

Nomadic Life, Mongolia

Itinerary

Day 1 - Ulaanbaatar

You are met on arrival at Ulaanbaatar and transferred to your hotel.

Please note that the itinerary may vary due to local conditions, but always with your best interests in mind.

After lunch (which is to your own account) visit Gandantegchinlin Monastery and the National Museum of Mongolian History.

Built in 1809, the Gandantegchinlin Monastery (formerly known as the Gandan Monastery) is a Tibetan-style Buddhist monastery located in Ulan Bator. Its name is of Tibetan origin and can be translated as "Great site full of Joy". Several hundred monks currently reside there. The National Museum of Mongolian History tells the story of the country, from prehistoric times to today.

Dinner downtown and overnight at the hotel.



Day 2 - Hustai National Park

You are transferred from Ulaanbaatar to Hustai National Park.

Declared a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 2002, the Hustai National Park covers 50,000 hectares of steppe and mountain forest and is home to many species of mammals and birds. It is best known for hosting the conservation project to protect the endangered Takhi. This wild horse, also known as Przewalski's horse, had completely disappeared from its natural habitat. Only a few specimens were still present in zoos around the world. A breeding and reintroduction program was initiated in 1992, resulting in a wild and sustainable

Takhi population inside the Khustai park which now stands at about 450 horses.

During the afternoon, you have a vehicle drive in the park in search of the Takhi.

Dinner and overnight at the ger camp (2 – 4 guests per ger).



Day 3 - To Karakorum

After breakfast you drive to Karakorum with a picnic lunch on the way.

Karakorum (Kharkhorin) is the ancient capital of the Mongol Empire, founded in 1235 by Ogödei, the son of Genghis Khan. In 1260, Kublai Khan transfers the capital to Beijing. Karakorum was destroyed in 1388 by troops of the Ming Dynasty. Of its former glory remain mere turtle statues guarding the entrances to the city walls.

Later visit Erdene Zuu monastery.

In 1585, Erdene Zuu was built just outside the walls of the ruins of the ancient capital after the introduction of Buddhism in Mongolia as the state religion. Stones from the ruins of Karakorum were used in the construction. The monastery was damaged in the 1680s, but was rebuilt in the 18th century and in 1872. For centuries, Erdene Zuu was the most important religious shrine in Mongolia.

After the fall of communism in Mongolia in 1990, the monastery was given to lamas and Erdene Zuu became a place of worship once again. Today Erdene Zuu remains an active Buddhist monastery, as well as a museum.

Dinner and overnight at the ger camp (2 – 4 guests per ger).



Day 4 - To the Orkhon Valley

After breakfast drive to the Orkhon Valley, a famous World Heritage Site in Central Mongolia.

Classified in 2004 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site as the cradle of nomadic Mongolia, the cultural landscape of the Orkhon Valley (about 121.967 hectares) covers an extensive area of pastureland that stretches approximately 80km long and 15km wide on both banks of the Orkhon River.

You have a picnic on the way, and also visit Tovkhon Monastery.

Tovkhon Monastery towers above the Orkhon Valley at an altitude of 2,400m. The monastery includes several small temples, the oldest of which was built in 1654 for Zanabazar, who was the first spiritual leader of Buddhists in the line of Gelugpas in Mongolia. Zanabazar brought a new beginning to the region on issues related to spirituality, including theology, language, art, medicine and astronomy. He composed sacred music, mastered the art of bronze and painting, and invented Soyombo writing in 1686.

In the afternoon you travel by vehicle through the Orkhon Valley to meet the family of the nomads who will welcome you for the next four days.

Overnight in a "guest-ger", close to the nomad family's ger for the next three nights.



Days 5 & 6 – Nomadic Life

These two days are devoted to horse riding and discovering the traditional lifestyle of the nomads of Mongolia.

Each ger camp is home to a family whose daily lives are punctuated by the care of their herds: milking mares, sheep, goats and dris (female yaks), caring for sick or debilitated animals, moving animals to new pastures. Women also take care of the children, cook and prepare different milk products (butter, cheese, fermented mare's milk, drinking milk) and maintain the interior of the ger. The men look after animals, maintenance of hardware and harness horses. They also cut wood for cooking.

The programme is very flexible so you can tailor your activities according to your preferences. The horses are at your disposal, as well as your translator and the equestrian guides of the nomadic family, so you can ride when you want. The nomads adapt the pace to your riding ability. It is possible, for example, to plan a horse ride for beginners in the morning and another one in the afternoon for more experienced riders with a faster pace.

Similarly, your vehicle and driver are at your disposal if you want to visit a place which cannot be reached in a day on horseback.

You can also take the time to sit quietly in camp, playing with children, helping to care for the herd if you want ... to really appreciate the unique nomadic lifestyle.



Day 7 – in the Bayan Gobi Desert

Say farewell to the nomad family after lunch and drive to the Bayan Gobi Desert (Khogno Khan Park), the heart of Mongolia.

Khogno Khan Park is home to huge sand dunes offering a variety of stunning landscapes that earned the region its nickname of "Mini Gobi" or "Bayan Gobi".

The geographical centre of Mongolia, the area you are travelling through in is the junction of three major ecosystems: two of the main mountain ranges (the Khangai and the Khenti) and a northern edge of the Gobi Desert.

There are many camels in the dunes, and there may be the opportunity to experience riding one of these animals. You will also visit Ovgon Khiid monastery.

Located about 280 km from the capital, Khogno Khan Park has amazing rock formations; cliffs shaped by erosion overlooking vast semi-desert plains. Here you will discover the Ovgon Khiid Monastery, a small monastery built during the 17th century, set in dramatic scenery.

Overnight in a "guest-ger", close to another nomad family's ger.



Day 8 - in the Bayan Gobi Desert

Today you spend more time exploring the Khogno Khan Park (Bayan Gobi Desert).

You can ride horses, walk in the dunes, or hike to a remote ancient monastery in the mountains. Only a few stones remain but they are full of tragic stories.

Night in a guest yurt close to our nomadic family.

Day 9 – to Ulaanbaatar

An early departure this morning to Ulaanbaatar with a picnic lunch enroute. The rest of the afternoon is free for shopping in Ulaanbaatar.

In the late afternoon, you attend a show with traditional dances, music and songs from Mongolia, including the amazing Khoomei.

The Khoomei is an overtone singing (throat singing) in which the singer produces two distinctively audible pitches at the same time, including a low pedal note, or drone, derived from the fundamental frequency of the vocal cord vibrations, and higher melodic notes that result when the singer's mouth acts as a filter, selecting one note at a time from among the drone's natural overtone series pitches.

Overnight in a hotel. Dinner is to your own account this evening.



Day 10 - Ulaanbaatar

Transfer to the airport after breakfast for your flight home.

Accommodation

When in Ulaanbaatar (first and last nights of the ride) you will stay centrally in a modern hotel of reasonable standard with ensuite bathrooms. This is usually the Dream Hotel (Khoroo 4, Ulaanbaatar 21646. Tel: +976 11 32 1253).



On the trail you stay two nights in comfortable semi-permanent ger camps, with proper single beds. Please note that the gers sleep two to five guests and this accommodation may be shared with other guests on the trail. A central stove is lit for warmth on cold nights, particularly welcome early and late in the season. It is sometimes possible to pay a supplement to guarantee a single/twin ger, subject to availability (please refer to your invoice for confirmation).



Showers are available in the semi-permanent ger camps.



Five nights will be spent in a 'guest ger' next to a nomad family's ger. A loo screen and washing tent will be erected, but showers are not available on these nights.



Upgrade to Blue Sky Hotel & Tower in Ulaanbaatar

When in Ulaanbaatar (first and last nights of the ride) you have paid to upgrade to Blue Sky Hotel & Tower (Peace Ave 17, Ulaanbaatar. Tel: +976 7010 0505).

