



[00:00:00] Intro

[00:01:22] Guest Intro

Darin: Hey everyone, welcome to another installment, another episode of The Darin Olien Show. Stoked for you to be on this journey with me and as I discover some very interesting people. As you know, sometimes I get people that you've never heard of. I actually kind of like that because there's so many interesting people out there that have done amazing things, are doing amazing things, making big impact and in their corner of their worlds, the best at what they do and I love that. I think also, you could sit down with anyone and have a conscious conversation and just listen and ask good questions and extract to the extraordinary in almost anyone. If given the opportunity, people have overcome, have gotten through and grieved and inspired their way through their lives. And I think that we all can learn from anybody. So although it's fun to have big stars or influential people on the podcast, I really like the granular getting to know someone on the podcast. So I am inspired by my next guest, and we got connected via Instagram. We saw each other who were avid travelers, running around all over the world. And when I see someone who's in indigenous area, in a remote village, and looking like they are doing good and helping and understanding the culture, then I really like to support them. And Eric Cooper, my next guest is one of those individuals, an extraordinary story. So he reached out to me on Instagram a couple of years ago, and we just stayed in contact. And he always kept inviting me, come to Mongolia, you will be blown away. And of course, that is gonna be put on my bucket list. I mean, I don't really have a bucket list because I believe my list is just a normal bucket that I just keep adding things to but nonetheless, Eric Cooper is an incredible individual. I mean, I just love this guy. So he was able to come out to the yurt, my yurt, which he totally dug because the Mongolians are basically the people that created and are famous for yurts. So of course, all of you know that I have a yurt in Malibu, part of my reconstruction process and my future guest house for my entire property, but I'm living in it now. So when he came out here, he was super comfortable. And so this guy from the Midwest grew up around training horses, riding horses, and gets this opportunity to go out to Mongolia for the longest, hardest horse race on the planet. We're talking adventure times a hundred danger, people get hurt, all of these things, horses. You have to understand horses on a level that you can't possibly imagine. And you have to understand the culture of the people that are actually going to help you along this way. So you'll find this a very interesting conversation and incredible human who now not only did he go out, I think it was in 2012, his first Mongolian horse Derby that he partaked in. He now has become friends and basically family to these indigenous people. He's got to understand and be around the nomadic herders, the reindeer riders, the eagle hunters, and all of those kinds of people are different kinds of factions of these indigenous people that he's been going out there. He goes out there every year. I think it's up to three to six months a year that he lives out there. And he's got an incredible company, an adventure company where he can bring you out there directly and have one of the most intimate and remote experiences of your life. I know you're gonna love him. I know you're gonna find this



incredibly fascinating. And believe me, it is and he is. So enjoy my next great guest, Erik Cooper.

[00:06:37] First Part of Interview

Darin: Let's create a context here. So you got basically thrown into or you went to Mongolia to raise this Mongol derby, the longest toughest horse race on the planet. I mean, anything going on in Mongolia is gonna be freaky gnarly.

Erik: A little bit but shape at times, but I'm comfortable in the States now.

Darin: Yeah, just going to Mongolia. That's our new weight loss program we're announcing today.

Erik: No, you really do. I just get fat in the States and I just lose it all because it's--

Darin: Isn't that crazy in that way.

Erik: Yeah, it's just so physical there.

Darin: It's almost like, I use this term, fatal convenience whereas the convenience of our modern-day world has a big flaw. It's convenient. We can look everywhere and get our food, be comfortable, all of that stuff. We're not under any environmental stress really because we're thermostatic our entire existence. And then we eat whatever we want. We too much of it. We eat just not off of the land. And the next thing you know, we have the leading cause of all diseases is a lifestyle. So that's the obvious thing that just by literally, it's so ironic that you go to Mongolia, get in better shape--

Erik: Then come back here and get fat.

Darin: Yeah. And that's scary in that way, very scary.

Erik: Exactly. What we are putting in our food is the thing. But also, what's interesting is, the travel that I do in Mongolia, food is not always available. Sometimes you just need to stay on the horse. But when I travel to Mongolia, food isn't always available, you might run out.

Darin: So you naturally fast.

Erik: I am kind of if there's fruit snacks, I mean, all of them not rashing anything or whatever, obviously. But the funny thing is, is that in our society, we're used to, I'm hungry, I eat, I'm hungry, I eat. I mean, how many places are there to get food for whatever price. And so meaning that I think we've lost our ability to adapt to stressful situations because if your body's so used to hey, you just had a really hard run, we're used to, what does it need? It needs amino acids, electrolytes. I'm not saying we shouldn't do that, but when you go to other countries and go to more remote locations where they don't have access to all these things, and you see that,



in a way, we're pretty weak. Even if you're physically fit, your body is so used to you taking pristine care of it that it doesn't know what it's like to do without it sometimes. And I think you do need that fluctuation, maybe not all the time you want to switch your body up, but you need to be able to adapt to situations, and I think it's that survival kind of thing where you're like, shit, I'm really thirsty but okay, there's no water. Okay, I'm gonna have to deal with this because that's why the animals adapt there and the people. Even the horse race, we're so used to hear with our horses like, okay, it just had a hard run, we're going to water, all this. And Mongolians don't believe in that. They're like, no, it needs to cool down. It needs to not drink anything. And so it's kind of interesting to think about that because it's completely opposite from what we believe here but then they live in a place where those resources don't exist everywhere. And so if animals get used to having them and they get taken away, same as people, then they lose that ability to adapt and to cope in stressful situations.

Darin: So they keep them on even if they are controlling them a little bit, they keep them under the same level of stress.

Erik: Exactly. It's all the same. Well, their body's adapted to it now for their environment.

Darin: It's interesting. I don't even know we're gonna get into some of the stuff but it's something where you see this biohacking world just expand. And it's so funny because it's literally stepping back and away from the modern-day world. It's like, hey, get outside, put your feet on the ground. Oh, that's called grounding. It's good for balancing the electromagnetic fields of the body, with the earth, and helps the circadian rhythm, and all of this stuff. And it's like, well, if we weren't so numb in nature, we would be doing it.

Erik: Exactly or fearful of danger is I guess the biggest thing too. I might step on a bee so I'm not gonna go barefoot, the stupidest things actually in the grand scheme of things.

Darin: Put chemical sunscreen all over your body and block out the sun and block out the ability to convert the beautiful sun rays into immune-boosting vitamin D. And it's just this ongoing weird--

Erik: Well, I think another thing is we just protect ourselves too much, like with the sunscreen obviously, but even with footwear, with every single thing we do, you don't want to feel discomfort, but it's like that's how you adapt people.

Darin: And we need it.

Erik: You need to adapt. Like things I think a lot about that sound like crazy but you know, being barefoot but walking over different textures because I used to do this thing where I would wake up in the morning and I would change what my feet would touch out of the bed. I'm all crazy. And so I'd be like because every morning, I'm used to feeling either a carpet or hardwood floor or whatever but I've animal furs and things like that for my travel. So I was like, let me just switch it up. Just a little thing then I was like, then it's something different. And then I don't wake



up and it's like, I have this routine but I'm like facing things that are changing. And I think that's something that is really interesting about the people in Mongolia too. It's like they move, they change, they constantly are in motion.

Darin: They're Nomadi, right?

Erik: Exactly. And they take care of the resources, but they're constantly adapting to whatever situation it is like, their water source changes, every month they move.

Darin: That's crazy. So let back up here.

Erik: We start getting excited.

Darin: No, no, this is awesome. I love all of it. So I want to know about that guy from Missouri.

Erik: Which one?

Darin: You're from Missouri.

Erik: I'm from Missouri.

Darin: So that guy.

Erik: Okay. I'm like, which one?

Darin: That guy, you, from Missouri, how you got to that place where you're like, I'm going to go to Mongolia and do the gnarliest, toughest race on the planet? Talk through that, how did that happen? Go back as far as you want.

Erik: I was born and raised in a horse farm in Middle America, small, small town, like one stop sign kind of thing, you know everybody, and no one ever leaves is the thing, which some things I appreciate about that, some things I don't, but I left. Since I turned 18, I couldn't wait to get off the farm and get away from everything small town and I moved to New York City and I went to school there. And for 16 years, I called New York home and then I also lived part time in LA. So I switched kind of drastically between those places but for me, horses has always been a passion. I love animals. I love how they think. I love to ride things that are challenging and work with animals that have issues or just have their spirits still because I'm a pretty crazy person so I like to keep crazies around me. But I think there was this thing where you think you're really good at one thing maybe, but you never want to test it because you don't want to show to yourself that you aren't that good actually. Do you know what I mean? No matter what it could be, it could be woodworking, it could be riding horses, it could be playing tennis, it could be anything like that but maybe you never want to throw your hat in the ring for something that's really difficult that puts it on the line, it's kind of survival because you're afraid that you'll actually fail. And for me, that's why I never competed big with horses. I just kept this thing that I like and I



do. Then I found out about the Mongol Derby. I was actually living in LA at the time. And it just instantly hit me [00:15:07] horse race, riding some wild horses across Mongolia, living with nomadic people. And if you're a horse person, Mongolia is the place. It's kind of like holy land if you will because everyone who's obsess with horses knows that's where they come from. So I found out about it and then I'm a very 0 to 1000 kind of guy so I'm just like no baby steps. I applied and went through the interview process and then I'm getting a spot.

Darin: So they literally interview you?

Erik: Yeah, now I actually work for them too. So I'm part of that team that selects who gets a spot and who gets to be a part of this epic race.

Darin: So what are some of the questions that they asked you or you asked?

Erik: It's a lot about your skill set with animals, like how often do you ride?

Darin: Because you're gonna be in a gnarly situation.

Erik: Yes, survival--

Darin: So you're interviewing people because they might die.

Erik: Well, yeah, and it's making sure they know that that is a real possibility.

Darin: Here, sign here.



Erik: You do. You got to sign your life away but it's probably the most crazy injury we've had was when I was riding and a dude got thrown off his horse and broke his neck and we're in the middle of Mongolia. And we do have a medic team, but there's no helicopters to come and pick your ass up. And that's when things got really real when someone gets hurt. It's all fun and games when you're on an adventure and nobody gets hurt, you never have to deal with those situations, but when somebody does get seriously hurt, and you're in this country so far away from your home and we're so used to having that access, like we talked about before, with help and safety and you press a button and you know someone is gonna get to you, but here you're like, okay, we press the button, where's the help? So that's when you know things get real. So people have broken their necks, they broken pelvis, collapsed lungs, all that kind of stuff. So a lot of things happen.

Darin: And how long is the race? Put a context around.

Erik: It's 10 days and it's 1,000 kilometers, so that's about over 600 miles. If you don't get lost, most time you get lost so you're going longer than that.

Darin: And what are you using to navigate?

Erik: You have like a GPS and it's got kind of like a topo map, but you don't have a Waze app or Google maps that has a highlighted thing. They're like, okay, we just stay on this thing here, you've literally got to read it. When I first did, I didn't know what the hell. I didn't even turn the GPS on before I went because I just was too focused on riding horses to train for, then I was like, "Oh, sure, I can figure that out." And I got then I was lost all the time. So you know, you learn some things. And now I'm on the rescue team too. So I work for the Mongol Derby for the month of August. So when the race is going on, I'm out there. I'm either on a horse or in a Jeep and just kind of troubleshooting things and telling stories. I handle our social media accounts. So I get to tell like each person's story because it's really cool. About 45 people from around the planet, from different walks of life, and they do different types of riding, maybe it's a polo player, a hunter jumper, things like that or cowboy but they all go to an even playing ground, horse-wise.

Darin: But they're not using like their horse.



Erik: No, they're using the horses of Genghis Khan essentially. So yeah, that's the challenge.

Darin: Horses of Genghis Khan. That's gnarly.

Erik: Yeah. We use 1,500. And we call them semi-wild horses for the race. So we hire around 500 Mongolians and their horses. So it's doing what they've always done and they get a pay check from it so it's great. And it's encouraging the young people too. They show off their culture, but also a lot of people are leaving this type of culture around the world to go to the cities and the villages where life isn't so hard, so it's cool too. Someone was coming over to my house watching me clean my horse's stall. When it's all me, it was the coolest culture ever, I might have stayed. I might not go to New York. But yeah, they didn't. It's really cool because it's like the whole community and kind of culture. Horse racing is essential to their whole life. And so to have people that share that passion come, and they trust them on their horses, and race these horses that are a lot different than our own like we talked about rewilding and just being in nature. And these horses don't have fences, they don't have barns. They're pretty free to act how they want. So some people will view it as a bit crazy because they're rearing not before you're getting on them, they're bucking and kicking, and throw in a bit of a fit, but for all of us who are real horse people and like, we like that. We like that they have the spirit because then it touch you as a person. Like, can I connect to this animal or can I not? And if I can't, like, okay, I'm probably gonna get fucked up.

Darin: Yeah, the personality.

Erik: So the risks are really high.

Darin: And it's like they all have their own personalities. Just like anyone, if you're meeting someone, everyone's got their own, there's some things you can do and not do. You just have to be aware of that stuff.

Erik: Exactly. And how that bond is getting created. It's so cool, because there, you don't have all day to work with this animal. You are in a race, the clock is ticking. So you have got to take



some risks that you probably wouldn't be taking at home because you've got a lot of ground to cover. And quite frankly, the ones that throw the biggest fit, like hurry up and act like that, they're the fastest ones and they're going to get you across their land the quickest way. And that's another thing to say is like, we are in such control about everything, here in our lives, and whatever you want to call it, modern society. But there, you have to let go and trust these animals who, number one, could kill you but also, number two, could save you. So you might think that this is the safer route but do you know that there's some marmot holes everywhere in that type of terrain? You probably don't, the horse does. So that's why it's saying go this way. So you have to have a conversation and you have to let go of a lot of things. And for most people, it's really hard. It's not just the longest horse race on the planet for no reason but you have to let go of a lot of mental things that you don't even think you have to face. Training for the race until you're there in the moment you're like, oh, shit.

Darin: People think and they see the beautiful pictures and that's the dupe also of social media, it's like you have this shot of this eagle hunter and this beautiful shot of you on the horse in the middle, but you know how much effort and stress it's taken to get that?

Erik: Yeah, and it's dangerous even in that moment because even the trip to the Tsaatan people which is probably the biggest thing that I do next Eagle hunters but to get to them, it is just so dangerous. And there's no social media. Obviously, in those moments, I'm not worried about taking a photo because it's so dangerous. So I'm just worried about is everyone safe, is everyone hanging on because I've had people get hurt, broken collarbones, broken thumbs, things like that, and horses escape and every ship show that can happen happens. I'm like, I'm not trying to get that shot, I'm just trying to get everybody through it.

Darin: Let's get through that chaotic situation and let's get to that place where now let's--

Erik: Yeah, which all that stuff does make it worth it in the end because not everybody goes that way. You know what I mean, because they're just like, I don't want to die.

Darin: So take me through. So you did this race? What the hell was that like, the first one? And then let's walk through from there how you started to get hooked.



Erik: I went over to Mongolia after getting a spot. I trained in LA, down at Orange County on endurance horses and help break in Spanish Mustangs, which is fun. Got hurt a couple of times, got thrown off because I was training for the race. So how I did it was I trained on athletes but I also trained on as many different personalities as possible because we talked about having to adapt yourself to situations, people, animals so that was my kind of, it's just my thing. I love people, I love animals and how they think so that's how I trained and then went over to Mongolia and then all hell broke loose. And we started the race and pouring down rain and it was maybe 15 kilometers from the start line and already two people, like two horses fell to marmot holes, you know, little ground squirrel kind of things and broke their collarbones, horses were fine, but they were out of the race before essentially even started. And then it was almost like the Hunger Games. It's like each station, you'd hear more people that dropped out or got fucked up.

Darin: And eliminated.

Erik: So it started becoming fewer and fewer people.

Darin: Day zero. We haven't even started and you're gone, you're gone, and you're gone.

Erik: Yeah, pretty much how it goes and that's really every year. It was pure carnage, just insanity. I think physically, I was like, okay, I trained my butt off, I've ridden horses non stop so I was good physically as far as in shape, but it was really the mental stuff which was so challenging, trying not to be negative when situations are really fucking sucky.

Darin: So take me through like a day. Take me through like either day one or just a day. So you jump on a horse and you're going. How long are you gone? What is that like?

Erik: Day one was pretty interesting for me because it was so new, figuring out what the hell I just got myself into. And I really didn't travel before. I live between New York and LA but I really didn't leave the country ever.



Darin: Yeah, small town kid.

Erik: Small town kid but I was in the two best cities in the US, but I never really left the country and that was age like 27. I am almost 36 now. So I went over there and I was like number one, where the fuck is Mongolia? And then you get there and you're in this. And you pick your own horses. For the most part, if you learn any Mongolian whatever, you can ask the herders, you know, "Hey, do you have--" I learned how to say give me your best racehorse and ended up working out too well.

Darin: So how many horses get applied to you? How many do you get use?

Erik: I'm 28.

Darin: 28?

Erik: I switch out. Every 30 kilometers, I get a fresh horse.

Darin: No kidding.

Erik: Yeah, but there's a whole vet check. You have to vet your horse out and make sure you took care of your animal and that was the biggest, coolest thing I thought about it because this isn't a solo adventure. This is like you're partnering with not just a living creature, but it lives here, you don't. So they'll catch them, they'll put them on the horse line, and then you'll go through and you need to use your judgment as a horseman or woman what is the best horse for you, what's going to get you across this terrain because it could be sand dunes, it could be mountains, it could be flat stretches. There's a different type of body for all that just like there's bodybuilders and endurance riders and all that stuff, endurance runners. So I picked out horses with my team. I ended up meeting three other people to ride with. And I was like, oh, these people are cool. One girl is a geologist. She knows how to navigate. Another dude did a lot on a



bicycle. And another girl trained with the race director. So I was like, wow, these people really got their shit together. I was like, and they're gonna have me. I was like, better keep my--

Darin: Buy you're the horse guy essentially.

Erik: Yeah, well, we're all horse people but it's interesting the kind of caliber people that come on. We found a road right away off the start line. And we were one of the first groups in the next station because everybody else tried to go straight to the hills like direct route. Got to the station, I was like, I'm gonna use my Mongolian I learned right now. So I found this kid and I was like, "Hey, [mongolian language]" And it means give me the best horse you got. And he pulls me over and he's like, "This one." I'm like, "Are you sure? This looks a little scrappy and he doesn't look like it's fast." And he's like, "Get it," just kind of motion. "All right." And it's pouring rain. It's freezing. You can see your breath. It's muddy everywhere. Riders are leaving the station and this is a nomadic family. So this is their horses, which is what's cool.

Darin: So he knows.

Erik: This isn't like a regular-- these are their animals. Yeah, so he knows. So I get on it and like, okay, nothing too crazy yet and we're starting to leave and we're trying to leave slow so we can figure out where the hell we're going because you're looking at the GPS and like, okay, which way while you're trying to hang on to these like race horses. And then he just bolted and he was like, not having it. He's like, I'm racing. This is what I do, I go. So I was like, shit. So I was pulling and pulling and pulling. Just trying every little trick I know to keep him with my group because I was like, I don't know what I'm doing. I can ride horses, but I don't know where the hell I'm going, like what direction is this? I was like, quick guys, get in front of me, block him from escaping, essentially. And then he was just climbing over them. And then I was like shit. I was like, okay, maybe try to like ride next to me and then he would just take off. And I was like, alright guys, I gotta go. And they're like, what? And I was like, I gotta go. And they're like, what do you mean? I was like, I just gotta let them go. I'm like, I can't control him. This is crazy. He just needs to run. I'm gonna get hurt because I'm controlling all that energy, and it's gonna explode in my face if I don't let it go. And so I was like, just tell me which way do you think it is? Just point me in the direction.



Darin: And how many days is this?

Erik: This is day one. I'm like, oh, this is gonna be real great. Tend days and this is one leg and I do four legs a day. You're supposed to do four legs a day. So they were like, "Okay, good luck. That way." And I was like-- and he raced every single thing, a bird, anything that was in motion. It was the scariest time. It was probably the scariest I've ever been in my whole life on an animal. It's like lightning all around, frickin mud. So he's just going flat out, slipping all over the place. And that's what I mean the power of letting go because I was like, if my own horse is doing this, I'd be like I'm jumping off but the thing about the Mongol Derby too, is your survival kit is on that horse. So your sleeping bag, you only get 10 pounds of survival kit. So that's all on this back of this horse so if I jump off, there goes everything I need to survive for the next nine days. So I was like, I'm just gonna hang on and then hope that we see people. And once I was like, "Am I in China?" because this guy is going so fast, I was like, they're gonna have to come and find me. I don't even know how to turn this GPS on because I was relying on that other girl that's a geologist.

Darin: I got the GPS. I hope he knows--

Erik: I hope I was like, how do we turn this thing off? I was like, shit. I'm riding this crazy thing trying to-- It was scary but it was hilarious after the fact because when I was in, I was like, fuck, what the fuck was I thinking? But I actually ended up going the right way somehow and saw other riders and I rode with these two girls named Justine and Lucy. They actually trained with the House Cavalry, the Queen's Guard in the UK. So I was riding with them and we had a system where they would catch up to me before my horse would bolt. They'd just be like, "That mountain, go Erik," and then I would just fly all the way there. And so eventually, we got to the station and I spent the night. I was cold and wet and also like, what the fuck did I get myself into? And that was day one of that situation. I chose to wait for my team, so I was one of the first four people in that station. And then my team never showed up and umpteenth hour they got lost. And so they finally came and then as the race went on, both girls ended up dropping and George ended up staying. And so it was just carnage and other things happen, like I had a horse flipped through a marmot hole on me and George, my teammate, lost his horse in the night. And it fucked off with all their shit never to be seen again. So just so much crazy shit was going on. And the thing is, it's funny at night with other riders, you can only bring 10 pounds of survival kit. So if you've got duct tape or you've got like painkillers or like electrolytes or anything like that, it's like those you just rationed out for yourself, but here we are, everybody's somehow fucked up from something that happened during their day, getting thrown off or just whatever, it's hard. So I remember George like, "Oh, can I have some of that duct tape?" And I was like, "Are



you crazy too? I got like two little strips of this." But then I was like, I don't need to right now so maybe I might need something from him later. So I was like, "Yeah, okay, take it." And it's like that humanism that goes on, but later on down the line he was like, "Okay, you can have this drybag that you need because yours got fucked up." And so it's like this thing where we have such limited resources and we're so protective of it because we're like, "Mine. I need to survive." And really it's like holy fuck, but we all need to survive and kind of a team even if we aren't riding together or not. So it was cool to see that take place and you'd be like, "Oh shit. Yeah, I guess. Okay, here we go. Ain't sharing my gummy bears with you but I'll share the duct tape."

Darin: I don't have them. I don't have any.

Erik: Yeah, I don't have any. So cool things like that to the experience because people see it as just like, "Oh, it's a horse race." It's like, no dude, this is a whole nother level. And then also, the Mongolians are so hospitable and the nomadic culture there is to take in strangers. Most has never seen people looking as crazy as we do riding their horses with strange saddles and we're kitted out with all this super technical gear to keep us waterproof which does not exist. You know what I mean? Like special boots and you see these dudes just rolling up with the same thing they wear everyday doing exactly essentially what we're doing right. And just toughing it out, like suck it up kind of thing.

Darin: We're used to this stress.

Erik: Yeah, this ain't hard, granted they think the distance we go is really hard. They're like, that's crazy. So that's kind of the different days that happened and the derby.

Darin: Did you finish?

Erik: I finished. I didn't get to place. I ended up staying with the dude that broke his neck for quite some time. So yeah, we were there in the swamp with him until we could get him sorted.

[00:33:31] 121 Tribe Ad



Darin: So for years, maybe most of my life, people have been asking me, "What kind of foods do you eat? What kind of exercises do you do? What kind of water should I drink?" All of these things and so much more we put into a 21-day program so that can take you through a theme every day of knowledge, action, and then eating these delicious meals, working out, getting support, anchoring in these new habits so you can do what? So that you can kick ass. So you have the energy, the vitality to live the kind of life that you really want. That's what it's all about. So all in this app, we have grocery lists, we have education about real hydration and what greater oxygenation and the balance of alkalization. All of these things we are diving into as you're heading down this hero's journey of implementation into a new life to give you the kind of life that you actually want. So join my Tribe. All you have to do is go 121tribe.com. Sign up, and you get three free days. Join me on this hero's journey. Join the Tribe.

[00:34:57] Barukas Ad

Darin: Many of you who follow me know I've spent most of my life searching for the healthiest foods on the planet. If you look hard enough, there are a few unknown extraordinary foods around the world that people still don't know about. And a few years ago, I came across my favorite superfood discovery of all time, Barukas nuts. When I first tasted them, my eyes lit up. The taste alone just absolutely blew me away. But after sending them to the lab, which I do and getting all the tests, I realized they're the healthiest nuts on the planet. No other nut even compares. They have an unusually high amount of fiber and they're off the charts in super high antioxidants and have few calories than any other nut. It's jam-packed with micronutrients. But they're not just good for you, they're really good for the planet. Most other nuts require millions of gallons of irrigated water, but Baruka trees require no artificial irrigation. Barukas are truly good for you, good for the planet, and good for the world community. It's a win all the way around. I really think you'll love them, so I'm giving all of my listeners 15% off by going to barukas.com/darin. That's B-A-R-U-K-A-S dot com backslash Darin, D-A-R-I-N. I know you will enjoy.

[00:36:55] Second Part of Interview

Darin: So then you completed the race and so talk to me about what that shift then was to I love this culture, I want to do something. How did that switch go to create Erik Cooper adventures and do that whole thing? And also, I want to really touch on this too because you really emphasize this because I always love this when I travel and that is helping the indigenous people and there's a healthy way to do that. There's also a very unhealthy way to do that. You don't throw money at people. You have to understand them. And you have to understand and be willing to understand what they actually need or else it can mess them up.

Erik: And it changes the culture.



Darin: So you did the race, you accomplish the race, holy shit, life-changing I would imagine.

Erik: Oh, yeah, huge.

Darin: So then that jump into--

Erik: Well, I went back. Did I come to LA first? I think it came back to LA. It was a weird kind of moment. I had this weird depression that I was just kind of like what the hell is going on? Like what is this world we live in kind of thing? I'm not even corny about it. It was really just a dark place because you're just like, this doesn't make sense. Like all the shit does not make sense.

Darin: You were looking at people going you have no idea what you have. You have no idea of what--

Erik: Just like this stuff does not matter. I mean, how often do we just stack our schedules with phone calls? I was working in corporate America at the time, marketing and stuff. And I'm like, this shit is just bullshit. This does not even matter, none of these people could survive what I just did. Natural selection is just not working out over here. You just start weighing everything.

Darin: You should be dead.

Erik: Yeah, you would be dead, you would be dead, you would be dead. You may be hanging on. But that's really it because you come back and you're just like, wow, for 10 days I experienced something that's just so real and raw because number one, your life is at risk, you're bonding with these local animals that aren't the tamest thing there are, you're living with nomadic people who are tough as hell, and resources are limited but you have to take care of each other in these situations. It was just so many things. There are so many things, I can talk a million years about it because it's so interesting because all these relationships and all these energies and animals and extreme situations. Rewind to when I'm on that race horse, and I'm



like, I can't jump off of this. If I would be in a tough time in the States, too tough, I'm out. I'm gonna call for help, whatever it may be, you know what I mean? But there, it was like, I'm on the fucking freight train. It's slipping off this track but I know that I got to stay on it because that's my only choice, period, because then if he gets lost and lose all my stuff, I might be out of the race all together. So that's kind of interesting coming back and facing things where it's like, wow, I really had to do things I didn't want to do and face things about myself that I was like, oh shit, maybe I was weak in that situation or whatever and come back and be like, what am I even doing with these jobs, what am I doing with work, life, the people I'm around, do people challenge me like this or did they excite me, what do they add to the situation? Am I just hanging out with them because I've known them for years? So you start really dissecting everything in your life. That's what was mentioned about your place, and then kind of looking at it be like, what am I doing here kind of thing?

Darin: The big question.

Erik: Yeah, what the heck am I doing here? And the race isn't cheapest. It's \$20,000 all in, fees, everything, that's expensive. It's a big commitment.

Darin: For five-star hotels.

Erik: Exactly. You mean, 20 men almost died? Exactly people, I sure as hell did and it was worth it because it was a life changer. And then after I kind of weaseled through the fog, because I was just like, what am I even doing? I can't go back to these jobs that I just don't give a shit about.

Darin: Life is now different.

Erik: It's different. And who's got your back when you needed it? And a lot of friends stepped up, some that I didn't even give that much energy to just showed how generous they are because I came back and I was just physically fucked up. It just wasn't good because I just went through war essentially for 10 days. And that goes to show some of the friends that I did have that I thought would be there were just more selfish about themselves. So it's just a changing thing



where it's like, okay, who do you want to have in your life? Who's on your same wavelength or they support you and they don't want something in return? You know what I mean? So that came back and then also just to be like, how do I want to live? What places do I want to explore? I'm a big Disney kid from growing up and I think having that sense of wonder is something that we should all have. And when you go to places to travel, and you should be so excited and go and live the Mowgli life, do whatever you want to do but don't lose that sense of curiosity. And don't research too much either. Sometimes gotta jump into shit and figure it out and just have everything be fresh. Not be like, okay, that matches that picture. Okay, guys, we go to this thing here and this thing here. Sometimes just show up and just be like, I'm going to Argentina. I'm just gonna wing it. So thing is I came back and then I started just trying to figure out where I wanted to go next and Mongolia kept calling me back. So I just kept going there and then doing my own trips to the Tsaatan. I went there the first time.

Darin: And Tsaatan are who?

Erik: They're reindeer people. So there's 44 families. They ride reindeer. They're probably one of the smallest ethnic groups on the planet or culture groups on the planet.

Darin: I have seen those pictures. You're literally riding reindeers.

Erik: They ride reindeers, so it's pretty insane. And they're shamans. They're rooted into nature and the connectivity of all of it, but they're also just real people too. They're our ages, they have the same issues, probably a lot of the same issues we do. It's just they're really unique people. So I started going to them, and I only thought I would go once and then go back, but it's such a special place that I just kept returning. And then I started just bringing certain things I needed whether it be like waterproof TP fabrics. I'm fortunate that I'm really connected in this world with certain people that can help them in a big way, veterinarians. I work with the reindeer vet now that is able to answer questions for them if their own remedies don't work. And dive in a little deeper. So I bring aid like that there. Obviously, other people started to hit me up from social media, the magic of social media, which then made me create essentially my own adventure travel company because people I think are searching for this authentic way to explore and meet people. I mean, everything I do is rooted in relationship and connection authentically kind of thing.



Darin: I've said that for years, I mean, the whole thing comes down to relationship. People say superfood hunting and all that stuff, I said the biggest thing is the relationship with the people. Then the doors open. And I think you mentioned somewhere, I read that Forbes article where you're talking about, and this is the difference I think, and this is not an ad for-- it's an ad for you because it's all based in that relationship and because of your strength of the relationship, you bring people into that and there's already a trust that you've already cultivated with several of these indigenous nomadic tribes. And so now people get to actually probably as close as they could ever have an authentic experience. And it's not this kind of made-up scenario where that can absolutely happen. That happens in some of the ayahuasca world in Peru and the so-called shaman and all that. And you're having kind of an experience, but it's a little dodgy. There's a lot of corners of the world that you can have that not so authentic but you think you're having authentic. But that's what I love about, number one, if you're gonna show up here, it's gonna be hard to get there. That's gonna weed out a lot of people.

Erik: And you're gonna sign my waiver, sign your life away, but for real. And I interview everybody before they come. So it's not a good fit for everybody. And it is relationship built so you have to have a good personality, you have to be respectful of, these are my friends. And it's funny because I can say like, you're going to get an interesting experience and you're going to get something real and deeper because my relationship with them. And people are like, "Yeah." Well, everybody that came last year was breaking down in tears afterward because they're like, we didn't really get it because I'm like, well, I don't expect you to until you're in it and then you're gonna see that they are so curious about you, and they aren't going to be so standoffish. These are my family's kind of thing.

Darin: And you're also interviewing them because you're vetting. Because you've now dedicated the next decade of your life.

Erik: That's what I do.

Darin: To these people.

Erik: It's already been seven years so now we're in it.



Darin: So you don't want shenanigans and weird people and not authentic at least to the degree at which they can be respectful, authentic people that come to your families in Mongolia either. So it's a two-way street.

Erik: Yeah, for sure.

Darin: It's so interesting. So you have the reindeer people, you have the eagle hunters. Who else?

Erik: The horse because even though we use horses, they are their own culture. It's not like wranglers. So the [00:47:51] people are the culture group and it's weird to talk to my dad because I'm like, they're just my friends, but for a greater context, they are the horse herders of the northern parts of Mongolia, and they're their own culture rooted in shamanism because a lot of Mongolia is Buddhist, but that was kind of a religion imposed by the Chinese to keep them from fighting, but it's all deeply rooted in shamanism. So it's cool because I partner with them and several different families is the thing too. I think a lot of tourism in general, they go to their one family that was the one that gets all the money or aid or whatever it is, and nobody else gets anything.

Darin: It causes some problems.

Erik: Yeah, I'm big on trying to help everybody, as many people as possible that's able to do so. But I will say it's like, I had built up really strong relationships and that's my strength there, but they didn't come from all happy times. And I think that's something that I started looking at a lot this year was like, we've had disagreements, we've had knock down drag out fights with each other about fairness and things like that and we're stronger for it. It's even more tighter relationship and I think that's something to take on as well. So I do the eagle hunters, that one's pretty unique because it's a falconry apprenticeship. So you need to have some sort of knowledge of animals either have a dog or need to have some experience. And then obviously, we're on horses. These guys and ladies hunt with eagles. So this has been a tradition of theirs. Falconry exists here in the States. It exists and a lot of countries all over the world, but never, I think, would these guys be open to a stranger showing up at their door wanting to essentially



play with their eagle. They'd be like, get the hell out of here. I don't care how much you have. I caught this thing out of a cliff. But I've been spending time with them for several years and so now I created this, I think the experience that I got when I first went out there to the eagle hunters, it wasn't easy to obtain. I had to show skills on horses and with littler birds like falcons and then got graduated up to working with their eagle. And I didn't know what I was doing before. I'm just so passionate about it. And then years go by and build up more relationships, and then bringing people that know how to ride horses really well, or they're savvy with animals. And so I brought my first group for this kind of pilot adventure this last October, and it was really, really cool because I ended up pairing the two Westerners with one of my eagle hunting friends. So they lived in their own little world-building bonds with each other. The eagle animal, the eagle Hunter, so they got to experience that special relationship. I did when I was solo in a group environment, but I've now paired them up with eagle hunters based on personalities.

Darin: So do they continue to go back now?

Erik: They did it that week and yeah, if they want to come back. I have one girl returning this coming October because she was just like, this is just so insane.

Darin: So they came back with these tons of different added skills with understanding that relationship.

Erik: They got to be hands on. I mean, they're animal people. Most people go for tourism, they're able to take a picture, hold something. And the thing is they had to graduate each step. It's a partnership with me and my eagle hunting families. I don't tell them what to do. If they don't have this skill set we thought they did, they don't move to the next step. It's simple. I'll tell them, so not a problem. It's literally like that. It's like school, if you will. If they don't pass the test, then they stay at that level, that shit together because they are animals so you have to be protective of them as well.

Darin: So how does that work then, the eagle hunters, they go and find an eagle.



Erik: So they have nests. I mean, the eagle nest is way high up, like the height to it. And I was like, okay, can we not hike because of something like a heart attack?

Darin: And you're already at some severe elevation.

Erik: It's high up. It's like 10,000, 9,000 feet. And so usually what they'll do is they'll use one of their children, kind of like tie a rope around them and lower them into the nest to grab the chick. And that's what they do. And the female chick is bigger than the male chick. So that's how they tell because they only hunt the females because they're the bigger bird and they're the hunter.

Darin: So they steal--

Erik: They steal the egg. Well, the not egg but they steal the chick. And then they raise that chick. One person feeds it.

Darin: So bonded.

Erik: And then when it's seven to nine years old, they release it back into the wild, so it can mate and continue the circle of life. But for that period of time, it hunts with that eagle hunter and they have their own personalities and their own thing they do.

Darin: So it takes off, grabs some--

Erik: Usually what we do is we're in the mountain, you're high up, and then someone's out trying to find the foxes. I mean, they even hunt wolves. So it's a very brave bird. It's not scared of anything.



Darin: It hunts wolves?

Erik: Yeah.

Darin: It can take down a wolf?

Erik: Yeah.

Darin: What?

Erik: Yeah. I forget what it is, like 100 pounds of pressure or something like that their--

Darin: Talons are just--

Erik: Really, really strong.

Darin: These are guys are big.

Erik: And they're huge. They're 15 pounds. So when you have a 15-pound giant, 7-foot wingspan thing flying at you--

Darin: Seven-foot, so just think of that everyone. So that's a 7 footer basketball player wingspan. That's serious.



Erik: Coming at you sideways. So that's pretty insane.

Darin: Like a rocket ship in the air.

Erik: And even when we're doing the call, which is part of the training process you gotta get ready for that blow because you could get knocked down even her just trying to land on your arm, and you have to stand a certain way so you don't get knocked down because it's a lot of wing coming at you.

Darin: Like a linebacker hitting you.

Erik: So it's pretty interesting. And it's cool because each eagle has its own personality. So some are a little stubborn or some are just like the VIP, MVP or whatever, they just do their thing. They're so athletic to like, boom, I do that, I do that. So it's cool to see which one has it.

Darin: And do you sense that they like it?

Erik: The eagle?

Darin: Yeah.

Erik: I mean, they're doing what they do, it's just all instinctual.

Darin: Are they trying to get away or they kind of do their thing--



Erik: No, they're imprinted to their dude.

Darin: So that's full avatar tech shit, right? So they're fully imprinted.

Erik: And don't get me wrong, some might have a difference of opinion. And then you've got to sit there and be like, please come down.

Darin: If they're imprinted then how do they at seven and nine years old, how do they then release them?

Erik: I guess they just revert back to the wild fairly easy. Falconers here will do a thing, like my buddy that I was just with yesterday, where they'll put them in the cage and they won't let them see them at all. And they'll just feed them with a chute and that's it until it just becomes, okay, animal food, because they connotate when you're training a falcon or a bird of prey, when you're the one feeding it, it's that food relationship, like I need this individual--

Darin: You're giving me--

Erik: -this that I need kind of thing. So I don't know how emotional they are. Obviously, I work with horses and dogs and things too and they're different. You have dogs, so you know, they're like, it's a more emotional thing. But birds, it's pretty like boom, boom, boom. It takes a lot of effort still because obviously they're catching these things as chicks and they've really got be tentative to them and stuff like that. They don't have big aviaries to keep them in. They've got to watch out for dogs if they're trying to get out or whatever.

Darin: I've got some serious hawks around here.

Erik: I saw coming in.



Darin: Oh, there are tons and they're big too because after the fire, there are so many rodents that these hawks are just doubling in size. I'm constantly riding the motorcycle through and then one's just yanking off here and there. It's unbelievable. So I could essentially just figure out where the nest is.

Erik: Get you one here. Next thing you know, he's gonna be perched out here at the yurt.

Darin: I can't imagine, that's got to be some serious training time that it will take to do that.

Erik: Well, and then you also have to train your horse to get comfortable with it, because they carry the eagle on the horse as well.

Darin: In this case, I would love to train Chaga to be comfortable with the red tail.

Erik: Yeah, for real. But it's pretty epic and the group that I work with, they hunt as a group so it's five dudes, eagle hunters, they all have their own eagles. And they essentially tag team prey. If it's like a bigger thing like a badger, if it's in the case of a wolf, it won't just usually be one eagle, but they'll release the first one. And then if that one needs help, they'll send in the backup system. And I haven't posted all that on the Instagram but it's pretty insane. It's so cool just seeing how fast it happens.

Darin: So they just send it off and they'll go find something straightaway.

Erik: Well, it has to already be out there.

Darin: So they know--



Erik: They just go and search all over the place. They literally have to be like, okay, dude, wait, what is that moving? Okay. Boom, go. And that's what they do.

Darin: And then they just give them some signals and they know I'm going.

Erik: Usually you just unhook it and once it's time, once you see it, and then once it's locked in and you see it's a certain face, it's game time, then you gotta let go. And then it's just seconds. And then you're on the horse trying to like, "Holy shit. This is how I've been trying to get down the mountain." It's pretty wild.

Darin: And now they killed something just sitting there, they're eating it a little bit and then they're saving it.

Erik: Either they've killed or they just kind of helped pinned it down. And then the hunter will come down and finish the job kind of thing and then it gets to eat.

And then it gets the reward.

Darin: Because the alpha situation maybe.

Erik: But it's pretty epic. It's just like you said, your own little avatar go out. Go, get it. I mean, the strength that they have when they even take off from your hand, it's insane.

Darin: Yeah, I can imagine.

Erik: I was just working on my buddy's Hawks and I was like, this is a lot lighter. The last thing I had was like a 15-pound bird flying at me.



Darin: So now what's your-- I mean, it's kind of a silly question, but I'm just curious, what's your future goal or where do you want this to evolve into?

Erik: I think I just want it to evolve how it's supposed to. I mean I enjoy it. I don't ever want to not enjoy it. And also, I don't want it to grow so big that I can't make sure the relationships are there. In the end of the day, I want to take care of the people that take care of me, take care of the ones I have relationships with so I don't need it to be some giant thing. I'm just trying to live my life and have a good time.

Darin: Because it actually can't be a giant thing, right? It's got its own limiters on it.

Erik: Exactly.

Darin: Its own little governor.

Erik: It's special. Yeah, it's the thing.

Darin: And because it's hard and there's only a certain amount of people in families and stuff.

Erik: Exactly. And it's a special people that want to come on the trips, usually that want to come and do it. One thing I'm doing is I'm watching other trips in different places, like outside of Mongolia. So I'll be launching something in Patagonia in January with gauchos there for cowboy experience but I've traveled a lot. It's just my focus is Mongolia on the social media as people see but I spend a lot of time in the UAE and South Africa. I have a tree house. I'm really into design so I have a tree house, me my buddy Jake built in South Africa like on the border [01:00:14] So we have a tree house builders show. So we have a big tree house there. It's pretty cool. So we want to do more creative stuff too outside of just adventure travel.



Darin: That's amazing.

Erik: This one is like, let me see how you design this thing. So you know, a bunch of different things. We'll see how it goes, but it's been a wild ride so far. Some days I wake up, like this doesn't seem real, like I'm really doing this?

Darin: Amazing. Well, thank you so much. We got to have you back and maybe we'll have you back and get into another adventure.

Erik: Thanks for having me.

Darin: Thanks for your time.

[01:00:49] Fatal Convenience Intro

Darin: Now we've reached a part of the show where we address society's fatal conveniences, and how we can avoid falling into them and being a victim of them. I defined fatal conveniences as the things we may be doing because the world we live in makes us believe we have to even though they may be saving us time, or tricking us into thinking they're good for us, the truth is, they're not. In fact, they could be slowly harming us and even killing us.

[01:01:28] Fatal Convenience

Darin: This one you might be using today. And you might be using it every day. You might be using it multiple times a day or right before you go to bed exposing yourself to toxins. Again, we think that companies have our best interests but they don't again and again and again so we have to do our own research, we have to look out for ourselves, that's fine but we have to do it. We can't just think that big corporations have our best interests. So you know that Oral B Glide Floss, guess what? A study at Harvard, they revealed that this PFHXS or PFAs which is a polyflora hexanesulfonic acid and then the PFAs is another type of chemical. That is that chemical that makes it slippery. They even put it on fast food papers so that it doesn't stick, the food doesn't stick to it. So they wrap your food in it but in this case, they're using it on dental floss. So it slides on between the teeth and it's in your mouth. And if you don't know that absorbability in that thin layer in your mouth is huge. That's where, you know, they say like if you're taking certain herbal remedies or whatever homeopathic, keep it in your mouth, let it



absorb in your mouth. And so they're putting these PFAs on our dental floss and then we're using that every day. Don't Oral B Glide. Anything that's trying to promote some sort of glide, just stay away from it. This fatal convenience is going to be very short because I just wanted to make it very clear. The concentration levels of the PFAS or PFAH or all of these things we know is creating this huge amount of accumulation in the body and creating exposure and injury within the body setting yourself up for immune compromise, liver damage, and cancers. And then if you children and kids, you want to stay away from that. All you have to do is plugin PFAs, non-PFA dental floss and you will get a bunch of products that don't have that in. So do your research, maybe it doesn't glide so much but guess what, suck it up. Don't get exposed to the PFAs and creating more cancers in your life. It's like taking medication in the opposite. It's like toxic exposure every day. Okay, that's it. That's the fatal convenience. Stay away from dental floss that has this sliding teflon-like substance that they use all over the place. And it is definitely not something that you want causing endocrine disruption, cancer, heart disease, liver damage. Is that enough? That's it. Easy correction, make a change, invest in companies that are doing good for you.

[01:05:03] Generic Outro

Darin: That was a fantastic episode. What was the one thing that you got out of today's conversation? If today's episode struck a chord with you, and you want to dive a little deeper on a variety of topics, check out my live deep dives on darinoliem.com/deepdive. More episodes are available on darinoliem.com as well. Keep diving my friends, keep diving.

[01:05:35] Amplify Plug

Darin: This episode is produced by my team at Must Amplify, an audio marketing company that specializes in giving a voice to a brand and making sure the right people hear it. If you would like or are thinking about doing a podcast or even would like a strategy session to add your voice to your brand in a powerful way, go to www.mustamplify.com/darin. That's www.mustamplify.com/darin.