



Welcome Package – Mongolia

The information in this package will address many of your questions regarding pre-trip preparations and outline the fantastic opportunities that await you at Baldan Baraivan. If you haven't decided whether to join us yet, this package will convince you! Be sure to read:

- [A-Day-In the Life & Itinerary](#)
- [Project & Organization](#)

Visas: Mongolia does not insist that all countries require one. Visa requirements and prices change and are dependent upon your citizenship. Please contact a travel agent or a Mongolian consulate to confirm. A passport is essential, and it must have more than six months of validity left and enough clear space on your pages for the stamps. For safety purposes, it is a good idea to leave a clear photocopy of your passport with your contact person at home. Currently, US citizens do not need a Visa for a 90-day stay. For every tourist, anyone staying beyond 30 days must Register and Un-register before departure. Please inquire if this applies to you and we'll provide more details.

New York: www.un.int/mongolia

Worldwide Directory:

www.embassyworld.com/embassy/mongolia1.html

Plane ticket: You are responsible for purchasing your ticket. CRTP staff are happy to help you organize your trip and address any questions you have. You will need to fly/train to the capital city, Ulaan Baatar (UB). We highly recommend our travel agent; give her a call and get a quote. Please let Susi know that you are joining CRTP.

Susi Sen

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Remember, inform CRTP of your itinerary: arrival date/time, flight#, etc

Arriving in country: A CRTP representative will meet you at the airport/train station. Note: we leave Ulaan Baatar (UB) for Baldan Baraivan the morning of your first tour date. You should arrive in UB a minimum of 24 hours before the day that your tour begins. We recommend that you arrive two (or three) days before the first day of your tour date so that you can get explore Ulaan Baatar and settle into the new time zone. CRTP will provide an Orientation Package – practical guide to support for your stay in Ulaan Baatar & Mongolia (language, phone, taxi, banking, etc). Please note, we highly recommend that you purchase a travel guidebook to enrich your experience and provide overall travel/cultural logistics.

Getting to & from the site: Our vehicle will transport you to Baldan Baraivan the morning of the starting date of the tour, and deliver you back to Ulaan Baatar by the evening of the last date. The road trip from UB to Baldan Baraivan will vary in the duration depending on road conditions. A portion of the road, heading out from the city is paved. Most of the trip will be on wonderful ribbons of dirt road winding in every direction. In general, it will take between 7– 9 hours each way. We will provide food and beverages. You will travel through classic rolling green steppes into the land of Chinggis Khan. Keep your eyes peeled for darting marmots, squatting eagles (very few trees), gray cranes, two-humped camels, and herds of yak, horse, sheep and goat. You will see the homes of the nomadic people and witness daily life in the steppes.

Health: Mongolian government requires that you purchase travel health insurance. Some travel agencies offer packages with ticket purchase, some credit card plans have insurance programs, as do some banks. Ask your friends and family for their advice. No specific vaccinations are legally required. Consult a doctor /travel clinic if you have any questions or concerns. Having an up-to-date tetanus and a Hepatitis A shot is always a good idea. For comments on your personal med-kits/ first-aid see our suggested packing list in this booklet.

Money: American Express Traveler's checks (US\$) can be easily exchanged for Togrog in UB. Some banks do cash advances (Visa, MC). It is a good idea to come into the country with some US dollars. Include small bills- great for those moments between bank trips. Many businesses happily accept US\$. Note: Airport exit tax. Be sure to keep 12,500 tg or \$12US cash to pay a tax upon your departure. Look around for the tax-window at the airport - located before you enter the ticketing/baggage check area. When in Mongolia, please ask CRPT staff to confirm current rate.

Accommodation/ Food Ulaan Baatar: Participants are responsible for their expenses while in Ulaan Baatar (UB): food & hotel. CRTP will make your hotel/ guest house reservation. For your convenience, we will provide you with a list of possible accommodation suited to varying budget needs for you to choose from (approx prices: Guesthouses \$10/ night/person. Hotels \$30 & up /night/person). In UB there are many markets for general needs and food and a diverse selection of restaurants from typical Mongolian to Mexican and Indian. Meals range from \$2-4 for typical local meals and \$4-8 (& up) for other restaurants. Eating vegetarian is no problem in the city. You should drink bottled water (\$0.50-1.00) Note, CRTP does offer some Specialty Groups with all-inclusive itineraries. If you need clarification please ask our office staff.

Accommodation/ Food Baldan Baraivan: While at Baldan Baraivan all participants are accommodated in a 'ger' (2-4 people). Sorry, no private occupancy available. The ger is the traditional housing of the Mongolian nomads (circular, wood framed, felt with white canvas cover, brightly painted wooden doors, vinyl cover over dirt floor). Gers are very comfortable and are far superior to regular tents, though they are basic. Inside your Mongolian home (watch your head as you enter) you will be provided with a bed, shelves, candles, teacups, kettle, washbasin and wood-stove. As well, there are sheets, pillows and blankets. We strongly suggest that you bring a sleeping bag. However, if you are unable to bring one we are able to provide you with what you need. In case you were wondering, 'ger' is the Mongolia word for 'yurt', which is a Russian word.

Three meals a day are provided and prepared by a Mongolian cook staff. Vegetarians are easily accommodated. Many people find it a great cultural experience to volunteer for a meal helping out in the kitchen. Fresh breads are baked in our stone oven and the meals are cooked in woks nestled in wood-stoves. The weekly menu includes many soups, vegetable and rice dishes, pasta and traditional noodles. In the countryside the veggies are mostly potatoes, turnips, cabbage, onions and carrots. Sorry, no fresh fruit. In July & Aug. our garden supplies lots of extra greens. We do augment the local diet with oatmeal and lentils. The kitchen house is a wood building with a cooking area, a lounge (library, resource/ archive materials and games) and banquet-style dining area with long tables and benches. Drinking water is provided: boiled well water.

Toilets: Typical countryside toilets are outhouse-squat toilets. At Baldan Baraivan, we have fantastic environmentally friendly sit-down composting toilets. They come with toilet seats and are cleaned daily. We also provide special unbleached toilet paper that composts very well.

Bathing: Attached to the kitchen house is a shower room. A water tower provides running water and a hand-pump draws water through pipes that hug the kitchen chimneys for a warm shower. For a fresh and invigorating bath there is a river within an easy walk from camp. Note: we ask that all participants bring biodegradable soap and shampoo. For example, one of Herbal Essence's shampoo/conditioners is biodegradable – check the label; so is Ivory soap.

Laundry: At Baldan Baraivan we provide washbasins and scrub brushes. Water is available in camp or you may go to the river. As well, there is a laundry line. Please use biodegradable detergent. Not keen on doing laundry by hand, if you have time in UB there are a few laundry services.

Electricity? We have solar power out at Baldan Baraivan. We encourage you to bring rechargeable batteries and YOUR chargers so not to make waste. In the city, Ulan Baatar uses a 220 volt system and you will need an adapter, but at Baldan Baraivan we can do both 110 volt and 220 volt and you are able to use your regular plug without a converter.

Packing: In this package we have included a brief checklist of things you should bring as well as some suggestions. Please refer to it while you are preparing. Do not consider this list complete. In addition, if there is something that you question or not sure of some, please ask us. *Don't PANIC!* If you forget something or need more of something, you can buy all general items (even brand names) in Ulaan Baatar prior your departure for the site. UB is a very modern city.

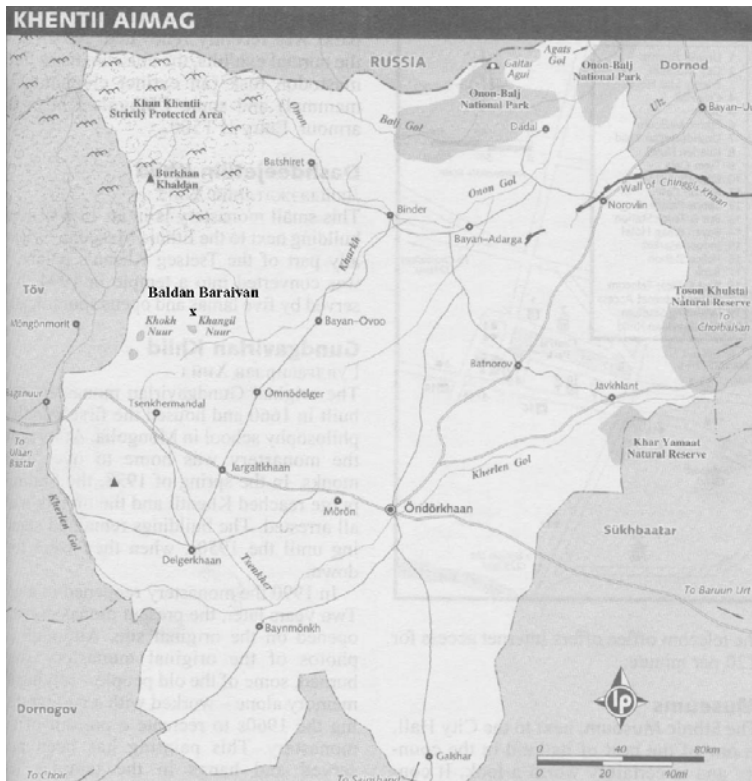
Environment & Geography: The temperatures at Baldan Baraivan should be around 60 - 80 degrees F during the day and drop into the 40s at night. Nights will be cooler in May, early June, late August and there after – down to freezing. There is always a possibility of rain, but most days will be very sunny. There are occasional thunderstorms, but they are usually short and intermittent. During the June and July dates expect flies, some of them are biting flies (appropriate clothing is your best defense, bring DEET based bug spray if you really hate flies and don't mind chemicals). Later months will have some mosquitoes at night - they do not carry any disease.

- Ecologically, BB is at the Southern tip of the Siberian forest.
- Rocky out-crops, weathered mountains.
- Coniferous trees, birch, etc.
- Wide grassy green valleys, rivers, ponds, lakes, wild flowers
- Coo-coo birds, magpies, eagles, falcons, swans, herons, deer, wolves, rabbits, marmots, etc.
- Wind, rain, sun, cold, hot – all in one day!!
- Fantastic sunsets and double rainbows. Awesome stargazing!



X Baldan Baraivan
Monastery

Baldan Baraivan is located in the northeastern province of Khentii (Aimag = Province).



At Baldan Baraivan - *Who will be there?*

• **International Volunteer Program Leaders:** These individuals are your key to the Baldan Baraivan experience. They will provide you with orientations, lead work projects, keep you informed of all the great cultural, social and recreational activities, and provide on-going support during your experience at the site. These Leaders are acting in a professional-volunteer capacity and selected annual. They have generously donated their time and energy to up-hold CRTP's high program standards and project goals.

• **Volunteer-Participants:** This is *you!* (Group size: 5-10 people) These individuals have generously donated their time & money to come and assist at the site. These volunteers participate in the daily activities of countryside life – living and working with the local people to restore this great community. See *A-Day-In-the Life...* for more details.

• **Managing Director:** Mark Hintzke, founder of CRTP, oversees all aspects of the restoration and camp.

• **Program Director:** Liz Branon, manages camp & Volunteer Program.

Mongolian Staff:

• **Mongolian labor staff & carpenters:** (15-25 people)

• **Construction Manager:** Professional. Engineer

• **Master Carpenter:** Jaminguroo, 82 years old Mongolian craftsmen

• **Cook Staff:** Professional chief & assistances.

• **Drivers and Mechanic**

• **Translators,** Mongolian professionals and apprentices.

• **Monks**

Gandan Monastery (only teaching monastery currently in Mongolia) is preparing Baldan Baraivan to provide teachings once again. The school of Dash Choimble, the philosophy school of Gandan, will be responsible for providing teachers and overseeing the administration when the BB community establishes full-time. Dash Choimble sends monks to BB whenever possible in order to begin the reestablishment of this community. The monks at Dash Choimble have a busy learning schedule in Ulan Baatar and are not always available to be at BB. As the progress of the restoration continues more and more monks from the school have been visiting BB and conducting teachings. The hope of Dash Choimble, and ours, is to have monks at BB for most of the summer of 2005.

A-Day-In the Life & Itinerary

Here is a 'typical' day (Monday-Friday). Please note, there are occasions when we schedule activities differently.

5:30 ish Sun rises, mist lingers about the lake south of camp.

6:00 ish Cooks start breakfast.

6:20 Cows wander through camp.

6:30 – optional – When monks are at the site there is often a morning ritual at the small temple (a log structure built in the 1980's). Participation is at your discretion. If monks are not present you are very welcome to use the temple for your own meditation. See **At Baldan Baraivan – Who will be there?** info on monks.

7:15 Breakfast Gong : Everyone eats together at the kitchen house.

8:00 Camp meeting and the workday begins: Everyone gathers to discuss the prior day's work and progress, and then that day's projects. A 'phrase/word-of-the-day' is introduced in both English and Mongolian. Volunteer-Participants are assigned tasks based on general availability & priority of projects. See **Work** for details.

1:00 Lunch Gong

2:00 Staff return to work. Volunteer are welcome to join the Staff, but are encouraged to relax, work on their own projects & explore the fantastic landscape. Our plan is that your experience at BB will be well balanced with work, culture & recreation.

5:00 Workday is complete: many people relax, socialize in the common areas, share language lessons, do laundry, play basketball or other games, bath, help in the kitchen, etc.

5:30 Dinner Gong

After dinner activities are up to the individual. See ***Free-time & Recreation.***

10pm 'ish' the sun sets / Camp Quiet Time

Upon you arrival: Upon your arrival you will get settled into your new Mongolian home and receive a camp orientation by our Volunteer Program Leaders. The rest of this day you will have free-time to relax, meet the other people in camp and explore the area.

Site Tour: CRTP staff will guide the Volunteer-Participants around the monastery grounds (approx 3 hrs). You will hear local folklore and stories about Baldan Baraivan and learn about the history of its destruction and how the restoration project has come about. You will see carved prayer stones, stone Buddhas, sacred stones such as the Mother Rock and stupa and temple ruins. As you walk over the foundation stones of this once great community and see the local people at work you will gain a deep understanding of the significance of **your** contribution and the magic of this site. The tour generally takes place on the morning of your first full day, but maybe re-scheduled depending on weather and work priorities.

Free-time & Recreation: The valleys and hills surrounding Baldan Baraivan are a playground for adventure. The wide valleys carpeted with wildflowers are ideal for the casual walker. The hills and rocky outcrops are a dream for explorers and climbers of every level. Volunteer Program Leaders will lead treks and walks as well as provide destination ideas for your own explorations. In addition to the marvelous nature, you can visit numerous sites considered sacred and auspicious by local people and their ancestors.

Opportunities to experience typical countryside life will be made available to you, such as milking cows, making yogurt, preparing meat, and horseback riding. We also visit our neighbors and have occasional trips into local villages. We are always expecting guests as many Mongolians come to visit Baldan Baraivan in the summer.

Around camp you will enjoy the common areas for socializing, sharing photos, language lessons, playing games (tradition Mongolian and others including cards, chess, soccer, basketball, volleyball, ping pong, etc.) We have a small library & archives where you can borrow (and donate) novels/picture books, reference books, and information on Mongolia, and Buddhism. Life in camp is authentic and real. The Staff live with and share with our Volunteers as a community. This is their life and work, not something created for a tourist event. The Volunteer Program Leaders will assist you in settling in and taking advantage of these great cultural experiences.

Work: *A typical weekly work schedule is:*

Monday – Friday 8:am – 1:pm for Volunteer-Participants.

Monday – Friday 8:am – 5pm for Restoration Staff and any Volunteers who wish to continue to work.

Saturday 8:am – 1:pm for Staff and Volunteers.

Sunday is a free-day for everyone.

Please note, the CRTP Volunteer Program can be flexible for those Volunteer-Participants who wish to do an activity that conflicts with the weekly schedule. Please keep in mind, one of CRTP's qualifications as a non-profit organization is that our Volunteer-Participants contribute the minimum requirement of 30 hours of volunteer labor / week. 'Labor' does not need to be hard labor. Please continue to read to see what your experience may be.

What work projects will I be doing?

CRTP does not require anyone to have previous experience and will provide the necessary training and equipment for all work projects. Please bring your own work-gloves and work boots or hiking boots. To-date, our Volunteer-Participants have ranged in age from 13-75 years old. And, their experience ranges from having never used a hammer to those who are carpenters and masons. Work projects vary from technical to basic and from heavy labor to light. Our expectations of our Volunteers are realistic – if you have no experience in the task at hand we don't expect you to master it. Our hope is that you will learn, experience and understand that every effort counts, that by your participation you are contributing. The Volunteer Program Leaders will direct you in projects that are appropriate.

Work projects include all aspects of the Baldan Baraivan Monastery and camp life. Projects are dependent on available materials, priorities and weather. This summer the project list includes: carving and preparing wooden beams/columns for the temple restoration, stone work, general maintenance of the main temple restoration area, maintenance and conservation of ruins around the Baldan Baraivan valley, trail building, painting at the small wooden temple and other structures around camp, tending to the organic garden, building camp furniture, building a stupa (Buddhist

monument), building a ger, and harvesting and preparing thatch for the main temple roof.

Our organizational goals are to have our Volunteers and Mongolian staff working together on the job. When at the main temple you will be working with the carpenters and laborers. And, generally when working on other projects around the monastery grounds you will be joined by one or two staff people.

Volunteer work hours are also completed when Volunteer-Participants help out in the kitchen and with other on-going camp chores. You may not think of it, but as you are enjoying yourself foraging for wild mushrooms and rhubarb or picking fresh vegetables out of the garden for dinner you are making an important contribution to the community & to the restoration effort. See [Project & Organization](#).

What do our past Volunteers have to say?

More testimonials are available, please inquire.

"One thing that I will always carry with me is the memory of one particular man, who we met at Baldan Baraivan. I don't know who he was or where he came from. But at once he was there while we were working on the scaffolding. He came up to us crying and talking to us in Mongolian. At that time there just happened to be no other Mongolian around and it took us some time to understand that he was so touched by the project we were doing. I remember how I felt embarrassed. On the one hand on how to cope with this sweet elderly crying man, but on the other hand because his thankfulness seemed too big for the little thing I was doing. Off course I had made the effort of coming here, devoting some of my time and paying a contribution.

But I was just enjoying my time, a lot. We were with a nice group of people in a marvelous place and I was learning a lot about Mongolia, Buddhism and myself. So I just felt embarrassed that I received so much thanks for enjoying myself. Then I came to realize that with enjoying myself I did contribute something really worthwhile. In someway, and maybe very little, but still, we were giving these people a part of their history back. (Giving back) a part of their identity, which had been stolen by seventy years of communism. That just really seemed the way this project was working. Thanks a lot, CRTP!"- --Guido Verboom, Netherlands

Packing List

*** **Pleassse bring!!**

Clothing

• Essentials: underwear, long-pants shorts, t-shirt, etc.

*** Socks: bring at least two pairs of socks that are NOT ankle socks, but that pull up a little higher into your pant cuff, i.e. crew or sports sock: easy protection from biting flies & prickly bushes.

*** Warm sweater/ fleece

• Bathing-suit

*** Comfortable work/ hiking boots

• Light rain jacket

• Work clothes -something you don't mind getting dirty.

• Work gloves

*** Lightweight LOOSE- fitting long-sleeve shirt (light in color: khaki) – will protect you from the sun and the flies.

*** Lightweight LOOSE-fitting long pants (light in color: khaki) – shorts are great for relaxing, but they are not always best for working and hiking. Also, great for sun protection and flies.

*** Sun hat

Stuff

*** Sleeping bag

*** Towel (not too heavy/ thick)

*** Small flashlight, batteries

*** Games: puzzles/ games that are not language based. Please inquire for ideas.

*** Photos from home: family, city, pets, etc. Great for breaking language barriers.

*** Magazine/ book (with pictures) to share with your new neighbors. i.e. National Geo, horses, News, etc

• Sunscreen

• Easy to carry luggage (i.e. backpack)

• Small backpack for day-hikes.

• Money belt

• Camera / film

• (Extra pair of prescription glasses)

• compact mirror

• Water bottle (i.e. Nalgene)

• Rechargeable batteries and charger

• Alarm clock or watch with alarm

Personal Medical Kit

C RTP has general first aid supplies, but you should bring the brand names you are accustomed to.

• Lip balm (it's very dry), cream.

• Biodegradable soap (body, laundry)

• Tooth brush, paste

• Hair brush, shampoo, etc

*** Mild stomach/ motion sickness pills (i.e. Pepto-Bismol & Dramamine), Antacid

*** Aspirin & Ibuprofen

• Antibiotic Ointment, bandages

*** Bug spray / anti-itch cream

Items to consider

• Mattress pad (we provide mattresses, but some Volunteers find them a bit lumpy!

• Gatorade / juice powder, (re-hydration solution)

• Feminine Hygiene products

Note: Contraceptives can be very difficult to obtain in Mongolia.

• Small umbrella

• Sandals

• Earplugs

• UV protective Sunglasses

• Warm hat (early June, late Aug, Sept)

*** Snacks: dried fruit, nuts, granola, teas, hot sauce, protein supplement, PowerBars

Project & Organization

Who is CRTP?

Changing The Face of Tourism—Enriching Lives

For more details, request our Executive Summary & History of BB

Since 1999, CRTP has been working in Mongolia helping the Khentii community restore Baldan Baraivan. During these years, CRTP Volunteer-Participants have funded dozens of jobs and job training within the community. The lasting impact of this type of vacation is invaluable. The Baldan Baraivan Restoration Project will be completed in 2007/8. In December 2004 CRTP commences its second project, the restoration of the Chhairro Gompa in Lower Mustang, Nepal (300 year old Buddhist temple). This project will take seven years to complete (2011), so we hope that you will choose to join us there as well!

The mission of the Cultural Restoration Tourism Project (CRTP) is to help communities around the world restore artifacts of cultural importance, promote responsible tourism and provide a model of alternative funding for grass-roots NGOs. We believe that through cultural understanding the world will become a more peaceful place. We endeavor to work with diverse cultures, faiths and political ideologies.

CRTP believes in more than just restoring buildings. We believe in building communities and strengthening ties to ones own culture and traditions, as well as the culture and traditions of others.

CRTP only undertakes projects that are initiated and promoted by the host community.

CRTP creates a grass-roots model for the community, empowering them to be an active part of the entire restoration and development process.

CRTP believes in bringing people together. Fostering cultural understanding one traveler at a time.

Here is how our program works:

Community Initiation: CRTP is contacted by a community group wishing to enact the restoration of a culturally significant structure.

Evaluation: CRTP evaluates the feasibility of the restoration project and its long-term impacts on the community.

Facilitation: Working with the community, CRTP helps create a development plan that incorporates the aspects of a sustainable community; environmental impact, economic sustainability and ability to provide social services & outreach.

Funding: CRTP recruits volunteer-vacation participants, such as yourself, who offer donations in order to visit the restoration site and get involved in the restoration project. This model of funding not only creates a forum for cultural exchange and understanding, but also provides the funds for local staff wages, job creation and job training and purchases restoration materials.

Cooperation: CRTP coordinates the project by partnering and cooperating with local citizens, professionals, craftspeople and officials.

Community Sustainability: Upon completion of a project, CRTP steps aside having ensured that measures for economic, social and environmental sustainability are in place.

Project Progress:

To-date, 90% of the first floor of the main temple is built, 80 % of the exterior walls are prepared for new plaster. Secondary ruins have been conserved. Two permanent buildings for housing/teachings have been built for the future community and nearly a dozen gers acquired including basic fixtures (beds, stoves, blankets, etc). Facilities such as a clean well, garden and human waste management have been established, as well, as a solar power system. Some of our current project aims are to develop more four-season housing, a garbage waste management system, & greenhouse- to name a few.

Baldan Baraivan - General Facts:

- The name Baldan Baraivan is the Mongolian translation of the Sanskrit “Drepung”, “pile of rice”, and was directly associated with Drepung Monasteries in Tibet and India.
- Baldan Baraivan is a Gelugpa (Yellow Hat) monastery.
- Baldan Baraivan was established around 1700 by Mongolian lama Dzeewendorj.
- Baldan Baraivan grew to be one of the largest monasteries in Mongolia with approximately 5000-6000 monks practicing at the site.
- At its peak there were four separate colleges, with more than twenty temples hosting daily chants.
- The main temple, called “Dash Tsepel Ling”, was built in the mid 1700’s and was completed in 1776.
- Measuring almost 30 meters by 30 meters and almost 12 meters tall the main temple was one of the largest buildings in all of Mongolia.
- The main temple was remodeled in 1850, when Baldan Baraivan reached its zenith as a teaching monastery.
- Around 1900 an epidemic wiped out half of the monastic community leaving between 2000-3000 monks.
- In the 1930’s the Communist regime of Mongolia began the persecution of Buddhist monks and many of the monks left Baldan Baraivan because of heavy taxes and mistreatment by the government.
- In 1937 the active destruction of Baldan Baraivan began. The oldest monks were shot and buried in a mass grave. Monks who were physically able to work were put into labor camps or forced into military service and the youngest monks (14 and younger) were allowed to return to their families. All of the buildings were destroyed and the statues and other precious relics were melted down for use in WW II.

- For nearly sixty years no one was allowed to visit the Baldan Baraivan site.
- In 1990, after the fall of Communism, a handful of old monks returned to Baldan Baraivan to begin providing teachings again. These men had survived the persecutions because they were only boys at the time. They had lived most of their adult lives as herders and laypeople. In their return to BB, the community came together and rebuilt the small temple at the north end of the valley, as well, they built a small wooden temple to the east of the main temple for the monks to resume their teachings.

In 1998, the United States based NGO, Cultural Restoration Tourism Project, was invited by the community to help restore Baldan Baraivan as an operating monastery and to restore the main temple. The restoration process aims at the completion date of 2007.

Getting others involved / Donations: Helping from home!

Please share the word about our volunteer-vacation opportunities with friends, family and co-workers. Our Volunteer-Participants make these projects possible. Donations of any size are welcomed & put directly into the restoration efforts. We also receive first aid supplies, tools and other items. We issue receipts for your tax purposes. Checks are made payable to CRTP and we also accept credit cards. For fundraising directives please inquire about CRTP presentations, and our Adopt-A-Column and Sponsor-A-Worker programs. Don’t forget, you too can fundraise to support your trip fee donation. Please request a fundraising package.

Please don’t hesitate to contact the CRTP office.

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