

Mongolia Expat magazine

• MAY / JUNE ISSUE

VOL.1 NO.1

THE SIX PLACES YOU MUST VISIT IN MONGOLIA

Gobi Desert * Khovsgol * Altai * Khanggai * Khentii * Ulan Battar

Mongolia's Przewalski's Horse

Mongolian Film, Music & Books Reviews

Interview With Rock Singer Jargalsaikhan



Getting Out There – Your Guide To Trekking, Travelling & Culture Across Mongolia
Seriously cool stuff for a seriously wild country

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Hi, I'm Chris Devonshire-Ellis and welcome to this very first issue of "Mongolia Expat" magazine ! This is a complimentary spin off from our Mongolian travel and culture website – www.mongoliaexpat.com – also just launched – which features details of traveling to and around this beautiful country. With articles on trekking and places to see, loads of photos galleries, details of annual events and reviews of books, music and film all about Mongolia, we hope to have produced the most detailed and concise library of information concerning the country, it's people, and it's culture available anywhere on the web. We need to give thanks to our sponsors, Rik and Tseren, who operate Tseren Tours travel in Ulan Bataar – our travel advisory partners in this venture and experts when it comes to arranging tours, trekking and camping throughout the country. This year Mongolia celebrates it's 800th anniversary as an independent state and our site also has details of what to see, where to go and how to get there. The magazine this year will appear bi-monthly – look out for the next issue at the end of June which will be all about the annual Nadaam Festival – and with the 800th anniversary it's going to be a good one ! I hope you enjoy this magazine and that it will encourage you to visit one of the most beautiful countries in world. And don't forget to check out the website for even more information !

"Ayan Zamdaa Sain Yavaarai" – Happy Travelling !

Chris



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magazine

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WELCOME TO MONGOLIA ! THE SIX TOP AREAS TO VISIT

– By Chris Devonshire-Ellis



W elcome to 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 article. 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 Ulan Bataar, the capital, lets start here :

• Ulan Bataar

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 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



Traditional Gers

772) and the New Capital Hotel (458 235) – although it is also worth wandering about. Even during Nadaam 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 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 everything really you can possibly want in



UB's main train station

State Circus. Teeverchidin Gudami's nightclubs are just behind to the right.



State Department Store, Ulan Bataar

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.

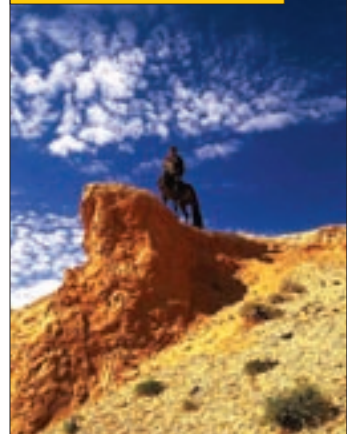
• Gobi Desert

"Gobi" means dry land in Mongolia and the desert occupies roughly the southern third of Mongolia. The Gobi is one jeepday south of Ulan 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

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 worlds 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 it's desert spirits, dinosaur bones, and magical peace, will seduce and attract you back again and again.

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



If you're lucky you may see these – sprinting at up to 40 mph across the plains

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



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



• *Khovsgol*

Khovsgol is in the north of Mongolia, with a beautiful lake, bordering Siberia. The lake is 3 or 4 jeep days away from Ulan 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 ?

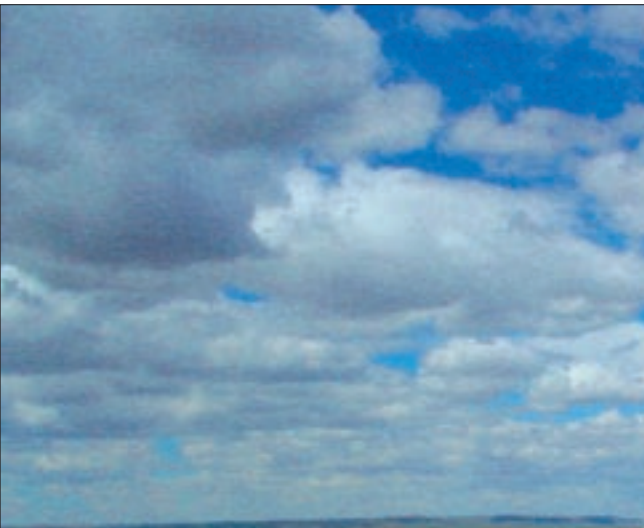
- ▶ The beautiful, wide and very deep Khovsgol Lake (136km long, 36.5km wide 262 meters deep) at an attitude of 1560m, located among the taiga forest and high mountains of far northern Mongolia.
- ▶ Its exceptionally clear water is fed by more than 90 rivers and drained by the Eg river.
- ▶ Catching 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 vist Amarbayasgalant Khiid, an ancient Mongolian Buddhist monastery.

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 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.



▶ *These are Taimen, the largest Salmon in the world, and can be caught (with a permit) on the fly and cooked afterwards over a campfire for dinner. Taimen can grow over a metre long and are well known as a good sporting fish.*

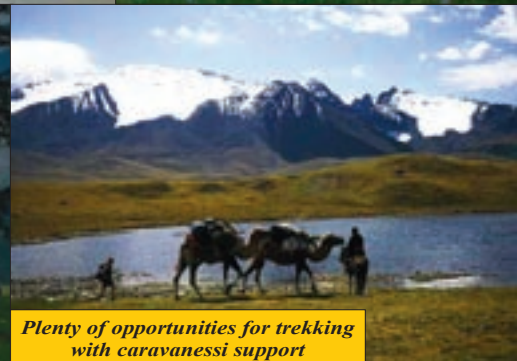


Dried sheep dung fire - keeps away Mosquitos

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



Lake Khovsgol. Pitch your tent and relax...



Plenty of opportunities for trekking with caravanessi support

• *Khanggai*

The Khanggai is a green and partly forested mountain range in central Mongolia, and is easy to reach from Ulan Bataar. 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. 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 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.



Khanggai's waterfalls



Herding Cashmere Goats



Young local beauty



Karachoram, the ancient capital

• *Altai*

The high mountains in the far west of Mongolia, almost a week by jeep from Ulan 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 Ibx 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.



Elder & Younger

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



The Kazak nomads in Altai still hunt with eagles and are some of the most skilled people practicing this ancient art in the world today.

Whole families will be on the move during the summer months looking for fresh pastures for their animals



To the North Altai the Tuva people herd Reindeer

• *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. 🐎

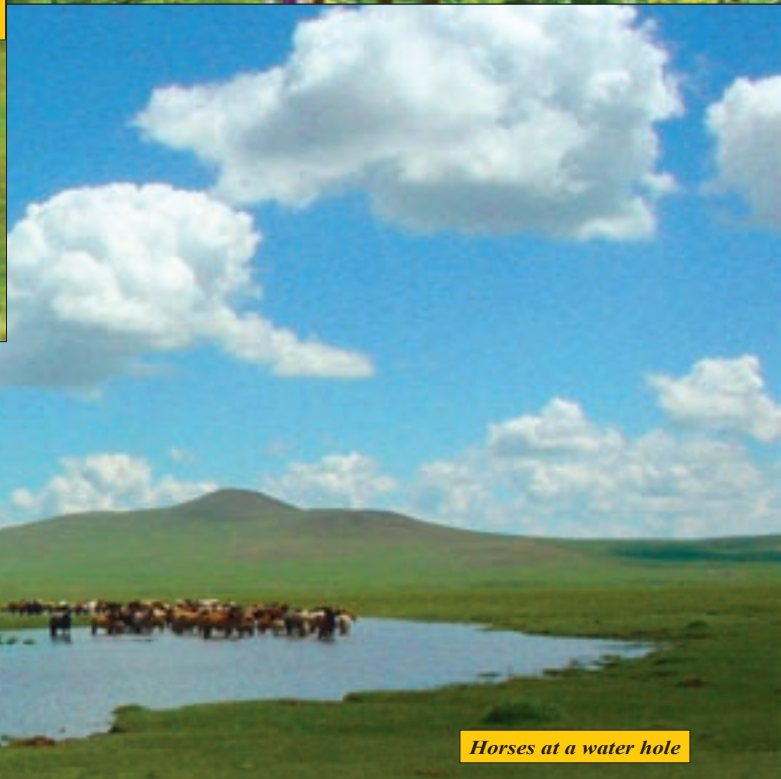
The region is a botanists dream, with many species of rare orchids and wild lilies growing



Nomadic Ger. Note satellite dish, powered by solar panels. Mongolia is one of the worlds sunniest countries and modern nomads adapt quickly to new technologies.



Przewalskis Wild Horses grazing. Highly endangered with about 500 left, seeing these herds is a real treat.



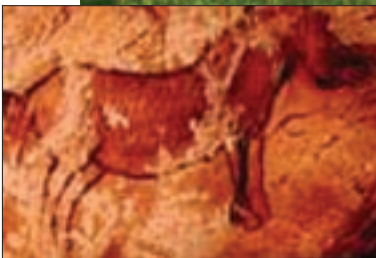
Horses at a water hole

MONGOLIA'S PRZEWALSKI'S HORSE

Mongolia's Wild Horses brought back from extinction



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



Twenty 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, in spite 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, 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 will be 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 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.



Wolf Attacks still cause casualties.

• 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

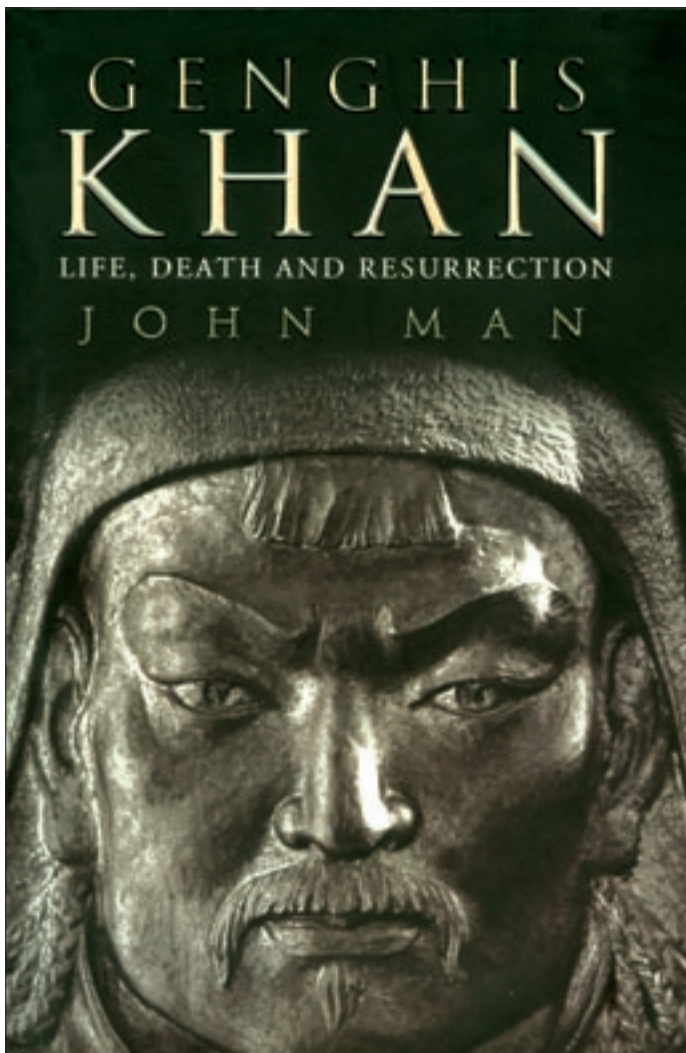
legs like a zebra. It has an upright mane, which unlike a Fjord pony's, does not fall over if it is not cut. The mane stops between the ears, hence the Przewalski horse has no forelock. The tail of the Przewalski is also different from the domestic horse. In the domestic horse the hairs on the tail start 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 Ulan Bataar. 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 suprisingly good. [ME](#)




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. [ME](#)

“Voices From The Distant Steppes” - Shu De



Recorded 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. 

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 and as contender for film of the year. 



INTERVIEW WITH ROCK SINGER JARGALSAIKHAN

Jargalsaikhan is Mongolia's greatest, best known and best-loved rock singer. With a career spanning right back to the 1970's and the days of Soviet occupation, his songs of freedom and traditional life struck a chord with many Mongolians as they looked to free themselves from Soviet rule, a dream realized in 1990 and the final withdrawal of Russian troops. His song "Chinggis Khan" proved a rallying call for Mongolians in 1988 and indirectly led to the national uprising and independence of the country. Jaga spends much of his time singing and performing in the countryside, taking his music out to the people, and will be releasing three new CD's to celebrate the 800th anniversary of Mongolia later this year.

Q : You became a rock star in the seventies and eighties in the communist times in Mongolia, and your career sees you still performing nowadays. But back in those early days, you had very long curly hair, very strange, at that time.

A : Indeed, I became a star in the communistic period. I'm rare product, something from archaeology (laughing) Because of my curly hair I have been called that, or

sometimes "Curly Jaga" as a nickname by Filatova, the Russian wife of the then Mongolian leader, who was concerned about my behavior and outlook. At the end of the 70's and beginning 80's we tried to be different, not only copying western artists. It was a time to make a change to be different on the stage, be more free and dress a bit differently. We wanted that the performers dress up not the same as always, but be different. Also we were trying to get more contact with our audience, which was not according the custom and rules of that time.

Q : More then 25 years has passed since you started. Has your audience changed?

A : With our shows we educated our audience and ourselves. Art is usually the forerunner of everything. To give at that time performances to people from the country side was a kind of a treat. Yet, the way people expressed themselves was limited, they didn't sing with us, were not shouting and jumping like now, but gave just a polite applause at the end of a song. Those were more restricted, reserved times and now we are freer to express ourselves. This is a good thing.



Q : Foreigners here in Mongolia often say that Mongolia's atmosphere in UB in life and culture is different and more modern compared with our neighbours Russia and China. Do you agree with this ?

A : We are changing a lot. Before 1990 pop western artists were branded as capitalist artists. Although it was prohibited to listen this music, there were always some ways to hear or get prohibited songs by banned artists. Eastern European foreigners, especially Hungarians who worked here, brought this music. Also the kids of high positioned people that time could get this music and they spread it. But compared with some countries, who had strict control in art exchange, Mongolia was quite free. In the 70's we just tried more or less to copy the Western pop artists, but later starting around early 80's we started to develop our own style. When Mongolia became independent when the Russians left in 1990 we could travel; we were free to start to visit our brothers in Chinese Inner Mongolia , where they had no idea about pop artists. Outer Mongolians were great examples for the new pop artists in Inner Mongolia, and it was blossoming there. I still hear there from some of the singers and musicians in China that I was a example and teacher for them.

Q : Did you go to music school in Russia?

A : No, I went in Russia to a building engineering school. But I grew up in an artistic family. My mother is a musician and my father was a sculptor. From age of 5 I started to play harmonica.

My childhood when I grew up among artists was very important for me in forming myself as an artist. I played a small harmonica from 5 till age 12 and I performed as much as I could. Later on my interest moved to play guitar and I changed my harmonica and 10 togrog (US\$1) to buy a guitar.

Q : How many CD's did you make?

A : This is not easy to answer. Officially I made only three CD's, the most famous studio one being "Knock On My Door", but every time when we go abroad on tour we make a new live CD just for that event. We are careful not to be illegally copied and having our music available cheaply everywhere. I don't like it if my CD's are everywhere, they must be more like rare candy.

Not producing new CD's doesn't mean that we are not working on new songs. In between 80-90 my CD's were illegally copied in cassettes a lot. From those who copied my CD's and sold them on the black market I never got any money. But I don't have to be angry about that, if because of this parents could buy the butter on the bread for their kids. Quite often people ask why we don't produce more CD's? But for the 800th anniversary of the Mongolian State we are now recording 3 new Studio CD's which will be on sale soon. With the group Chinggis Khaan we do lot of tours abroad for the Mongolians who live there. Sometimes people say that we don't perform a lot. But that is not true. We do not make much promotion, but we go often to countryside. But in the last four years we



didn't perform in UB, but this year we will have several concerts.

Q : How long has Chinggis Khaan as your backing group existed ?

A : About 20 years. I wrote a poem about Chinggis Khaan in 1981, later in 1985 I made it a song and one year later it was recorded. All this was quite difficult, because at time not many people knew about Chinggis Khan and speaking about him wasn't allowed. I heard actually about Chinggis Khaan at a very early age. My father made a statue of a local hero in Khovd province, but he told me that it was in fact Chinggis Khaan. The traditional stories and heroes can never be wiped out by oppressors.

Q : Who is your favorite singer abroad and in Mongolia?

A : The words of the songs are for me important. I love Chez Morris from the Doors, who passed away when he was 28. The Beatles and John Lennon I also liked. I remember I studied English through these songs. Jimi Hendriks and Frank Zappa were other favorites of mine. From Russia I love to hear Makarevich. In Mongolia Nomin Talst and Kamerton are making good new material and a change for Mongolian pop music. Saraa and Ariunaa are good solo singers.

Q : You seem to have a fans from all ages?

A : I feel the love and attention from people. I m surrounded with a great group, and that helps me lot. I like it when people are looking for my CD's. I also wrote two books about pop music and singers in Mongolia and those are bestsellers in Mongolia. [ME](#)



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