

Viktor V. Levitsky

«Russian Minerals» Co., info@rusmineral.ru



Rhombohedral crystal of **chabazite** from altered basalt cavity.



Thomsonite spherulite on stilbite split crystal.



Stilbite sheaf-like crystals from strong fault zone in basalt.

This expedition was a trip for a dream. The pioneers' picturesque narrations of their finds as well as the inaccessible wildness of Siberia itself heat the rock hounds' imagination for many years. However, it is not easy to undertake such a trip; it requires much laborious preparation and considerable expenses.

This year we managed to bring this old dream to life. Eight enthusiasts, including experienced ones and beginners, geologists and mineral collectors, decided to unite into a team with the aim of reaching the Amudikha River valley for the sake of its abundant zeolite occurrences. This river cuts the Yaktali highland at the southeastern slope of the Putorana Plateau, about 3500 km linear distance from Moscow.

Several months of preparations and several hours of flights by plane and copter were necessary to approach the target region, about three hundred kilometers to the north of the town of Tura (64°17' N, +100°13' E (Google map)), capital of the Evenki Autonomous Area. The Amudikha Valley lies within the endless rocky plateaus that reach out to the very horizon. They consist of the famous Siberian traps, the mantling layers of Triassic basalt. In the second half of the past century, just as in the traps of Central Siberia, gigantic crystals of Iceland spar were mined as a highly valuable material for some optical applications. Here also, in the Amudikha Valley, geologists looked for Iceland spar; however, they only managed to discover the zeolite veins along with small quantities of off-quality calcite in the altered basalts.

These very veins were our targets. Thank to a nearly complete absence of soil, it was not very difficult to find out old exploration openings. Even the geologists'





Thomsonite spherulite with inclusions of **laumontite** crystals, 1.5 x 2 cm.



Stilbite split crystals, 8 x 6 cm.



Thomsonite split crystals on **analcime** crystal, 3 x 4 cm.



Thomsonite spherulite, 5 x 5 cm.



Thomsonite, 10 x 6 cm.

Amudikha River, 300 km to the North of Tura town, Evenki region, Krasnoyarsk krai, Russia.

Specimens: *Russian Minerals Co.*

Photo: Michael Leybov.