

## Destinations in Western Mongolia



### **Altai Mountain Range:**

Altai Mountain Range is located in the west and southwestern part of Mongolia stretching through the territories of 5 provinces. This majestic mountain range consists of two huge separate mountain ranges, Mongol Altai Mountain Range that stretches for 900 km and Gobi Altai Mountain Range that extends for about 700 km. The ranges have heights of 3500 – 4374 meters above sea level. The highest peaks, many over 4000 meters, are permanently covered with glaciers and snow while the valleys have green pastures, that support millions of livestock as well as diverse species of wild animals like wild Argali sheep, Siberian ibex, snow leopard, saiga antelope, gazelle, white and black tailed antelope, wolf, fox, and marmot. These valleys are dotted with small communities of nomadic families and there are hundreds of astonishingly freshwater lakes and streams. Mountain climbing, hiking, relaxing in untouched nature and exploring the variety of nomadic cultural heritages are great activities to be enjoyed in western Mongolia.

### **Altai Tavan Bogd National Park:**

Called “The Roof of Mongolia”, Altai Tavan Bogd National Park is in the far west of Mongolia near the borders of Russia and China. The park has an area of 636200 hectares and the highest point is the peak of Khuiten Uul reaching 4374 meters above sea level. Altai Tavan Bogd means Five Holy Peaks of Altai, Khuiten, Naran, Ulgii, Burged and Malchin. The park includes Mongolia’s highest peaks, perpetually snow-capped with beautiful glaciers including the 20 km long Potanin Glacier, the longest in Mongolia. The stunning freshwater lakes of Khoton, Khurgan and Dayan are there in the park. Fauna includes Argali sheep, ibex, maral (Asiatic red deer), stone marten, deer, elk, Altai snow cock and eagles. There are many archeological sites with many balbal “Turkic stone figures”, deer stone monuments, burial mounds and petroglyphs.



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## Khurgan Lake:

Khurgan Lake is surrounded by glacial moraines. It is 23 km long, 6 km wide and its shoreline is 71 km long. Landscape around the lake is very beautiful and picturesque, surrounded by snow-capped mountains, its shoreline has ancient moraine depressions and hills and its west shore has forest trees. The lake water temperature is relatively low, 8.1 - 10.1°C in June because of the lake is fed by snow, ice and glacial water. Khurgan and Khoton lakes, the second largest, are located in the northern part of Mongol Altai mountain range and joined by a 3 km long and 100-150 m wide channel called Sirgaal. Khoton and Khurgan lakes are also home to many species of red listed birds: whooper swan, goose, eagle, hooded crane and various species of ducks. Khurgan nuur is the lowest point of Altai Tavan Bogd National park. The lakes belong to Altai Tavan Bogd National Park.



## Khoton lake:

Khoton lake is fed by more than 10 rivers and streams which fed by snow and ice water such as Black Khovd, White Khovd, Chuluut (Rocky) and Zagastai (Fishy) drain the 2670 square km area of Altai Tavan Bogd and Rashaan mountain range. The lake is home to many species of fish. The Khoton and Khurgan lakes are second largest and clearest of all lakes in Mongolia. The average depth is 26 m, the maximum depth is approximately 58 metres. The landscape around the lakes is stunning with forests and the snow-capped Altai Mountains. Khoton lake has one Iceland which is covered by woods.



## Ethnic Groups:

Western Mongolia is Mongolia's most heterogeneous area with a Khalkh majority and minorities of Kazakh, Bayad, Durvud, Uriankhai, Zakhchin, Myangad, Oold, Torguud, Khoton, Tuvan ethnic groups.



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### Kazakh “Eagle Hunters”:

About 90% of Bayan-Ulgii Province population is Kazakh and almost all of them are Muslim. They speak both Kazakh and Mongolian languages. The Kazakh is a minority that has a different culture from the Mongols, herding livestock and hunting with trained eagles. Kazakh people hunt with specially trained eagles, the real pride of the Kazakhs. In Bayan-Ulgii you may visit Kazakh eagle hunter’s family and learn about the Kazakh people’s unique lifestyle, traditions and how they train the eagles for hunting.



### Gurvan Tsenkher Cave:

This cave is 25 km west of the center of Mankhan Sum in Khovd Province. The cave is about 220 meters long and 20 meters high. Inside are ancient rock paintings drawn 40,000 – 12,000 years ago in the Paleolithic Era. The paint pigment is composed of red and brown earths. Soot from smoke also covers the walls and roof of the cave. Among the paintings are mountain goats, buffalo and birds that appear to be ostriches and elephant, both long extinct in Mongolia. The cave became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996.



### Kharkhiraa & Turgan Mountain Range:

The mountains of Kharkhiraa Uul and Turgan Uul are perpetually snowcapped. Kharkhiraa Mountain reaches 4038 meters above sea level and Turgan Mountain reaches 3965 meters. There are many kinds of rare plants and animals such as snow leopard and wild Argali sheep. The mountain range is a great place for hiking.



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## Uvs Lake Basin Strictly Protected Area:

This strictly protected area consists of Uvs Lake, Turgen Mountain, Torkhlog River, Tes River, Tsagaan Shuvuut Mountain and the Golden Sand Dunes that covers an area of 7125 square km. The protected area contains everything from desert sand dunes to snowfields and marsh to mountain forest. This area has enjoyed state protection since 1993 and was designated as a UNESCO World Biosphere Site in 1997. Uvs Nuur is the largest lake in Mongolia. The lake surface covers 3351 square km and is 80 km wide and 80 km long. The surrounding area of the lake becomes the coldest part of Mongolia in winter time. Ornithologists have documented over 220 species of birds around Uvs Lake including osprey, white-tailed eagle, black stork, swan goose, bar-headed goose, Eurasian spoonbill, great white heron, whopper swan, great black-headed gull, white-headed gull and cranes.



## Khyargas Lake National Park:

Khyargas Nuur is one of the Mongolia's largest lakes, covering 1406 square kilometres. It is 75 km long, 31 km wide and 80 m deep. The lake surface is at 1028 m above sea level. Khyargas Nuur, a salt lake amid desert and scrub grass, provides an attractive summer home for birds. The Zavkhan river feeds lake Airag Nuur, which is connected to Khyargas Nuur by a channel. The water is brackish and has rare fish such as Mongolian Grayling. The lake is one of the essential fantastic part. There you will feel a kind of relaxing paradise.



## Khar Lake:

Khar Lake or Khar Nuur was not a common destination in Mongolian tourism until last few years because of its hidden remote location. But it is now a truly worthy natural attraction for Western Mongolian travelers. The lake is surrounded by massive extensive sand dunes and among sand dunes the looks like an Azure Lopez. Visiting the joint part of sand dunes and lake is an unforgettably wonderful experience.

