

A photograph of two cranes, likely Mongolian cranes, standing in a lush green grassland. The crane in the foreground is larger and has a dark grey body with a white neck and a reddish-brown head. The crane in the background is smaller and has a white neck and a reddish-brown head. The background is a soft-focus green field with some brown patches.

**BIRDING IN MONGOLIAN GOBI  
DESERT AND MONGOL DAGUUR  
GRASSLAND**

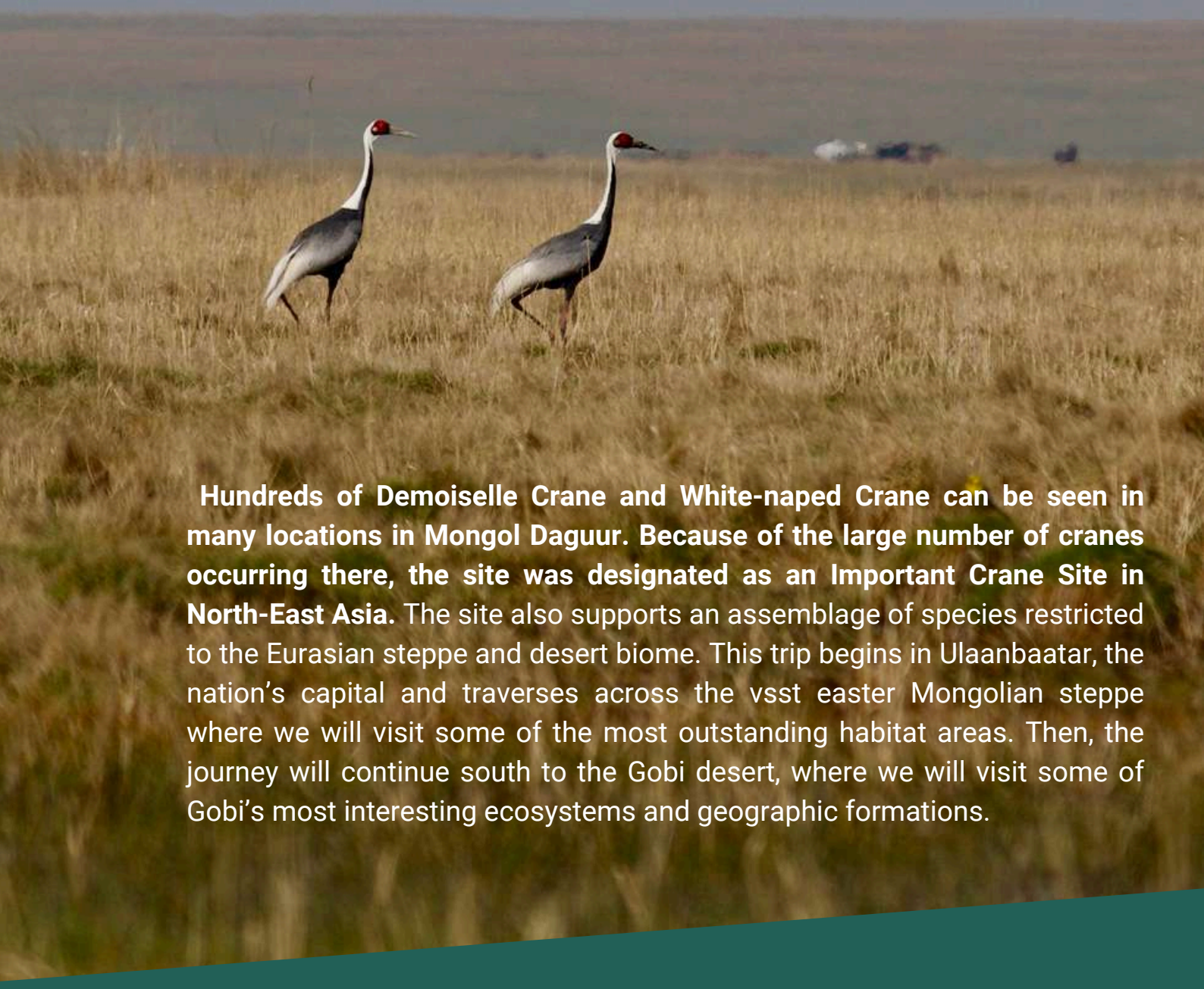
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**(Date: June 2 – 16, 2024)**

## TRIP SUMMARY

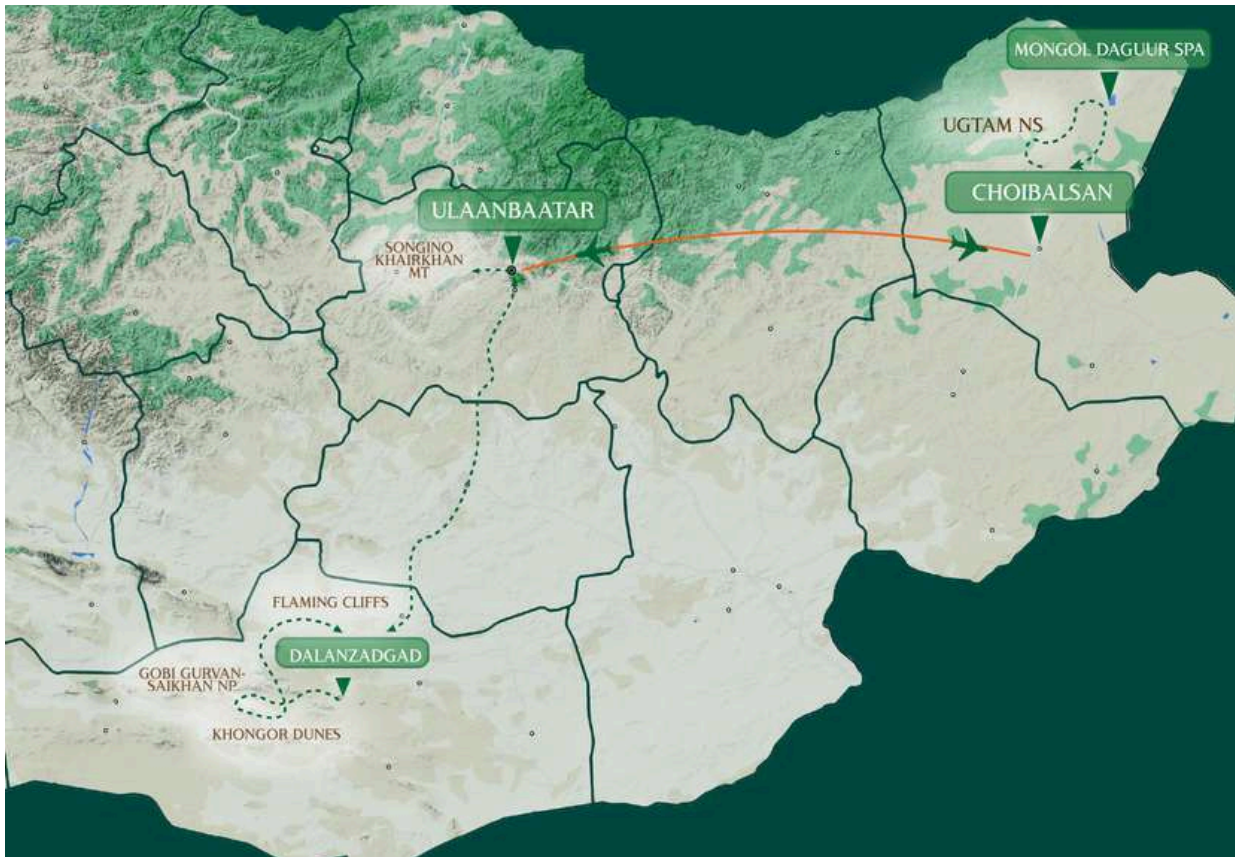
The Mongol Daguur is a flat plain with rolling hills lying in the Ulz river basin. It is an area made up of moist Daurian steppe with lakes and ponds of different sizes, rivers, streams and wetland areas including reed beds. The larger lakes support tens of thousands of molting water birds in summer. Congregatory waterbirds occurring at the site in numbers exceeding 1% of their flyway populations include:

***Great Crested Grebe Podiceps cristatus , Great Cormorant Phalacrocorax carbo , Whooper Swan Cygnus cygnus , Bean Goose Anser fabalis , Ruddy Shelduck Tadorna ferruginea , White-naped Crane Grus vipio , Common Crane Grus grus , Hooded Crane Grus monacha , Demoiselle Crane Anthropoides virgo and Northern Lapwing Vanellus vanellus .***



**Hundreds of Demoiselle Crane and White-naped Crane can be seen in many locations in Mongol Daguur. Because of the large number of cranes occurring there, the site was designated as an Important Crane Site in North-East Asia.** The site also supports an assemblage of species restricted to the Eurasian steppe and desert biome. This trip begins in Ulaanbaatar, the nation's capital and traverses across the vast eastern Mongolian steppe where we will visit some of the most outstanding habitat areas. Then, the journey will continue south to the Gobi desert, where we will visit some of Gobi's most interesting ecosystems and geographic formations.

## TRIP OVERVIEW



**Travel route:** UB-DORNOD PROVINCE-UB-UMNUGOBI PROVINCE

**Type:** Birdwatching, Wildlife Photography, Trekking

**Activity Level:**

**Group size:** Max: 15, Min: 3

**This trip is perfect for:**



Birdwatchers and  
nature enthusiasts



Adventure Seekers



Those interested in  
Mongolian culture



People who enjoy a  
mix of activities

## ITINERARY

### DAY 1. JUNE 2 ARRIVAL IN ULAANBAATAR

Ulaanbaatar is the capital of Mongolia, located on the basins of Tuul River valley. It is nestled on the foothills Bogd Khan Uul National Park on its outhern part. Originally a nomadic Buddhist center, it became a permanent city in the 18th century. A Soviet-era influenced architecture co-exists with old monasteries and 21st-century highrises.

Enjoy a short city tour followed by a welcome dinner at a fine local restaurant.

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

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### DAY 2. JUNE 3. CHOIBALSAN CITY, DORNOD PROVINCE

The eastern Choibalsan (Mongolian: Чойбалсан) is the fourth-largest city in Mongolia after Darkhan, Erdenet and located at 700 km from Ulaanbaatar. In the morning, we will transfer to the airport for our flight to Choibalsan (1.5 hours). Upon arrival, we will transfer to a local hotel for the day. (Local hotel; B, L, D)

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### DAY 3. JUNE 4. UGTAM NATURE RESERVE



After breakfast, we will drive straight north to the Turgen Tsagaan Lake and Ugtam Nature Reserve. The landscape here is predominantly rolling hills with a couple of shallow steppe lakes and the Ulz River valley. On the way to Ugtam, we will see grassland birds such as Demoiselle cranes which is the much common small cranes in the country along with steppe eagle, upland buzzard, mongolian lark, Asian short toed lark, blyth's and richard's pipits and Mongolian gazelle etc.

**Overnight in tents or gers. (Tent camp; B, L, D)**

On the way, we will visit to Turgen tsagaan lake were we often see Siberian cranes using the lake as their spring stopover and summer site.

However, our chances of encountering this species at this location will depend largely on whether or not water levels provide favorable foraging conditions of the year. Water levels at this site are determined by winter snow cover and precipitation during the spring period. The Siberian Crane is known to be the most specialized crane in terms of its habitat requirements, and the most aquatic, exclusively using wetlands for nesting, feeding, and roosting, preferring wide expanses of shallow fresh water with good visibility. As the impacts of anthropogenic activity along its flyway and wintering ground increases, the suitable foraging habitat for this species continues to decrease. Two pair of White-naped Crane and 5 pairs of Common cranes also regularly nest on a northern reed in the lake. But, during the main trip we should have already had a close look at this species. **(Tent camp; B, L, D)**

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#### **DAY 4. JUNE 5. UGTAM MOUNTAIN AND TSAGAAN LAKE**

In the morning, drive to the Hustai National Park, to spot the takhi wild horses in their natural habitat with a chance to photograph them. After lunch, spend the afternoon exploring the park's various sites before returning back to Ulaanbaatar.

Enjoy dinner at a local restaurant. **(Hotel Bayangol or similar; B, L, D)**

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#### **DAY 5. JUNE 6. CHUKH LAKE, MONGOL DAGUUR SPA**



The great Mongolian-Manchurian grassland is considered by many as possibly the last and largest expanse of unspoiled and pristine prairie ecosystem not only in Asia, also in the World. The Eastern Mongolian Grasslands contains an abundance of natural wonders and conjures images of an endless and open land – tall grasses and wide-open spaces without a glimmer of civilization. The nature reserve protects a chunk of steppe ecosystem that sprawls across two of eastern provinces. Altogether, it covers nearly 480 thousand hectares' area of enormous stretches of grassland. The nature reserve is famed for its huge herds of Mongolian Gazelle. It was originally established to conserve the extensive grasslands of eastern Mongolia and its biodiversity.



This morning we will continue traveling along to the Mongol Daguur SPA along downstream of Ulz River. Ulz river basin is one of the most important areas for breeding and staging cranes in northeast Mongolia. Isolated from human settlement, this beautiful landscape offers river valleys with numerous lush meadows surrounded by forested mountains and grassland steppe. In addition to all this wonderful natural beauty, we can expect to see Mongol horsemen riding across the steppe a

attending the vast herds of horses, cattle, and sheep. Visit an ethnic Buriad field museum in Dashbalbar town. **(Tent camp; B, L, D)**

#### DAY 6. JUNE 7. KHUKH LAKE, MONGOL DAGUUR SPA



After an early morning breakfast, we'll head east for a full exploration of this beautiful steppe reserve. In the afternoon, we will continue our journey to discover more breeding sites of rare cranes and we will see Grebes, Ducks, Pochards, Geese, Waders, Gulls. Before dinner time, we will reach Khukh lake which is the lowest point of Mongolia at 560 meter above sea level. We'll head out for a full exploration of this beautiful steppe reserve. Overnight: Stay in tented camp near the lake. **(Tent camp; B, L, D)**

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## DAY 7. JUNE 8. CHOIBALSAN CITY



Early morning, we will awake to a symphony of larks. The dominant resident species here is Mongolian lark, one of the few species named after Mongolia. This species breeds in the steppe as do other ground-dwelling species like Greater short-toed lark, Asian Short-toed Lark, Sky lark, Mongolian (Brandt's) Horned Lark, Richards and Blyth's pipit. In winter Siberian migrant winter visitors such as Snow buntings and Lapland buntings take residence in the park as well. En route today, we will also have a high chance to see breeding individuals of Mongolian gazelle, Pallas's Cat and other steppe specialists. We will reach the city before dinner time and stay in hotel in the city. Overnight at a local hotel. (Local hotel; B, L, D)

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## DAY 8. JUNE 9. ULAANBAATAR / SONGINO KHAIRKHAN MOUNTAIN

In the morning, transfer to the airport for our flight back to Ulaanbaatar. Upon arrival, we will drive directly to the Songino Khairkhan Mountain and a UB pond located outside the city. At this obscure-looking pond, we always see Azure Tit, Azure-winged Magpie colony, breeding Yellow-breasted Bunting, Longtailed Rosefinch, Chinese White Crowned Penduline Tit, Great Reed Warbler, Lancellota Warbler among other species. Dinner and overnight at hotel.

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

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## DAY 9-11. JUNE 10-12. GOBI GURVAN SAIKHAN MOUNTAIN NP

In the morning, we will begin driving south to the mighty Gobi Desert (7-8 hours). Arrive at the ger camp and overnight in gers. **(Ger camp; B, L, D)**

## DAY 7. JUNE 8. CHOIBALSAN CITY



In the next to days, we will explore the magnificent Gobi Gurvansaikhon National Park lies on the northern edge of the Gobi desert. We will spend the following two days birding in the Mountain. Hike up into the narrow canyon surrounded by steep, giant mountain formation (2600m). Noteworthy species that we may encounter here today include nesting Saker falcon, Chukar, Chinese Beautiful and Common Rosefinches and migrating Thickbilled warbler, Barred warbler, Common whitethroat, Isabelline Wheatear, Brown Shrike, Brown and Alpine Accentors, Blackfaced and Pallas's Reed Buntings.



Our first stop starts with a journey to Yolyn-Am Valley in Zuun Saikhon Mountain Range. While exploring the valleys, slopes and ridges, we will be on the lookout for a wide range of mountain species, including the impressive Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier), a couple of pairs of which nest in the canyons here. Another major target is the localised Altai Snowcock, which often give their characteristic whistling calls in the early morning just after dawn. Other exciting birds to look for here include **Chukar Partridge, Himalayan Griffon, the impressive Cinereous Vulture, Booted and magnificent Golden Eagles, Water Pipit, Black Redstart, Alpine, Brown and the breeding nearly endemic Kozlov's Accentors, Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch, Twite, Godlewski's Bunting, Pallas's Reed Bunting, Common Rock Thrush, and with a bit of luck, Grey-necked bunting and rare Red-mantled Rosefinch and Spotted Great Rosefinch.**





Flocks of White-winged Snowfinches are regularly seen and can be very confident while feeding along the trail. At this time of year, we may see migrating raptors such as Oriental Honey Buzzard, Amur Falcon and Steppe Eagle, while mammals could include the regal Siberian Ibex, the strange and extremely impressive Argali (a type of wild sheep), three species of rodents including Pallas's and Alpine Pikas, and Midday Gerbils that scurry in and out of the stunted alpine vegetation. On the second day we will search for the species we missed previous day and explore the rocky slope, small canyons near the camp. **(Ger camp; B, L, D)**

## **DAY 12. JUNE 13. KHONGORYN ELS DUNE**

After breakfast, we will continue driving to Khongoryn Els, where the largest accumulation of dunes in the Gobi can be found. This dune reaches 300m high, 12km wide, and 100km long. Our drive will take us through fantastic scenery of barren landscapes and gravel plains, with the Gobi Altai Mountains as a constant backdrop. The scenery of Khongoryn Els is brilliant with Rocky Mountains on the south, sand dunes in the center and a river oasis with extensive saxaul forest on the north. Our main target birds here is the scarce and localized Saxaul Sparrow, rather common Southern grey shrike, enigmatic Long-legged buzzard and Mongolian Ground Jay! This smart looking bird favors gravel plains with scattered vegetation and spends much of its time running across the open ground in search of invertebrates. There's a colony of Lesser Kestrels near our camp. Here we will have an opportunity to study these fascinating small raptors. **(Ger camp; B, L, D)**



## DAY 13. JUNE 14. ZUUN SAIKHAN MOUNTAIN / FLAMING CLIFFS

On this day we will leave the Khongor dune area to the Flaming Cliffs. On the way, we will see Henderson's ground jay, oriental and greater sand plovers, and Goitered gazelles. Today, we will journey northeast to the famous Bayanzag locality. These red sandstone cliffs was named "The Flaming Cliffs" by Roy Chapman Andrews of the American Museum of Natural History, who first discovered the fossil beds of dinosaur bones and the first fossil dinosaur eggs the world had ever seen before. In this dry and open region birds strive to find drinking water therefore, we will stop at a small oasis. Here we can approach many exciting species, providing a great opportunity to take photos.



Some species such as Pallas's Sandgrouse congregate in big numbers. The scenery en route, driving across the plains of Gobi is simply spectacular! En route, in addition to numerous Horned larks, subspecies brandti, and occasional Great sand plover we should find endangered and much desired Oriental Plover (surely one of the most elegant species of its family). Enjoy a sun-down and return back to the ger camp for dinner. (Ger camp; B, L, D)

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#### **DAY 14. JUNE 15. RETURN TO ULAANBAATAR CITY**

After breakfast, we will drive to the local airport for our return flight to Ulaanbaatar (1.5 hours). The afternoon is free for individual sightseeing and shopping.

In the evening, we will enjoy a traditional Mongolian performance followed by a festive dinner to celebrate our adventures in Mongolia. Overnight at hotel. **(Hotel Blue Sky or similar; B, L, D)**

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#### **DAY 15, JUNE 16 DEPARTURE**

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

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**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:	<b>\$4,950 per person</b> , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 3-5 participants:	<b>\$4,370 per person</b> , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 6-9 participants:	<b>\$4,150 per person</b> , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 10 and more participants:	<b>\$3,850 per person</b> ,
Optional single supplement:	<b>\$480</b> (including a single tent)

LAND PRICES INCLUDE:	LAND PRICES DO NOT INCLUDE:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic flights as indicated in the itinerary;</li> <li>• Land transportation as indicated in the itinerary based on using Toyota Land Cruiser jeeps seating 3 passengers each;</li> <li>• Accommodations in a standard room at hotels, gers in the countryside based on a twin occupancy and expedition style camping in the countryside;</li> <li>• Airport arrival and departure transfers;</li> <li>• Sleeping bags; expedition style tents and mats;</li> <li>• All meals indicated as B, L or D;</li> <li>• All entrance fees as indicated in the itinerary;</li> <li>• Guest lecturer's Mongolia land expenses and participation;</li> <li>• English speaking national guide throughout your stay;</li> <li>• Bottled water per person per day and unlimited supply of boiled waters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International airfare;</li> <li>• Personal laundry;</li> <li>• Drinks not mentioned in the itinerary;</li> <li>• Travel insurance;</li> <li>• Medical evacuation costs;</li> <li>• Excess baggage charges;</li> <li>• Visa fees;</li> <li>• Gratuities;</li> <li>• Photography and video fees</li> <li>• Any other item not mentioned as included.</li> </ul>

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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

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