

Antarctic is a ice desert with isolated scientific outposts on it... But, let's make a look on some of this "spots" on map.

Pole of Inaccessibility

A pole of inaccessibility is the location in a continent that is the farthest from any ocean. Though just a remote and imaginary point on an endless, white plain, this particular spot has an interesting history of its own.

(Original text by Tom Neumann)

The idea is that the farther inland a point is, the more difficult it is to reach. For most continents, modern transportation makes reaching the point of inaccessibility relatively easy. However, given the unique challenges of traveling in Antarctica, the southern Pole of Inaccessibility has only been visited a few times in history.

Disputed location

The location of the southern Pole of Inaccessibility is open to some debate, depending on whether one defines the edge of Antarctica by the edge of the ice that rests on land, or the edge of the ice sheet, including the ice shelves. The most frequently used location is 82° 06'S, 54° 58'E (while other sources give 82° 53'S, 55° 40'E; 83° 50'S, 65° 43'E (as determined by the British Antarctic Survey); 85° 50'S, 65° 47'E (as determined by the Scott Polar Research Institute)). Using the most common definition, the Pole of Inaccessibility lies 885 km (or 532 statute miles) from the South Pole and is approximately 3800 meters above sea level.

Soviet research station

This point was first surveyed by IL-12 airplane by the 3rd Soviet Antarctic Expedition in December 1957, as part of the International Geophysical Year. This was a reconnaissance flight to scout a route for an overland party later in the year. The overland traverse left the coastal station of Mirny with 32 men in ten tractors in mid-December and reached Komsomolskaya Station on 17 January 1958. A smaller group of eight tractors continued on toward the Pole of Inaccessibility on 3 February. An additional advance station, Sovetskaya, was established a week later and 540 kilometers in the direction of the Pole of Inaccessibility, and a group of four were left to over-winter.

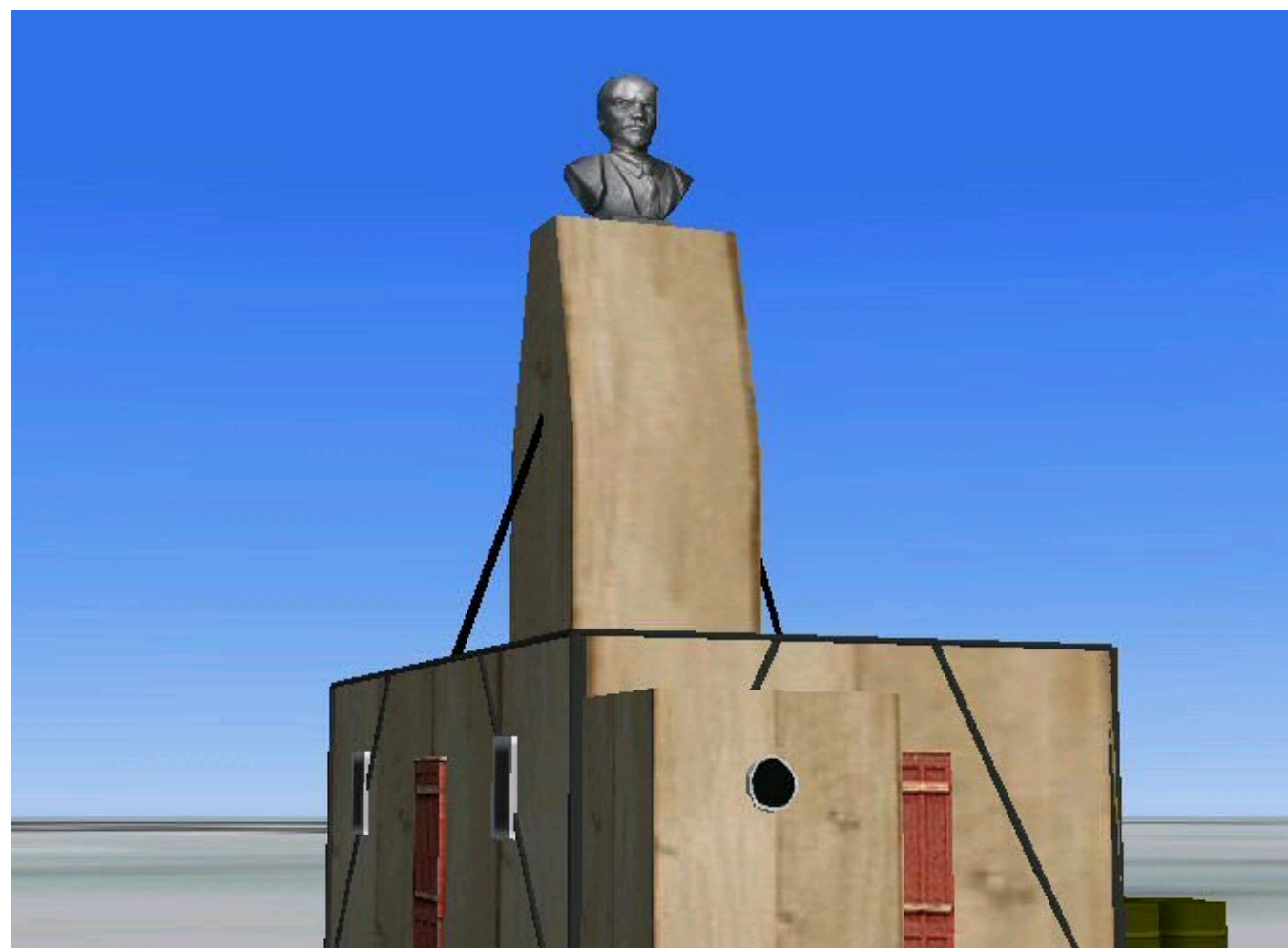


Komsomolskaya Antarctic station

The final push began with a new group of traverse vehicles leaving Mirny Station in September 1958. They reached the winter-over party at Sovetskaya Station on 29 November after traveling approximately 1400 km from Mirny. A team of 17 men (lead by Yevgeny Tolstikov) traveling via ~~P~~ingvin~~o~~ tractors left Sovetskaya on 3 December and reached the Pole of Inaccessibility on 14 December 1958 after traveling some 2100 km. Upon arrival, the group celebrated, launched rockets and raised the Soviet flag. The party proceeded to establish a small research station (referred to as the Pole of Inaccessibility station) which consisted of a few temporary structures, and a small cabin for 4 persons mounted on a sledge. Measurements were made along the entire route from the coast, consisting of seismic soundings of the ice thickness, as well as meteorological, glaciological, gravimetric, and geomagnetic observations. The meteorological program continued while the station was occupied.



Polyus Nedostupnosti - modern and old photos



And in Flight Simulator...

On 19 December, a flight arrived to exchange some of the personnel and bring supplies. The remaining members left on 26 December 1958 and arrived back at Mirny on 18 January 1959. Upon leaving the Pole of Inaccessibility station, the expedition left a bust of V.I. Lenin on top of the chimney of the cabin (Figure 3) facing Moscow.

The station was next reached by the 1963-1964 8th Soviet Antarctic Expedition, which traveled from Vostok Station with 3 tractors and 16 men (lead by A. Kapitsa) on 3 January 1964.



Kharkovchanka - legendary soviet Antarctic crawlers

Again, seismic soundings as well as meteorological and glaciological observations were made during the traverse. This traversed benefited from resupply of food and fuel from airplanes as needed throughout the traverse. The group reached the Pole of Inaccessibility on 1 February 1964, the first visit in six years. The expedition stayed only a few days, leaving again on 6 February and continued on to the vicinity of 78°S, 20°E before turning toward Molodezhnaya Station (a Soviet coastal station established in Feb. 1962, and closed in 1989). The group reached the coastal station on 21 March 1964.

Vostok Antarctic station

Vostok research station was established on December 16, 1957 (during the International Geophysical Year) by the 2nd Soviet Antarctic Expedition and has operated year-round for more than 37 years. The station was temporarily closed in January 1994. This station is now cooperatively operated by Russian, U.S., and French scientists.

The station is 11,444 ft (3,488 meters) above sea level. It is the most isolated of all of the established research stations on the Antarctic continent, located about 1,300 km from the Geographic South Pole. Its location near the South Geomagnetic Pole makes it one of the optimal places to observe changes in the Earth's magnetic sphere. Other studies include aerometeorology, actinometry, geophysics, medicine, climatology and others. The station typically contains 25 scientists and engineers in the summer and in winter, their number drops to 13.



"Vostok Station greets you!"



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Antarctic explorer's memorial at Vostok Station:

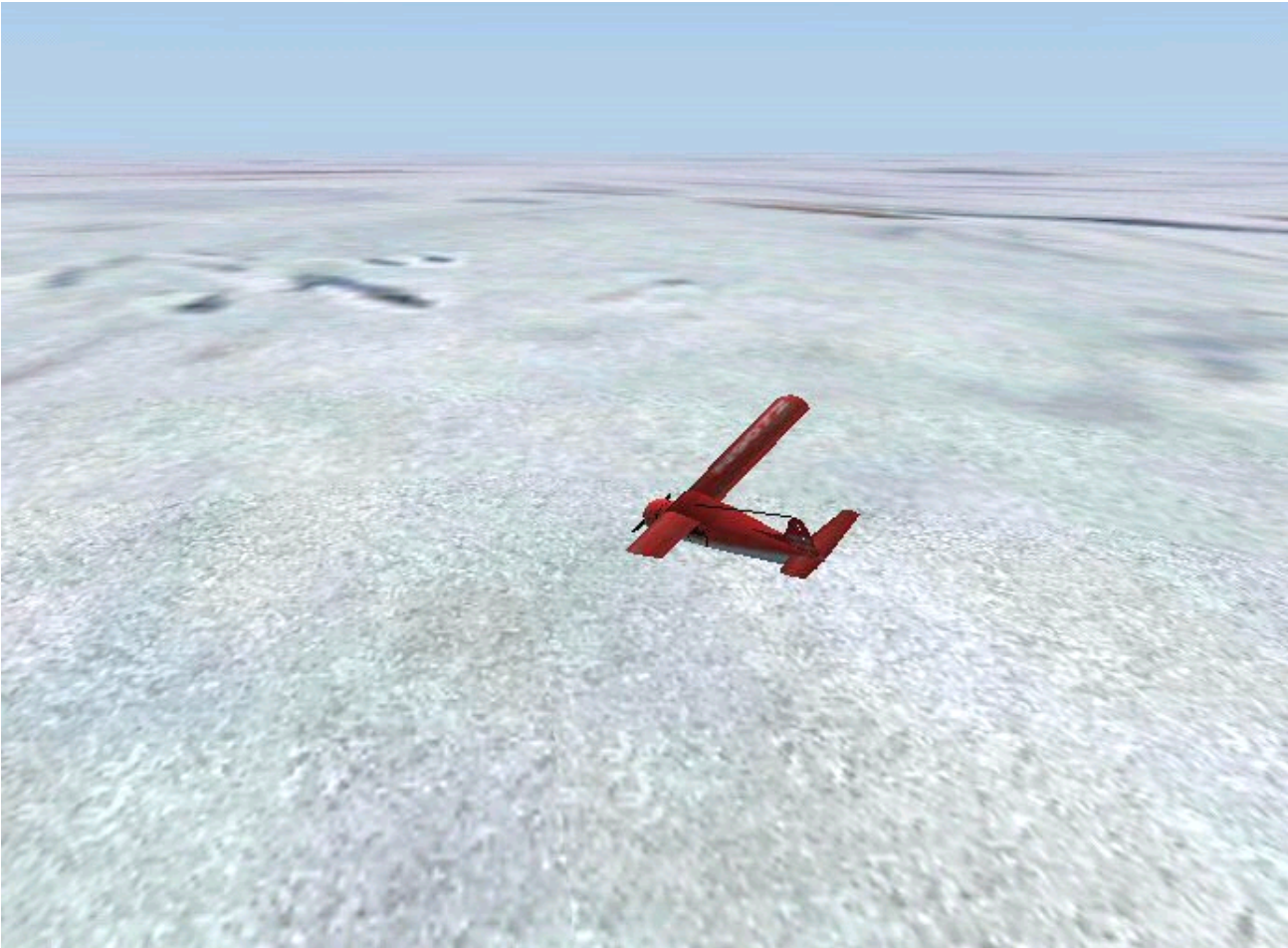


Антарктида, обсерватория "Восток", памятник основной транспортной машине.



"Lost in Antarctic"

December 5th, 1958, wanting to join the commander de Gerlache and geodesist Loodts, the plane of Antoine of Line and the Hulshagen mechanic runs up against the landing of the fixed ices which can reach one meter in height. The four shipwrecked men shelter under the tent during a few days and await possible helps. They lay out each of 15 days of vivres.



After having left a message on the aircraft laid down on the side announcing their intentions, the four men decide on December 11th to undertake the return voyage to the Base King Baudouin by their own means. But they progress with difficulty because of the bad weather: 20 km per day when all is well.

Anxious of the disappearance of their companions, the other members of forwarding launch a call to the help. The distress message from the Base King Baudouin was received on Australian Mawson Antarctic station, but there were no aircraft or ground vehicles capable to reach possible crash region in time. Distress message was re-transmitted from Mawson station to Soviet Mirny Antarctic station.

Victor Perov, the chief pilot of the Third Soviet Antarctic expedition, took off with crew of six men and headed to Mawson station. Aircraft was refuelled at Mawson, some fuel was stored at abandoned at that time Japanese Showa Antarctic station.

After two days of research, Li-2V ("V" means "Vysotny" - "altitude" - special Antarctic modification of well-known Li-2) of the base of Mirny discovers the plane of d'Antoine of Line and the message left by the Belgians. The following day, they see an abandoned camp: empty tents, scattered material and vivres, turned over and broken sledge, camera and other objects belonging to the four shipwrecked men. It will be learned later that they had demolished superfluity to progress more quickly.

The Russian pilot Victor Perov passes the region to the fine comb and is able to locate them, healthy and safe.



This picture by Andrey Ruban can be seen in Arctic and Antarctic museum, St-Peterburg.

The mass-media comments on this event were shot:

<http://www.flightglobal.com/pdfarchive/view/1958/1958-1-%20-%200955.html>

Flight magazine, no 26, December 1958, p. 963

"IN BRIEF":

Four Belgian explorers who had been marooned in the Antarctic since their Auster crashed on December 11 were rescued four days later by a Soviet aircraft flown by V. Perov, chief pilot of the U.S.S.R. Antarctic Expedition.