



Christmas, 2021

New country, new lives...

We crossed several borders to get here, driving from California to Illinois in April to Alabama in June to (finally!!) by plane to Russia in August.

Life has been anything but dull since getting here. Neither of us were expecting the amount of concrete and plaster dust in the house, because of the pandemic shutdowns we weren't able to have the floors sealed before we got here so for a while it was like living in a dust storm. We've since cleaned the floors and applied concrete hardener to about three fourths of the house, so not so much dust now. Still have to add a final layer of self leveling concrete before we can put down real floors.

We bought a car, a Russian made LADA Niva Legend Urban and found out it was the LAST one to be sold in this region, possibly the country. The car is silver and reminds Sharon a lot of her Suzuki Samurai...just a lot bigger. Because of the parts shortages, LADA has shut down the Legend factory and transferred or laid off everyone there. There have been constant trips to the region (like a state) capitol to file various paperwork, receive documents, etc. so having our own car really helped. We've already put about 2500 km (1500 miles) on it with all these trips.

The house is comfortable even though it still needs final floors, inside doors (only after the floors are installed), and paint for the walls and ceilings, along with kitchen & bathroom cabinets, etc. We're still unpacking, there were over 300 boxes and that's a lot of sorting. The movers were very good about putting part of something in one box and the other part of it in a different box.

We found there's a store here called Ozon, it's something like Amazon where you order online and then the item can be shipped to you or picked up at local offices. Aside from the convenience of this, they also have quite good prices so between AliExpress and Ozon we have most of our needs taken care of. For food, there's a Magnit (magnet) grocery store in the same parking lot as the Ozon office... how handy! There's also a big box store, Metro (like Costco) in the capitol city. It saves

a little money, but it's a long drive to get there. Haven't had much time to check out other stores and farmer's markets...just too busy and too much to do.

The weather here has been mild, some nights below freezing but warms up during the day. This last week we even had t-shirt weather...in December! The coldest part of the year will be in about a month or two. The house is so well insulated that the relatively small heating system here (much smaller than we had in Los Gatos) has no problem heating two floors of house and the workshop. We actually turn it off some days.

Our visa says we're here as teachers/instructors so we've been doing just that. We started out working with a few people at a time but have now started doing larger seminars with videos for those who can't make it. The reception has been great, these kids (and adults) really want to learn things. Here is a link to our teaching website

https://pyramidhope.ru/The_Workshop/

So, about our visas. We have 3 year деловая ("about or relating to work") visas which allow us to live here as long as we're doing non-paid work for a corporation (ООО). We were officially invited by a local company so all is well there. We do have to leave the country for one or more days every six months in order to keep the paperwork active. This normally wouldn't be a problem, but now the question is where can we go with all the travel restrictions. Some countries have no entry to anyone, others require a specific vaccine that we haven't received, others don't want Americans... so it looks like we'll probably go visit a student's family in Uzbekistan. We can get there easily and they're friendly to both Americans and Russians. No vaccines of any type needed, just PCR tests for the airline.

We applied for residency (Green Cards) recently, but we're in an area of the country that is in high demand. Conversion of farm and forest land to residential or commercial use has been banned in our region to try to keep things under control. As expected, we were turned down as there were only 7 openings. Our lawyer has made an appointment with a representative to the President who's agreed to consider giving us residency due to our value to the area and our demonstrated desire to stay here. Also, in January there will be a lot more openings and also there is supposed to be a new law to give residency to anyone who has invested significantly in the country. The house we built easily qualifies for this. So, Green Cards early next year? We hope so.

Jerry's doctor has recommended daily 3km (1.9 miles) walks so he's been walking down to the river and along the bank through the woods and collecting firewood along the trail from fallen trees. A small saw makes quick work of the wood. The only times he can't walk along there are when it's been raining a lot, the river rises to flood part of the trail and then it's muddy for a couple of days after. But then there's more firewood to collect!

Our fireplace works very well, our Thanksgiving guests were amazed at how well it worked. I guess there's a lot of less functional fireplaces around?

So, what's for tomorrow? Who knows, Russians are very spontaneous and we could find ourselves visiting someone's house, having visitors here, or even traveling to see other parts of the country. All on short or no notice.

Back in Business!!



Opening our business was supposed to be simple, but we're foreigners without green cards yet from a country constantly harassing Russia. So, it turned out to be much much more complicated and expensive. Originally we were going to open a "private company" (sole proprietorship) but that's not allowed for us. So, we had to go through the major hassle of opening a corporation (ООО). We had to add a third person as the General Manager who has to be a permanent resident or citizen with an absolutely clean police record. Luckily, we know just such a person. Once we receive our green cards he'll step aside and Jerry will be the General Manager.

So, a lot of trials and tribulations later, we have just reopened our business, complete with an official rubber stamp (corporate seal). But, it will be a while before we are really up and running as we need tools and equipment for the office and machine shop. There's also various accounts to open for the business, bank, shipping, eBay, PayPal, tax payment, etc.

Overall, we're doing fine, we love our new town and new friends!

Jerry & Sharon Durand

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Pictures of the house from bare land to now:
https://durandinterstellar.com/photos/Our_New_Home/