

## Eagles Club Year Book - 2019

Tour Reports – Eastern Europe

Tree skiing in Luzhba, Siberia

David McClelland

8-17 Dec 2018



*Photo by Andrey Golovachev*

Skiing in Siberia is as much about the journey as the destination. Flying into Moscow and then Novokuznetsk involves crossing two time zones and a 7hr UK time difference before skis can be donned. A jet-lagged, half-day pit stop in the comfortable Hotel Voskhod, located in Mezhdurechensk - a substantial coal mining town mixed in with primeval coniferous forests and a little ski resort, permitted skis and skins to be tested together with a first experience of the sharply continental climate. Winter temperatures down to -40C are not unusual.

Continuing by train, part of the trans-Siberian network, one is dropped off two hours later by the trackside in Luzhba - inaccessible by public road - to be met by skidoos to take skis, luggage and provisions up to the first of our two encampments, a series of huts just up from the banks of the frozen River Tom; and later in the week onto a much smaller basecamp 10km from the river.

Most of the skiing in December is undertaken within the treeline from a choice of several hills 700-900m in height. These give vertical drops of 150-300m on 20-30 degree slopes normally less than a kilometre long. Daylight at this time of the year is after 9am to about 4pm, which permits 1-3 runs

each day through judicious reuse of one's cut trails. Skiing above the tree line requires skidoos to extend the travel perimeter, but would give access to summits 1,500-1,700m in height with drops of 500-700m and runs of 2-3kms.

Heavy snowfall - in our case something like a metre in a day - can be anticipated throughout the season from late November to early March. However, the real attraction is in the quality of the snow which benefits from the general lack of humidity to create truly magnificent 'bow-waves' of 'snorkel-necessitating' powder.

The area lends itself to touring via its local network of some 40 wooden huts. These tend to be heated with wood burning stoves and have ample stocks of firewood. A ground floor serves as the kitchen and dining room whereas the upper floor provides a shared sleeping surface. Water is usually spring-fed and electricity only available within the proximity of the main cabin area and rail track. Steam saunas abound. All personal supplies need to be brought in on the train and moved to more remote huts by snowmobile, a major people/kit logistics exercise in itself.

For the independent Eagle, it is hardly possible to book the huts and snowmobiles without fluent Russian. Bookings can be arranged through Anna Drozhzhina, an ESC member. Note that to Google the area in English leads to a competitor's website.

#### GPS MAPS

[nakarte.me](http://nakarte.me): Opentopo plus soviet military maps

[Talkytoaster.co.uk](http://Talkytoaster.co.uk): Openstreetmap (Siberian Federation, 10m contours)

[Alternativaslibres.org](http://Alternativaslibres.org): Openstreetmap (Russia, 20m contours)

#### PARTY

**Organisers:** Andrey Golovachev and Anna Drozhzhina.

**Guides:** Anna Drozhzhina, Slava Akava and Dima Blinov. **Cook:** Olga Bespalova

**Members:** Anna Drozhzhina, Tim Taylor, Tamsin Gray, Chris Vaughan, Roger Upton, Mhairi and Jamie Brown, Ed Procter, Howard Pollitt, Susie Amann, Julie Pritchard, Oliver Lutte, Adrian Parsons and David McClelland.