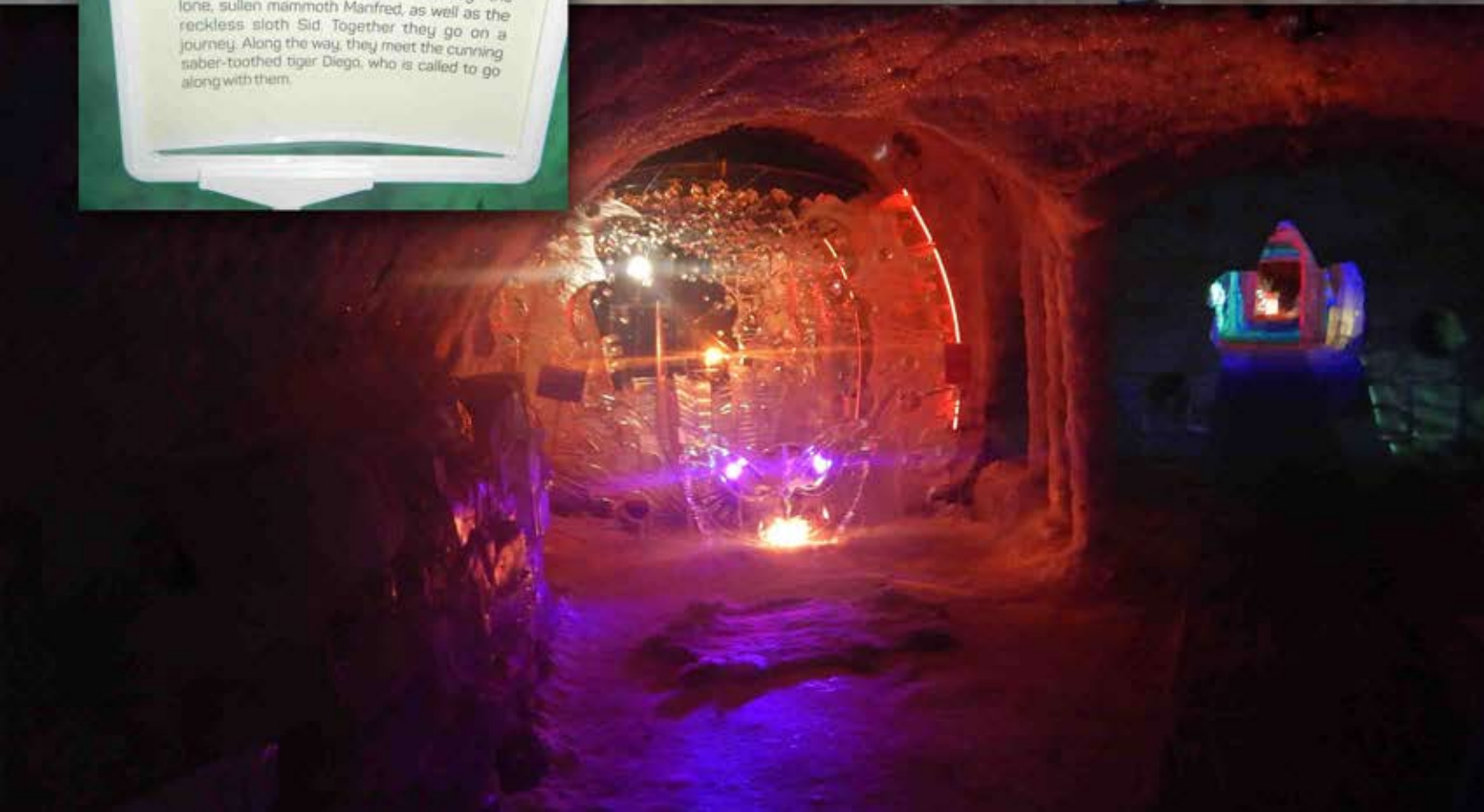
The Ice Cave of Thule is a natural ice cave located in the town of Thule, Greenland. It is one of the most beautiful and well-preserved ice caves in the world. The cave is filled with ice sculptures and is a popular attraction for tourists. The cave is illuminated with blue and white lights, creating a magical atmosphere. The cave is a natural wonder and a must-see for anyone visiting Thule.





Cartoon «Ice age»

20 000 years BC the ice age begins. To avoid approaching cold, animals migrate to the south. However, some of them still decide to stay - the lone, sullen mammoth Manfred, as well as the reckless sloth Sid. Together they go on a journey. Along the way, they meet the cunning saber-toothed tiger Diego, who is called to go along with them.





Надземный мир, который описан в сказке Даниила
иногда называют миром Царя-Всадника.
Этот мир был создан и охраняем силами и
мощностями высшего иерархического уровня в
2005г.

THE UPPER WORLD (USHH DODU)

The upper world consists of a number of layers in which
the city of Agy dwells, particularly those led by Yungur
Agy Yungur - master of the world and Agy Yungur - Agy Yungur
spirit - who create worlds and plants. He lives in the most
beautiful, which seems to be the most beautiful country,
where there is white grass grows like the wings of a white
swan. Here you may also see figures of Sakti name Agy
Droshko, the great Yungur Yungur - who fights against evil
spirits to save the world and Agy Yungur Yungur.
Eric Droshko is recognized as a masterpiece of world
and globe heritage of humanity by UNESCO in 2005.





Large Russian transport Helicopter.

Had lunch at a restaurant called Genesis 2 which is related to the Documentary : the mammoth hunters set out on a dangerous journey to the remote New Siberian Islands in the far north of Siberia.





Large cranes to unload supplies from barges.



The start of Kolyma Highway.



Stopped on the side of the road for lunch.



Left Yakutsk and went to Khandiga, a 400 km gravel road with lots of stones, sand and dust. At a gas bar I met a rider from China returning from Magadan with all sorts of spare parts on his bike.



Locals wanted to be photographed with the Canadian.



We camped by the Aldan River.



Due to technical problems outside of Yakutsk we are a day late. We slept in our tents and had to repair another flat tire and change air filter on my motorcycle.





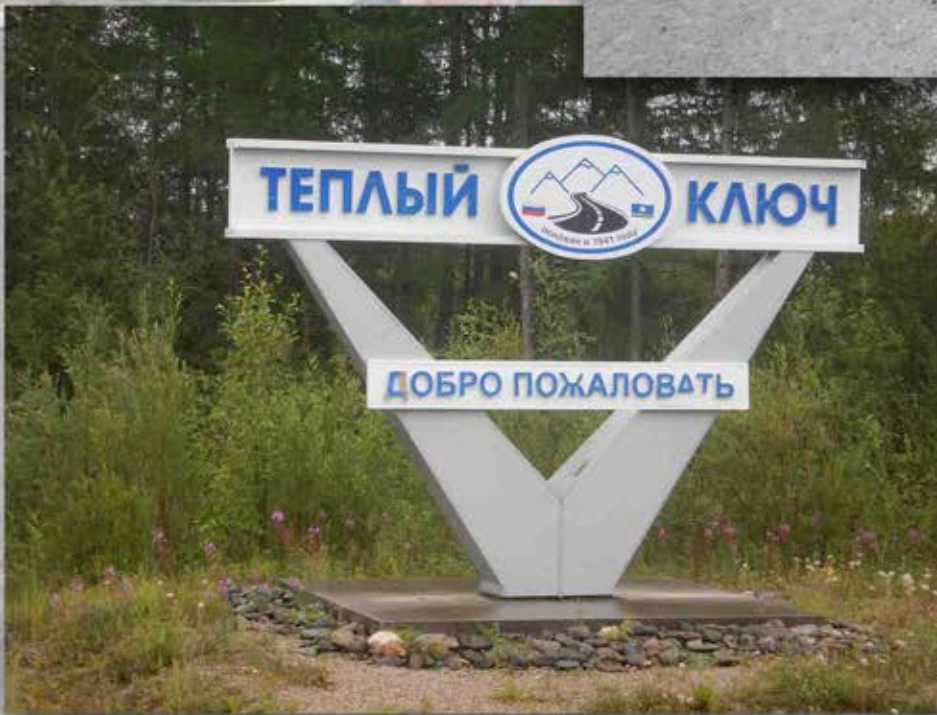
We crossed Aldan river by ferry to reach our next destination and stayed at a 0.1 star hotel.



Anton sitting on the steps at the entrance of our hotel in the town of Khandyga.



A transport truck removed a tree blocking the road so we could continue on our journey.



Another day in the rain on a gravel road.





The road is very dangerous, as you can see by the trucks that fell off the cliff.





The Federal Highway is not wide and some places are washed out but we are still going forward.



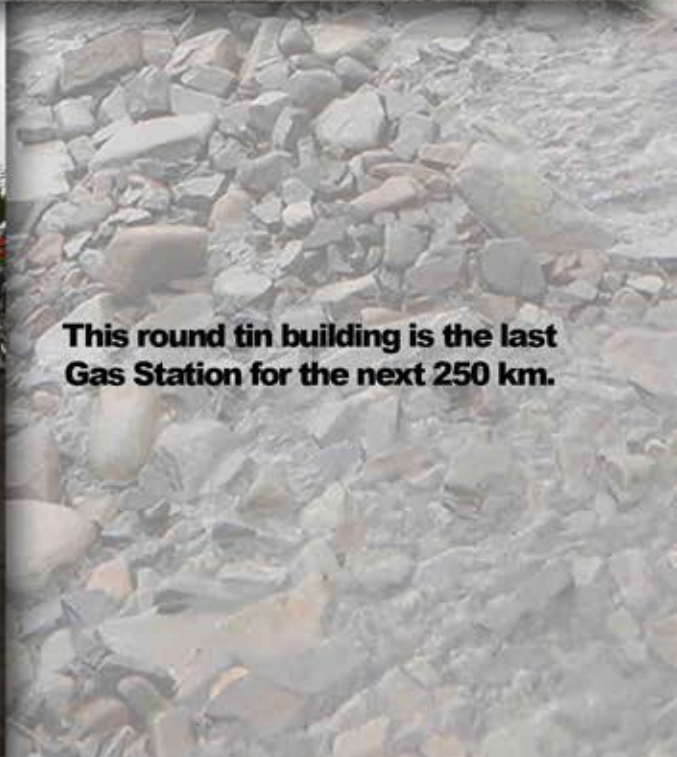
The ice on this river is there all year long.



Many kilometers left to travel on our way to Tomtor.



Another flat tire to fix for Alex.



This round tin building is the last Gas Station for the next 250 km.



Anton is making sure the tires are still well held on the truck because of the vibrations due to the road.

One more night of sleeping in a tent on the side of the road.





As you can see in the photos the roads are very hard to travel on.









Arrived in Tomtor, the coldest registered place on Earth -71°.



Stopped at the local school to meet young students.



Three young kids playing on the town sign as we entered.



We found 0.5 Star hotel in town.

The airport in Tomtor was built in 1942 when Russia and USA signed an agreement that they would supply arms to help Russia fight the Germans. 11 billion dollars in armaments was supplied in exchange for gold. This was a stop along the way West for US planes.



Tomtor is very close to Fairbanks, Alaska, only a 4 hour flight.

АЭРОПОРТ ОЙМЯКОН
ПОСТРОЕН В 1942 ГОДУ.
ПЕРЕСАДОННЫЙ ПУНКТ
ТРАССЫ ФЭРБЕНКС-
ЯКУТСК-КРАСНОЯРСК
В ГОДЫ ВЕЛИКОЙ
ОТЕЧЕСТВЕННОЙ ВОЙНЫ.



Недостатки (отказы) в обеспечении полетов. Должности, фамилии и подписи лиц, составивших запись

Кому сообщено, время сообщения

Запись о времени устранения (отказов) в обязанности полета подпись дежурного (инженера)

Дата:

Исполнитель: А.Е.Ж.с.
 Руководитель: А.В.С.х.
 Дата: 02.00

The control tower to guide the planes at the airport.



04.02.87
 17:00

05.02.87
 7:00

06.02.87

Good memories during a lunch break on Ulu Lake.



On our way to Susuman we stopped to take a walk on river that is frozen year long.





We took a walk on the frozen river Kubeme.





Max was supervising and giving us security with his Rifle while Anton fixed another flat tire on my bike.

Holding a Fiber Optic Cable running on top of the ground for 1800 km from Yakutsk to Magadan.





**Took a break to enjoy the beautiful mountains:
Loshkalakh, Gavryushka, Kulu and Gusakov.**





View from our 0.1 star Hotel.

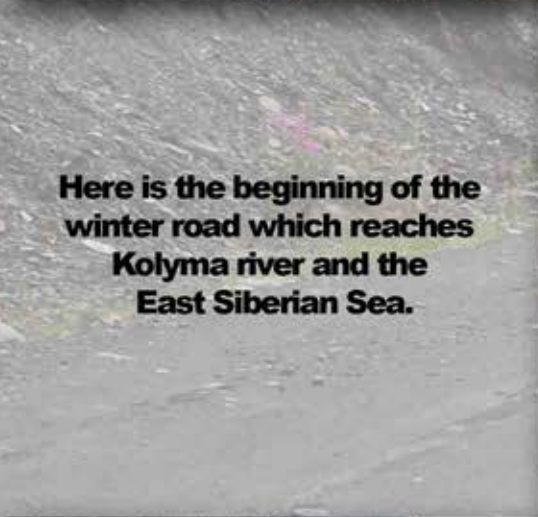


Visited the mining town of Ust Nera.





**The monument indicates
Magadan's and Kolyma's
Borders.**



**Here is the beginning of the
winter road which reaches
Kolyma river and the
East Siberian Sea.**



САСЫР	187
ЗЫРЯНКА	489
СРЕДНЕКОЛЫМСК	845



Stopped at a Weather Station to have lunch with Meteorologists who are on duty 7 days a week. They report only by telephone to the office in Yakutsk.





On our route we stopped at a Monument in Memory of 3 Army pilots that died in a crash during the World War II.





Deep in the Magadan region in remote Siberia, a coal mining town known as Kadykchan was built by Gulag prisoners during World War II. At its peak, the town housed nearly 11,000 residents. By the early 1990s, the decreased demand for coal and the fall of the Soviet Union would see the town start to decrease in importance. A mine explosion in 1996 killed six people and prompted ownership to shut down the mines altogether.

Officially Kadykchan is 100% uninhabited. The men we've seen there are black coal diggers, they do not live there. We came there as a group with arms as protection. You wouldn't ride there alone, it is a no man's land. There are no services, winters are extremely harsh, and the only way into town requires traveling on a ghost highway.



As I was taking pictures of the town I heard screaming for help. I turned around and noticed it was Alex, The Legend, who was stuck in muddy waters, I had to take a photo as he was losing his moto in the mud, and laugh a bit before helping him out!

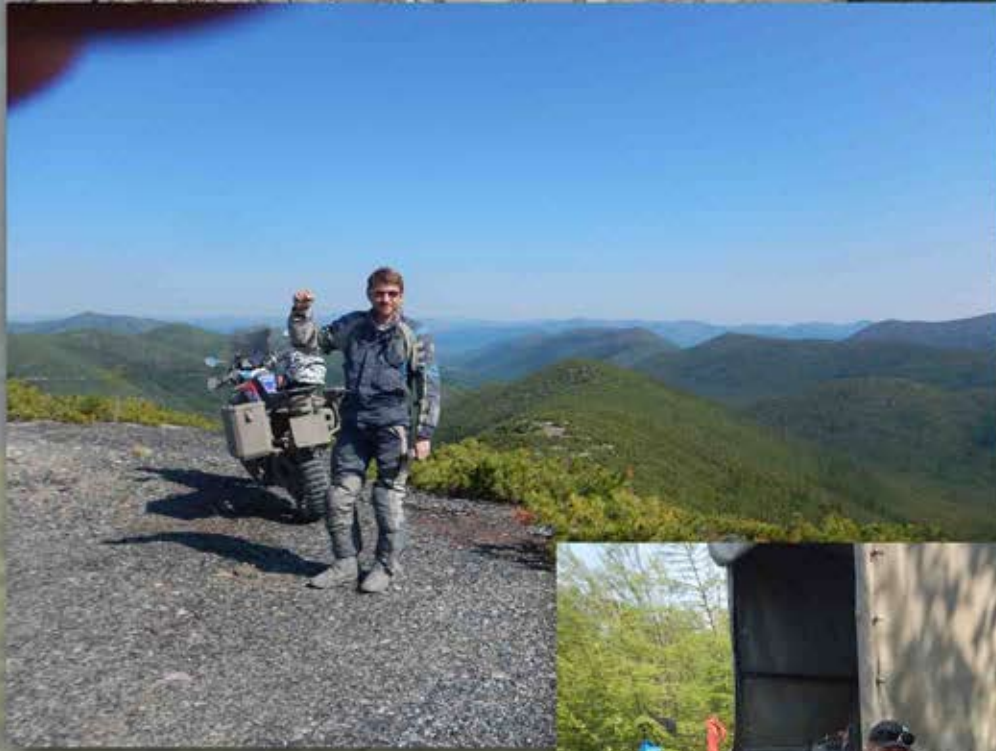


In Susuman I took a photo of a rare poster of Stalin, all memories of him have been taken away in Russia.





We were near the uranium mine in Butugychag where prisoners used to work.



Stopped by a river for lunch where I washed my clothes. The route was beautiful but unbelievably dusty



As we entered the town of Omchak, the largest gold mining area in Russia, we visited the remains of a Gulag (prison) built during the Stalin era to open mines of gold, diamonds and uranium. The workers were prisoners of war. It was forced labour where many died either in the mines or building the Road of Bones, whoever died on the road was buried there









Finally arrived at our Hotel in Ust Omtchug, in front of our hotel.





As we left Ust Omtchug, we had a chance of meeting an Orthodox priest who came originally from Moldavia.

He showed us a piece of art made about the labour camps in the area.





Then we visited a museum, he showed us where the labour camps were situated and some of the prisoners files.





These are buses used as transportation for local people.

Sign stating the distance left as we were at the intersection of Kolyma highway and Tinkovskaya Road.



We made it to Magadan! It was a ride that was physically and emotionally demanding. I would say to people who want to ride the road to Magadan: it is very dangerous as high speed traffic is always present on dusty roads.



Upon our arrival in Magadan, we stopped at a monument erected in memory of people who suffered and died in labour camps.



The mammoth is still present in Magadan.



In Magadan, I met Pavel Zhdanov the author of
the book called A Disappearing Past.



Павел Жданов
Pavel Zhdanov

Magad
Gilles Robert from Pavel
Zhdanov. Came back on
Kolyma 15.07.2019

Исчезающее
прошлое

A Disappearing Past

Magadan — Moscow — Red Square

My next trip in 2020 Thailand & Laos

