

Fermented Horse Milk, Goat Heads, Bubonic Plague Ridden Marmots, Orogenic Gold and Porphyries in the Kyrgyz Republic of Central Asia

Glen Diemar SMEDG Talk 25th May 2017

As a geologist when you get thrown such an opportunity you just have to take it, especially if you can bring your family. This talk will take you through a fast 1.5 years of living, exploring and really enjoying the Ex-Soviet Republic of Kyrgyzstan. The most beautiful country I may ever lay eyes on.

During the Soviet era, their geologists were some of the hardest working, best funded and most productive in the world. However, independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 paved a long path of greed and corruption which still dominates the corporate and political landscape.

The Country boasts 5.7 million people mostly living under vodka soaked harsh winter conditions and magic blue sky summers. With giant mountain ranges, 90% of the country is over 1,500m above sea level leaving only 6.7% as arable land, making life tough for nomadic families. The mean elevation of 2988m is a mere 760m above our little Mt Kosciuszko.

The Pamir Mountains dominate the SW border with Tajikistan and host countless antimony and mercury deposits while the Tien Shan Mountain range brutally divides the north from the south and host some of the world's largest Orogenic Gold deposits including the unrivalled Muruntau (180M Oz) in Uzbekistan and Kumtor (25M Oz, 4500m asl) in Kyrgyzstan. Together the Tien Shan and Pamir Mountains with five peaks over 7000m and countless reaching 6000m still do not stop the persistent drug trade from the southern neighbours.

For a young geologist, a posting to remote and exotic foreign places can be quite a treat. Let me briefly take you there over a Beer.