



BOOJUM EXPEDITIONS

Kazakh Eagle Hunters of Mongolia



Eagle Hunting, one of the most dramatic and primal relationships between man and beast is alive and well in the remote mountains of western Mongolia. Falconry developed in Central Asia and for centuries, Kazakh men have hunted from horseback with trained golden eagles, the largest and most powerful of raptors. Fox, rabbit and even wolf are hunted for their fur and for the challenge they present, pursued across the snowy mountains and steppes. We offer a ten day long trip to meet the hunters and their birds, follow them on the hunt and learn some of the skills involved in the capture, training and use of the eagles as hunters.

In winter western Mongolia is COLD. Day time temperatures are nearly always below freezing. The accommodations will be comfortable but very simple, **housed in a small local cabin** and heated with wood stoves. In winter it is also generally sunny and not windy so the days, if properly dressed, can be quite pleasant. The Kazakhs only hunt with their eagles during winter, when the pelts of the rabbits, red fox and wolf are at their most luxuriant. Hunting with eagles is an ancient sport. It reminds us of how close, until recent history, man was with both nature and animals. This tradition, lost in many parts of the world, is enjoying a resurgence of interest among the Kazakhs and has spread to other ethnic groups who once hunted with raptors but lost the knowledge.

Participants will discuss the techniques of capturing and training an eagle (only the females are used, they are larger) and will be able to see the eagles fly in pursuit of prey. You should be prepared for some horseback riding (Mongol ponies are small but stout) and camel riding in order to follow the hunters. In addition, the far western mountains of Mongolia (Altai) are spectacularly beautiful.

This trip is limited to 6 participants and an interview with our office is a prerequisite.

Itinerary

Day One: Arrive Ulaanbaatar, capitol of Mongolia. Ulaanbaatar is known among foreigners as UB for short. Meet your guide at the airport or for a late arrival use your taxi voucher to transfer to your hotel. Your hotel is a four-star hotel conveniently located right in the downtown. Time permitting; you will be given a short city orientation before dinner.

Day Two: UB guide will take you to the airport. Fly to Western Mongolia with an early morning flight. Local guide will meet you at the Ulgii airport. Ulgii is the capitol of Bayan-Ulgii aimag, the very westernmost and only province populated with Kazakh speaking nomads with Muslim influence. Drive to Eagle hunter's camp. Homestay with the Eagle hunter's family cabin.

Day Three – Seven: Join the hunters either by jeep, on foot or horseback. Visit local herders and experience the Nomads hospitality. Every family as you visit them will offer you dairy products, boiled horse meat and etc. The hunt is led by the older member of the family while the young guys help with mounting horses and riding. You have an option to ride a camel during your stay with the family.

Day Eight: Drive back to Ulgii. Visit local mosque and market. Homestay.

Day Nine: Local guide will take you to the airport for your return flight to Ulaan Baatar. UB guides transfers you to the hotel. Overnight at hotel.

Day Ten: Full day guided sightseeing in Ulaanbaatar. Visit Suhbaatar Square, named after the Mongolian National Hero of People's Revolution in 1921. Visit Zaisan Memorial. Zaisan Memorial a prominent landmark in UB, built in the Bogd Khan Mountain is the best place to view the city. Visit Museum of National History and Fine Art Museum of Zanabazar. Both museums are very informative to learn more about the Mongolian history, traditional culture and arts. In the afternoon shop at the State Department Store and cashmere store. Farewell dinner. Overnight in hotel.

Day Eleven: After breakfast guide will take you to the airport. Depart for home.

Please Note: these trip dates are designed to allow North Americans to go in and out of Ulaan Baatar via Seoul, Korea which is the easiest and generally cheapest way to travel.

What's Included: Meals begin and end in UB (dinner on arrival day thru breakfast on departure day), all transportation upon arrival in UB, hotel in UB and ger accommodations, homestay with Eagle hunters, horses and tack, guides and entry fees to museums and parks.

What's Not Included: Roundtrip international airfare to/from UB, airport taxes, gratuities, excess baggage fees and items of a personal nature.