

PERM NEWS

The newsletter of the Perm Association

July 2009

Developing Tourism in the Ural Mountains

In Perm State University students in the department of tourism traditionally have 'summer tourist practice'. In 2008 it was under the supervision of Igor Volkhin and S. Michurin. We travelled along the Usva River. It's one of the most beautiful rivers of the central Ural Mountains. It is a tributary of the Chusovoi River which runs into the Kama, that into the Volga, and that into the Caspian Sea. So it is possible to travel directly to Iran. Our plans however were much more modest. We used two buses for transfer from Perm to the river - approximately 260 kilometres away. According to Russian standards it's very close. We collected catamarans and started our travel down to the settlement of Usva. Here near the rocks is located the white water part of the river. All day long our students practised kayaking. Next day was trekking to rock outcrops. They rise above the taiga. From their top it was a magnificent panorama of the Taiga Ocean¹ lying around us. The fourth day we travel to Usvensky Columns. It is a big monolithic rock in length more than one kilometre, the biggest on this river. Here was climbing practice.



¹ a 'sea' of conifer and pine forest

The view from the panorama point is absolutely fantastic. The whole world was lying under us. We see the huge bulk of the rock, Usva River flowing to the horizon and taiga. There is one separate rock which is named the devil's finger. It's about one hundred metres high. Next day we stopped at the Big Log rock. Such long monolithic rocks lying along the river are called logs. This place has a tragic story. In the days of Stalin's reprisals there was a Gulag department. Here was a commandant's office, and there lived exiled and repressed people from different regions of the Soviet Union. They brought down wood and many of them died because of the hunger and back-breaking toil. From the top of the rock we can see squares of the bases and coloured rags of old kitchen gardens. Russians have not forgotten tragic lessons of their history. In the memory of these innocent victims of reprisals a simple wooden cross is established. In this place we do a history lesson. After it was traditional minute of silence for memory of these people. We consider that patriotic education of our young generation should occur not only on examples of great victories of our state, but also on examples of great tragedies.

Then we continue our practice. In the afternoon we do lecture and practice on risky service and survival. Students learnt to roll under the canoe, to lift the turned canoe and to get on it in water. In the evening we made a tourist banya². Next day we rafted all day long. In the evening we had an extraordinary supper and fireworks at midnight and sang songs with guitar. Last day we reached the small settlement called Cape and returned to Perm by bus. We consider that such tourist practice is very useful to students. Specific point of our groups was that it's a form of distant education. For such students it's difficult to leave work for a long time. Therefore this and similar six-day routes are very convenient. In a short period of time they have practice in water, cross-country and mountain tourism. Students live in harmony with nature.

It is necessary to thank the Oxford professor Judith Pallot who brought English students on practice to the Perm region in 2000. She demonstrated an excellent example of the European style of universities tourist practice organization. She used the combination of lectures and seminars with the individual student's task. During the travel each student did individual academic work and made a report on practice. We took all useful aspects of your experience and used it in our practice. We organized the multi-level system of preparation and passing the tourist practice. Students have three theoretical courses of lectures: introduction in tourism, the organisation of travel and tourist equipment. Then they have two university practices. They plan practice tours and learn to use tourist equipment. So they pack backpacks, erect tents, collect catamarans and kayaks in the university. In the field students use this knowledge and abilities. It's a good Russian tradition to work collectively. Therefore individual tasks are given to small groups of students. On practice teachers do short lectures around a fire, on coast, on rocks. Sometimes they are long when we speak about the work with foreign tourists or about specificity of travel across Great Britain. Seminars on different aspects of travelling are conducted too. And traditionally we organize many common discussions. After returning to Perm each group writes small essays which formed the collective report on practice. We consider that this trip of student's tourist practice developed by us can be interesting to students of Oxford and other European universities. So you are welcome to visit our hospitable region.

Igor Volkhin, senior teacher of Perm State University

Olga Votnova, student in the Geography Faculty of PSU

² a banya is a Russian bathhouse, rather like a sauna – but more exhilarating. A 'tourist banya' is made by building a stove from scratch with local materials, heating it and enclosing it with heavy polythene or tent fabric slung around four upright poles. Such banyas are surprisingly effective but require the students to carry the material which can be heavy, as well as axes for the making the poles. Axes are used at every stage of such a trip.

Dates for your diary

Summer party

Tea and strawberries from 4.00pm on Friday 24th July in the garden of 6 Rawlinson Road; followed by wine and savouries. Members may like to go on from here to see the production of 'Carmen' (see details below). Please let Karen know if you'd like to attend.

Dorchester concert

The "Karavai" balalaika quartet from Perm is due to perform in Dorchester Abbey at 5.45pm on Saturday 19 September. Tickets £10 from www.osj.org.uk or from Oxboxoffice on 0845 6801926.

Future plans

Plans are under way for Oxford Fiddlers to visit Perm in 2009; and for Permians to participate in the Oxford Folk Festival in 2010.

Oxford International Links News

Carmen

There will be a multi-national performance of Carmen at 7.30pm on Thursday 23 and Friday 24 July 2009, featuring young dancers from Perm and section leaders from Perm Symphony Orchestra, who will be playing with, and giving master classes to, the young players in the Leiden Youth Orchestra. Quentin Hayes will play the part of Escamillo. Hosts are needed from 18th July, when joint rehearsals in Oxford begin.

Tickets £12 (concessions £10, children £5) from www.oxboxoffice.com or by telephone to 01865 252537 or 0845 6801926.

Christmas Carol Concert

Bonn and Leiden have offered to take part in a Christmas carol concert in Oxford.

News of other links

Bonn

Bonn Week in May was an outstanding success. The festivities included an art exhibition, the formal opening of the revamped Bonn Square, a Burgerfest, a Barn Dance and the Lord Mayor's Parade, led by the Bonn Ehrengarde in full uniform. Visiting groups included the Band of the Bertolt Brecht School, a jazz choir, canoeists, young athletes and Irish dancers.

Leiden

The joint Leiden-Oxford link committee is considering a range of exchanges, including hockey, judo, football, baseball, school gardeners and lacemakers.

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Leonid Pasternak

At our AGM on 11th February held in the Buttery, Wolfson College, we were fortunate in having as speaker Dr Ann Pasternak-Slater. She gave a talk on the paintings of her grandfather Leonid Pasternak, illustrated with slide projections of many of his paintings and several fascinating old photographs. The presentation began with his early work with beautiful paintings of Boris Pasternak as a boy and other family members such as Lydia, Ann's mother. Leonid's life was traced through his paintings from Russia to Berlin and finally before the war to Oxford where he died in 1945. His encounters with famous people enabled him to make superb portraits of Einstein (playing his violin), Hoffman, Rachmaninov at his piano, Tolstoy (reading by his desk). We saw a heart-rending illustration for Tolstoy's last novel Resurrection. There was also a portrait of Lenin speaking at a podium. The talk concluded with a fascinating analysis of a painting of one of the early meetings of the Bolsheviks in power which had been painted over to accord with changes in the Russian political scene - a slice of Russian history. We are indeed indebted to Dr Pasternak-Slater for devoting time to giving us this splendid and at times moving presentation.

Perm Association members may see the paintings in Park Town by appointment with Ann Pasternak-Slater (telephone 01865 515 994) on the first Sunday of each month, 2pm to 4 pm.

David Roulston

Upper Heyford

About 10 miles north of Oxford is the redundant USAF air base at Upper Heyford. The result of a public inquiry will be known at the beginning of August when the Communities Secretary will determine the planning appeal made by the owners against the refusal of permission to build an extra 700 houses and use the flying field (and the 56 Hardened Aircraft Shelters) for commercial storage. No buildings of interest would be demolished (this was one of the reasons why Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council objected) although the barbed wire would be taken off the perimeter fence.

A heritage centre is being proposed with staffing for two weekends a month when access by minibus could be arranged around the flying field. The housing is relatively uncontentious, but arguments were made that the primary use of the military landscape, the runways and buildings should be for heritage purposes and, subject to sensitive management, some commercial use could then be allowed. Questions were also raised about whether the very limited times when the public could be admitted would do justice to what English Heritage and the Dept for Culture Media and Sport accept is the best preserved Cold War remains in the country (possibly in Europe), to which European Conventions on the historic environment and culture should be relevant. A number of accession states were on the other side of the Iron Curtain and could have been on the Upper Heyford bombing run. Remnants of the target map can still be viewed in the Battle Command Centre.

While the Secretary of State ponders the application and appeal, visits to the site are possible by appointment, and I have taken a number of Russian visitors to see what, as one of them has said, embodies what separated us for so long. There is an organisation (The Oxford Trust for Contemporary History) which is interested in establishing a multinational heritage presence at Upper Heyford where different Cold War stories can be juxtaposed for the benefit of an international audience. There might be opportunities to twin this site with Cold War sites in other countries (including the Perm region), sharing exhibits and knowledge.

If anybody is interested in visiting the site, or in its longer term future, they can contact me (pause.forthought@googlemail.com) or the owners direct at michael.loveland@btconnect.com

Daniel Scharf