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Daredevil Photographer Scales Vladivostok Bridges

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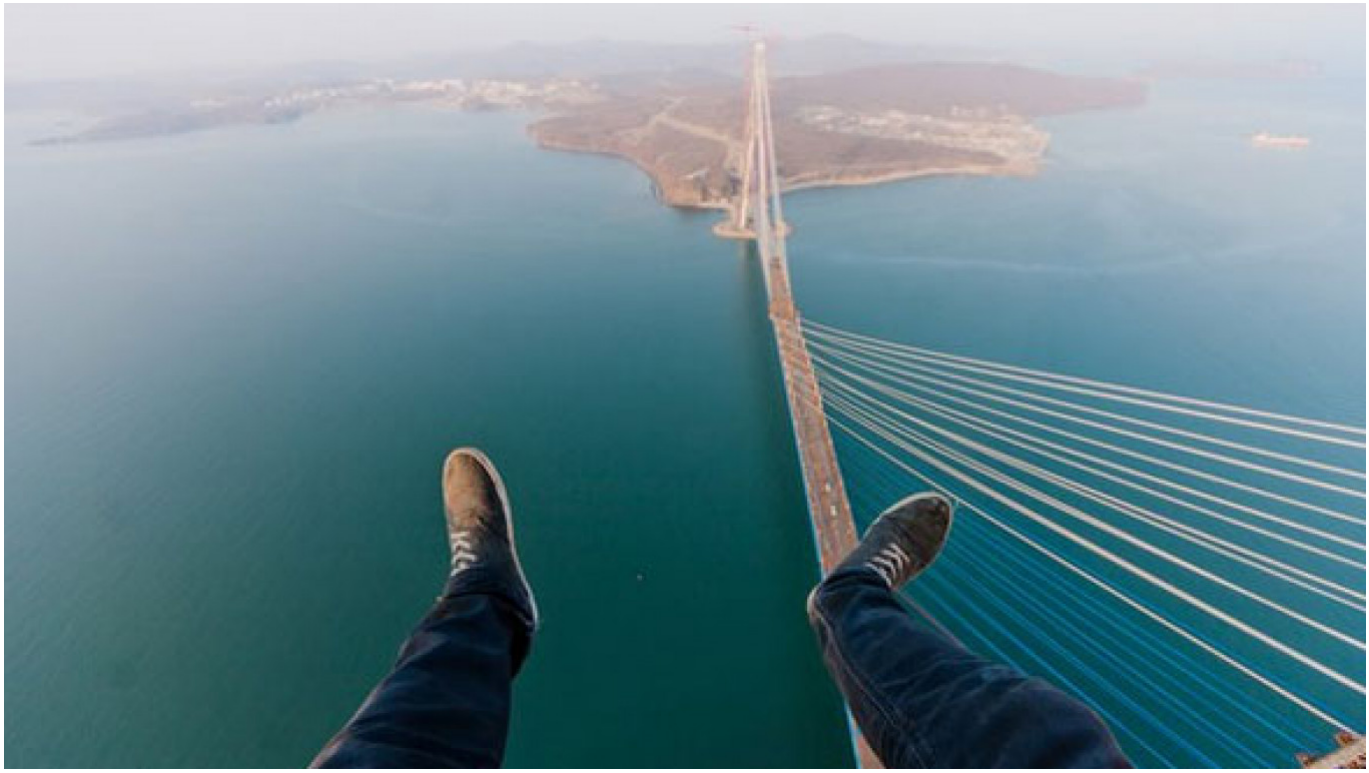

Vitaly Raskalov's feet seen hanging off the top of Russky Island Bridge in Vladivostok on Wednesday morning.

A 19-year-old photographer and two friends scaled the 300-meter-high pylons of two Vladivostok bridges being built for this fall's APEC summit to take jaw-dropping pictures of the city far below.

But pictures published on the photographer's social networking page from their trip up the first bridge on Tuesday tipped off law enforcement authorities, and the trio were detained upon their descent from the second bridge Wednesday.

Apparently unnoticed by anyone, 19-year-old Moscow resident Vitaly Raskalov led the trio in climbing the 240-meter-high pylons of Zolotoy Rog Bridge over Zolotoy Rog Bay in downtown Vladivostok on Tuesday.

"The weather isn't very good. The temperature is 4-5 degrees," Raskalov wrote on his Vkontakte page above bird's-eye photos of the gray port city. "Tomorrow at dawn the bridge

over Russky Island. Height: 320 meters."

On Wednesday, he and his friends scaled Russky Island Bridge, which crosses the Eastern Bosphorus Strait to connect the mainland with Russky Island, site of the APEC summit that Russia will host in September.

"On the top," Raskalov tweeted from the peak of the bridge. "I climbed with a crane. There is no place higher to go."

But police and Federal Security Service officials were waiting for Raskalov when he came down the bridge, which will be the world's longest cable-stayed bridge when it opens.

Raskalov said the authorities questioned him and his friends for three hours before letting them go.

"We carried out a preventive conversation with them," a police spokesman told Interfax, adding that the trio's actions were illegal and an investigation had been opened.

It was unclear what charges, if any, might be filed against them.

The police spokesman identified Raskalov's friends as residents of Moscow and Vladivostok. None of the three had insurance, Interfax said.

The two bridges, aimed at improving the Far East city's transportation infrastructure, are expected to open to traffic this summer, weeks before Russia hosts the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit on Sept. 8 and 9.

This week's incident is not the first time that thrill-seekers have targeted the bridges. Last May, two basejumpers from Moscow illegally entered the construction site of the Zolotoy Rog Bridge and, in full sight of the workers, climbed 150 meters and jumped, Interfax reported. Local prosecutors subsequently ordered the builders to beef up security at the site.

Raskalov, meanwhile, seemed to have no regrets about his bridge stunts.

"Freedom," he tweeted after his release. "Now we will enjoy the local beer Amur."

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