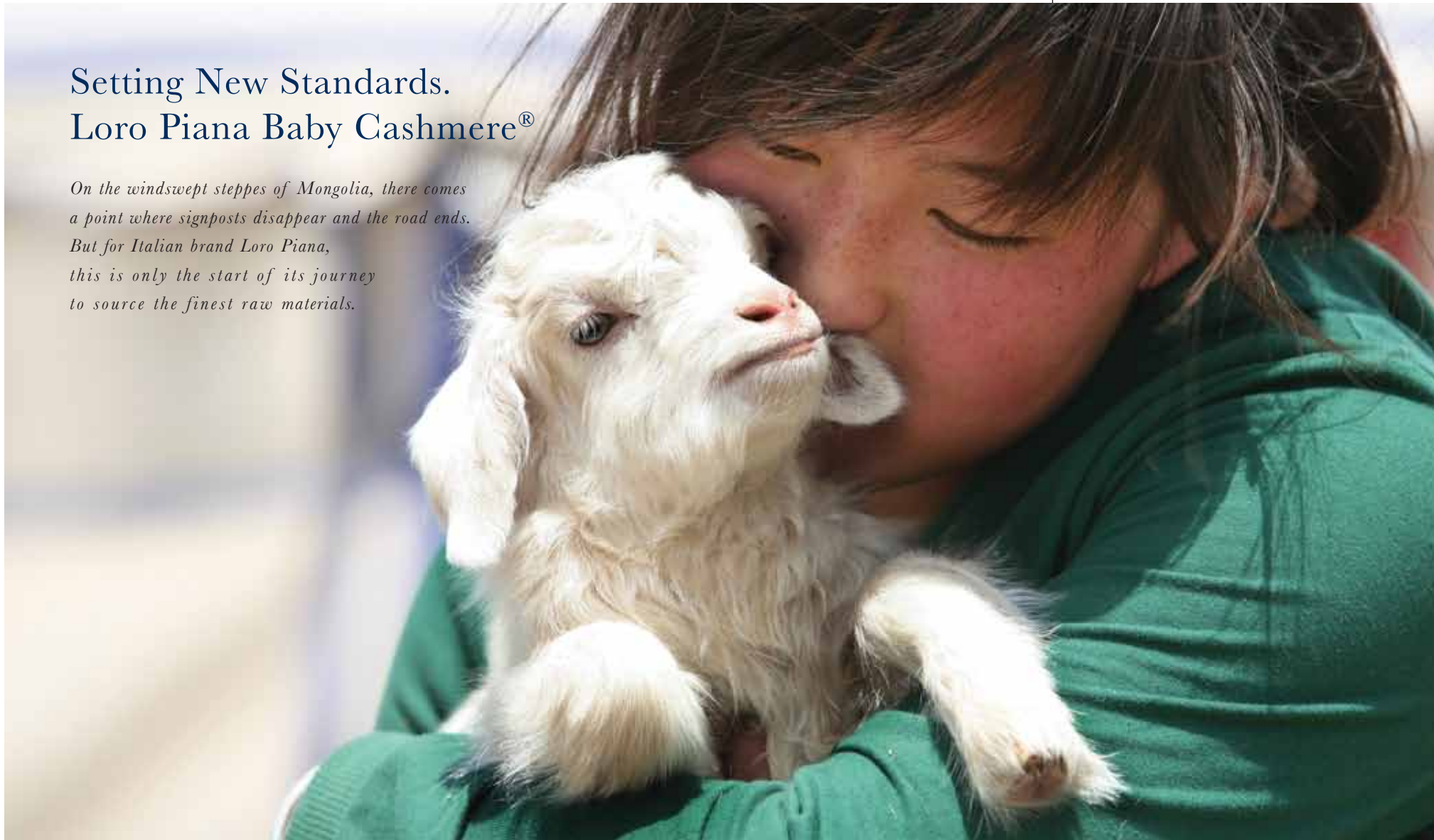


Setting New Standards. Loro Piana Baby Cashmere®

*On the windswept steppes of Mongolia, there comes
a point where signposts disappear and the road ends.
But for Italian brand Loro Piana,
this is only the start of its journey
to source the finest raw materials.*



A local girl cradling a young Hyrcus goat



A Mongolian Hyrcus kid

Loro Piana is recognised by the most discerning customers in the world for creating a complete range of lifestyle products. Manufactured with the finest raw materials, they are crafted to perfection in Italy, following classical codes of Italian elegance. With 136 stores to its name located in the world's most iconic cities, from Paris, London and New York to the fast-paced metropolises of the East – Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong – Loro Piana stands for six generations of expertise, family tradition, and the unending pursuit of excellence.

Nowhere is this dedication to uncompromising quality clearer than the distances Loro Piana travels to source nature's rarest raw materials.

The journey for baby cashmere begins in Mongolia, a land of spellbinding, yet savage beauty, where the arid steppe stretches on for hundreds of miles; a multitude of pristine lakes reflect the infinite skies and ferocious sandstorms rise up without warning, leaving a landscape dusted with gold.

In this world of extremes, only those with tenacious instincts thrive. For more than ten thousand years, Hyrcus goats have endured rugged terrain and harsh winters helped by the hardy and proud spirit they share with their nomadic herders. But the real secret to survival lies hidden beneath the animals' long, coarse coats: a fine, soft, incredibly warm underfleece called cashmere.

Every year, as winter mellows into spring, herders gather an extraordinary harvest of the silky-fine 'duvet', shed naturally by the moulting goats and collected through a soothing, time-honoured process of hand-combing. It is for this precious gift from nature that Loro Piana's people travel for days across the lonely steppe and desert every year.

Yet only part of Loro Piana's quest for excellence can be measured in miles. Indeed, the distance from inspiration to achieving a dream is just as great. Its first extraordinary leap of intuition was realising the rare qualities of Hyrcus kid fleeces as the source of a fibre even more luxurious than adult cashmere: baby cashmere.

Harvested during a once-in-a-lifetime process, before the kids are 12 months old, baby cashmere is 15 percent finer than its adult counterpart, making it noticeably warmer and softer. Like doting parents, goat herders wait for May's more temperate weather before gently combing small handfuls of impossibly fine fleece from their tiny charges, who draw comfort from the delicate touch.

Mixed together with adult fleeces, according to the custom of generations, the uniqueness of baby cashmere was obscured. But over the course of a decade and using every reserve of determination, patience and diplomacy, Loro Piana eventually persuaded herders to separate the two.

Though the reward of thirty grams of fibre per kid, barely enough to fill a palm, might seem meagre, it stands for a new frontier of excellence that has finally been reached.

In May, just as a wash of spring green begins to spread over the steppe, Loro Piana's Mongolia representatives open up buying stations for cashmere and baby cashmere. Nomads' ger tents sprout up like mushrooms, and the heads of families bustle back and forth with sacks loaded with fleece, on which their livelihood depends. With only minutes to examine the mixture of wispy cashmere and ordinary fleece laid out on the sorting tables, Loro Piana's people have to rely on practised eyes and hands, honed by years of experience, to spot the diamond in the rough; a fleece that will realise its exceptional potential.

In stark contrast to the frenetic buzz of activity outside, negotiations take place in complete silence. Secret gestures and nods of acquiescence form an age-old liturgy from which no-one deviates. Once the deals have been struck, the precious cargo is loaded onto trucks bound for Ulan Baatar and Beijing, under the watchful eye of armed guards.

As the trucks rumble off and the grittily romantic landscape recedes hazily into the distance, signposts are already pointing the way to the highest hurdle of the Loro Piana journey: the rigorous quality tests that each sack of fibre must undergo in its laboratories. On arrival, the fleece is scoured, washed and dried before the fine cashmere fibres are liberated from any coarse outer hairs, and examined to determine if their early promise meets the exacting technical standards. And though its eventual destination is unknown – Loro Piana Baby Cashmere® may be crafted into a unique cape, a timeless cable-knit sweater or a sumptuous gift – Loro Piana will continue to strive to bring out its exceptional potential.



Cashmere fleece being meticulously examined



A cape in Loro Piana Baby Cashmere®



The fine, soft fibres of baby cashmere