



## THIS IS WHO WE ARE

There are many mountain ranges in Mongolia with mountains higher than 4000 metres. But Mongolia is also known for its steppe and desert regions. The largest desert region in Asia is called “Gobi” and covers parts of southern Mongolia. The Gobi Desert is the fifth largest desert in the world.



Mongolian landscape  
(Picture: flickr/tiarescott)



Ulaanbator  
(Picture: wikipedia/aineias)



The Gobi Desert  
(Picture: wikipedia/aineias)



The world’s biggest **desert** is called the Sahara. The Sahara covers a large part of North Africa. You can find deserts on every continent except Europe.

In desert regions it gets extremely hot during the day. At night however, temperatures can drop below zero degrees Celsius! Rain falls very irregularly in deserts. Sometimes several years go by without any rain. Then, all of a sudden, it’s really pouring down: dry valleys turn into rivers and the desert becomes an oasis. But only a few weeks after the rain stops, the drought returns. The Atacama Desert in Chile (South America) is known as the world’s driest desert. There hasn’t been any rain in hundreds of years.

Even though Mongolia is a large country, there aren’t many paved roads outside of the big cities. Only few people own a car there. To get from one place to another Mongolians use animals, such as horses, camels or yaks. They are considered to be part of the family. In Mongolia, there are about ten times more animals than people (in total about 25 million horses, sheep, goats and cattle).



Yak  
(Picture: wikipedia/he-ba-mue)



Wild Horses  
(Picture: flickr/ilanphoto)



**Discussion: How do people in your country get from one place to another?**

There are many ways to get around: by car, by public transportation, by bike or by animals. What are the ways of transportation in your country? Do you like them? Or would you rather change it?

## THIS IS HOW WE LIVE

About one third of the people living in Mongolia live a nomad life. Nomads don't have a permanent home. Using their animals for transportation, they trek from one place to another in order to find fresh grassland for their cattle. In Mongolia, there are large variations in temperature. In the summertime it can get very hot (up to nearly 30°C). In the wintertime however, the temperature eventually drops down to a frosty -30°C! Nomads in Mongolia live in transportable homes, so-called yurts.



From the outside, yurts are similar to big tents. But inside they are as cosy as a house! A typical yurt consists of a scaffold (5 pieces) and other parts to build the roof. In order to give the yurt a wall and protect the people inside from bad weather, several layers of sheep wool and felt are attached to the scaffold. Inside the yurt, you can find some furniture and even a stove. There is no running water though. Within two hours, yurts can be set up or taken down and the nomad family can move on to another place.



Yurts in Mongolia

(Picture: wikipedia/Yosemite)

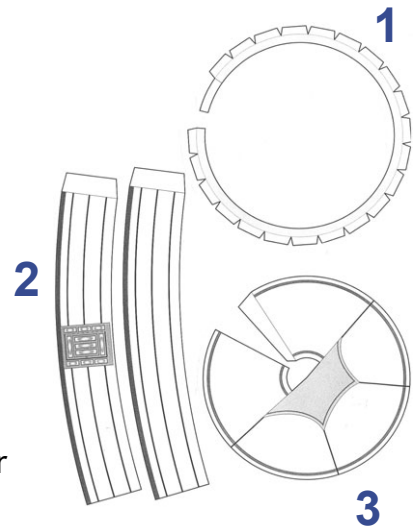


(Picture: wikipedia/KarlMoor)



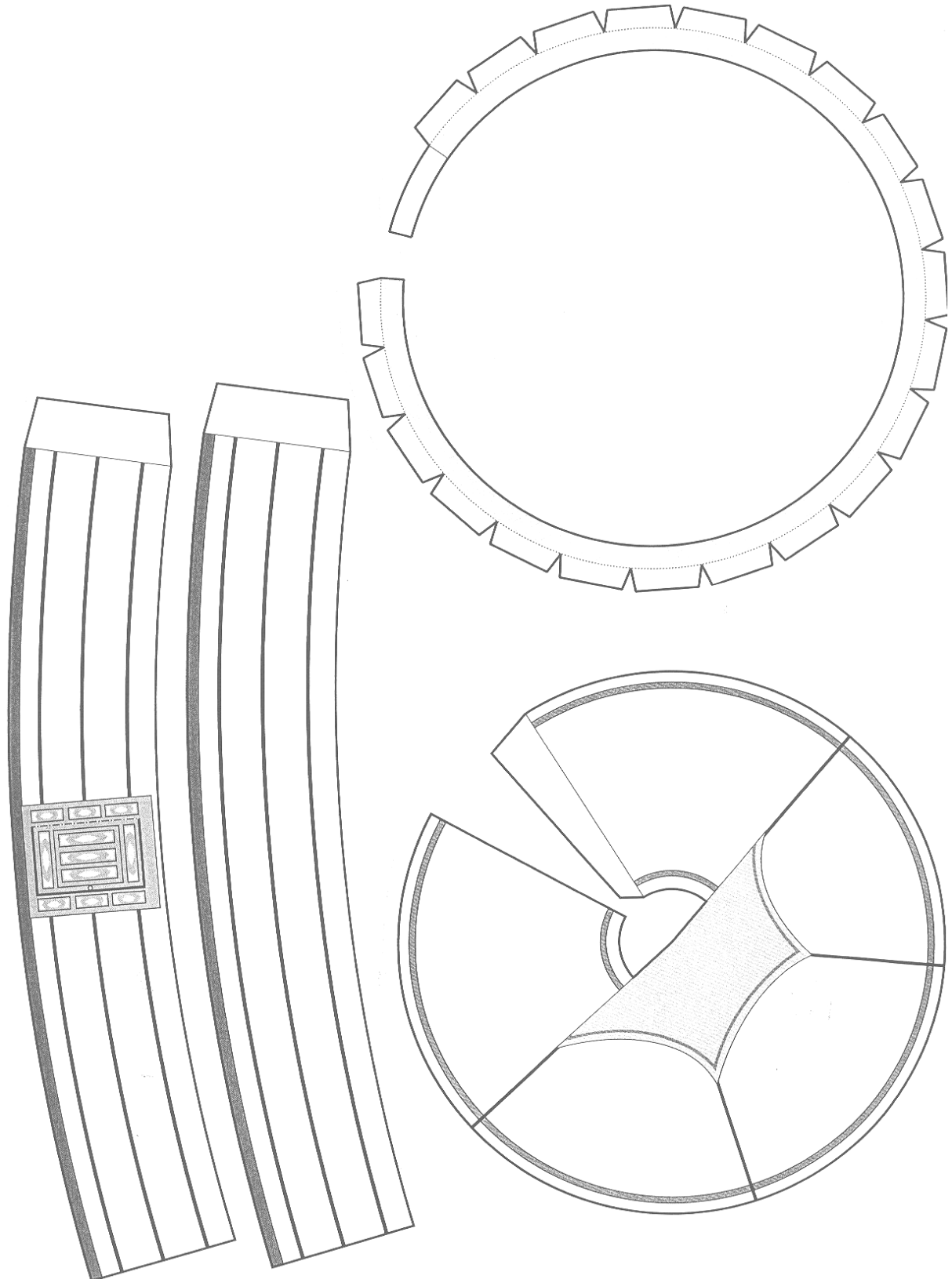
### Activity: "Build a little yurt!"

1. Put the templates (on the next page) on cardboard and cut them out.
2. Fold back the flaps of the ring-shaped template (1).
3. Take some glue and glue the ring-shaped template to one of the yurt walls (2).
4. Attach the second yurt wall alongside the first one.
5. Glue the roof template (3) to the other parts of the yurt.
6. Finally you can colour the walls of the yurt!





## THIS IS HOW WE LIVE



## THIS IS OUR SCHOOL

On the webpage you see a group of Mongolian children, presenting themselves in front of a blackboard. Did the children in class notice the special lettering? The Mongolian alphabet consists of 26 characters, so called Cyrillic characters. These characters are written vertically, from left to right. Depending on the position of a word, the characters' shape can change slightly.



### Activity: "Say "Hello" in Mongolian!"

Show the children how to write "Hello" in Mongolian (**Сайн уу**) and let them try to write it themselves. Afterwards, the children can face each other in pairs of two and try to say: **Сайн уу!** (Hello!) and: **"Намайг...гэдэг"** (My name is...) (written: **Намайг ... гэдэг**)



## THIS IS OUR FAVOURITE DISH

Dinner is by far the most important meal in Mongolia. All family members gather together to have dinner. Families living in a flat in the city, sit around a big table, whereas families on the countryside sit on the floor or on small stools and eat from a lower table. If the main dish consists of cooked meat, it is often eaten out of one big, shared bowl.



### Prepare a typical Mongolian dish!

On the webpage you see several drawings of the children's favourite dishes.

#### Recipe for Buuz:

One of those dishes is called "Buuz". It's a type of steamed dumpling, filled with minced mutton or yak meat.

Flavour the meat with onion and garlic and add salt. Place the meatball inside a small pocket of dough (made of flour and water) and fold the dough around the ball. Leave a little opening at the top of your dumpling and steam it.

"Buuz" is a typical Mongolian dish which is easy to make and eaten simply by hand.



Buuz

Picture: Wikipedia/Tamorlan



### Recipe for Khuushuur:

Another popular dish in Mongolia is "Khuushuur". It's a kind of meat pastry or dumpling.

The meat, either beef or mutton, is minced and mixed with onions, salt and other spices. Roll the dough (made of flour and water) into circles, place the meat inside the dough and fold the dough in half, creating a flat half-circular pocket. Then close the pockets by pressing the edges together. Fry the pockets in oil until the dough turns golden brown. The "Khuushuur" is served hot.

## THIS IS OUR FAVOURITE GAME

Genghis Khan is long dead and his world empire has gone down. However, wrestling, archery and horse races are considered the most important sports in Mongolia. At the Nadaam festival, which is the Mongolian public holiday, Mongolians compete in those sports - like athletes do at the Olympic Games. Every year, from July 11th to the 13th, Mongolians celebrate the Nadaam festival. Horse races are the special highlight of the festival. Families start preparing for the races many weeks in advance. Often children (especially girls) between the ages of 6 and 12 participate as jockeys. At the end of every race, there is an award for the fastest horse and the horse's breeder.



Horse Races  
(Picture: wikipedia/fan111)



Mongolian Wrestlers  
(Picture: flickr/jerrold)

The children from Mongolia show us their favourite games. Here are the instructions:

### 1) Hide a bird

A child hides its fingers and asks: "How many birds are in my hand?" The other children have to guess.

### 2) Crane, piglet, cap

Pick a child who is the announcer. When it says "piglet", everyone has to hold their nose. When it says "cap", the children have to put a hand onto their head. When it says "crane", everyone has to wave their arms like birds. The child who is the announcer has to say one thing, but do another movement to confuse the others. If someone does the wrong movement he/she drops out.

### 3) Boys and girls

All the children form a circle. The first child says someone's name in the circle, the second child says how she/he will be "punished", (for example with a kiss), and the third child says how many times he/she will be "punished". Now the children take their neighbour's hands with the palms lying on top of each other. One child claps the palm of its neighbour. This child in turn claps the palm of its other neighbour and so on. The palm clapping goes around the circle until it gets to the person who was named at the beginning. This child has to pull its hand away. If the child doesn't succeed in pulling its hand away he/she will be "punished".

## THIS IS OUR FAVOURITE SONG

Before the time of Genghis Khan, a united Mongolian people did not exist. Instead, there were many different tribes. All tribes have influenced the traditional Mongolian folk music. Folk music is often played on special instruments that people from other countries are possibly not familiar with.

The “horse head violin” is one of the most popular instruments in Mongolia. It is an instrument with only two strings. It sounds similar to the common violin. Mongolians play it on many occasions, such as dances or special celebrations.



Horse head Violin  
(Picture: flickr/nirgidma)

An old Mongolian legend tells how the horse head violin was created:

Long time ago, a Mongolian was very sad because of the death of his beloved horse. He was missing his horse so badly that he built an instrument, using the horse’s head, its bones and the hair of its tale. When the Mongolian played his new instrument for the first time, it was the sound of his beloved horse that he heard. And he was not sad anymore.”



**Discussion:**  
“Which instruments do you know? Do you play any instruments?”