

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

M O N G O L I A



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



November 2008



RUSSIA

CHINA

Mongolia

- International boundary
- Province (*aymag*) boundary
- National capital
- Province (*aymag*) center
- Railroad
- Road

The cities of *Darhan, Erdenet, and Ulaanbaatar* are municipalities (labeled) with province-level status.

0 100 200 Kilometers
0 100 200 Miles

Lambert Conformal Conic Projection, SP 47N/62W

A WELCOME LETTER

San ban oh Peace Corps Invitees!

The Volunteers and staff of Peace Corps/Mongolia eagerly await your arrival in this fascinating land of blue sky, green steppe, rugged mountains, and endless desert. If you choose to join Peace Corps, you will find that Mongolia offers you a unique opportunity to serve others, form invaluable friendships and work with wonderful, hospitable people in a challenging environment where your skills and commitment are tested on a regular basis.

As you will learn in the pages of this *Welcome Book*, Peace Corps/Mongolia is a very special place in which to live and work. To help you prepare for the next two years, the Peace Corps supplies you with a significant amount of information about the agency.

This *Welcome Book* was prepared jointly by Volunteers and staff. We hope that this resource will help answer some of your questions and concerns about Mongolia itself, the Peace Corps program in Mongolia, and what you can do to prepare for service. It is by no means comprehensive, but we trust that it will offer you some useful information ahead of your arrival. We recommend that you share this book with your family as well.

A two-year commitment to Peace Corps service is not made easily or casually. It is a commitment you will make repeatedly and in many different ways throughout your two years of service. You will be challenged in every way imaginable, and your patience will be tried to its limits. However, if you bring a positive attitude, enthusiasm, patience, and a commitment to serve, learn, and grow, you will do very well here. The staff is ready to support you, but you are the primary architect and judge of what your success as a Volunteer will be. We offer you this opportunity to serve the people of Mongolia and to have an experience that will change the way you view the world and yourself.

We look forward to meeting you soon!

The Peace Corps/Mongolia Staff

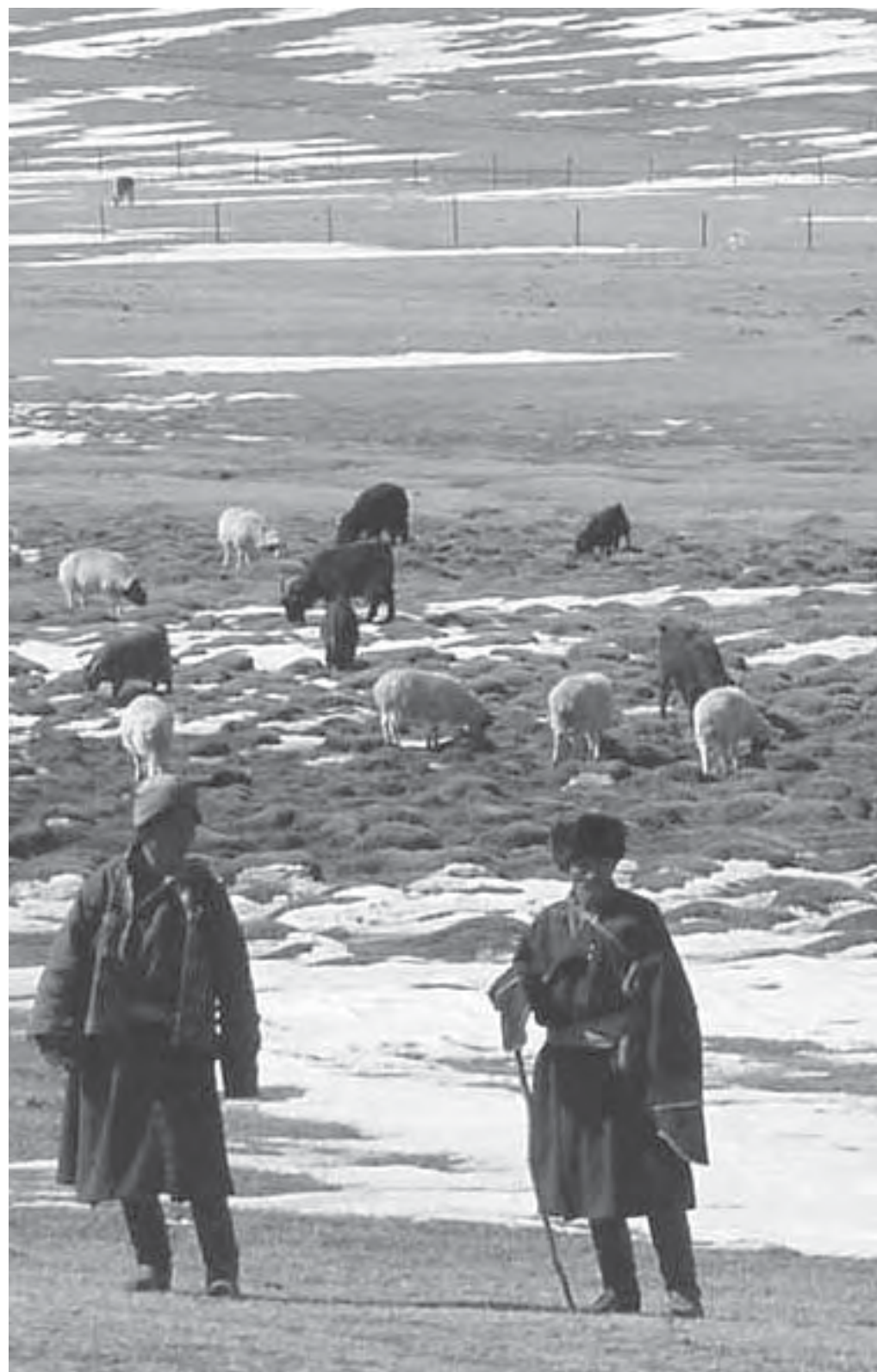


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PEACE CORPS/MONGOLIA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Mongolia

The Peace Corps established its program in Mongolia at the invitation of the Mongolian government in 1991. Since then, more than 600 Volunteers have served in Mongolia, working in the fields of education, environment, health, small business development, information and communications technology (ICT), and nongovernmental organization (NGO) capacity building. All Peace Corps Volunteers in Mongolia are considered community development workers and, as such, support community service activities as well as cross-sector initiatives, including youth development, gender and development, HIV/AIDS awareness, and ICT. Currently, 104 Volunteers work in provinces throughout Mongolia.

The mission of Peace Corps/Mongolia Volunteers and staff is to provide community-based development assistance that addresses needs identified by Mongolian partners, and to promote cross-cultural understanding between Americans and Mongolians. Peace Corps/Mongolia programs emphasize sustainable community development and capacity building that rely on locally available resources.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Mongolia

During the next few years, Peace Corps/Mongolia will focus on English education, community health, community economic development and youth development. A brief overview of Peace Corps/Mongolia's projects follows.

The English education and community development project builds capacity by teaching students to become future English teachers, assisting in accessing English language resources, introducing promising education methods, and facilitating community development projects.

Volunteers in the community-based health project assist with community health education, help update medical professionals and medical students with medical English knowledge, facilitate preventive health initiatives, and work with local teachers to educate secondary school students about healthy life skills.

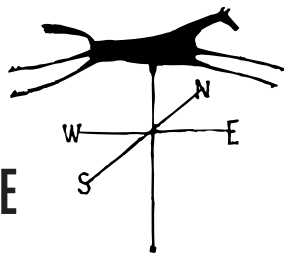
Community economic development (CED) Volunteers share skills and knowledge of promising business practices to help increase income generation opportunities for Mongolians. Additionally, CED Volunteers increase the capacity of Mongolian organizations to support income-generation projects and development efforts in both rural and peri-urban settings around Mongolia. CED Volunteers also work with small- and medium-sized businesses to develop organizational capacity by transferring skills in business planning, management techniques, and marketing to entrepreneurs.

Youth development Volunteers increase the capacity of Mongolian youth to overcome challenging life circumstances and become young adults who contribute to improving the quality of life for themselves, their families, and their communities. Volunteers work with youth-focused NGOs, children's centers, schools, and civil society organizations to address major challenges confronting Mongolian youth today, such as education, life skills, employability and leadership.

To further support Mongolia's development priorities and to strengthen the role of all Volunteers in community service and development, cross-sector initiatives in youth development, life skills, gender and development, HIV/AIDS awareness, human trafficking, and ICT are also addressed in collaboration with both Mongolian and international partners.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: MONGOLIA AT A GLANCE



History

The history of Mongolia spans more than 500,000 years. Archaeological excavations throughout the country have revealed artifacts from the Stone and Bronze Ages. The prehistoric inhabitants of Mongolia are culturally linked to Central Asia, not China, in that they were nomadic herders, not settled cultivators. Mongolia today embraces the heartland of Chingiss Khan's empire, but it was the homeland of other nations long before the Mongols were first mentioned in the annals of the emperors of China. Recent investigations support the hypothesis that the Mongols originated from the Huns (Hunnu in ancient Mongolian), nomads who created a state in the area of what is now called Mongolia in 200 B.C., the first of many peoples to do so. ("Hun" translates as "man" and "nu" translates as "sun.") Until its collapse in A.D. 98, the Hun state was the most powerful nomadic state in the sprawling Central Asian steppe and mountains. The Hsien-pi replaced the Huns as the ruling group in A.D. 95. Between 95 and 1125 A.D., a succession of nomadic, feudal tribes occupied and ruled the area: Sumbe, Toba, Nirun, Turkic, Uighur, Kirghiz, and Khitan.

In 1190, Temujin, from the Esukhei tribe, took advantage of weak individual tribal territories and waged 35 battles against other tribes. By 1206, he had succeeded in uniting 81 tribes to form the Great Mongolian State, or Mongol Empire. His success in these battles led to his being named Chingiss Khan (universal ruler). The Mongol Empire of the 13th and 14th centuries was the largest land-area empire in history. At its

greatest, it stretched from Korea to Hungary and included most of Asia, except for India and the southeast part of the continent. After Chingiss Khan's death in 1227, the Mongol Empire was divided into dominions, expanded into Russia and China, and ruled first by his sons and then by his grandson Kublai Khan (1260-1294) of Marco Polo fame. After 1294, however, the Mongol Empire slowly disintegrated, beginning with the loss of China in 1368 to the rulers of the Ming dynasty.

In 1644, the Manchus, rulers of the Ching dynasty, conquered China and southern Mongolia (a territory later renamed Inner Mongolia) and the remainder of Outer Mongolia, consolidating the Mongol Empire under Manchu rule by 1691. The Manchus penalized the Mongolians for any act of insubordination, and their 220-year rule is considered the harshest period in Mongolian history. During this time, Mongolia became isolated from the outside world, the power of the Mongol Khans was destroyed, and Tibetan Buddhism was introduced.

The revolutionary sentiments in Russia and China at the beginning of the 20th century also existed in Mongolia. It declared itself an independent state in 1911 as the Manchu dynasty in China collapsed and the Manchus withdrew from Mongolia. Gegeen Javzandamba Hutakht was declared Bogd Khan, the secular and spiritual leader, and formed a new government. However, China and Russia refused to recognize it, so the Tripartite Agreement that established Outer Mongolia as a politically and territorially autonomous state remained unacknowledged until 1915, when Russia agreed to sign it.

In 1920, two small underground revolutionary groups joined forces to form the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) to defend the Mongolian nation (against China) and to protect the interests of Mongolian herdsmen. Under the leadership of military commanders Sukhbaatar and

Choibalsan, the MPRP army defeated both Russian and Chinese armies. On July 11, 1921 (commemorated today as People's Revolutionary Day), Mongolia proclaimed its independence again and became a constitutional monarchy with Javzandamba as the head of state. After he died in November 1924, the Mongolian People's Republic became the world's second communist state.

The emergence of a democratic movement in December 1989 brought swift and peaceful change to Mongolia as the government adopted a positive approach toward reform. The dramatic changes toward a free-market economy and fully democratic society began in 1990 and continue today. A new constitution, adopted in early 1992, changed the official name of the country to Mongolia.

Government

The government has an executive branch, a legislative branch (the Parliament is called the Great Khural), and a judicial branch, which includes a Supreme Court and a Constitutional Court.

The current head of state is President Nambaryn Enkhbayar, who was elected in June 2005. President Enkhbayar has been an active supporter of the work of the Peace Corps in Mongolia. The head of government is Prime Minister Sanjiin Bayar, who was appointed in December 2007 by the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, which controlled the government. Elections were held in June of 2008.

The first presidential elections were held in spring 1993. During the parliamentary elections in June 1996, the Democratic Union Coalition (DUC) won 50 seats out of 76. The coalition was formed from two main parties, the Mongolian Democratic Party and the Mongolian Social

Democratic Party. The DUC's term was marked by conflict between coalition partners, which split into three separate parties bidding for seats in the June 2000 elections. In those elections, the Mongolian People's Republic Party won 72 of 76 seats, regaining its hold on the Great Khural. Later in 2000, the MPRP also won most of the local elections, positioning it to exercise great influence in government.

The last parliamentary election was held in the summer of 2004. In that election, MPRP won 36 seats, the Motherland Democratic Coalition (MDC) won 34 seats, and the Republican Party won one seat. There were also three independent and two disputed seats. As no party held an absolute majority, a consensus government was formed. The MPRP nominated the speaker and the MDC nominated the prime minister.

Economy

Mongolia's private sector is the primary engine of growth for the economy. Since 1991, traditional trading patterns have changed, with a large volume of imports from new sources entering Mongolian markets. Industries that developed during the central planning era have declined or disappeared altogether, depending on their ability to export to communist markets. A major transfer of assets from state ownership to private ownership has occurred, accompanied by a rise in large private businesses in mining, textiles, trade, banking, information technology, and other sectors. The distribution of goods and services and retail prices are now largely decontrolled, with the exception of the state-owned utility monopolies.

Economic growth had been steady from 1997 to 2006, after stalling in 1996 due to a series of natural disasters and

declines in world prices of copper and cashmere. Growth in GDP was restrained from 2000 to 2001 because of the falling prices for Mongolia's primary exports, widespread opposition to privatization, and the adverse effects of weather on agricultural output. In 2004, the Mongolian economy grew by a record 10.6 percent, nearly tripling its 2002 rate. In 2005, growth was 6.2 percent, again fostered by high prices for Mongolia's main export products (copper and gold).

Mongolia joined the World Trade Organization in 1997 and has received significant foreign aid and assistance in recent years. As of 2006, the international donor community pledges more than \$330 million per year to Mongolia, with Japan being the largest donor. The United States is the third largest donor, providing \$10 million per year. Mongolia's international debt is approximately \$1 billion.

Inflation increased from about 9.5% in 2005 to over 11% in 2007. Growing unemployment, the primary cause of poverty, remains the government's main concern. Extreme winters have highlighted the vulnerability of the rural economy and accelerated migration to urban areas by people seeking better access to social services and employment opportunities. For instance, the population has almost doubled in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, over the past five years.

People and Culture

Mongolian and foreign scholars give different explanations for the ethnic name "Mongol." Some think it was once the name of a single tribe. Others believe it comes from a geographical name that means the river Mon. Still others assert that Mongol should be pronounced "mun-gol," with "mun" meaning correct, basic, or true and "gol" meaning pivot, center, or essence, combining to mean "true essence."

More than 20 ethnic groups make up the population, with ethnic Mongolians representing 95 percent. The remaining 5 percent are mostly Turkic people composed of Kazakhs and Tuvans. The largest group of ethnic Mongolians are the Khalkha Mongols, constituting about 70 percent of the population.

Mongolian is the main language of Mongolia, which is also spoken in Inner Mongolia and other parts of China, as well as in the Altai, Buryat, and Kalmyk Republics of the Russian Federation. Mongolian, along with the Turkic and Tungusic languages, forms the Altaic family of languages spoken by some 80 million people from Turkey to the Pacific.

Modern Mongolian, of which Khalkha (or Halh) is the most widely spoken dialect, is written in the Cyrillic alphabet. After experiments with Romanization in the 1930s, Mongolia adopted the Cyrillic alphabet at the end of the World War II, replacing the vertical Uighur, or classical, script in which Mongolian had been written since Chingiss Khan's time. Since the 1990s, there have been movements to return to Uighur; however, the Cyrillic alphabet better reflects spoken Mongolian and will likely be used for the foreseeable future.

Mongolia's religious roots are bound up in shamanism, the major religion of both the ancient Mongol states and the Mongol Empire. Shamanism might be considered an unconventional religion because it has no founder from whom its teachings originate. There is no collection of sacred writings, such as sutras or a bible, and there are no monastic communities to preach or distribute its doctrines. Although officially replaced by Tibetan Buddhism in the 14th century, shamanism continued to be practiced by a few of the ethnic groups living in northern and western Mongolia.

Buddhism faced severe repression under the communist regime, and only one showcase monastery was allowed to remain open. In early 1990, Buddhism was again named Mongolia's official religion. Today, most Mongolians call themselves Buddhist, although the Kazakh minority living in the western part of the country practices Islam.

Mongolia observes the following official holidays: New Year's Day, Tsagaan Sar (the lunar New Year) in early to mid-February (three days), Mother's and Children's Day on June 1, Eriin Gurvan Naadam (Festival of the Three Manly Sports) from July 10-11, and Independence Day on November 26.

The three “manly” sports popular with the Mongols since ancient times are wrestling, horse racing, and archery. These three games make up the core program of the Naadam festival, which has been held annually since the 13th century. Earlier, Naadam was associated with religious ceremonies (worshipping the spirit of the mountains, the rocks, and the rivers). Currently, it is a national holiday held to commemorate the Mongol People's Revolution in 1921.

Tsagaan Sar, the lunar New Year, is translated as “white month.” There are many opinions about the origin of this name. Some Mongolians believe that white symbolizes happiness and purity; others believe that the name refers to the abundance of milk products. In any case, the holiday celebrates the passing of winter and beginning of spring.

Environment

Mongolia lies in Central Asia, with Russia to the north and China to the east, west, and south. Mongolia is also called Outer Mongolia, the name China's Ching dynasty gave to the area to distinguish it from Inner Mongolia, an autonomous region in northern China, and Buryat Mongolia in Russia.

Mongolia occupies an area of about 1.57 million square kilometers, or 626,000 square miles (about the size of Alaska).

The current population is approximately 2.7 million, making Mongolia one of the most sparsely populated nations on Earth. Thirty-eight percent of the population is under 16 years old, and 4 percent is over 60 years old. Almost 60 percent of the population lives in urban areas (30 percent in Ulaanbaatar). The rest live in rural areas. Life in Mongolia is becoming more urbanized and sedentary, although nomadic life still predominates in the countryside. Ulaanbaatar has doubled in population over the past five years.

Mongolia is a land of contrasts: wild forests, alpine meadows, semi-deserts, vast plains, and snow-covered mountains. Mountains cover more than 40 percent of the country. The natural scenery in the northern section resembles that of eastern Siberia, while the southern section, which comprises two-thirds of the country's area, features the arid desert and semi-desert of Central Asia.

The Gobi Desert in southeastern Mongolia supports almost no vegetation and is sparsely populated. North and west of the Gobi, the landscape changes gradually to rugged mountains, with elevations of more than 3,962 meters (13,075 feet) above sea level. The highest peak in Mongolia is Nairamdal Uul at 4,373 meters (14,431 feet). There are small prairies and saltwater and freshwater lakes throughout the country, but water is more abundant in the habitable north. The only navigable lake is Huvsgul. The country's longest rivers are the Selenge, Orkhon, Tuul, Hovd, Herlen, and Halhin Gol.

Mongolia has many places of breathtaking beauty. Mongolia is home to 136 mammal species, almost 400 species of birds, and 76 species of fish. The country is also known for its wolves, marmots, falcons, snow leopards, musk deer, and the rare Altai snow cock.

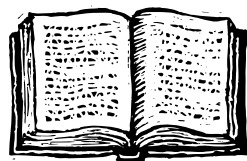
With an average of 260 sunny days per year, Mongolia is known as the “Land of Blue Sky.” Because it is so far inland, it has a continental climate with extreme temperatures and very low humidity.

Snow usually stays on the ground from October through April, although it seldom totals more than a few inches at a time. The summers are generally mild and pleasant. The temperature in Ulaanbaatar ranges from 27 degrees Celsius (-17 Fahrenheit) in January to 18 C (64 F) in July. There have been recorded extremes of -48 C (-54 F) and 39 C (102 F). (Don't let these averages fool you; temperatures in the summers have reached the high-90s and low-100s and have fallen low enough for snow in June.) Annual precipitation averages 25.4 centimeters (10 inches) in Ulaanbaatar.

The average altitude of Mongolia is 1,580 meters (5,214 feet) above sea level. Ulaanbaatar's altitude is 1,351 meters (4,458 feet), which is about the same altitude as Denver. Some people experience shortness of breath, low energy levels, and fatigue during air pressure changes in the spring.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Mongolia, or to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: As you surf these sites, be aware that you will find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to give opinions and advice based on their own experiences. The opinions expressed are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government. You may find opinions of people who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. As you read these comments, we hope you will keep in mind that the Peace Corps is not for everyone, and no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About Mongolia

www.countrywatch.com

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in Ulaanbaatar to information about converting currency from the dollar to the tugrik. Just click on Mongolia and go from there.

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations

Visit this site to learn all you need to know about any country in the world.

www.state.gov

The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Mongolia and learn more about its social and political history.

www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm

This site includes links to all the official sites for governments of countries around the world.

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information about countries around the world. Each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background.

www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N.

www.worldinformation.com

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries worldwide.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/peacecorps>

This Yahoo site hosts a bulletin board where prospective Volunteers and returned Volunteers can come together.

www.facebook.com/Peace Corps Mongolia group

This facebook group was initiated by current Volunteers and allows invitees a chance to interact among themselves and with Volunteers.

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the webpages of the “friends of” groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local Volunteer activities. Or go straight to the Friends of Mongolia site: www.friendsofmongolia.org.

www.peacecorpswriters.org

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts from countries around the world.

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Mongolia

www.MongoliaToday.com

An online magazine started by two Mongolian journalists

<http://ulaanbaatar.net/home/index.shtml>

A website that focuses on the capital city

<http://www.mongolmessenger.mn>

The Mongol Messenger is one of two English language newspapers in Mongolia.

<http://ubpost.mongolnews.mn/main/index.php>

The UB Post is the other English language paper.

International Development Sites About Mongolia

www.un-mongolia.mn

Information about the work of the United Nations in Mongolia

www.eurasianet.org/resource/mongolia/index.shtml

A site with links to a variety of resources

Recommended Books

1. Goldstein, Melvyn C., and Cynthia M. Beall. *The Changing World of Mongolia's Nomads*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
2. Kohn, Michael. *Lonely Planet Mongolia*. Footscray, Victoria; London: Lonely Planet Publications, 2005.
3. Sanders, Alan J.H., and J. Bat-Ireedui. *Lonely Planet Mongolian Phrasebook*. Footscray, Victoria; London: Lonely Planet Publications, 1995.
4. Sarangerel, Odigan. *Riding Windhorses: A Journey Into the Heart of Mongolian Shamanism*. Rochester, Vermont: Destiny Books, 2000.
5. Severin, Tim. *In Search of Genghis Khan: An Exhilarating Journey on Horseback across the Steppes of Mongolia*. NY: Cooper Square Press, 2003.
6. Weatherford, Jack. *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*. Crown Publishers, 2004.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.

3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Few developing countries in the world offer the level of service considered normal in the United States. Mail to Mongolia generally takes two to four weeks to arrive, and some mail may never arrive. Occasionally, letters may arrive with clipped edges because someone has tried to see if any money was inside. Also, some boxes may be opened by customs officials to ensure nothing illegal is being shipped. Advise your family and friends to number their letters and to include the word “Airmail” on their envelopes.

Check with your local post office for information on weight and size limitations for packages. Packages sent by surface mail usually take two to three months. Volunteers have found that letters and packages have a better chance of arriving if correspondents do not use a variety of interesting stamps; write the address (with the exception of “Mongolia”) in the Cyrillic alphabet; use sturdy, well-taped boxes for packages (to discourage tampering); write “via China” on mail; and use padding for breakable items (including cassette and CD cases).

Mailing Address

Your address while you are in training is listed below in English and in the Cyrillic alphabet. Peace Corps staff regularly bring trainees' mail to the training site.

“Your Name,” PCT
Post Office Box 1036
Central Post Office
Ulaanbaatar 13
Mongolia (via China)

“Your Name,” PCT
Энх Танвны Корпус
Тов шуудан
Шуудангийн хайрцаг 1036
Улаанбаатар 13
Монгол Улс
Mongolia (via China)

Be aware that you may incur customs charges on your personal mail, especially packages. How packages are labeled in the United States can influence these charges. For example, if someone sends you a package containing both printed matter and “luxury” items, such as music cassettes, the customs charges calculated by the post office in Mongolia will generally be less if the printed matter is emphasized and the luxury items are not.

Telephones

Long-distance calling to the U.S. from landlines is available from every *soum* (small city or town) throughout Mongolia. Prepaid phone cards can be purchased at telecom branches and from specified service agents. You can then make a call from any pay phone by following the instructions on the phone cards.

Pre-paid international calling cards are now available in Ulaanbaatar and other cities and can be used when calling the U.S. from landlines in the capital. The cost for the call is very affordable if you buy the right card. Peace Corps/ Mongolia

can offer you advice on which cards are the best to purchase while in Ulaanbaatar.

Your host family during pre-service training may have a phone; if so, family and friends can call you directly there. (Note that the time in Mongolia is 12 to 13 hours later than Eastern Standard Time.) Some Volunteers call home using an Internet phone service; the cost is generally whatever the charge is for the Internet connection.

Cellphone service is very common in Mongolia. After completing training and swearing-in as a Volunteer, you will receive a Peace Corps-issued cellphone. While trainees are not prohibited from purchasing a personal cellphone prior to swearing-in, Peace Corps/Mongolia will not reimburse this cost. Many cellphones purchased in the U.S. will not work in Mongolia.

Computer, Internet, and Email Access

Although computers can be bought locally, they generally do not come with virus protection software or system software backup disks. If you bring your own computer, remember that the weather in Mongolia can be hard on LCD screens and electronic equipment may be damaged by power surges. You should also consider insuring your computer. Some host organizations provide limited access to computers, but they often contain contaminated files and may not have the necessary backup disks or software to fix a problem.

Internet connections are rare but increasing in smaller towns and communities. Most provincial centers now have access to the Internet, usually at the local post office or telecom center. In Ulaanbaatar, Internet cafes are plentiful, and the rates there-500 to 1,500 tugriks (\$.45 to \$1.40) per hour-are cheaper than elsewhere. Though connections can be unstable and frustratingly slow, and power outages occur, it is still nice to communicate so quickly with family and friends.

Housing and Site Location

During pre-service training you will live with a host family.

During your two years of service, Volunteers live in small family compounds or in separate apartments, depending on what is available at their site. Most sites are located either in a provincial town center (*aimag* in Mongolian) anywhere from 50 to almost 2,000 kilometers (31 to 1,240 miles) by road from the capital, or in provincial villages (*soums*) that are up to four hours by car from an aimag. A few Volunteers are assigned to Ulaanbaatar.

Increasingly, Volunteers in Mongolia live in either *gers* (yurts) or wooden houses, sharing a compound with a Mongolian family. Enhanced cultural interaction, improved language skills, and greater Volunteer safety have all resulted from this living arrangement. City volunteers may live in apartments.

A ger is a round tent of about 20 feet in diameter, made of a wooden lattice covered with thick felt. The inside consists of one room with furniture around the circumference and a wood stove in the center.

Living Allowance and Money Management

U.S. dollars can be exchanged at various places in Ulaanbaatar, including hotels, the Trade and Development Bank, post offices, and legal money exchange facilities. Depending upon the size of your community, you may be able to change money there as well. Many places will not exchange for U.S. dollars that are old and wrinkled, they like pristine bills. Also, the exchange rate is minutely lower for traveler's checks of any size or bills in denominations smaller than \$50.

There are two options for getting cash transferred from the United States. The cheapest and easiest is using an ATM machine. There are internationally connected ATMs around the city. Some do not have local fees, but your U.S. bank may charge you to use them. While credit cards are of limited use in Mongolia, they are accepted by major hotels, restaurants, and shops and may come in handy when traveling outside the country. Traveler's checks can be purchased at the Trade and Development Bank in Ulaanbaatar and cashed there for a 2 percent fee. Although few retail outfits in Mongolia will accept them, they are useful for travel in other countries in the region. Personal checks are not accepted in Mongolia.

You are likely to spend roughly 60 percent of your living allowance on food, and you probably will not be able to maintain the lifestyle, including diet, to which you are accustomed in the United States. For one thing, it is difficult to find the wide variety of foods available in the United States. It is also important that you live at the same economic level as the people in your community.

Food and Diet

Once a nation of nomadic herdsman, Mongolia is known as the Land of Five Animals – sheep, goats, cattle, horses, and camels. Traditionally, herdsman got everything they needed to survive from these animals. Today's diet still relies heavily on meat and dairy products. Fermented mare's milk is the traditional ceremonial drink.

The main meats are mutton and beef, but Mongolians also eat goat, horse, marmot, and camel. Some Mongolians buy a sheep carcass to put out on their balcony for the winter (a natural cold storage method). Mongolian chickens have been described as “very athletic” and are good for stewing, but now

a lot of chicken is imported. Fish is sometimes sold at markets or door-to-door. A very limited variety of fresh fruits and vegetables appears in the markets, but these foods are not a major part of the local diet.

The traditional diet can be bland, monotonous, and high in fat and cholesterol, and it may be difficult to limit your fat intake while eating with your neighbors. If you are a vegetarian, you may find it difficult to maintain your diet because of both limited food availability and cultural considerations. The Peace Corps living allowance, however, will enable you to buy some imported fresh and canned fruits and vegetables on visits to provincial centers, so a modest vegetarian diet is certainly possible, albeit difficult. Turning down food can offend Mongolians, who believe meat is necessary for survival in harsh climates, so a vegetarian will have to become good at explaining his or her “strange” diet to Mongolians. If you are vegan we recommend that you consider adjusting your dietary restrictions as plant protein can be impossible to find outside of major cities.

Transportation

Travel among cities by bus, van, or Russian-made jeep is mostly on unpaved roads. The price of rides, which depends on the price of the fuel supplied by Russia, has fluctuated greatly in recent years. Volunteers are prohibited from driving motorized vehicles in Mongolia or from riding on or operating motorcycles. Some cities are also served by train and expensive flights.

Geography and Climate

Probably the first thing you were told about Mongolia was that it is very cold. This is true. But rather than try to anticipate

the various weather patterns of the country, it is better to prepare for the worst-case scenario, which is -40 C (-40 F) with a wind chill factor of -55 C (-67 F). While this may sound unbearable, Volunteers are given many strategies for “beating” the cold from the Peace Corps training staff and their Mongolian neighbors. It is important to remember that millions of people, including hundreds of Volunteers, live and thrive here in the winter. The winter is very sunny and usually windless.

Spring is sunny and extremely windy, and dust storms are common. The temperature ranges from 10 C to 20 C (50-68 F), but the wind makes it seem colder. Summer is sunny and breezy, with an average temperature in the low 20s (70s F), though it can get as hot as 35 C (96 F) on a regular basis. Autumn is short, with temperatures similar to those in spring. The sun shines almost every day in Mongolia, even in winter, and the glare from the snow can be intense, so sunglasses are a necessity.

Social Activities

Although Mongolia's traditionally nomadic herdsman are now comfortable on both motorcycles and horses and many live in apartments rather than in gers, Mongolia has not lost its rich cultural heritage. The Mongolian people's hospitality endures, and most social life at Volunteer sites centers on visiting friends' homes rather than going out to bars and clubs.

Mongolians enjoy a wide variety of sports. Soccer, volleyball, basketball, table tennis, and the national sport of wrestling all take place during the summer. Hiking is also popular during the warmer months. Cross-country skiing, sledding, and ice-skating are popular pastimes in the winter.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

It is very important that you dress professionally in work settings, where the appearance of the staff reflects on the office as a whole. You are also expected to dress professionally during training, which means no shorts or T-shirts, although clean jeans without rips are acceptable. You will need a more formal outfit for being sworn-in as a Volunteer. All clothes should be clean at all times.

The main goal is to fit into Mongolian culture, in which professionals, especially teachers, dress well. Typical clothing for men includes slacks, a collared shirt with a sweater or jacket, a tie, and dress shoes. Women tend to wear dresses or dressy slacks or skirts with blouse-and-sweater combinations and nice boots or high-heeled shoes.

Most Mongolians have only a few outfits for work and will not judge you negatively for wearing only a few yourself. You can wear the same outfits again and again and no one will care or notice.

Special notes:

- Professionals in Mongolia wear their hair in fairly conservative styles. Although you might see young men on the streets of Ulaanbaatar, Darkhan, or Erdenet with shoulder-length hair, long hair on men is rare in the professional environment. Male Volunteers should come to training with their hair conservatively cut and styled and not exceeding shoulder length. After you have completed pre-service training, been at your post for three months, and have established your credibility, you might find that it is acceptable to wear a less conservative style.

- Body piercings are not common in professional settings. Peace Corps/Mongolia requires Volunteers to remove facial piercings (with the exception of earrings in women) through pre-service training and during the first four months of service. This allows Volunteers to establish a professional rapport with colleagues and counterparts.

Rewards and Frustrations

Although the potential for job satisfaction in Mongolia is quite high, like all Volunteers, you may encounter numerous frustrations. Because of financial or other challenges, some collaborating agencies do not always provide the support they promised. In addition, the pace of work and life is slower than what most Americans are accustomed to, and some people you work with may be hesitant to change practices and traditions that are centuries old. For these reasons, the Peace Corps experience of adapting to a new culture and environment is often described as a series of emotional peaks and valleys.

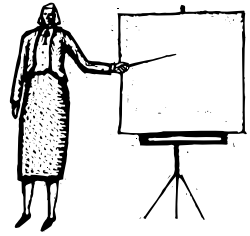
You will be given a high degree of responsibility and independence in your work—perhaps more than in any other job you have had or will have. You will often find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your co-workers with little guidance from supervisors. You might work for months without seeing any visible impact from, or without receiving feedback on, your work. Development is a slow process. Positive progress most often comes after the combined efforts of several Volunteers over the course of many years. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results.

To overcome these difficulties, you will need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, and resourcefulness. Mongolians are warm, friendly, and hospitable, and the Peace Corps staff, your co-workers, and fellow Volunteers will support you during times of challenge, as well as in moments of success. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave Mongolia feeling that they have gained much more than they sacrificed during their service. If you are able to make the commitment to integrate into your community and work hard, you will be a successful Volunteer.

NOTES



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Pre-service training (PST) is a critical and significant time for future Volunteers. It is a time to gather the tools you will use during your service; to work through culture shock and get an idea of the reality of working in a country other than one's own; and to test your assumptions and expectations about Mongolia and its people, your general role in development, and your particular assignment and living conditions.

The PST hubsite is based in a provincial town center, not in Ulaanbaatar, and lasts 11 weeks. You will stay at the provincial center with your training group for a couple days before moving in with a host family located within one to two hours of the provincial center. The training group will be dispersed among a number of host communities. Married couples whose assignment areas are different will be placed in separate host communities during PST and in all cases will be living with separate host families. This community-based training (CBT) model is designed to immerse you in Mongolia by placing Volunteers in more realistic situations and to begin to develop community integration skills early on. The philosophy behind CBT is that “experience is the best teacher” and that is the training approach that guides PC Mongolia.

The typical training day—running from approximately 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.—consists of four hours of language class, followed by integrated activities and sessions on cross-cultural issues, technical skills related to your assignment, and personal health and safety. Each trainee is responsible for his or her preparation for becoming a Volunteer and is expected to take full advantage of what is offered. The Peace Corps staff strives to maintain an open and supportive learning environment

and will provide objective feedback to help trainees develop behaviors that will lead to smoother cultural integration and more effective service.

An assessment process will help monitor your progress toward accomplishing the objectives of each training component. You will conduct ongoing self-assessment, and the training staff will make periodic assessments of your progress during face to face interviews. The training staff will be available to help you in any areas of concern. You must successfully complete the training objectives before you can be sworn in as a Volunteer.

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Mongolia by building on the skills you already have and by helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Mongolian experts, and current Volunteers conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer. The emphasis during training is hands-on learning, trainee-directed activities and the expectation that each trainee must demonstrate initiative and self direction.

Language & Cross-cultural Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Mongolian language instructors teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups of five to six people.

Language and cultural training utilizes a community-based approach. This approach focuses on developing the language skills needed to function successfully in daily living situations. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so you can practice and develop language skills further on your own. Prior to swearing in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service.

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Mongolian host family. This homestay experience is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families have gone through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of the pre-service training program and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Mongolia. Mongolian host families take an active role in your training, making it more practical and reality based. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Personal Medical Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive health care and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Mongolia. Nutrition, mental health, safety and security, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also covered.

Safety Training

During the safety training sessions you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces risk in your home, at work, and

during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service. The safety training is also incorporated into the components of PST, such as language, culture, medical and technical.

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YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN MONGOLIA



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of each Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in Mongolia maintains a clinic with two full-time medical officers who take care of Volunteers' primary health care needs. Medical services such as testing and basic treatment are limited in Mongolia. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to an American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in Mongolia

Health problems that commonly occur in the United States, such as colds, diarrhea, headaches, skin infections, STDs, emotional disorders, and alcohol abuse, may be more frequent or compounded by living in Mongolia. Certain environmental factors in Mongolia may raise the risk or exacerbate the severity of illnesses and injuries. During pre-service training, the Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with guidelines on how to remain healthy in Mongolia.

Local conditions that may affect your health include air pollution caused by burning coal, wood, and dung in ger fires and by fossil fuel-burning power plants (especially in larger urban areas like Ulaanbattar, Darkhan, and Erdenet); the relatively high altitude at which most Volunteers live (about 4,500 feet); refuse left on the ground that attracts flies and other pests; the extreme cold and low humidity in the winter,

which helps to spread respiratory illnesses; and diarrhea resulting from bacteria-contaminated water and fresh fruits and vegetables.

Behaviors and habits of Mongolians, such as smoking, alcohol abuse, and having sex with multiple partners, may also put Volunteers at risk.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. During pre-service training in Mongolia, you will receive a medical handbook. At the beginning of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic first aid supplies through the medical officer. However, **you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require**, as we will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for new shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at midservice and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Mongolia will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Mongolia, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Women's Health Information

A variety of feminine hygiene products are available for purchase in Ulaanbaatar, if not at your site. If you require a specific feminine hygiene product, please bring a six-month supply with you.

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health-physical, mental, or dental-since the time you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, you should contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation (staging). If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for their cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Mongolia.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this, we will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment-which can take several months-you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you-a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. We discourage you from using contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. In addition, Mongolia experiences dust storms, which can damage contacts. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless their use has been recommended by an ophthalmologist for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in health care plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care from the time you leave for your pre-departure

orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service health care benefits described in the *Peace Corps Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age and/or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security-Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property theft and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 83 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2008 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify, minimize and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control.

By far the most common crime incidents that Volunteers experience are thefts. Frequently these occur in crowded locations, such as markets or on public transportation, or are due to Volunteers leaving items unattended. More serious assaults, however, do occasionally occur. Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2007, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for crimes against Volunteers, many of which can be avoided with appropriate actions. Assaults consist of physical and sexual assaults committed against Volunteers; property crimes include robbery, burglary, theft, and vandalism.

- Location: Most assaults (53 percent) occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 36 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites. Most property crimes occurred in the Volunteer's residence or another Volunteer's residence, followed closely by public areas. Forty-eight percent of property crimes occurred when Volunteers were away from their sites
- Time: Assaults usually took place during the evening, between 6 p.m. and 11 p.m.- though the single hour with the largest percentage of assaults was 1 a.m. (8 percent) Property crimes were more common in the middle of the day, from noon to 9 p.m.
- Day: Assaults and property crimes were more commonly reported on weekends (48 percent and 49 percent, respectively).
- Absence of others: Assaults and property crimes (64 percent and 53 percent, respectively) occurred more frequently when the Volunteer was alone.

- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults and property crimes (64 percent and 85 percent), the Volunteer did not know or could not identify the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: 23 percent of all assaults and 4 percent of all property crimes involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

Risk factors can vary within countries throughout the world that are served by the Peace Corps. A Volunteer in Mongolia may face risks specific to this country in addition to risks associated with living in a developing country.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a “dummy” wallet as a decoy

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Purchase the Peace Corps recommended personal property insurance
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends with local people who are respected in the community
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors
- Travel with someone trusted by your community whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

Support from Staff

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” This office is led by an associate director for safety and security who reports to the Peace Corps Director and includes divisions which focus on Volunteer safety and overseas security and crime statistics and analysis.

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff members provide support by reassessing the Volunteer's worksite and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their

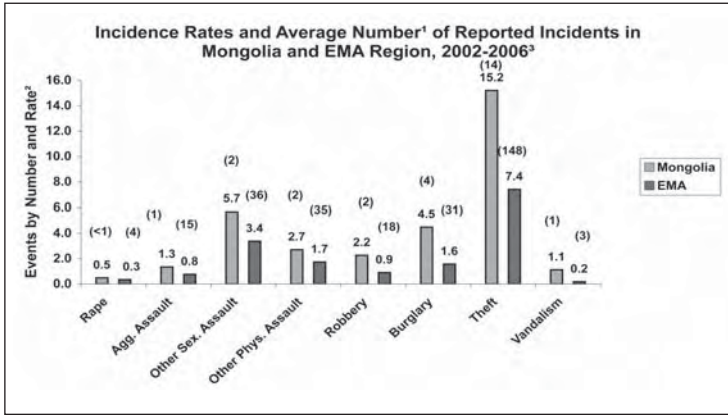
rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Mongolia as compared to all other Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Region programs as a whole, from 2002-2006. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

To fully appreciate the collected data below, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way to compare crime data across countries. An “incident” is a specific offense, per Peace Corps' classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); other physical assault (attacking without



¹The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2002–2006.

²Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

³Data collection for Mongolia began as of 2002; due to the small number of V/T years, incidence rates should be interpreted with caution.

Sexual Assaults are termed Other Sexual Assault and Other Physical Assault per CIRF definitions as of the year 2006. Prior to CIRF and prior to 2006, Sexual Assaults were termed Minor Sexual Assault Assault and Minor Physical Assault per ANSS definitions.

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS), Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS), and Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); the information is accurate as of 08/15/07.

a weapon with minor injuries); other sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas, including safety and security. Once in-country, use the

tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes and, naturally, crimes that occur overseas are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities through the local courts system. If you are the victim of a crime, it is up to you if you wish to pursue prosecution. If you decide to prosecute, Peace Corps will be there to assist you. The Office of Safety and Security, through our regionally-based Peace Corps safety and security officers, will work with the security officer at the U.S. embassy and the staff at the Peace Corps office in-country to coordinate with local police and prosecutors. One of our tasks is to ensure you are fully informed of your options and understand how the local legal process works. We are here to provide support and assistance every step of the way. Peace Corps will help you ensure your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country.

If you are the victim of a serious crime, get to a safe location as quickly as possible and contact your Peace Corps office. It's important that you notify Peace Corps as soon as you can so we can get you the help you need.

Security Issues in Mongolia

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you have to be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target for crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Mongolia. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally are less likely to steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions in large towns are favorite worksites for pickpockets.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your home is secure, and develop relationships in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. In coming to Mongolia, do what you would do if you moved to a new city in the United States: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Mongolia may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers tend to attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are more likely to receive negative attention in highly populated centers, and away from their support network (“family,” friends, and colleagues) who look out for them. While whistles and exclamations may be fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, abide by local cultural norms, and do not respond to unwanted attention. In addition, keep your money out of sight by using an undergarment money pouch, the kind that hangs around your neck and stays hidden under your shirt or inside your coat. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. And always walk with a companion at night.

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Mongolia

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two-year service and includes

the following: information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Mongolia's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Mongolia office will keep you informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, you will be contacted through the emergency communication network. An important component of the capacity of Peace Corps to keep you informed is your buy-in to the partnership concept with the Peace Corps staff. It is expected that you will do your part in ensuring that Peace Corps staff members are kept apprised of your movements in-country so that they are capable of informing you.

Volunteer training will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in Mongolia. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural aspects, health, and other components of training. You will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas, including safety and security, as a condition of service.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure

housing and worksites. Site selection is based, in part, on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Mongolia's **detailed emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, you will gather with other Volunteers in Mongolia at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers immediately report any security incident to the Peace Corps office. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.

NOTES



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In Mongolia, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyles, background, and beliefs will be judged in a cultural context very different from our own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in Mongolia.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in Mongolia, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during your pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge, ultimately, will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in Mongolia

The Peace Corps staff in Mongolia recognizes adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to

provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of cultures, religions, ethnic groups, and ages and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

A single woman living alone is against the cultural norm in Mongolia, and you may be asked often about why you are not married or why you are serving alone when your family is living in the United States. You may receive more unwanted and inappropriate attention from Mongolian men than what you are used to in the United States. Therefore, you may need to keep a low social profile and practice discretion in public. You may have to work harder than male Volunteers to gain the respect of host country colleagues in the workplace.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Volunteers of color in Mongolia often express frustration and annoyance at being asked where they are from. When they answer, for example, “African American,” “Asian American,” or “Mexican American,” some Mongolians react with surprise, suspicion, or disbelief. Chinese Americans may be regarded with suspicion because of Mongolians' historically-based mistrust of China. Americans of Korean or Japanese descent may be mistaken for Chinese. You may feel isolated within your Volunteer group if there are no other Volunteers of the same ethnicity. Mongolians may call you by famous people of color's names. For example Michael Jordan for African Americans or Jennifer Lopez for Latin Americans.

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Respect comes with age in Mongolia. Younger Volunteers may have to work harder than their older colleagues at being accepted as professionals. On the other hand, older Volunteers may feel isolated within the Peace Corps community, as the majority of Volunteers are in their 20s. They may work or live with individuals who have little understanding of or respect for the lives and experiences of senior citizens and, therefore, cannot provide needed personal support. Senior Volunteers may find that younger Volunteers look to them for advice and support. While some seniors find this a very enjoyable experience, others choose not to fill this role. Older trainees sometimes encounter a lack of attention to their needs for a particular learning environment, including timing and method of presentation. You may need to be assertive in developing an effective, individual approach to language learning.

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Sexual mores in Mongolia are conservative, and Volunteers are expected to respect them. Many Mongolians believe that gay and lesbian relationships are wrong or that such relationships do not exist in their country. Some gay and lesbian Volunteers who have served in Mongolia report that they were not able to be open about their sexual orientation. Those who are open may be hassled in public places or in the workplace. You may serve for two years without meeting other gay, lesbian, or bisexual Volunteers and may sense a lack of support and understanding among your Volunteer group. Men may encounter machismo and be expected to join in talk of sexual conquests and dirty jokes.

In the past, gay and lesbian Volunteers have formed their own support groups. You might find some helpful information at www.geocities.com/~lgbprcv/, a website affiliated with the National Peace Corps Association.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Propaganda or teaching about any religion other than Buddhism, Islam, and shamanism by foreign residents is prohibited in Mongolia outside the monasteries and churches of the respective religions. Volunteers who openly proselytize for a particular religion are in direct violation of Peace Corps policy. More confusing and difficult to deal with, however, are the seemingly innocent things many Americans do, such as discussing major religious holidays like Easter and Christmas, which could be misconstrued by people who are sensitive about missionary activities. Volunteers who are not clear as to what constitutes religious proselytizing should consult with the country director.

You are, of course, free to exercise or express your personal religious beliefs in a way that does not impair your effectiveness as a Volunteer. Peace Corps/Mongolia interprets this to mean that you should not engage in any religious activity while at work.

Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities

As a disabled Volunteer in Mongolia, you may find that you face a special set of challenges. In Mongolia, as in other parts of the world, some people may hold prejudices against individuals with disabilities and may discriminate against them. And there is very little of the infrastructure to accommodate individuals with disabilities that has been developed in the United States.

That being said, as part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, of performing a full tour of Volunteer service in Mongolia without unreasonable risk to yourself or interruption of your service. Peace Corps/Mongolia

staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations in training, housing, jobsites, and other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage will I be allowed to bring to Mongolia?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds this allowance. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The authorized baggage allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 102 pounds total with a maximum weight allowance of 70 pounds for any one bag. Please check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters, automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution.

What is the electric current in Mongolia?

It is 220-240 volts, 50 cycles. Outlets take European-style round pin plugs and, as a general rule, are not grounded. Most laptops auto-convert, but you should check the electrical info tags on the equipment you will bring. You may consider bringing a voltage converter (although you can buy them here) as well as a battery charger/adaptor and several rechargeable batteries for flashlights and other battery-

operated equipment. Candles are a necessity and are available locally.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which will cover most living expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects. Volunteers are responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company. Additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Mongolia do not need to get an international driver's license. Operation of motorized vehicles by Volunteers in Mongolia is strictly prohibited.

What should I bring as gifts for Mongolian friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house, pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes, souvenirs

from your area, hard candies that will not melt or spoil, or photos to give away. Mongolians will enjoy seeing pictures of your home and family.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two days of annual leave (vacation days) per month of service, excluding training. Annual leave may not be taken during training or during the first three months or last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and after the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps cannot provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance. Weather conditions throughout the year make travel to and within Mongolia difficult.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training, and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps trainees are assigned to individual sites toward the end of pre-service training. This gives the Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their counterpart agencies. If feasible, you may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, or living conditions. However, many factors influence the site selection process and the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you might ideally like to be. Site assignments are based on the following factors, in order of priority: (1) The community's request and needs, (2) The Volunteer's skills and experience, and (3) The Volunteer's interests and preferences.

Most Volunteers will live in aimag centers (provincial centers of 10,000 to 20,000 people) or soums (provincial villages of 1,000 to 10,000), and will generally be one to three hours from the nearest fellow Volunteer. Some sites are as far as a 10- to 30-hour drive from the capital.

How do Volunteers deal with the pressure to drink on social occasions?

Some Volunteers choose not to drink and occasionally may have to put up with disapproval from Mongolians as a result. Some choose to drink only beer or wine, and others take just a sip or put a little on the tips of their fingers and do a ceremonial offering (you will learn more about this in training). Mongolians are usually respectful of these efforts and do not expect you to drink more. It is ultimately up to you to decide how to handle alcohol responsibly.

Are the heating systems as poor as some have said?

Yes, some are. Many Volunteers report being able to see their breath when teaching at schools in winter. Housing may not have good heating, either. Some solutions are to wear layers, to become cozy with your Peace Corps-issued space heater, and to become a competent fire builder.

Where will I eat during pre-service training?

During training you will live with a host family, who will provide your breakfast, lunch, and dinner on weekdays and weekends. This can be difficult for some Volunteers because they do not have full control over what they eat. Some trainees have even offered to cook for their host family as a strategy to eat a mutton-free meal. Once you get to your site, you will have more control over your diet.

My friends and family keep telling me to pack toilet paper-is this necessary?

No. While most of the toilet paper in Mongolia is not quilted or soft, you do not need to pack any-all the toilet paper you need can be bought locally. You can even find baby wipes.

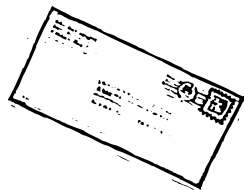
How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580; select option 2, then extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at the above number. For nonemergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580..



2007.6.12

WELCOME LETTERS FROM MONGOLIA VOLUNTEERS



Dear Peace Corps Invitee,

Welcome to the program! Let's get one thing out of the way: *Stop worrying about the winter.* Let me put it the way a current Volunteer put it to me: Mongolians have been living in Mongolia for hundreds of years and they know how to keep warm. They'll help you with whatever you need when you get here.

Next, with the time you've saved by not stressing about buying the hugest coat you can find, spend time with friends and family and eat all of your favorite foods before you leave the U.S. By two months into training, if you're anything like me, you'd give your left arm for some hot peppers or an avocado. Mongolian food is what the book says it is: mutton, fat, flour, and a few shavings of vegetables like cabbage and carrots. You'll adjust though; just remember to bring some spices or have them sent from the states after you get here.

I wish I could tell you what it's like to be in a ger or a wooden house here, but I'm a city Volunteer. My placement is in the capital, Ulaanbaatar. This means I'm in a nice overheated apartment with hot running water. Countryside Volunteers drop by on the weekends to shower and stock up on peanut butter and hot sauce. I live on the edge of town, so transportation is my big adventure. Squeezing my six-foot body into a minivan with 19 people in it day after day has given me a new appreciation for the half-empty city buses of the U.S.

No matter what, you'll get a little bit of the countryside experience during pre-service training when you live with a Mongolian host family. My family saw me as one of their own from day one and I get in touch with them every week now, more than I do with my real parents. Amid the reminders to wear warm clothes in the winter and to text message them before I go on vacation so they don't worry when they can't

reach me, I can feel their love. This past summer, my host brother and sister came to visit me here in Ulaanbaatar, and I got to return their hospitality, playing hostess to their first trip to the capital city.

On a final note, you may have heard this before, but the fewer expectations you have about Mongolia, the easier it will be to adjust here. If you have some concrete picture of exactly what you want it to be, it will be hard to realize your vision and you may end up disappointed. Just try to be open-minded and ready for anything.

Good luck! Cheers,

— Sunaree Marshall

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Dear Peace Corps Invitee,

My first thoughts about Mongolia focused on packing for the winter and trying to learn a little of the language, but mostly I decided to follow the advice of in-country Volunteers and enjoy my remaining time with family and friends before staging. Mongolia and all my concerns about life there would take care of itself, they wrote. This proved to be sound advice for me. So, in the time leading up to staging, enjoy your time with family and friends, eat all of your favorite foods, watch movies—do all the things you won't be able to do and be with all the people that you won't be with for the next two years and let the future take care of itself.

With my first year in-country under my *buus* (belt), here are some thoughts and impressions that may be helpful for you. Life in Mongolia tends to get romanticized. What you see on the *The Discovery Channel* is all here, but living with it day in and day out quickly turns those exotic images into your own personal reality show—think: “National Geographic meets The Real World.” Staging and the summer spent in a host community will help ease you into the reality of site placement. Enjoy pre-service training; it's the toughest 11 weeks you'll ever love! One of the most romanticized parts of Mongolian life is the ger. There are three housing options available to Volunteers: gers, apartments, and wooden houses.

I live in a ger in one of the western aimag centers. Ger life is about 5 percent romantic and 95 percent labor intensive. Gers can be cool and pleasant in the spring and autumn, hot and fly-ridden in the summer, comfortably warm and freezing cold in the winter. I have to re-stake my claim to privacy regularly. Still, it's cool to be having this experience even with all the challenges. My *hashaa* family (neighbor) helps me out a lot and made my first year much less difficult. Mongolian people in general are quite friendly and will be very curious about you. And while you may, at times, find that curiosity is losing its charm-say on that two-day ride to the capital- you'll nonetheless be bowled over by their constant, natural, and unassuming hospitality.

As for food, the Mongolian diet is pretty bland. However, I found some dishes that I really like (I'm a connoisseur of *tarag* - yogurt) and the occasional trip to the capital provides a pizza and cheeseburger fix. My peanut butter addiction, however, has only worsened since being here! And while I'll be happy to eliminate mutton from my daily menu after I close service, I'll sorely miss both horse and camel. While Mongolia has its share of culinary exotica, you'll probably never have as many organic, free-range meat options available anywhere else! Lastly, if you are a coffee drinker, for the love of God, bring ground coffee and a French press!

Travel is another aspect of life here where reality elbows romanticism out the door and plops itself uncomfortably next to you. A 28-hour trip that should have been only 13 hours and breakdowns or unplanned delays are a constant possibility. Keep your iPod fully charged! But, as with all things here, you survive it, laugh about it later with your friends, and gain a whole new perspective and appreciation for what the majority of Mongolians endure every day.

Lastly, make sure you have the following items at the top of your packing list: patience-for yourself and everyone else, abundant curiosity, an open mind, and (no kidding) the best long underwear money can buy! *Sain yavaarai!* (Safe travels!)

— “Gooch” Blakely

Greetings from Darkhan, Mongolia,

At this point, the town of Darkhan doesn't have a whole lot of significance for you, but by the end of your first summer it will be a place you have become quite familiar with as the hub of your pre-service training. For Volunteers in this region, Darkhan is a place to re-supply, catch up on emails, and meet up with other Peace Corps Volunteers. Mongolians would say they love this town because it is fairly clean, the air is pure, and there is very good access to goods and services. While those qualities might have to be taken a bit relatively, after over a year of living here, we can honestly say that we are very thankful for our placement here in this country and in this city. That said: Welcome! It still may be a little while before you step on the plane (or it may not), but we are eagerly anticipating your arrival.

Depending on when you get this letter, you'll be in different states of preparation, but even as you're getting ready to spend two years in a country you may not know much about, working with an organization that stresses flexibility and with people you've never met, from our experience, you're gonna be in good hands. The training and support that Peace Corps/Mongolia provides is exceptional. When Vita and I got to Mongolia last June, we stepped into a program that was willing to provide us access to as much language and culture skills as we were willing to acquire. The staff, from administration to medical to the technical sectors, have been very knowledgeable and a pleasure to work with.

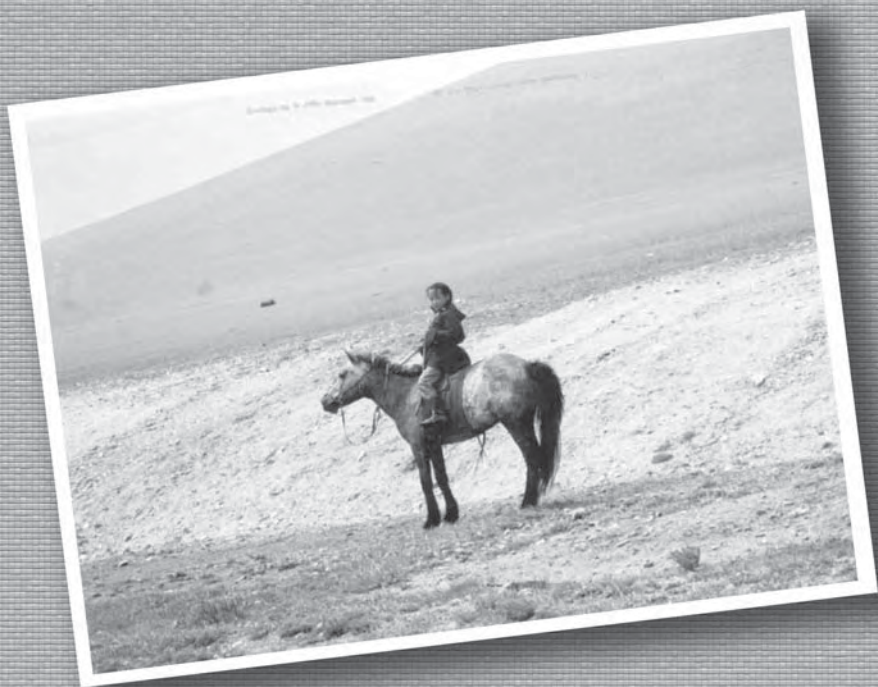
So, a little about us. I am a TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) Volunteer working at a local secondary school and Vita is working with a business development nongovernmental organization as a community economic development Volunteer. Although we are working in different sectors, we share a lot of the same challenges, rewards, and frustrations in our day-to-day work. For example, the challenge of speaking a new language, or the frustrations of projects or ideas that sometimes don't seem to get off the ground and the rewards of finally seeing something come

together and click. Yes, from time to time, it is a challenge to relate graciously with each other, when the stresses of cross-cultural living start to wear on us. On the other hand, as a married couple, having each other to share this experience with has been invaluable and we have definitely grown individually and together through this experience.

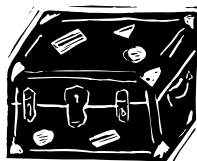
Now a bit about Mongolia. Is Mongolia cold? Yeah, it can get pretty cold in the winter and we would definitely recommend bringing some clothes and supplies along that will help you stay cozy on the colder days. On the other hand, cultivating an open mind and warm heart for the people here even as you're preparing will help you not only get through, but enjoy the winter months and the many winter holidays. The Mongolian word *bayar* means both celebration and happiness and is found all over, in names, greetings, etc. The word for goodbye, *bayarteh*, literally means “be with celebration” and celebrating is something most Mongolians love to do—with friends, with song, and with food and refreshments. So as you prepare to embark, think of it not only as a journey, or as aesthetic volunteer service, but as though you're being invited to the celebration and there are a lot of people waiting to welcome you in.

Za, Bayar-teh!

— Anthony and Vita Trujillo



PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Mongolia and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, remember that you have a 102-pound weight restriction on baggage.

You can find almost anything you need in Ulaanbaatar and many basics can be purchased in aimag centers (provincial capitals). Depending upon your site, you may have limited time to shop in Ulaanbaatar until your first in-service training, which is usually held in December. So think carefully about those essential winter items you will need during your first few months at your site.

Before you move to your site, the Peace Corps will provide you with a space heater, water filter or distiller, fire extinguisher, smoke detector, shortwave radio, good- quality extension cord, many teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) books, sleeping bag (some Volunteers find the sleeping bag bulky and heavy and suggest that trainees bring their own for travel purposes) and a medical kit.

Your living allowance should not be considered a source of funding for major clothing purchases, although replacement clothing is factored into the living allowance. The Peace Corps does not provide reimbursement for winter clothing purchased in the United States. However Peace Corps/ Mongolia does provide a settling-in/winterization allowance that covers the purchase of some winter clothing and supplies in-country.

The hard water and strong detergent in Mongolia, not to mention hand-washing, will be harsh on your clothing, so make sure that whatever you bring can stand up to this treatment. Most Volunteers wear their clothes for several days before washing them, so dark colors are a good idea. While dry cleaning is available in Ulaanbaatar, Darkhan, and Erdenet, you may not have regular access to these cities, and the quality of the service is not consistent.

A wide variety of clothes is available here (many of them made in China), but quality can be lacking. If you have a hard time finding your size in the United States, you won't find it here, and genuine "high-tech" fibers are not readily available. Very warm, Mongolian-made winter clothes can be purchased in-country. Walking will be your main mode of transportation around town, and the terrain here is rather rugged, so you need footwear that can take a lot of abuse.

General Clothing

Note: Many Volunteers suggest packing very light. Basic clothing and toiletries can be bought here. Save room in your suitcase for music, pictures from home, games, and things that make a big difference when being away from home for two years. Specialty items like quality long underwear and gloves make good sense to bring from home, but heavy jackets can be bought here for under \$30. Also pack a separate bag of winter things or things you won't need during the 11 weeks of summer training. This bag will be stored at the Peace Corps office and you won't have access to it during summer training.

- One pair (tops and bottoms) of mid-weight long underwear (it is essential that you purchase these before coming to Mongolia)

- One pair (tops and bottoms) of heavy long underwear (it is essential that you purchase these before coming to Mongolia)
- Winter coat or parka (available in Mongolia)
- Fall and spring coat or parka (readily available in Mongolia)
- Gloves or mittens (available in Mongolia, but if you have big hands, get some in the U.S.)
- Scarf (available in Mongolia)
- Stocking cap (available in Mongolia)
- A few (3-4) pairs of woolen socks (available in Mongolia)
- A few (3-4) pairs of cotton socks (available in Mongolia)
- Sun hats (available in Mongolia)
- Two to three “professional” shirts to work in, one for summer. (available in Mongolia)
- Two to three pairs of nice pants for work, one light (available in Mongolia)
- One to two pullover sweaters (available in Mongolia)
- Two pairs of jeans (available in Mongolia)
- Five to six of your favorite T-shirts
- Sweatpants and sweatshirt (available in Mongolia)
- Two pairs of shorts (essential for summer and playing sports)
- One formal piece of clothing, such as a suit for males and a dress for women (available in Mongolia)

Note: It is very difficult for tall men and women to find clothing that fits them here. Peace Corps recommends purchasing these items while in the U.S. if you are over 6 feet tall.

For Women

- Bras and underwear (larger sizes are difficult to find and the quality may be lacking)
- Bathing suit

For Men

- Underwear (local underwear may be of low quality)
- Swim trunks

Shoes

- Winter boots (available in Mongolia)
- Hiking boots (not necessary, but the hiking is great here)
- Sneakers (especially if you like basketball or volleyball since there are plenty of opportunities to play)
- Sandals (outdoor flip-flop sandals are not available in Mongolia)
- Dress shoes

Note: Men's shoes larger than size 10 and women's shoes larger than size 8 are difficult to find in Mongolia.

Kitchen

- Leatherman or Swiss Army Knife
- Sturdy water bottle(s) (e.g., Nalgene)
- Plastic storage bags

***A Volunteer-compiled cookbook will be given to you at the end of pre-service training.*

Personal Hygiene & Toiletry Items

- Towel (you can find low quality towels in Mongolia)

Note: Many products are available in Mongolia (e.g., Nivea hand cream, Pantene shampoo, Colgate toothpaste, nail polish, and ALL kinds of cosmetics), but if you are, for instance, a Clinique or Body Shop junkie, bring your own or have them sent.

Miscellaneous

- A small photo album of family and friends (a must-bring item)
- 220-volt converter (essential if you bring American appliances)
- Rechargeable batteries
- Camera*
- Flashlight*
- American board and card games
- Music*
- Solar shower
- Duct tape (highly recommended)
- Camping gear (if you like to camp)*
- Fishing gear (if you like to fish)*
- Backpack (useful for traveling in-country)
- Reading materials (much cheaper if sent using a postal M-bag; also, Peace Corps has an extensive lending library)
- MP3 or iPod player
- Flash disk or thumb drive

*Available in the capital

Care Package items

These are good things for your friends and family to send you if they are looking for useful ideas.

- Hand and foot warmers (i.e., the charcoal kind that are activated when exposed to air).
- Your favorite magazines (double as English teaching resource once read)
- Children's books with Songs/tapes
- Portable French press mug (if you like good coffee or loose tea)

Work Items for English Education Volunteers

Chances are good that your school will not be able to provide you with many resources. Below are a few items that cannot be bought in-country but would be useful in the classroom.

- Colored construction paper
- Catalogs (the pictures are useful when teaching)
- Children's books, a picture dictionary, songs on tape, and a book about American holidays
- Erasers for chalkboards
- Index cards

Work Items for Health and Community and Youth Development Volunteers

What you need will depend on your experience in your field and the specific job you have. It is best to assess your situation when you get here and then have items sent from home.

NOTES



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your healthcare during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in supplemental health coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated for insurance. This is especially true when insurance companies know you have predictable expenses and are in an upper age bracket.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.



CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



The following list of numbers will help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family so they have them in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

800.424.8580, Press 2, then
Ext. # (see below)

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia	Ext. 1875	202.692.1875
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer E-mail: mongolia@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2416	202.692.2416

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 (24 hours)

PEACE CORPS

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