

About Tuva Trader's excellent tours to the Republic of Tuva
A testimonial by Michael Crofoot, New Mexico:

I am writing you now to send my testimonial on behalf of Tuva Trader's Tours to the Republic of Tuva. I was lucky enough to be able to be a part of Devan Miller's first organized tour to Tuva, which went from July 21st through August 3rd of 2007. I really do want you to know that I could not have been happier with my experiences in Tuva-- and the tour that Devan arranged for us in Tuva was quite simply the best it could possibly have been! Not only did we see many, many amazing sights and become friends with many wonderful Tuvan people, but I, for one, had a life-changing and transformational time in the Republic of Tuva. Let me tell you a little bit why such excellent personal growth came into my life while being in Tuva and how it was that Devan Miller helped it all to happen just exactly right...

I arrived a day and a half late in Tuva for our tour which started on July 21st, as I am a somewhat inexperienced airline traveler and I made a couple of errors and thus missed my flights on two occasions, not once but twice! But the long flight to the Abakan airport in Khakassia finally arrived and I and my new Tyvan friend and seat mate on the plane from Moscow hired a long distance taxi just outside the airport who took us the five or so hours from Abakan to Kyzyl, the capital city of Tuva-- and this enjoyable trip was through some of the most amazing mountains I have ever seen-- and I have seen a lot of different mountains on this good earth! Two Tyvan men were waiting for my where our taxi driver delivered us in Kyzyl and they loaded myself and my traveling baggage into their car and drove me three miles to downtown Kyzyl where our expert translator for the tour, Mz Aldynai Seden-Khurak, was likewise waiting for me. Within a few minutes of my arrival in Kyzyl my new friend Aldynai and I were on a minibus with 8 other music enthusiasts bound for the Ustuu-Khuree World Music Festival some 5 hours west near the lovely town of Chadaana. We drove over some rough roads through really fine looking country-- with it's low steppes, higher foothills and the forested taiga mountains all around us, stopping in good time to get lunch at quaint little roadside cafes and careful to stop at a roadside Shamanic ova sacred structure to give our regards and ask for Blessings. Well, our stop at this first of many ovaas I visited must have done the trick as my tour in Tuva was as blessed as it could be. We arrived in the late afternoon at the town of Chadaana where the the Ustuu-Khuree World Music Festival is held each year just in time to be a small part in the big Ustuu-Khuree Music Festival Procession which wound it's way through Chadaana-- with many of the people of Chadaana lined out along our Procession's path as enthusiastic as us participant's were. Soon after the Procession got moving I did finally find Devan Miller, who immediately and ever after in Tuva took me under his wings like a Mama hen looks after her chicks.

After the Procession Devan, myself and our two Swedes who were also part of Devan's first organized tour to Tuva-- we all regrouped at our lovely camp under the giant Larch trees, had some Tuvan tea and some nice food and began to get to know one another. Bengt and Anna were a mighty fine couple to visit with and it soon came out that they were rather experienced in international travel and were already having the time of their life in Tuva. Soon enough it was time for all us Ustuu-Khuree World Music

Festival participants to walk the five minutes out of the forest, across the small Chadaana River and on up the hill to the Festival grounds where we enjoyed the sounds from a phenomenal line-up of accomplished musicians from all over Inner Asia, Russia and Western Europe. Then, when the Festival's first night performances were finished, all two hundred of us music enthusiasts went on back to our campgrounds, only to regroup around the giant Peace Fire which had been ceremoniously started set ablaze just minutes before. Well, that there fire sometimes burned twenty feet into the air, with the Chadaana Fire Department water truck sitting right nearby. There was shamans drumming round the fire, and then fire throwers spinning burning balls of light every which way around their bodies. And then some of the Russian musicians in our large fire lit crowd began to drum and sing in their own ways and an hour or two of merriment, music and laughter was had by all. As the Peace fire died down and the people went off to their respective camping areas-- Devan and I found ourselves going from communal fire circle to communal fire circle as group after group began their nightly fireside singing. There were a number of Russian folk music groups and Devan and I stayed with several of them that first evening and several other evenings-- with us two joining right in on the singing. Finally, we just kind of staggered off to bed-- a most comfortable large tent with sleeping pads and the works. I woke up at 6:00 the next morning, as I did every glorious morning that I was in Tuva, absolutely eager to be an intimate part with whatever was to happen...

Well, dear reader, the above is a blow-by-blow description of what I did on my first day of my tour in Tuva with the Tuva Trader's own Devan Miller. The rest of my first tour to Tuva with Tuva Trader just got better and better. We met famous Asian musicians and artists and scientists and politicians and we also met and became friends with Tyvan after Tyvan who were not famous, but certainly should be-- for the Tyvan people are a remarkable, magical people. I never feared for my safety in Tuva and I never met a fearful Tyvan while there. Not only do they seem fearless, but the Tyvans are really quite generous, very warm and gentle, curious about the outside world and of a very fine spirituality and connection with Nature and they are often also quite worldly and well informed. In total, I spent two glorious, life-changing weeks in Tuva and I can hardly wait to go back to Tuva on another of Devan Miller's tours to Tuva. Devan helped us meet with powerful shamans at sacred springs, who shamanized for us individually, and he also much helped Bengt, Anna and myself to really get to know the fantastic landscapes of Tuva as well. I was on a co-sponsored ecological Reconnaissance Trip to Tuva so I had to break off from Devan's Tuva tour itinerary to go back to Kyzyl to meet with Ministers of Agriculture, forestry and Natural Resource Management and other such Tyvan authorities. Thus did Devan arrange for me to have the complete use of a very nice apartment in Kyzyl and at a most reasonable cost. Devan further helped me craft my own personal tour of all things ecologic in Tuva by introducing me to yet more translators and to other ecologists in Tuva; Devan made sure I had all the food I needed and that I had all the in depth logistic support required for my rather strenuous cycle of meetings and guided tours of the nearby countryside. My last night in Tuva, this time around, was totally awesome-- as it turned out to be a going-away party for me. Devan was there in the apartment, our Tyvan host family was there, Choduraa Tumat, the founder and musical director of the world's first and foremost all women Tyvan throat

singing group, Tyva Kyzy, also came to my going-away party as did the Fulbright scholar and now good friend Sean Quirk and his lovely wife Sveta and their new baby daughter. Others came also, showering me with gifts from Tyva and then the phone started to ring as new friend after new friend called to wish me well and to ask that I come back soon to Tuva. I became overcome with strong and very positive emotions, and so I therefore went off into a little room to have a good cry. And upon emerging back into my going-away party I knew instantly in the very depths of my soul that I would be coming back to the Republic of Tuva again and again and again-- most hopeful that my new friend Devan Miller would help me get back to Tuva again and again and again so that I might have yet more life-changing experiences there and just try as hard as I can to give a little something back to the Tuvan people and the Tuvan landscapes. Devan arranged for me to get a car ride back to the Abakan airport with a very nice translator friend and her family and we left from my going-away party at midnight. I will never, ever forget how it was that my translator friend came up to me early the next morning as I prepared to board my flight to Moscow to tell me, once again-- Michael, do not forget about the White Road! You must go up the White Road through this life and into the next... Well, friends, I can not tell you just now what this here White Road really is, but please do know that it starts in Tuva and it is very, very good...

In conclusion, I need to say that my two glorious weeks in Tuva were by far the best two weeks in my long life and that I am oh so thankful that I now have an entire region and an entire people to get to know and to get to love. So thank you Tuva and thank you Tuva Trader and thank you Devan Miller for giving me a tremendous lifetime experience. I will be back soon to Tuva, I promise....

Yours sincerely and most gratefully,
Michael Crofoot
Placitas, New Mexico