

Experience the nomadic life

Tour theme: Cultural, Discovery, Staying with nomads

Duration: 11 days/ 10 nights

Region: Central part of Mongolia

Mongolia is one of the few regions in the world where nomadism persists. Here, man and nature exist side by side in a balance that has remained essentially unchanged for thousands of years. The opportunity to experience this way of life as well as to enjoy its beautiful landscapes are the great rewards awaiting visitors who choose to come to this unique area.

Through this 10 days trip, we will explore both the natural and cultural heritage of Mongols. Do you want to soak up their rich and authentic culture? This immersion stays in nomadic families is for you!

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

Thus, tourists who are taking this tour will have the opportunity to herd livestock, tasting milk tea and cheese, horseback riding: all these activities will have no secrets for us at the end of the trip.

In addition, we will be discovering the most beautiful sites of Mongolia: Orkhon Valley, Khugnu Khan Nature Reserve and its "Semi - Gobi", Tuvkhen and Erdene Zuu monastery.

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. 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 2: Ulaanbaatar to Erkhset

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 Erkhset station (16:40), we will be welcomed by Sharaa's family, whose hospitality makes us wonder. According to Mongolian tradition, we will be offered by *Suutei*

Tsai - traditional milk tea, 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 in a yurt

Day 3: 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's daily work. Therefore, we have plenty of work to do today! Such as herding sheep and goats in wide-open steppe, and milking a cow under an endless blue sky.

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.

Overnight with nomad family in a yurt,

Day 4: Erkheto Khugnu Khan

Early in the morning, we get in our vehicle and head to the west to conquer the central steppes of Mongolia. Our road will take us in Khugnu Khan Natural 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 are warmly welcomed by our second nomad family who herd sheep and goat.

Vehicle trip: 4 - 6 h, walking: 1-2 h, Overnight with nomad family in a yurt

Day 5: Staying with nomad family

We will spend another full day with nomads. As day goes on, nomads are having endless work that is related with livestock. Therefore, we are invited to participate in the various tasks of our host family.

Some may gather sheep and goats before taking the herd to graze in the pasture. Others will benefit from the absence of animals to clean the enclosure and even to pick up the dried dung for making fire.

In the afternoon, we will hike among the strange rocky formations of Mount Khugnu Khan, to discover the ruins of an ancient monastery.

Then we take a camel ride in the Elsen Tasarkhai dune, also known as "Semi - Gobi". Our walk in this magical setting mixing a sand dune and an oasis allows us to familiarize with the desert landscape generally characteristic of southern Mongolia.

Walking: 1 - 2 h, camel riding : 0,5 h, Overnight with nomad family in a yurt

Day 6: Khugnu Khan - Orkhon Valley

Today, 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 thousand colors of the sumptuous painting. The Orkhon Valley is one of the most populated areas by herders in the country. Many archaeological remains belong to this valley dating back to the 6th century.

We cross the valley from East to West to reach the encampment of the next nomadic family, located at the bottom 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 steep gorges just next to us. We will discover the unexpected Ulaantsutgalan waterfall. 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 our next family who is a famous yak herder.

Vehicle trip: 4-6 h, overnight with nomad family in a yurt

Day 7: Staying with nomad

We spend the day with our nomadic friends, in order to capture and observe activities related to yak herding: take the herd to pasture, catch the baby yak then milk the "dri" (female yak), make dairy products. (cream, yogurt, butter, cheese, alcohol), etc.

In this free time, enjoy being cut off from the world and your daily life, to live the moment in contemplation.

Overnight with nomad family in a yurt

Day 8: Hermitage of Tuvkhen

A cultural day awaits us today. After thanking our nomad friends, we will head to Tuvkhen Monastery that was founded in 1648 built by Zanabazar, who is the first Buddhist spiritual leader of Mongolia. Tuvkhun Monastery is located on the top of Shireet Ulaan sacred mountain. We can either go hiking or horseback riding through the forest to the top. When we arrive at the bottom of the rock formations, we will see the monastery that is perfectly integrated in its natural environment. Immediately, we will feel calm and the serenity emerging from this sacred place. In the afternoon, we will be greeted by another nomad family, who lives near the monastery in an isolated mountain gorge.

Vehicle trip: 3 - 4 h, walking: 2 - 3 h or horseback riding: 2h, Overnight with nomad family in a yurt

Day 9: Tuvkhen - Kharkhorin

Today, we reach Kharkhorin, 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. Adjacent to the ancient capital, there is a monastery "Erdenezuu" which was built in the 16th century. Stones from the ruins of the ancient capital were used in its construction. During the socialist period in Mongolia, most of the monasteries were destroyed. Despite these facts, the Erdenezuu monastery's some important temples rescued. At the current time, it operates as a museum that makes most Mongolians appreciation.

Vehicle trip: 3 - 4 h, walking: 2- 3 h, Overnight with nomad family in a yurt

Day 10: Kharkhorin - Ulaanbaatar

We take our final step in the heart of the Mongolian steppes contemplating one last time its landscapes before reaching the busy capital where we arrive in the afternoon.

Afternoon free (souvenirs, visits, walks in the city, ...) and the possibility to visit the cashmere factories. Farewell dinner.

Overnight in a hotel

Day 11: Back

After breakfast at the hotel, a driver awaits you for transfer to Ulaanbaatar airport.

Tour pricing:

Valid Till: Oct 2020 - Price in USD

Group Size	May and Oct	June and Sep	July and Aug
2 pax	14400\$	1485\$	1565\$
3 pax	1140\$	1175\$	1235\$
4 - 5 pax	1085\$	1105\$	1140\$
6 - 8 pax	890\$	910\$	945\$

Highlights:

- Discovery of the capital city by visiting religious center, national history museum and central square
- Mongolian folk art concert
- Experiencing trans-siberian railway to Erkheto town
- Staying with nomad families, discovery of nomad life-style, tasting traditional and typical mongolian meals, making dairy products, herding sheep and goat in the pasture, milking a cow
- Discovery of horse herding activity such as rodeo and capturing wild horse
- Camel riding
- Walking through the sand dunes and visiting Uvgnu temple in Khugnu Khan Nature Reserve
- Discovery of Orkhon Valley, true cradle of Mongolian people (Urtiin tokhoi canyon and Ulaantsutgalan waterfall)
- Discovery of yak herding activities
- Hiking to the Tuvkhen monastery on the top of the mountain
- Discovery of history by visiting Kharkhorin museum
- Visiting to Erdenezuu monastery
- Visiting the biggest cashmere shop in the world Gobi cashmere

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(NP – 09/01/2020)