



Beauty of Mongolia Tour

Mongolia

Overview

This 10-night adventure starts in Mongolia's bustling capital Ulaanbaatar and strikes out into the country's rolling heartland, calling at the once Ancient Capital of Kharkorum and the sacred Orkhon Valley before heading south to Mongolia's famed Gobi Desert. The Gobi Desert is a region synonymous with adventure and excitement.

Once the stomping ground of explorers, fossil hunters, invaders, now welcomes modern travellers searching for the Gobi deserts beautiful extremes.

So travel with us as we glimpse once extinct horses, temples of Kublai Khan's grand empire, roaring waterfalls, rolling dunes and flame coloured cliffs.



Itinerary Overview

*Check out the brief overview of our **Beauty of Mongolia Tour** – or scroll down to see the in-depth run through of each day of the trip.*

Day 1.	Arrival Day
Day 2.	Hustai National Park & the Perzevalski Horse
Day 3.	Kharkorum & Erdene-Zuu Monastery
Day 4.	Orkhon Valley and Falls
Day 5.	Ongi Temple
Day 6.	The Flaming Cliffs of Bayanzag
Day 7.	Journey to Khongor Sand Dunes
Day 8.	Yol Valley (Eagle Valley)
Day 9.	Drive to Baga Gazriin Chuluu
Day 10.	Return to Ulaanbaatar
Day 11.	Departure Day



Day 1

Arrival in Ulaanbaatar & City Walking Tour

AM

- Whatever your time of arrival, we'll pick you up from the airport and take you to the group hotel.

PM

- Once you've had a chance to relax, we'll head out into the city for a bit of light exploration. Visiting the nation's heart, Sukhbaatar Square, surrounded by important buildings such as the government palace, central banks, theatres, and the post office, all in their original Soviet design.
- There is an equestrian statue of Sukhbaatar and a massive bronze monument of Genghis Khan flanked by two of his many sons and two of his most important generals.
- Our city walking tour will take us from the central square down one of the nation's main avenues to the beautiful State Department Store, a chance to peruse some of the weirder items on sale in this luxury department store where the weird and wonderful is mixed in with the everyday and the usual. Washing machines on one floor, stuffed eagles on another.
- Then, we'll head out to the Beatles Statue to discover why there is a monument to this Liverpoolian band in the heart of Outer Mongolia, after which, we'll take a leisurely stroll back towards the city centre along Seoul Street – Ulaanbaatar's attempt to create a bar culture in the middle of the city – on our way we'll pass other incredible Soviet buildings such as the Art and Drama Theatre, and the first Elementary School.
- Finally, it's off to dinner for our first group meal.

Accommodation: *Hotel 9, Ulaanbaatar*

Included Meals: *Dinner*



Day 2

Hustai National Park & the Perzevalski Horse

AM

- This morning the adventure begins as we leave Ulaanbaatar and drive out into Mongolia's beautiful countryside, making our way to Hustai National Park.
- Hustai National Park (Khustain Nuruu) has been a protected area since 1993, a unique landscape containing both mountains and steppe within a relatively small area. The national park is home to the rare Mongolian wild horse known as Perzevalski or Takhi; once extinct in the wild, the Perzevalski Horse is a true conservation success story with captive breed horses released into, and then surviving in the wild.
- Once we arrive at the park, we'll check into our Gers before grabbing a spot of lunch at the camp restaurant.

PM

- Following a hearty meal, we'll have a little time to view the onsite visitors centre to learn a little more about the region, the horses and various other flora and fauna resident to Hustai National Park.
- Mid-afternoon offers us the best time to catch a sighting of the beautiful Takhi horses, so we'll pile into our trucks drive out into the rolling terrain to spot them come down from mountains for water at the nearby river. As well as the famed Perzevalski horse, it is also possible to see fox, red deer, roe deer, eagles, and other various animals.
- Once we've finished our Mongolian safari, it back to the camp for dinner and to spend our first night under canvas in our authentic Mongolian Ger.

Accommodation: Hustai National Park

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 3

Kharkorum and Erdene-Zuu Monastery

AM

- After breakfast, we'll continue the adventure with a drive to the ancient capital of Kharkorum and Erdenezuu Monastery.
- Kharkorum was the former capital of the Mongolian Empire. At its height, it was from Kharkorum that Genghis Khan's son, Ogedei Khan, would rule the largest land empire the world has ever known.
- During Kharkorum 's golden age, much of the city was comprised of tents, and, as the Mongolian Empire went into decline, the city's decay was rapid. These days, all that remains of this once great settlement is the impressive Erdene Zuu Monastery, as well as a few scattered but not unimpressive archaeological finds.

PM

- Once we arrive at Kharkorum, our first stop will be Erdene Zuu Monastery; it may be a shadow of its former self; however, it is still impressive. We'll hopefully catch the resident monks in their afternoon prayer. Following our monastery visit, we will call at the unique archaeological museum to see some recent historical finds.
- These days Kharkorum has a real melancholic feel to it, and before we head to our Ger camp for the evening, we'll be sure to cut through its centre so that you can gain a snippet of life in this once grand settlement.

Accommodation: Local Ger Camp

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 4

Orkhon Valley & Falls

AM

- Today we depart our Ger camp early, stopping at a nearby shop to stock up on supplies for the journey; we continue south following Mongolia's ever-changing scenery trailing the famed Orkhon River and its UNESCO listed valley.
- The drive to Orkhon takes us through the Khangai mountain range, offering beautiful landscapes comprising of gorges, river valleys and green steppe.

PM

- We leave the main track for a small mountainous trail that leads to the Tovkhon Monastery.
- Perched atop the sacred Shireet Ulaan mountain, Tovkhon monastery is only reachable on foot: it is from this monastery that the first religious leader of Mongolia Zanabazar composed the Soyombo script. The Soyombo symbol used in that script has become the country's national symbol present on the Mongolian flag and a source of much national pride.
- At 2,312 meters above sea level, the monastery offers breathtaking views of the Khangai mountain range and the surrounding area.
- From the monastery, we continue the adventure with one final visit of the day to the Orkhon waterfalls. The Orkhon falls were formed more than 20,000 years ago by a rare combination of earthquakes and volcanic activity; these 16 meter high waterfalls are Mongolia's largest waterfalls and are simply magical.

Accommodation: Local Ger Camp

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 5

Ongi Temple

AM

- Today, we transit from the green mountains of Khangai into the Gobi landscape. As we journey, the scenery still impresses as we pass lush green winding river valleys that transition into the Gobi region's scrub filled desert region.

PM

- We pass into Saikhan Ovoo, a small province in Mongolia's heartland patchworked with green steppe, rugged rock formations and martian landscape type terrain.
- Our destination? A place of quiet solitude on the Ongiin Gol river known Ongi Temple. The ruins of two monasteries, Barlim and Khutagt, remain on the north and south shores of the river. We visit this site, commonly collectively known as the Ongii Lamasery and its little museum.
- Ongi used to be one of Mongolia's most extensive monasteries and home to over a thousand monks until the destruction in 1937 by the Soviet army. In 2002, some monks returned and began restoration work with a small budget, making up for what they lacked monetarily with inspiring spiritual fervour.
- This evening, our Ger camp is located only a stone's throw from the temple and offers a chance of serene relaxation, further hiking, or exploration.

Accommodation: Secret of Ongii Ger Camp

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 6

The Flaming Cliffs of Bayanzag

AM

- After breakfast, we depart our Ger camp and head into the Gobi Desert proper. We journey past the "Three Beauties", mountain range derived from the three subranges, the easternmost 'Zuun Saikhan', the central 'Dund Saikhan' and the westernmost 'Baruun Saikhan'.
- The Gobi Desert is vast, and our foray onto its plains today only gives us a snippet of its actual size, for the Gobi Desert reaches into six Mongolian provinces (aimags) and crosses into China. The Gobi is the sixth-largest desert globally and the second in Asia, a wide-open place of extremes; our first stop is one of these extremes.

PM

- Our main destination for today, Bayanzag – (the Flaming Cliffs), is stunningly beautiful with its flame-coloured sandstone cliffs and canyons. Aside from its obvious wow factor, Bayanzag is also where American palaeontologist Roy Chapman Andrews first discovered the world's first-ever recorded dinosaur eggs and a mighty haul of various other fossils. A walk along the cliffs here is a walk in the footsteps of the man whom Indiana Jones was modelled on!
- Once we have finished our exploration, it's off to the nearby Ger camp where we can relax, drink, and maybe return to the cliffs to catch the changing colours as sunsets, making a perfect end to an exciting day.

Accommodation: Gobi Oasis

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 7

Journey to the Khongor Sand Dunes

AM

- The adventure continues as we bid farewell to the Flaming Cliffs, board our vehicles and journey onwards through the wilds of the Gobi Desert to the Khongor Sand Dunes (Khongoryn Els) also known as the Singing Sands.
- Along the route, we pass some of the typical Gobi terrain, a loose mix of pebbles, gravel and fine sand; however, we will cross a fertile area of steppe where we'll be sure to visit one of the traditional nomadic families who call this desolate region home.
- The Khongor Sand Dunes, as the name suggests, are a dune system found within the Gobi; as only around 3% of the Gobi desert is covered in sand, the sight of these 300 metre high gigantic dunes is something to behold. The shifting sands of Khongoryn Els stretch out for over 180 km, although we arrive in the most impressive area and stay at a Ger camp with views across these giants.

PM

- Once we have eaten lunch and waited for the day to cool a little, we'll continue our adventure and visit one of Khongor's resident camel herder families. Although most of these herder families are now in this region to supply camels to tourists, we can think of no better way to approach these monstrous sandy giants. After arriving, we will have time enough to climb and explore the dunes; it may take a little longer than you think to climb the amazing giants.
- If you are fortunate, you may also experience why they have the name the singing dunes, as when the wind blows across the sand's surface in the right direction, an eerie sound is emitted, sounding like an aircraft to some and a hidden being to others.
- Another day nearing its end, but with much of the Gobi Desert's natural scenery, the Khongor Dunes come alive at sunset. Maybe view them from the top of the dunes or the comfort of our relaxing Ger camp while enjoying a cold drink after dinner.

Accommodation: Gobi Erdene Ger Camp

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 8

Yol Valley (Vulture Gorge)

AM

- After enjoying a filling breakfast in our Ger camp, it's back aboard our vehicles as we continue the adventure.
- This morning it's bumpy going as we leave the Khongor area, making our way to today's destination, the Yol Valley.
- As we travel, we will stop for photos along the way as the landscape transitions from a typical sandy desert, hard clay, rock, stone and steppe, summing up how diverse the Gobi Desert really is.

PM

- We'll eventually arrive at the Gurvansaikhan Mountains heading into the Yolyn Am Gorge. Yolyn Am means 'Vulture's Gorge'. Yolyn Am is a magnificent mountain valley 40 km long and offers those who want to walk an exciting path.
- We begin at the valley's wide entrance, following the small river into the canyons, narrowing cliffs eventually. As the step-sided walls cut the sun from the canyon's bottom, we will catch a glimpse of the locally famous frozen river. Over the winter months, the river builds up a thick layer of ice, which thaws slowly and, at times, remains long into the summer months. As you follow the winding path, eagles rise to circle in the thermals high above the canyon whilst wild goats can be seen perched on the high valley walls and picas scurry amongst the rocky terrain.
- For those who may have used all of their energy climbing the dunes yesterday, there are plenty of horses for rent at the entrance of the canyon.
- Once we have finished at the Yol Valley, we will drive to our accommodation for tonight, another well-appointed Ger camp where we will have a chance to chat about our adventures over a drink or two.

Accommodation: Local Ger Camp

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 9

Drive to Baga Gazriin Chuluu

AM

- After enjoying a filling breakfast in our Ger camp, it's back aboard our vehicles as we continue the adventure to an area known as Baga Gazriin Chuluu. The trip will take us across typical Gobi scrub, transitioning into the more famed and well-known traditional Mongolian steppe.

PM

- As we approach Baga Gazriin Chuluu, it comes as a real surprise a red granite outcrop of rocks rising to 1768 metres above sea level in the middle of the flat, featureless Mongolian steppe.
- Baga Gazriin Chuluu is designated a national park home to 20 rare species of plant, ibex, marmot and mountain sheep. The area offers us impressive geology and the chance to explore this and more with some good hikes, which also encompass some of the ancient petroglyphs and burial mounds found in the area.
- Should time permit on our journey, we will also have time to interact with a few more local nomadic herders who will also be passing through the region (just on a longer journey). Time permitting, we'll stop for the ubiquitous cup of milky tea before continuing on our own adventure.
- Once at the ger camp, for those who wish, there may be the opportunity for some optional horse riding, a great location to experience a ride out on a true Mongolian steed.

Accommodation: Local Ger Camp

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 10

Return to Ulaanbaatar

AM

- After a leisurely start to the day, we say a fond farewell to the Gobi Desert and continue our long journey back to Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar.

PM

- However, our tour isn't over as we'll arrive back in the city and visit one of the more modern, upmarket parts of the city. This southern edge of Ulaanbaatar, nestled in a valley of the Bogd Khan mountain, is called Zaisan – one of the more recent additions to the city.
- We'll visit a modern shopping mall, complete with monuments to old Soviet Tanks, and also climb the hill at the centre of the district which is topped with an incredible old Soviet Monument. From here, we'll get an incredible view over the entire city – the perfect way to bring our adventure to a close.
- Finally, we'll head to dinner, after first passing by an oddly out-of-place giant golden statue of Buddha built by the South Koreans.
- We'll spend our farewell dinner reminiscing about our adventures across Mongolia, and wrapping up our incredible expedition.

Accommodation: Hotel 9, Ulaanbaatar

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 11

Departure Day

AM

- Today, it's time to bid goodbye to Mongolia. We'll head to Chinggis Khan International Airport to see you off. Although the tour is over, we hope you'll be flying home with a head full of memories and stories to share with your friends and family!

Included Meals: Breakfast

END OF TOUR