Northern Mongolia Archaeology Project

A RIVER IN THE DARKHAD DEPRESSION NEAR THE SITE OF THE NORTHERN MONGOLIA ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

Need a little adventure in your life? Interested in traveling to Mongolia? Interested in trying your hand at archaeological fieldwork? A small international team is now being assembled to conduct archaeological fieldwork in northern Mongolia from July 5th – 26th in collaboration with the National Museum of Mongolia. Applications are due by March 18th, 2016. Program cost is $2,250 USD and covers all costs for the duration of the project for food, transportation, permits, and equipment. This does not include international travel to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia or personal camping gear. No previous experience necessary. Read on for more detail.

Email juliakateclark@gmail.com to request an application or go to:

https://www.cognitoforms.com/NorthernMongoliaArchaeologyProject/_2016Application

EXCAVATORS WORKING ON A BRONZE AGE FEATURE
BRONZE AGE BURIAL FEATURE IN THE DARKHAD DEPRESSION

**Research Aims:** Mongolia’s mobile pastoral economy is the foundation of the national identity and primary economic strategy, a lifeway made possible with the introduction of domesticates into the area from regions to the north and west. Though this characterization has been evident since at least the 1st millennium BCE, little is known about the earliest pastoral adaptations in the region. The archaeological site of Soyo, in the Darkhad Depression of northern Mongolia, has the potential to contribute significantly to understanding questions about the archaeological history of this region. Located at the intersection of the dense forest taiga and the grass steppe-land of the basin, Soyo is uniquely positioned to facilitate interaction between hunting and herding practices. Previous research on prehistoric domestic sites in Mongolia has been frustrated by the prevalence of thin, jumbled deposits of artifacts with few preserved features. However, preliminary research at the Soyo site has revealed a unique depositional history where wind-blown sand has stratified thick artifact deposits creating a one of a kind, 7,000 year continuous record of human activity. No other similar domestic sites that have such a long, well preserved occupational sequence are known from Mongolia. Despite being such an important part of Mongolian heritage, this site is threatened by the development of a tourist camp. It is critical that an archaeological team conduct this research at the site in the summer of 2016 as the site is actively being threatened by this development.
PARTICIPANTS IN THE 2012 PROJECT WORK TOGETHER TO UNLOAD A TRUCK THAT GOT STUCK WHILE CROSSING THE RIVER

Requirements: No previous archaeological experience necessary to participate in this project. A remote project area, variable climate, challenging topography, and cultural differences dictate that participants are in reasonably good physical shape, have a positive attitude, are culturally sensitive, and have a good sense of adventure. We will be departing from Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on July 5th and returning on July 26th. It is suggested that you give yourself at least a couple of days before and after these dates to be in the city as delayed flights and lost baggage happen with some frequency. It will take us approximately 4-5 days to reach the project area by car as it’s approximately 1,000 km from the city, and there are few paved or dirt roads in Mongolia. Participants will not be able to sign up for only part of the 3 week project as it is logistically very difficult to arrange alternative travel options.
Fieldwork: Participants will be instructed in a variety of archaeological field methods, including survey, mapping, excavation, and ethnoarchaeological interviews. The 2016 field season will also involve a geophysical survey using specialized remote sensing equipment (more on that below). Students/volunteers will also have the opportunity to gain some lab experience cleaning, sorting, cataloging and doing basic analysis on artifacts collected. All members of the team will be required to work in the field most days and in the lab occasionally. While many of the participants on past projects have been students of archaeology looking to gain skills in their field, others are simply interested in learning about archaeology. Participants usually range from 18-60 years of age, and are students, teachers, retirees, or any number of other professions. Mongolians make up approximately half of the project, while the other participants are typically from North America, Europe and Australia. There are no credits offered through this program, in part to keep costs down. However, if a student wishes to arrange independent study credits with their home institution, the project will work with his/her adviser to design a course of study.
Dr. Ian Moffat and some of his Geophysics Equipment

**Geophysics Survey:** Participants will have the opportunity to work with geophysics expert, Dr. Ian Moffat. Geophysical techniques provide a means of non-invasively locating archaeological material in the subsurface. While the archaeological record of Mongolia is rich with significant late prehistoric and early historic period sites located throughout the country, the use of geophysical methods has rarely been used on sites of this type providing a unique opportunity to develop a new methodology for archaeological research and cultural heritage management in this country. This project will apply the geophysical techniques ground penetrating radar and magnetometry, integrated with a static GPS and drone aerial photography to locate and non-invasively examine the archaeological record of late prehistoric and early historic sites in northern Mongolia.
Camp Life: Participants will be required to supply their own personal camping equipment (tent, sleeping bag, sleeping pad). Having suitable gear is VERY IMPORTANT – if you are not sure about your gear, please ask. It is advised you’re your sleeping bag be rated to at least 20 F/-7 C, and that your tent have a rain fly that goes all the way to the ground on all sides. Rain gear and layers of warm clothes are crucial.

The project will supply all food, kitchen gear, and eating utensils and has hired a cook to prepare meals for us. Vegetables, rice, and flour will be shipped in from the city, and meat (sheep and goat) bought locally and butchered in camp. Vegetarians have participated before, but you must be willing to do much of your own cooking (food and small camp stove provided). Breakfast usually consists of a fried dough called boortsog that is somewhat like a donut, and black tea/salty milk tea, and hot water. If you must have coffee, you will need to bring it. Past participants have brought small French presses or rely on instant coffee. There is instant coffee available in Mongolia, but most agree that it is not very good as it is mixed with copious amounts of cream and sugar. Nutella, peanut butter, marmite/vegemite and other spreads are popular items brought by participants. Lunch and dinner usually consist of soups, pastas, rice dishes, and bread filled pockets. While our cook is very good, ingredients are limited and sometimes participants find the food choices monotonous – but remember, we are in an incredibly remote region. It is a good idea to pack snacks such as nuts, dried fruit, protein bars, etc. for between meals.

There is a large river near the site. While it is relatively clean, you will need to filter or otherwise purify it before drinking it. Pumps, gravity filters, steripens, and iodine tablets have all been used successfully and without illness. If it rains heavily, the water is sometimes filled with particles and mud, and so a few coffee filters, a bandana, or cheese cloth or some kind is advisable.
CAMELS WALKING ALONG THE EDGE OF A LAKE IN THE DARKHAD DEPRESSION

Staff: The project is co-directed by Dr. Julia Clark and J. Bayarsaikhan (Director of Research, National Museum of Mongolia). Dr. Clark has been working in Mongolia since 2007 and is the primary contact for applicants to this project. Email juliakateclark@gmail.com with any questions or to receive an application. Stay tuned for more information on other staff and archaeological experts to join the team.

More information: For more information, check out the following sources –

- National Museum of Mongolia website (in Mongolian, but very nice photographs!)
  o http://www.nationalmuseum.mn/

- Dr. Clark’s dissertation on the archaeology of northern Mongolia can be found
  o on academia.edu
  (https://www.academia.edu/10908366/Modeling_Late_Prehistoric_and_Early_Historic_Pastoral_Adaptations_in_Northern_Mongolias_Darkhad_Depression)
  o or via the University of Pittsburgh (http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/23838/)

- Consider searching for the dissertations and articles of other archaeologists working on similar issues in Mongolia
  o Dr. Jean-Luc Houle
  o Dr. William Fitzhugh
  o Dr. Lisa Janz
  o Dr. William Honeychurch
  o Dr. Joshua Wright