

A photograph of two cranes, likely Red-crowned cranes, standing in a lush green grassland. The crane in the foreground is taller and has a prominent red patch on its head. The crane behind it is smaller and also has a red patch on its head. The background is a soft-focus green field with some brown patches.

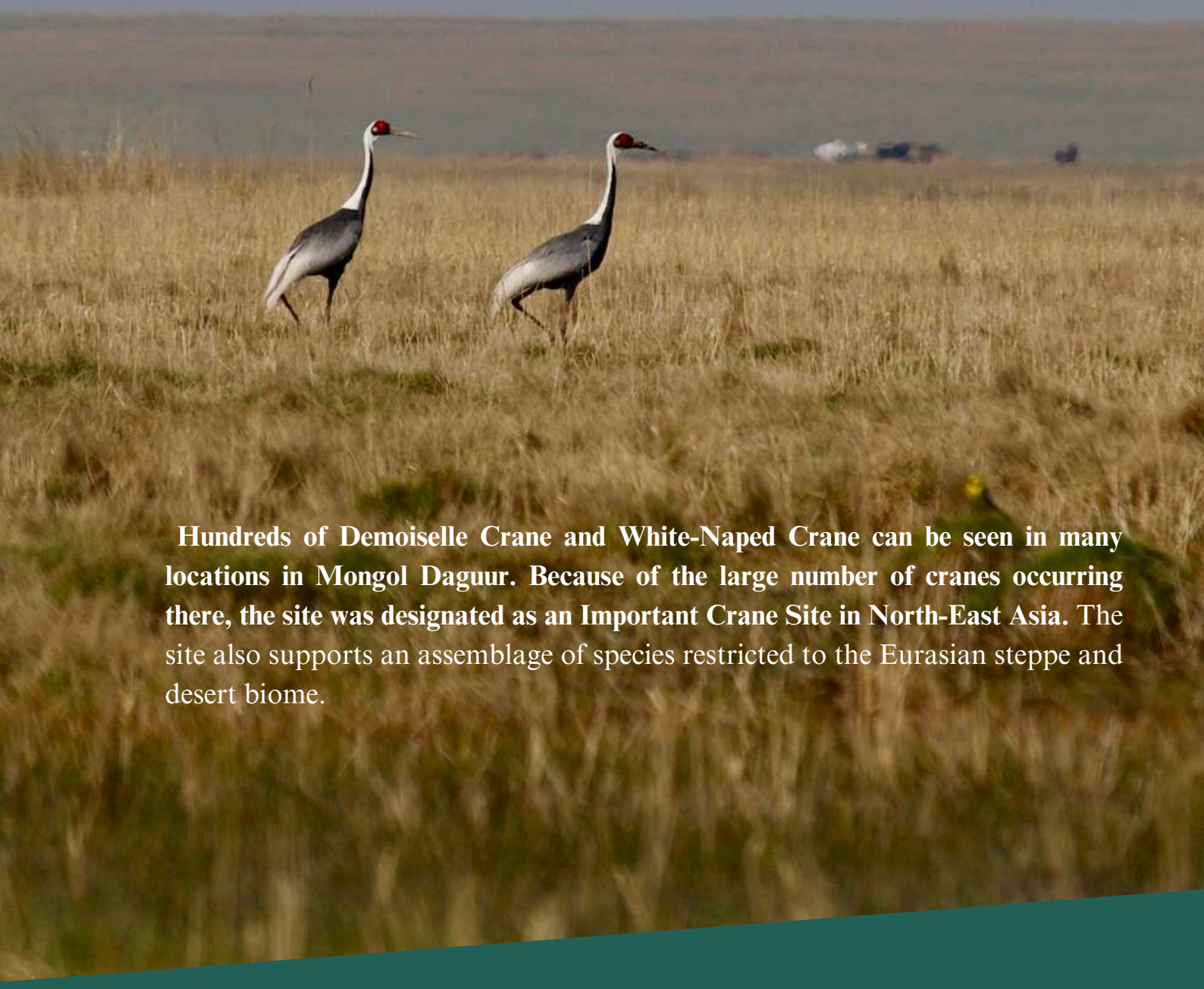
BIRDING IN MONGOLIAN GOBI DESERT AND MONGOL DAGUUR GRASSLAND

(Date: June 2-16, 2025)

TRIP SUMMARY

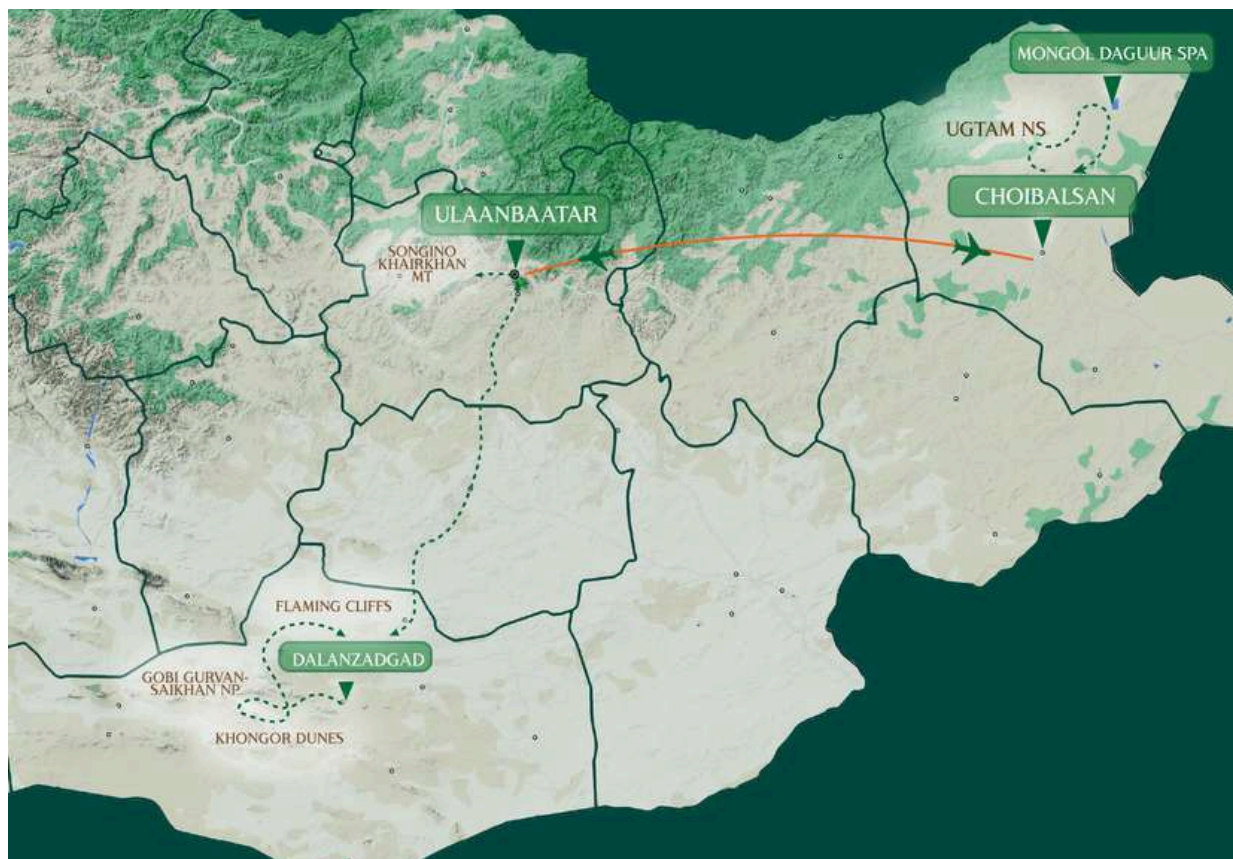
The Mongol Daguur is a flat plain with rolling hills lying in the Ulz river basin. It is an area made up of moist Daurian steppe with lakes and ponds of different sizes, rivers, streams and wetland areas including reed beds. The larger lakes support tens of thousands of molting water birds in summer. 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.

TRAVEL ROUTE



This journey commences in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's capital, from where we venture across the expansive eastern Mongolian steppe. In Dornod Province, exploring its remarkable habitat areas.

Dornod Province, located in the easternmost part of Mongolia, is a region of untouched natural beauty, characterized by its rolling steppes, rich biodiversity, and vibrant cultural heritage. This area offers visitors a glimpse into the traditional nomadic lifestyle, with opportunities to experience the warm hospitality of local herders, explore historic sites, and witness the stunning wildlife that calls this region home. Continuing southward, our path leads into the Gobi Desert, where we delve into the desert's captivating ecosystems and unique geological formations.

Known for its sweeping dunes, rugged mountains, and dramatic cliffs, **the Gobi Desert** is a land of extremes and timeless allure. One of its most famous sites, the Flaming Cliffs, or Bayanzag, is renowned for its rich deposits of dinosaur fossils and striking red sandstone formations that glow brilliantly under the sun. The Gobi Desert's vast, open spaces and serene landscapes provide a unique setting for adventure and introspection, offering travelers a chance to connect with nature in one of the world's most remote and unspoiled regions.

ITINERARY

DAY 1. JUNE 2 ARRIVAL IN ULAANBAATAR

Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, is situated in the Tuul River valley, nestled at the foothills of Bogd Khan Uul National Park to the south. Originally a nomadic Buddhist center, it became a permanent city in the 18th century. The city features a unique blend of Soviet-era architecture, historic monasteries, and modern 21st-century highrises.

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

(Hotel Kempinski or similar; B, L, D)



DAY 2. JUNE 3. FLY TO CHOIBALSAN CITY, DORNOD PROVINCE

Choibalsan, Mongolia's fourth-largest city after Darkhan and Erdenet, is located approximately 700 km east of Ulaanbaatar. In the morning, we will transfer to the airport for our 1.5-hour flight to Choibalsan. Upon arrival, we will transfer to a local hotel where we will spend the day.

(Local hotel; B, L, D)

DAY 3. JUNE 4. DRIVE TO UGTAM NATURE RESERVE THROUGH TURGEN TSAGAAN LAKE



After breakfast, we will drive northward to Türgen Tsagaan Lake and Ugtam Nature Reserve. The landscape features rolling hills dotted with shallow steppe lakes and the Ulz River valley. Along the way to Ugtam, we will observe grassland birds such as Demoiselle Cranes, which are among the most common small cranes in the country. Additionally, we may spot species like the steppe eagle, upland buzzard, Mongolian lark, Asian short-toed lark, Blyth's and Richard's pipits, and Mongolian gazelle.

On the way, we will visit Türgen Tsagaan Lake, where we often observe Siberian cranes using the lake as a spring stopover and summer site.

However, our chances of encountering Siberian Cranes at this location will largely depend on water levels that provide favorable foraging conditions throughout the year. The water levels at Turgen Tsagaan Lake are influenced by winter snow cover and spring precipitation. Siberian Cranes are known for their specialized habitat requirements, preferring wide expanses of shallow freshwater with good visibility. They exclusively use wetlands for nesting, feeding, and roosting. As anthropogenic activities along their migration routes and wintering grounds increase, suitable foraging habitats for Siberian Cranes continue to diminish. In addition to Siberian Cranes, Turgen Tsagaan Lake is also home to two pairs of White-naped Cranes and five pairs of Common Cranes, which regularly nest on northern reeds around the lake. However, encountering these species during the main part of our trip will have already provided us with a close look. **(Tent camp; B, L, D)**

DAY 4. JUNE 5. UGTAM MOUNTAIN AND TSAGAAN LAKE

We will spend one full day and drive around Ugtam mountain to find bustards. Our main target here is Endangered Asian Great Bustards. This species is mainly represented by its eastern population of approximately 2,000-3,000 individuals. North Eastern Mongolia is one of the breeding sites for the species. Great bustard is one of heaviest flying birds in the world. These heavy-bodied birds also perform spectacular breeding displays and exhibit extreme sexual dimorphisms. These stem from the 'lek' breeding system of these species, in which males compete for female attention at traditional gathering sites each spring. Overnight on the banks of Ulz river. **(Tent camp; B, L, D)**

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



The Great Mongolian-Manchurian Grassland is widely regarded as possibly the last and largest expanse of unspoiled prairie ecosystem, not only in Asia but also in the world. The Eastern Mongolian Grasslands are abundant in natural wonders, evoking images of endless, open landscapes—tall grasses and wide expanses devoid of civilization. **This nature reserve protects a vast steppe ecosystem that spans across two eastern provinces, covering nearly 480 thousand hectares of pristine grassland.**

The reserve is renowned for its vast herds of Mongolian Gazelle and was originally established to conserve the extensive grasslands of eastern Mongolia and its rich biodiversity.



This morning, we will continue our journey to Mongol Daguur Special Protected Area (SPA) along the downstream of the Ulz River. The Ulz River basin is renowned as one of the most vital areas for breeding and staging cranes in northeastern Mongolia. Isolated from human settlement, this picturesque landscape features river valleys adorned with lush meadows, enveloped by forested mountains and grassland steppes. In addition to this breathtaking natural beauty, we can expect to witness Mongolian horsemen riding across the steppe, attending the

past 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 will head east to fully explore this stunning steppe reserve. In the afternoon, our journey will continue as we discover more breeding sites of rare cranes and observe a variety of waterfowl including grebes, ducks, pochards, geese, waders, and gulls. By dinner time, we will arrive at Khukh Lake, Mongolia's lowest point at 560 meters above sea level.

We will spend the night in a tented camp near the lake, surrounded by the serene beauty of the steppe reserve. **(Tent camp; B, L, D)**

DAY 7. JUNE 8. RETURN TO CHOIBALSAN CITY



Early in the morning, we will awaken to a symphony of larks. The dominant resident species here is the Mongolian lark, one of the few species named after Mongolia itself. This species breeds in the steppe, along with other ground-dwelling species such as the Greater short-toed lark, Asian Short-toed Lark, Skylark, Mongolian (Brandt's) Horned Lark, Richards's and Blyth's pipit. During winter, Siberian migrant visitors like Snow buntings and Lapland buntings also take residence in the park. During our journey today, we will have a high chance to encounter breeding individuals of Mongolian gazelle, Pallas's Cat, and other steppe specialists. We will arrive in the city before dinner time and stay overnight at a local hotel.

(Local hotel; B, L, D)

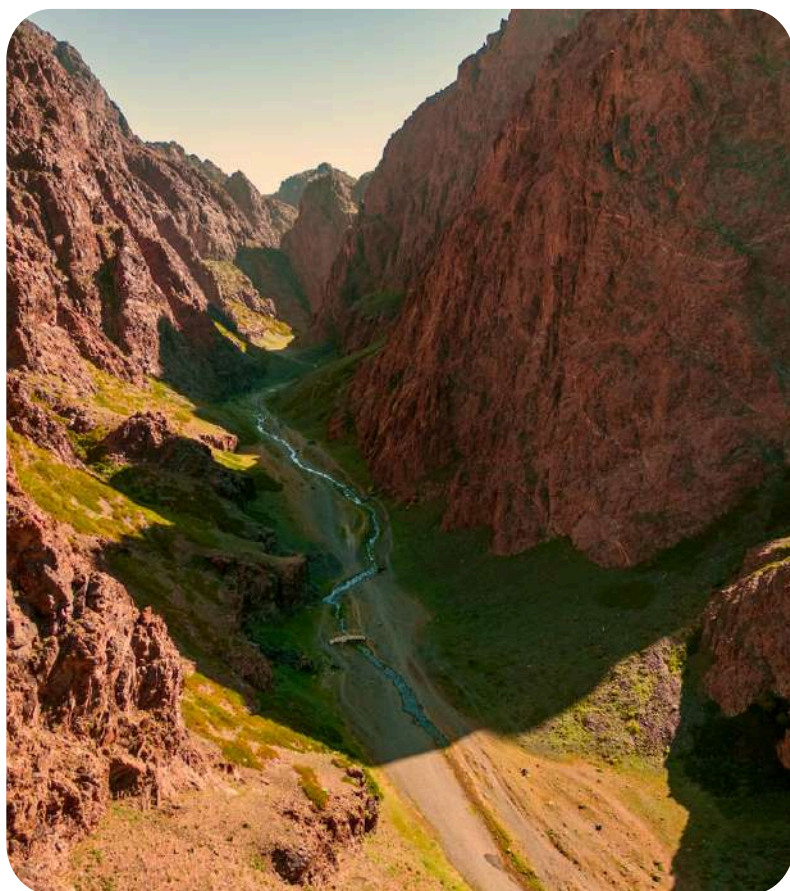
DAY 8. JUNE 9. ULAANBAATAR / SONGINO KHAIRKHAN MOUNTAIN

In the morning, we will transfer to the airport for our flight back to Ulaanbaatar. Upon arrival, we will drive directly to Songino Khaikhhan Mountain and a pond located outside the city. This obscure-looking pond is a haven for birdwatching, where we can observe species such as Azure Tit, Azure-winged Magpie, breeding Yellow-breasted Bunting, Long-tailed Rosefinch, Chinese White-crowned Penduline Tit, Great Reed Warbler, Lancellota Warbler, and many others. **(Hotel Kempinski or similar; B, L, D)**

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

In the morning, we will embark on a southward drive to the vast Gobi Desert (7-8 hours). Upon arrival, we will settle into the ger camp and spend the night in traditional Mongolian gers.

(Ger camp; B, L, D)



Over the next two days, we will explore the magnificent Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park, situated on the northern edge of the Gobi Desert. Our time will be dedicated to birdwatching in the mountains. We'll hike up into narrow canyons surrounded by steep, towering formations reaching up to 2600 meters. Noteworthy species we may encounter include nesting **Saker Falcon**, **Chukar**, **Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch**, **Common Rosefinch**, and migrating **Thick-billed Warbler**, **Barred Warbler**, **Common Whitethroat**, **Isabelline Wheatear**, **Brown Shrike**, **Brown Accentor**, **Alpine Accentor**, **Black-faced Bunting**, and **Pallas's Reed Bunting**.



Our first destination is the Yolyn Am Valley in the Zuun Saikhan Mountain Range. As we explore the valleys, slopes, and ridges, we will have the opportunity to encounter a diverse array of mountain species. Among our targets will be the impressive **Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier)**, known to nest in the canyons here. Another highlight is the local **Altai Snowcock**, often heard giving its characteristic whistling calls in the early morning after dawn. We will also be on the lookout for other exciting bird species such as the **Chukar Partridge**, **Himalayan Griffon**, **Cinereous Vulture**, **Booted Eagle**, **Golden Eagle**, **Water Pipit**, **Black Redstart**, **Alpine Accentor**, **Brown Accentor**, and the nearly endemic **Kozlov's Accentor**. Additionally, we hope to spot the **Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch**, **Twite**, **Godlewski's Bunting**, **Pallas's Reed Bunting**, **Common Rock Thrush**, and with some luck, the **Grey-necked Bunting**, as well as rare species like the **Red-mantled Rosefinch** and **Spotted Great Rosefinch**.



In addition to the diverse birdlife, flocks of White-winged Snowfinches are a common sight confidently feeding along the trail. During this season, we might also spot migrating raptors such as the Oriental Honey Buzzard, Amur Falcon, and Steppe Eagle. As for mammals, the majestic Siberian Ibex and the impressive Argali, a type of wild sheep, roam these landscapes. Three species of rodents including Pallas's and Alpine Pikas, and Midday Gerbils, scurry in and out of the stunted alpine vegetation.

On the second day, we will focus on finding any species we missed the previous day and explore the rocky slopes and small canyons near the camp. **(Ger camp; B, L, D)**

DAY 12. JUNE 13. KHONGORYN ELS SAND DUNE

After breakfast, we will continue our journey to Khongoryn Els, home to the largest accumulation of sand dunes in the Gobi Desert. These dunes are impressive, reaching heights of 300 meters, spanning 12 kilometers in width, and extending 100 kilometers in length. Our drive will take us through breathtaking landscapes of barren plains and gravel terrain, with the Gobi Altai Mountains providing a majestic backdrop.

The scenery at Khongoryn Els is stunning, featuring rocky mountains to the south, expansive sand dunes in the center, and a river oasis with extensive saxaul forests to the north.



Our primary birding targets here include the scarce and localized Saxaul Sparrow, the relatively common Southern Grey Shrike, the enigmatic Long-legged Buzzard, and the agile Mongolian Ground Jay. The Saxaul Sparrow prefers gravel plains with scattered vegetation, where it hunts for invertebrates while the Mongolian Ground Jay is known for its smart appearance and habit of running across open ground.

Near our camp, there is a colony of Lesser Kestrels, providing us with an excellent opportunity to observe these fascinating small raptors up close.

(Ger camp; B, L, D)

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

On this day, we will depart from the Khongor Sand Dunes towards the Flaming Cliffs. Along the way, we will have the chance to spot Henderson's Ground Jay, Oriental and Greater Sand Plovers, as well as Goitered Gazelles. Our journey will take us northeast to the renowned Bayanzag locality, famous for its red sandstone cliffs known as "The Flaming Cliffs."

Named by Roy Chapman Andrews of the American Museum of Natural History, this site is where the world's first fossil dinosaur eggs and numerous dinosaur bones were discovered. In this arid and expansive region, birds seek out drinking water, and we will make a stop at a small oasis. Here, we can observe many exciting bird species up close, offering ample opportunities for photography.



Some species, such as Pallas's Sandgrouse, gather in large numbers. The scenery along the route, driving across the plains of the Gobi, is simply spectacular! Along the way, in addition to numerous Horned Larks (subspecies *brandti*), and occasional Great Sand Plovers, we may have the chance to spot the endangered and highly sought-after Oriental Plover, known for its elegant appearance within its family. Enjoy a sunset experience before returning to the ger camp for dinner. **(Ger camp; B, L, D)**



DAY 14. JUNE 15. RETURN TO ULAANBAATAR CITY/ DAY 15, JUNE 16. DEPARTURE

After breakfast, we will transfer to the local airport for our return flight to Ulaanbaatar (1.5 hours). The afternoon is free for individual sightseeing and shopping, allowing for personal exploration of the city.

In the evening, we will delight in a traditional Mongolian performance, followed by a festive dinner to celebrate our memorable adventures in Mongolia. Overnight at the hotel.

(Hotel Kempinski or similar; B, L, D)

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:	\$4,880 per person , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 3-5 participants:	\$4,590 per person , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 6-9 participants:	\$4,120 per person , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 10 and more participants:	\$4,010 per person , standard twin occupancy;
Domestic airfare:	\$480 per person
Optional single supplement:	\$480 (including a single tent)

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; • Guest lecturer's Mongolia land expenses and participation; • 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 and domestic 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 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 |
|--|---|--|

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!