

Inner Mongolia Ethnic Minority Group

Inner Mongolia has long fascinated me, and I became curious to delve into a new culture, learn new traditions and to understand their way of life a little better.

The full name of this region is Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, in Chinese it's 内蒙古 (Nèiménggǔ). The Han Chinese outnumber the Mongols in Inner Mongolia, but the Mongols are still currently the largest minority group to occupy within the region. Most Mongols follow Tibetan Buddhism, many Mongol families have a son in a monastery.

Inner Mongolia comprises of 3 dialects of the Mongolian language, they are phonetically, morphologically and syntactically almost identical to the native Khalkha Mongol dialect of Mongolia to the north. A writing system of the Mongol language using the Cyrillic alphabet was introduced in 1955, but later on the traditional Mongolian script was reintroduced. Traditional Mongolian script is currently used for writing, but many still use the Cyrillic form.

Herding has been a part of Mongol work ethic for generations, both men and women are accomplished equestrians using horses to gather herds of goats and sheep. But because of harsh climate change, industrialization and overgrazing, they have taken their toll on the grasslands which are vital to their way of life. Due to this, herding was banned in 2008 by the government because of dry and damaged prairies and strong sandstorms. Some Inner Mongolians have given up their traditional herding culture for work in distant cities, but others remain on the prairie, clinging to a threatened lifestyle. Some herders couldn't afford to live on the prairie without herding so some get 30,000 yuan a year as compensation from the government, but it is very little compared to how much they can make from herding. Now the government has eased the ban.



The clothing for both male and female Inner Mongolians is very similar, they dress in many layers due to the colder climate of the north. Their under garment is a long sleeved, loose fitting robe which reaches their ankles. The robes are made of silk and lined with sheepskin, these are called Dels. Terligs are a thinly lined robe which is worn during the warmer months. On top is a long-sleeved garment which hits below the waist, or a long sleeveless garment with slits either on the sides or front and back are worn, these slits are to accommodate horseback riding. The sleeveless robe is called a Guji and is more commonly worn by women than by men. Also hats and boots are worn for warmth as well as for decoration. These boots are called Gutuls and are designed with horse riding in mind. The Mongols usually choose bright and bold colours for their clothing.



This is Khorkhog, a Mongolian BBQ, lamb is cooked in a large pot over an open fire, then potato, pepper and onions are added, smooth stones are then placed inside, so the lamb will become evenly cooked.



Buzz is a variation of dumpling that can contain either strips of beef or lamb, it also has carrot, pepper and onion inside.



The National drink of Inner Mongolia is Airag, it's mare milk which is fermented and then drunk as an alcoholic beverage.



Boodog is a traditional Mongolian roast, it's a whole goat cooked over an open fire, potatoes and onion are added, also smooth stones are placed inside to guarantee the skin is cooked through. Also instead of goat, marmots can be used. Marmots are large rodents which roam the Inner Mongolian pastures.

For generations the Mongols have been known as nomads, moving to different pastures as they wait for grass to regrow. Many Mongols live in Gers or Yurts as they are more commonly known. They are made of heavy white canvas, decorated with blue accents wrapped around a lattice work of wooden supports. Yurts are easily transported and have recently become more permanent residences for the Mongolians along the pastures.

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