

June 15 Sunday

Woody and I are wrapping up our last few days in Khovd. Yesterday we hiked to the Buyant River upstream from Khovd to the “knob.” This is a mountain that juts out and Woody has been looking at it since October, hoping to get to it. We hiked about ½ mile past the knob to make a campsite and pitched our tent. There were lots of animals in the neighborhood so got to watch cranes, yak, horses, goats, and sheep before a thunderstorm drove us into the tent about 8:30 PM. Sunday morning around nine after packing up and eating some breakfast we waded the two branches of the river and began a long climb over the western end of the knob and hiked back to Khovd.



This hike included camels, lizards (tiny), lots of goats, horses, cows, and because it's a small city, we ran into Sasha, the Russian teacher who was in a car going away from the city.



We have only to clean our apartment and pack the suitcases before leaving on Monday with our neighbor Tsagana and her family for the northern aimag of Uvs. Tsagana has family there and she had suggested months ago that we all take a trip to see her home countryside. Tsagana has four small children and works more than fulltime in Woody's

department at the University. Two weeks ago, she presented me with a deel, the traditional long dress/coat worn by Mongolians that her mother had made for me. Also this past week, we had the chance to go with her husband, Ojo, to build their summer ger.

In early May, Ojo took us to the countryside to check on horses that he raises and we were able to ride horses, camels and Woody caught a fish. So this family has really gone out of their way to help us enjoy Mongolia. We fly from the capital city of Ulvs aimag, Olamgom, on June 22 to UlaanBaatar. There is lots to tell about our plans for the next month but that will have to wait.

After our train trip in late May to Darkhan in central Mongolia, we returned to UlaanBaatar via train and then flew back to Khovd. We spent some time in UB eating lots of interesting things and seeing some new scenery. One of my former students from the University of Montana who is from Japan, arrived in UB two days before we flew to Khovd and joined us in Khovd. For ten days we finished up our finals and hiked and cooked food with Shogo. We were able to climb to the top of Goat Red and also up and down the Buyant River for short jaunts.

The most eventful part of Shogo's visit was our travels via van to the countryside with a friend of ours and her extended family. Until five years ago Dawaa and her husband were herders in a small district about four hours southeast of Khovd.

She still travels there regularly to bring milk and milk products to the herders' shop near our apartment.



There, we have purchased many items over the past 9 months including slippers and yogurt and we have been treated to fermented camel's milk and hot milk tea whenever we stop by. Dawaa's family raises camels so we were able to spend some time with 30 camel moms and 30 calves. It was pretty exciting to be part of the routine of a

ger family. Woody has two notebooks on his site about the trip so I'll just include a few photos . (www.woodypackard.com "notebook")

In addition to this trip to the countryside, Dawaa picked us up on Thursday evening and took us to her ger in Khovd for a farewell goat soup dinner. She has six children. One is in Amsterdam, two in UB and the younger three and her husband ate dinner with us.



Also, in the last week Woody and I have attended a number of parties. Many of the foreigners that we have become friends with have been leaving so they have had going-away parties and the University has had parties for us, as well. The Chinese English Department presented Woody with a beautiful Mongolian jacket and Russian English Language department took us out for lunch on Tuesday of last week and gave us gifts. We were both a little tearful as we've become friends with many of our work colleagues and as usual, it is difficult to leave. The sophomores/Level II students and the Dean arranged a bus field trip on Wednesday morning for a trip to the Buddhist temple and the mountain near the airport (Batarkhairkhan). Most of these same students leave for two weeks for a Russian practicum today so I will see them off.

We will clean the apartment on Sunday and prepare our suitcases for the next part of our journey. We plan to end up in UB on June 22 and then from there meet my sister Nancy and her husband Steve for a few weeks of vacation in Mongolia and China. Woody and I are allowed to stay in Mongolia until July 1 and then we must be out, so Nancy, Steve, Woody, and I will take the Trans-Mongolian train to Beijing beginning on June 29. Once in Beijing we hope to see the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, and Tiananmen Square. We will also take the train to Xi'an to see the terracotta warriors and return to Beijing where Nancy and Steve will fly home on July 7. Woody and I will return to Mongolia by train in order to see Naadam (the national holiday of the three manly sports: archery, horse racing and wrestling) somewhere south of UB. Those plans are not yet firm which makes me feel like I've become a little Mongolian during my stay here!

The last pizza party!



Field trip with level 2/Sophomores.

