Genghis Khan Educator Guide

Ever wonder if the legend is true? Discovery Place Science invites you and your students to find the answer as you explore the ancient empire of Mongolia through Genghis Khan.

On Exhibition November 19 - April 30.

About the Exhibition

Explore the culture, conquests and heritage of the world’s greatest conqueror when the treasures and stories of Genghis Khan are presented in Charlotte for the first time.

Experience life in 13th-century Mongolia, entering the tents, battlegrounds and marketplaces of a vanished world. Explore Genghis Khan's life and those of his sons and grandsons during the formation, peak and decline of the Mongol Empire.

View gold jewelry and ornaments, silk robes, musical instruments, pottery, sophisticated weaponry and numerous other fascinating relics and elaborate artifacts. More than 200 objects will be on display — the largest collection ever assembled of the treasures of Genghis Khan.

*Please note: No food or beverages are allowed in any of the exhibit galleries.

Exhibition Overview

The Grasslands

After passing through the introductory theater area, your journey begins in the grasslands where you will discover the daily life of a nomad on the high plateaus of Central Asia and learn about Genghis Khan’s earliest influences. A centerpiece is the ger - the traditional Mongolian dwelling of the time.
Rise of the Mongols

The next area presents Genghis Khan’s rise to leadership. Learn how this young, charismatic leader united warring Mongol tribes in order to form an unrivaled cavalry. Explore the equestrian culture and innovations in weaponry to begin to understand how Genghis Khan leveraged the strengths of his people to achieve dominance over their enemies.

The Walled City

Enter the recreation of Karakorum, the walled city which became the capital of the Mongolian empire after Genghis Khan’s son inherited the kingdom. See how life changed for Mongols once they had vanquished all of their enemies. Arts and culture flourished as the need for war subsided.

The Silk Road

While Genghis Khan was a ruthless warrior, he was also a savvy statesman who developed written language and a sophisticated society with fair taxation, stable government, and appreciation of the arts, religious freedom and open trade along the Silk Road. Explore this vital trade route which enabled the exchange of both goods and ideas between cultures.

Mongolia Today

See images of modern Mongolian life and trace the influence of Genghis Khan. The distinctive horse-based culture of Genghis Khan’s time persists today, eight centuries after his rule.

Who was Genghis Khan?

Mysterious and Misunderstood: The Epic True Story of Genghis Khan (1162–1227 CE)

Genghis Khan—founder of the largest contiguous land empire the world has ever seen—is one of history’s immortals. His military legacy endured for centuries, and some of his civic improvements are still in use today.

Time magazine and The Washington Post both named Genghis Khan “the most important person of the last millennium.” But how much do we really know about this man? How did this warrior-nomad have such a profound effect on world politics that his influence can still be felt more than 800 years later? The story of how this extraordinary man from a remote corner of Asia created an empire that led the world into the modern age is an enduring epic tale.

A Difficult Childhood Filled with Misfortune Helps Shape the Future Leader

Born Temüjin, Genghis Khan grew up amid the harsh landscape of Mongolia, in a world of tribal violence, kidnapping, murder, and enslavement. His father was murdered when Genghis Khan was just nine. His family, abandoned by their tribe, was left to survive extreme poverty, forcing Genghis Khan to learn survival, ambition, determination, and cruelty. His difficult childhood, as well as his nomadic heritage, helped shape him as a leader.
Ambitious, Strategic Young Adult Unites Mongolia

While still a teenager, Genghis Khan united the separate, warring Mongol clans and together they began to conquer other nomadic tribes. Conquering these rivals was a struggle, but the young, charismatic leader’s ability to form alliances and motivate his warriors eventually led to victory. Genghis Khan’s battle skills grew. He incorporated defeated warriors into his own army, usually killing their leaders first. He rewarded loyalty rather than honoring bloodlines. After many years, he was able to unite the tribes, forming the first unified Mongol nation.

Genghis Khan and His Descendants Conquer Half the Known World

Genghis Khan led a series of major military campaigns, each one enlarging his territories beyond his homeland, south into China and west into Iran. The Mongol war machine featured a ruthless leader, loyal officers, and fierce warriors, coupled with tight organization, swift movement, and brilliantly coordinated tactics. It was nearly impossible to defeat. As a result of these conquests, unprecedented trade and cultural exchanges followed.

Mystery Burial Ground

Genghis Khan died during a military campaign—or, in the words of the Mongols, for whom mention of death or illness is taboo, he “ascended into heaven.” His soldiers escorted the body back to his homeland for a secret burial without a mausoleum, temple, pyramid, or tombstone to mark the place where he lay. According to legend, all the soldiers and laborers involved with his burial were killed to keep its location secret. The location of the site remains one of archaeology’s greatest mysteries.

About Mongolia

During the 13th Century
At the height of his power, Genghis Khan ruled an empire that was four times the size of the Roman Empire and four times the size of the realm of Alexander the Great.

At its peak, the Mongol Empire covered 12 million square miles, an area the size of the continent of Africa. It stretched from the snowy tundra of Siberia to India, from the rice paddies of Vietnam to the wheat fields of Hungary, and from Korea to the Balkans.

The entire Mongol tribe under Genghis Khan numbered one million, 120,000 of whom served as warriors in the Mongol army.

Mongolia Today
Today, Mongolia is slightly smaller than the state of Alaska. Its population density (people per square mile) is the lowest of any country on Earth. Mongolia’s average elevation is one mile above sea level. After a period of Communist rule from 1921 to 1990, today Mongolia is a sovereign democratic republic.
Fast facts

- “Genghis Khan” means “universal ruler.”
- Genghis Khan was tolerant of all religions. His people were permitted to practice any religion they chose including shamanism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Taoism.
- Geneticists estimate that 16 million people alive today are genetic descendants of Genghis Khan.
- During his lifetime, Genghis Khan never allowed anyone to paint his portrait or sculpt his image. After his death, however, his devoted followers captured his likeness in many ways and forms, preserving his image for future generations.
- Genghis Khan established the concept of passports to protect diplomats, merchants and messengers.
- One legacy of Genghis Khan’s leadership is the use of a “cabinet” of advisors to set policy and make decisions.
- The Mongols were highly-skilled horsemen and their cavalry was the best the world has ever seen. Many children learned to ride horseback before they learned to walk.
- Mongolians were nomads who moved from place to place. They lived in gers which were large, round, felt-lined, wood-framed tents that could be easily moved.
- The Mongols developed and used the trebuchet—a weapon similar to a catapult. Without it, Genghis Khan’s cavalry might never have been able to defeat enemies in walled fortresses.
Genghis Khan

Suggested Resources for K-12 Classrooms and Libraries

Elementary School
Genghis Khan
by John Bankston
ISBN 1612284329

Middle School
Genghis Khan and the Mongol Empire
by Miriam Greenblatt
ISBN 0761410279

Life in Genghis Khan’s Mongolia
by Robert Taylor
ISBN 1560063483

High School
Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World
by Jack Weatherford
ISBN 0609809644

Genghis Khan: Life, Death, and Resurrection
by John Man
ISBN 0312366248

In Search of Genghis Khan: An Exhilarating Journey
on Horseback across the Steppes of Mongolia
by Tim Severin
ISBN 0815412878

Recommended Websites

The Land of Genghis Khan
www.nationalgeographic.com/genghis/trail.html

Genghis Khan
www.history.com/topics/genghis-khan
Curricular Standards

Benchmarks for Science Literacy

7. Human Society
7a. Cultural Effects on Behavior
7b. Group Behavior
7f. Social Conflict

Common Core English Language Arts

K-5: Reading Informational Text
6-12: Literacy in Science & Technical Subjects

National Standards for History

K-4: Topic 4: Standard 7A
5-12: World Era 5: Standard 3A&B

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

K-12: Theme 1: Culture
K-12: Theme 3: People, Places, & Environments

National Core Arts Standards — Visual Arts

AS7: Perceive & analyze artistic work
AS8: Interpret intent & meaning in artistic work
AS10: Synthesize & relate knowledge & personal experiences to make art
AS11: Relate artistic ideas & works with societal, cultural, & historical context to deepen understanding

NC Essential Standards

Science
- Forces and Motion
- Structures and Functions of Living Organisms
- Ecosystems
- Evolution and Genetics

Social Studies
- Geography and Environmental Literacy
- Economics
- Civics and Government
- Culture
- Conflict and Innovation
Genghis Khan Lab Class at Discovery Place Science

What’s Your Culture?
Investigate artifacts and ancient relics from different cultures, including 13th century Mongolia in our special limited-engagement exhibition, Genghis Khan. Explore the science of archaeology and create an artifact that expresses your own culture.

https://science.discoveryplace.org/programs-and-classes/classes/whats-your-culture

Mysteries of China in The Charlotte Observer IMAX Dome Theatre

Mysteries of China captures one of the great archaeological events in modern times, telling the story of ancient China, the First Emperor and the literal foundation of the China we know today. Starting with modern China and springing back to the birth of this mighty nation, explore an ancient time when a fierce warrior brought together a warring nation and how an accidental discovery changed everything we know about China's past.