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Sincerely,
Vladimir Nevzorov

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nahs.haus@gmail.com



nahs,haus

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INTERESTING CHERNOBYL

100 SYMBOLS

This book contains 100 fascinating and, at the same time, concise articles about the most important and interesting symbols of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone: from the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant and the city of Pripyat, to individual monuments of the bygone Soviet era, like soda machines, payphones, and other items that give an idea of the life of a typical successful 1980s Soviet town.

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1	26 April	26	"Ukraina" Cinema	51	ISU-152	76	Yanivsky Zaton
2	Pripyat	27	"Fujiyama"	52	IMR	77	"Izumrudnoye"
3	Chernobyl	28	Book House	53	CRPV	78	"Skazochny"
4	Evacuation	29	Post Office	54	Mi-6 Helicopter	79	"Dovzhenko"
5	Radiation	30	"Energetic"	55	Robots	80	Firemen Memorial
6	Radiation Hazard Sign	31	Music School	56	Fire Trucks	81	"Wormwood Star"
7	Exclusion Zone	32	Child Care Facilities	57	Combine Cemetery	82	Park of Glory
8	Samoseli	33	Apartments	58	Trolleybus	83	Chernobyl-2
9	Around the Zone	34	Hairdressing Salon	59	"Invalidka" Car	84	Slavutych
10	Checkpoint Dytyatky	35	Ferris Wheel	60	"Duga-1"	85	Narodychi
11	ChNPP	36	Pripyat Graffiti	61	"Jupiter" Plant	86	Poliske
12	Arch	37	Bumper Cars	62	VNZ "Krug"	87	Vilcha
13	Shelter Object	38	Pripyat Mosaics	63	Pig Farm	88	Lesnoy
14	"Release 3"	39	Big Bucket	64	"Volkhov"	89	Dead Villages
15	Cooling Towers	40	Telephone Booths	65	ARMS	90	Pripyat River
16	Cooling Pond	41	Sparkling Water	66	Weather Station	91	Uzh River
17	Pripyat Firehouse	42	Soviet Symbols	67	St. Elijah Church	92	Fox Simeon
18	Pripyat Hospital #126	43	Bear Sculpture	68	Novo-Nikolsky Monastery	93	Przewalski's Horses
19	Police Department	44	Toys	69	Church in Zamoshnya	94	Catfish
20	"Bridge of Death"	45	Kopachi Kindergarten	70	Church in Krasne	95	Wild Animals
21	"Avanhard" Stadium	46	Pine Cross	71	Our Savior Icon	96	Film "Stalker"
22	Cafe "Pripyat"	47	Rassokha	72	Red Forest	97	S.T.A.L.K.E.R.
23	"White House"	48	Buryakivka	73	Sandy Plateau	98	Stalkers
24	"Lazurny" Swimming Pool	49	"Field of Miracles"	74	Fleet Base	99	Chernobyl Museum
25	"Prometheus" Cinema	50	Bus Cemetery	75	Yanov Station	100	Tourist Trips

1

The day that changed the
destinies of thousands



26 April

On April 26, 1986, at 1:23 a.m., a series of explosions destroyed the reactor building and building housing power unit # 4 of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Gases and volatile substances were thrown to high altitudes and spread globally; it took less than a week for Chernobyl to become a problem all over the world. The accident at Chernobyl was the largest techno-energetic catastrophe in the history of mankind, measuring from the 7th to the maximum level on the International Nuclear Event Scale (the second was an accident in Fukushima). In the first days after the accident, the background radiation exceeded the allowable rate by 87,000 times. According to the testimony of a helicopter pilot flying to Chernobyl, the land around the station was as red-hot as a volcanic eruption, and in the sky above the station there was as a huge cone of smoke with a red glow. The accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station has not yet been fully assessed but its impacts included damage to the health of many thousands of people and it changed the destiny of in the USSR. The economy of the whole country was also greatly damaged, and it was never able to recover.



2

Dead City, remaining
forever young



Pripyat

Pripyat, the ninth so-called atomograd in the Soviet Union, was founded on February 4, 1970. This satellite town of Chernobyl (#3) provided housing for station staff, and had a population 50,000; the average age was 26 years. Thus, Pripyat could claim the title of “youngest” city in Ukraine. In addition, it was intended as a model for other cities with improved layout, infrastructure, and logistics. Perhaps that is why two albums were dedicated to Pripyat and published by Kyiv publishing house “Mystetstvo” before the accident. There were many kindergartens and schools, a large amusement park with a variety of shops, and an indoor swimming pool (#24). By 1986, the large “Avanhard” stadium (#21) had been built. Pripyat had its own football team, a diving club “Aqua”, music ensembles “Pulsar” and “Crew”, an amateur theater, and much more. The town was completely evacuated (#4) on April 27, 1986. It is now in the Exclusion Zone (#7) and completely abandoned. It acquired the status of a cult post-apocalyptic place, largely due to the S.T.A.L.K.E.R. computer game (#97). Since the beginning of the 2000s, official tours (#100) have been organized here and the city is also a place of pilgrimage for single-illegals, i.e. stalkers (#98).

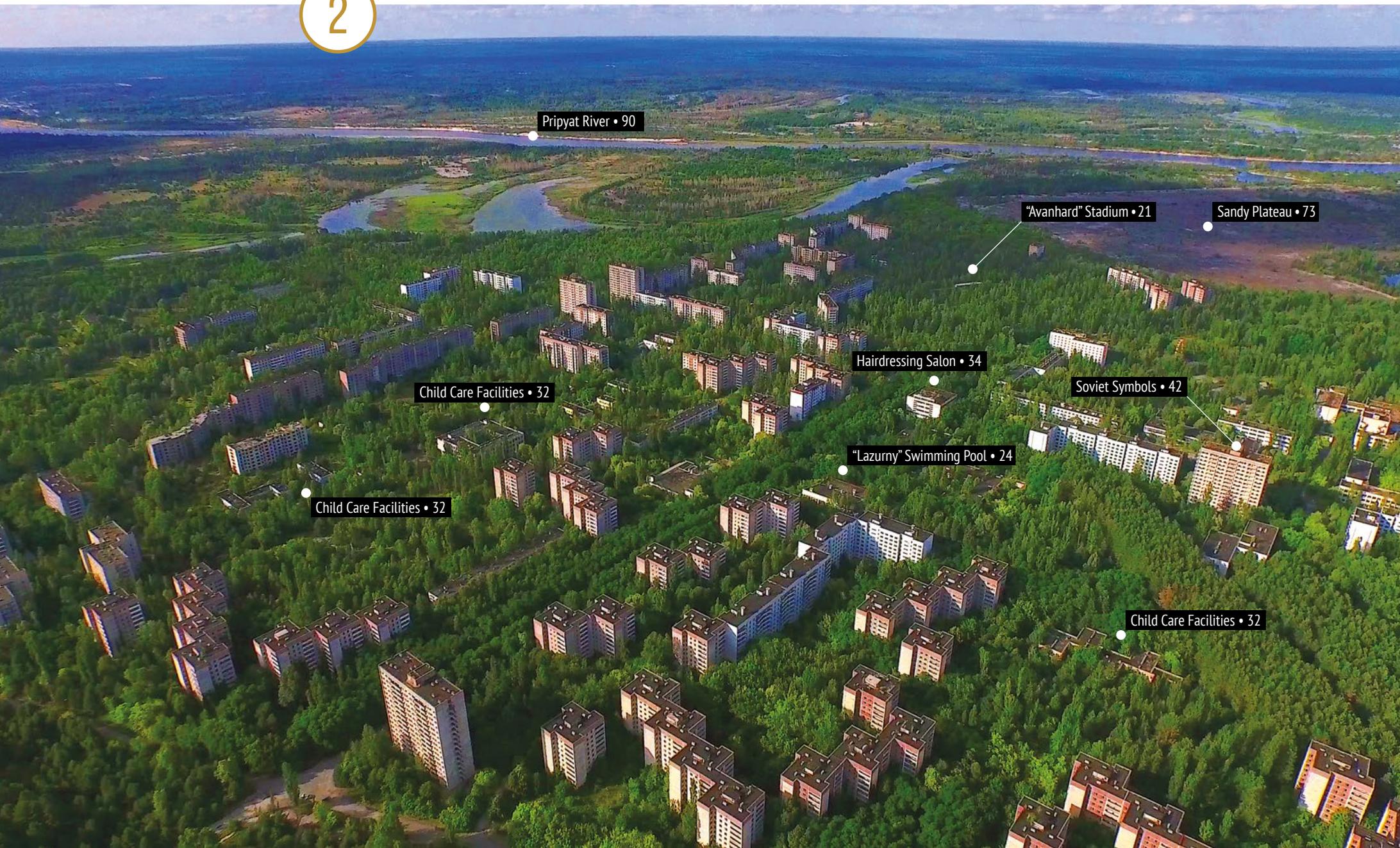


51.4050957
30.0537872



Pripyat city





Pripjat River • 90

“Avanhard” Stadium • 21

Sandy Plateau • 73

Hairdressing Salon • 34

Child Care Facilities • 32

Soviet Symbols • 42

“Lazurny” Swimming Pool • 24

Child Care Facilities • 32

Child Care Facilities • 32

3

One of the most famous
cities in Ukraine



Chernobyl

Chernobyl is a small town with an area of 5 sq km (2 sq mi). In 1986, 13,700 people lived there. It was founded in 1193 on the bank of the Pripyat River, on the famous trade route “from the Varangians to the Greeks”, and, like all ancient cities, stands on high ground. It is surrounded on three sides by water: the rivers Pripyat (#90) and Uzh (#91) and Chernobyl creek. Chernobyl was a rural settlement throughout most of its history; it began to have an urban look only in the 1960^s. That’s when, among the farmsteads and gardens, blocks of high-rise apartment buildings, massive administrative buildings, and infrastructure started to grow – a cinema, a department store, a bus station, schools and kindergartens. And now the city is divided into parts: a residential sector with private homes and apartment buildings; a town center, where administrative, utilities, and cultural institutions are concentrated; and an industrial zone. Only two central streets, Radyanska and Kirova, have a typical “urban” view. Chernobyl was one of the last settlements that was evacuated from the accident zone, on May 5, 1986. However, the city was not deserted.



51.2729240
30.2241611



Chernobyl city

INTERESTING CHERNOBYL • TOP 100

Actually, it’s the opposite – it gained a completely new life. The proximity of the station, on the one hand, and the acceptable radiation level, on the other, determined its fate. During the clean-up period, the main management bodies were housed here: the government commission, army headquarters, civilian agencies’ operational groups, and support services.

Now, it is the administrative capital of the Exclusion Zone, a city of samoseli (#8), shift workers, police, forestry personnel, and representatives of many other professions needed in the closed world of the Zone. The only thing that distinguishes Chernobyl from other similarly compact and comfortable Ukrainian towns is the absence of children.



3

The crimson sunset over Chernobyl is striking in its beauty, but here it is always as if crushed by the "ash of bitterness" and causes associations with the glow of the fire that broke out in 1986



4

Forcing people from
their homes



Evacuation

Evacuation from the accident zone was carried out in stages. First of all, it was decided to evacuate the city of Pripyat.

To ensure evacuation and preservation of law and order, about 800 police officers from Kyiv and Kyiv oblast were involved (another 1,000 operational reserves were in the capital); 5 of them were special service brigades whose task was to monitor the operational situation, study people's mood, and, if necessary, resolve conflicts.

At 12:20, there was a briefing for managers. At 13:00, instructions were given to the entire staff. At 13:10, a short official message was sent to the residents of the city by the Pripyat city radio; they were asked to take along a 3-day supply of food and get ready for departure. Evacuation began at 14:00. Buses were right outside the apartment building entrances. Three hours later, 44,600 people left the city, including approximately 17,000 were children.

A little more than 36 hours had passed since the explosion at the nuclear reactor. Less than 3 hours later, only those who were performing their official duties remained in the city. Then, on April 27, the population was evacuated from the military town of Chernobyl-2 (#83).

Later, due to the constant deterioration of the radiation situation, it was decided to continue the evacuation. On May 3, 15 villages were



evacuated from a 10-km (6 mi) zone in one day; from May 4 to 7, 43 settlements in the 30-km (18.6 mi) zone, including Chernobyl were evacuated; and by the end of May, another 7.



5

Invisible and deadly particles



Radiation

As is well-known, atomic nuclei are stable and unstable. Unstable or radioactive atomic nuclei differ in that they change their structure (decay) with time, turning into the nuclei of another element or isotope of the same element. In this case, radioactive decay is accompanied by the emission of electromagnetic radiation, electrons, and even entire nuclear fragments. These particles and emissions are what is called radiation. Studies of the effects of radiation on living objects revealed a radiobiological paradox: the amount of energy that enters living tissue during irradiation leads to disproportionately serious consequences. It is usually illustrated with a cup of hot tea. The lethal dose of radiation for a person is 5 Grays. If this amount of energy of ionizing radiation is converted into thermal energy, then it will be as much as in a cup of hot tea. A cup of hot tea, as you know, has not killed anyone yet. Why is this happening? The fact is that radioactive emissions can affect the most sensitive elements of a living cell, which are responsible for its normal functioning. Ionizing radiation, directly or indirectly (by irradiating, for example, water molecules in the body) leads to damage to important structures: protein macromolecules. The effectiveness of radiation exposure can be compared with the work of saboteurs: their firepower and armaments are very weak, but, acting from the enemy's rear, attacking its vital objects (for example, the headquarters), they can cause great damage.



6

International symbol
everyone understands



Radiation Hazard Sign

The first thing that always and obviously scares people in the Exclusion Zone is the radiation, the presence of which is indicated by an ominous symbol meeting the traveler near the border of the forbidden territory.

An international danger label, indicating ionizing radiation, was first used in the radiation laboratory of the University of California at Berkeley. At that time, it was magenta on a blue background. A few years later, the International Organization for Standardization adopted the radiation hazard sign in its current form, black on a yellow background. The proportions of the drawing are also standardized. On February 19, 2007, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) adopted a new sign for radiation hazard. This is a red isosceles triangle with a wide black border; at the top is the previous sign of radiation danger; in the lower left corner, skull and crossbones; and in the lower right, there is a person running away. It is assumed that this less abstract interpretation should be more understandable to anyone who is not familiar with the standard symbol of ionizing radiation, and prompt him to leave the danger zone in a hurry.



7

The land where it's
forbidden to live



Exclusion Zone

After the accident, on orders from above, a 30-km (18.5 mi) radius around the damaged reactor was laid out; a huge empty area was formed, called the Exclusion Zone. Inside, another additional barrier protecting the most polluted area was created, the so-called “10K.” Official entries to and exits from the dangerous Zone pass through checkpoints.

Almost all the inhabitants in the vicinity were hastily evacuated. Initially, several dozen villages and two large towns were resettled: Pripyat was one of the youngest cities in Ukraine, satellite of the Chernobyl NPP (#11); and Chernobyl (#3), a small ancient town which was destined to provide the name not only for the station itself, but later for the entire Zone.

The Exclusion Zone is one of the most polluted places on our planet (the most polluted before the recent Fukushima accident). It is impossible for people to live there permanently, and temporary residence is governed by radiation safety rules.

But every year, the contaminated land, surrounded by barbed wire, attracts more and more attention from people all over the world. This “country in a country”, with an area of 2,044 sq km (790 sq mi), has been shrouded in gloomy secrecy for a long time and guarded very tightly. Now the aura of inaccessibility is disappearing, and the Zone can be officially visited (#100).



7

Aerial view of the Pripyat River, cooling pond, nuclear power plant, and the "Arch"

Red Forest • 72

Arch • 12

Shelter Object • 13

ChNPP • 11

Cooling Towers • 15

Cooling Pond • 16

Pripyat River • 90



8

People who did not want to leave their homes forever



Samoseli

“Samoseli” (self-settlers) are people who returned to their homes in the Zone after the accident. From the point of view of the law, they should not be there – living in the Exclusion Zone is prohibited! But they are. The term was invented by journalists in 1988, but it is still used in official documents to this day. It all started during the evacuation. About a hundred residents from the village Illintsi refused to leave and disappeared from the evacuation staff: it seems that the rich partisan experience of the Second World War was helpful. Some were hiding in the woods, others in attics and cellars. These were thought to be isolated cases. The authorities didn’t perceive a system or the problems with this. But in 1988, the Chernobyl police department recorded more than 1,000 samoseli. The wave of return was provoked by statements about victory over the “peaceful atom.” After several unsuccessful attempts at forceful eviction, the authorities put up with the situation.

Living in the Exclusion Zone has its own characteristics, but it cannot be said that this is life in a radioactive desert. People here are not left to the mercy of fate. Many services are available for samoseli: there is a separate ambulance brigade in a special medical unit; there is a special police unit assigned to the inhabited villages; and social services attend to general issues. Retirement payments are brought

INTERESTING CHERNOBYL • TOP 100

to the samoseli, and once a week a mobile shop brings groceries to the villages and the town of Chernobyl.

As a demographic group, they have specific characteristics. In 1992, 95% of samoseli were 50 years and older, and 75% were over 60 years old. A tendency of sustainable “aging” has been observed. As of the beginning of 2016, 158 samoseli live in the Exclusion Zone, of whom about 100 live in the town of Chernobyl. The average age is 76 years.



9

Border area between
two worlds



Around the Zone

There are many villages along the almost 100-km (62-mi) perimeter of the Exclusion Zone. Most of them were under threat of evacuation, and some were cleared out but then residents were brought back. Soon after the disaster, the authorities finally brought gas lines here and improved the roads to reduce the exodus of the population. The radiological background does not exceed permissible levels in most settlements, but it is much higher in some places. In the summer of 1986, liquidators were quartered around the edges of the Zone. Now, nothing is left of these camps, but the earth remembers everything, setting off the alarming chatter of a dosimeter.

The field camp Zelenyi Mis, specially built for the operational personnel of the Chernobyl NPP (#11), was also dismantled. The liquidators' quarters interlace with pastures and arable fields. To the west of Zelenyi Mys is a large village with the telltale name Strakhollissya (Scary Forest). It is located in the picturesque land between the Dnipro and Teteriv rivers. The price of land here is high. Almost the entire riverside area is built up with luxurious mansions. It was once possible to buy entire villages for almost nothing, and a few residents will do any work for a small amount of money.

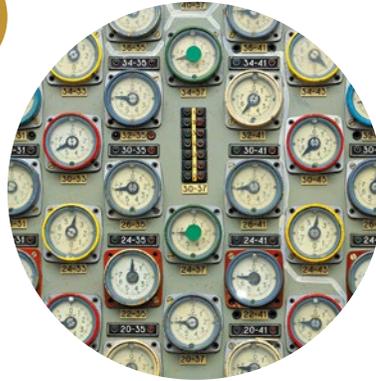


10



11

The beginning of the
Chernobyl NPP



ChNPP

In the second half of the 1950s, nuclear power engineering began to develop in the USSR, and already in the next decade the idea of building a nuclear power plant in Ukraine was discussed. Over two years, in 1965-1966, 16 sites were surveyed to find the most suitable location. The main requirements were the availability of a water supply, rail and road transport, and the unsuitability of soil for agriculture. As a result, the choice fell on an area near the village of Kopachi, Chernobyl rayon, Kyiv oblast.

1,676 hectares (4,141 acres) of land was allocated for the nuclear power plant and accompanying residential district. Estimates for the construction of the top priority facilities amounted to 857,265,000 rubles. The station was founded in 1970, as well as the town for its future workers, called Pripyat, after the river flowing alongside it. Construction of the nuclear power plant and the city of Pripyat was announced by the All-Union shock Komsomol construction.

In May 1971, the ChNPP builders began to dig a pit under the main building of the first power unit. Three settlements were in the area

INTERESTING CHERNOBYL • TOP 100

designated for construction of the ChNPP and Pripjat: the small hamlet Podlesny and villages Semykhody and Nahirtsy. They were flooded, when a huge cooling pond was built for the future nuclear power plant, which was above the level of the river, so water was pumped into it with the help of electric pumps.

The facility, as was customary in the USSR, had to be launched on the next significant date (which played a tragic role in subsequent events). In 1977, during the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the revolution, the Chernobyl NPP emitted its first industrial current.



51.3896194
30.1028824



Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant
Pripyat city

This quite futuristic picture captured the process of building the largest (at the time) mobile ground object in the world, the New Safe Confinement Arch. 3,000 workers were involved in the construction, and it cost \$2.15 billion



Red Forest • 72

Arch • 12

Shelter Object • 13

Cooling Pond • 16

12

Sarcophagus built to protect
the sarcophagus



Arch

The design life of the Shelter (#13) was 30 years. By the first decade of the 21st century, its floor slabs and walls had decayed, rusted, and partially collapsed. Moreover, this construction did not allow for working with nuclear waste, and the radioactive contents of the 4th reactor needed to finally be buried.

The Shelter-2 or Arch (the official name is New Safe Confinement) was built to protect against radiation during the dismantling of the old sarcophagus or from a possible accident, and the sarcophagus itself is protected from weather that could cause unforeseen chemical reactions in its “filling.”

The Arch was an unprecedented structure. It is a double shell 100 meters (328 ft) high and 150 meters (492 ft) tall, covering the 4th reactor and separating it from the 3rd. It is built on artificial rocky soil from concrete pillars and slabs and is made of high-quality steel capable of withstanding gamma radiation. The metal alone weights 18,000 tons.

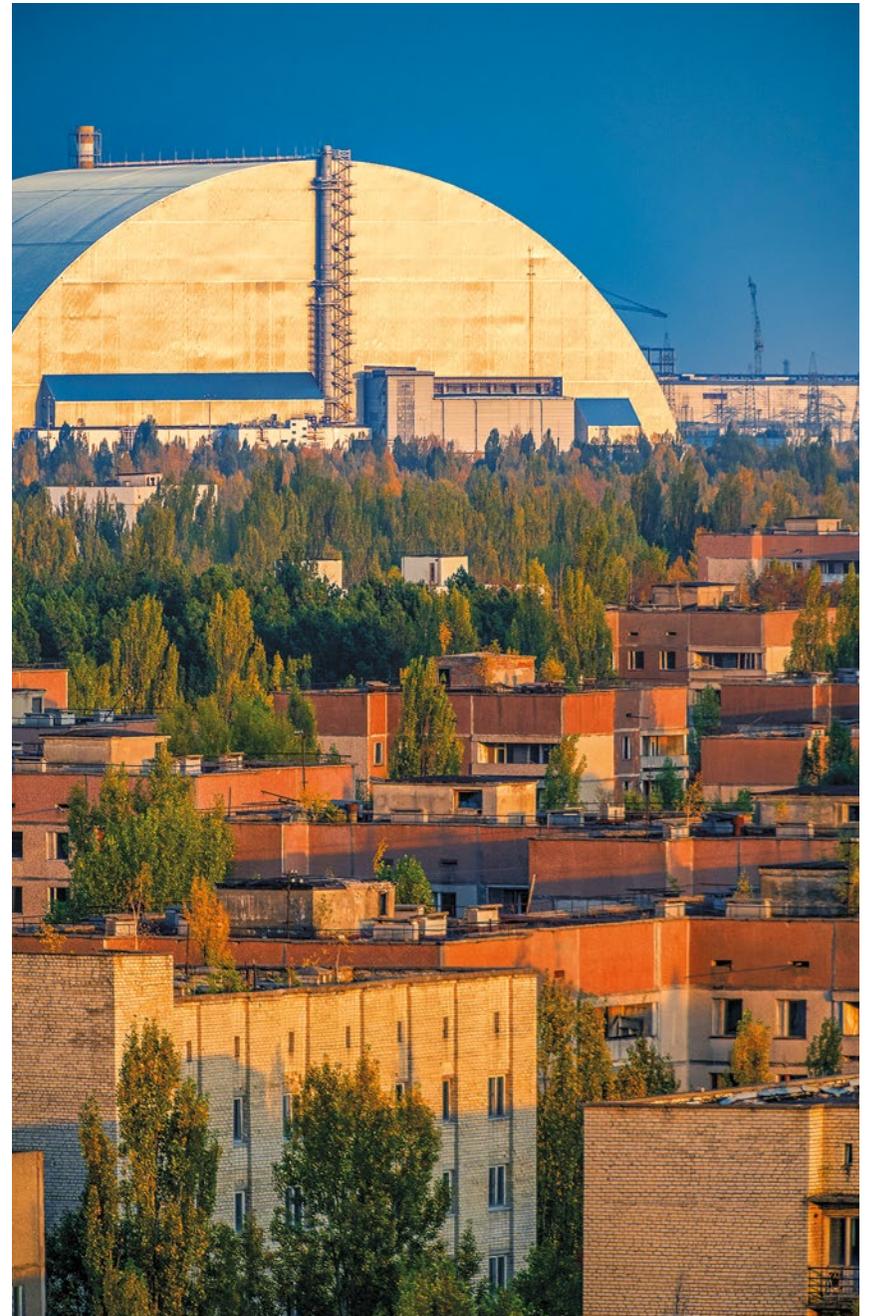
The Arch sections were assembled on a nearby site and moved along special rails over the existing buildings. After work was completed, dismantling, decontamination, and disposal of the power unit began. The expected service life is 100 years. The Arch was commissioned at the end of 2016.



51.3894453
30.0981617



Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant
Pripyat city



12

This is a view from inside the unfinished "Arch" structure. It has yet to "move" along the rails to the Shelter (#13) and completely enclose it



13

4th unit's protective sarcophagus



Shelter Object

The protective shell was built in 6 months. There were 18 design options; the final one was ready by August 20, 1986.

Cranes were used with a maximum load capacity of 600 tons at that time. To create a covering over the destroyed reactor, a metal beam was remotely installed, which was 70 meters (230 ft) long, 6 meters (20 ft) tall, and weighed 147 tons. It was called “Mammoth” because of its size. Construction was carried out around the clock, with 10,000 workers on each shift. Initially, walls were built separating the 4th power unit from the 3rd; reinforced concrete walls were erected around the perimeter of the destroyed block #4. The walls were 6 m (20 ft) thick on the north side, and 8 m (26 ft) thick on the south and west sides. The surviving part of the western wall was closed by a counterfort; the northern part is a cascade wall with concrete buttresses (12 m/39 ft high each). Damaged metal structures and containers with radioactive waste are buried inside the walls. The upper covering over the destroyed reactor was constructed of transverse metal beams, on which were laid 27 metal pipes (1.2 m/4 ft in dia-

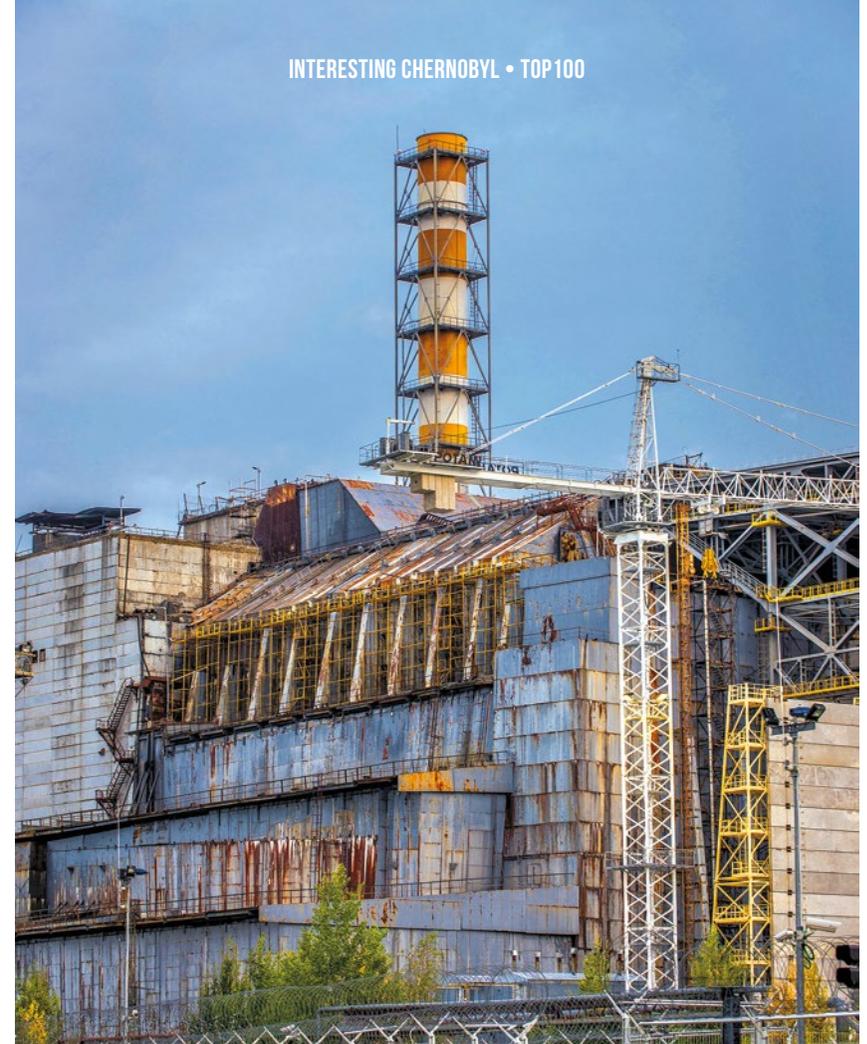


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Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant
Pripyat city

INTERESTING CHERNOBYL • TOP 100



meter and 34.5 m/113 ft long). A roof of profile boards was mounted on top of the pipes.

During construction, about 400,000 m³ (523,180 y³) of concrete was laid, steel structures weighing more than 7,000 tons were assembled. During decontamination of the area around the object, 90,000 m³ (117,715 y³) of soil was removed and relocated. The Shelter was launched into action on November 30, 1986. 30 years later, on November 29, 2016, it was covered by the New Safe Confinement “Arch” (#12).

14

"Frozen" and abandoned
power units



"Release 3"

At Chernobyl, there are buildings that were prepared but did not become a part of the plant, unfinished EMO 5 and 6, the so-called "Release 3." They suffered little radiation, because authorities hoped eventually to bring them into operation, and in preserving them conducted a thorough decontamination. "Release 3" is located on the island between the gigantic ChNPP cooling pond (#16) and a drain passage through which several bridges allow access to the mainland. The buildings also include two unfinished cooling towers (#15). The first had only begun, and the second was almost finished. If not for the accident, the 5th unit would have been launched in November 1986. Until the radiation situation was finally clarified, "Release 3" was frozen. However, at the end of May 1987, it was finally decided to stop construction. At present, dismantling the object is underway.



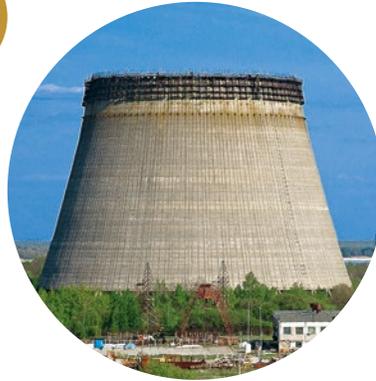
51.3810891
30.1194692



Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant
Pripyat city

15

Huge unfinished
cooling towers



Cooling Towers

A view of the unfinished cooling towers opens immediately around the bend of the road on the way from the village of Kopachi towards the Chernobyl NPP (#11). Two giant gray towers rise a few hundred meters from the drying Chernobyl cooling pond. The height of the cooling towers is 107 meters (351 ft) and 30 meters (98 ft) respectively, the diameter is 60 meters (197 ft). The distance to ChNPP is 3 km (1.8 mi).

They were built to cool the 5th and 6th reactors, because the capacity of the cooling pond (160 million m³ / 5.65 billion ft³) was not enough. Like the entire complex of the 3rd stage of the Chernobyl NPP, where construction work stopped, the cooling towers symbolize the irreversibility and suddenness of the catastrophe. They are forever frozen in time in 1986.

“Garlands” hang on the outer and inner side of the building walls: scaffolding, cement supply systems, etc. The base is overgrown with trees and shrubs. On the ledges and niches inside the building, kestrels have built nests. From time to time, the plates and structural elements break off and fall down. Then, inside there is a booming blow, repeatedly

amplified by an echo which is clearly audible even at a distance of 300-400 meters (984-1,312 ft).

The cooling towers are an impressive sight, so tourists like to take pictures of them; thankfully, they are large, and procedural restrictions are not enforced here. Australian artist Guido van Helten created a memorable mural on the concrete wall inside the 107-meter cooling tower especially for the 30th anniversary of the accident. This has increased tourist interest, which is not too good, because there are high levels of pollution and risk of collapse. It is better to look upon the cooling tower from the side. This is our advice.



51.3775132
30.1326656



Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant
Pripyat city

16

One of the most radioactive reservoirs on the planet



Cooling Pond

This artificial reservoir was created in 1976 to cool the Chernobyl NPP power units. Its area is 22.9 sq km (8.8 sq mi). In the first 10 years of its existence, it became a favorite fishing place for locals and station workers. It is known that on the night of the explosion there were fishermen here. Some of them subsequently died from radiation sickness.

In the direction of the third stage (#14) is an experimental fishery – it was abandoned in 2008. They were studying the effect of radiation on fish here. Unfortunately, after several years, almost all the exhibits left by scientists during the conservation of the station were destroyed by unknown vandals. The different types of fish and other aquatic creatures that were preserved in alcohol have been destroyed. There is a fairly high level of radiation in the vicinity of the former fish farm. From here begins a spit more than 5 km (3 mi) long, dividing the pond into two parts for water circulation. North of the fish farm is the cemetery of the former village of Nahiry, which was flooded during the pond's creation.



51.3797097
30.1535225



Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant

17

Where no one has returned



Pripyat Firehouse

On April 26, 1986 (#1), at 1:23 a.m., the control panel of Militarized Fire Department #2 of Chernobyl Protection received report of a fire. Three units headed to the station and within 10 minutes, firefighters from Pripyat HPV-6 arrived to help them. This part of the building is located on the outskirts of the city, on Factory Street. The brigade under the command of Lieutenant Victor Kibenko set out from here. The firefighters had only canvas overalls, gloves, and helmets for protection. Respirators were removed almost immediately because of the heat. In the first hours, no one suspected the seriousness of the accident, how badly the reactor was damaged, and the radiation threat level for the workers. Nevertheless, by 4:00 a.m., the fire on the roof of the machine hall was localized and extinguished within two hours. Firefighters did not let the fire spread to the third power unit. All 10 men from HPV-6 died from exposure. Lieutenant Kibenko was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union – posthumously. Firehouse #6 includes an administrative building, a high watchtower, and garage



spaces for fire vehicles with the doors wide open. Some say that these doors have not closed since the night when the crews went to fight the fire.



51.4004239
30.0518131



11 Lesi Ukrainki St.
Pripyat city

18

A place where it will
always be April 26, 1986



Pripyat Hospital #126

Hospital #126 is located east of the central square in Pripyat. This is a long, five-story building with a large main entrance. It houses a large medical complex, including a maternity ward, an ambulance station, a pediatric unit, out-patient clinic, a morgue, etc. The first victims, Chernobyl NPP workers and firefighters, were brought here on the night of the accident. Their clothes – boots, helmets – are still piled up in the basement and are off-the-charts: the radioactive background from these things is at least one roentgen per hour.

Over the past 30 years since the accident, the Chernobyl Zone has changed beyond recognition; it has become a peculiar, separate, lost world, with its own history and destiny. And although time flows differently in the Exclusion Zone than outside it, the 21st century has also arrived here. But in the hospital basement, it seems like it's the same never-ending Saturday, April 26, 1986.

As an entity, Hospital #126 continues to exist today. It is now located in the city of Chernobyl on Kirov Street. Exclusion Zone employees and samoseli (#8) get check-ups and medical care here.



51.4063873
30.0659966



16 Druzhby Narodiv St.
Pripyat city



18

Deserted forever, a corridor in Pripyat medical unit #126, one of the most radiation-dangerous places in the Exclusion Zone to this day



19

The level of law enforcement and order did not depend on the level of radiation



Police Department

The four-floor militia (now police) building of Pripjat was located in the center of the city. Before the accident, there was a fairly low crime rate — the most serious cases in 16 years were three murders: two in 1974 and one in 1984; as well as an armed robbery of a city department store in 1975 and an attack on the ticket office of the Yanov railway station (#75). Basically, the police were investigating theft of bicycles and boats, as well as law enforcement in public places. Ironically, there was much more work after the accident. Protection of the population during evacuation (#4) weighed heavily on the police's shoulders, and assurance of the clearance of personnel from all apartments and houses. There were those who refused to leave without realizing the scale of the incident. The first looter was detained on April 27, 1986, in other words, on the day of the evacuation. During the same year, all areas of the abandoned city were surrounded by barbed wire, alarm systems were installed, and checkpoints established. Now, official tour (#100) are conducted of the Pripjat Police Department building. Here you can see a miniature model of the city,



investigators' offices, detention cells, and files with documents and forms of a country has not been on the map for a long time.



51.4004640
30.0516629



5 Lesi Ukrainki St.
Pripjat city

20

Regular bridge with an unusual history



"Bridge of Death"

This is what people call the automobile bridge on the central road leading to Pripyat. It spans the Chernihov-Ovruch railway line at the station Yanov (#75). From it, the city of Pripyat and the Chernobyl NPP are perfectly visible. Before the accident, Pripyat residents occasionally called it the "Humpback Bridge." The name "Bridge of Death" came into use after the disaster. According to one version, on April 26 (#1), the nuclear scientists' children ran here to look at the burning station and received huge doses of radiation. According to another version, policemen blocked entrance to the city here. But both versions converge: they all later died from radiation. According to a third version, on the day of the disaster, a radiation reconnaissance armored vehicle shot a motorcyclist traveling from Pripyat.

The so-called Western radiation trail passed across this bridge. That is why there really was a very high radiation background level.

During an excursion in the Exclusion Zone, you will definitely cross this bridge.



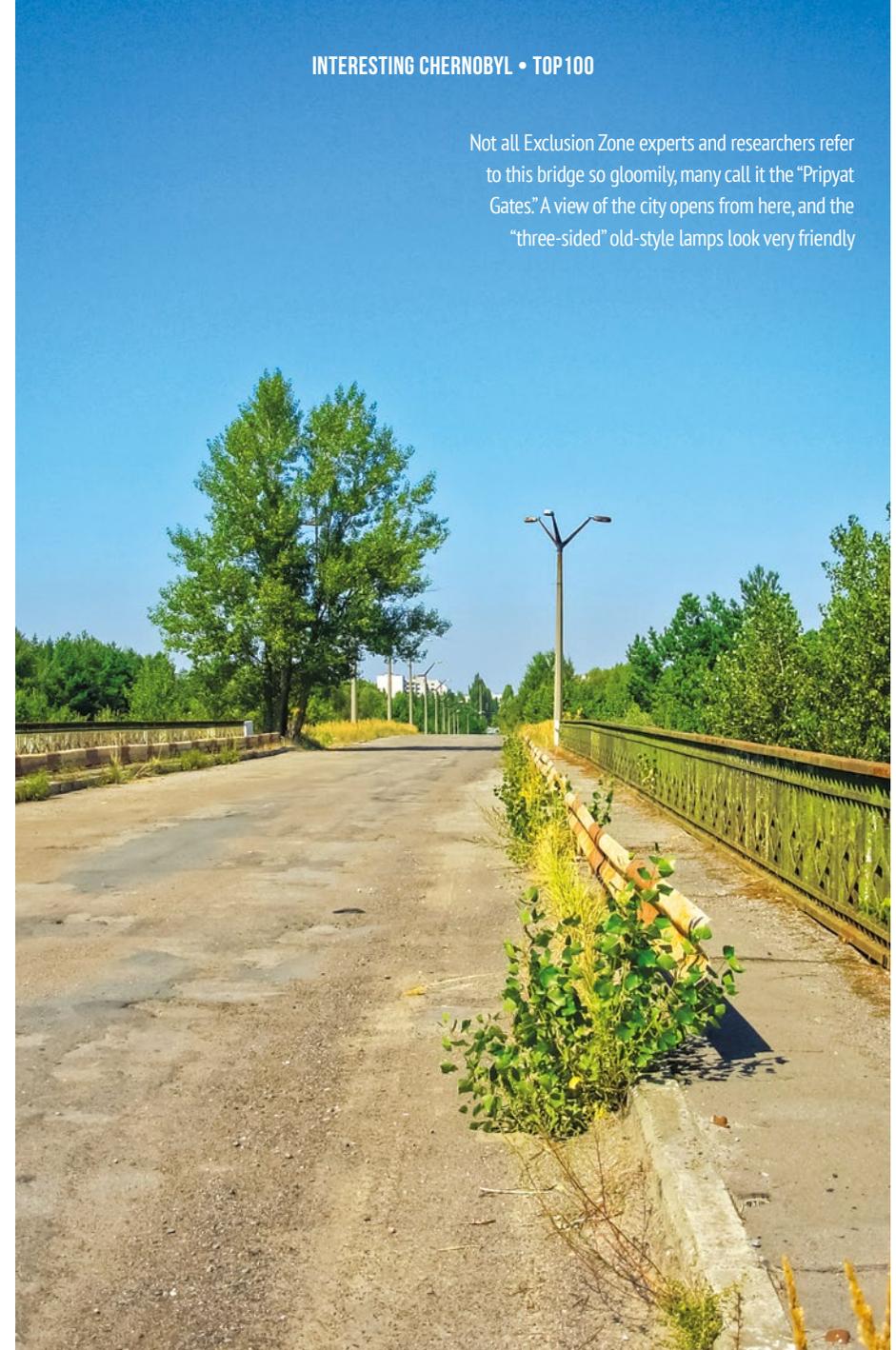
51.3950086
30.0694513



Pripyat city

INTERESTING CHERNOBYL • TOP 100

Not all Exclusion Zone experts and researchers refer to this bridge so gloomily, many call it the "Pripyat Gates." A view of the city opens from here, and the "three-sided" old-style lamps look very friendly



21

Stadium that never had its
opening ceremony



“Avanhard” Stadium

Avanhard Stadium was conceived as one of the cultural and sports centers for the young city, and it was designed for the future. It is equipped with stands for 5,000 spectators; the middle rows of the stands were covered with a screen.

Construction was completed in spring 1986; on May 1, a ceremonial opening and the first competition on the new sports field were planned – Pripjat’s “Builder” and “Mashinostroitel” from Borodyanka were supposed to meet in the semifinal match of the Kyiv oblast Cup. Neither the ceremony nor the match ever took place.

In the intense period of liquidation, the stadium was used as a landing site for helicopters. Later, a meteorological station and equipment for controlling radioactive air pollution were placed on the football pitch, as well as special tablets that assessed how radioactive the substances were that had been ejected from the exploded the 4th power unit and deposited by the wind in the city. In fact, it was one of the first points of air contamination control in the Exclusion Zone.

Today, only the stands and the lighting tower remind us of the stadium. The football pitch and part of the race track have turned into a forest.



51.4102789
30.0550425



Hidroproektovska St.
Pripjat city

22

Launch of the Chernobyl
NPP's 1st unit was
celebrated here



Cafe "Pripyat"

In Pripyat, there were several restaurants, cafes, and cheaper and simpler eating establishments for young professionals. The canteens "Druzhba" ("Friendship"), "Vstrecha" ("Meeting"), and "Elektronika" ("Electronics") were at the station. A meal ticket cost 1 ruble (about \$1), which got you 2 soups, 2 main dishes, 2 salads, 2 beverages, and 2 buns.

At the port on Yanivsky Zaton (#76), which still remains one of the city's most polluted places, there was the small cafe "Pripyat." It was there in 1977 that the builders celebrated the launch of the 1st power unit at the Chernobyl NPP (#11).

Now it is empty. The windows are knocked out, equipment is broken, and garbage is everywhere. But the stained-glass windows that adorn the establishment are still intact. In the courtyard there are machines with carbonated water. Someone constantly brings a clean glass here and puts it in the decrepit vending machine, as if expecting soda to start flowing.



51.4080203
30.0651383



7 Naberezhna St.
Pripyat city

23

House where the Chernobyl
NPP management lived



“White House”

The White House got its name from an association with the American namesake – not because of the color of the walls, but because most of its residents belonged to the urban elite: the station leaders and party leaders lived there. The nine-story building, standing on the central square, popularly known as the “Palace”, had a good location, comfortable apartments, and was considered a privileged accommodation. Director of the Chernobyl NPP Bryukhanov lived here in apartment number 78; he later was sentenced to a prison term. Shop #1 “Rainbow” was on the ground floor, where office supplies, car parts, radio goods, etc. were sold. On the roof, they installed huge letters spelling the slogan “Glory to Lenin! Glory to the party!” At the entrance, there is still a telephone booth (#40).

The White House building was made of brick, according to the improved standard design; now, it is in the most precarious condition in comparison with other Pripjat houses.



51.4054102
30.0588834



32/13 Lenina Avenue
Pripjat city

Nearby, as if in mockery, is the so-called “Collective Farm House.” It housed residents of the village Semikhody, demolished during construction of the new atomic city. When moved, they took with their chickens, geese, and other animals with them, which they settled on the balconies. You can imagine the noise and smell. So, they stood near each other, the White and Collective Farm houses, symbolizing the brilliance and poverty of the Soviet Union.



24

In a Pink Floyd video, you can see it before and after the accident



“Lazurny” Swimming Pool

Pripyat residents were physically active. The large “Avanhard” Stadium (#21) for 5,000 people was located in the 4th microdistrict, right behind the amusement park. In the 3rd district, on the street with the telling name Sportivna, there was a large indoor swimming pool called “Lazurny” (“Azure”). A pool membership was available at an affordable price, so there was no end to those who wanted to splash and dive. It is interesting that “Lazurny” still functioned after the accident. As in other buildings that were used in Pripyat after 1986, linoleum flooring was installed in all the rooms for easy decontamination and cleaning. Unfortunately, the pool was closed in the late 1990s due to the termination of work in Pripyat and the dangerous condition of the building that had not been repaired for a long time.

Now the pool is one of the most famous and popular places to visit in Pripyat, both for official tourists and stalkers (#98). It is so famous from among the many cult symbols, such as the Ferris Wheel

(#35), Post Office (#29), and others, that it appeared in the “Marooned” music video by the legendary group Pink Floyd, filmed in 2014 for the 20th anniversary of the release of the album “The Division Bell.” In addition to modern views, the clip includes a scene from a documentary film where you can see how Lazurny looked before the accident.



51.406860
30.049215



24 Sportivnaya St.
Pripyat city

25

The most popular
cinema of Pripyat



"Prometheus" Cinema

The cinema "Prometheus" featured 1,220 seats and stood – the name emblazoned on both sides – next to a music school in the central Kurchatov street. Above the main entrance, the signage was made of straight black letters on a blue background, creating a difficult-to-describe effect. The facade is decorated with a mosaic panel by Ivan Litovchenko, designer of almost all the mosaics and stained-glass windows of Pripyat. The building looks like two boxes, built one on the other and faced with beige tiles with black welt below. The foyer and cinema hall – and the walls and floor – were finished in white stone. The hall featured offices, tables, a buffet, and, at the opposite end, a few arcade video games, with such titles as "Battleship", "Rally", and "Safari."

On the ground in front of the cinema stands the statue of Titan Prometheus. A stylized fire, raised to the sky, burns in his hand. The implication is that he was the first "energy man" of the world and the symbolic patron of Pripyat. Today, the cinema building is included in the excursion route (#100) through the Exclusion Zone as one of the famous objects.



51.4079467
30.0615335



4 Kurchatova St.
Pripyat city

26

Cinema – Museum –
Memorial Complex



“Ukraina” Cinema

The movie theater “Ukraina” was built in 1977. The Ukrainian SSR’s leadership believed that the district center should have well-developed infrastructure and meet the standards of the city after which the first Ukrainian nuclear power plant was named.

There is a monument in front of the movie house, symbolizing the struggle and victory of Komsomol members in the formation of Soviet power and the construction of a brighter future. After the accident, the building was used for retail and warehousing purposes. A few years ago, part of the hall was occupied by a bar, where you could order a grilled chicken and have a strong drink. The cinema’s auditorium is used as a repository of ethnocultural valuables – wooden trunks, looms, canoes, and other wooden household implements. The State Scientific Center of Cultural Heritage Protection from Technogenic Disasters preserves the culture of the Chernobyl region. The center has conducted several dozen ethnographic expeditions around the Chernobyl Zone and collected tens of thousands of unique household items abandoned in the villages and settlements



51.2721185
30.2233779



58 Sovietskaya St.
Chernobyl city

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of the Chernobyl region after evacuation in 1986. There are no guided tours in the storeroom. Today, the largest part of the cinema is occupied by the memorial complex exposition “Wormwood Star” (#81).



27

One of the city's highest points



"Fujiyama"

There are two tall apartment buildings on the northwestern edge of Pripjat. Closest to the traffic police checkpoint is the famous "Fujiyama." It received this name from the lighthearted Exclusion Zone employees who worked here in the 1990s. There was a ritual for those who worked an entire watch in Pripjat – they would go up after supper to the rooftop of a high-rise building and watch the sun go down. From there, the whole city was visible, in full view, and in the rays of the sunset, its abandoned buildings did not look so gloomy.

The building belongs to the BPS-6 series (16-storey panel house). This is a typical construction for cities in the former USSR. But this particular model is only in three cities: Pripjat, Ukrainka, and Kyiv. The building is oriented to the west, to the emerald landscapes of Polissia. A hundred meters away is the famous Pripjat city sign.

Ornithologists found a kestrel's nest on an 8th floor balcony – this small falcon settled into the abandoned city rather successfully.

On the ground floor by the elevator is a sign with the list of tenants, which has been preserved since 1986. The surnames are written in

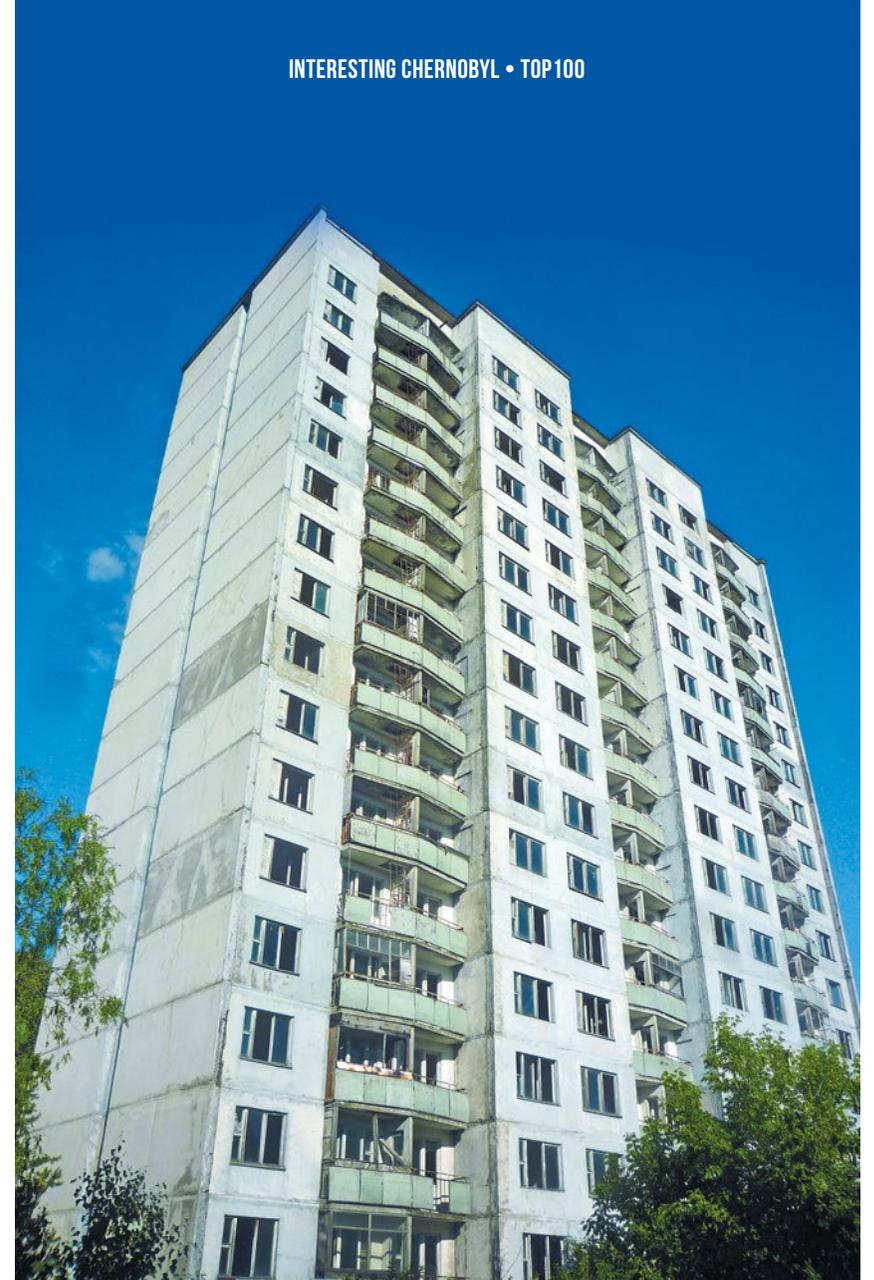


51.4077191
30.0395715



52/1 Lesi Ukrainki St.
Pripjat city

INTERESTING CHERNOBYL • TOP 100



black lacquer paint on a stainless-steel sheet, so the list has been preserved like new, the way it was in Soviet times, which now seems almost undisturbed.

28

The main Pripyat bookstore



Book House

The Soviet Union was called “the most reading country in the world.” In any case, the enormous circulation of literary journals, fiction, and popular science literature, with the exception of openly ideological opuses, emerged here quickly. However, there was not enough good literature for everyone so it was often bought from speculators at inflated prices. Pripjat (#2), which was conceived as a “city of the future”, was better supplied than others. Even people from Kyiv came here for scarce goods. The local Book House was no exception. On the shelves of this store were a variety of publications, including some of the most popular. When the city was deserted, the books were left to fend for themselves. They lie about the store, underfoot everywhere. Many of them have not even been unpacked and thus are well preserved. But the majority, of course, over the years became decayed and decrepit. Slowly they give up their lives, never finding readers.



51.4012338
30.0646448



1-A Druzby Narodiv St.
Pripjat city



29

Mail of all times and people



Post Office

This phrase is written in the upper left corner of the famous panel, which appeared in many films about the Exclusion Zone, and even in a clip by Pink Floyd. It is located in a white building with a recognizable decor on Sergeant Lazarev Street. Located here were the City Communications Center, the Delivery Department, and the City Broadcasting Editorial Board. It was from this building that Pripjat radio broadcaster Nina Melnik made the announcement on April 27, 1986, about the evacuation (#4) of residents in connection with the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station (#11). The floor of the central hall is littered with envelopes, postcards, telegrams, blank forms, and documents with seals. A panel-painting with the figures of a girl and a cosmonaut, a horseman, an ancient Egyptian scribe, medieval city dwellers, a caravan, and trains are peeling badly, but, oddly enough, still impresses visitors with its bright colors.



51.4058586
30.0548065



4 Lazareva St.
Pripjat city

30

The white marble
palace of culture



"Energetic"

The famous Palace of Culture "Energetic" in Pripyat (#2) was built as one of the first in a large complex of buildings on the central square. The façade featured white marble walls while the structure inside was decorated with pink tufa and floors were covered with carpet. The inscription "Palace of Culture" on the roof was illuminated by a blue light, and the word "Energetic" had red illumination. Inside the building, there was the "Edison" disco with excellent equipment; bands, theater groups, and numerous clubs were also accommodated. The local library had a wide range of books, many of which were not found even in the Ukrainian capital's libraries. The building included halls for sports and a swimming pool. After the Chernobyl accident, this central structure became home to groups of liquidators, administrative bodies, and police units. In 2000, it was finally abandoned. It is now considered one of the most popular tourist sites of the Exclusion Zone (#7).



51.4068357
30.0567162



10 Kurchatova St.
Pripyat city



31

Sounds of the Exclusion Zone Music



Music School

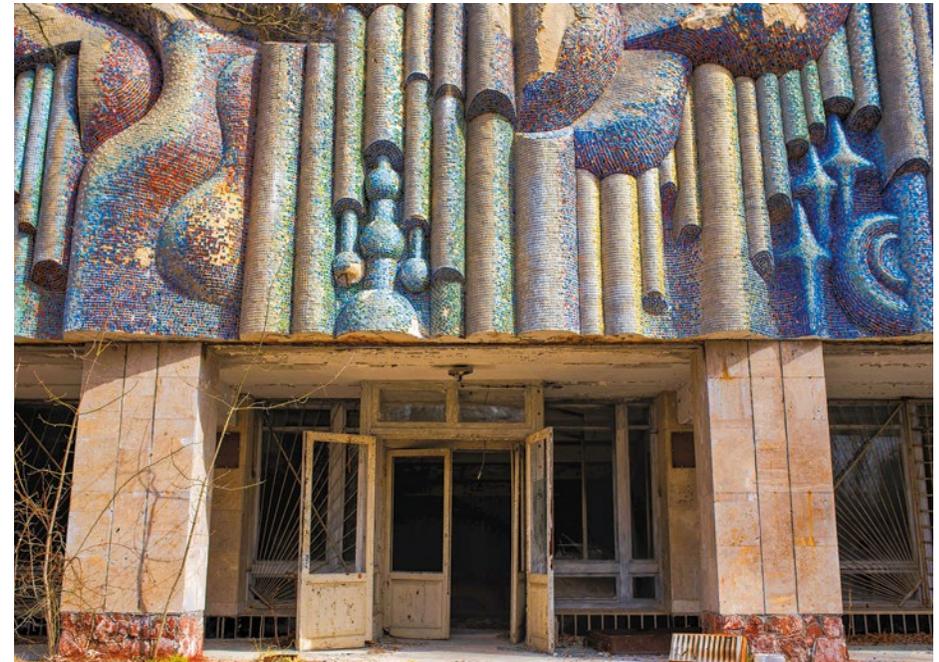
In the Soviet Union of the 1970s-1980s, teaching children music was fashionable and widely promoted. As early as 1972, it was officially announced that the country had “completely satisfied the demand for pianos.” Even today, in the Russian Federation, there are 28 piano factories, and the Leningradskaya plant alone produces 10,000 instruments per year. During Soviet times, virtually every family had its own piano, with red ones being common and ginger being especially valued. An obligatory part of the “full-fledged” aesthetic education of the child was considered study in two schools – general and music. The monthly payment for the last one was 23 rubles (about \$28). A home-style piano cost about 350 rubles – two average salaries. The Pripjat music school was built as a model: it had a large assembly and concert hall and a variety of instruments. The concert grand piano, which ordinary Soviet citizens could not afford, has survived to this day. This colossus simply would not fit in a standard Soviet apartment. The facade of the school was decorated with recognizable mosaic panels in gray-blue tones. The concert hall today is almost gutted. The floor is studded with yellowed notes and musical literature.



51.4077660
30.0608897



4-A Kurchatova St.
Pripjat city



31



32

City of happy childhood



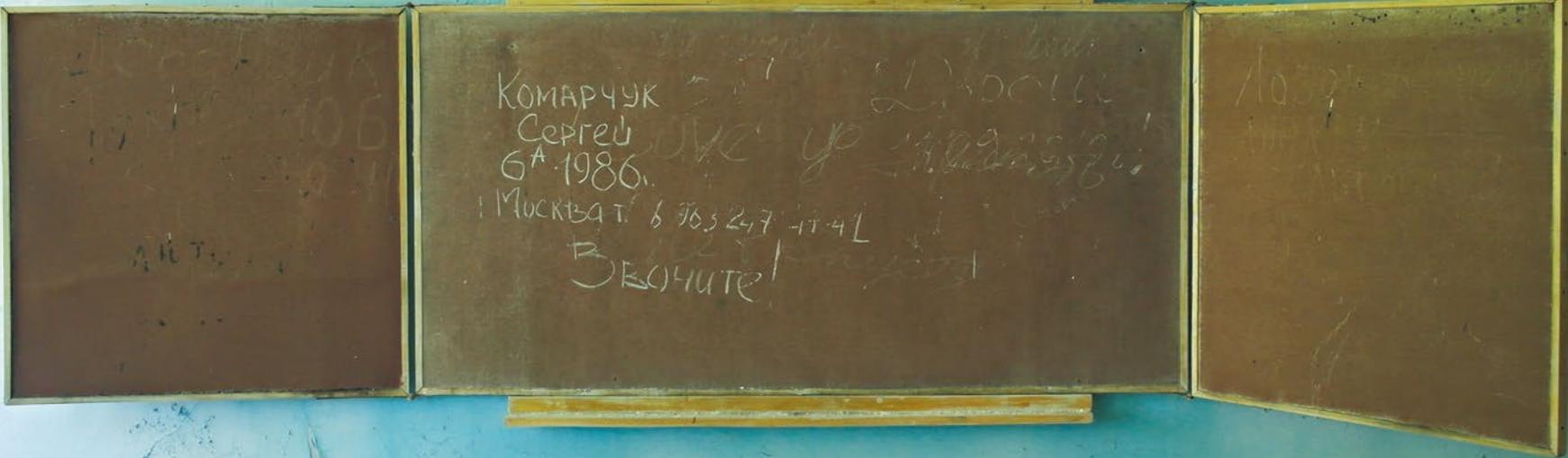
Child Care Facilities

Pripyat (#2) was not only the “youngest” city of Ukraine. It could rightly be called “the most childish.” By the spring of 1986, out of 49,600 inhabitants, there were 15,600 children. And the best conditions were created for them. Thus, there were 15 kindergartens with almost 5,000 places and five schools with 6,786 places, along with a vocational school for 600 students and a children’s art school with 312 places. Today, all these abandoned buildings are tourist attractions in the Exclusion Zone (#7). Even now, when their facilities are



in utter desolation, partially looted and affected by radiation and time, you may still get an idea of how the daily life of Pripyat children looked and felt. Visitors are particularly impressed by the countless children’s gas masks, hurriedly abandoned in the kindergartens, in the basements of schools, and simply in classrooms.





Former Exclusion Zone residents, who were evacuated from here by their children, return to their former home as tourists for a day or two and try to find old friends, neighbors, and classmates. The inscription on this chalkboard reads: "Komarchuk, Sergei. 6A, 1986. Moscow. Call." And a phone number

33

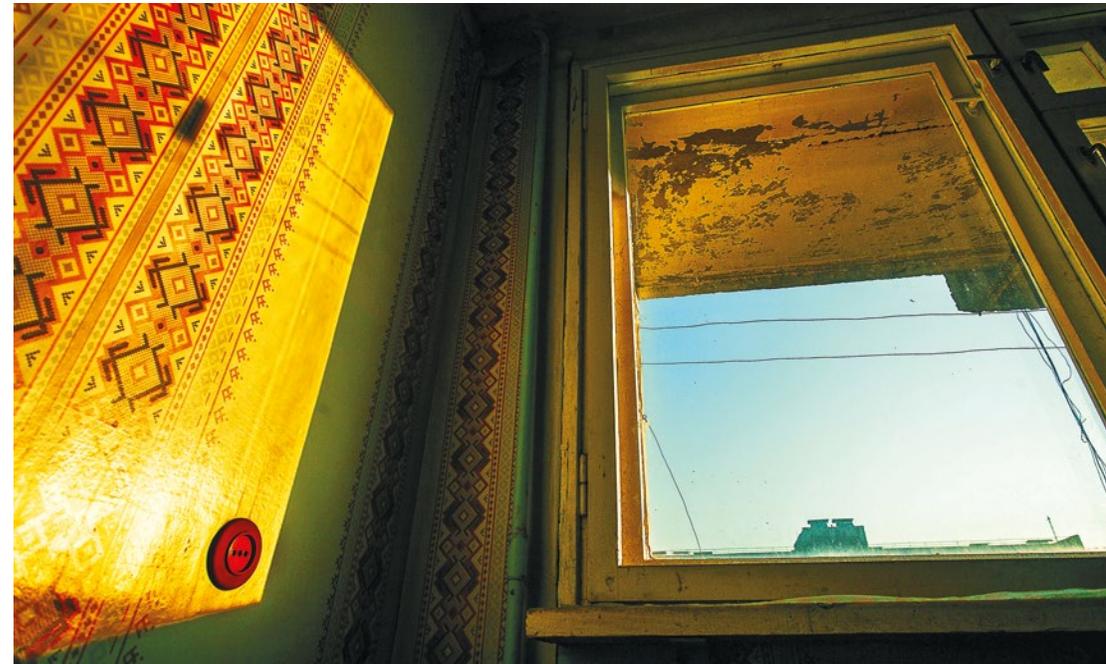
All Soviet citizens dreamed to live like this



Apartments

Pripyat (#2) was built as a demonstration of the successes of developed socialism. Accordingly, housing in Pripyat was substantially better than the average.

Multi-story buildings had an improved layout and were favorably oriented; the apartments were comfortable with large windows always providing a lot of light. Kitchens were spacious, certainly not the case in the overwhelming majority of Soviet homes, and lined with scarce tile. Light wallpaper, pretty linoleum and large balconies were welcome fixtures. Over the long decades after the accident, the unpopulated and abandoned Pripyat apartments were looted, and have deteriorated by time, dampness, and cold. The windows are broken, steam heating radiators have been torn out for scrap metal, plaster has peeled off, and wallpaper has fallen. But some apartments have surprisingly escaped this fate, and can serve as an illustration of the daily life of the city before the disaster. The furniture is partially preserved in them, quite cozy and dry, in some places there even remains a piano. These apartments are much appreciated by illegal travelers to the Zone, stalkers (#98), who make use of the “accommodations.” True, they are quickly caught by the police. On the walls of many apartments you can see inscriptions and telephone numbers left by former residents who came here on the days of sad anniversaries, trying to reconnect with neighbors, friends, and classmates.



34

Pripyat's consumer
services combine



Hairdressing Salon

In the years of Chernobyl's development, chemically produced so-called permanent waves were in vogue and the majority of Soviet women marched through the streets with magnificent hairstyles, much like the musicians of western rock bands. Components for hair styling poured from huge white plastic bottles, similar to the ones in which modern stores sell household chemicals; the smell was much the same. The process burned the scalp and literally "burned" the hair, but this did not stop the fashionistas. The most advanced hairdressing salons began to acquire special tools: finger tips for hair dryers, thinning scissors, a variety of hairbrushes, and unusual novelties, including more comfortable chairs. Instead of a short list of prices for men's, women's, and children's haircuts, there appeared long price lists for various services. This Pripyat hairdressing salon looks more like the famous Kyiv "Charodeika" ("Enchantress") in the center of the capital than a salon in a small town. But the huge round mirrors in square wooden frames were then common everywhere in the USSR.



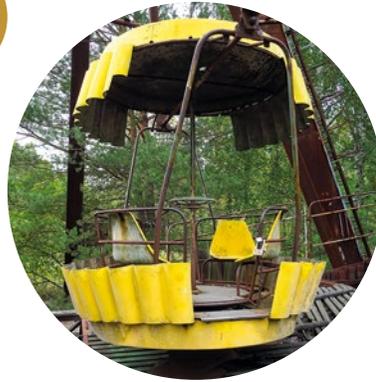
51.4068424
30.0615656



7 Kurchatova St.
Pripyat city

35

One of the most recognizable symbols of the Dead City



Ferris Wheel

The Ferris wheel is one of the most famous objects in the dead city of Pripyat and the entire Chernobyl Zone. Structures like these were made in the USSR only at the specialized plant in the city of Yeysk. This model of the attraction was the most popular and was produced until 1991. Rumor has it that towers for military tanks were also produced at this enterprise.

The Ferris wheel is 24 meters (79 ft) tall, it makes a full turn in 5 minutes. Such “devil’s wheels”, as they are often called, still stand in almost every post-Soviet recreation park. But this one was destined to become a symbol of Pripyat and the entire Exclusion Zone. The attraction was delivered to the city and installed in the spring of 1986. The grand opening of the amusement park and the Avanhard Stadium (#21) was supposed to be held on the eve of May 1, 1986. Not so long ago, a clandestine attempt was made to start the wheel unbeknownst by the Zone administration. This led to a huge scandal. It is worth noting that some cabins are pretty radioactive. The Pripyat Ferris wheel will gradually rust, but no one can tell when it will



51.4083482
30.0558472



Pripyat city



collapse. However, there is a possibility that it will be cut up for ordinary scrap metal by looters. For your own safety, it is better to abandon any attempt to get to its top, although a special ladder is provided for this. Today, the wheel is obscured by trees, but initially it would have been visible from almost anywhere in the city and dominated the skyline.



36

The only permanent residents
of the deserted city



Pripyat Graffiti

Graffiti appeared in Pripyat in 2006. Wall “murals” were the result of foreign street artists who came to the Chernobyl Zone specifically for this purpose. While some of them distracted the guide, others dispersed to pre-selected places in Pripyat. More than three dozen graffiti pieces livened up the deserted urban landscape.

Of course, there was controversy about the appropriateness of graffiti in this city. Many emphatically called for their removal, and some activists tried to wash away the pictures. But the effort to remove the graffiti did not receive much support, and, over time, everyone acknowledged that they quite harmoniously fit into the urban surroundings. In addition, the paint faded, was washed away by rains, and blached in the sun. Perhaps soon, people will start talking about restoring them. After all, today it is difficult to imagine Pripyat without the pictures of a little girl in pigtails stretching to reach an elevator button in an abandoned high-rise building on Lazarev Street, or children playing in the “Energetic” (#30) recreation center next to the words “The dead do not cry”, or a teenager running along a fire escape. These images did not just become recognizable, they are now full-fledged citizens, the only permanent residents of the abandoned city.



Undoubtedly, these silhouettes are inspired by the famous black shadows left on the walls of houses after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The artists' idea is simple and sad: the city, which became its own shadow after the catastrophe, is inhabited by the shadows of its inhabitants and memories.



37

The most popular attraction
in Soviet parks



Bumper Cars

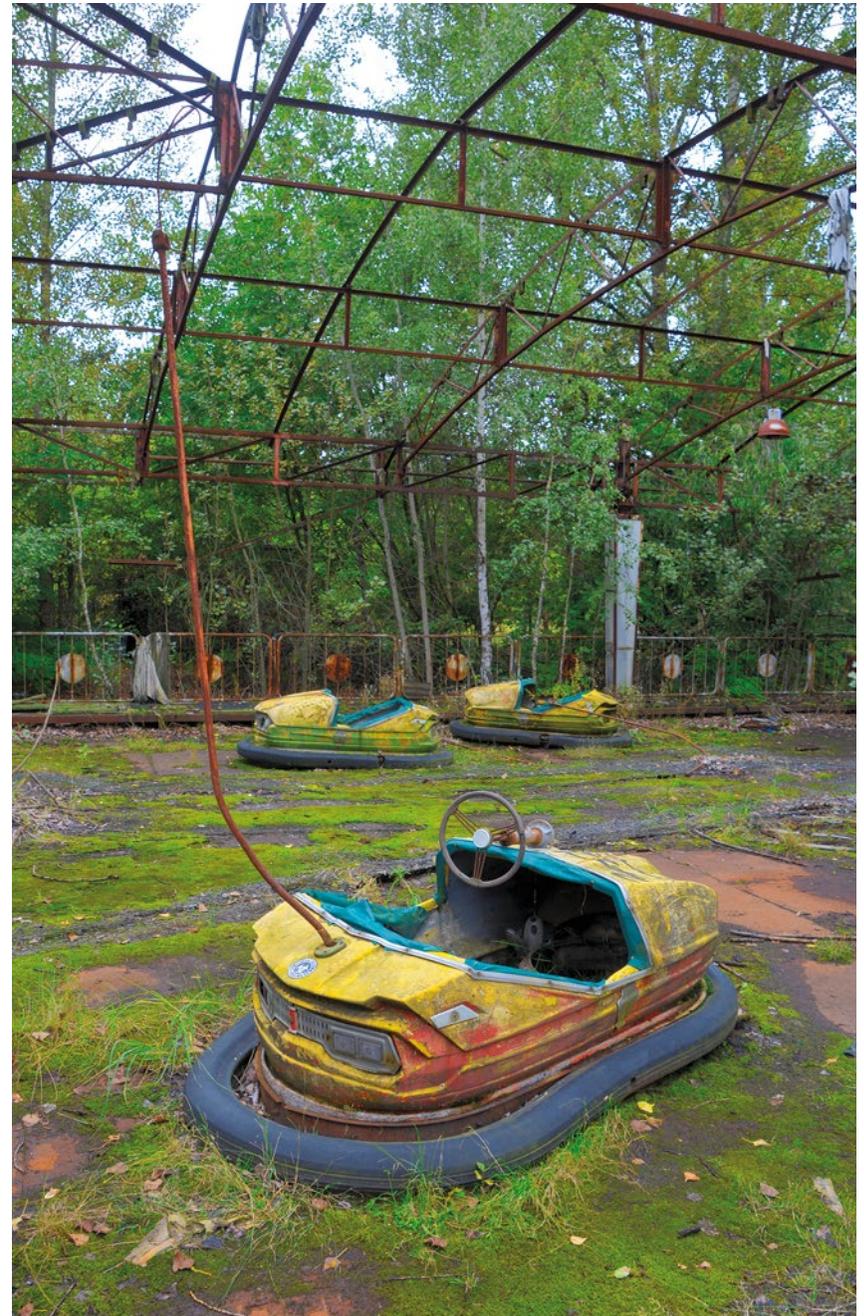
In the USSR, where amusement parks were encouraged by the state as a type of collective leisure and were managed by the Ministry of Culture, a standard set of park amusements was designed at the Institute of Cultural Equipment, and made mainly at the specialized Yeysk plant in Krasnodar Krai. It included 8 rides, but only two were crowd-pleasures; the rest were not popular with the public. However, they were ordered (compulsorily) and forced on all the parks. The rides were subsidized by the state, their production was cheap: the designs were purchased in Japan, and then Soviet engineers adapted them to local conditions, simplifying them, removing extras and making calculations for cheaper materials. The “Autodrome”, not included in the mandatory set, was one of the most popular, but it was difficult to get. Rich collective farms, for example, received bartered for bumper cars in exchange for food products. In Pripyat, the exemplary city of nuclear scientists, the attraction was installed when the park was laid out. These cute little cars, dying from time, bad weather, and loneliness in an abandoned city, look so sad and touching that the most visited attraction before the Chernobyl NPP accident became one of the Zone’s cult sites after the disaster.



51.4076890
30.0550532



Pripyat city





Three-wheel bumper cars for the Autodrome attraction were invented in 1919 by Americans Max and Harold Stoehrer (according to other sources, by General Electric employee Victor Levant). And, probably, out of hundreds of thousands of rides around the world, the one that is captured in this picture has the most unusual fate

38

One of the most popular types of decorative art



Pripyat Mosaics

Ukraine has a long and very powerful tradition of mosaic art. Therein lies the reason that St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv is considered the most complete collection of original 11th century mosaics in the world, made in the Byzantine tradition. In 1960-1980, this type of decorative art gained unprecedented popularity in city planning. Very few administrative or public institutions did without a mosaic panel with allegorical images. The youngest city in Ukraine, Pripyat (#2), was generously decorated with multi-colored compositions of smalt. Practically all of them was made by one master, Ivan Litovchenko (1921-1996). He also worked on mosaics at the Chernobyl NPP itself (#11). Remarkably, not only familiar buildings – cinemas, clubs, or restaurants – were decorated in this spirit. This fashion was so rampant that even the grocery store “Meat. Fish. Vegetables” on Lenin Street boasts a monumental mosaic bas-relief in the style of Siqueiros. The theme of this bas-relief had nothing to do with fish or meat, and certainly not with vegetables.





39

One of the Zone's deadliest artifacts



Big Bucket

When the rubble was shoveled aside near the destroyed 4th power unit of the Chernobyl NPP (#11), highly active fragments were loaded into special 1-cubic-meter (35-cubic-ft) containers made from a metal grid. Then they were laid at the base of the walls of the Shelter (#13) and covered with concrete. 1,145 of these boxes with radioactive waste were buried only at the very beginning.

The huge grab bucket, which captured these fragments and materials, is the most radiation-dangerous object in Pripjat. It was thrown, literally, in the middle of the road, and today, more than 30 years later, the exposure dose rates on its surface range from 2 to 4 mR/hour, which is 200 times more than natural background levels. Because of such a high level of radiation, this object is one of the abandoned city's attractions that reminds visitors of the consequences of the disaster. Its name is Bucket, with a capital letter.



51.4012338
30.0473499



Pripjat city

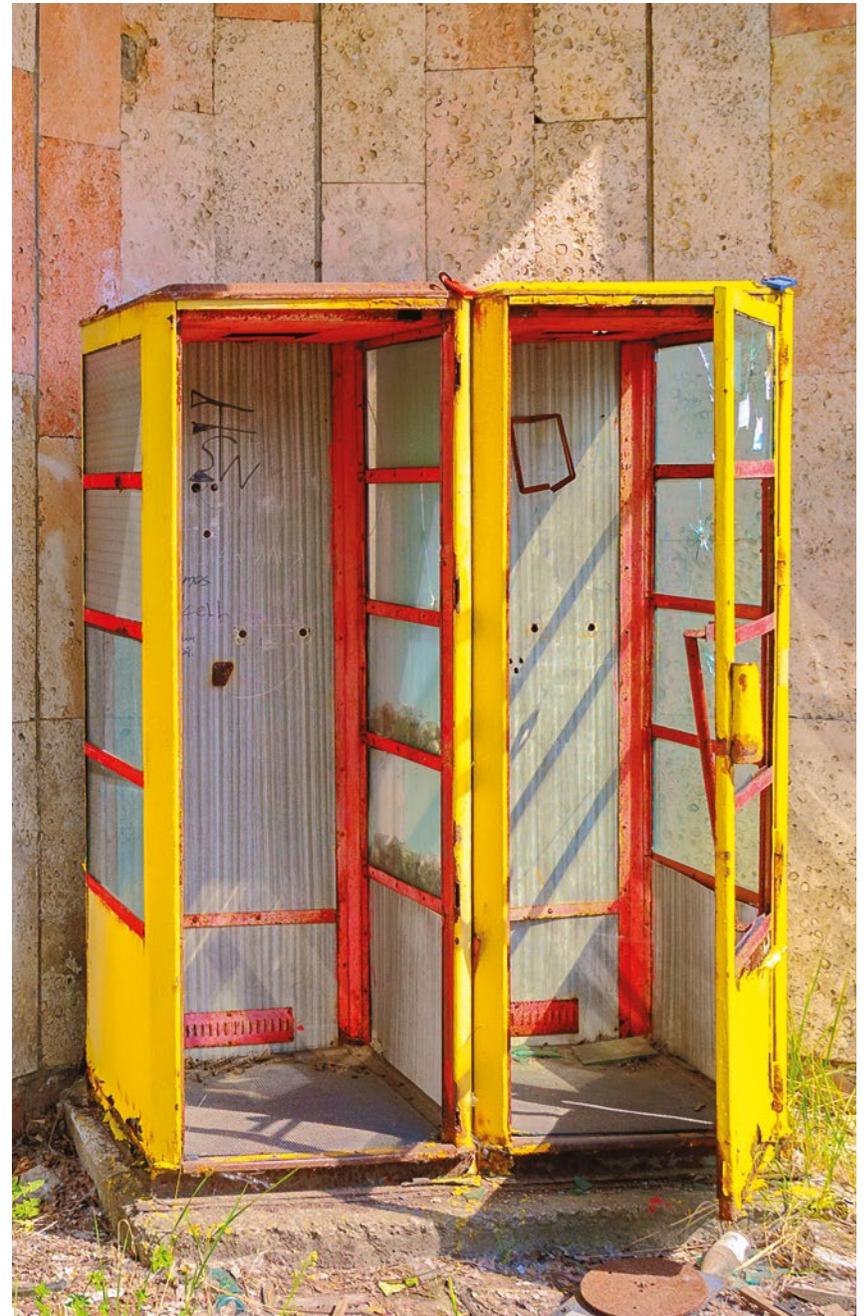
40

Main method
of communication
in the Soviet Union



Telephone Booths

The phone booth brand AMT-69 appeared on the streets of Soviet cities in 1973. This is a payphone, it does not have its own number in the city telephone network, and an ordinary citizen cannot call it. The cost of a call was 2 kopecks (paid either with one coin, a “two-er”, or two one-kopek coins, which was placed in the slot at the top of the rectangular case). The length of a paid conversation was 3 minutes. It was possible to call free of charge to the fire brigade, the police, and the ambulance. The price of 2 kopecks was minimal, but the constant need to call somewhere, when citizens not only didn’t have mobile phones, but most also didn’t have a landline phone at home (many waited several decades to get a phone line), creating a shortage of “two-ers.” Therefore, there was no shame in asking any passerby for one. And some people even altered the coin by drilling a hole and tying it with a fishing line, so they could pull it out after connecting to the other line. It was called the “shuttle.” Of the several public telephones in an area, at best only half worked, so there were always small lines near them.



A photograph of a yellow payphone booth in a forest. The booth is rectangular with a yellow frame and red horizontal bars. The glass is broken, with a large hole in the upper right section. The booth is situated in a wooded area with many bare trees and a ground covered in fallen leaves. In the background, a multi-story brick building is visible through the trees. The overall scene is desolate and overgrown.

A lonely pay phone in a deserted alley, densely overgrown with poplars over the past 30 years. It's hard to believe that once there was a line of people wanting to make calls

41

Most common street machines in the USSR



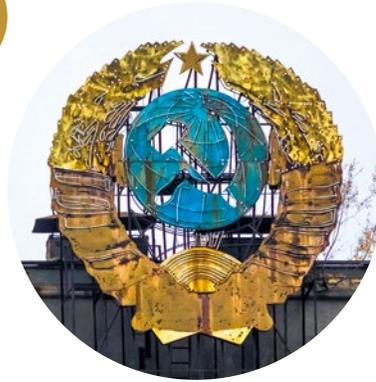
Sparkling Water

Two types of sparkling water were sold in these machines: simple, slightly salty, worth 1 kopeck per glass; and with syrup, for 3 kopecks. In this case, the machine thought for a minute, then with a grumble, gave a portion of lemon syrup, more rarely a thick tangerine syrup, and then topped it up with simple soda. Before using, the glass cups were washed right there in the machine, by setting them upside down in a special device (a grate with a valve) and pressing lightly. A stream of water shot up, rinsing the bottom and sides. Therefore, a wide puddle always spread around these machines, and many preferred to use their own glasses. On hot days, there were queues around these machines, and under them you could always find wet 1 and 3 kopecks coins. The most common in the USSR were the AT-100S type machines with separate coin acceptors. A later version, AT-101S (in the picture), allowed you to choose the type of syrup (Cream Soda, Lemonade, Pear). The machines worked from May to September, and during the cold season, they were closed with special metal boxes.



42

Space caught time



Soviet Symbols

On April 26, 1986, time stopped forever in the Exclusion Zone. In this piece of space, time was trapped like an insect in amber. Coming here, you find yourself in the last century and millennium, in a country which is no longer on the map. The streets have Soviet names, there are the monuments to Lenin, long ago demolished across the country; posters and slogans of a bygone era hang in the former clubs, cinemas, kindergartens, schools, and other public institutions. The walls are decorated with panels and carvings with allegorical images of a bright future and happy children are devoted to the Soviet astronautics, power, and memory of the heroes of World War II. Many of these have suffered over time from radiation and the hands of unknown vandals. But some are remarkably well-preserved and are reified memory of those who once lived here.



City of Pripyat. The inscription "Let the atom be a worker, not a soldier" in huge metal letters on the roof of a 9-storey building on Lazarev Street



43

Funny Bear in the city
of sorrow



Bear Sculpture

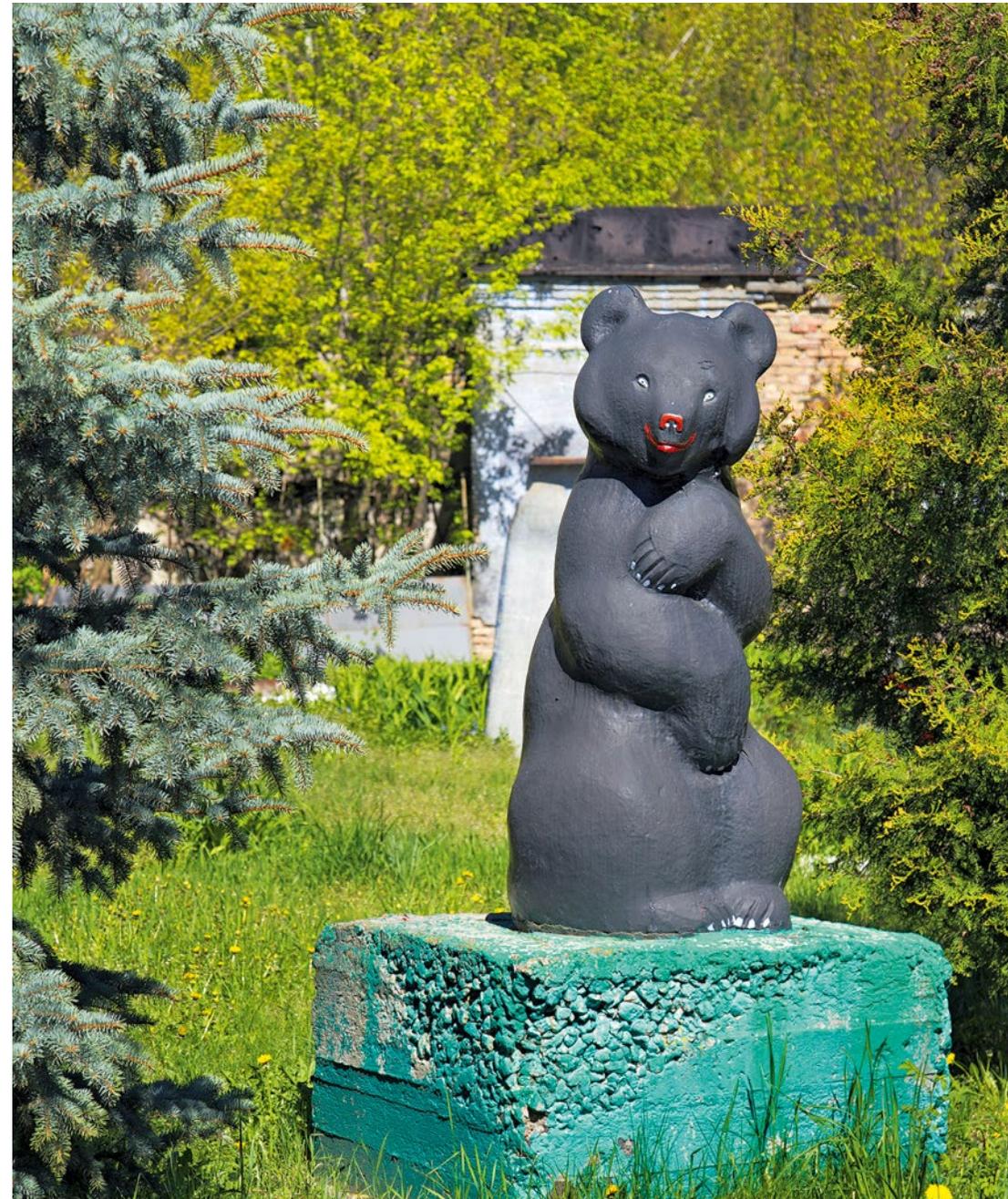
This funny bear figurine stands near the existing facilities in the 1st district of Pripyat (#2). It invariably attracts the attention of visitors to the Exclusion Zone (#7) and has become not only a favorite subject for photographing, but also captured in the cult game S.T.A.L.K.E.R. (#97), the creators of which have tried to include all known artifacts of Pripyat. Why is this little bear so remarkable? Everything that has been created by and for people – no matter how simple and naive it is, causes the aching feeling of guilt – deepening loneliness of these things. Unlike nature, which only sighed and blossomed in the absence of man, these bears, horses, pigs, dwarves, lion cubs, and turtles, painted on houses, still carry on their mission. Sadly, they serve to bring more amazement than joy to an endless stream of visitors, not to the young children who were their original audience.



51.4043126
30.0668281



9 Druzhby Narodiv St.
Pripyat city



44

A fragment of childhood left
in an abandoned house



Toys

Probably one of the most wrenching experiences for visitors of the Exclusion Zone is made by toys, left behind by their small owners in abandoned homes and child care facilities. The most common among them are dolls. Faded, battered, dusty, completely irrelevant in this crushed little world, they seem to wait for their masters to come back for them. For example, on a windowsill in “Druzhba” (“Friendship”), someone sat a little baby doll with a mask on its head. These tiny reminders are often photographed to show a bright, simple, understandable-to-all symbol of shattered lives and interrupted childhood.



45

Village with a prophetic name



Kopachi Kindergarten

The village of Kopachi is closest to the Chernobyl NPP. It was almost completely demolished almost immediately after the accident and buried in the ground. One of the few surviving buildings is a kindergarten, built in 1967 for the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution. Now it is a Zone cult tourist site. It is captivating because someone's creative nature decided to attach a Palladian-style portico to a regular village house. In the 16th century, Italian architect Andrea del Palladio introduced the triangular portico and columns of Greek temples, which is now a timeless classic. To this day, anything can be designed in the Palladian style – Venetian villas and churches, palaces of Russian emperors, country estates, institutes for noble maidens, the White House in Washington DC, prestigious Soviet sanatoriums and cultural centers. Designed for a hot Mediterranean climate, buildings open from all sides to the wind look strange in mid-latitudes and the north, but that does not in the least minimize their popularity. So, Soviet leaders of all ranks understood the solid construction.



51.3523263
30.1257992



Kopachi village



This is one of the first places on the tourist route where there is increased background radiation. Cribs, some utensils, and toys are still preserved inside.



46

Tree symbol with a tragic fate



Pine Cross

The famous pine-cross from the Red Forest (#72) became a memorial long before the Chernobyl disaster. During the Second World War, the Germans hanged partisan prisoners from it, then Germans were hung from it. Iron brackets were driven into the tree trunk like a staircase. After the war, embroidered rushnyki (towels) were tied to them in memory of those who were executed, relatives of the victims came to this pine. The tree became a kind of memorial: it was enclosed with a fence, and a plaque and obelisk with a poem were placed nearby.

When the Red Forest was cut down and buried, this dead pine tree was not touched. However, it stood only a more few years and then collapsed, after which it was taken to an experimental radiological base in the village Novoshepelychi, where the tree lay among the debris of a barn, until recently. The image of the pine-symbol was placed on the badge of the First Congress of the Union of Chernobyl in 1990, and on the icon Chernobyl Savior from the Church of St. Elijah (#67). Another remarkable fact: this tree marked exactly where the radiation line was divided into western and northern traces, and touched only the outskirts of Pripyat.



51.4141032
30.0205064



Novoshepelychi village



47

Former dump for
"radioactive" equipment



Rassokha

This place – one of the most famous symbols of the Chernobyl disaster and liquidation – is a field with endless rows of vehicles and military equipment. In the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident, many vehicles were used in the Exclusion Zone, including armored military vehicles (engineering clearance vehicles, artillery bulldozers, etc.) and helicopters. They were contaminated with radiation above the levels that are safe for humans. Often the contamination was so intense and persistent that radioactive substances could not be removed at special decontamination stations. In this case, they were sent to temporary storage facilities, so-called “graveyards.” One of the largest in the Exclusion Zone was a plot near the village of Rassokha. According to various estimates, there were more than 1,100 items (military machinery, tractors, fire trucks, trucks, ambulances, buses, tankers, etc.) and Mi-8 and Mi-6 helicopters. These helicopters were extremely contaminated with radionuclides, because they worked directly over the collapsed nuclear reactor; they dropped sand, clay, and lead into its crater.



51.1567389
29.9780416



Rassokha village

Rassokha covers about 20 hectares (49.5 acres). It was not only the location for equipment, but also had a decontamination station. Since the early 2000s, a great deal of work has been done to clean up the dump. Much of the equipment was dismantled, decontaminated, and exported to metallurgical enterprises around Ukraine. Today, it is an empty field with concrete ramps, along the edges of which you can still find the remains of liquidators’ vehicles – cabs, wheels, etc.



Rassokha in 1992

48

This place will be safe
in 300 years



Buryakivka

The radioactive waste disposal facility Buryakivka is named after a village of the same name, although they are located quite far from each other. This is a large fenced field where more than 1.3 million tons of radioactive waste is buried in special trenches measuring 150×50 meters (492×164 ft), packed with a meter-thick layer of clay. “Dirty” equipment is allotted to a special small area. Cars are stacked up on each other almost in piles.

The radiation contamination is much higher than in Rassokha (#47), and the range of vehicles is somewhat different. Military helicopters Mi-24 (“Crocodiles”) are also preserved here. They were modified to eliminate the consequences of the Chernobyl accident. Since the Mi-24 had airtight cabins with radiation protection, they were adapted for radiation reconnaissance. In the southeastern part of the repository, there is a sludge disposal site. The bodies of Mi-8 helicopters, fire engines, military equipment (BRDM, BTR, IMR), tankers, etc. are located there. At Buryakivka, you can even see a wheeled robot that worked on the roof of the destroyed 4th power unit and “died” from the extreme radiation levels.



51.3328640
29.9162865



Stechanka village

The accident liquidators' equipment ended their days at the Buryakivka cemetery. Dump trucks that brought fuel for helicopters are piled up here



49

History of Pripjat residents' personal vehicles



"Field of Miracles"

Near the city there is the so-called "Field of Miracles." Here they buried Pripjat residents' contaminated cars. Pripjat garages, and the vehicles stored in them, were subject to contamination, but some were "lucky" – a few people managed to get their vehicles out. The cars were washed at sanitary processing points (PUsO) with special solutions in order to bring the radiation level to a more-or-less acceptable level. It did not always work, but many paid a bribe at the PUsO and took their "hot wheels" out, later undermining their own or other people's health. Before the disaster in Pripjat, more than 2,000 private cars and about 1,300 motorcycles were registered. Some of them managed to be taken out by local residents, the wreckage of others can still be found in the thick of the Zone's forests, where "metalworkers" (looters) have not yet reached. The remaining Pripjat vehicles were buried in the Zone, but not deep. Rain and looters revealed the wrecks of contaminated cars. Hence the name "Field of Miracles", where cars grow out of the ground...



51.400705
30.038466



Pripjat city

50

Buses that saved
hundreds of lives



Bus Cemetery

One of the most obscure objects of Chernobyl is a huge bus junk yard. At one time, these vehicles transported Exclusion Zone employees who were involved in decontamination and operation of the Shelter (#13). When the vehicles were decommissioned, they were placed in a huge sump near an abandoned elevator. This building is clearly visible from Kirov Street, on the way to Pripjat.

Basically, there are LAZ 695 “Lviv” buses built by the Lviv Bus Plant. Produced since 1955, this bus model was updated so many times, mostly externally, that its various modifications may seem like different vehicles. Moreover, all its versions were used simultaneously. It was designed considering the experience of the Mercedes Benz 321, and its style was developed from the Magirus bus model. Despite the cramped interior, narrow doors, overheating engine, and a number of other drawbacks, the LAZ was distinguished by the simplicity of its design and unpretentiousness on the worst roads. It had another interesting feature: if necessary, the LAZ is easy to convert into an ambulance, simply by dismantling the seats. In the front of the bus, under the windshield to the right of the driver’s seat, an additional door was provided for loading the wounded. Devised as a means of saving lives, the modest LAZ accomplished this task in 1986.



51.2720111
30.2086687



29/1 Polupanova St.
Chernobyl city



51

Legendary military vehicle
that protected liquidators
from radiation with its armor



ISU-152

The ISU-152 unit was created in 1943 on the basis of the IS-1 tank that had just been put into service. It was first used in the summer of 1944 during Operation Bagration, and it was then that this heavy self-propelled artillery mount received its nickname “Beast killer.” The vehicles distinguished themselves during street battles in Berlin and the storming of the powerful fortifications at Königsberg – its rounds pierced the thick walls of the enemy’s concrete ramparts. The ISU is famous for its armor protection and high-power artillery system. In Chernobyl, the ISU-152 also had the opportunity to serve its intended purpose: at some point, it was necessary to pierce the reactor wall in order to reduce the dangerously high level of water accumulated while extinguishing the fire, which could have led to the so-called “Chinese Syndrome”*, resulting in a new high-power blast. High radiation levels prevented combat engineers from approaching all the necessary points, and so they brought in the “Beast killer.” Even now, rusty and abandoned to fate, this self-propelled vehicle does not seem dead, but rather seems ready to fight again. However,

INTERESTING CHERNOBYL • TOP 100

illegal scrap collectors and looters, in contrast to the “Tigers” and “Panthers”, don’t engage in open battle.

**And although it was not necessary to shoot from the ISU (this task was carried out by three heroes who descended into a tank of water in diving suits), according to a popular legend, it was brought here just for that purpose.*



51.4002181
30.0770205



Pripyat city

52

T-62 tank-based combat engineering vehicle



IMR

The main purpose of the IMR is to create column tracks in difficult places, as well as passages in minefields for troop advancement. These powerful machines are equipped with electromagnetic attachments and mine-clearing systems; bulldozer and crane equipment; a dozer blade, mine trawl with fuses, etc. The armored body of the IMR is fully sealed and protects the crew from radiation with a reduction coefficient of 10 (modern equipment gives a factor of 1,000, and this difference was catastrophic for those who worked at Chernobyl). The vehicle also has a system for operating underwater, automatic fire extinguishing, anti-nuclear protection, and air filtration. It is equipped with a radiometer and a device for chemical reconnaissance. The typical army IMR was equipped with a Kalashnikov tank machine gun on the turret. Of course, they were removed from the machines that worked on the liquidation of the accident.

The IMRs performed the most difficult and dangerous work: they razed villages contaminated with radiation and the Red Forest (#72), buried and leveled radioactive waste and materials, and worked at



the graves. The crews of these machines received one of the highest doses of radiation, and the machines themselves were so polluted that they literally “glowed” from radiation. It all remained in the Exclusion Zone, the majority at Buryakivka (#48). Over the years, many have been cut into scrap and sent to recycling.



51.3984158
30.0516200



Zavodska St.
Pripyat city

53

The truly heroic fate
of combat vehicles



CRPV

Probably the most amazing fate has befallen combat reconnaissance vehicles (CRPVs) of the Soviet army. It all started with an incident of placing a conveyer where the authorities wanted it to go. It was supposed to be placed in distant Udmurtia but the authorities stopped it at provincial Arzamas. When Gorky Automobile Plant (GAZ) developed a new model range of civilian cars (the procedure was as follows: civilian vehicles were first developed, and then military vehicles were developed on their base), there was demand for a new CRPV. Ministry of Defense departments developed weapons and equipment. As a result, a vehicle appeared equipped with a new large-caliber machine gun, a powerful engine, and anti-nuclear protection system, which made the CRPVs indispensable during the liquidation of the accident at Chernobyl NPP (#11). Anti-tank missile systems “Glaz” (“Eye”), “Phalanga” (“Phalange”), “Malyutka” (“Little Baby”), and “Strela-1” (“Arrow-1”) were developed on the basis of the CRPV-2. Also added were the “Dolphin” radiation reconnaissance vehicle, the battalion commander’s command control vehicle, and the “Lisa” (“Fox”) anti-nuclear defense vehicle. All of them went to the



51.2863596
30.2022958



52 Kirova St.
Chernobyl city

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Chernobyl Zone and saved many human lives. After receiving huge doses of radiation, CRPVs were unsuitable for further use and remained contaminated forever. These anti-nuclear modifications could be seen in the “Rassokha” sump (#47) in 1986. Then they were cut-up for scrap, and now there are only photos and memories.



54

Sand and lead were thrown into the reactor's mouth with these rotary-winged machines



Mi-6 Helicopter

The first design of this aircraft of unprecedented size, with a 5-blade rotor with a diameter of 30 m (98 ft), appeared in 1952. And in 1954, the first version of the rotorcraft, officially called the Mi-6 (product 50), was built. The Mi-6 was considered a “new means of transporting troop units and almost all types of divisional artillery” and could carry 6 tons of cargo with normal take-off weight, 8 tons with re-loading, and 11.5 tons for shorter distances. The dimensions of the Mi-6 cargo compartment are similar to that of the An-8 and An-12; the fuselage is a metal-riveted semi-monocoque. This helicopter and many of its subsequent modifications were very popular with the military and civilians, and was in demand abroad. It had a baptism of fire in Afghanistan, as part of the legendary Independent Guards Airborne Regiment, known as the “Poltinnik” (“Fifty”). The 51st GDHR, a flight squadron, began operating in the Zone during the first days after the disaster at the Chernobyl NPP (#11), just six months after returning from the Afghanistan war. Mi-6s and Mi-6As (modified in 1971 with a maximum take-off weight of up to 44 tons)



were used for transport; then they started to use an external sling and dump lead and sand into the crater of the hot reactor. Most helicopter pilots received huge doses of radiation. In Chernobyl, a large part of the Soviet Mi-6 fleet remained, including those that served in Afghanistan and other wars.

These photos were taken more than 15 years ago, and the helicopters captured in them are still intact. Later, they were cut up for scrap, and today there is no trace of these vehicles



51.3328640
29.9162865



Stechanka village

This huge helicopter, like a fallen dragon, has already lost several blades and will not live much longer. Soon it, like its brothers, will be cut into pieces and taken out of the Zone



55

Mechanical emergency responders



Robots

After the accident at the Chernobyl NPP, it turned out that there were no vehicles in the USSR capable of operating at high levels of radiation. And part of the work on the Chernobyl NPP (#11) was impossible to perform without automatic remote-controlled systems.

A Chernobyl robot had to work in conditions of high radiation, move on complex surfaces (debris and obstacles), and needed to be inspected, repaired, and decontaminated. Different types of machines were needed (for radiation reconnaissance, tele- and photographing, sampling of radioactive materials, analysis of debris, burial of radioactive materials, etc.). This work was carried out on the roof of the Chernobyl NPP and in the areas adjacent to the destroyed block. About 15 types of modular robots were involved in the accident clean-up. Light reconnaissance robots were used to study the radiation conditions inside the sarcophagus, and heavy technological ones were intended for decontamination of the territory. But the majority turned out to be unsuitable for working in the conditions of the Chernobyl NPP. For example, the amphibious radio-controlled

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bulldozer Komatsu, capable of operating on the seabed, could not withstand the radiation doses and quickly broke down. Two German robots MF-2 and MF-3 could not stand the harsh conditions. The most well-known robots used at the Chernobyl NPP in 1986 were Klin-1, Specialized Transport Robot (STR-1), Klin-2, Mobot-H-HV and Mobot-H-HV-2, BAER (Beloyarets), MVT -2, TR-B1, RTK Avangard, and PP-G1 (robot intelligence).

On the outskirts of Chernobyl in the direction of Pripyat there is a special exposition platform, where real robots that participated in the Chernobyl NPP accident clean-up are displayed.



51.2863596
30.2022958



52 Kirova St.
Chernobyl city

56

These trucks were the first
that arrived at the
catastrophe site



Fire Trucks

The workhorse of any fire brigade – the ATs-40 truck – carries on a vigil for almost half a century, despite the fact that many modifications have appeared over the years of its existence. It was made from 1970 to 1984 and was the most common fire truck in the USSR. It was intended for a combat crew of seven people, as well as fire-fighting equipment: water and foam agent, water tanks for 2,100 liters, and a 150-liter tank for foam. The truck used for extinguishing a fire drew water from a tank, an open pond, or water mains. Behind the standard ZIL-131 cabin, a combat crew cabin was welded. A pump and a coil with a hose for a fire hydrant were installed at the rear. On the roof of the cabin was mounted a stationary delivery monitor, which was controlled from the cabin through the hatch. For the convenience of the operator, the seat back in the rear cockpit folded back and formed a platform. On the roof was a pumping unit control panel. Another delivery monitor could be installed for supplying foam instead of water.



51.294666
30.045290



Chernobyl-2 town

57

Home of a bloodthirsty
monster



Combine Cemetery

The left bank of the Pripjat River is the least studied and wildest part of the Zone. On one side, it is blocked by the river's powerful current; on the other, the state border and many kilometers of another Zone belonging to the Republic of Belarus. Basically, this is a huge number of reservoirs, streams, and forests, among which are abandoned villages that have been lost. There is a wooden church here.

The grain-cleaning facility in the village of Zimovishche gained extraordinary popularity thanks to the game "S.T.A.L.K.E.R: Shadow of Chernobyl" (#97). One of the most dangerous monsters in the game lives here. And the greatest interest for a real-life visitor is the vehicle station with trucks and agricultural equipment, in particular, the shell of a "Niva" combine. This self-propelled combine harvester has been produced at the Rostselmash factory since 1970. It had a processing capacity of 5 kg (11 lbs) of grain per second. It was the most common combine in the USSR, and became a kind of calling card of Soviet agricultural machinery. Any TV program or newspaper article about the "battle for the harvest" was illustrated with the image of 3 or 4 "Niva" combines, feeding a continuous stream of wheat into the truck's body, sparkling in the sun.



51.4203794
30.1678991



Zimovishche village



58

Trolley in the midst of
a barren field



Trolleybus

There are many objects in the Exclusion Zone that are surprising by their obvious irrelevance, such as the motor boat on the Volkhov (#64), although there is not a single reservoir in the area. A no less absurd and fantastic spectacle is the famous “Chernobyl trolley” which “goes to the east.” It stands in the middle of a field, almost completely demolished and buried in the ground on the outskirts of the village Kopachi, very close to Chernobyl (#3). There has never been a road or power lines here. Where did it come from? This city trolley, brand MTB-82, was the most common in the USSR from 1946 to 1961. Some 5,000 of these trolleybuses were produced. By early 1960, all of them had been written off and used for different purposes. The inscription “Master station #2 RayDRSU Chernobyl” can be seen on the trolleybus from the village Kopachi. It was used as a self-propelled storage room during the construction of the nuclear power plant. Now it has become a cult tourist attraction with an interior that includes chairs and a table with notes left by visitors.

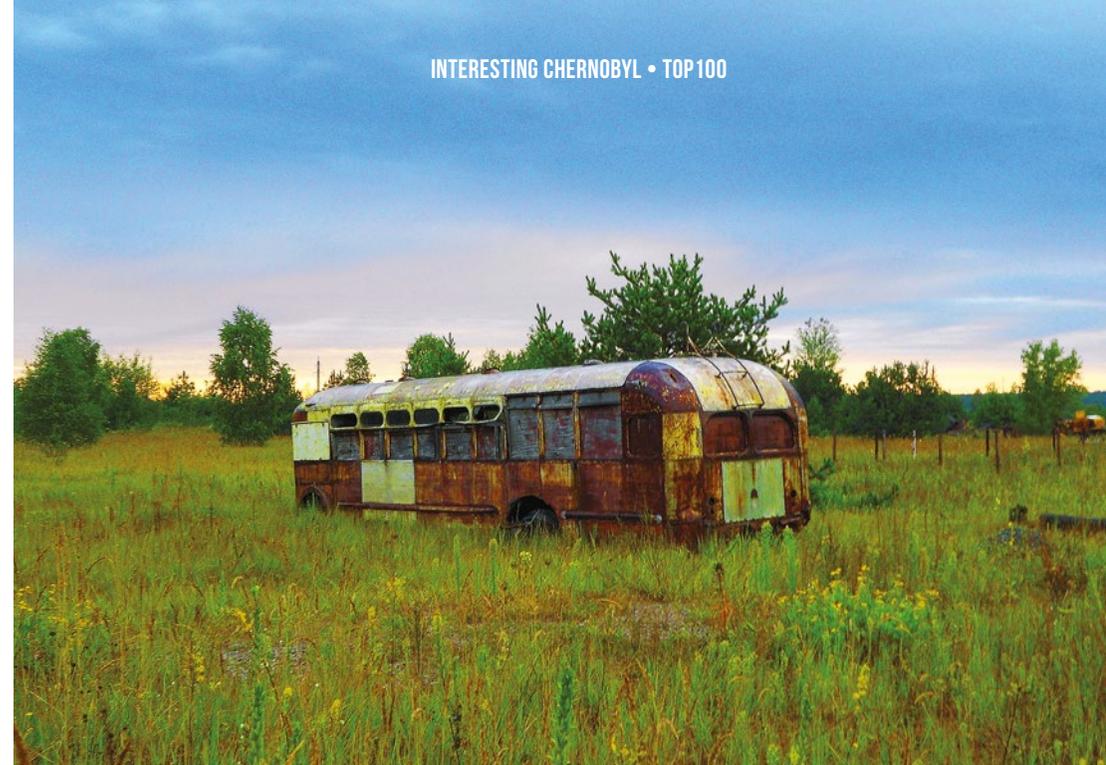


51.3453322
30.1081932



Kopachi village

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59

Remains of someone's
microcar in the village
Stechanka



“Invalidka” Car

The SZD car for disabled people – a twin-seat, four-wheel cyclecar – was manufactured by the Serpukhov Automobile Plant (originally a motor plant) from 1970 to 1997. It belongs to the class of heavy quadricycles with IZH Planet-2 and IZH Planet-3 engines. Given the unflattering nickname “invalidka” (not so much in association with the owner, but rather in connection with its own qualities), this microcar was planned as a rural off-road vehicle for people with disabilities, but the future manufacturer did not have the necessary equipment for producing complex parts, and the design of the “invalidka” was defined as “a simplified body of original construction.”

These cars were distributed by state social care agencies for partial or full payment. They were given to the owner for 5 years. A special category A driver’s license (for motorcycles and scooters) was required to drive an “invalidka.”



51.304201
29.921360



Collective Farm “Pobeda”
Stechanka village

60

Secret object that
can't be missed



"Duga-1"

This legendary secret object still boggles the mind. They said it was a zombie radar to control the will of the Soviet people, or even a brain "burner." This myth is used in the plot of the famous S.T.A.L.K.E.R. computer game (#97). Now it is no secret that it was intended as a long-range radar. The giant antenna detected launches of the American Shuttle spacecraft, but its main purpose was the probable nuclear missile attack from the West, including launches from nuclear submarines. The facility was commissioned in 1985, at the very end of the Cold War.

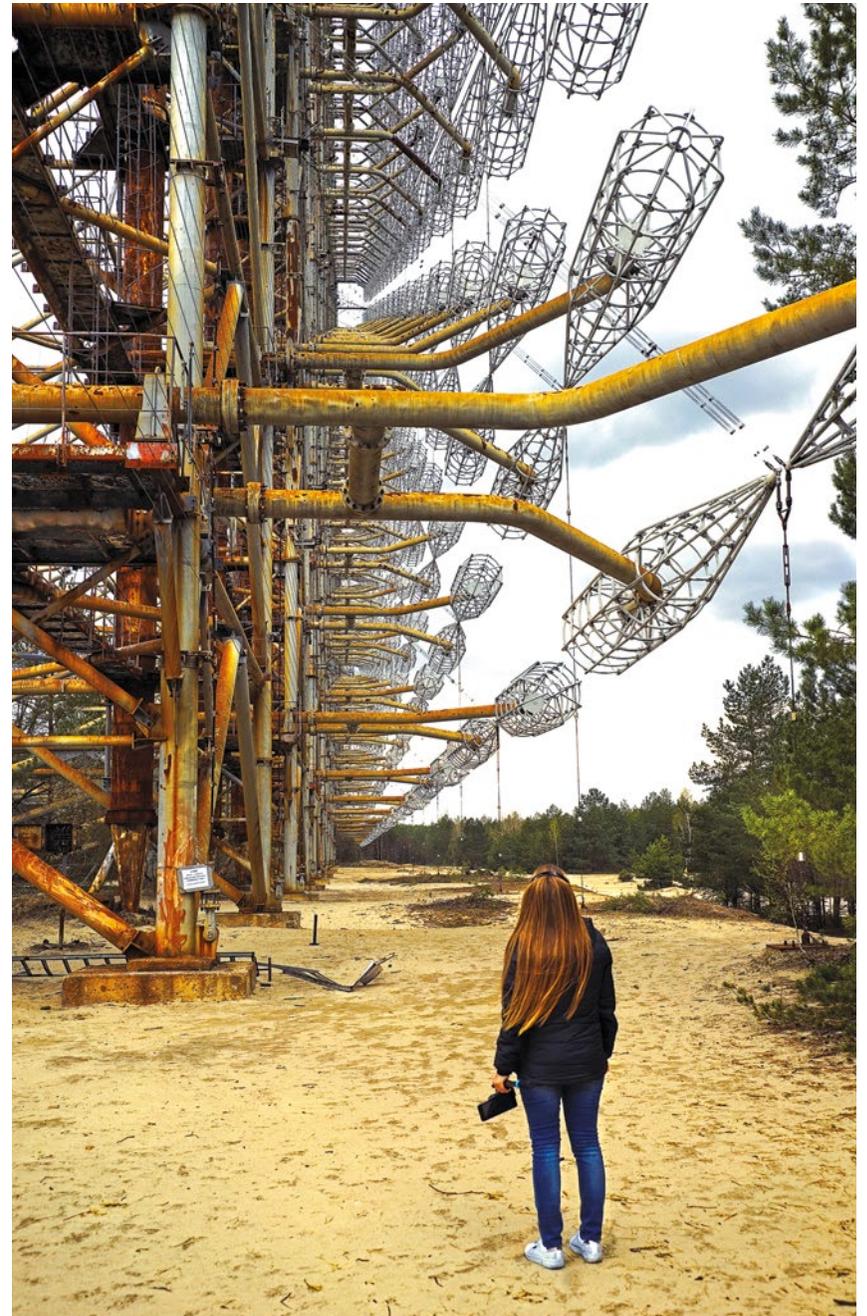
The antenna consists of two radar grids, small and large. There is also the command post and auxiliary systems building. Only 3 of these complexes were built in the USSR. One was near Mykolaiv, the other in Komsomolsk-on-Amur, and the last in Chernobyl. The first two have long been dismantled. Only the third survived, closed in 1987, of course, due to the Chernobyl accident. After all, Duga-1 is only 9 km (5.5 mi) from the nuclear power plant. The place was not chosen by chance; the colossus consumed a huge amount of electricity. NATO military called it the Russian Woodpecker because of the characteristic tapping noise it caused on shortwave radio bands. They also say the antenna interfered with civilian air travel, so the world community demanded that it be silenced.



51.3050502
30.0657177



Chernobyl-2 town



60

Duga's dimensions are usually measured by football fields. There is no need to go far, the overgrown football field of the town of Chernobyl-2 (#83) is nearby. In general, these radars were useless, because they could not fix starting points. However, in Soviet times, they did not spare money for military experiments



61

Factory that produced tape recorders and robots



“Jupiter” Plant

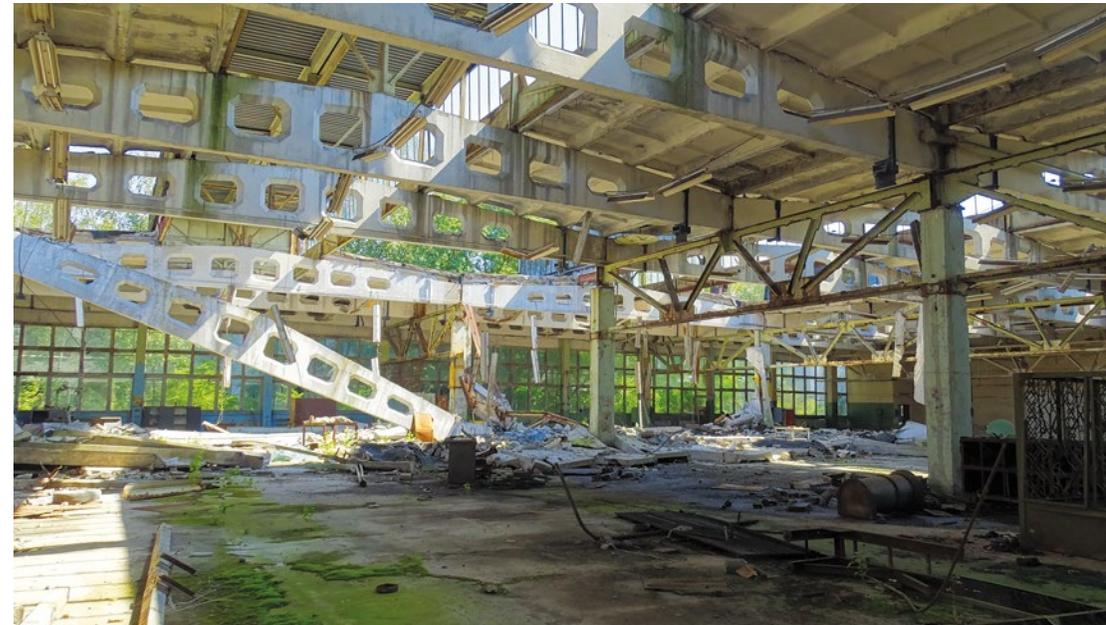
The “Jupiter” plant, whose buildings and assembly shops cover about 70,000 sqm (753,473 sq ft), is in the western part of Pripyat. Before the accident, the plant had a dual purpose: in addition to “Jupiter” tape recorders, it produced electronic components for the USSR’s military-industrial complex. According to rumors, electronics for air defense systems or “black boxes” for military aircraft were manufactured here.

After the accident, in 1987-1988, work resumed in the factory shop. The company “Spetsatom”, working on decontamination of the station, Pripyat (#2), and the zone closest to the Chernobyl NPP, used the plant for production.

Over time, it began to make robots for work in the sarcophagus (#13), as well as robotic systems and special products for other NPPs in the USSR. By the end of the 1990s, when heat and hot water were no longer supplied to Pripyat, the plant’s ceased to operate. Much of the equipment was transported to the village of Bilhorod near Kyiv. Jupiter’s production workshops, laboratories, and administrative buildings



became a bonanza for illegal scrap metal collectors. The factory’s abandoned buildings and workshops are dilapidated. Already parts of the roof in the production buildings have collapsed. It will take just a little more time for the metal scrappers, corrosion, wind, and rain to destroy the building.



51.4025925
30.0428224



11 Zavodskaya St.
Pripyat city

62

Unique station that never fulfilled its purpose



VNZ "Krug"

The Krug (Circle) is an auxiliary system for the Duga-1 radar station (#60). Its official name is the Return-oblique Ionosphere Sounding Station (abbreviated VNZ in Ukrainian). It consists of two huge circles with a diameter of 300 meters (984 ft), on the perimeter of which are 240 ten-meter (33-foot) antennas, 120 per circle. In the middle is a low one-story building, the control center, on the roof of which was a large antenna that served as a kind of target designator for the rest. There was a fire after the Chernobyl accident. It is rumored that the military torched the building so that no one could get the equipment. True or not, the fire truck (#56) used to fight the fire remains in the courtyard.

Unfortunately, now the Krug is almost destroyed. In the early 2000s, a number of antennas were cut down. For a long time, the parts were abandoned. Researchers in the Zone even began to hope that looters were disappointed with these places and forgot the way here. How wrong they were. The Krug's second radius started to be

looted in February 2015. A concrete road from the Chernobyl-2 to the Krug was dismantled back in the 1990s. This facility still has the feel of a typical Soviet military unit. The guard towers have fallen. At the entrance is a shabby gate with large red stars. The officers who served at the Krugs located at two Soviet OTHR (Over-the-horizon radars) were convinced that these antennas were useless, and believed that most likely the Krug at Chernobyl-2 was also not useful for anything.



51.294666
30.045290



Chernobyl-2 town

63

Former auxiliary farm
for the military

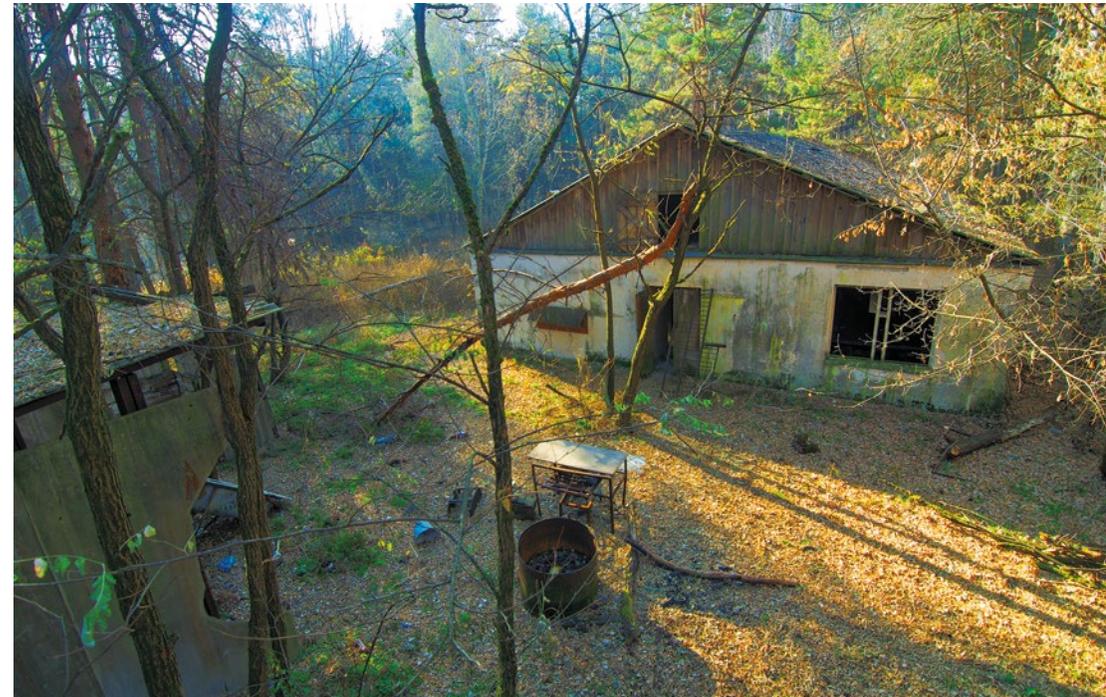


Pig Farm

In the military areas of the Soviet Union, there was an unspoken rule: the farther away from the commanders' gaze it was, the more it functioned like a principality with its own rules and laws. They established a daily routine, and set up auxiliary farms where the soldiers worked free of charge: they planted vegetable gardens, and raised poultry, rabbits, or pigs.

VNZ "Krug" (#62) also had a pig farm, they even canned stewed pork here, which was a staple in the diet of every Soviet soldier.

Now stalkers (#98) have taken a fancy to the abandoned pig farm, and the looters who lived here in the 1990s left behind cots and an excellent metal camp stove. They grew potatoes and marijuana in the yard. There were several police raids at some point, even with the use of firearms, as evidenced by the bullet holes in the walls. The last looters were seen here just a year ago. They say that criminals know the Zone much better than any law enforcement officer or stalker (#98).



51.2922239
30.0450754



Chernobyl-2 town

64

Abandoned Air
Defense System

"Volkhov"

The Soviet mobile S-75 anti-aircraft missile system was developed in 1957. Its tasks included the destruction of targets flying at speeds of up to 1,500 km/h (932 mph) at altitudes of 3-20 km (1.8-12.4 mi), changing positions, and ambush operations. The Volkhov, a modification that became the base for all subsequent systems, was put into service in 1961.

This is what provided air defense for the Chernobyl NPP (#11) and the military facility Chernobyl-2 (#83).

This military unit is a small set of buildings located in the middle of the forest: a control bunker, protected by massive airtight doors twice as tall as a person; barracks, containers for cars; and six missile launch sites. Around Volkhov are remnants of various vehicles – a caterpillar tractor, an overturned ZIL tank truck, and (Lord knows from where) a motor boat.

In our time, the air defense support function was transferred to a mobile squadron, utilizing the much more modern Buk anti-aircraft system, which was also based not far from the nuclear power plant.

51.3312552
30.1169586

Kopachi village

64



65

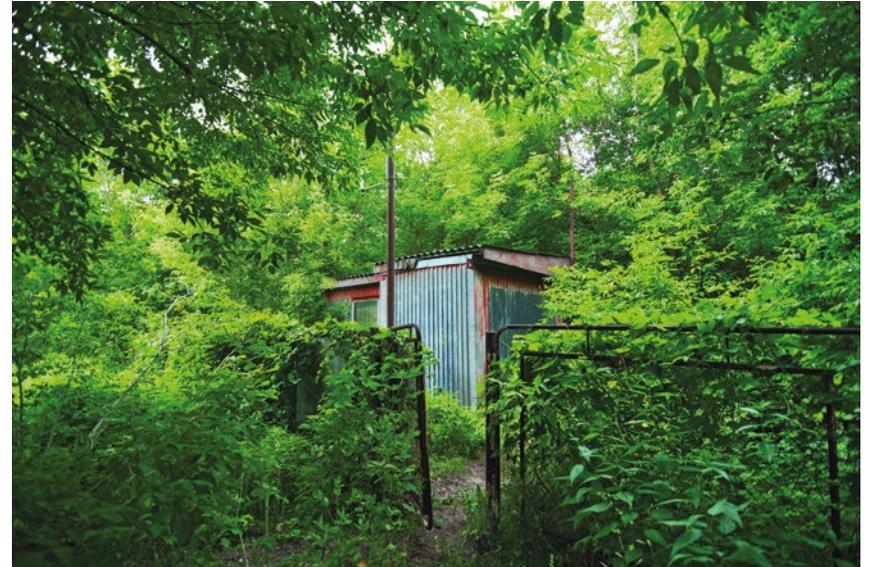
Post-radiation monitoring



ARMS

If you wander around the Zone long enough, sooner or later you will come across strange white houses measuring 4-6 meters (13-20 ft). They stand in the most unexpected places: on the industrial site of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant (#11), in abandoned villages, in the middle of fields. A concrete building without windows, encircled by equipment – towers with instruments, small troughs. In the buildings is usually something noisy, some mechanism is working. These are posts for the Exclusion Zone's radiation and environmental monitoring system. Each post has a set of instruments for monitoring the surrounding environment. In total, there are 13 of these posts: 4 are in the 10-kilometer zone, and 9 are in the 30-kilometer zone. They were set up after the accident and began operating in 1988. Their prototype was a radiation monitoring system used at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site (in Kazakhstan).

An observation network of 40 special sensors forms the basis of the automated radiation monitoring system (ARMS). ARMS is the first link in the detection of a major radiation incident. Therefore, its information is constantly sent to the operational dispatch center. In normal mode, the sensor transmits data once per hour; in the event of an alarm, every 3 minutes. In case of an accident, the system will allow for the visualization of the radiation situation and track its changes.



66

Pre-Revolutionary
meteorological station
in Chernobyl



Weather Station

The meteorological post in Chernobyl has been operating since 1909. In 1925, it was expanded into a meteorological station. Since 1977, it has been part of a network of observation stations and laboratory monitoring of environmental radioactive contamination. On April 26, 1986, the meteorological stations were among the first to receive true information about the scale of environmental radioactive pollution as a result of the Chernobyl accident. The weather station worked until May 5; further observations were led a special task force. Since May 1, 1988, the station has been fully restored. The station conducts round-the-clock meteorological observations of wind direction and speed, atmospheric pressure, air temperature and humidity, soil temperature, precipitation, cloudiness, visibility, and atmospheric phenomena, as well as radiometric observations of the gamma background level, air pollution, and radioactive pollution of precipitation. There are 7 staff, who work in teams of 3 on 15-day shifts.



51.2661913
30.2256739



Koshevogo St.
Chernobyl city

INTERESTING CHERNOBYL • TOP 100



67

The only active parish church in Chernobyl



St. Elijah Church

The Radomyshl church council began to build St. Elijah Church in 1749. The parish school and clergy houses were set up near it. In 1873, the wooden church burned down, and in its place a stone one was erected, for which all parishioners were levied a special tax: for the construction, they were obliged to supply eggs and fresh morning cow's milk, which was added to a lime solution. Thanks to this, the walls of the church were extremely durable.

In 1930, services in St. Elijah were stopped, and the bells were removed from the belfry and broken. Services resumed in 1942 and continue to this day. According to a long-standing custom, clergymen from other parishes are invited to Chernobyl for the feast of Prophet Elijah. In the church, there is a unique icon of St. Nicholas. It was painted in the 17th century and is considered miraculous. After the evacuation of Chernobyl (#4), there were several robbery attempts. The looters wanted to pull out the door with a cable, but it burst and mutilated the faces of the robbers. They say that St. Nicholas protects the church. Services here were resumed with the return of parishioners from among samoseli (#8) and the Exclusion Zone workers.



51.2724676
30.2380443



Chervonoarmiyska St.
Chernobyl city



In the courtyard there is a Bell of Sorrow. Every year on the night of April 26, at exactly 1:23, on the anniversary of the disaster, it rings. As many times as the years that have passed since the day of the accident.





68

Recently restored monastery



Novo-Nikolsky Monastery

On the right bank of the river Uzh (#91) stood the wealthy Novo-Nikolsky Old Believer men's monastery, founded in 1805. In addition to several churches, there were 50 houses for monks and one chapel. The monastery owned a fair amount of land, which later was confiscated by the imperial authorities. Only the 1882 Nativity Church has been preserved until our time. According to local residents, it housed a store in 1957. In the 1990s, the former monastery and cemetery were in a state of neglect. Since 2011, the women's Kyiv Pokrovsky Monastery has had a skete here, called Pustinno-Nikolsky. Unfortunately, the restoration of the monastery has been handled rather carelessly. They destroyed part of the old cemetery and an alley of trees planted in memory of the heroes of the Second World War. The monastery is closed to the public. Getting here without advance agreement is problematic.



51.2076362
29.8713112



Bychky village

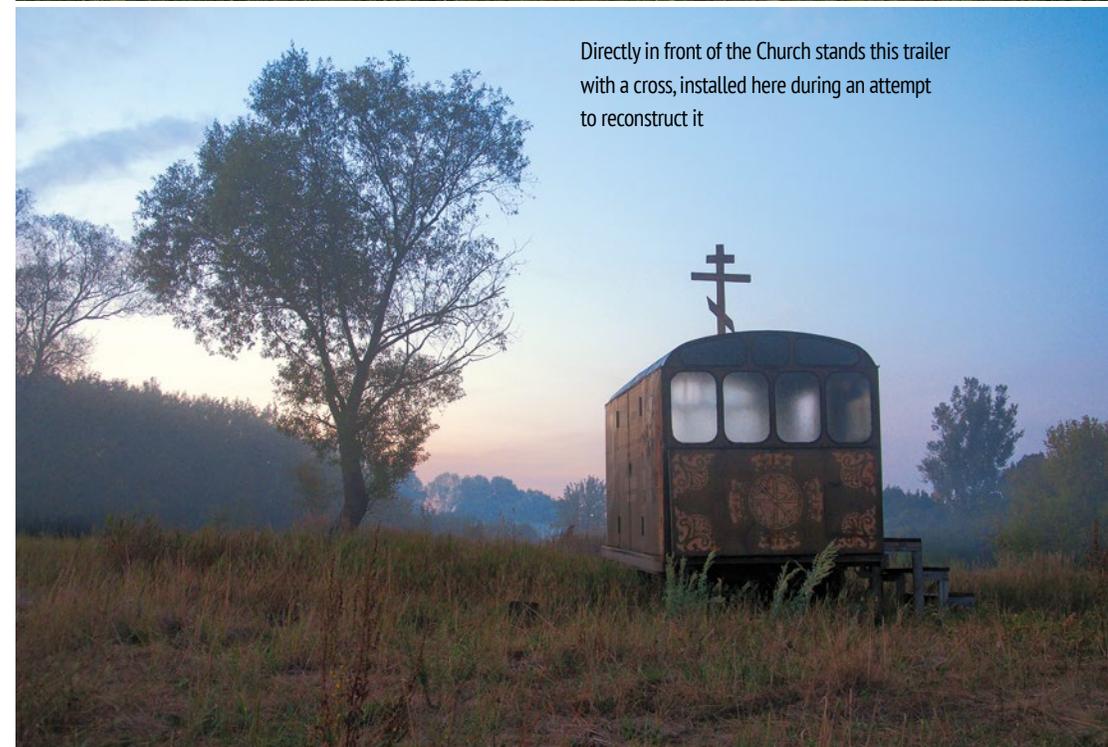
69

Ruins of the last church
of the Kazan Mother
of God Monastery



Church in Zamoshnya

In the village of Zamoshnya, 20 km (12 mi) from Chernobyl, are the ruins of the Church of Our Lady of Kazan, all that remains of the monastery of the same name. The church was built in the middle of the 19th century, financed by merchant Old Believers. It was closed in the 1930s during the persecution of religion. After the war, it was used as a warehouse. According to local residents, they also tried to use the church as a club. In the 1980s, the building fell into disrepair, the arches collapsed. A few years ago, the rector of St. Elijah Church (#67) and the local Orthodox community attempted to rebuild the church. Now the reconstruction is on hold due to lack of funds. Immediately after the accident, several ethnographic expeditions were sent here, and they found some Old Believers books, including a handwritten textbook of church songs with musical notations, as well as a collection of canons published by Old Believers Moscow printing house. All finds are dated to the 19th century. It is strange that looters did not get to them, because some of the books found even had covers.



Directly in front of the Church stands this trailer with a cross, installed here during an attempt to reconstruct it



51.2391968
29.8889387



Zamoshnya village

The ruins of the Church of the Kazan Mother of God – this is the only surviving building of the former Old Believer women's monastery from the 19th century



70

Church of Archangel Michael in the Exclusion Zone



Church in Krasne

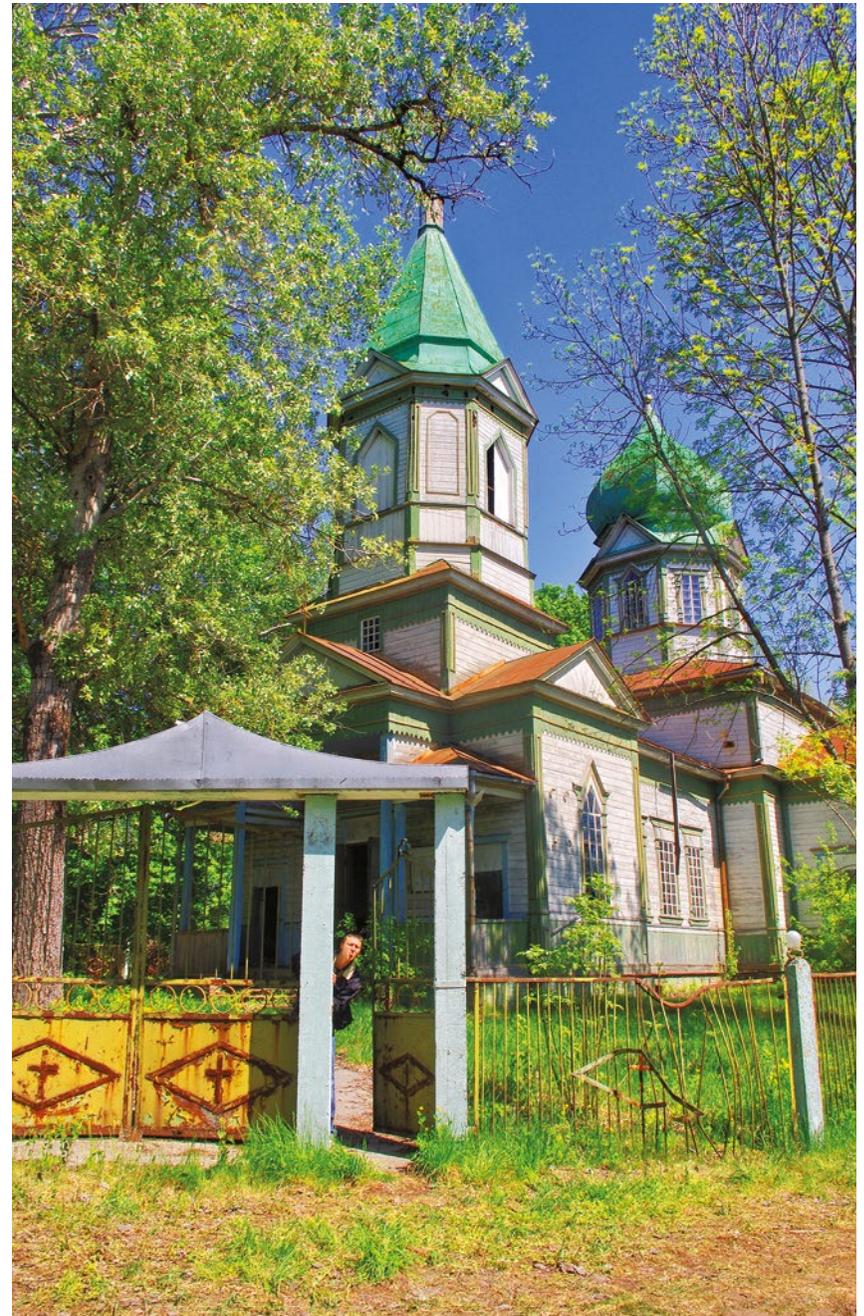
The only surviving church in the Exclusion Zone on the left bank of the Pripyat (#90) is located in the village of Krasne, evacuated in 1986. Previously, it was located in the village Masheve, but then was moved closer to the water. The year 1800 is erroneously marked on the facade of the present church as the date of construction. Obviously, it was completely rebuilt in the late 19th – early 20th century. In the “Tales of the towns of Kyiv province” (1864), this rich church of the 5th class is described. The construction that has lasted until our time is more modest and typical for the churches of Polissya. Orthodox pilgrims very rarely travel here, crossing almost 30 km (18.6 mi) shaking and crawling, like a snail, in a bus along a narrow road with potholes, from Chernobyl to the cherished church, through a kind of enclave, on one side the river, and brotherly Belarus on the other. The church is not locked. Of course, it is creepy to come here at night. It is reminiscent of a Nikolai Gogol story. But only small timid owls live here. And drafts, blowing through the cracks, have scattered the requiem and prayer notes of pilgrims.



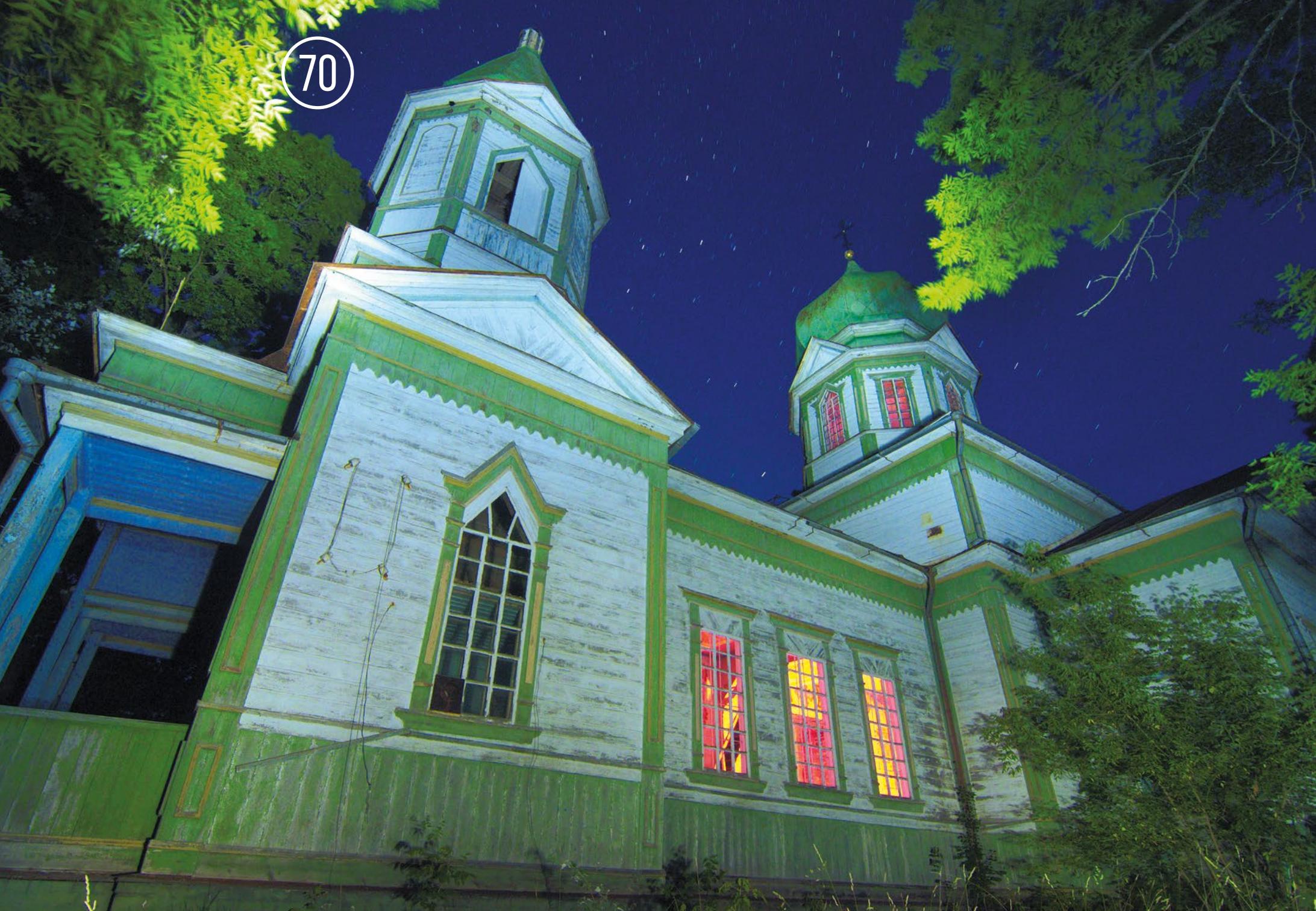
51.4565875
30.1198769



Krasne village



70



71

Icon depicting heroes
and participants of
the Chernobyl tragedy



Our Savior Icon

One of the main attractions of St. Elijah Church (#67) is the icon “Chernobyl the Savior”, painted in 2003 by Vladislav Goretsky and consecrated near the walls of the Assumption Church in the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra.

It is unique because it is the only one in Orthodoxy that depicts people next to the faces of saints. At the top of the image are the figures of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, and the Archangel Michael. Below, in the center, is the Chernobyl pine (#46). On the left are the souls of the dead Chernobyl victims, on the right are the liquidators of the accident: a fireman in a respirator, an NPP worker, a pilot, a nurse. On the horizon, behind the sarcophagus, the glow of the sunrise burns, the Wormwood star flies in the sky. In the background is scorched earth; in the foreground, it is green, reviving. According to believers, the icon has a miraculous power. Many people come to worship before it. Every year, at the request of believers, the icon is sent for a religious procession around Ukraine. The abbot of St. Elijah Church is Archpriest Mykola Yakushin, a native resident of Chernobyl.



51.2724676
30.2380443



Chervonoarmiyska St.
Chernobyl city

Samoseli (#8) and employees of enterprises in the Zone worship here. However, the church is eagerly visited by the dignitaries who come to the Exclusion Zone on official visits.

A mosaic copy of the icon is in a church in Kyiv on Chernobyl Street.



72

Forest burnt from radiation
and buried in the ground



Red Forest

The forest, now known as Red (Rusty, Ginger), is 202 hectares (499 acres) of coniferous trees, mainly pines, on the outskirts of Pripyat. It fell under the Western radiation trail immediately after the accident. The deadly level of radiation for pine trees is 4 times lower than for humans. The pine trees burned within 30 minutes of irradiation, from the excessive amount, and over the next two days, all the trees in this area turned first a red and then a ginger color, and at night they visibly glowed. In the first weeks of disaster clean-up operations, about 150 hectares (370 acres) were cut down. The trees were buried in the ground with the help of IMRs (engineering clearing vehicles built on the basis of tanks). This technique was subsequently one of the most “backgrounding” and the drivers received high doses of radiation. Today’s Red Forest consists of new trees that grew in the same place. The level of radiation here has decreased significantly, but is still unsafe. The famous pine-cross (#46) grew in the Red Forest.



51.3831381
30.0606537



Kopachi village

72

This forest grew on the site of the famous Red Forest. The trunks of the trees appear charred, as if a wave of radiation flashed over them just the other day

73

Sand in which soil was buried



Sandy Plateau

According to the master plan, Pripyat (#2) should have been almost two times larger. New homes were being constructed in parallel with the increasing power of the nuclear power plant. At least two more units were planned for commission at the Chernobyl NPP (#11), and even more later on. And the population would increase accordingly. Following the 5th micro-district, arrangements for the site of the 6th and 7th began. The city would extend to the river of the same name. To do this, they deposited a sand bank and were about to start constructing the buildings. But fate ruled otherwise. The place cleared for construction of the 6th and 7th micro-districts became one of the most contaminated in the Exclusion Zone, the “Sandy Plateau” burial ground, where soil and resident’s personal belongings were buried. It is 4 km (2.5 mi) from the Chernobyl NPP and was planned as a temporary burial, but it still exists today. Here, 82 trench-type burial places and 8 simple burial mounds were made, where items were simply dumped into a heap, covered from above, and enclosed by a moat dug around the perimeter. These low sandy mounds and flat areas of land are heavily lined with radiation danger signs (#6).



51.4140631
30.0670910



Pripyat city

74

Island of dead ships



Fleet Base

One of the most interesting objects in Chernobyl (#3) is the repair and operational base of the river fleet. It is on a peninsula that is formed by the river Pripjat (#90) and the Chernobyl backwater. This place is now known as the “Island of ships.” A flotilla of ships stands here on an eternal track – ships, boats, and barges that were taking part in the transport of goods used in the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident (#1). Many of them were not heavily contaminated by radiation, but were still written off. You will also find there a few high-speed passenger boats that went along the route Mozyr – Pripjat – Chernobyl – Kyiv. Subsequently, part of the ships were cut up for scrap after decontamination. Thus died the famous “Skadovsk”, caught in the cult game S.T.A.L.K.E.R. (#97). Today, the patrol boat “Stalker” stays on the river port coast. One of the two remaining Lenin monuments in the city can be found at the Repair Base post.



51.2845344
30.2138400



Chernobyl city

75

The place where chimeras live



Yanov Station

The Yanov railway station was built according to the same standard design as Vilcha (#87) in 1930, near the village of the same name. It became famous thanks to the computer game S.T.A.L.K.E.R., when it became the abode of one of the most dangerous monsters of the fictional Zone. In reality, it marked the beginning of Pripyat (#2). Supplies of materials and equipment for construction of the atomic scientists' city were delivered by this branch railway line. Since the young model city was supplied as a top priority, a new type of market was opened here in 1983. Agricultural products were sold at it, and on weekends and holidays, fairs were organized where it was possible to buy consumer goods, books, and scarce confectionery. On April 27, 1986, trains were brought in to take people out of the Exclusion Zone (#7). Yanov village was completely demolished and buried in the very first weeks after the disaster.

During the liquidation of the consequences of the accident, the Yanov station again acquired key importance and was actively used during construction of the New Safe Confinement, or Arch (#12). However,



even in its closed condition, there are still some interesting examples of Soviet railway equipment here, thus making it a place of pilgrimage for tourist groups and lonely explorers of the Zone.



51.3928731
30.0547743



Pripyat city

76

Pripyat's former port



Yanivsky Zaton

Yanivsky Zaton is an artificial reservoir created for solving transport problems in the city of Pripyat. In the 1970s – 1980s, water transportation was used extensively to move passengers and goods from Kyiv and Chernobyl to Pripyat. Passenger ferries made several trips a day. Construction material for the Chernobyl NPP (#11) was delivered by river.

Today, there are still 4 cargo cranes in the bay that worked there before the accident. As a result of the disaster, the area of water and surroundings were heavily contaminated with radioactive substances, for which a dam was erected between the inlet and the Pripjat River to protect them.

Today, Yanivsky Zaton is a closed reservoir. It attracts the attention of scientists studying the levels of radionuclide contamination in plants and fish, as well as the consequences of their exposure. Another cult place for all lovers of post-apocalypse Pripyat is the river port on the Yanivsky inlet.



51.4079868
30.0785923



Pripyat city



It was here that the legendary Soviet “Rocket” moored – hydrofoil vessels. Excursions to the city were offered every Saturday and Sunday. Tourists were fed multi-course meals at the city restaurant, and its 100 seats were always occupied.



These monstrosities, which look like the giant Martian walking machines from Orson Wells' "War of the Worlds," are portal loading cranes with a lifting capacity of 80 tons



77

Former elite recreation center



"Izumrudnoye"

Closer to Pripyat is the recreation camp "Izumrudnoye" ("Emerald"). It is a real paradise, located on the bank of the Chernobyl NPP cooling pond (#16). Before the accident, soldiers from the garrison of the secret town Chernobyl-2 (#83) liked to rest here, as well as nuclear engineers and people with connections, because getting a pass for the Emerald was quite difficult. At the camp, there are about 100 wooden summer houses spread throughout a beautiful pine grove. Just like other recreation camps, the Emerald wasn't abandoned immediately after the accident. A squadron of liquidators was stationed here. Their respirators and other things can still be found throughout the area. A well-worn vehicle track is striking at the entrance: someone regularly comes here. However, it is not surprising that the main road from Dytyatky (#10) to Chernobyl NPP passes nearby, and there is the Leliv checkpoint at the 10-kilometer Exclusion Zone. Quite often, guided tours with extended programs come here. It should be noted that the buildings and their contents are relatively well preserved. On the main street there are information stands on which they placed ads and propaganda. Many courtyards have tables and benches. There is also



a water tower. A shop was here, and you can still find refrigerators in it. There is a summer cinema with a still-standing projection booth and a painted wooden fence on which fairy-tale characters invite everyone to the next show: "Watch today on the screen."



51.3268574
30.1605606



Leliv village

77



78

Empty children's camp



"Skazochny"

Pioneer camp "Skazochny" ("Fairy Tale") is located on the banks of the river Uzh, 30 km (18.5 mi) from Pripyat. According to the ChNPP civil defense plan, all personnel had to be evacuated to here in case of an emergency. Therefore, for the first few years after the accident, engineers and other staff who worked at the station lived here. One of the liquidators, the artist Peter Emets, drew sketches here. Later, he would publish an album, which included "Fairytale" landscapes and portraits of its residents.

Now there are no human voices in the camp, only bird chirps and wolf howls at night. It's been left forever. There was a time when looters came here and dug trenches to get the non-ferrous metal cable. Now there are only tourists.

There is a broken pool, two-story dormitories, and sculpted images of fairy tale characters. A rusty soda machine, a stage. Broken windows, moss, and loose plaster in the rooms. A narrow-paved walkway

with rotting benches on either side leads to the river, but it suddenly stops – the shore of the Uzh has washed away, and water flooded everything. Previously, there was a clean little beach with metal "umbrellas." A swimming area for children was lined with special buoys so that no one swam in dangerous places. It was a happy childhood ...



51.1860144
30.0525856



Ilovnytsya village

79

Vacation site for the famous
Kyiv Film Studio



"Dovzhenko"

This base is located slightly west of Skazochny (#78). It is hidden in the forest on the side of the road, between the Uzh (#91) and Veresnya rivers. Unfortunately, the base is very poorly preserved: there are no longer any cabins. As at the Emerald (#77), they were painted with fairy tales. They were unusual as they were built on stilts. The only thing that survived here are the numerous latrines.

There are small tourist buses in the forest. They were here long before the accident, they were used as warehouses. Not even a scrap of paper is left in the ramshackle library. The old water tower is still intact, but illegal metal collectors will soon realize they can get a few extra tons here.

Before the Chernobyl disaster, hundreds of people vacationed here every year. And about 5 km (3 mi) to the west, near the village of Rassokha, there was an airfield. After the accident, troops that worked on the disaster clean-up were stationed here for a short time. They left gas masks and helmets scattered throughout the forest. But now this area is clean from radiation. At the airfield is the famous dump for radioactive equipment Rassokha (#47), which was eliminated at the



end of 2012. The ruins of the Kyiv film studio's former summer recreation camp won't last for much longer. Just a couple more years, and the forest will have finally swallowed it. Only photos and a dot on the map will remain.



51.1841315
30.0853300



Rudnia Veresnia village

80

Firemen's Monument, created
by firefighters



Firemen Memorial

One of the main monuments in Chernobyl (#3) is dedicated to the liquidators of the Chernobyl accident, not only firefighters, but also people of other expertise who participated in the aftermath of the nuclear reactor's destruction. The inscription on the monument reads "To those who saved the world."

The monument is unique in that it was not created by professional sculptors, but by ordinary firefighters, who still work in the city's fire department near which it stands. The group created the monument right on the parade ground. The figures of the firefighters and the liquidators were first made from wire cages, then were covered with concrete, giving a rough outline to the sculptures. Smaller details were chiseled, based on their posing comrades. Fire valves and hoses found in the fire station were used. They were installed in the composition and covered with concrete. The monument was created for the 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl accident. It's about 8 meters (26 ft) high, and depicts one of the symbols of the Chernobyl



51.2804141
30.2082020



Kirova St.
Chernobyl city

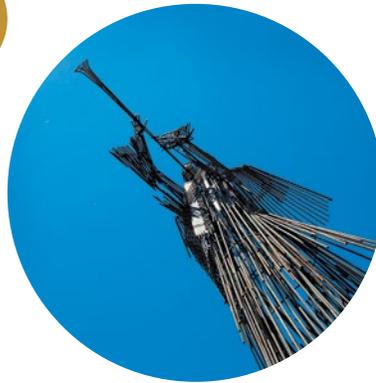
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NPP (#11), the sarcophagus' ventilation pipe, and a globe. On both sides of the saved Earth are the figures of liquidators, the people who saved humanity from the greatest man-made disaster. The monument is located on Kirov street. Today, it is very recognizable, and mini-copies are awarded as prizes at competitions in applied fire sports.



81

Park dedicated to the
memory of the disaster's
consequences



“Wormwood Star”

In the center of Chernobyl town (#3) is the Memorial Park “Wormwood Star.” White crosses stand along its main alley. There are a lot of them, 188 in all, with two signs hanging on each: the “beginning” and the “end” of a settlement with that name.

The construction of the memorial park began in 2010. Then, despite the protests of former residents of the city, an entire residential area was demolished. So, the former residents of Chernobyl were deprived of the opportunity to come to their native threshold at least once a year. The opening of the memorial complex was timed with the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl NPP disaster. The name was taken from the Bible: in the Book of Revelation of St. John the Theologian (Apocalypse), the final book of the New Testament, the Star of Wormwood is mentioned, which fell to the ground when the Third Angel sounded his trumpet. After that, a third of the waters became bitter. Since one of the names of the herb wormwood is chernobylnik, many believe that the Bible predicted the Chernobyl disaster.

Several monuments from other parts of the Exclusion Zone (#7) were brought to the memorial park, for example, a statue of a bull and a tamer. There is also a monument dedicated to the tragic events of Fukushima, as well as Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The compositional center is the trumpeting Third Angel made from rebar. He stands on a large concrete slab that resembles a map of the Exclusion Zone. Opposite, in the former cinema “Ukraina” (#26), there are several halls with various expositions on the subject of the disaster.



51.2733670
30.2258992



Sovietskaya St.
Chernobyl city

82

Monument to the heroes of
the Second World War



Park of Glory

The Chernobyl City Park was created in the 1950s on a place called Zamkova Hora, a naturally high terrace above the floodplain of the rivers Pripyat (#90) and Uzh (#91), where a real castle towered until the end of the 19th century. The park begins with the memorial “Alley of Glory”, which is lined with memorial plaques inscribed with the names of the heroes of the Second World War, a memorial stele. In the center of the park stands a concrete obelisk with the Eternal Flame; at the entrance is an anti-tank gun. The rest of the park served as a place of leisure for the townspeople; there were shady alleys, a dance floor, an open stage, and a platform with a view of the Pripyat River.

The park contains a record number of monuments in the Chernobyl Zone (#7) from the Soviet period: a cannon, several steles, busts of heroes, a monument to the Unknown Soldier in the form of a soldier’s bayonet, etc.



51.2755014
30.2363813



Chernobyl city

83

Military town in
a secret forest



Chernobyl-2

In the forest near the giant antenna Duga-1 (#60), a town was built for the military units serving at the facility. Chernobyl-2 had all the necessary infrastructure for a comfortable life. The town had its own shop, kindergarten, school, club, greenhouses, fire and sanitary facilities, two hotels, and even its own Green Theater. The residential complex for 1,500 people consisted of five 5-story buildings located on the town's only street, Kurchatov. Now this abandoned site is one of the most popular places in the Zone. The children's amusement park deserves special attention here. It was built mainly from materials left over from the construction of the antenna. The hill, built of radar reverberators, was illuminated in the evening by a lantern attached to a pole made from a geological drill.



51.3080014
30.0746441



Chernobyl-2 town

84

Heir to the dead city Pripyat



Slavutysh

Soon after the accident, construction began on Prip'yat's younger brother, Slavutysh. The new atom-town was also given the name of a nearby river: Slavutysh, one of the ancient names of the Dnipro. On the shore, a bay was dug and equipped, where builders' ships docked. What is common between Prip'yat (#2) and Slavutysh are the countless pines in the courtyards. But the architecture differs significantly. Slavutysh is the last city built in the USSR, and workers from several republics built it at the same time; therefore, each neighborhood was symbolically decorated in the national style. For example, the Yerevan quarter, erected by the Armenian SSR, is equipped with barbecue grills in the courtyards and even provided for the possibility of making shashlyk (grilled meat) on porches. For children, there are several excellent sports and recreation facilities, as well as a swimming pool, a cinema, an art school, and a children's arts and crafts center. There is still very little advertising in Slavutysh, which also creates the illusion of some Soviet times. The city is located a few dozen kilometers from Chernihiv, but administratively falls under Kyiv oblast, as well as



the Chernobyl NPP (#11). When, after the accident, they were looking for a place to build a new atom-town, it wasn't accidental that the choice fell on this site. A clean place was needed, with a railway, and at a distance of no more than 50 km (30 mi) from the nuclear power plant. Former Prip'yat residents and the workers from the power station, which operated until 2000, mainly lived here.



51.5224161
30.7545090



Slavutysh city

85

The most uninhabited
of the inhabited areas
in the Exclusion Zone



Narodychi

Narodychi is a large village, documented since the 15th century. Narodychi district ranks third in the level of radioactive contamination, after Chernobyl and Polissia. The level of gamma radiation (#5) here after the Chernobyl accident reached 10 milliroentgen. Now the situation has improved significantly, but on the outskirts and in the nearby forests you can see up to 300 microrentgen on a radiometer. It was planned to gradually relocate the village along with Polissia residents. Only the latter were resettled – it turned out that the most accommodating governing administration was there. About half of Narodychi’s population left.

The history of Narodychi was first highlighted in the USSR by the semi-forbidden documentary film “Micro-background.” In the early 1990s, the district had a sad rating for the number of abortions. However, people have recently started to actively move here, many young people have appeared. According to the police, a few years ago it was possible to get housing here for free. About a hundred jobs were created by the Drevlyans Nature Reserve, which was recently created



around the villages evacuated in 1986. Along the perimeter of the village were checkpoints and endless wire fencing. Officially, it is located in the Exclusion Zone (#7), but it was long ago quietly reclassified to the third category – habitable. Close to Narodychi are the deserted villages Novo Sharno, Staro Sharno, and Khristinovka. The first to be evacuated in the Narodychi district, on May 27, 1986, was the village of Dolhiy Les, which is almost on the border with Belarus. Resettlement of the entire area took until 1990.



51.2073136
29.0804672



Narodychi town

86

Deserted former center
of Poliske District



Poliske

Poliske is located almost 60 km (37 mi) from Pripyat (#2). It became one of the main evacuation support stations for the settlements most affected by radiation. Pripyat residents were placed in the homes of local residents, some received housing here. The Pripyat administration also moved here, and the Pripyat police department was located at the school. But after 5 years, the true scale of the tragedy began to open up. During the most active emissions from the destroyed power unit, the wind blew north and west, which saved Kyiv, located to the south. But Poliske was thoroughly “licked” by the Western radiation trail, which stretched to Rivne oblast.

In already-independent Ukraine, a so-called “second zone” was formed, requiring unconditional and obligatory resettlement, the same procedure as for the “thirty zone”, but without a wire perimeter. Poliske, which turned out to be on the border of two infected Zones, gradually began to be resettled. Radiation levels here were relatively low, but the density is very high. There was no panicked evacuation from the village, as in Pripyat. People took their property



51.2407484
29.3898869



Poliske town

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and furniture; government enterprises appropriated state property. Personal items infected with radiation were buried in a grave near the resettled village of Bober.

By 1997, there were only 15-20 samoseli (#8) left here, firmly determined not to leave their native land. The majority of residents moved to Pereiaslav-Khmelnyskiy, where a memorial to the Poliske District was created at the Museum of Folk Architecture and Household Traditions in Middle Naddnipryanschina.



87

Western gate of the
Exclusion Zone



Vilcha

Vilcha is the fourth largest former settlement in the Exclusion Zone (#7). It is located at the beginning of an abandoned 50-km-long (31-mi) railway line, and is, in fact, the conditional western border of the Exclusion Zone, kind of a gateway to it.

Vilcha, like the neighboring regional center Poliske (#86), began to be resettled only 10 years after the Chernobyl NPP accident. They realized late that the pollution levels here were barely lower than in the vicinity of the nuclear power plant itself. And construction of a new city for the nuclear engineers was already being developed on this site. Vilcha was ideally suited for it, with the basic conditions met: not more than 50 km (31 mi) from the nuclear power plant, and on a railway line. However, the Western Radiation Trail, one of the Chernobyl NPP's most powerful emissions, swept right through this area. Instead of constructing at Vilcha, Slavutych (#84) was quickly built, and, starting in 1993, a gradual resettlement began. After a few years, almost all of Vilcha's residents had moved to a village of the same name, built especially for them in Kharkiv oblast.



51.3638497
29.4234467



Vilcha town

88

Settlement in a
radioactive forest

Lesnoy

Lesnoy (Forest) was arranged like a small town. It had four streets: one with barracks and dormitories, and three with 2-room mobile homes (with kitchens, a porch, and a toilet). Also, there were three stores for groceries, vegetables, and industrial goods. The Cafe “Veterok” (“Breeze”) was located near the station Yanov (#75). The club “Chaika” (“Seagull”), which was called “Gidrozaray” (“Hydro Barn”), was used for Communist Party meetings and also screened movies and provided a stage where live artists performed. In addition, there was an outdoor theater for cinemas in summer, a health care center, post office, sauna, library, and hairdressing salon.

Initially, heat and hot water were supplied from a steam locomotive that stood without wheels. Then a gas boiler was built and the tracks were asphalted. After the builders received the first apartments in Pripyat (#2), workshops were based here. After the accident, Lesnoy was in the epicenter of radiation injury. Although the Red Forest (#72) was cut down to its roots and buried in the first weeks after the accident, no one touched the village. Small houses still stand here among the bushes.



51.3891373
30.0712109



Pripyat city

89

Demolished, abandoned or
buried in the ground



Dead Villages

The Exclusion Zone (#7) has 188 settlements. Among them are only two cities; the rest are villages, from small settlements of a few dozen houses to fairly large, urban-type settlements. Time, fire, decontamination, and purposeful elimination destroyed human settlements. As a result, there are only two signs along a road, at the beginning and at the end of a settlement; and in between, ruins. Sometimes even those are no longer there, only the grass-covered hills along the site of former streets. This is what the three buried villages near the Chernobyl NPP (#11) look like. Often these places are like an abandoned ethnographic museum under the open sky, the exhibits of which date back to the 17th and 18th centuries. One may find a wooden spinning wheel (on which they spun without a spindle, pulling the thread out of the tow with one hand and pressing the pedal with the foot); old wood stoves; cozy wicker cottages made from the flexible branches of filberts – wooden huts (kolyba) – under thatched roofs and lilac thickets. Time has gone with the people, and now history rules here.



During the Second World War, fierce fighting took place in this area. Many monuments to the soldiers-liberators have survived in the dead villages of the Exclusion Zone. This one stands in the village Mashevo



90

The longest right tributary
of the Dnipro



Pripyat River

The Pripyat flows through the territory of two states, Belarus and Ukraine. It is 775 km (481.5 mi) long, the basin area is almost 115,000 sq km (44,400 sq mi), which makes it the largest, in terms of water content, right tributary of the Dnipro. The banks almost everywhere are high and sandy. The river is turbulent and strong, it is also characterized by long spring floods, when the Pripyat spreads over several kilometers, and even tall trees are under water. Before construction of railroads and bridges in the 1930s, there was only a ferry crossing across the river, which was very difficult in the spring. During the Second World War, the bridges were blown up, and after, only one was restored, the railroad one.

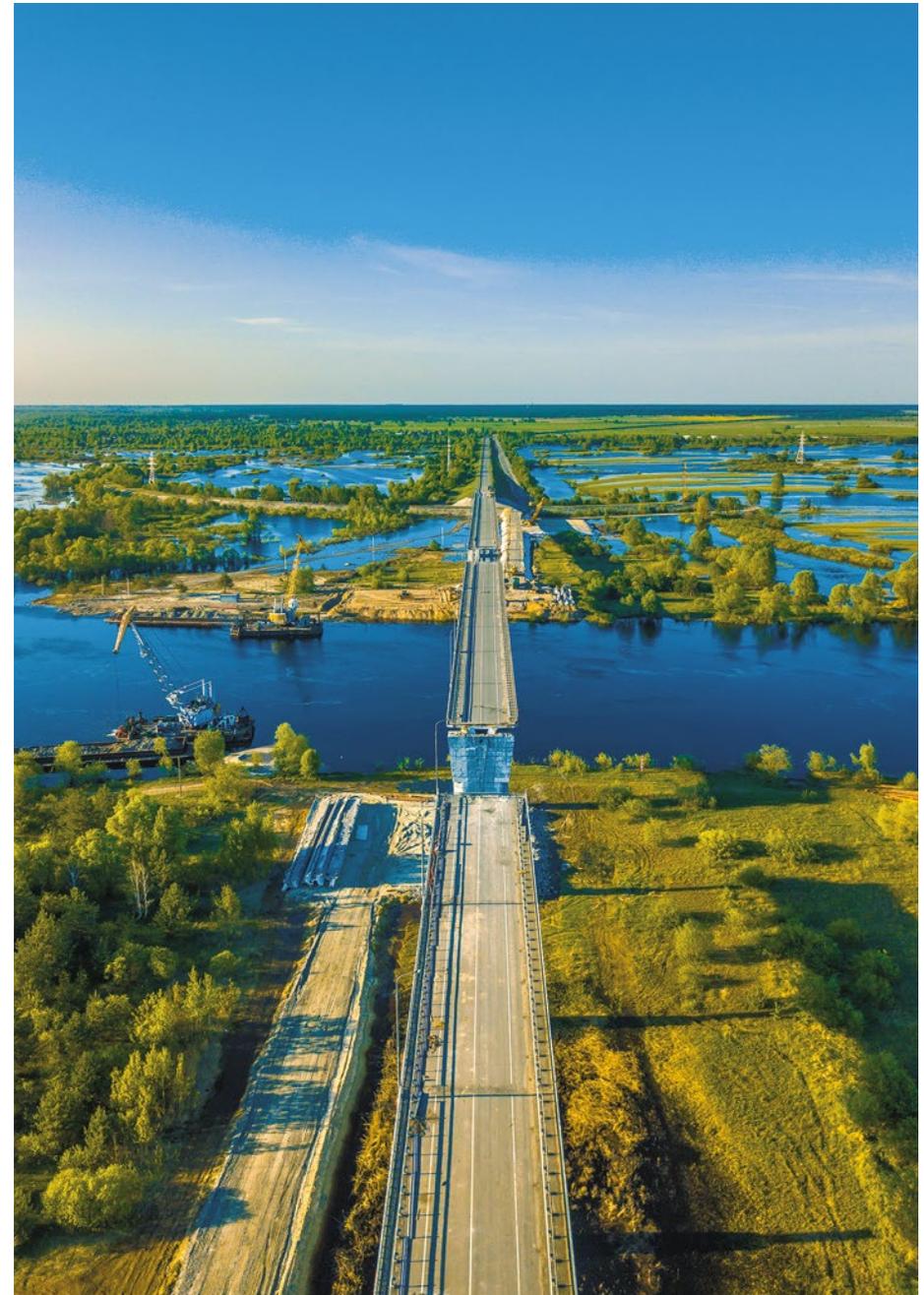
On the banks of the Pripyat, a city was built for the personnel of the Chernobyl NPP (#11), which was given the same name as the river, and a port was established at Yanivsky Zaton (#76), now heavily polluted with radiation and therefore separated from the river by a dam. South of Chernobyl (#3), the Pripyat flows into the Kyiv reservoir.



51.4178790
30.0804823



Pripjat city



91

One of the most radiation
polluted rivers in the country



Uzh River

The ancient name of the river Uzh (Water Snake) was Usha. It remains only in toponyms of the ancient town Ushomir on its shore. The Uzh is tortuous and not very long – only 256 km – with a basin totaling 8,802 sq km (3,120 sq mi). Its depth ranges from shallow waters where the river is only knee-level to quite deep and dangerous places with fast flow. Previously, there were numerous health resorts and recreation centers along the shores of the Uzh, such as “Skazochny” (#78), abandoned after the accident, as well as settlements, including Chernobyl (#3), the infamous “capital of radiation”, and currently relocated Poliske (#86) and Narodychi (#85). As a result, the river flows in quite a large gap through the territory with a radiation background much higher than the permissible limits. In fact, the Uzh is a real boundary of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (#7), which explains the years-long plan to cut down the shoreline.



51.2522921
30.2188278



Chernobyl city

92

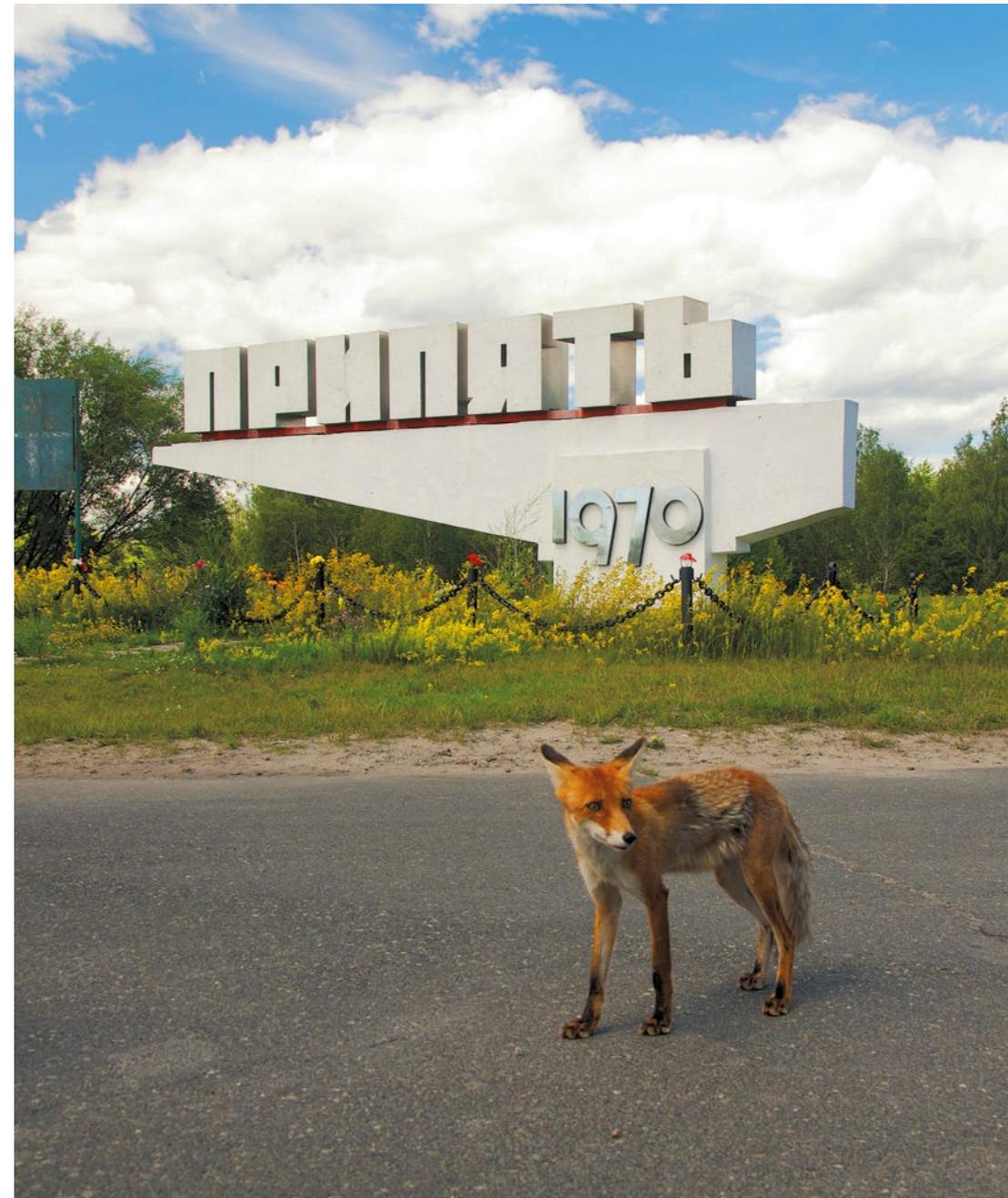
The best-known animal of
the Exclusion Zone



Fox Simeon

Tame fox Simeon has long been a celebrity. He is not only unafraid of people, but also willingly walks with tourists along the Pripyat and even more willingly accepts a variety of treats. Recently, he has become the star of social networks – “he opened” his own page on Facebook. It is said, however, that taking advantage of the gullibility of visitors to the Zone (#7), several intelligent foxes mimic Simeon’s actions. And in September 2018, a picture by British photographer Adrian Bliss contended for the best photo prize in the prestigious competition of the London Natural History Museum. The picture appeared with the caption, “A visit to the school.” It depicts the fox in a classroom in one of the Pripyat schools on a floor strewn with gas masks. And in Slavutyich (#84) a mural by a famous Hungarian street artist recently appeared with the nickname “TakerOne” – with a picture of Simeon.

[Photo next page:] Chernobyl fox Simeon





Chernobyl fox Semyon has not been afraid of people for a long time, and it seems he even willingly poses in front of cameras, like here, on the Palace of Culture “Energetic” (#30) stairs

93

Last of their kind
of wild horses



Przewalski's Horses

Russian traveler Nikolai Przhevalsky described a new breed of wild horse that he encountered in Mongolia in 1879. Since the 1970s, it has been considered extinct in the wild. They became nearly extinct due to direct pursuit by humans, destruction of natural habitats, and competition with domestic animals. At the beginning of the 20th century, about 50 Przewalski's horses were brought from Asia to Europe. They became the founders of several lines that ensure the preservation of the species in captivity. But this did not solve the problem of its long-term survival. Lack of natural selection and a full-fledged natural environment would sooner or later lead to extinction, therefore re-naturalization is necessary, a return to nature. Ukrainian scientists were already discussing the possibility of enriching the fauna of the Exclusion Zone (#7) with large hoofed animals just 5 years after the accident (#1). In 1998, 22 animals were brought here from the Askania-Nova nature reserve as part of the "Fauna" program. Initially, the horses were kept in an acclimatization center near Chernobyl (#3); a year later, they were released into the wild. Later, several more groups were delivered. In 1999, there were two herds in the vicinity of the villages Cherevach and Korohod. In 2002, were 38 animals; in 2004, 60. It is difficult to cite the exact number of horses in the Exclusion Zone now, since they have settled throughout the territory, with the exception of the left bank of the river Pripyat (#90).



94

Giant catfish from
the cooling pond



Catfish

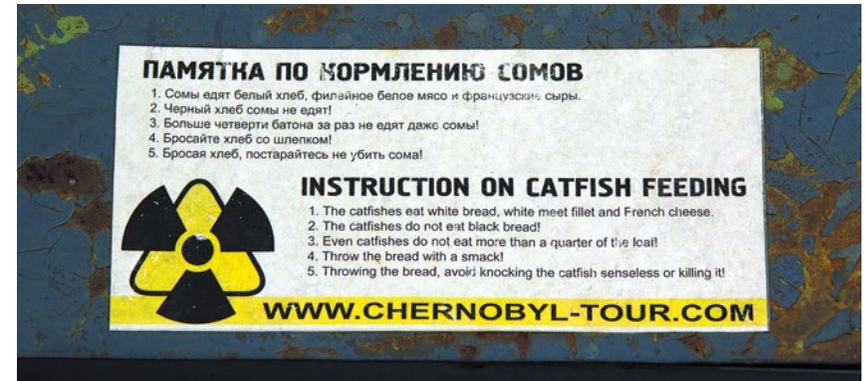
Giant catfish living in the canal that supplied water from the cooling pond (#16) to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant reactors became “celebrities.” At lunchtime, the fish swim to the bridge over the canal for treats. The staff is happy to bring leftover bread and feed them. The station workers had a favorite among them — Borka, 2 meters (6.5 ft) long. His slow shadow was almost always visible near the surface. A passionate lover of white bread, the catfish could swallow half a loaf at a time. Borka swam slowly towards a tossed piece of bread. Diving to the very bottom, he slowly emerged from the dark depths, forcing the audience to hold their breath. After a few seconds, an open fish mouth appeared from the turbid water, resembling a wide-open bag. Thick lips silently closed over the delicacy. The audience exhaled loudly and giggled with children’s delight. Despite his celebrity status, Borka’s fate was sad. Someone caught the gullible fish and yanked him onto the concrete shore. They did it “for fun”, the fish from the Chernobyl NPP cooling pond are not edible (radioactive). Borka’s half-meter (1’7”) head with a fishing hook



51.3899407
30.1130533



Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant



protruding from his mouth lay under the bridge for another two weeks, attracting crows and startling tourists. In 2012, the Discovery TV channel filmed an episode “River Monsters” in the Exclusion Zone (#7). The show’s host, Jeremy Wade, was supposed to catch an “atomic killer” in the Chernobyl cooling pond. It didn’t happen quickly, but he managed to do it.





95

History of Borka the boar



Wild Animals

Borka (namesake of the famous Chernobyl catfish #94) was found as a youngster in the vicinity of a forest fire. The piglet was “assigned” to the fire station yard. He grew up in the company of horses, dogs, and cats. He was often seen traipsing along with a dog behind the firefighters’ wagon through the city streets. Employees and visitors loved being photographed with him. In 2009, Borka was taken for filming of a French documentary about nature in the Exclusion Zone (#7). He was supposed to “play” a wild boar. Three locations were set: a city, a village, and the forest. The city was filmed in Chernobyl (#3), where the pig walked thoughtfully along the roadway and sidewalk against the background of the five-story building on Kirov Street. The “village” was also filmed in Chernobyl, but in a residential neighborhood. Borka was marking the fence, while the film crew was standing 40 meters (130 ft) away; the gate suddenly opened, and an old samosel (#8) woman looked out into the street. She didn’t see the crew, but Borka saw that he was a meter (3 ft) away from her. The grandmother sternly chastised the boar, “What are you doing?! Those are my flowers! Go on, get out of here!” The director was delighted.

The forest was filmed near town. And then the unthinkable happened – in the last scene, Borka ran away. It was very awkward for



crew – the firefighters had shared their pet, and the crew lost it. But everything worked out. Two days later, at night, Borka showed up at the main checkpoint (#10). In 2015, this boar died. For almost 10 years, he entertained the Zone workers and let them see the world of nature a little closer, to understand that wild animals are not so scary and not so dangerous.



96

Prize of the Ecumenical Jury
at Cannes in 1980



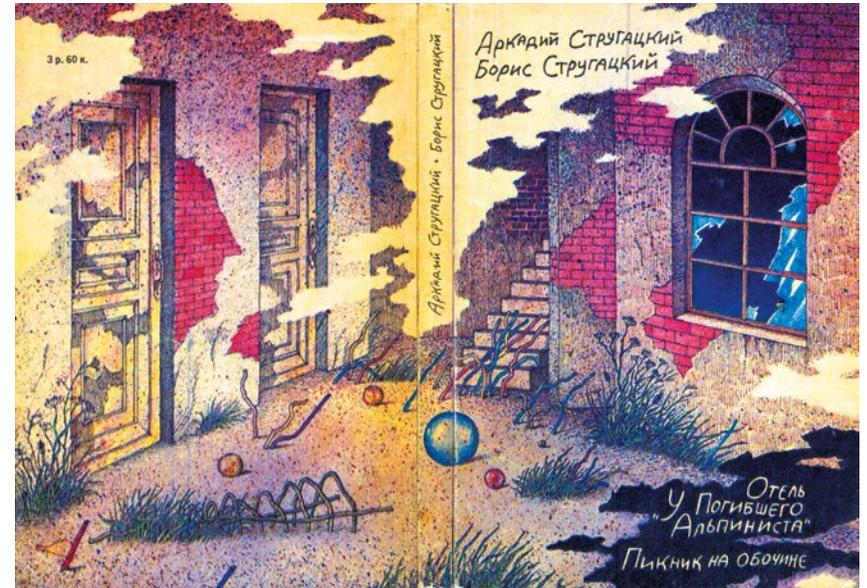
Film "Stalker"

The film by Soviet director Andrei Tarkovsky (1932–1986), based on the story "Roadside Picnic" by the Strugatsky brothers, was immediately a cult favorite, but, although not officially banned, it was not shown in the central cinemas, despite its prestigious awards from international film festivals.

It was shot over 3 years, with huge challenges. Two years of work was completely destroyed when the film was improperly developed. The film was re-shot, and the entire script was rewritten the same way. Tarkovsky was an uncompromising and tough director. The Strugatsky brothers managed to convince him only once: not to leave a scene in the film, the repeated crossing of a dead armored vehicle convoy across a dilapidated bridge. This convoy is in the game S.T.A.L.K.E.R. (#97) – standing, stuck on the bridge, the dead "Urals", ZILs, and armored personnel carriers.

Many consider this film to be prophetic, because in many respects it anticipated the future: the deadly Forbidden Zone and stalkers (#98), penetrating into it at their own peril and risk.

The film had a significant impact not only on Soviet filmmaking, but also on world cinema; it is in the top 250 films on IMDb, ranking 206th (as of January 11, 2019).



97

Sensational game
by Ukrainian company GSC
Game World



S.T.A.L.K.E.R.

Speaking of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (#7), it is impossible to ignore another artifact generated by it, in a certain sense: the cult game S.T.A.L.K.E.R. (#97). It influenced many of today's stalkers who went to Pripjat (#2) for the first time, recreating the Zone's unique look and creating a whole philosophy. S.T.A.L.K.E.R. became famous for its advanced technology and the fact that the Zone was reproduced so meticulously. However, it gained cult status for the unparalleled atmosphere that gives the gaming world an authenticity even the most advanced "engine" cannot provide – an atmosphere of the frozen past, the provincial serenity of forsaken cities and villages, abandoned things, equipment, buildings – which contrasts sharply with the bloody events that unfold there with the player's direct participation. The game's uniqueness gives a sense of life that ceased so suddenly, it did not have time to stop, and constantly reminds us of itself with old posters, newspaper scraps, or with a mug standing on a windowsill, above which a deadly anomaly waves in a breeze.

In 2007, the first game in the series "The Shadow of Chernobyl" was released; in 2008, the prequel game "Clear Sky"; and in 2010, "The Call of Pripjat." S.T.A.L.K.E.R. brought in more than 100 million dollars in cash revenue, with a total circulation of more than 5 million copies.



98

Special fringe subculture



Stalkers

The word “stalker” was first heard in the distant 1970s, in the Strugatsky brothers’ novel “Roadside Picnic.” A little later, based on this book and the script by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, the film “Stalker” (#96) was made. The plot of these works is based on the life of people in a certain city near the Forbidden Zone, which was left after aliens visited. This territory is literally crammed with artifacts: some are incredibly useful, the purpose of others is incomprehensible, others are deadly, as is, by the way, the Zone itself. It is constantly visited by illegal treasure seekers, desperate thugs who are obsessed with a place that normal people avoid by a mile: stalkers. When the Chernobyl disaster (#1) occurred 16 years later, the work turned out to be prophetic. And the name of the people who went to explore the Exclusion Zone (#7) suggested itself.

“Stalker” is one of the words invented by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky that became commonly used, first of all, thanks to the film by director Andrei Tarkovsky. It was taken from the Rudyard Kipling novel “Stalky & Co.,” about merry English schoolchildren in the late 19th – early 20th century, whose leader was nicknamed Stalky.

Today’s stalkers (they are also called “self-propelled”, “illegal immigrants”, “radioactive or nuclear tourists”, “atomic romantics”) are not treasure hunters (it is strictly forbidden to take anything out of the Zone), but rather illegal travelers, wandering around the post-apocalyptic

spaces; guests who are not invited. Each of them finds his own special charm in these visits. They appeared very recently, 10 years ago. To a certain extent, it was an alternative to official visits to the Zone that began at about the same time and gradually became a special subculture.

It is against the law to go to the Zone on your own, not as part of an official tour (#100). If a person is caught for the first time, they will be released after a short detention and given a fine of up to 500 hryvnia (about \$20). However, any object taken from here as a “memento”, no matter how cheap and innocent it may seem at first glance, automatically changes the offense from an administrative one to a criminal one. Having any weapon is also forbidden, and incurs criminal liability. Well, all kinds of danger lurk for an illegal tourist, from an unsuccessful collision with wildlife, like a snakebite (which happened here more than once), to an encounter with poachers, or looters fraught with even more trouble. And although the level of radiation (#5) as a whole has decreased, the chance to catch a “hot particle” at any moment is still high.



98



99

Materialized memory of the
Chernobyl disaster



Chernobyl Museum

This museum is located in Kyiv. The old fire station building, built in the early 20th century, looks like a fortress with thick walls and a tower. In 1992, at the initiative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a museum was opened here dedicated to the liquidation of the Chernobyl accident (#1). From the beginning of personnel mobilization by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the headquarters and political department maintained a “chronicle” of the main events, with photos and videos. A year later, these materials were shown at an exhibition in the Fire Department of Kyiv oblast, dedicated to the first anniversary of the tragedy. In the future, the exhibition was expanded, and there was a need for a museum.

The total area of the museum is 1,911 sqm (20,569 sq ft). It has 7,000 items, an exhibition hall, a conference hall, a depository, etc. Unique documents, photographic materials, equipment, and liquidators’ personal belongings are displayed here; also, artifacts and cultural items



of Polissya; a model of the Chernobyl NPP (#11) 4th power unit, and a scale model of the Exclusion Zone (#7).

We recommend visiting it before a trip to the Exclusion Zone. This will help to understand the scale of the event.



50.4664375
30.5173588



Chernobyl Museum
1 Khoryva Lane
Kyiv

100

Exclusion Zone as a landmark

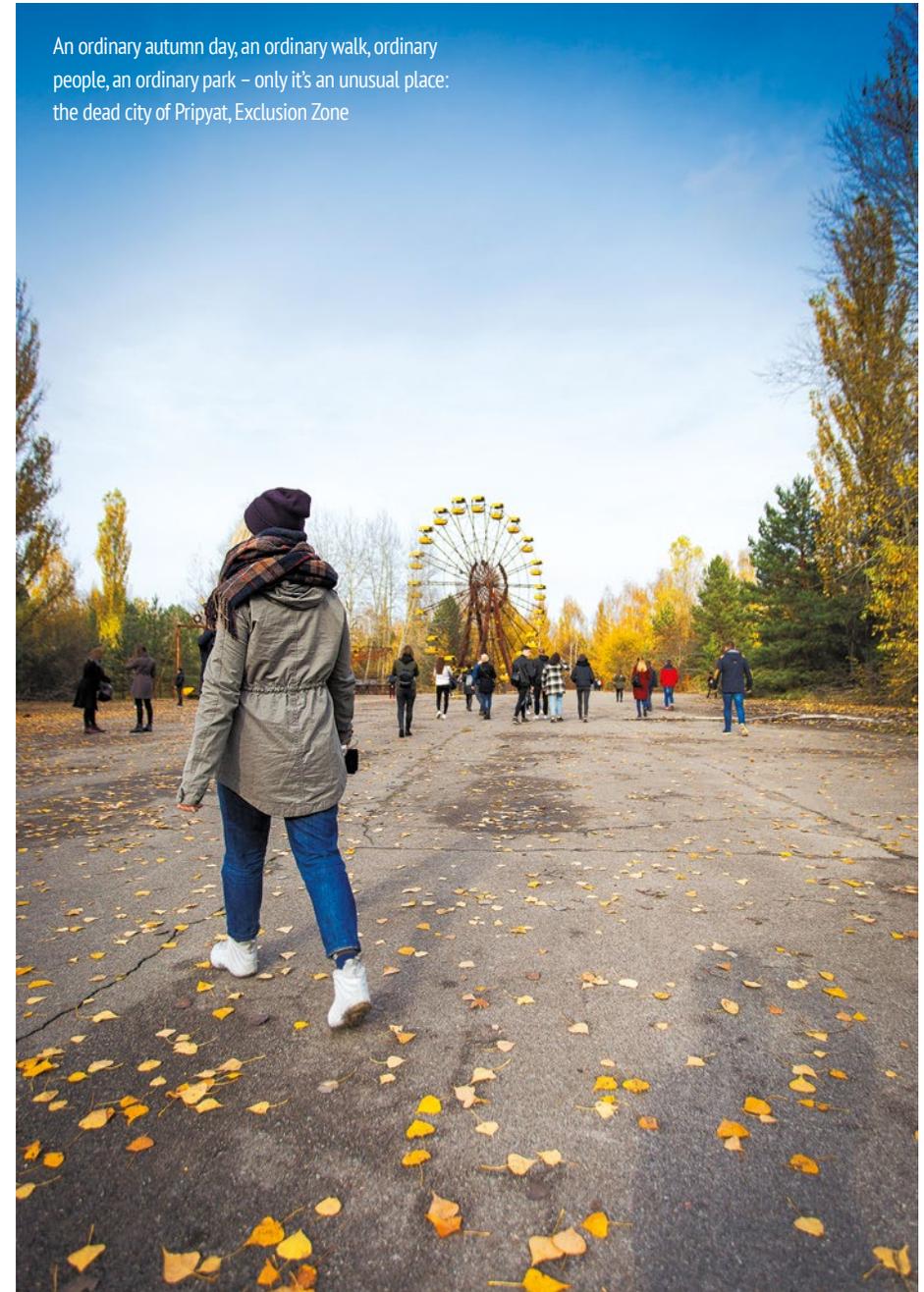


Tourist Trips

Tourist trips to the Exclusion Zone (#7) have become commonplace, and Chernobyl itself is a national landmark. The first visitors, whose arrival was not related to any professional activities, appeared already in the late 1980s. In the early 2000s, there was an attempt to organize a visit to the Exclusion Zone for science fiction writers and another for a conference of historians. These visits did not succeed: many did not understand what there was to see here, and some were even frightened.

Trips began in the mid-2000s and slowly gained momentum. Probably the new generation, for whom the Chernobyl disaster (#1) is a historical event rather than personal experience, could, putting aside emotions, see the Zone with a fresh eye. In 2009, the S.T.A.L.K.E.R. game appeared (#97), which dramatically increased interest in the Exclusion Zone, and tourism has become prevalent. Now the Exclusion Zone is visited by tens of thousands of tourists a year. A one-day excursion includes a mandatory list of places to visit: the Chernobyl NPP observation deck, the city of Pripjat (#2), Chernobyl-2 (#83), the town of Chernobyl (#3), and the villages of Kopachi and Zalesye. It's also possible to visit a few more locations. As experience shows, tourists stay the longest in Pripjat. A more extensive list is offered on two-day and three-day excursions. The rules limit the duration of a continuous stay to five days. Routes and safety requirements are prepared by Exclusion Zone specialists.

An ordinary autumn day, an ordinary walk, ordinary people, an ordinary park – only it's an unusual place: the dead city of Pripjat, Exclusion Zone



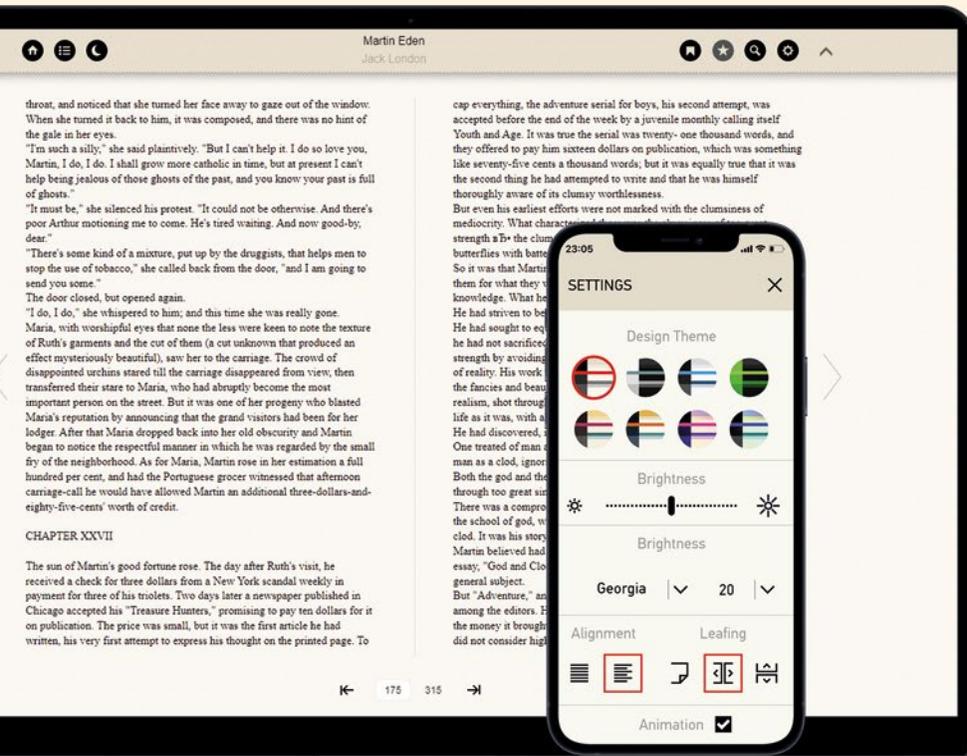
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