

Mongol Derby Horse Welfare and Race Logistics Information



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Please find below some background information on the comprehensive medical and logistical preparations that have been put in place for the Mongol Derby 2009.

The welfare of the horses involved has and always will be the paramount concern for everyone involved in staging the pioneering Mongol Derby.

If you have any questions about the Mongol Derby or the contents of this documents please email mongolderby@theadventurists.com

Contents

1. **Pre race horse selection**
2. **Selecting the Riders**
3. **The rider agreement helps to ensure safety and welfare**
4. **Pre-Derby training session in Mongolia**
5. **The right to refuse entry to ensure the riders are suitable for the race**
6. **Veterinary care for the horses**
7. **Rider weight limits**
8. **Is this an endurance race?**
9. **Safety and Welfare Logistics**
10. **The Extensive Support Network**
11. **Rider Tracking and Emergency Response**
12. **The Course, Horse Welfare and Water Sources**

Pre race horse selection

The 26 riders taking part in the Mongol Derby will be riding traditional Mongol horses, an extremely tough breed that has changed little since the Mongol hordes swept across Europe on their backs in the 13th century. They range in size from 12-14 hands high and live on the Mongolian steppe all year round, in temperatures ranging from -40 to +30. Owned by nomadic herders, these horses are used for a variety of purposes, from breeding and milking to herding and racing. The horses used in the Mongol Derby will belong to both nomadic herders and horse breeders.

Because of the nature of the Mongol Derby and the fact that the riders will be changing horses every 40 km, we will be using almost 700 of these Mongolian horses. Each and every horse used in the race is being individually selected for the purpose of the Derby. The suitability and welfare of the horses taking part is of the utmost importance.

We are working with a network of horse breeders, nomadic herders and horse trainers along the entire route in order to select the very best horses. In the months leading up to the

Mongol Derby this network will be selecting and training the horses and working with vets along the route to ensure the horses are in the fittest possible condition for the race. Every breeder who supplies horses for the Mongol Derby will be paid generously for the use of their horse.

In the two weeks prior to the race the horses selected will enter their final phase of training, with the 26 horses used at each *Urtuu* (horse station) being under the charge of three Mongolian horsemen and undergoing rigorous veterinary checks. No horse that is not 100% fit for the Derby will be allowed to take part.

Selecting the Riders

The Mongol Derby is not an endurance race for the horses, it is an adventure race that will see the riders travel 1000 kilometres while the horses will travel only 40 kilometres each.

From the outset the race has been designed with horse welfare as the paramount concern over all others. Therefore the rider selection is based on various factors to make sure the right applicants are given a place.

Over 100 riders from around the world applied for the Mongol Derby when the places opened in January 2009. Each rider filled in an application form which detailed their riding and adventure experience, amongst other information. With such high competition for places the process of selecting the riders was a difficult one for the organisers, such was the calibre and experience of the applicants.

Following the first round of applications in writing, a number of successful applicants were selected for the second round of the process. At this stage telephone interviews were conducted with each applicant to discuss their suitability. Attributes for a suitable rider included a comprehensive understanding of the survival aspects of the Mongol Derby, riding ability and sound understanding of equestrian care and horse welfare. The Mongol Derby is not an endurance race, but an adventure race created and managed by The Adventurists, and therefore the final decision on rider selection resides with The Adventurists.

Once the short-list was finalised all the riders were interviewed over the telephone after which referees provided by them were contacted. All the riders finally selected were chosen because they had the right mix of equestrian and adventure experience. For not only is this about being a great rider, it's about having the ability to survive in the Mongolian steppe.

Before each rider was signed up they were sent an email stating very clearly the potential dangers of taking part in the Mongol Derby. Only after they had had a week to consider this, and were 100% sure they were prepared to take on such a challenge, were they fully signed up.

The rider agreement helps to ensure safety and welfare

Before any rider signed up to the Mongol Derby they had to sign an extensive legal agreement outlining how they must behave in the Derby. Above all the rider, by signing this agreement, acknowledges the risks involved and the fact that safety must come above everything. An extract from the rider agreement is as follows:

- The Rider accepts that safety is the paramount consideration for the Mongol Derby, which is first an adventure and secondarily a race. The safety of the Rider, the Rider's horses and the other competitors must take priority over any competitive element to the Mongol Derby.
- The Rider acknowledges the risk they undertake when entering the Mongol Derby and has read and understood clause 12 (12.1-12.7) of the Rider Agreement which deals with the acknowledgement of risk.

Pre-Derby training session in Mongolia

The riders arrive in Mongolia to attend an orientation meeting and a two-day training regime on the steppe close to the start line.

During this training, the riders will be assessed by Mongolian and British equine experts on their riding ability and equine knowledge to ensure that they are fit and capable of taking part in the race and ensuring the welfare of the horses between Urtuus.

The training and assessment will be carried out using Mongolian horses of the same breed used in the race itself to recreate the conditions and educate the riders on the particular needs and quirks of these incredible and hardy animals. Western and Mongolian equine experts will be carrying out this session to combine local and international knowledge and understanding of the requirements to ensure horse welfare remains the most important consideration above any racing element or other aspect of the Derby.

The right to refuse entry to ensure the riders are suitable for the race

The Adventurists reserve the right to refuse any rider access to the Derby if they believe after this two day session that the horses will be put at risk by the rider. We will enforce this rule regardless of any other considerations to ensure the riders are suitable and equipped for the task at hand.

Veterinary care for the horses

There are two types of veterinary support for the horses on the Mongol Derby. The first is a long term health checking program to ensure the horses are prepared and healthy for the event. The second is our support network to provide expert on-call veterinary support to all the horses.

The organisers have been consulting a Mongolian veterinary NGO as to how best care for the horses before, during and after the race. Using their network of trained vets, as well as world class veterinary medicines, the Derby horses are going to be expertly looked after.

We are flying out a **British equine vet with 32 years of experience** who will be following the Derby in one of our fleet of back up jeeps. This vet will be working in conjunction with the network of Mongolian vets to ensure the horses are checked before and after they have raced. This vet is fully licensed to work in Mongolia by the Ministry of Agriculture.

Finally, the **chief equine vet of Mongolia's Ministry of Agriculture** will be working alongside our British and Mongolian vets to share experience.

Rider weight limits

One of the criteria for selecting the riders taking part was that they must not weigh over 85 kg. We sought advice from people with years of experience leading horse trekking expeditions in Mongolia in order to determine the correct weight limit for the Mongol horses.

Although the horses are deemed small by Western standards, at around 12-14 hands high, they are incredibly tough and are not only used to being ridden for hours on end by herders, but, lets not forget, are the very same breed who carried the warriors of Chinggis Khaan (and all their armour and weapons) to as far as Poland and back.

On top of their 85 kg personal weight limit, each rider is allowed to have a 10kg equipment limit. This includes a GPS tracking device and all their personal equipment, such as camping gear.

Is this an endurance race?

The Mongol Derby is NOT an endurance race, and has never been described as such. It is however a test of endurance for the riders, who have to ride the full 1000 km course.

Whilst endurance races governed by the FEI and AERC can be anything between 30km and 160 km on a single horse, the Mongol Derby will see riders riding 25 different horses over the 1000 km course. No horse will be ridden for more than one 40 km leg.

The Mongol Derby will have a route marked out by the horse stations and an extensive list of confirmed water sources. All the riders have to change horses at every 40 km urtuu point, thus giving the route a definite structure, and every rider will carry both a detailed map and a GPS unit with details of wells, rivers and water sources along the entire route. The Mongol Derby course was carefully mapped with water and suitability for horses as a main consideration.

Although the Mongol Derby is a race, it is, above all an adventure, an adventure that will raise over £25,000 for Mongolian charitable projects.

Safety and Welfare Logistics

As mentioned the safety and welfare of the horses and riders on the Mongol Derby is of paramount importance to us as organisers. With a network of first class professionals, both veterinary and medical, the Mongol Derby's support network is exemplary; before, during and after the race.

With safety at the forefront of the organisation the entire structure of the event has been designed around this.

The race is divided into 40 km legs with a Morin Urtuu (Mongolian for Horse station) at the end of each leg. The riders will ride between each Urtuu, collecting a new horse at each one.

During the race there is a support network following the riders to ensure their safety and that of the horses at all times.

The Extensive Support Network

Horses are monitored during the training as well as before and after they have been ridden. With **an extensive network of vets** stationed along the route and following in vehicles equipped with **satellite tracking devices and satellite phones** the welfare of the horses is guarded and monitored at all times (please read the veterinary section for further details).

The event is supported by five off-road vehicles running alongside the riders and two standby 4x4 vehicles. These vehicles are all tracked by satellite and monitored in our control centre in the capital city Ulaanbataar. Communications between the vehicles and the control centre are maintained through satellite phones, back up cellular phones and radios.

The vehicles will constantly be kept at the best position to respond to any emergency situation that may arise.

We have **Mongolia's chief equine vet of the Ministry of Agriculture** and an **equestrian vet from the UK with 32 years of experience** working together in the support vehicles.

To ensure the safety of the riders we have teamed up with Prometheus Medical Ltd who are providing the **very best possible medical expertise** as they specialise in remote medical support. Not only are they providing two fully trained staff but they are consulting us on the support structures of the event and rider safety. They provided the medical support for a recent Army Everest Expedition so they are very serious professionals!

Rider Tracking and Emergency Response

Each rider is given a satellite tracking device with an emergency help button. Once activated the control centre will send the appropriate support vehicle while also alerting all the relevant support vets in the area should it be an horse-based emergency.

If the emergency is medical, the emergency medical team will assess the situation and decide on the appropriate action or evacuation plan.

The riders have comprehensive insurance specifically tailored for this event.

The Course, Horse Welfare and Water Sources

Provision of water has been a prime deciding factor in the choice of Derby course and at every point along the 1000 km route water for both horses and riders is within easy reach.

We have taken GPS coordinates of water supplies along the route and continue to locate more as we re-survey the route again and again. These will be provided to the riders both in map form and as GPS coordinates. **The route will under no circumstance be taken**

through any area without adequate water provision and has been designed with this primarily in mind.

The route has been surveyed by three separate groups. Firstly by a Mongolian Logistics Expert, secondly by us, the Mongol Derby Logistics team and also by a team of Mongolian Equestrian Experts to ensure all the terrain is suitable for the horses. We are continuing to regularly survey the course to check the condition of the terrain the horses and the water supplies.

Each rider will be given the GPS coordinates of all the Urtuus before the race begins to ensure they know the route.

We are working with the regional Mongolian authorities along the route to ensure we are always sympathetic to the culture and environment of Mongolia.