



NEWS RELEASE
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copyright Richard Dunwoody Mongol Derby 2016

**38 competitors from around the world tackle
the 9th Mongol Derby: the world's longest horse race**

www.mongolderby.com

"What better way to test yourself than through a tough endurance race that immerses you in a unique culture and takes you to Mongolia, the spiritual home of equestrianism."

Mongol Derby competitor 2017

This is the 9th Mongol Derby, featured in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's longest and toughest horse race. The 2017 race features 12 men and 26 women from nine countries riding 1000km across Mongolia on semi-wild horses.

William Comiskey was one of the joint winners in 2016 – and he's back to try and win single handedly this time. Trying to stop him are 37 fearsome competitors including an Olympian, a cattle herder, a dairy farmer, a potato farmer, an ostrich rider, a dog sledder, a psychologist, an artist, a banker, a private investigator. And even a desperate housewife. Plus of course, the usual vets and riders of every type of horse on the planet. Although of course, many of them are yet to ride the Mongolian horses...



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2017 Competitors

AUSTRALIA

William Comiskey, 28, Long Reach, Australia

Grew up on a cattle station in Queensland where he learnt to ride competing in rodeo, show-jumping and eventing. Now runs cattle. Was a joint winner of the race in 2016 and is back to try and win it on his own. Now that's keen....

Greg Chant, 43, North East Victoria, Australia

Has only been riding since mid-2010, mainly Arabians – has always wanted to ride for as long as he can remember. Is doing the Derby for the physical and mental challenge but mainly because he *“wants to go for a long ride and not have to open any gates or jump any fences.”* Little does he know how many times he may have to pick himself up off the floor!

Ed Fernon, 29, Sydney, Australia

Ed's aim is to excel at life's adventure and what better way than taking on the Derby. Ed competed for Australia at the 2012 London Olympic Games in Modern Pentathlon, has summited Aconcagua, the highest peak in the southern hemisphere, and has previously ridden 1000km when he rode from Braidwood, NSW to Melbourne over the Snowy Mountains, following the legend of the first Melbourne Cup winner, Archer.

Roberta MacLeod, 47, Birregurra, Australia

Accomplished equestrian who trained and rode racehorses for over 20 years. Now rides in the bush and plays polocrosse. Loves travel, other cultures and has been to Mongolia before. Also a qualified myotherapist (now that could come in handy!)

Jodie Ward, 30, Katherine, Northern Territory, Australia

After submitting an application one casual afternoon thinking she would never make the cut, Katherine-lady, Jodie Ward is now well and truly in preparation to be a competitor in the internationally acclaimed 2017 Mongol Derby. *“I've set myself what I would consider to be a pretty rigorous training schedule, but so far, I'm enjoying it. Hopefully it will all be enough to put me in good chance of placing near the top come race time.”* Jodie is raising money for the Leukemia Foundation.

Rebecca Hewitt, 36, Moura, QLD, Australia

Grew up in rural Queensland riding before she could walk. Now operates a cattle enterprise with her husband. Enjoys a challenge and *“what better way to do it than with the Derby and everything*

it has to offer.”

James Lester, 21, Perth, Australia

Started riding horses just north of Perth from the age of six and is now a professional polo player. When “grows up” aspires to become a Seahorse trainer. Is competing in the Derby *“to experience Mongolia's unique culture and challenge my physical and mental boundaries.”*

Emma Manthorpe, 30, Port Lincoln, South Australia

Emma grew up on a farm where her dad bred and worked racehorses. She began riding at a very young age and soon progressed to helping. She now works with horses as a veterinary nurse. She is having a mild *‘turning 30 not quite midlife crisis’*, so is out to achieve something of significance.

Warren Sutton, 45, Ocean Grove, Victoria, Australia

Loves to educate young horses of all breeds from first rides into first competitions and races. Plays around in the film industry, is having a great time working on many projects in SE ASIA and at home. With many big adventures succeeded on foot *“now is the time to do it on horseback into the Mongolian Derby of 2017!”*

Lucy Taylor, 21, Coonamble, NSW, Australia

Grew up on a cattle property in North Western NSW and was on the back of a horse at a very early age. Now works as an international polo groom travelling from country to country following summer and working with some of the most amazing horses. Is doing the Derby because she thinks *“it will be an incredible adventure as well as invaluable learning experience.”*

CANADA

Olivia Wood, 24, Canada - living in Buffalo, NY

A thrill seeker, she started off with hunter ponies but found her need for speed early as she transitioned into jumpers, western gaming and then into on and off-track thoroughbreds. Is doing the Derby *“for the mental and physical challenge and to keep her mother on her toes!”*

Tamara Beckstead, 52, Rockwood, Ontario, Canada

A small animal vet who feels most alive atop a horse. Eventing has earned her the name *“Teflon Girl”* by her coach. Hunting satisfies her need for speed; Dressage, her desire for beauty and perfection; and Side Saddle got her and her horse, Modesty, onto a movie set. She looks forward to the Derby providing an escape from her current reality and was inspired to take this adventure by the Doris Day song “Enjoy Yourself” (look it up and sing along!)

GERMANY

Annette Kriller, 51, Slussfors, Sweden (German)

German veterinarian with her own practice for small animals and (some) horses in Lapland/Northern Sweden. Loves activities that she can do as a team with animals such as sled dogs (she owns 40 and enjoys to train and travel with them but is mostly passionate about taking care of them as a veterinarian) and horses. Likes speed and would have loved to become an amateur jockey. Also, always had the dream to once do a long trip with horses. *“The Mongol Derby seems to combine all of this.”*

Hanna Schumacher, 31, Palo Alto, California, United States (German)

Hanna conquered many adventures living on six continents and riding all types of horses along the way. Currently, she plays polo in California while completing her MBA. She visited Mongolia for the

first time last year and was impressed by the vastness and ruggedness of the terrain, the friendly hospitality of the Mongolian people and most importantly the feeling the freedom underneath the clouds riding a Mongolian horse for the first time – on her 30th birthday. On that special day, she decided that she wanted to experience the country in a more authentic way and challenge herself beyond anything she had ever done before: She threw her hat into the ring for the 2017 Mongol Derby!

ICELAND

Christine Sarah Arndt, 38, Búðardalur, Iceland (German)

Grew up in a small town near Stuttgart, Germany, and spent most of her after school hours riding and taking care of all kinds of horses. Moved to Iceland at the age of 19 and lives now on a sheep farm with her husband and two children. *"The Derby is the perfect kick in the butt to get in shape and there is no better way to discover beautiful landscapes than from the back of a horse."*

NEW ZEALAND

Jennifer Cook, 31, Rotarua, NZ

Southern born and bred kiwi girl who currently resides in Rotorua. Jen grew up riding horses, beginning as a volunteer with her mum at the RDA, then eventually going to pony club, showing, eventing and games. For the last 10 years, she has worked in tourism and outdoor education, loves to travel and explore and has a passion for photography. Wants to do this race because not only is Mongolia an incredible country, but she loves a challenge and having a cause like Cool Earth benefitting from this experience makes it worth every minute.

Marie Palzer, 22, Marahau, New Zealand.

Horse riding provides Marie with a sense of freedom and empowerment. She entered the Mongol Derby as she is completely addicted to adventure and pushing herself to her limits. She taught herself to ride at a young age, now she classifies as a long-distance rider having spent 102 days travelling solo on horseback. She trains green horses, works at a horse trekking company, competes in trail rides, gives riding lessons and alongside all that Marie is a Waldorf Steiner teacher. *"I think it's wonderful to take what you love and turn it into a gift that makes the world a better place"*.

UK

Louise Ball, 30, London UK

Ridden since she was three and loves all horse pursuits that involve a bit of danger. Just back from riding in Patagonia in testing weather and for long hours so thought the Mongol Derby should be next to move away from her *'regular showers and plug sockets'* comfort zone. Likes *'spicy and naughty'* horses – welcome to Mongolia!

Mark Bauwens, 61, London, UK

The oldest, fattest and least funny competitor! Raising funds for Combat Stress. He learnt to ride and speak Spanish on his parent's sofa watching westerns. Useless at school, especially geography. This is a dream come true for him. He hopes to find many cantinas along the way and maybe the odd bank to put into practice what he has learnt IF he can stay off the beer, crisps and chocolate on that sofa as he continues his education...

Neil Goldie-Scot, 56, Sussex, UK

First engaged with horses as a 10-year-old when assisted his brother on one of the very first Riding for the Disabled groups in the UK. After a forty-year gap, rediscovered horses when recklessly decided to take up polo! His wife (Clare Salmon), who is also in the Derby, assured him that *"twelve falls make a rider"* and he naively believed her. Many multiple number of falls later, he heads to Mongolia and shall be raising money for the RDA, of which he is now honorary treasurer.

Cy Lloyd Jones, 41, Dorset, United Kingdom

Cy is a former Tank Commander in the British Army turned investment banker. Avid horse rider, sailor and frustrated Polo player, Cy is riding in the Derby both for the personal test and the unique equestrian experience. *"I need challenges like these to keep life in perspective. What better way to test yourself than through a tough endurance race that immerses you in a unique culture and takes you to Mongolia, arguably the spiritual home of equestrianism. I can't think of any place or event that will allow you to build up such an exclusive and natural partnership with a horse, I hope that this experience will be riding in its purest form."*

Rebecca Pumphrey, 30, Bucks, UK

Rebecca, better known as Pixie, grew up in Buckinghamshire. She works in London at a busy Talent Agency, looking after actors and trying to cram in the training where she can. Ridden forever, mostly Arabs, which are her breed of choice. Turning 30 she felt that perhaps she wasn't embracing life so chose the most extreme challenge she could find in the most inspirational place. She is feeling *"enlivened and terrified by the challenge ahead."*

Ceri Putman, 30, Lusaka, Zambia

A British female entrepreneur who fell in love with Africa, Ceri started her riding career in pony club, then competing in show-jumping in the UK. Later taking up polo at the University of St Andrews, she has since been actively involved in equestrian sport in Zambia. She now focuses on producing young horses and re-schooling ex racehorses for all disciplines. From a young rider, Ceri has taken a classical approach in training horses, but is often sought to take on 'problem horses'. She hopes that this, alongside adventure experiences in Zambia and further afield, combined with 'hands-on' farrier/vet care, will help her competitive edge in the Derby.

Paul Richards, 59, Cornwall, UK

Fourth generation Cornish Dairy farmer who took to riding & hunting in later years. Has a passion to experience an adventure that will connect him with the spiritual wilderness of Mongolia. He is ready & willing to *"go the extra mile"* to raise money for his chosen charity, Children's Hospice South West - *"No hour of life is wasted that is spent in the saddle"* (Winston Churchill)

Clare Salmon, 53, Sussex, UK

Lives with 22 horses, 25 wallabies, 7 rheas, 5 Alsatians, 3 Bengal cats, an African python and her husband, Neil who is also doing the Derby. Runs the British Equestrian Federation. Also has a polo team and does a bit of horse-racing. Before horses, raced as a cyclist for seven years. Wants to do the Derby *"because the challenge of going from the shortest and most glamorous horse-race on Ladies Day at Glorious Goodwood, to the longest and most unhygienic one in Mongolia the next day, is pretty irresistible."*

Sally Toye, 54, Fareham, UK

Has always loved and lived for travel, adventure and endurance (on and off the ponies) as these challenges have taught her so much about life (the good and the bad) and how she perceives the world. *"We are only here for a brief of moment, let's really live life."* Has had the Mongol Derby in her sights for some years. Having successfully completed the Tevis four times in the last 20 years. *"I*

am excited to think of what I can achieve and learn from this new adventure. How much will we all learn? How much will we change?"

Victoria Twelves, 44, London, UK

Grew up in South Africa loving horses from a distance. Wished she had been born into a farm life, but the reality is that she's done more proper riding in the last six months training for the Derby than in her whole life. She found out about the Derby when looking for a fundraising challenge for the War Child charity; *"If those children of war can deal with such hardships as they have, I thought I should be able to find some bravery and courage also and contribute to the worthy cause"*

USA

Pierre Germain, 21, Owings Mills, Maryland, USA

Born in Paris and moved to the U.S. at the age of eight. Started riding at three years old. When he was 19, worked for a summer as a wrangler at a dude ranch taking care of 130 horses and entertaining guests daily. Family bought a farm last summer and he works there and rides every day when back home. Has a passion for all things nature and conservation. Looks forward to meeting the many people of the Derby and *"feeling the winds of the steppe on my face as I race from ger to ger."*

Julia Fisher, 65, Hartsville, SC, USA

A psycholinguist raised on concrete, asphalt, and steel, she moved to the land of pine forests, and took her first riding lesson eight years ago. She teaches experimental psychology, when she's not competing in 50-mile endurance races on her first and only horse. She's been riding the Derby in her sleep for the past three years – it's time to make it real!

Amanda Charlton Herbert, 25, Maine, United States of America

Amanda is a lifelong horsewoman and equine artist with a passion for nature preservation. She has worked with horses in the jumping and dressage rings as well as on the cattle ranch and considers them to be the best life coaches out there - regardless of the discipline. Amanda is competing in the Derby to raise awareness and funds for Cool Earth and the Mustang Heritage Foundation.

Rick Helson, 58, Green River, Wyoming, USA

Rick met his first horse at age 52 and has been trying to stay on ever since. He is really excited about the Derby because *"it will be a monumental adventure, and because the horses are small so it's not as far to fall"*. If only he knew....

Rachel Land, 38, Easley, SC, USA (will ride with Clare Summers)

Rachel is so much more than a horse enthusiast, she is a "life enthusiast"! A wife, a mother of four young boys, co-founder of Strong & Crazy, an equestrian performer, ostrich jockey, and endurance rider are a few of the adventures that have shaped her. Racing in the Mongol Derby is the next step in the pursuit of a full life and always wanting to dream big.

Marianne Logue Williams, 54 Tryon, North Carolina, USA

First took her baby dolls aboard a raft (in her room) at the age of seven and explored the Amazon while single-handedly fighting off piranhas, pirates, and mutineering baby dolls. Moved out of her room and in to spearfishing in Florida, diving for urchins in the ice-cold winter waters of Maine, and home-schooling her two sons aboard a 55 foot sailboat while exploring Cuba, Venezuela, Panama... Riding the Mongol Derby (her first horse was a wild mustang) is a natural expression of

Marianne's quest "to not go gentle in to that good night" but to slide sideways in to her grave -laughing like hell - while clutching one last cold beer in her weather worn hand.

Clare Summers, 59, Pendleton, SC, USA

Didn't get her first horse until the age of 34, but had the passion in-utero. Is an endurance rider in the southeast United States, but has ridden all over the country and done over 10,000 competitive miles. *"In my ongoing battle with aging, the Mongol Derby allows me to test my physical and mental endurance in addition to experiencing a new culture, making new friends from around the world, and riding 26 incredible ponies."*

Leslie Wylie, 35, Knoxville, Tennessee, United States

Three-day eventer, pony whisperer, desperate housewife, equestrian journalist for the websites Eventing Nation and Horse Nation, and podcaster for Horse Radio Network. Hobbies include box wine and being in over her head. Why she's doing it: *"Girls just wanna have fun! Oh and saving the rainforest."*

SOUTH AFRICA

Jakkie Mellet, 40, Lydenburg, South Africa

City kid turned seed potato farmer. Whilst growing up in Johannesburg, the time Jakkie spent visiting the farm was always magical, *"because that was the time spent riding and being wild outside"*. 12 years ago, he moved to the farm, at that stage more for the sake of the horses than potatoes.... Doing the Derby *"to prove to his kids their dad is no sissy boy and to push the mental limit of life as we know it"*.

SWEDEN

Suzanna Holmqvist, 29, Lima, Sweden (currently lives in Perth, Australia)

Private investigator who has a thing for crazy adventures. Grew up in Sweden but has lived and worked in Australia for many years and been riding since early childhood. Most recent adventure was to ride her fjord horse 2,500kms through Sweden during 100 days so should be able to last ten days on the Mongolian steppe...

ENDS

Notes to Editors

6th-8th August: Pre-race training

9th August: Start gun of the 2017 Mongol Derby

18th August: Final riders expected to finish

The race recreates Chinggis Khaan's ancient horse messenger system in epic fashion.

The hardy & semi-wild native horses of Mongolia reprise their traditional role as the legs and lungs of the adventure and the horse stations, or *morin urtuus*, will be manned by nomadic herding families as they traditionally were. The messengers themselves will be played by horsemen and adventurers from around the world all riding up to 160kms a day, navigating independently and changing horses at 40 kilometre intervals.

Cool Earth is once again the race's official charity, although riders can also raise money for causes close to their saddles, and hearts. <http://www.coolearth.org/adventurists>

Interviews with the riders and organisers are available. High resolution images can be provided, please contact us for details.

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The Mongol Derby is organised by the UK based purveyors of adventure – The Adventurists, who are fighting to make the world less boring and save a bit of it as well.

Find out more at www.mongolderby.com