

Not a gentle day trip to the documenta: By motorbike from Siberia to the colleagues to Kassel

- **Bikers from Novy Urengoy travelling almost 12,000 kilometers in six weeks**
- **“Baba Lena”: Russian gas workers taking 90-year-old Instagram star to art exhibition by pillion**
- **Welcome with official reception in Kassel**

Kassel. “They're shivering – so that we don't freeze!” was the headline in a wintertime edition of a German Sunday newspaper. It was printed in thick letters above a large photo that showed a German and a Russian employee from our Achimgaz joint venture – working together in the snow and ice at a drilling rig in Siberia. Wintershall has been involved in Russia for over 25 years. One of the company's most important production facilities is located in Novy Urengoy. In 2005, Wintershall initiated a partnership between Kassel and Novy Urengoy to mark the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Western Siberian city. Since then there has been a lively exchange between the respective schools as well as between the administrations of the two cities. The Deputy Mayor of the Siberian municipality, Andrei Kowal, has now used the current summer holidays for a very special excursion: together with three employees and their wives from Gazprom's Siberian subsidiary, with whom Wintershall works closely together in Novy Urengoy, he is travelling by motorbike to Kassel. The bikers already set off at the end of July.

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Together with Wintershall, the group has now come up with something special for Kassel: the bikers are taking with them by pillion a grandmother and enthusiastic traveller from Krasnoyarsk in Siberia. The 90-year-old Russian, Elena Mikhailovna Erkhova (Baba Lena), rose to fame in Russia's social media. After the death of her husband seven years ago, Baba Lena decided to travel the world. At the age of 83 she made her first trip abroad – her grandson posted this on Instagram. Since then tens of thousands have been pursuing the travels of the sprightly pensioner. The globetrotter is now coming to Kassel to visit the documenta d14: with the support of an airline and Wintershall. The Mayor of Kassel is donating an entrance ticket to the international art exhibition for Baba Lena.

“Zest for action, a pioneering spirit and the desire to discover something new – these are the things that distinguish our Russian colleagues and guests. And we share these passions,” explains Thilo Wieland, who is the Executive Board member at Wintershall responsible for the oil and gas business in Russia: “And Wintershall not only produces oil and natural gas but also promotes intercultural dialogue, dynamism and energy that make visions become reality.”

The city partnership between Kassel and Novy Urengoy in Russia has become an integral part of the German-Russian exchange in the twelve years of its existence. In addition to a regular exchange of school students between Kassel's Friedrich Secondary School and Novy Urengoy Secondary School, a partnership has also been established in the administrative sector over the years. As part of the annual Summer & Winter Schools scheme, public service employees from both cities alternately visit the respective partner city.

Since then the cooperation has grown steadily and has been deepened by personal contacts. The Mayor of Kassel, Christian Geselle, appreciates the value of these connections: “The partnership between Kassel and Novy Urengoy shows that, in addition to the professional exchange, deep-rooted friendships have also developed at all levels over the years. Both sides benefit from this.”

The motorcycle crew from the city in the Arctic Circle is travelling around 12,000 kilometers through two continents, 14 countries and 30 cities. The “Easy Riders” from Siberia will be honored at an official reception on Wednesday, 16 August in front of Wintershall’s company headquarters and then in Kassel City Hall. “We would like to thank all those who have invested considerable commitment and time into making this important and personal dialogue possible. It is a great pleasure for us to welcome the bikers from Novy Urengoy and to set an example for partnership and dialogue,” says Wieland.

Wintershall Holding GmbH, based in Kassel, Germany, is a wholly owned subsidiary of BASF in Ludwigshafen. The company has been active in the extraction of natural resources for 120 years, and in the exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas for over 80 years. Wintershall focuses on selected core regions, where the company has built up a high level of regional and technological expertise. These are Europe, Russia, North Africa, South America, and increasingly the Middle East region. The company wants to expand its business further with exploration and production, selected partnerships, innovation and technological competence. The company employs more than 2,000 staff worldwide from 50 nations and is now Germany’s largest crude oil and natural gas producer.

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