



Photos: Haroldo Castro

Ulaanbaatar Naadam Games

Ancient medieval games still survive in Mongolia and are part of the Living Cultural Heritage of our country. Wrestling, horse races and archery are still the most popular sports. In July, the National Naadam is held in our capital and all across the country. The largest being in Ulaanbaatar itself. Herdsmen arrive on horseback from distant provinces, simultaneously training their horses. Such a journey lasts for anything between one to three months! A giant nomadic camp is being set up on the steppe area outside Ulaanbaatar during the night of July 9th. This program is a close encounter with the Mongol Three Manly Games of horseracing, wrestling and archery. Skills required and practiced during the medieval times of Genghis Khan armies, and perhaps as way back as during the time of the Huns.

Brief Outline Itinerary

This is a brief encounter with the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar and its immediate surroundings during Naadam times. The itinerary should be understood as tentative in order to accommodate any changes in the Naadam programs made or change of restricted areas by the police. Overbooking of hotels is likely. At Nomadic Journeys we have the experience of Naadam every year, and we know how to anticipate any problems. It is a time everyone wants to be there which includes the Mongolian government inviting VIPs and other official guests, why accommodation and transport are in short supply.

Monday 9th Ulaanbaatar

Arrive in the Mongolian capital by flight or join this program from any other of our trips. Transfer to the hotel. You may explore the city on your own for the rest of the day. Ulaanbaatar was a migrating ger city (yurt city) until 1778, when the town finally settled on the Tuul River where it stands today. Today more than half the population still lives in gers in the city. The minor archery competitions and trainings may have started already today. Especially different styles such as children's archery, Buryat style archery etc. Training sessions allows for good photography. In the evening the horse trainers move their horses with their mobile camps near to the city, and pitch camp at the steppe area at Hui Doloon Hudag, 60km away from the city and Sukhbaatar Square. We meet for a festive welcome dinner.

Tuesday 10th Ulaanbaatar

Full day exploration of Naadam for horse racing. There are horse races at Hui Doloon Hudag, but also rural Naadam Games are on-going in several locations 60-90km away from the city.



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In the rural Naadams you may get up close to the horse races, with the added benefit of also getting close to the wrestling. We will bring picnic lunches with us for the full day out.



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Wednesday 11th Ulaanbaatar

A.m. Naadam is being opened officially by the President of Mongolia. Soldiers on horseback, sometimes dressed in Genghis Khan warrior regalia, will bring the nine white horsetail banners. They will get the banners at the Parliament where they are normally displayed and will then ride in procession through the city, later to be placed in the center of the Stadium, from where we will be viewing the Opening Ceremony. The first round of wrestling will start immediately thereafter. Usually 512 wrestlers from all across Mongolia will compete in the first round! But sometimes more than 700! No judges, no time limits and no weight limits! There is a chance to attempt to see the archery competitions (if not done the previous day) and later find our way out to the steppe area on the fringes of the city.

Visit to the nomadic tented camps that have sprung up, and experience a concentration of nomadic Mongolia at one site! Herdsmen have come with their horses and all provisions for the festivities, which include airag (koumiss; fermented mares milk) for the merry making. Stroll around the area and you are likely to be invited in somewhere. You may also try your luck at the finals of the horse races, but prior instructions are necessary, since the coming of a full horserace of several hundred, is a potentially hazardous situation.

Thursday 12th Ulaanbaatar

Our services ends after breakfast (and transfer to the airport if applicable), as we

will have covered all aspects of Naadam earlier days. You may remain in the city with entrance tickets provided for the National Stadium and final rounds of wrestling and awards, if not continuing on our trips further into the great Mongolian void. You need be careful with hotel reservations and advise us early if intending to stay beyond mid day.

PRICE ex Ulaanbaatar:

UNG 4d/3n: **USD 660 per person**

Single Supplement: **USD 45 per night.**

Prices & Practicalities

Includes: All meals. All local transport and transfers. Hotel in shared double with private bath or ger camp accommodation in Bogd Khan Mountain Biosphere Reserve. Accommodation not specified until a few weeks prior to arrival. Local English speaking guide.

Excludes: Laundry, imported drinks.

Extension Programs: Prior to and after this program we have a series of trips. These are Yak Trek in Khan Khentii, Camel Trek in the near Gobi and horse riding expeditions such as Mongol Horse Trails, Gobi Steppe Ride and Big Skies Trail. For overlapping horse rides, there is extension possibility with this Naadam Games for 3d/2n at USD 580 per person.

Trips available in conjunction with Naadam:

- MONGOL HORSE TRAILS
- GOBI STEPPE RIDE
- BIG SKIES TRAIL
- YAK TREK IN THE KHAN KHENTII
- CAMEL TREK IN THE NEAR GOBI
- IKH NART NATURE RESERVE
- ARBURD SANDS
- JALMAN MEADOWS

Reservations:

