



Mongolia Expat magazine

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SERIOUS CHILL

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GETTING OUT THERE - YOUR GUIDE TO TREKKING, TRAVELLING & CULTURE ACROSS MONGOLIA
SERIOUSLY COOL STUFF FOR A SERIOUSLY WILD COUNTRY

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Hi, Welcome to the new issue of Mongolia Expat. Back by popular demand after a two year hiatus, we'll be publishing every quarter from this issue onwards – and what better to usher in the winter than an issue devoted to serious chill. Even during the winter months, Mongolia remains one of the sunniest countries in the world, so you can expect blue skies – yet temperatures that can drop well below -30. However, it's also a great time to visit – a true Siberian wilderness, and scenery at times that is positively arctic. But wrap up warm, and adventure travel can be rewarding in the long cold days of winter. In this issue we take you ice fishing at Lake Khovsgol – a body of water so large it contains 3% of the entire fresh water on the planet – to the amazing ice gorges at Yolyn Am, in the middle of the Gobi Desert. We take in an account of wolf hunting in Khentii, and introduce you to one of the worlds most beautiful animals, the Snow Leopard. Finally, we end up with a bar, restaurant and events guide to Ulaan Baatar for the December-January period.

If some serious winter chill sounds like your thing – then head off to Mongolia for the holidays. It'll be an experience you'll never forget.

*Wrap up warm!
Best wishes
Chris*

*Chris Devonshire-Ellis
Publisher
Mongolia Expat*



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Mongolia Expat
magazine

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ICE FISHING AT LAKE KHOVSGOL

– By Chris Devonshire-Ellis

Having a winter break in the most wintery of climates may not seem like fun for many people, but then winter in Mongolia is not like winter anywhere else. Despite the cold – which can reach down to minus 30, the skies are typically a brilliant blue – Mongolia is one of the sunniest countries in the world, and this both adds to the majesty of a land gripped by snow and ice, as well as taking the edge of what would otherwise be uncomfortably freezing days. Indeed, so bright is the sun that sunglasses can be needed here to offset the reflection off the ice. As darkness nears and night falls, it's time to retreat to the comfort of the traditional Mongolia Ger – where the temperatures can be well into the thirties above. Mongolian gers are havens of warmth, shelter and security, and are remarkably comfortable. Beds, or at least plenty of rugs, blankets and quilts will keep you as warm as toast while outside the winter chill does its worst. Unlike more temperature climates, affected by proximity to the oceans, Mongolia also enjoys a dry cold – far inland, it's a continental climate that also helps keep the cold at bay. West cold is horrible, Mongolia has dry cold, and is thus rather more capable at being dealt with. Some good winter gear is all that's needed, and somewhere to explore.

To really experience winter then, one needs to get out to where winter really exists – and that's Mongolia, technically part of Siberia to its northern range. Lake Khovsgol lies to the North-West of Mongolia, and is reached by a two hour propeller plane flight from the capital, Ulaan Baatar. Regular flights run, even during the winter, and from there a Russian high base minivan will drive you to one of the Ger Camps still open at this time of year.

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. It's actually a smaller brother of the massive Lake Baikal, in Russia just 500km to the north, and is connected by river to its larger relative.

Popular with tourists

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, which is why you'll need cold weather gear – thermal underwear, decent kit (all available in Ulaan Baatar and familiar to most residents of Beijing)

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 publisher who would have willingly – not to mention stupidly – have subjected himself to endless hours of freezing torture. Mongolian fishermen are far smarter than that.

During the early winter when the lake begins to freeze, they hammer two long poles into the lake bed about 100 meters apart, and suspend a fishing net between them, yet weigh it down with stones so it is suspended underwater. When the Lake fully freezes over, they walk to the poles, cut two holes in the ice, and then pull the net through, tie up the ends at each hole, then leave it for 24 hours to see what swims into it.

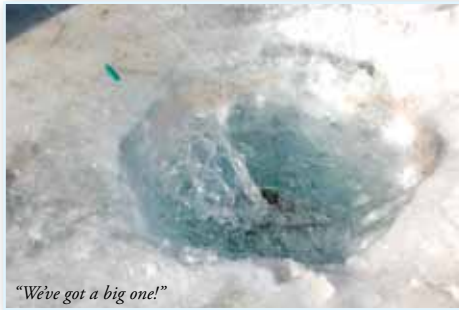
The next day, one end – connected via a pulley system so it can be repositioned again under the ice – is pulled up to see what has been caught. In fact, turning up the next

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

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 (many Mongolians do not), 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!

Khovsgol is also an interesting location for winter horse trekking – the Lake is home to several islands. However as the entire lake freezes over, it's possible to ride to these on horse and sled. The horses are shod with special ice shoes with spikes in to help them grip the ice, then it's about an hour's ride on sled to reach the islands. The evening temperatures can be so extreme however that the mass of ice, as it cools, expands, and this creates tensions within the ice on the lake itself. As the ice melts slight during the day, then expands again at dusk, it creates tremendous pressures, and the groans and cries of the ice can be heard for miles at it constantly seeks to find fault lines along which to expand. Occasionally they do, and with an ear-splitting crack, massive slabs of ice weighing several tons each can be forced upwards. These leave behind patches of open water, or thin ice, even in the middle of the Lake, so one needs to proceed with



caution. Falling into such waters is not an option, it would be very difficult to get out again, and the cold would likely kill within minutes.

Attempting such a ride then needs to be done with expert care, however the locals here know the waters – and the ice – well. Traveling by horse and sled across the Lake is an amazing experience, and the islands of course can be climbed. For a great and unusual days trekking – the islands at Khovsgol represent an aspect of a land of ice and snow very few tourists ever get to see.



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



Going...

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 Khovsgols icy waters? ME



WOLF HUNTING IN KHENTII

– By Chris Devonshire-Ellis

Wolves 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.

Wolf Hunting in Mongolia

The Mongolians and Wolves have a love-hate relationship. Revered for their pack instincts and cleverness, yet feared for the damage they can inflict on herds, the wolf can be an indiscriminate killer and will often slaughter more livestock than necessary. A permit issued by the Government is required to shoot wolves, however this is often not enforced, and anyway far out in the Steppes is impractical to do so. The Siberian Wolf prevalent throughout Mongolia is not an endangered animal, although it does tend to get into more trouble with humans near more populated areas. The animal has a winter coat, and young pups if caught are often kept alive until fully grown for their winter fur. While hunting animals is not an activity Mongolia Expat condones, in Mongolia, Wolf Hunting is a way of life and in some instances, a matter of survival. 

YOLIN AM — TREKKING AN ICE GORGE IN THE GOBI DESERT

– By Chris Devonshire-Ellis

Deserts are usually thought of as being hot, dry places, and not usually synonymous with ice and snow. While the Gobi does get fiercely hot during the summer, at winter it is a cold, harsh environment, although amazingly, people do still manage to eke out a living with herds of cashmere goats. Camels, rather than horses, are the beast of burden here, but to live in the Gobi is to realize one of its secrets – much of the desert is linked with underground water channels, and water pools and springs can appear if you know where to look.

It's that water which sustains both people and animals, and caters for a vast array of life even under seemingly the most hostile conditions. In winter, anything below minus twenty is just stupidly cold – at that temperature your breath freezes as soon as it leaves your mouth, leaving those with beards and moustache ice-encrusted hairs, a darker haired eyebrows and eyelashes turn white with a covering of frost, giving one the appearance of being rather older than you are. The Gobi is camel country, not horse, the savage weather more suited to animals that have evolved thick winter coats, and whose eyes, nostrils and ears can all close for severe sand and snow storms.



Trekking the Gobi In minus 20. With Wind Chill, You'll Need These Animals.



"We've got a big one!"

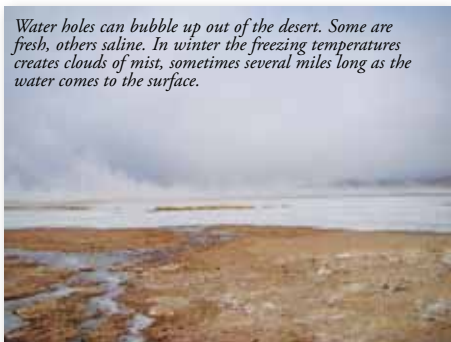
Plus, the Gobi itself can be barren – and you need an animal who can survive going for days without water and on little to eat.

Yolin Am is a days drive out of UB, and is that rare commodity – a deep gorge, carved out by an underground river that subsequently collapsed, leaving an open space below the floor level, rather like the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Shaded from

the heat of the sun even in the height of summer, Yolin Am provides a much needed supply of fresh water all year around and has its own micro-system as a result – migratory birds, eagles, and game both small and large all come here to drink, be replenished and move on. It is part of a strictly protected area, so no camping is permitted (although there are facilities close by, outside the park), however a full days trekking here is

a wonderful experience, even in the winter. Trekking the Gobi in the winter months requires planning, good gear, and a good guide. You'll need good camels (their fur in the winter is ideal to bury your hands in) and of course a good warm ger to overnight in. Temperatures can vary from between -20, to -40, and there's the wind chill factor as well. Yolín Am though offers some respite from the winds blasting across the desert, and provides shelter. The gorge itself is several miles long and can be driven along – the river here exists all year around but freezes over during the winter. The variety of wildlife here is staggering. I've seen seagulls – on migratory passage from South China to Siberia – here, as well as avocets, snipe and the beautiful citrine wagtail, while the gorge itself is home to thousands of Pika – a small burrowing rodent not dissimilar to a hamster, whose bird like trills as an alarm call make sure your presence in the Gorge is well known. Where there are rodents, there are eagles, and the magnificent Golden Eagle is ever present. Larger fauna too, although wary, will come to drink, such as the Marco Polo Sheep (actually the size of a medium yak), and Ibex, while in the frigid desert plains above herds of gazelle roam. As mentioned, the Gobi is criss-crossed with underground rivers and streams, and the Yolín Am is a classic example of life suddenly appearing in the midst of a seemingly barren, yet beautiful landscape. Its not just Yolín Am that has fresh water however, pools erupt all over the Gobi, although some are saline, others are fresh. The entire desert was once the bottom of a prehistoric sea, and dinosaurs ruled the area back then. Such pools during winter appear almost magical like, their waters meeting the freezing air and creating barrels of mist, sometimes miles long, that can be seen across the desert for a considerable distance. If you're in search of fresh water, head for the mists.

Water holes can bubble up out of the desert. Some are fresh, others saline. In winter the freezing temperatures creates clouds of mist, sometimes several miles long as the water comes to the surface.



Yolín Am Gorge can be in places up to 1,000 meters high, and deep below, out

of the wind chill, waters gurgle and flow. I've seen snipe and woodcock here, while far above the eagles and buzzards soar, keeping an eye out for a stray pika or if lucky, a marmot. Coughs breed on the cliff faces, and wheel about in the winter, their characteristic calls echoing through the valley. Mongolia is also home to herds of Gazelle, they enter in at one end of the Gorge, usually evening, often to drink. Wary though, they can bolt at lightening speed. I tracked one once through the desert in a jeep – we were doing 70mph on the flat and it was still pulling ahead. They can herd in the tens of thousands, however are protected, although occasional animals will end up in the locals pot. Other animals one can see here are arctic hare and arctic fox – their fur turning white to blend in with the winter snows, although the winds blowing across the desert floor does tend to disperse snowfall quickly. At such times such animals need to be fast – their white plumage against the golden-orange of the desert scrub land means they can be spotted some way off.

The Gobi is home to large herds of Gazelle, and can be seen in groups of several thousand.



Riding through the gorge or in the desert on a camel makes one realize just how extreme the weather can be here, its no place for the ill prepared. Yet spending the evening with a local family in their ger is a tremendous experience, - the gers are roasting warm inside, and huge vats of tea constantly on the boil to warm the fingers and the stomach. Later, dinner will be shared – anything from boiled sheep heads to a stew. At that time of day, anything is welcome – the cold makes the body use more calories to keep warm, and creates hunger. Chewing into a sheep head may seem uncivilized in the bars of Shanghai and Beijing, in the middle of a Gobi winter it's a positive treat. After that, it'll be some card games, vodka, and off to bed relatively early – these nomads are herders and they have their animals to take to pastures – even in the Gobi they can scrape enough plant life together to feed. They'll be up at 6am to tend to their goats

– cashmere goats are hardy animals and can thrive in these barren conditions. I always like to get up a little earlier – say at 3-4am to nip outside for 20 minutes to watch the stars. Mongolia's clear skies are legendary, and in the frigid night of a Mongolian winter, they are at their clearest. The Milky Way appears at 3am not just as a stairway through the heavens, but for what it really is – an entire galaxy being viewed on its edge. 30 minutes is enough in the midnight chill, and I'll be tucked up in bed again before long. But for an adventure with a difference, trekking the Gobi in the middle of winter takes some beating.



Mongolians are famous for their hospitality, this family put me up for two nights, great company and welcome shelter and food.

Note: Yolín Am is a days jeep drive from Ulaan Baatar. You'll need another two-three days to explore the area, and another jeep day back to UB. Allow 5 days for the complete excursion.

Cold Weather Gear Tips

If you're out in Mongolia during the winter, you'll need appropriate gear. Thermal underwear is a must, and you'll need cotton shirts, and ideally cashmere or camel wool sweaters and a decent fleece, waterproofed jacket. A good hat, protecting the ears, thick socks, and gloves are all essentials, it's the bodies extremities that feel the cold first. A decent pair of hiking boots and you should be set up. Fortunately you can buy all this gear at Ulaan Baatars State Department Store, and there are a handful of specialist gear shops around UB as well. Mongolian cashmere is amongst the best in the world, and camel wool products are also sold here and are good value.

If you're out doors, you'll be staying at family gers, which are as warm as toast. You'll be made welcome as they provide food, shelter, and plenty of hot tea to warm you up.

ME

MONGOLIA'S SNOW LEOPARD

– By Chris Devonshire-Ellis

Mongolia is home to one of the world's most beautiful animals, the Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*).

Sometimes known as the ounce, it is a large cat native to the mountain ranges of central and south Asia. Along with the Clouded Leopard, also found in the Himalayas and parts of China, 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 do so. 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 an estimated 750 live in Mongolia. They tend to be found in West Mongolia, near to Kazakhstan, and to the Forests of the North-West, although a small population is thought to exist around Ulaan Baatar's remaining forests. It is unfortunately highly prized for its fur, and illegal hunting does go on. The animal is regarded as critically endangered – and sightings unless you are way out in the countryside are extremely rare.

The Snow Leopard Trust has been involved in conservation of the animal for the past 25 years, photos are courtesy of the Trust, who may be visited at <http://www.snowleopard.org/>. Mongolia Expat encourages readers to take an interest in the preservation of this beautiful creature.

Related Reading: Check out our archives and the Mongolia Expat issue "Mongolia's Tigers" at www.mongoliaexpat.com.

ULAAN BAATAR LISTINGS

This section of Mongolia Expat is a free listings section of bars, restaurants and nightclubs in Ulaan Baatar. Things change, and places close and new places open, so check before you go. If you think you should be listed in this section please contact editor@mongoliaexpat.com with details.

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 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.

Chinggis 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 beer 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.

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.

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.

RESTAURANTS



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 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.

Mongolian Restaurants

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 - offering 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 Sukhbataar 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 cheap 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!

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.

Choijin Lama Monastery Area

(to the South of Sukhbataar Square)

The Silk Road restaurant

Jamiyan Guunii Gudamj, Close to the Monastery
Tel 91910211
<http://www.silk-road.mn>
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.

The 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

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.

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. 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 it's 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

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 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

Somewhat 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.

Events



The Mongolian State Opera, on the edge of Sukhbaatar Square, has an extensive winter programme of both Opera and Ballet, often augmented by premium singers and dancers from Russia.

The programme for December and January is as follows:

December 11th & 12th – Aida

December 18th – La Traviata

December 19th – Swan Lake

December 25th & 26th – The Nutcracker

January 8th – The Magic Flute

January 15th – Aida

January 16th – Swan Lake

January 22nd – Tosca

January 23rd – Giselle

Bookings may be made via phone at 70110389, 91141538, 96683639 & 98674933

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