

MONGOLIA

DETAILED ITINERARY

GRASSLANDS, NOMADS AND THE GOBI

Nov 30/23

Photo: © Fred Lokay



Grasslands extend to a horizon of cobalt-blue skies, pastel-hued rocks color the Gobi Desert, and fast-flowing rivers cut deep canyons in arid steppes in this remote Asian nation land-locked between China and Russia. The people, descendants of Genghis Khan, are an eclectic mix of rugged nomads, Buddhist monks, farmers and merchants. For the truly adventurous, Mongolia holds the promise of an exotic culture rarely visited by travelers.

Starting in Ulaanbaatar, the tour uses the capital as a hub to visit the beautiful shores of Lake Hovsgol. Surrounded by mountains and forests, it contains three percent of the Earth's fresh water. We travel to Yol Valley, in the Gobi Desert where we experience a unique environment that includes 200 species of birds and 600 species of vegetation. We see the the ancient red rock creation known as the "Flaming Cliffs" and a world-class dinosaur site with remains so

FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

- 17 land days • Maximum 16 travelers • Start & finish in Ulaanbaatar • All meals included • Includes 6 internal flights • Witness the Eagle Festival, the celebration of the Kazakh culture • Learn about the traditions and culture while visiting a Kazakh family • Visit the remote Altai Mountains • Enjoy beautiful Lake Hovsgol and the stunning Mongolian landscape • Explore Flaming Cliffs dinosaur site • Witness Khongoryn Els -the singing sand dunes • Experience the Gobi desert • Visit Erdene Zuu Monastery

DEPARTURE DATES & PRICE

Sept 07 - Sept 23, 2025 - \$8695 USD

Activity Level: 2

Comfort Level: Some rough/dusty roads and long drives. Flexibility is key due to changing internal airline schedules. The Altai Mountain region is very remote

ACCOMMODATIONS: Comfortable hotel in Ulaanbaatar with private bathrooms. Eight nights accommodation in twin/single room gers (Mongolian circular tents) with private bathroom facilities. Basic hotel accommodation for 2 nights in the Altai Mountain region.

ELDERTREKS



SMALL GROUP
EXOTIC ADVENTURES
FOR TRAVELERS 50 PLUS

plentiful that dinosaur eggshells can still be found on the surface. In Karakoram we discover the ruins of the ancient capital of the Mongols, and in Ulaanbaatar we walk through former royal palaces and visit the national museum.

The highlight for many is the famous Altai Eagle Festival in the impressive Altai Tavan Bogd mountain range. Altai is truly an adventurer's paradise. The surrounding atmosphere is remarkable but extreme, with snow-capped mountains, lush green rolling hillsides, stunning freshwater lakes and eternal blue sky. This is home to unique and diverse cultural presentations and the main ethnic group, the Kazakhs, have a colorful culture and rich history. Altai Eagle Festival is an exclusive hunting tradition with eagles that has existed for 2000 years and is still strong among the Kazakhs.



DAY 1 ARRIVE IN ULAANBAATAR

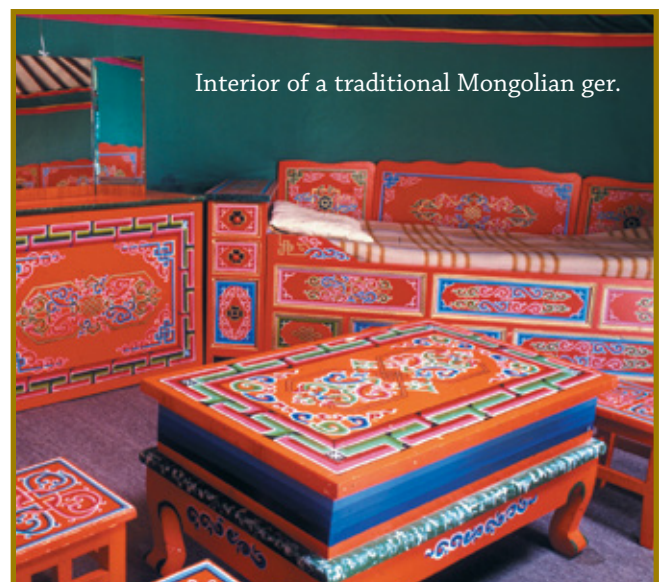
Arrive in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia and transfer to our centrally located hotel. We gather this evening for our orientation meeting and dinner.

Overnight in Ulaanbaatar.



DAY 2 FLY TO MURON, LAKE HOVSGOL

Today we fly to Muron, located in the center of Hovsgol province. A scenic drive takes us to Hovsgol Lake, Central Asia's second-largest freshwater lake, which has over one percent of the world's freshest water and a maximum depth of 262m. Ninety-six rivers and streams feed this gorgeous lake, but only the Egiin River flows out from the lake, joining the Selenge River on the way to Lake Baikal. Nine species of fish inhabit Hovsgol Lake. At the same time, the nearby forests and mountains provide







habitat for 68 species of mammals, including argali, ibex, elk, reindeer, musk deer, brown bear, lynx, marten, beaver, wolf, and moose, as well as 244 species of birds and 750 species of plants. The lake is surrounded by dozens of stunning mountains, thick pine forests, and lush meadows with grazing yaks and horses.

Dinner and overnight in our ger camp.

DAY 3 LAKE HOVSGOL - HIKE, BOAT RIDE

We enjoy a light hike in the surrounding forest mountains in the morning, where we can better see the crystal blue lake. Riding around the shores is breathtaking. In the afternoon, we have a boat ride up north to visit the Tsaatan reindeer people and learn about their unique way of life. We will see traditional tent dwelling urts, and plenty of reindeer.

Dinner and overnight in our ger camp.

DAY 4 LAKE HOVSGOL - HORSEBACK AND YAK CART RIDING (OPTIONAL)

Today, we can try horseback riding or yak cart riding! Also, for those intrepid swimmers you can go for a dip in the lake!

Dinner and overnight in our ger camp.

DAY 5 TO ULAANBAATAR - ZANABAZAR MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

In the morning, we return to the airport in Murov, where we catch our flight back to Ulaanbaatar. This afternoon in the city, we have the opportunity to visit the Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts.

Dinner and overnight in Ulaanbaatar.

DAY 6 FLY TO GOBI DESERT - YOL VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

Today, we fly south to the Gobi Desert. The Gobi Desert is a mysterious place that captivates the imagination. It is an extreme area with wide temperature swings, sparse vegetation and a small population of hearty nomads. It is also unique for its fauna and is home to the two-humped Bactrian camel and the world's only desert bear, the Gobi bear. Today, we drive to the Yol Am (Eagle's Mouth) Valley nestled between the beautiful peaks of Gurvansaikhan (Three Beauties). We hike through the Shivertam Valley and Mukhar Shiver, also known as an ice valley for its dramatic and unusual scenery.

After a 2-hour hike, we have a picnic lunch at Yol Valley National Park. The park contains over 200 species of birds, including the Mongolian Desert finch and cinereous vulture, as well as 600 different types of vegetation and plants.

Dinner and overnight in our ger camp.

DAY 7 GOBI DESERT - SINGING SAND DUNES

Today we drive to Khongor Sand Dunes (130 miles). Khongoryn Els is the largest accumulation of sand in the Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park. The dunes rise abruptly from the plain. The dunes can reach an imposing 2500 feet in height, 5-7 miles wide and stretch for over 100 miles along the Gobi Altai mountain range. These high dunes are called "singing sands" by locals as it makes various sounds when the wind is blowing. We have free time to explore the dunes on foot or just enjoy the magic of the dunes. We will also visit a camel breeding family and have the opportunity for a short camel ride.

Dinner and overnight in our ger camp.

DAY 8 FLAMING CLIFFS - CEMETERY OF DINOSAURS

After breakfast at the camp, we continue on to see the “Flaming Cliffs”. On the way, explore an arid steppe landscape with camel herds and herding families. The true name of this site is Bayanzag, first excavated in 1922, the area is world renowned as a “Cemetery of Dinosaurs”. The striking red Bayanzag cliffs have dinosaur fossils, eggs, and bones throughout, and are surrounded by bushy Saxual tree forests. Enjoy optional trekking around the areas.

Dinner and overnight in our ger camp.

DAY 9 RETURN TO ULAANBAATAR, BOGD KHAN PALACE

In the morning, we drive to the airport at Dalanzadgad, where we catch our flight back to Ulaanbaatar. In the afternoon, we visit the Bogd Khan Palace, with its bizarre collection of artifacts, including a royal ger made out of snow leopard skins! Unique bronze castings, silk paintings, paper icons, mineral paintings, and Buddhist statues made by Zanabazar and his students are the main attractions of this palace.

Dinner and overnight in Ulaanbaatar.

DAY 10 HOGNO KHAN MOUNTAINS

After early morning breakfast, we start driving to Bayangobi. This unique place has many different natural landscape forms, combining dunes, forests, and rocky mountains. There will be opportunities to hike in the small sand dunes or ride a camel. We have lunch at our ger camp.

In the afternoon we visit Erdene Khambyn Khuree, located 20 km from the camp in the majestic-looking Khugnu Khaan mountain. Enlightened Bogd Geegen

Zanabazar, a religious leader, philosopher, artist, and sculptor, founded and dedicated Uvgun and Zалуu temples within the monastery to his religious teacher. There will also be an opportunity to visit a horse breeder’s family, ride a horse on an authentic Mongolian wooden saddle, and experience making ‘airag’ -the Mongolian traditional drink made from mare’s milk.

Dinner and overnight in the ger camp.

DAY 11 TO KARAKORAM - ANCIENT CAPITAL OF THE MONGOLS

In the morning, we will enjoy a day trip to Karakoram, which served as the Mongolian capital for only 40 years (when Kublai Khan moved it to what is now Beijing). Most of the city was later destroyed by Manchurian soldiers. On our way to Karakoram, we visit Erdene Zuu Monastery. The remnants of the city were reputedly used to build this monastery in the 16th century. We visit the newly opened museum in Karakorum showcasing recent archeological findings in the area and excellent displays on Mongolian empires.

Dinner and overnight in our ger camp

DAY 12 PRZEWALSKI WILD HORSES, RETURN TO ULAANBAATAR

After an early breakfast, we drive to the Hustain Nuruu (Pike Hustai) National Reserve to have a view of Przewalski wild horses, recently reintroduced back into Mongolia. The 90,000 hectare reserve was established in 1993 and the takhi (the Mongolian name of wild horses) were brought to Mongolia from zoo parks within Holland. These wild horses have been successfully reintroduced to their homeland from zoo parks worldwide after 40 years of near

Flaming Cliffs — nature's miracle.



extinction. Currently, the number of takhi has reached more than 170. Tour the visitor center to learn about the conservation projects and hike to the mountains to view the horses. Afterwards, we drive back to Ulaanbaatar.

Dinner and overnight in Ulaanbaatar.

DAY 13 FLIGHT TO ULGII - BAYAN-ULGII PROVINCE

This morning, we take a 2.5 hours flight to Ulgii, the center of Bayan-Ulgii in Mongolia's most western province. Ninety percent of the population of Bayan-Ulgii are Kazakhs, Mongolia's largest ethnic minority. The Altai Mountains provide some of the most spectacular scenery in Mongolia and the isolated location has preserved the language and traditions of the Kazakh people. Upon arrival, we will transfer to the hotel and enjoy lunch.

After lunch, we will visit the local history museum located in downtown Ulgii. This 2-storey museum showcases the finest embroideries and artifacts collected from the region, including horse and eagle hunting accessories, hand-woven carpets, and other arts and crafts. This small but impressive museum offers an excellent opportunity to glimpse the history and culture of the people who have dwelled around the Altai Mountains for over a century. Later on, we visit a Kazakh family and have a chance to view the local crafts. Kazakh women are renowned for their skills in embroidery and applique, and their gers are decorated in a dazzling array of colors. Hand-crafted felt carpets line the floor, and delicately embroidered tapestries adorn their gers' walls, each design unique to a particular family.

Dinner and overnight in Ulgii.

DAYS 14 & 15 ALTAI EAGLE FESTIVAL

We have two full days to witness the celebration of Kazakh culture - the Eagle Festival!

The competition begins with a parade of participants displaying hunting outfits and accessories. Golden Eagles will be evaluated for their speed, agility, hunting technique, and success. We will also attend a Kazakh play in honor of the Kazakhs and their eagles.

Dinner and overnight in Ulgii.

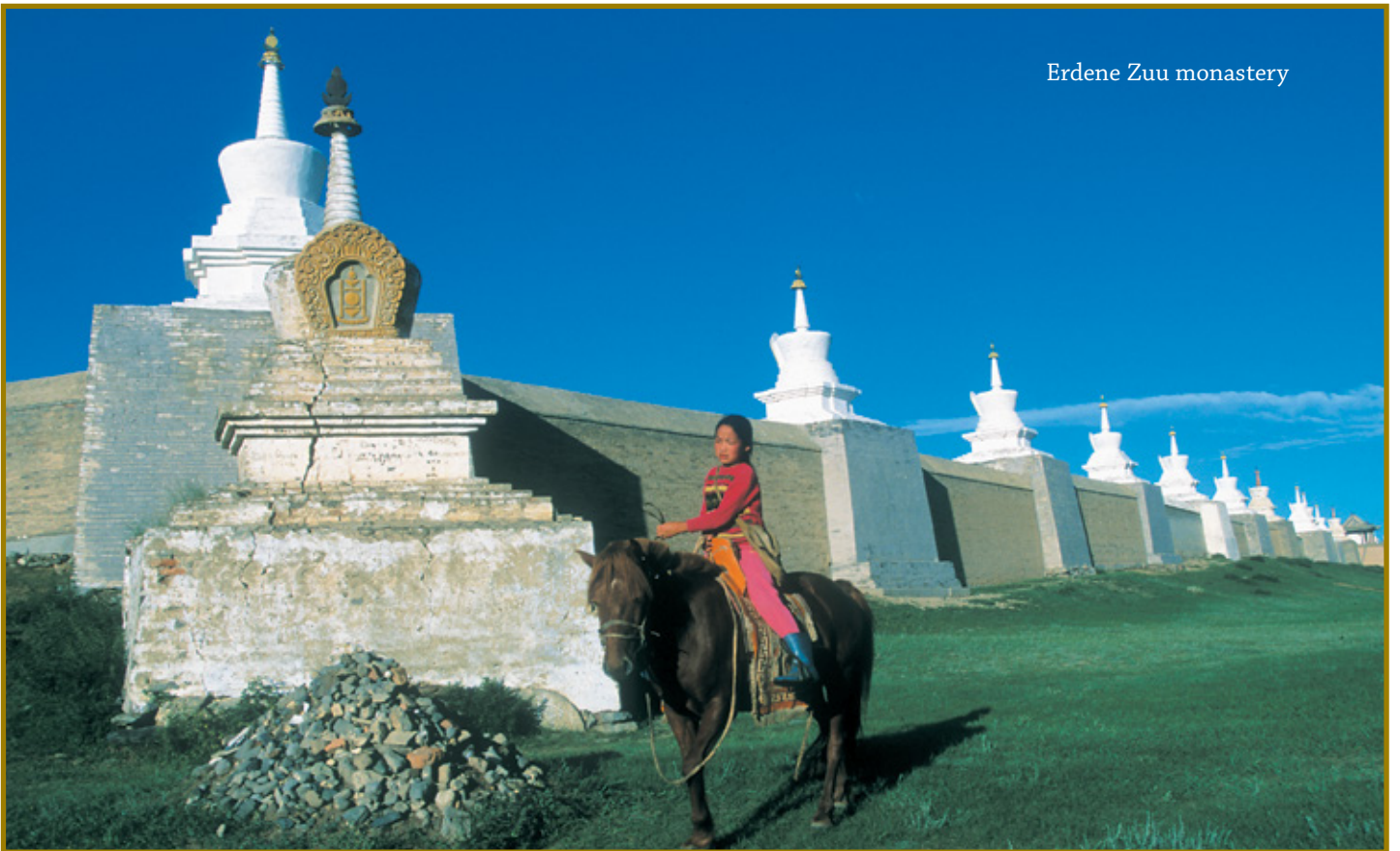
DAY 16 RETURN TO ULAANBAATAR

After breakfast, we transfer to the airport for our return flight to Ulaanbaatar. Upon arrival, we drive to Gandan Monastery, the heart of the Mongolian Buddhists. Feel the sense of Buddhism in Mongolia and see the outstanding and impressive 24m golden-plated statue of Megjid Janraisig. This monastery which houses 500 monks, is the largest in Mongolia. Afterwards we will tour the Choijin Lama Temple Museum in the city's center. This well-kept monastery was built in 1908 and is now a museum preserving elaborately decorated interiors and containing a rich collection of Mongolian Buddhist sculptures and paintings. It has several gilded bronze statues, impressive sculptures of the significant Mongolian and Tibetan incarnations of the Buddhist deities, and a striking array of papier-mâché masks used for the Tsam dance ceremonies. The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure for additional sightseeing and shopping.

Farewell dinner and overnight at hotel.

DAY 17 DEPARTURE

The tour concludes in Ulaanbaatar with a transfer to the airport for your departure flight.



Erdene Zuu monastery



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 16 participants. Small groups are an important ingredient in adventure travel. They allow for more interaction and more personalized service throughout the itinerary.

2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; all meals, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); bottled drinking water throughout the trip; all internal transportation; airport transfers on day 1 and departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); all day trips and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary; tips for hotels (porterage), national guide, bus driver, restaurants and spot guides; services of a trip leader.

3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, tips to ElderTreks tour leader, alcoholic drinks, visas and travel insurance.

4. ARE THESE “EDUCATIONAL” TOURS?

Yes, in the broadest sense of the word, “educational”. We visit museums, National Parks and Reserves and have talks and discussions on many aspects of history, culture and nature. But this is only a portion of the educational experience. We believe that it is equally educational to meet local people on a non-commercial basis, visit their homes (gers) and even try to learn a few words of Mongolian.

5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL DURING THE TOUR?

All local transportation is included in the land price of the trip. We use buses, 4-wheel drive vehicles and we have the opportunity to ride horses and camels. Includes 6 domestic flights.

6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

We always stay in good accommodations — a combination of ger camps and hotels. The ger is a round felt structure with comfortable raised beds on wooden floors. Private facilities at the ger camps.

7. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

Our summer departures have been timed to coincide with the pleasant temperatures in Mongolia. You can expect daytime highs of 80°F (26°C) with night-time lows of 40°F (4°C). The country receives very little rain throughout the year and the humidity is low as well, making for comfortable travel.

8. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 USD (plus insurance if you require it) is due at time of booking and will reserve your place on the tour. Payment of the full land cost is due 120 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and are outlined in the “Terms and Conditions” section of our brochure.

9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note that medical insurance is not required for this adventure but is recommended. ElderTreks offers comprehensive travel insurance and we are happy to provide you with a quote if you call our office. If you are purchasing insurance elsewhere, please ensure you provide the details to ElderTreks as soon as possible.

**Please note those travelers with pre-existing medical conditions must take out travel insurance at the time of deposit*

10. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TOUR?

There is a detailed “What to Take” list in our Trip Kit, which we will send to you after receiving your booking deposit for the trip.

11. WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?

All meals during the itinerary are included, starting with dinner on day 1, and finishing with breakfast on departure day. We eat a variety of local foods prepared in a wide range of settings. In many cases, we simply order a number of dishes and share, allowing you to sample new foods and decide what you enjoy best. In Ulaanbaatar, we eat in local establishments and at our hotel. Rest assured, though, we will make every effort to ensure that you are well fed with quality food.

12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks offers personalized flight itineraries — not group flights. Stop over en route, come in a few days early, or extend your stay. Call us for a customized itinerary.

13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions about the trip, please do not hesitate to contact our office for additional information. A Trip Kit containing further details on the destination will be sent to you once you have booked on the tour.











Naadam Festival