



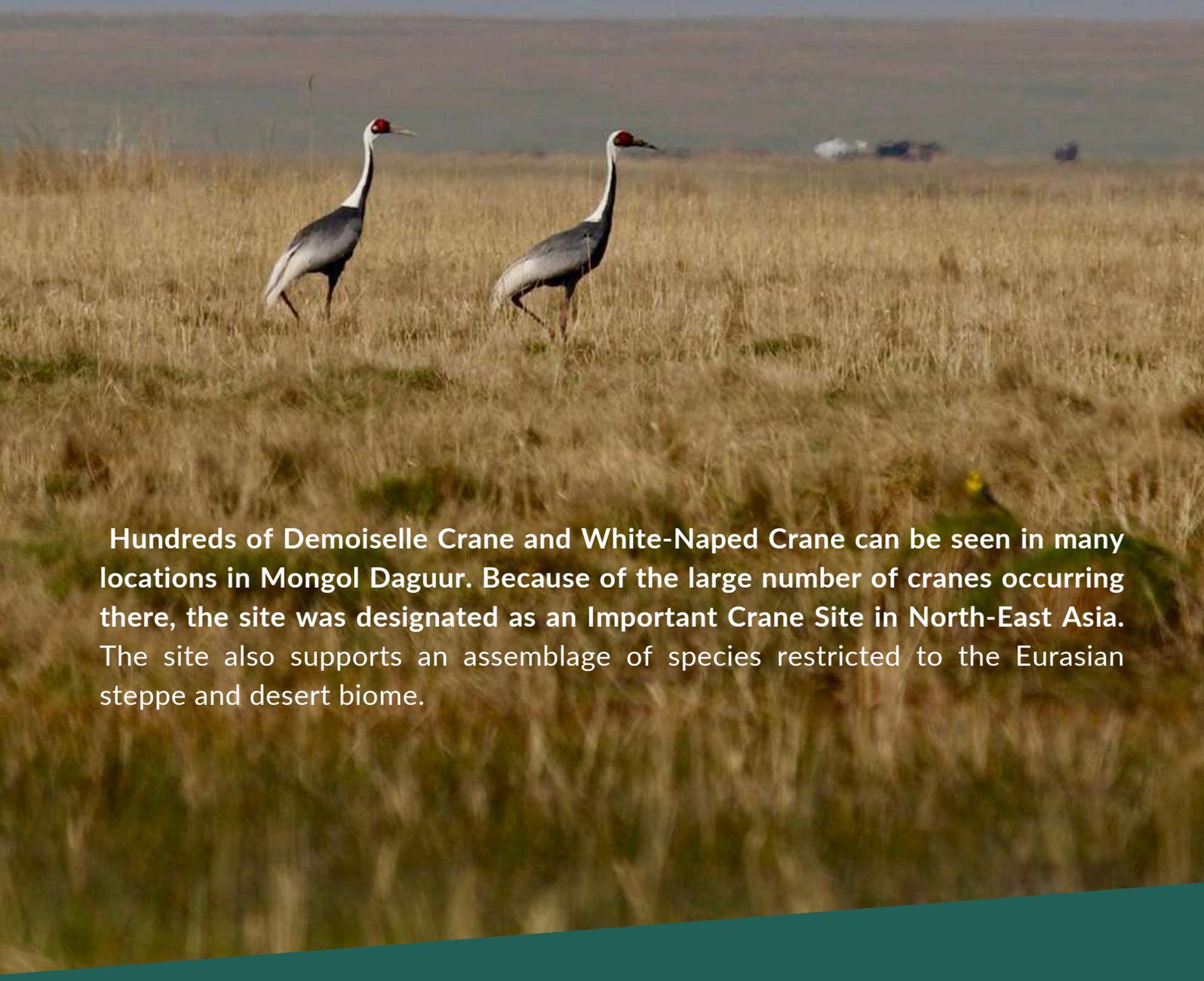
**BIRDING IN MONGOL DAGUUR  
WETLANDS AND THE GOBI  
DESERT**

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**(Date: June 2-17, 2026)**

## 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.

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## 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)**



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

Today, we set out on a scenic overland journey eastward to Choibalsan, Mongolia's fourth-largest city. This full-day drive offers a rare glimpse into the country's vast, changing landscapes, from forest-steppe to rolling grasslands. We'll enjoy a leisurely lunch stop in the historic town of Undurkhaan, a regional hub along the Kherlen River, before continuing eastward. Frequent stops along the way allow for stretching, photography, and observing life in Mongolia's rural heartland. Upon arrival in Choibalsan, settle into a comfortable local hotel and enjoy dinner. **(Approx. 10-12 hours driving; Local hotel; B, L, D)**

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



Drive north to Ugtam Nature Reserve, passing through the rolling hills, steppe lakes, and the Ulz River valley. Along the way, look for Demoiselle Cranes, Steppe Eagles, Upland Buzzards, Mongolian Larks, and herds of Mongolian Gazelle. At Turgan Tsagaan Lake, keep an eye out for Siberian Cranes, which use the area as a spring stopover and summer habitat.

Our chances of seeing Siberian Cranes depend on water levels shaped by winter snow and spring rains. These critically endangered birds require open, shallow wetlands with clear visibility—conditions that are increasingly rare due to human activity along their flyway. The lake also supports nesting pairs of White-naped and Common Cranes, though we may have already encountered these species earlier in the trip.. **(Tent camp; B, L, D)**

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#### **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)**

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



This is one of the world's last great unspoiled prairie ecosystems—and the largest of its kind in Asia. The Eastern Mongolian Grasslands evoke vast, open landscapes with tall grasses and an absence of human disturbance. Spanning nearly 480,000 hectares across two provinces, the nature reserve was established to protect this unique steppe habitat and its rich biodiversity, including vast herds of Mongolian Gazelle. Today, we travel downstream along the Ulz River into the heart of the Mongol Daguur Strictly Protected Area—one of northeastern Mongolia's most critical breeding and staging sites for cranes. This secluded valley is surrounded by forested mountains and expansive grassland steppes. Along the way, we may witness nomadic horsemen herding livestock across the open steppe. The day also includes a visit to a local Buriad ethnographic museum in Dashbalbar town. **(Tent camp; B, L, D)**



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## 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)**

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## DAY 8. JUNE 9. DRIVE BACK TO ULAANBAATAR

After an early breakfast, begin the long journey back to Ulaanbaatar through the vast eastern steppe. We'll stop for lunch en route and reach the capital by late evening. Upon arrival, check into your hotel and rest. **(Hotel Kempinski or similar; B, L, D)**

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## DAY 9. JUNE 10. SONGINO KHAIRKHAN MOUNTAIN EXCURSION



After a restful morning, we'll take a short excursion to Songino Khairkhan Mountain and a nearby pond on the western outskirts of the city. Despite its modest appearance, the area is a productive site for observing several unique breeding species, including the Azure Tit, Azure-winged Magpie, Long-tailed Rosefinch, Yellow-breasted Bunting, and Great Reed Warbler. Return to Ulaanbaatar by afternoon with time to relax or explore at your leisure. **(Hotel Kempinski or similar; B, L, D)**

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## DAY 10 . JUNE 11. FLY TO SOUTH GOBI

In the morning, transfer to the airport for your domestic flight to Dalanzadgad, the gateway to the breathtaking Gobi Desert. Upon arrival, you will be welcomed by your local support team and begin the scenic drive toward your base camp. The dramatic landscapes of the Gobi – with its vast gravel plains, rugged rocky ridges, and hidden oases, provide a striking contrast to the eastern steppe. Depending on your flight schedule, you may have time to explore the charming town of Dalanzadgad or simply relax and settle into your ger camp. Take this opportunity to rest and prepare yourself for the unforgettable adventure that awaits in the arid beauty of the Gobi Desert. **(Ger camp; B, L, D)**

## DAY 11-12 JUNE 12-13. GOBI GURVANSAIKHAN NATIONAL PARK

Over the next two days, we will explore the stunning Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park, located on the northern edge of the Gobi Desert. Our focus will be birdwatching in the mountains, hiking through narrow canyons flanked by towering formations up to 2,600 meters high.



Our first stop is Yolyn Am Valley in the Zuun Saikhan Mountain Range, where we'll search for a rich variety of mountain birds. Highlights include the nesting Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier), the distinctive whistling calls of the Altai Snowcock at dawn, and species such as Chukar Partridge, Himalayan Griffon, Cinereous Vulture, Booted Eagle, Golden Eagle, Water Pipit, Black Redstart, Alpine and Brown Accentors, and the nearly endemic Kozlov's Accentor. We'll also keep an eye out for Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch, Twite, Godlewski's Bunting, Pallas's Reed Bunting, Common Rock Thrush, and, if lucky, rare species like the Red-mantled and Spotted Great Rosefinches.



Along the trails, flocks of White-winged Snowfinches are commonly seen feeding confidently. During migration season, we may spot raptors such as the Oriental Honey Buzzard, Amur Falcon, and Steppe Eagle. Mammal sightings might include Siberian Ibex, Argali wild sheep, and small rodents like Pallas's and Alpine Pikas, as well as Midday Gerbils darting among alpine vegetation. On the second day, we'll revisit areas to locate any species missed previously and explore additional rocky slopes and small canyons near camp. **(Ger camp; B;L;D)**



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### DAY 13. JUNE 14. 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 14. JUNE 15. 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 15. JUNE 16. RETURN TO ULAANBAATAR CITY**

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)**

### **DAY 16. JUNE 17 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>\$5,220 per person</b> , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 3-5 participants:	<b>\$4,925 per person</b> , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 6-9 participants:	<b>\$4,590 per person</b> , standard twin occupancy;
Based on 10 and more participants:	<b>\$4,640 per person</b> , standard twin occupancy;
Domestic airfare:	<b>\$480 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>• Land transportation as indicated in the itinerary based on using a 4x4 van and land cruisers;</li> <li>• Domestic Airfare;</li> <li>• Accommodations in a standard room at hotels and gers in the countryside based on a twin occupancy;</li> <li>• Airport arrival &amp; departure transfers;</li> <li>• All meals indicated as B, L or D;</li> <li>• All entrance fees as indicated in the itinerary;</li> <li>• English speaking guide throughout your stay with local knowledge and experience;</li> <li>• Supply of bottled water per person per day based on consumption.</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 #1205, Dalai Tower 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.