

# TRAVEL GUIDE TO ULAAN BAATAR AND THE MONGOLIAN COUNTRYSIDE

BY CHRIS DEVONSHIRE-ELLIS



**Including details on  
travelling, where to go,  
what to see, trips out of UB,  
City Living, Mongolian culture,  
wildlife and full restaurant,  
bar and nightclub listings**

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*Welcome to Mongolia!*

*This book is designed to give you a detailed overview of Ulaan Baatar – for many travelers the starting point for a wider excursion into this beautiful country. Ulaan Baatar does have a charm all it's own and there are a number of historic places to check out and visit. We then expand this and introduce to you the logistics of being in Mongolia, camping, staying with nomads and so on and introduce to you some of the destinations and activities that are within easy reach of Ulaan Bataar. Included also are articles about specific Mongolian features, which we hope you will also find of interest, as well as pieces on bird watching, wild flowers and Mongolia's wildlife. The guide is concluded with listings for Ulaan Baatar, from nightclubs and bars to embassies and tour guides.*

*I am grateful to the following people without whose assistance this guide would not have been possible:*

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*Finally, please check out our associated website: [www.mongoliaexpat.com](http://www.mongoliaexpat.com) – with forums, news, articles and travelcams online – and the regular magazine – also available online (with a free subscription). We hope you make new friends here, have a great time and return soon!*

*With best wishes*

*Ayan Zamdaa Sain Yavaarai – Happy Traveling!*

*Chris Devonshire-Ellis*

*Ulaan Baatar*

*February 2007*

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# Introduction To Ulaan Baatar

## ULAAN BATAAR – THE CAPITAL CITY

**Y**ou'll probably arrive here first, either via plane or train. Ulaan Baatar's (UB) neat little airport was renovated a couple of years ago, while the train station is small, neat, and somewhat legendary as a stop over on the famous Trans-Siberian express, running from Beijing to Moscow. Just next to the train station is an outdoor locomotive museum – well worth a look.

Firstly though, how to get to Ulaan Baatar or away:

### TO ULAAN BATAAR FROM INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS

#### By Air



*Ulaan Baatar Airport*

Traveling by air to Ulaan Baatar is generally considered the most comfortable and fastest option available. There are direct flights from Beijing Berlin, Moscow, Tokyo, Irkutsk and Seoul and the network of airlines and destinations is growing. London, Milan, Shanghai & HongKong are rumored to be in the pipeline as additional destinations, as well as a flight share arrangement with one of the

Japanese airlines to serve the US. As soon as we have details we will post these on the Mongolia Expat website, so check there for any updates. At the time of going to press, the following international routes were available, however bear in mind timetables can change and we recommend checking these to ensure accuracy.

#### Beijing

Air China and MIAT (Mongolian International Airlines) both fly regular flights between Beijing and Ulaan Baatar, the regularity of the flights depending very much on the season with more regular flights in summer than winter. There is generally a daily flight from one of the two airlines in summer and about 3 times a week in winter. The cost of a return ticket is generally around 500USD to 600USD. Flight time is approximately one and a half hours. Air China flights at present depart Beijing about 9am while MIAT at 1pm.

*For more information please consult*

**MIAT** <http://www.miat.com/>

**Air China** <http://www.airchina.com>

#### Moscow

Aeroflot flies between Moscow and Ulaan Baatar with flights two to three times a week depending on the season. Be aware Aeroflot runs the old Tupolev planes on this route. The price of a return ticket is around 500USD and is the most competitive of all long haul flights. The flight time is six hours. It is possible to take a connecting flight to

Europe from Moscow but the wait in Cheremtyevo airport can be up to 12 hours long, the airport itself somewhat lacking in facilities. Pack books, ipods and other entertainment for airport delays.

*For more details:*

**Aeroflot** <http://www.aeroflot.ru/eng/>

## Berlin

MIAT runs bi-weekly flights from Berlin to UB. The flight often flies via Moscow for refueling and a crew change before it carries on to UB. MIAT runs a fleet of modern Boeing and Airbus planes, has an efficient and polite service on board and are comfortable and cost effective flight. Return flight average around 800USD. From Berlin there are connecting flights to the rest of Europe.

## Seoul

Korean Air flies directly between Seoul and Ulaan Baatar, and is the preferred route between Europe and Mongolia for most of the executive expats based in UB as the flights are comfortable and the quality of service excellent. Flights between UB-Seoul-Europe do have the disadvantage of being longer than any other route as you would fly back over Ulaan Baatar on your way from Seoul to Europe. There is also the added disadvantage that the connecting flights in Seoul can be around 9 hours apart but the airport hotel in the transit lounge is excellent. There are about 3 flights a week between Seoul and UB.

*Please see:*

**Korean Air:** [www.koreanair.com](http://www.koreanair.com)

## Tokyo

There are once weekly flights between Tokyo and Ulaan Baatar, operated by MIAT during most of the year but predominantly in summer, while ANA will usually have routes during the summer months. Excellent quality and service can be expected on the ANA flights while the MIAT crew also provides for a pleasant journey. The cost can be expected to vary between 600USD and 800USD. Flight time is around two and a half hours.

*Please view:*

**ANA:** [www.anaskyweb.com](http://www.anaskyweb.com)

## Osaka

As with Tokyo but flights only operate in summer and generally by ANA. The flight is a little bit longer and slightly more expensive than the Tokyo route.

## Major Airlines Companies office in Ulaan Baatar

### Air China

Bayanzurkh district, 2nd Khoroo, Sansar Microdistrict, Building number 47  
*Tel: 452548*

### Aeroflot

Sukhbaatar district, Seoul Street 15  
*Tel: 320720*

### Miat

Chingeltei district, 1st Khoroo, east side of the Government Building number 4  
*Tel: 1881*

### Korean Air

Bayanzurkh district, 3rd floor of the Chinggis Khan hotel, room 301  
*Tel: 317100*

## Aeromongolia

Sukhbaatar district, west side of the UB Hotel, in Mongolian People Revolution Party's building

*Tel: 330373, 330373*



## By Train

Traveling by train to Mongolia is often a romantic dream for many people, is an adventure in itself and is well worth the experience. Trains generally run between Moscow and Beijing. However, while all the trains leave Moscow and arrive in Irkutsk in Siberia there are then three options available. The first is to carry on with the Trans-Siberian and go on to Vladivostok, the second option is to take the Trans-Manchurian which continues just north of the Mongolia border in Siberia and then curves around and south to China (without entering Mongolia), terminating in Beijing. The third option is to take the Trans-Mongolian which goes in a direct line Irkutsk – Ulaan Baatar – Beijing. There are various classes of travel available on the train, 1st class – the “soft sleeper class” is usually a comfortable 2 bed cabin, often with small washing facilities and maybe even a television if you are lucky. There is a second class “hard sleeper”- which consists of either 4 or 6 beds in a cabin, this is generally shared with a Chinese/Russian/Mongolian family and can provide for an amusing if sometimes noisy journey. The third class of travel is a large dormitory with approximately 46 beds in one carriage, this is usually booked by local travelers and is often a very happening place. It certainly gives you a great insight into the region you are traveling in. Don't expect to get any sleep or rest in third class but

in return you will have amazing stories of gambling, spontaneous demonstrations of joy and anger, storytelling, love affairs, arguments, card games, on the spot commodities trading and in short, all the ingredients for an undying friendships with the local smugglers, soldiers and peasants. As always – be very careful of your belongings and secret your money and valuables carefully.

## Irkutsk – Ulaan Baatar

The journey between Irkutsk and Ulaan Baatar is stunning. The train departs Irkutsk in the afternoon and glides effortlessly around the abrupt cliffs of the Baikal Lake as the sun sets over it. This leg of the journey is accompanied by the many legends and tales surrounding the construction and logistics of the most difficult few miles of the trans Siberian express. When the line was originally under construction, the train was loaded at the village of Baikal on two enormous British made ships to be taken to the other side of the lake, but at the first try the ship sunk with its train, and the second ship never left the harbour. After this first failure, tracks were laid over the iced over Lake Baikal in winter so that the train could cross the lake. Sadly the first train to attempt the crossing rejoined the other one at the bottom of the lake. It then became obvious that the only way of completing the route was to blast an almost impossibly impenetrable route out of the cliff face along the edge of the lake. This resulted in one of the most breathtaking train journeys in the world. The journey takes about 1 day and 2 nights arriving in Ulaan Baatar early on the morning of the second day.

It is of course possible to go the other way, Ulaan Baatar – Irkutsk.

### Time Differences en route

Be aware that trains traveling in Russia travel at Moscow time, which is very different to the time in Siberia. This means that your ticket may state a departure from Irkutsk at 10:20 but as this is Moscow time, the real departure time would be at 16:20 Irkutsk time. This system has caused many travelers to miss their trains so beware and ask at the train station well in advance to confirm departure times and actual time zones. There is slight wait at the border as passports are checked and the trains restaurant wagon is switched between the Russian one to the Mongolian one (the Mongolian one is considerably better)

### Ulaan Baatar – Beijing

*Ulaan Baatar Train Station*



The Beijing – Ulaan Baatar route is a bit more monotonous than the one described above but is nonetheless interesting. The train departs from Beijing in the afternoon and travels out of Beijing more or less following the path of the great wall. There is a stop on the way to admire the wall and then onwards towards Mongolia. The train reaches the border in the middle of the night and the wait at the border

is tediously long with endless forms to fill in and the constant questioning of the Chinese border guards. The next morning the train crosses the wide expanses of the Gobi before reaching Ulaan Baatar later that same afternoon.

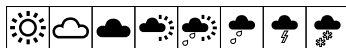
Note that it can be extremely difficult to obtain train tickets in July and August as there are a limited amount of trains on the line and most tickets are booked very long in advance by large tour groups. If you plan on using the train to Beijing or Ulaan Baatar book well in advance. A single way ticket to either one of those should cost no more than 200USD in 2nd class.

A transit visa is fine if you do not intend to stop in Ulaan Baatar but of course, if you plan to stop in Ulaan Baatar and stay there for a while, you will need a visa.

**Or you might want to get to UB by yourself?**

<http://www.drivetomongolia.org/>

<http://www.mongolrally.com>



### WEATHER INFORMATION

“Four Seasons in One Day” can apply very much to anywhere in Mongolia. To check what’s going on in over 20 locations throughout Mongolia visit: [www.wunderground.com/global/MO.html](http://www.wunderground.com/global/MO.html).

### VISA INFORMATION

Obtaining a visa for Mongolia is a relatively painless and quick process. Visas



are available for various periods of time but as a tourist a 30 day single entry visa is the norm, any longer will require an invitation letter and a clear statement of purpose concerning your stay in Mongolia.

If you have not had time to obtain a visa previous to arrival it is always possible to obtain one at the airport arrival lounge before the passport check. Bring USD with you; the cost of a single entry visa obtained directly from the airport is about 60 USD. You will need an invitation letter and a passport size picture. Your travel agent should be able to email an invitation to you. For some citizens (US, Hong Kong for example) a visa is not required, however we recommend you consult the Mongolian Embassy for up to the minute information.

### Long Term Visa

If you feel like staying, the only way is to apply for a job or study permit. You will have to go the Office of Immigration, Naturalization & Foreign Citizens (INFC)

*Address: On the west side of Peace Bridge  
Tel: 315 323*

Multi-entry 12 month business visas are also available for employees or business people with investments in Mongolia.

### CURRENCY

The Mongolian currency is the wonderfully named Togrog. One thousand Togrog is worth about US\$1.10 Dollars and Togrog are exchanged in equal measure, and dollars are readily acceptable almost everywhere. There are money changers at the airport, train station and in numerous locations in UB, banks and hotels. The smaller notes depict Sukhbaatar, the champion of



democracy in Mongolia, while the larger ones depict Chinggis Khan.



### TAXIS

Taxis are very loosely defined in Mongolia, you have the city taxis which are painted yellow or white and have taxi signs. They generally operate on a meter but some meters seem to work faster than others. The starting price of the meter should read 250 togrog but you may also be confronted with unknown and sudden supplements for being, well, new to Mongolia.

During the day, just stick your arm out near a road and any random car will stop to take you where you which to go. The prices are generally cheaper with unmarked and unregistered taxis but they can argue if they think you are being too pushy. At



night some taxis will ask exorbitant prices if they think they can get away with it. As no taxi driver in the city speaks a word of English it is advisable that you learn the general words to direct the taxi in Mongolian before you take one.

The following prices are indicative of what you should be paying, bear in mind that if you behave like an obvious tourist you will be charged tourist prices which may be considerably more than the prices below.

### ➔ From the airport to the city centre

From the airport to Sukhbaatar Square (centre of the city) 4,000 to 6,000 tg, more if you have luggage and friends. Be careful with the change – 1,000 tg are similar in colour to 10,000 tg notes as the author has previously learnt to his cost !

### ➔ From the train station to the city centre

This should be around 2,500 to 3,000 tg.

### ➔ From Sukhbaatar square to the State Department Store

would cost around 450 to 600 tg depending on traffic conditions. Even UB can get busy during rush hour.

### ➔ From Sukhbaatar square to the Boghd Khan Palace Museum (south of the city)

would be around 1,500 tg.

## RENT A CAR

You can always rent a taxi for the day. Another option is to rent a Jeep with driver, and translator, most tour operators will arrange this. Budget for about USD50-100 a day for everything.

## A FEW WORDS TO START

The Mongolian language has famously been described as like listening to two

cats fighting, and is generally difficult to master. Mongolian is part of the Ural-Altaic group of languages which includes Finnish, Hungarian, Kazak and Korean. It may have evolved such a broad spread as a common dialect amongst nomadic herders following the Reindeer thousands of years ago. Phrase books and dictionaries are readily available in UB, however here are a few words and phrases that may help you get around:

*Hello :* Sain Baina Uu

*How is your family ?*

Tanai ger bulliinhen sain uu ?

*Yes:* Tiim

*No:* Ugui

*Thanks:* Bayarlalaa

*Do You Speak English:* Ta angliar yairdag uu ?

*How can I get to....?*

(place name)....ruu bi yaj ochikh ve ?

*Goodbye:* Bayartai

*Numbers:*

0: teg

1: neg

2: khoyor

3: gurav

4: dorov

5: tav

6: zurgaa

7: doloo

8: naim

9: yos

10: arav

100: zuu

1000: myangga

# ULAAN BAATAR – CITY LIVING

**K**nown locally by many as simply “UB” Ulaan Baatar at first appears rather a mish-mash. With a population of about 750,000, the city is made up of a combination of the urban sprawl of gers, old Soviet built blocks, and some inspired architecture. The worst feature of the landscape is the immediate view of the two huge coal burning power stations either end of UB that provide much of the power, again built by the Russians. However, these are the only blots on what turns out to be a charming city – so give UB a chance and it is a great place to relax and chill out while planning your trip out to the “countryside” as Mongolians, with great understatement, tend to refer to all of the rest of the country.

## THE BEST TIME TO VISIT

For five months of the year Mongolia faces sub zero temperatures fuelled by the Siberian wind. The summer months between June and September are however pleasant and temperature can reach 30c+. It can however get cold at night, and remember that it can suddenly snow at any time of year. Prepare with t-shirts, sun-hats, sun-cream (it is a strong sun and Mongolia is one of the sunniest countries on earth) as well as jerseys and jumpers for the evening. Like the Boy Scouts motto – be prepared. For gear, most of the tour companies will have tents, sleeping bags and blankets and even provide cooking utensils and food as well, but obviously if you have your own it means you don't have to rent them. While the summer months

are high season in Mongolia for tourists, spring is also a lovely time, particularly in the Gobi desert. Winter is harsh and temperatures can plummet, however that doesn't keep hardened adventure travellers away, and the landscape – complete with those ever present sunny skies, can be spectacular amongst the snow and ice. Here are some suggestions:

**Spring** – travel the Gobi and see the desert come to life

**Summer** – the entire country is an adventure seekers paradise

**Autumn** – West Mongolia, to the Altai, for the eagle festivals amongst the Kazaks

**Winter** – Lake Khovsgol in it's frozen winter beauty and ice festival

## LOCAL TIME

Local time in Ulaan Baatar is GMT + 8 hours. The three western provinces are one hour behind the capital. Mongolia observes daylight savings time in the summer months.

## MAKING PHONE CALLS



*Phone Call*

You can make local phone calls from your hotel most of the time for free. Some hotels may levy around 200 tg for a call to a landline or up to 500 for a call to a mobile.

You can also always call from the street, from the “white phone” as Mongolian people call them. Those nomad phones are almost everywhere in the streets – you can see locals sitting down with them by the roadside. Cost per call is around 100tg/minute. Ulaan Baatar only has six digit phone numbers – a telling sign about Mongolia’s population density. If you leave UB however remember that unless you are in a provincial town elsewhere, you are likely to lose signal and almost certainly be out of contact in the countryside. Mongolians use wireless receivers in these areas to keep in touch, but your mobile phone will be out of range.

### **Mongolia Country Code from overseas**

Mongolia’s country code is 976

To make international calls from Mongolia either use your + button on your phone or dial 001 to access the Mongolian international exchange, followed by the relevant country code and the number you wish to call.

### **Local Calls - Emergency**

Emergency aid - ambulance 103

Fire 101

Police 102

Most Asian registered phones equipped with roaming will work in Mongolia without the need to change sim cards.

### **Mobile Phones**

There is a reliable mobile phone shop on the second floor of the State Department Store, it is operated by Mobicom which is the largest operator in the country. They have a good level of coverage and are relatively inexpensive. It is recommended that you go with a Mongolian friend who can help you fill out forms and make the right choices. Prices very much depend on the packages you take but are no more expensive then elsewhere in Asia.

Most shops as well as the post office, the tourist information office and the state department store will be happy to sell phone cards to call home.

### **Mobile phone budget:**

#### ***The Phone***

It will cost you less than 100 000 tg for a second hand phone and around 200 000 to 400 000 tg for a new one.

#### ***The SIM card***

The SIM card will then cost you 17 000 tg and has a 2 months validity – after these 2 months, you can extend it for 2 more months – it will cost you 8000 tg - it includes 2500 units.

#### ***Recharges***

You will then have to buy recharges depending on your need 2500, 1000, 500 tg card. Most of Mongolian people will buy the cheapest one and send text messages instead of calling.

Most Phone Operators also offer a “postpaid service”, allowing you to call any time any destination without having to constantly charge your mobile.

Another interesting possibility, when you’re going out of units is to ask one of your friends to transfer some units from his phone number to yours!

There are lucky numbers (9 and 3) and bad numbers (7).

### Phone Operators:

#### **Mobicom**

Peace Avenue 3/1, Chingeltei district

Tel: 976 11 312222

Fax: 976 11 310411

Website: [www.mobicom.mn](http://www.mobicom.mn)

#### **Skytel**

Chinggis Khaan Avenue 9, Sukhbaatar district

Tel: 976 11 319191

Fax: 976 11 318487

Website: [www.skytel.mn](http://www.skytel.mn)

#### **UNITEL**

Baruun Dorvon Zam Undsen Huuliin Dudamj-24, Rokmon Building first floor, Bayangol district

Tel: 1414, 328888

Fax: 330708

Website: [www.unitel.mn](http://www.unitel.mn)

### ELECTRICITY & VOLTAGE

Mongolia uses 220 volts 50Hz. Electrical sockets accept two round prongs, similar to those used in Russia and Europe. Bring a travel adapter with you.

### INTERNET

There are internet cafés everywhere in the city. Hourly rates are about 800 tg / 1000 tg.

There is a large and comfortable internet café on the street going from the Department Store to the Circus. Next to Emerald Bay – Mediterranean restaurant on Tserendorjiin Gudamj City Coffee, near the city main intersection on Chingisiin Orgon Choloo, is offering wifi. Others are springing up all over the

city so you will have no problem keeping in touch. Bear in mind that as soon as you get out of UB, unless you happen to be in one of the provincial towns, there will be no internet access or service.

### POST OFFICE

The Central Post Office is on the corner of Sukhbaatar square and Peace avenue (the entrance is on Peace Avenue) is the best place to go, they are friendly, speak English and are happy to help. They have



Central Post Office

a wide variety of postcards on offer there as well as a collection of colourful stamps to send postcards to your loved ones at home. Prices for the postal services vary but are always reasonable – around 90 tugrik-and the service itself is excellent if a bit slow. They also offer poste restante services to hold mail for you if you are travelling.

Commemorative Stamp





## NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES

There are two English language newspapers in Mongolia, The Ulaan Baatar Post and The Mongol Messenger, readily available for 300 - 400 tg. The State Department Store carries these and a variety of other local and Russian newspapers and magazines. Or you can log onto your favourite online newspaper in one of the internet cafes. To date, our own Mongolia Expat magazine is the only consistently produced English language magazine in UB, containing travel information articles and pieces on Mongolian culture it is readily available in most UB bars and restaurants. It is free – however some enterprising locals have been seen to sell it, priced at 1,000 tg. Archived back issues and a complimentary electronic subscription can be found on the Mongolia Expat website at [www.mongoliaexpat.com](http://www.mongoliaexpat.com).

## TOURISM INFORMATION OFFICE

The Tourist Information Office is located in the same building as the Post Office. You will find there some useful information and brochures about travelling in Mongolia. They will often refer you to various travel and tour operators in Ulaan Baatar. They also sell maps and souvenirs of Mongolia.

## FINANCES

### Cash Points and Banks

There are very few cash points (ATM's) in Ulaan Baatar and nearly all of them only take Visa cards. You can normally take money out from the banks themselves if you have Maestro or other cards but this involves a long process of filling in forms,



having them approved at one counter, stamped at another and paid out at a third. However, several banks are open 24 hours a day such as the Golomt bank near the Marco Polo restaurant. Travellers cheques can be changed in most banks in the city. Most foreign restaurants, bars, hotels and service providers also accept payment by card. The preferred currencies in Mongolia are of course the national Togrog and US dollars.

Most banks are open from Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm, however as mentioned it is possible to find 24 hour money changers in the city centre.

Some currencies, such as HK\$ and RMB can be difficult to change, however the first floor money changer in the Flower Store Building, just off Peace Avenue not far from Chez Bernard, will change most currencies.

To withdraw money, the Trade & Development Bank of Mongolia can assist, while ATM machines can be found

in Chinggis Khaan Hotel, Ulaan Baatar Hotel, the Bayangol Hotel and most other 4 – 5 star hotels.

Outside of Ulaan Baatar credit cards are not used and only cash is accepted, so leave prepared with a roll of togrog.

### Opening A Bank Account

Opening a bank account in Mongolia is relatively easy - the Trade and Development Bank as well as the Golomt Bank are happy to help. You will need to provide them with your passport. It will cost a 1000 tg registration fee to open the account and a minimum 50USD deposit. You can operate accounts both in togrog and a foreign currency bank account. Credit cards, domestic and international one can be provided upon request and fulfilment of the banks own credit requirements.

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Public transport in Mongolia is cheap but is not generally comfortable or reliable. Small mini buses travel from Ulaan Baatar to various parts of the country but they only depart when full (which means that every inch of available space is taken up by something, including goats) and can result in you waiting in the mini-bus for hours for it to fill up. Sign posts out of UB are very rare and it is difficult if the country is new to you to know where you are. Once at your destination there are few indications of when the next bus will depart - if at all – back to Ulaan Baatar. It is unlikely anyone working for, or taking the public transport system in Mongolia will speak English. All timetables are written in Cyrillic. While this can be fun, it is also very tiring, exceedingly uncomfortable and extremely unreliable. Travel by public

transport is only advisable if you are very adventure minded and have plenty of spare time to be wandering amongst the steppes of Mongolia...however most tour companies will provide planned trips for you and take care of all these hassles.

### REAL ESTATE & PROPERTY SERVICES

The largest and best real estate agency in Ulaan Baatar is Mongolian Properties ([www.mongolianproperties.com](http://www.mongolianproperties.com)). They have a large expat staff working for them and can assist with most European and Asian languages. All their contracts, legal documents and general information are available in English.

The Residential letting market of Ulaan Baatar has consistently grown over the last few years, with supply still very much struggling to meet the high levels of demand. The strong growth witnessed within the Mongolian economy has fuelled demand by local residents for housing as well as encourage expats to live and work in Mongolia.

Ulaan Baatar was largely built by the soviets along the communist ideals of architecture, and while some buildings are purely functional others display a Stalinist grandeur and elegance. Various waves of construction and developments have come through the city and each has left its mark. Prices for rental and sales of real estate are greatly affected by the age and the state of the building.

### Types of Property

#### *The Pink Buildings*

The city was originally built with these. They are extraordinarily strong with thick walls and high ceilings. They were built

in the 1940's to the 1960's. The prices of those buildings are actually on the rise; this is because they are solid and comfortable. There are generally three to four floors high while some also have balconies. They are great for renovations and to live in. Often full of character and cracks.

### ***The Gulag Blocks***

Built in the 60's and 80's they litter the landscape in most of the old socialist states. They were built at a time of desperate need when a large percentage of the population had neither housing nor choice in where they lived. Those towers were for the most part built in factories on the cheap and they certainly look like it. There are a few of them around the city centre, behind the MCS Plaza and opposite the Russian Embassy are prime examples. They are generally 5 to 8 floors high, no elevators, no security and regularity have problems with plumbing and electricity. The advantages of living in the gulag towers is that they are quite cheap, some are in the city centre and they provide for amusing stories back home as they are full of local life. Some of these apartments have been bought by expats and renovated. They make for a great deal if you can get your hands on one.

### ***The Courtyard Developments***

When the Soviets first started developing the city with the pink and orange buildings, they built them in a square around a large central courtyard which was communal to all the buildings along the square. This meant that kids and the elderly could go out and play in those courtyards without any risk. As the price of land in the city is becoming more scarce and valuable, those courtyards and the gaps to them

are being built upon. This phenomenon started in the 90's and is still on-going. Those buildings are generally very popular with the expat, they are often built with garage space underneath, a fence around it and spacious and light apartments within them. The apartments are modern and for the better part very comfortable.

### ***Luxury Developments***

For the past five years or so there has been a flurry of new developments being built in and around the city, each new development is generally better than the last. They are starting to incorporate all the mod cons as standard into the buildings, are generally well located and popular with the expats. You can expect to pay considerably higher prices for these higher standards. The latest buildings such as the Park View Residence and the Star Apartments are very hard to get into as they have waiting lists. Golomt towers still have a few apartments left for rent but the building is slightly out of town. Mongolian Properties maintains an online listing of all the availabilities in town.

### ***The Next Wave***

There is a new wave of construction taking place in Ulaan Baatar. They are for the most part world class high rise (around 15 floors) condominiums such as the Regency Residence - currently built next to the children's park. Some developments are also coming up outside of the city to the south such as the Four Seasons Garden. The buildings being planned and built at the moment such as the Olympic Residence and the MITIC towers would not look out of place in any other capital in the first world.



Selling superb properties  
in Mongolia everyday...



[WWW.MONGOLIA-PROPERTIES.COM](http://WWW.MONGOLIA-PROPERTIES.COM)



MODA MONGOLIA

Moda Mongolia is a very trendy high quality brand offering the best in Mongolian cashmere, yak and camel products. We've got shops in Mongolia and in England. We've got also an e-shop on our website.

[www.modo-cashmere.com](http://www.modo-cashmere.com)



The Regency Residence

The Regency Residence is a large multi use complex being currently built in the heart of Ulaanbaatar. It will offer a 100 apartments and penthouses built to the highest standards of international luxury. The Regency Residence will become one of the landmarks of this ever growing city with its large balconies facing the Bogd Khan range of mountains, overlooking the park and the city. Not only will the Regency Residence be the tallest Residential building in Mongolia but also the most desirable one.

[www.mongolia-realestate.com](http://www.mongolia-realestate.com)

### ***The Best Locations to Live***

Ulaan Baatar is an evolving city with some areas better or more desirable than others. The city is generally divided into three areas.

#### ***Sukhbaatar Square***

Sukhbaatar square and everything to the north of Parliament House is the political and administrative centre of the city, there are a lot of ministries, official buildings, embassies and so forth. While it is a relatively safe area to live in, it is far from the main restaurant and bar area.

#### ***The Children's Park***

The Children's Park is the most sought after location in the city, primarily along Olympic Avenue around the Star Apartments, the Continental Hotel and the Regency Residence. The area is safe as a lot of embassies are located there. The Star apartments are home to most of the ambassadors and high ranking expats in the city, while the Park provides for a nice quiet and luxurious environment perfect for high end residential living away from the city centre but still close enough to walk into all the major locations. The Park View Residence, located next to the popular Chojin Lama museum is a popular building with the executives from the mining companies. The park is also filling up with bars and restaurants.

#### ***Seoul Street and the Circus***

This area has some luxury buildings but most are mid-range. This is however the entertainment centre of the city, with a lot of cool bars and restaurants close by.

### **Property Rental**

Rental prices in UB have been on the rise for the past few years. Below is a guideline on what is obtainable at what prices:

#### ***250 USD to 350USD***

For this price you can generally rent a 1 bedroom flat / studio around Seoul street or further north towards the Lenin Museum and the Cinema. The building which you would get for that will be either a pink building or a gulag development, usually being partially furnished. It is hard to find an apartment in this category which is decorated in the western style as opposed to the heavy kitsch style so common in Mongolia.

#### ***350 USD to 500USD***

2 bedroom apartment as above but in generally a better location and better decorated with more modern cons. Fully furnished, quite a few of them towards the north of peace avenue and around Sukhbaatar Square.

#### ***500USD to 1,000USD***

The possibility to move in a courtyard development, it would generally be a 2 bedroom apartment with a security guard at the entrance. Standard mod cons. Those apartments are in a shortage so hard to find. They usually have reasonable levels of furniture.

#### ***1,000USD to 2,500USD***

Those are starting to be luxurious apartments of a standard equivalent to mid to high end apartments in the Asian capital cities, some supply around the Children's Park, they are the top end of the courtyard developments and the low to mid range of the luxury apartments. Most of the apartments in the Park View Residence



are priced within this bracket. A reasonable amount of choice within this category, but it is very seasonal as consultants and expats tend to come for the summer or milder months and go home for winter. There are a lot of developments outside of the city, they form a compound with security and services within it but require you to have transport to and from the city centre.

### ***2,500USD upwards***

From 2,500 USD you can have access to some of the best real estate in the city, generally situated around the park, this would include penthouses and large apartments. From 3,000USD it might even be possible to have a small townhouse in the Star Apartments - but a long waiting queue still exists.

## **Facilities & Utilities**

### ***Paying Bills***

Paying bills in Mongolia is a tricky business, primarily if you don't speak the language. Bills will be glued on your door every so often. It will not state how much the bill is or sometimes not even what it is for. You then need to go to your district's payment centre for whatever bill you have, once there you will be told how much the bill is. Once paid you will receive a receipt for it. This process is frustrating at best but most property companies can offer bill settlement as part of a property management package for your apartment.

### ***Phone***

Again, a difficult process, if you take an apartment, make sure it has an existing phone line and that it will not be shut off when you move into the apartment. If you have to acquire a landline for your apartment, local friends or your property agent can help – however the process can

be long and drawn out. Getting a mobile phone is considerably easier; Mobicom offers a good level of service and a reliable network. They have a point of sales in the State Department Store with some English speaking staff available to help.

### ***Internet***

If you have a phone line, you need to connect an internet provider in the city. Mobinet, Magicnet, MCS, Digicom are some of the most reliable ones. Depending on your location and the price you are willing to pay you can have broadband wi-fi installed in your apartment, the whole process should not normally take more than a month.

### ***Security***

Mongolia is a relatively safe place, it is quite rare to hear of expats getting physically abused while in Ulaan Baatar. It has happened in the past, primarily in winter as drunk expat stumbling out of a bar makes for easy pickings, but physical violence to foreigners is unusual. As always, be sensible when out at night. Most apartments at the high end will have incumbent security guards.

## **LANGUAGE**

**The National University of Mongolia**  
Opposite the Bistrot Francais north of Sukhbaatar Square

The university offers Mongolian culture and language classes for both groups and individuals.

<http://web.num.edu.mn/>

**International School of Mongolian Studies (ISMS)**

Also providing Mongolian language classes, four twelve week sessions every year, from beginners to advanced students,

with an average of twelve students per class.

They also offer summer classes and individual classes.

ISMS also offers Mongolian calligraphy and Mongolian Hoomii (throat singing) - classes

[www.isms.edu.mn](http://www.isms.edu.mn)

### Bridge International College

Bridge provide Mongolian language courses – intensive 2 weeks courses and longer term classes, including a two year course, a Diploma program, summer language program and private classes.

[www.bridge.edu.mn](http://www.bridge.edu.mn)

## SCHOOLS

International School of Ulaan Bataar

Tel: 452 839

Web: [www.isumongolia.edu.mn](http://www.isumongolia.edu.mn)

## HOSPITALS

If you're in an accident you should contact your Embassy for assistance, otherwise for normal outpatient bangs, bruises and minor injuries the following hospitals are the best for adequate care and attention.

### **Russian Hospital # 2**

Corner of Peace Avenue & Tokyogiin Gudamj

Tel: 450 129

Usually regarded as the best in UB for general outpatient needs.

### **SOS Medical Clinic**

Gutal Cooperation Building, Chingisiin Orgon Choloo

Tel: 345 526

Emergency Hotline: 9975 0967

Part of the international SOS network with Western educated and English language speaking doctors and specialists. Expensive but vital in an emergency. Also has a dentistry section.

## SOCIAL CLUBS /

*The University of Mongolia Main Building with statue of Marshal Cholbalsan, Prime Minister & Commander in Chief 1924- 1952*



## ORGANISATIONS

Rotary Club of Mongolia:

[www.rotaryfirst100.org/global/countries/mongolia/index.htm](http://www.rotaryfirst100.org/global/countries/mongolia/index.htm)

## GEAR SHOPS

You can buy pretty much everything you need for the great Mongolian outdoors in UB. Both local, Chinese, Russian and the well known international brands are all generally available although prices (and quality) vary. If camping during winter or in extreme conditions do not skimp on cheap gear—quality is the vital factor. Most stores have English speaking staff and are experienced.

### State Department Store

#### *Peace Avenue*

Well worth a good look around – they stock just about everything.

### UB Outdoor Equipment Centre

Ikh Toiruu 6

Tel: 321 276

Email: [info@activeadventures.com](mailto:info@activeadventures.com)

Stockists of heavy duty German made gear (Vaude) they also rent inflatable rafts for river expeditions.

### Ayanchin Outfitters

Seoul Street 21

Tel: 327 172

Web: [www.ayanchin.com](http://www.ayanchin.com)

Extensive but expensive selection of



imported gear, including fishing and hunting equipment.

### Pro Shack

Ikh Toiruu 6

Tel: 318 138

Great for tools for vehicles, bikes, and treks and one of UB's most popular heavy duty stores.

### Shonkor Saddles

Behind the Central Post Office on the corner of Sukhbataar Square & Peace Avenue

Tel: 311 218

Everything you need to go horse trekking.

### Toread

Teeverchidiin Gudamj

Tel: 9918 0000

Chinese made but good quality gear at reasonable prices.

### Zagas

3/f, Flower Centre on Peace Avenue & Baga Toiruu West

Tel: 318 551

Camping and fishing gear.

# ULAAN BAATAR – PLACES TO GO, THINGS TO SEE

Ulaan Baatar is a surprisingly interesting city to wander around, once you've gotten over the shock of the two massive Soviet-built power stations that dominate each end. A mixture of classic soviet era architecture, modernism and gers, the city can spring surprises on each street corner – an old statue of Lenin here, a bronze figure of a sleeping monk there. There are also an interesting array of museums, art galleries and buildings to view – really it's worth the time to just wander around on foot, take in the sights and get to know UB. If you want to get to somewhere – just point to the photo in the book and you'll be given directions or the taxi driver will know where to take you. You can visit most sites of interest in UB in two or three days.

## Zaisan Memorial

For the best view of UB City from Zaisan Memorial. The memorial, sited on the summit of the tallest hill overlooking the city, was built by the Russians in commemoration of fallen comrades. It is now run down, but the view from the monument is magnificent, and you'll see all of UB in one panoramic swoop.

## Gandantegchinlen (Gandan) Khiid

On Dor Gegeen Zanabazaryn Gudamj

*Opening Hours: Daily 9am - 9pm*

*Free admission*

Completed in 1838, this is the largest monastery in Mongolia, and houses some 500 monks. It was purged in 1937 and



*Gandan Stupa*

partly ruined, however restored in 1990. The main temple is the superb white Migjid Janraisig Sum, which houses a huge, 27 metre high, copper and pure gold plated statue of Buddha, consecrated in 1997 by the Dalai Lama, and wrapped in 500 metres of silk.

In the courtyard are two further temples, the two storey Didan-Lavran Temple, which was home to the 13th Dalai Lama during his stay here in 1904, and the Ochidara Temple, where the most auspicious ceremonies are held. It is worth getting here in the mornings to see the most elaborate daily and seasonal ceremonies.





## Winter Palace of Bogd Khaan

Chingisiin Orgon Choloo

Tel: 342 195

Entrance fee: 2,500 tg

Opening hours: Daily 9am – 5.30pm

The Bogd Khan was Mongolia's last King and the nation's eighth Living Buddha. He lived here for 20 years following the completion of the Palace in 1903. The Winter Palace proper is the first building on the left as you enter, it houses gifts the Bogd Khaan received from visiting dignitaries, including from the Tsar of Russia. Various thangkas, paintings and other artifacts are on display. The Bogd Khaan's Summer Palace, incidentally, on the banks of the Tuul Gol River, was destroyed by the Soviets in the 1930's.

## Monastery Museum of Choijin Lama



Choijin Musicians

Close to Millie's café and Silk Road restaurant. Pass City's café and Khan Brau Beer Garden, turn left and you'll find it.

Tel: 324 788

Admission fee: 2,500 tg

Opening hours:

June- Oct: 8am – 10pm

Nov- May: 10am – 5pm



The Chojin Lama was the State Oracle and a brother of the Bogd Khaan. His monastery was completed in 1908, but closed during the soviet occupation in 1938. It is now a museum and houses five temples, with a collection of statues, thangkas and tsam masks. It is a prime spot near the centre of the city and a great place to relax. During the summer, traditional Mongolian performances are held here in the main hall and these are well worth looking out for.

### Sukhbaatar Square



*Sukhbaatar Square*

Ulaan Baatar is centralized around the massive Sukhbaatar Square, home of the government, museums, and with the main drag of Peace Avenue (Enkh Talvny Orgon Choloo) running across it's southern face. To the north, but like

*Parliament House*

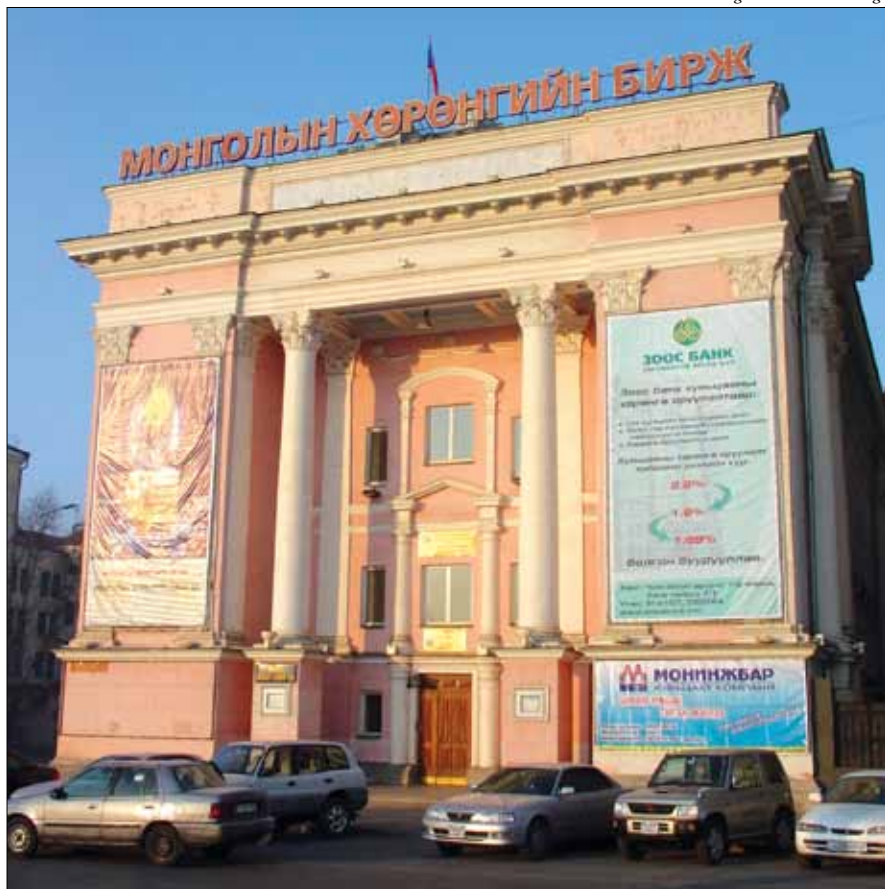


every Mongolian Ger, facing south, lies Parliament House, with it's new façade having been completed in 2006 to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the nation. Chinghis Khan sits proudly in the middle. Sukhbaatar himself was the founder of the democratic movement in Mongolia and declared Mongolia's independence from China in 1921. As a national hero, that's him astride his horse in the centre of the square.

Facing Parliament House, to the right, is the Palace of Culture, also housing the National Museum of Modern Art. The pink-orange building next to it is the State Opera & Ballet Theatre. To the left, and further back behind Parliament House is the grey coloured National Museum of Mongolian History. Running to the west of the square, the yellow and white building is Ulaan Baatar City Hall, while



*UB City Hall*



the Golomt Bank, a greenish, classic Stalinist building (with a huge new block behind it) is next door. Next to that, in deep pink is the Mongolian Stock Exchange.

Across Peace Avenue to the south lies the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chingis Khan Hotel and the still standing city statue of Lenin.

### **Peace Avenue**

With your back to Sukhbaatar Square, and turning right, walking along Peace Avenue will bring you into contact with many of

the relaxing bars and restaurants, some of UB's primary shops, and ultimately to the massive State Department Store where you can pick up anything from fly fishing gear, to tents, televisions, books

*Peace Avenue*

*State Department Store*

and microwaves. Everyone shops here, and pretty much all of UB is centered around this area. There are also many guest houses, small hotels and larger hotels all in the vicinity – you can just turn up and sort it out as you go shopping or relax in one of the many restaurants, bars and coffee shops along the way. It is a ten minute walk from the square to the State Department Store.

## Museums

Most of the Museums are located in Sukhbaatar square area.

### National Museum of Mongolian History

*National Museum of Mongolian History*

Juulchin Gudamj & Sukhbaataryn Gudamj

*Tel: 325 656*

*Entrance Fee: 2,500 tg*

*Opening hours: Daily except Sunday & Monday, 10am–5:30pm*

This excellent museum displays the history of the Mongolian people in different phases on each floor. On the ground floor lies exhibits showing early Mongolians, rock carvings, deer stones, and tools, jewelry and implements dating back to 4,000 years. Level two displays the various costumes, customs and utensils of various Mongolian tribal people, while Level three houses the main attraction – an examination of the times and life of Chinghis Khan and the rise of the Mongolian Golden Horde. It contains authentic battle armour and weapons from that time, as well as written communications the Great Khan had with the then Pope Innocent IV in 1246, bearing Chinghis Khans seal. The collection is completed with a display of Buddhist artifacts, including the notorious Ganlin Horn, made of human thigh bones and used by senior monks to exorcise demons.

### Museum of Natural History

Behind Sukhbaatar square, on Sukhbaataryn Gudamj & Sambugiin Orgon Choloo

*Tel: 321 716*

*Entrance fee: 2,000 tg*

*Daily except Monday, 10am–5:30pm*

Somewhat dusty in places, but well worth a visit to prepare your trip elsewhere and discover more about the animals you might come across, with an extensive

*Museum of Natural History*

collection of Mongolian animals and birds. The highlight, especially if you are going to the Gobi, is the Palaeontology Hall, with an impressive array of dinosaur bones, including a huge, 5 ton complete Tarbosaurus, which looks like an enraged T-Rex with a massive hangover after too many vodkas. Also fascinating is the fossil of a Velociraptor (as seen in Jurassic Park) in mortal combat with a Protoceratops – buried alive by a collapsing sand dune as they were fighting, more than 80 million years ago. Various dinosaur bones, eggs and nests make up the collection, while there is an interesting camel museum on the top floor.

## The Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum

Juulchin Gudamj

Tel: 326 060, 326 061

Entrance fee: 2,000 tg

### Opening hours:

Summer: 1 May - 31 September, every day from 9 am – 6 pm

Winter: 1 October - 30 April, Monday to Friday 10 am – 4.30 pm

Website: [www.zanabazarmuseum.com](http://www.zanabazarmuseum.com)

Zanabazar was a famous Mongolian sculptor in the 1600's, and this museum houses some of his finest works of art, including his 1683 cast of the Buddha and his "21 Manifestations of Tara". Also on display are priceless thangkas, paintings, sculptures and carvings and a fascinating collection of Tsam masks – worn by monks during religious ceremonies. B. Sharav's famous – and much copied – painting "One Day In Mongolia" is also displayed here.

The Red Ger Art Gallery on the first floor is a showcase for contemporary Mongolian artists and features a variety of paintings and sculptures, for sale from 130USD to 3,000.



Zanabazar Arts Museum



*Tengis Theatre***The Arts Council of Mongolia**

This impressive organization organizes two interestingly themed Ulaan Baatar tours: “Mongolian Buddhism Tour”, which takes in better and lesser known monasteries and temples, and “Myths and Truths - the Socialist Legacy in Mongolia” which deals with the soviet era. Both are excellent. The Arts Council also compiles a monthly calendar of all arts-related events in Ulaan Baatar in Mongolian and English, which is published and distributed throughout UB. Details: [www.artscouncil.mn](http://www.artscouncil.mn)

**Mongolian Art Websites**

<http://www.mongolianartist.com/>

[http://www.alashensemble.com/about\\_alash.htm](http://www.alashensemble.com/about_alash.htm)

<http://www.mongolianartist.com/>

<http://www.uma.mn/>

[http://www.art5plus.com/about\\_us.html](http://www.art5plus.com/about_us.html)

<http://www.artscouncil.mn/>

Link to Mongolian Masterpieces [www.khanbank.mn](http://www.khanbank.mn)

**Cinema and Entertainment****Cinema**

The biggest cinema in Ulaan Baatar is the Tengis Cinema located on Liberty Square to the north of the State Department Store, it has two large screens and shows Western, Korean, Japanese and Mongolian films. Beware that although some of the western films are shown in their original language, subtitled in Mongolian they are sometimes dubbed in Russian. Most films are shown here about a month after their general release. Opened in 2004 and complete with usual multiplex facilities.

Cost : around 2500 tg/ person

Website with details of screenings: [www.tengis.mn](http://www.tengis.mn)

*Contemporary Mongolian Art - "Evening With The Moon" from the authors private Asian art collection.*







*Opera House*

### **The Opera House**

Tel: 322 854

On Sukhbaatar Square, housed in the large orange building (built by the Russians in 1932). Performances here are a surprisingly good quality as the senior artists were trained in Moscow. They show all the classics at various times of the year. Carmen, Madame Butterfly, Tosca, Die Fledermaus and La Boheme were all excellent productions during 2006 and are well worth seeing. The Opera House is closed during August.

### **The National Theatre**

***Seoul Street and Chingisiin Orgon Choloo***



*State Drama Theatre*

Tel: 310 466

During the summer months the National Theatre has a traditional Mongolian

Performance Arts Festival, including putting on various traditional plays, rock concerts, acrobats and contortionists, traditional music, national costume displays and fashion shows.

### **The State Circus**

Seoul Street

Tel: 320 795

Formed in 1940, the circus is recognizable as a UB landmark with its bright blue tent styled roof. Tickets can be purchased in the pink coloured building just next door. Performances are well worth it for contortionists, acrobats and jugglers, but can be somewhat eccentric. The circus is closed during August. Performances begin at 5pm and details of events can be obtained from the Arts Council (listed elsewhere).



*State Circus*

# THE SIX PLACES YOU MUST VISIT IN MONGOLIA

With such a vast country – it is the size of Europe, but with just 3 million people – Mongolia is often bewildering in its size and choices of where to go. From near arctic conditions and massive, untamed glacial mountains in the north-west, where reindeer run wild, to the huge steppes of seas of grass, to the bitter coldness and parched conditions of the Gobi Desert, to the lush mountains and larch forests of Siberian Mongolia to the North-East, there really is something for everyone – although we also apologise for what we have had to leave out in the confines of this book. To get started though, this is a useful introduction – look out for more information on the main website.

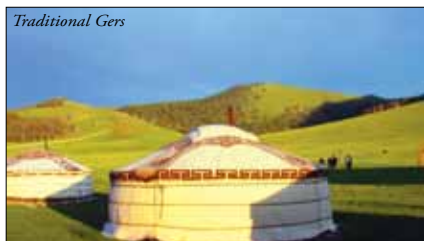
First though, as you'll probably arrive in Ulaan Baatar, the capital, lets start here :

## • Ulaan Baatar

Sited in Mongolia's mid-north, UB is home to about 1/3 of all Mongolians, and is a quirky, laid back city not without it's charms. Unfortunately dominated by the massive Soviet built coal-fired power station, it nonetheless possesses a welter of internet cafes, bars, and some excellent museums and monasteries. It's a good place to wander around before getting out into the majestic surroundings of the Terelj national park that surrounds the city. Home to just 750,000 Mongolians, the population swells during the frigid winter months – the city outskirts turning into a mass ger camp as nomads seek to get

*Parliament House, Sukhbaatar Square*



*Traditional Gers*

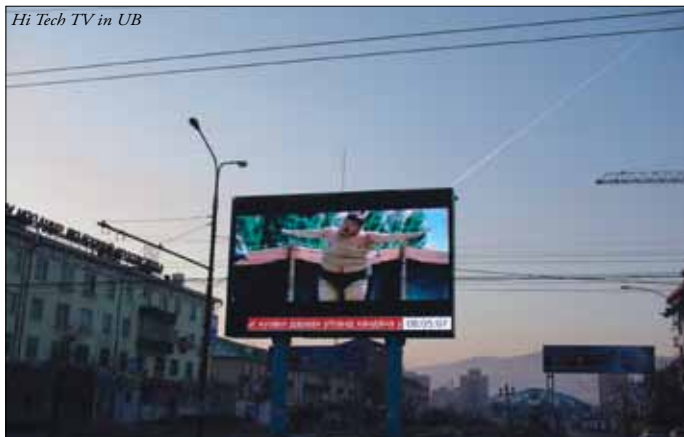
closer to the amenities of civilisation when the temperature drops below -30.

Summertime however is sunny and hot, with big blue skies, and the milky way hanging just overhead at night. It's light here until about 11pm – you're technically in Siberia this far north, characterised by the presence of larch trees that skirt the cities main avenues. Soviet architecture is prevalent here, and not least amongst the hotels. Places we've checked out and can recommend include the Marco Polo Hotel (+976 310 803) the excellent Hotel Urge (313 772) and the New Capital Hotel (458 235) – although it is also worth wandering about. Even during Naadam you should be able to find somewhere, although the inevitable price hikes occur during the festival period. UB's bars and internet cafes are great sources of information too – with holiday treks, guides and jeeps

*Chinggis Khan on UB Mountainside*

and drivers all offering their services from these locations. Hunt around, ask, and you'll be able to pick up a tourist guide – most often than not a University student during a summer job – couple this with a car and driver and the country is yours to explore.

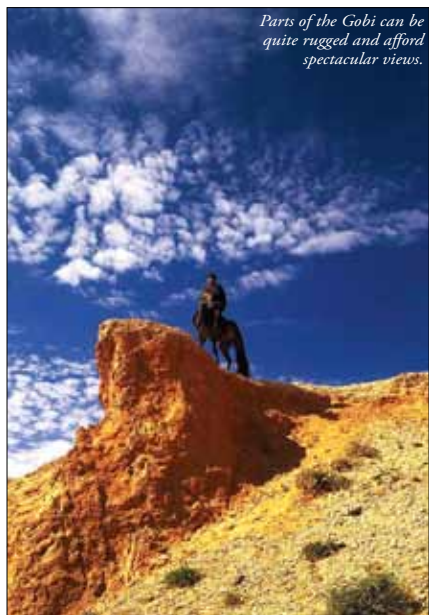
Most nightclub style bars are sited along Teeverchidiin Gudamj, which runs parallel to the main Peace Avenue just behind the State Circus. There is a German brewery here with home brewing on the premises, the well known Marco Polo Bar a little further along, and a variety of popular American, Irish and Western restaurants along the street. Also, Peace Avenue, from Sukhbataar Square all the way up to the State Department Store has a number of bars, cafes and restaurants tucked in and around it, so hunt about. The Store itself is a five storey Soviet edifice, but does have

*Hi Tech TV in UB*

everything really you can possibly want in terms of camping gear, fishing rods, souvenirs, and home appliances such as TV's, cameras and clothing. Further out, the Chingghis Pub, next to the Chingghis Brewery, is a good place to hang out and get some of the local brew on tap.

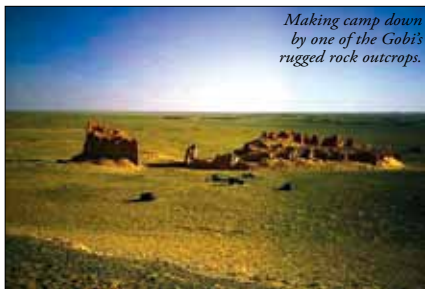
More cultured, is the Mongolian Museum of Natural History, with an excellent collection of the many and varied dinosaurs that the Gobi has been revealing of late, with other impressive wings devoted to covering meteorites, camels, and flora & fauna. The National Museum of Mongolian history is also a worthwhile stop, outlining of course everything to do with Genghis Khan and the Mongol rule of 1200's. The Winter Palace of Bogd Khan, home of Mongolia's last living Buddha, is truly spectacular and a 20 minute drive out of the city.

Otherwise, relax over a Chinghis Beer in the open air cafes on the main streets and enjoy the chilled out ambience of an underrated Asian capital.



*Parts of the Gobi can be quite rugged and afford spectacular views.*

## • Gobi Desert



*Making camp down by one of the Gobi's rugged rock outcrops.*

"Gobi" means dry land in Mongolia and the desert occupies roughly the southern third of Mongolia. The Gobi is one jeepday south of Ulaan Baatar, but you can also fly to the capital of the South Gobi province. So what are the main attractions ?

- ➔ Sparsely habited: silence
- ➔ Nomads with herds of camels
- ➔ Oasis where they grow tomatoes and melons
- ➔ Endless dry steppes.
- ➔ Areas with sand dunes
- ➔ Mountain ranges with narrow canyons, among others the famous Yolin Am (Vulture Valley) with snow and ice even in summer.
- ➔ Rock formations, flaming cliffs
- ➔ Wild animals: herds of gazelle are quite common, and marco polo sheep, ibex, and gobi bear can be seen.
- ➔ Clear skies: mirages, sunrise and sunset, stars at night



*With their legendary abilities to go without water for great distances, you will see plenty of camels in the Gobi.*



Really, the ideal place to lose yourself and gather your own thoughts for a healthy break away from the teeming masses and all of their questions. The Gobi is more than just sand though – there is life here, and even the world's only desert bear. Wild camels, lynx, wolves, lizards and a wide variety of specially adapted birdlife make the Gobi a refuge for a surprising variety of flora and fauna. Typical journeys will involve hiring a jeep, driver, translator, and your travel agent will also supply tents, sleeping bags and all camping and cooking equipment if you don't have your own. Wrap up well, and be prepared however – it can be very cold at night and hot in the day, with a piercing sun. But for a get away – quite literally – from it all – the Gobi, with its desert spirits, dinosaur bones, and magical peace, will seduce and attract you back again and again.

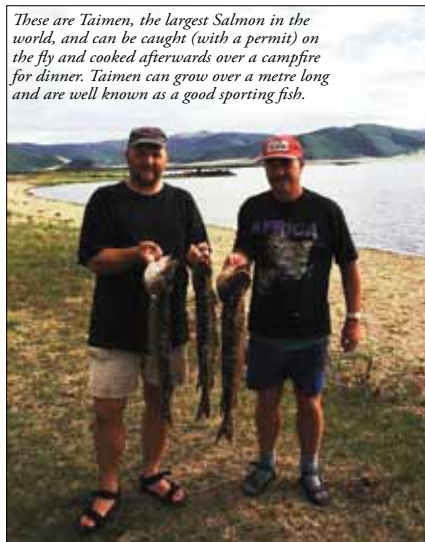
### • Khovsgol

Khovsgol is in the north of Mongolia, with a beautiful lake, bordering Siberia. The lake is 3 or 4 jeep days away from Ulaan Baatar, but it is also possible to take a flight to Moron, the capital of the province or even to the lake itself.



What are the attractions ?

- ➔ The beautiful, wide and very deep Khovsgol Lake (136km long, 36.5km wide 262 meters deep) at an attitude of 1560m, located among the taiga forest and high mountains of far northern Mongolia.
- ➔ Its exceptionally clear water is fed by more than 90 rivers and drained by the Eg river.
- ➔ Catching a Taiman, the biggest salmon in the world, fly fishing
- ➔ Swimming in cool water.
- ➔ Horse trekking or walking along the lake.
- ➔ Camping and preparing your fish on the camp fire.
- ➔ Visit nomadic families with their herds of yaks, including the remote reindeer people along the Russian border who live in wigwam styled tents, like the North American Indians.
- ➔ On the way to Khovsgol visit Amarbayasgalant Khiid, an ancient Mongolian Buddhist monastery.







*Your horsemanship skills can be trained and developed on a trek like this*



*Lake Khovsgol. Pitch your tent and relax...*

Khovsgol can rightly be considered Mongolia's most scenic province (or aimag as they are known in Mongolia) with the region of Khovsgol Nuur being the most popular and accessible from the capital Moron. You'll need a jeep, driver and translator this far out, however this can all

*Dried sheep dung fire - keeps away Mosquitos*



be arranged in UB. Khovsgol can get it's fair share of rain so pack your waterproofs, this is limited to downpours rather than constant drizzle and you'll be rewarded with spectacular rainbows, lush grasslands and crystal-clear lakes. This is the area to go for fishing.



### • **Khanggai**

The Khanggai is a green and partly forested mountain range in central Mongolia, and is easy to reach from Ulaan Baatar. The ancient capital of Karachoram – the seat of the Great Khans, is located here.

What are the attractions ?

- ➔ Beautiful untouched mountains
- ➔ The Orhon waterfall, Mongolia's largest waterfall in the Orhon Valley.
- ➔ Taking a bath at hot springs of Shargelshuult en Tsenkher.
- ➔ The oldest and most famous Buddhist monasteries of Mongolia: Erdene Zuu in Karachoram, the old Mongolian capital and Shankh Khiid and Tovhiin Khiid.
- ➔ Excellent for horse and hiking trekkings in the mountains.

- ➔ The beautiful naiman nuur (eight lakes) high in the mountains.
- ➔ Visit the Otgon Tenger Uul, the holy, snowcapped and highest (4021m) mountain of the Khanggai
- ➔ Visit nomads with yaks high in the mountains.

The ancient capital of Karachoram was founded in 1220 when Genghis Khan moved it here from Khentii, although construction only began after his death.



*Kharokoram*



*Young local beauty*

Karachoram only remained the capital for 40 years before Kublai Khan moved it again, to Khanballik (now Beijing). Following the collapse of the Mongol Empire in 1388, Karachoram was destroyed by the Manchus. Interestingly, there have been calls in parliament to restore Karachoram and move the government there to echo

*Karachoram, the ancient capital*

the transfer of Genghis' own decision 800 years previously. There is little remaining at Karachoram, but ger camps surround the area – however it is well worth a visit just for the beauty and romance of what once represented the central ruling point for the world.





## • Altai

The high mountains in the far west of Mongolia, almost a week by jeep from Ulaan Baatar, but also accessible by flight to the provincial capitals Hovd, Olgii and Ulaangom. What attracts people to the Altai?

- ➔ The most barren and highest mountains of the country: the Tibet of Mongolia.
- ➔ Big lakes, including the largest in Mongolia - the salt lake of Uvs Nuur.
- ➔ Excellent for hike trekking and mountaineering.
- ➔ Home of the Islamic Kazakh people, some of them still hunting with eagles and falcons
- ➔ More minorities live here like the Islamic Khoton and the Tuva.
- ➔ Cradle of “khoomi” - the traditional form of throat singing, often practiced by Shamens

## SNOW LEOPARDS

Many wild and rare animals live in this region, and most notably the Snow Leopard. Growing up to 1 meter in length (another 70cm for the tail), they tend to be solitary animals, although they do group together during the mating season. Capable of attacking and killing Ibex three times it's size, the Leopard is highly endangered and sought after by poachers (many of them Chinese) for it's luxurious and beautiful fur. With about 1,200 living in Mongolia, it is unlikely you'll see one – except for perhaps the odd pelt on display in a ger camp. There are a number of conservation organizations dedicated to saving this most beautiful of animals, please contact :

[www.snowleopard.org](http://www.snowleopard.org)

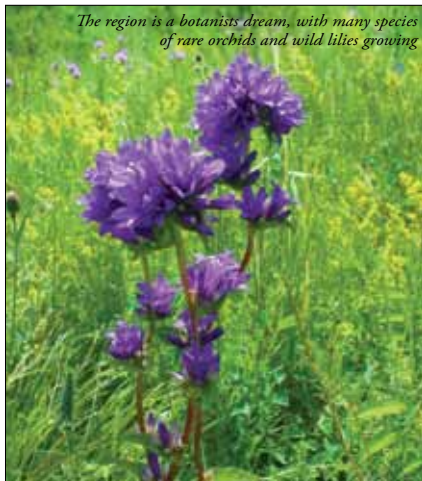


*Photo of wild Snow Leopard reprinted with kind permission, Fritz Polking, Snow Leopard Trust*

### • Khentii

This area, starting just northeast of the capital, is a lush mainly forested mountainous area with historical sites linked to Chinggis Khan. Ideal for a quick break and not too far out of UB this is a great location to plan a trip if wanting to see the wildness of Mongolias countryside but have limited time. What are the attractions ?

- ➔ Green and lush area, in summer, full with colourful flowers (including alpine species such as edelweiss).
- ➔ Close to Ulaan Baatar with many luxury tourist camps, camping not needed.
- ➔ Excellent for horse trekkings.
- ➔ Birthplace and possible grave of Chinggis Khan are in this area.
- ➔ Great opportunities for birdwatching and even wild gazelles running across the plains
- ➔ National Park for the rehabilitation of the Przewalskis Wild Horse is here.



*The region is a botanists dream, with many species of rare orchids and wild lilies growing*



*Prayer Flags At Khentii*



*Horses at a water hole*



## RECOMMENDED TRIPS FROM ULAAN BAATAR

**I**n this section we take a look at some suggested itineraries, from just one day to one week trips, and then explore some of these in more detail with articles about some of the adventures that Mongolia has to offer. You can discuss these with your travel agent if they sound like fun !

### FLY FISHING IN MONGOLIA

#### • Weekend from Ulaan Baatar



*Fly Fishing*

Mongolia is a unique fly fishing destination, a rolling green pasture, snow capped mountains , clearly blue sky, streams and glaciers ,purely pristine rivers. In the early times Mongolians say Fish is the animals of the heaven, and abstain fishing. But now fishing and rafting, floating become one of the adventure sport in Mongolia. Grayling, Lenok, Trout, and the Legendary Taimen are abundant in Wild rivers.

You can fly fish for the Taimen, which is a fascinating fish well known as the largest member of the Salmon family.

There are many places which is possible for fishing famous Darhad valleys, Ogi,

Terhiin Tstsagaan lake , Pristine Khovsgol lake and other river channels.

### GORKHI - TERELJ NATIONAL PARK

#### • One-Two Day Trip From Ulaan Baatar



*Terelj View*

Terelj is a beautiful spot, conveniently located just an hour or two drive out of Ulaan Baatar. Therefore it's a great destination to get a quick feel for Mongolia if you only have a weekend to spare. Terelj is known for it's strange rock formations, some of which provide some spectacular views across the surrounding mountains and valleys. The area has several ger camps, which are to are high standard and even offer hot showers and restaurants if the idea of roughing it doesn't appeal so much. However, if you want to, you can



*Local Horses*

also camp in the area and horse trekking and even canoeing can all be arranged in this location.



*The interior of the Aryala Temple*



*Ger Camp at Terelj*



*Cashmere Goats up on Turtle Rock*



*Looking down to Turtle Rock Valley from Aryala Temple*

Terelj offers some spectacular flowers and birdlife, as well as a beautifully sited monastery along the valley from the famed Turtle Rock just off the main road. From the rock you can hire horses up to the foot of the mountain upon which the Monastery is sited. From there it's an hours trek; it's well worth it for the views and the peaceful nature of the monastery itself. The Aryala temple here dates back from the 17th century, and is named, unusually, after a Chinese princess. Sent by the Emperor of China to marry into the local Mongolian Khanate and then spy on him and feed information back to China, she fell in love with the khan and refused to let her Father have the vital strategic information he wanted to invade Mongolia at that time. Eventually, the Emperor had her assassinated by poisoning her from one of the visiting Chinese envoys. She was buried here and the temple consecrated in her honor. It's a fitting place – one of Mongolia's most scenic spots.



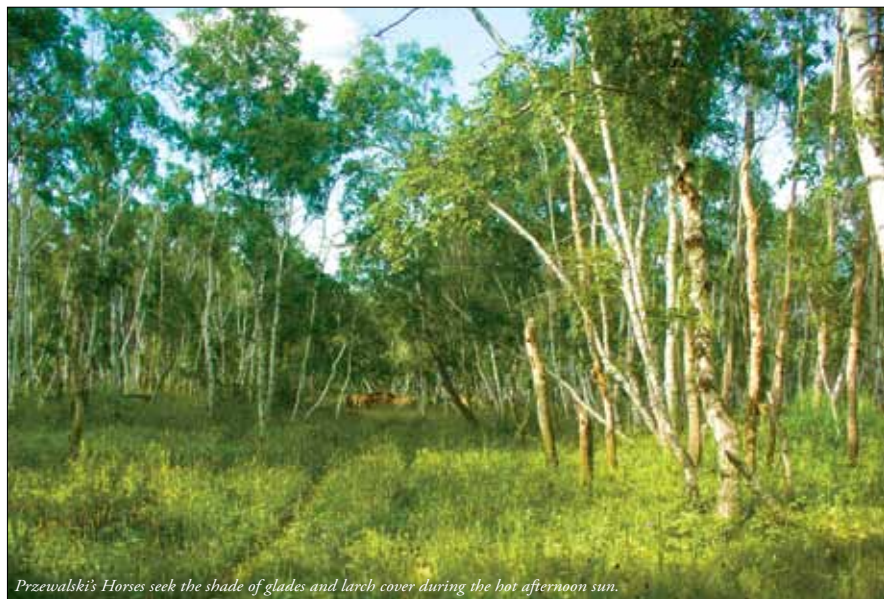
*Horse Trekking*

During the evening, the milky way appears – with no light pollution from UB, a weekend out at Terelj is a wonderful way to pass some quality time.

# PRZEWALKSI'S HORSES AT KHENTII

## MONGOLIA'S WILD HORSES BROUGHT BACK FROM EXTINCTION

• 3-4 Day Trip From Ulaan Baatar



*Przewalski's Horses seek the shade of glades and larch cover during the hot afternoon sun.*

**T**wenty thousand years ago wild horses roamed over the whole of Europe and Asia. Our prehistoric ancestors hunted them intensively as we have learned from the many caves discovered in the last hundred years, especially in France and Spain, where wall paintings abound. In most of the caves, pictures of horses far exceeded pictures of any other species, so we may assume that



they were abundant. During this period there were comparatively few human beings and therefore posed little threat to the environment. These early people were very dependent upon nature for their survival.

In the course of time primitive agriculture and livestock rearing began to be practiced, and some of the animals that had previously been hunted became the enemies of the early farmers. Of all the wild creatures the horse was the one that gave them the most trouble. It broke into the enclosures and grazed on the crops raised on the hard won land and moreover the wild stallions were in the habit of taking with them the tame mares that were kept for meat. As time went on and agriculture spread, the

population of humans and domestic cattle increased and the enclosing of more land meant that the wild horses were driven even further off into areas that were not suitable for cultivation.

The increasing demands of men were not the only threat to the wild horses. After the last ice-age the steppes, which provided the most suitable terrain for them, gave way to woods and forests to which they were less well adapted, although there were herds still in existence in many parts of Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

By the nineteenth century herds were confined to Poland and Southern Russia, although there was already some doubt as to whether these were really of original wild stock or whether they had run wild. In any event, while the scientists argued and the discussion raged, these herds became extinct. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that the great Swedish scientist, Linnaeus (1707- 1778) did not include the wild horse in his 'system naturae' wherein he classified all living things.

It therefore caused a great sensation when Colonel Nikolai Przewalski, who made voyages of discovery into Central Asia by order of the Czar, announced that he had heard of wild horses still in existence in Southwest Mongolia. From



his second voyage of discovery he brought back the skull and hide of a wild horse that had been given him by a frontier guard. During his third journey

he saw two herds of these animals in the Tachin Schara Nuru Mountains near the edge of the Gobi desert. Because in the 'system naturae' the name of a new species always includes the name of its discoverer this wild horse received the complicated name of Przewalski's horse (more recent information that has come to light indicates, however, that two European explorers observed this animal at much earlier dates.).

In 1881, Przewalski made an official statement describing their appearance, their remote and deserted habitat and their characteristics. They lived in herds from five to fifteen animals led by a stallion. He noted that they were alert and very shy, with acute hearing, very good



eyesight and a highly developed sense of smell. They seemed to prefer saline soils and could survive for a long time without water. By the end of the century, news of Colonel Przewalski's discovery had spread throughout Europe and America. There were at the same time several large landowners who had become interested in rare animals, among them Frederic von Falz-Fein, who kept many rare species on his vast estates at Askania Nova in Southern Russia. When he heard of the discovery of the wild horses in Mongolia he ordered Asanov, a dealer in Kodbo, to organize an expedition to capture some



of these animals. It proved impossible, however, to catch the full-grown horses. They were too shy and too fast. The only chance of capture was to try for the foals. It seems likely that the first attempt was made in 1897, without success. In 1898, two foals were caught; their captors had intended rearing them on sheep's milk, but this failed and both foals died soon after being taken.



In view of this, von Falz-Fein decided to try and obtain local in-milk mares. Elaborate arrangements were made with the local inhabitants to use their mares as "stepmothers"

for the captured foals. In 1899, seven foals were captured and reared by the imported mares and of these four eventually arrived at Askania Nova. The whole expedition had cost von Falz-Fein over ten thousand rubles, a very considerable sum when you realize that one ruble was the price paid in Mongolia for five hundred pounds of tea.

One foal caught in 1899 and one filly caught in 1900, were presented to Czar Nicholas II. The filly soon died and subsequently the Czar gave the stallion to von Falz-Fein so that he could start breeding his wild-caught fillies. In 1900 two more colts were caught and were transferred to Moscow.

The first Duke of Bedford was a great lover of nature. He was, among other things Chairman of the Zoological Society of London, and he kept many rare species of birds and animals at his Woburn

estate. The Duke was very interested in acquiring some Przewalski horses so he commissioned Carl Hagenbeck, the great animal dealer in Hamburg, to obtain some for him. As a result of this and the pressure from other collectors in Europe and the United States, another fifty-one wild foals were caught in 1901. Of these only twenty-eight survived the hardships of the seven month journey to Europe. Twelve of them went to the Duke of Bedford's Woburn estate, two to Halle, two to Berlin and two to Gooilust in the Netherlands. Two were shipped to New York and later transferred to Cincinnati. Two went to London, two to Manchester, one to Paris and three stayed in Hamburg. More foals were caught in the following two years, but only fourteen survived to reach their final destination, of these some were in such poor condition on arrival that they did not survive long. Only 53 of these survived the rough voyage from Mongolia to Europe. They were dispersed over a number of zoos and privately owned parks. All the captive Przewalski horses of today are descended from only 13 of these ancestors.



Until the Second World War the number of Przewalski horses living in the wild appears to have remained stable. Although there were regular reports of small herds being sighted, the total population could not have been very great, and after the war



the numbers quickly declined. Since 1967, no herds of wild Przewalski horses have been seen in Southwest Mongolia, inspite of several expeditions sent out specifically to look for them. The last wild Przewalski horse was sighted in 1969 near a spring called Gun Tamga in Terelj.

Breeding the Przewalski horse in captivity was not easy. In many cases the animals did not have enough space, and often there was no grass. Moreover, there was insufficient exchange of animals between zoos. Stallions would often breed with their own daughters and granddaughters. Such inbreeding raised the chances of congenital diseases and defects. Inbreeding has already caused great damage, including a diminished life span and increased mortality among foals. The number of pregnancies also decreased. The situation of the Przewalski horse was critical. Something had to be done to save the last wild horse from extinction.

### • Reintroduction to the Wild



The future looked dim for the captive Przewalski horses. Reintroduction into the wild was necessary for the preservation of the species. Three Dutch charities took action; in 1977 they founded the Foundation for the Preservation and Protection of the Przewalski Horse. At that time only some 300 Przewalski horses were left.

The Foundation's aim was twofold. A computerized studbook was established, using the data of the studbook keeper, Dr. Jiri Volf of Prague. The Foundation started advising zoos on breeding Przewalski horses. Their intention was to push back inbreeding by supporting the exchange of Przewalski horses between zoos.

The Foundation's second aim was to initiate the reintroduction of Przewalski horses into the wild. A transitional phase was to precede release into the wild. After having lived in zoos for many years, Przewalski horses needed to learn how to find their own food and to live in natural groups. This takes a considerable amount of time. In 1981 the Foundation started purchasing Przewalski horses from various zoos, selecting animals with as little common ancestry as possible. The Foundation now has about 61 perfectly healthy Przewalski horses. They are living in five so-called semi-reserves, natural or semi-natural areas, measuring 12 acres or more. Mortality among foals is exceptionally low (6%), and every year 92% of all mares give birth. Many of the second and third generation offspring born in the Foundation's semi-reserves have been released into the wild already and more will be introduced in the coming years.

In 1986 the Foundation started collaboration with the Institute for Evolutionary Animal Morphology and Ecology, of the Moscow Academy of Sciences. In 1988 this collaboration resulted in a search for suitable steppe reserves in what was then still the USSR, and in Mongolia.

Unfortunately, the steppe is very much an endangered biotope today. Many steppe areas have already been lost to overgrazing by large herds of livestock and to cultivation. Only in Mongolia a number of relatively undisturbed steppe areas have been preserved, but these, too, are threatened by overgrazing. The preservation of an endangered species like the Przewalski horse and the endangered steppe biotope of Mongolia go together very well. A beautiful 24,000 acre steppe area, named Hustain Nuruu, in Khentii, was found in Mongolia. It has a rich flora and fauna.

Because of the reintroduction of the Przewalski horse, Mongolia's national symbol, Hustain Nuruu has been turned into a National Park. The area gradually will be closed to the Mongolian herdsmen, who can graze their livestock in several other places. In this way the bio-diversity of the steppe area can be saved.

The reintroduction project started in 1990 in co-operation with the Mongolian Association for Conservation of Nature and Environment. In June 1992, sixteen Przewalski horses were shipped to Mongolia. In 1994 and 1996 again two groups of sixteen Przewalski horses were brought into the mountain forest steppe reserve in Mongolia. Other transports took place in June 1998 and 2000. To let them get used to the different climate and vegetation, and to each other, the animals remain in acclimatization areas for some time, before being released.

As of January 1, 2006, some 500 Przewalski horses live on the steppes of Hustain Huruu with some 1450 spread over 135 zoos and private parks all over the world. However, although the breed is gradually

*Wolf Attacks still cause casualties.*



returning to Mongolia and is starting to re-establish itself in small breeding harems, attacks by wolves on young foals is still a problem, and the international work that is being carried out to save the horse from extinction is still needed for the time being.

### • Breed Characteristics



The Przewalski is a heavily built horse. It stands typically between 12 and 14 hands. Its color is beige-brown or dun with a light colored muzzle. It has a black stripe over its back, called "eel-stripe" and stripes across its legs like a zebra. It has an upright mane, which unlike a Fjord pony's, does not fall over if it is not cut. The mane stops between the ears, hence the Przewalski horse has no forelock. The tail of the Przewalski is also different from the domestic horse. In the domestic horse

the hairs on the tail start at the top, tight where the tail is implanted on the body, but the Przewalski horse, as in the asses, the dock hairs are short and the longer hairs only start lower down. In a sandstorm he would turn his head with eyes and nose away from the fierce wind and the driven sand grains and protect the vulnerable parts of his rear with the tail. The mane and tail are dark in color.

Some authorities believe the Przewalski is a direct ancestor of the modern day domesticated horse. Others contend this is not possible as the Przewalski is a different species having sixty-six chromosomes while the domestic horse carries sixty-four. It is possible to cross the Przewalski with the domestic horse, and the resulting hybrid is fertile; however this offspring has sixty-five chromosomes. When crossed again to the domestic horse, the new generation returns to sixty-four chromosomes and little influence of the Przewalski horse is evident.



The Przewalski horse is a social animal like steppe zebra's and domestic horses, which means they live in groups. There are two kinds of social groups, family and bachelor. A family group generally consists of a stallion plus three or four mares, with

their foals and some yearlings. As the name implies, a bachelor group consists of stallions only, mostly led by a somewhat older stallion. Each group covers a specific area or home range during day to day activities. The major requirements of a group within a home range are food, water and shelter. These resources can be found in different parts of their home range with the change of seasons. These resources may be shared with other groups as well. Then the home ranges of more than one group may overlap.

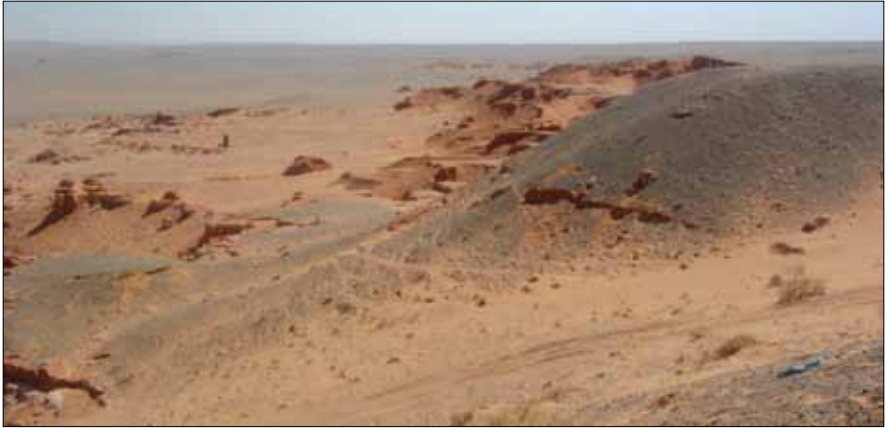
There are Przewalski's Horse Reserves located reasonably close to Ulaan Baatar. Check at the many internet café's and coffee shops in UB for details and fees – as restricted and protected areas you require a permit to visit. The chances of seeing horses nowadays are surprisingly good.

## • Khentii

- *Ger Camps*
- *Guides To See The Horses At Dawn & Dusk As They Graze*
- *Birdwatching*
- *Trekking*
- *Horse Riding*
- *Canoeing*

# TREKKING THE GOBI

• 5-6 Day Trip From Ulaan Baatar



**T**rekking in the Gobi ! Spring – the months of April & May in Mongolia – offers some of the most spectacular scenery and surroundings in the country at this time – not so hot, not so cold, and with all the joy of rebirth as the gobis herds of various animals all seemingly give birth at once to create a sensation of life reborn in this harshest of the worlds environments.

We began our Gobi trek of course in Ulaan Baatar, and with a well prepared Russian 4WD jeep, plenty of supplies, an experienced driver and guide and we were on our way. The plan was to drive south to Erdenedalai to visit the Gobi's primary monastery, visit the ancient gobi saxual forests at Bayan Zag, explore the nearby flaming cliffs with all it's dinosaur bones, swing further south towards the Chinese border to the sand dunes at Moltsog Els, continue further south to the ice filled gorge at Yolin Am, then turn back north via Dalanzadgad, the capital city of Omnogovi, Mongolias southern-

most aimag (province), detour via Tsogt Ovoo to see if we could spot Mongolia's wild sheep, the huge Argali, continue via Mandalgovi for a break, and back towards UB through the massive rock formations of Baga Gazriin Chuluu. In all this trip would take six jeep days and involve mainly staying with nomadic Gobi herders – if we could find them.

## • Leaving Ulaan Baatar



It's about half an hour out of UB that you turn off the paved road and onto the real Mongolian highway of dirt tracks, in this case, leading directly south. At this stage, grass and horses predominate, and gers, herds of goat and sheep are well



in evidence. After three hours though, the terrain starts to change, grass thins out to a tougher, more sparse variety and the landscape begins to darken. The Mongolians have nearly 40 words for different types of ‘gobi’ – the word simply means desert – and actually only about 3% of the total gobi landscape is sand dunes. Browning vegetation gives way to a grittier, harder surface, as we pass by the small town of Bayan Onjuul, camels, rather than horses, begin to take precedence as the pack animal of choice. Seven jeep hours south and we are ready for a stop for the night. A local nomadic family is found, and they agree to put us up, and we walk to the local stupa, high up on an ascending hill.

Curiously, they profess to be Christians, rather than the Buddhists one expects to find in these areas, and sure enough the ger is decorated with the sign of the cross. Herding mainly cashmere goats, they look after us well, give us shelter and we watch as the sun disappears below the horizon. Venus appears, and by 11pm we are treated to a spectacular view, in a moonless sky, of the milky way far above. As morning breaks, in this barren landscape, the



sound of an icy well being worked explains how they can survive here – the gobi is criss-crossed with underground lakes and streams and even in the harshest conditions – if you can locate water – you can survive. Animals are fed, watered, we feast on a breakfast of hot butter tea and hard tack, collect our belongings, give the nomads some sweets and some cash, and head off further south.

### • Erdenedalai



This small, dusty village sits right on the cusp of gritty, sparsely vegetation covered gobi and the beginning of the gobi sand dunes directly to the south. The contrast is obvious, and the sands foreboding. Originally established as a camel herders and traders meeting point, Erdenedalai however is home to the Gimpil Darjaalan Monastery, built in the late 18th century to commemorate the first visit of the Dalai Lama to Mongolia. It used to house 500 monks in pre-soviet times, now about 50 live here. The monastery was visited again by the current Dalai Lama in 1992 following it's reopening after 50 years of forced closure in 1990. It is a charming monastery, notable for it's brave facing off the huge gobi sand dunes just a



thousand meters away. It's also entirely made of thick, massive pillars of larch – the enterprising original monks trading local Erdenedalai salt for the trees 200 years ago with another monastery over 800 kilometres further north in Khanggai. Apparently it took a caravan of camels over three months to conduct the round trip and return with the timber.

### • Bayan Zag – The Flaming Cliffs

Reaching our second nights destination after a full jeep days driving, we are by now deep into the gobi. Having by passed the sand dunes at Erdenedalai, the gritty hard surface of the desert has almost given up any pretence of supporting vegetation. Almost, but not quite, and even in this harsh terrain, the tough, dessicated strands of almost inedible grass are still enough, with the help of a well positioned well, to



support a sustainable herd of goats. We camp with another nomadic family, almost directly beneath the Flaming Cliffs, made famous 80 years before by the American geologist Roy Chapman Andrews, who discovered a colossal variety of new-to-science dinosaur fossils just poking out of the red sandstone rocks. Amongst his finds – *Veciloraptors* (as depicted in Jurassic Park), the *Tarbosaurus*, which looks like a T-Rex on a bad day, and several species of early mammals – soon to displace the dinosaurs as the dominant species on

earth. Staying in the ger that night, a desert storm blew up, and it was good to be huddled up inside as the winds and sands howled across the gobi.



The next morning, camels were provided and we set out to search the cliffs for dinosaurs. It didn't take long. Just sticking out of the sandstone are the telltale white bleached bones of extinct creatures. They're best left alone for the experts to get at, identify and examine, so please don't be tempted to prize them away – it can be dangerous and anyway is highly illegal. It was enough to look, marvel at what the creature must have looked like, photograph it, and move on. The tops of the cliffs provide a spectacular view across the gobi, and it is easy to imagine the plains below as the shallow sea they once were.

### • Saxual Forests

#### A forest ? In a desert ?

Well the gobi is a magical place where it sometimes seems anything is possible. Saxual Trees are a throwback to prehistoric times, and require very little water to survive. They grow however very slowly, and rarely reach a height in excess of ten feet – their knarled, weathered trunks obvious evidence of the hardship of their living conditions. Sprouting dense, thorny



branches, incredibly camels can eat these, and digest the pitiful and vicious looking offerings. Indeed it may be their only diet for a long time. Saxual wood is so hard it sinks in water, while the forests also support species that are specific to the tree – various insects, and even the Saxual Sparrow are unique to these eerie woodlands. Close by are also sand dunes – a rarity in the Gobi – with a panting climb to the top but great views of some of natures handiwork from the top.

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### • Yolin Am – an Ice Clad Desert Gorge

Deep in the heart of the southern gobi lies this spectacular and beautiful gorge – with a desert spring so productive it has formed a small valley in the rocky outcrops about – veering up to 1,000 meters high, with



an ice covered, crystal clear river running along the valley floor before disappearing underground. The water is so abundant here that it has formed an oasis of sorts within the valley – green, fertile and populated with pika – a small, hamster like rodent, many rare bird species, including woodcock, snipe, wagtails, redstarts and cougars – and is a magnet for wildlife from miles around to seek shelter and resuscitation. A walk through this lush valley makes for an enchanting experience and a welcome and surprising respite from the relentless barren moonscape of the surrounding gobi. Camping here is forbidden – so it's onto Dalanzadgad for a stopover.

### • Dalanzadgad



This small town is the capital of Omnogovi Aimag and is essentially a trading and supply outpost of about 15,000 people. There's not a lot here – but welcome public baths for a shower and scrub to get rid of the gobi dust and sand, and a stop over for various provisions. Nearby however are a range of sand dunes – as mentioned, quite a rare sight in the gobi – and these make for picturesque photos and sliding down. The gobi skink will dart about and if lucky you can scare him into freezing just long enough to take a close up photo.

### • Mandalgovi



Turning north, away from the Chinese border, this is classic gobi landscape, flat, gritty expanses that run for miles. They are almost dead level – I placed my camera on the desert floor, pointed it at the 1500 metre Mount Goyyot 5 miles away and the picture was revealed as an uninterrupted view. Here run herds of wild gazelle – the white tailed gazelle that can sprint at over 70 mph, zigzagging away from your jeep at an electrifying pace. The landscape is relentless, but eagles will soar away from you, and even Demoiselle Cranes can be seen dancing their mating rituals in the small lakes and salt dunes that dot the region.

Mandalgovi itself is another trading town, with soviet character, an internet cafe, a few shops and restaurants and an excellent disco / nightclub, decorated with heads of ibex, wild sheep, antelope and deer all



displayed along the walls. The chronic sound system breaks down mid-song, so used to this are the locals that they simply sing the missing parts, still dancing, until the tune restarts again. The local gobi vodka is 3,000 tg a bottle, and a good night is had by all. It's probably the only disco in the gobi...

### • Delgertsogt

Heading back north, it's a one jeep day drive back to UB, but not before we veer close to Dalgertsog, with the rugged caps of Baruun Shandny Tolgoy ahead, as the route becomes rugged and littered with rocky valleys and mountainous areas. This is the home of the Argali, Mongolia's wild sheep, Ibex, and eagles. Stopping off at

a likely remote spot, we scan the rocky horizon and spot, suddenly, nearly half a mile off, three sheep are scurrying for cover. Climbing on the almost sheer cliffs they then face down on us, their eyes on us all the time. They are indeed Argali – a handsome male with huge horns, his mate and a kid of about 6 months. Staring at us somewhat contemptuously, they are still for about 5 minutes before casually sauntering off amongst the rocks, out of sight. We find their wool, in tufts, caught on thorns, and I weave some into my hat band. Ulaan Baatar is a four hour drive distant, but we are more than happy to have explored such a remote region and have seen the sights only the gobi can provide.

*Delgertsogt - Home to Argali and Ibex.*





# HUNTING WITH EAGLES

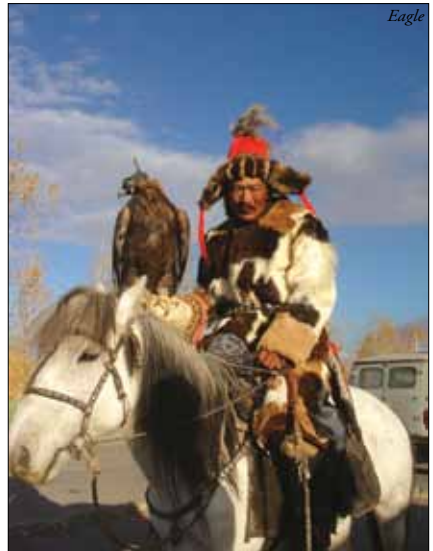
*Golden Eagle on the Wrist*

## • 4-8 day trip from Ulaan Baatar

The Western part of Mongolia is ethnically Kazak, and quite remote. In this area, with the Altai mountains dividing Mongolia from Kazakhstan, the majority of people are muslims, and have quite distinct characteristics from the Mongolians.

The best way to get here is to drive – but you need to allow at least 4 days for the journey. Alternatively, you can fly – it's a 3 hour trip from UB. The destination is Bayan Olgii, an old soviet town originally a trading post of about 15,000 people.

Every autumn, the indigenous people hold what must be one of the most spectacular ethnic events in the world – showing off their skills in hunting with eagles for game, while on horseback. But the annual tournament doesn't just stop there – horse racing, and horsemanship skills are all tested in the harsh terrains of western Mongolia.

*Eagle*

In terms of the eagles, the Kazaks catch them as young chicks from the eyries high up in the mountain cliffs. That alone is a dangerous occupation, with adult birds trying to save their young and assaulting any would be predators with razor sharp talons. The chicks are then made to





bond with their human parent, usually involving a starvation / reward system, and by getting used to the sights, sounds and smells around the family ger. For much of this time they are hooded to keep them quiet. Gradually, they are trained daily on exercises on the saddle and working with the horse, until they can fly on command, track and pounce on a target, and either return to the hand or wait until the horseman can retrieve the prize.

Golden Eagles are commonly used, large powerful birds, but are starved for a day or two before being used for hunting, making them both lighter on the arm and also more hungry and alert to making a kill.

Smaller birds, kestrels and hawks are also taken but are used mainly to teach smaller children about handling and respecting birds. After 3-4 years, the now adult birds are released back into the wild to maintain species stability.

At the festival, the birds and men are put through a number of examinations. Firstly, the bird is taken up a mountain cliffside, while the horse and rider wait below. Then, on a signal from the horseman, the bird should rise on the wing, and then fly to the wrist while the rider and horse are in motion. This is precision flying, designed to show the speed and accuracy of being reunited with it's master.



Inevitably, some of the eagles decide to have a bit of fun and just take off, riding the thermals for an hour or two while horse and rider disappear to track it and coax it back. But others launch into the air like guided missiles, straight to the wrist while horse and rider are at a gallop. Rewards are tasty morsels of rabbit or hare.

The other test involves a wolf, set loose by the crowd, that runs for cover, again, desperately running up the mountainside. With sharp eyes, the wolf can see the eagle circling overhead and panics, darting to try and avoid what it senses is coming. With a sudden explosion of feathers and dust, the eagle pounces, and tumbles the wolf over. Others join in, with wings spread like a mantle of death, pecking and ripping the wolf, until one of the riders intervenes and rescues the animal. Its savage, for sure, but a supreme test of an eagles strength and lightening fast reactions. It's also surprisingly noiseless – eagles feathers are built for stealth and remain silent. It's that final orgy of violence as, talons outstretched, the eagle hits the wolf hard.

Both will live to fight another day; the wolf will be kept until it's winter coat turns white and it can fetch a higher price for it's fur. The eagles meanwhile earn their keep – away from the festivals at Bayan Olgii, they are hunting on the wing for hare, grouse and marmot, keeping both them and their Kazak masters in meat until the time comes for them to be set free, back again on the wing as nature intended.

# MONGOLIAN REINDEER – THE TSAATAN TRIBE

• 4-8 Day Trip From Ulaan Baatar

The Darhad valley is a highly scenic region, cradled amongst round, snow capped mountains in the far northwest of Mongolia. This is where the people of the Reindeer live...the Tsaatan tribes, who are originally from Tuva in Siberia, yet moved into Mongolia fleeing Soviet persecutions of their centuries old nomadic lifestyle.

The villages of Tsagaan Nuur and Renchinlumbe are the main strongholds of the Tsaatan; it's possible to drive from the Provincial capital Moron to both of them, taking an additional 2-3 days depending on the weather. The "road" leads through mountain passes, many river crossings, some without bridges. It's quite a trek, and it leads to higher altitudes – Reindeer live on a type of lichen that only grows above 3,500 metres – which is why you don't see them very often at lower altitudes. In fact, Reindeer can die if brought down too low and out of season.

November is the best time to gain access, when the Tsaatan move closer to their villages on the ridge of the mountains, also the boggy mountain roads freeze at this time making passage easier for the horses. If you can put up with the cold nights, you'll be rewarded with travel through amazing rolling green grasslands, huge snow mountains, and a nomadic culture – following the Reindeer – that has been going on for centuries. These are hardy people who have made this one animal



*Reindeer Herd*

their entire life support system, from milk, to clothing, to meat and for trade.

The Tsaatan still live in a cone shaped tent very similar to the Teepees or Wigwams of the North American Indians, and there is strong genetic evidence to show that it was these people who crossed the Siberian land bridge that existed at that time to North America. The Tsaatan, following their reindeer migrate every two months – true nomads - for the need of the reindeers, looking for the grazing for them. Reindeer eat a particular kind of white moss which grows only at altitude on mountains and also other alpine plants which are rare and can only be found on the banks of gravel bottomed mountain rivers. Indeed, Reindeer have a specialist diet, adapted to their harsh surroundings. The Tsaatans life is based totally on their reindeer, which are highly productive animals, just a cup of milk a day is enough to live on if necessary. Reindeer milk is very rich, containing 16-18 % butter fat. Meanwhile, their hides are soft, warm and strong enough

*Tsaatan Boy*

to make coats and boots. Antlers are used for medicinal purpose or traded.

To many, the exclusive life style of the Tsaatan is the ultimate in nomadic culture and a unique demonstration of how affiliation with just one animal species can sustain a people for centuries.

There are many Mongolian folktales about the origin of reindeer. One recounts how a poor hunter, down on his luck, was

traveling in a forest and found an animal who was completely helpless, trapped in a crevice. The hunter helped it to gain its freedom, from that time reindeer promised to serve to that man, providing meat, hides and transport to return the man's care and help. This was the beginning of the wild reindeer's domestication and the basis of the relationship of man and animal today. It's a unique lifestyle and one not to be missed.



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# ICE FISHING AT KHOVSGOL LAKE

• 5-6 Day Trip From Ulaan Baatar



Lake Khovsgol is Central Asia's deepest lake, reaching a depth of some 262 meters, and covers over 2,760 sqkm, making it the source of about 2% of the entire planet's fresh water supply. Sited close to the Russian border in the Khovsgol Nuur National Park, it is surrounded by snow capped mountains – some liken it to Switzerland. Accordingly popular in the summer months, in winter it freezes to a depth of about four feet – strong enough to drive on. Sub-arctic winds chill the lake to -40 at night, with daytime highs of -20, and with forest cover all around, it is left to the wolves, a cold



winter sun and the Siberian winds howling down its valley. It's not a place for the faint hearted during winter.

Yet it is the home to spectacular species of fresh water fish – eight species of game fish inhabit the waters, which can be caught during the depths of winter - and we were there to see how it's done.

Having purchased a rod, line, lead weights and hooks from the sleepy store at Khatgal village on the southern end of the lake I was somewhat dubious about having to stand for hours over a hole cut in the ice waiting for a bite. How naive I was. It's not done like that at all – the locals aren't that dumb, unlike your intrepid reporter who would have willingly – not to mention stupidly - subjected himself to endless hours of freezing torture. Mongolian fishermen are far smarter than that.

The locals simply cut two holes in the ice, 100 meters apart, and then pull through





a net, weighed down with stones to hold it to the bottom – simply tie up the ends at each hole, then leave it for 24 hours to see what swims into it.

In fact, turning up the next morning, you can walk over the crystal clear ice and see below what unfortunate fish has become entangled before hauling them up.



*Lenok, trapped in our net underwater, visible through the ice three feet below*

A quick break of the surface ice at one of the ice holes later, and we are hauling up our catch: Siberian Grayling, River Perch, and the Lenok, (Asian Trout) which can grow to over four feet in length.



Reeled onto the ice, untangled from the net, they are simply cast onto the ice where they freeze solid in minutes. The net is then fed gradually, via a supporting line to the opposite ice hole, back through the waters, and left for another 24 hours. The entire process takes no more than fifteen minutes.

Locals at Khovsgol do eat fish, and also smoke them, and the Siberian Grayling in particular is very good eaten this way. For us – we enjoyed a good fish stew that night!



### • The One That Got Away

As always, it's always the largest one that got away as excuses for fisherman's tales and a poor catch. However in our case it was true. Having spotted a huge Lenok trapped in the nets, completely motionless, through the clear ice above, we were eagerly hauling in the net when its massive head appeared above the ice hole, and we began to haul it onto the ice. But then it suddenly revived, and desperately started trashing about to regain its freedom. It was on the ice, it was in our hands, it twisted, turned, and with a mighty effort broke free and plunged back into the frigid waters below. It had been a four foot monster, at the edge of its upper range for its size, and would have made a grand catch. But then again, we already caught enough, and who could begrudge a mighty trout that size another slice of freedom in Khovsgol's icy waters?



*"We've got a big one!"*



*"Here it comes..."*



*"Going..."*



*"Gone!"*



*"Going..."*

# CROSSING THE KHARKIRAA WITH THREE HORSES AND A CAMEL

*Article courtesy of Tim Cope*

I arrived in the village of Tarialan at 7am just as the sun was peeking over the mountains above. Taralian was about 40km from Ulaangom at the foot of the Kharkiraa range. The houses in the village were typically Mongolian- constructed with anything and everything available. Oil drum lids, bits of wood, rusty pieces of wrecked cars, stones from the river bed, and pieces of throw-away gers were standard building materials. Some homes were just normal gers barricaded with a fence made of this instead.

I made our way to the home of a man who had promised to drive us to Ulaangom airport- the 2km patch of dirt just south of the town. It was all over in a flash. Unsaddled, I lugged my backpack in the back of the beaten up old van, and jumped in. The driver cranked the engine over and rushed to the steering wheel. I watched the van putt away and was soon left with an empty third horse and three locals staring on in curiosity. My plan was to find a local guide named Dashnim and with the aid of a camel cross the Kharkiraa mountain range. I had been gazing up to its glacier-encrusted peaks for days and felt drawn to the mountain air and the hidden valleys that were so removed from the flats near Uvs lake. It felt like a new chapter of my journey was beginning.

Dashnim had worked for Tseren- my Mongolian friend who had supported me

so much from Ulaan Baatar. With the help of a local I found his ger a little way up the Kharkiraa river, parked on a patch of green between several shallow channels. Only after some tea and 'borzog' (dough dipped in animal fat) did we begin to talk. I liked Dashnim at once. He had a grin on his face that betrayed a sense of simpleness and curiosity. His eyes were large, his cheeks round and polished by the wind. The lines on his face, and thick, callused fingers told a tale of a hard physical life. He was the kind of man I thought who would work extremely hard and expect little. His ger was very poor. He had a dirt floor and just a couple of beds. All of his children's clothes were stowed away in old shopping bags. I watched as one little girl came in and opened her bag with the care that one would normally only afford a nice expensive set of drawers. As a herder he was one of the poorest I had met. He owned 17 goats in total and one old horse. His pride and joy was a rusty Belarussian tractor that was probably handed out after the collapse of the soviet union's collective farm system. For a herder with few animals cash was required to survive. This unexpected arrival of an Australian was a welcome surprise. He was excited by my plan.



*Dashnim & his animals*

'When do you want to leave? Today? Tomorrow? I need to fetch a camel.'

We looked over my map and agreed that seven days would be required to reach the far side of the mountains. He helped me unpack and set up my tent and then we wandered into the village. I felt at ease around him- he may have been amazed by my saddle and equipment but had not so much as touched it, let alone asked for it. As Tseren had told me, he was a listener. It was the first day of school in this village and as we made our way to the shop we passed children dressed up like dolls. The girls wore black dresses and white pretty decorations in their hair, the boys little suits and ties. After buying goods, he sent me back with a note for his wife to bake some bread for our journey. He trotted off on his horse to find a camel.

I spent the day preparing things, getting to know Dashnim's family, and using the rare time to rest and write diary. Just on dark Dashnim arrived with a camel. He had travelled about 30km to find it. His five children rushed out to greet him in the dying light. I waited for Dashnim to stake the camel before approaching. A plan of mine had been brewing all day and it was time to tell him. Schneke, Kathrin's horse, was starting to show signs of fatigue, and what's more he had always hated rocks. The next section was to be particularly rough terrain. I wouldn't ride him again, so it was time to say goodbye.

Through a satellite phone call with Tseren, she translated that I would like to give the horse to Dashnim for the equivalent of two days work (about \$27). Dashnim was over the moon, and after I said goodnight I listened to him tell the news to his family

in the ger. Schneke couldn't have found a nicer home.

I woke in the morning with a sense of new and excitement. After some tea and bread in Dashnim's ger



*Family In Ger*

we packed the camel and discovered that with some little adjustment my pack-saddle fitted this Bactrian breed of camel perfectly! The camel let out a melancholy cry as we tightened the straps and I got a whiff of its rotten breath. Its eyes and feet seemed enormous and overall made my packhorse, Rusty, seem tiny.

Then with the swing of the legs over the saddle we were off. The first part of the day we weaved our way up a canyon, criss-crossing the icy cold Kharkiraa river. It came rushing down the over smooth stones and boulders, a translucent blue. Leafy aspen trees grew along the banks just beginning to turn yellow. A few hours brought us into a wide rocky valley where we paused for lunch. Around us peaks rose blocking out much of the sky.

Soon there appeared a camel train. There were about ten camels in all, each packed with around 250kg of gear steadily making their path downwards. It was a family of Khotont people migrating to the plains for Winter. The Khotont people are a tribe numbering about one or two thousand and live primarily in the Kharkiraa. Their history is very murky. No one really knows where they came from or when. They have adopted many Mongolian customs, but their language is different, and their facial features differ from Mongolians. The color of the train was dazzling. The women



leading on horseback wore silky deles and colourful headscarves. Sitting in the cane baskets on the first camel were two small children, their eyes peering out between pots and pans and pieces of Ger tent. When they stopped to greet us the camel went to its knees, and the women pointed at one of the cane baskets laden with rugs. It wasn't until some sheepskin was taken away that I realised that deep within this cocoon was a newborn baby. Just its face was visible, eyes gazing up through a frame of fur to the sky. I was taken by its calm, captured expression. What a world it had been born into.

A little further up this deep valley the pyramid peaks of the Kharkiraa cut into the sky. High above, glaciers clung to almost vertical slopes. The air cooled and in the afternoon light the dark shapes of ancient 'Kurgans' and 'Turkic' grave markers dotted the otherwise wind-cleaned steppe. Dashnim suggested that in one Kurgan about 45 people would have been buried along with horses. Around these ancient sites I always had the sense that the people of today are aware of their history but do not understand it. The history of people in Mongolia lives on in the clothes, songs, expressions and way of life. Nomads live from day to day, with the changing of the winds, and looking into the future, let alone the past is largely irrelevant. This valley had obviously been populated for thousands of years, but how much had really changed in that time?

We camped in a remote gully with a family of nomads tending to a large herd of camels. I spent a couple of hours repairing Dashnim's basic tent. The zippers were broken and he had been using safety pins to keep the snowstorms from blasting

inside (without success). He was euphoric once it had been fixed, and then pointed to the huge holes in the floor- burnt by a misused gas stove on a previous trip. He would have to cope with that. Throughout the night I was woken by the howling of wolves, movement of animals, and inevitably the sound of gunshots. Hunting wolves, marmot, fox, and even snow leopard are standard practice despite Kharkiraa's status as a national park.

Morning came biting and fresh, and soon the camel was packed and we were moving gradually upwards. The river



*Valleys of Bayan Olgi*

made a turn and we entered a deep valley from which peaks rose almost vertically. The snow line was just visible, and every now and then the glaciers above came into sight. The valley itself was largely abandoned but a few gers still remained. Herds of woolly yaks could be seen grazing, dwarfed by the scale of the environment. Every now and then I would also notice black dots in the distance, sometimes half way up a mountain on a precarious ledge: hunters. They would lie in wait for hours with their spyglasses and Russian rifles. These hardened looking men would sometimes come galloping over the rise, marmot tied to their saddle, gun slung over their back, dele flapping like a sail in the wind.

Despite making it only a short distance, Dashnim was keen to stay at the last ger we passed by. He greeted the elder of the family with the traditional swapping of Tibetan-style snuff bottles, and sharing of

a long oriental tobacco pipe. I was grateful for a large chunk of dried Yak yoghurt, the bitter taste satisfying after a day in the saddle. Their daughter, a lady with a kind face and endless smile was my age, and I soon understood that she was blind. I watched the way she still managed to cook over the fire, feel her way around the ger, and even gather dried animal dung outside for firewood. In the evening she was lead out to the yaks where she did the milking. She loved to listen to everything, and sometimes I watched her sitting outside with a smile, listening to the animals, the wind, and of course my strange accent. She was curious just to touch my tent, and saddle. For her sounds and feel were everything and I had the impression that she was far more aware of the rhythms and beauty of this place than us.

The valley turned more to the west again the next morning and gradually the high range of the Kharkiraa seemed to slide into view. Glaciers paused in mid tumble shone a brilliant white in the light. A cloud of wind-whipped snow hovered above. I was surprised by the sheer drama of this landscape that had been largely hidden until now. Soon we came across some hunters that blended in with the dirt after several nights out in the mountains. We paused to share some black tea. They lay alongside the discarded innards of marmots and fresh skins.

Then we began to rise abruptly. Below us the lower end of a glacier twisted its way down a valley. The climb became very steep and the sounds of slipping rocks and cries of the camel cut through the mountain air. A fox darted out from a hole in front of us, soon consumed by the detail of the land. To both the north and the south these

mountains rose riddled with ice-choked gullies and glaciers. Some peaks were razor sharp, while others were snow-capped domes. The Kharkiraa rise to about 4100m and are actually part of the greater Altai range. The Altai are geographically at the very heart of Asia and are split between Russia, Mongolia, China, and Kazakstan. It was from these mountains that nomads are thought to originate from. The Turks, Mongols, Kazaks, Hungarians, and even Iranians trace their history to a people who came out of these mountains a few thousand years ago and at some stage tamed wild horses, yaks, and camels.

Our route lay ahead via a high pass between the main peaks. After a couple of hours we arrived as if into the clouds, suddenly above the many valleys and looking straight on at the peaks. The saddle was more of a wide, open alpine plain squeezed between these mountains at about 3000m. As we crested the highest point the distant Sayan mountains in Russia could just be seen to the west beyond a myriad of glittering lakes. I was struck by the image of Dashnim on his horse, leading the camel. I had never associated camels with such mountains, yet here we were plodding on with glaciers that almost seemed to be tumbling down upon us.

We made camp just to the western edge of the saddle and rested in the glow of sunset.



*Tim on a high pass*

The mountains were a peach orange and revealing many of the details that were washed out in the harsh daylight. I shared tea with Dashnim who I was beginning to come to know better. He couldn't stop

telling me how good the grass was up here for the animals, and how I was good for not smoking. He said he had picked up the habit of smoking 15 years earlier. In the Mongol fashion he often rolled a cigarette in old newspaper, and spent half the time spitting out the pieces of paper and tobacco that made it into his mouth.

All day I had been gazing up at the peaks, and the various ridges that angled towards the alluring ice. A plan had been brewing to spend a day climbing to the northern side. Dashnim agreed that it was a good spot to give the animals a rest and so after dinner I packed my things.

By morning I was sure my plan had been crushed. Snow had been falling for several hours, and with it came a terribly cold wind rushing down from the mountains. However by the time I had boiled some water and warmed my hands the clouds were parting. I shouldered my backpack and gave Dashnim my spyglass, instructing him to check on me each hour.

I felt a shiver of excitement to finally be alone. The wind cut through my thermals like a knife, but the effort of pushing up the rock made my skin a tingly warm. Loose rock skittered away from under my boots, and I drew in deep, cold breaths. With each step I rose above the pass and the mountains to the south came clearly into view. By the time I had reached about 3700m a series of crystal blue lakes appeared, sunken into the rock just beneath the tongue of glaciers. I aimed for the sliver of white at the top of the rise before me, and passed the tongue of a small glacier with freshly formed icicles dangling over the edge of crevasses. The wind blew colder, and up here the clouds seemed to race. The campsite

below was now just another spec, almost impossible to find. On the hour I paused and waved down, knowing that Dashnim would be looking up with a grin on his face, probably muttering something like: 'Ahaaa!' He always said this when something positive was happening- like when I gave him a cup of tea, a piece of bread, or some horse blankets at night to keep him warm. Funnily enough he used this same expression when telling the camel to stop.

At last I reached the sliver of snow, expecting it to be a false summit. As I stepped into the crusty white however there suddenly came blue sky. A little further, and like in a dream a rugged skyline of peaks suddenly appeared. A little further and I was standing on a saddle. Dropping down in front of me and from all the peaks were glaciers, forming a spectacular ice bowl below. The wind roared, yet nothing as much as shivered, all frozen into place. It was a view that I had never expected and I couldn't help but throw my hands into the air and giggle. I spun around to see the southern range, and Kharkirra peak itself. Below the steppe panned out in a murky brown sea, dotted with lakes. I spent a couple of hours making my way along this high ridge, reaching a mini summit. In every direction there was a mountain or horizon that intoxicated my senses. I forgot about the pain in my legs and began to imagine the original peoples of the Altai migrating down from its many valleys, eventually becoming the nomads who would rule the steppe for millennia. By late afternoon it was time to head down and after a few hours I found Dashnim cooking up some tea over a fire of dried animal dung. He

met me with his partly toothless grin. I smiled and put my thumb into the air. It was enough for him to understand.

Heading down from the pass, we entered a new environment: a land of hills, pock marked with a thousand little lakes. By late afternoon we had slipped into a river valley and the high peaks were erased from view. We arrived ravenously hungry to our evening camp and sat, eyes glued to the stove waiting eagerly for the water to boil.

The following day the 7am start was abandoned with the onset of a heavy snowfall, and by 11am we decided to take the day off. Apart from anything, the camel would struggle to keep its footing on snow and ice. That was also one of the reasons for the nomads migrating out of the mountains by September when the colder weather started to set in.

At around midday there suddenly came the typical clearing of the throat noise. Herders always seemed to do this when warning of their approach. Up went the zipper on my tent and I came face to face with the hardened face of a hunter. In fact there were three of them, all peering in, their dees dusted white, rifles over their shoulders. Dashnim soon appeared and beckoned them to his tent. I joined them and we sat for a couple of hours holding up the walls as the wind and snow beat down outside. I cooked some tea and we ate a few pieces of borzog (dough deep fried in fat). When the weather finally cleared in the afternoon I followed the hunters a few hundred metres up the mountains to their hide-out. It wasn't so much as a cave as a very poor rock shelter. Laid out in the dirt were about 15 marmots. A blackened pot

was brimming with greasy, boiled meat. They had been living here for six or seven days and planned to stay another week. They had no sleeping bags, just their dees for protection from the weather. It was such a poor shelter that the snow easily drifted in.

Soon a feast got underway. A communal knife was passed around and pieces of meat were sifted out of the fatty water. I watched one of the men slurping on the jaw of a marmot. They sucked the grease off their fingers and chewed heartily on every little piece of meat possible. I preferred to munch on the dried yoghurt that they offered. Many Mongolians refuse to eat marmot because they are known at times to carry the plague. Despite this I met people every day of my trip who routinely feasted on marmot. Along with the meat, some Mongolian vodka was passed around. It is made from fermented yoghurt and is actually about 12-15 percent alcohol. It went straight to my head and for a time I watched this scene wondering whether much had changed since the time of Ghengis Khaan. Ghengis himself had spent many years in hiding, living off the land in the Khentii region of Mongolia. Then when Ghengis formed his formidable armies of mounted nomads they honed their skills during exhaustive hunting expeditions. Their methods of ambush, false retreat, and stunning speed were also used in their terrifying raids on settled communities.

We woke the following morning to a crisp blue sky and a hard frost. Dashnim had of course predicted as such. Soon we were on the move again. The river that had begun as a trickle eventually became a raging torrent in a canyon far below. We followed



the flats above and at lunch descended to a forested little valley. The leaves were ablaze orange and red. A river gushed down over rocks, tumbling in some mini-waterfalls. I had the feeling that we had descended into the land of the living. The scent of the forest was sweet.

As we sat next to the river I offered Dashnim some vegemite. He had seen it in my lunch bag and assumed that it was facial cream. Another thing that had made me laugh was that Dashnim had been wearing my backpack upside down for a couple of days. I didn't have the heart to tell him. I spread the vegemite nice and thick onto a piece of borzog. It seemed only fair after all the lips and ears, innards, and marmot that I had been offered and forced to try. I could see him struggling to swallow, but in typical style he just grinned and put his thumb into the air. 'Delicious!' He then went on to thank me, and say how proud he was to be part of the journey. It was classic Dashnim.

We crossed the river via the first bridge I had seen since we began, and then followed the edge of a slope.



*Into the Kharkiraa Mountains*

The camel struggled here, its feet often slipping, threatening to tumble down into the gorge. It always righted itself though, and it was sobering to think that nomads made this journey every year with 250kg on each animal, children included. For seven or eight hours we rode on. Gradually the brown turned to green, the rocks to grass, and the air thick and warm. At each turn I was surprised. Eventually we descended into a land of countless valleys, ridges, and gullies. I felt like a bird hovering above

then making a dive and becoming lost in the mystery below. It all felt very surreal. Just as the sun was fading we arrived in the abandoned summer camp of Khovd brigad. Only a few old shoes, and round circles of yellow grass indicated that the nomads had even been here. Hundreds dot this valley in summer. We unpacked the camel and set up camp. Dashnim was to return in the morning and from here I would continue alone.

I was looking forward to our last evening together when all of a sudden the sound of a motorbike cut through the air. I turned to see two men steaming towards us in the murky light of late evening. They crossed the river and plonked themselves next to our tent. They both wore colourful deels and the traditional hats with the golden spire on top. They had been riding all day and had arrived without food or shelter. I cooked them tea over my stove, but was reluctant to continue with dinner. Since we took the unscheduled day off my food supplies were very low, and I still had to give Dashnim enough for the trip back. What's more my petrol was almost finished. We were both ravenous, and the thought of halving our rations again was heart-breaking. Eventually however it became clear that these men would stay the night with us. I cooked up some rice and dried meat, and inevitably we shared it. All went to bed hungry.

At dawn the next morning the men simply stood up from the earth, dusted the frost off, and jumped on their motorbike. I was always astounded with the way that Mongolians just took hardship in their stride and never complained. Conditions in Russia were pretty tough too, but the Russians will let you know about it from

day one. It's almost frustrating when you can be in the most dire of situations and Mongolians will carry on as if nothing is wrong.

Dashnim and I surfaced as well and began to take down our tents. Although the journey had taken us seven days to get here, Dashnim planned to make it home to his family in just two and a half. I still don't really understand how it could have been possible.

We had our last pot of semolina, and of course Dashnim licked his meal down like a cat. He had not even thought to bring a spoon, or perhaps he just thought it unnecessary. I gave him a packet of Russian cigarettes and paid him an extra couple of days as a gift. He then presented me with a packet of 'kangaroo brand matches.' I accepted it with two hands and rose it to my forehead in respect, but it hit my head-torch and went tumbling to the ground.

Then I split our meagre rations and it was time to say goodbye. He swung his arm in an arc to the north-west indicating which way I was to travel- it was typically vague. It only took him about ten minutes to saddle up and pack. I was struck by his lack of equipment- just a potato sack with his old tent, one pot, his tobacco and brick tea. I felt embarrassed by my clutter of heavy equipment that took me two hours to prepare, and envious of Dashnim. It is true that one of the main reasons for the



Khotont Elder

mounted warrior's success was the fact that they travelled so light-weight and were such hardened people. Both they and their horses survived on very little. The armies of settled people were weighed down with gear and food rations for both man and horse. I was just carrying on the tradition.

We said goodbye, and then I was left watching he and the camel shrink into the distance. The camel cried out a few times- the melancholy sound echoing up the valley.

Then they disappeared beyond a ridge and I was truly alone.

*Tim Cope is a world renowned adventure traveler and we are grateful to him for allowing us to reproduce this article. Tim*



Camel & horses at a watering hole

*was the Australian National Geographic Adventurer of the Year in 2006, and has spend many years traveling amongst different cultures, landscapes and situations. His book & DVD "Off The Rails" about his cycling from Finland to China, across Russia and Mongolia, is an international best seller. When we last spoke by satellite phone, he was somewhere in Central Ukraine completing an 18 month horse trek from Mongolia to Hungary – the breadth of the conquests made by Chingghis Khan and the Golden Horde in the 13th century.*

*His website, with full details of his adventures and travels can be viewed at [www.timcopejourneys.com](http://www.timcopejourneys.com).*

*Tim's journey was arranged with assistance from Tseren Tours.*

# MONGOLIA'S NOMADS

With a population of about 3 million, and just a quarter of that in Ulaan Baatar, pretty much 80% of Mongolia's population have a nomadic lifestyle, although there are a few smaller towns and villages across much of the country. Many of these however are also semi-nomadic, especially during the summer months when livestock needs grazing. Often whole communities will spread out far and wide to live off the fat of the land during the summer.

## • Gers, Teepees, & Totems



*Erecting a Ger*

Known as Yurts in Kazak only, the Mongolian Ger is the traditional nomadic, transportable "tent" – made of a birch wood frame, with the supporting struts painted orange to symbolize the sun. The Ger is the heart of family life, with roll away bedding, a central stove / oven and small amounts of furniture – family chests – with everything packed and stored away neatly and tidily inside. The outer layers are of heavy felt – waterproof and warm – and itself is traditionally made by placing sheep and other wool underneath the saddle and riding on it for several days. Different sections are then sewn together

to make everything from clothing, to bedding, to ger walls. Gers can be taken down and moved on in a matter of two hours.



*Interior*

In the North and West of Mongolia, the Ger gives way to a wigwam style tent, very similar in looks to the teepees of the North American Indians. Totem carving and displays are also a traditional part of Mongolian nomadic craft. In winter conditions some communities live in single storey mudbrick and wooden beamed houses instead of gers.

## • Diet

Mongolia has a harsh winter climate, and consequently certain foods are impractical for them to eat during the summer months, when the putting on of fat reserves and maintaining a solid (yet healthy) physique to last through the winter being paramount. Fish, for example, is rarely eaten. The majority of the diet is dairy based, with milk from horses, goats, sheep, yak and camels all in high demand, and drunk, used as yoghurt (the Mongolians make fantastic yoghurts), or made into cheese, all part of the standard dietary intake. Sweets are made from sweetened milk

*Dried cheese on ger*

or cheese, and even alcohol, made from fermented mares milk (known as airag) is a staple. Livestock are precious then for

their produce and only killed on special occasions or when they are too old to be productive. Sheep are traditionally slaughtered by making a small slit in the chest cavity with a sharp knife, then

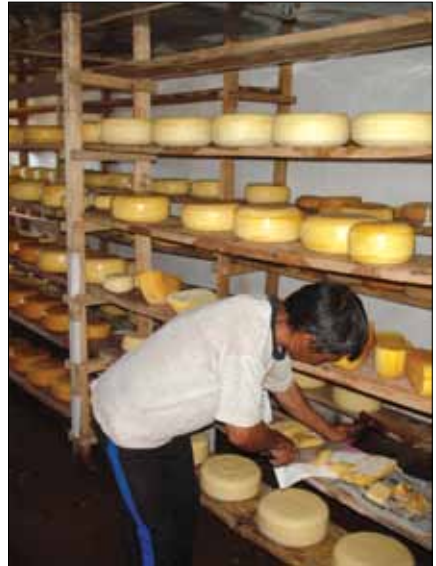
*Killing Sheep*

inserting your hand and stopping the heart beating directly. Marmots are eaten but

*Marmots*

are prone to plague, so are only shot when there are no signs of disease. All of these are supplemented with wild mushrooms, herbs and berries as can be found in the wild.

Produce includes milk, plus cashmere wools from goats (Mongolian cashmere is the worlds finest and most sought after), wool and fur from sheep, camels and yaks and are used both in the home or traded for other supplies. Often a centralized trading point is established, way out in the middle of nowhere, to cater for the nomads bringing in their produce, such as the cheese factory (pictured) in the middle

*Cheese Factory*

of Terelj (about 200km east of UB) that buys fresh milk from passing nomads, processes it into cheeses and sells it onto the markets in UB and beyond.

### • People

*Family*



Elders are revered and children fawned over. Children are brought up at an early age to handle animals – most can ride a horse at age 3, and will be helping out with herding duties and milking by age 6. Traditional stories, and games such as elbow flicking – involving knuckle bones and accuracy of shots, as well as archery and horsemanship skills are all part of growing up.

### • Livestock

The most important part of any nomadic family, even the traditional greeting in Mongolia is “mal sureg targan tavtai yu ?”



*Kid & Camel*

– “How are your animals fattening up ?” Livestock quite literally allows the nomads to live, providing everything from clothing to milk – even the dried dung is used as fire – and being mainly vegetative based is not obnoxious in aroma. Plus the smoke keeps the midges away. Most families will have a rather large dog as a watch, so again, the phrase “Nokhoi khorio !” - “Please hold



*Kazak Nomad*

your dogs !” is a useful one to have ready. Otherwise, depending upon the size of the family, their wealth, and their traditional area of expertise with animals, they will possess horses, goats, sheep, yaks and camels. In the Altai, the locals tame eagles and falcons for hunting as well.

### • Staying with a Nomad Family

Mongolia has been is a country of nomads since well before the times of Chinggis Khan.

Staying with a nomad family will help you to understand more about the typical Mongolian life style. You'll make great friends, and have a wonderful and enriching experience far away from the hassles of your regular job.

The nomadic lifestyle begins by waking before sun rises, checking the livestock, and for women, milking the animals. Goats,



*Milking Goats*

sheep, yaks, and camels are all milked, and when they are not nursing their new born in the spring, have their milk turned into a variety of dairy produce.

Urum (clotted cream) is made by boiling the milk, continuously stirring for several hours until finally it thickens. It is then naturally cooled and eaten with cereal, fruit, biscuits or in tea. Aaruul is freshly made yoghurt and is extraordinarily good.

*Churning Butter*

Dried Curd is skimmed off the top, patted into shape, cut into small square pieces and left on the roof of the ger to dry. It can be sweetened for the children to eat as sweets, or is left sour and is savoured by the adults. One piece can last for hours – it is that hard. From the beginning of July, Mongolians milk their mares and produce Airag – fermented Mare's milk. It has a sour, slightly bitter, but not unpleasant taste. Its alcoholic strength increases during the day. Mongolian children start

*Young girl with bowl of airag*

drinking airag from the age of four. It is often sold in large kegs at Naadam or at other country fairs during the summer. Try some – it's

served in a bowl and is refreshing on a hot summer day.

During the summer months, nomads store enough food to last for the harsh winter, milk products, and meat. Mongolian nomads slice fresh meat, and hang it on the ger wall (inside to be used within a few days, and outside for longer curing

*Drying Meat*

and storage). It is left to dry in strips, and is added to boiling water to make soups and stews. Dried meat is known as Borts and can include herd animals, as well as wild game.

Nomads tend to move four times a year – once each season – looking for better grazing for their livestock, and to rotate the land usage. They usually follow set

*On the Move*

routes, and will typically migrate to summer pastures, retreating to higher, sheltered areas for the winter. In some areas they will use gers during the summer, but

use sturdy mudbrick and wooden beamed houses for winter. Whichever, despite living in the countryside, the inside of a ger or house will always be absolutely spotless. Mongolians are much in tune with nature, are experts at reading the weather, animal tracks and are experts in animal husbandry and hunting. Nomads will only hunt what they can eat and are respectful of nature. Wolves can be a problem with livestock and will also be culled if numbers grow problematic. Being nomadic forgoes agricultural development, and vegetables are not usually grown, although most nomads will be familiar with local plants, mushrooms, berries, wild fruits and herbs, both for consumption and for treating illnesses.

Typical Mongolian families will include Grandparents, Mum and Dad, while younger children will be at home, older children are packed off to school in the nearest city, returning at holidays to help with the chores.

Most nomads now have solar panels, and these are used to power television and radio. Most gers will have a black & white television set on, tuned to local stations, and a radio transmitter. These are used both to pass on news and entertainment to nomadic communities but also to pass personal messages between communities and individual nomadic families as well, such as notices of births, marriages, deaths and other bulletins.

Mongolians will be curious about where you come from – if you have a photo

book of your hometown they will enjoy looking at the pictures. It's also useful to pick up a phrase book and try out a few words ! They will usually let you play with the animals and show you their daily routine – especially if you can help – but try not to get in the way. Nomads will usually let you ride their horses – but do ask beforehand, and be careful – these horses are strong and fast, are used to expert horsemanship and probably best left to experienced horseriders rather than novices. Be careful with the family dogs – they can be temperamental and can bite unawares.

It is a Mongolian tradition and deeply ingrained in their national psyche to look after passing strangers, feed them and provide shelter. It's the only way people can survive in the wilds while traveling – the ability to rely on each other. If staying with a Mongolian family please treat them with respect and take a few gifts – sweets for the kids, books, music and so on for the adults. It's generally not a good idea to give alcohol as the women of the family often disapprove. In West Mongolia the Kazak majority are Muslim and do not usually drink anyway.

It is a privilege staying with a nomadic family and you will have an unforgettable experience. If you take photos – do try and get them to write down on a piece of paper their address – and send them copies of the snaps. Just stick the address on an envelope, add "Mongolia" to the bottom and the amazing Mongolian postal system will do the rest. It may take awhile to get to them – but it will – and when they arrive you can be sure your photos will take pride of place and give much satisfaction to the family.



# AN EVENING WITH THE SHAMAN

Shamanist rituals have long been part of Mongolian traditional culture, going way back before the days of Chingghis Khan, yet modern persecution during the Soviet occupation all but wiped them out and left just small pockets of this ancient set of beliefs, mainly in the sub-arctic north of the country. Yet nowadays, with resurgence in Mongolia's national pride and the freedom to practice traditional religious beliefs, shamanism is starting to make a comeback.

Shamans have long been a bridge between human existence and the natural world, and are often well versed in the arts of traditional medicines, as well as being able to read weather, predict animal behavior in addition to connecting with the earth's spirits in order to circumnavigate mere mortal senses and delve into the unconscious world of fortune telling, casting spells, and healing. They often also act as the local societies social leader, by being able to dispense often sound emotional advice to families and individuals facing uncertainties in their lives. Consequently, they are a fix-it for all manner of necessary daily rituals and beliefs and help to bind local communities together as well as provide practical medicinal and natural knowledge to a people whose lives are so well integrated with the natural movements and phenomena on living with the land.

In other words, shamens are the spiritual pulse that connect humans to the natural world, its secrets and wisdoms.

Shamans are hereditary and the trait is passed down to the eldest born child – consequently resulting in a fairly even mix of male and female shamans. The traits of



shamanism often – but not always – manifest themselves after the elder dies – and release themselves in illness, both physical and mental, that can affect the individual concerned to a high degree.

The shaman we consulted had been previously confined to a mental institution in his 30's for two years and had had to be strapped to his bed, his contractions and fits being so bad, until his elderly Father – a Shaman himself – passed over his ritual belongings to his son and the behavior ceased. When the spirits call for you to become a shamen, they will not rest until their call is heeded.

Batbaatar – as the child was known – then began a life devoted to shamanism and is now one of the most respected shamans in the Khovsgol region of Northern Mongolia – an area of some 5,000 sq km with just 15 shamans extant, yet featuring central Asia's deepest lake and surrounding mountain peaks of 2-3,000 meters or more.



Batbaatar began his ritual in his ger, with his wife, eldest daughter, and various other local people present, in all about twelve people crammed into his ger. Casually dressed in the manner of most nomads, he enjoyed a pipe before asking us our fortunes, and the questions we wished to pose. Upon being asked, he unwrapped from layers of blue silk a circular flat metal plate, not dissimilar to the Chinese feng shui wheels, which he spun around. When it stopped, he consulted the inscriptions upon it and gave his verdict. It contained observations about my private life, in response to my questions, that he could not have been aware of. This was repeated until I was satisfied with the answers – I had also tested him with a couple of sideways tracked statements – which were accurately ignored when he made his predictions about my future (which were happily positive). That said, there were additional issues he needed to consult the spirits with about my questions for further clarity of answer.

Next, with the help of his wife, he donned his shamanic garments. Bizarre, not to mention eerie looking clothes, made from feathers, animals skins, furs and various plants, he then picked up his ritual drum, shaped rather like an Irish baron, and began to beat rhythmically, while dancing around in a circle. The gers only electric light was put out, and a candle lit as the only illumination. A sweet smelling fragrance from burning incense wafted through the ger. His incantations made no sense, with strange yelps and word like sounds being produced as he danced faster and faster to his drum beat. In danger of falling over, both his wife and a dedicated assistant keep him from hurting himself or crashing

into something in the cramped ger. Finally, ten minutes after he had begun, he slid lifeless to the floor, where his wife helped at once take his ornaments off, removed all his shamans garments, and helped him back into his normal outerwear. Giggling and muttering at times, he downed cupfuls of butter tea until he began to show some signs of having returned to normality, whereupon he asked for his pipe and a glass of vodka.

These, along with his snuff bottle, were solemnly handed around the guests to partake of, while he regained his strength. The second, intuitive round of answering my questions concerning my future then took place. Without going into detail, I can admit that they were sensible observations not laced without a large dose of social wisdom; however they still contained details of my private life that he could not possibly have known.

The evening continued with lighthearted chat and conversation, further pipe smoking, vodka drinking and banter, until we bid our farewells at 1am in the morning.

So – is shamanism just a bunch of mumbo jumbo or is there something in it? Well for me at least – and I can usually spot a good con – there is something there. Quite what – I can't define. But then, who can put their finger on the pulse of a little bit of traditional magic? Either way, the world would be a poorer place without the strange rituals, beliefs and sheer natural wisdom that Mongolia's shamans undoubtedly possess.

## WOLF HUNTING IN KHENTII

**W**olves are on the increase in Mongolia and are often found attacking livestock and horses, which they then kill indiscriminately in a blood lust, far more than they can actually need. For this reason culls are undertaken locally in many locations across the country when valuable animals get taken. While at Mongolia Expat we do not generally condone hunting, and especially of endangered species, the wolf is best kept to manageable numbers. In this article, we have a first hand account of a wolf hunt, Mongolian style.

Mongolia is overrun by wolves. They are a serious menace to stock. Mongolians hunt them all the time and the State Department Store is full of their skins. Therefore it must be a relatively easy task to track them down and shoot them? Wrong.

On a cold October Friday afternoon I set off from Ulaan Baatar for Tsenhermandal just across the provincial border in Khentii. There I was to meet my Mongolian friend who I had been unwise enough to tell I wanted to go wolf hunting. After cruising along the amazing new Japanese road through the grim coal town of Baganuur, I arrived. A brief reunion and off we set. I had not expected it to be quite so quick.

An hour and a half to the south of the main road, in the middle of nowhere, I found myself lying in a snow filled ditch with a very fine German hunting rifle, gazing at the side of a valley bathed in evening sunlight. Half an hour passed before I heard the whooping sound of the beaters. Two other guns were to the left and right of me but I could not see them. Suddenly high on the crest of the valley to the left six shadows moved quickly across the face



of the hill towards us. So it was easy. But then they turned and swept the other way. There was something not quite right. They were deer. All the same to my companions, but not while I was lying in a now wet (I had forgotten that if you lie in snow it melts) cold ditch.

The light had gone so off we set to drive the back route to Ondorhaan. Our external searchlights probing the dark for a fox or a wolf, I concluded it must be worthwhile. Once caught in the light, the wolf presumably froze and waited to be shot. We didn't see one in that hour and a half, so I never found out. But from what I now know, I would guess that shooting a wolf in the dark is a bit like hoping England will win the Ashes.

A short sleep in Ondorhaan before we set off at 5 am to travel north towards the Russian border. After three hours we arrived at a herder's ger. Our arrival was eagerly awaited, but we were late; the sun was already up. No time to eat - we set off in two vehicles crashing across the steppe, guns everywhere, some held together with string. There were four in my vehicle. The windows were open. I became obsessed with checking my safety catch. A river lay across our path. No hesitation, no check on the condition of the ice, no reduction of speed. Our objective was to get to the top of the highest hill and watch for wolves returning home after a night's hunting. So there I stood in the coldest place on earth, if not the universe, my binoculars freezing to my eyebrows, searching the surrounding countryside. Nothing, we were too late. The sun was too high. They had returned to their lairs.

So off we set again across the steppe. A fox was spotted and pursued. Mongolians believe if you ignore a fox you will never catch a wolf, and so it was chased hither and thither. I had no idea they could run so fast, doubling back, always heading for the hills and the rough terrain as if it understood the limitations of a Land Cruiser. Eventually tired and exhausted it was shot. I felt rather sad about it all.

Eventually we stopped on the crest of a hill looking down into a small valley. The relative shelter of the valley had enabled a grove of silver birch to take hold. The trees were full of snow. We took up our positions behind rocks and stunted trees while the beaters worked their way down the other side, whooping and firing guns. No wolf, just some startled pigeons. This we did all day in a dozen valleys. At one point we passed a ger where three wolf pelts were stretched out on the ground. No Land Cruisers there, just horses. 'Ah!' said my companion 'but they watch them for days before shooting them'.

With fading light we returned to our ger, tired with only a fox to show for our efforts. An evening meal of boiled horse meat and rough bread with a thick layer of cream. The wife cooked with consummate skill. The ger was no tourist camp but it was warm and snug with eleven of us lying on the floor around the fire. Outside the stock lay in absolute silence in the inky black. On venturing to the loo I found myself in a herd of goats before I noticed them.

Again an early start, but this time we were at the top of the hill before the sun came up. Raw cold, all eyes scanned the surrounding county side. The focal point

was the frozen river. Suddenly a pack of six wolves were spotted making their way home along the river. But they were too far away. Then one turned back, still hungry after the scent of a kill they'd made somewhere. It would prove a fatal mistake.

Once down on the level all view was lost, but clearly the driver knew where he was heading. After a mad dash across terrain I would take at a very slow pace, we rounded a low hill and there he was. Going like the wind and heading for the hills. This time he made it and we had to follow, my safety catch firmly on. Once more we plunged down to the flat steppe at a crazy angle and at 40, 50 Kilometres an hour. But this time the tactic was to keep him on the flat. Shots were fired out of the windows, shell cases flying everywhere, cracking off the windscreen. At last he turned sharply

away from us and we stopped. Shots rang out. No hit, but he panicked, turned across our line of fire and was winged. He hardly paused and ran on as fast as ever. Another mad chase until he was hit again and went down. Another shot and it was over. Some vodka to celebrate, and calm the nerves, and the dead wolf was thrown onto the roof. People appeared from nowhere to admire our handiwork (and share the vodka). It was 7 am.

On the way back we found their kill - a freshly killed horse, the work of the pack of six, now five. It's tail was cut off by our team, and the poor disembowelled creature just left to feed the carrion of the steppe. All day we repeated the lying in valleys routine and found only one other wolf. But he ran away from the guns. Sensible creature.

  
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# MONGOLIA'S NAADAM FESTIVAL

Mongolia's annual Naadam Festival is where the entire country's champions in the "Three Kingly Sports" – Archery, Wrestling and Horseracing – all come together in spectacular style. The competition is nationwide, with many villages and towns having their own local Naadams to determine the local champions. Then each summer, the best of these congregate – as do much of the population of the entire country – to Ulaan Bataar, for the national championships. This year, it is held in UB from 11th-13th July.

## • Archery



Held just outside the national stadium, in a smaller venue purpose built for the sport, the event is divided up into mens and womens categories and is designed for accuracy. Competitors don full traditional regalia and have to hit a golf ball sized target at a distance of 75 to 100 yards. The accuracy is astonishing – archery as a means to capture game is still practiced in the country and using it can be a matter of survival or death during the winter months. Note the target is actually on the ground rather than the Western, raised

target we are used to – Mongolians still hunt today and the animals they need are ground dwellers.



## • Wrestling



This is where a lot of money gets bet – and some of the world's most powerful men come to compete. It's no coincidence that Japanese Sumo is a sport currently dominated by Mongolians – this most ancient of muscle-flexing activities is almost balletic at times, and technique is part of the game here. Smaller adversaries can and do beat far bulkier combatants, although at the top end, the big shots – national champions – are almost professional in their training and skills. However, expect to see some gargantuan sized men with huge bellies and curious tiny shorts and waistcoats cutting a rug





– and each other – down to size in the national stadium.

Like Sumo though, bulk is not everything – there is a huge amount of skill involved and grappling to overthrow one's opponent can go on for some time in the more evenly- matched bouts. Look out too for the 'eagle dance' – the traditional routine dance the winner always undertakes after defeating his opponent – a mixture of ballet-style movements and the cultural significance of mimicking a bird or prey.

### • Horse-Racing

A competition of stamina and endurance as well as speed – this is a 27km gallop across the Mongolian plains, run by young riders aged 7 and upwards. Those big hearted Mongolian Horses (don't call them ponies) exert themselves to the limits to get across the finishing line – and with thousands of riders all competing at once, over a 27km course it ends up being a steady stream of finishers for hours. The winner though is lauded, the sweat treated as liquid gold and flung about like champagne, and a life of stud awaits the lucky horse who gets that far. As for the kids – they are born in the saddle and everybody has their own horse just as Chinese do a bicycle.

Getting To Naadam : We suggest contacting a suitable travel agent to

arrange accommodation, arrival visas and other countryside treks you may want to undertake. Otherwise, it's a 90 minute flight north from Beijing. You will need to arrange visas before arriving, or at least have someone prepare documentation for you upon arrival for this. Visas are USD53. As for accommodation, UB gets very busy during Naadam, but you can usually find somewhere. The main festival is held in the central sports stadium, while the horse racing is a 30 minute drive out into the pastures.



Alternatives are staying at Ger camps just outside UB – these are felt covered 'tents' that sleep up to ten – ideal for a group. Most of these camps have toilet and communal washing facilities.



# OTHER NATIONAL EVENTS & FESTIVALS IN MONGOLIA

Here is a compilation of other national festivals that take place elsewhere in Mongolia, and are well worth visiting if you have the chance. Most are reasonably accessible from Ulaan Baatar by either an internal flight or by jeep. Dates however for these events can change, often nothing is definitely fixed until the last minute ! You'll need to check with a local tour operator for details and for making travel and accommodation arrangements, however we can recommend all of these as some of the annual highlights of the Mongolian year. As can be seen, most celebrate the relationship Mongolians have with their animals, and are essentially spectacular, friendly festivals held by the local community as their version of a country fair. Foreign tourists are always made most welcome and have plenty of opportunities to join in the fun and participate. Take lots of film or disc space – you'll find you'll take far more pictures than you had anticipated ! Most of the Festivals are just one or two day events – ideal for a quick trip out of UB. Your Mongolia travel agent will be able to provide up to the minute dates and travel arrangements.

## • Tsagaan Sar - Mongolian Lunar New Year – National (January / February)

This is celebrated around late January to early February depending on the traditional lunar calendar of that year. Tsagaan Sar is a family occasion, and



*Tsagaan Sar*

everyone makes a great effort – sometimes travelling hundreds of miles - to visit their relatives. The festival continues for three days. During this time Mongolians prepare a lot of food especially traditional buuz dumplings (similar to Chinese jiaotzi) when they make these, if any flour is left over it means during the forthcoming year they won't have any lack of clothes, whereas if the meat filling is more than enough they'll have enough food during the year.

Also consumed is Uuts, a whole boiled sheep which is usually placed in a prime position on a large tray in the middle of the dining table. This is the most important dish, and in particular the Ul Boov (sheep tail), by which size and colour (pure white is best) Mongolians say you can tell the wealth of the family by the appearance of the sheep tail, if it looks very big and white that means family will be wealthy.

During the New Year morning, everyone wakes up before the sun rises. The Mother of the family makes traditional milk tea with salt then offers this outside the ger to heaven, flicking tea with her fingers

to the sky, to the north, south, east and west and to the ground before serving it. The Father will accompany his sons to the nearest peak just before dawn and perform the Sergyem prayer ritual, worshipping to ensure whole family has a decent life in the new year.

Meanwhile, the women will place three pieces of ice on the roof of the ger, to protect the family from evil, when Father and sons return from Sergyem the morning family ceremony starts.

The eldest person from the family sits in a heart of the ger and everyone formally greets everyone else, by giving money, a blue Hadag scarf and a cup of warm milk to each other. Upon greeting elders, the older person places their palms face down on younger one's arm, and younger one supports the older one's elbow. Older people then gives wishes to the children for a full, long and happy life. Normally older men will enjoy a pinch of snuff, also offering this to others in the family. This should be received in the right hand - if you don't use snuff it is polite just to smell it and return it to the elder.

During Tsagaan Sar most people wear Mongolian Traditional costume, and decorate their best horse with trinkets, medals and other colourful materials.

### • Tsam Dance Festival – National (January)

The Tsam ceremony is held at the beginning of the year to exorcise evil. Tsams are the wonderfully painted and often ferocious looking masks worn by Buddhist Monks and are used both in religious ceremonies as well as in traditional theatre, performed by highly skilled dancers. Wearing

*Tsam Dance*



magnificent ornamented costumes, each individual represents a different holy figure or demon, various animals and characters from ancient Mongolian and Tibetan Buddhist related stories and legends. The Tsam dance ceremony was first introduced to Mongolia in the 8th century, when the great Indian Saint Lovon Badamjunai was invited to Mongolia to sanctify the construction of the first Tibetan Buddhist temple at Samya. From that time, the Tsam dance was performed following the traditional teaching of Nyambdeyen, and evolved greatly during the 16th century to incorporate Mongolian legends and figures as well as the traditional Tibetan and Indian deities and tales. Tsam Dances are often held in Monasteries and Temples, being a great setting for such a colourful piece of traditional Buddhist theatre. Check with your local travel agent for details of the nearest event.

### • Ice Festival – Khovsgol, North West Mongolia (February)

This is celebrated by the Darhad people who live around the Lake Khovsgol area in the far north western part of Mongolia, bordered by the Horidol Saridag Mountains. The Ice Festival is held around a small icebound Island named Dalayn Modon Huys (Wooden Shell of the Sea), just before the Spring

*Ice Festival*

**Reindeer migration** This is the traditional way of sending off the harsh winter and welcoming the new year. In the winter, the environment around Lake Khovsgol is beautiful, with forested, snow capped mountains, a clear blue winter sky, lit up with thousands of stars at night (it's a prime spot to view the Milky Way). Temperatures can plummet to -40 during the evening, so you'll need thermal gear, but day time is usually zero to -25. This is probably the best time to discover the unique and unfolded life of these nomadic people and admire the weather conditions and the way of life that they have. During the Festival many activities are organized.

Horse and Dog Sledging, Ice skating, Wrestling on Ice, Ice Carvings and so on make for a spectacular scene. It is also possible to go ice-fishing with holes cut out of the lake – you can see feet in the crystal clear waters for several metres in depth.

**Getting There:** 3-4 jeep days

**Flight:** To Moron (100 km from the Lake), then a 3-4 hour drive to Hatgal on the lakes edge.

### • Camel Polo, Gobi (March)



The Mongolian Camel Polo Association began organizing camel polo matches from 2002, in the Dund Gobi province of



*Dalayn Modon Huys, an island in Lake Khovsgol encircled in winter by ice six feet deep, that climbs up its cliffs twenty feet high. Wind Chill - minus 40.*

Mongolia in early Spring. Competitors are invited from other Mongolian provinces and also from Chinese Inner Mongolia. They also arrange other activities such as Camel Racing, breaking in unbroken male camels, Camel beauty contests and so on. It's a spectacular event, with camel products, wool, milk and clothing all being sold. It is also possible to have camel riding lessons. The camels used are the huge, two humped Bactrian Camel, which is native to Mongolia. It was used as the main means of transport along the Great Silk Road in ancient times. A dvd about the organization and the event is available at the State Department Store. Website: [www.camelpolo.org.mn](http://www.camelpolo.org.mn), or contact your travel agent for more details.

Getting There: 1-2 jeep days

### • Reindeer Festival, Khovsgol (June)



*Reindeer Festival*

It's back to the pristine shores of Lake Khovsgol for this celebration of Reindeer, with the event showcasing Reindeer racing, battles of strength between adult males, a parade of the best antlered stallions, demonstrations of herding, reindeer milking and added spice with a full exhibition and performances and rituals conducted by the shamans of the Tsataan people. Horse racing and

other related sports such as wrestling on horseback are also showcased. A local craft fair is also open, and Reindeer riding lessons are also held.

### • The Mongol Rally – London to Ulaan Baatar (July & August)



*Mini Rally*

This is an annual charity event (the 2006 rally raised GBP200,000) and involves taking a car of less than 1,000 cc from Hyde Park, London to Sukhbaatar Square in UB. That is a distance of up to 10,000 miles taking about three weeks, and at that limited engine capacity Mini's are the vehicle of choice. The route is open – teams have been known to travel via Afghanistan and the Arctic Circle. Typically about 50% of the field finishes. The 2007 rally has about 200 entrants and leaves London on 21st July meaning finishing cars will start arriving about mid-August. Details and participation enquiries for the 2008 rally: [www.mongolrally.com](http://www.mongolrally.com)

### • Yak Festival, Khorgo-Terkhi National Park (August)

Mongolia has the second largest population of yaks in the world, with them being a highly valuable and productive animal for milk and fur, as well as being used by for transport and pulling heavy loads. This summer festival takes place in the mountainous region of Western Mongolia,



*Yak Festival*

close to the alpine scenery, in the shadow of the extinct Khorgo Volcano by Lake Terkhiin Tsagaan. It is a spectacular setting. Yak races are held, as are tests of strength, a yak rodeo, yak milking contests in addition to a variety of other events. Yak products are freely available.

Getting There: 3-4 jeep days

### • Eagle Festival, Bayan Olgy (October)

Held in the far west of Mongolia near the border with Kazakstan, the Eagle Festival is an ethnic Kazak event, bringing together the best horsemen and eagle hunters from hundreds of miles around. Some of the nomads travel by horse for over

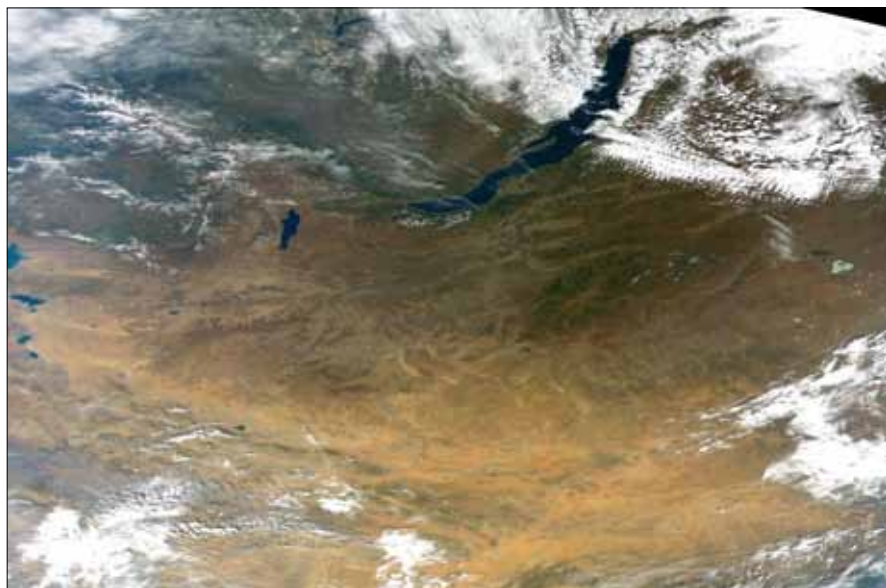
a week to attend. The main focus is the skill of hunting game using birds of prey, predominately Golden Eagles, although other species are also displayed with a variety of hawks, kestrels and falcons also present. The birds are trained to hunt on the horse, and released to catch prey. A selection of different contests are held, from calling the bird to the fist while on horseback, to hunting wolf cubs (the cubs are not killed). Additional horse racing, bareback wrestling and other horsemanship skills are also demonstrated.

Getting There: 3-4 jeep days

Flight : To Bayan Olgii (3 hours)

*Eagle Festival**Eagle Hunting*

# MONGOLIA FROM SPACE



**W**ith American technology now keeping an eye on the world from high above, NASA now provide downloads of various places in the world from about 300 miles up as their various satellites map the planet. We've been lucky enough to obtain some of these for you, and reproduce them (with kind permission from NASA) for our readers here, with comments (see <http://visibleearth.nasa.gov> for more).

## • Mongolia's Terrain

With winds that constantly whip dust across high plains, a nomadic population that mostly lives in felt tents, and a local cuisine that consists of fermented goat milk and stewed meats, Mongolia is not a place for the pampered. This true-color image of Mongolia was acquired by the Moderate-

resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS), flying aboard NASA's Terra spacecraft. Most of the 2.3 million Mongolians live on the vast, rolling, semi-arid, grass-covered plateaus that stretch across eastern and northern Mongolia. In the image, these areas are a dark reddish-brown. The faint herringbone pattern running through eastern Mongolia is



formed by the Kerulen and Orhon Gol rivers and their tributaries.

The lighter reddish-brown areas covering most of southern Mongolia is the Gobi Desert. Vast and largely uncharted, the Gobi has become a favorite of fossil hunters from around the world. Here ideal fossil specimens of *Velociraptor* and *Protoceratops* have been unearthed. Moving to the southwest corner of the country, one can see the defined ridges that make up the sparsely vegetated Altai Mountain Range, the highest mountains in Mongolia.

A number of lakes can be spotted to the northwest and the far north. The drumstick-shaped lake at the northern tip of Mongolia is Hovsgol Nuur, which is considered a national treasure in Mongolia with its picturesque alpine surroundings and pristine water. Further north in Russia, the long lake that is half surrounded by snow is the great Lake Baikal. Reaching 1,620 meters (nearly one

mile) in depth, Lake Baikal is the deepest freshwater lake in the world and holds as much fresh water as the shallower lakes Superior, Huron, Ontario, Michigan, and Erie combined.

### • Western Mongolia

A MODIS captured image of western Mongolia. Notice how the snow-capped mountains to the north and west seem to be blocking any moisture from the interior, creating the arid landscape dotted with small lakes.

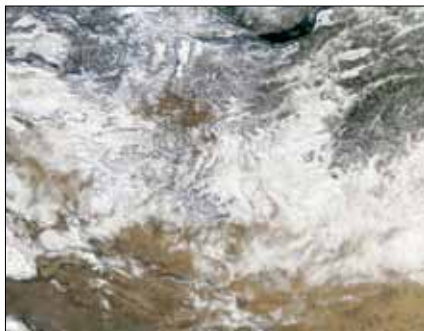
### • Forest Fires in Northern Mongolia

This series of true-color Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) images show the development of scores of fires in Mongolia (bottom) and Russia (top) over the month. The active fires are marked with red dots. At upper right is the southern portion of Lake Baikal.





### • Winter Snows



Snow covers Mongolia in patches in this true-color Aqua MODIS image. Mongolia sits at an extremely high altitude; no point is lower than 1,800 feet (550 meters), while the highest point stretches to 15,266 feet (4,653 meters). Snowfall is normally light and blows away quickly during the winter, so to see this much snow on the ground at once is rather unusual.

### • Gobi Desert Dust Storm

A large dust storm can be seen blowing across the Gobi Desert in Mongolia in this true-color Terra MODIS image. The dust storm appears as a lighter tan with horizontal-running streaks against the darker tan-orange of the desert. The dust storm is mostly in Mongolia (top), but also has a streak running on the other side of the border in the Inner Mongolia region of China.



The Gobi Desert is one of the world's largest deserts, covering almost 1.3 million square kilometers (around 0.5 million square miles). It sits on a high plateau (from 910 to 1,520 meters), and is a region of extreme weather conditions with bitterly cold winters and short hot summers.

### • The Altai Mountains



The rugged and remote Altai Mountains (running diagonally from the upper left to lower right of the image) tower over the surrounding basin of desert, steppe, forest, and taiga ecosystems. The large lake at the top of the image is Uvs Nuur, which is approximately the size of Rhode Island. This part of the country is sparsely populated inhabited mostly by Kazakhs, who are Muslim and speak a Turkic language; the majority of the population of the rest of Mongolia are Buddhists who speak Mongolian and Russian. Most Mongolians that live outside of the few cities are nomadic and live in gers (sometimes called yurtas), or large tents with wooden frames. Western Mongolia is renowned for its endangered and rare species, including lynx, argarli sheep and snow leopards. The region is seismically active, with numerous hot springs and frequent earthquakes. The two red dots in this image signify grassland fires just over the border in Northern China.

# THE RUSSIAN JEEP - VEHICLE OF THE STEPPES



Often the first sight of any vehicle in Mongolia will be the famous jeep or its related van – classic vehicles, taking the Mongolian steppes or Ulaan Baatar’s potholes in their stride. Seemingly indestructible, they are almost as much a part of Mongolia’s transport scenery as the horse.

What isn’t so well known is how they came to be here, their history and the reasons behind their success. Mongolia Expat put its head under the bonnet and found out....

## • Where Are They Made?

The Russian jeeps are made in Ulyanovsk in the Ulyanovsky Avtomobilny Zavod (Ulyanovsk Automobile Factory). Ulyanovsk is a city with a population of 700,000 and is situated at the river Wolga, about 710 km east of Moscow.

## • The Factory History

In 1941 (at the beginning of World War 2 in the East) the government of the

Soviet Union decided to evacuate big industrial plants from Moscow eastwards, because of the threat of the invading Germans. This also affected the Moscow Vehicle Works, and so the Ulyanovsky Avtomobilny Zavod was founded as it’s eastern cousin. The Russian jeeps had already been made from 1938 in another factory: the Gorkovsky Avtomobilny Zavod (Gorky Automobile Factory) in Gorky. This factory was founded in 1931 and set up with American help. One of their first cars was a clone of a Ford “A”. Their first jeeps GAZ “61”, “64” and “67” models were made from 1938, based on the American Bantam jeep and were used in the army. In 1953 the production of the GAZ “69” was started. In 1965 the production of this jeep was removed to the Ulyanovsky Avtomobilny Zavod and since 1970 the jeeps name became UAZ “469”. This jeep has been exported to countries like Vietnam, Afghanistan and Mongolia. The latest version is not called “469” anymore, but has the name UAZ



Hunter and is not anymore partly covered by cloth, but completely by metal. GAZ specialized later in normal passenger cars (the Wolgas), but these cars have been (in Mongolia anyway) replaced by Western, Korean and Japanese cars. UAZ specialized in jeeps and 4x4 minivans and these cars are still very popular in Mongolia.

### • So The Model Is Based On What Design?

It's a complicated story ! Basically, in 1938 the first Russian jeep (GAZ "61") was actually based on the American Bantam jeep, but its true beginnings go back even further. In 1930 Austin of England founded the American Austin Car Company in the United States. Unfortunately, economical little cars never proved popular there and by 1934 the company was almost bankrupt. It was taken over by its Chairman, Roy Evans, who re-launched it as the American Bantam Car Company. He retained the small car concept based on the original Austin design but made improvements and increased the range of models available.

As early as 1938 Bantam had spotted the potential of a light reconnaissance vehicle for military use and lent the National Guard three of its Austin based Roadsters to evaluate. The company continued to press the case for such a vehicle until a meeting with the Military was finally arranged at the Bantam factory on June 19th 1940. Worried by the mobility and ease with which the German Army had taken France and intelligence reports that the Germans were about to convert the Volkswagen for military use, they at last showed a real interest in Bantam's proposal.

*These jeeps can get anywhere*



A series of meetings developed Bantam's original car based proposal into a military specification for a 4 x 4 hybrid car / truck type vehicle weighing not more than 590kg. Aware of Bantam's limited design and production facilities and the fact that the company was not financially sound it was decided to offer other manufacturers the opportunity to tender as well. The overall task was to design and submit 70 finished vehicles for evaluation (including 8 with 4 x 4 ). A prototype had to be delivered within 49 days, the rest within 75 days. The rather unrealistic weight limit resulted in no interest being shown by traditional truck manufacturers like Dodge or GMC and initially only Bantam and Willys responded to be joined later by Ford in submitting designs and prototype vehicles for evaluation. Bantam persuaded Karl Probst, a freelance engineer, to head their project and when the drawings for the

tenders were examined by the Military on July 22, Probst's vehicle came closest to matching the specification though Bantam did conceal the fact that their vehicle was likely to be a little over the weight limit. An order was placed and by the end of September Probst had completed the drawings, sourced the parts and the Bantam prototype was delivered. Having tested it to destruction and being satisfied with its performance, the army commissioned 70 more to be built. Despite Willys failing to submit a prototype by the deadline and Ford showing little interest in the project at all at this time, both manufacturers were allowed access to the trials of the Bantam prototype and subsequently to Probst's drawings. Willys and Ford prototype models, the Quad and the Pygmy, were to follow in that order but clearly outside both the time and weight limits.



*Typical terrain for the GAZ 69, and behind it, its van-like cousin, quite happy in three feet of rushing river water*

Trials continued into the Winter of 1940 and should have resulted in an outright winner. The Bantam GPV (General Purpose Vehicle) had been delivered on time and met the specification in most respects. It performed well bearing in mind the nature of prototypes and minor defects were soon corrected. It also had many recognisable features of the later

*Spare parts are available in any hardware market throughout Mongolia. These jeeps don't die – they just get recycled.*



standardised jeep. However, the Military identified strengths and weaknesses in each vehicle. The Bantam was considered too high off the ground and under powered. The Willys Quad had a more powerful engine but was far too heavy. The Ford Pygmy had the best steering (though linkages were easily damaged) but its tractor engine had insufficient power.

There was also concern about Bantam's limited production capability and that even Willys Overland might not cope given the imminent need for a very large number of these vehicles. All of this resulted in a political decision in March 1941 that all three companies would receive an initial order for 1500 vehicles each, provided that they met the original specification though the permitted weight had now been increased.

Vehicles that looked remarkably similar during the trials became even more alike as each company adapted their design and copied the better ideas from each other

or from Probst's plans ready for the first production runs. However, in July 1941 the military decided that standardisation was needed, it being impractical to operate and maintain three different designs. All three vehicles now performed well but it was decided that the Willys design represented the best overall value for money at \$739 (compared with \$1166 for a Bantam) and it was adopted as the standard army vehicle. Willys secured the contract to provide the next 16,000 vehicles.

In awarding Willys the contract, the army produced a list of improvements and alterations that were required. Apart from general improvements to the battery, generator, air filter and fuel tank, the standard jeep was now to have blackout lights, sealed beam headlights, pioneer tools (axe and shovel), double bow canvas tilt, trailer socket, centre dash handbrake control and radio suppression. The classic standard jeep design was about to emerge.

The 40 BRC (the production version of the Bantam) was now no longer required by the US Army as it was 'non-standard'. The Bantams already in service with the army together with the continued output from the factory were passed to the British and Russian armies under the terms of the Lend-Lease Act. Interestingly, having observed the trials, the Russian Purchasing Commission wanted the Bantam by choice.



The photograph shows a typical British marked Bantam 40 BRC in the colours of the 6th Armoured Division complete with .303 Bren gun mount on

the passenger side. The vehicle's light weight also made it particularly suited for use by British airborne units in North Africa.

By the end of October 1941 the army were keen to find a second source of supply for two reasons ; Willys could no longer keep up with the growing demand for jeeps and there was the need to safeguard the supply of jeeps against the Willys plant being bombed or sabotaged.

In early November Ford were awarded their first contract to build 15,000 jeeps to the Willys design specification from Willys drawings. The Willys MB and Ford GPW varied in minor detail only as the military insisted that the parts be interchangeable. With the increased supply it was now possible to supply the standard MB/GPW vehicles under Lend-Lease arrangements and production of the Bantam 40 BRC was phased out. Interestingly, it was Ford who designed the pressed radiator grille to replace the heavier and more costly slat grille of the early Willys MA design. Willys then incorporated this into their definitive MB model.

In all, 2675 Bantam 40 BRC vehicles were built, 62 of which had four-wheel steer as requested by the US Cavalry. Sadly, the company never again produced vehicles. Having been first to suggest and build a 'jeep', Bantam was made to share Probst's plans with competitors, and then lost out in securing any work under contracts for the universal jeep and spent the rest of the war building trailers, aircraft parts and torpedo motors.

Meanwhile, production started in Moscow...

## • Why Mongolian drivers like them...

The cars are very simple and easily equipped and repaired. They are also strong and will not break down so easily. Their design and very low centre of gravity makes them very suitable for driving along Mongolias unpaved roads, and there is a national spare parts and distribution network in place. Coupled to that – they can be mended with basically, bits of string, wire, rope and even nylon stockings ! Local drivers are used to these vehicles and can help each other when there are problems.

### Reasonable price (about US\$7,500)

Disadvantages during summer: no air conditioning and on warm days overheating of the engine is common, so the engine has then to cool down then for 10-15 minutes.

### Fuel consumption

According official specifications 15,5 L per 100 km, but in practice it is often 20 L per 100 km (5 km per 1 liter). So now with high fuel prices you can't call it an economical car !

### How to import into Mongolia?

There is an official distributor in Mongolia ("Hurd" company), but most of the Russian jeeps are picked up from the Russian distributors closest to the Mongolian border in Ulan Ude and Gorno Altyansk.

### Engine type and other features

From the official UAZ site ([www.uaz.ru](http://www.uaz.ru)) :

► Vehicles & Services / SUV / UAZ Hunter / Specifications /



Technical specifications		
1	Length, mm	4170
2	Width, mm	1785
3	Height, mm	2020
4	Wheel track, mm	1445
5	Ground clearance, mm	210
6	Curb weight, kg	1620
7	Load carrying capacity, kg	750
8	Fuel tank capacity, L	2_39
9	Type of engine	Carburetor
10	Engine	<u>UMZ-4218.10</u>
11	Fuel	Petrol A-76
12	Displacement, L	2,89
13	Max. speed, km/h	120
14	Fuel consumption at 90 km/h, L/100km	15,5
15	Rated output, kW (hp)/rpm	61,8 (84)/4000
16	Max. torque , Nm/rpm	189 (19,3)/2500
17	Tires	225/75 R16

# MONGOLIAN WILDLIFE

Mongolia has 136 mammal species, as well as almost 400 different types of birds and 76 species of fish. Central and Northern Mongolia, with its rich forest areas, are home to wolf, wild boar, elk, roe deer and brown bear, while the steppes and forest margins support marmot, muskrat, fox, steppe fox and sable. The Altai Mountains to the west are home to wolf and wild cats such as lynx and snow leopard, in addition to the world's largest wild sheep – the Argali – and Siberian Ibex. The Gobi desert and the eastern Mongolian steppe are inhabited by thousands of gazelles. The rarest animal in Mongolia – the Gobi bear is found in the south western part of the Gobi. Wild ass and wild Bactrian camels are found in the desert while Argali and Gobi Ibex also inhabit the rocky mountains within the Gobi region. The Przewalski's wild horse have been reintroduced to the country from captivity abroad after being extinct and are now increasing in numbers, while the tiger population appears to be extinct – although one or two tantalizing unconfirmed sightings seem to crop up each year.

## • SIBERIAN ELK (*Cervus canadensis*)



Siberian and American Elk, are the second largest species of deer in the world, after the moose (*Alces alces*). Elk are also referred to as “wapiti”, which is from the Native American word waapiti, or “white rump” used by the Shawnee. Elk are widely distributed across North America and Eastern Asia. They should not be confused with the European animal also known as the elk, which is the moose of North America. Early European explorers to North America, who were familiar with the smaller Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*) of Europe, believed that the much larger North American animal looked more like moose, which in Europe is called an elk. The renaming has become part of the common vocabulary of North Americans.

Until recently, the elk and the European Red Deer were considered the same species, but recent DNA evidence has demonstrated that they are different species. According to the study, another even more closely related species to the Elk than the Red Deer is the Sika Deer (*Cervus nippon*) of Asia.

Elk are one of the largest mammals that inhabit North Asia (Southern Siberia, Mongolia), temperate Eastern Asia (including Manchuria, Ussuri Region, Northern China, and Korea), and much of North America. They have a unique mating ritual in which males perform posturing, antler wrestling and especially bugling, a loud series of screams designed to help attract females and to establish dominance over other males. Elk populations are



currently increasing in North America, but population figures in Eastern Asia are not well established. In Mongolia, they may be seen in the Northern regions close to the Russian border.

### • BROWN BEAR (*Ursus arctos*)



The brown bear is a species of bear distributed throughout the Northern hemisphere. Weighing up to 130–700 kg (290–1,500 pounds), the larger races of brown bear tie with the Polar bear as the largest extant land carnivores. The grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), the Kodiak Bear (*Ursus arctos middendorffi*), and the Mexican brown bear are North American subspecies of the brown bear. However, DNA analysis has recently revealed that the identified subspecies of brown bears, both Eurasian and North American, are genetically quite homogeneous. It is sometimes referred to poetically as the bruin. They are omnivores and feed on a variety of plant parts, including berries, roots, and sprouts, fungi, fish, insects, and small mammals, especially ground squirrels. Contrary to popular mythology, brown bears are not particularly carnivorous as they derive up to 90% of their dietary food energy from vegetable matter. Their jaw structure has evolved to fit their dietary habits and it is longer and lacks strong, sharp canine teeth of true predators. Bears eat an enormous

number of moths during the summer, sometimes as many as 40,000 in a day, and may derive up to a third of their food energy from these insects. Locally, in areas of Russia and Alaska, brown bears feed mostly on spawning salmon, and the nutrition and abundance of this food accounts for the enormous size of the bears from these areas. Brown bears also occasionally prey on deer (*Odocoileus* spp.; *Dama* spp., *Capreolus* spp.), Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus* or American elk), moose (*Alces alces*) and American bison (*Bison bison*). When brown bears attack these animals, they tend to choose young calves or aged, sick adults because they are slow and weak. Brown bears retrace their own tracks and walk only on rocks while being hunted to avoid being traced.

### • BACTRIAN CAMEL (*Camelus bactrianus*)

The Bactrian Camel is a large even-toed ungulate native to the steppes of eastern Asia. The Bactrian camel has two humps on its back, in contrast to the Dromedary, also known as the Arabian Camel, which has one.

Nearly all of the estimated 1.4 million Bactrian Camels alive today are domesticated, but in October 2002 the estimated 950 remaining in the wild in northwest China and Mongolia were placed on the critically endangered species list. Bactrian Camels are over 2 meters (7 feet) tall at the hump and weigh in excess of 725 kg (1,600 lb). They are herbivores, eating grass, leaves, and grains, capable of drinking up to 120 litres (32 US gallons) of water at a time. Their mouths are extremely tough, allowing them to eat thorny desert plants.



They are supremely adapted to protect themselves against the desert heat and sand, with wide, padded feet and thick leathery pads on the knees and chest, nostrils that can open and close, ears lined with protective hairs, and bushy eyebrows with two rows of long eyelashes. Thick fur and underwool keep the animal warm during cold desert nights and also insulate against daytime heat.

The Dromedary (*Camelus dromedarius*) is the only other surviving camel, native to the Sahara desert, but today is extinct in the wild. By comparison, the Bactrian Camel is a stockier, hardier animal able to survive the scorching desert heat of northern Iran to the frozen winters in Tibet and the Mongolian Gobi.

The Dromedary is taller and faster, and with a rider it can maintain 8–9 mph for hours at a time. A loaded Bactrian Camel moves at about 2.5 mph. There is some evidence that the Bactrian Camel can be divided up into different subspecies. In particular, it has been discovered that a population of wild Bactrian Camel lives within a part of the Gashun Gobi region of the Gobi Desert. This population is

distinct from domesticated herds both in genetic makeup and in behavior. However, the significance of those differences has not yet been demonstrated.

There are possibly as many as three regions in the genetic makeup that are distinctly different from domesticated camels and there is up to a 3% difference in the base genetic code. That is significant when it can be considered that the genetic difference between man and chimp is just 1.5%. However, with so few wild camels, it is unclear what the natural genetic diversity within a population would have been.

Another remarkable difference is the ability of these wild camels to drink saltwater slush, although it is not yet certain the camel can extract useful water from it. Domesticated camels do not attempt to drink salt water, though the reason is unknown.

### • MONGOLIAN WILD ASS (*Equus hemionus hemionus*)

The Mongolian Wild Ass (also called Khulan) is a subspecies of the Onager. It may be synonymous with the Gobi Kulan or Dziggetai suspecies (*Equus hemionus*

luteus). It is found in Mongolia and northern China, and was previously found in Kazakhstan before it became extinct due to hunting.

The Mongolian Wild Ass's distribution range was dramatically reduced during the 1990s. A 1994-1997 survey estimated its population size at 33,000 to 63,000 individuals over a continuous distribution range encompassing all of southern Mongolia. In 2003, a new survey found approximately 20,000 individuals over an area of 177,563 km<sup>2</sup> in southern Mongolia. Despite that, the subspecies lost about 50% of its former distribution range in Mongolia in the past 70 years.

The population is declining due to poaching and competition from grazing livestock and the conservation status of the species is evaluated as vulnerable. Since 1953, the Mongolian Wild Ass has

been fully protected in Mongolia. The subspecies is also listed at appendix I of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and was added to appendix II of the Convention of Migratory Species in 2002. However, due to human population growth in conjunction with severe winters in the past years, the number of conflicts between herders and Mongolian Wild Ass's appear on the increase.

Poaching for meat appears to be an increasing problem in Mongolia. For some parts of the local population, wild ass and other wildlife meat seems to provide a substitute or even a cheap alternative to meat from domestic animals. In 2005, a national survey based on questionnaires, suggested that as many as 4,500 wild asses, about 20% of the whole population, may be poached each year. The Mongolian



wild ass typically has a sandy-colored coat with lighter-colored legs and belly, a short erect black mane, a black spinal stripe, and a black tail tuft. Its neigh is shrill. Different races of this species vary in size, but all are smaller than the African ass. They were once widely distributed across Asia, but they have been crowded out of their grazing lands by domestic livestock and have been hunted for their flesh and hides. Each race is now restricted to a very limited territory. Among them are the Persian ass, or Onager, of central Asia; the Mongolian ass, or Kulan, of NE Asia; the Tibetan ass, or Kiang, presently the most numerous Asian wild ass; and the Indian ass, or Ghorkhar. All are considered endangered, and the continued survival of the Onager and the Kulan is particularly threatened. The Syrian wild ass, of SW Asia, is probably already extinct.

### • PRZEWALSKI'S WILD HORSE (*Equus ferus przewalskii* or *Equus caballus przewalskii*)

Przewalski's Horse, also known as the Asian Wild Horse or Mongolian Wild Horse, or Takhi in Mongolia, is the closest living wild relative of the domestic Horse.

Most "wild" horses today, such as the American Mustang, are actually feral animals, horses that were once domesticated but escaped and reverted to an apparently wild status. The Przewalski's

Horse, on the other hand, has never been successfully domesticated and remains a truly wild animal today. There were once several types of equid that had never been successfully domesticated, including the Tarpan, Onager, and others. However, most have become extinct, with the Przewalski's Horse the only remaining truly wild horse in the world.

Poliakov, who concluded that the animal was a wild horse species, gave it the official name *Equus przewalskii* (Poliakov 1881). However, authorities differ about the correct classification. Some hold it is a separate species, the last remnant of the wild horse *Equus ferus*, others hold it is a subspecies of *Equus caballus*. The question will only be answered with finality if or when the common ancestor from which domestic and Przewalski's horses diverged is determined. Although the Przewalski's horse has 66 chromosomes, compared to 64 in a domestic horse, the Przewalski's horse and the domestic horse are the only equids that cross-breed and produce fertile offspring, possessing 65 chromosomes.

As of a census taken in 2005, the world population of these horses was about 1,500, all descended from 31 horses that were in captivity in 1945, mostly descended from approximately 15 captured around 1900. A cooperative venture between the Zoological Society of London and Mongolian Scientists has resulted in successful reintroduction of these horses from zoos into their natural habitat in Mongolia, and as of 2005 there is a free-ranging population of 248 animals in the wild.

The horse is named after Russian General Nikolai Przhevalsky (1839–1888). (The



spelling of the horse breed as “Przewalski” derives from the Polish spelling of the name). He was an explorer and naturalist who described the horse in 1881, after having gone on an expedition to find it, based on rumours of its existence. Many of these horses were captured around 1900 by Carl Hagenbeck and placed in zoos. As noted above, about twelve to fifteen reproduced and formed today’s population.

The native population declined in the 20th century due to a combination of factors, with the wild population in Mongolia dying out in the 1960s. The last herd was sighted in 1967 and the last individual horse in 1969. Expeditions after this failed to locate any horses, and the species was designated “extinct in the wild” for over 30 years.

After 1945 only two captive populations in zoos remained: in Munich and in Prague Zoo. The most valuable group in Askania Nova was shot by German soldiers during occupation for food and the group in the USA had died.

In 1977, the Foundation for the Preservation and Protection of the Przewalski Horse was founded by Jan and Inge Bouman, which started a program of exchange between captive populations in zoos throughout the world to reduce inbreeding, and later starting a breeding program of its own. In 1992, sixteen horses were released into the wild in Mongolia, followed by additional animals later on. These reintroduced horses successfully reproduced, and the status of the animal was changed from “extinct in the wild” to “endangered” in 2005. The area to which they were reintroduced became

Hustai National Park in 1998 which can be visited just two jeep days away from Ulaan Baatar.

### • ARGALI (*Ovis ammon*)



The argali, or the mountain sheep is a globally endangered wild sheep, which roams the highlands of Central Asia (Himalaya, Tibet, Altay). It is also the biggest wild sheep, standing as high as 120 cm and weighing as much as 140 kg. The Pamir argali (also called Marco Polo sheep, for they were first described by that traveler) may attain more than 6 feet in length.

The general coloration varies between each animal, from a lightish yellow to a dark grey-brown. The face is lighter. Argalis have a whitish rump patch, although there is much variation between subspecies in terms of size and borders. Adult males carry two enormous corkscrew-like horns, which can reach 190 cm / 6.3 feet when measured along the spiral. Females also bear horns, although these are much smaller, rarely exceeding 30 cm / 1 foot in length. Reported population densities range from 1.0-1.2 animals per square kilometer. Seasonal migrations have been reported for some populations (especially the males), while there is a general trend to live at higher elevations in the summertime. With relatively long legs,



argalis are fast runners and may flee from predators, although refuge is often taken on steep mountain slopes. The primary vocalizations are an alarm whistle and a warning hiss made by blowing air through the nostrils. When competing, males rear up on their hind legs and, leaning forward, race towards their opponent, crashing horns in the process.

Argalis live in herds between 2 and 100 animals, segregated by sex, except during breeding season. Migrating herds, especially males, have been reported. With long legs, herds can travel quickly from place to place. Argalis tend to live at higher elevations during the summer.

Argalis are considered endangered or threatened throughout their entire range, due to habitat loss from overgrazing of domestic sheep and hunting. They are hunted for both their meat and their horns, used in traditional Chinese medicine. Legal hunting of trophies has also added to the mortality.

### • GOITERED GAZELLE (*Gazella subgutturosa hilleriana*)

The Goitered, Black-tailed or Persian gazelle is a gazelle found in a large area of central Asia, including part of Iran and southern west Pakistan in the western end of the range, as well as the Gobi desert. The specific name means “full below the throat” and refers to the male having an enlargement of the neck and throat during the mating season. This is not a true goiter, which is caused by the enlargement of the thyroid gland.

The Goitered gazelle inhabits sands and gravel plains and limestone plateau. It runs at high speed, without the leaping,

bounding gait seen in other gazelle species. Throughout much of their range, Goitered gazelles undergo seasonal migrations. Herds cover 10–30 km per day in the winter, with these distances being reduced to about 1–3 km in summer. In contrast to most other gazelles, goitered gazelles possess horns only in males. These gazelles inhabit desert areas from Palestine to Northern China and have become severely reduced in numbers by hunting.

The goitered gazelle, *Gazella subgutturosa*, inhabits desert and sub-desert steppes of the Arabian peninsula and southwestern Asia to northern China and Mongolia. Four subspecies are recognized by Groves (1985), two of which are presently maintained in captivity in North America. The Arabian sand gazelle *G. s. marica*, was once common in the Arabian peninsula, ranging north through eastern Jordan and Iraq, where its range integrated with that of *G. s. subgutturosa*, commonly known as the Persian or goitered gazelle. Persian gazelles once ranged from eastern Turkey through Iran, Pakistan and Soviet Central Asia. There are two forms which are the Xinjiang goitered gazelle, *G. s. yarkandensis*, found in the deserts of the Tarim Basin, Xinjiang, China, and the Mongolian goitered gazelle *G. s. hilleriana*, native to the Gobi and Caidam and can be seen in herds of up to 20,000 in Eastern Mongolia.



## • SIBERIAN IBEX (*Capra sibirica*)



The coat coloration varies widely across this ibex's range. The general color of the coat is a light tan, with the undersides lighter. In winter, mature males become much darker, with varying patches of white on the neck and back. Both sexes have a dark beard beneath the chin, although it is much less pronounced in females. Unlike the Nubian and Walie ibexes, the Siberian ibex does not display the contrasting black and white markings on its legs. Both sexes carry horns, and while in females they are small and slightly arched towards the rear, in males they grow into massive arcs which curl over the back and may even loop back on themselves. A male's horns also have several large knobs on their frontal surface. Principally a diurnal animal, the Siberian ibex has alternating periods of resting and activity throughout the day. Although the Siberian ibex lives at high elevations, and often climb up to the vegetation line at 5,000 meters / 16,000 feet, as a rule they seek out lower slopes during the winter. These slopes are generally steep and southward facing, areas where snow has difficulty covering in large amounts over large stretches of time. However, when the snow cover is heavy, Siberian ibex must find food by pawing

away at the snow with their forelegs in order to reach the vegetation concealed below. If threatened, Siberian ibex flee to steep, rocky cliffs.

Siberian Ibex produce 1 or 2 offspring, and live up to 16 years, in both maternal and bachelor herds, feeding on grasses, leaves and the shoots of bushes and trees. They are prey for Wolf, snow leopard, lynx, wolverine, brown bear, fox, golden eagle, humans and are commonly found in the alpine meadows and crags across Central Asia.

## • SNOW LEOPARD (*Uncia uncia*, or *Panthera uncia*)

The snow leopard, sometimes known as the ounce, is a large cat native to the mountain ranges of central and south Asia.



The taxonomic position of this species has been subject to change. In the past, many taxonomists included the snow leopard in the genus *Panthera*, with several of the other largest felids, but later it was placed in its own genus, *Uncia*. However, most recent molecular studies place the species firmly within the genus *Panthera*, although the exact position remains unclear. Along with the clouded leopard, it represents an intermediate between so-called big cats and smaller species, as it cannot roar,

despite possessing a cartilaginous hyoid apparatus which is thought essential in allowing the big cats to roar. Despite its name, the snow leopard is not related to the leopard, "*Panthera pardus*", and is thought by some to be more closely related to the cheetah, "*Acinonyx jubatus*". Both cats share similar physical characteristics, such as round skulls, long legs and large counter-balancing tails. The cheetah, like the snow leopard, is also incapable of roaring, a trait only known in the Pantherine cats.

Well known for its beautiful fur, the snow leopard has a soft grey coat with ringed spots and rosettes of black on brown. The fur turns white in the winter. Its tail is heavy with fur and the bottom of its paws are covered with fur for protection against snow and cold. The life span of a snow leopard is normally 15-18 years, but in captivity they can live up to 20 years.

Weighing up to 75 kilograms, the snow leopard can be distinguished from other similar species by its proportionately longer tail, which helps it maintain its balance on the rugged terrain and unstable surfaces of its habitat. The snow leopard's tail also doubles as a warmth cover and is used to cover its nose and mouth in very cold conditions. The male's head is usually much squarer and wider than that of the female. Its big furry feet act as snowshoes, like those of the lynx. In summer, snow leopards usually live above the tree-line on mountainous meadows and in rocky regions at an altitude of up to 6000 m. In winter, they come down into the forests at an altitude of about 2000 m. They lead largely solitary lives, although mothers can rear cubs for extended periods of time in cave dens in the mountains.

Snow leopards have grey-and-white fur with numerous rosettes on the flanks and spots on the head and neck, similar to jaguars. Their tails are striped. They are opportunistic feeders, eating whatever meat they can find; they often kill animals three times their size, including domestic livestock. Snow leopards ambush prey from above when possible, as they can jump as far as 15 meters. Their agility often proves helpful when ambushing prey and traversing through mountains. Their diet consists of ibex, bharal, markhor, urial, boars, as well as marmots and other small rodents. Snow leopards' habitat in central and south Asia, a rugged mountainous region of approximately 1,230,000 square kilometers, extends through 12 countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

The total estimated wild population of the snow leopard is between 3,500 and 7,000 individuals, of which about 750 live in Mongolia.

### • GRAY WOLF (*Canis lupus lupus*)

The Gray Wolf (also known as the Timber Wolf) is a mammal in the order Carnivora. The Gray Wolf shares a common ancestry with the domestic dog (*Canis lupus familiaris*), as evidenced by DNA sequencing and genetic drift studies. Gray wolves were once abundant and distributed over much of North America, Eurasia, and the Middle East. Today, for a variety of human-related reasons including widespread habitat destruction and excessive hunting, wolves inhabit only a very limited portion of their former range.



Though listed as a species of least concern for extinction worldwide, for some regions including the Continental United States, the species is listed as endangered or threatened.

The Gray Wolf, being a keystone predator, is an important part of the ecosystems to which it typically belongs. The wide range of habitats in which wolves can thrive reflects their adaptability as a species, and includes temperate forests, mountains, tundra, taiga, and grasslands. In much of the world, with the exception of Northern regions, they are listed as endangered. They continue to be hunted in many areas of the world as perceived threats to livestock and humans, as well as for sport. The weight and size of the Gray Wolf can vary enormously worldwide, though both tend to increase proportionally with higher latitudes. Generally speaking, height varies from 0.6–0.9 meters (26–36 inches) at the shoulder, and weight can range anywhere from 23–59 kilograms (50–130 pounds), making wolves the largest among all wild canids. Although rarely encountered, extreme specimens reaching over 77 kg (170 lb) have been recorded in Alaska and Canada, and the heaviest wild wolf on record, which was killed in Alaska in 1939, weighed 80 kg (175 lb). The smallest wolves come from the Arabian

Wolf subspecies, the females of which may weigh as little as 10 kg (22 lb) at maturity. Females in a given population typically weigh about 20% less than their male counterparts. Wolves can measure anywhere from 1.3–2 meters (4.5–6.5 feet) from nose to tail tip; the tail itself accounts for approximately one quarter of overall body length.

Wolves are built for stamina, possessing features designed for long-distance travel. Narrow chests and powerful backs and legs facilitate efficient locomotion. They are capable of covering several miles trotting at about a 10 km/h (6 mph) pace, and have been known to reach speeds approaching 65 km/h (40 mph) during a chase (wolves only run fast when testing potential prey). While thus sprinting, wolves can cover up to 5 meters (16 ft) per bound.

Wolf paws are able to tread easily on a wide variety of terrains, especially snow. There is a slight webbing between each toe, which allows wolves to move over snow more easily than comparatively hampered prey. Wolves are digitigrade, so the relative largeness of their feet helps to better distribute their weight on snowy surfaces. The front paws are larger than the hind paws, and have a fifth digit, a dewclaw, that is absent on hind paws.

Bristled hairs and blunt claws enhance grip on slippery surfaces, and special blood vessels keep paw pads from freezing. Scent glands located between a wolf's toes leave trace chemical markers behind, helping the wolf to effectively navigate over large expanses while concurrently keeping others informed of its whereabouts.

A wolf sometimes seems heavier than it actually is due to its bulky coat, which is made of two layers. The first layer consists of tough guard hairs designed to repel water and dirt. The second is a dense, water-resistant undercoat that insulates the wolf. Wolves have distinct winter and summer pelages that alternate in spring and autumn. Females tend to keep their winter coats further into the spring than males.

Wolves have stout, blocky muzzles that help distinguish them from coyotes and dogs. Wolves also differ in certain skull dimensions, having a smaller orbital angle, for example, than dogs (>53 degrees for dogs compared to <45 degrees for wolves) and a comparatively larger brain capacity. Larger paw size, yellow eyes, longer legs, and bigger teeth further distinguish adult wolves from other canids, particularly dogs. Also, precaudal glands at the base of the tail are present in wolves but not in dogs.

Wolves and most larger dogs share identical dentition; the maxilla has six incisors, two canines, eight premolars, and four molars. The mandible has six incisors, two canines, eight premolars, and six molars. The fourth upper premolars and first lower molars constitute the carnassial teeth, which are essential tools for shearing flesh. The long canine teeth are also important, in that

they are designed to hold and subdue the prey. Powered by 1500 lb/sq. inch of pressure, a wolf's teeth are its main weapons as well as its primary tools. Therefore, any injury to the jaw line or teeth could devastate a wolf, dooming it to starvation or incompetence. Mongolia's wolf population has been increasing and they are often culled.

### • MARMOT (*Marmota sibirica*)



The Marmot has a special place in Mongolian history, both as a creature of children's stories, food and of plague. With several different species worldwide, (known as Ground Hogs in the US) the Mongolian Marmot, or Targava are active about six months a year, but still take at least three years to mature. About half the females breed in a given year and litter sizes are small, averaging 3-4 pups. They have a single alarm call, but there is also individual variability. Mongolians prize their meat and oil, and export their fur to Russia. Hunting targava is a major pastime and managing hunting will prove to be a challenge in the future. Hunters shoot them from horseback and camouflage themselves with large "bunny-like" ears and also "dance" and wave a white yak-tail to get the marmots to stand up and be more easily shot. Marmots in some parts of Mongolia are subject to plague and are currently subject to a nationwide ban on hunting or eating their meat.



# MONGOLIAN WILD FLOWERS

Mongolians consider the ground sacred, and are highly sensitive to the preservation of their lands. They will not dump rubbish, or defecate for example within 50 yards of fresh water. Digging up the ground is also said to provoke the spirits. Consequently, with no use of fertilizers, and possessing such a huge country with a small population, Mongolia is close to being a national park for its entire size. Flowers

abound here, and it is a photographers dream.

Remember not to pick them – take photos to enjoy later and leave the plants in peace for other people to enjoy. Pictured are a small selection of some of the beautiful flowers to be found.

*Note: Names given are those locally used and may not match scientific classifications.*



*Alpine Aster*



*Briar Roses & Halophyllum*



*Beautiful Stirl Life*



*Arctic Poppy*



*Coral Lily*



*Chrysanthemum*



*Delphinium*



*Edelweiss*



*Fireweed*



*Forget Me Nots*



*Meadow Cranes Bill*



*Gentian*





*White Anemone*



*Pink*



*Rhodolia*



*Superb Pink*



*Veronica*



*Oriental Strawberry*



*Wild Lily*

# BIRDS OF MONGOLIA

**W**ith over 400 species, it would take a major work to list all the bird species to be found in Mongolia. In fact, a Mongolian Guide at the time of going to press does not seem to exist – we recommend instead either a Field Guide to the Birds of China, or a similar Guide to Russian birds. Here though we can give a very basic introduction to some of the more common – although maybe exotic elsewhere – and distinctive species you may encounter on your travels in the country.

## Mongolian Lark - *Melanocorypha mongolica*



*Mongolian Lark*

It's this bird that suddenly flies off as your jeep nearly runs it over and that scurries across the path of the vehicle nearly, but not quite, getting hit. Native to Mongolia, a pretty little bird more often seen flying off than on the ground.

## Snow Bunting - *Plectrophenax nivalis*

This is a small, pretty bird, and can be found near streams, usually with bushes and small trees for cover.



*Snow Bunting*

## Citrine Wagtail - *Motacilla citreola*

An unmistakable bird, small, but with bright yellow head. Can be seen at streams and lakes.



*Citrine Wagtail*

## Redstart - *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

A brightly colored warbler with attractive colorings and song, often heard singing at dusk.



*Redstart*

## Desert Wheatear - *Oenanthe deserti*



*Desert Wheatear*

A light colored, small thrush like bird that scuttles about, often flitting from rock to rock. Often in deserts but can be seen in steppes and woodland too.

**Black Woodpecker - *Dryocopus martius***

An unmistakable bird, with undulating



*Black Woodpecker*

flight, pure black with a red crown. Often to be seen tapping for insects in dead of dying trees

**Daurian Jackdaw - *Corvus dauuricus***

An unmistakable small black and white



*Daurian Jackdaw*

crow, often to be seen with other crows – noisy and cheeky they can become quite tame.

**Red Billed Cough - *Pyrhacorax pyrrhacorax***

This bird is often seen around temples and



*Red Billed Cough*

in flocks, a member of the crow family it is distinctive by it's red chilli pepper beak. Nests high on rugged cliffs and rock faces.

**Goldeneye - *Bucephala clangula***

Quite a common Mongolian duck, the female has a reddish head, Often dives for food and is distinctive by the gold ring that gives the duck it's name. Fast running rivers and streams.



*Goldeneye*

**Ruddy Shelduck - *Tadorna ferruginea***

The only large orange colored duck, it's often to be found inland, again in marshy



*Ruddy Shelduck*

areas or streams and water holes.

**Whooper Swan - *Cygnus Cygnus***

The Worlds largest Swan, usually seen in pairs, in the remote lakes in Northern



*Whooper Swan*



Mongolia. A huge bird, told part by the smaller Bewicks Swan which is the size of a goose.

### **Pallas Sandgrouse - *Syrhaptes paradoxus***

A bird of the desert, often to be seen in dry steppe or Gobi, flying fast, and low



*Pallas Sandgrouse*

across the tundra.

### **Common Sandpiper - *Actitis hypoleucos***

This is a small, yet distinctly marked wader that can be found both in small ponds of water in the steppe as well as near streams. It runs fast and is often solitary.



*Common Sandpiper*

### **Ringed Plover - *Charadrius hiaticula***

This distinctive small wader can be seen on stony banks of streams and rivers.



*Ringed Plover*

### **Avocet - *Recurvirostra avosetta***

An unmistakable wader, often to be found, even in the gobi, in watering holes and lakes across Mongolia.



*Avocet*

### **Demoiselle Crane - *Anthropoides virgo***

Usually seen in pairs, and consequently a symbol of new love and weddings, these cranes can be seen all over Mongolia, often by water holes and small lakes.

### **Black Kite - *Milvus migrans***

A common bird of prey, that can appear brownish to black, Kites can always be

*Demoiselle Cranes*



identified as they are the only medium



*Black Kite*

sized bird of prey with a V shaped notched tail.

### **Rough Legged Buzzard - *Buteo lagopus***

A medium-large sized bird of prey, is often seen sitting on a rock on the steppe, appears lighter in color than other similar birds.



*Rough Legged Buzzard*

### **Golden Eagle - *Aquila chrysaetos***

There are many birds of prey in Mongolia, and they can be difficult to tell

apart. The Golden Eagle however is huge, and has deep fingered wings and a rounded edge to its tail. They may often be seen singly, hunting on the steppes.



*Golden Eagle*

### **Black Vulture - *Coragyps atratus***

These huge birds can often be seen riding

the thermals high above, often in groups of twenty or more. Living off mainly carrion, they are occasionally disturbed picking



*Black Vulture*

through the carcass of a dead animal on the steppes or through rubbish.

### **Birdwatching in Mongolia**

Mongolia sits right on some very important migratory routes, with many species, especially ducks, waders, and even Pelicans, spending summer in the breeding grounds further north in Russian Siberia, then wintering in South China, or even further afield in the Philippines, and Australia. This can lead to some apparently odd sights – such as seagulls in the Gobi Desert! The country also sees an East-West migration with smaller species including various thrushes, warblers and so on traveling into Mongolia for summer, and eastwards to Japan and Korea for winter. Storms can even blow over species usually found in the United States, Canada, or Western Europe. It's not uncommon. Consequently Mongolia is rich and diversified in bird life, and offers rewarding trips for ornithologists. You'll need to stock up with identification guides on Chinese, Russian or Siberian birds as there are none specifically covering Mongolia, and a good pair of binoculars, but just about everywhere will yield surprises and new sightings.

# MONGOLIA'S MUSIC SCENE

**U**laan Bataar has an eclectic and diverse music scene, somewhat surprising given the size of the community and the nomadic nature of many Mongolians. Rock tends to dominate, but other scenes are also thriving as follows and are well worth checking out. Here is an overview of recommended and relatively easy to buy Mongolian contemporary and traditional music.

## • HIP HOP & RAP

Often imitating American and, to a lesser extent, Japanese hip hop, Ulaan Bataar has a thriving underground scene with several clubs and raves occurring during the summer. If anything, possessing a more laid back and soulful groove than the hard rap coming out of America's ghettos, local artists such as Mastaflov, Amai, Gennie, Hulan and Funksta are all adept on the turntables as well as being possessed of a remarkably authentic rap sound, - all in Mongolian.

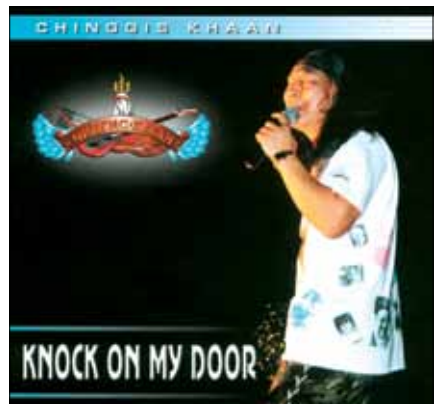


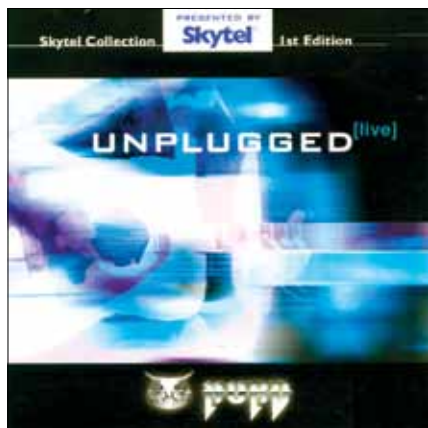
Must Buy : **"Born In UB" Mastaflov**

## • ROCK

The granddaddy of them all is Jargalsaikhan (see May 2006 issue of Mongolia Expat online at the archives section of the website for a full interview) and his long lived band, Chinggis Khan. Rocking Mongolia since the pre-independence days of the Soviet era, Chinggis Khan, and the song of the same name, came about in 1988 amidst the authoritarian rule of the Russians, and proved to be a rallying call for many Mongolians. Chinggis Khan play a huge number of concerts each year and are a well known and highly regarded live act in their own country, where they often venture out into the countryside to entertain the nomadic families. Chinggis Khan have released just three CDs over the years, preferring to concentrate on live work (which has given rise to a whole raft of bootleg live CDs), however a series of new studio releases are scheduled for this year, as are a number of large concerts in UB and around the country. Watch the news section on the main website of Mongolia Expat for details.

Must Buy : **"Knock On My Door"**

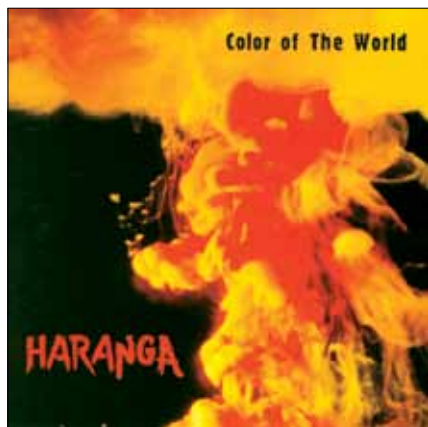




Otherwise, The Hurd are a legendary Mongolian band, melodic and are often likened to Mongolia's version of the Eagles. Also dating back many years, the group has a solid fan base and has spawned many spin off projects - including their sons and daughters now following in their footsteps and releasing CDs! They are also rumoured to be performing a number of concerts this year, so again, look out for details.

Must Buy : **Unplugged (Live selection of their best songs)**

Haranga are another local band worth checking out – jangly guitars and power



chords all to the fore and some rousing grooves not dissimilar to a raw, funky and basic Rolling Stones. Their recent CD has been a mainstay of the local radio programmers the past year.

Must Buy : **Color Of The World**

Of the girl singers, Saraa is the best known and admired in Mongolia. Softer rock, occasionally mixed up with a hefty dose of dance beats, this is aimed more at the dancefloor than at the headbangers. Nonetheless, many of her songs have become anthems to many Mongolians and she is rather more than the typical pouting soft rock chick singer the west currently seems infatuated with. Her songs are a mixture of fun, rolling plains and handle the occasional social issue also – with the occasional David Bowie cover thrown in for good measure.

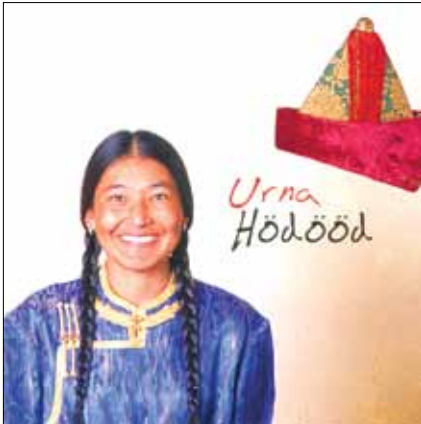


Must Buy : **Martya Remix (dance floor remixes of some of her best known songs)**

#### • NEW AGE

Without doubt the only Mongolian singer to combine traditional songs with modern arrangements is Urna – yet she

remains unknown to many Mongolians ! Largely the result of some inverse snobbery (Urna is from Inner Mongolia – now part of China, and not always considered “authentic” by many Mongolians) she also has spent much of her recording career in Europe, where she is better known.



This is a shame, as her CDs combine the best of traditional Mongolian folk with modern instrumentation, not unlike a Mongolian version of Enya. With most of her songs detailing life out in the plains, and sung in Mongolian, she has been able to call upon the wide range of Chinese instruments as well as her Mongolian ethnic roots in addition to synthesizers, drum machines and electric guitars. Hard to find – but if you can – well worth a listen.

Must Buy : **Hodood**

#### • TRADITIONAL

Mongolia's traditional music revolves around the Horse-Head Fiddle – a two stringed instrument related to the Chinese er-hu - as well as various lute type instruments, an assortment of central asian derived wind instruments and percussion.



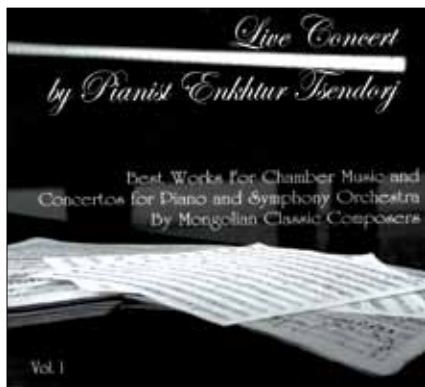
One thing uniquely Mongolian however is ‘throat singing’ – an initially odd sounding eerily whistling noise created by opening the throat’s minor larynx and enabling the voice to produce two sounds simultaneously. There are a number of well known practitioners of this and it probably dates right back to shamanistic rituals. Very much part of a traditional Mongolian evenings entertainment and musical evening out, one of Mongolia’s best known throat singers is Booyoo, who comprises his singing with traditional instruments and ancient melodies handed down across the centuries.

Must Buy : **Spirit Of Skyland**

#### • CLASSICAL

Although the Soviet Communist era left much to be desired as regards Mongolian culture, the communists always did have a huge structure of musical education, mainly in the realm of the traditional western orchestra and piano led pieces. Mongolia also, as a result, has acquired a rich heritage of classical concert pianists who grew up during this period. Amongst the best is Enkhtur Tsendorj, who was born into a family of traditional composers,





before being educated in Moscow at the prestigious P.I. Tchaikovsky Conservatory as a concert pianist. Now a professor at the Mongolian University of Culture and Arts, Enkhtur releases occasional CDs, often collaborating with the Mongolian Opera & Ballet Theater Company, mixing up well known works by the likes of Tchaikovsky as well as traditional Mongolian pieces.

**Must Buy :** *Live Concert – Best Works for Chamber Music and Concertos for Piano – a selection of Mongolian traditional songs played by full orchestra and led by Enkhtur.*

## “VOICES FROM THE DISTANT STEPPES” – SHU DE

**R**ecorded in Tuva, a far off North-Western corner of Mongolia, “Voices Of The Distant Steppes” captures the nearly lost art of Shamanic singing – rituals here are sung for everything for happy marriages to fat sheep as well as ancient cures. “Throat Singing” – a way of compressing the larynx in order to produce sounds not unlike those of Tibetan singing bowls, and gruff drones reminiscent of Indian ragas, are all sung, and interwoven with chanting and drums. Spiritual, ancient, and no doubt wonderfully evocative heard while sitting around an evenings camp fire, you’re not going to hear this down on your local bar juke box, but for an ambient setting at home and with some open ears, maybe those shamans can help chill you out. Released on Peter Gabriel’s “Realworld”



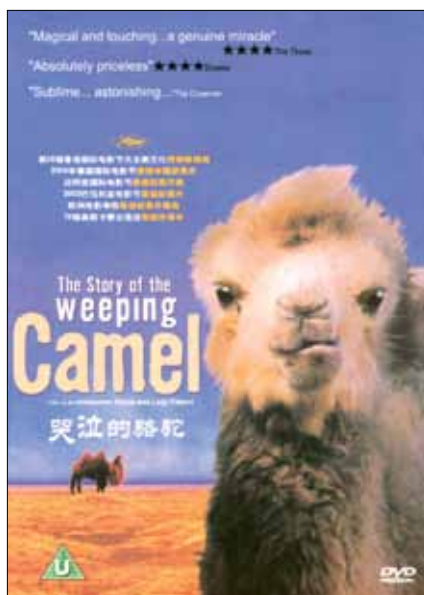
label, there is a helpful search function and audio tracks you can download if you want to try some Mongolian shamanism at : [www.realworldrecords.com](http://www.realworldrecords.com).

# THE STORY OF THE WEeping CAMEL

Actually shot in Mongolia's Gobi desert, this quite superb documentary tells the story of a white calf, rejected by it's Mother, and the camel herders family attempts to reunite them. With the Mother enduring a difficult and painful labour, she rejects her new born calf and refuses to allow it to suckle. The family try all they can to reunite them, and have to start hand feeding the calf to keep it alive. But without it's natural mothers milk, the future looks bleak, and the calf, forlorn and distressed, begins to weaken.



This film, shot with entertaining footage of the life of Mongolia's Gobi nomads, is a rare look into the lives, trials and essential humanity that is the lot of the Mongolian peoples; and it is remarkable to see five year old children effortlessly mount beasts of burden many times their size and ride



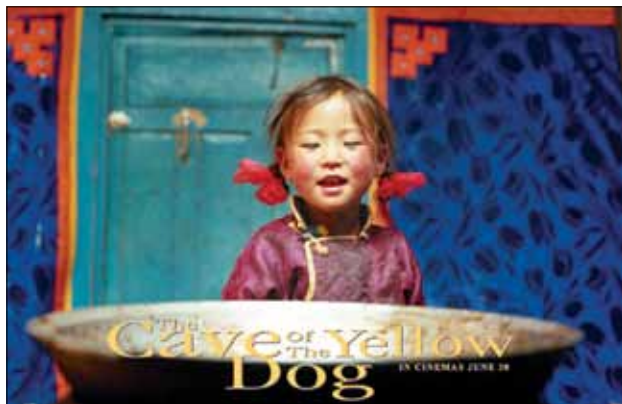
them, full of confidence, across the desert at an age when most western children are playing with pedal cars.

It displays the musical, religious and shamanic beliefs of this fascinating people as they seek expert help from a shaman in a far off commune.

The story of the weeping camel is a must-see film that will leave a lump in your throat and have you marveling at the ways of the nomads and some of the long lost secrets in handling animals and an awareness of nature have been lost to the modern world.

Strongly recommended.

# THE CAVE OF THE YELLOW DOG



A remake of an old Mongolian folk story, this is a lovingly filmed part-documentary, part-storytale look at the lives of today's modern Mongolian nomads. Mongolian-born, German-trained and financed director Byambasuren Davaa's follow-up to her Oscar-nominated "The Story of the Weeping Camel" is, once again, beautifully filmed and extraordinarily powerful yet tender and charming. A drama-documentary about Mongolia's nomadic herdspeople, *Cave Of the Yellow Dog* concerns the Batchuluun family's relationship with a stray dog, which eldest daughter Nansal finds in an ancient cave. Her Father however doesn't want another mouth to feed – until the dog proves his worth unexpectedly by coming to the rescue when one of his children get into trouble. The real

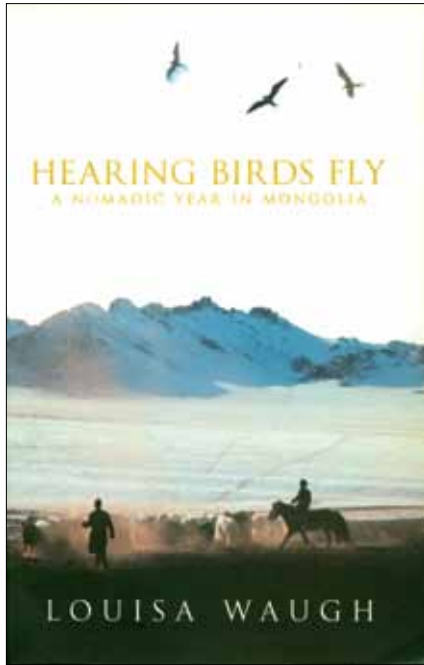
beauty of the film lies in the wonderful evocation of the Batchuluuns' everyday household tasks which are both the essence of simplicity and wondrously exotic. The film also explores some of the traditions concerning re-incarnation and the value of man's relationships with



animals, a uniquely Mongolian Buddhist – Shamanist mixture. Beautiful, evocative, and well worth looking out for.

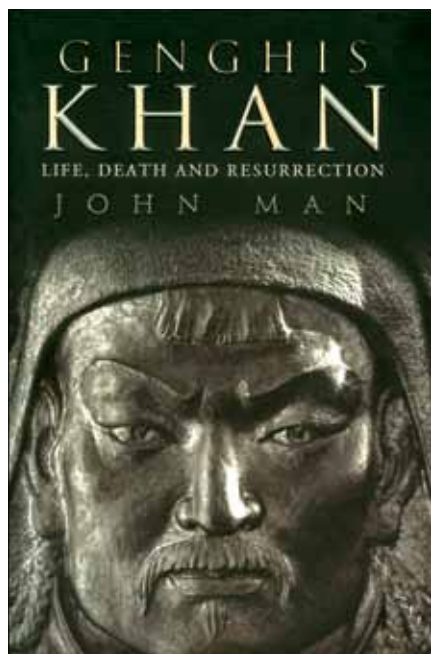


## “HEARING BIRDS FLY” - LOUISA WAUGH



Subtitled “A nomadic year in Mongolia”, this recent account (covering 2001-2) is about as evocative and accurate an essay on living way out in the wilds as is currently available. Waugh is sensible enough not to over-romanticize the lives of the nomadic community she visits and lives with in the very far west of the country, dealing with the men’s occasional drunken attempts to have sex with her, the perils of hunger, warmth and hygiene in temperatures of minus 30, and the despair of the plague and other illnesses or accidents that occur hundreds of miles from anywhere. She manages, despite her previous reliance on the simplest of luxury items, to adapt and earn the trust and respect of those she lives with – no mean feat in an environment where a wrong move or unnecessary burden can mean the difference between life and death. She has the grace and toughness to live in her own accommodation and prepare herself for the onset of the ruthless winter just as the locals do. Summer however brings an exalted feeling of re-birth, the celebration of survival, the warming sun and the flowering of crops, pastures and the season of feeding, birth and a new generation of fattening livestock. Waugh’s account is a sensitive, real and successful attempt to capture the true meaning of what it means to live as a nomad and is essential reading for anyone interested in their lives – or thinks they know what it must be like to be truly alone in a strange country.

# JOHN MAN “GENGHIS KHAN”



Subtitled “Life, Death & Resurrection” this is a definitive work not just of the life of Mongolia’s most famous son but a man who China regard also as one of their own, and the founder of the Yuan Dynasty, for Genghis was also a Chinese Emperor. Detailing the young Genghis early years in poverty, the making of him as a man, and exploring not just how he managed to develop an empire that at it’s zenith stretched from Korea to Poland, but also delving into personal issues such as his relationship with religions, the respect he had for linguists (hard to dominate such a huge area without language skills, and the Mongolians were adept) this is an engrossing read and astonishing in how much it reveals the heart of what made him tick. With gory details of what became of those who opposed him, to maps showing accounts of his battles and conquests (I was in Qingdao when I read about his victory over the Han there !) the sheer breadth of Genghis’s achievements becomes quite apparent and strangely, unites China with the west in a manner not usually recognised. Finishing with a search for his grave and likely spots that it may be located, and illustrated with some 40 odd photos, this is a well researched, thrilling and fascinating account of one man’s exploits that changed the way we all approach China and Mongolia today.



# ULAAN BAATAR BASED TRAVEL AGENTS

**U**B has a huge selection of travel agents and tour companies. It is a highly competitive market in the summer months. To make a sensible selection and get the best value for money we recommend selecting an agent whose website firstly appears professional, who can show several years of operating experience and who seem willing to work with you to plan out your optimum travel plan. Unless you are already in a large group, our personal preference is to hook up with groups of no more than 5 or 6 in total. Larger groups tend to be noisier, more rowdy and distracting from the magnificent scenery and getting away from it all ambience that is really what Mongolia is all about.

We list a number of reputable agents here, although you may also wish to search online or find your own – Ulaan Baatar offers plenty of choices.

## Tseren Tours

Baruun Selbe Street, 14/1, opposite the east entrance of the State Department Store

*Tel: 327 083, or 99111832*

*Email: [tserentours@cs.com](mailto:tserentours@cs.com)*

*Web: [www.tserentours.com](http://www.tserentours.com)*

Dutch-Mongolian family owned tour operators established since 1992, specializing in both individual and smaller group travel. Well known for attention to detail and good pre-trip planning. Good language skills and competent guides and drivers.

## Juulchin

Unit 5b, Bayangol Hotel, Liberty Square

*Tel: 328 246*

*Web: [www.mongoljuulchin.mn](http://www.mongoljuulchin.mn)*

Former state owned agency, and the largest in Mongolia. Provide organized tours on a national basis. Excellent for larger groups.

## Karakorum Expeditions

Gangaryn Building, behind the State Circus

*Tel: 320 182*

*Web: [www.gomongolia.com](http://www.gomongolia.com)*

Reliable and well established operator, Australian run. Provides wildlife tours as well as trips into China.

## Nomadic Journeys

Sukhbaataryn Gudamj

*Tel: 328 737*

*Web: [www.nomadicjourneys.com](http://www.nomadicjourneys.com)*

Swedish-Mongolian joint venture, with an eco-friendly mission, running yak, camel and horse trekking tours on a national basis as well as rafting and canoe trips.

## Samar Magic Tours

Peace Avenue 3, in the El Latino Restaurant

*Tel: 311 051*

*Web: [www.samarmagictours.com](http://www.samarmagictours.com)*

Specialists in fishing and wildlife focused trips.

## Active Adventures

Tel: 321 276

Web: [www.activemongolia.com](http://www.activemongolia.com)

A Scottish-German venture, specializing in getting out there in hiking, rafting and horsetrekking trips.

## Nomads

3/f, Peace & Friendship Building, Peace Avenue

Tel: 328 146

Web: [www.nomadstours.com](http://www.nomadstours.com)

A wide range of jeep trips and camel treks in the Gobi and elsewhere.

## Specialist Adventure Agencies & Contacts

### Fishing

[www.fishmongolia.com](http://www.fishmongolia.com)

Mongolia has the worlds largest salmonoid, the Tiemen. These guys can help you catch them.

Specialists in arranging float and fly fishing trips.

### Microlites

[www.flymongolia.com](http://www.flymongolia.com)

Mongolia via microlite.

### Ballooning

### Parachuting

### Scuba

[www.divingobsession.com](http://www.divingobsession.com)

These guys detail scuba conditions in Lake Khovsgol. Go to their Mongolia pages.

## Caving

[www.mongolia-expeditions.com](http://www.mongolia-expeditions.com)

Specialist firm, organized caving expeditions in 2006 with joint Italian research centre, with primary exploration goals of geological morphology leading to 19 caves being explored for the first time.

## Mountaineering

Mongolian Alpine Association

The people for serious recommendations over mountaineering in Mongolia.

Contact: [chagnaad@yahoo.com](mailto:chagnaad@yahoo.com)

Tel: 9919 1048

## Ski

Mongolian Ski Federation

Likewise for skiing

Contact: [Danzan Surenkhorioo](mailto:Danzan Surenkhorioo)

Tel: 325 234

## Motorcycle Tours in Mongolia

The ultimate off road tours for bikers

[www.outback-mongolia.com](http://www.outback-mongolia.com)

If you wish to be included in this section for the next edition please contact us at [info@mongoliaexpat.com](mailto:info@mongoliaexpat.com)

# ULAAN BAATAR RESTAURANT GUIDE

**T**his is a considered selection of Ulaan Baatars best known and generally recommended restaurants and cafes. While correct at time of going to press, restaurants can and do change hands, or even close. However, in UB new places are always opening up and we're sure you'll find somewhere to serve your tastes and expectations. Bon Appetit !

## CAFÉS OFFERING BREAKFASTS, COFFEES & LUNCH

### City Coffee

*Chingisiin Orgon Choloo*

Tel 329 077

City Coffee is located next to Khan Brau. It is said to be all at the same time: a café, a bakery, internet and library. They also have some good dishes – mainly Chinese, and a selection of beers and coffees.

### Orange Café

*By the German Embassy*

Orange is a warm relaxing place, with a German menu and imported magazines. There is another Orange café next to the Natural History Museum

### Millie's Café

*Marco Polo Building, the café faces the Monastery of Choijin Lama.*

Tel 330 338

Millie's is an Institution for expats in UB and its perfect location attracts tourists too. Millie's is well known not only

*Millies - Great Smoothies !*



because of the location but also for their excellent shakes and smoothies, chocolate cake or the Apple pie, or to enjoy a great breakfast while glancing through their wide selection of magazines. Just next door is the Xanadu bookstore, it's a mandatory stop to stock up on English language Mongolian guides, books, and novels.

### Sachers, German Bakery

*Peace Avenue and a branch behind the Trade and Development bank (our favourite of the two)*

Tel 324 734



*Sacher's  
German  
Bakery*

An appealing German bakery with a charming cozy atmosphere. Fresh flowers on the tables

Drinks: Coffee, Café Latte, Tea, chocolate;  
Soft drink: Juice, milkshake; All day  
Breakfasts Classic German and non –  
German pastries : apple straddle, quarchle  
straddle, pineapple pie, bretzle, donut  
bagels, freshly baked. Also open in the  
evening, doubling up as a wine bar.

### **Chez Bernard, European**

**Peace Avenue 27**

Tel 324 622

You cannot miss Chez Bernard, located on Peace Avenue. It offers a nice, warm atmosphere and

Is a backpackers favourite, with it's notice board used to find travel mates to go to the

countryside, second hand gear and so on. Mainly frequented by tourists.

### **Mediterranean**

Just down from the State Department Store, Greek run restaurant bringing an authentic slice of the Med to UB. Great salads, a good selection of wines and a terrace for people watching. Recommended.



*Mediterranean Restaurant*

*Chez Bernard*



## MONGOLIAN RESTAURANTS

### World Restaurant

Located behind the London Pub this restaurant serves proper Mongolian food while a reasonable try is made of occidental dishes but they are of varying quality. Big mirrors and world maps decorate this local. Tuya the owner speaks French and would be happy to assist you in any way.

### New Mongolia

***Behind the State Department Store, you will recognize the restaurant from the sign outside***

*Tel : 88828999*

Inexpensive but excellent Mongolian, Asian and Central European dishes.

### Nomad Legend

***Located on the left side of the central museum.***

Mongolian Food at a reasonable price.

*Tel: 330633.*

### City Nomads

***West side of Sukhbaatar square next to the Golomt bank.***

*Tel : 327700*

A buffet restaurant offering good Mongolian dishes and a favourite with expats and locals.

### History Club

***Juulchin street, near Channel 25 building,***

*Tel: 311732*

Newly open Mongolian restaurant. They serve European dishes and Mongolian traditional food prepared by a professional Mongolian chef.

### Ikh Mongol restaurant

***Left side of State Circus***

*Tel: 340450*



*Ikh Mongol*

Great warm atmosphere, English speaking staff and very traditional Mongolian dishes, you've never tried before! A popular restaurant.

### Taliin Mongol restaurant

***Chingeltei district, 4th horoo trade street CIA building, 2nd floor***

*Tel: 319451*

Serving traditional Mongolian food, with an excellent barbecue

### Modern Nomads

***Baga Toiruu north. Just opposite to Chinggis Club***

*Tel: 318 744 – Reservation recommended the place is always packed!*

*<http://www.modernnomads.mn/>*

If you feel like trying Mongolian Food but do not feel like going to those small street restaurants this is your place : “we offer high-quality traditional Mongolian dishes”. Selection of wine. Nice atmosphere, an outdoor terrace and a favourite of locals and expats.



## WESTERN RESTAURANTS

### **Chinggis Brewery Area – Sukhbataaryn Gudamj**

(to the North of Sukhbaatar Square)

#### **Bella - Italian restaurant**

*Good English Pleasant atmosphere – Piano concert in summer*

Very well established and authentic Italian restaurant, with wide selection of pasta and regional Italian dishes and French and Italian wines.

#### **Bora Bora**

Just down from the State Department Store towards the Circus on the left hand side, this white minimalist trendy joint does good inexpensive Italian and Japanese style food.

### **Los Bandidos, Mexican Indian Restaurant**

*Baga toiruu ikh surguuliin gudamj*

Tel 314167. 99194618. 99095746

A unique combination of Mexican and Indian foods – and very good they are too ! Great ambience and service and an expatriate favorite.

### **Chinggis Restaurant (Korean)**

*Huge wood panelled dining room, perfect for groups!*

Concert and live band, and an excellent Teppanyaki buffet  
French & Australian wines

### **The Gate Restaurant and Pub**

Tel: 11332009

Nice atmosphere, elegant setting. Very friendly staff

Great for business lunch or to spoil

yourself, this restaurant was recently chosen to host the Mongolian music awards, and is often regarded as having the best burgers in town. Add to that great desserts and an exhaustive wine list French, Italian, Australian, Chile.. and a cocktails master.

### **Choiijin Lama Monastery Area**

(to the South of Sukhbaatar Square)

#### **The Silk Road restaurant**

*Jamiyan Guunii Gudamj, Close to the Monastery*

Tel 9191 4455

A charming, well located restaurant with an open terrace facing the Temple. Good for Mediterranean style cuisine and a great chilled out atmosphere.

### **La Veranda, European Style**

*Above Silk Road. Same location, Jamiyan Guunii Gudamj*

Great view over the Monastery. Great atmosphere, relaxing place with big sofa, perfect for a date.

But cuisine is good, they have a good selection of wines...and they have that view....

### **Circus Area**

(Just south of the State Department Store)

### **Marco Polo, Italian restaurant**

*Seoul Street 27*

Tel 325 240

Wood fired Pizza oven in the entrance, with a warm atmosphere, perfect for winter lunch and dinner. You will enjoy the outdoor terrace during summer. Voted best pizzas by many of UB residents.

Beware of same named Strip Bar upstairs if you're with kids, but that doesn't open until midnight.

## UB Deli

### ***Seoul Street 48***

*Tel 325 240*

The UB Deli serves gourmet sandwiches with salads, pasta and pizza. It has a cosy and comfortable atmosphere. Managed by Lee Cashell the American entrepreneur, the UB Deli has become a popular location for parties and meetings while the English speaking staff is always happy to help with tips and info about Mongolia.

## California

### ***Seoul Street. Same street same side as Marco Polo but a bit further along.***

*Tel 319 031*

Nice atmosphere, US styled bar / diner, with red leather bench seating, and an enclosed front terrace. Great steak and salads, western / American dishes but Mongolian dishes as well. Good selection of wines. Reservation recommended the place is often packed. Very popular with the American community.

## Emerald Bay

Tserendorjiin Gudami - the street leading from the State Department Store to the Circus. Opposite to Michele's Bakery.

Located above a disc shop, Emerald Bay restaurant offers a small outdoor terrace and great Greek and Mediterranean food

*Bistrot Français*



## OTHER LOCATIONS

### **Le Bistrot Français, French Food *Surguuliin Gudamj***

*Tel (976) 11 32 00 22*

More info on their website – in French only - <http://www.bistrot-mongolia.mn/links.html>

Styled as a traditional French Bistrot, Guy the owner manages to import the traditional French Bistrot Atmosphere, with small coffee tables in the entrance, a bar as in every bistrot, French magazines, and traditional French cuisine, with a good selection of wines. A popular place.

### **Hazara, Indian Restaurant *Behind the Wrestling Palace***

*Tel 9919 5701*

East of the city centre, Hazara, is UB's first Indian restaurant and is a long term expat favourite for their North Indian dishes. They have their own tandoori oven. Recommended by local expats as the best Indian in UB.

# ULAAN BAATAR BARS

## BARS

Ulaan Baatar has a wealth of bars and there are many to choose from. Here we feature some of the best known and well established, but new bars open up regularly, so ask around for what's hot and where's new. Most bars open 'til late – UB is a late night party city.

### Budweiser Bar

*Sukhbataar Square, West Side*



The original Czech Budweiser, not the pale American imitation, this bar is sited right on Sukhbataar Square and is a good venue to go for the real beer and fried lamb and chicken. Good value.

### Ikh Mongol

*Seoul Street, next to the State Circus*

This large venue is German in style and look with a big central room and various

smaller rooms at the back. With a very large outdoor terrace overlooking the circus, it gets very busy during the summer months. Ikh Mongol is a fun place to spend the Oktoberfest as well as those cold winter nights. With their own brews on tap, there is plenty of choice in both drinks and food - German inspired – this is a happening place with live Mongolian bands on the busy nights and a DJ after hours.

### Dublin

*Seoul Street, on the corner with the circus*

The Dublin is a small pub on the corner facing the circus, this extremely popular locale serves

Irish and international beers in a clean, comfortable and safe environment, while the service is swift and efficient. A typical Irish style expat bar, and there's nothing wrong with that.

### Grand Khan Irish Pub

*Seoul Street, Next to the National Theatre*

This is by far the largest and most popular bar in town. This large glass structure houses the Irish bar on the ground floor



# MONGOLIAN RESORTS

[WWW.MONGOLIANRESORTS.COM](http://WWW.MONGOLIANRESORTS.COM)



## OASIS CLUB

The newly opened Oasis Night Club and Lounge is ready to welcome you into its deep sofas for a relaxing evening of cool music, candle lit atmosphere, and sparkling cocktails. Should you wish to dance the night away our french disc Jockey will play the latest tunes from Europe and the US while our two french managers Christophe and Michelle will tell you the tales of their world adventures... Whatever the occasion, whatever the time, Oasis is the place to be and be seen...

[www.disco-mongolia.com](http://www.disco-mongolia.com)



## UB DELI RESTAURANT

The UB deli, with its gourmet sandwiches and Napa Valley food in a cosy friendly setting is ready to serve you. The UB deli has a large selection of world wines, delicious meals and charming english speaking staff to provide you with the perfect evening you have been longing for.

[www.ubdeli-mongolia.com](http://www.ubdeli-mongolia.com)

and the VIP rooms as well as a beauty centre on the first floor. The bar itself is large and commercial in its look but always full of expats and wealthy Mongolians, great for meetings or groups, the level of service is professional and the quality constant. In summer there is a large terrace and a stage for the live band. Situated just across from the Prime Minister's residence and next to the National Theatre it is easily accessible by foot from anywhere in the city centre. Who knows? You may see the PM himself in for a pint.

### **Chingghis Brewery and Pub** *Sukhbataaryn Gudamj*

A pub sited right next to Ulaan Baatars



Chinggis Brewery – how cool is that? Talk about the freshest beer in town – glass walls between the pub and the brewery mean you can see your future pints brewing away. A variety of light and dark beers are on tap and there is a good German themed menu.

### **Khan Brau, German Beer Garden** *Chingisiin Orgon Choloo* *Tel 326 626*

The German bier garden by excellence. Klaus, the owner of Khan Brau is usually spotted at the regular's table. He will entertain you with his tales of Mongolia



while you drink a pint of his excellent home brewed bier and listen to the live Mongolian band. Situated just across from the National Theatre, it is a favourite hang out of the German community of Ulaan Baatar.

### **Dave's Place** *Sukhbaatar Square* *Tel 99798185*

Dave is the archetypal British pub landlord,



and will look after you in his small bar in the basement of the Cultural Palace – or in the summer, on his impressive veranda right on Sukhbaatar Square. Homebase of the UB Yaks, the local rugby team as well as the final target of the Mongol Rally, this bar is popular all year round. Thursday's feature a well attended pub quiz. In winter it is cosy with assorted British regulars there most nights. Typical British menu and beers on tap.

### **Crystal Lounge**



***Peace Avenue, just across from the State Dept Store***

Ulaan Baatars first lounge bar is a classy,



minimalist, all white bar with an eclectic selection of spirits, liquors and wines. The place to come if you want to splash 700USD on a bottle of Cristal. However, cocktails are reasonably priced and it's an inventive menu. Probably not the type of place to turn up at in desert boots and rucksack, so pack your guccis if you want to get in.

**Canuckz, Canadian Pub**

***Embassy area in front of the German Embassy – Negdsen Undestnii Gudamj***

Welcome to Tyler and Canuckz new pub. Opened by a Canadian Hockey player and English Teacher, this is a home from home for Canadians in UB. The main room has been decorated by the students of the art college. Normal range of imported beers and a limited but good menu.

**Isimuss**

***Just opposite the Wrestling Palace on Peace Road East across from Hazara.***

*Tel 461146*

Worth the visit just to take in the huge statue of Stalin - which used to be opposite the Central Library - that now graces this

Soviet themed bar. Well cool, and Uncle Joe even suggests a smile as buxom young things dance around his feet.



*Stalin statue in nightclub*

**The Steppe Inn  
British Embassy**

Fridays only, from 6pm, sited in the British Embassy, this is the longest running bar in UB. You need to be a British national and / or invited by a member to get in. To be on the safe side it is better to call the Embassy to ask for permission to attend: Tel: 458 036. Pints are pulled by the Ambassador which is an excellent way to deploy Her Majesties diplomats.

# ULAAN BAATAR NIGHT CLUBS

There are a growing number of night clubs in Ulaan Baatar where the city gets up, out and has a good time, dancing to the latest hip hop and cool tunes out of the US or Europe. As a small word of warning, Mongolian men (principally those who have already drunk a bit too much) can sometimes be aggressive towards foreigners if you are too publicly affectionate with your Mongolian girlfriend or just that little bit too flirtatious. Different places will have a different crowd which will react differently – as always be respectful and sensible. UB increasingly has a growing selection of upmarket clubs and you can buy anything here from beer on tap to bottles of Krug. Again, places change and go in and out of fashion so check before you turn up. These listed however represent some of the most popular and reliable.

## River Sounds

*Olympiin Orgon Choloo – south of Sukhbaatar Square*



River sounds is one of the most established and best located night clubs in UB. Just south of Sukhbaatar square along Olympic avenue it is easily recognizable

by its neon lights spelling out its name. The inside is modern with a large dance floor surrounded by sofas and chairs. A variety of bands and artists play on Friday and Saturday nights to offer a very wide variety of musical styles. A cover charge is applicable. The River Sounds crowd is generally slightly older than most of the other clubs, it is a favourite spot with the consultants and executives from the expat community.

## Strings



*Singer at Strings*

Strings is modeled after the Hard Rock Café in Beijing, and is also one of the most popular night clubs of the moment. It's a little hard to find at the back of a little alley way slightly outside of the city centre. It is set on two floors with a large central stage where a live band plays on

most nights. Strings is popular with the local Mongolian youth, usually packed on Friday's and Saturday's. Some of the younger expats attend but generally it's a crowded and entertaining venue. The upstairs seating is quieter and has its own bar which is not as busy at the main bar downstairs.

## Flux

An enormous night club set just to the south of Sukhbaatar square with bright red neon lights. The inside of the club has a feel of the American 70's while the local crowd dances away on the heavy house music. Popular with locals and worth a visit.



## The Oasis Club and Lounge

The Oasis club is the newest and swankiest lounge club in Ulaan Baatar, it is an entirely new and unique concept in Mongolia with a trendy, relaxed and cool interior design which allows you to pose or be more modest, settling down into deep sofas. They play the latest tunes from the UK and France and is a firm favourite with the expats in UB. Christophe, the French manager of the bar is usually found behind it serving his unique cocktail creations and various alcohols he has travelled the

*Oasis Lounge*



world to find. The Oasis Club and Lounge is situated in the courtyard just behind the popular UB Delicatessen restaurant. In summer there is vast and comfortable seating in the lounge own courtyard with a BBQ and fountains to set the town. An extremely popular venue for the weary travellers after a long tour in the Gobi seeking peace and relaxation from the hustle and bustle of Ulaan Baatar.

## Hollywood

### *Zaluus Youth & Cultural Center, Zaluuchuudyn Orgon Choloo*

Located near the Indian Embassy, this small club is pretty cool and popular with the locals. Relatively upmarket with a Hollywood movie theme, the film inspired décor is interesting and it plays the latest tunes.

## Muse

### *Maral Tavern Bldg, Baga Toiruu*

Very popular with the new yuppie Mongolians who have just discovered the fun that can be had dancing and dressing up for the occasion. This small venue gets quickly packed but can form the basis of a great night out.

## Face

### *Juulchin Gudamj*

Always busy, very popular with the young Mongolians and expats, very black and dark interior decoration with large mirrors and lots of flashing lights. A place to dance rather than relax.

## UB Palace

### *Chingunjaviin Gudamj*

The UB palace is a large entertainment complex with several venues within it. It is located north of Peace Avenue on the east side of the 1st micro-district. It plays different music styles to suit all tastes. Plenty of cheap drinks and bar fines for heaving up on the dance floor.

## Berlin

### *Baruun Selbe 14/1*

Loud techno joint popular with locals and Russian expats and travelers, open until 5am.

## Marco Polo Club

### *Seoul Street 27*

S o m e w h a t notorious, the Marco Polo club is situated above the pizza restaurant of the same name; the



club is accessed by a discreet door to the rear of the restaurant, with a cover charge to gain entry. The club was UB's first strip joint and is reasonably classy, with sashaying ladies in various state of undress suggestively dancing along the lounge. 5,000 tg tips tucked in suspenders and underwear will usually result in speedier removal, but no touching.

## Seoul Hotel Nightclub

### *Peace Avenue, to the west of the State Department Store*



Another popular strip club, with various assorted views of some spectacular Mongolian hills and valleys.

There's a cover charge, and drinks are pricey, however the going rate per girl for a lap dance is between 5,000 to 10,000 tg. Be gentlemen, treat them well and the no touching rule applies.

# EMBASSIES IN ULAAN BAATAR

**I**t's a good idea to check in with your Embassy, especially if you are going to remote areas and provide them with an itinerary or contacts just in case you get into difficulties. They'll usually also be able to help with travel tips and other information about the country.

## **Austria**

Peace Avenue 7  
*Tel: 324 804*

## **Canada**

Bodicom Tower, 7/f, Sukhbaatar  
Gudamj  
*Tel: 328 285*

## **China**

5, Zaluuchuudyn Orgon Choloo  
*Tel: 320 955*

## **France**

Apartment 48, Diplomatic Services Corps  
Building  
*Tel: 324 519*

## **Germany**

Negdsen Undestnii Gudamj 7  
*Tel: 323 325*

## **Japan**

Olympiin Gudamj 6  
*Tel: 320 777*

## **Kazakstan**

Apartment 11, Diplomatic Services Corps  
Building  
*Tel: 312 240*

## **Russia**

Peace Avenue A6  
*Tel: 327 018*

## **South Korea**

Olympiin Gudamj 10  
*Tel: 321 548*

## **United Kingdom**

Peace Avenue 30  
*Tel: 458 133*

## **United States of America**

Ikh Toiruu 59/1  
*Tel: 329 095*

## **MONGOLIAN EMBASSIES OVERSEAS**

Useful for checking visas and so on.

## **MONGOLIAN EMBASSY IN THE USA:**

2833 M Street N. W.  
Washington, D.C. 20007  
*Phone (202) 333-7117*

[www.mongolianembassy.us](http://www.mongolianembassy.us)  
[www.un.int/mongolia](http://www.un.int/mongolia)

## **MONGOLIAN EMBASSY IN GREAT BRITIAN:**

7 Kensington Court  
London W8 5DL  
*Phone (71) 937-0150*

[www.embassyofmongolia.co.uk](http://www.embassyofmongolia.co.uk)



**MONGOLIAN EMBASSY IN FRANCE:**

5 Avenue Robert Schuman  
92100 Boulogne Billancourt

*<http://www.ambassademongolie.fr/>*

**HONORARY CONSULATE OF MONGOLIA, ITALY:**

Via Giulia, 10  
34126 TRIESTE  
*Phone +39.40.575422*

*Fax +39.40.575431*

*Telex 461138 COMMON I*

*E-mail [consolato.mongolia@net96.it](mailto:consolato.mongolia@net96.it)*

**MONGOLIAN EMBASSY IN GERMANY:**

Siebengebirgsblick 4-6  
53844 Troisdorf-Sieglar  
*Phone (02241) 40 27 27*

**MONGOLIAN CONSULATE IN BERLIN:**

Gotlandstr. 12  
10439 Berlin  
*Phone (030) 446-9320*  
*Fax (030) 446-9321*

**MONGOLIAN EMBASSY IN MOSCOW, RUSSIA:**

Bornoglebkiy per., 11  
*Phone (095) 244-7867*

**MONGOLIAN CONSULATE IN IRKUTSK, RUSSIA:**

Ulitsa Lapina, 11  
*Phone 42370/42260*

**MONGOLIAN EMBASSY IN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA:**

(Mongu Dashiguan)

Jianguomenwai  
Xiushui Beijing Str. 2  
Beijing

*Phone: 532-1203*

*Fax: 532-5043*

*<http://www.mongolembassychina.org/index.php> - find the visa application form on their website —service section [http://www.mongolembassychina.org/upload/en/Visa\\_Application\\_Form.pdf](http://www.mongolembassychina.org/upload/en/Visa_Application_Form.pdf)  
[http://www.mongolembassychina.org/upload/en/Visa\\_Application\\_Form.pdf](http://www.mongolembassychina.org/upload/en/Visa_Application_Form.pdf)*

**MONGOLIAN EMBASSY IN JAPAN:**

Shoto Pinecrest Mansion  
Kamimam-Cho 21-4  
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150

*Phone: (03) 409 20 88*

*Subway: Ghibuya, Ginza Line and Hanzoman Line*

*For a more exhaustive list you can consult Mongolia Today website*

*[http://www.mongoliatoday.com/info/embassies\\_abroad.html](http://www.mongoliatoday.com/info/embassies_abroad.html)*

## SELECTED WEBSITES OF CULTURAL INTEREST

This listing is for useful Mongolian sites that include culture, travel experiences and other related information about the country. If you wish to be listed in the next edition please contact us at [info@mongoliaexpat.com](mailto:info@mongoliaexpat.com).

[www.mongoliaexpat.com](http://www.mongoliaexpat.com)

The home site for this book, and the regular (free subscription) magazine and archived issues. Online forums, updated information, webcams and plenty of travel and cultural articles. Links to sister sites about China, Tibet, Xinjiang & North Korea.

[www.mongoliatourism.gov.mn](http://www.mongoliatourism.gov.mn)

Website of the Official Tourism Bureau of Mongolia with up to date news and events

[www.Ulaan Baatar.mn](http://www.UlaanBaatar.mn)

The internet's gateway to all that is going on in UB

[www.un-mongolia.mn](http://www.un-mongolia.mn)

Website of the United Nations in Mongolia

<http://ubpost.mongolnews.mn>

Website of the Ulaan Baatar Post newspaper.

[www.guide-mongolia.com](http://www.guide-mongolia.com)

Detailed and useful directory site with many sections from culture and costumes to flora and fauna

[www.buddhism-mongolia.com](http://www.buddhism-mongolia.com)

Site all about Mongolian Buddhism with detailed articles.

[www.buryatmongol.com/msa.html](http://www.buryatmongol.com/msa.html)

Website of the Mongolian Shamans Association

[www.ulaanbaator.narod.ru](http://www.ulaanbaator.narod.ru)

Bizarre yet appealing fan site all about UB's metro system and rolling stock.

[www.camscape.com/Asia/Mongolia/index.html](http://www.camscape.com/Asia/Mongolia/index.html)

Someone needs to add a webcam for Mongolia...if only to see how bad the rush hour traffic is on Peace Avenue at 5pm.

[www.mongoliantemples.net](http://www.mongoliantemples.net)

Research website of Mongolian websites and temples

[www.linguamongolia.co.uk](http://www.linguamongolia.co.uk)

The study and translation of classic Mongolian literature

[www.poetry-culture.mn](http://www.poetry-culture.mn)

Site dedicated to Mongolian classic poetry

[www.mongolduu.com](http://www.mongolduu.com)

Mongolian music and downloads

[www.mongolianwildlife.net](http://www.mongolianwildlife.net)

Dedicated to the preservation of Mongolian animals

[www.wwf.mn](http://www.wwf.mn)

Official website of the World Wildlife Fund in Mongolia

[www.snowleopard.com](http://www.snowleopard.com)

Dedicated to the preservation of the highly endangered Snow Leopard

[www.treemail.nl.takh](http://www.treemail.nl.takh)

Homepage for the Foundation of the Preservation of Przewalskis Horse

[www.geocities.com/mongoliabird](http://www.geocities.com/mongoliabird)

Full listing of all 415 species to be found in Mongolia

[www.baigal.com](http://www.baigal.com)

Traditional Mongolian medicine

[www.mongolia-pictures.com](http://www.mongolia-pictures.com)

Plenty of images and files from Buddhism to Art to Travel

[www.golfmongolia.com](http://www.golfmongolia.com)

One mans adventure golfing across the country

[www.uma.mn](http://www.uma.mn)

The Union of Mongolian Artists. Galleries and exhibitions

[www.shopmongolia.com](http://www.shopmongolia.com)

Online shop with products shipped directly from UB.

[www.mongolia-web.com](http://www.mongolia-web.com)

A news and information site on Mongolia and all things Mongolian.

[www.mongoluls.net](http://www.mongoluls.net)

Cultural information about Mongolia

[www.mongoliatoday.com](http://www.mongoliatoday.com)

Online magazine



**mongoliaexpat.com**

## For When You Want To Get Out There

Adventure Travel / Articles / Forums / Picture Galleries /

National Trekking & Exploring Guides

Seriously cool stuff for a seriously wild country



# Notes





Author :  
Chris Devonshire-Ellis

Chris Devonshire-Ellis is the founder and publisher of Mongolia Expat. This is his first book about the country. Born in the UK, Chris was educated in law and founded the China legal and tax practice Dezan Shira & Associates in 1992. He is the firm's senior partner, and now oversees ten offices in both China and India. He also founded the China tax and legal publications house China Briefing, India Briefing, the Chindia blog [2point6billion.com](http://2point6billion.com), and the China culture and travel website China Expat. Based in Beijing, he commutes often to Delhi and spends his free time in Ulaan Baatar, where as he says "I can get away from it all". He threatens to start similar magazines and books about Tibet, Xinjiang, Kazakhstan, North Korea and Sri Lanka "in the next couple of years when time and travel permit". He was born in the year of the Rat, is a Taurus, and prides himself on always managing to be in the last placed team on the regular Thursday quiz nights at Dave's Place in UB.

Further related reading:

China Travel & Culture:

[www.chinaexpat.com](http://www.chinaexpat.com)

China-India Business Blog:

[www.2point6billion.com](http://www.2point6billion.com)

# TRAVEL GUIDE TO ULAAN BAATAR AND THE MONGOLIAN COUNTRYSIDE



Traveling to or just arrived in Mongolia ? Need to know your way around ? This definitive guide to Ulaan Baatar and the Mongolian Countryside – lavishly illustrated with over 250 color photos and pictures – is the first such city guide on the subject, and details the places to see, where to go, and what to do in this relatively unknown Asian capital city. This guide explores living in Ulaan Baatar, accommodation, property prices, and the essentials you need to know for a longer stay, in addition to some of the adventure travel trips – from one day to one week and more – that can be made from UB. It also contains detailed information of the historic sites, museums, hotels, tour specialists, restaurants, bars & nightclubs that can be found in the city, and is completed by articles on components of Mongolian culture including nomads, bird watching, wildlife, flowers and other aspects of contemporary Mongolian life. Simply put – this guide is a must have for anyone interested in or visiting this under explored and unspoilt destination.

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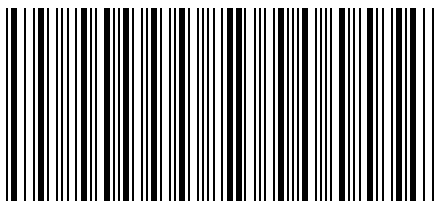


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