



MONGOLIAN ARCHEOLOGICAL QUEST



In partnership with Ulaanbaatar State University

Trip Date: August 10 - 23, 2023

(Designed for citizen scientists and professionals)

Trip Summary

Over two millennia ago, a powerful confederacy of nomadic tribes known as the Xiongnu Empire (*Hunnu* in Mongolian) thrived in what is now Mongolia. For many Mongolians, this is when the nation began. The Xiongnu were the dominant power in Central Asia, forcing their southern neighbor, the Han dynasty, to maintain a “peace and kinship treaty.” Dr. Erdenebaatar of Ulaanbaatar State University and his dedicated archaeological team have been excavating the largest known tomb of Xiongnu aristocrats to date. The site, known as **Gol Mod-2**, is located in the picturesque Arkhangai Province. Excavations of this site have yielded never before seen crafts of the Xiongnu Empire, including gold, silver, and jade ornaments, as well as parts of horse chariots, tools, and human and animal remains. In August of 2017 this team is planning to open yet another tomb at the site. During this “Empires of the Steppe” tour, we will be given exclusive access to visit the excavation site and to spend a few days with the scientists and students. We will have the opportunity to not only observe the excavation work, but to also help in unearthing ancient treasures never before seen by the modern world.

About guest lecturer and field leader Dr. Erdenebaatar Diimaajav

Dr. Erdenebaatar Diimaajav is Professor of History, Dean of Faculty of Humanities, and Head of the Department of Archaeology at Ulaanbaatar State University. His chief research area is the archaeological study of Bronze Age and the Xiongnu Period in Mongolia. He is the author of several Mongolian books and has co-authored many publications including *The History of Mongolia Volumes* (2003) and *The Treasures of Xiongnu* (2009). In 2000, he led the discovery of the largest tomb of Xiongnu aristocrats known to date and has been conducting excavating expeditions ever since. During his excavations, he has unearthed a cup from the Roman Empire and several other artifacts which had never been found in Asia before. Dr. Erdenebaatar has traveled throughout Mongolia and is an outstanding expert on early Mongolian history, monuments and burial sites.



Trip Map



Tour Itinerary

Day 1, Wednesday, August 10: Arrival

Upon arrival at Chinggis Khan International Airport, meet your Mongolia Quest guide and transfer to a centrally located hotel in downtown Ulaanbaatar.

In the afternoon, we will make a short city tour including a stop at the towering Zaisan Hill, where you can get a bird's eye view of the entire city, huddled in between the valley of Tuul River and Bogd Khan Mountain. This scenic mountain is believed to be the first national park in the world. The Mongolian State Library keeps copies of letters exchanged between the governor of Ulaanbaatar and Qing Emperor from 1778, mentioning local celebrations arranged for the occasion of making the Bogd Khan Mountain an official protected site.



Zaisan memorial. Photo by Gereltuv Dashdoorov

In the evening, we will commence our trip with a briefing by our expedition leader, followed by a welcome dinner at a fine local restaurant. Overnight at hotel. (Hotel Blue Sky or similar; D)

Day 2, Thursday, August 11: Amarbayasgalant Monastery

After breakfast, we will drive north to the Amarbayasgalant Monastery (approx. 5 hours), enjoying a lunch along the way at a local road café. We will reach the temple grounds in the afternoon. The monastery is named after twin children (“Amar” and “Bayasgalant”) who were found playing by monks travelling in this valley in search of a location for the monastery. Established in the 17th century by a Manchurian king who dedicated it to Zanabazar, the first Buddhist theocrat of Mongolia, the monastery flourished until the arrival of communism in Mongolia in the early 20th century. Though partially destroyed, Amarbayasgalant Monastery has been partially reconstructed over the course of the last 30 years and is recognized as one of the few surviving examples of traditional Mongolian architecture and construction. It is also remarkable that all the construction materials are of local origin. (Ger Camp; L, D)

Day 3, Friday, August 12: Uran Togoo, Bulgan Province

Our destination of the day will be Uran Togoo, a beautiful dormant volcano surrounded by mountains, forests and colorful wild flowers. We will have a chance to exercise and trek in the foothills of the mountains. Overnight in tents. (Tent Camp; B, L, D)



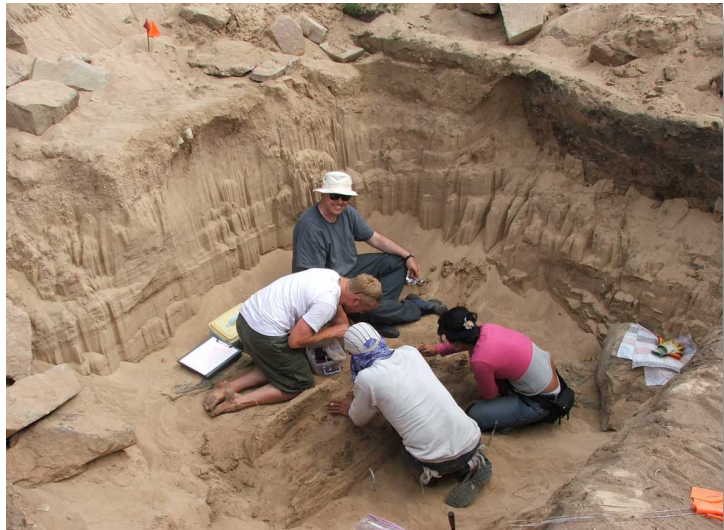
Gol Mod II site. Photo by Ulaanbaatar University

**Day 4, Saturday, August 13:
Hanui Valley**

After breakfast, we will drive to the main destination of our

journey, the Gol Mod 2 site, located in the beautiful Hanui Valley. Gol Mod-2 is located at the base of the Bugatiin Nuruu Mountains and

measures about 2.2 kilometers by 1.3 kilometers. There are over 98 large tombs, each comprised of a ramp leading up to a level platform. The largest of these tombs has a 3-meter-tall platform and measures 83 meters in length. There are also about 335 smaller burials at the site, marked by stone circles, either associated with the tombs or located independently—



Excavation site. Photo by Ulaanbaatar University

making this a literal treasure-trove of ancient life in Mongolia.

In the afternoon, we will arrive at our site and will join the team from Ulaanbaatar State University who are carrying out the excavation works at the next major tomb site. Enjoy dinner hosted by Dr. Erdenebaatar, the expedition leader and begin learning about his remarkable discoveries at this site. Overnight in tents. (Tent Camp; B, L, D)

Days 5-9, Sunday-Thursday, August 14-18: Excavation Work and Sightseeing

We will spend our time here for the next few days as the Mongolian team attempts to uncover remnants of a new aristocratic cemetery. Each day, we will also hike in the surrounding mountains, possibly surveying for new evidence of burial sites. Each evening, we will be joined by Dr. Erdenebaatar as he talks about the day's findings. We will also have an opportunity to enjoy horseback riding and visit local nomadic families to hear about the history and legends behind the Gol Mod site. Overnight in tents. (Tent Camp; B, L, D)

Day 10, Friday, August 19: Kultegin Monument, Ogii Lake

In the morning, we will bid farewell to the university field staff and begin driving south to our next destination. We'll drive to Ogii Lake and onto the Kultegin Monument complex, a 7th century Turkic site. We will overnight in gers at Lake Ugi. This beautiful steppe lake is an ideal place for horseback riding and fishing. Overnight in gers. (Ger Camp; B, L, D)

Day 11, Saturday, August 20: Kharakhorum, Erdenezuu Monastery

After an early morning breakfast, we will begin our overland journey towards Kharakhorum (1 hour driving). The construction of Kharakhorum city was completed during the reign of Ogedei Khan, Chinggis Khan's third son who, in 1128, inherited the empire his father created. It is located in the picturesque valley of Orkhon River, which bears hundreds of historically and archeologically significant sites going back 2000 years, still waiting to be discovered. These include 2000 year old burial sites, deer

stones and ruins of cities pre-dating the time of Chinggis Khan.

We also will pay a visit to the magnificent Erdenezuu Monastery, one of Mongolia's most beautiful Buddhist structures. Strolling through its grounds, surrounded by 108 stupas, you will find plenty of opportunities to photograph its temples and local visitors. This

evening, enjoy a traditional Mongolian barbeque for dinner.



Main stupa at Erdene Zuu monastery. Photo by Gereltv Dashdoorov

(Ger Camp; B, L, D)



Statue of Avalokitesvara at Gandan Monastery. Photo by Mongolia Quest

Day 12, Sunday, August 21: Uyghur City Ruins, Tsogt Prince Castle Site

In the morning, we will complete our epic journey and begin driving back to Ulaanbaatar. Along the way, stop at two historically significant city ruins. Our first stop is at the ruin of the large citadel of the Uyghur Empire capital, Khar Balgas. Uyghurs were people of Turkic origin, who dominated the grasslands of central Mongolia between the 8th and 9th centuries. The next stop will be at the ruins of Prince Tsogt, a famous central Mongolian prince and patriot who fought for the independence of Mongolia in the 17th century. Reach Ulaanbaatar later in

the afternoon and enjoy dinner at a fine local restaurant. (Hotel Blue Sky or similar; B, L, D)

Day 13, Monday, August 22: Ulaanbaatar Sightseeing

Today, we will explore some of the city's best-known museums and historical sites. Begin with a visit to the Gandan, Mongolia's largest Buddhist Monastery. An imposing 90-foot-tall statue of Megjid Janraisag (Avalokites-vara in Sanskrit) stands in the largest temple in the middle of the monastery. This statue is considered the religious symbol of Mongolia's independence and democracy after the country's democratic transition in 1990. When a Mongolian student in the mid -1990s discovered fragments of the original statue (which was destroyed by Soviet authorities in the 1930s) in St. Petersburg, a nationwide campaign began to collect money for rebuilding the Buddha. After several years of hard work and struggle, this magnificent Buddha was resurrected and is now standing proud, making all Mongolian Buddhists happy.

Next, we will visit the halls of the National History Museum which showcases Mongolia's best collection of traditional tools and crafts. Other exhibits present different periods of Mongolia's history. Among the museum highlights are collections of traditional costumes of different Mongolian clans, a hall of 13th century Mongolia, and nomadic family belongings. After lunch, we will move to Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts with its excellent collection of Mongolia's arts including golden Buddha statues of 17th century and some of the best preserved *tankas* (traditional Buddhist paintings) in the world. In



the evening, enjoy a cultural performance featuring khoomii or “throat-singing,” followed by a farewell dinner at a fine local restaurant.

(Hotel Blue Sky or similar; B, L, D)

Day 14, Tuesday, August 23: Departure

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for departure. (B)

B = Breakfast

L = Lunch

D = Dinner

Mongolia Quest reserves the right to alter the above itinerary if deemed necessary

Land Price:

Based on 2 participants: \$4,250 per person, twin occupancy;

Based on 3-5 participants: \$3,890 per person, twin occupancy;

Based on 6-9 participants: \$3,650 per person, twin occupancy;

Based on 10 and more participants: \$3,490 per person, twin occupancy;

Optional single supplement: \$550 per person.

Land prices include:

- Land transportation as indicated in the itinerary based on using a Mitsubishi Delica Van for every 4-5 passengers;
- Accommodation in a standard room at hotels and standard gers in the countryside;
- Airport arrival & departure transfers;
- Sleeping bags; expedition style tents and mats;
- All meals indicated as B, L or D;
- All entrance fees as indicated in the itinerary;
- Camel and horse riding fees;



- Guest lecturer's expenses and participation;
- English speaking national guide throughout your stay;
- A bottled water per person per day and unlimited supply of boiled waters.

Land prices do not include:

International and domestic airfare; personal laundry and drinks not mentioned in the itinerary; travel insurance; medical evacuation costs; excess baggage charges; visa fees; gratuities; photography and video fees and any other item not mentioned as included.

How to book this trip

You may book any trip with us by filling out our Trip Application Form, which you can download using Adobe Acrobat Reader and can send to us as an electronic file via e-mail at Info@MongoliaQuest.com. All reservations are subject to deposit of \$400 per person. Deposits are refundable until 90 days prior to the start of the program less a \$250 administrative fee.

Please arrange a wire transfer to Mongolia Quest bank account as per following instructions:

Beneficiary name: MONGOLIA QUEST
LLC

Beneficiary's address:
Suite#00, Apt.26B, 1st Horoo, 13th Sub-district,
Sukhbaatar District, Ulaanbaatar 14230,
Mongolia

Land Line: (+976) -11- 70009747;
info@MongoliaQuest.com

**Beneficiary's account
number:** 3005111070

Beneficiary's bank name: Golomt bank

Beneficiary's bank address:

Monnis branch

3rd floor, Monnis tower, Chinggis avenue
Khoroo #1, Sukhbaatar district

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

**Beneficiary's bank swift
code:** GLMTMNUB

Once we receive your trip application form, we will send you information about how to wire your deposit to us, and a confirmation letter with information related with visa and international airfare reservations. You will also receive our pre-departure Travel Guide, which will include information on weather, suggested reading list, a list of items to pack, etc.



About 4 weeks prior to your arrival date, we will send you Final Departure Information which will include your final itinerary along with any other necessary updated information regarding the logistics of your trip.

Payment and Cancellation Policy

As mentioned above, a deposit of \$400 per person is required to reserve space for the trip that you have chosen. Full payment is due 90 days prior to the start of the trip. In the case of a cancellation, please contact us in written form.

Notification of cancellation must be received in writing by Mongolia Quest. At the time, we receive your written cancellation, the following penalties will apply:

- Up to 90 days prior to departure: \$250 per person handling fee;
- 89-60 days prior to departure: 20% of the trip cost per person;
- 60-45 days prior to departure: 50% of the trip cost per person;
- 44-30 days prior to departure: 75% of the trip cost, per person;
- 29 days prior to departure, or after the trip starts: no-refund.

Some airfares may be nonrefundable. Once an expedition has departed, there will be no refunds from MQ for any unused portions of the trip. The above policy also applies to all extensions and independent travel arrangements made in conjunction with this program.

Tier pricing

Our prices are based on tier pricing. At the time of booking, we will bill you for the amount based on the confirmed number of trip participants. In case the number of travelers increases at the last moment, we will reimburse the balance of your payment in accordance with the corresponding tier pricing, after you return home.

Travel notes

How to get to Mongolia

The official Mongolian international civil flight carrier is Mongolian Airlines or MIAT. Currently it serves flights between Beijing, Seoul, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, Berlin, Istanbul and and Moscow. Beijing is the most common



international gateway city to Ulaanbaatar. Mongolian Airlines and Air China fly daily between the two cities. Seoul, Korea is the second most popular gateway city; is served by both Mongolian Airlines and Korean Air. If you are coming from Europe, you may also consider Russian Aeroflot in addition to MIAT. Turkish Airlines has recently started offering flights between Istanbul and Ulaanbaatar. A private airline “Hunnu” offers direct flights between Bangkok-Ulaanbaatar and Paris-Ulaanbaatar. During the summer season, if no seats are available on any of these major carriers, there are ways to fly to Mongolia through local cities in China and Russia. Please contact us for more information.

Also, a major branch of the Trans-Siberian Railway goes through Mongolia from Moscow stopping in Irkutsk and Ulan-Ude, before stopping in Ulaanbaatar and continuing to Chinese Erlain and Beijing. The seats are usually in high demand and booking needs to be done well in advance.

Visa Information

U.S, Canadian, and Japanese citizens are allowed to enter Mongolia without a visa for up to 30 days. All other nationals are required to get a visa before entering Mongolia. If your visa-application requires it, we will send you an invitation letter upon request.

Starting from year 2022, Mongolia introduced eVisa digital form where foreign nationals could obtain the visa by applying online with eVisa.mn. All foreign citizens need a visa for Mongolia and a passport valid for at least 6 months from the date of arrival to enter the country. The visa application protocol a foreign passport holder can use depends on their nationality. The Mongolia eVisa is valid for either tourism or business purposes. It is highly recommended that you keep your Mongolia eVisa with you either as a soft copy (smartphone, tablet, etc.) or as a hard copy in case of any failure in the system.

WHO CAN ENTER MONGOLIA WITH THIS DOCUMENT

Only 35 nationalities can apply for a Mongolia eVisa exclusively online through a simplified electronic application protocol. As well as holders of passports issued by Hong Kong or Macao.

Travelers must have a health certificate prior to departure from the first embarkation point. Minors under the minimum age for a test in the country of



departure are exempt.

All nationalities eligible can apply for the documents here.

To fill out the Mongolia eVisa application, you will have to provide specific information about yourself (including your full name and birthday), details about your trip (including your passport number, information about previous visits or applications, the accommodation where you will stay), and upload supporting documents.

Your personal details on the document should correspond with those in your passport or on your ID card. This will ensure that you do not experience possible difficulties when your certificate is being checked against your identification document.

You can apply online in 3 easy steps, once you submit the form, your request is processed. You will receive all communication and the document via email. You should keep a printed copy of the visa as well as an electronic copy with you in case you are asked to present it to any officials during your trip. Visit the EVisa.mn for more information.

Weather

Mongolia enjoys over 280 sunny days a year. However, because Mongolia has a continental weather pattern, weather can fluctuate drastically during any given day. We recommend packing warm clothes even if you are coming during the hottest months. Our pre-departure information will provide details regarding the weather along with a suggested packing list. Layering is the best plan to be ready for a wide array of Mongolian weather patterns.

Safety

Mongolia is devoid of any political, religious and ethnic sectarian conflicts and is considered one of the safest countries in the world for international travelers. However, like in any other country, crimes do happen, so a good sense of caution and respect shown to the locals can help to avoid unnecessary confrontations. Mongolians are generally hospitable people who love to interact with foreigners.



Food

Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar, hosts an excellent collection of fine restaurants of international cuisine. In the countryside, tour establishments offer hearty meals with a balance of meat and vegetables. Meat in Mongolia is excellent in that the whole country is essentially "free-range" terrain. Even your strictest dietary restrictions can now be met with proper information in advance and preparation by us.

Accommodation

Newly renovated Soviet era hotels are located at some of the best locations in downtown Ulaanbaatar. They offer comfortable rooms and friendly services. There are also newer hotels like Kempinsky Khan Palace, Ramada Ulaanbaatar and Best Western Inn. The countryside accommodations are arranged in "ger camps," which provide authentic nomadic felt tents with centralized bathroom and toilet facilities located nearby. They offer clean, comfortable beds and plentiful meals.

Information about Currency and Payment Methods

Mongolia's national currency is called tugrik and the exchange rate is about 3,200 tugrik to a US dollar. Major currencies can be exchanged at the hotels and pawnshops, and ATM machines are widely available throughout Ulaanbaatar and provincial centers. However, Australian dollars can usually only be exchanged at banks. Traveler's checks can be cashed at banks and major credit cards are accepted at most places in the capital, but only Mongolian cash is accepted in the countryside. We recommend that you travel with Mongolian national currency equal to at least \$200 when touring in the countryside.

Souvenirs

Like any other places, Mongolia offers great souvenirs ranging from camel wool sweaters to cashmere scarves and traditional wooden puzzle games. Mongolian vodkas can be an excellent gift. At several stores, you can also find a range of traditional Mongolian musical instruments such as the famed morin khuur or "horse headed fiddle." Bargaining is not very customary; most items are sold for the price on their labels. If you plan to shop for souvenirs, we recommend purchasing locally as many items as possible since your purchases will be a direct contribution to the local community.



Travel Insurance

With Mongolia stretching over 1.5 million square kilometers and its population concentrated in the cities, we will be travelling through some remote areas away from good roads and medical facilities. We strongly recommend that you consider getting standard emergency medical evacuation insurance as a means to protect yourself from unexpected accidents that can happen during any trip. Nothing is better than traveling with peace of mind knowing that you have prepared for the trip as much as possible in advance

Traveling with Mongolia Quest

Because it is still a developing country, traveling in Mongolia requires a sense of humor and patience. New roads and bridges are being built every year but the paved road system is still limited in the countryside. You may experience flight delays and find road conditions bumpy and dusty. But the experience of traveling in Mongolia will far exceed some personal compromises in comfort. We like to say that the best part of traveling in Mongolia is spontaneous events and interactions, which lead to unexpected interactions, discoveries, and experiences that will make your trip unique and memorable. At Mongolia Quest, we ensure the integrity of your overall itinerary but at the same time, will go out of our way to make necessary changes in order to enrich your travel experience with us.

ENJOY YOUR TRIP!