

14 Days Naadam Festival (Special Departure: 09 Jul 2020)



Cultural Tour

Tour Overview

Tour theme: **Cultural**

Duration: **14 days / 13 nights**

Region: **Central and Southern part of Mongolia**

Physical rating: **Easy**

Language: **English/ French**

Max group size: **27 pax**

Tour description:

Are you ready to enjoy one of the unique festivals on the earth? This is the Naadam festival that marks the anniversary of the independence of Mongolia in 1921. Naadam, whose exact name in Mongolian is "Eriin gurban naadam", means the three manly games where you will enjoy appreciating traditional wrestling, horse racing, and archery. It is celebrated throughout the country, but the state gathering is held on July 11 and 12 in the capital Ulaanbaatar. It is a pleasure to see all of the Mongolian dressed by colorful traditional costumes. This festival represents the Mongolian identity, is created by Chinggis Khaan during the XIII century, originally intended to train the Mongolian army during peacetime and now recognized as an intangible world heritage of humanity by UNESCO. By joining this trip, you will watch both state and local festival. From the state festival, you will see the biggest competitions of horse race by its size and encountering high ranked national wrestlers, while from the local festival you would enjoy watching it from a close distance. Except Naadam festival, you will explore the Gobi desert and central part of Mongolia. We will take a flight to the Gobi desert, visit famous sites such as Yoliin Am (Vulture Valley), the biggest sand dunes of Mongolia Khongoriin els, up from gobi to central region, you will visit The Kharkhorin ancient capital, nomad family visits, natural hot spring called Tsenkher.

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Itinerary

Day 1 (July 9th) : Ulaanbaatar

This group tour begins with your arrival at the Chinggis Khaan International Airport in Ulaanbaatar. After arrival, you will be transported to the hotel to check-in. Then, you will enjoy traditional Mongolian barbecue lunch at a local restaurant. After lunch, we will explore the Gandan Monastery, as well as top sites of the city such as the National History Museum, central square and statue of Chinggis Khaan. At the end of the day, enjoy a folk art concert featuring traditional Mongolian dance and khoomii /throat singing/, followed by dinner at your hotel.

Overnight in hotel.

Day 2 (July 10th): Ulaanbaatar - Zuunmod

Here comes the first day of the national holiday! it is an opportunity to feel like real Mongolians. Because everybody wears fancy "deel" traditional Mongolian clothing, and gather around the stadium joyfully. Naadam festival consists of three manly sports which are wrestling, horse-racing, and archery. All Mongolians really appreciate watching those competitions. Thus, it can give tourists joyful time likewise. Our day starts with driving to Zuunmod town, to celebrate the Naadam festival with locals. Participating in the Naadam festival in a small town will allow us to see closely the competition of the three manly sports. You will have a great opportunity to do photography of traditionally dressed happy local people in which you can not find that image from any other place. Therefore, you can even try archery instructed by the professionals. Another thing we must do in the Naadam festival is to taste "khuushuur" - fried dumpling and mare's fermented milk. We are sure that you will have a unique experience.

Vehicle trip : 2H, walk: 1 -2H, Overnight in yurt camp

Day 3 (July 11th) : Ulaanbaatar

Today, we go back to the capital city to attend the opening ceremony of the State Naadam festival. We will see traditional shows, the parade of the traditional costume, and marvelous competition of wrestling and archery there. For lunch, like other local people, we will eat khuushuur around the stadium. .Afternoon, we will drive to Khui Doolon Khudag (25 km) in which horse racing place. There will be horse herders from various regions gather to attend the national holiday. Mongolian horse racing competition held in wide-open steppes since horses race for 15 km to 30 km depending on their ages. It might be touching for you once you see children aged between 7- 12 years old are riding horses and racing in that harsh competition trying to show us their unexpected speed.

Vehicle trip: 3-4h, walk: 1 -2h, Overnight in the hotel

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Day 4 (July 12th) : Ulaanbaatar - Yoliin Am /Ice Valley/

Early in the morning, you will take a flight to the Gobi desert where you will be welcomed by your guide and drivers at Dalanzadgad airport. We will be arriving at Gobi-Gurvan Saikhan National Park - the Gobi and Three Beauties" referring to the 3 mountain ranges which crossing the national park. It's the biggest park in the country, which has a remarkable fauna and flora: the saxaul bushes, the wild goats, the wild ass and even the wild camels. After lunch in Dalanzadgad, the center city of Umnugobi (Southern gobi) province, we hike along a stream joining the Gorge of Yolin Am (Vulture Valley). This place is known for its very special climate. Located in the middle of the Gobi desert where temperatures can reach +30 ° C and yet, remaining the ice during summertime. It is an ideal place to observe the life of vultures and eagles. If we are lucky we can even see ibex at the top of the surrounding mountains.

Flight : 1h30, vehicle trip : 2-3h, walk : 1-2h, Overnight in yurt camp.

Day 5 (July 13th) : Yoliin Am - Khongoriin Els /Khongor Sand Dune/

Today we will discover the Khongor sand dune which is one of the largest and most spectacular sand dunes in Mongolia standing as high as 200 meters above the ground, 7-8 km wide and 180 km long. The dunes rise up between Sevrei mountain to the south, stream and oasis on the north side with lush green. Climbing to the sand dunes is exhausting but it has a breathtaking view at the top. It surprises climbers that the sand dunes make a singing sound while you climb.

Vehicle trip:4-5h, hiking: 2-3h, Overnight in yurt camp.

Day 6 (July 14th) : Khongor Sand Dunes

We will do camel riding in this pleasing landscape mixed with dunes and lush green plains. You can also take a walk to the top of the dune to enjoy a remarkable panorama with sunset. The highest peak of the sand dune is called Duut Mankhan - Singing Dunes, due to the sound produced by its movement. It is considered as one of 3 singing sand dunes in the world.

Camel riding:1h, Overnight in camp.

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Day 7 (July 15th) : Khongor - Arvaikheer via Uush Cliffs

Today we begin your great ascent to the Khangai region. First, you cross a vast dry step, where the view is lost on the horizon. The spectacular crossing of Arts Bogd mountain range by a narrow pass, where we will discover petroglyphs dated back to the Bronze age following up with the discovery of Uush cliffs which has an impressive color of red and orange. At the top, we will have a magnificent panorama view where red-colored Uush cliffs contrast with the surrounding valleys and mountains in the background. Also, feel free to wander Mongolian naturally formed pyramid. Leaving the Great Gobi behind us, we will cross our last kilometers to reach the Khangai region. We will discover the monument created to honor of the Mongolian racing horses, in the steppe of Arvaikheer, which horse breeders and racing horses trainers come to find protection.

Vehicle trip: 4-5h, hiking : 1-2h, Overnight in hotel

Day 8 (July 16th) : Arvaikheer - Orkhon valley

Visit a nomadic family, herder of horses, who will introduce you activities related to horse breeding such as catching semi-wild horses by “Urga” and rodeo. Then drive to Orkhon valley which is the true cradle of the Mongolian people and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The diversity of landscapes makes this region gorgeous. Since it is the cradle of the nomadic civilization of the steppes, you will see many archaeological remains dating back to the 6th century. Camp at the bottom of the Uurtyin Tokhoi canyon. This is a cliff of natural beauty on the east bank of Orkhon River, situated on the way to Khujirt spa-resort and 10 km southeast from Bat-Ulzii Soum of Uvurkhangai province. Uurtyn Tokhoi is 1630m above sea level. Orkhon River flows beneath this stunning natural cliff and a the therapeutic drinkable spring flows out from the ground. Tourists and travelers usually stop over the area.

Vehicle trip: 4-6h, hiking: 1-2h, Overnight in camp.

Day 9 (July 17th) : Orkhon valley

After breakfast, we dive into the famous Orkhon Valley, the true cradle of the Mongolian people, registered as a World Heritage by UNESCO. The diversity of landscapes makes this region a painting of a thousand colors. This valley is rich with its archaeological sites. We cross the valley from East to West to reach the encampment of the next nomadic family, located about fifty kilometers at the end of the valley. Surrounded by ancient dormant volcanoes, we cross vast grassy plains, dotted with basaltic rocks. The Orkhon river flows between Edelweiss floor and narrow canyon just next to us. We will discover the Orkhon waterfall.

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This waterfall is about 20m high and appeared 20,000 years ago by the consequences of repeated earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Our slow driving on the bumpy road gives us plenty of time to observe the different scenes of the nomadic life. Tonight we will arrive at Batsukh's family who is a famous yak breeder and an excellent wolf hunter. We will spend the evening by cooking Khorkhog - Mongolian traditional barbecue made by special way using hot rocks, All an art! The result is unique. We will enjoy our dinner around a campfire dancing and singing together under thousands of stars.

Vehicle trip: 2-3h, hiking: 1-2h, Overnight in camp.

Day 10 (July 18th) : Orkhon valley - Tsenkher

Spectacular cross of the Khangai mountain range to the north. Then we enter the territory of Arkhangai province (North Khangai) whose beauty is often praised in Mongol songs and poems. We discover the Tsenkher hot spring which emerges from the ground at 86.5 ° C. Located in a beautiful setting, these springs supply outdoor pools where you can enjoy hot spa. Containing hydrogen sulphate, this water is renowned for its healing ability that assist in treating articular diseases and nervous system diseases.

Vehicle trip: 4-6h, hiking: 1-2h; Overnight in camp.

Day 11 (July 19th) : Tsenkher - Kharkhorin

Road to Kharkhorin, the legendary city of Chinggis Khaan, founded in 1220. Kharkhorin was first capital of Mongol Empire and prosperous center on the Silk Road in the 13th century. It played an important role in the world economic, political and cultural life. Discovery of the monastery "Erdenezuu" which is one of the most beautiful monasteries and the first religious center of the country. Also, we will visit local museum that will give us detailed information about ancient capital Kharkhorin.

Vehicle trip: 3-4h, walk: 1-2h; Overnight in camp.

Day 12 (July 20th) : Kharkhorin - Khugnu Khan

We will meet an interesting site on your route. This is the Khugnu Khan Nature Reserve, where the beauty of Mongolian nature makes sense. Indeed, there is an interesting coexistence of the green steppe and the great sand dune "Elsen Tasarkhai". We go there and do a short hike among the unusual rocky forms of Mount Khugnu Khan, allowing you to discover the ruins of Erdenekhamba monastery.

Vehicle trip: 3-4h, walk: 1-2h; Overnight in camp.

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Day 13 (July 21th) : Khugnu Khan - Ulaanbaatar

Return to Ulaanbaatar and transfer to the hotel. Leisure time in the afternoon.

Vehicle trip: 5h; Overnight in hotel

Day 14 (July 22th) : Return

After breakfast at the hotel, a driver awaits you to transfer to the airport and it will be the end of our services.

Price

Group size	Price per person
4 - 7 pax	USD 2310
8 - 11 pax	USD 1980
12 - 15 pax	USD 1885
16 - 19 pax	USD 1870
20 - 23 pax	USD 1815
24 -27 pax	USD 1760

The price included:

- ♦ **Airport / hotel / airport transfers**
- ♦ **Accommodation: 2 nights in hotel, Ulaanbaatar, 1 night at Arvaikheer, 10 nights in tourist camp**
- ♦ **All transportation (4x4/fuel/drivers)**
- ♦ **English/French speaking guide**
- ♦ **Full board for 13 days**
- ♦ **Entrance fees to the parks and museums mentioned**
- ♦ **Folk Art concert ticket**
- ♦ **Camel riding for couple of hours**
- ♦ **Entrance fee for the Naadam festival opening ceremony**

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It does NOT included:

- ♦ **Air ticket for international flights**
- ♦ **Visa fees**
- ♦ **Travel insurance (assistance, repatriation)**
- ♦ **Extra meals (excluding 3 meals a day) and personal drinks**
- ♦ **Tips**

Tour Highlights

- ♦ **Experience both local and state Naadam festival: horse racing, traditional wrestling, and archery**
- ♦ **Exploring capital city such as visiting National History Museum**
- ♦ **Folk Art concert**
- ♦ **Trying traditional meals: buuz and khuushuur**
- ♦ **Exploring Gobi desert: Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park, Vulture Valley, Khongoriin els, Uush Cliffs**
- ♦ **Camel riding**
- ♦ **Orkhon Valley UNESCO World Heritage Site**
- ♦ **Orkhon Waterfall**
- ♦ **Tsenkher Hot Spring**
- ♦ **Kharkhorin town which was an ancient capital**
- ♦ **Erdene Zuu monastery**
- ♦ **Khugnu Khan National Park**

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(NP – 03/01/2020)