



Photos: Jan Wigsten

Big Skies Trail

- yak carts supported

This journey on horseback is a trail ride without having to bend yourselves into a sleeping bag or a tent. Group size is half of that of our regular horseback journeys, and all riders may overnight in gers (yurts) which are being moved to a new location—by yak cart caravan - every two days. Meaning you will be able to stay in the basic comforts of a bed (sturdy cot) with full linens, and a ger heated by a stove. This horse ride will cover the southern fringes of the Khan Khentii, the scenic interior of Gorkhi Terej National Park, which is mountain forest taiga zones.

Brief Outline Itinerary

We will start this horse ride by a short drive to the taiga life zones of Khan Khentii and we will be dropped off at the Upper Tuul River to meet our local crew of horsemen. They have deployed our personal gers at the site already. After a day trial ride in the vicinity (two overnights) we continue our ride as a truly Nomadic Journey, e.g. without vehicle support in wild terrain. We are supported by a caravan of yak carts and local nomads. Our luggage and a fully collapsible ger lodge will be loaded on to yak carts; We will ride in daily big loops while the caravan makes its way to our next night scenic night stops. We will spend two nights in each location. We will ride over mountains, steppes, forests and wooded meadows. Camping streamside along rivers mostly.

Day 01 Ulaanbaatar

Arrive in Ulaanbaatar. Transfer to your hotel. Tour briefing followed by dinner and entertainment.

Day 02-03 To Bosog Meadows

A.m. Visit the Gandan lamasery, possibly in time for the prayers, center for the Buddhist revival in Mongolia. The Mongols follow the Tibetan version of Lamaism, Dalai Lama being the supreme theocratic leader. We then drive out of the ugly exit of the city, and gradually the Mongolian landscapes unfolds before our eyes. By the time we come to the Hadan Hoshuu steppes valley, there are no traces of the so-called civilization any more. Another world of pastoralist nomads with their horses, gers and livestock are making use of this summer pasture. Picnic lunch en route. We will cross across the forested Zamtiin Pass into the Upper Tuul River Valley. We will meet the yak carts and the horses at Bosog Meadows, streamside of the Tuul River. We will spend two overnights here. Each ger will have a stove and strong cots with full bedding. After a night under the stars in our luxurious ger (yurt) tented camp, we will make a full day trial ride on the southern side of the Tuul River, up the valleys, forests and on to the ridges with stunning panoramic views of the habitat of southernmost Siberian forests as it makes the transition to Mongolian steppes. We will now ride along with the yak carts downstream along the tiny Baruunbayan until we come to the large meadows by the Tuul River. Again cross the Tuul River with the horses while our caravan heads straight for our Bosog Meadows, which will be our last night stop. Full day ride loop out of Bosog Meadows will bring us up the valleys and ridges on the southern side of Tuul River.



Day 04-05 To Baruunbayan Valley

The day before our entire camp of gers (yurts) have already been loaded on the yak carts, and now our luggage is being loaded before breakfast. Our support structure is free from vehicles. All our provisions, camping equipment, luggage's will be loaded on to yak carts. We will ride and make way north towards the Hentii Mountains, across the forested ridge into the next valley, the Baruunbayan, where we will again spend another two overnights. Riders will separate at some point and ride a most scenic loop. The next day we will make a full day ride excursion from our new base camp at Baruunbayan River, to Gunjin Sum, a temple ruin hidden in the forest.

Day 06-07: To Zuunbayan Valley

Pack up and load the caravan for the last time. We set out separating ourselves from the yak carts caravan riding up the partly forested ridges. Most trees are larch, however some of the ridges there are larger patches of Pine, there is a real possibility to come across the rare Black-billed Capercaillie. But also Black Grouse which is more common. Our ger camp will be built next to the Zuunbayan River, a tributary of the Tuul River. We spend two nights at this place. One full day we will ride up towards the treeline of the Hentii Mountains, with spectacular scenery and views in all directions.

Day 08: To Jalman Meadows

Today we say good bye to the herders and their yak carts caravan, and head on horse back to the Sharbulag Valley, crossing the uppermost parts of the Tuul River. We reach the small ger camp at Jalman Meadows mid afternoon. Stay overnight in the ger camp.

Day 09: Jalman Meadows

A full day to enjoy the setting of Jalman Meadows Ger Camp. You may use the day for an additional half or full day ride. Or lean back in the library ger with good reads on Genghis Khan, contemporary Mongolia or horses for that matter. If you like to replace the ride with a float on Russian cataracts downstream using inflatable rafts which will be loaded to a yak cart and taken to the river side. There is also a possibility of a river side sauna at streamside.

Day 10: To Ulaanbaatar

A.m. Return to Ulaanbaatar and check into the hotel. See the capital city on your own. Distances are short. The local guide is standing by to assist where your points of interest are located.

Day 11: Departure

Transfer out to your next destination.

Nomadic Journeys Style

Transport: Mongolian families frequently move from one pasture to the other using traditional wooden carts. These are tied to the animals available in the region. Here we will use yaks, or rather yak-cow crossbreeds here called hainag. The services of some herdsmen will be hired by the expedition, and they will provide us with their animals.

Staff: A local guide who speaks English, will accompany the group at all times. A cook will follow. In addition, the services of several local herdsmen will be hired along with their animals. The horsemen follow a traditional lifestyle in the areas where we will be riding. When four riders or more, we also have a Mongolian doctor as part of crew.

Meals: Our cook will prepare the meals. We pride ourselves in having cooks adept at both western and Mongolian cooking on our trips. There are always vegetables available, and we have no problem accommodating vegetarians on this trail. For breakfast we can usually buy fresh yogurt from the herdsmen in the local area.

Minimum riding ability: Competent rider. Fit and capable of riding at all paces confidently. Varying terrain, in the saddle for several hours for several days.

PRICE 2012 ex Ulaanbaatar

USD 3500 per person (2/6 members)

Includes: Leadership, breakfast every day in UB, and all meals outside Ulaanbaatar. All overnights in hotels (2n.) in shared double gers (8n), camping equipment and all local transport. Local medevac coverage.

Excludes: Laundry. Lunch in Ulaanbaatar. Air or train tickets in and out of Mongolia. Visa fee. Single room in Ulaanbaatar is USD 60 (2n). Single ger at Jalman Meadows is USD 60 (2n). Single ger at the remaining 6 ger nights is USD 1500 (6n).

DATES ex Ulaanbaatar: 2012

BST01: 21Jun-01Jul (Thu-Sun)
 BST02: 11-21Jul (We/Sa) Naadam ext
 BST03: 04-14Aug (Sa/Tu)
 BST04: 24Aug-03Sep (Fr/Mo)
 BST05: 08-18Sep (Sa/Tu)

Naadam: There is a Naadam Festival extension at USD 520 pp supplement in shared double prior to BST01, in which case you need arrive latest July 9th afternoon. It makes for a possible total trip length of 09-21Jul.

