

MEETING & PROTECTING GOBI KHULAN

JUNE 28-JULY 11, 2025



In collaboration with the Gobiin Khulan Association

© Anne-Camille SOURIS 2014

TRIP SUMMARY

If you are looking to explore the extensive Mongolian plains and learn about nomadic culture in depth, this quest might be suitable for you. For centuries, explorers have arranged quests to discover its wildlife and have sought to traverse its vast land on horseback or camel.



The Mongolian hemion (*Equus hemionus hemionus*) known as Khulan in Mongolian is a wild equid and one of the recognized subspecies of the Asian wild ass (*Equus hemionus*). It now represents the largest population of the Asian wild ass in the world, living mainly in the Gobi Desert with small populations in northern China (Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia). The Mongolian Hemione is listed in the IUCN Red List as “Near threatened” (but was listed as “Threatened” until 2015). This exceptional journey is arranged with the collaboration of Goviin Khulan Association and certain proceeding of the income is dedicated to supporting this important conservation project. The journey is co-led by biologist Anne-Camille SOURIS, the founder of the non-profit association, who takes travelers through the Gobi’s most remote and secluded regions with amazing flora and fauna.

MEET THE TRIP LEADER



“ Mongolia is a country with a fragile environment that hosts a high diversity of wild species. This expedition will allow you to be directly connected with environmental protection at a grass-roots level in the Gobi Desert of Mongolia and to actively participate in conservation of an unique and threatened wild Equid of Mongolia: the Mongolian wild donkey/Mongolian khulan, in partnership with Association GOVIIN KHULAN. During this journey you will be able to see the amazing landscapes of the south and southeast Gobi and its unique wildlife (Mongolian khulan (Mongolian wild donkey), Black-tailed/goitered gazelle, Wild sheep (argali), Wild goat (ibex), Mongolian gazelle, Corsac fox, Cinereous vulture, Steppe eagle, Grey wolf, and many other species), meet with Buddhist monks, and some herders who are partners of the Association Goviin Khulan, and participate in some research activities.”

This Conservation and Research Expedition has been organized by Anne-Camille Souris, an ethologist and a member of the SSC/IUCN Equid Specialist Group since 2007. As the president and research manager of the Association Goviin Khulan, Anne-Camille has dedicated her efforts to studying the Mongolian Khulan since 2004. Her initial research began with this subspecies in the southwest Gobi during the summer of 2004. By 2006, she expanded her focus to include research and conservation initiatives for populations in the south and southeast Gobi, where conservation efforts for this endangered species were less established.



Our expedition begins in the northern Lake Hovsgol region, home to Mongolia's crystal-clear Lake Hovsgol. We then continue to Zavkhan province, one of Mongolia's few remaining unexplored corners. From there, we traverse the northern Gobi plains to the towering sand dunes. Our quest concludes with a dinosaur fossil prospecting journey and an encounter with a nomadic horse-breeding family. This expedition takes us through the best-known lakes and river systems of central and northern Mongolia, concluding in the Gobi Desert.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 / JUNE 28 ARRIVAL IN ULAANBAATAR CITY

Arrive in Mongolia through Chinggis Khaan international airport. Upon arrival, meeting with the local guide and transfer to Ulaanbaatar hotel or similar. After a short city tour, orientation meeting, followed by a welcome dinner. Overnight at hotel. (Hotel Bayangol or similar; D)

DAY 2 / JUNE 29 DRIVE TO HUSTAI NATIONAL PARK



After an early morning breakfast drive to Hustai Nuruu National Park, which is known for its successful reintroduction of the Przewalski's horse or "takhi" in mongolian (the only wild horse to survive in modern times). Before entering the park, we will first stop at the camp of the Mongolian Bankhar Dog Project which is based just few kilometers before the entrance of the park. This project is conducted by a nonprofit organization whose mission is to bring back the traditional use of the livestock guardian dog known locally as the 'Bankhar dog'

to help herders protect their livestock from wolves (and in some areas from snow leopards too). Then, after lunch you will travel inside the park where you will be able to observe a certain variety of species such as Red deer, Siberian marmots, Corsac foxes, numerous raptors and the Przewalski's horses. In late afternoon, we will drive back to Ulaanbaatar. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

(Approximately 250 km. Hotel Shangri La or similar; D B, L, D)

DAY 3 / JUNE 30 VISIT IKH NART NATURE RESERVE

This morning we will travel by road through the steppe to desert fields and will have a better insight about the diversity of Mongolia's natural habitats to Ikh Nart Nature Reserve, which is a protected area home to Siberian Ibex, Argali sheep and Cinereous vulture. Located in Dornogobi province, Ikh Nart Nature Reserve that has been established in 1996, covers an area of about 66,000 hectares of grassland and semi-desert steppe environments and harbors the last remaining populations of Argali sheep. It is also one of the most significant breeding sites for the Cinereous Vulture (European Black Vulture). Three research projects are ongoing in this reserve, conducted by the Denver Zoo and the Mongolian Academy of Sciences: Argali sheep and Ibex project, Carnivore project, and vulture project. You will spend this day to discover this nature reserve and its exceptional landscapes. Stay in tents or depending on availability in small ger camp close to the park.

(Approximately 320 km. Tents/gers; B, L, D)



DAY 4 / JULY 1 DRIVE TO KHAMAR MONASTERY



In early morning you will leave the nature reserve on dirt roads to travel to Sainshand, city of the southeast part of the Gobi Desert. Then, you will reach the ger camp of the “Khamar Monastery Energy Center” which is located about 50 kms from Sainshand. Khamar Monastery monastery and energy center has been built by a famous poet, Buddhist monk and scientist of the 19th century, Danzaravjaa. Tour the area, including a visit to the Shambala monument and monastery established over 200 years ago. Dinner and overnight at the local ger camp. **(Approximately 310 kms. Ger Camp; B, L, D)**

Camera trap installed at a water point. Photo courtesy of Association of GOVIIN KHULAN

DAY 5 / JULY 2 NATIVE MOUNTAIN AND ITS BUDDHIST MONASTERY

This morning, drive further south into the Gobi Desert. The Gobi makes up about a third of Mongolia and, despite common perceptions of desert "sameness," offers a great variety of scenery and wildlife. Travel through small towns in the remote desert to reach our destination. The monastery at the site of the 'Native Mountain' was destroyed during the 1930s political purges but has been rebuilt since the 1990s with the reintroduction of Buddhism.

Starting today, you might see water holes made by khulans at dry riverbeds and water points. We will collect GPS locations of Gobi wildlife and gather information about species presence, behavior, and ecology. The Association Goviin Khulan's research team has observed that khulans dig these holes to access underground water. Other wild species (e.g., black-tailed gazelle, argali sheep, fox, wolf) and some domestic species (camels, cows, and horses) also use these holes to drink.

After lunch and a short visit to the area, we will set up a few camera traps in the surroundings. Overnight in tents or gers, depending on availability. **(Approximately 330 km. Tents; B, L, D)**



Observation of Gobi wildlife using binoculars © Association GOVIIN KHULAN

DAY 6 / JULY 3 THE NATIVE MOUNTAIN AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

This morning, you will explore the remains of the old monastery and visit the temple, which began reconstruction about 30 years ago. You'll meet with the community of monks and have the opportunity to discuss their involvement in the Association Goviin Khulan conservation program, as well as their actions and motivations towards protecting the Gobi ecosystem.

After lunch, we will travel around the monastery's surroundings to set up camera traps at different locations. We will return to the monastery in the late afternoon.

(Approximately 150 km; Tented camp; B, L, D)



Measuring tracks of a Mongolian khulan on the soil. © Association GOVIIN KHULAN

DAY 7 / JULY 4 QUEEN'S SPRING

In the morning we will head out towards the south, at about 150km from the Chinese border. This region is a natural habitat for the Khulan but also for black-tailed gazelle and argali sheep. Water sources are an important factor in the distribution of Khulan populations including natural springs such as the one at Queen's Spring. In the summer months the species occurs within 10-15 km of standing water, and this range increases in the winter when it is not restricted by water availability as there is typically snowfall. On the way to Khatni bulag we will stop at Khatanbulag village where – depending on their availability we could meet with some of the park rangers working in the Small Gobi B Protected areas and talk with them about their work towards protection of the Gobi ecosystem and wildlife. We will set up camera traps again on the way. **(Approximately 210 km; Tented camp; B, L, D)**

DAY 8 / JULY 5 QUEEN'S SPRING

While we stay at the same camp for another night, we shall take packed lunches and explore nearby localities with possible watering holes of the Khulan, including one at Lugin Gol. We will also meet with one family of herders that live in this area. You will be able to have an insight of the daily activities of the nomad family of the Gobi Desert. **(Approximately 200 km; Tented camp; B, L, D)**



Set up of a camera trap at a water point with Protected areas' rangers © Association GOVIIN KHULAN

DAY 9 / JULY 6 NATIVE MOUNTAIN

Today we drive back to the native mountain and we will check some of the camera traps we did set up in the area before. We will have an opportunity to meet the monastery's community members and monks and those who have been and are involved in the Khulan project as Citizen Conservationists, and we will explore with them the pictures that have been collected by some of the camera traps. Dinner and overnight at Suikhent.

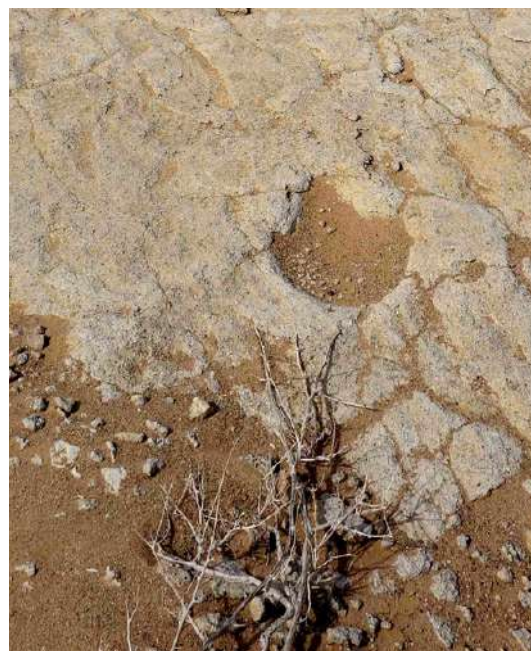
(Approximately 230 km; Tented camp; B, L, D)

DAY 10 / JULY 7 KHANBOGD AND DINOSAURS FOOT PRINTS

After our visit to Mt. Suikhent, we will travel to Hanbogd soum, one of the largest settlements in the area. This administrative unit hosts one of Mongolia's biggest mining activities. To offset their environmental impact, the mine funds various projects, including community-run tourism activities. We will have a chance to stop by Shar Tsav, a visitor center built around a unique find of 18,000 dinosaur footprints.

During our stay in Khanbogd, we might have the opportunity to meet with the director of the Small Gobi A and B protected areas. The Association Goviin Khulan has partnered with the administration of these protected areas since 2008.

(Approximately 300 km; Hotel in Hanbogd, B, L, D)



DAY 11 / JULY 8 FROM SOUTHERN TO MIDDLE GOBI

After breakfast, we will visit Demchog Monastery, built by the same lama-poet who constructed Khamar Monastery in Dornogobi. This was one of the three most influential Buddhist centers in the entire Gobi region. Destroyed by the communist government in the 1930s, it is now being rebuilt by locals with help from the local copper mine.

We will then head to Ulaanbaatar via a slightly different route through Middle Gobi. Mongolia is divided into twenty-one provinces, and on this day we will drive from South Gobi to Middle Gobi. Although technically still part of the Gobi Desert, you will notice a clear difference in vegetation and landscape.

(Approximately 550 km; Local hotel; B, L, D)



DAY 12 / JULY 9 DRIVE BACK TO ULAANBAATAR

Continue driving to Ulaanbaatar. Check into the hotel. Dinner on your own.
(Approximately 300 km. Hotel Shangri La or similar; B, L)

DAY 13 / JULY 10 ULAANBAATAR



We will spend this day exploring the sights and sounds of Mongolia's capital. The morning begins with a private blessing by a Buddhist monk at Gandan, the country's largest monastery. Here, you'll see the imposing 90-foot-tall statue of Megjid Janraisag (Avalokitesvara in Sanskrit) in the largest temple. This statue is considered a religious symbol of Mongolia's independence and democracy following the country's democratic transition in 1990. In the mid-1990s, a Mongolian student discovered fragments of the original statue, which had been destroyed by Soviet authorities in the 1930s, in St. Petersburg. This led to a nationwide campaign to collect funds for rebuilding the Buddha. After years of hard work, the magnificent statue was resurrected and now stands proudly, bringing joy to all Mongolian Buddhists.

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



Natural History Museum of Mongolia. “Mesozoic Era” hall

After lunch, we will visit the Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum, which boasts an outstanding collection of Mongolian art, including 17th-century golden Buddha statues and some of the best-preserved tankas in the world. Alternatively, you will have the opportunity to explore shopping options, including visits to cashmere factory outlets and stores selling genuine Mongolian products.



The Fine Arts Zanabazar Museum

In the evening, we will enjoy a wonderful performance of traditional Mongolian music and dance, featuring Khoomii or “throat” singing. The day concludes with a farewell dinner at one of the best restaurants in town.

(Hotel Shangri La or similar; B, L, D)



DAY 14 / JULY 11 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 4-7 participants:	\$4,475 per person , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 8-10 participants:	\$4,480 per person , standard twin occupancy;
Optional single supplement:	\$420 per person

***Please note:** As a part of our effort to support international and Mongolian research and conservation efforts, Mongolia Quest may decide to subsidize the trip cost for one or two students or rangers in joining this expedition. **They will not influence the tier pricing and only fully paid participants will determine the final per person price.**

LAND PRICES INCLUDE:	LAND PRICES DO NOT INCLUDE:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodations in a standard room at hotels based on a twin occupancy; • Sleeping bags; expedition style tents and mats, while traveling in the countryside; • Airport arrival and departure transfers; • Land transportation as indicated in the itinerary based on using Toyota Land Cruiser jeeps seating 3 passengers each; • All meals indicated as B, L or D; • All entrance fees as indicated in the itinerary; • Study leader's land expenses and participation; • . Donation to the Goviin Khulan project; • 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"> • 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 #1205, Dalai Tower, 1st Horoo, 13th Sub-district, Sukhbaatar District,
Ulaanbaatar 14210, 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.

***Please note:** As a part of our effort to support international and Mongolian research and conservation efforts, Mongolia Quest may decide to subsidize the trip cost for one or two students or rangers in joining this expedition. **They will not influence the tier pricing and only fully paid participants will determine the final per person price.**

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!