

Mongolia Small Group Tour | Discover the history and culture of Mongolia

Reading List

Mongolia: Travels in the Untamed Land

by Jasper Becker

For seventy years Mongolia was all but closed to the west - a forbidden country, shrouded in darkness. Jasper Becker had long dreamed of exploring the sweeping land that lay just beyond China's Great Wall and when communism disintegrated, he finally did. Setting out from Kublai Khan's capital, Beijing, Becker was one of the first westerners to cross the border. Tracing the course of the Yellow River, he ventured deep into the heart of Mongolia, witnessing the birth of one of the world's youngest democracies as well as the deep and tragic impact of the rules of Mao and Stalin on the Mongolian people. Unravelling the history of Mongolia which had for so long been obscured and distorted, Becker traces the rise and fall of the Mongols who emerged from the steppes to forge one of the greatest and most feared empires of all time under Genghis Khan and his successors; he examines the shattering, divisive years of communist rule and explores present-day Mongolia, where poverty and the encroachments of westernisation cause as much damage. He goes in search of the fragile remnants of Buddhism and shamanism; visits Tuva - the lost world of Central Asia - and searches for the tomb of Genghis Khan which has been guarded and hidden by the same family for generations. Listening to the pulse of Central Asian history, Becker adorns his narrative with the stories of past travellers, tyrannical rulers, nomads, monks, missionaries, Russian officials, Mongolian activists and the memories of everyday people to paint a moving and enlightening portrait of Mongolia, a country that against all the odds has survived since the days of Genghis Khan and continues to beat to its own rhythm.

Hearing Birds Fly: A Nomadic Year in Mongolia

by Louise Waugh

Louisa Waugh's passionately written account of her time in a remote Mongolian village. Frustrated by the increasingly bland character of the capital city of Ulan Bator, she yearned for the real Mongolia and got the chance when she was summoned by the village head to go to Tsengel far away in the west, near the Kazakh border. Her story transports the reader to the glacial cold and the wonders of the Seven Kings as they steadily emerge from the horizon. Through her we sense their trials as well as their joys, rivalries and even hostilities, many of which the author shared or knew

about. Waugh's time in the village was marked by coming to terms with the harshness of climate and also by how she faced up to new feelings towards the treatment of animals, death, solitude and real loneliness, and the constant struggle to censor her reactions as an outsider. Above all, she aims to involve readers with the locals' lives in such a way that we come to know them and care for their fates.

Bones of the Master: A Journey to Secret Mongolia

by George Crane

In 1959 a young monk named Tsung Tsai (Ancestor Wisdom) escapes the Red Army troops that destroy his monastery, and flees alone three thousand miles across a China swept by chaos and famine. Knowing his fellow monks are dead, himself starving and hunted, he is sustained by his mission: to carry on the teachings of his Buddhist meditation master, who was too old to leave with his disciple. Nearly forty years later Tsung Tsai — now an old master himself — persuades his American neighbor, maverick poet George Crane, to travel with him back to his birthplace at the edge of the Gobi Desert. They are unlikely companions. Crane seeks freedom, adventure, sensation. Tsung Tsai is determined to find his master's grave and plant the seeds of a spiritual renewal in China. As their search culminates in a torturous climb to a remote mountain cave, it becomes clear that this seemingly quixotic quest may cost both men's lives.

Eagle Dreams: Searching for Legends in Wild Mongolia

by Stephen Bodio

Mongolia is a vast country located between Siberia and China, and little-known to outsiders. As Mongolia had long been under Soviet rule, it was inaccessible to Westerners. That was until 1990, when Stephen J. Bodio began planning his trip. As a boy, Bodio was always fascinated with nature. When he saw an image in National Geographic of a Kazakh nomad, dressed in a long coat and wearing a fur hat, holding a huge eagle on his fist, his life was changed from then on. When Mongolia became independent in 1990, Bodio knew that his dream to see the eagle hunters from the picture in National Geographic< so many years ago was soon to become a reality. In Eagle Dreams, readers follow Bodio on his long-awaited trip to Mongolia, where he spent months with the people and birds of his dreams. He is finally able to visit the birth place of falconry and observe the traditions that have survived intact through the ages. Not only does he get to witness things most people will never be able to, but he's also able to give life to his dreams and the people, landscapes, and animals of Mongolia that have become part of his soul.

Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World

by Jack Weatherford

The Mongol army led by Genghis Khan subjugated more lands and people in twenty-five years than the Romans did in four hundred. In nearly every country the Mongols conquered, they brought an unprecedented rise in cultural communication, expanded trade, and a blossoming of civilization. Vastly more progressive than his European or Asian counterparts, Genghis Khan abolished torture, granted universal religious freedom, and smashed feudal systems of aristocratic privilege. From the story of his rise through the tribal culture to the explosion of civilization that the Mongol Empire unleashed, this brilliant work of revisionist history is nothing less than the epic story of how the modern world was made.
