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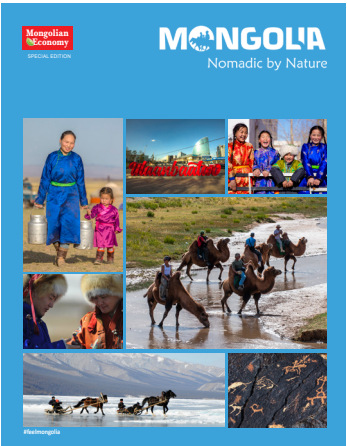
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Mongolia

Three decades ago, the peaceful Mongolian Democratic Revolution led to the overthrowing of the Mongolian People’s Republic. Since then, the state has transitioned into a market-led system. Discussions of the country’s economy are nearly impossible without mentioning the two largest sectors; mining and agriculture. The government jointly works with the largest mining companies in the world on Mongolian mining. In recognition of Mongolia’s rich natural resources both domestic and foreign direct investment has flown into the mining sector. Likewise, the steppe nation is also abundant in livestock with 66 million in total making it so that there are over 20 heads of livestock per person in Mongolia. The Mongolian Economy Magazine aims to deliver information on the country that is suitable for tourist travelers and business people alike. This guide is composed of market analysis, business environment and the political structure of Mongolia while still briefing about its lavish history, liberal present and the transition in the lives of the nomads from rural to urban.

Mongolia was the first country in the world to implement **what3words** as a new addressing solution. **what3words** has divided the world into a grid of 3m by 3m squares and assigned a unique 3 word address to each of these squares. Use the what3words app to find every place in this book with the 3 word address.

Country Profile

Land area
1,566,500 sq km, 99,3% is land and 0,7% is water. 9.10% is arable land (2011) and the highest point is 4,374 metres, lowest point is 560 metres.

Population
3,166,244 (2018)
(Data from the National Statistical Office)

Currency
Average exchange rate in 2019:
2,650₮= \$1 (As of June 2019)

Climate
Mongolia has an extreme continental climate with lengthy cold winters and short summers; during which most precipitation falls.
Hottest month, July, 30- 38 °C
Coldest month, January, -25 –40 °C
(average monthly minimum and maximum)

Language Mongolian
Main religion Buddhism
Life expectancy 65 years (men), 73 years (women)

Time
Ulaanbaatar is eight hours behind UTC
Khovd, Bayan-Ulgii, Uvs, Zavkhan and Gobi-Altai are seven hour behind UTC.
Dornod, and Sukhbaatar are nine hours behind UTC

Main cities
Population at last census (2018 official estimate)
Ulaanbaatar: 1,418.000. The capital city was founded in the 17th century. Ulaanbaatar translates to ‘Red Hero’
Erdenet: 79,647
Darkhan: 74,300
Khovd: 30,500
Ulgii: 28,400
Ulaangom: 28,085
Murun-kuren: 27,690

| |
|---|
| Public holidays |
| December 31th-January 1th (New year) |
| February/1st day of first lunar month (Mongolia new year) |
| March 8th (International women’s day) |
| June 1st (Mothers and Children’s day) |
| July 11th-13th (Naadam) |
| November 8th (Genghis Khan’s Birthday) |
| November 26th (Republic Day) |

| Annual Data | 2018 | Historical Averages | 3rd quarter 2018 | Annual Data |
|--|-------|-----------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Population (m) | 3.24 | Population growth | 1.9% | Population (m) |
| GDP (\$ bn; market exchange rate) | 10.44 | Real GDP growth | 6.4% | GDP (\$ bn; market exchange rate) |
| GDP per head (\$; market exchange rate) | 3.22 | Real domestic demand growth | 14.2% | GDP per head (\$; market exchange rate) |
| Exchange rate MNT: \$ | 2,660 | Inflation | 8.1% | Exchange rate MNT: \$ |
| Livestock count (m) | 66.46 | Current-account balance (% of GP) | -1.5% | Livestock count (m) |
| Unemployment | 6.9% | FDI inflows (\$; bn) | 1.6 | Unemployment |

Fact Sheet

Background

The Mongol Empire was founded in the 13th century by Chinggis Khaan and the Mongolian People’s Republic was established in 1924 with the current constitution being set in 1992. After the cease of the Mongol Empire, the country first declared its independence from the Manchu Dynasty in 1911 and achieved it in 1921. However shortly after Mongolia came under the control of the Soviet Union which helped Mongolia gain their independence from China. In 1946, the independence was recognized by the Nationalist Government of China and the current constitution as we know it was set in February 1992.

Political Structure

Mongolia is known to be a unicameral republic with a semi-presidential and semi-parliamentary system. The head of state is the president who is directly elected by the public. The appointments of judges and ambassadors are made by the president and the laws made by the parliament can also be vetoed by the head of state. Still, whether the parliament accepts the veto or not is their decision as the parliament can override the veto with a two-thirds majority vote. The other members of the national assembly are also elected by the people into the State Great Khural. Currently, the parliament consists of 76 members with most of them being from the two largest parties; Mongolian People’s Party and the Democratic Party while there are still a number of smaller political parties. Formerly known as the People’s Revolutionary Party from 1924 to 2010, the People’s Party had formed and ruled the government for 75 years until 1996. The party had also ruled in a one-party system up until the Democratic Revolution of 1990 and remained dominant until 2012. Currently, there are many diplomatic missions of Mongolia and there are embassies in 31 capitals of the world. As for the territorial division of the state, there are 21 provinces which are then divided into 348 subunits consisting of districts in urban areas as well.

Economy

The World Bank ranked Mongolia as a lower-middle-income economy with one in three Mongolians being poor. Majority of economic activity in Mongolia has been based on herding and agriculture for centuries. As technological advancements

hit the globe, Mongolia has been found out as a country rich in extensive mineral deposits of coal, iron ore, copper, zinc, uranium, gold, hydrocarbons, shale oil, and crude oil.

Mining is estimated to make up 201 percent of the national GDP while agriculture makes up 14.3 percent as of the third quarter of 2018. Due to the mining boom of 2011, the GDP increased by 17.5% making Mongolia the country with the highest leap. Such a phenomenon has only taken place in Mongolia within this century. In 2018, Mongolia has fallen out of The Economist ranking as the commodities markets dropped. However, the country was returned to the list in 2019 when mining activities picked up again.

Other industries that take up a large portion in the composition of the GDP is wholesale, retail trade and service, transportation and storage and real estate activities with the addition of he grey economy speculated to be at least one third. A large majority of the country’s resources go to China while China supplies 41.6 percent of Mongolia’s imports.

Trade information 2018

| Exports /1000\$ | 7011.8 | Imports/1000\$ | 5875 |
|---|------------|---|------------|
| Mineral Products | 6070.3 | Food Products | 436.7 |
| Coal | 2802.5 | Mineral Products | 1325.8 |
| Base metals & articles thereof | 91.8 | Petrol | 308.7 |
| Raw & processed hides, skins, fur, articles thereof | 17.0 | Diesel | 576.7 |
| Textiles and textile articles | 409.8 | Base metals & articles thereof | 540.3 |
| Natural colored stones, precious metals, jewellery | 145.5 | Transport vehicles & their spare parts | 896.8 |
| | | Machinery, equipment, electric appliances | 1285.9 |
| Major Imports 2018 | % of total | Major Exports 2018 | % of total |
| China | 33.5 | China | 92.8 |
| Russia | 29.1 | United States | 2.5 |
| Japan | 9.5 | Russia | 1.2 |
| United States | 4.9 | Italy | 0.8 |

Mining

Coal, copper and gold are the most important resources being mined. The largest mines in the country include Erenet Mining Cooperation, Oyu Tolgoi Gold and Copper Mine and Tavan Tolgoi Coal Mine. Erdenet Mining Corporation is one of the largest ore mining and processing factories in Asia approximately processing 26 million tons of ore, 530 thousand tons of copper and 4.5 thousand tons of molybdenum concentrates per year. The Oyu Tolgoi mining project is owned 34 percent by the Government of Mongolia and 66 percent by Rio Tinto, the third largest mining company in the world by revenue. Additionally, the mining project is the largest financial undertaking in the history of Mongolia and is expected to produce 450,000 to 500,000 tons of copper annually. The mine also has a large gold deposits and the financing of the project has come in part from the Rio Tinto Group. Large scale projects such as Erdenet Mining and Oyu Tolgoi is not possible to be operated without foreign assistance. Still, the mining capabilities of Mongolia are growing and Tavan Tolgoi, one of the world’s largest untapped coking and thermal deposits is still fully state owned and operated by Mongolians.

Tourism

As opposed to only generating revenue from primary sources and raw materials, the government is aiming to have tourism be a more developed economic sector in Mongolia. Tourism was limited in Mongolia by the Communist Government but has been rising since the Democratic Revolution of 1990. The majority of the country’s wildlife remains untouched, and offer great scenic natural features. To top it all off, Mongolia has preserved its nomadic culture for 6000 years. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism highlighted that tourism is a forefront sector of Mongolia’s economic priority. As Mongolia plans to further develop the sector, they are

Proven Resource Reserves



Source: Ministry of Mining

attempting to improve the quality of their tourism as well. Starting 2019, tour guides are required to speak English, Chinese and Russian and six domestic airports are spreading their borders and becoming international. Long term financial support is being made to the sector and the Ministry is working with international tourism organizations such as the World Tour Partner, Mastercard and IBM. Around 507,000 tourists visited Mongolia in 2018. This number is expected to reach 600,000 in 2019 and become one million in 2020. ■

Nomadic by Nature

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Mongolia is ranked 99 out of 140 countries by the UN World Tourism Organization. Tourism has been highlighted as a potential sector to examine in terms of high FDI and linkages potential for the medium to long-term.

In recent years, the Government introduced a series of inspiring measures to improve infrastructure and promote tourism and has set ambitious short and medium-term objectives for the sector, which include boosting international arrivals in Mongolia.

As a developing sector with high growth potential, boosting investments in hotels, tour camps, eco-tourism and foreign tour operators are highly in demand. ►



► Indeed, over the past decade Mongolia has earned a reputation as a key destination for outdoor and adventure sport and other related activities, including trekking, climbing, fishing, hunting, and birdwatching, among many other things based on exotic, untouched, wonderful nature and traditional nomadic customs.

Flora and Fauna

Mongolia has a wide variety of plant life that makes up a significant portion of Central Asia's vegetation. There are plant species from Siberia's coniferous taiga forest, Central Asian steppe and desert. Recorded up to date, there are over 3000 vascular plants, 920 lichens, 437 mosses, 875 fungi and diverse algae exist in Mongolia. However, 150 species are considered epidemic and over a 100 types of plant species are considered endangered. The fauna of Mongolia is also diverse featuring the wildlife species from the Siberian forest, the steppe and the desert. Mongolia has 136 mammal species, 76 species of fish, 8 amphibians, 22 reptiles and 400 different kinds of birds. In the central and northern part of the country, there resides wolves, wild boar, elk, roe deer and brown bear. In the margins of the steppe and the forest, there are marmots, muskrats, foxes, steppe foxes, and sables.

Apart from the common wolf and wild cats, there are lynxes, snow leopards and wild cats in the Altai Mountains. The ranges also is the home to the world's largest sheep-argali and Siberian ibex. As such, there is a wide variety of interesting animals in the four corners of Mongolia.

Additionally, Mongolia habits the rarest animal in the world- the Gobi Bear Mazaalai, Przewalski horses or takhi, the last remaining wild horses, and a rich bird life. The country's 2000 lakes work like a magnet for birds. With eastern Mongolia being more famed for birds, exotic ones such as the Altai snowcock and the mute swan are still observed in the countryside. ■



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Hidden Gem **Ulaanbaatar**

All travel to the birthplace of steppe nomads starts in Ulaanbaatar. Originally called Urguu it was founded 375 years ago on the shores of Shireet lake in Central Mongolia. Since then the city has moved several times before settling where it is today. The city,

nicknamed UB, will surprise you when you compare it with those settled thousands of years ago. However, once you learn about the nomadic lifestyle and culture of Mongols, you will have a better understanding of these surprises. This is the hospitable and friendly city of Ulaanbaatar,

capital of authentic nomads. The reason why gers, invented centuries ago for nomadic living, are still used when households have settled in an urban environment, is to save on the cost of living. Also, many Mongolians prefer to live in a felt ger - even if only for the summer ►

► months. Many families in ger districts have not only gers, but also wooden houses. The minimum size of a lot in the city is 0.7 hectares. Intergenerational family household is a common portray of Mongolia. If you climb any mountain surrounding the city, you will see the

city as if in the palms of your hands. Ulaanbaatar has changed continuously since its establishment in the Tuul river valley. This was not only due to natural evolution, but political ideology. The only religious site that survived the purges was Gandantegchinlen monastery.

The monastery never went silent. Monks prayers, bells, and religious drums could be heard even during the time when religion was banned. It is now home to an 26.5 meter high statue of Megjid Janraisag Boddhisatva. The statue was created twice, as it was destroyed by communists in 1911.

During the communist years, Ulaanbaatar was a city of rectangular concrete buildings, all in clear lines, according to a central plan. It was renowned as the "Asian White Princess," home to everything a city needed such as a circus, an opera, theaters, universities, libraries, and more. On a windy spring morning 70 years of history was completely changed overnight, and Mongolia became a democratic country. Since then, Western style tall glass buildings have emerged and the city exploded with development. This change is continuing side by side with ancient buildings and historical gers you will find new hotels and buildings. Ulaanbaatar is probably the only place where you can see a luxury boutique and a traditionally dressed horse-riding nomad in the same frame.

You can't imagine Ulaanbaatar without its fashionable, confident young women and men. When you see women in high heels, walking on streets covered in ice, you are getting a glimpse of the bravery and confidence of ancient Mongolian women who fought on horseback to save their husbands' lives. ■



Agriculture



Camel: **460** Thous.



Horses: **3.9** Mill.

80 percent of agriculture is for livestock while the remaining 20 percent is at the crop sector. Due to half the population still living a nomadic life, agriculture provides employment for 41 percent of the entire population and generates seven percent of export revenue. Leather, cashmere, meat, sheep and camel wool are the main export products of agriculture. Specifically, crop production takes up one percent of the total Mongolian land producing cereals (wheat, rye and oats), potatoes, other vegetables and fruit. On the other hand 80 percent of the total territory is used for animal husbandry

and the “five star cattle” of the country are sheep, goat, cow, horse and camel.

Five kinds of livestock

The five kinds of livestock or the tavan hoshuu mal have been herded by the nomads for thousands of years as their primary livelihood. They consist of horse, cow, camel, sheep and goat. Mongolians are extremely respectful to them even regarding them as the five jewels. Horse, cow and camel are called “bod” cattle while sheep and goat are called “bog” cattle. Due to harsh ecological conditions, harsh weather, long term natural selection and

generations of herding, the Mongolian livestock have grown to be what they are today. Herders have their livestock roam the grasslands throughout the four seasons. All their hard work is later paid off when they start reproducing and delivering in spring, adding to the heads of livestock the household owns. About half of the country with the population of just over a three million are herders. The National Statistics Office suggests that there are around 66.5 million heads of cattle in Mongolia. This number may be compromised however with the accurate number ranging at around 40 million. In order ►

► for herders to get larger bank loans, they often say they have more livestock than they actually do. Many people often question as to why Mongolia isn’t the largest meat exporter in the world. This is due to the high complexities that come with exporting meat. Back when Mongolia was a satellite state, the country exported around 60,000 tonnes of meat to the Soviet Union. Now, the country periodically suffers from outbreaks of Foot and Mouth Disease, an infectious viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals. The disease does not affect people. The government has started to

implement FMD prevention measures according to the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code (2015). Furthermore FMD can now be diagnosed in provincial labs within a few hours and significant upgrades to the equipment and training have been made. Mongolia has also started to vaccinate livestock against other contagious diseases such as Brucellosis. Perhaps the largest threat to the livestock in Mongolia is the dzuds, a severe winter with cold waves. During the dzuds a large number of livestock die mainly because of starvation as they are unable to graze. In other cases they

may die directly due to the cold. It is common for dzuds to kill over a million of livestock just on one winter. The 1944 records show that almost 7 million heads of livestock were lost to the dzud. The last severe dzud was recorded in the winter of 2009-2010. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture stated that 2,127,393 heads of livestock were lost during that time. There are numerous economic and social consequences to this. Some herders lose all their animals to the dzud and move to the cities to seek a new life, adding further strain on the capital city’s capacity. ■



Cattle: **4.4** Mill.



Goat: **27.1** MILL.



Sheep: **30.6** Mill.

10 reasons to travel to **Mongolia**

1. **MOST CAPTIVATING SUNRISES (AND SUNSETS) IN THE WORLD** *Haruki Murakami, best-selling Japanese author*

"Dawn in Mongolia was an amazing thing. In one instant, the horizon became a faint line was drawn upward, higher and higher. It was as if a giant hand had stretched down from the sky and slowly lifted the curtain of night from the face of the earth. It was a magnificent sight, far greater in scale...than anything that I, with my limited human faculties, could fully comprehend."

2. **THE VAST UNTOUCHED STEPPE** *Stanley Stewart, British author of "In the Empire of Genghis Khan: A Journey Among nomad"*

"I waited half a lifetime for Mongolia only to arrive, fortuitously, at the moment I was best equipped to appreciate it. Any older, I might have found five months in the saddle too arduous. Any younger and I would not have taken such pleasure in those innocent landscapes, in the grasslands' wonderful solitudes, or in the rich hospitality of nomads. Nor would I have understood Mongolia as a kind of homecoming."

3. **MONGOLIANS ARE THE MOST HOSPITABLE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD** *Joe Rohde, Vice President of Creative at Walt Disney Imagineering*

"No matter how much one reads about the tradition by which strangers are welcomed into a random ger, it is remarkable to experience."

4. **YOU CAN RECONNECT WITH NATURE WHILE CROSSING THE COUNTRY ON HORSEBACK** *Tim Cope, author of "On the Trail Genghis Khan"*

An Epic Journey Through the Land of the Nomads" about his 10,000 km solo odyssey that took over three years of travelling from Mongolia to Hungary on horseback. "Feeling the air, in touch with the way the world works, aware of everything around you. In the wintertime you even realize when the days shorten by one or two minutes. If I'm in an apartment for a week I totally lose touch with what the moon's doing, where the stars are, or what the weather's doing, and I start to lose my strength."

5. **IT IS FULL OF UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES** *Andre Tolme, author of "I Golfed Across Mongolia" about the 12,170 shots it took to cover 1,200 miles in 90 days*

"As I wander across the land, there is no doubt in my mind that golf must have originated here. The horses, goats, and sheep keep the fairways mowed down to the perfect playable height. Every day is a sunny day (perfect for golf), and the marmot holes make perfect targets."

6. **FOR THE TRACES OF ANCIENT HISTORY - THAT STILL EXIST!** *Ian Johnson, traveler*

"To realize that Mongolia is, in many respects, unchanged from its historical period is a fascinating draw. How many other periods of history can you find reflected in an existing society? Mongolia, to me, offers a picture of Living History."

7. **PRISTINE LAKE KHUVSGUL: THE BLUE PEARL OF MONGOLIA AND ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST** *Lubomir Svoboda, scuba diving expert*

"I was surprised to hear that it is possible to drink straight from the lake. A place like that is rare in this world."

8. **FOR THE ULTIMATE IN WILDLIFE WATCHING - NO MATTER IF YOU ARE A BIRD OR A BEAR LOVER** *Balazs Sziget, birdwatcher*

"From the endless Gobi desert to the slopes of the Altai mountains covered with beautiful evergreen forests, this country provides unspoilt scenery, stunning landscapes and a mouthwatering array of species."

9. **TO SEE MODERNITY MEET ANCIENT HISTORY IN THE CAPITAL CITY ULAANBAATAR** *National Geographic Traveler*

"Nearly half of Mongolia's three million residents are nomads, and most of the rest live in Ulaanbaatar - the country's capital and the largest city. Its ten museums, close proximity to national parks, and collection of imperial palaces and Buddhist monasteries qualify Ulaanbaatar as a destination rather than way station."

10 **BECAUSE IT WILL CHANGE YOU - FOREVER** *Liza F.Carner, author of "Moving with the Seasons: Portrait of a Mongolian Family"*

"While in Mongolia, I certainly explored new landscapes, but more importantly, I discovered new ways of seeing and being. Spending time with my Mongolian family recalibrated my internal scale to what I needed to have a happy life."

Master of thousand skills



D.Gombo-Ochir, the best herder of Mongolia and herder of Erdenesant soum of Tuv Province

On the eve of the last day of the lunar month, when Mongolians were busy preparing for the Tsagaan Sar (White Moon Festival), I was heading home with the constant thought, “Who are the Mongolian herders of XXI century?” This baffling question would certainly expose many inaccurate assumptions and many accurate thoughts as well. Some might say that they are nomadic herders who still maintain centuries old traditions, while some might argue that they are outsiders, abandoned from the Mongolian modern society and its free market economy. Others denounce them as parasites who overuse natural resources and destroy valuable grassland. On the other hand, many people defend them stating that they are the backbone of the Mongolian society and culture.

These thoughts kept me busy for indefinite time, and suddenly I was at the home of D.Gombo-Ochir, a herder of 4th bag of Erdenesant soum of Tuv Province. Quite old though agile, he is a smart and eloquent man, a unique representative of modern Mongolian herders.

Master of a thousand skills

Privatization in mid 1990s opened the opportunity for him, who was secretly breeding cattle for his own welfare during socialist regime to do what he liked, animal herding. In his perspective, this was not a profession destined for someone who lacked education as public sentiment believed at that time. It was a profession which require specific skills and indeed it was science itself. For that reason, out of his six children, he chose the one who was the best at math to be a herder. The father believed his son would inherit his distinctive knowledge and work in conformation with nature, the unpredictable super force. The successor all all this is to be the most intelligent one. Time has proven that this was the correct decision when his son G.Enkhtur was honored as the best herder of Mongolia at only 24 years old in 2004.

For me, it seemed interesting that G.Enkhtur tends his livestock easily, starting off with 2000 heads in the spring and reaching 3000 heads in summer with his eyes closed. The reason is a profound system taught by his father. Intriguingly, not analysis nor studies but folklore themes dominate the speech style of Gombo-Ochir. It was evident that old man’s mind is packed with “a great science” not explored by anyone. Therefore, he likes to describe the herder’s knowledge as “king knowledge” and herders as “the masters of a thousand skills”. That is honest evolution indeed: herder becomes meteorologist when they analyze the weather, a botanist when they choose pastureland, a zootechnics when they feed cattle, a biopsychologist when tending their livestock, an economist when selling wool, cashmere fiber, meat and skins of animals and food production technologist when preparing dairy products. There is no other way but to define it rather than a “fine science” when herders memorize their hundreds of sheep individually by their appearance and can point out the location of their horses even when they

haven’t seen them in days days with the same exact accuracy of GPS device. Hence, throughout his lifespan, Gombo-Ochir developed the life philosophy “A person with the ability to sustain a credible life reaches more success than someone with a good diploma”

While listening to his narrative, a conclusion was reached that amongst the many nations of the world, the herders are the ones destined to live closest to mother nature. Regardless of their educational status, the Mongolian herder are given much by nature. Therefore he says that the Mongolian people's wits under the vast steppes, and open sky ferment like airag.

In terms of animal husbandry optimization and increase of its efficiency, Gombo-Ochir has his own distinctive opinion. Mongolianlivestock are small in stature, and paltry in productivity. Yet, they are the best possible naturally gifted versions that could survive harsh weather and elevated mountainous areas of Mongolia. That is why he considers total animal husbandry optimization to be impractical. By opting for various sires from domestic and foreign resources, he made many attempts to improve his livestock . The result was the realistic conclusion that the best breeds were the ones that could survive harsh drought and dzud and require small amount of feeds even though they have considerably low levels of productivity.

Let's go to the countryside

Two stylish young people in expensive sport boots and jeans were eagerly purchasing warm poitreel for livestock at Narantuul black market on a chilly October day in 2017. This was an unusual sight for the merchants of the market. They were A.Tengis, 25 year old graduate of the National University of Mongolia (NUM) who majored in political analysis and an employee of a foreign invested company and Kh.Bilguun, who graduated from the Institute of International Studies in 2009. They both decided to become herders and work under the leadership of D.Gombo-Ochir, the best herder of Mongolia.

Few days prior to this event, D.Gombo-Ochir and his fellow herder P.Ononbat organized a press conference at which they announced to start a movement to create 10 000 employment in rural areas in cooperation with Altan Gar labor exchange.

Currently, Mongolia boasts more than 11 000 herders who own more than 1000 cattle and they are in dire need of people who could help tend their livestock. Hence, they started the movement to fill this huge need and on the other hand to reduce over-concentration in Ulaanbaatar and eliminate at least 10 000 chimneys that pollute the air. The contracted herders shall receive a salary of 500 000 MNT per month and have food and accomodation provided. On top that, the work agreement is to be valid for 1-5 years.

There are thousands of families who lost their livestock ►

► to the drought and dzud which forced them to relocate to Ulaanbaatar. Unfortunately for many of them, Ulaanbaatar has not been place, where after rain comes sunshine. These people could again be herders and return to the countryside. If they agree to sign long-term contracts, they would be provided with livestock, tuition fees and apartment rental fees for the children who study in Ulaanbaatar, mentioned D.Gombo-Ochir.

Within two weeks since the press conference, more than 200 herders from 13 provinces sent their requests to hire herders. Alas, only four people applied for the job. D.Gombo-Ochir participated and presented his projects at “Herders’ Council of Mongolia” and “Economic forum” in 2017 and 2018. He even managed to meet the President and introduced his objective.

Even though, the decision makers were supportive his objectives at first, then it was apparent that everybody's business is nobody's business. Social workers of khoroo (the smallest administrative unit) even hesitated to visit families to ask “Would you like to go to the countryside and become herder?”. Eventually, D.Gombo-Ochir himself visited some families to review their opinions and intentions. Most of them expressed their wish to return to the provinces and do what they love to do. Many were worried to come back to their birthplaces unemployed and most importantly empty-handed.

When he first started the project, he didn't want to pretend to appear to be a patriot like many decision makers who uses media platforms and strong speeches to receive honors. Instead, he wished wholeheartedly to make his contribution to solve unemployment, a pressing issue the Mongolians face today. Unfortunately for him, many members of the parliament and the government employees were unwilling to meet him, citing some bureaucratic excuses. It made him to eventually get disappointed with them who promise everything and anything in order to get votes and then let it sink through the floor after the election.

The good news is he was not disappointed with A.Tengis and Kh.Bilguun, who had no experience of tending livestock but have grown into genuine herders. They first heard of D.Gombo-Ochir's project in autumn of 2017 and what followed immediately were their meeting and contract signing. They both wanted to become herders as well as to

study the Mongolian nomadic lifestyle in person. D.Gombo-Ochir taught them, who at first could not distinguish hornless sheep and goat, everything he knew. In winter of 2017-2018, dzud in Erdenesant soum forced many families to move their livestock to the Gobi Region and stop impregnation. Majority of households who moved to Gobi Regions lost half of their livestock to the dzud. For the young herders, D.Gombo-Ochir and D.Enkhtur, the story was different as they welcomed more than 800 lambs without a single loss. When their contract ended in autumn of 2018, both herders decided not to return to Ulaanbaatar and travelled to Gobi and Khangai regions to try to tend cows and camels.



Currently, D.Gombo-Ochir temporarily left his animal husbandry and lives in a comfortable house at the soum center. He is accompanied by his daughter-in-law and grandchildren. As for D.Enkhtur, he moves his livestock from one place to another depending on the climate and pasture lands. His small ger has almost no furniture and is easy to build and collapse. He is not a man who is isolated from the modern world. He owns a TV set, mobile phone and internet device.

When I was leaving Buushint winter camp, there were thousands of sheep of D.Enkhtur gathered looking like white ankle bones on that last day of the lunar month. The question “Who are the best Mongolian herders of XXI century?” was finally answered. They are the keepers of the nomadic culture and tradition, who have drawn into the whirlpool of free market economy with their livestock. For them, animal husbandry is their business and their method of living. They are the people at the crossroads in the most critical moment. ■



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Event Calendar 2020



FEBRUARY

Bayankhongor province
“Tuin River Frost -2020” Winter Festival
1st week of February

Khentii province
Baljid’s Friends
7th February

Bayan-Ulgii province
Altai Nomads’ Eagle Festival
23-25th February

PUBLIC HOLIDAY
Lunar New Year
24th February

MARCH

Khuvsgul
White Horse Event
1st March

Ice Festival
2nd- 4th March

Ulaanbaatar
Spring Eagle Festival
3rd-4th March

Umnugovi province
1000 Camel festival
6-8th March

Uvs province
“Camel, Ice, Fishing-2020” festival
7-8th March

APRIL

Ulaanbaatar
Shamanism Event
Mongolian Grand Culture and Sports Festival
8th-12th April

Selenge province
Kharaa Spring Celebration: Monos Flower Blooming
20th May - 1st June

MAY

Selenge
Kharaa Spring Celebration: Monos Flower Blooming
20th May - 1st July

JULY

| | |
|--|---|
| Khuvsgul province Reindeer People’s Festival 6-7th July | Khentii province Galshar Race Horses Festival 18-19th July |
| Public holiday Naadam traditional festival 11th-13th July | Govisumber province Cultural Festival of Borjigon clan 30-31st July |
| Bayankhongor Province “Zag-Baidrag’s Brown Basin” - Mongol Tuuragtan’s Kharvuul Grand Festival 19-21st July | Uvurkhangai province Silk Road-Kharakhorum City” Tourism and Cultural Event 15-17th July |
| Ulaanbaatar Naadam Night 11th July | Mongolian Felt Festival 22nd July |
| Tuv province Sheep Bash 28th July | “Yak festival” 22nd July |
| | 800th anniversary of Karakorum July |





AUGUST

Bayankhongor province

YAK FESTIVAL
1-2nd August

Arkhangai province

Orkhon Valley, The Journey of
99 Little Warriors
5th August

Ulaanbaatar

Danshig Festival
1st week of August

Mongol Festival
5th August

Khuraldai Festival - Eagle
Celebration
15th August

Govi-Altai province

Sand Festival 2020
8-9th August

Uvs province

Oirats Ethnic Art
International Festival
4-6th August

Arkhangai

1000 Foal Festival
13th-15th August

SEPTEMBER

Ulaanbaatar

Airag Festival
September

International
Horse Archery
Tournament
17-20 September

Umnu-Gobi

Sand Dune
Festival
Second weekend of
September

Dundgovi province

Herder's Festival
Event
8-9th September

Dornogovi province

"Shambala Grand
Prayer Ceremony"
10th September

Khovd province

Tea-Road
Heritage
Festival
25-28th September

OCTOBER

Bayan-Ulgii provinc

Eagle festival-2020
1st week of October

NOVEMBER

Khentii province

1000 Horses
Festival of the
Steppe
3rd weekend of
November

Sukhbaatar province

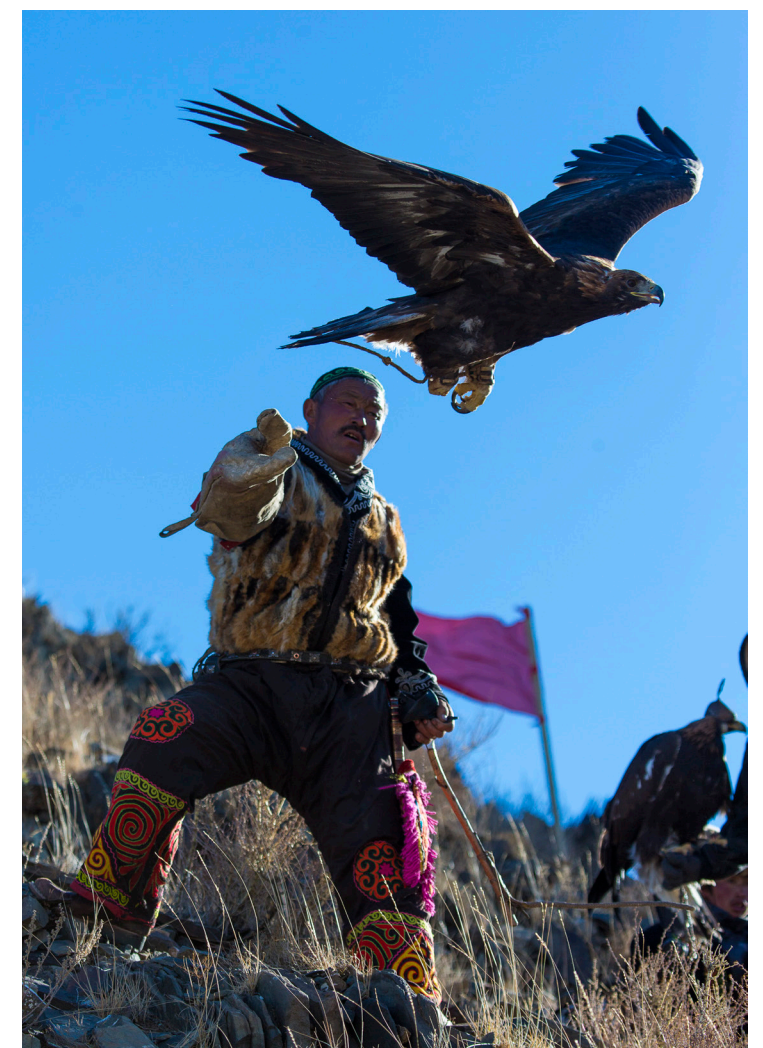
Agtana Khureet
Khulegch
Mens Festival,
International
Photographers
Competition

16-17th November

DECEMBER

Uvurkhangai province

"Karakorum
Ice Festival"
Ice hiking
competition
7-8th December



Religion

Mongolians have a reputable history of having an open-minded attitude towards all religions. Historical records reveal that there were 12 Buddhist temples, 2 Islamic mosques, and a Christian church In the capital city of the Great Mongol Empire Karakorum and in, under the rule of Munkh Khaan, the grandson of Chinggis Khaan the first-ever inter-religion theoretical debate was held in 1254. They even legalized religious freedom in the "Ikh Zasag" law.

SHAMANISM

Shamanism, one of the oldest religious beliefs still exists among Mongolians today in a close relationship with an original ideology that values an existence congruent with nature and Tengrism (the belief to worship the sky). Tengrists believe the sky, earth, nature, and spirits of their ancestors guard and bless all people. Therefore, they aspire not to disturb the ecological balance, and live a sacred life, cultivating their spirituality, valor, and intellectual powers.

Costumes and ceremonies of shamanism are truly astounding. It is believed Mongolian shamans' guardian spirits remain in their costumes, which have specific traditional ways of being made and worn. Mongolian Shamans differ slightly between each ethnic groups. It is noteworthy that some practices of shamanism have been adopted by Mongolian Buddhism and have created a symbiosis throughout the history.



BUDDHISM

Although Buddhism first arrived in Mongolia as early as 2nd century BC, it became widespread later in the 16th century and since then has been the main religion in the country.

Undur Gegeen Zanabazar (High Saint Zanabazar), the historic enlightener of Mongolia, spread Buddhism in Mongolia. Mongolian costumes, ritual instruments, methods for making statues of gods, and the composition of chants stand out from other Buddhist countries. For instance, Mongolian mantras are styled differently from Tibetan mantras, and their harmonies sound like Mongolian folk songs with beautiful melodies.

In the 17th century, the peak period of Buddhism in Mongolia, the nomadic and Buddhist schools of medicine were brought together to create great advancement. This period in time is called the "Golden Era" in the history of Mongolian science of medicine.

Buddhism in Mongolia has attained its own unique characteristics, adopting an original way of thinking and the rich traditions of nomads to be identified as "Mongolian." Modern day Mongolians exhibit great religious tolerance, too. It may be because they consider religious beliefs and doctrines as wisdom, and they have deep respect towards any source of knowledge and wisdom. Mongolians can always find something in common with other religions or spiritual beliefs and their own ideology. ■

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MONGOLIA

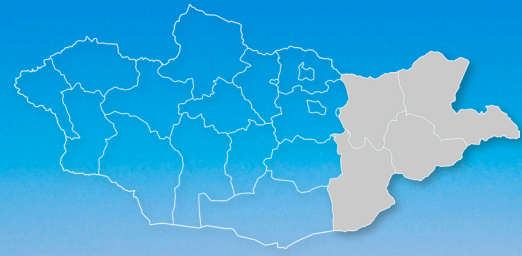
Where legends are born

Mongolia has an interesting geography. The huge country has a little bit of everything. There is vast grassland in the east — where the sun pops above the horizon as though it's growing from the land. The Gobi in the south is where dinosaur fossils and two-humped Bactrian camels wander the sand dunes like ships floating in a sea of sand. In the west there is a mountain range where peaks hide in clouds and glaciers fill the valley. In the north there are some of the world's most spectacular fresh water lakes and rivers. While in central Mongolia there are valleys full of history deer stones, petroglyphs and many more. Tourists can enjoy the landscape in all of these places while learning about the rich traditions and lifestyle of the nomads who have been living the same way for millennia.

This is Mongolia — home of nomads who accept, adapt, and follow the changing moods of Mother Nature.



📍 Altai Tavan Bogd, Ulaankhus sum, Bayan-Ulgii
///annuals.tribe.handwriting



Eastern Mongolia

Since ancient times, the endless steppe of the East has been home to the Khalkha, Buryat, Zakhchin, Dariganga, Barga, and Uzemchin ethnic groups. They are proud of their land on the Dariganga Plateau, home of the legendary Chinggis Khaan.

Delve and appreciate the beauty of Mongolia by watching the sun rise from the horizon - with horses breaking the silence of the morning with their neighs and the thundering sound of hundreds of gazelles galloping in the background Chinggis Khaan would visit this area after each of his war victories. It's wonderful to imagine how by staring at the distant horizon, embracing the vast land with his eyes, he channelled power, wisdom, patience, and courage.

The eastern Mongolian steppe are endless with swaying, feathery grass. The reason why generations of nomadic Mongols have preserved and protected this untouched, virgin land for future generations is perhaps because of their nomadic philosophy and understanding of nature. You could claim this is the wisdom of winning by waiting, not winning by forging ahead.

These endless grasslands are a true treasure kept by nomads for humanity.

The endless steppes of Mongolia are home to thousands of white gazelles. Biologists estimate that approximately one-third of the world's white gazelles inhabit in Mongolia.

Professor Kirk Olson, from the University of Massachusetts - Amherst, witnessed a rare wonder in 2007, when he climbed a small hill in the vast steppe. Olson saw a herd of what he thought was a few thousand gazelles. He later told BBC: "But it was really one edge of a group that ended up being over 250,000 by one estimate."

"We were simply amazed at the sight. The image I have in my mind of seeing this massive aggregation of gazelles will always be etched into my memory. I expected that we would come across gazelles at times in large and impressive numbers, but not a couple hundred thousand in one sweep across the horizon. I had never seen that many before and that many had never been documented."

Mongolian gazelles are renowned for their huge herds. The average herd will have at least 300-500. Recently, a 80,000 head herd was registered. White gazelles make up the highest number of wild animals in Central Asia.

Footprints in Mongolian gobi

The clay from the former shores, hills, and soil of the Cretaceous period look like they are on fire during sunrise and sunset. You may feel like you are on a different planet. Really though, you're in the Mongolian Gobi Desert.

Dinosaur fossils from millions of years ago still remain here. Most are small and often hidden by Saxaul forests, which are ubiquitous with the Gobi, so you may pass them by without noticing. Desert plants, dry but capable of coming to life in an overnight rain, are also unique to the Gobi.

Though the golden sand won't remember your steps once the wind blows, the footprint of the Gobi desert will stay in your heart forever.

Nature's Song of Sand - Khongor sand dunes

The Khongor sand dunes lie from northwest to southeast. The dunes are 27 km at its widest covering 965 square km in total reaching 200 meters (650 feet) in height.

While the southern part of the dunes is rocky and mountainous, the central part is barren with no plants and northern part has several oases.

Flaming Cliffs - Bayanzag

This is the place that made the Gobi desert famous all over the world. During the 1920s, a research expedition led by American explorer Roy Chapman Andrews found dinosaur eggs, a rhino-like huge dinosaur skeleton, and a parrot-nosed dinosaur. Famously the explorer happened upon the find when he fell down a cliff.

Bayanzag spreads across 8 km in a valley of the Arts Bogd mountain range. When the sun sets, Bayanzag's cliffs are breathtaking in their beauty with red clay almost glowing. One might say only gasp, "it's flaming" - which is how it gets its name.

Gobi Waterfall - Tsagaan Suvarga

Tsagaan Suvarga is a natural formation that looks like ancient city ruins, located in Luus soum of Dundgobi province. Its highest point is 30 meters, and its length is 400 meters. During downpour water flows from its vertical walls, and it looks like a huge waterfall.

Dragons Grave - Nemegt Mountain

Nemegt mountain, Altan mountain, Tugrugiin Shiree, Ukhaa Tolgod, and Khermen Tsav are well known places in the global palaeontology science, often hosting international research expeditions.

#feelmongolia



Diversity in Harmony

Western Mongolia

Western Mongolia has a unique combination of desert, steppe, taiga, tundra and mountains. This land is home to many ethnic groups that have lived together in harmony since ancient times. Diverse in wildlife and people, Western Mongolia has a rich history of traditional dances (biyelgee), throat singing (khoomei), and tsuur (flute-like instrument) inherited from ancestors.

Primeval footprints of Khoïd Tsenheriin Cave

The walls and ceiling of Khoïd Tsenheriin (Northern Blue) Cave, 25 km from Mankhan soum in Khovd province, is home to paintings by Central Asian tribes during the Palaeolithic Age. Large birds, camels, mammals, buffalo, and trees are painted with deep red and beige pigment. These animals inhabited Mongolian territory in ancient times, but are now extinct. The paintings' content and composition make them an important part of Palaeolithic history and culture studies.

Home to Gobi Bear - Eej (Mother) Khaïrkhan Mountain

Eej Khaïrkhan is a unique formation located in Tsogt soum of Gobi-Altai province. The area has rich wildlife and rare birds such as partridges, Mongolian ground jays, and Great Bustards. The blue mountain of the desert is also home to the "never seen" Gobi bear, wild Bactrian camel, and drought-resistant saxaul trees that absorb sunshine and thermal energy.

Untouched Beauty - Uvs Lake

Uvs lake is the birthplace of the Hunnus, Turks and Skiffs who left an unforgettable mark on world history. The lake's basin is the largest untouched watershed in Central Asia. This area is a natural wonder, treasure chest of 40,000 archaeological artefacts. In 2003, it was registered on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list. Uvs lake is the largest lake in Mongolia covering 3,350 sq. km.

The Blue Pearl of the north - Lake Khuvsgul

Mongolia is part of the Amur river basin that contains more than 300 rivers and 26 large lakes. The seemingly boundless Khuvsgul lake, which Mongolians call 'Mother Sea', has a secret trail that you can walk along. The lake is 2 million years old and makes up 0.4 percent of the world's fresh water reserve.



Land of Sky Worshippers

Northern Mongolia

Northern Mongolia has attracted the hearts and minds of many travelers throughout the year. Northern Mongolia is home to the tall mountains of Khangai and Sayan, Khuvsgul lake that shimmers like a borderless blue pearl, the Darkad Tsenkher depression (a huge valley of rivers flowing from high mountains), and deer stones.

The Taiga's nomads, reindeer herders by trade, live here. In the deep forests of the mountains they worship the sky and nature. The Khotgoid ethnic group whose pride is their fast-flowing Tes river, Khalkh people who worship their picturesque mountains, and the hard working Darkhad people all live in this area.

Taiga Nomads-Reindeer Herders

An interesting ethnic group lives in the northern boundary of Mongolia, in the basin of the Tengis, Sharga and Shishged rivers and in the mountains of the Jams and Ulaan taiga. They are the Tsaatan people, or reindeer herders. They have unique traditions and lifestyle. They live far away from civilization and the progress of the modern world, herding their reindeer in deep forests, where it's 27 degrees Celsius in summer and -55 to -60 degrees Celsius in winter.

Majestic Beauty-Khoridol Saridag

The Khoridol mountain range combines meadows, steppe, and taiga. It is one of the rare places that has been left truly untouched. Many rivers begin in these mountains, including the Arsaï river that flows from 70 meters above sea level and turns into the highest waterfall in the country. However, this waterfall flows only when it rains. The Khoridol mountains are separated from the Bayan mountain range by the Arsaï Passage. The Darkhad Depression side of this range is very steep.

Abundance of Rare treasures - Deer Stones (megaliths)

In a large valley between the mountains there are 14 deer stones. It's rare to see so many of them in one place. These deer stones are made of granite and range between 2.3 and 4.8 meters in height, up to 1 meter wide, and 50cm thick. The deer's head usually faces the sky as ancient nomads thought of deer as heavenly animals. The front of the stone is decorated with images of the sun and moon followed by the image of the deer, and a wide belt-like decoration.

Deer stones also include images of ancient belongings, such as bows and arrows, mirrors, pentahedron shields, tools, knives with round mirror-like ornamentation, and unknown long weapons. Some rare stones have images of two deer opposite each other, facing the foundation.



Cradle of Mongol Empire

Central Mongolia

Central Mongolia was the heart of the Great Mongol Empire. The vast grasslands of Central Mongolia is where the first official capital, Karakorum, was founded in the 13th century. This place was home to ancient people who engraved rocks and deer stones to document their lifestyle.

Wonder of Volcano - Khorgo Volcano

Academics have proven that Khorgo was a volcano that erupted twice 9 million years ago and became dormant. Khorgo volcano, 2240 meters above sea level, is the youngest of all the volcanoes in the country. Its pre-historic lava flowed 100 km to the east of the mountain, and to the Suman and Chuluut rivers. The crater slopes at about 50 degrees, its depth is about 100 meters, and its diameter is 300-400 meters.

Ancient Gallery of Art - Bichigtiin Khad Rock

Bichigtiin Khad rock in Ikh Bichigt in Bayankhongor province, is full of ancient rock engravings. An image of a man with an ox-drawn harrow shows that people used animals to plough and cultivate the land 3000 years ago. Many places in Mongolia such as Khoid Tsenher Cave in Khovd province, Tevsh mountain in Uvurkhangai province, and the Tsagaan river in Gobi-Altai province have similar rock inscriptions left by ancient people. Though these paintings are rather primitive and do not show things in sequential order, they are amazing stone records that tell US about their creators' lifestyle and mentality.

Natural Heritage of Humanity - Orkhon Valley

A must-see place for those who want to walk the trails of the Mongolian Empire's glory and fall, is the Orkhon Valley Protected area. The Ulaan Tsutgalan Waterfall, ruins of Karakorum built in 1220 by Chinggis Khaan, Erdenezuu monastery and its 108 stupas, and Tuvkhun monastery on top of a mountain (you'll need to hike 600 meters to reach it!) - are all located along the Orkhon river. The valley is 360 km from Ulaanbaatar.

The simple secret of DIE-HARD NOMADS

Mongolian’s seemingly simple nomadic lifestyle is enriched by the philosophy of living in harmony with the natural environment. Each and every symbolic act of nomads - be it a greeting, paying respect, telling a legend or singing an epic; inevitably has deep symbolism and meaning.

Add to that the melodic double tone coming from human vocal cords and the steppes filled with distinct long songs that will send shivers down your spine. Mongolia in the 21st century is a rare and unique land existing in a modern world while managing to preserve a harmonious relationship between man and nature.



In the middle of moving to next location to settle

Mongolians and THE NOMADIC LIFESTYLE

There are many stories of tourists being overwhelmed by the unreserved and open-hearted hospitality of the people who are maybe best known for once dominating half of the world. However, if you look deeper into their spirit, you will witness how strong, stern nomadic men can be moved to tears by their race horses rushing to a finish line. How they sing and play music for a mother camel that has rejected her calf until she accepts it once more. How women sing to their domestic animals to calm them while milking them.

It is astounding how the tough, rustic Mongolian nomads - who survive such harsh climates - show tender care towards animals, plants, and each other. Have you heard of any other people who have designed their boots with soft, wide, curved soles to avoid hurting seedlings?

These are secrets hidden deep inside the simplicity of their lives. Mongolian nomads have a long tradition of soothing and comforting female animals that have rejected their newborns. To make a female sheep accept its own lamb or an orphan lamb a ritual called "toig" is practiced, a "chuugii" for goats, and a "khuuslukh" for camels. These rituals involve a form of singing technique used to calm the livestock.

For example "khuuslukh" is a ritual singing "khuus, khuus, khuus" to pacify the camel and stir the inner soul of the camel. A vivid example is beautifully portrayed in the documentary "The story of the Weeping Camel." These rituals are nomadic intangible heritages passed down from generation to generation and practiced even today.



ORIGINS of Mongolians

If you asked a Mongolian, "Are you a descendant of Borte Chono and Gua Maral?" They would probably agree with a nod and a vague smile. Of course, they know they are agreeing with a mythological belief, but, these ideas have been inherited from their ancestors. To most Mongolians, a wolf is not just another animal, but a spirit of nature and men. The deer is an aesthetic expression of beauty and has strong ties to early shamanism beliefs.

These longstanding beliefs can be seen on deer stones that date back to the Bronze Age and still standing today in Mongolia. On many Mongolian and Southern Baikal (an area that includes east Russia) style deer stones, the deer is portrayed as a heavenly messenger flying up to the sky. This style of carving stands out with its intricate detail and vivid fantasy. There are about 700 deer stones in the world. About 600 of those are in Mongolia and are easily accessible to tourists. ►

MELODIES of nomads

Nomads have a musical mindset and their melodies are an intrinsic part of their lifestyle. Nomads have developed various ways of calling, whistling, whooping, and practicing rituals such as "chuugii," "khuus" and "toig" to communicate with their herds.

However, the most prestigious forms of nomad music are "khuumii," throat singing, and "urtiin duu," long songs. Khuumii and long songs can help you understand the uniqueness of Mongolians as well as their understanding of the world. As they mimic their surroundings, you can hear

the mountains, wind and water, the sounds of birds and other animals, the unity of man and nature, and the echoes of inner souls.

Accompanied by melodies played on a horse-headed fiddle, Mongolian long songs make you feel the timeless freedom and the serene composition of harmony between man and nature. It is not a surprise that any concert hall is too small to fully appreciate khuumii and long songs.

The long song and khuumii are listed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The three-octave long song named “A Melody like the Tears of Heaven” is considered rare and exquisite.



THE HU BAND

The HU is a band from Mongolia that blends heavy metal and traditional Mongolian throat singing. Their first two videos (“Yuve Yuve Yu” and “Wolf Totem”) immediately went viral garnering the band over 30 million views. The explosive reaction to The HU resulted in a number of features about the band in international media such as

NPR, ET India Times, Playboy Mexico, Jack Canal+Fr, Hong Kong 01, DW News Germany and others.

The band’s name The HU, is the Mongolian root word for human being. They call their style “Hunnu Rock”...inspired by the Hunnu, an ancient Mongolian empire, known as The Huns in western culture. Some of the band’s lyrics include old Mongolian war cries and poetry.

► Founded in 2016 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia by their producer Dashka, along with the members Gala, Jaya, Temka, and Enkush. The HU combines Rock Music with traditional Mongolian instrumentation like the Morin Khuur (horsehead fiddle), Tovshuur (Mongolian guitar), Tumur Khuur (jaw harp), guttural throating singing and the bombastic bass and drums of rock. All four members have earned Bachelor’s or higher degrees in music and have several years of touring experience

Mythological MINDSET of nomads

When travelling across Mongolia, you will quickly learn the locals have a tale to tell about the surrounding mountains, rivers, valleys and more. Why?

For Mongolians, myths are stories handed down from their ancestors to help them make sense of the world. All Mongolian legends have historical accounts and wisdom

throughout Asia and the Pacific Rim.

Since the formation of the band, they’ve been working on their first album, The Gereg. The word Gereg was used as the first Diplomatic “Passport” by the Mongol empire during the time of Genghis Khan. The album contains nine songs including viral hits “Yuve Yuve Yu” and “Wolf Totem”, and was released on September 13, 2019 via Better Noise Music (f/k/a Eleven Seven Music).

At last, NATURE

The most intriguing thing about Mongolia is its natural environment. Nature has shaped the religion and philosophy of Mongolians. It has inspired the simplified and satisfied way of living. It is also nature, which at times is harsh and formidable, which has inspired the close-knit and respectful relationships of people. Through thousands of years, nomads have passed on their wisdom of worshipping, adapting, and living in harmony with nature instead of being frightened by it or destroying it.

This knowledge has been passed down through music,

about living harmoniously with nature. For this reason, Mongolians value their myths and pass them down from generation to generation. It's amazing to discover how this culture of dedicating a tale to even the smallest of rocks has merged with their everyday lifestyle. In a sense, the essence of their lifestyle is mythology itself.

songs, costumes, customs, tales and myths that have been told over many nights.

The nomadic lifestyle may seem a slightly inconsistent with the modern world. However its harmony with nature is truly unique and powerful to bring out the true nature of a person.

Discovering this harmony for yourself is one of the first things you should do so. Welcome to Mongolia, the land of ancient history and astounding legends.

Mongolian EPICS

The epic mindset of nomads was reconsidered with the discovery of a 1500 year old angular Altai harp inside the tomb of a warrior. Mongolian epics are songs that are considered to be the living encyclopedia of the country. Singers perform songs that are hundreds to thousands of lines long while playing an instrument. It is inspiring to imagine, 1500 years ago, a man dropping his weapon and singing about peace while playing a harp he crafted

with his own hands. The ancient drawings and runic inscriptions carved on the harp make it even more impressive.

Some short epics can be sung within a night, while others are sung over many nights. Mongolian epics are listed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List for their spirit of original religious beliefs and expression of the mythological thinking and literature of nomads. It is estimated that no more than 20 epic singers are alive today.

► **Mongolian GER**

The Mongolian ger is a classic "building" that expresses Mongolian concepts of symbolism. Although gers have changed over the course of centuries, with the development of new materials for example, it has yet to change in one way.

It continues to exist in harmony with nature.

Many years ago Mongolians believed that if they surrounded their homes with fences, they would lose their freedom, and if they built their homes with stones, they would lose their connection to nature. No matter where you are in Mongolia - from the high mountains in the west to the hot sand of the Gobi in the south - you will come across a ger of a nomadic family. They will welcome you with hot milk tea and a warm bed. And the next time

you travel along the same road, they will probably have moved to another place.

There is an ancient custom of facing the door of a Mongolian ger south - so it can get as much sun as possible. The interior parts of a ger have their own place per customs as well. For example, saddle, bridle, hobble and airag sack are placed on the right side of the ger. This is also the side where the man's accessories such as snuff bottles, knife, wrestling costume, and fur are kept indicating it is his side. The left side of the ger is considered the woman's side with the items such as milking buckets, water tank, and a bedside trunk where fine accessories and clothes, thread and needles for sewing are kept.



Observing THE LIFE OF NOMADS, one rich with symbolism

The historical roots of Mongolians are best explained in the 1204 AD text The Secret History of Mongols:

"The ancestors of Chinggis Khaan - Burte Chono (meaning grey wolf) and his wife Gua Maral (meaning a beautiful deer), came sailing across the ocean and settled in Mount

Burkhan Khaldun, at the spring of the Onon river, and gave birth to a boy named Battsagaan. “

Thousands of years later, the existence of Mongolian nomads is as complicated to understand as the myths surrounding their origin.

Made in Mongolia

In a country with such a rich history, there is much to see and do. To remember Mongolia, many visitors often take home souvenirs. There are some trademark Mongolia items that is guaranteed a great choice with the best prices.

Cashmere

Perhaps the number one item that tourists buy is local cashmere. Mongolian cashmere is high quality and is considered the best cashmere in the world.



The cashmere is produced through traditional hand combing which is the only cruelty free cashmere. Additionally, the long fibers of Mongolian cashmere ensure maximum softness

Interlocking Puzzles

Unlike many developing nations, Mongolians are highly educated with 98% literacy rate, according to UNESCO's International Literacy Data 2013. Mongolians have long played intellectual games and Ulaanbaatar is even home to a Intellectual Museum that showcases these amazing puzzles to visitors. The technical games, which include wooden puzzles that many struggle to put back together, are said to have helped develop the intellectual capacity of locals.

Mental Calculation World Cup 2013 Calendar Calculation winner T. Myagmarsuren can calculate the exact calendar day of your arrival based on the day of your decision to come to Mongolia in less than one second. He had practiced mental calculations for only 4 months when he won the World Cup. The sport of mental calculation is fairly new in Mongolia. You'll be surprised to meet many individuals who are dominating in this field of sports.



Traditional Clothes

Mongolian traditional costumes consist of a deel (a robe), a hat, boots and accessories. The hats are considered to be one of the most original items of Mongolian traditional clothing. You can buy felt or leather boots, pouches and jewelry. They have great respect towards these traditional clothing as well. For example, hats and belts worn by men are to be placed respectfully in the honored place of a home. Though these items can be extremely beautiful, often in matching colors for husband and wife, they have several functions: to keep nomads warm in the harsh winters, to be comfortable while horse riding, and cool in hot summers.

Games

There are numerous games that the Mongolians like to enjoy such as ankle bones, interlocking puzzles and bow and arrows. While the ankle bones are used for fortune telling and for pure joy, the interlocking puzzles



are rather intellectually challenging. Why not scout out a Mongolian bow from Mongolia, one of its earliest creators. The nomads also invented the composite bow which is made of multiple materials laminated together.



Ice Festival

Ice Festival is a 2 days event held on the frozen Khuvsgul lake in March. Events include a gala opening ceremony on the ice, a folklore concert, shaman ceremony and many competitions featuring ice sculptures, ice ankle bone shooting, horse, reindeer sled and ice skating races. Winter sports include downhill and cross-country skiing, ice-fishing contests, a 100 kilometer ice-skating marathon and a 12 kilometer horse sleigh race.



Mongolian cuisine

Mongolian cuisine is an integral part of a nation’s culture and history. The Mongols have engaged in nomadic animal husbandry ever since their beginnings in order to adapt to the harsh climate of the region. Given its climate, Mongolian cuisine heavily consists of meat, dairy products and other animal products. Meat is eaten most during the winter and colder springs. In the warmer months of summer and autumn, Mongolians consume more dairy products, jerky and fruits.

It is hard to classify what kind of meal each Mongolian dish falls into because there are no clear differentiations. For example, dishes such as milk tea with dumplings, Mongolian-style porridge, rice tea or cream soup could be either a snack, starter, or main course.

Dishes such as boiled meat, stuffed intestines, sausages, fried dumplings, fried liver, khorkhog (barbecue dish) and boiled shank are best considered as main course meals, but a person eating any of these does not need to have eaten an entree. Nomads did not sit at dining tables to eat, and they became accustomed to eating all types of food all at once, without separating food into courses.

Thus, it is better to classify Mongolian traditional cuisine into dairy products, meat and animal fats.

With the changing society and culture, Mongolians’ lifestyles and eating habits are also changing. Seventy years under Soviet rule infused European culture into Mongolian society and cuisine. Starting from the transition to a market economy in 1990, Western countries opened their doors to Mongolians and vice versa. Again this brought cultural diffusion to Mongolia.

Mongolian styles of dress, homes and jobs are rapidly evolving along with the cuisine.



UNESCO Intangible Heritage: Airag

The Mongolian traditional beverage of fermented mare milk and its associated techniques were inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO as of late December 2019. Methods for making the airag consist of milking the mares, cooling the milk and churring it over 500 times with the camel felt starter inside the milk to boost the fermentation. At the end of each summer, a square camel felt is put inside the brew and dried up to be stored over the winter. The next summer, the felt is placed inside the new milk.

Making the airag require the nomadic knowledge that has been passed down for hundreds of years. In addition to being used for symbolic and religious festivals, the beverage has been proven effective for curing diseases and is an easily digestible beverage. Those who carry on the tradition of making airag inherited the knowledge from their ancestors, and this heirloom has been passed on through thousands of years.

Do's and Don'ts

Though in the city, these practices are less enforced and one might see a few city dwellers not following the rules. However, it does not mean that you should not follow suit.

Don’t

| |
|--|
| Stand on the threshold when entering the Ger/house |
| Refuse offered drink or food in the Ger/ house (it’s customary for Mongols to offer tea and food as a welcoming omen), at least taste little bit and give back |
| Whistle inside a Ger |
| Lean against the pillars in the Ger |
| Throw water or rubbish into the fire (fire is sacred!) |
| Touch other people’s hat or especially, man’s head |
| Walk over the Uurga (horse catching pole) |
| Point at someone with a single finger |
| Pee in any waters in nature such as lakes, rivers, streams ever! (Water is sacred) |
| Spill milk/dairy in river, well, lakes |
| Talk or joke about bad things that may happen |
| Estimate travel hours as drivers believe it brings evil on the trip |
| Ask names of big mountains while the mountain is still in sight |
| Say thank you too much or for small gestures |
| Forget to pack a small medical kit and personal toiletries for countryside trip |
| Step over dishes and cooking utensils |
| Put your feet up onto table |

Do

| |
|---|
| Greet the people when entering the Ger |
| Give/receive presents with both hands |
| Try to speak Mongolian even it’s just Hello (sain bainuu?), Thank you (Bayarla!) or Bye (bayartai!) |
| Enter or leave Ger through the left |
| Accept food or drink with your right hand or both hands |
| Receive the snuff bottle and gently loosen the top without removing it |
| Bring some small gifts such as stationary for children |
| Always get on horseback from the left |
| Watch over your wallet/purse. Pickpocketing is common in crowded places |
| Shake the hands of someone who you have accidentally bumped feet with |
| Take plenty of bottled water while travelling in the Gobi |
| Base camps have boiler systems. Ask to warm shower water 30 minutes prior to your use. |
| In museums and other entertainment venues, always ask for permission before taking photos. |

Basic Language & Useful Information

GREETINGS - MENDCHILGEE

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Hello! How are you? | Sain baina uu? |
| I am fine, how are you? | Sain, sain baina uu? |
| What is your name? | Tanii ner hen be? |
| My name is ... | Minii ner ... |
| Excuse me, sorry | Uuchlaarai |
| Goodbye | Bayartai |
| Thank you | Bayarlalaa |
| Not at all (No problem) | Zugeer |
| All right! | Za |
| Yes | Tiim |
| No | Ugui |
| How is your health? | Tani bie sain uu? |
| Bon appetite! | Saihan hoollooroi |
| Good night! | Saihan amraarai |
| Have a good trip, good journey. | Sain yavaarai, Saihan ayalaarai |

SHOPPING - DELGUURT

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| How much does it cost? | Ene yamar unetei ve? |
|------------------------|----------------------|

COUNTRYSIDE

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Take away your dog! | Nohoi hori |
| Are you having a good summer? | Saihan zusch baina uu? |
| Are the cattle fattening well? | Uher mal targalj baina uu? |
| Are you watching the sheep well? | Khoni sain hariulj yavna uu? |

HUDUU

VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| I don't understand | Bi oilgohgui baina |
| I don't know | Bi medehgui |
| I can't | Bi chadakhgui |
| Good/Mad | Sain/Muu |
| Large/small | Ikh/baga |
| It is delicious | Ikh amttai baina |
| It is cold | Khuiten baina |
| It is hot | Khaluun baina |
| Let's go | Yaviya |
| Cheers! | Togtooyo! |
| I am hungry | Bi ulsuj baina |
| I am not hungry anymore | |
| I've had enough | Bi tsadsan, bolson |

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Fire station | 101 |
| Police station | 102 |
| Municipal ambulance service | 103 |
| Airport directory | 1900 1980 |
| Directory of railway station | 1900 1949; 21-24193 |
| Phonebook | 109 |
| Taxi service (City taxi) | 1900-1991; 1900-1950; UbCab mobile app |

NUMBERS - TOO

| | |
|-------|--------|
| One | Neg |
| Two | Khoyor |
| Three | Gurav |
| Four | Dorov |
| Five | Tav |
| Six | Zurgaa |
| Seven | Doloo |
| Eight | Naim |
| Nine | Es |
| Ten | Arav |

Traveling - Aylah

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Road, track | Zaam, har zam |
| Straight ahead | Chigeeree |
| Right | Baruun |
| Left | Zuun |
| Stop | Zogs |
| I'm getting off | Buumaar baina, buuya |
| Far | Hol |
| Near | Oirhon |
| Airport | Niseh ongotsny buudal |
| Airplane | Ongots |
| I need help | Nadad tusalna uu |
| I need a doctor | Nadad emch heregtei baina |

Time - Tsag hugatsaa

| | |
|-----------|----------|
| Today | Unuudur |
| Tomorrow | Margaash |
| Yesterday | Uchigdur |
| Now | Odoo |
| Morning | Ugluu |
| Afternoon | Udur |
| Evening | Oroi |



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| MG231 | ULN-HKG | Thursday | 05:20 | 09:35 | 6 June 2019 - 24 October 2019 |
| MG232 | HKG-ULN | Thursday | 11:05 | 15:35 | |
| MG231 | ULN-HKG | Sunday | 04:20 | 08:35 | 9 June 2019 - 20 October 2019 |
| MG232 | HKG-ULN | Sunday | 09:35 | 14:05 | |

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Entry & Exit Formalities



When entering Mongolia, by land or air, fill out the straightforward entry form. You’ll have to register if you plan to be in Mongolia for more than 30 days. Registering in Ulaanbaatar (UB) is fairly straightforward, and it’s also possible in Ölgii if you arrive in western Mongolia.

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

If you are legally exporting any antiques, you must have a receipt and a customs certificate from the place you bought them. Most reliable shops in Ulaanbaatar can provide this. If the shop cannot produce a receipt or if you buy the item from a country market, assume that you will not be able to export the item; it will be confiscated upon departure.

At some sites (especially Kharkhorin and Bayanzag) you’ll be offered furs of rare animals and even fossilised dinosaur bones and eggs. Please do not take up these offers. There are stiff penalties for illegally exporting fossils, including jail time.

Travellers entering at the airport with extra baggage can expect to have their luggage opened and inspected. You can bring the following into Mongolia duty-free:

- 1L of spirits
- 2L of wine
- 3L of beer three bottles of perfume
- 200 cigarettes

VISAS

A 30-day tourist visa is required for some foreign nationals, although a number of countries can visit visa free, including citizens of the USA, Canada and Germany.

MONGOLIAN VISAS

Tourist visas A 30-day tourist visa is required for most countries and can be easily obtained at any Mongolian

embassy, consulate, consulate-general or honorary consul.

Visa on arrival If you are travelling to Mongolia from a country that has no Mongolian consulate, you can pick up a 30-day tourist visa on arrival at the airport in Ulaanbaatar. You’ll need T108,000 (or dollar equivalent) and two passport photos – you should also have a pre-approval letter from an organisation or company in Mongolia.

90-day visa-free nationalities Citizens of the following countries can stay in Mongolia for up to 90 days without a visa: Belarus, Brazil, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macau, Serbia, Ukraine and USA. If they stay less than 30 days, nothing needs to be done, other than having their passport stamped when they enter and leave the country. If they stay more than 30 days, they need to register.

Other visa-free nationalities Citizens of Canada, Germany, Israel, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Russia, Thailand and Turkey can stay visa-free for up to 30 days; Philippines passport-holders can stay for 21 days without a visa, and Hong Kong citizens can stay visa-free for up to 14 days.

Registration All visitors who plan to stay more than 30 days must be registered within seven days of their arrival.

Extension Visitors can extend on a per-week basis. A one-week extension is T22,000. A 30-day extension is T108,000. If you overstay your visa the fine is also T108,000. When requesting an extension, you may be asked for a flight itinerary printout.

Regulations To check current regulations, try the website of the Mongolian embassy in Washington DC at www.mongolianembassy.us. Other websites to check include www.immigration.gov.mn and mfa.gov.mn.

TOURIST VISAS

Cost Standard tourist visas generally last 30 days from the date of entry, and you must enter Mongolia within three months of issue. Each embassy or consulate sets its own price. For single-entry/exit visas you can expect to pay: A\$230 in Canberra, UKE40 in London, C\$90 in Ottawa and Y405 in Běijīng.

Issuing time Visas normally take several days, or even up to two weeks, to issue. If you want your visa quicker, possibly within 24 hours, you will have to pay an ‘express fee’, which is double the normal cost. If you want to stay longer than 30 days, tourist visas can be extended in Ulaanbaatar.

Multiple-entry visas Multiple-entry/exit tourist visas are usually only issued to foreign residents who do a lot of travel.

TRANSIT VISAS

These visas last 72 hours from the date of entry. This period will only allow you to get off the Trans-Mongolian train for a very short time before catching another train to Russia or China. A single-entry/exit transit visa costs between US\$25 and US\$60, depending on where you apply for it, and cannot be extended. You will need to show the train or plane ticket and a visa for the next country (Russia or China).

VISA EXTENSIONS

If you have a 30-day tourist visa, you can extend it by another 30 days. For extensions, go to the Office of Immigration, Naturalisation & Foreign Citizens. The only catch is that if you stay longer than 30 days you have to be registered at this office (which you should have done within seven days after arrival).

The office is located about 1.8km east of Ulaanbaatar airport (next to the large sports arena), an inconvenient 15km trek from the city centre. The office can get quite busy, so try to arrive early to avoid the lines. There is a small cafe here that serves meals if you get stuck during the lunch hour. An information desk with English-speaking staff can help answer your questions and point you to the correct line.

The INFC office is a branch of the main visa office of the Ministry of External Relations (www.mfa.gov.mn). You may be sent to the ministry if your visa situation is complicated (ie you require a work permit). The entrance is on the west side of the building. In Mongolian it’s known as: Gadaadiin Irgen Haryatiin Asuudal Erhleḡ Gazar (Гадаадын Иргэн Харьяатын Асуудал Эрхлэх Газар).

If you have already registered, you should apply for an extension about a week before your visa expires. It costs T3600 per day and the minimum extension is seven days. You will need a passport-sized photo and must pay a T5000 processing fee. The extension will be issued on the same day. Credit cards may be accepted, but it’s best to bring cash in case the machine isn’t working.

Several guesthouses in Ulaanbaatar will take care of visa extensions (and registration) for a small fee. If you don’t have a letter of support, you can write your own (handwritten is OK); the letter should state the date of your arrival, the date of extension and the reason for travel.

Getting a visa extension outside Ulaanbaatar is difficult, as officials would need to send your passport back to Ulaanbaatar. In an extreme situation this might be possible at the INFC office in Ölgii.

EXIT VISAS

Transit and tourist visas are good for one entry and one exit (unless you have a double or multiple-entry/exit visa). If you are working in Mongolia, or if you obtained your visa at an honorary consul, you are usually issued a single-entry visa (valid for entry only). In this case, another visa is required to leave the country. These visas are available from the INFC office.

The exit visa situation in particular applies to Israeli and US passport-holders (who usually enter without visas). Israelis need an exit visa if they stay more than 30 days and Americans need one if they stay more than 90 days.

Cost For most nationalities the exit visa costs around US\$15, plus an additional US\$2 per day that you stay beyond the expiry of your entry visa.

Duration It is valid for 10 days, which means that you can stay 10 days after your normal visa has expired.

REGISTRATION

If you intend to stay in Mongolia for more than 30 days, you must register before the end of your first seven days of being in the country (although this rule is sometimes overlooked and you might be able to register in the first 30 days). Note that you can only register twice per calendar year at the INFC office.

Requirements Registration takes place at the INFC office. The process is free, but you have to pay T1000 for the one-page application. You’ll need one passport-sized photo. Most guesthouses can rustle up an invitation to Mongolia for you if you require one.

Signing out As a formality, the registration also needs to be ‘signed out’; however, the official you are dealing with will usually do this when you register so you won’t have to come back. A specific date is not needed; just set the exit date as far out as possible and you can leave any time before that date.

Ölgii office If you’ve arrived in western Mongolia from Russia, the INFC office in Ölgii can get you registered.

Fine If you don’t register, you are liable for a fine (theoretically from US\$100 to US\$300) when you leave the country.

LONG-TERM STAYS

The only way to remain in Mongolia on a long-term basis (ie more than three months) is to get a work or study permit. The company or organisation you are working for should handle this for you, but if you are working independently you need to go it alone. You will almost certainly need a letter from an employer providing a legitimate reason for your stay. Registration typically takes place at the INFC office near the airport.

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| TK363 | .2.4.6. | Ulaanbaatar | Istanbul | 10:50 | 14:30 | A330-300, A330-200 |

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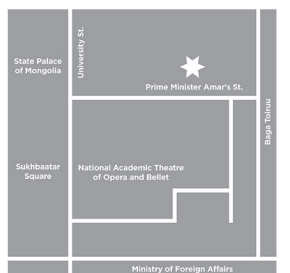


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