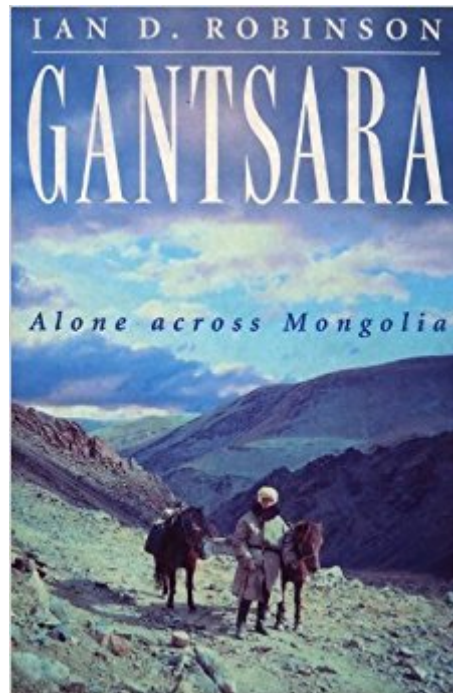




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Gantsara: Alone Across Mongolia



Synopsis

While Ian Robinson was born and raised in rural New Zealand, he's covered a lot of ground since then. He's done it the hard way too - backpacking through South America, China, Tibet, Nepal and India. In 1992 he was living in London, and was seized with the idea of travelling across Mongolia, and despite opposition from friends, family and so-called 'experts' who claimed it was impossible, he went on to become the first westerner to cross Mongolia alone on horseback. His battle to find guides, horses and a safe place to sleep in some of the world's wildest and most inhospitable surroundings is an extraordinary testament to his courage, ingenuity and determination. *Gantsara* - alone across Mongolia tells the fascinating, sometimes frightening and often hilarious story of his amazing journey. From falling in love with an enchanting girl in Ulan Bator to being chased across the steppes by drunken bandits, his story is never dull and is full of the affection and respect he developed for the warm and vital people he came to know and love along the way

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ian is now back in New Zealand, having completed other extraordinary solo journeys, and is currently teaching in Auckland, while he writes his next book and plans his next adventure.

Hello ians, I am surprised to see this book was published in 2004, I read my flatmates copy in about 2004/05, so it must have been a new release when he was gifted it by his family. I only read it once, but it has firmly stayed in my mind. I read a lot of novels, (not usually 'travel' ones mind you) but for the last near 10 years this word *Gantsara* has remained (correctly spelt even!) with me in my

vocabulary. I was drawn to read it as having never read anything about Mongolia (where Mongols live right? That was all I knew really) and from the keenness of the author, to have the urge to travel the land, and finding the means to do it also. It was wonderful reading ways the people live/survive in the incredibly harsh conditions there, the Gers, the yaks, ponies, camels, the distances, the trading that happens. And I fully appreciated Mr Robinsons viewpoint, Perhaps I was a similar age when I read it, as he was when he travelled there in 1994. This is not fiction, this is real writing, and yes sometimes all the rocks can look the same in a day of travelling through a stony desert! Coming from New Zealand, the HUGENESS of Mongolia was just amazing to read about. If Mongolia does not interest you (particularly at this time, 1994, before internet and mobile phones covered the globe), or if you do not understand why anybody would leave the 'comforts of home' to step out to the unknown, this book is not for you. But if you appreciate the wonder of this planet, and wish to read about how some of the most remote people live, written from the point of view of a young man who knows he does not know enough, well I hope your local library, or flatmate, has this book then.

I know it's probably not right for an author to review his own book but given the comments by Jeannie Mancini I feel I should say something. I wonder if she has actually read *Gantsara*, alone across Mongolia, and if she has how well she read it. I'm the first to admit that it's not a greatest travel book ever written, in fact I've only given it four stars, however, in 2005 it won 'Travel Book of the Year' award at the Cathay Pacific Travel Media Awards ahead of eleven other entries, I've since gone on to publish six further books. As for Ms Mancini's comments; firstly I was alone, completely, I didn't meet another westerner or barely speak English for five months, I had no contact with the outside world at all. I was not unprepared, I was youthful and somewhat reckless, but I certainly knew what I was getting myself into. And the trip was long and at times monotonous and I have allowed this to come through in the text, however to say nothing of interest happened is totally false, I was chased by drunken bandits, nearly died of hypothermia, nearly died crossing a frozen river, was arrested by the local police, fell in love, lost horses, saw a man kill a goat with his bare hands, and then we ate it, bought a wolf cub, met wolf hunters, met Buddhist monks, stayed at the ancient capital of the great khans, met Kazakhs with trained hunting eagles, rode through deserts, mountains and forests.... I could go on, but I won't because all this and more is mentioned in the text. *Gantsara* sold out in New Zealand, but is now available on a print to order basis, it has also been translated into Italian and published in Italy. Anyway, what I want to say is that Ms Mancini's review is very unfair and not an honest description of the book, I hope she'll read it again, perhaps a bit more slowly this time. But don't just take my word for it, here are some comments from

independant reviews in New Zealand media: 'This is not a book which pretends to offer deep psychological or cultural insights. It is a simple, straightforward, unpretentious account of an extraordinary journey, and is probably the more effective because of that.' New Zealand Herald. 'Robinson is no 'gee-whiz' traveller. He is sensitive to the extraordinary in Mongolian culture and its history and is appreciative of the un-questioning hospitality generally awarded him.' Waikararapa Times-Age. 'Robinson's fearless nature and gritty resolve to make the journey, even though the odds are stacked against him, make this book a compelling page-turner... Gantsara is an entertaining and revealing book about a country that is perhaps unfamiliar to most. It is certainly the best book I've read in the genre in recent years.' Nelson Mail. 'There is a naivety about the excellent writing, yet this young author constantly amazed me with his perceptive observations... This is an outstanding documentary journey, beautifully written. I totally recommend it.' Hawke's Bay Today. Ian Robinson.

Well worth reading if you are interested in Mongolia or cross country travelogues at all. I read this around 2004 when it came out, and read it again a couple of years ago. The author was only 24 when he undertook his horseback journey across Mongolia in 1992, with minimal experience and preparation. The writing could be better, more observant and patient, and the author is sometimes self-absorbed (the experience of travel for anyone is of a litany of annoyances and irritations, but we forget most of them afterward the bigger experiences are remembered.... this doesn't always come through from this author). Furthermore it is written in a past-present tense which may annoy some readers. Overall however this book shines with the exuberance and daring of adventure when you are young and it feels like the world is waiting for your footsteps. His book about crossing Tibet ten years later 'You Must Die Once' is also flawed, but darker and much neglected in my view and worthwhile.

I enjoyed this book. Couldn't put it down. Why haven't I heard of this book before?. It should be in every NZ bookshop. Traveling through Mongolia (I think) in 1992, but not published till 2004. I would like to have read more about the bus journey back to Ulaan Bataar where the book could also be marketed. Buy it, read it and pass it on.

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