



Mongolia

Part 3

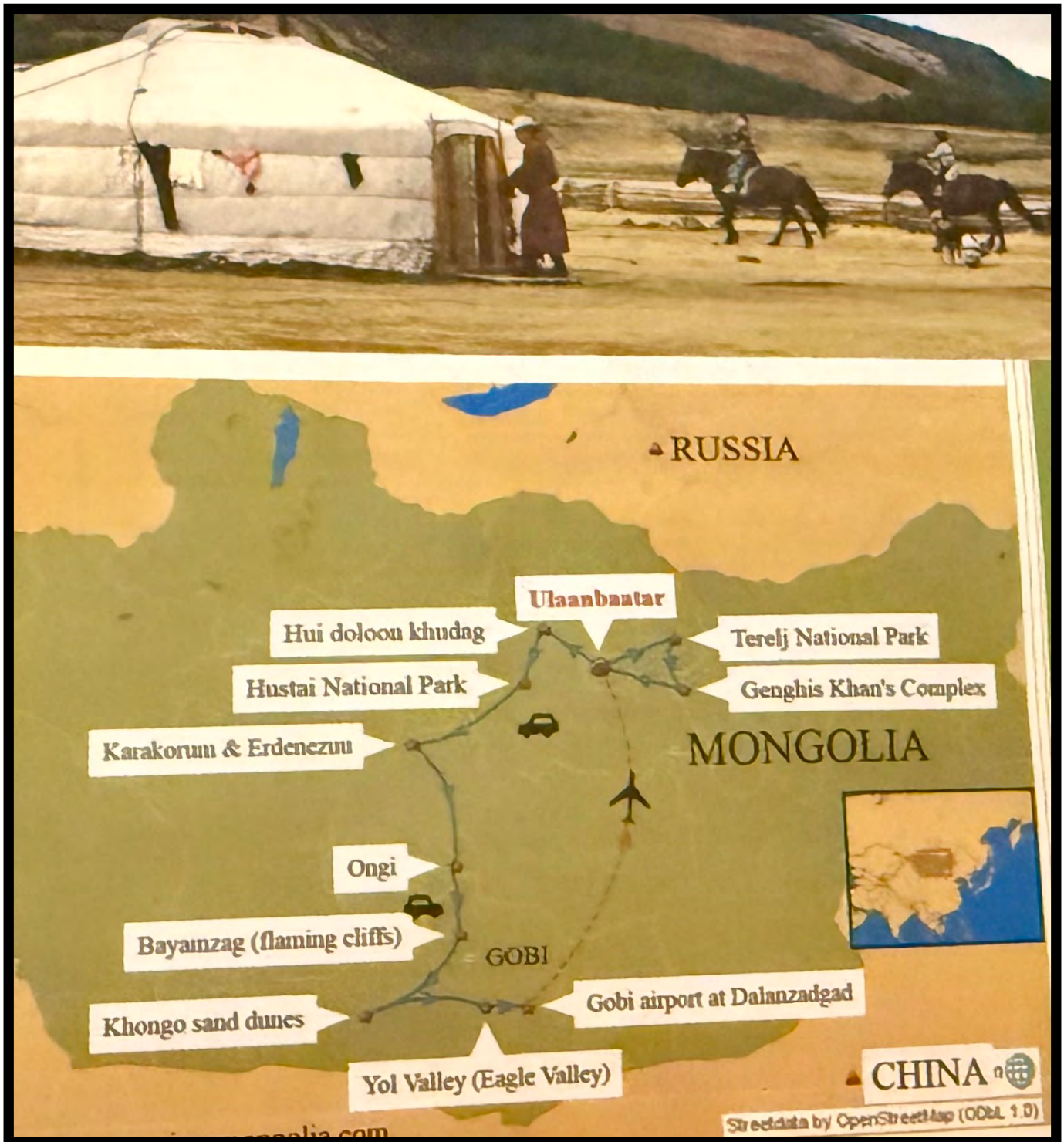
July, 2025

Title



The answer to a 15 year dream. Martha and I visited Mongolia in 2007 (Book 1) and were so impressed with this wonderful country and its people. We were told many times to come again during their Naadam Festival in July and to visit the Nomads in the South Gobi Desert. Our plan was to arrive some year to Ulan Bator, the capital, in mid June and stay in a hostel. There, we could meet a few compatible people and then hire a Mongol with a van to drive us to the South Gobi desert for a few weeks to stay and learn with the nomad people...how they survive well on very little.

Many thanks to Billy G at Amicus who changed the dream into a reality. He designed the itinerary to fit any schedule for the price of the international airfare. United Airlines began service to Ulan Bator (Ulaanbaatar) in May, 2025.



The round trip from Philadelphia was \$2600. Jere Breneisen, my friend, accompanied me on June 30. The 52 km trip to the four star Grand Hill Hotel took over an hour due to the extreme traffic within the city. In 2007, there were 3 coal fired heating plants to keep a million people warm. The city is now 1.7 million folks who rely on 4 plants. Their city is the coldest capital on earth. The country's population today is 3.5 million.

Chuukii Coco, our interpreter and guide, arrived at the hotel in a black Lexus SUV driven by her friend Haagii.





A short run within the city to Gandan, the largest functioning Buddhist monastery in Mongolia. The objects outside do not foretell well what lies on the inside.







The accompanying video gives a more accurate scene.
The most known site in the monastery is the 85 foot ornate statue of Megiid Janraisig.





There are lesser images beside
A few more delights of color.



And then 10 miles out of Ulan Bator, we are welcomed to the steppes of Mongolia ...miles of green with no fences!



We arrived at the get camp at Hustai National Park.



Dinner was delicious.



Our ger had plenty of room and cozy. The communal bathroom was only 100 feet away which is typical for a ger camp in Mongolia.



different from domestic horses as proven by their skull. The world is





blessed that Mongolia has given them a home. We traveled 10 miles out of camp in the evening to see them come from the mountains to drink the fresh water from the stream.







The deer thirsty also.



There were twenty robust Dutch fellows on rented motorcycles who joined us in the camp. Their bikes were all the same. You can see that they all looked down on us because of their height.



Our eight people were aided by 3 drivers and the interpreter, Coco, on the right.. They came from Europe and America and fit comfortably into the 3 Lexus SUV's. Haagii, our driver on the left would run around to open my door when we would arrive. I never expected this kind of courtesy.



A job requirement for a driver was that applicants needed to be mechanics as well. They carry spare bearings, shocks and brakes. Our Lexus suddenly needed a bearing in the front wheel so we had to pull over and get to work.



This was the cue for Coco to introduce us to a popular native game using the knee bones of



sheep for dice. The result of the four dice throw determines whether it's good luck or not.

The video explains it all. Why be bored when there's a mechanical pause in the steppes of Mongolia?

Kharakhorum or Kharkhorin is now a small town. It used to be



the capitol of the Mongol Empire and one of the most important places on the Silk Road. In 1200 AD, the Mongolian Empire stretched from the Sea of Japan to Italy...the largest Kingdom in the history of the world to date. This was the feat of Genghis Khan and his predecessors.

Near Kharkhorum is the oldest Buddhist Monastery complex Erdene Zuu. It was built in the 16th century which contains 108 Buddhist stupas.







A close neighbor was a fancy ger compound which served as our overnight accommodation. Outside, the ger didn't look unusual...but we had our own private bathroom inside!





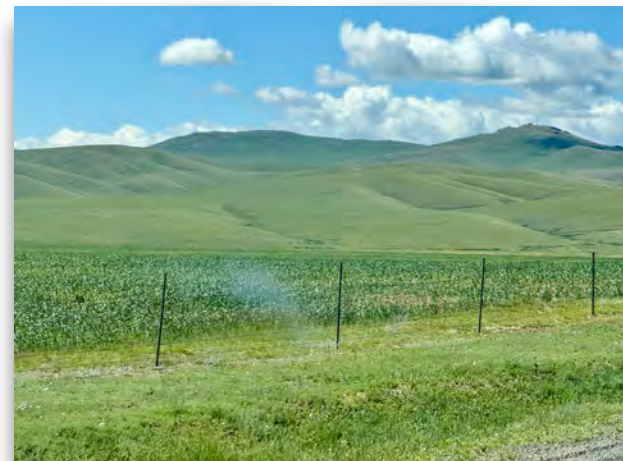


Food wise, there was a delicious choice between seaweed or lamb flour soup.

The Turtle on the mountain, is able to see Kharkhorum, The Erdene Zuu and our ger at the Secret of the Silk Road Resort.



Going into the South Gobi, the terrain became greener as we passed fields of rape seed and corn and then back to grasslands.





Here we saw many horses beside a few gers so we decided to visit. It was a young couple with two children

and Grandma. Their friendly greeting began with some fermented mare's milk and then some







cheese. How wonderful. Their ger had interesting furnishings. Grandma insisted that we visit her so we were rewarded with more fermented mare's milk.

A look at the furnishings and family life.



And then some sheep and goats who had no respect for vehicles.



A stop at the “supermarket” to prepare us for the Dundgovi. The Fanta and Coke looked familiar.

Four hours at high speed with the other two Lexus in



front was quite tiring. The seatbelt offered the head benefit of not



hitting the ceiling while zooming over a rut. After a sudden rain storm, the desert becomes many streams to cross which makes the ride even more bumpy.





Every now and then we had to slow down so as not to hit the wild camels.

The 50 mile steppe in the Gobi is called the Ongi Steppe.

The scene changed from sparse grass to the saxual trees growing in red dirt. The wood is hard not like a pine tree.

The gobi berry flourishes here on thorny bushes. Good for vitamins and marmalades.





The area is known as Bayanzag (Flaming Cliffs). The tall, red ridges look like they are on fire when seen from a distance in the desert.



You are now entering camel country



The area became famous in 1923 when Roy Chapman Andrews with an American expedition discovered the first nests of dinosaur eggs.

They came by ship to Peking, China with a caravan of Dodge cars to cross the country and then into Mongolia. The irony is that a camel train had to keep them supplied along the way. The goal was to study the origin of man. That mission failed because the truth is found in



Genesis but their work proved that dinosaurs laid eggs. There is still a chance to find bits of fossilized eggs while hiking the area.

A mid afternoon rain storm in the desert.





The ger camp had an attractive greeter who also graced us musically

The food was as pleasant as it looked.



Her goodbye had the good taste of sweets.



We drove through the Gobi wilderness to the extraordinary beauty of the Knongoryn Els, a 120 mile long sand dune. This is one



of the most scenic areas of the Gobi Desert.



Tvwden and his family live in a ger of different colors and they are the camel people in this section of the Gobi. He gave us the usual treats but his extra gift was a good smelly lotion on the wrist for health and good luck.



The new day was spent camel riding and sand sledding.





There was a female camel who showed her disapproval by urinating on my leg.









Wild horses love to enjoy the dunes just like the people.





We traveled by paved road back to Ulan Bator rather than by air.



A typical truck supplying modern Mongolia.



Copper mining in Tôv and Ömngövi have brought the big money into the country.



The restaurant in Mandaigovi served us some “high end” pizza.



A novel way to “walk” the horses.





The stainless steel statue of Chinggis Khan can be seen for





miles. His kingdom was vast. He had the largest kingdom ever.

It is possible to get on top of the horse head via elevator and stairs.





The ger camp in Terelj National Park was surrounded by gorgeous scenery.





It wasn't far from "The Turtle". The restaurant buffet featured the scenery well.

The Nice to C U is Mongolia's answer to Seven Elevens.



The Naadam Festival is held every year in the national stadium at Ulaanbaatar. It is the country's biggest, most colorful and most important national cultural event of the year. It celebrates the three sports, horse racing, wrestling and archery. The cover shows the anxious participants ready to

burst into the stadium. The show rivals the halftime show of our football's Super Bowl. The following shows a glimpse of the splendor.































Ghinggis Khan overlooks the
ambiance on Plaza Sühbaatar.

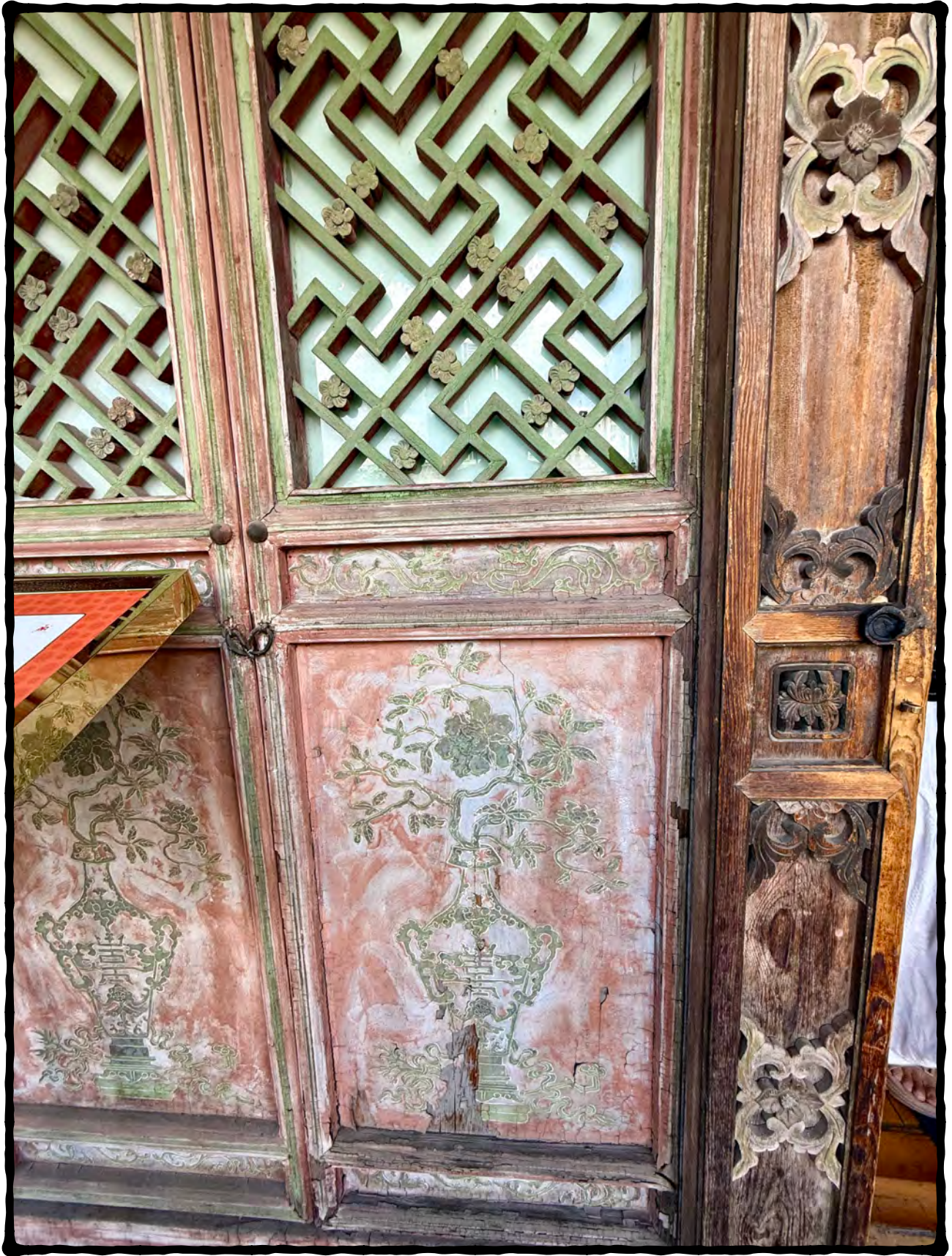


The Winter Palace of Bogd Kahn



In and around.,





Mongolian money



Three nights before we departed I was ill and grouchy. I went from the 8th floor to the lobby to secure proper wifi when the elevator stoped on the 4th floor. A tall, Arabic gentleman sporting a cane entered the car and I thought “oh no, not this”.

He ask, “ Sir, did you have a good day?”.

“Heck no, I just returned from the South Gobi”.

He burst out laughing and we became immediate friends. We saw him of in the coffee shop playing cards with his friends the following

evening so there was a few more witty remarks. The next morning, he and his friend were waiting for the airport taxi and I suggested a photo op and they readily agreed. They were from Dubai. I knocked on the taxi window as they were leaving...

“ Who won the card game?”

His friend replied, “ He did, because he cheated!”... and they sped off never to be seen again.



A few other scenes



The boss himself, Mr. Billy N (Bilgumhtugs Narangerel- his Mongolian name); drove us to the airport in a late model Lexus sedan. It was ok that his speed was 89 mph because it was early morning on a smooth three lane expressway. Our thanks didn't seem enough for all he did for us.

We had to leave our luggage behind because of the weight at that high altitude. It arrived six days later with no damage.



Mongolians are tough, proud and hospitable. We are so thankful to have lived this experience.

Text, videos and most photos by John Bucher Herr

