



Photos: Jan Wigsten

Eagle Festival Trek

We will spend two fascinating days at the Eagle Festival in Sagsay, where we will be able to see Eagle competitions based on accuracy, speed and agility of the magnificent Golden Eagles. Also some great Kazakh traditional games such as Bouzkhasi, traditional horse racing and archery etc. This fantastic festival celebrating the Kazakhs' honored Golden Eagle is also a celebration of Kazakh traditional heritage. The highlight of this fantastic trip is interacting with the Kazakhs and living with them for a couple of days to take part in the eagle training and get to know more about the unique Kazakh culture.

Brief Outline Itinerary

The Altai Mountains, with eternal snowcapped peaks and glaciers, are the highest of the three major mountain ranges in Mongolia, straddling the Russian and Chinese frontiers in the Far West. In this remote region live many nomads of various ethnic minorities. The Kazakhs are Muslims and speak the ancient Kazakh language. The Tuvans are Buddhist and shamanistic. On our journey we will use low-impact traditional modes of transport. Our equipment will be carried on pack-camels, and also, possibly, packhorses. You may fly or join overland from Russia or fly to Hovd on an almost 4 hour domestic flight from Ulaanbaatar. We will transfer out to the mountain regions from Hovd, the Kazakh provincial capital, by 4wd Russian vehicles. Our crew will be Kazakhs. The local guide is trilingual at least: English, Mongol and Kazakh. Possibly also Tuvan and Russian.

Sa11Sep: To Ulaanbaatar

Arrive Ulaanbaatar airport. Met upon arrival and transfer to Narantuul Hotel. Free time in Ulaanbaatar. Welcome briefing in the evening.

Su12Sep: To Hovd - Tsambagarav Uul National Park

Fly Eznis Airways to Hovd. Visit the local museum of the town with comprehensive information of flora and fauna of Hovd province, as well as its colorful traditional costumes. After lunch drive about 3-4 hrs until the north side of Tsambagarav Uul National park driving up the mountain sides until a place called Tavan Belcheer/Five Pastures. Stay in Gers. There are numerous petroglyphs, depicting the animals and life of early inhabitants and stone men in Tsambagarav Uul National Park, plus scenic wonders like waterfalls and snowcapped Tsast and Tsambagarav peaks. During the summer this is a great place to meet a Kazakh Eagle Hunter.

Mo13Sep: Tsambagarav Uul National Park

Tsambagarav Uul (4208m) is one of the most beautiful snowcapped mountains in Mongolian Altai. It is just on the border of three western provinces of Bayan-Ölgii, Uvs and Hovd. We will see snowcapped peaks, rocky valleys and crystal clear spring waters. We visit the nomadic Kazakh and Urianhai (one of western Mongolian ethnic groups) families and experience their hospitality.



Tu14Sep-Th16Sep: Trek

Meet local crew and load the pack camels for the trek. Today we start our walking east through rocky high Altai mountains. The trek makes you enjoy having beautiful spectacular views of snow capped mountains which are at long distance all around you. Next day, continue our trek to east. From Tsambagarav Mountains, we walk down to Lake Bayan Nuur (Rich lake), summer pastures of Kazakh nomads (from over 3000m to 1600m). This is a salt lake among the Bor Khyarin Els Sand Dunes with a fascinating scenery and locals claim it to be good fishing. Coming down to the lakeside you will see landscapes with red rocky mountain granites and sandy beaches around the lake itself. There are many water birds here and it's good for swimming. Staying overnight around lake, you will see both stunning sunset and sunrise. Overnight in tent.

Fr17Sep: Drive To Ölgii

Drive short day to Ölgii. After lunch, we will visit the local sights of this rather ugly town. Instead of a market it has a bazaar, with distinct kazakh ambience. Instead of a Buddhist monastery it has a mosque, which has been renovated in recent times. There are some very interesting back street handicraft shops and a well-stocked local museum. Stay in Ger Camp.

Sa18Sep-Su19Sep: Eagle Festival in Sagsay

Two days of festivities at Sagsay community, which is half an hours drive beyond Ölgii. Kazakh eaglehunters are arriving on horseback with their domestic hunting eagles. There will be various games such as bouzkhasi, kind of horse polo with dead goat carcass, horse races, picking up objects from the ground while in galopp, eagles hunting for objects dragged. Very colorful local dresses. In the evening drive to Eagle hunter's family. Stay with family. Mongolian Kazakhs only hunt with the larger female eagles which can be nearly a third heavier than the males. The eagles are collected as chicks from nests on the mountains. Once the hunter has obtained his eagle he will spend several months rearing it and training it to fly for its reward of food. Eventually the eagles become a highly efficient hunting machine with acute eyesight and powerful talons, used to hunt rabbits, hares and foxes. The eagle hunters lavish great care on their birds and eventually after ten or 15 years will release them back into the wild in the hope that they will pair up and breed.

Mo20Sep: Döröö Nuur

Drive a short way passing Tolbo Nuur towards Höh Serhiin Nuruu (Blue Goat) National Park and camp for one night at scenic Döröö Nuur.

Hike in the area and visit the national park with high mountains and snow leopard habitat.

Tu21Sep: To Hovd

Full day exploration of Döröö Nuur area and late afternoon drive to Hovd, 2 hrs. Overnight stay at basic hotel.

We22Sep: Fly to Ulaanbaatar

Morning transfer to the airport and fly Eznis Airways to Ulaanbaatar. Upon arrival transfer to Narantuul Hotel.

Pm free in Ulaanbaatar.

Th23Sep: Ulaanbaatar

City highlights recommended on your own: a visit to Gandan Monastery, the largest Buddhist Center of Mongolia and perhaps a visit to the Natural History Museum to observe the unique collections of flora and fauna including dinosaur fossils and eggs.

Fr24Sep: Fly out

Transfer to the airport.

Practicalities

Transport: Local nomadic families frequently move from one pasture to another using pack-camels or pack-horses. The services of some local herdsmen will be hired by the expedition and they will provide us with their animals.

Staff: A Kazakh leader will accompany the group at all times in Bayan-Ölgii. The service will be in English. There will also be a cook on the trek. In addition, the services of the local herdsmen will be hired along with their animals.

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 our trips.

PRICE ex Hovd

USD 1780 per person (min 2 members)

Single supplement **USD 30** per night.

Included: All meals. All overnights at hotels (3n.), in ger camps (5n.) and tents (5n.), camping equipment and all local transport.

Excluded: Imported drinks, rent of riding horse. Flights. Visa fee. Domestic flights. Appr. USD 384 from Ulaanbaatar to Hovd and Appr. USD 414 from Hovd to Ulaanbaatar (price of Jun2010).

Eagle Festival only: Pls request directly with us if you wish to exclude the trek part.