



## Soviet Mongolia Tour

### TOUR OVERVIEW

May 14th – May 20<sup>th</sup> 2022  
7 nights in Mongolia

### SUMMARY

A new Mongolia tour for 2022; exploring Mongolia's Soviet heritage.

Mongolia was never part of the Soviet Union, but as a Soviet satellite it received guidance, money, expertise, and infrastructure, the latter of which remained long after the country's independence.

This adventure takes us in and around Ulaanbaatar as well as down to the Gobi desert, peering into the Soviet history of Mongolia.

We'll start in this nomadic nation's capital, Ulaanbaatar, where we'll explore dusty Soviet-era museums, wonder at bold 1950's architecture, and gaze at statues erected to red heroes and Russian giants.

Travelling on part of the trans-Mongolian railway, the tour will trundle south and explore abandoned apartments and once-sprawling Soviet military bases. Built at the time of the Sino-Soviet split, these large military installations were prepared for a war that never happened.

### SAFETY

At Koryo Tours, our priority is the safety of you and of the group. You are entering the country as a legal tourist, and therefore must obey the local laws and customs. One of our experienced Koryo Tour leaders will accompany the trip.

**The Experts in Travel to Rather Unusual Destinations.**

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## ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrival in Mongolia
Day 2	Explore Ulaanbaatar
Day 3	Sainshand & the Soviet Military Base
Day 4	Visit Choir and Baganuur
Day 5	Abandoned Military Base & Genghis Khan Statue
Day 6	Ride a T-55 OR Discover Mongolia's Dinosaurs
Day 7	Departure Day

## DAILY ITINERARY

### MAY14 – SATURDAY (DAY 1)

For all of those joining this adventure, you will be met at the airport upon arrival and transferred to our group hotel. The meeting time is 18.00, although, for those of you who arrive early, we will meet for an orientation walk.

- **Hotel Ulaanbaatar:** Built-in 1961, this is hotel of many firsts. Constructed during the Communist period, it was the first hotel in the country, the first public building with hot running water, and the first 5-star hotel in Mongolia. Designed by the wife of Mongolia's then communist leader Yumjaagiin Tsedenbal.
- **Sükhbaatar Square:** Named after Mongolian's revolutionary hero Damdin Sükhbaatar shortly after his death in 1923, although in 2013 the square's name was briefly changed to Chinggis Square much to the ire of many local people. 2016 saw a change back to the original title, which has remained. In the centre of the square stands an equestrian statue of Damdin Sükhbaatar himself, while a large monument dedicated to Genghis Khan sits atop the steps of the government palace.
- **National University of Mongolia:** Established in 1942, we'll pay a visit to view its Soviet architectural style and to catch a glimpse of the statue of Khorloogiin Choibalsan. Choibalsan was referred to by some as the 'Stalin of Mongolia' as he oversaw the purges of the 1930s in which it's estimated over 35,000 people were killed.
- **State Department Store:** Established in 1921, this relic from the Soviet period has seen many changes but is worth the visit as it still has a few older retro corners to be visited. As well as its history, it houses everything you may need from money-changers to a supermarket and souvenir vendors.
- **The Beatles Statue:** The Beatles never visited Mongolia, but a beautiful statue is indeed erected for them. The story goes that local people raised money to have it built after the Soviet period in memory of the music they illegally listened to during their time under communist rule.

As we walk back to the hotel, we will pass the National Academic Drama Theatre, Mongolian Stock Exchange and The National Theater: all excellent examples of Soviet-style design and construction.

Hotel: **Hotel Ulaanbaatar**

Meals: **Dinner**



## MAY 15 – SUNDAY (DAY 2)

This morning, after breakfast, it's straight out and off to explore the city on foot and by bus.

- **Mongolian Military Museum:** This ageing museum is home to Russian MIGs, rocket launchers, anti-aircraft guns, and tanks - and that's only on the outside! The museum interior covers history from the Mongol empire right the way through to its more recent Soviet past. After our visit, it's on to the former home (now a museum) of Marshal Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov.
- **Marshal Zhukov House Museum:** This small but exciting museum was opened in 1979 in the same house where Zhukov stayed from 1939-1940 as he directed Soviet troops in the battle of Tavan Gol. We'll get to view his living quarters as well as pictures, maps and weapons from around the time of the Soviet defeat of the Japanese army at this little known, but crucial battle.
- **Marshal Zhukov Statue:** Located in a small square next to the Zhukov Museum is a rather splendid figure of the man himself.
- **Lenin Statue:** For those interested in Lenin statues (and who isn't?), we have quite a treat as we visit the Lenin statue once located in front of the Ulaanbaatar Hotel. This statue, commissioned in 1951, stood for many years until it was taken down in 2012 by the then-mayor of Ulaanbaatar. It has found a few homes since that time and now resides within a local residential area.
- After lunch, we'll continue with our tour as we visit further into the city, stopping at local apartments to view mosaics found still in place at the end of traditional Soviet apartment blocks. Our last visit of the day prepares us perfectly for our overnight train
- **Ulaanbaatar Open-Air Railway Museum:** This pre-dinner visit sets us up perfectly for tonight's overnight train journey. The museum houses six locomotives used throughout the last 65 years. Many of the engines still have their Soviet detailing and imagery, including a large image of Joseph Stalin.

After an early dinner, we board our local train to Sainshand town, Dornogovi province. We have four-berth cabins as we trundle along part of the trans-Mongolian railway.

Hotel: **Overnight Train**

Meals: **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

### MAY 16 – MONDAY (DAY 3)

We'll arrive in the early morning at **Sainshand Town**. After alighting the train, for those awake enough, we will pause to view the small but well-appointed Soviet outpost train station before heading into town for a basic breakfast.

Sainshand Town is the capital of Dornogovi Province and lies due south-east of Ulaanbaatar, sitting to the east of the Gobi Desert surrounded by scrub and flat arid terrain. This remote town is a real mix of old and new. Only 130 miles from the Chinese border, this position made Sainshand an essential military base during the Sino-Soviet split.

Sainshand was once home to the air-missile intelligence stations of the Soviet Union; these would protect the underbelly of Russia from possible attack from a hostile China. The town was separated into three distinct areas: north, south, and east. Unfortunately, in modern times, the northern section has been destroyed and used to construct newer buildings; the east was sealed off for use by the Mongolian air force.

Following breakfast, we will see what remains of the town's Soviet past as we look to the southern area of this frontier settlement. Luckily for us, a little still remains, mainly used for habitation and business for local people.

After lunch, we drive 2 hours north to the village of Shivee-Ovoo. This small habitation was once home to the Soviet motorised rifle division; believe it or not, there were up to fifteen-thousand soldiers once stationed here. These days all that remains in this desolate windswept area are the former homes built for the servicemen and their families and the officer's mess. A little exploring will also reveal a few fascinating mosaics.

Once we have finished our Soviet exploration for the day, we'll have our final drive to the provincial capital, Choir. Once here, we locate a local restaurant for our evening meal and then head to our hotel for tonight situated in one of the former Soviet district block apartments.

Accommodation: **Art Hotel**

Included Meals: **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**



## MAY 17 – TUESDAY (DAY 4)

After breakfast, we're ready to continue our exploration of Choir, heading to the Soviet-style Choir Railway Station, outside of which is a Statue of Yuri Gagarin built to commemorate the flight into space of Mongolia's first cosmonaut Jügderdemidiin Gürragchaa in 1981.

During the Soviet period, Choir housed the most extensive military base for the Soviet Union, but that has long gone with many of the buildings dismantled. We will explore what is left and make sure to visit the 25-meter high statue erected in honour of the USSR's war heroes.

Upon leaving Choir, we'll continue north and, after a while, we'll make a stop at one of the region's former airbases. Here it gets even more interesting as we have the opportunity for a bit of 'urbex' (urban exploration) and see one of the abandoned MiG monuments (a former MIG fighter jet raised to point skyward). We will also be permitted to enter the former base to see around some of the remaining airfield buildings if we're lucky.

From here, we'll drive onwards to check on another former Soviet airbase located in the town of Bagakhangai; we plan to access the area and its abandoned aircraft hangers. Around the town, there are also some derelict buildings worthy of our time and attention for a bit more exploring.

Next, we drive across the rolling countryside to the city of Baganuur. Baganuur was created to serve the Soviet military base, which was home to the 12th Motor Rifle Division. The Russians have gone now, but the city retains much of its former Soviet design and currently serves the nearby Baganuur coal mine.

As we arrive late today, we head straight to our hotel for dinner and then some well-deserved rest.

Accommodation: **TBC**

Included Meals: **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

## MAY 18 – WEDNESDAY (DAY 5)

We're up and out early, driving out of Baganuur further east to have a look at what remains of the base that once belonged to the 12th Motor Rifle Division. Much of this has now gone, taken down and recycled, although some of the living quarters still remain and offer us a little more 'urbex'.

Once we have finished exploring the remains of the Soviet base, we board our vehicles and begin to make our way back to the Red Hero City, Ulaanbaatar. As we journey back, we will stop at one of the small towns that serve the still functioning aerodrome. The MiG 21 in the children's play area is a particular highlight!

As we make our way back, we'll stop at a more modern statue built for the ancient leader and most famous Mongolian, Genghis Khan. Finished in 2008, the Genghis Khan Equestrian Statue makes for a great visit, offering views over the surrounding countryside.

Once we return to Ulaanbaatar, we will visit the home of a local resident who has, over the years, amassed an impressive array of Lenin statues and memorabilia. He loves to meet interested visitors to show off and talk about his collection proudly.

Once we've arrived and checked back into our hotel, you'll have the rest of the day to rest and relax.

Accommodation: **Ulaanbaatar Hotel**

Included Meals: **Breakfast, Lunch**



## MAY 19 – THURSDAY (DAY 6)

Today, you may get the chance to leave Ulaanbaatar and head to one of the military areas outside of the city for a chance to ride on an authentic Soviet T-54 Tank still operating in this fascinating country.

Before the COVID situation affected the globe, we had guaranteed permission, but due to the ever-changing travel situation, this now cannot be confirmed until one month before the tour. Should it not be possible to ride and view the tanks or you do not wish to do so, we'll run the itinerary below:

Today is another day of exploring the nation's capital, Ulaanbaatar. This morning, we're out on foot to visit the nearby Mongolian National Gallery. This impressive building houses many of the artworks of Mongolia. As well as the art, the architecture here is terrific, incorporating some fantastic mosaics and stained glass windows from the country's communist past.

From art to dinosaurs, we'll walk further into the city to view some of the small city squares that would have once been adorned with monuments commemorating Mongolia's socialist neighbour but have since been replaced with more nationalistic Mongolian figures and symbols.

Our destination is the Mongolian Dinosaur Museum. This building once housed the nation's Lenin Museum built especially for the father of communism. The outside is adorned with brass reliefs depicting the great man himself as well as Engels and Marx. Although once inside, you may need to use your imagination a little! Although the architecture remains where the Lenin statue once stood, Mongolia's own T-Rex now stands!

After a spot of lunch, we'll head across the city to the upmarket Zaisan area; we're not here to drink an overpriced coffee but to climb the 612 steps up the hill to the famed Zaisan monument. Built-in 1956, the memorial commemorates the friendship between the USSR and Mongolia.

The lower reaches of Zaisan incorporate the Revolutionary Mongol Tank Brigade Monument; this monument combines an original T-34 tank and a map of its journey from manufacture in the Soviet Union to Berlin. Following our tour of the remaining Soviet sites in Ulaanbaatar, we'll return to our hotel before heading out into the city for our last group meal

Accommodation: **Ulaanbaatar Hotel**

Included Meals: **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**





## MAY 20 – FRIDAY (DAY 7)

### 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!

### Included Meals: Breakfast

## ACCOMMODATION

We will be staying in a range of accommodations on this adventure; the hotels are chosen to fit the tour from the 4\* Ulaanbaatar hotel in Ulaanbaatar to the more basic soviet style hotels in the small town of Mongolia.

Single supplement is 55 USD per person: This will guarantee you a single room option during your stay where possible.

## FOOD

Most meals are included in this tour, although there is time allowed in Ulaanbaatar for one night which allows for a bit of exploration. Your tour leader 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. We would strongly recommend you bring these dietary items if you need them.

## TRANSPORT

All transport on tour is included; we will mainly use the famed UAZ 452 due to its Soviet roots. Tourists will not be piled in; there will be no more than 3-4 to a truck, this way, everyone gets a window seat. Once in the desert, your driver may let you have a drive of the 452.

## 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 Mongolian 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 and your passport. 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 helpful 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 nighttime temperature drop expected in the in desert areas. May in Mongolia is warming up, but we can occasionally expect snow.
- Day pack — for carrying essentials when exploring destinations like water, camera, snacks, jacket, etc.
- Lightweight clothing/wind and waterproof jacket — a mixture of covering light clothing and some warm layers are recommended. It is best to check the weather and seasonal information before travelling.
- Comfortable shoes for walking/trekking — closed-in shoes will help protect your feet from cuts and scratches when walking through cities and bush/grasslands and act as a barrier protection in rare cases against bites or stings. There can be broken glass and other debris when exploring some deserted areas.
- Sun protection— hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, and lip balm may be needed.
- One large main piece of luggage (lockable) hard shell, soft holdall, kitbag or frameless rucksack will be perfect for the tour.

## 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.
- 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 excellent for long drives.
- Walking/ trekking poles if needed.

## 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 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.

**\*\*\*It's also helpful to note that this tour is exploratory in nature, we may have problems entering some sites, or some may not be available.**

**At the same time, there may be places not listed in the itinerary, and if we can visit, we sure will. \*\*\*\*\***

## 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, particularly any consequence or effects of flight/train cancellation/delay, robbery, sickness, government intervention, or other such happenings.

**INSURANCE** Koryo Tours insists that tourists travelling on all 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.