



# Where the Pavement Ends: One Woman's Bicycle Trip Through Mongolia, China, & Vietnam

*Erika Warmbrunn*

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"In the middle of the night I crawled out of my tent into a silvery vastness truly unchanged since Genghis Khan and his hordes loped west more than half a millennium ago. There was no glow of city lights on the horizon, no ranger station at the edge of the next valley, no quaint general store, no paved road. There was nothing but space, unbounded and untamed. A brilliant moon lit the blackness crystal clear. Moonshadows of every blade of grass danced silently in the wildness. It was the emptiest, quietest place I had ever been. I threw my arms out wide and spun slowly around and around in the dazzling clarity of the night, the stars blurring into ribbons of light above me."

Mongolia. It was Erika Warmbrunn's dream. To escape deep into parts of Asia inaccessible to tours and guidebooks, to abandon herself to the risks of the unknown. And so, with only a bicycle named Greene for a traveling companion, she set off on an eight month, 8,000 kilometer trek that stretched across the steppes of this ancient land, on through China, and down the length of Vietnam. Freed by Greene's two wheels from the tyranny of discrete points on a map, she found that the true merit of travel was not in the simple seeing, but in flowing with the unexpected adventure or invitation, in savoring the moments in between -- the daily challenges of new words and customs, the tiny triumphs of learning a new way of life, the daunting thrill of never knowing what the next day would bring.

Wanting to ride a Mongolian horse and finding herself in the saddle for four hours, herding fifty head of cattle. Asking for a hotel in a Chinese village and being taken into a family's home to share their grandmother's bed for the night. Pedaling into the Vietnamese highlands and being stopped along the muddy road by a father asking that she join his two-year-old son's birthday party. Accepting a Mongolian village's invitation to stop pedaling and stay for a while, to live with them and teach them English. In the doing and the telling, *Where the Pavement Ends* is a much richer experience than any line on a map can show.

*Where the Pavement Ends* is the recipient of the "Barbara Savage Miles From Nowhere Memorial Award."

You can find out more about this author at her website: [www.wherethepavementends.com](http://www.wherethepavementends.com)

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