

June 2013

# Apex

*Looking Through The Curve*

Official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc. Lexington, Kentucky  
MOA #146 RA #4-49 <http://www.bluegrassbeemers.org>



Typical traffic situation in St. Petersburg, Russia. This is not a parking lot.

—Photo by John Rice



June 8th  
10 am



## EIGHTH Annual Ride 'em, Don't Hide 'em Café Run

Not a race, not a rally and definitely not another  
poker run!

**NEW LOCATION !!!!**  
**GARDEN GIRLS CAFÉ**  
**6109 LEXINGTON ROAD**  
**WINCHESTER, KY**

(between Stuffs and the Drive In on Route 60)

*Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at 10:00 a.m.* for another  
gathering with riders of the Right Stuff.

No entry fee, no prizes - just a reason to ride.  
Destination this year...The Kickstand and the Village Café !

For more information contact:  
John Rice 859-229-4546



# 2004 BMW R1150RT For Sale

**7,022 miles**

Second Owner. I bought this 1150RT in 2007 with 1,208 miles from a 73-year-old gentleman. This bike has every option imaginable.

Titan Silver Metallic, Dual Spark, EVO Linked ABS Braking

- BMW Panniers and Top Case
- Sargent Seat (Griptex Carbon Fiber - Heated w/ Controller)
- Backup Backrest
- Moto-Techniques Bar Risers
- Moto Lights
- J-Pegs
- 2 1/2 in taller Smoked Euro-Cut windshield &
- Stock windshield



- GadgetGuy GPS Bracket
- Remus Genesis Carbon Exhaust (not loud- just right)
- Wunderlich Header System (Jet-Hot Ceramic Coated)
- RineWest performance chip V3.0

- Wunderlich Carbon Fiber rear tire hugger
- New Tire front and rear mounted by Roy less than 500 miles ago
- Ohlins shocks

Plus More

**\$9,000.00**

**Paul Huber**  
**859-983-2611 Mobile**

2428 Palumbo Drive #140  
(inside DR FITNESS)  
Lexington, Ky 40509

859-420-0922  
todd@massage4life.biz



## Todd Fuller

Licensed Massage Therapist (LMT)  
NCBTMB Certified/AMTA Member

*Sports Massage - Swedish Therapeutic  
Trigger Point- Deep Tissue - Relaxation*

**Apex is the official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc.**  
**Lexington, Kentucky MOA #146 RA #4-49**

**Paul Elwyn, Editor paul.elwyn@gmail.com**  
**Deadline for submissions is the last day of the month.**  
**Back issues of Apex can be accessed at <http://www.bluegrassbeemers.org>**  
**Join us at Frisch's on Harrodsburg Rd.**  
**on any Saturday, 7-9:00 a.m.**



# ***Saturday*** @ Frisch's 7-9 am





## ***Saturday*** @ Frisch's 7-9 am



Lee Jarrard arrived on his new 2012 Triumph Bonneville T100 with Hepco-Becker luggage and rack. Touring seat is a Triumph accessory option.



Left: Barry Sharpe arrived on an MV Augusta service loaner provided by Commonwealth Motorcycles in Louisville.





## ***Saturday*** @ Frisch's 7-9 am



**2010 1000 RR  
runs quarter  
mile in 8.5  
seconds, hits  
160 mph  
with stock  
engine**



Charles Happy rode his 2010 BMW 1000RR drag bike built by Schnitz Racing in Indiana. This thing covers the quarter mile in 8.5 seconds and hits 160 mph in the quarter with the stock engine featuring 195 hp. The horn button activates an air shifter, no clutch needed. The strap on the front end and the long swingarm reduce the tendency to wheelie. U-turns, however, take a little more planning with this modified chassis.



## ***Saturday* @ Frisch's 7-9 am**



We also enjoy cars! Ben Prewitt (left) stands with his 2004 Jaguar XK8.  
Lee Thompson stands with his 2006 BMW Z4.

## **European Rider's Rally in Burkesville**



A light rain throughout the weekend didn't discourage riders from attending the Burkesville rally. (Left) Ray Brooks and Lowell Roark relax in chairs at The Kickstand display/van. Other Bluegrass Beemerphiles included Roger Trent, Ray and Lynn Montgomery, Paul Elwyn, Hubert Burton, and Roy Rowlett,



# European Rider's Rally in Burkesville



Above: These aluminum home-built panniers by hot rod builder Gary Warren of Danville are a little oversized, a feature that came in handy on the Alaska trip.



Right: Well-travelled R1200RT with stickers to prove it.



# European Rider's Rally in Burkesville



Foot clutch and hand shift are authentic features providing a vintage experience as well as a measure of theft security.



This 1939 45 c.i. Flathead Harley-Davidson, named "Mabel" by owner Erick Taylor of Dale, Indiana, (left) garnered much attention at the rally. Erick said the only problem in the ride down was rain water seeping down the petcock rod on top of the fuel tank, leaking past the rubber o-ring and watering down the gas. The '39 sports a police-style solo seat on plunger that provides suspension to soak up bumps passed along by the rigid frame. Erick says the sweet spot for this machine is 55 miles per hour, providing a relaxing ride. Modern disc brakes and an aftermarket springer front end work well, says Erick.

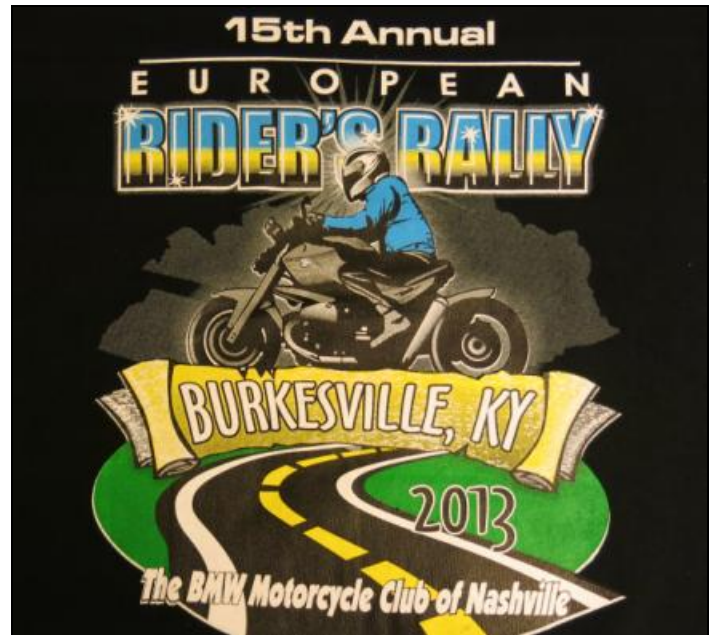
*Photo by Ray Brooks*





# European Rider's Rally in Burkesville

Photos by Ray Brooks





# European Rider's Rally in Burkesville

Photos by Ray Brooks





# Russia 2013

By John Rice



Our home away from home, for 13 days, the Viking Rurik

**A**s a child of the Cold War era, I always had this image in my mind of Russia as dark skied, cold and for bidding, bound by secrets and oppression.

My wife Brenda has read extensively about Russian history and a visit there has been on her list since I've known her. We aren't getting any younger, so we decided that if we are going to get it done, we'd best get to it. Unlike our typical free-form trips, we opted this time for an organized tour, through Viking River Cruises.

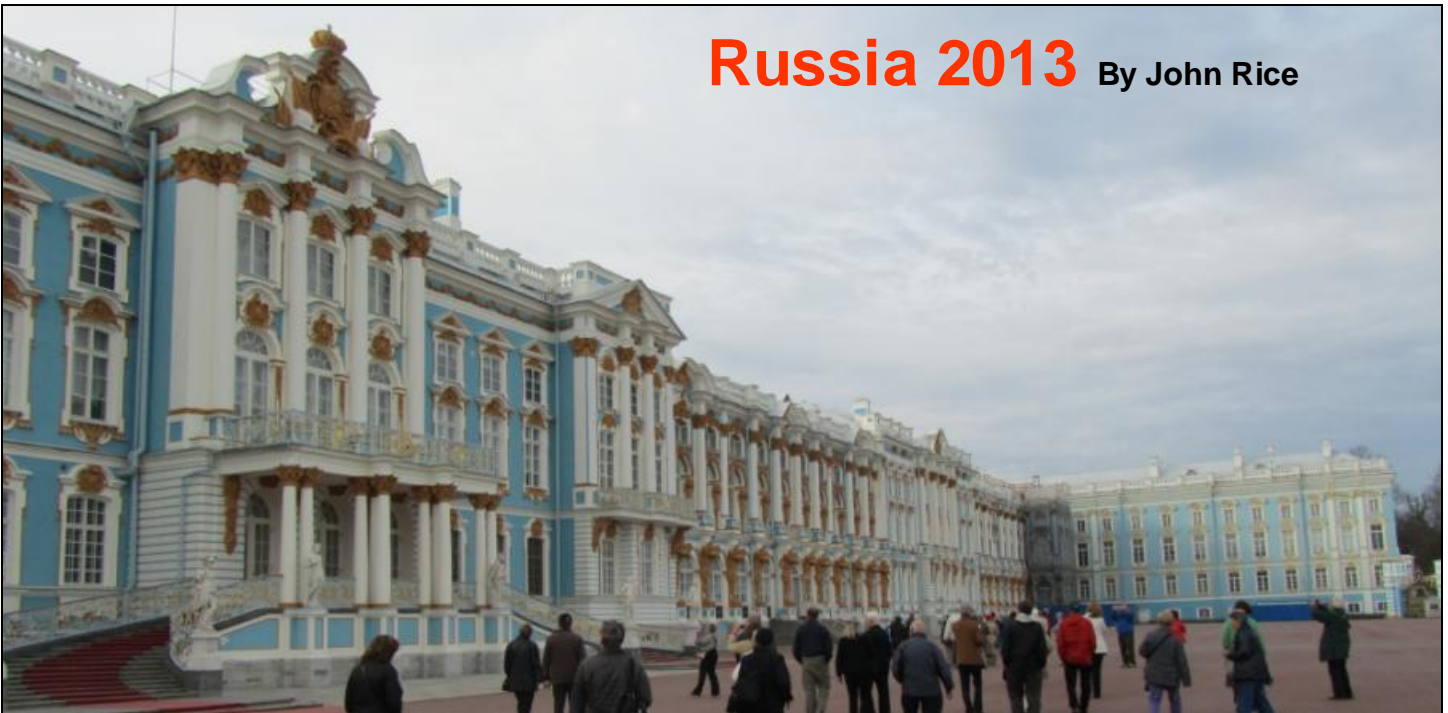
After an all-night flight, our arrival in St. Petersburg, started with an hour and a half in line to get through passport control (what the French in line with us described as "Le Queue Infernal" ) where the uniformed young lady stared at us, then into a computer screen, then wordlessly buzzed us through. We were met by Viking personnel and quickly bussed to the dock. Our boat is moored on the Neva River, apparently about an hour away from the city center, though one isn't sure of the distance in miles,

since an hour can be used up standing still in traffic.

St. Petersburg is a relatively new city, being just over 300 years old in a country, a region, where things a thousand years in place are common. Peter The Great was installed on the Russian throne at the age of 10, in 1682, enduring several years as "co-ruler" with his half-sister Sophia after she led a rebellion which killed off many of his mentors and relatives. At age 17, he overthrew Sophia and shared the throne with his half-brother Ivan for five years until Ivan passed away (it's not clear

whether Ivan had any assistance in his passing.) Peter, who stood 6'8", wanted to Europeanize Russia and after traveling to other capitols, decided to build a new city in conformance with his vision, on the western border of his expanded empire. He began it in 1703 and legend has it that he and his first wife lived simply in a small log cabin here while the new city was under construction. He ordered that the capitol be moved to St. Petersburg from Moscow and decreed that nobles and officials pack up and move there. He also re-





## Russia 2013 By John Rice

### Catherine Palace, Pushkin, Russia

quired that they adopt European style in dress and grooming, changing virtually overnight from the traditional garb with long hair and beards. It is, apparently, a good thing to have absolute ruling power....at least for the one wielding it.

On our first full day, we are up early and out on the bus for the Catherine Palace Tour. Today, May 9, is a major national holiday, roughly equivalent to our 4th of July and Memorial Day combined. It marks the end of WW II (the treaty was signed in Europe on the 8th, but due to the time difference, it was already the 9th in Russia.) Many streets are blocked today, stores are closed and traffic, already a nightmare, is even worse in spots because of the closures. There are old soldiers in their uniforms, resplendent with medals, walking carefully (they are all over 80) in the crowds.

The Palace is now in the nearby town of Pushkin, named for Russia's famous poet and writer. The estate once belonged to a Swedish noble, but

after Peter's victory over the Swedes, he gave it to his wife Catherine I, as a present. She began to develop it into a country residence, but it was her daughter, Catherine II ("Catherine the Great") who had the vision of the grand palatial estate it has become.

On the way to and from the Palace, we passed the monument showing the spot where the Red Army (apparently the word "Red" in Russian translates not only as the color, but also "beautiful", leading to some occasional confusion as to which was intended) was able to halt the advance of the Germans, preventing St. Petersburg from being taken and sacked. The death toll of the three-year siege is incomprehensible and the misery endured by the citizens, starving by the thousands, cannot be imagined by we well-fed, well protected tourists. That the Red Army was able to hold the invaders off for so long is indeed heroic and worth memorializing. America never has been attacked so viciously and has

never endured such hardship (at least not other than that self-inflicted in the Civil War).

Being at the Palace, seeing the grounds and the lakes, gives life to the old isolated drawings I've seen and the old black and white staged photos. There is the sense of opulence (the paintings, the copy of the famous Amber Room, the grand staircases) and also a bit of "getting by" (some columns are brick, covered with plaster and then painted to look like marble). A touch of dinginess hangs over some of the castle, as though the hard winter's grunge hasn't been cleaned away quite yet. The vision of the architects is obvious as the alignments of the avenues and the settings of the buildings form the desired patterns. I marvel at the scope of that vision when I consider that this all came from swamp land, all at the behest of a strong-willed monarch who just wanted it this way.

Later in the day we are stuck in one of Russia's infamous traffic jams. Our enormous

bus, piloted by Viktor, with the same kind of absolute will that built this city, his nerves of steel on constant display, weaves in and out of cars with less than inches to spare, trusting or willing other drivers and pedestrians not to get in his way. Certain collisions loom constantly but never happen. Motorcycles are here, filtering through the traffic, but not in the kind of supply one would expect in a city of more than 5 million. They are an eclectic mix, from Japanese sportbikes (I would think such to be of little use here, in a flat crowded city) and large cruisers, including Harley Davidsons (which must be the cost equivalent of a Porsche here). I watched one rider negotiate a city corner on a cruiser with a rear tire so wide that the bike rolled around its circumference like a person balancing on a beach ball.

Our tour guide for St. Petersburg was Yuri, a middle-aged Russian with the slender profile, shaggy graying hair and general air of a Russian poet. We were told that he was a





**Looking for his spot. Not much use for a 150 mph top speed.**

professor, with advanced degrees in art history. His accent was classic, exactly what one would expect after a lifetime of movies featuring such characters. He had an excellent way of expressing himself with an English vocabulary wonderful in its richness without being overly full. His knowledge of the history was encyclopedic, and I marveled at the ability to produce specific dates and names (and I know he wasn't, for the most part, making them up since I had my own Russian history scholar, Brenda, sitting beside me for a reality check). Later in the day, as we (well, actually Viktor) were struggling through the traffic to return to the boat, Yuri started fielding questions from the passengers, many of whom were interested in the politics of the transition periods. Yuri's reflective, circumspect answers were more like those of a college professor than the patter of a guide. He told of how Gorbachev was intensely disliked by the Russian people because of the perception that he gave away too much, but softened it by noting that the end of Communism was, on the whole, a good thing. He had no qualms in saying that Stalin had been a

brutal tyrant, but noted that Stalin was a politician of his times, when "the only answer to an argument was a pistol shot" and that if Stalin had given in at any point, he too would have been murdered by his rivals and the repressive regimes would have continued under a replacement. He spoke of the systems now in place, that the Russians have many advantages, free health care, dental, education, etc, but noted that some were more equal than others, that money and political influence still held sway....just as it does here in the West. I never got the impression that he was trying to sell us on his government's system, nor was he disparaging anyone else's. He was thoughtful and pragmatic....just an intelligent man fitting the world of politics into the human (i.e. messy and unorganized) condition.

The next day, we went to the Hermitage, an art museum housed mostly in the former Winter Palace of the Czars in St. Petersburg. It is a huge building, spanning several blocks along the banks of the Neva and containing a large courtyard with a triumphal arch. Inside there is the expected grand staircase, which

## Russia 2013 By John Rice

our guide tells us was a political necessity, since each country vied to outdo the others in opulence to establish its place in the pecking order of nations. We travel in our group, following Yuri's placard and listening to his voice in our earpieces, through a dizzying array of spectacular rooms. The ceilings are high, the "trim" if such a term can be used, is impossibly ornate and complicated and the floors are intricately inlaid patterns of exotic materials. Brenda and I have toured castles of other monarchs, but I cannot recall ever seeing anything so absolutely grand for grand's own sake. We've not been to Versailles, (the one in France, not the one in Woodford County), but there seems to be a common denominator....a poor populace and royalty marked by excess grandeur, inevitably followed by violent revolution.

Saturday morning we bussed our way to Peterhof, which is both the name of the town on the edge of the Baltic Sea and the grand palace built there by Peter the Great to put his stamp on the western edge of his empire. We were told that Peter was greatly influenced by his visits to Versailles and wished to, among other things, replicate a system of fountains to rival or exceed the French display. The Versailles fountains are pump operated, which adds greatly to their expense and maintenance (our guide said that the chief engineer at Versailles told the French king that "the water in your fountains is more expensive than the wine in your cellars"), so Peter had engineers devise a system of piped water from higher elevations about 15 miles away to provide the needed pressure.

It's easy to devise such works when one has a supply of laborers without any choice in the matter. The end result is truly impressive.

The Peterhof palace was occupied by the German army during WW II and mostly destroyed by the combination of the occupiers and the Russian army shelling of the invaders from a nearby unconquered fort. Much of the contents had been squirreled away as the Germans neared, but a lot was lost. After the war, Stalin decreed that the palace be reconstructed using the original drawings and some photos. The process took 20 years and the first tourists saw the end result in 1965.

We spent Saturday afternoon visiting a Russian who lives in a Kommunka, a shared apartment. The building was plain-fronted, like most we've seen here outside of the city center, but once inside we could see that at one point it had been a rather grand construction. Our host was "Ivan", whose family once owned the whole floor of this apartment building, before the 1917 Revolution. Through the Communist years, the building was divided among families, but Ivan's family managed to keep possession of one room, which Ivan has now divided down the middle. The total square footage of his space is about 700 and in that space he lives with his wife and five year old son. The remainder of the floor, probably 4,000 sq. ft in total, is shared by seven families. Each family has one room of its own and they all share the common area of the hallway, the kitchen and the single bathroom. The kitchen contains five stoves, all of what we would consider "apartment



## Russia 2013 By John Rice



**The Kommunalka community kitchen: Five stoves for seven families**

sized" and in some cases two families share one. Ivan showed us that in that case, each family got the use of two burners and the oven was divided top and bottom. There were five small washing machines also in the kitchen, each draining into a single free-standing sink. There is one toilet and one bathtub, which has the only hot water available, so must serve also as the spot for dishwashing. Ownership now is a complicated arrangement, not entirely clear according to Ivan. He owns the one room his family occupies and can sell it or pass it on to his child. The state owns the land the building sits on, and is responsible for the common areas of the building. The occupants of building pay a

small fee each month supposedly for the overall maintenance, such as a roof, etc, but as Yuri translated, "no one knows where that money goes". Each family pays for its own utilities and if one is behind, it has no effect on the others.

Ivan is a college professor of Philosophy, a slender, relatively young man with intense dark eyes, a penumbra of wild hair and a dark untrimmed short beard. He spoke through our guide's translation in response to our questions. He earns a small salary, less than some grade school teachers, and has a not surprising dim view of the future.

He believes, or so he said, that people in America have a biased view of Russia, influenced by our mass media,

though he acknowledges that he probably has the same sort of skewed view of us. I thought of an expression I read once, "Spend two weeks in a foreign country and become an expert, spend two years there and realize that you know nothing about it".

I do not know how common this arrangement is now (we were told that it is no longer the dominant way, as it once was in the early Soviet times) but apparently there are still a lot of folks in this situation. Our local guide, Yuri, said he lived in this fashion for several years in his youth (as did, we were later told, President Putin). His expression suggested that it was not something he remembered fondly or ever wished to repeat.

As we move around Russia, we see monuments to various bad things that happened during WW II. We in America, with our view of the Russians colored by the Cold War, perhaps forget that Russia suffered much more in the two world wars than we did. America lost many soldiers and endured rationing, but nothing to compare with Europe and Russia, where in addition to those killed in battle, millions upon millions starved to death and cities were completely destroyed taking homes and livelihoods. Here in Russia, whole generations were lost. The siege of Leningrad (St. Petersburg's temporary name) lasted three years and the bodies of the starved had to be stacked in churches because they could not dig in the frozen ground to bury them.

After three days in St. Petersburg, our boat moved on down the Neva River, beginning our journey on the Volga-Baltic waterway to Moscow, about a thousand water miles away.

One morning at sunrise, I went up to the sun deck to watch the passing scene as we left Lake Ladoga, and moved into the Svir River with the shoreline close on both sides. We frequently passed waterfront "dachas", which would not look out of place in a similar setting in the States. The homes are smaller, perhaps a bit less polished, and the architecture is just different enough to tell me I'm not at home. There are several boats and cars at some of them, letting me know that these are people here of some means. I don't see any (ubiquitous in the States) jet skis, but it may be only because it is so early in the season. There are few birds in evidence, only one or two occasionally flying along the shore.



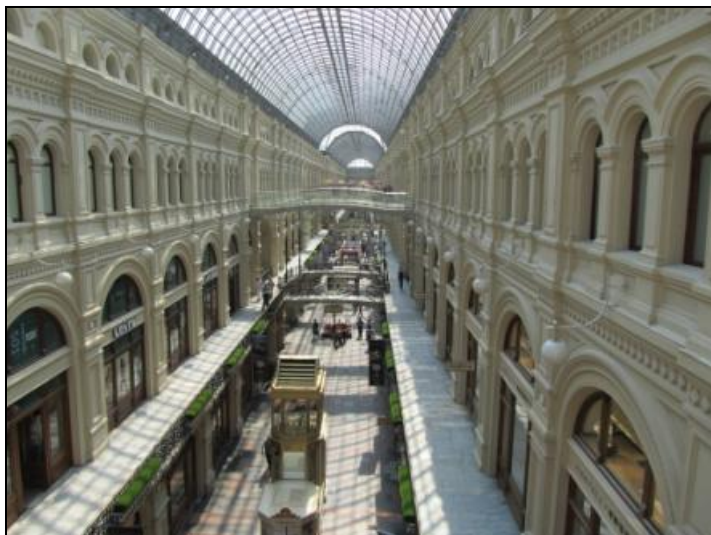
## Russia 2013 By John Rice



**The confluence park at Yaroslavl, the park commemorating the bear, who would rather have skipped the honor.**



**The Bolshoi ballet building. They did not ask us to dance.**



**Inside of GUM, one of several levels in several halls.**

There are no birds on the water, no ducks, geese, terns, waterfowl of any description. The water is dark, and I've seen no fish jumping. I suspect that the water is not fit to support much life. We read at one source that the Neva was badly polluted by factory and farm runoff of chemicals and oils. I don't imagine that there are regulations followed here to limit such fouling of the water.

There are many locks on this waterway, leaving me amazed at how gently and precisely the captain and crew can maneuver this boat. With only a few feet of side clearance and not much front to back, we never felt a bump. Once the boat was inside the lock, we rose quickly, meaning an astonishing amount of water was being brought into the confined space, again without any real sensation of movement. In very short order, we had raised or lowered 30 feet or more and were again on our way.

One morning the passengers were told to report to the Sky Bar for an announcement. Our captain, an imposing, very Russian looking, fellow informed us, through a translator that the portion of the trip up through Lake Onega to Kizhi Island had been canceled. Apparently it has been an unusually cold winter and there still are floating ice sheets in the upper part of the lake. Some of the passengers were complaining, certain in their paranoia that they were being shortchanged in some fashion. Personally, I've seen the movie "Titanic" and have no desire to re-enact it here. Just as with airplanes, if the pilot doesn't want to go there, I don't either. All tour boat traffic for that area has been canceled and there are other boats now moored near us, probably with

passengers making the same complaints. For our captain, the choice is relatively simple: his superiors cannot chastise him for making a decision that preserves the boat and its passengers. The managers of the cruise experience must deal with the grumblings of the participants, but by now I'm sure they've heard it all before and know that they will again.

Early the next morning, from the sun deck, I could see in the water several chunks of floating ice, larger in area than the 142 square-foot cabin we occupy. I can imagine that if we were in the upper reaches of the lake, we'd be dodging much larger bits.

We spent the day traveling, sometimes on the river/waterway and then later on the open water of White Lake. We have passed what appear to be villages or small towns, with clusters of houses or tiny cabins on the shoreline, but almost never see people. One such place had an ornate, onion-domed church which, as we drew closer, could be seen to be in derelict condition with the roof falling in and doors boarded. There was one house in the village with smoke issuing from the chimney and far in the distance I could hear the sound of a single hammer pounding nails into wood. There was no human in sight, no animals on what appeared to be farmland. All along the waterways, we have seen few birds and no signs of aquatic life. A few small boats with one or two occupants have passed, but no sign that they are actively fishing. There have been docks with cargo boats tied up, sometimes loaded heavily with birch logs (none larger in diameter than a good-sized fencepost) but no sign of



## Russia 2013 By John Rice

anyone working them. We have seen abandoned factory buildings, some with heavy equipment rusting in the yards.

Our boat docked at Kusino, to visit the Kirilov monastery. It is located in the small town of Kirilov, (a Russian form of the name "Cyril" after the so-named monk who began it when he received a visit from the Virgin Mary, telling him to do so.)

We were bussed to the monastery where our efficient local Russian guide, Natalia, kept up a running commentary about what we were seeing. The monastery is over 1,000 years old, dating back to the time of Prince Michael, the first of the Romanov's. It became a fortress later in its history, and never was successfully attacked. It still functions as a church for some services, but mostly is a museum of religious icons. We then visited a school in the town, which was interesting in that it looked like any American school from the 50's and 60's, except for the bare walls. Pupils here do get training in traditional arts and crafts, as well as more typical subjects, which we do not do at home....I guess because we don't have 1,000 years of tradition to pass along.

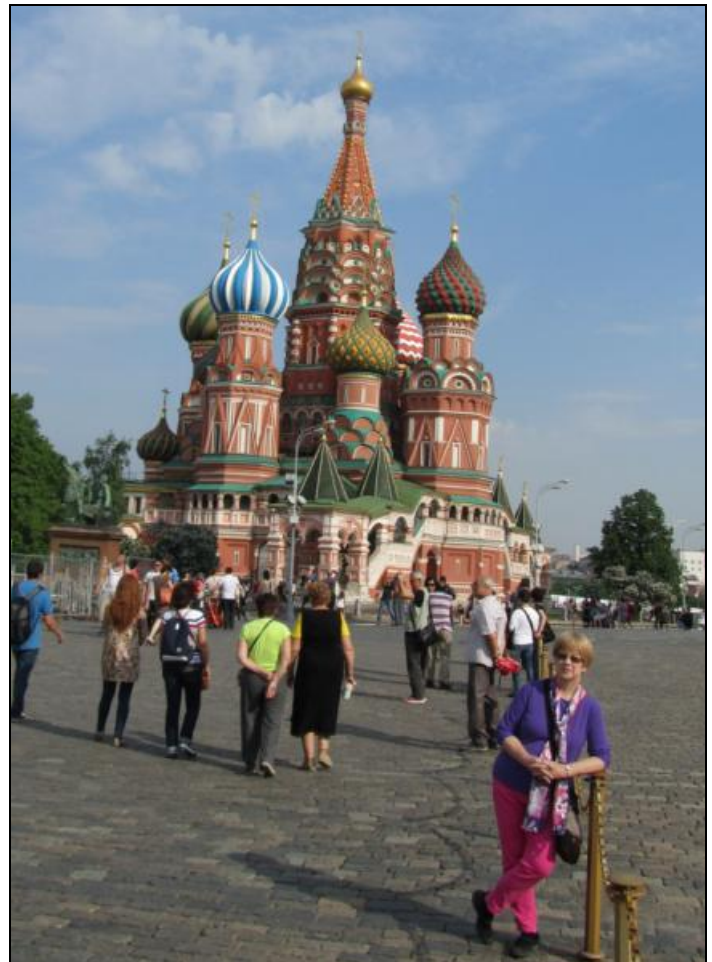
Our boat continued down the Rybinski Reservoir (once the largest man-made body of water in the world) and docked in the afternoon at Yaroslavl, a city of over 600,000 population extending 18 miles along both sides of the river. Founded at the beginning of the 11th Century, by Yaroslav The Wise son of the Viking (Varangian) Grand Prince Vladimir the Great. Yaroslav was sent by his father to Novgorod to be vice-regent there and while he was gone, his father died and

the oldest son, Svyatopolk the Accursed (after being on this trip, enjoying the excess of good food on the boat, I shall be proclaimed John the Very Large upon my return to my native land) killed the other three brothers and seized power in the capital of Kiev. Yaroslav gathered some Vikings (as one would do before a war) and eventually defeated his brother and became the ruler, propelling the Kievan Kingdom of the Rus (their tribe and the root of the term "Russia") to new heights of cultural and military greatness. Among his accomplishments was the founding of a legal code and a court, though I suspect that in such proceedings, he did not need a lawyer for himself. Through both conquest and politics (including marrying off various children to the offspring of other potentates), he greatly expanded his new kingdom and there are now four towns named for him in four different countries (though the names are all different versions of one of his many names.)

Yaroslavl is a prettier town than St. Petersburg, and oddly enough (since it is 700 years older) it looks in better kept shape. The spaces are wider, the buildings in better repair and there are more of what one would term "user-friendly" areas for people to gather and enjoy the scenery. One of our side excursions was to the "Governor's House", dating from the Czar Nicholas Era (built in a hurry when the Gov learned that the Czar was coming to visit). Our guide inside was in character as the Governor's daughter, in period dress. Our bus-guide, a young woman named Olga, said that her own great grandmother had seen the Czar on his visit to the city,



**A Beemer in Moscow. In the Cyrillic alphabet, "Ресторан" is pronounced "Restaurant". A Russian version of our Frisch's breakfast.**



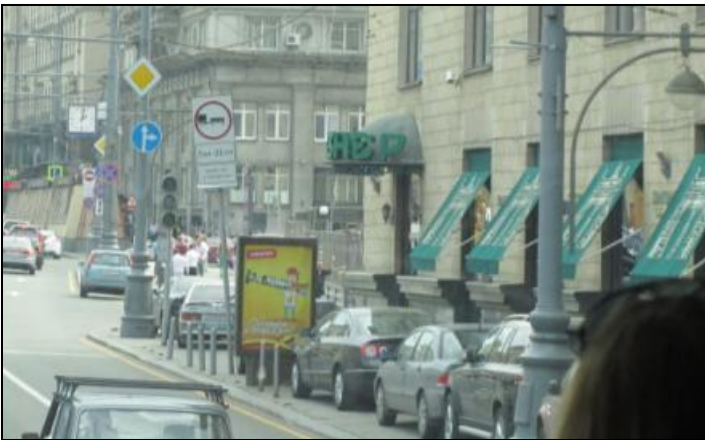
**St. Basil's Cathedral, at one end of Red Square.**



## Russia 2013 By John Rice



A park on one side of the Kremlin.



Parking on sidewalks



The universal language of selling junk to tourists

standing as part of the crowd lining the street to watch his approach.

There is a beautiful park at the confluence of two rivers with a large floral garden in the shape of the city's mascot, a bear walking on two legs, with an axe over its shoulder. This commemorates the story of Yaroslav killing a bear on this spot, using an axe, and supposedly then having the idea to found a city here. I'm pretty sure it didn't happen exactly that way (axing bears wouldn't seem to be directly related to civic enterprise) and in any event, the bear would rather have skipped the honor. On the bluff overlooking the confluence park, is an elaborate church with a monument in front, a stone dating back to the Ice Age, which brings good luck and grants wishes made while touching it. Since the stone was there through the worst of the times over ten centuries, I'm not sure about its efficacy in wish-granting.

Later, on the boat, Brenda went to a lecture on post-Perestroika Russia. The presenter told some jokes that might not have gone over well in Soviet times. "Putin and Medvedev (the nominal president) went to lunch. Putin ordered a steak. The waiter said, "That is only the meat. What about the vegetable"? Putin replied, "He'll have a steak too." "What's the most permanent thing about the Russian economy? Temporary rationing." "After Gorbachev came to power, we were all excited because he was young and had potential. Later we decided that he is like a wife.....first you love her, then you fear her, and after a while you want a new one."

Our next stop was Uglich, which despite its name is quite

impressive. The approach to this town reminded me of Germany with the neatly trimmed banks, the well-tended houses and flower gardens (though few are blooming this early). The town was founded in 1148 and flourished during the 13th and 14th centuries, being favored in the 16th by Ivan the Terrible who used it as a base for his campaigns (the Russian word for his identifier is "Grozny" which we westerners translate as "the Terrible", actually translates more as "awe-inspiring") Ivan was the son of Vasily III Ivanovich, the Grand Duke of Muscovy (the older name for the Moscow area) and was proclaimed Grand Prince at the age of 3 when his father died. His mother became his Regent, but she died when he was 8 and squabbling nobles took over as regents, largely ignoring Ivan except in public appearances. When he was crowned Czar at age 16, he took over with authority and long-held plans to revise the law codes, create an army, opening trade routes, introducing the printing press....in short, he was ready to shake things up. (We think it's a big deal to turn a 16 year old loose with the family car!) Ivan was an effective leader through much of his reign, but began to deteriorate with age, becoming paranoid, erratic and vindictive, which may have colored our thinking about the "Terrible" translation

In Uglich, we had another home visit with a family, this time in a private home in a street near the town center. This couple, probably in their 50's, had built this house themselves, with the help of the wife's father, and owned the land upon which it sat. The home was fairly large, perhaps 1,800 square feet, two story,

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### Weekend bikers

with an open foyer in the middle for the staircase. The siding was wooden, with some exposed stone (hand laid, with varying patterns showing the different workmen who made it) in the back. The lot was narrow, but deep, and in the back was a mini-farm with vegetable plots, a chicken house (also containing ducks and a piglet) and some very small ponds. The couple, who host these "visits" two or three times per month in the tourist season, seemed justifiably proud of their place. We were served (at 9 AM) small "pies" (more like rolls with a filling), tea and the husband's home-made "moonshine" (their term). The drink was described at one point as "wine", but by this I think they were distinguishing it from a distilled spirit. It seemed to be made from rye bread (we were told that one can only get real rye bread in Russia) fermented in water, then "filtered" to produce the final drink. It was strong, tasting a bit like Scotch, with a mouth feel much like red wine. The toasts were poured, repeatedly, and we were told that to leave some in the glass

was "to leave tears with the hosts" so we were to drink up at each toast. Not sure if getting loaded at breakfast will become a family tradition for us, but it was an interesting experience.

The couple told us, through the translator, that they had two children and two very young grandchildren that they saw frequently, but not often enough. The grandchildren "turned the house upside down" on their visits, which brought a chorus of "the same everywhere" from our group. We humans, wherever situated, are more alike than we are different.

Later we went on more guided tours, meandering through the Kremlin of Uglich (all of the old towns had one, which means "fortress", or the walled portion of the town designed to fend off invaders, even though for the most part, the walls are now gone) containing more old churches, administrative buildings and a "palace" where the prince of this area once lived. For a change (on our tour, but I suppose it's fairly common in the reality of the ancient times) the palace was more like a brick

home, smaller than a modern "McMansion". At the palace, an old dog was sleeping by a tree, eventually waking up, stretching and making his way over to the crowd, leaning his great body on first one tourist and then another to get petted. Then, sated for the moment, he went back to his tree and fell asleep again. We had a bit more time to wander freely in the town, poking into a few shops, before making our way down the market corridor through the park leading back to the boat. The stalls had the usual wooden dolls, ornaments and textile offerings, along with some t-shirt shops flogging the same stuff we have at home, with Russian text. (There was, of course, the obligatory "Harley-Davidson" shirt, in black.)

At Moscow, we docked at the Terminal Building (an ornate old construction, dating from 1937, unfortunately now closed for renovation) and soon boarded busses for our Moscow Tour. Our local guide was Tatyana, a James Bond vamp's name but actually a short rather stout lady closer to our age, with a wicked sense of humor

even in English. The drive included the Leningrad Road, the direct route from here to St. Petersburg. It's several lanes wide on either side and has very few stoplights (meaning that traffic merging from the side streets just shoulders its way in when it can). Tatyana told us that there are no private homes in the limits of Moscow, with everyone living in apartments. Some of these are the Soviet-era "Stalin-style" plain fronted monoliths and some are newer construction with just a bit more flair. When the Soviet period ended, the occupants of the state-supplied apartments suddenly became owners and could sell their property (if they could find and afford somewhere else to live). There is very little parking area within Moscow, for all of the cars (mostly foreign made, Tatyana told us) that the newly capitalistic residents could afford. The solution is, in part, privately funded multi-story parking garages, built by a consortium of the residents of a building. The others seem to park wherever they can, including on the sidewalks. Tatyana told us that this was "illegal" but that the au-



## Russia 2013 By John Rice



Red Square

thorities had virtually given up trying to enforce it. They have "black angels", (which actually are orange,) trucks with cranes that pick up cars onto a flatbed, but they are far overmatched by the number of scofflaws. Cars are parked parallel, sometimes two deep, on the sidewalks, sometimes in at an angle, and if one's car is blocked in by another, the driver just proceeds on down the sidewalk among the pedestrians until he or she finds an opening back to the street.

The streets, and sidewalks, are thronged with cars of every description, with a lot of expensive makes from every country. Motorcycles weave in and out of traffic, sometimes reminding me of mice in a maze, threading their way through any obstacle to get to the cheese (or in this case, an open bit of pavement). I even saw them cutting perpendicularly across lines of moving

traffic. The buildings are not terribly high, as one would expect in a major city of 12 to 15 million (depending upon which source you believe), mostly 10 to 20 stories, leaving Moscow with a rather low and flat skyline as far as I could see. The dizzying array of signs, mostly Cyrillic, but some in English and other languages, include Starbucks, KFC, McDonalds, Sony, Suzuki and nearly any other world brand one can imagine. I guess that people here are, like everywhere else; usually comfortable in a small area, perhaps a mile or so from their home, and venture out into the warren of streets only when necessary for business not found there. I shudder to think of being a cab driver or a police officer here, having to know the entire city well and trying to get from one side to another in a hurry. I'm astonished again, as I have been in other metropoli-

tan areas, that there is not an accident every twenty seconds.

Later we are taken to Red Square for a look around. Tomorrow Brenda and I will come back here on our own for the better part of a day, but for now it's a reconnoitering run, just getting our bearings. The square is smaller than I expected (knowing that a young German man landed a small plane here years ago), dominated on two sides by the Kremlin wall and by GUM, the huge department store in the 19th century building that looks as if it could have been a royal palace. At one end is St. Basil's Cathedral, the iconic onion-domed structure that we all have seen in the news and tourist photos taken here. Of course, I take its picture too. Off to one side, in the middle, is Lenin's Tomb. It's a low marble building surrounded by railings and a chain of unusual

design, meant to keep the crowds at bay. We are told that it's only open a few hours each day and even now, after all these years, the line to get in typically takes hours.

The Square is busy with tourists of every nationality, including Russians, but its late on Friday afternoon and we're told every Muscovite who can has left the city for a weekend at the dacha, their getaway cottage.

As we try to make our way back to the boat, our bus is in a jam that has us moving forward only occasionally, usually at less than a walking pace, for over an hour. Though there are five painted lanes on our side, at one point I count 10 lines of cars going our direction.

"Lanes" are a theoretical construct here, with each vehicle taking whatever space it can bully its way into. Every vehicle is a commando, seeking an advantage, feinting the enemy

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Here at one exit of the Kremlin wall is the house that was occupied by Stalin.

and surging forward by inches. They slip into the smallest spaces, missing each other by a hair's breadth (not an exaggeration for literary effect. Sometimes one can't see daylight between passing vehicles, but no obvious paint is traded). We see ambulances vainly trying to make their way through, ignored by the cars who won't give up whatever advantage they think they have gained, even for emergency vehicles. I'm now convinced that the Russian "dash cam" videos we have seen, where cars seemingly aim at one another or are magnetically drawn together, are actually cases of "chicken" where each driver willed the other to yield and neither did.

For our "free day" in Red Square, the bus took us into town, an easy trip at 10 AM on a Saturday, covering the 12 miles in about 20 minutes. We got off in front of the Metro-pole Hotel, a grand hotel on the inside, but looking a bit shopworn on the outside. Red Square and its surrounding area was festooned with market stalls, colorful "arches" celebrating Victory Day, and of course lots of tourists. Most of the tourists seemed to be either oriental or Russians, or some

other Slavic-speaking nationality, with some French, Germans and, English-speakers thrown in for spice. Many people were queued up to stand in the center-marker and throw a coin over their shoulder, supposedly ensuring that they would return to Moscow.

All over the Square are tour groups, their guides holding aloft some symbol or placard, shuffling through the crowds of others similarly situated, listening to earpieces hooked to audio devices. Every other day we've been just like them, but today we are unfettered, unguided. We take our lunch at an outdoor café looking out over Red Square, hardly able to believe that we, small town Cold War era Kentuckians actually are here.

On Sunday, our last full day in Russia, we visited the Moscow Kremlin. When we were young, this term stood in for the repressive Communist government of the Soviet Union, giving the word a power far beyond that of just a location. Although it now houses the units of a new government, in theory more democratic, the air of menace still seems to linger. Before we got on the bus, Alexi, our Viking guide,

warned us not to take pictures inside the buildings, particularly of any officials. "We have a saying, Siberia is only two steps from the Kremlin".

Inside the red brick walls (done by Italian masons, to replace the older white walls in the pre-revolution days) there are churches, palatial buildings for the Presidential residence (which Putin doesn't use as such) and numerous structures from various eras, all once shrouded in mystery. I look up at the windows, thinking of what decisions were made, what actions were taken, in these confines behind the crenellated walls.

Later, we decided to skip the afternoon tour of an art gallery. I wanted to wander this large park that extends from the boat terminal (a huge, palace-like building topped with a Red Star, complete with hammer and sickle) over to Leningrad Highway. It turned out to be, for me, the best afternoon of the trip. No historical significance, like the tours, but a chance to be out among "real" Russians, families enjoying a park on a Sunday afternoon, with not a stacking doll seller in sight. There was a small amusement park with rides and inflatables,

with kids enjoying them all, young lovers on park benches, older folks (like us) just out for a stroll. We found at the end of the park, a shopping mall and went inside to check it out. If I teleported a Lexingtonian to that mall, unannounced, he or she would think that except for the Cyrillic lettering on most (but not all) of the signs, they were in Fayette Mall. All of the same stores, brands, fast food outlets and of course, bored looking teenagers on cell phones, were exactly the same as here.

The Soviet Union fell in 1991, if memory serves, meaning that there is a whole generation of people, in their 20's and early 30's that have little or no memory of life in those times. Older people can tell them, but it has no reality. Their children will not have any connection, other than dry history books, to that era. We were told that Putin, in his role as political candidate, once said. "Anyone who doesn't have some fond memories of the Soviet times, has no heart. Anyone who wants it back, has no brain." My grandchildren will grow up in a world in which Russia holds a very different spot in the overall scheme of things than the one I knew as a young person and even an older man.

If I have any impression to offer, it is that Russia is a bright, sunny and warm place, now a modern society, with all the good and bad things that entails. I'll probably not be going back, but I'm immensely glad I saw it for myself.

—JR



# Images from Russia

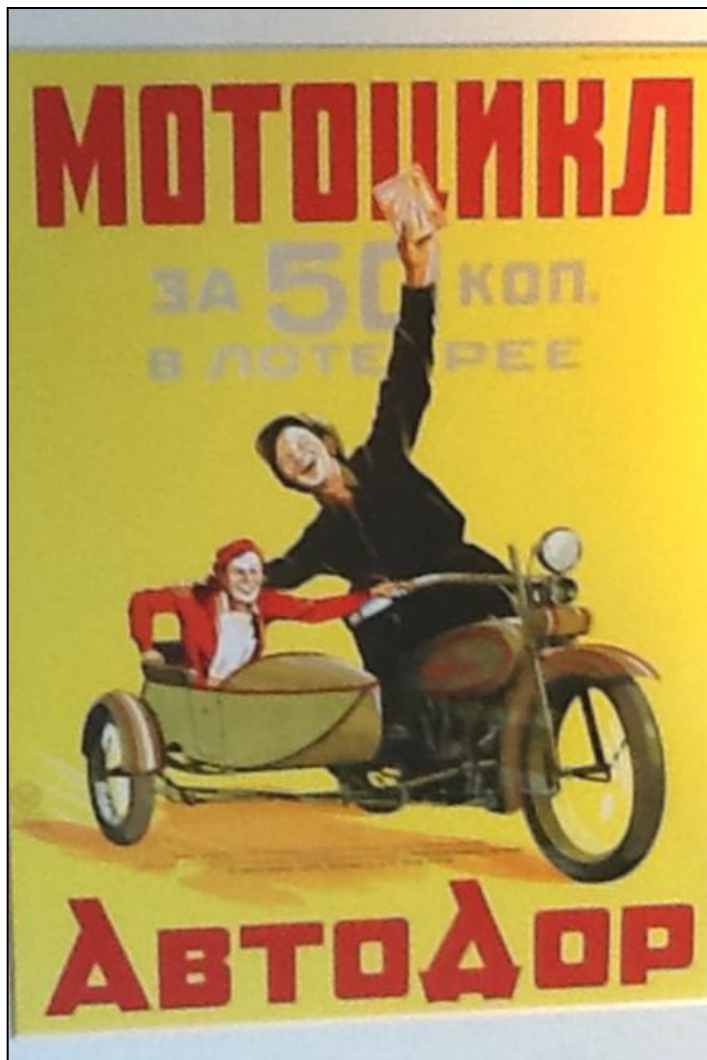
By John Rice



In a marketplace in Uglich, Russia, we have the typical symbols of the Russian history...especially the third from the left, (no pun intended) in the middle row.



KGB building in Moscow. KGB no longer in service, having been replaced by another security agency.



We saw this poster on the wall on a boat. An interesting ad, presumably post-WWII. Hard to tell from this photo, but the artist must have seen a rare V-4 Harley-Davidson.



Not sure what these folks were doing. They pulled up at a school we were visiting and began to take out the printed signs. I can't read Russian, so I don't know if they were protesting, a tour club or what errand they had in mind.





This image dug from the depths of the archives. It is future American World Superbike champion Ben Spies, then six or seven years old, posing with fellow Texan Colin Edwards II. Edwards was then a Superbike rider for the Vance and Hines Yamaha team. The pair would go on to win World Superbike championships and actually be teammates at Tech 3 MotoGP.

Posted at <http://www.superbikeplanet.com>  
Photo submitted by Mary Spies



# Thursday night riders

Photos by Tom Weber



Josh Weber's first time at the Waterfront with Thursday night riders. Check the shirt for Randolph Scott Insurance featuring Randy's '62 Panhead.





# Thursday night riders

Photos by Tom Weber





# RIDE



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