

MONGOLIA

Classic Mongolian Odyssey

July 6 - 18, 2020





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Classic Mongolian Odyssey

Join Nomadic Expeditions on this classic journey which offers a fascinating introduction to the people and culture of Mongolia. Explore the cliffs and canyons of the Gobi, cross the steppes in search of the world's last wild horses, and discover the ruins of ancient cities and temples on our most popular itinerary.

As part of this exceptional journey, take part in the celebrations surrounding Naadam, Mongolia's national games. Wrestling, horse racing, and archery are the three age-old competitions traditionally used to measure the courage and strength of nomads and warriors. Contemporary Naadam Games showcase the abilities of local men, women, boys, and girls, and are also a time when family and friends get together to celebrate the short, joyful summer season.

DEPARTURE DATE(S): JULY 6- 18, 2020
RECOMMENDED FOR:

Explorers interested in an intimate and genuine cultural experience at Mongolia's national games, as well as discovering the scenic beauty of the mountains, steppes, Lake Hovsgol, and Gobi Desert.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Witness the celebrations and traditions surrounding Naadam Festival

Lake Hovsgol

Flaming Cliffs

Yol Valley

Interaction with local nomads

Sand dunes at Moltsgol Els

ACCOMMODATIONS:

6 nights at Shangri-La Hotel, Ulaanbaatar

1 night at Terelj Hotel, Gorkhi Terelj National Park

2 nights at ger camps

3 nights at the award-winning Three Camel Lodge

Day 1
Monday, July 6

WELCOME TO ULAANBAATAR

The contrast between ancient traditions and a 21st-century democracy is most visible in Ulaanbaatar, where traditional gers and Buddhist monasteries sit side by side with modern high-rises. Upon arrival at the airport you are welcomed by your Mongolian guide and transferred to a centrally located hotel within walking distance of various museums and shops.

(Shangri-La Hotel)

Day 2
Tuesday, July 7
ULAANBAATAR

Begin the day with a visit to Gandan Monastery, the seat of Buddhism in Mongolia. Although Buddhist monasteries were either destroyed or converted into museums during the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, Gandan Monastery continued to operate as a showpiece for government officials. However, in spite of the government's efforts to suppress Buddhism and other religious beliefs, Mongolia's spirituality persisted and a significant resurgence of Buddhism began in 1990 when Mongolia became a democracy. Monasteries across the country are again opening their doors to worshippers and the few lamas who survived the purges are training a new generation. Extensive reconstruction and renovation projects are underway and priceless artifacts that were hidden for safekeeping by nomadic families are now being returned to monasteries.

Next, drive through downtown Ulaanbaatar to the National Museum for an excellent overview of Mongolia's history and culture. The newly remodeled museum displays traditional implements of daily nomadic life including Stone and Bronze Age artifacts, historical costumes of Mongolia's minority tribes, sacred religious relics, and agricultural, fishing, and hunting equipment.

You will also visit the Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum. Named in honor of Zanabazar, the first Buddhist leader of Mongolia and renowned sculptor, artist, and politician from the 17th century, the museum contains one of the best collections of Buddhist art and artifacts in the world, including many of Zanabazar's original works.

In the evening, drive to Zaisan Memorial, built by the former Soviet Union to commemorate fallen soldiers of World War II. Those who climb the 300 steps will be rewarded with a beautiful panoramic view of the capital city, the Tuul River, and the surrounding countryside. Enjoy welcome dinner at a fine local restaurant.

(Shangri-La Hotel; B, L, D)

Day 3
Wednesday, July 8
LAKE HOVSGOL

In the morning, fly north to Murun, the capital of Hovsgol Province, and continue overland to Lake Hovsgol (3 hours). The beauty and mystical qualities of Lake Hovsgol are legendary. Mongolia's largest lake by water volume, it extends 85 miles in length, 18 miles in width, and is fed by over 90 streams and rivers. This crystal-clear alpine lake, known as Mongolia's "dark blue pearl," remains untouched by industry and is situated





among the most pristine forests, mountains, and meadows in the world. Along the way, stop at Uushgiin Deer Stones, one of the best-preserved monuments of its kind in Mongolia. Dating back thousands of years, the Uushigiin Deer Stones are comprised of 14 magnificently preserved deer stones, lined from north to south and often referred to as the “graveyard of deer stones.” The front stone is carved with a human face on top and is the only one to have been found. Awareness of the Uushigiin Deer Stones has increased recently as a result of the Smithsonian Institute’s research at the site. Continue your drive to Lake Hovsgol. Overnight at a ger camp on the lakeshore.

(Local Ger Camp; B, L, D)

Day 4
Thursday, July 9
LAKE HOVSGOL

Spend this day exploring the lakeshore and surrounding mountains and meadows. Travelers can enjoy nature walks, kayak on the lake, or sample Mongolian-style horseback riding. Those who are interested will also have the opportunity to visit local nomads’ dwellings, and experience the ancient nomadic culture first-hand. Dinner and overnight at the camp.

(Local Ger Camp; B, L, D)

Day 5
Friday, July 10
ULAANBAATAR

In the morning, return by flight to Ulaanbaatar. Spend the rest of the day at leisure. Your hotel’s central location is ideal for exploring the city’s shopping and cultural pursuits.

(Shangri-La Hotel; B, L)

Day 6
Saturday, July 11
NAADAM

Wake early in the morning to attend the Naadam Festival, the most popular festival in Mongolia. Observe as the celebrations begin with a colorful parade of marching soldiers, athletes, musicians, and people dressed as ancient warriors. True to its name, the festival is dedicated to the “Three Manly Games.”

Archery: The skill of Mongolian archers and their advanced bow design was a significant asset to Chinggis Khan and his descendants during the years of Mongolian conquest. In the past, sharpshooters would practice by aiming for the heads of marmots.

At today’s Naadam games, small round leather targets are placed at a distance of 60-100 meters from the archers, who still use formidable compound bows made from wood, horn, and sinew. The archers wear a special glove on the thumb and index finger of the right hand and wrap the left arm in soft belts. Referees, lined up next to the targets, mark each hit, raise their hands, and move around the spot singing a short song of praise. The best archer




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receives the title of “mergen,” or marksman.

Wrestling: Each wrestler wears trunks, an open-fronted long-sleeved silk vest, and ornamental knee boots with upturned toes. Before the wrestling match begins, the wrestlers perform the “eagle’s dance” symbolizing power and invincibility. The wrestler who forces his competitor to touch the ground with his knees or elbow is considered the winner. The victor then repeats the “eagle’s dance,” with his opponent passing under his arm (as though under a wing) as a sign of submission.

Horse racing: Horseracing originally involved adult jockeys and the most popular contests involved riding unbroken horses. Later, so as to ease the burden on horses in long-distance races, the adult riders were replaced by children as young as six years old riding broken horses. The racing is done both with and without saddles, and the horses that take part are two years and older. Depending on the age of the horses, the distance of the races vary from 5 - 30 kilometers. The race’s winner is honored with a cup of airag (fermented mare’s milk), which he or she drinks and sprinkles on the head and croup of the horse.

(Shangri-La Hotel; B, L, D)

Day 7 Sunday, July 12

GUN GALUUT NATURE RESERVE

After an early breakfast, we will head east from Ulaanbaatar. Though only two and a half hours from the capital, the recently established Gun Galuut Nature Reserve contains a very beautiful river valley and mountain range surrounded by rolling steppe. Among the special natural attractions, we will hope to find a

small population of the endangered Argali sheep.

Those interested will also have the opportunity to meet your horse wranglers and horse trek towards a nomadic herder family in their summer pasture. Relatively unchanged for centuries, Mongolia has one of the last remaining horse-based nomadic cultures in the world. Through spontaneous encounters with nomadic families, you will experience the tradition of warm hospitality offered to passing travelers in the form of food, shelter, and friendship.

We will spend a full day exploring the Gun Galuut Nature Reserve and in the evening drive to Gorkhi Terelj National Park (1.5 hours). Comprised of the southern Khentii mountain range, this mountain, forest, steppe region provides habitat for a variety of bird and plant life. Also sheltered in this protected area are endangered musk deer and moose, brown bear, roe, elk, wolf, fox, and badger.

(Terelj Hotel; B, L, D)

Day 8 Monday, July 13

GORKHI TEREJ NATIONAL PARK

Embark on an adventurous hike towards the Aryabal Monastery. A hike up along a steep road leads to a wooden suspended bridge called “the bridge that leads to wisdom.” After crossing the bridge, you climb 108 steps to finally arrive at the temple. Along the way, the path is lined with numerous signboards displaying Buddha’s teachings. The monastery is special for its spectacular views of the surrounding green valley.



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Our next stop is Turtle Rock, a natural rock formation that resembles a turtle in its shell. You also have the opportunity to explore the national park on foot or on horseback before we set off for Ulaanbaatar.

En route stop at the Chinggis Khan Equestrian Statue in Tsonjin Boldog. The massive statue made of 250 tons of gleaming stainless steel will take your breath away. Once inside the two-story base of the statue, visitors can see a replica of Chinggis Khan's legendary golden whip and also take an elevator to a deck on the horse's head and marvel at the surrounding area overlooking the beautiful Mongolian steppes. Return to Ulaanbaatar and enjoy dinner independently. Overnight at the hotel.

(Shangri-La Hotel; B, L)

Day 9
Tuesday, July 14
FLY TO THE GOBI

Set off in the morning across the vast steppe to the Gobi (1.5 hours). Contrary to the sameness that the word 'desert' suggests, the Gobi is a fascinating and diverse region, and includes the sites of some of the most important paleontological discoveries of the 20th century. Explore the stunning landscape of the Gobi, habitat for Bactrian camels, Argali mountain sheep, goitered gazelle, golden eagles, Saker falcons, jerboas (similar to kangaroo rats), and many endemic reptiles.

On arrival, drive to the award-winning Three Camel Lodge for dinner and overnight.

This evening, if you wish, visit the Havtsgait Petroglyphs where you will hike up the side of a local mountain home to hundreds of stone carvings from the Bronze Age. Note: this is a steep hike on loose gravel and takes about 20-25 minutes.

(Three Camel Lodge; B, L, D)

Day 10
Wednesday, July 15
YOL VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

Drive to Yol Valley National Park (1 hour), cradled in the foothills of the Altai Mountains. An ancient river carved this surprisingly green valley, and its remnant streams create ice formations at the base of the valley that sometimes persist as late as July. A hike through the valley leads to the habitat of indigenous vulture-like Lammergeiers, Altai snowcocks, ibex, yaks, and Argali mountain sheep.

After your exploration of Yol Valley, drive to the Three Camel Lodge (2 hours), an award-winning eco-lodge located near the Gurvansaikhan Gobi National Park.

In the evening, if time permits, drive to the Havtsgait Valley, site of ancient rock drawings left by early Gobi settlers for more than

5,000-7,000 years ago. Hundreds of petroglyphs adorn rocks scattered on the top of the mountain.

(Three Camel Lodge; B, L, D)

Day 11
Thursday, July 16
MOLTSOG ELS | FLAMING CLIFFS

Explore the dunes at Moltsoq Els. If you are interested, you will have the opportunity to ride a Bactrian camel.

In the evening, drive to the legendary Flaming Cliffs (1 hour), named for the red-orange sandstone that glows brilliantly at sunrise and sunset. It was here in 1923 that Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews and his exploration team from the American Museum of Natural History found the first nest of dinosaur eggs the world had ever seen. To the trained eye, the dramatic formations of the Flaming Cliffs are rich with fossils, and paleontological expeditions continue to make significant discoveries at this site. Return to the ger camp for dinner and overnight.

(Three Camel Lodge; B, L, D)

Day 12
Friday, July 17
RETURN TO ULAANBAATAR

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for the return flight to Ulaanbaatar (1.5 hours). On arrival, In the afternoon, visit Bogd Khan Winter Palace museum, home of Mongolia's last theocrat, Bogd Jabzan Damba Hutagt VIII. The museum displays elaborate ceremonial robes and other personal effects of "Mongolia's 8th Living Buddha."

In the evening enjoy a performance featuring traditional Mongolian dancers and khoomi throat singers.

(Shangri-La Hotel; B, L, D)

Day 13
Saturday, July 18
DEPARTURE

After breakfast transfer to the airport for departure.

B=Breakfast L=Lunch D=Dinner

Nomadic Expeditions reserves the right to change the above itinerary if necessary.




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2020 LAND PRICE

6 -14 passengers: \$8,200 per person/double occupancy

Internal Airfare: \$640 per person (subject to change by airlines)

Single supplement: \$2,500

Airfare for international flight is not included.

Please contact us for details.

LAND PRICE INCLUDES:

- Ground transportation in Mongolia as described in the itinerary;
- Transfers upon arrival and departure;
- All accommodations based on double or twin occupancy (hotel rooms and gers);
- Meals as noted in itinerary;
- All excursions, entrance fees, and visits as described in itinerary;
- Extensive pre-departure Travel Guide, reading list, important information about your trip, and luggage tags;
- Bilingual Nomadic Expeditions guide throughout your stay

LAND PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- International airfare; internal airfare is quoted separately and subject to change by airlines
- Tips to guides/drivers
- Passport and visa fees
- Comprehensive medical and trip insurance; airport taxes
- Excess baggage charges
- Photography and video fees
- Food and beverages not included in the group meals
- Items of a personal nature, including alcoholic beverages, laundry and telephone calls
- Other items not specifically mentioned as included.

WHY TRAVEL WITH NOMADIC EXPEDITIONS?

Unrivaled Expertise

Nomadic Expeditions was founded in 1992. Nothing can compete with the experience we have attained over 25 years of designing luxury adventure travel to Asia. While each trip we design is slightly different than its predecessor, our breadth of knowledge, network of contacts, and experience in the field is unrivaled.

Our People

We hire the best in the business to create and execute memorable journeys for our clients. From our Expedition Specialists in the United States, Ulaanbaatar, Lhasa, and Thimpu who turn wish lists into reality to our English-speaking, professionally trained guides who share their extensive knowledge of the culture and natural history of our destinations, our staff is what makes Nomadic Expeditions successful.

Passion for Travel

While our journeys open your eyes to a whole new world of experiences, we understand that choosing to book a trip with us requires time spent away from friends, family, and work. Your time is precious and we take that to heart. It's why we design journeys that go beyond a checklist of attractions. When you travel with us, we want you to remember drinking tea with a nomadic family or digging for fossils with a renowned paleontologist. We imbue our trips with encounters, whether it's with a local resident, a high-ranking government official, or a renowned wildlife conservationist, so you take home more than a set of photographs to frame on your nightstand.

Our Philosophy

Nomadic Expeditions was founded on the principle of treading lightly long before sustainable travel was a buzz phrase. Every expedition is undertaken with the greatest respect for the lands we explore and the local people we meet. Those who travel with us do so with the assurance that the preservation and protection of the ecosystems and cultures we visit is of the utmost importance to us, both as individuals and as a company. Respect for the places we travel to is at the heart of everything we do, but over our 25 years we have realized additional opportunities where we can lend a hand. We have gone beyond simply treading lightly and have wholeheartedly partnered with local communities and regions. Read more about our sustainable practices and philanthropic efforts here.

We would love to share this exceptional adventure with you!

Our Expedition Specialists are available from 9:00 AM- 5:00 PM EST, Monday thru Friday

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