

TREC International Competition of China 2019

Introduction

2019 2nd year China has held the TREC International Competition of China, part of a recent program to encourage and promote the sport of TREC in China, a joint private and state venture. Mr Wutzala (Mr Wu) is the President of China Institute of Horse Culture, Sports and Tourism; the host of the international riders attending in China.

Justin Tseng is the main communicator and organiser of the international riders. Justin participates in training interested Chinese riders and competes himself, including international events abroad and in China. He competed in Italy 2018 European championships and he was back over in France this year at a Euro cup.

Again this year each nation in FITE received invitations for international riders to attend the competition together with an offer to pay the costs of hotel and horse for one rider from each nation. No formal qualification required, but up to each country's federation as to who they sent. GB chose from their international squad and those who had competed in at least 2 L4 competitions in 2019. Kate Gillam picked up the nomination.

9 Nations, 12 riders.

UK (Kate Gillam)

China (Justin Tseng)

Austria (Claudia schwendimann)

Denmark (Lotte Jespersion)

France (Amanti Muller – winner 2018)

Ireland * 2 (Elaine Dolan, Mairead Moynihan)

Russia (Anna Samulenkova)

Singapore (Alexis)

USA * 3 (Mary Harcourt, Jill Delaney and Kim Stoddard)

UK, France, Russia and Ireland sent L4 riders

USA no competitions at all. Mary Harcourt.

Denmark and Ireland sent L2 riders

Riders from Holland and Germany both mentioned that the invitation was not extended to any riders (that they know of).

Justin was concerned that he did not have the correct emails for some nations as he received no response.

Travel Plans

- Last minute invitation meant that it was all a bit nerve wracking. Had to obtain visa, flights and get other travel plans in place (booking time off work, finding animal sitters and getting appropriate vaccinations) in about 3 weeks.

- Getting the visa turned out to be very easy and organised, if expensive. Website said 3 week turn around, but in fact it was 3 days (2 for express service). Must go in person for biometrics. It seems to be only £60 now. Tourism promotion?
- Recommend China airlines – much cheaper and I booked Lufthansa and found that I was on China airlines anyway on the flight home.
- 12 days before travel (the day after I bought flight), we were told to hold on buying flights as the venue and date might change. We waited 3 days for further news (a week before travel) before hearing of the new venue. The dates stayed the same. Internal flights back to Beijing were booked and paid on our behalf.
 - Not ideal as Flights to Beijing rather than Qingdao were cheaper and there was a larger baggage allowance on the international.
 - Much worse for French and Austrian just going for the w/e as their outward bound was Qingdao.

Travel & Arrival

Circular emails let us see who else was coming and when they were travelling. I contacted other competitors who I would meet on route. Denmark in Frankfurt, 1 * USA in Qingdao for the internal back to Beijing. Beijing met up with 2 other Americans and we were met in Arrivals by Deborah Wang (employee of Mr Wu).

Car to Datan. No rush hour traffic at all.

Re-routed to new hotel because of snow.

At this roadside hotel we met with Justin Tseng & 2 other competitors.

Mystery tour.

Plans changed again & we were off to Datanzheng.

4 remaining arrivals were to stay at this hotel as it was too late to get through.

Datan Horse Town

4 hours north of Beijing near Inner Mongolian border.

Like a small Vegas with horses instead of fruit machines. The 2 large hotels were built in the last couple of years and the rest was really a large theme park devoted to the horse. Statues and paintings everywhere, beautiful marble cream and gold Royal Stables, paintings of the horse, large murals throughout hotel.

We were told that over a million tourist visited in the last year, to ride in Mongolia.

We had the place to ourselves as it was out of season & there had already been several snow falls.

Late dinner served in a private banquet room off of the main restaurant in the hotel.

We met our host Mr Wu, his wife and son, Justin Tseng, Thierry Maurouard, FITE TD and all competitors.

Mr Wu obviously has a huge interest in the culture and history of horse in China and is keen to bring back traditional sports. Following the competition, on tour day 1 he showed us around his museum dedicated to the horse in Datan. It illustrated the horse in Chinese history from early times until modern day, with emphasis on traditional and culture and the horse in society. It brought us to modern day. One

small section showed the horse with world leaders, including the pin-up photograph of a half-naked Putin (Poo-tn) and the even more recent photograph of Kim Jong-un up a mountain. In the world sports section, among more traditional Mongolian sports, a video of the first ever Badminton and TREC! There was a photograph of Mary Harcourt (one of the competitors). She was most surprised to find herself in a museum.

The Stables

We went by cars to the stables after breakfast. They were about 10km from the hotel. The scenery was bleak, snow dusted and sub-zero.

The horses were drawn randomly from a hat.

Typical trekking ponies – 12.2 to 14.2 hands, thick coats, bushy mains, large heads, irregular confirmation. Hardy. Better nick than the French hire horses.

Amanti had same horse as last year.

We rode them across to the Park. 10km, an hour, mostly at canter.

Lunch then vetting.

Check pulse, backs and trot up. Recorded height.

2 horses vetted out (including mine). Rush rush rush.

Everyone had 2-3 horse PTV practice in the large arena– I had to change my horse, so missed most of this.

2nd horse forward going and one of the large ones – 14 hands? Broad. Hard to say if he had done TREC before; it certainly didn't show, but he did give me rein-back and did step/hop over the jumps.

Opening ceremony in evening. Spectacle. Flag waving.

The competition

3 Classes

Chinese seniors, juniors (just 2) and then International in the afternoon.

Watched a couple, one in native flamboyant costume, one on an eye catching quarter horse.

Like last year no scores were shown at any time.

The weather was cold and windy, but blue skies and sun both days made it pleasant out of the wind. Less wind on POR.

PTV. Saturday

Obstacles:

Low branches, footbridge, corridor, jump, rein-back, jump, s-bend, incline up led, incline up ridden, immobility, incline down led, corridor led, mount, bending, neck rein, and gate. Distance = approx. 1.5 km

Lots of practicing before start. Many doing actual obstacles. It didn't seem right, so I didn't. Wasted time in panic and walked course instead.

Course walk with TD, Thierry and all competitors. Thierry had the time extended by 3 minutes.

Standard was L1 to2. Jumps about 75cm and no associated difficulties. Appropriate to the ponies we were given.

Course took you out of the arena, up to top of equivalent to dry ski slope, back down for corridor, mount, bending, neck rein on rough land and finish at gate to arena.

Great views from top, outlandish park and distant mountains.

Average score 65. Amanti 149 and Kate 105.

MA Saturday

Hand timed and perhaps incorrect distance. Timed to the tail as opposed to frontend! A reasonably straightforward run with gentle curve, but with a difficult start as only a couple of meters run in and lots of people standing by the start frightening the ponies. Half way down was the paparazzi, so quite a few ponies left the track. Apparently no one scored more than 2 at the canter. Walk scores were middling to high. I felt both my paces should have counted, neither did. Perhaps a break.

Saturday evening Thierry gave lecture on POR for the Chinese. I don't think anyone attended from our class. Thierry rather indicated that it would be too elementary.

POR Sunday

Average score 35, top score 102, Kate 45, Winner 46

About 35 km long. 5 CPs (incl. map), 8 tickets. About 5 hours.

L3-4 difficulty, but the map was a blurred satellite image with very little detail and no contours. North and scale was given at 1:25000.

Pacing made no sense. It was also out of date, so dark patches didn't match current forest lines.

Plenty off-piste, one impossible to ride as not marked up correctly.

I overheard that some check point flags and some tickets were ill-positioned and moved during the day. I disagreed with two.

Speeds increased as we went round. Very taxing towards the end, with the last speed at 10km for nearly two hours. Thierry had this removed. The first speed was curious as it said 'under 6km'!! Also for an hour or so. Was it translation issue? So should you go for 6km or just stop for a picnic?! I SHOULD HAVE PUT IN GRID LINES.

Barren, rolling hills, plains and some forest. Easy footing, lots fast moving.

We rode past another 'theme park style town' and through a small rustic village, but mostly it was plains, dry river beds, and bare hills and creeks. Up one side of a range, over the neck and down the other side. There were horses everywhere, loose and in corals. Little cultivated once away from the village.

Didn't feel I would get lost entirely.

All tickets were manned and in French style they popped out from behind trees, huts etc. Not visible on approach.

Vetting at finish was very rudimentary, I had a clinking shoe which was paper thin.

He did seem sound and hydrated though, if very tired.

No facility to check scores let alone raise queries.

Quite a few riders on zero, we think they applied the PTV obstacle rule to the POR, i.e. you can't go less than zero.

For what it is worth I was only one point off of French champion Amanti Muller, in POR, but as he says you cannot really count it, (but I do 😊)

Results:

Below are the original results, as used for the podium. As Mairead and I were equal 3rd with 150, the sum of PTV and POR (FITE rule) put me on the podium and in 3rd place.

名次		2	PTV	MA	POR	合计	
1	W18	Amanti Jubal Michael	149	20	46	215	1
2	W19	Elaine	67	10	102	179	2
3	W20	Mairead	75	19	56	150	4
4	W17	Catherine Ann	105	0	45	150	3
5	W13	Kim Whitaker	87	13	36	136	5
6	W11	Claudia	68	6	49	123	6
7	W11	Jill Ann	93	20	0	113	7
8	W12	Wen Tien Justin	EL	15	81	96	
9	W15	Mary Frances	66	17	0	83	
10	W10	Anna	73	9	0	82	
11	W21	Alexis	78	0	RT	78	
12	W16	Lotte Klitgaard	47	15	0	62	

Summary

The whole trip was incredible and so much fun. We were looked after really well by our very polite and welcoming host Mr Wu, by Justin and the many helpers and guide Bruce and Deborah Wang. Treated like stars, surrounded by camera crew. We stayed in a beautiful hotel, with fantastic dinners every night. It was great to be able to explore all the different foods, mostly local to the region and some Mongolian. We were entertained by an extravagant and mesmerising circus style show, with horses, trapeze artists, dancers, singers, light shows and theatre at its most exotic. We dined at a Mongolian barbecue restaurant, where the spit roast pork arrived to the sound of huge gongs and everyone dressed in traditional costume. Mr Wu took us for a guided tour of the park, visiting his horse museum and taking in the outlandish statues and traditional style architecture.

The 3 day after tour was equally amazing, with a 3 hour ride out into a blizzard of snow. It was -6, with a wind chill factor of what (-20!). Covered faces. The land totally changed under a blanket of snow.

The trip seemed to circle as much round food and the revolving banquet tables as it did around horses. Following the blizzard ride we came back to the most amazing lunch served at the stables in a very local and basic surroundings. How the wife prepared the food I just don't know. A whole stewed lamb carcass, sheep innards stew, chicken and pork dishes.

In Beijing we ate Peking Duck of course and on PTV day we had a literal Chinese takeaway in the very royal stables.

We visited the Great Wall and WTown. The town was exceptionally pretty. Lots of red and yellow leaves, blue sky. Red lanterns, twinkling lights over a river with many humpy backed bridges, narrow cobbled streets twisting this way and that. All pedestrianised. Spa. Foot bath.

Gt Wall incredible & a good walk! Views astounding across endless mountains, the wall marching off into the distance.

So many toasts to TREC family and international friends. Mr Wu really seemed passionate about TREC and all horse culture. He told us that he was pleased with our visit and the way we had conducted ourselves saying we were very popular amongst the local riders who had met us. We were all invited again next year.

Mr Wu also said that he was hoping to organise a ride in Mongolia next year. Again he said we were all invited & to watch the space! I would love to go. He is so interested in the traditions and cultures. I think it would be a huge adventure.

There was also a number of people from Mongolia also wanting to get TREC started in their country and hoping to have their own TREC international competition. I am not sure if this is as well as China or instead of. Also I couldn't gather whether they were from actual Mongolia or from China/Mongolia (Inner Mongolia?).

I was watching Strictly and noticed that the continual praise that the participants make about being part of Strictly Family, so similar to TREC. It was very, very special. As a result it has given an enormous boost to my confidence both as a competitor in TREC and more generally.

I would totally recommend anyone to go if they have a chance. I would certainly be up to going again, but particularly to the ride across Mongolia.

Kit

Riding Hat

Body Protector (optional)

Riding boots

Riding clothes (mostly team clothes)

Red, White and Blue bridle (I would really recommend bringing clip on reins if not whole bridle, because of the very stiff buckles not helped by the cold)

POR Compass, map case, pens etc., first aid, torch, bottle carrier, water bottles – perhaps not farrier tools or hoof boot/cast. I had them with me, but didn't take on POR. Fluorescent, but we had to keep the rider number vest visible, so not really required. Not required on horse.

ID, Medical arm band. Photocopy of passport & Visa.

Phone with local SIMM card

Communications – WeChat

You cannot use any western websites or apps while in China.

Ways around are if you get a VPN (Virtual Private Networ). You can buy these from various websites. Dot recommended

Couple of people had 'roaming' & seemed to be ok. 50% tried to download WeChat but couldn't get it to run. It wouldn't work on my iPad. Nor would VPN.

It was useful some people having it. The plans were so fluid. Mermaid relayed messages to me & output news/photos on my behalf.

Injections

I just had tetanus and typhoid. Others were recommended.

Travel and Riding insurance (including jumping and competition.

I got the best quote from SEIB. I made sure that I spoke to someone who knew about TREC.

Costs.

1. Tour £300 (very approximate)
2. Visa £155 since Nov £ 60.00
3. Flight £540 (cheaper to Beijing) China Airlines £369.00
4. Injections £0 (I chose not to have the ones that weren't free e.g. Rabies.
5. UK travel £170.00 petrol and taxis to Heathrow, incl. travel for visa
6. Foreign Cash £55.00 (shopping- didn't need any really).
7. Insurance £90.00 (including riding and jumping)

Total just over £1300 (with hotel and horse it would be closer to £2000)

Appendix

Articles & photographs.

https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201911/05/WS5dc10cd6a310cf3e35575844_1.html

<https://trecfrance.wixsite.com/infostrecfrance/post/un-week-end-%C3%A0-jamais-grav%C3%A9-dans-l-histoire-du-trec>

<https://live.aiyaopai.com/live/51425150?from=groupmessage>



