

Cambridge University Mongolia Expedition

Mountaineering first ascents in Western Mongolia
12th July to 26th August 2005



Published December 2005

Tom Lambert
tom.lambert@cantab.net

12 Spout Copse
Stannington
Sheffield
S6 6FB

Gonville and Caius College
Cambridge
CB2 1TA

Alan Dickinson
alan.dickinson@cantab.net

17 Ely Gardens
Tonbridge
Kent
TN10 4NZ

Clare College
Cambridge
CB2 1TL

A mountaineering expedition to western Mongolia was planned and conducted in the summer of 2005. The team comprised two students of Cambridge University: Alan Dickinson and Tom Lambert. The aim was to complete the first crossing of a new ridge traverse in the region of Mongolia's second highest mountain, Monk-Khairkhan Uul. This 70km route was identified from a satellite photograph and a 1: 500,000 scale map. The terrain is less impressive on the ground than it had appeared in these sources and it transpired that the route was a series of rather tame-looking hills. We abandoned this objective in favour of an ascent of Monk-Khairkhan Uul (4202m).

We moved to the Tavanbogd national park, on the borders of China and Russia in the country's far northwest. Here we experienced bad weather. An attempt on Huiten (4374m) was abandoned when only 150m below the summit due to the poor conditions. Later, in clearer weather, we completed a successful and enjoyable route on a mixed snow and rock ridge to a summit at 3542m.

Contents

Cover

1	Abstract and Contents
2	Introduction and Expedition Members
3-10	Expedition Diary
11	Administration and Logistics
	<i>Research Materials</i>
	<i>Training and Testing</i>
	<i>Permissions and Permits</i>
12	<i>Fund Raising</i>
	<i>Finances</i>
	<i>Insurance</i>
	<i>Travel</i>
13	<i>Food and Accommodation</i>
	<i>Communications</i>
	<i>Specialist Equipment</i>
14	<i>Risks and Hazards</i>
	<i>Medical Arrangements</i>
	<i>Photography</i>
15	Accounts
16	Sketch Map

Thanks

We would like to thank everyone who helped us to get to Mongolia as without them it would not have been possible. In particular we would like to thank our sponsors:

Mount Everest Foundation (MEF)
British Mountaineering Council (BMC)
Cambridge Expeditions Fund (CEF) and the Burton Charitable Trust
Cambridge Expeditions Committee (CEC)
David Revell
Clare College
Milton Brewery
Bailey and Cogger Solicitors
Denise Barnes Estate Agents
ASK Restaurants

Our patrons:
Martin Moran
Anthony Snodgrass
Henry Day

For their advice and support we would also like to thank:
Mary Selby
John Town
Lindsay Griffin



Introduction

It was probably all Neil Gresham's fault. He came to Cambridge a few years ago to lecture the mountaineering club on some of his recent climbing tours, including a trip to Mongolia, and I think the idea of going there has been in my mind ever since. Being a believer in keeping things simple, I wanted to keep the size of the group to a minimum. Tom was persuaded reasonably easily, and our team was complete.

Expedition Members



Figure 1: Tom Lambert (L) and Alan Dickinson

Alan Dickinson

At the time of the expedition, Alan had over four years' rock climbing experience. This began on Wye Valley limestone, but he has since done most of his climbing in the Peak District, with regular forays to other destinations around Britain. Favourite routes have been the Old Man of Hoy (E1), Centurion (HVS), The Bat (E2), The Right Unconquerable (HVS) and Satan's Slip (E1).

In winter, Alan has climbed as much in Snowdonia as in Scotland, and leads Scottish grade IV. His trekking experience is considerable and varied, and has included long distances in the Indian Himalaya and the Bolivian and Chilean Andes, as well as in British mountains.

Tom Lambert

Living on the edge of the Peak District, it is no surprise that the majority of Tom's rock climbing has been on gritstone. His favourite routes have been High Neb Buttress (VS), Nea (VS), The Cracks (HS) and Revelation(HS).

Tom has one Alpine season to his name, climbing routes up to Alpine grade D. In Scottish winter climbing, Tom leads grade III. Tom and Alan have climbed extensively together, both on rock and on Scottish and Welsh winter routes, including Clogwyn Ddu Gully Right Hand (III) and The Screen (IV).

Expedition Diary

This being the first time that either of us had organised an expedition, every stage of the planning was new and confusing. Fortunately, we quickly enlisted the support of some much more experienced mountaineers, to whom we are greatly indebted for their support, encouragement and advice. Henry Day knows more climbers than we realised existed and was an excellent source of contacts who knew about Mongolian mountaineering. Anthony Snodgrass, a fellow of Clare College, was very helpful with our applications to university travel funds. Martin Moran was invaluable when it came to our Mount Everest Foundation (MEF) application.

The months passed quickly. We went to our MEF interview in the grand setting of the Royal Geographical Society. It's fair to say that we were nervous as we sat down in front of the panel, but it turns out that illustrious climbers are a friendly breed and they seemed genuinely interested to hear all about our plans. At one stage an argument broke out between two of the interviewers as to whether the Trans-Siberian Railway was a wonderful experience or a tedious waste of time! This light-hearted banter put us more at ease, and we must have managed to say something to impress the committee as we later heard that the MEF had decided to award generous support to the expedition.

We looked with some success for other sponsorship, discussed gear, planned routes, booked flights, got fit, went on a first aid course, did lots of climbing and generally neglected our degrees. Almost before we knew it Alan had graduated and somehow we were on a plane to Moscow. This was it! A night in Moscow and we were on the train the next evening, chugging steadily towards Siberia and, eventually, Ulaan Baatar.

One thing we forgot to ask when we bought out train tickets was exactly how long the journey would be, and it didn't cross our minds to check with any of the other passengers for the first couple of days. We enjoyed stops at stations, where Mongolian passengers in every carriage would unpack bales of jeans, jackets and trainers to sell on the platform to the hundreds of locals who flocked to buy them. The countryside in between was worth watching for a while, but eventually it became clear that Siberia consists almost entirely of birch forests and our interest waned. Finally, we ran out of food (though not, fortunately, of beer), and it occurred to us to find out how much longer was left of the journey. The answer that there was over a day remaining was disappointing to say the least, particularly in view of the fact that we had no roubles with us. Kindly Dutch travellers changed some dollars, allowing us to buy provisions from the last station in Russia. The eggs were reasonably successful, but the can with the picture of tuna on the side was rather disappointing. It contained several pinkish-grey blobs of indeterminate shape that we can only guess were fish livers. These fell somewhat short of being delicious.

We waited a few days in Ulaan Baatar for a flight, spending time walking in the forested and mosquito-infested hills south of the city, and finally made it to Hovd, a hot, dusty provincial capital in western Mongolia. The market provided pasta, biscuits, and little else in the way of hill food, but Alan did witness the sale of a goat's head to an apparently-satisfied customer. The next day we were on our way in a rugged Ukrainian jeep towards Monk-Khairkhan, Mongolia's second highest mountain and the starting point for the long ridge traverse that we had been planning to attempt. The route had been identified from maps and satellite photos, but unfortunately their scale of 1:500,000 had exaggerated the quality of the terrain. What had looked as though it might be a jagged ridge on the map turned out to be a chain of rather tame-looking hills. There was plainly little, if any, new ground to be covered here, since Mongolian nomads would have had no difficulty in crossing these hills on horseback during the summer months. Reluctantly, we concluded that there was no merit in

walking our proposed route, so we set about making alternative plans.

Since we were at its base, an ascent of Monk-Khairkhan seemed appealing. This mountain, described in John Town's AJ article of 1992, is Mongolia's second highest. It is flanked on one side by steep ice several hundred metres high that look like they would give any number of excellent, hard ice climbs. We lacked the necessary equipment for such an undertaking – on the basis that we would be carrying everything with us on long and relatively easy routes we had taken only one axe each, strap-on crampons and a minimal amount of rock and ice protection – and so these routes remain to be explored by a later party. There certainly seems to be scope for dozens of long, multi-pitch lines in the rough range of Scottish grade V.

Our route took the easier ground that approaches the mountain from the north. In one day there is little difficulty in completing the climb that begins with steep scrambling over boulders for a couple of hours. Eventually, the snow line was reached, and we walked, roped, over ground that seemed remarkably free of crevasses. The first, and lower, summit was reached easily, and we saw what we believed to be snow leopard footprints in the otherwise untainted snow. We were again treated to a glimpse of the stunning ice walls as we walked down and around them towards the main summit. The climb up this was steeper, though still requiring no more than crampons and persistence, and we were surprised to suddenly find ourselves at the top. Surprised, because our thirty-year-old Russian map appeared to have the mountain's height wrong by 200m or so, at least in comparison to the probably much more reliable GPS.

We looked for a route off the far side of the summit, but the snow appeared too steep to allow this. It seems that John Town's party had ascended the mountain by this route, so the climb was probably possible. Unaware of this, we returned via our approach route to the base of the mountain.



Figure 2: Alan at the top of the Potani Glacier

Having expected to be attempting a long ridge route, we had not asked our Jeep driver to wait for us, and we returned to our drop-off point with no means of returning the 200km or so to Hovd. As

we pondered the problem, we wandered down the valley, passing several yaks – were we supposed to be scared of these, we wondered? Are they dangerous? – and arrived at the first ger. By means of arm-waving and phrasebook-pointing, techniques that were to prove invaluable over the course of our travels, we explained our predicament. The family invited us into the tent, and we were treated to our first taste of Mongolian hospitality. It is the tradition of the steppe that guests are to be welcomed in and offered food and drink, and even a place to sleep at night. We drank our first milky, salty tea, and ate our first dried curds. These tasted quite like cheese but with a certain fizzy tang and were as hard as chocolate. The dung fire in the middle produced a lot of heat and the wooden poles that supported the structure were all painted bright red. We sat on mats on the lino-covered floor. The men made cigarettes by rolling tobacco in strips of newspaper, which was then carefully folded and put away for next time.

The return to Hovd was accomplished via four days' walk to the village of Mankhan, followed by a journey on a crowded bus that we shared with more people and goat hides than its designers had probably foreseen. From Hovd, we moved immediately to Bayan-Olgii, Mongolia's most northwesterly and highest province. Along the borders with China and Russia is the Tavanbogd National Park, including the country's largest glaciers and highest summit, Mount Huiten (4374m). It is a region that we had intended to visit in any case but, thinking that our main efforts would be focused on the objectives further south, we had not researched what remained to be explored in Tavanbogd before leaving home.

We arranged transport to Tavanbogd, but then both fell ill with food poisoning. We shall not trouble the reader with details, but suffice it to say that the lack of electricity or running water most of the time compounded the unpleasantness of the experience. After a few days we felt well enough to travel and made our way to Tavanbogd.



Figure 3: The ridge traverse

After a day's acclimatisation at the base of the glacier, we made an attempt on Huiten (See the sketch map on p17 for location). We ascended the dry Potani Glacier, which leads to the start of the mountain's north ridge, in good conditions and camped near the start of the ridge. As soon as the

tent went up the weather took a sudden change for the worse, and for the next two days we had to contend with near constant snow and very strong winds. Having plenty of food, we sat it out, hoping for an improvement in conditions. A brief clear spell allowed us to leave the tent and investigate (Figure 2), but this came in the late afternoon and a summit attempt was not really feasible. On the second night, the wind was stronger still, and we woke to find that no small quantity of snow had been blown into the porch of our tent and had covered our equipment including bags, ropes and, most annoyingly, boots, in two or three inches of fresh powder. By the time we awoke, the snow was no longer falling, so we resolved to attempt the route.

We prized apart our boots, which had acquired the consistency of wood, and forced our feet into them. Setting off across the fresh snow, we spent the first half hour or so falling into the previously-obvious crevasses. After that we made good progress, and by mid-morning were high on the ridge and going well. Weather conditions grew steadily worse again, alas. In strong winds and heavy snow, with visibility of barely 15m, we decided to turn back. We were 150m below the summit.

We returned quickly to the tent and spent a good half hour or so digging it out of the ice, inflicting considerable damage on our axes in the process. Finally freeing the guys, we returned to the bottom of the glacier, and were at base camp by early afternoon. The bad weather explains the dearth of photography from this part of the expedition.



Figure 4: The rock tower on the ridge

Upon returning to camp, we went in search of our belongings, which we had stowed in an empty ger. Not finding them, we surmised that they had probably been stolen. We worked out what was left, and came rapidly to the conclusion that what we had carried up and down the glacier with us was rather little to live off for the next several days. The only thing that remained was the useless fuel that we had purchased from a petrol station. Not being able to speak Mongol, we had relied entirely on guesswork to buy the right stuff, and what we ended up with was clearly not that. Experiments revealed that a match set to a pool of the liquid would give a flame lasting for a few second before it fizzled limply out. Imagine our surprise, then, when a team of camels carrying supplies for a Jagged Globe expedition to Huiten arrive a couple of hours later, the first beast proudly bearing our possessions at the top of its burden.

We dried our gear and repacked it. Our attention had turned to a ridge that we had first seen on our walk into the base camp. Crossing the glacier and its interminable

moraines (these we nicknamed 'Martins', after our patron), we reached the base of the ridge and camped amongst the meadow flowers at the far left centre of Figure 3. Despite some overnight snow, we woke to clear skies and the prospect of good climbing conditions at last.

The route follows the skyline in Figure 3, and began with a struggle up steep scree as the sun rose. After a couple of hours we were established on the ridge, and the route became much more enjoyable. The route was a mixture of snow and rock, and we were able to move unroped along most of it. Clear skies and outstanding scenery made for fantastic views in all directions. To our left was a large glacier with a striking circular maze of crevasses at its centre. To the right we finally saw our first clear views of Huiten.



Figure 5: Alan approaching the summit.

The few problematic sections involved passing awkward rock buttresses. These we pitched, the hardest part being roughly British Severe on steep, snow-covered and very loose rock. The trickiest moves involved turning a rock tower, shown in Figure 4, on its right by descent to the snow beneath it.

Enjoying the improved weather conditions, we took photographs and enjoyed the views as we neared the summit. Figure 5 shows Alan on easy ground. We reached the summit around 1.30pm, and enjoyed the panorama. Deciding to descend to the small glacier to the northeast of the summit, we walked down the summit snow dome, picked our way through rock buttresses and snow slopes to the glacier. Gently sloping and uncrevassed, this soon led us back down to the screes. We returned to our tent in its little garden of dandelions, vetch and chives and the snow again began to fall.

We returned the next day to the road end, and waited in our tent for our driver to arrive. He came in the evening and told us, through a nearby tour guide who spoke English, that we were expected for dinner by a local family. On the drive to Tavanbogd, we had stopped overnight in a Kazakh ger, and it seemed that now we were again being welcomed there on our return. The hospitality of the steppe is legendary, and we experienced it fully that night. We sat on the floor of the ger with the men while the women rolled dough and tended the fire. We were offered airag from a carved wooden bowl (Figure 6) and did our best to force it down. This weakly-alcoholic drink, made from

fermented mare's milk and sour as lemon juice, was not at all to our tastes. I suppose that wine or whisky would taste as unpleasant to a Mongolian nomad.



Figure 6: Inside a ger, drinking airag

Mongolian gers, including those of the ethnic Kazakhs in the western provinces, are round felt tents supported by a mesh of wooden poles. At the centre is the stove, a dung-fuelled fire in a welded metal box that connects to a chimney rising out of the centre of the tent. Around the walls are beds, with a shrine opposite the door. Beside the door the pots, pans, plates, and food is stored. Herds of goats and sheep surround the ger, with smaller numbers of yaks and, most prized of all, horses. This family also kept a very large eagle, used for hunting during the winter months (Figure 6). Curds and dung dry outside, ready to be stored for the cold winter months. Mongolian concepts of privacy are very different from our own, and it is considered normal to walk into a stranger's house on arrival without waiting for invitation.

Trying to make conversation by pointing to sentences in the phrasebook – fortunately Mongolian literacy rates are high – we wondered what was being prepared. When it was time to eat we were not disappointed. The pan was lifted from the fire, and huge joints of steaming mutton were pulled out of it. After a diet on the mountain of vile pasta and monotonous soup, biscuits and sweets, this was a wonderful sight. The dough was briefly boiled in the pan and the two parts were served together. The fatty meat tasted delicious and we ate until we could eat no more. The stock was then served in bowls.

We slept on the floor of the ger, and in the morning took photographs of the family, their gers and livestock (Figure 7). It is considered offensive to offer payment to nomads for their hospitality, but we promised instead to send them our photographs. This delighted the family, and they proudly posed for us with their animals. We breakfasted on the by now familiar fare of fried dough, butter, and bowls of dried curds, hard dried curds, crunchy dried curds and a white powder that we presumed to be some curd derivative. This all came with several cups of milky tea which it seems customary to dissolve a spoonful of butter in. Alan tried this once and found that it did not add

greatly to the experience.



Figure 7: Gers and yak

We returned to Olgii, and spent a very tedious afternoon trying to persuade a driver to take us to Hovd. Transport is a chronic problem in Mongolia. Not only are the roads terrible, but there is a general sense of extreme lethargy. After negotiations lasting the greater part of a day, a deal was finally agreed, but the driver then insisted upon waiting until darkness fell to set out on what is only an eight-hour drive. A journey that could have been made entirely during daylight was made entirely at night. A brief stop to change a tyre in the freezing steppe saw us finally arrive in Hovd shortly before dawn.

More illness in Hovd (Alan) and Ulaan Baatar (Tom) made for an anticlimactic end to our time in Mongolia. We boarded the train for Moscow, this time with sufficient Chinese noodles and currency to last the trip. We went to Red Square to visit Lenin, Stalin and Gagarin. One last piece of good fortune lay in store for us when we checked into Moscow Sheremetova airport. An overbooked flight via Rome meant that we were upgraded to a direct flight to Heathrow with Aeroflot. After seven weeks away with the minimum of clothing we must have been some of the scruffiest passengers ever to fly First Class. We didn't let that worry us as we drank our complimentary champagne.

Administration and Logistics

Research Materials

Detailed (i.e. 1:500 000) maps of Mongolia were hard to get hold of in this country. We tried established sources like Stanford's but they no longer stock them. In the end we used photocopies of maps from the former USSR, taken from the originals in Cambridge University Library. We were assured this is legal since the Soviet Union no longer exists, hence no copyright is attributable. There is a map shop in Ulaan Baatar which sells maps that have been updated since the country's independence, although these are unlikely to be much of an improvement. In the national park office in Bayan-Olgii we did see an up to date map (probably the same as in UB) that had the height of Monk-Khairkhan-Uul as 4200m, almost exactly the same as we measured with the GPS. This is in contrast to 4362m currently publicised.

We bought a satellite photo of the area where we intended to new route from GlobeXplorer.com which, although of high quality, was expensive at ~£20. A much better idea would be to use Google Earth as this is free resource which has the same pictures for the area we were interested in. Google Earth is, in fact, superior, since its tilt feature allows topography to be better visualised.

Training and Testing

The only formal training we undertook was a three-day Rescue Emergency Care first aid course at Plas-y-Brenin. Since this was a mountaineering expedition the only other form of training was getting ourselves fitter and continuing to climb together.

Permission and permits

Permits were not required for mountaineering, although we had to obtain visas for both Mongolia and Russia. Mongolian visas were simple to obtain through the Mongolian embassy just by sending off the form, a cheque and some passport photos. They claim that if you have an invitation from a Mongolian travel agency then you can apply for more than 28 days. We did this and they still only gave us 28-day visas. We would recommend what we ended up doing, which is to extend it once in Ulaan Baatar. The process is to go to the visa office and hand over various (small) sums of cash and spend lots of time waiting in queues. We would strongly recommend extending the visa for a few more days than you need as it costs practically nothing and saves a lot of hassle.

In contrast, Russian visas were very hard to obtain. We only intended to be in Russia for a few days either side of Mongolia as we took the train between Moscow to Ulaan Baatar. Since you can neither have two Russian tourist visas at once, nor have a tourist visa for more than a month, we had to get a business visa. This required getting an invitation from the Russian interior ministry which is time consuming and expensive. Once you have all the required paperwork you have to queue at the embassy which is only open for a few hours each day and hardly sees any people. Advanced booking would have helped matters here, and is strongly recommended. In the end we paid a company to obtain the visas for us. This saved a lot of hassle and we would recommend anyone going to Russia to go through them from the beginning as it will work out a lot cheaper. We used ruvisa.co.uk.

When travelling to the Tavanbogd national park you need to have a permit. The prices have gone down a lot recently but the park wardens did not seem to be aware of this (or so they claimed) so we recommend getting a permit from the national park office in Olgii. This only costs a few pounds and is easy to obtain. You also need a border permit which is obtained from the army barracks just out of the centre of town. You need to go there with your driver and everyone's passports. It doesn't take very long, and again costs little, but is worth obtaining since the consequences of not doing so are

jail and a large fine.

Fund Raising

Being a student team, we were keen to raise the maximum of funds from external sources to offset the cost to our own pockets. We were reasonably successful in this aim, though the process of letter-writing and applying to various funds was time-consuming.

We applied to every fund we heard about that could be applicable to our expedition. In hindsight, it was clear that we never stood much chance in some such as the Nick Estcourt Fund, which makes only one award each year, generally to much more ambitious undertakings than our own. We successfully applied to the Mount Everest Foundation in December. The same application and interview cover both the MEF and BMC funds, and we received support from both organisations.

In the spring, we applied to the Cambridge Expeditions Fund, which awards grants to expeditions undertaken by members of the University. This was also successful, part of our award being funded by the Burton Charitable Foundation.

Commercial sponsorship was sought, with the promise of publicity through the expedition website and in the local press. Four companies offered us financial support. We were successful in our approaches to small companies local to either our homes or Cambridge, where we are both at university. Letters to national companies were seldom replied to and never successful

We both received very helpful financial support from family and friends. Alan in the form of a Satellite Phone from his parents and money from his Aunt and Uncle, Tom receiving money from Family friend David Revell.

Finances

For the expedition we opened an account in the name of the Cambridge Mongolia Society so that we could keep track of all expedition funds.

In both of the aimag capitals we visited (Hovd and Olgii) there was at least one bank where we could withdraw money using a VISA debit card. The same is true of Ulaan Baatar where there is even a cash machine in the Trade and Development bank. We had no problems either cashing travellers cheques in the T&D bank or withdrawing cash. It is a quick and simple process, almost as fast as withdrawing cash from a bank in the UK.

Full expedition accounts are included as an appendix

Insurance

We insured ourselves with Alpine insurance from the British Mountaineering Council. This covered us for everything we needed. It cost us £214 for annual insurance. We didn't make any claims so nothing needed to be settled.

Travel

We travelled to Moscow by air and from there to Ulaan Baatar by train on the Trans-Siberian. We didn't book the outward journey until our arrival in Moscow, which was easy to do from the Central Railway Agency. We carried all our equipment with us so didn't need to use freight. In Mongolia we flew to the west of the country with Aero Mongolia, which is of a Western standard. Once in the west we hired a driver to take us to the area we intended to explore. The driver was very good and charged what seemed to be the standard rate of T350 (about £0.15) per kilometre. The standard practice is to pay the driver for both ways, whether you travel both ways or not.

For our journey between aimag capitals we managed to travel in a shared minivan for about T15000 (~£7.50) for the 200km trip. This took almost a day with most of the journey taking place at night. This, for some reason, seems to be standard for Mongolian drivers and it seems that little can be done to avoid it.

For the return journey we had much more trouble as there seems to be no traffic travelling between Olgii and Hovd. In the end we had to hire a minivan with a group of other foreign travellers. This worked out at a bit more expensive than the outward journey. This is strange as there were only two of us on the outward journey rather than eight. Again the driver set off and arrived in the dark.

When we arrived at the national park we easily hired a horse to carry all our equipment. Since Mongolians don't walk anywhere (even the children ride horses), whilst the horse was T5000 we had to pay the same again for the minder and also for his horse. It cost us about £7.50 for all of our gear to be carried to base camp, a journey of about 20km.

A very helpful man to contact about transport in Olgii is Dosjan Khabyul at dosjan@yahoo.com.

Food and Accommodation

In the aimag capital markets most mountain foods such as rice, pasta, biscuits and sweets are readily available and cheap. There are also plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, although fresh meat is sold straight out of the back of the container lorries and will not last long. Although you don't need to bring any food with you I recommend bringing powdered soups/sauces with some spices from the UK to add some variety. Don't do what we did and mistakenly buy stock powder rather than soup powder as the result was us eating dry rice from then on. Also, it is worth making rice your staple if buying from the aimag capitals as all the pasta we bought turned into glue once cooked and was inedible.

For drinking water in built up areas we bought bottled water from the markets as this was cheap and the water is suspect. We strongly recommend boiling water if not buying it as we both got very ill (with salmonella and campylobacter as it transpired), probably from drinking from a glass washed in water. In the countryside we boiled our water except when it came straight from mountainous regions with no livestock. This seemed to work fine for us.

We spent all of the time outside UB and the aimag capitals camping. We even spent one night in Hovd by the river camping, which was fine. The only problem we found was that Mongolian mosquitoes can be excruciating when there is no wind. This affected us even when we were a long way from water sources. This aside, Mongolia is probably one of the best countries in the world for camping as the scenery is beautiful and no-one owns any of the land. After all, most of the population live in tents.

Communications

We didn't have any host-country partners so had no need to contact them. We carried an iridium satellite phone with us, provided by Alan's parents, in case we had an emergency, although how useful it would have been is debatable. All the aimag capitals we visited had internet access in the post office. This is how we contacted home since we didn't use the satellite phone on cost grounds.

Specialist Equipment

Worth a mention are the aluminium snow and ice equipment we carried. We both carried aluminium ice axes which the manufacturers state as only for ski touring occasional use. They performed well for this task but when hacking out a ledge from the ice on the glacier the head of

Alan's axe came off. We did manage to replace this but it wasn't very sturdy. Also, the leashes worked only as protection against dropping as once they were loaded with body weight they came off the axe (Camp Flyer).

Tom also wore aluminium crampons (XLC 470) which worked fine for moving uphill on snow but had very little holding power when moving down steep soft snow. Tom had to resort to walking down backwards on some steeper sections.

The GPS device we carried was very accurate, especially the altimeter which gave height readings that agreed exactly with the more modern Mongolian maps. It proved very useful for pinpointing ourselves on the map since at 1:500 000 scale one Mongolian valley looks very much like another.

Risks and Hazards

We prepared risk assessment as part of the expedition planning. Below are a few items from this that caused us problems.

We had some problems with the roads in Mongolia. All of the roads outside of the capital consist of two ruts formed by a succession of vehicles using the same routes. Most of the Mongolian drivers we encountered preferred to drive at night and to drive quickly through boulder fields where any mistake would result in a serious crash.

It is worth mentioning for anyone planning on climbing in the Tavanbogd area that all of the rock we encountered was incredibly loose and fractured and we found it difficult to place any reliable protection at all. On a few occasions we were climbing snow covered loose rock which was very unnerving.

Finally, I have already mentioned that we both got ill with waterborne infections so they are not to be taken lightly.

Medical Arrangements

As already mentioned we both went on a three day first aid course. We both carried an enlarged standard first aid kit plus antibiotics (Ciprofloxacin), painkillers (Temgesic) and anti-nausea tablets in case we got seriously ill or injured. In terms of evacuation we had the satellite phone to get assistance and insurance cover for evacuation to medical care. We both had the appropriate inoculations recommended by the Foreign Office.

Despite our best efforts we both fell ill, we think after drinking from a glass washed in unclean water, and neither of us recovered completely, even by the time we arrived back in the UK three weeks later. We took the antibiotics but they had little effect.

Tom was later diagnosed with salmonella and campylobacter and Alan with campylobacter.

Photography

No permission was needed for photography. Our driver in Olgii told us that a few days previously a tourist had been too close to the frontier without a border permit and had had all his film destroyed and spent a night in jail. Make sure you get a border permit. Otherwise, we found Mongolians only too happy to pose for photos. We sent photographs to the families that we stayed with.

We took only a digital camera (Canon PowerShot A510) plus spare batteries. We took pictures of almost everywhere we went which are available from our website at mongolia2005.org.uk. If you want to use these or to obtain better copies then contact one of us directly.

Accounts

Income		Expenditure	
Cambridge Expeditions Fund	£500.00	<i>Pre-Expedition</i>	
Mount Everest Foundation	£525.00	Return flights to Moscow	£374.31
British Mountaineering Council	£600.00	Russian Visa invitations	\$180.00
Mr D. Revell	£100.00	Russian Visa support	£130.00
Bailey and Cogger Solicitors	£50.00	Mongolian Visas	£80.00
Louise Barnes Estate Agents	£40.00	UB-Moscow train journey	\$360.00
ASK Restaurants	£30.00	Satellite photos	\$34.95
Milton Brewery	£50.00	Printing	£20.00
Tom	£993.69	First Aid courses	£350.00
Alan	£702.04	Insurance	£455.00
TOTAL	£3,590.73	SUB-TOTAL	£1,716.39

Equipment Bought for Expedition

2 x Ice Axes	£90.00
Crampons	£45.00
Tent	£228.65
Cooking Pans	£27.00
GPS Geko 301	£179.00
SUB-TOTAL	£569.65

During Expedition

Hotel Tresntralnaya		£34.00
Moscow-UB train journey	\$280.00	£149.55
UB Guest-houses	\$60.00	£32.05
Visa extension	T20,000	£9.52
Return flights to Hovd	\$280.00	£149.55
Hotel in Hovd	T25,000	£11.90
Jeep hire in Hovd	T140,000	£66.67
Minivan to Olgii	T15,000	£7.14
Hotel in Olgii	T27,500	£13.10
Border permit	T3,500	£1.67
Jeep hire to Tavanbogd	T200,000	£95.24
National Park fee	T15,000	£7.14
Pack animal hire	T15,000	£7.14
Minivan to Hovd	T18,000	£8.57
Guest-house in Moscow	\$20.00	£10.68
Food and Misc.		£700.78
SUB-TOTAL		£1,304.69
TOTAL		£3,590.73

\$1 US Dollar	£0.5341	
T1 Mongolian Togrog		£0.0005

Sketch Map

