



## Classic Mongolia with Naadam Festival

2 -5 \$2375.00 6-12 \$2150.00 (+ internal air)

**Duration of the trip:** 12 days/11 nights

**Areas of interest:** Ulaan Baatar (The Capital); Kharkhorin (Central); Gobi desert (Southern)

**Trip activities:** Classic introduction to Mongolia's culture, people and environment. View Naadam Festival, a traditional contest of strength, marksmanship and speed. Extensive driving, optional hiking.

**Day 1:** Arrive in Ulaan Baatar, the capitol of Mongolia, also called "UB" by visitors. Upon arrival at the UB airport, you will be met by your guide and driver and transferred to your hotel. Referred to as "The City of contrasts", where modern constructions stand beside traditional dwellings and ancient monasteries, Ulaan Baatar is a very rapidly growing city with a population of nearly a million people. Conveniently located in downtown, your hotel is in walking distance of Sukhbaatar Square, museums, theaters, and shops. Depending on an arrival time, enjoy a short city orientation tour before dinner.



**Day 2:** In the morning, visit Gandan Monastery, the seat of Buddhism in Mongolia.

Having survived the purges of the 1930's Gandan Monastery offers a unique example of religious architecture. In the late morning head out of the city towards Kharkhorin, the site of an ancient capitol of 13<sup>th</sup> century Mongolian Empire, located 400 km (6-8 hours drive with breaks) southwest of UB. Visit Erdene Zuu Monastery (Hundred Treasures) originally built in 1586. Stop enroute for a picnic lunch. Stay overnight in a ger camp. ("Ger Camp" is a Mongolian version of motel with traditionally decorated gers for sleeping, separate dining hall and basic facilities for shower and toilet. Normally 2-4 people share the same ger)

**Day 3 - 4:** Experience the Naadam Festival in Kharkhorin and observe traditional Mongolian sports called the "Three Manly Games". Naadam, or "games", has occurred for centuries in Mongolia as a combat training of the Mongol warriors and is a colorful contest of horse racing (jockeys are generally ages 7-11 and race 15-30 kilometers), wrestling (men only) and archery (women and men). July 11<sup>th</sup> is the official date of Naadam established by the Mongolian government. Stay overnight in a ger camp.

**Day 5:** Depart south towards the Gobi Desert. Lunch en-route. In the early evening, arrive at the ruins of the Ongi monastery hidden in the mountains along the Ongi River. Located in the Dundgobi (Middle Gobi) province, these dramatic ruins are a perfect place to stop for an overnight rest. Ger camp.

**Day 6:** Head south towards Umnugobi (South Gobi). In the early evening, you will reach the edges of the Gobi Gurvansaikhan (The Three Beauties of the Gobi) National Park and arrive at Khongoryn Els called the "singing dunes" for the sound of the wind howling through the dunes. 2600 feet high, 20 km wide and over 100 km long, these dunes offer some spectacular views of the desert. Ger camp.



**Day 7:** Morning at the Khongoryn Els dunes, optional camel riding. Meet a family of camel breeders. Overnight in a ger camp.

**Day 8:** Head westwards to Bayan Zag, known as the Flaming Cliffs for its spectacular colors. The first dinosaur eggs were discovered at this site by an American expedition from the Museum of Natural History headed by Roy Chapman Andrews in 1922. Explore the area on foot. Overnight in a ger camp.

**Day 9:** Learn about local flora and fauna at the Gurvan Saikhan National Park museum. Yolyn Am (Vulture's Mouth) canyon in the Gurvan Saikhan mountains is home to endangered snow leopards and Lammergeyers (Bearded Vulture) where "eternal ice" (usually) remains throughout summer. Yolyn Am is one of the main attractions in the Gobi for its stunning vistas. Lucky visitors may see Ibex, Argali (wild mountain sheep), and Tas (Scenerious Vulture). Picnic lunch at the canyon. Visit with a local herder family. Stay overnight in a ger camp.

**Day 10:** Catch your flight back to UB in the early morning. Start the city tour in UB with Zaisan Memorial, a prominent landmark looking over UB built on Bogd Khan Mountain. Walk Sukhbaatar Square, named after the Mongolian National Hero of People's Revolution in 1921. Parliament building, the Stock Market, cultural sites, the Palace Royal Opera House and the main post office all surround Sukhbaatar Square. Overnight in hotel.

**Day 11:** Full day guided sightseeing in Ulaan Baatar. Take in the Museum of National History and the Fine Art Museum of Zanabazar to acquaint yourself more with Mongolian history, traditional culture and arts. Pass the afternoon shopping at the State Department Store and cashmere store. See "Tumen Ekh" folk theater perform throat singing, traditional dances and more. Farewell dinner. Overnight in hotel.



**Day 12:** Transfer to the airport for your international departure.

**Included:** Meals throughout your travels in Mongolia (dinner on arrival day thru breakfast on departure day), all transportation upon arrival in Ulaan Baatar, hotel in UB and ger accommodations, guide/translator, vehicle/driver.

**Not Included:** Roundtrip international airfare to/from UB, airport taxes, gratuities, excess baggage fees.