



BEAUTY OF MONGOLIA TOUR

TOUR OVERVIEW

July 1860 USD
9-night tour in Mongolia

SUMMARY

This 9-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 Karakorum** 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

SAFETY

At Koryo Tours, our main priority (besides tour enjoyment) is your and the group's safety. Since 2012 we have worked with a local travel agency who help us ensure that the journey is safe in terms of vehicles we use and the areas we visit. You are entering the country as a legal tourist and must obey the local laws and customs. One of our experienced Koryo Tours guides will accompany the trip.

WHY SHOULD I BOOK THIS TOUR?

Many passengers visit Mongolia every year, but many only scratch the surface by stopping while on the Trans Siberian train journey for 3 or 4 days. At Koryo, we will help broaden this experience by taking you further, and off of the central tourist route, to gain a better experience and understanding of this truly unique country. With visits to stunning waterfalls, desert monasteries, camel herder families and ancient capitals, this is truly a trip to remember!

The Experts in Travel to Rather Unusual Destinations



DAY 1

Arrival in Ulaanbaatar

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.

After a brief look around the city centre, it's off to dinner for our first group meal.

Meals | Dinner

Overnight | Hotel 9, Ulaanbaatar



DAY 2

Hustai National Park & the Perzevalski Horse

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.

On the way to the park, we'll be sure to stop by and visit a local herder family and pay a visit to an area known as the '**Mini Gobi**', a collection of rolling dunes that look out of place surrounded by green steppe.

Once we arrive at the park, we'll check into our Gers before grabbing a spot of lunch at the camp restaurant.

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**.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight | Hustai National Park



DAY 3

Karakorum and Erdenezuu Monastery

After breakfast, we'll continue the adventure with a drive to the ancient capital of **Karakorum** and **Erdenezuu Monastery**.

Karakorum was the former capital of the **Mongolian Empire**. At its height, it was from Karakorum that Genghis Khan's son, Ogedei Khan, would rule the largest land empire the world has ever known.

During Karakorum'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.

Once we arrive at Karakorum, 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 Karakorum 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.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight | TBC



DAY 4

Orkhon Valley and Falls

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.

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.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight | TBC



DAY 5

Ongi Temple

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.

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.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight | Secret of Ongii Camp



DAY 6

The Flaming Cliffs of Bayanzag

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.

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.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight | Gobi Oasis



DAY 7

Journey to Khongor Sand Dunes

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.

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.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight | Gobi Erdene Ger Camp



DAY 8

Yol Valley (Vulture Gorge)

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.

We'll eventually arrive at the **Gurvansaikhan Mountains** heading into the **Yolyn Am Gorge**. Yol 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.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight | Gobi Oasis 1



DAY 9

Exploring Ulaanbaatar

After an early morning start, we say a fond farewell to the Gobi Desert and board a flight returning to Mongolia's capital, **Ulaanbaatar**.

However, our tour isn't over as we're off into the city to explore some of Ulaanbaatar's must-see sites, the first stop **Gandan Monastery**.

Gandan Monastery is Ulaanbaatar's largest and most impressive Buddhist monastery; the complex is comprised of varying temples from different periods; one of the highlights is viewing the 26-meter-high gold-coated indoor buddha.

From temple to museum, we head further into the city and stop at the **National Museum of Mongolian History** to see artefacts from Mongolia and Central Asia dating as far back as the Stone Age to the present day.

In the evening, we have one last visit, the "**Wonders of Mongolia**" folklore show fronted by the locally famous **Tumen-Ekh ensemble** – in Mongolia, it is one of the most successful folk art groups, performing traditional Mongolian music.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight | Hotel 9, Ulaanbaatar



DAY 10

Departure Day

Today, it's time to bid goodbye to Mongolia. We'll head to **Genghis 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!

Meals | Breakfast

Overnight | N/A

ACCOMMODATION

We will be staying in a range of accommodation on this adventure from comfortable hotels in Ulaanbaatar to tourist ger camps in Orkhon Valley and the Gobi Desert.

*All accommodation is based on a shared option.

Single supplement is 55 USD per person: This will guarantee you a single room option in our hotel stay and camping. While in the ger camp, you may still be sharing.

FOOD

Most meals are included in this tour, although there is time allowed in Ulaanbaatar for your exploration. Your tour guide will be able to advise on the options when you arrive.

DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Vegetarian food choices can be minimal once we leave Ulaanbaatar. If you have any special dietary requirements, please make sure that you let us know in advance.

In this region, the availability of certain specialised products for restricted diets, e.g. gluten-free or dairy-free is minimal or non-existent. As such we would strongly recommend you bring these dietary items if you need them.



TRANSPORT

All ground transport and domestic flights are included in this tour.

VISAS

Many nationalities still require a visa for a visit to Mongolia. Please do not hesitate to contact your tour manager to see if this is the case.

The application process for a Mongolia visa is quite simple; you can apply for a visa yourself at your nearest Mongolian embassy. You will need to fill out an application form and submit one or two passport photos along with your passport. At times you may be required to provide proof of a tour booking with a Mongolian travel company. We can, of course, send this if needed.

PACKING

Generally speaking, we recommend you pack as lightly as possible and make sure that you can carry and lift your luggage and walk with it for short distances.

Most travellers carry their luggage in a backpack or wheeled luggage, although an overnight bag with a shoulder strap would suffice if you travel lightly. Smaller bags or backpacks with wheels are convenient. A lockable bag or small padlock is useful as your luggage may get stowed separately and unattended while out and about.

ESSENTIALS

- Clothing: Daytime temperatures are warm, we recommend lightweight clothing plus some warm layers for that night time temperature drop in high desert areas and the mountains of Mongolia. A good waterproof jacket is always a bonus in case we experience more torrential rains which can occur.
- Day pack — for carrying essentials when exploring destinations like water, camera, snacks, jacket, etc.
- Lightweight clothing/wind and waterproof jacket — a mixture of covering lightweight clothing and some warm layers are recommended. It is best to check the weather and seasonal information before travelling.
- * Please note temperatures can get a very low overnight in the Mountainous areas. If you get cold quickly, make sure to bring extra layers of clothing or, e.g. a thin fleece sleeping bag.
- Comfortable shoes for full-day walking/trekking — closed-in shoes will help to protect your feet from cuts and scratches when walking through cities as well as bush/grass-lands, and will also act as a barrier protection in rare cases against bites or stings.
- One large main piece of luggage (lockable) soft holdall, kitbag or frameless rucksack although hard cases can be accepted. Keep luggage to a strict minimum as you will be expected to carry your bag throughout. Porters are not available in Mongolia. Please note that the luggage allowance for the domestic flights at the time of writing is 15kg per person



for the hold plus 5kg hand luggage. It is possible to pay for small amounts of excess baggage at the cost of approximately \$3 per kilogram. Excess baggage can also be kept securely in Ulaanbaatar until our return to the city.

RECOMMENDED

- Personal medical kit — we recommend you carry items such as mild painkillers, electrolytes, Band-Aids and insect repellent.
- Water bottle — we recommend a 1.5-litre capacity for which we can provide potable water. Bottled water is also available, but we prefer to use safe drinking water rather than contribute to polluting the environment.
- Spare batteries — our trips have access to power to recharge batteries for phones and cameras most days, but we recommend you take extra batteries for your camera.
- Electrical travel adapter plug.
- Inner sleep sheet/bag for added comfort during overnight stays.
- Money belt.
- Torch or flashlight.
- Hand sanitiser.
- Neck pillow for those long, bumpy drives

OPTIONAL

- Earplugs can be a bonus to guard against street noise and snorers.
- A good book, journal and music player can be an excellent choice for long drives.
- Walking/ trekking poles if needed.
- Images from home — during our trip there will be many opportunities for you to meet and talk with locals. One way to start any conversation is with pictures. We recommend that you bring some photos/postcards of your family, home, city or country where you live, animals peculiar to your country etc.

VALUABLES

Please try to avoid bringing unnecessary valuables, and use your hotel safe. We strongly recommend that you photocopy all relevant documents, e.g. air tickets, passport, vaccination certificates, etc. and keep the copies separate from the originals. While not valid, a photocopy makes it easier to obtain replacements if necessary.



CURRENCY

The official currency of Mongolia is the Tugreg. Mongolia is predominantly a cash economy with most small businesses and shops unable to take a credit card. Only change money at officially authorised currency exchanges; these are often found at banks, hotels and shopping malls. There are ATMs in Ulaanbaatar and other larger towns, but none in rural areas and they may not always accept foreign cards or have enough cash to dispense. US dollars are the most widely accepted foreign currency; other currencies such as Euros, UK sterling, Russian Rubles, and Chinese Renminbi can be exchanged in Ulaanbaatar.

TRAVELLING ON A GROUP TRIP

As you travel on a group trip, you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of travelling together. Your fellow travellers will probably come from all corners of the world and likely a range of age groups too.

We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group — patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a specific time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting.

We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well — this takes just a little effort on your part.

Due to privacy reasons, we are unable to provide you with contact details and any personal information about your fellow travellers booked on your trip before departure.

IMPORTANT TRAVEL NOTES

- As a responsible tour operator, your safety is our priority. Mongolia is a safe country to visit, but your tour leader and local guides will be able to advise you further about travel in this location.
- This tour is not suited for children under the age of 12 (please check with Tour Manager if you would like to bring a child on tour), as well as those who are less able as some hiking is involved (albeit, relaxed) and camping in more remote locations.
- If you have a medical condition which may affect your health or safety during your trip, you must inform us before the visa application.
- After the tour, we will send out a list of all participants' emails so you can keep in touch, swap photos etc. If you do not wish to be on this list, then please let us know.



TERMS & CONDITIONS

CANCELLATION If our partners cancel the tour, we will fully refund the tour price. Please note this tour is charged in US\$. If we receive any other currency, this will be converted to US\$ on that day's exchange rate fixed by the Bank of China. Any refund will be made according to the US\$ amount we received and not the original currency sent. With all refunds, Koryo Tours will not be held liable for any bank charges. We do have a deadline for cancellations although due to the nature of travel in Mongolia we may need to book certain services earlier such as flights and hotels. In many cases, these are none refundable. Your tour manager will let you know when this needs to be done. After this it would be impossible to offer a full refund should you then need to cancel.

STANDARD DISCLAIMER: Koryo Tours reserves the right to withdraw service and cancel a tour at any time. In this eventuality, a full refund of any monies paid by the customer will be made.

Koryo Tours cannot be held responsible for any mishap to yourself or your property and in particular any consequence or effects of flight/train cancellation/delay, robbery, sickness, government intervention or other such happenings.

INSURANCE Koryo Tours insist that tourists travelling on all of our tours have full medical insurance. You are advised to insure yourself against any possible risk that may occur and in particular to ensure that sufficient insurance has been obtained in respect of any dependant relatives. It is your responsibility to be covered by insurance which must include medical expenses and the cost of repatriation should you become too ill to continue.