

Mongolia in Depth with Naadam Festival

Departs
5th July 2025

Blue Dot Travel





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MONGOLIA IN DEPTH WITH NAADAM FESTIVAL

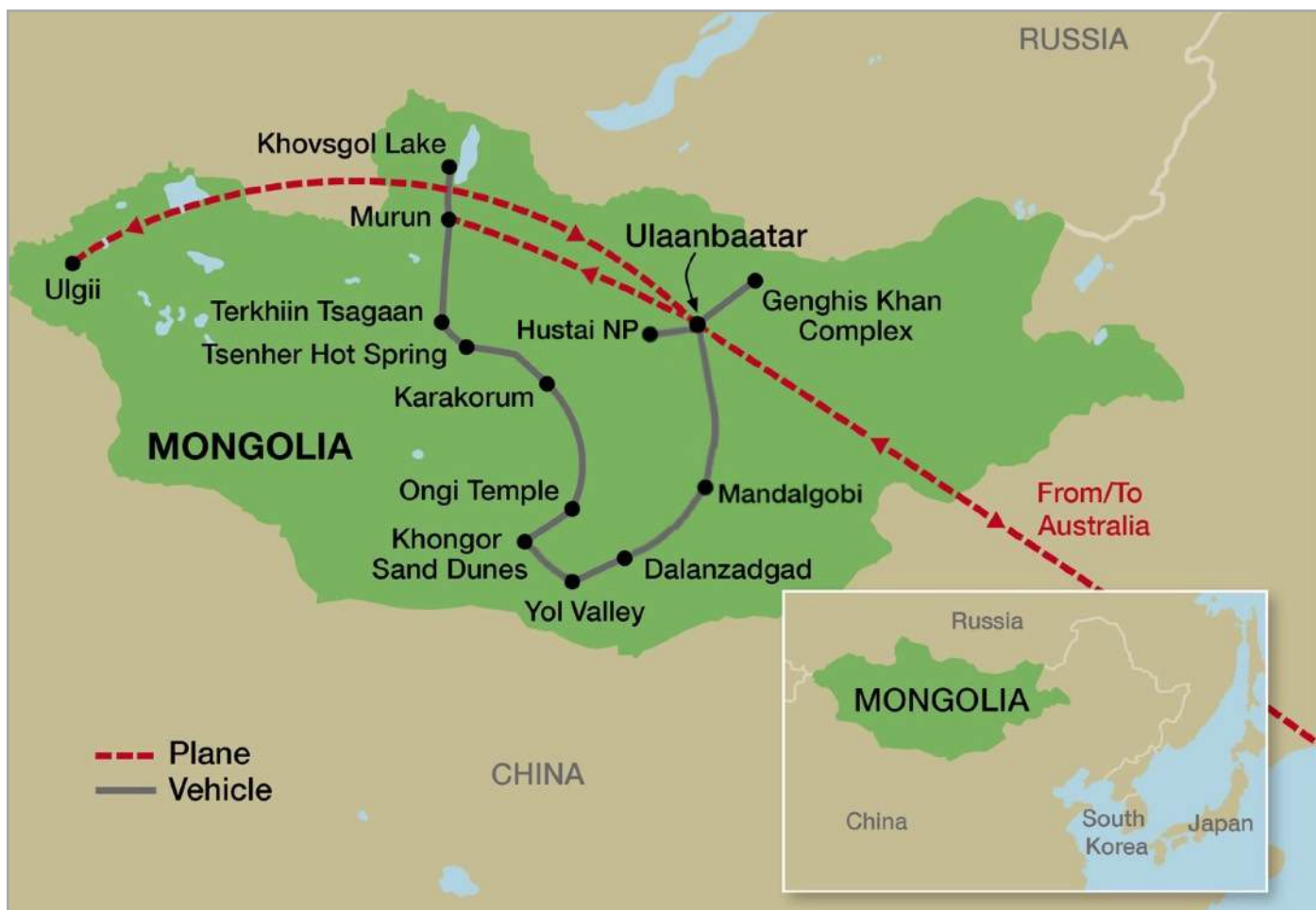
A trip through the Land of the Sapphire Blue Sky is a truly unique experience.

If you're looking for a five-star type, cushy, comfortable holiday, then Mongolia is probably not for you. Mongolia is a land of extremes. If you want to get off the beaten track, 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 and 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.

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 a horse population of more than 3.5 million, which exceeds the country's human population. 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.

From the stark Gobi, incredible rock formations and magnificence of Khogoryn Els in the south, to the crystal blue lakes and rushing clear rivers of the north, Mongolia will delight you with its fascinating culture and stunning beauty.



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 Ulaanbaatar 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**



Day 2, Monday 7th July ULAANBAATAR CITY TOUR

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 approximately 55 km west of the capital towards the Mongol nomadic camp, where we will attend a



Mongol nomad show. The show provides information about traditional dairy products, felt-making processes, the nomads' migration 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 became extinct in the wild in the 1960s due to 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 at Mongol Nomadic 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 drawback 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 & TEREJ 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 Terej National Park, a unique area located near the big city, featuring granite rock formations such as Turtle Rock. We'll stay overnight in a deluxe ger at Terej 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 quintessentially 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 Terkhiiin 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 to Terkhiiin Tsagaan National Park and Khorgo Volcano – approximately 170 kilometres. The lake, birdlife and mountains are now protected within the 77,267-hectare Khorgo-Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur National Park. The lake, formed by lava flows from a volcanic eruption many millennia ago, is excellent for swimming, although it can be a bit cold in the morning. Try swimming in the late afternoon, after the sun has warmed it. Hike to 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 most 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, situated on the right bank of the Orkhon River and on the northeastern slopes of the Khangai Mountains. 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 placed under state protection and converted into a museum in 1944. The political climate in Mongolia is shifting, and Buddhism, previously suppressed, is experiencing a resurgence throughout 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 highlights including artifacts from the 6th-8th century Turkic Empire. 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 (around 550 km on a bumpy road) 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. Overnight in the Ongiin nuuts ger camp, standard gers. **B/L/D**



**Day 13, Friday
18th July
KHONGOR SAND DUNES**

After breakfast, we'll drive to the famous Khongor 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 eye 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 '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 in the sunlight and can be seen from a great distance. 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 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 the way, we might see ibex, mountain goats, Altai pica, yaks, and vultures. **B/L/D**



Day 16, Monday 21st July MIDDLE GOBI PROVINCE

Today, we'll start our 400km drive with a visit to "Mukhar Shivert" canyon and take a 30-minute one-way spectacular walk in the canyon, surrounded by tall vertical cliffs. The canyon has a dead end with a beautiful waterfall that stays frozen for most of the year, except for a short summertime period. 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 (1.5-hour 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, as well as its traditions of 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 souvenir shops as well as 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 centuries-long 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 enjoy 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**

Day 23, Monday 28th July DEPARTURE

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



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section.** Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.