

**Where in the World is . . .**  
**Mongolia (JT-JV)**  
**CQ Zone 23 ITU Zone 32, 33**

The thundering Mongol Horde rolled out of the Great Asian desert in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Lots of Hollywood royalty played the great Khan on the screen. Led by John Wayne as Temujin, later Genghis Khan; then Orson Wells, Omar Sharif, Jack Parlane Stephen Boyd, or even Murvyn Vye, playing second banana to Richard Widmark as a sad sack Mongolian tribal chief in *Destination Gobi*; caught up in the backwater of WW II.



The Mongols rode in search of plunder and grazing for their animals. The Mongol horse is purported to be largely unchanged since the time of Genghis Khan. Nomads living in the traditional Mongol



fashion still hold more than 3 million animals, which outnumber the country's human population. Despite their small size, they are horses, not ponies. In Mongolia, horses live outdoors all year, dealing with temperatures from 86 °F in summer down to -40 °F in winter, and they graze and search for food on their own. Some animals are slaughtered for meat. Other than that, they serve as riding and transport animals; they are used both for the daily work of the nomads and in horse racing.

The mare's milk is fermented into the national drink, *Airag*. Airag contains about 2% alcohol. The taste is slightly sour and requires getting used to it. The exact taste depends on the characteristics of the local pastures and the exact method of production. The beverage is a rich source of vitamins and minerals for the nomads. Hospitality mandates the host present a bowl of airag to every visitor. To reject the offer right away would be gravely impolite.

At their greatest, Mongols controlled the largest contiguous land empire in history, stretching from Korea in the East, China and Russia in the south and most of Eastern Europe in the West. Some historians regard the destruction under the Mongol Empire as some of the deadliest conflicts in human history. The Mongols were fierce warriors who scourged the landscape wherever they went of cattle and horses. They murdered their captives or forced them into their army.

The Empire developed through a series of conquests and invasions, fueled by the need for grazing land to support Mongol cavalry and cattle. Definitely not vegetarians, their diet consisted of the animals they ate and the horses they rode.

The Empire was founded by Genghis Khan who initially forged a confederation of key Mongol tribes. Large areas of Central Asia and northeastern Iran were seriously depopulated, as every city or town that resisted the Mongols was subject to destruction.

During conquest, every soldier was required to execute a certain number of persons, with the



number varying according to circumstances. The Mongol invasions induced population displacement on a scale never seen before in central Asia as well as eastern Europe. Word that the Mongol hordes were approaching would spread terror and panic.

After 100 years or so, the empire began to fracture because of infighting between descendants of Mongol rulers and the Mongols never regained the sweep and wealth of their former empire.

Fast forward to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1911 Mongolia was established as an independent nation. In Central Asia. What was Inner Mongolia, became a prisoner province of China, large parts of which contain the Great Wall of China.



Present day Mongolia is still one of the largest landlocked countries in the world, approximately 604,000 sq. miles. After it declared its independence in 1911, it became closely aligned with Russia and later the Soviet Union. After the Japanese invasion of neighboring Manchuria in 1931 and during the Soviet-Japanese Border War of 1939, the Soviet Union successfully defended Mongolia against Japanese expansionism. Mongolia fought during the Soviet-Japanese War in August 1945 to liberate Southern Mongolia from Japan and China.

At the 1945 Yalta Conference, one of the Soviet conditions for its participation, was that after the war Outer Mongolia would retain its independence. The referendum took place on October 20, 1945, with (according to official numbers) 100% of the electorate voting for independence.

Mongolia's total population as of January 2015 is estimated by at 3,000,000 people. About 59% of the total population is under age 30, 27% of whom are under 14. This relatively young and growing population has placed strains on Mongolia's economy. The horse culture is very much alive as about 30% of the population is nomadic, moving from place to place through the Great Gobi Desert or on the steppes.

The geography of Mongolia is varied, with the Gobi Desert to the south and with cold and mountainous regions to the north and west. Much of Mongolia consists of the Mongolian-Manchurian grassland steppe, with forested areas comprising 11% of the total areas. Most of the country is hot in the summer and extremely cold in the winter, with January averages dropping as low as -22 °F, a vast front of cold air comes in from Siberia in winter, causing very cold temperatures.

The Mongolian Amateur Radio Society represents hams in Mongolia; roughly 250 members. Mongolia is 220<sup>th</sup> on the Club Log DXCC Most Wanted List.



Reporting from the Dark Side,

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