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# Russia

Moscow to Chita  
Legs 4 to 7

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UUBW Moscow to USSS Yekaterinburg  
767NM

It took a few days of waiting in Moscow before we felt relatively confident in the weather to be clear enough to commit to a flight to the next destination. A visual departure from this small general aviation airport that was deserted on the Sunday but it took us an hour to drive to the entrance as there was a drag race meet next door the queue went back for 3 miles! Lots of young party people in their 1970s hotted up LADAs (Russian made small sedan).

Once in the air we started to climb in stages testing the readings of altitude against each measuring device - 9000 , to 14000 , to 27000.

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Very high thin cloud and reports of no thunderstorm activity and we are still in visual conditions at request to climb to 310. The weather looking better and better as we progress, now in -20c at 250 FL. The testing flight to ensure the static ports are clear and each ADC (Air data computers ADC1 & 2) are reading the altitude, rate of climb and airspeed succinctly.

Weather reports in Russia are proving to be very unreliable, there is conflicting information on each media so we are relying on a bit of Windy application weather, a bit of BBC weather, a bit of Foreflight application weather and a finger in the air. Then when in flight we use the radar and weather systems on board and progressively ask ATC to provide a report in our path. Nevertheless we made it to Yekaterinburg with virtual visual conditions until the point of entry at TOD (top of descent) when we are in full IMC conditions with 11C we were clear of any icing and with the instruments all playing nicely we were enjoying the smooth white out conditions. Clear to landing in this large international airport, we were marshalled into park, called a crew car/mini bus then dropped off at a locked door! How do we get into the terminal? No-one around us speaks English and we are starting to induce a bit of commotion. We are airside standing under a huge Airbus being loaded, in an international airport looking very out of place. After a while a very nice supervisor (Dimitry - who speaks English) shows us the crew entrance and helps us through security.

Yekaterinburg is ranked as the 4th largest city in Russia, it is a nice modern city with a museum to Boris Yeltsin - the first President and also of significant interest is the site of the mass murder of the Romanov family hence ending the reign of Tzar and monastery rule.

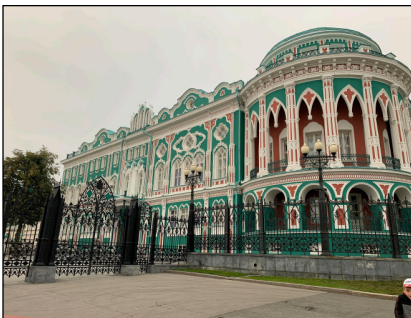
There is also a sizable meteorite at the dam in the main park.

By the next morning we got up early to try to depart to Novosibirsk but that weather report shows imbedded thunderstorms along the path and entry so we are delayed until 1pm.

We get through the security at the airport but are stuck waiting for a bus to take us to the aircraft, standing below the tower, we again attract a bit of attention and the customs officer starts to hassle us for our declaration, eventually he takes a photo of the declaration with apologies and helps to arrange the crew car.

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Thinking we are now in the clear with the fuel truck arriving and pumping the fuel they stop half way; the prepaid fuel release had only allowed and prepaid for a certain amount -as per our original estimates. Changes to airports or fuel estimates require to be done well in advance and all these changes can only be organised through the Flight Operations Support. We try to negotiate more fuel direct and with many phone calls but they say that's it and drive off. We need to wait for another fuel release and payment by the Flight Ops for them to come back. That took another 2 hours before the truck came back to top up our tanks.



*Grand residence, GA airport, meteorite*

### **USSS to UNNT - Yekaterinburg to Novosibirsk**

760NM 3 hrs

After waiting for fuel for 3 hrs we finally take off at 14:22 local time and land in Novosibirsk at 18:22 local time, why did it take 4 hours to complete a less than 3 hr flight? What happened in that 4 hrs? One flight from hell is what happened. First problem was a screen full of imbedded thunderstorms, this was relatively manageable, flying a bit lower from 310FL to 290FL we were between cloud layers and with a deviation right of track- technically we can say we just flew with our right wingtip in Kazakhstan, then diverting back to left of track. At 290FL after 2 hrs of flight, the SDF MIS-COMPARE starts up again, then over speed warning! The auto pilot taking over and announcing - Auto pitch up!, quick to respond and try to get the problem under control we need to descend and try to get out of the clouds all whilst avoiding thunderstorms that are invisible. As expected (from the last flight experience) the descent causes the static reads to report over speed again, when the speed reaches 233 the Auto

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Pilot yelling "Over speed and taking over to pitch up". Amir being aware of her next move, disengages and takes over, when he swaps to the ADC #2 (Air Data Computer) the actual speed is around 144, so that silly computer AP (Auto Pilot who is reading ADC#1) would more than likely put us in a stall by pitching the nose up. We continue to fly, trying to constantly contact ATC to advise of the problem and the required descent also requesting they call out altitude and speed but they are unresponsive- eventually a Siberian air pilot advises a different frequency and ATC want to know our exact GPS and altitude which puts an extra burden and stress load into the mix, all the while Amir is manually flying and constantly toggling between static readings of the 3 measures and I'm calling out the iPad GPS altitude and ground speed readings.

We fly like this for an hour by hand until we get to altitude 9000/8000 feet all the time looking for clearance of clouds and weaving through to avoid them. This seems to be the magic altitude and temperature of 12C that clears the MIS-COMPARE notices and allows us to engage the Auto Pilot back and all the systems start to behave nicely. There is no choice but to fly the next hour to the airport at this level, doing deviation after deviation to avoid thunderstorms as per the storm scope screen as ATC have no information in this regard.

Although we burnt more fuel flying at a lower altitude and with deviations the fuel on landing was still within over an hour and half endurance. Airport staff are amazing and the movement through the airport is smooth. We check into the Hilton Double Tree and get a nice suite with executive lounge so things are looking up, good thing too because looking at the weather it appears we are going to sit here for some time.

We are lucky as the local opera/theatre has the ballet Spartacus; it is a little strange to see Roman soldiers doing ballet and wielding swords, it was a fabulous show sitting first row with the orchestra pit in front and an unobstructed perfect view.



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*- At the ballet Spartacus and his girlfriend*



*- sandwiched between the cloud layers and thunderstorms all around.*

The restaurants in Novosibirsk are very good but there is not very much else to do than walk the city, we enjoyed the jacuzzi and sauna and basically just monitored the weather and watched as our RTW (Round the World) friends progressed a little further ahead of us to the next destinations, in their SR22, which can fly lower and avoid the higher thunderstorms. We need to take our flights in good high cloud bottoms to test the static port readings and hobble closer to a city that we can get service perhaps in Vladivostok if the problem persists. The weather is a low pressure system that just sits in this middle



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section of Russia and doesn't move or when we move East it moves with us so we are constantly stuck in the same weather. The next area is covered in bush fire smoke so we will be adding another layer of complexity.



*Every city has a  
Lenin square.*





*When the ladder is bigger than the plane! - oil top up in Novosibirsk*

UNNT - Novosibirsk to UNAA - Abakan

300 NM about 1 hr

There will be another 2 hour move forward when we fly to Ulan Ude and the weather is a big factor, either it is fine where we leave and bad where we are going or vice versa and the time at destination would have us landing after sunset, so we decide to go to UNAA a very small airport.

A smooth transition through the airport again and we top up the fuel but need to wait for our allotted flight plan departure time for a half hour. The weather looks great and we climb to 27000 feet (270FL) above the clouds and weather and get a nice 30 knot tail wind which gives us ground speed of 336



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knot and 196 knot airspeed we are constantly checking all 3 Altitude and airspeed measures the difference is 80 feet .



It is a really beautiful landscape over the lake Abakan on arrival and we get to the hotel via our Yandex aka Uber driver Nicholi who uses his translator to communicate. He then takes us on a tour of the City region with all the highlights- mostly statues over a great view of the region, the memorial of wars fought here, as everything is in Russian it is hard to understand exactly. The region is Khakassia Republic is very close to the Mongolian border and was established in 17th century. In 1940 ruins of possibly a Chinese Han Dynasty Palace were discovered, speculation is the complex was built by an exile around 99 BCE.

The restaurants in town are busy and full of many people from everywhere including Kazakhstan, it is common to find many Uzbekistans here also.

The hotel advises there is no water in the town until 11pm and it will only be cold water from then, apparently this is a yearly event for a few weeks so it's a bucket of water in the bathroom to use as best we can. We spend our few nights here while we wait for good weather making the best of every situation. Travelling to a dam and hydro power plant on the Yenisei River some 130km away we get to see a bit of the landscape as we are not able to rent a car - Australian drivers license holders have no insurance cover here, so it is a long taxi ride but worth the trip.





*A little bit of Paris in the city gardens and the great Dam spillway.*



*Workers memorial at the Dam*

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## **UNAA - Albakan to UIUU -Ulan Ude**

- 645NM through the heart of Siberia

It's a 7 am start this morning to ensure to clear the weather and to take account of the time that we will gain in Ulan Ude ; a shift of 2 hrs. We initially climb to FL250 to stay clear of the jet stream clear air turbulence, then move to FL270 for a while then FL290 each time double checkin both ADC (Air Data Computer) readings; up to FL270 the altitude difference per instrument is 60 feet out, same when we move to FL290 the difference really starts to occur, climbing to an 80 mis-compare by FL310 and remaining there for the rest of the flight which is well within the acceptable tolerance. Prior to each flight since the problem started I have been sucking on each of the static ports - the first time I did this there was some water in the RHS bottom port, now 3 are clear but the top left port is difficult to suck. This flight when I sucked this same port a bit of brown fluid came out. Like brown water, just a bit not much. It could be that a small insect climbed in there and is blocking it a little as this one port is not clean and clear to suck on.

We are traveling along the mountain range between Russia and Mongolia, MSA around FL120 so fairly high mountains. As there are scattered clouds and hazy conditions it is low visibility.

We decided to cut our time short in Lake Baikal as we are a little behind our schedule and still need to make the country departure within the time frame that we specified on our entry, we are told this can be extended with some bureaucracy and new paperwork however we decided we have seen enough lakes and villages so will get back on track, follow the opportunity of good flying weather and rejoin with our RTWers.



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## **UIUU - Ulan Ude to UIAA - Chita**

### **220 NM**

Now back with our finish line RTWers (Round the Worlders) Alex and Martine in their SR22, also parked at the same airport. They returned on their road trip from Lake Baikal where they bravely stayed in a primitive Yurt with only a bush toilet and a bucket shower, they were very happy to see we booked them a room at the only 5 star hotel in Ulan Ude.



The Buryatia region is populated by Buryat and Yakuts indigenous groups originating from Mongolia and other regions. They have 3 main religions Tibetan Buddhism, Orthodox Christian and Mongolian Shamanism. We visit the largest Buddhist Temple complex and the biggest Lenin head in the world, there are a few world firsts here - the lake being over 500 km long and having a unique freshwater seal population and that huge head, not that you would find that many heads of Lenin in the world outside of

Russia! Every city here has a dedicated statue, memorial, square and street named after Lenin.





We are limited in our choice for restaurants as the best one in town has closedown, so we remain at the hotel and with a very stressed non English speaking waitress she eventually gets our order - there is not much to choose from as all of the buzzy (boose - dumplings filled with meat) have pork and there is no venison, we refuse to even think about eating horse which only leaves lamb steak that is

fine for me but Amir has just a chicken soup and fish tartare. My fish soup was excellent.

Our departure from UIUU is smooth except for some moderate wind sheer at 2200 feet otherwise we just climbed to FL130 and stayed there under the cloud base. Flying just North of the border of Mongolia and later staying North of the border of China which we need to go around as flying over China in a short cut is not possible. The landscape is very green rolling hills with forest areas and many lakes and rivers, there is no farmland or towns so really just land for many miles. Chita is a fair sized town spanning around a lake and surrounded by mountains on the east side this is a fuel stop for us then onto UHBB.



The airport terminal in Chita is straight out of an old Soviet movie with a tower rising high up to a hammer and sickle a common emblem throughout Russia, the amount of buzz around the aircraft is exciting , every one coming out of the woodworks to take photos and ask questions- in Russian, we are unable to communicate besides hand language.





*Lake arrival to Chita airport - Biggest Lenin head in the world*

