



## Essential Mongolia

Group departure dates:

July 8 -17 (includes Naadam in Tsetserleg) August 5- 14



**Day 1:** Arrive in Ulaan Baatar (UB), the capital of Mongolia by 1 pm local time. Your guide and driver will meet you at the airport after you clear customs and immigration. Drive to Khustai Nature Reserve located 110 km southwest of UB. Driving will take about 3 hours mostly on sealed roads. Visit Park Information Center. Overnight in ger camp. ("Ger Camp" is a Mongolian version of motel with traditionally decorated gers for sleeping, separate dining hall and basic facilities for shower and toilet. Normally 2-4 people share the same ger.)

**Day 2:** Drive to Kharkhorin, the site of the capital of the 13th century Mongolian Empire. Originally established in the 8th century and named as Khar Khorum (The Black Fortress) as a military training and weapons production unit, this town was taken over by Chinggis Khaan and made a capital for its strategically important location to launch military campaign and boost trade. Now, this is the site of Erdene Zuu monastery, originally made as a prototype of the ancient capital. Built on the site and constructed using the ruins of the ancient capital some 300 years ago, this monastery was the seat of Buddhism in Mongolia which also succumbed to purges. Now there is a museum and restored, active temple functioning at the site. Overnight in ger camp.

**Day 3:** Drive to Tsenkher hot springs. Located in west-central Mongolia, Arhangay is called the "Switzerland of Mongolia" for its beautiful scenery: forests, rivers and mountains. Visit herder's family. See preparation for the Naadam Festival. Overnight in ger camp.

**Day 4:** Drive to Arhangay province. Spend all day at the Naadam Festival in Tsetserleg. This is Mongolia's annual summer celebration with horse races, wrestling and archery also called "Three manly games". Naadam, or "festival", has occurred for centuries in Mongolia as an exhibition of horse racing (racers are generally ages 7-11 and race 15-30 kilometers), wrestling (men only) and archery (women and men). July 11th is the official date of Naadam established by the Mongolian government. Overnight in ger camp.

**Day 5:** Drive to Jargalant, along the way visit Terkhiin Tsagaan Lake. Climb to the top of the Khorgo, the dormant volcano, where you'll see a dramatic landscape of larch forests, mountains and lava flows reaching to the horizon. Overnight in ger camp.

**Day 6:** Drive into the northern part of the country, crossing the Selenge River heading for Khatgal, gateway to Lake Khovsgol. On the way, visit the Valley of the Kings near Muren, famous for its deer stones erected by Bronze Age nomads. Overnight in ger camp.

**Day 7:** Full day of exploring, hiking and relaxing at the lake. Famed as the "Blue Pearl" of Mongolia and heart of Khovsgol National Park, this lake holds 2% of the world's fresh water reserve and is surrounded by mountains and forests. Visit Park Information Center. Horseback riding is optional. Overnight in ger camp.



**Day 8:** Transfer to Muren. Fly back to UB. Overnight in hotel.

**Day 9:** Day in UB. Enjoy a breakfast buffet at your hotel before a full day of guided sightseeing in UB. Begin the tour at Zaisan Memorial, a prominent landmark looking over the city of UB built on Bogd Khan Mountain. Walk around Sukhbaatar Square, named after the Mongolian National Hero of the People's Revolution in 1921. Sukhbaatar Square is surrounded by Parliament, the Stock Market, cultural sites, the Palace Royal Opera House and the Main Post Office. Take in the Museum of National History and the Fine Art Museum of Zanabazar to acquaint yourself with Mongolian history, traditional culture and arts. In the evening, see folklore performance. Farewell dinner. Overnight in hotel.

**Day 10:** After breakfast your guide will transfer you to the airport for your int'l flight departure.

**What's Included:** English speaking guide, meals (dinner on arrival day thru breakfast on departure day), all transportation upon arrival in UB, hotel in UB and ger accommodations, horses and tack, guides and entry fees to museums and parks.

**What's Not Included:** Roundtrip international airfare to/from UB, boat rental in Khatgal, evacuation coverage, airport taxes, gratuities, excess baggage fees, alcohol/soft drinks, bottled water and items of a personal nature.

**Note:** Depending on the domestic flight schedule for next summer, there will be some minor changes in the itinerary. We reserve the right to surcharge clients when internal flights increase by more than 5% from the cost of the air ticket at the time the trip deposit was paid. Air ticket prices and flight schedules are often hard to determine until just a month or two before travel and price and schedule changes are capricious.

*Driving hours and distance in the countryside will vary depending on road and weather conditions. Oftentimes roads are very dusty, bumpy and very challenging.*