Trans Mongolia Adventure with Naadam Festival
Departs July 1, 2018

Itinerary correct as at Mar 06, 2018 but subject to change. ALL flights to be confirmed. www.bluedottravel.com.au
Trans Mongolia Adventure with Nadaam Festival

A trip through the Land of the Sapphire Blue Sky is something very unique. If you’re looking for a five star type, cushy, comfortable holiday, then Mongolia is probably not for you. If you want to get off the beaten track then Mongolia is unmatched in its wild beauty and rawness. In three weeks you will get a wonderful taste of what this country has to offer. What you will experience, smell, hear, taste and see, will engage all of your senses. Mongolia will be indelibly imprinted on your memory.

Mongolia is one of the world’s least-developed, least-populated countries in the world. If you want to see a night sky so clear that you’ll be reminded that the galaxy is infinite, to camp on the edge of a vast steppe covered in chive flowers as far as the eye can see, or to look across a giant basin, rimmed with dark towering mountains, Mongolia is that place.

With a population of only 3 million, roughly half of the country’s population is packed into one city, the capital Ulaanbaatar. Outside of that, Mongolia’s largest “cities” only number in the tens of thousands, with a significant portion of those still living the traditional lifestyle as nomadic sheepherders.

Mongolia is a land of extremes. On the road it can take hours of driving before you pass a tiny ger community, a Mongolian on horseback or even another vehicle. Yet in between you are blessed with the stunning views of a country so untouched that you know you’ve reached its true heart. From the stark Gobi in the south, to the incredible rock formations and magnificence of Khogoryn Els (Mongolia’s largest sand dunes) to the crystal blue lakes and rushing clear rivers of the West, it is a land serene, with a culture that is warm and welcoming.

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Day 1, July 1  
**Australia to Beijing**  
Our non stop Qantas flight leaves Australia for Beijing and on arrival you will be transferred to your hotel. Accommodation tonight is at the Novotel Peace Hotel or similar. Meals in flight.

Day 2, July 2  
**Beijing’s Great Wall**  
No trip to China would be complete without a visit to the Great Wall. Today you’ll take an early morning visit to one of the best preserved areas, the Mutianyu section (approximately 2.5 hours from the city), featuring guard towers dating back to the Ming dynasty. An incredible piece of engineering, the wall stretches 6,000 km westwards from the mountain ridges north of Beijing. It was originally constructed to protect Chinese empires from the ‘barbarians’ of the north and even though it failed in this purpose, it is still without a doubt one of the country’s most remarkable achievements, and an iconic destination. It’s a 30-minute climb up some steep steps to the wall itself, but it’s well worth the effort. There’s also the option of taking a chair lift or cable car to the top and back if you’re after a more leisurely experience. You’ll have a few hours to explore before heading back to the city for the afternoon and a visit to the Temple of Heaven. Built in 1420 during the Ming Dynasty, the Temple of Heaven is a complex of Taoist buildings where emperors of Ming and Qing dynasties visited for annual ceremonies to pray for good harvests. Located in the south of Central Beijing, it covers an area of 273 hectares. The Temple of Heaven became a World Heritage Site in 1998. This evening you will head out for our welcome dinner with your group. Accommodation is at the Novotel Peace Hotel or similar. **B/L/D**

Day 3, July 3  
**Trans Mongolian Railway**  
Today we have an early morning start as you will be transferred to the train station for your overnight train journey to Ulaanbaatar on the Trans Mongolian Express. The train journey takes around 30 hours – two days and one night. As the train heads north towards the Mongolian border, we pass the extraordinary Great Wall, travel through the vast expanse of the Gobi desert and finally onto Ulaanbaatar, the capital of modern day Mongolia. Now is the chance to read books, play games or retire to the dining car for drinks or a meal. We will cross the Chinese/Mongolian border town of Erlian in the late evening. A giant hydraulic lifts raise the train and the wheel bogies are changed to fit the different gauge tracks in Mongolia. The whole process takes around 4 hours and during this time border formalities are undertaken. Meals are not included during the train journey to provide you with flexibility. There will be a chance to shop for snacks before you board the train and food can also be purchased on the train and at stops along the way. For purchases made on both the train and platform on

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Day 4, July 4
Arrive Ulaanbaatar
Wake this morning to the rolling hills of the vast Mongolian steppes as we approach the capital, Ulaanbaatar in the early afternoon. After time to freshen up, we will visit the National Museum of Mongolian History which is famous for its collection of authentic dinosaur skeletons, impressive exhibits dedicated to the Mongol Empire and collections of wonderful costumes hats and jewellery from most of Mongolia’s ethnic groups. We will then take in a fantastic view of the entire city from Zaisan memorial hill before ending the evening with a dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Ramada hotel or similar B/D

Day 5, July 5
Ulaanbaatar to Amarbayasgalant Monastery
After breakfast we’ll drive to Amarbayasgalant through Erdene, the second biggest city in Mongolia. Late in the afternoon we will visit the monastery located in Selenge province, the Amarbayasgalant monastery. The magnificently styled monastery was established by order of Manju Emperor Enkh- Amgalan Khan, to cherish and give respect to the Undur Gegen Zanabazar, and was completed in the year 1736. Tonight is your first night in a traditional ger. Whilst the accommodation is basic, this is an opportunity to experience life as the Mongolian nomads live. Driving distance: 220 km. Overnight in standard ger camp. B/L/D

Day 6, July 6
Amarbayasgalant Monastery to Ugii Lake
After breakfast, we begin our drive to Ugii Lake, which is a freshwater lake in the steppe, rich with fish and birdlife. Over 150 migrating birds stop at the lake. We will have a leisurely afternoon walking around the lake enjoying some bird watching. Driving distance: 180 km. Overnight in standard ger camp. B/L/D

Day 7, July 7
Ugii Lake to Tsenher Hot Spring
Following breakfast at the ger camp, we will drive to Tsenher hot spring located 1,860m above sea level in the Khangai mountain ranges. We will stop for a break in the small town of Tsetserleg to visit a monastery museum. We spend tonight in a ger where you will be able to soak in the therapeutic waters of the natural hot springs whilst enjoying the wonderful view of the surrounding hills. You might also enjoy a hike in the hills to stretch your legs. Driving distance: 190 km. Overnight in standard ger camp. B/L/D

Day 8, July 8
Rural Naadam Festival in Karakorum
In the morning we head to Karakorum where we will attend Rural Naadam Festival. The distinctly Mongolian feel and flair of the Naadam Festival make it a wonderful spectacle, a joyous time, and an intriguing cultural event. Colourful ceremonies kick off the celebrations. The ancient game of wrestling follows, with men competing in many rounds of competition. Both men and women compete in the archery games, using the traditional Mongolian compound bow that terrorised Europe when Genghis Khan and his Golden Horde moved their empire west. The quintessentially Mongolian art of horse racing follows, where up to 800 horses compete, jockeyed by children so that the skill of the horse, and not the rider, is tested. Overnight in Deluxe ger with en-suite bathroom. B/L/D.

Day 9, July 9
Karakorum – Erdene Zuu Monastery
In Karakorum, we will visit Erdene Zuu, the oldest monastery, with 108 stupas, built in 1586. The monastery was built of the remains of the ancient Mongolian capital. Founded by Chinggis khan in 1220, was not only the capital of the vast Mongolian Empire but the epicentre of trade along the Silk Road. At that time the inhabitants of the city were mostly merchants and craftsmen who came to Karakorum from all over the world. When Kublai Khan moved the capital of the Mongolian Empire to China, establishing the Yuan Dynasty, Karakorum began losing its importance. In 1379 much of the city was badly damaged during an attack by the army of the Ming Dynasty. Erdene Zuu Monastery was built by Awtai Sain Khan on the ruin of the Mongolian capital Karakorum in 1586. It was the first great Buddhist Monastery of Mongolia. It is part of the World Heritage Site entitled Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape. It is surrounded by a wall featuring 108 stupas, 108 being a sacred number in Buddhism, and the number of beads in a Buddhist rosary. The monastery was damaged by warfare in the 1680s, but was rebuilt in the 18th century and by 1872 had a full 62 temples inside. The Erdene Zuu Monastery was taken into state protection and became a museum in 1944. Next, we will visit the Karakorum Museum to see the period halls dedicated to the Stone Age, Bronze Age and the Great Mongol state. Overnight in Deluxe ger with ensuite bathroom. B/L/D

Day 10, July 10
Karakorum to Ongi Temple
Today you'll drive to the ruins of the Ongi monastery. It was the largest Buddhist center in the Gobi region. There are 2 complexes of temple ruins which were built up in 1780s. During political repression in 1930s’ these two temples were destroyed and many lamas were executed and imprisoned. On the way we will visit basin of the Ongi river which is now dried out because of mining activity. Driving distance: 250 km. Overnight in standard ger camp. B/L/D

Day 11, July 11
Ongi Temple to Bayanzag, Flaming Cliffs
After breakfast, we leave Ongi Temple for Bayanzag. It’s a long day drive today and can take up to 5 hours but it’s a scenic drive through the landscape. We check into our camp, wash and change and after lunch, we drive to visit the Flaming Cliff. The place was named as 'Flaming Cliffs' by Roy Chapman Andrews, an American explorer who searched throughout the Mongolian Gobi Desert and found dinosaur skeleton and eggs for the first time in Asia. The
Day 15, July 15
Trip to Khavtsgait Petroglyphs and Nomads Day
In the morning we drive to the site of the Khavtsgail Petroglyphs which date from the Bronze Age (4000-3000 BC). They are beautifully carved on many rocks on the top of a sacred mountain. It is easy to find the rock paintings there because they are spread on rocks all around. The area is very rocky and can be slippery to climb, but by carefully following a path up the mountain, you can reach the top to see these beautiful rock paintings. The petroglyphs were carved and painted with motifs consisting of animals, hunting scenes and weapons. They depict various animals related to everyday life of the stone age people including deer, bears, wolves and hunters. Other paintings depict more domestic scenes of yaks pulling carts and herdsmen on horseback. The engravings vary in size, ranging from two-centimeters to the real life size of horses. After the rest, we will visit a nomadic herder family nearby. We will spend some time there getting to know the family members and their casual yet unique daily lifestyle. It is a good chance to see how the family members cooperate together to do their daily chores such as milking mares and goats, fencing and making homewares. If you wish, you are welcome to try some mare’s fermented milk and other dairy products. Overnight in Gobi Nomad Lodge in deluxe gers. Driving distance: 120kms. B/L/D

Day 16, July 16
Flight to Ulaanbaatar— Terelj National Park
Following an early morning breakfast, we transfer to the Dalanzadgad Airport to board our flight to Ulaanbaatar and then drive to Gorkhi Terelj National Park known for its unique rock formations, scenic valleys, winding rivers and restful groves of trees. The park is also home to unusual rock formations like the “Turtle rock” and “Monk reading a book”. At the Aryabal meditation centre you will have the opportunity to learn about Mongolian Buddhism before checking into our lodge for the next two nights. Overnight in Terelj Lodge deluxe ger. Driving distance: 80 km. B/L/D

Day 17, July 17
13th Century Complex and Terelj National Park
After breakfast we drive to the 13th Century National Park Complex with a brief photo-stop en route at the Statue of Chinggis Khan. The Chinggis Khan’s 13th Century Complex offers a peek into the history, lifestyles and cultural impacts of Mongolia during the 13th Century. Here you can experience life during the bygone era of Chinggis Khan and his empire. In the six camps, you can interact with the several Mongolian tribes, watch craftsmen creating works of art, learn Mongolian calligraphy or traditional scripts, get your fortune told or watch Shamans at ritual worship. Perhaps try your skills at archery, ride a camel or lasso a
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Day 18, July 18
**Terelj National Park to Ulaanbaatar**
After breakfast we’ll drive to back to Ulaanbaatar, where we’ll visit the Bogdo Khaan Winter Palace Museum, the home of the last Mongolian King, Javzun Damba Khutagt VII. The museum contains a number of Buddhist artworks and the private collection of Bogdo Khaan, composed of gifts from rulers and kings from all over the world. The artworks displayed here were made by the top Mongolian, Tibetan, and Chinese master-sculptors of the 18th and 19th centuries. Before dinner enjoy a performance by the Nomuna Acrobatic Troupe. Overnight at Ramada Hotel or similar. B/L/D

Day 19, July 19
**Ulaanbaatar**
After breakfast we start our city tour at Sukhbaatar Square. This central square is named after Damdin Sukhbaatar, the revolutionary hero of 1921 who declared independence from China. Next is a visit to Gandan Monastery, the largest and most famous functioning monastery in Mongolia. Here you will see the impressive Golden Buddha Statue of Migjid Janraisig and may even have the opportunity to experience monks in worship. In the evening you can enjoy a dinner and attend the local folklore dance shows. Overnight at Ramada hotel or similar. B/L/D

Day 20, July 20
**Ulaanbaatar to Beijing**
Today is a free morning in Ulaanbaatar to choose what you would like to do. Perhaps visit the Gobi cashmere outlet store, revisit the National Museum of Mongolian History or simply walk around the city centre and enjoy the local atmosphere. We catch a bus to the airport in the afternoon before flying onto Beijing. Accommodation at Novotel Peace Hotel or similar. B/meal in flight

Day 21, July 21
**Beijing**
Begin your day passing by Tian'anmen Square – a place of pilgrimage for the Chinese tourists who consider it the heart of their nation – and enter the enormous Forbidden City. The Forbidden City was home to 24 emperors between 1368 and 1911. This “city within a city” is a World Heritage Site. The largest and best preserved ancient imperial architectural complex in the world, featuring the great square, halls and gates with intricate gardens, courtyards and quarters. The exhibitions, both permanent and temporary, are all important treasures of ancient China. We will then move onto the Summer Palace which is located about 12 kilometres northwest of the city centre and is the best preserved and the largest imperial gardens in China and one of Beijing's premier attractions. It is also possible to take a short boat on the lake. Finally, we visit the modern day Beijing Olympic Stadiums to see the exterior of the Bird's Nest and the Water Cube. The Olympic Park is built on 1,215 hectares, and also contains the Olympic Village and approximately 31 competition venues. Tonight is free for you to enjoy as you wish – perhaps catch a performance by the world renowned Beijing Acrobats. Accommodation at the Novotel Peace Hotel or similar. B

Day 22, July 22
**Beijing**
Today is a free day to explore Beijing and get in that last minute shopping. After our farewell dinner, our bus will take us to the airport for our overnight Qantas flight back to Australia. B/D

Day 23, July 23
**Transit**
Arrive back in Australia. Meals in flight

**OPTIONAL XIAN EXTENSION**
**Day 22, July 22**
**Beijing to Xian by train**
This morning is at leisure. Take a walk or bike around the city wall to fully enjoy the ambience and views of the city. Then in the afternoon we will have a transfer to Beijing Xi (West) Railway Station to take Train No. G87 to Xian Bei (North) Railway Station, departing Beijing at 14:00hrs - arriving Xian at 18:23hrs (in First Class cabin). Upon arrival there will be a transfer to the hotel. Dinner is a dumpling banquet at the hotel. Jiaozi or dumplings with meat and vegetable fillings are popular during New Year Festival and top the list of delicacies in Northern China. Overnight at the 4 star Grand Noble Hotel. B/D

Day 23, July 23
**Xian**
Today we will enjoy a full day tour of Xian taking in the marvellous Terracotta Warriors in full battle array, the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor, visiting the Big Wild Goose Pagoda - Chinese-style architecture combined with dozens of Buddhist historic statues and murals, and the Muslim Quarter. A lunch stop at Da Wan Cheng Hotel. Overnight at the 4 star Grand Noble Hotel with a local delicacies tasting experience for dinner. B/L

Day 24, July 24
**Xian to Beijing and flight home**
In the morning we will explore Xian's ancient city defences. The walls, ramparts, gates and watchtowers form one of the oldest and most complete city defences in China. Built in the 13th century on the foundations of the original Tang Forbidden City surrounding the city centre, it is a major historical landmark. You may choose to do this part of the tour on bicycle, by foot or by car. If the weather is not good enough for touring the city wall, we will substitute a visit to the Bell Tower. For lunch we will eat like a local and go to the Haidilao Hot Pot which is a very popular spicy hot pot restaurant. We will then leave Xian by high speed train at 13:20 and arrive back in Beijing at 17:55 and be transferred to the airport for our return flight back to Australia. B/L/ Dinner in flight.