

THE ProjectsAbroad™ Land of Blue Sky

October 2011, Issue no.22 Projects Abroad Mongolia Newsletter



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Director's note

Sain baina uu,

2011 is an amazing year for Projects Abroad Mongolia. We have had record numbers of volunteers visiting us, who have helped in various parts of the community.

I hope you all will enjoy it.

With warm regards,

Okto Togtuun
Country Director,
PROJECTS ABROAD MONGOLIA

Editor's note

Hey everyone!

In this October issue, you'll be introduced to our culture a bit more and informed about our updates on projects, volunteers and events! Get a glimpse of what it would be like if you volunteer here, in the Land of Blue Sky.

Have a wonderful month,
Sumia
Social Manager

*Stay hungry,
Stay foolish.
- Steve Jobs*

Inside-out

The Golden Eagle Festival

Event date: 1-2 October

Venue: Bayan-Ulgii province Mongolia

This annual festival, which celebrates the Golden Eagle as well as the hunters' traditional culture, is arranged by the local Kazakh community and members of the Berkut Association, a community-based conservation organization.



Historically, nomadic Kazakhs have depended on the Golden Eagles for hunting, and the Berkut Association was founded by Nomadic Expeditions CEO Jalsa Urubshurow to preserve this proud tradition and protect the berkut.

Experience the thrill of riding alongside Kazakh nomads as they hunt with trained Golden Eagles. Specially timed for the winter hunting season, this journey leads

to Mongolia's far western province, Bayan-Ulgii, where Kazakh hunters track small rabbits and foxes in the snow with the help of their magnificent eagles. Following the hunt on horseback through the mountains of Western Mongolia, witness firsthand a unique tradition that has survived for centuries in this remote corner of Asia. Spend the night in a finely decorated Kazakh ger, visit a local mosque, and enjoy the hospitality of the Kazakh families who call this extraordinary corner of the world their home.

This expedition into the rugged Altai Mountains also includes opportunities to ride on horseback alongside the hunters, as well as visits to a local mosque, town market, provincial museum, and archaeological site ([via](#)).



Destination of the month

Chinggis Khaan Statue Complex

As the Eiffel Tower is for the French, the Statue of Liberty for the Americans and The Great Wall for the Chinese, The Taj Mahal for the Indians; The Chinggis Khan Statue, which was erected in 2008, has become an icon of which Mongolia can be proud.

The world's largest statue of a rider on a horse standing at 131 feet tall; the Chinggis Khan Statue is located on the historical site of Tsonjin Boldog, approximately 50 kilometers outside Ulaanbaatar.

The honourable statue is surrounded by 36 columns representing the 36 Mongolian Khans. The entire edifice is covered in 250 tonnes of steel. Also, the statue complex gate is decorated with statues of 9 generals of Chinggis Khan.



Visitors ascend to the exhibition hall using an elevator at the back of the horse and then walk to the horse's head passing through its chest and the back of its neck from where they will have an excellent panoramic view over the complex area and the scenery beyond.

The 40 meters high steel statue of Mongolia's Chinggis Khan houses a restaurant, a small art gallery, a meeting room, a large lobby and an observation deck.

In the art gallery you can enjoy selected art works by Mongolian artists with Mongolian historical significance and cultural information. In the restaurant you can enjoy European and Mongolian Cuisine.

The complex was designed by sculptor D. Erdembileg and architect J. Enkhjargal. Construction is currently underway and upon completion the statue will be surrounded by over 200 ger camps designed and arranged like the pattern of horse brand marks that were used by the 13th century Mongol tribes. 10 thousand trees will also be planted.



The complex project plans also includes a spa, hotel and golf course reporting to be costing a massive \$4.1 million.

The Statue is described as Chinggis Khan holding a golden whip in his hand as mounting his horse. This is the historical place where Temujin (his childhood name) found a golden whip on this hill during his travels to Hereid tribe.

Mongolians hope that this complex will provide a new and distinctive image for the Mongolian tourism industry. The Chinggis Khan Statue is currently the biggest equestrian statue in the world ([via](#)).

News



Desertification threatening Mongolia

Desertification has already become a global environmental issue and is one of the major challenges that countries will face in the 21st century. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) defined the term “desertification” as “land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities.” According to a study conducted under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), land degradation, which is defined as the reduction or loss of the biological or economic productivity of drylands, affects one third of the Earth’s surface and more than one billion people. Mongolia has recently been included in the list of the countries that seriously suffer from land degradation.

A serious and widespread desertification in Mongolia is caused by climatic factors as well as human activities. Ninety percent of Mongolian territory can be regarded as vulnerable to desertification. These areas are almost exclusively used as rangelands, home to about 30 million heads of livestock and many more species. Therefore, proper policies and management have to be taken into effect in order to protect rangelands from desertification and properly cope with the consequences of desertification. Mongolia has an extreme continental climate with long, cold winters and short summers. Precipitation is highest in the north and lowest in the south. Some regions of Gobi sometimes receive no precipitation at all.

(via ubpost).

Placement info

MONTSAME national news agency of Mongolia



The MONTSAME news agency is one of the first media organizations of Mongolia. It was founded on July 19, 1921 as MONTA, the Mongolian Telegraph Agency. The Agency has started publishing newspapers in Mongolian and Russian languages since 1921.

As a member of the Organization of the Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA) the MONTSAME news agency exchanges regularly news and information with its 32 members and supplies news and information on events taking place in Mongolia to the OANA database.

Our agency has cooperation agreements on news exchange with news agencies such as ITAR-TASS, RIA Novosti, REUTERS, XINHUA, VIA, PTI, YONHAP, PRENSA LATINA, ANADOLU, BTA, PAP, Voice of America, Kyodo Tsushin, and UKRINFORM.

MONTSAME has newsgathering network of correspondents and reports in the Ulaanbaatar head office, country's 21 provinces and in Moscow and Beijing cities.

Their daily activities include:

1. Gathering, processing and distribution of domestic news
2. Supplying current international news to Mongolia public
3. Delivery of information about Mongolia to foreign public

Publications for domestic readers:

- Daily newspaper the "MONTSAME News"
- The "Humuun bichig" weekly newspaper in traditional 800 years old Mongolian script

Publications for foreigners in Mongolia:

- Daily bulletins in Russian and English, available in print and e-mail editions
- "The Mongol Messenger" English weekly
- "Novosti Mongolii" Russian weekly
- "Mengu xiaoxibao" Chinese weekly
- "Mongoru Tsushin" Japanese weekly
- "Mongolia Today" English quarterly magazine
- "Mongolia" yearbook in English
- Other publications such as albums, calendars, booklets and post – cards featuring history and culture of Mongolian people.

Placements you can volunteer:



Mongol messenger, Mongoru Tsushin

Your role as a volunteer:

There are 6 staff members at the Mongol Messenger. Volunteers will work in the office, using a computer and the internet.

Your role here is as an intern. You will begin by shadowing professional journalists, learning from them and hopefully gaining an insight into the field.

Your responsibilities will depend on your previous experience, as well as your enthusiasm and level of initiative. However, to begin with you must view yourself as an intern with a learning role. The onus is on you to prove yourself. You should dress the part and take your role seriously.

Flexibility, on both sides, is the key to all our placements. As long as you are prepared to work hard and do the best you can, no one will insist on you doing something you are not happy about.

Volunteers in action

*Photo article
Medicine project (Michael Rowe, Charlotte Clifford)*



Volunteers in action

*Photo article
Sports project (Matt Cosad)*



Sarah Chapman (Law, Human Rights project volunteer)

Mongolian Wrestling

It's Wednesday afternoon, we have diligently done 2 ½ days at work already this week, so decided to take the afternoon off and indulge in a bit of culture and take in the Mongolian Wrestling.

We departed for the Wrestling Palace in the east of the city, paid our 5000Tug (after some slight confusion as to where the tickets could be acquired from) and settled in for an afternoon of sport.

What followed was 3 hours of us looking baffled, confused and occasionally emitting loud cheers at, what we assumed, were key moments. All the while, we were being given a rundown of events by a neighbouring Mongolian, in German, in an incredibly noisy arena, which ultimately didn't clarify things much at all.

If you have not yet ventured inside the Wrestling Palace, we would strongly recommend it. Take a drink and your camera and enjoy. There are masses of semi naked men holding on to each other in various poses, occasionally flipping each other to the floor, running into other wrestling pairs, the sound system, the judges tables and the audience. At some point one of the pair is inexplicably declared the winner, whereupon he reclaims his pointy hat, dances like a bird around a flag pole and then swiftly relinquishes his hat as he starts on his next opponent. The floor is filled with many pairs of wrestlers and older men whose job appears to be holding hats and occasionally slapping the wrestlers on their bum.

After 45 minutes or so, the round was complete, the floor cleared and the interval entertainment started. This in itself was worth attending for – we were treated to bands, dancing karate kids, singing and some form of military ballet. All truly excellent.

Although we didn't stay until the end of the competition (dinner called) we were reliably assured that at some point, one of the many wrestlers would be crowned a lion, or an elephant, or some such lofty title.

You should all go. But maybe Wikipedia the rules first. I'm sure it would make a lot more sense then.....

Rachel Hardy (Journalism project, production volunteer)

A Television Production Shoot in the Countryside (12th October 2011)

Whilst planning my trip to Mongolia in September, I was often asked by friends and family why I had chosen this particular country as my destination. I had originally asked myself the exact same question. Perhaps it was the fact that Mongolia appeared to me, to be one of the last few remaining places to be fairly untouched by western civilization. Furthermore, Mongolia seemed to be an unlikely destination for a typical Westerner's Gap Year. Eager to possess a number of fascinating life stories, that very few people my age would have, I booked my two month project without any further hesitation. Although Ulaanbaatar is the most westernised area of Mongolia, there is plenty of opportunity to experience the traditional Mongolian culture in the countryside.

I travelled to Gachuurt, for example, which is roughly twenty kilometers east from the city centre. Although it has recently become a rapidly growing suburb of the city, it still remains to be a very different area, where it is possible for tourists to go horse riding, camping and pursue water sports activities. Almost instantly, it appears to be a much poorer region, with what can only be described as shanty town-type housing. Strangely enough, I discovered that Gachuurt is a popular town for the wealthy Mongolians, who have begun to erect large holiday homes surrounded by ominous walls and pretentious gates – perhaps to remind the poorer locals that they are superior to them.

I travelled to Gachuurt and part of the Gorkhi-Terelj National Park with a Mongolian television crew – two cameramen and two journalists. The team was in search of some ancient drawings, which I was told had been inscribed on the rock faces by homo-sapiens, some of which had never been filmed before. This made our journey that little bit more tricky, as not knowing the exact location of the drawings meant that we had to rely on the locals for directions – a very timely error.

After a couple of hours driving aimlessly in and around the town, we somehow managed to stagger across one set of drawings. They were undeniably fascinating to look at, but the crews' limited ability to speak English meant that I had little idea of the story behind them. The crew set up their cameras and microphones, and began their filming in Mongolian.

Speaking only a mere fraction of the native language, I found myself paying rather more close attention to the incredible scenery than the actual production of the documentary. The landscape is almost comparable to that of the Lake District in northern England, what with the tranquil lakes, and towering mountains. Yet there is also something indescribable about it too. Perhaps, it is knowing that the land is steeped in ancient history that makes it such an awe inspiring place to be.

Once the crew had finished their shoot, we moved on to our next destination, Dendii Valley. This proved even harder to find, turning our journey into somewhat of an adventure. Since Dendii is situated much further out into the wilderness, we found ourselves travelling off-road for the vast majority of the way. This proved to be great fun for the five of us who were being tossed violently about in the back of the mini-bus by the rough terrain. No seat belts, loose seating and broken doors meant that we really did find ourselves in hysterics as we drove through lakes, woods and over hills. Inevitably, the mini-bus struggled at times, and had to be helped when it got completely stuck in the mud. As we drove further afield, the population grew noticeably sparse, passing one or two gers every half hour or so. Again, the journalists found themselves quizzing every nomad we could find about the exact location of these ancient drawings, but no-one really seemed to have any definitive idea. This did not bother me in the slightest though, as the more we got lost, the more of the country I got to see.

As the sun began to set, it became noticeable how cold it actually was. I could do nothing but hope we would get the opportunity to set foot inside a ger, seen as we had called it a day trying to find the drawings. The gers looked so idyllic nestled into the hillside with smoke rising from their roofs. At around tea time, we were fortunate enough to be invited into an elderly woman's ger with her two grandchildren.

The ger was kept incredibly warm by the felt walls that contained the heat from the fire in the middle, but this meant that we found ourselves enveloped in smoke, struggling to distinguish exactly who was who at one point. What I found almost comical about the gers, is that despite the fact the nomads live their lives almost identically to how their ancestors did, they still find ways of keeping up to date with modern technology. Inside this particular ger, for example, was a radio and flat screen tv, not forgetting the solar paneling outside.

The woman was so kind and hospitable, insisting that we shared her food and drink with her. She gave us all a mug of traditional Mongolian tea, Süüteitsai, and a variety of traditional homemade food: aaruuls (dried curd), tsötsgii (sour cream), and talkh (bread). If you want to experience the culture, your stomach has to be prepared to try some interesting cuisine. I was just glad that I had not been offered some airag (fermented mare's milk), which is apparently something you will not forget anytime soon. I tried fermented camel's milk the day before, which is certainly up there in my top ten of most unpleasant concoctions! Before we left, the grandmother gave us all a large mug of Mongolian vodka, which was not only greatly received by myself and the crew, but also our driver. Let's just say, the consequences of this made our journey back to Ulaanbaatar all the more merry and bumpy!

Volunteer poem

by Matt Cosad (*Sports project volunteer*)

Ulaanbaatar, city of dreams
How to describe the fantastic
scenes?
For a nation sp poverty-stricken,
with money so dear,
Nowhere else in the world has
more Prada than here,
Knock-offs, you cry, a claim more
hit than the miss,
But their taste of footwear cannot
be dismissed.

Moving on from fashion, there's
still much to do,
A trip to the Gobi for a fire of
horse poo,
A local restaurant for a bowl of
sheep stew
(I'm still not brave enough to go
off-menu),
Chill in the square maybe see a
rap crew
(Although you can't understand
the lyrics, it's true)
See the gold Buddha, he'll
enlighten you
Or head to a bar for a large local
brew.

People at your placement might
not speak your language,
But that doesn't mean you won't
have any fun.
Trip to BTV, that much viewed
station,

To see Miss Irene addressing the
nation,
Pain in your joints? It's no
concern,
Just consult physio Anna, I'm sure
you'll both learn.
Worried about your nights?
Naomi's legal advice is usually
quite sound.

As you can see from what I have
said,
There are friends to be made and
new places to tread.
Hurry on out here, to meet we
can't wait
Mongolia is one place you will not
stagnate.

Interview with a volunteer

Tell me something about yourself?

My name is Catriona Gardiner, I am from UK, London. I was doing the teaching project for 6 months.

When did you firstly arrive here in Mongolia?

I came to Mongolia first time in middle of March, 2004 with support of Projects Abroad, I spent 6 months in teaching project, I was teaching English at the 77th school Bayangol district in Ulaanbaatar, that was good but the summer holiday was quite long. During the holiday, I visited Natural History Museum in Ulaanbaatar, where I noticed that English explanations weren't good. So I helped them with that and it was a nice experience for me. Even till now I have contact with them.

I have spent 6 months in Mongolia, even though it is a long time, living and working with different people was really interesting to me. Because of my long trip, I got to know Mongolia quite well. I even came back the following year in 2005 with other volunteer Laura Booth to develop

children's charity which I have come across.

Why did you choose Mongolia?

I wanted to explore something different and started looking for program and projects that will enable me to and that's when I found Projects Abroad. Mongolia was quite a new project at that moment and I was really attracted to it, especially to the horses and beautiful steppes. And again, I didn't want to go somewhere very hot like Africa or India. That was one of the reasons.

What kind of children's charity is that, what activity did they hold?

It is The Christina Noble Children's Foundation which seeks to protect children at risk of economic and sexual exploitation, while ensuring these and other children in need an access to basic care and educational opportunities. Basically they protect poor family, children from ger districts such as Bayankhoshuu. Apart from the education project, they also had a kinder garden and a sponsorship program.

Will you suggest to other volunteers to come to Mongolia?

Yes, actually I have people that I've suggested already. I really like it.

Thank you so much for your interview. I hope you the best in your life.

What's on!

Social activities



More about Mongolia

Climate of Mongolia

Mongolia has four extremely continental seasons: hot summer and very cold winter. The country is situated at the heart of the central Asian continental, far from seas and oceans, in the lee of surrounding high mountains – all these factors that contribute to its dry climate.

It has about 205 sunny days a year, which is why it is named as the Land of the Blue Sky.

It is said that Mongolia can experience four seasons in a single day. This seems especially true in spring when changeable weather creates snowstorms intermixed with bouts of wind and sun. Bear in mind the wind-chill factor: a 10-knot wind can make 0°C feel like -5°C.

The four seasons are very distinct – winter lasts from November to February, spring from March to mid-May, summer from mid-May until late August, and autumn is during September and October. The cold weather in the far north can last a month or two longer than the Gobi areas. The highest rainfalls occur in the taiga areas (subarctic coniferous forests of Siberian larch and pine trees) along the northern border, especially



Khentii and Khövsgöl.

Cookery corner

How to make *Tsuivan*



What you will need for the:

Noodle dough (300 g flour, 2 dl water, Oil)

Stew (200 g Meat without bones , 350 g Vegetables (Onion, garlic cloves, water 2-4 dl, salt, oil, some spring onions)

Prepare the noodles

- Mix flour and water to create a pliable dough. Let it rest for 15 min.
- Separate in two pieces and roll into round sheets.
- Pour some oil in the centre of one sheet. Disperse it over the surface by temporarily folding the sheet together from different directions.



- Place the second sheet on top of the first one, and disperse oil on it in the same way.
- Cut the two sheets in half, and place one half on top of the other with the oiled surface looking up again.
- Cut the now four sheets in half, and place one of the quarters on top of the other in the same way.
- From now on, cut in half in the same direction twice, until you get a stack of a size of about 7x25 cm (~ 3x10 in), about 5 cm (~ 2 in) tall.
- From this stack, cut the noodles about 0.4 cm (~ 0.2 in) wide.
- The noodles should still stick together as little stacks!

Cook vegetables and meat

- Cut the vegetables into narrow stripes.
- Cut the meat into small pieces (about half the size as for a gulash).
- Take a large pot and sauté half of the onion rings slightly on oil.



- Add the carrot stripes and sauté them for a few minutes as well (also any other types of vegetables that require long cooking).
- Add the meat and sauté as well.
- Add some water as required so that nothing sticks.
- Season well with garlic, salt, and pepper.
- Add the cabbage, and let it cook under a closed lid for a few minutes to reduce the volume.
- Add water, until it reaches about 2/3 of the vegetables.
- Let everything simmer for a few minutes.
- Add the remaining onion rings.

Cook the stew

- Place the noodle stripes carefully on top of the vegetables, so that they keep sticking together in stacks.
- Close the lid! The lid must remain closed until the end, because the noodles are cooked by the steam from the boiling water below.
- Keep the water boiling for about 15 min. First on medium heat for the steam to replace the remaining air in the pot, then on small heat.
- At the end the water in the pot should be almost completely gone.
- Open the lid. The noodle stripes have taken a slightly reddish-brown colour, and are somewhat sticky at the outside.
- Take a small cutting board (or something similar) to fan fresh air into the pot - the noodles turn dry at the surface, lose their stickiness, and change their colour some more.
- Use a fork or some chop sticks to separate the noodles from each other. They should not stick to each other anymore. (Sticky noodles means that either there wasn't enough oil in between, or they haven't finished cooking yet)
- Shuffle everything to mix the ingredients.
- Add some spring onion rings at will.
- Serve on a plate, possibly garnished with some parsley, and seasoned with Ketchup or some other condiment.

Events in November

ProjectsAbroad

*Meet new people,
Experience our culture,
Learn, help, explore!*



Projects Abroad Mongolia

*Questions, new ideas about/for
the events?*

*Contact our Social manager Sumil!
E-mail: [mongoliasocialman-
ager@projects-abroad.org](mailto:mongoliasocialmanager@projects-abroad.org)
Phone number: 88067781*

NOVEMBER 2011

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1	2	3	4 PHOTO DAY	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 CARE OUT- REACH	15	16	17	18 MEAL OUT	19	20
21	22	23	24 HUMAN RIGHT WORKSHOP	25 FUN DAY AT MCLUB	26	27
28	29	30				

About us



Mr. Otgonbayar T.

Job title: *Country Director*

ProjectsAbroad



Mrs Otganbayar D.

Operation manager

Miss Sumiya B.

Social manager

Mrs Ariunzul G.

Project supervisor



Mrs Saruul G.

Project supervisor

Miss Zolzaya N.

Project supervisor

Miss Enkhmaa O.

Desk officer

Join our Official Facebook Group!

Check out our Facebook group: [Projects Abroad Mongolia - The Official Group!](#) It is regularly updated with photos from social events, news on the projects and the city of Ulaanbaatar.

Follow us on Twitter!

[Twitter page](#)

Read our Official Newsletter!

Read our monthly newsletter: [The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad Mongolia!](#)

Have a look at our Official Country Blog!

See what is going on with Projects Abroad Mongolia! Read our [Country Blog](#).

Dear volunteers,

*Send your stories, opinions, experiences,
funny anecdotes and pictures, absolutely
anything you want to share with everyone!*

To: Sumi

Email: mongoliasocialmanager@projects-abroad.org

*Best wishes,
Projects Abroad Mongolia*