

Mongolia in Depth with Naadam Festival

Departs
5th July 2025

Blue Dot Travel





\$13,990 pp

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MONGOLIA IN DEPTH WITH NAADAM FESTIVAL

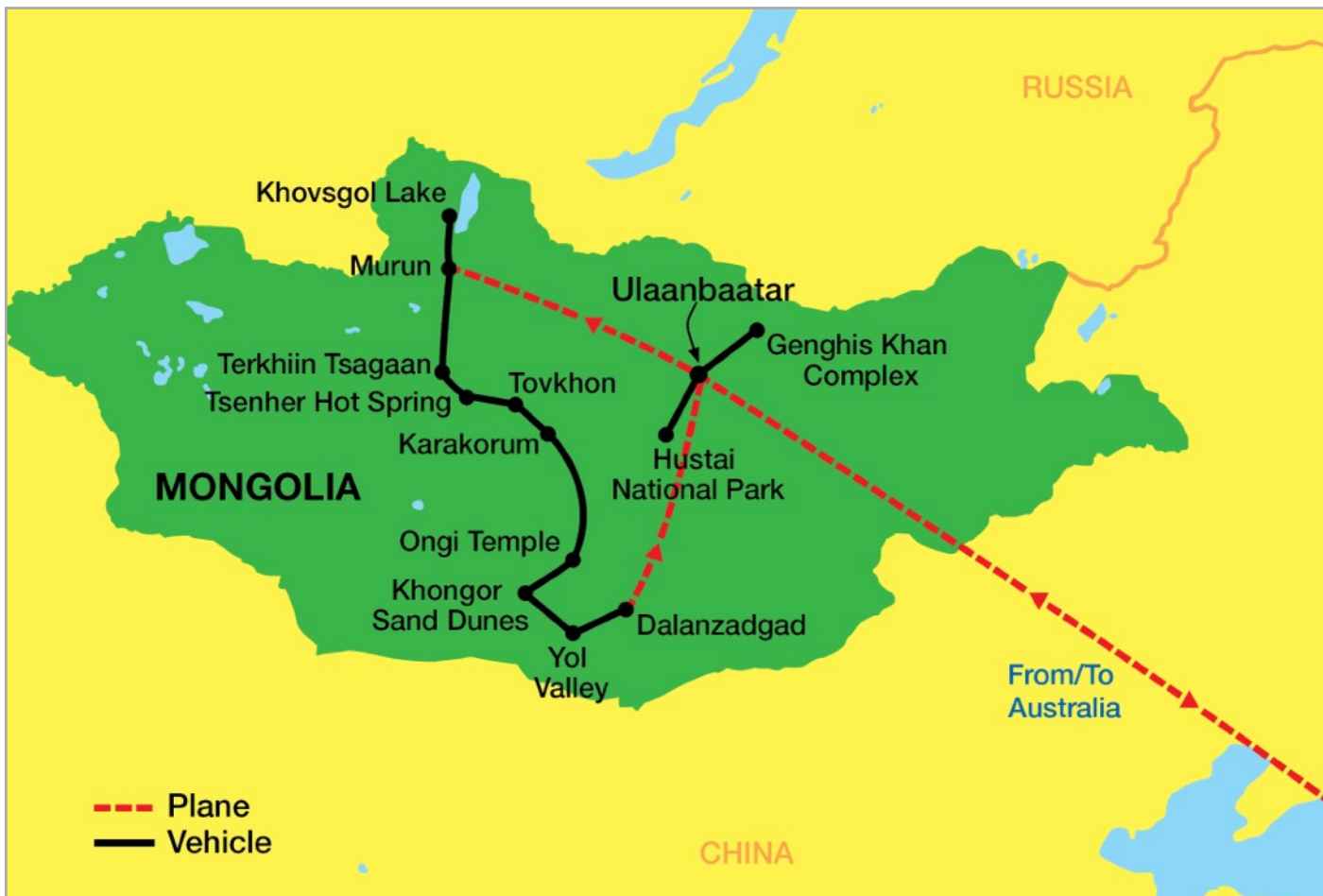
A trip through the Land of the Sapphire Blue Sky is something very unique.

If you're looking for a five-star type, cushy, comfortable holiday, then Mongolia is probably not for you. If you want to get off the beaten track then Mongolia is unmatched in its wild beauty and rawness. In three weeks you will get a wonderful taste of what this country has to offer. What you will experience, hear, taste and see, will engage all of your senses.

Mongolia is one of the world's least-developed, least-populated countries. With a population of only 3.3 million, roughly half of the country's population is packed into the capital Ulaanbaatar. Outside of that, the population of Mongolia's largest "cities" remains in the tens of thousands, with a significant number still living a traditional lifestyle as nomadic herders. Mongolia is a land of extremes.

Horses and horse culture play a large role in daily and national life in Mongolia. It is traditionally said that "A Mongol without a horse is like a bird without the wings." Mongolia has more than 3.5 million horses, an equine population that outnumbers the country's human population.

Mongolia is a land of extremes. On the road it can take hours of driving before you pass a tiny ger community, a Mongolian on horseback, or even another vehicle. Yet in between you are blessed with views of a countryside so dramatic that it will be indelibly imprinted on your memory.



**Saturday 5th July
DEPART AUSTRALIA**

Depart for Beijing. We will provide a personalised flight schedule based on your needs.

**Day 1, Sunday 6th July
ARRIVE ULAANBAATAR**

After a two-hour flight from Beijing, once we have cleared immigration, we'll be transferred to our centrally located hotel, where we stay two nights. Welcome dinner tonight at a local restaurant. Accommodation is at Urgoo Boutique Hotel (or similar). *D*



**Day 2,
Monday 7th
July
ULAANBAATAR
CITY TOUR**

Our city tour starts at Sukhbaatar Square, the central square named after the revolutionary hero of

1921, Damdiny Sukhbaatar, who declared independence from China. After lunch, we'll visit the Gandan Monastery, the centre of Buddhism in Mongolia and home to the Golden Buddha Statue of Migjid Janraisig. It's a beautiful sight to experience monks at worship or going about their daily lives amongst the grounds of this important religious site. After lunch, we'll visit the National Museum, famous for its wonderful collection of elaborate costumes, hats and jewellery from the main Mongolian ethnic groups. The

Museum also houses an exhibit dedicated to the Mongol empire, giving insight into the country's long nomadic tradition. Accommodation at Urgoo Boutique Hotel. *B/L/D*

**Day 3, Tuesday
8th July
HUSTAI NATIONAL
PARK**

Today, we will drive 90 km west of the capital towards Hustai National Park. On the way, we'll stop for 3.5 hours at a Mongol nomadic camp



to learn about the way of life. We'll watch them go about their dairy farming activities and felt-making to gain an understanding of how Mongolian nomads move from one pasture to another and also enjoy some traditional games and music. The locals will demonstrate their horsemanship skills. After lunch at the camp, we'll continue our drive (20-30km) to Hustai National Park. There was a time when it would have been nearly impossible to see a Przewalski's horse (named after Russian geographer and explorer Nikolay Przhevalsky). They had become extinct in the wild in the 1960s because of overhunting and harsh winters. Only two captive groups remained in the world – in zoos in Munich and Prague. In 1992, some of these horses were reintroduced into the wild at Mongolia's Hustai National Park, and the herd has been carefully monitored since. Now, there are more than 350 living here. Tonight is our first night in a traditional ger. Whilst the accommodation is basic, this is a unique opportunity to experience life as the

Mongolian nomads do. Overnight in a standard ger at Hustai Ger Camp (or similar). **B/L/D**

Note. Staying in a traditional ger camp is a must-do cultural experience in Mongolia. It's a drawcard for many travellers. A traditional ger is a round-shaped tent with a wooden structure covered with wool felt and waterproof tarpaulin. The ger camps we use vary in size, with some common features: Each ger will accommodate a couple or two solo travellers, with permanent beds and a western-style mattress. You'll notice that we refer to some camps as "deluxe". The gers in these camps feature an ensuite toilet and shower, whilst the "standard gers" have shared facilities. Electricity is available at all camps, with some utilising a generator as some electricity supplies can be unreliable. Overall, you'll find the accommodation simple but comfortable, with a definite cultural charm. A much larger ger is used for communal dining, and at most camps, there is an additional ger with lounge and bar facilities.

Day 4, Wednesday 9th July **TERELJ NATIONAL PARK**

Today, we will drive 60 km northeast of UB city to see the Genghis Khan Equestrian statue, the highest statue representing a man on horseback in the world. Then, we'll visit Terelj National Park, a unique area with granite rock formations, including Turtle Rock. We will stay overnight in a deluxe ger with private facilities. Accommodation at Terelj Lodge Ger Camp (or similar). **B/L/D**

Day 5, Thursday 10th July **HUSTAI NP — KHOVSGOL LAKE**

After an early breakfast, we'll drive to the airport and fly to Murun, the centre of the Khovsgol province. From Murun, we'll drive approximately 130 km to stunning Lake Khovsgol near the Russian border. With an area of 2,620 square km and a more than 244m depth, Lake Khovsgol is Mongolia's largest freshwater lake. The remainder of the day is at leisure, to stop and soak in your surroundings. This is a remote area of extraordinary, pristine beauty. Overnight in ART 88 Resort for three nights, standard wooden cabins. **B/L/D**



Day 6, Friday **11th July** **NAADAM FESTIVAL**

Today, we will witness the spectacular Naadam Festival, comprised of the three key Mongolian traditional sports of

wrestling, archery, and horse racing. The opening ceremony of our rural Naadam festival occurs at Khatgal village. A rural Naadam offers a chance to get closer to the action and provides a more intimate experience with the locals. Naadam festival celebrates the victory of the People's Revolution, which led to Mongolia's independence and its rich cultural heritage. The distinctly Mongolian feel and flair of the Naadam Festival make it a wonderful spectacle, a joyous time, and an intriguing cultural event. Colourful ceremonies and parading soldiers kick off the celebrations. The ancient wrestling game follows, with men competing in many rounds of competition. Both men and women compete in the archery games, using the traditional Mongolian compound bow that terrorised Europe when Genghis Khan and his Golden Horde moved their empire

west. The quintessentially Mongolian art of horse racing follows. While these are traditionally male-dominated sports, women and children also compete. **B/L/D**

Day 7, Saturday 12th July **KHOVSGOL LAKE AND SURROUNDS**

After breakfast at the camp, we have a day exploring the shores of this beautiful lake and learning more about the nomadic way of life. We will enjoy a light hike along the shoreline, a habitat for migratory flocks of birds, and capture some wildlife photography. There is also an opportunity for horse riding near the lake and visiting the yak or reindeer breeding families to experience their unique lifestyle. **B/L/D**

Day 8, Sunday **13th July** **KHOVSGOL LAKE TO** **ZUUN LAKE**

After breakfast, we'll start towards Salt Lake Zuun or Eastern Lake via Murun, Khovsgol province centre, where we will have lunch. On the way to Murun, we'll stop at the Uushgiin Chuluu deer stone monument site, which consists of 14 Bronze Age deer stones erected in memory of chiefly figures. Especially interesting is the 2.6m high Deer Stone 14, one of the few found only in Mongolia and the Russian Altai. It was engraved with many traditional themes, including stylised deer, a belt with hanging weapons sets such as a war hammer and dagger, and a striped pentagonal shape believed to be a shield. The uppermost portion of this deer stone makes it unique and important. A shaped human face with ears and earring loops on either side of the head and an encircling necklace or neck ornament looks out along a direct line southward toward the river. The driving distance is 250km (110km by paved road). Overnight at Ulzii Khishigt Ger Camp, staying in a standard ger, located between the prominent destinations of Khovsgol Lake and Terkhiiin Tsagaan Lake. **B/L/D**



Day 9, Monday 14th July **ZUUN LAKE TO TERKHIIN TSAGAAN LAKE**

Today, we travel to Terkhiiin Tsagaan National Park and Khorgo Volcano. The lake, birdlife and mountains are now protected within the 77,267-hectare Khorgo-Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur National Park. The lake, formed by lava flows from a volcanic eruption many millennia ago, is excellent for swimming, though a bit cold in the morning - try the late afternoon, after the sun has warmed it. There are horse trips and trekking available to Khorgo Volcano. Overnight at Maikhan Tolgoi Ger Camp (or similar) in a standard ger. The driving distance is 170km. **B/L/D**

Day 10, Tuesday 15th July **TERKHIIN TSAGAAN LAKE TO TSENHER HOT** **SPRING**

After breakfast, we'll drive to Tsenher Hot Springs. Along the way, a stop for a break in the small town of Tsetserleg to visit a monastery museum. We spend tonight in a ger camp where you can soak in the natural hot springs' therapeutic waters while enjoying the view of the surrounding hills and forests. Overnight in Duut Resort (or similar). **B/L/D**



Day 11, Wednesday 16th July
TSENHER HOT SPRINGS TO KARAKORUM

In the morning, we'll drive to the 13th-century capital city of Karakorum. Upon arrival, we'll visit the Karakorum Museum. Karakorum was the ancient capital of Mongolia, located on the right bank of the Orkhon River and the northeastern slopes of the Khangai Mountain. The nomadic city was founded by Chinggis Khan in 1220, and it was the capital of the vast Mongolian Empire and the centre of its economy, culture, and trade. At that time, the city's inhabitants were mostly merchants and craftsmen from around the world who came to Karakorum. Once Kublai



Khan came to the throne, he moved the capital of the Mongolian Empire to China, establishing the Yuan Dynasty. Karakorum then lost its importance, and in 1379, much of the city was badly damaged during an attack by the

army of the Ming Dynasty. After lunch at our camp, we'll continue exploring Karakorum and visit Erdene Zuu monastery, built by Avtai Sain Khan on the ruins of the Mongolian capital Karakorum in 1586. It was the first great Buddhist monastery of Mongolia and part of the World Heritage Site entitled Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape. Stones from the ruins of Karakorum were used in its construction. It is surrounded by a wall featuring 108 stupas, with 108 being sacred in Buddhism as it represents the number of beads in a Buddhist rosary. The monastery was damaged by warfare in the 1680s but was rebuilt in the 18th century, and by 1872, it had 62 temples and up to 1,000 monks inside. The Erdene Zuu Monastery was taken into state protection and became a museum in 1944. The political climate in Mongolia is changing, and Buddhism, previously suppressed, is currently experiencing a resurgence all over the country. Overnight in the wooden villas for two nights. *B/L/D*



Day 12, Thursday 17th July
ANCIENT CAPITAL CITY OF KARAKORUM

After breakfast, we begin our 45-minute drive to visit the Khushuu Tsaidam Museum, part of the Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape, with the highlights being the 6-8 century Turkic empire artefacts. In the afternoon, enjoy the resort or take a short walk to the hill where a mosaic wall was erected to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Great Mongol Empire in 2006. The hill overlooks the Orkhon River valley and modern time Karakorum town. *B/L/D*



Day 13, Friday 18th July
ONGI TEMPLE

Today, we'll drive to the ruins of the Ongi Monastery, the largest Buddhist centre in the Gobi region and the gate to the northernmost desert in the world, the Gobi desert. Two complexes of temple ruins were built in the 1780s. During the political repression of the late 1930s, these two temples were destroyed, and many lamas were executed and imprisoned. We will visit the ruins of the monastery and the reconstructed parts. Overnight in Ongi Nuuts Ger Camp, in a standard ger. *B/L/D*



Day 14, Saturday 19th July
ONGI TEMPLE TO FLAMING CLIFFS

In the morning, we will drive to the Flaming Cliffs. This area was named as 'Flaming Cliffs' by Roy Chapman Andrews, an American explorer who searched throughout the Mongolian Gobi Desert and found dinosaur skeletons and eggs first ever seen in the world.



The locals name it Bayanzag or "rich in saxaul," a tree typical for Central Asia's sandy and stone deserts and the only kind of tree found in the Gobi. The red cliff gleams with sunlight and can be seen from far away. We will take a short walk on the cliff's ridge and enjoy sunset in the Gobi desert. The driving distance is 180km. Overnight in our Gobi base camp, the Gobi Mirage resort, where, in total, we'll spend three nights in deluxe gers. *B/L/D*



Day 15, Sunday 20th July
KHONGOR SAND DUNES

Today, we drive to the famous Khongor dunes, which are the most important sand mass of the Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park, covering an area of more than 900 square kilometres. It's one of the largest sandy areas of Mongolia. Suddenly standing out from the plains, they are



undoubtedly among the most spectacular in the country. The wind continuously blows from north towards west, and the dunes can reach breathtaking heights, between 100 and 300 metres at their highest points. Khongor dunes

are over 180 km long and can reach 27 kilometres wide. The inhabitants name their imposing dunes "singing dunes" due to the noise made by the wind when it moves the sand. Beyond the dunes, the steppe extends as far as the eye can see. Khongor dunes have a particular appeal because they have an impressive combination of colours (the dunes are pale yellow). They are lined with a green luxuriant vegetation band at the northern end, delimited by a river - the Khongoriin Gol. Subterranean sources supply this river and flow along the dunes for a few kilometres, forming an oasis in the middle of the desert landscape. Overnight tonight in Gobi Erdene ger camp in wooden cabins. *B/L/D*



Day 16, Monday 21st July
GOBI

Today, we drive back to the Gobi Mirage resort. On the way, we'll stop at Khavtsgait. Petroglyphs from the Bronze Age (4000-3000 BC) are beautifully carved on rocks on the top of a sacred mountain. The area is very rocky and can be slippery to climb, but by carefully following a path up the mountain, you can reach the top to see these beautiful rock paintings. The petroglyphs were carved and painted with motifs consisting of animals, hunting scenes and weapons. They depict various animals related to the everyday life of ancient people, including deer, bears, wolves and hunters

with their livestock. Drive distance – 200km. Overnight in the Gobi Mirage Resort ger, deluxe gers. **B/L/D**

 **Day 17, Tuesday 22nd July**
YOL VALLEY

After a late checkout this morning, we'll drive to Yol Valley, also known as Bearded Vulture Valley. We'll learn about local wildlife in the Natural History Museum before gently hiking through the valley to discover their habitats. This valley is nestled deep within the hills and is a haven from the desert heat. Some areas of the valley are continually sheltered from the hot sun, and consequently, the stream freezes over in winter and remains partially frozen until late summer. It is very wide at the entrance and narrows gradually into a remarkable gorge. We will trek into the gorge, which is a 2.5-hour round trip, and along the way, we might see ibex, wild sheep, pika, yaks, and vultures. Overnight in the Gobi Mirage Resort, deluxe gers. **B/L/D**

 **Day 18, Wednesday 23rd July**
ULAANBAATAR

Today, we will transfer to the Dalanzadgad Airport to board our flight for Ulaanbaatar (flights to be confirmed). Upon arrival, we'll visit the Bogdo Khaan Winter Palace Museum, the home of the last Mongolian King, Javzun Damba Khutagt VII. The museum contains many Buddhist artworks and the private collection of Bogdo Khaan, composed of gifts from rulers and kings worldwide. The artworks displayed here were made by top Mongolian, Tibetan, and Chinese master sculptors of the 18th and 19th centuries and represent the gods of the Buddhist pantheon. In the evening, we'll be treated to a wonderful display of Mongolian throat singing, musicians, dancers and contortionists, followed by dinner. Overnight in Ulaanbaatar, Urgoo Boutique Hotel (or similar). **B/D**

 **Day 19, Thursday 24th July**
ULGII, WESTERN MONGOLIA

After breakfast, you'll transfer to the airport for your flight to Ulgii (3.5 hours). Raw, rugged, and remote, this region has been geographically and culturally isolated from central Mongolia for centuries. With its glacier-wrapped mountains, shimmering salt lakes and hardy culture of nomads, falconry and horsemanship, western Mongolia is a timeless slice of Central Asia. On arrival at Ulgii, the province's capital city, we'll check in to our hotel, where we will stay for two nights. Accommodation at a local hotel. **B/L/D**




 **Day 20, Friday**
25th July
ULGII, WESTERN MONGOLIA

After breakfast, we'll visit the local museum to learn about the ethnic minorities in Western Mongolia, including the

Tuvans, Khalkhs and Oirats. We will visit a local Kazakh eagle hunter's family and learn about the culture of eagle hunting. The Kazakhs are semi-nomadic people who have roamed western Mongolia's mountains and valleys with their herds since the 19th century. 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, rabbits and even wolves are

hunted in winter for their fur across the snowy mountains and steppes. We'll spend time with a local family, enjoying an eagle hunter demonstration and holding a Golden eagle or a Saker falcon if you choose. Learn about the traditional costumes worn by Kazakh men and the wonderful embroidery work of our hostess, who will prepare lunch for our group. Overnight in a local hotel. **B/L/D**

 **Day 21,**
Saturday
26th July
ULGII -
ULAANBAATAR

On our final day in the Altai mountains we'll enjoy a short hike and breathtaking scenery of the snowcapped



Altai Mountains at Tolbo Lake located in 50km away from Ulgii and where White Russians were surrounded by the Bolsheviks and their Mongolian allies in 1921. There will be an opportunity to visit the local market and souvenir shops where amazing embroidery and felt-made products are sold. Before boarding our afternoon flight back to Ulaanbaatar, we will drive to Friendship Hill to look at the vast landscapes of the Altai mountains. Overnight in Ulaanbaatar, Urgoo boutique hotel, deluxe rooms. **B/L/D**

 **Day 22, Sunday 27th July**
ULAANBAATAR

This day starts with taking 300 steps, which lead to Zaisan Memorial Hill. There we'll enjoy a bird's eye view of the city. The afternoon is free to choose what you would like to do. Visit the Gobi cashmere or State Department store, revisit the National Museum, walk around the city centre and enjoy the local atmosphere, relax in a coffee shop, and catch up with WiFi. We'll celebrate and reminisce over our tour with a farewell dinner tonight. Overnight in Urgoo boutique hotel (or similar). **B/D**

Day 23, Monday 28th July
DEPARTURE

We depart the capital today for our flight home. Flight schedule to be advised. **B**



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section**. Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.