



2010 Luxury Preview



From holidays in space to a new, indulgent Singapore shopping centre, *Robb Report's* annual look at what is to come puts the spotlight on the luxury world's most exciting new products and places. →

In the Footsteps of Kublai Khan

LUXURY ACCESS TO LAVISH HUNTING
EXPEDITIONS MADE FAMOUS BY KUBLAI KHAN
WILL SOON BE AVAILABLE AS PART OF A NEW
WAVE OF BESPOKE ADVENTURE TRAVEL.

IT'S DESCRIBED AS 'the most luxurious trip in the world' by travel company, Urbane Nomads, and it will take place in the most remote and inaccessible areas of Mongolia next year.

While some travel will be on horseback—and even on reindeer—to recreate the eagle hunting adventures of the 13th-century Mongol Emperor, a private jet will remain at the travelers' disposal, plus a private butler, private chef and luxurious, movable private gers (yurts).

Falconry flourished in Asia during the 1200s. Every March, Kublai Khan would leave Beijing to hunt. He would be accompanied by around 10,000 falconers and bird catchers, as well as thousands of soldiers, office bearers and bodyguards. Marco Polo gave several accounts of these extravagant expeditions that have enabled artists to re-create the events on canvas.

In central Asia, Eagle Hunting remains one of the most dramatic and primal relationships between man and beast. Currently, the UAE is making an application to the UN to consider falconing as a 'living world heritage'. As they have for centuries, Kazakh men still hunt from horseback with trained golden eagles on their arms—the largest and most powerful of raptors—in order to chase foxes, rabbits and even wolves across the snowy mountains and steppes.

Following in the footsteps of Kublai Khan, the 16-day Urbane Nomads trip also begins in Beijing at the presidential suite of the Park Hyatt and a private villa designed by Kengo Kuma, close to the Great Wall of China.

In the Taiga forest, life for the nomadic Tsaatan or 'Reindeer people' has changed little over the centuries.





CORBIS/HAND SARDAK



Once in Bayan Olgii in western Mongolia, there will be a much smaller accompanying party than that which Kublai Khan enjoyed. However, guests will be able to try their hand at eagle hunting, which will be immortalized through an oil painting by a famous artist and falconer whose patrons include Sheikh Suroor bin Mohammed Al Nahyan, the first president of the UAE and HM Queen Elizabeth, as well as many other members of gulf royalty.

The trip then heads to Northern Mongolia where guests will ride darhad horses bred by the 'horse masters of Mongolia', and be guided by academic researchers actively involved in the study and conservation of the Mongolian reindeer, now threatened by extinction. Much of the knowledge of reindeer breeding has been lost and reindeers are being



threatened not only by the discovery of a new gold mine close to their habitat, but also because their horns, milk and meat are used by local Tsataan reindeer herders. This trip takes travelers deep into the Taiga forest to meet the few remaining nomadic families of 'Reindeer people', and experience how life has been for them—with little change—over the centuries.

Says Urbane Nomad's Alex Schoppe, "Given the current economic climate, luxury travel will be more centered on trips that are meaningful; where travelers will have a chance to reconnect with core, traditional values and rediscover themselves." The trip is priced from US\$2 million.

—REBECCA SKINNER

Urbane Nomad, www.urbanenomads.com.

Hunting with the help of eagles remains one of the most dramatic relationships between man and beast (top) and portable luxury gers in remote Mongolia.