



MONGOLIA IN DEPTH WITH NAADAM FESTIVAL

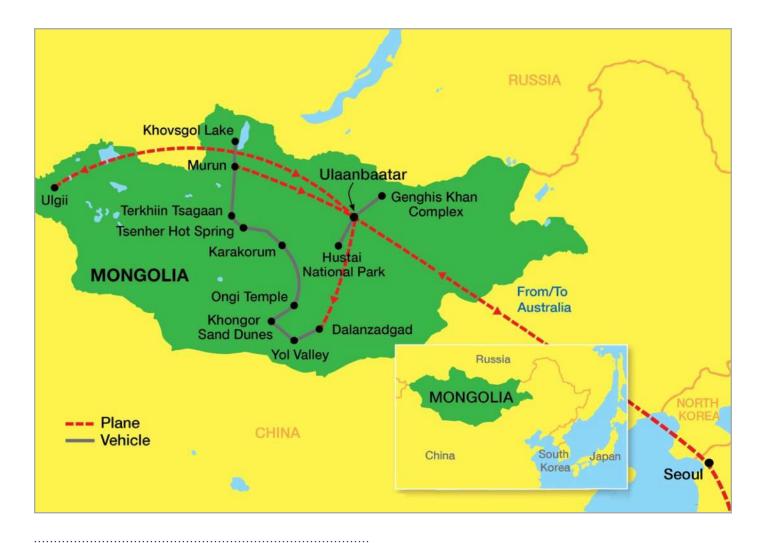
A trip through the Land of the Sapphire Blue Sky is something very unique.

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, hear, taste and see, will engage all of your senses.

Mongolia is one of the world's least-developed, least-populated countries. With a population of only 3.3 million, roughly half of the country's population is packed into the capital Ulaanbaatar. Outside of that, the population of Mongolia's largest "cities" remains in the tens of thousands, with a significant number still living a traditional lifestyle as nomadic herders. Mongolia is a land of extremes.

Horses and horse culture play a large role in daily and national life in Mongolia. It is traditionally said that "A Mongol without a horse is like a bird without the wings." Mongolia has more than 3.5 million horses, an equine population that outnumbers the country's human population.

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 views of a countryside so dramatic that it will be indelibly imprinted on your memory.



Saturday 5th July **DEPART AUSTRALIA**

Depart for Seoul, where you will have an overnight stay (included in your international flight package).

Day 1, Sunday 6th July **ARRIVE ULAANBAATAR**

Arrive in Ulaanbataar from Seoul. After clearing immigration, we'll be transferred to our centrally located hotel for a two-night stay. We'll enjoy a welcome dinner at a local restaurant. Accommodation is at Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel (or similar) for two nights. D

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Our city tour starts at Sukhbaatar Square, the central square named after the revolutionary hero of 1921 Damdiny

Sukhbaatar who declared independence from China. We'll visit the Gandan Monastery, the centre of Buddhism in Mongolia and home to the Golden Buddha Statue of Migjid Janraisig. It's a beautiful sight to experience monks at worship or going about their daily lives amongst the grounds of this important religious site. After lunch, we'll visit the National Museum, famous for its wonderful collection of elaborate costumes, hats and jewellery from

the main Mongolian ethnic groups. The Museum also houses an exhibit dedicated to the Mongol empire giving insight into the country's long nomadic tradition. B/L/D

Day 3, Tuesday 8th July **MONGOL**

NOMADIC SHOW AND HUSTAI NATIONAL PARK

Today, we will drive around 55 km west of the capital towards the Mongol nomadic camp, where we will see the Mongol nomad show,



which gives information about our traditional dairy products and felt-making processes, how the Mongolian nomads move from one pasture to another, and traditional games and musical instruments. After having lunch at the camp, we'll continue our drive - about another 50km drive to Hustai National Park. There was a time when it would have been nearly impossible to see a Przewalski's horse (named after Russian geographer and explorer Nikolay Przhevalsky). They had become extinct in the wild in the 1960s because of overhunting and harsh winters. Only two captive groups remained in the world – in zoos in Munich and Prague. In 1992, some of these horses were reintroduced into the wild at Mongolia's Hustai National Park, and the herd has been carefully monitored since. Now, more than 350 people live here. Tonight is our first night in a traditional ger at Mongol Nomadic ger camp.



Whilst the accommodation is basic, this is a unique opportunity to experience life as the Mongolian nomads do. Overnight in a standard ger camp. (or similar). B/L/D

Note. Staying in a traditional ger camp is a must-do cultural experience in Mongolia. It's a drawcard for many travellers. A traditional ger is a round-shaped tent with a wooden structure covered with wool felt and waterproof tarpaulin. The ger camps we use vary in size, with some common features: Each ger will accommodate a couple or two solo travellers, with permanent beds and a western-style mattress. You'll notice that we refer to some camps as "deluxe". The gers in these camps feature an ensuite toilet and shower, whilst the "standard gers" have shared facilities. Electricity is available at all camps, with some utilising a generator as some electricity supplies can be unreliable. Overall, you'll find the accommodation simple but comfortable, with a definite cultural charm. A much larger ger is used for communal dining, and at most camps, there is an additional ger with lounge and bar facilities.



Day 4, Wednesday 9th July CHINGGHIS KHAN STATUE & TERELJ NP

Today, we'll drive to the northeast, passing UB city, to see the massive 40 m-tall Genghis Khan Equestrian statue. Then we'll visit Terelj National Park, the unique area near the big city with granite rock formations like Turtle Rock and where we will stay overnight in a deluxe ger at Terelj Lodge Ger Camp (or similar). B/L/D



Day 5, Thursday 10th July KHOVSGOL LAKE

After breakfast at the camp, we'll drive to the airport and fly to Murun, the centre of the Khovsgol province, where our drivers will meet us. (Flight 09:25 - 10.35). On the way to Khuvsgul Lake, about 16 km from the airport, we'll visit the Uushgiin Chuluu deer stone site, which consists of 14 Bronze Age deersones erected in memory of the chiefly figures. Especially interesting is the 2.6m high Deerstone 14, one of the few found known in Mongolia and the Russian Altai, it was engraved with many of the traditional themes, including stylised deer, a belt with hanging weapons sets such as a war hammer and dagger, and a striped pentagonal shape believed to be a shield. Then we'll drive 130 km, and we'll arrive for lunch at the stunning Lake Khovsgol. With an area of 2,620 square km and a depth of more than 244m, Lake Khovsgol is Mongolia's largest freshwater lake. The remainder of the day is spent at leisure, soaking in your surroundings. This is a remote area of extraordinary, pristine beauty. Overnight in Ashihai resort for two nights. B/L/D



Day 6, Friday 11th July NAADAM FESTIVAL

Today we will witness the spectacular Naadam Festival comprising the three key Mongolian traditional sports of

wrestling, archery and horse racing. The opening ceremony of our rural Naadam festival occurs at Khatgal village. A rural Naadam offers a chance to get much closer to the action and provides a more intimate experience with the local people. Naadam festival celebrates the victory of the People's Revolution leading to Mongolia's independence

and its rich cultural heritage. 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 and parading soldiers 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 guintessentially Mongolian art of horse racing follows. While these are traditionally male-dominated sports, women and children also compete. B/L/D

Day 7, Saturday 12th July KHOVSGOL LAKE TO **ZUUN LAKE**

This day, we'll start driving to the northern part of the lake to explore its shores, do a light walk



along the shorelines, visit a local souvenir market, watch yaks grazing and visit a yak breeding family. After lunch at the resort, we'll continue our day drive - about 200 km of bumpy road - towards salt Lake Zuun or Eastern Lake, located between prominent destinations. Khuvsgul Lake and Terkhiin Tsagaan Lake. We'll overnight at Ulzii Khishigt Ger Camp. B/L/D



Day 8, Sunday 13th July **ZUUN LAKE TO TERKHIIN TSAGAAN LAKE**

Today we travel on to Terkhiin Tsagaan National Park and Khorgo volcano – about 170kms. The lake, birdlife and mountains are now protected within the 77,267 hectare Khorgo-Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur National Park. The lake, which was formed by lava flows from a volcanic eruption many millennia ago, is excellent for swimming, though a bit cold in the morning - try the late afternoon, after the sun has warmed it. Hike up Khorgo volcano crater in the afternoon. Overnight in Maikhan tolgoi ger camp. B/L/D



Day 9, Monday 14th July TO TSENHER HOT SPRINGS

After breakfast, we'll drive about 215kms to Tsenher Hot

Springs. Along the way, we will stop for a break in the small town of Tsetserleg to visit a monastery museum. We spend tonight in a ger camp where you will be able to soak in the therapeutic waters of the natural hot springs whilst



enjoying the view of the surrounding hills and forests. Also, we'll do a short walk through the forest to the hot spring source. Overnight in Shiveet Mankhan camp. (You'll now be at an altitude of about 2,400m which should not affect individuals. You may, however, feel a little lethargic). B/L/D ______



Day 10, Tuesday 15th July TO KARAKORUM

In the morning, we drive about 150 km to the 13th-century capital city of Karakorum. Upon arrival, we'll visit the Karakorum Museum. Karakorum was the ancient capital of Mongolia, and it was located on the right bank of the



Orkhon River and on the north-eastern slopes of the Khangai Mountain. The nomadic city was founded by Chinggis Khan in 1220, and it was not only the capital of the vast Mongolian Empire but the economic, cultural and trade centre. After lunch at our camp, we'll continue exploring Karakorum and visit Erdene Zuu monastery, built by Avtai Sain Khan on the ruins of the Mongolian capital Karakorum in 1586. It was the first great Buddhist monastery in Mongolia and part of the World Heritage Site entitled Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape. Stones from the ruins of Karakorum were used in its construction. 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 Erdene Zuu Monastery was taken into state protection and became a museum in 1944. The political climate in Mongolia is changing and Buddhism, previously suppressed, is currently experiencing resurgence all over the country. Overnight at ASA land resort, wooden villas for two nights. B/L/D



Day 11, Wednesday 16th July KARAKORUM

After breakfast, we have a 45 minute drive to visit the Khushuu tsaidam museum, part of the Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape

with the highlights being the 6-8 century Turkic empire artifacts. In the afternoon, enjoy your stay at the resort or take a short walk to the hill where a mosaic wall was erected to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Great Mongol Empire in 2006. The hill overlooks the Orkhon River valley and modern time Karakorum town. *B/L/D*



Day 12, Thursday 17th July TO THE GOBI VIA ONGI TEMPLE

Today we'll have a long drive (about 550kms) to the Gobi desert. We'll start our day with early breakfast, and by lunchtime, we'll arrive at the ruins of the Ongi monastery, the largest Buddhist centre in the Gobi region and the gate to the northernmost desert in the world, the Gobi desert. Two complexes of temple ruins were built in the 1780s. During the political repression of the late 1930s, these two temples were destroyed, and many lamas were executed and imprisoned. We will visit the ruins of the monastery and the reconstructed parts. After lunch and visiting the ruins, we'll continue to the Gobi Mirage camp. Today, you will see how climate, terrain, and vegetation change from grasslands to semi-desert. Overnight in the Gobi mirage camp for three nights. *B/L/D*



Day 13, Friday 18th July KHONGOR SAND DUNES

After breakfast, we'll drive to the famous Khongor sand dunes, the most important sand mass of the Gobi

Gurvan Saikhan National Park, covering an area of more than 900 square kilometres. It's one of the largest sandy areas of Mongolia. Suddenly standing out from the plains, they are undoubtedly among the most spectacular of the country. The wind continuously blows from north towards west and the dunes can reach breathtaking heights, between 100 and 300 metres at their highest points. Khongor dunes are more than 180 km long and can reach 27 kilometres wide. The inhabitants name their imposing dunes "singing dunes" due to the noise made by the wind when it moves the sand. Beyond the dunes, the steppe extends as far as the eve can see. Khongor dunes have a particular appeal because they have an impressive combination of colours (the dunes are pale yellow). At the northern end, they are lined with a green luxuriant vegetation band, delimited by a river - the Khongor River supplied by subterranean sources and flows along the dunes for a few kilometres, forming an oasis in the middle of the desert landscape. B/L/D



Day 14, Saturday 19th July BACK TO THE GOBI MIRAGE CAMP

In the morning, we will drive back to the Gobi Mirage Camp. On the way, we'll stop at Khavtsgait. Petroglyphs from the Bronze Age (4000-3000 BC) are beautifully carved on rocks on the top of a sacred mountain. The rocky area can be slippery, 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 the everyday life of ancient people. The climb takes 10-15 minutes and walking sticks are recommended for those with mobility issues. In the afternoon, we'll drive to the area named as 'Flaming

Cliffs' by Roy Chapman Andrews, an American explorer who searched throughout the Mongolian Gobi Desert and found dinosaur skeletons and eggs first ever seen in the world while the local name it Bayanzag or Rich in



saxaul, tree typical for the sandy and stone deserts of Central Asia and the only kind of tree found in the Gobi. The red cliff gleams with sunlight and can be seen from far away. We will take a short walk on pathways on the ridge of the cliff and enjoy the sunset over the Gobi desert. Late dinner is expected. Overnight in our Gobi mirage camp, deluxe gers. *B/L/D*



Day 15, Sunday 20th July SUN YOL VALLEY

After breakfast, we'll drive to Yol Valley, which is also known as Bearded Vulture Valley. We'll learn about local wildlife in the Natural History Museum before gently hiking through the valley to discover their habitats. This valley is nestled deep within the hills and is a safe haven from the desert heat. Some areas of the valley are continually sheltered from the hot sun and consequently, the stream freezes over in winter and remains partially frozen until late summer. It is very wide at the entrance and narrows gradually into a remarkable gorge. We will hike into the gorge, which is a 2-2.5 hour round trip, and along our way, we might see ibex or mountain goat, Altai pica, yaks and vultures. B/L/D





Today we'll start our 400km drive with a visit to "Mukhar Shivert" canyon and do a 30-minute one-way spectacular walk in the canyon surrounded by tall vertical cliffs and has a dead end with a beautiful waterfall staying frozen most of the year except for a short summertime. It is a hidden gem of the 'Three Beauties" NP, and you may have a rare chance to spot an elusive Bearded vulture. Then we drive 35 km to Dalanzadgad town, the centre of Southern Gobi province, to visit the Gobi Museum of Nature and History. where enormous skeletons of dinosaurs and ancient fossils are displayed. After having lunch in the town, we will drive to Mandalgobi town, the centre of Middle Gobi province. Overnight in the Burd Hotel. B/L/D



Day 17, Tuesday 22nd July YOL VALLEY

After breakfast we'll drive to Ulaanbaatar city. After lunch, we'll visit Bogd Khan Winter Palace Museum, the home of the last Mongolian King, Javzun Damba Khutagt VII. The museum contains several Buddhist artworks and the private collection of Bogdo Khaan, a state and spiritual leader, composed of gifts from rulers and kings from all over the world. The artworks displayed here were made by top Mongolian, Tibetan, and Chinese master sculptors of the 18th and 19th centuries and represent the deities of the Buddhist pantheon. Check in to the Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel. B/L/D



Day 18, Wednesday 23rd July **TERELJ - ULGII, WESTERN MONGOLIA**

Early in the morning, we'll be transferred to the airport for



our flight to Ulgii (1.5hour duration 07:25 -08:40). Raw, rugged, remote and backward, this region has for centuries been isolated both geographically and culturally from central Mongolia. With its glacier-wrapped

mountains, shimmering salt lakes and hardy culture of nomads, falconry and horsemanship, western Mongolia is a timeless slice of Central Asia. On arrival at Ulgii, the province's capital city, we'll check in at our hotel, where we will stay for three nights. After having some rest, we'll explore Ulgii town, visit a local market and souvenirs shops as well a province museum to learn about the ethnic minorities that inhabit Western Mongolia, including the Tuvans, Khalkhs and Oirats, Altai mountain flora and fauna and the history of the province. Stay three nights at the Bayan Tsambaragav Hotel. B/D



Day 19, Thursday 24th July **ULGII, WESTERN MONGOLIA**

After breakfast, we'll drive 30 km to Saisai county to visit a local Kazakh eagle hunter's family, where we'll soak into centuries-old, still surviving unique eagle hunting culture practised by the Kazakh ethnic group. The Kazakhs are

semi-nomadic people who have roamed western Mongolia's mountains and valleys with their herds since the 19th century. Falconry developed in Central Asia, and for centuries, Kazakh men have hunted from horseback with trained golden eagles, the largest and most powerful of

raptors. Fox, rabbits and even wolves are hunted in winter for their fur across the snowy mountains and steppes. We'll spend time with a local eagle hunter's family, who would love to share their centurieslong traditions and customs passed down



from generation to generation and, if you choose, hold a Golden eagle or a sneaker falcon. Learn about the traditional costumes worn by Kazakh men and the wonderful embroidery work of our hostess, who will prepare lunch for our group. B/L/D



Day 20, Friday 25th July ULGII, WESTERN MONGOLIA

Today, we'll enjoy a short hike and breathtaking scenery of the snowcapped Altai Mountains at Tolbo Lake, located 50km from Ulgii, where White Russians were surrounded by the Bolsheviks and their



Mongolian allies in 1921. In the afternoon, we will drive to Friendship Hill to marvel at the Altai mountains' vast landscapes and the Khovd River's turbulent waters. B/L/D

Day 21, Saturday 26th July **ULAANBAATAR**

We will arrive to Ulaanbataar in the midday, so the afternoon is free to choose what you would like to do. Perhaps visit the Gobi cashmere or State Department store, revisit the National Museum, walk around the city centre, enjoy the local atmosphere, or relax in a coffee shop and catch up with WiFi. Stay at The Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel for two nights. B/D

Day 22, Sunday 27th July **ULAANBAATAR**

Today we'll visit Zaisan memorial hill, taking 300 steps up, where you can get a bird's eye view of the city. In the evening, you'll be treated to a wonderful display of Mongolian throat singing, musicians, dancers and contortionists, followed by a farewell dinner. Accommodation at UB hotel (or similar). B/D

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Day 23, Monday 28th July **DEPARTURE**

We depart the capital today for our flight home. Flight schedule to be advised. B



