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An Aviation Photography Event in Moscow... Spotting Day...

Dear Readers,

In our previous article, we touched upon what it's like for an aviation photographer to participate in an air show and the stages of shooting involved in aviation photography.

As in every article, I would like to remind our readers once again that it is always wise to make budget-friendly choices when selecting equipment. For this reason, I think it is useful to select or upgrade equipment by self-appraising based on personal enthusiasm and by recognizing the level of dedication and skill in this hobby. It should not

be forgotten that in the end the photo is taken by an individual. As the number of shots, we capture increases and as we refine and compare the outcomes, we will be able to identify our needs more easily and make better decisions.

In this article, I describe my experience attending a Spotting Day event in Moscow. The preparations and stages of participation, the information required during the activity and the list of things to be done after the event will be covered along with the security measures and codes of conduct will be

described through the perspective of my experiences and observations.

In October 2014, during a beautiful autumn, I happened to come across some news on a website saying that an airline company was going to conduct a flight for the first time to the Domodedovo Airport in Moscow and that a special welcoming event was going to be organized for a private airline company. I was interested, as I had been thinking of attending an airshow, so I immediately contacted a master's in aviation photography, Aktuğ Ateş who lived in Moscow and



I researched the details about the welcoming ceremony. After confirming the event, I started to follow Domodedovo Airport's announcement regarding this activity. I sent an email to the event organizer to inform them of my intention to attend the event and inquired about the requirements. They promptly contacted me and asked for my passport information, my reference photographs and information on my photography equipment. Two days after submitting the required information I was informed that my application to attend the Spotting Day aviation photography event had been accepted. In the reply, I was kindly asked to wait at Domodedovo Airport's Public Relations Counter on the day

of the event. Actually, since the application process for these kinds of events are quite lengthy in our country and it is quite hard to get accepted, I didn't think that I would be accepted. I was quite surprised to receive their positive response so quickly. Then again, I was really pleased to be able to attend the Spotting Day event and to have the opportunity to take photos on the apron of an airport in Moscow, as a Turkish Aviation Photographer. I hope that with our satisfactory work and successful events in Turkey, these types of processes will take less time in our country and become more accessible to all aviation photographers worldwide.

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Upon the positive response from the Domodedovo Airport, I immediately gathered the details needed such as the relevant location, runways, terminals, the angle of the sun according to the time, etc. And since this was an event carried out by the airport operator, I still had doubts about how the photography locations and positions would be identified, whether the photos would be taken under their control or the control of the photographers. I researched details about the airports in the Moscow city center and the other airports nearby, the transport duration and distance between these airports and the city center. As a result of some initial research, I decided on the required means of transportation. Then, by considering the cold in the last months of autumn in Moscow, I arranged the necessary clothing, bags, and lotions for myself, protection cover for the machines and lenses to avoid the cold.

I had been dreaming of visiting Moscow, particularly during autumn and winter for a long time. One of the biggest reasons for this was the opportunity

to capture wonderful images during high winds, sleet, snowy and blizzard conditions. The images I may capture under those harsh and challenging circumstances would be quite different than the images I captured in Antalya - the city I lived in. What really mesmerized me was the chance to see the lovely reflection caused by the snow under the plane. I had examined photos such as this with falling snow and with the ground covered with snow, and the prospect of capturing my own unique images was very exciting. Another positive factor was the cost of participating in such an event. As you may have guessed, since it was winter the tickets from Antalya to Moscow and return tickets were quite affordable, sometimes they are even cheaper than the tickets from Antalya to Istanbul, Ankara, or Izmir. Also, in those days, there was no visa obligation for Turkish citizens visiting the Russian Federation; touristic visits could be conducted with just a Republic of Turkey passport.

My next step after planning my journey was to look for a cost-efficient ticket that would allow me to





arrive in Moscow early in the morning the day of the event and to return to Antalya right after the event, on the same day or night. In short, I planned to make it a day trip. After a brief search online, I came across the ticket that I was looking for. Until the flight date, I took care of the preparations I mentioned in the previous article, and instead of the airport where the event would take place, I had arranged to fly to another airport in Moscow, to Vnukovo Airport from Antalya on the night before (in the very early morning hours) the Spotting Day.

During my research on Moscow, I came across AeroExpress trains that provided transportation service from the airports in Moscow to the city center in the morning. So, I took the earliest service of this train and reached the Moscow city center. There, I met with my esteemed contact and master aviation photographer Aktuğ Ateş and we toured around fascinating Red Square. Then we took an AeroExpress train once again and we headed to the Domodedovo Airport at noon. We reached Domodedovo Airport around 13:00 p.m. and we



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still had two hours before we were scheduled to gather for the event. So, we went to the second floor of the terminal, and accompanied by the panoramic view started to shoot the parking positions of the aircraft and snapshots inside the terminal and on the apron. Two hours later, we went to the designated meeting point and waited along with the other aviation photographers.

When the event started aviation photographers mostly from Moscow were

gathered at the meeting point in addition to other aviation photographers from around the Russian Federation. An official from the organization checked the names of the participants one by one and started the event after handing us our entrance cards that had our titles printed on them. We were also provided with safety vests for the Domodedovo Airport Apron as our cards allowed us access to certain parts of the airport. We were then sent to the security point that was located

at the end of a long and narrow corridor. There our passports and our apron entrance cards were checked and our bodies and bags were inspected at the security inspection point. After the security check, we waited in front of the gates opening to the apron and an official from the organization committee informed us of the locations, points and the times that we could take photos.

A ground service bus arrived at the apron gate and took us to the

location where we would be shooting. From that time on I was on the apron in Moscow as a “Turkish Aviation Photographer.”

The bus dropped us at the shooting point, which was located in a safe place, in front of the fire department and next to the taxiway at the 32R (right) and 14L (left) runway at Domodedovo Airport. The aircraft were now landing at the 14L runway and taxied in front of us. The shooting started in a designated order and all participants respected





the rules and each other, respecting the space of all the other aviation photographers. Then the direction of the wind changed, the airplanes started to land on the 32R runway and passed over us, then headed to the terminal apron for the parking position after the 'Follow-Me' vehicles that were waiting for them. In the meantime, the airplane of the airline company landed at the airport and we took its photos. After a while, the bus took us back to the spot where

the airplane was waiting. Accompanied by the passengers who landed, we took photos of the airplane in a static park position.

As the sun started to set, the bus dropped us off at a spot in the middle of the 32L and 14R runway, between the taxiway and the parking place. We could easily capture photos of aircraft that were taking off, taxiing of landing aircraft and cargo planes that were waiting on the cargo apron, as well as shots of traffic. After a

wonderful day of shooting, the bus took us to the exit gates of the apron. There we snapped photos of the terminal apron and the aircraft waiting at the loading bridge and exited through the apron gate. After we stepped out of the bus, we passed the security check point and were transferred to the terminal.

The organizers of the event kindly asked us to share our photographs through any environment that could be accessed through social media and the internet

and bid us farewell from the Domodedovo Airport. (Later on, an internet communication counter was formed at the Vnukovo Airport providing facilities that enable rapid and high-quality sharing online.)

We built great friendships during this event and were able to get acquainted with many leading aviation photographers of the Russian Federation.

It was 19:30 p.m. and the departure of my plane from the Vnukovo Airport was soon approaching.



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Aktuğ Ateş and I quickly left the Domodedovo Airport went to the city center by AeroExpress train; there we bid each other farewell and I left for the Vnukovo Airport again by AeroExpress. I didn't have any luggage; I only had the bag with the equipment. So, after a swift online check-in, I passed the passport check and arrived at the gate of my flight, and I managed to get on the plane just as the gate was closing.

Despite the fatigue, I enjoyed the flight with

a sense of joy as my thoughts were filled with the days moments, of aviation and the beautiful images I had captured. I returned to the point from which I started, to Antalya, after exactly 24 hours.

When you think about it, going to Moscow for a shoot may seem like hard work. And naturally, one might think that it is quite costly. However, as I mentioned, it merely costs as much as two domestic flight tickets. In this 24 hour journey I made good use of the time since the

duration of my two flights equaled to the duration of two domestic flights. I captured stunning images during the event, saw various aircraft models and coatings and took a variety of photos. And this was truly the greatest reward for such a cost-efficient journey.

After this first experience, during the autumn and winter of 2014 and 2015, I went to the Vnukovo, Sheremetyevo and Domodedovo Airports under all types of weather conditions and gained diverse experience at numerous Aviation Photography and Spotting Dayevents that I attended. For instance, at the Night aviation photography event in February 2015, I took photos at the airport and on the apron under heavy snow and blizzard conditions with temperatures of -15 and even -20 while striving to protect myself from

the blustery cold, using my equipment was an amazing experience. In addition to innovations, different airports and various weather conditions often give aviation photographers the chance to build new competencies. With good research and logistics, you may as well go to various cities, countries and airports, and make your mark with unique experiences and unforgettable photo shoots.

During my visits since 2007, I have observed the progress in aviation photography particularly in Moscow and in many other cities and airports of the Russian Federation and I have personally witnessed invitations that facilitate the efforts of aviation photographers and spotters.

I believe the regulations and granted licenses and the approach of the Russian Federation's



Ministry of Transportation as well as the aviation authorities, the operators and relevant airport administrations and last but not least the concerned parties with an advanced level of aviation culture underlay the level achieved by aviation photography events and airshows in the Russian Federation.

In this article, I've written about a day at an aviation photography event and the participation stages of the

event in another country. Even so, the stages I wrote about are merely my personal experiences and preferences. Every aviation photographer captures stunning images by blending their own creativity, experiences and know-how as a photographer. After our images appear, we can analyze our photos, see the results of our parameters, make notes and observe our own performance and adjust accordingly. As

our number of shots and experience increases, we can perform optimum shooting under various weather conditions with various aircraft types at new airports, in new circumstances at venues through controlling the time and conditions.

In the final section of this article, I will leave you with the pleasant interviews I made as I explored how aviation photography was conducted in Russia, whether or not it is supported by the authorities, and the country's perception of Spotters. As I believed it would enrich the article further, I asked the following three questions to renowned Aviation Photographers in the Russian Federation with whom we executed photoshoots.

1- When and how did your interest in aviation photography begin? How did you improve your capabilities in this area?

2- How would you help and support beginners in aviation photography to progress in aviation photography?

3- How does the Russian Federation approach aviation photographers? How do the aviation authorities support Spotters?

Their answers are as following pages...

We wish you pleasant reading!

