



Ice Marathon Tour – Mongolia 2020

TOUR OVERVIEW

1900 USD
8 night tour in Mongolia

SUMMARY

A unique 8-day winter adventure to run the Lake Khuvsgul Ice Marathon and experience life among Mongolian reindeer herders.

We'll travel from Ulaanbaatar across the snow-covered Mongolian Steppe, stopping in Soviet-era industrial towns and beautiful Buddhist monasteries, until we reach Khuvsgul National Park in the Taiga close, to the Russian border.

In the far north, we'll stay with Dukha (Tsaatan) herdsman and their families to learn about the role of Mongolian reindeer in their traditional way of life, and take part in one of the world's coldest marathons.

Ice Marathon runners can join 10km, half marathon, or full marathon races across the frozen Khuvsgul Lake, then warm up in a cozy Mongolian ger.

Tour leader Rich Beal has 15 years of experience leading tours to Mongolia, including remote areas of Mongolia's far west and Gobi Desert.

SAFETY

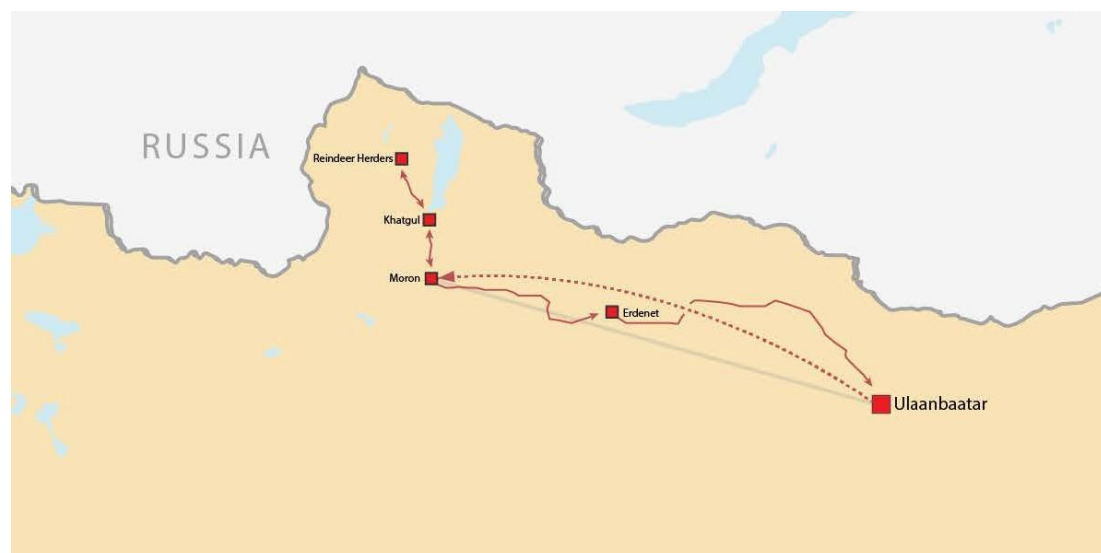
At Koryo Tours our main priority (besides tour enjoyment) is your and the group's safety. Since 2012 we have worked with a local travel agency who help us ensure that the journey is safe in terms of vehicles we use and the areas we visit. You are entering the country as a legal tourist, and therefore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

The Experts in Travel to Rather Unusual Destinations.

WHY SHOULD I BOOK THIS TOUR?

Many passengers visit Mongolia every year, but many only scratch the surface by stopping whilst on the Trans Siberian train journey for 3 or 4 days. We at Koryo 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 Mongolians, Kazakh eagle hunters, Shamans, Tuvan's, the Naadam festival and glaciers, you will not be disappointed.

Map & Itinerary





DAILY ITINERARY

FEBRUARY 15TH – SATURDAY (DAY 1)

Arrive in Ulaanbaatar

When arriving into Ulaanbaatar (UB), all passengers will be met and taken to the group hotel.

We meet early evening for a Pre-Tour Briefing followed by a group meal; those not feeling too jet-lagged can join us in one of UB's famous bars.

Meals | Dinner

Overnight | Standard hotel; single room available

FEBRUARY 16TH – SUNDAY (DAY 2)

Flight to Moron and on to Khatgul

This morning after breakfast we're up and out early as we board our flight and head to the city Moron. This small town is our gateway into the Khuvsgul National Park area and in particular the small lakeside hamlet of Khatgul, our base for the next few days.

Upon arrival, we will sort into our ger before driving onto the frozen lake. Here we will travel our Ice Marathon Route as well as utilizing the local horse sleds. The traditional horse sled has been taxiing locals across the frozen lake long before mechanisation reached this part of the world. Khuvsgul Lake starts to freeze in late September/ early October and remains frozen until May. As we near our tented home, you will have one final chance to see the Marathon route ready for tomorrow's chilly adventure.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Overnight | Ger camp: Ger, or traditional Mongolian tent – the way most locals still do. This tourist ger camp is purpose built with a restaurant area. Although there is no running water in this region we have eco-toilets and a purpose built sauna. For those whom wish there are shower facilities only 5 minutes away in town. The ger may be a little chilly but our local hosts keep the fires regularly burning throughout the night.

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FEBRUARY 17TH – MONDAY (DAY 3)

Marathon Day

Today is the day of the Mongolian Ice Marathon. You have the chance to run a 10km option, half marathon, or full marathon.

The event will begin at 9 am near to the small harbor whose ships remain held within the icy clutches of the lake.

For the 10km event and half marathon, there will be a heated ger at each finish line. Those who wish to complete the full event will run the return course.

There will be Russian 4X4s on hand to help out as well as horse sleds to aid runners returning to the start point. For those who are not running, you can cheer at the start line along with the locals or even help at one of the drink stations supplying heated beverages to our runners.

Upon completion of the run, all who wish will be taken back to our ger camp immediately for a hot sauna and well-deserved rest.

This afternoon is free for relaxing or one final look at the lake before this evening's dinner and celebration.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Overnight | Ger camp



FEBRUARY 18TH – TUESDAY (DAY 4)

Travel to the Reindeer Herders

Today we leave the comfort of our ger as we drive into the Mongolian Taiga. The aim is to locate the local reindeer herders and spend some time learning about their fascinating existence. There are no roads and the drive will be long as we drive across the frozen lake and into heavily forested hills to the north of Khuvsgul. Be prepared for a bumpy yet amazing journey with cameras at the ready.

Upon arrival, we will meet with Dukha herdsman and their families. The Dukha way of life revolves entirely around the reindeer herd: their herd provides them with milk, cheese, and even transportation. The clothes they traditionally wear are made from reindeer hair. Reindeer dung fuels their stoves for heat and cooking whilst antlers are fashioned to make tools and other ceremonial items.

After spending time with them we will bed down for the night in the traditional tepee. It is maybe not the most comfortable sleep, so there will be a ger available for those who need it.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Overnight | Ger camp/ Tepee

FEBRUARY 19TH – WEDNESDAY (DAY 5)

Return to Khatgul

This morning after spending a little more time with our hosts we board our 4X4s and journey back towards our temporary home Khatgul.

Along the way, we will certainly stop for more photos of the Taiga and frozen lake areas. We will see the different areas of the lake and our local guide will explain how the lake takes on its surprisingly diverse frozen forms. In places, we will see where the waves of the lake have been frozen holding their rippled form until the season's end.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Overnight | Ger camp



FEBRUARY 20TH – THURSDAY (DAY 6)

Drive to Erdenet city

Today we bid farewell to our amazing hosts as we drive through Moron on our journey to Erdenet city. After an early start, we begin our adventure driving into the frozen Steppe of Mongolia. We will stop along the way to take photos of the magnificent scenery which appears to run endlessly into the distance. This 5-6 hr drive will take us into the stunning Mongolian countryside where rolling hills blanketed in snow offer vistas of unparalleled natural beauty.

Erdenet was once known as 'Little Russia'. This relatively prosperous city has grown around Mongolia's largest copper mines (and the 4th largest mine in the world), which were once home to a large Russian population, although its numbers have declined in recent years since the mines have now become nationalized. On entering the city we will stop at the Communist Monument and the Karl Marx Mural along with a picture of Lenin.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Overnight | Standard 3*hotel; single room available



FEBRUARY 21ST – FRIDAY (DAY 7)

Return to Ulaanbaatar and visit Amarbayasgalant Monastery

Upon leaving Erdenet we first drive to the picturesque Amarbayasgalant Monastery one of the three largest monastic centers in Mongolia, being one of the very few monasteries to have partly escaped destruction during the Stalinist purges in 1937. Located at the foot of Mount Büren-Khaan this beautiful yet remote temple offers us a great opportunity for photography before our drive onto Ulaanbaatar the worlds coldest capital. For those who want to see more, we can visit Gandantegchinlen Monastery, Ulaanbaatar's largest Buddhist monastery, where we can see practicing monks and learn about the role of Mongolia's largest religion.

Then it's back to the city center, where we'll stop off for any last minute souvenir shopping at the State Department Store. Today privately owned, this is a throwback to the old Soviet sales system, where everything is under one roof, and you pay with multiple receipts before returning for your purchases. As we journey back to the hotel we will also be sure to stop at Sükhbaatar Square, the central square of UB.

Tonight's farewell dinner will be a Mongolian BBQ.

Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Overnight | 3* hotel

FEBRUARY 22ND – SATURDAY (DAY 8)

Departure day

We end our adventure in the morning, with transfers to the airport for international flights. Pack your souvenirs, your dirty clothes and your memories, and have a safe trip home!

Meals | Breakfast



ACCOMODATION

We will be staying in a range of accommodation on this adventure from comfortable hotels in Ulaanbaatar to tourist ger camps in 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. Whilst 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 own exploration. Your tour guide will be able to advice on the options when you arrive.

DIETRY REQUIREMENTS

Vegetarian food choices can be very limited once we leave Ulaanbaatar, although the chefs in the ger camps may be able to take special dietary requirements into account on the tour. If you have any special dietary requirements, please make sure that you let us know in advance.

In this region the availability of certain specialized 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.

We use a mixture of vehicles: in Ulaanbaatar we will utilise larger private buses, and when we travel in the countryside, 4x4s are the vehicle of choice. Due to the nature of the adventure there will be long and sometimes bumpy drives. We will break these up where possible.

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 required.

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PACKING

Generally speaking, we recommend you pack as lightly as possible and make sure that you are able to carry and lift your own 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

In addition to your 'normal' daily clothes, you will need the following essential items:

- Day pack — for carrying essentials when exploring destinations like water, camera, snacks, jacket, etc.
- Walking shoes or boots are essential
- Sun protection— hat, strong sunscreen, sunglasses, and lip balm.
- Mosquito repellent
- Rain jacket
- Soap and Shampoo
- Water bottle — we recommend a 1.5-liter 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.
- Bedding, including blankets, will be provided at the camps although towels will be needed in some locations.
- One main piece of lockable baggage — Internal flights in Mongolia are subject to weight limits of 10kg (checked in luggage) + 5kg (hand luggage) and extra weight costs \$2/kg.



RECOMMENDED

- Personal medical kit — we recommend you carry items such as mild painkillers, electrolytes, Band-Aids and insect repellent.
- Spare batteries — our trips have access to power to recharge batteries for phones and cameras most days, but we recommend you take spare batteries for your camera.
- Electrical travel adapter plug.
- Money belt.
- Torch or flash light.
- Hand sanitizer.
- Neck pillow for those long, bumpy drives.

OPTIONAL

- A good book, a journal, and music player for longer drives.
- Walking 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 important documents e.g. air tickets, passport, vaccination certificates, etc. and keep the copies separate from the originals. While not valid, a photocopy makes it very much easier to obtain replacements if necessary.



CURRENCY

The official currency of Mongolia is the Tugreg. Mongolia is a mainly cash economy with most small businesses and shops unable to take credit card. Only change money at officially authorized 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 certain 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 prior to 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 the 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 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 the tour is cancelled by our partners, 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.