



NEWS RELEASE
23 April 2018



copyright Julian Herbert @ Mongol Derby 2017

**45 competitors from around the world tackle
the 10th Mongol Derby: the world's longest horse race**

www.mongolderby.com

"I have tried tinder in my search for a wife and Richie Killoran said, 'try this' - it worked for him!"

Mongol Derby competitor 2018

This is the 10th Mongol Derby, featured in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's longest and toughest horse race. The 2018 race features 17 men and 28 women from 13 countries riding 1000km across Mongolia on semi-wild horses.

Three previous competitors are back for more in 2018 (let's not go into why they didn't finish before!). They know the terrain and the worst bits, so let's hope they cover themselves in glory. The other 43 Mongol Derby virgins feature our usual wonderful mix of professional riders and happy horsemen. We've also got an eclectic mix of accountants (not so handy), nurses and vets (much handier) as well as a translator (but not in Mongolian), a fishing captain (useful in a landlocked country), and someone who works pack camels. Yet to meet our semi-wild Mongolian horses, they could look like a walk in the desert...

46 fearless competitors line-up. Adventurists all.



copyright Julian Herbert 2017

2018 Competitors

AUSTRALIA

Ed Archibald, 31, Scone, NSW, Australia

Grew up on a cattle and polo farm in Australia, now living and working in Sydney. This is his first endurance ride so he figured he may as well take on the hardest challenge he could find! Is looking *"to push myself to my limits and see it as an opportunity to explore Mongolia is the most unique way."* Is competing with his two brothers and cousin and raising money for Multiple Sclerosis research, which their uncle suffers from.

Jack Archibald, 29, Scone, Australia

Has ridden his whole life. Lives on a farm, professional polo player for 10 years who has captained the national team. Now takes on this with his brothers and cousin.

Robert Archibald, 34, Scone, Australia

Was a professional polo player from 2001 to 2015 travelling all over the world, as well as captain of the Australian Polo Team. Then decided that he wanted to train racehorses so is currently working in the racing industry for various different trainers to gain experience and help him prepare for when he starts on his own. Competing with his brothers and cousin for MS.

Eliza Allan, 35, Denmark, Western Australia

Her non-horsey family finally relented to get her a horse when she was 12 and spent every weekend thereafter riding the thousands of acres of bush that bordered their farm from dawn to dusk - completely alone with her horse and in *"various states of rapture"*. Since then, hasn't been able to shake the urge to just *'ride and ride and just keep going'*, which is why the Derby appeals. Is a single-Mum and full-time teacher *"terrified of going fast"* who spent 2016 traveling Australia's Bicentennial National Trail with her daughter, horse and donkeys.

Chase Becker, 21, Yandina Creek, Australia

Competed in the Mongol Derby in 2016 but snapped a tendon in her ankle so had to pull out at the half way point. Is back for redemption *"and this time I'll finish it"*. Is a pre-med studying Nursing and Midwifery. Will be accompanied by her horse instructor, Rod (who has been teaching her since she was 10) and Dad, Mike, (who finished the Derby in 2016).

Mike Becker, 55, Yandina Creek Australia

Having completed the Derby in 2016 is back again with Chase and Rod *"to show them the way!!"* Is a helicopter pilot and Company director of an aerospace group and loves a bit of adventure with the family. The Derby is their 2018 adventure and having done it before, is *"really looking forward to coming back and riding across the open steppe in an environment of freedom and excitement."*

Henry Bell, 33, Goulburn, New South Wales, Australia

Was bought up with horses on the family farm, and plays polo. Never thought he would compete in an endurance style race so *"can't wait to have a go at the longest one in the world"*. Competing with his cousins and raising money for MS

Kathy Gabriel, 27, Benambra, Victoria, Australia

Has been in the saddle before she could walk and horses have always been her passion. Spent years working in northern Australia on cattle stations chasing cows on horses. Now manages a beef property in the high country. Has decided to do the derby for so many reasons but *“mostly for the ride.... for everything the derby is about, the adventure, the challenge, meeting new people, meeting and learning off the Mongolian herders about their extraordinary horses.”*

William Gunning, 34, Sydney, Australia

Proud father of two, married to the woman of his dreams and works in the family business as a Commercial Real Estate Agent. Started riding as a child at his grandparents farm and then started entering Junior Rodeo competitions where his passion for horses grew. Is looking forward to the challenge ahead and getting himself fit as well as saddle fit for the upcoming event. Is *“a bit of a joker and wants to make sure everyone is having a good time and just hope I can have the same effect on the horses.”* He'll learn!!

Rodney (Rod) Herman, 70, Maleny, Australia

Grew up with a love for horses and has worked most of his adult life in the Equestrian Industry, including working for the famous King Ranch in Australia. Has been a horse rancher/rider, a horse trainer, EA riding Coach and accredited farrier. Is *“looking forward to riding across the Steppe with my good friends Mike and Chase Becker as part of the team, The Three Amigos.”*

Ciaron Maher, Australia

Group One winning racehorse trainer in Australia and adrenaline junkie, “usually satisfied by going 300km on a motorbike” but pretty sure “this will give me just as much satisfaction!”

Karrin O'Loughlin, 32, Toowoomba, Australia

Grew up on her family cattle station near Nebo in North Queensland. Was riding horses before she could walk as is the scenario for most county kids on the land. Lived and worked on the property up until mid 20s before moving to town and developing a major passion for travel. After returning from a summer living and working in Canada as a trail riding guide in the Rockies, was looking for my next big adventure! *“Couldn't think of a better way to see and experience Mongolia than on the back of a horse (hopefully not on my back in the dirt looking up)”* and with the added bonus of raising funds for RACQ LifeFlight Australia

Annabel Neasham, Australia

Competed to CCI** in eventing in the UK. Moved to Oz in 2016 where now works as Racing Manager to Ciaron Maher. Still rides trackwork in the mornings and has been lucky enough to swing her leg over a few Group One winners.

Cecilia Stone, 50, New South Wales, Australia

A “horse tragic” who grew up riding, did the usual pony club stuff, horse adventures with teen friends and cattle work at home on the farm. Had a break from horses and found them again while NOT looking to get back into them. After a long stint of being a Carer started looking for an adventure and found the Mongol Derby. Is now *“off the couch, at the gym, on the horse and focused on being ready for the delights that shall appear.”*

BOTSWANA**Michael Turner, 39, Maun, Botswana (Citizen of both UK / USA)**

Leads private safaris all over the African continent. Is riding in the 2018 Derby, *“simply for the adventure as it just sounds too fantastic to pass up.”* (Maybe he needs to read a bit of the previous press coverage!)



copyright Richard Dunwoody @ Mongol Derby

CANADA

Tamara Beckstead, 54, Rockwood, Canada

A small animal vet who feels most alive atop a horse. Eventing has earned Tamara the nickname “Teflon Girl” by her coach. Hunting satisfies her thrill of 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!).

Kelsey Riley, 29, Lexington, KY, USA (Canadian)

Having not ridden a horse for two years prior to applying, Kelsey decided the Mongol Derby would be a good excuse to get back in the saddle (no, seriously). After she was, shockingly, actually accepted to participate, Kelsey has discovered that (thankfully) she has not forgotten how to ride. A rigorous training schedule should hopefully see her ship-shape in August. She is an editor of the Thoroughbred Daily News, and is riding to raise money for the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation’s Second Chances Program at the Blackburn Correctional Complex in Lexington, KY.

IRELAND

Charmaine McQuaid /O’Neill, 43, Kilkenny, Ireland (but lives in Leicestershire, UK)

Born and bred into racing from Whytemount Stud in Ireland. Was Champion Irish lady Jockey 1997/98 having ridden winners for trainers such as Aidan O’Brien, Paddy Mullins and Dessie Hughes. Currently works as a feed rep for Gain Horse Feeds in the UK accompanied every day by her beagle, Walnut. Is he coming to Mongolia?

John Daniel Moore, 40, Kildare, Ireland

A Bloodstock agent who is following in the footsteps of fellow Irishman and 2014 runner-up, Richie Killoran – *“I have tried tinder in my search for a wife and Richie Killoran said, ‘try this’ - it worked for him!”*

ITALY

Claudia Gaspa-Ward, 19, Lazio, Italy

Competes nationally and internationally in endurance races and is opening an endurance training facility, ‘Long Ride Stable’, and a breeding farm, ‘Allevamento Celeua’. That’s if she survives the Derby of course...

THE NETHERLANDS

Rouke Bloemsma, 52, The Netherlands

An architect who has ridden since she was eight – competing in dressage, jumping and eventing. Has two Icelandic horses. Has been training for over a year for this and lost 22kg in 18 months...

Hinke van der Werf, 28, Groningen, The Netherlands

Born and raised on a dairy farm in Friesland, the Northern province of the Netherlands famous for their fields

full of Friesian cows and horses. To her father's regret, she picked an Arabian horse instead of a Friesian horse. While working as a nurse and a sociologist, traveled a lot. *"People now think that I'm settled down back in the North with my desk job as a lecturer and researcher at the academy for nurses. But I'm always preparing for a new adventure. Why the Mongol derby? I saw the adventurers' rickshaw race in India. I don't do too well with traffic so I thought I'd try my luck in Mongolia."*

PAKISTAN

Saif Noon, 18, Lahore, Pakistan

Currently a university student studying at The Royal Agricultural University in the UK (known as the 'Gin and Tonic' course we believe!). Has been riding for nearly 12 years. Grew up in Lahore, where learnt and competed in polo. Has also been riding in Nurpur and some mountain ranges in the Punjab. Wants to do the Derby because *"am also looking forward to the mental and physical challenge of riding for as long as I can."*

PORTUGAL

Manuel Espregueira Mendes, 28, Lisbon, Portugal

Translator by qualification, rider by passion, with a foot in interior design, Manuel started show jumping at age nine. He believes that it is in hardship and conquering limits that great personalities are forged, hence his decision to take on the Derby – that or, *"because he started drooling over it as soon as he laid eyes on this crazy adventure!"* Raising Money for the Portuguese fire victims.

NEW ZEALAND

Eion Kemp, 44, Matamata, New Zealand

What started as a way to pay my way through university lead to a passion. Twenty five years later owning one of the largest Thoroughbred Breaking in and Breeze up farms in the heart of the Waikato, the interest in horses still runs strong. *"I have followed the Derby for a few years with interest and always wanted to give it a go and now is the time to swap my thoroughbreds and experience the Mongol Ponies. I love a challenge , something new, different and out of my comfort zone and the Mongol Derby offers all that and more".* Oh yes, it does...

Charlotte Howard, 25, Glentui New Zealand

Currently work running the family biz nzseeds.co.nz but usually an entrepreneur always starting new things. Madly in love with horses, fast cars, high heels and all things sexy and adventurous. Ridden horses all her life from eventing to high country and most things in between and is riding in the derby as a tribute to her mum *"who was always the biggest supporter of my mad ideas and adventures"*.

Trudi Thomas-Morton, 60, Levin New Zealand

Bred with the equine addiction gene and has had a horse or 5 for 30+ years. Extreme trekking, competitive trail riding and endurance with horses and, for a bit of adventure, working pack camels in the Australian desert for ecological and archaeological expeditions - these things help keep her sane - just. Rest of the time works in the city, runs her wee lifestyle block breeding a cow or horse or two and pampers her large menagerie. The Derby is her biggest challenge yet - *"A challenge of mind and body, the adrenaline surge from the unknown and unexpected, a collage of experiences for the soul."*

UK

Gemma Ractliffe, 37, Surrey, UK

An accountant as her day job Gemma had been riding since she can remember. The majority of her riding experience comes from her time at the Horse Rangers Association, where she started riding at the age of 10 and now teaches children every weekend. *"Having never owned my own horse or done any kind of competitive riding this is a huge challenge, but what would be the point of going through life without a challenge? I love to travel and what better way to see a country than to actually spend time with the people whilst carrying out a sport you love. Oh and as an aside I'd like to see if the 1960s purple beetle my sister*

did the Mongol Rally in 10 years ago is still making its way round Ulaanbaatar..."

URUGUAY

Valeria Ariza, 40, Montevideo, Uruguay

The first 'proud South American lady' to take part in the Mongol Derby. Jumping and dressage are her origins and she works as a full-time trainer and coach. Is *"in on anything involving horses from ladies polo to horse related conferences"*. Her true passion is travelling with and on horses, and her midlife mantra is *"going where the horses take me"*. Rode in Mongolia in 2004, a lifechanging trip, and *"always wondered if I could ever go back"*.

USA

Carol Federighi, 58, Takoma Park, Maryland, USA

Government lawyer, endurance rider, Ride and Tie competitor (whatever that is?!). Always wondered if she could ride the day after a 100-mile ride, now she will find out. Convinced a friend to sign up, will also find out how far the friendship goes *"Looking forward to the wide-open spaces, the gutsy horses, and living by my wits rather than my phone"*.

Heather 'Flash' Accardo, 37, Prairieville, Louisiana, USA

"My mom always made sure I had a horse to ride while growing up - for that I am eternally grateful." Flash grew up showing Arabs in every event possible and now endurance is her love. Her motto in life is: *"If you want something bad enough you'll find a way, otherwise you'll make an excuse."* She has been blogging her preparations on Facebook at *Flash's Journey To The Derby* and is raising money for her charity Heros and Horses.

Michael Gascon, 28, Poplarville, Mississippi, USA

Fifth generation horse trainer who has dedicated his life to the way of the horse. *"Ready to go on an adventure for the ages!!"*

Matthew Graham, USA

Mechanical engineer, yoga teacher, freelance outdoors and adventure writer. Hang glider pilot, paraglider pilot, SCUBA diver, rock climber, skier, sailor, paddler and cyclist. Started riding horses 25 years ago because it was his wife's favourite sport. They rode together in fox chases, played polo together for over a decade and took equestrian vacations throughout Europe. He then tragically lost her in a freak hang gliding accident two years ago. Is *"competing in this race in honour of her and her love of horses and her spirit of adventure."*

Dori Hertel, 48, Kingwood, Texas, USA

Vet for 23 years. Done mainly what she calls "pleasure adventure" riding including endurance and polo. Owns and breeds quarter horses.

Devan Horn, 24, Houston, Texas, USA

A third time Derby participant, she was runner-up (after crossing the line first in 2013) and then fell ill during the 2015 race. Still the fastest ever competitor, this will be her 5th ride over 500 miles.

Pamela Karner, 64, Ithaca, New York, USA

Recently retired large animal veterinarian. Has practiced for over 30 years in Ithaca, New York. Is an endurance rider, veterinarian and ride manager in both the US and more recently in Australia as well. *"I have felt drawn to Mongolia since I was a little girl AND I thrive on challenges! I can't think of a better way to satisfy both of those than racing across the steppes. I wake up every morning ridiculously excited and equally frightened by the upcoming race. I don't feel 64 but ask me that after the race!"*

Jeanette Lazzaro, 29, Virginia Beach, USA

Started riding at six months old on the back of her Mum's Arabian and grew up riding in Pony Club and Eventing. As an "adult" with a "real job", worked in aviation, but in her spare time rescued, healed, broke, and trained a quarter horse. Work took her to live in Japan last year and is training for Mongolia by begging and

borrowing any and every horse available. *"I'm a Derby first-timer and as well as mastering the use of anti-chafing anything in a goal to finish the race with my bum intact!"*

Couple **Joel Scholz, 44**, and **Nicolette Merle-Smith, 30**, are first time Derby racers. Joel, a Massachusetts native, USAF veteran, and VP of sales for a mobile medical technology company, and Nicolette, a Virginia native and professional 3-day event rider, live in Ocala, Florida training up their young homebred sport horses and riding out with hounds on a regular basis all over the country. Due to be married this fall, Nicolette and Joel are dedicating their entire wedding registry to Cool Earth in support of land conservation. As outdoor enthusiasts, they look forward to the challenge of the Derby and all of its demanding elements. Nicolette's grandmother told them, *"If you can survive the Mongol Derby together, then you must deserve each other."*

Kelsey Opstad, 27, Anchorage, Alaska, USA

A commercial fishing captain and paramedic who grew up showing dressage, but has since found a love of travel and other sports (backcountry snowboarding, speedflying, snowmachining, paragliding, biking, climbing). The Derby is *"an opportunity for me to immerse myself in horseback riding once again, and a challenge to combine riding skills with those of navigation and survival. I wanted a reason to bring horses back into my life in a big way, and this was the one which excited me most."*

Jocelyn Pierce, 31, Rockville, Maryland, U.S.

Outdoor adventure freak, three-day eventer and an editor at *Practical Horseman* magazine. Jocelyn believes her horse-crazy childhood of pool-noodle jousting, crude attempts at skijoring and ill-fated trail rides in search of ice cream cones have aptly prepared her for partnering with the Mongolian horse. She is eager to immerse herself in one of the last surviving nomadic cultures, but a misguided assurance that her time in the concrete jungle as a U.S. letter carrier will parallel Genghis Khan's "pony express" route may prove problematic.

Christine Roberts, 29, Dallas, Pennsylvania, USA

Growing up with three brothers on a farm in Colorado did not cultivate a weak person. Instead it created an independent, tough-as-nails woman who enjoys martial arts, competitive shooting, travel, and horses. Christine has been riding since in the womb and has never been without a horse. She grew up riding in Competitive Trail and made the switch to Endurance Racing in 2007. Easy going yet highly competitive, she cannot wait to breathe in the Mongolian air on the back of a galloping horse taking on the Derby!

Madison Smith, 28, San Francisco, USA

Hunter jumper rider taking her second whack at the Derby after a bump on the head and some breaks in 2016. When she's not on a horse, this California girl is running a small business from her apartment floor and usually running late for her next flight. Madison is proud to once again be raising money for the Homeless Prenatal Program!

SOUTH AFRICA

Samantha Anderson, 45, Durban, South Africa

A self-confessed *"complete nutter"* who rides a 1909 Humber (ancient motorcycle with no gears and peddles) 650kms in two days in an annual event called the DJ (Durban to Johannesburg). Has always wanted to ride the Mongol Derby but never thought she would be chosen because *"I can ride horses, but nothing remotely close to the scale of the Derby. Since I got the invite I have been training like mad, broken two ribs and met the most amazing people who have lent me their horses and taught me so much. No one actually believes me when I tell them what I am going to do. Hee ha here I come!"*

Angus Lowe, 24, Fourways, Johannesburg, SA

Is currently a student with the University of Pretoria. Loves polo and horses and rides and plays as much as possible. Wants to ride in the Derby to combine his love of the outdoors, riding and adventure. *"As an avid historian the idea of traveling along Genghis Khans old postal route was also a major draw for me to the Derby."*

ENDS

Notes to Editors

5th-7th August: Pre-race training

8th August: Start gun of the 2018 Mongol Derby

17th 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.

The Adventurists Press Office

Liz Ampairee 01725 552484 / liz@lizampairee.com

Adventurists - 0117 963 5513 / hq@theadventurists.com

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