

EASTERN MONGOLIA OVERLAND

(TRAVELING THROUGH STEPPES AND ANCIENT VOLCANOES)

(September 15 - 28, 2024)



TRIP SUMMARY



Mongolia is one of the last places on the planet Earth with vast expanses of untouched land with little to no evidence of human influence. For centuries, traditional local herders have been following their domestic animals in search of good pastureland; moving from place to place, based on changing seasons as well as rainfall. Similar to people, most of the wildlife pursue a similar nomadic lifestyle, roaming a territory the size of Alaska without any discernable migratory patterns. The eastern steppes of Mongolia, known as Dornod, are vast grasslands seven times the size of Serengeti. They are inhabited by Mongolian white-tailed gazelles, the largest hoofed-mammal population outside of the African continent. The best way of exploring this large, open landscape is to travel overland. Join us on this exceptional adventure through the Mongolian steppe, passing through the land of ancient volcanoes and entering the mystic Gobi Desert, stopping by old monastery ruins and present-day places of worship for local peoples.

ITINERARY

DAY 1, SEP 15: ARRIVAL

Upon arrival at the airport, transfer to the centrally located hotel in downtown Ulaanbaatar. In the evening, we will provide your pre-trip briefing followed by a welcome dinner at a fine local restaurant. (Hotel Blue Sky or similar; D)

DAY 2, SEP 16: ULAANBAATAR



We will spend this day exploring sights and sound of Mongolia's capital. Begin this morning with a private blessing with a Buddhist monk at Gandan, the country's largest monastery. An imposing 90-foot-tall statue of Megjid Janraisag (Avalokitesvara in Sanskrit) stands in the largest temple in the monastery. This statue is considered the religious symbol of Mongolia's independence and democracy after the country's democratic transition in 1990.

Next, visit the National History Museum located in downtown Ulaanbaatar. This museum offers an excellent introduction to Mongolia's history from pre-historic times through the 13th century Mongolian Empire, and on to the democratic movement of the early 1990s, which overthrew the Communist regime.

After lunch, visit the Zanabazar's Fine Arts Museum with its excellent collection of Mongolia's arts, including golden Buddha statues of the 17th century and some of the best preserved tankas in the world.

In the evening, we will enjoy a wonderful performance of traditional Mongolian music and dance, featuring Khoomii or "throat" singing, followed by dinner at a fine local restaurant. (Hotel Blue Sky or similar; B, L, D)

DAY 3, SEP 17: CHOIBALSAN, DORNOD PROVINCE



In the morning, transfer to the airport for your domestic flight to the Eastern Steppe town of Choibalsan. Eastern Mongolia is now home to world's last remaining wilderness steppe ecosystem and such animals as the Mongolian white-tailed gazelle and a host of rare birds are found in the area. Upon arrival, begin driving eastward to Lake Buir via the famous Menengiin Steppe (approx. 350 km).

Overnight in tents. (Approx. 3-4 hours driving; Tent camp; B, L, D)

DAY 4, SEP 18: BUIR LAKE

In the morning, continue driving towards Buir Lake. We will stop at a border check point to get our pass to travel in the special border zone of Mongolia and Russian. Enjoy a pack lunch along the way. The eastern steppes are one of the flattest areas in the country and the steppes of Menin are well known around the country as a representative Dornod province. We will have a good chance of seeing herds of Mongolian gazelle along the way. In the late afternoon, arrive at Buir Lake and overnight in tents on the bank of Khalkhiin River, one of eastern Mongolia's largest rivers.

Overnight in tents. (Approx. 4-5 hours driving; Tent camp; B, L, D)

DAY 5, SEP 19: BUIR LAKE



Spend the entire day on the lake, exploring the lakeshore, visiting local families and resting. Buir lake offers the only sandy beaches in the entire country and because of its shallow waters it is suited for bathing. Buir Lake straddles the Mongolia-China border, with 92 percent or 566 km² of the lake area in Mongolia and eight percent or 49 km² in China. A separate clause was even written into a Sino-Mongolian agreement on the management of transboundary water bodies to hold separate consultations on Buir Lake fishing.

(Tent Camp; B, L, D)

DAY 6, SEP 20: IKH BURKHAND / KHALKH GOL



We will pack in the morning and continue driving southeast, passing by the Ikh Burkhand, considered as one of the largest Buddhist heritage sites in the country. A large figure of Buddha has been made on a hillside facing towards the sky, the only Buddhist architecture of its kind in the country. We will continue driving south to our next camp site on the beautiful valley of Khalkh River, near Sumber village.

Overnight in tents. (Approx. 7 hours driving; Tent camp; B, L, D)

DAY 7, SEP 21: TASHGAI LAKES



Our journey will continue today on the eye stretching eastern Mongolian steppe; here there will be opportunities to spot some of the famous Mongolian gazelles. We will make frequent stops to inspect local flora and fauna and stop at a military outpost on the Mongolian-Chinese border for travel permission. In the afternoon, arrive at the group of lakes, known as Tashgai Lakes, some of which appear or dry out, depending on the year's rainfall.

Overnight in tents at one of the lakes. (Approx. 6 hours driving; Tent Camp; B, L, D)

DAY 8, SEP 22: DARIGANGA

Today we drive into Sukhbaatar province, a land known for fast horses and skillful blacksmiths. It is believed that every Mongolian with a certain level of wealth should possess silver bowls or knife-sets made in Dariganga. We will have a chance to stop at Baruun Urt, provincial center to visit their museum and time allowing visit some of the local craftsmen.

Overnight in local ger camp. (Ger Camp; B, L, D)

DAY 9, SEP 23: DARIGANGA



Today, we will spend learning about both geological and human history. We will visit a local cave Taliin Agui, Ganga Lake, and famous Altan Ovoo – a small volcano, which is worshiped by locals for a long time. Altan means golden in Mongolian. It was believed that several hundred years ago the top cairn had a piece of gold on its top. Another volcano, which has lost its top during the eruption is known as Shiliin

Bogd, holiest of the mountains in the area and it was here that Mongolian Shiliin Sain Ers or “brave men” rose against unjust rule of rich and pledged to punish the rich and give help to the poor. The valley of Dariganga is strewn with ancient volcano craters. These volcanoes erupted long ago; wind and water erosion over the millennia have filled the crevices, creating rich soils capable of producing lush grasses for both wild and domestic animals inhabiting the area.

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Overnight at the same ger camp. (Ger Camp; B, L, D)

DAY 10, SEP 24: SAINSHAND

Today we enter the Eastern Gobi region. Contrary to common perception, the Gobi is not a desert. We'll make stops to inspect the Gobi flora and look for birdlife. This local word stands for a special natural grassland suited for herding livestock and camels. One needs to go long ways to find a true desert landscapes and habitat. Drive into Sainshand city, which is situated on the Trans-Mongolian railway line, built in 1940s and connecting to the Trans-Siberian rail line with China.

Overnight at a local hotel. (Local Hotel; B, L, D)

DAY 11, SEP 25: KHAMAR MONASTERY



Trace history along the Trans-Mongolian line at Khamar Monastery, shaped by Danzanravjaa's progressive vision.

An outspoken critic of the society, in which he lived, Danzanravjaa fought against the rigid class and gender distinctions of his day. He devoted great efforts to the cause of public education, which he promoted at Khamar Monastery through the establishment of an inclusive public school, theater, museum and library. Locals believe in the positive energies of this place and it has become a place of local pilgrimage. We will visit the ruins of the monastery.

Overnight in Sainshand. (Local Hotel; B, L, D)

DAY 12, SEP 26: IKH NART



Today we continue onto Ikh Nart reserve. This beautiful reserve is located about 300 km south east of Ulaanbaatar, in the eastern Gobi region. Consisting of a network of granite rock mountains and hills, this area is a habitat for the endangered wild sheep Argali. Research projects taking place in the park are administered by a number of organizations including the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, Denver Zoological Foundation and the University of Vermont. We will have an opportunity to visit this project site and acquire first-hand knowledge about these animals' behavior and ecology.

Overnight in a local rustic ger camp. (Rustic ger camp; B, L, D)

DAY 13, SEP 27: ULAANBAATAR



In the morning we will continue to explore the park. After lunch, drive back to Ulaanbaatar. After a farewell dinner, we will overnight at the hotel. (Hotel Blue Sky or similar; B, L, D)

DAY 14, SEP 28: DEPARTURE

After breakfast transfer to the airport for your return flight home. (B)

B = Breakfast | L = Lunch | D = Dinner

Ger camp = The traditional portable, circular, wooden dwelling used by the nomadic peoples.

Field camp = A bit more sophisticated camping/glamping, more permanent in nature.

Tent camp = Expedition style, often moving regularly and smaller in size and scale.

MONGOLIA QUEST RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ALTER THE ABOVE ITINERARY IF DEEMED NECESSARY.

LAND PRICES

Based on 2 participants:	\$3,500 per person , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 3-5 participants:	\$3,390 per person , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 6-9 participants:	\$3,150 per person , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 10+ participants:	\$2,890 per person , standard twin occupancy;
Domestic flight	\$290 per person
Optional single supplement:	\$395 per person

LAND PRICES INCLUDE:	LAND PRICES DO NOT INCLUDE:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land transportation as indicated in the itinerary based on using Toyota Land Cruiser jeeps seating 3 passengers each; • Accommodations in a standard room at hotels, gers in the countryside based on a twin occupancy and expedition style camping in the countryside; • Airport arrival and 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; • English speaking national guide throughout your stay; • Bottled water per person per day and unlimited supply of boiled waters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic flight; • International airfare; • Personal laundry; • Drinks not mentioned in the itinerary; • Travel insurance; • Medical evacuation costs; • Excess baggage charges; • Visa fees; • Gratuities; • Photography and video fees • 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 Sud-district, Sukhbaatar District,
Ulaanbaatar 14230, Mongolia;

Tel: (976) 7000 9747

Email: 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 carriers Mongolian Airlines or MIAT. Currently it serves flights between Beijing, Seoul, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Frankfurt. Other popular airlines include Asiana, Pusan and Turkish airlines. South Korea is the most common international gateway city to Ulaanbaatar. Mongolian Airlines and Turkish Airlines fly daily to/from Istanbul. If you are coming from Europe, you may also find Turkish Airlines a convenient connection. 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. The seats are usually in high demand and booking needs to be done well in advance.

Visa Information

U.S, Canadian, Japanese, Australian and citizens of most European counties 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.

THE LIST OF THE COUNTRIES TO BE EXEMPTED FROM VISA REQUIREMENTS TO VISIT MONGOLIA UP TO 30 DAYS IN THE YEARS OF 2023-2025

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Czech Republic • Republic of Austria • Kingdom of Belgium • Hungary • Hellenic Republic • Kingdom of Denmark • Kingdom of Spain • Italian Republic • Republic of Latvia • Republic of Lithuania • Swiss Confederation • Republic of Bulgaria • Republic of Ireland • Republic of Philippines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principality of Liechtenstein • Grand Duchy of Luxembourg • Republic of Malta • Kingdom of the Netherlands • Republic of Poland • Portuguese Republic • Slovak Republic • Republic of Slovenia • Republic of Finland • Republic of Croatia • Canada | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kingdom of Sweden • French Republic • Republic of Estonia • Kingdom of Norway • Republic of Iceland • Republic of Cyprus • Romania • Principality of Monaco • United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland • Commonwealth of Australia • New Zealand |
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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.

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 Kempinski 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.

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 Mongolians 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.

Information about Currency and Payment Methods

Mongolia's national currency is called tugrik and the exchange rate is about 3,400 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 traveling 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!