

A poetic new film celebrates the traditional way of life of herdsmen in remote Inner and Outer Mongolia, whose goats produce the finest wool for Loro Piana, the world's leading luxury cashmere brand.

The imposing Helan mountains and vast deserts of the Alashan region in Inner Mongolia have been home to the herdsmen and their flocks of indigenous *Capra hircus* goats for hundreds of years. The goats' long, white fleeces protect them from the extreme climate, while their soft, insulating under-fleeces, brushed out carefully by hand each spring, produce the finest cashmere fibers in the world. However, the introduction of a new, less sustainable but more productive breed threatens this isolated community's traditional livelihood and its fragile ecosystem.



For more than six generations, Italian company Loro Piana, the world's most revered wool and cashmere brand, has been sourcing the finest fibers from some of the most inhospitable places on Earth to create its famously exquisite fabrics and garments. After decades of buying its raw cashmere fibers directly from selected herdsman from Inner and Outer Mongolia, in 2009 it launched a sustainable development program, the Loro Piana Method, with universities in Italy, China and Mongolia. This initiative aims to further improve the impeccable quality that Loro Piana's devoted customers expect of its cashmere, support smaller herds through selective breeding, preserve the ancient and complex craft of harvesting the precious under-fleece, secure a premium price for the herdsman's precious fibers, and protect the local ecosystem.

In an industry often criticized for waste and unsustainable practices, Loro Piana strives to maintain a virtuous circle for its excellent fabrics, based on animal welfare that produces pure, natural cashmere fibers. The brand also introduced the Loro Piana Cashmere of the Year Award in 2015 to support the highest standards of quality. This year the winner produced exceptionally fine fibers only 13.6 microns in width—five times thinner than a human hair.

To celebrate the Loro Piana Method and the fabric brand's ongoing commitment to sustainability as well as the quality for which it is renowned, it commissioned former ecologist and film director Luc Jacquet, who won an Academy Award for *March of the Penguins*, to produce a trilogy of documentaries.



“I do not like the fact that beautiful things disappear,” Mr. Jacquet says. “Working with Loro Piana I discovered there were important scientific and ecological issues in the history of these fibers. Loro Piana is not just looking for suppliers; this brand is taking a real step toward saving species, landscape and know-how.”

The first short film, *Cashmere – The Origin of a Secret*, is a poetic piece filled with muted golden colors, vast skylines, and a lyrical soundtrack broken only by the clatter of hooves, the whipping wind and the haunting songs of the herdsman.

In the harsh winter months they drive their flocks through snowdrifts in search of sustenance, and in the summer the herd clambers across sand dunes and up vertiginous rocky cliffs in the blistering sun to find fresh water. A new-born kid is taken from its mother’s side to bask in the spring sunshine, while an adult goat from the flock is shorn with traditional shears and its soft under-fleece carefully brushed out.

The film ends with footage of the sophisticated spinning machines that pull and twist the fibers at high speed to give them strength and durability, turning them into clouds of yarn that are then woven into the finest cashmere in the world.