



## Guys and guns in Mongolia

### The hunting trip of a lifetime

Every hunter remembers that special hunting trip – the location, the conditions, the quarry and most important of all, the mates beside him. For Dave Compston, his hunt of a lifetime took place in Outer Mongolia with three other hunters from Franklin, tracking wapiti in the snow.

Terry Short from Waiuku, 'Mirt' Morrison, Lester Fitzpatrick and Dave from Pukekohe were part of a group of nine hunters on the intrepid hunting journey, in October 2002. Dave took the opportunity to see the sights of China, including the terracotta army and the Great Wall of China, before flying to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's capital. The city was founded in 1639 as a Buddhist monastery. Of the 2.5 million people in Mongolia, one million live in the capital.

Dave: "My first impression of Ulaanbaatar was that it was like America looked in the 1920s and 30s, not touristy at all. There were big wide roads and no sign of any wealth at all, just big old concrete Russian buildings. We spent two days there before heading north-west to near the Russian border. It was a three hour flight over the Gobi Desert – no roads, then a 12 hour cross country jeep ride over very, very rough terrain of barren tussock and beech forest. Every now and then we came across a ger, the homes where Mongolians live. These are very warm, and they have to be – it can be minus 30 degrees there. They are lined with mohair with canvas pulled over and a fire in the middle and can be put up and pulled down, ready to travel in an hour.

"The route was so rough, we nearly rolled a couple of times and got

stuck late at night, in the pitch black. The Mongolians couldn't get the jeep put, and in the end, we did it for them. We were pleased to get to the hunting area in a beech forest, 30km from the Russian border – we could see it through our binoculars. Another group, including a friend from New Caledonia went to 9,000ft to hunt Ibex. Unfortunately, my friend fell off the horse and broke his hip, ending his hunting trip in hospital.

"Our first night where we camped it snowed and the river froze over. We woke at 4am when the generator came on and a lady came and cooked our breakfast – I don't know what I was eating – it was some kind of stew. We had taken our own guns, which made it tricky getting into China – there was a lot of paper work. I've been a hunter for 30 years and I was after a trophy head – we all were.

"There weren't a lot of wapiti around but when we spotted one, it was easy to hunt. We would follow it, then it would stop running and we would catch up. Terry and I were lucky and got heads."

Dave says spending time with their Mongolian "minders" was a memorable experience – there were 23 people altogether there to look after the hunting party.

"We hunted together for three days and couldn't speak the same language, communicating through sign language. We shared drink bottles and sweets and got on well. The Mongolians are a very, very nice, hospitable people."

Dave says that with the average income at \$1 a day, hosting