



Summer Solstice (Ivan's Night for John the Baptist) celebration in St. Petersburg, Russia

## **Happy Summer Solstice! June 2020**

No, it's not Christmas but we thought we'd break with tradition this year and send out an update before we move. The Summer Solstice seemed like a good time, so here we are.

Our house is nearing completion and we have our occupancy permit complete with official blue stamp! The house outline has now been added to the online public cadastral map (in Russia almost all official documents are public, many online).

As of the writing of this letter, we don't know when we will actually be moving. For tax reasons we can't leave before 2 July, but it's highly unlikely that we'd be able to leave then. At the moment the Russian border is closed to all Americans until August but that is subject to change. We also need to leave before the end of the year to avoid other expenses.

The governor of our region issued a directive on May 21st that anyone with documentation proving they own a residence in the region will be allowed across the regional border. So, the above occupancy permit which names us as joint owners of the house plus our Russian Visa and US Passports will let us in whenever we get there. Our lawyer will meet us at the small KRR international airport to ease any issues. To keep things simple, we plan to take a route

that keeps us outside of Russia until the final leg of the flight, otherwise we'd have to go through customs in Moscow and that could get tricky with current restrictions.

One detail is people coming from outside the region have to go into quarantine for at least a couple of weeks, but that time might change before we get there. Our new house will be designated as our quarantine facility so all inside construction will have to pause during this period.

So, what about the house? Right now all the windows and outside doors are installed, the gas appliances are approved ready to be installed, our complicated electrical wiring was completed June 14th, the plumbing is in progress including the heating. On June 15<sup>th</sup>, a large crew showed up to start "hard plastering" (like stucco but smooth, not plaster of Paris) all the walls and cement ceilings. Then the plumbers will lay the heating pipes on the floor and several inches of concrete will be poured over all the floors, smoothed and leveled (our California house floors are neither smooth nor level and have occasional lumps of ceiling plaster under the tiles). This should all be hard and dry before we get there. Once the floors and walls have dried out, they'll finish putting in the drywall ceilings below the attic. The plaster and cement dries quicker with the ceiling missing.

The fireplace outer stone layer will be put in when the walls and floor are hardened, the builder said if the stones were put in before the walls it's a sure thing plaster would get on them.

The radiators will also go in after the walls and floor are done, all the pipes will have been laid under the concrete floors waiting for them so it's just a matter of attaching them to the walls and pipes, installing the boiler and testing everything out. The boiler provides both house heat and hot water for washing, it's a compact high efficiency unit that will hide inside a kitchen cabinet that's had the shelves and back removed. This puts it next to the sink and directly below the master bathroom...no waiting for hot water! It also places both gas appliances in the same room to simplify piping and meeting building code.

Our fence and front "wall" have had to be modified a little due to factories being closed by the virus panic, the front wall is now a solid metal fence with brick pillars. Our neighbors have done the same thing so we'll all be in the same style. Our builder is currently trying to get the fence material that's already paid for out of the warehouse so they can close up our property for security since things of value will start being placed in the house. This is one of the lowest crime areas of the country, but it's better to be safe than find something is missing. Plus, with the virus panic, there has been some instances of out of towners picking a likely small town and looting.

Our plan is to follow Russian convention and move into part of the house while the rest is "decorated", this allows early residence and the final touches are often spread out over years depending on the family's resources. So, we will be making the room labeled "Kitchen Office" into our bedroom and will have at least the downstairs bathroom fitted out and functional. In the kitchen there will be a nice 5 burner free standing gas range with oven, combination microwave oven and a refrigerator/freezer. Internet, water, gas and electricity will be turned on before we get there and our friends will have food and drinks in the house waiting for us since we won't be able to leave the grounds for a while. They'll also shop for us until we can go out ourselves. It will be a great time to adjust to the time zone, study our Russian, and

deal with probable piles of paperwork both Russian and from closing out our USA accounts. It sure is handy being able to do most paperwork remotely.

We're not sure our exact order of finishing the house. We will have the washing machine and dryer installed before we get there but the laundry room won't be finished. They're easy to move so no problem finishing that room. It will be quite some time before the majority of our stuff gets there as it will go by ship. So, one thing is to complete the floor in the workshop before any heavy machinery arrives...maybe get the walls and ceiling painted too. Then it will be a matter of going through the rooms, maybe the office next so we can get the business up and running with minimal delay. By the time our tools, furniture, big computers, and 3D printers arrive we should have that done and waiting.

By this time we'll have been working out of a minimalist kitchen and using the bathroom sink for dishes for a couple of months, maybe longer. We will want to start putting in cabinets and counter top along the back wall for the kitchen sink and as a work area. We'll also want to finish the upstairs bath so we have a tub and full shower instead of just the small shower in the downstairs bath.

It promises to be an interesting time, we already have people waiting to start learning business from us as well as learning American English instead of just British. For a while it will be "bring your own chairs and maybe table" for lessons. We plan to give a big party for everyone who's helped us once we're past quarantine, so that will have to be a "bring your own everything" type of party, they've said that's no problem.

What the future holds is a mystery, we have a bumper sticker we got from our work with *The Cousteau Society*, it says "Destination Unknown". Very appropriate.

Currently, here in California, we are in the mega-process of getting rid of stuff we don't need (selling or just giving away) and figuring out what can we live without until our ship comes in. The moving company estimates it will take 8 to 10 weeks for our stuff to make the journey by cargo container, once they have found a ship going that way that has room for a container. And figuring out what can be crammed into our luggage. We figure it will be mostly clothes, a small computer, and some small tools. As we will be (hopefully) be going into Fall, that will mean a variety of seasonal clothes. Our sponsor and other relatives have generously offered to lend us some furniture and cooking utensils, which is greatly appreciated.

Some time after the quarantine is over, we will need to get a car. We plan on getting a Russian made Lada 4x4 5 door, it's much like the Suzuki Grand Vitara we currently have. From what we understand, the early Suzuki cars were modeled after Ladas. Importing foreign cars into Russia is very expensive, the car industry is protected by high tariffs.

We are also winding down our business and will officially close it in California when we leave. Once we are there we will re-open as a Russian business, but little else will change in our operation. Our web domains will remain, both our English and Russian ones.

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Photos of our house construction are available here:

[https://durandinterstellar.com/photos/Our\\_New\\_Home/](https://durandinterstellar.com/photos/Our_New_Home/)

Our contact information will remain:

[jdurand@durandinterstellar.com](mailto:jdurand@durandinterstellar.com)

[sdurand@durandinterstellar.com](mailto:sdurand@durandinterstellar.com)

Our new address is:

(warning, international mail is slow, expect 3 weeks)

(always use full proper names on mail)

(in English)

Gerald Joseph Durand  
Sharon Hurtley-Durand  
ulitza Kazachya 6  
Goryachiy Klyuch  
Krasnodar Krai 353290  
Russian Federation

(and the same in Russian, with the last name first and the street name before the number)

Дюранд Джералд Джозеф  
Хартли Дюранд Шэрон  
ул. Казачья 6  
город Горячий Ключ  
Краснодарский Край 353290  
Российская Федерация

If you use an online translator, “Klyuch” is often translated as “Key”, the word has two meanings and the translators tend to pick the wrong one.

We both have Russian phone numbers, we got them in 2018 as you pretty much can't do anything without one. Jerry has WhatsApp and Signal and we both have Telegram and VK so if anyone wants that contact info, just let us know.