



Extreme living

 Lesson code: A417-1MIB-A5U6-N

INTERMEDIATE

1 Warm-up

Describe the weather today. How comfortable is it?

2 Key words

Match the following words with their correct definition:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. nippy | a. a medical condition where parts of the body are damaged by extreme cold |
| 2. frostbite | b. a person who lives in a particular area |
| 3. tricky | c. able to tolerate extreme conditions or difficult situations |
| 4. a local | d. accepted beliefs or principles about right and wrong behaviour |
| 5. hardy | e. difficult, needing careful attention |
| 6. cope | f. quite cold |
| 7. ethics | g. the country of your birth |
| 8. homeland | h. to deal with a difficult situation |

3 Predict the answers

You are going to read about Yakutsk in Russia, the coldest city on earth. Guess the correct alternative to complete each statement and check your answers by reading the article on the next page:

- The population of Yakutsk is...
a. 20,000 b. 200,000 c. 2 million
- The average high temperature in January is...
a. minus 20°C b. minus 30°C c. minus 40°C
- In summer, the temperature reaches a maximum ...
a. 15°C b. 25°C c. 35°C
- The lowest temperature ever recorded in an inhabited place is...
a. minus 58°C b. minus 68°C c. minus 78°C



THE
INDEPENDENT

Yakutsk: Journey to the coldest city on earth

If you think your winter has been too cold, try visiting Yakutsk - the Russian city where 'a bit nippy' means minus 50°C, and a quick visit to your local shop could end in frostbite. So how do people manage to cope?

- 1 At minus 5°C, the cold is quite refreshing and you only need a light hat and scarf to keep warm. At minus 20°C, it becomes difficult not to cough, because of the cold air. At minus 35°C, frostbite is a constant danger. And at minus 45°C, even wearing glasses is tricky: the metal sticks to your cheeks and removing them is dangerous.
- 2 This is Yakutsk, a place where friendly locals warn you not to wear glasses outdoors. Yakutsk, a remote city in Eastern Siberia (population 200,000), is the coldest city on earth. In January, the most freezing month, average "highs" are around minus 40°C. In the same region is the village Oimyakon, known as "The Pole of Cold", where the lowest ever temperature in an inhabited place was recorded - minus 68°C.
- 3 In Yakutsk, local people do not turn off the engines of their cars if they have to stop somewhere for half an hour, and some leave them on all day while at work so that their cars don't stop working. The exhaust fumes add to the fog. The inhuman temperatures and the winter fog are just part of daily life for its hardy residents.
- 4 The open-air markets are full of people selling frozen fish, pork and horse hearts. "Of course it's cold, but you get used to it," says Nina, a Yakut woman who spends eight hours every day standing at her stall in the fish market. "Human beings can get used to anything," she says.
- 5 The level of tolerance is hard to believe. Workers continue working on building sites up to minus 50°C (below this temperature, the metal can break), and children go to school unless it's below minus 55°C.
- 6 Almost all the women wear fur from head to toe, and much of it is locally produced. In such a climate, ethics have little value. "I saw on the television that in Europe there are crazy people who say it's not nice to wear fur because they love animals," says Natasha, a Yakutsk resident, who's wearing a coat made of rabbit and a hat of arctic fox. "They should come and live in Siberia for a couple of months and then see if they are still so worried about the animals. You need to wear fur here to survive. Nothing else keeps you warm."
- 7 "For us, the winter is like the working week and the summer is like the weekend," says Bolot Bochkarev, a former journalist. But the summers sound even worse than the winters - short and sticky, with two or three weeks when the temperature hits 30°C or 35°C. None of the buildings have air conditioning, and the air is filled with mosquitoes. The short summer is also a time when huge efforts are made to make sure that the region is ready for winter.
- 8 Most Yakutsk residents don't plan to go anywhere soon - and don't want to, either. "Of course it's difficult to live here," says Fyodorov of Gazeta Yakutia. "But the people here were born here. It's our homeland. What can you do about it?"

Article adapted from The Independent, Monday, 21 January 2008



4 Checking understanding

Put T (True) or F (False) next to the statements below. Correct the statements which are false.

1. When visiting Yakutsk in winter, you should not wear glasses outdoors.
2. Yakutsk is the coldest place on earth where people live.
3. Yakutsk is very foggy in the winter because the residents don't turn off their car engines.
4. In winter, hardly anybody goes to the open-air markets.
5. Workers continue working and children go to school no matter what the temperature is.
6. Yakut people believe it is wrong to wear fur coats.
7. In summer, the weather conditions can also be unpleasant.
8. The local people would like to leave their home.

5 Phrases in the text

Complete the phrases from the text and match them to their correct definitions:

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------|---|
| 1. a constant | city | ⇒ a city that is far away from other towns and cities |
| 2. a remote | danger | ⇒ a place where a house or other structure is being built |
| 3. an inhabited | fumes | ⇒ a place where people buy and sell things outdoors |
| 4. exhaust | market | ⇒ a place where people live |
| 5. an open-air | place | ⇒ something that can always harm you |
| 6. a building | site | ⇒ waste gas and smoke that comes out of a car's engine |

Create sentences about Yakutsk using the phrases.

6 Talking point

Would you like to visit Yakutsk? What do you think of the locals? How does your country's climate compare?

7 Online review

Don't forget what you have learnt! Go to www.linguahouse.com, enter Lesson code: A417-1MIB-A5U6-N, and click:

