

Meet Nomads by Train

Tour theme: Cultural, Staying with Nomad families, Discovery

Duration: 10 days/ 9 nights

Region: Central and southern part of Mongolia

Schedule 2020

TE 1 : 10 may - 19 may,

TE 2 : 20 may - 29 may,

TE 3 : 4 june - 13 june,

TE 4 : 14 june - 23 june,

TE 5 : 16 june - 5 july,

TE 6 : 20 aug - 29 aug,

TE 7 : 3 sep - 12 sep,

TE 8 : 15 sep - 24 sep

Tour description:

In front of us, the landscape scrolls. The golden sun appears slowly from the horizon. In the vast steppes, livestock grazes freely and nomad families' yurts scattered here and there. "The Trans-Siberian carries the train to the end of the world", leaving us all the time to admire the intact nature of the country.

Discover Mongolia by train. Here is a mode of transport, both economically and ecologically beneficial to discover at a comfortable pace this vast country of steppes and mountains. Through the only railroad that crosses the country from north to south, we will conquer the mythical Gobi desert to the central Mongolian steppe aboard trains whose pace will leave us plenty of time to admire the diversity of the landscape.

This tour will give us the opportunity to meet the people of this country, whether in the corridors of the train or under the yurt.

We will meet a family of horse herder, another family of yak herder and finally another family of camel herders in the Gobi Desert.

Proud of their traditions, your hosts are always willing to explain a tradition or custom, to tell us their story, to tell us a legend. Every day we will learn more about this way of life, which is harmonious and rough, pleasant and compelling.

Herding animals in the pasture, tasting milk tea and cheese, horseback riding, all these activities will have no secrets for us at the end of our trip.

In addition, the discoveries of the most beautiful sites of Mongolia: The beautiful Terelj National Park and its rocky mountains, the mysterious Khamriin Khiid monastery in the heart of the Gobi Desert are waiting for us.

Designed in close collaboration with nomad families, the income generated by our stay is distributed equitably to families, who benefit from us additional income.

Day 1: Ulaanbaatar

We will welcome your arrival at the airport and transfer to the hotel. Time to rest in a hotel. For lunch, we will taste the famous Mongolian barbecue in the traditional restaurant. Then, we will visit the religious center Gandan Monastery, National History Museum, the central square where we will discover the statue of Chinggis Khaan.

Overnight in a hotel

Day 2: Ulaanbaatar - Erkhjet

Time to start our adventure to the land of nomads! After breakfast we go to the train station to board a domestic train at 10:50 am. This train straddles the mythical Trans-Mongolian Railway. The 2080 km long railway line, which extends the Trans-Siberian, crosses Mongolia from north to south. Through its windows that we discover amazed our first images of Mongolia ... the vastness of the steppes dotted with yurts and there will be livestock graze freely. Upon arrival at Erkhjet station (16:40), we will be welcomed by the Sharaa's family, whose hospitality makes us wonder. According to Mongolian tradition, we will be offered by *Suutei Tsai* - milk tea with salt, as well as *Aaruul* -dried curd. We will have free time in the afternoon to observe our first scenes of everyday nomadic life under the yurt.

In the evening we prepare our dinner together which is *Buuz* - Mongolian dumpling. Everyone can get their hands busy, a real moment of cultural sharing!

Train journey: 6 h, overnight with nomad family under a yurt

Day 3 - 4 : Staying with Nomads

We will spend a full day with Sharaa's family. Even though they have guests, their daily life goes as usual, busy with livestock. We are more than welcome to help the family. Picture yourself caring livestock and horses under an endless blue sky. Therefore, we have plenty of work to do today! Such as herding sheep and goats in wide-open steppe, to clean livestock fence, collecting dung to make fire, and milking a cow.

The place is ideal for discovering practices related to horse herding. Among them, the most impressive is the capture of the horses with the aid of the *Uurga* - a long stick with the running noose at the end and rodeo the herder must be very agile to catch and ride these semi-wild horses. In the evening of the 2nd day, we board a night train which will take us to Erdenet, the 2nd largest city of Mongolia (00: 40- 07:30)

1st night with nomad family in a yurt, 2nd night in 4 bed sleeping train

Day 5: Amarbayasgalant monastery

Early in the morning, we arrive at the mining town Erdenet, the second-largest city in the country, after the capital.

From the train station (07:30), we will be greeted by our driver who takes us to the Amarbayasgalant monastery. This monastery is the largest Buddhist complex of the country, also called "monastery of quiet bliss". Manchu Emperor ordered this monastery, dedication for Zanabazar, spiritual leader of the Mongols. This Buddhist

center once had several religious colleges to its credit. Today nearly 60 monks live in the monastery. The place is magnificent and this holy place is located in the middle of the step for the pleasure of the eyes.

In the evening we take the night train to the Gobi desert via Ulan Bator. (18: 35- 05: 40)

Vehicle trip : 4 - 6 h, overnight in a 4-bed sleeping train.

Day 6 : Terelj National Park

Upon our arrival (6.30 am), we will leave the capital to Terelj national park, famous for its rocky mountains and green valleys.

Then the road leads us to the foot of the Turtle Rock, so nicknamed for its original form. Here we will meet our horses and then we sink further into the valley to reach the Buddhist monastery of Aryabal. The ascent of the 108 steps and the reading of the sacred proverbs that mark them will emerge us into the special atmosphere of Buddhist monasteries. Arriving at the top, the panorama view of the valley is worth it. In the evening, we board the train which takes us this time, to the Gobi desert.

Vehicle trip: 3 - 4 h, horseback riding: 1 - 2 h, overnight in a 4-bed sleeping train.

Day 7 : Khamriin Khiid monastery

At sunrise, we see our first image of the Gobi desert, through the train window.

Here, the desert landscape has nothing to compare with the green steppes of northern Mongolia. We get off the train in Sainshand station (06:45), capital of the province of Dorno Gobi (eastern Gobi), where our driver will wait for us.

After a short drive to the south, we will arrive in Khamriin Khiid monastery. This monastery, which was the Buddhist center of the school of red caps, is today an important place of pilgrimage. It is dedicated to "Danzanravjaa", who was considered a living god by the Mongols. Haven of peace, a place of pilgrimage and meditation, this monastery has some surprises for us. A camel riding in the Gobi desert is planned.

Then we head north to reach the Ikh Nart nature reserve. We will be greeted by a nomadic family who is also the ranger of the park.

Vehicle trip: 3 - 4 h, camel riding : 1 h, Overnight with nomad family under a yurt

Day 8 : Discovery of Ikh Nart

The day is devoted to the discovery of the fauna and flora of the reserve. The reserve that covers the rocky valley of Ikh Nart was created in 1996 to protect rare species such as the lynx, wild ass, wild goat and the ibex.

We also discover historic sites such as petroglyphs and ancient tombs dating back several millennia.

Late in the evening, we will board the train to reach the capital.

Vehicle trip : 2 - 3 hrs, walking : 1 - 2 h, overnight in a 4-bed sleeping train

Day 9 : Ulaanbaatar

After arriving at Ulaanbaatar train station (7:30 am), transfer to the hotel.

Free day (souvenirs, visits, walks in the city, ...) and the possibility of visiting the cashmere factory stores.

At the end of the day, we will enjoy the folk art concert featuring traditional Mongolian dance and khoomii /throat singing/, followed by dinner in the hotel.

Overnight in a hotel

Day 10 : Back

After breakfast, the driver will take you to the Chinggis Khaan International airport.

Tour pricing:

Valid Till: Oct 2020

Group size	May & Oct (USD)	June & Sep (USD)	July & Aug (USD)
2 pax	1415\$	1440\$	1495\$
3 pax	1210\$	1245\$	1265\$
4 pax	1095\$	1127\$	1150\$
5 - 8 pax	1035\$	1070\$	1095\$

Highlights:

- Discovering the capital city by visiting religious center, national history museum, and central square
- Experience Trans-Siberian railway
- Staying with 1st - horse herder, 2nd - yak herder, 3rd - camel herder in different regions of Mongolia from north to south. Discover and observe the activities related with those livestock
- Tasting and making Mongolian traditional and typical meals and drinks such as buus (dumpling) and milk tea with little bit of salt
- Visit second biggest city of Mongolia, Erdenet
- Visiting one of the biggest monastery, Amarbayasgalant
- Exploration of Terelj National Park (Aryabal meditation temple and Turtle rock)
- Discovery of Gobi desert by visiting Khamriin Khiid monastery and Ikh Nart nature reserve
- Folk art concert

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(NP – 09/01/2020)