



Photo: Jan Wigsten



Photos: Mark Johnstad

## Hongor Sands

### Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park

*Hongoriyn Els or the Hongor Sands is a giant sand dune in the South Gobi. This journey will bring us to both desert steppe and mountain areas of the Gobi. We will also be able to visit the famous Yol Valley, actually a ravine. The Gurvansaikhan Mountains are an extension into the Gobi of the Altai. Here we may be able to spot Argali Sheep and quite likely Siberian Ibex. The Snow Leopard is certainly present, but this elusive animal is close to impossible to see. In the desert steppe we will probably be able to observe Black-tailed Gazelles and Foxes.*

### Brief Outline Itinerary

We will fly to and from the Dalanzadgad airport in the South Gobi, from where vehicles will be hired. This is a journey in relative comfort where we make use of the best ger camps available around this large national park. No camping is involved and provisions will be provided by each of the three ger camps. Our guide will fly with you to South Gobi.

#### Day 1: To Bayanzag

Arrive Dalanzadgad airport in South Gobi (Ömnögobi), the least populated province in Mongolia. If you fly from Ulaanbaatar airport transfer is included from there. Drive west and check into a ger camp near Bayanzag. In the late afternoon, visit Bayanzag – the famous Flaming Cliffs – at sunset. This is where Roy Chapman Andrews, the famous explorer of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, unearthed the first fossilized dinosaur eggs ever found, in the early 1920s.

#### Day 2: To Hongor Sands

A.m. Again visit the cliffs and walk for an hour on the top and below. Drive a while to the nearby Saksaul groves. After lunch we will continue for a half day drive 120km further west to the famous Hongor Sands, a giant sand dune stretching lengthwise some 180 km away into the distance. Sometimes it is just a couple of hundred meters wide, sometimes as wide as 7-20 km. We will check in at one of the three ger camps located here. These are basic camps, but with excellent locations.

#### Day 3: Hongor Sands

Hongor Sands are high, with a small stream following the leeward side of the sand dune. Some herdsmen also live nearby. On a stretch of grass, which resembles a lawn, a kilometer or two separates the families.



We will ramble into the dunes to a point where the sand reaches some hundred meters into the sky and then climb up for a superb view of the desert steppe. During our stay, we are also likely to come across herdsmen who breed camels and we will no doubt be invited into their gers. We will use their riding camels for a couple of hours and go for an extended ride along the Hongor Sands.

#### Day 4: To Yol Valley area

Drive east for a full day across the Gurvansaikhan Mountains and the Gobi plains until the Yol Valley area. Overnight in gers.

#### Day 5: Yol Valley

A full day excursion into the core of the Gurvansaikhan Mountains and the Yol Valley itself. We will explore this famous ravine, which sometimes has permanent ice and snow. Lammergeier nest here, and we are almost guaranteed to see them flying over the ravine. Another rare bird, the Wallcreeper (*Tichodroma muraria*) is also quite easy to see at close range. When the ice and snow are solid or completely thawed, it is possible to take a long hike through the entire length of the Yol Valley back to our ger camp.

#### Day 6: To Ulaanbaatar

After breakfast drive to the airfield and catch your flight (1½hrs) back to the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar. Transfer to your hotel.

### Practicalities

Nomadic Journeys have introduced a concept of practical and desirable ways of travel in Mongolia, which is a synergy of Western and Mongolian ideas brought about after many years experience in the country. We emphasize the quality of human contacts and encounters with local people.

**Transport:** This journey is supported by a jeep or minibus on the Gobi road tracks.

**Domestic flights:** In July and August there are daily flights, mornings and evenings. He rest of they year usually has evening flights at least three times a week.

**Staff:** A Mongolian English-speaking local guide will accompany the group at all times. Plus one driver.

**Meals:** Meals will be prepared as breakfasts and dinners in the ger camps next to Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park.

**PRICE ex Dalanzadgad:**  
**USD 1300 per person (2/6 members)**

Single ger supplement:  
**USD 30 per night.**

Additional night at the ger camp:  
**USD 100 per person, all meals included.**

Supplement for Three Camels Lodge 1n:  
**USD 80 pp.**

Transport supplement by Japanese jeep:  
**USD 360**

**Includes:** Local guide, all meals outside Ulaanbaatar, all overnights in ger camps in double occupancy. All transport and entrance fees.

**Excludes:** Imported drinks. Transfer and hotel nights in Ulaanbaatar are excluded, but these services may be added as requested.

Please note the domestic flight is added to the price at face value of the air ticket. It is currently (2011) USD 238 each way. The luggage allowance (incl. hand luggage) is 20 kg, and above that overweight must be paid.

**DATES ex Dalanzadgad:**

April through October every day when there is a flight. Daily July and August.

Reservations:

