

SPECIAL: TRAVEL SECRETS YOU NEED TO KNOW

TRAVEL + LEISURE

FEBRUARY 2007

25 DREAM TRIPS



WIN!

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SWEEPSTAKES
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— PARIS —

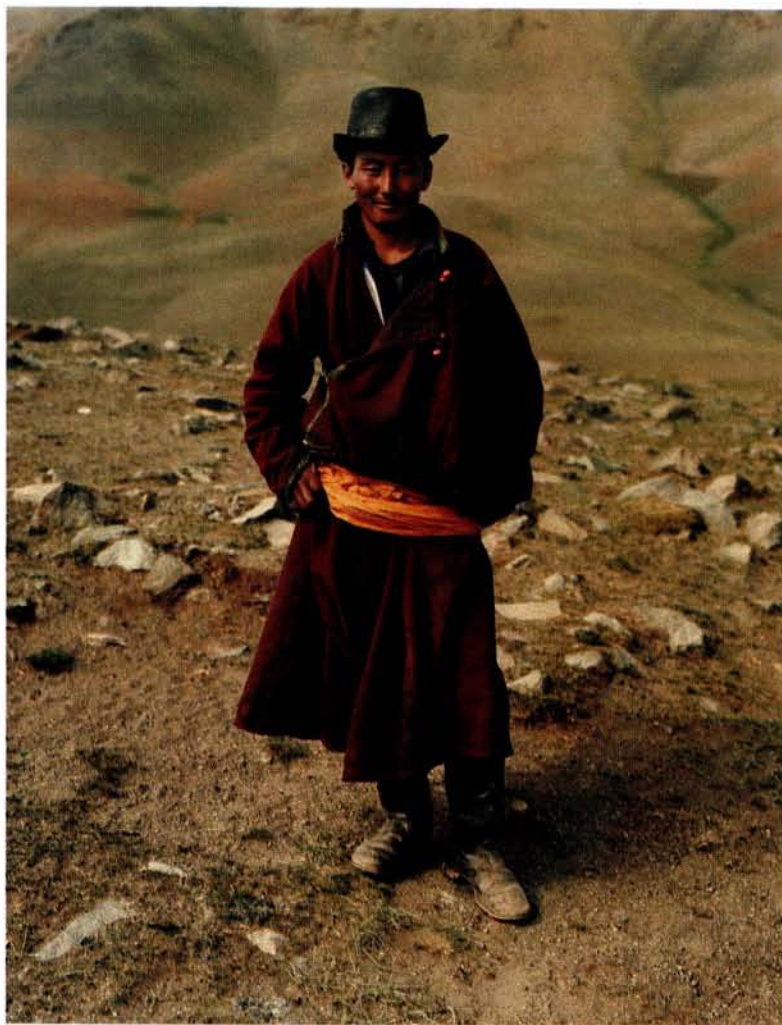
THAILAND
CALIFORNIA
SCOTLAND
TURKISH COAST

+

HIDDEN ROME



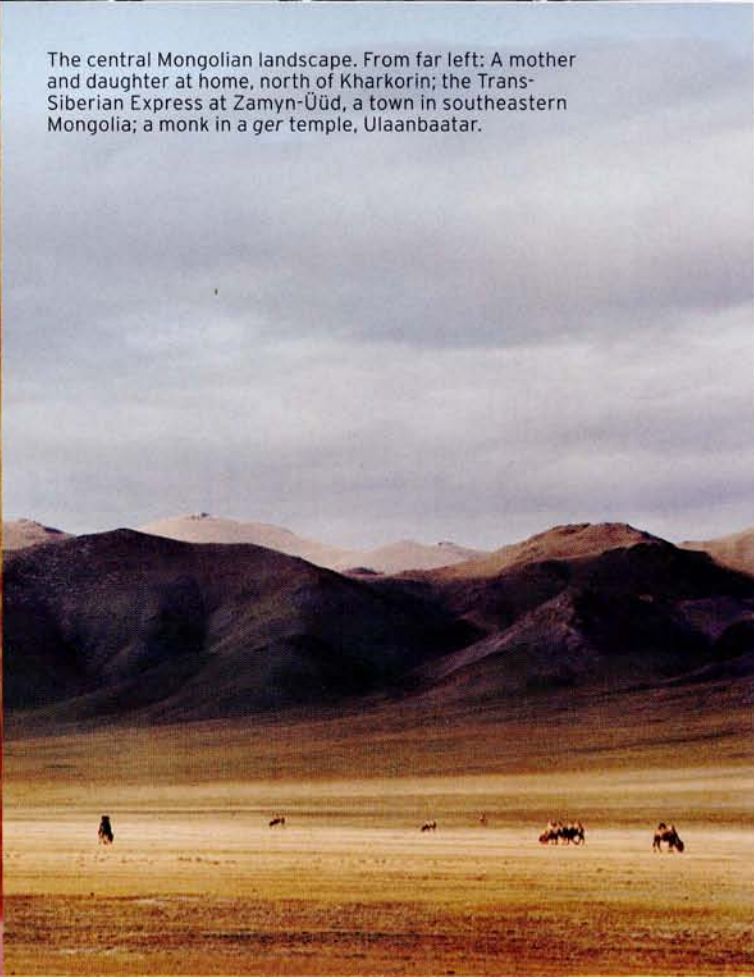
~ INLAND ~ EMPIRE



Emerging from the long shadow of Soviet Communism, *MONGOLIA*—with its stark, ravishing landscapes and resurgent Buddhist traditions—is looking west for its future. *By* PANKAJ MISHRA
Photographed by FRÉDÉRIC LAGRANGE



The central Mongolian landscape. From far left: A mother and daughter at home, north of Kharkorin; the Trans-Siberian Express at Zamyin-Üüd, a town in southeastern Mongolia; a monk in a ger temple, Ulaanbaatar.



there was *EMPTINESS* for hours on end

GUIDE TO MONGOLIA



WHEN TO GO

July through September are the most pleasant months to visit, but come prepared for cold at any time of the year. Avoid mid-October through April, when temperatures remain below zero and sudden snowstorms are frequent.

HOW TO GET THERE

Most travelers fly in from Beijing,

Berlin, or Moscow, but there are also nonstops from Osaka and Seoul. Ulaanbaatar's Chinggis Khaan International Airport is the only international hub in the country. MIAT (Mongolian Airlines), Air China, Aeroflot, and Korean Air fly to the capital city.

VISAS

Visas are not needed for U.S. citizens to visit Mongolia.

WHERE TO STAY

Ulaanbaatar Hotel
14 Sukhbaatar Square; 976-11/320-320; www.ubhotel.mn; doubles from \$90.

GREAT VALUE **Three Camel Lodge**
Perched in the foothills of the Gobi Gurvan Sayan

Mountains, this desert camp of 46 *gers* (nomadic tents of felt and wood) is the area's only luxury accommodation. 800/998-6634; www.threecamellodge.com; doubles from \$140.

TOUR OUTFITTERS

Geographic Expeditions
Offers five trips (as well as private tours) that extend from the Gobi desert to forested Lake Khövsgöl in the north. 800/777-8183 or 415/922-0448; www.geoex.com; 16-day trips from \$3,995 per person, double.

Mountain Travel Sobek
Leads a moderate to difficult

17-day hiking trip through the Altay Mountains. 888/687-6235 or 510/594-6000; www.mtsobek.com; from \$5,690.

Nomadic Expeditions

Founded in 1990 by Jalsa Urubshurow, a Mongolian-American, the travel operator offers more than two dozen culture and adventure trips. 800/998-6634 or 609/860-9008; www.nomadicexpeditions.com; trips from \$2,125.

T+L ONLINE To see more of Frédéric Lagrange's Mongolia photographs, go to travelandleisure.com.