



Photo: Fredrik Sträng



Photos: Mark Johnstad

Mongolian Odyssey

This vehicle based roundtrip is the one Mongolia classic which brings you to some of the most famous sights around the country. Yol Valley, Flaming Cliffs and Hongor Sands in South Gobi. And Karakorum and Högnö Khan Mountain in central areas. This journey will bring you to both desert steppe and mountain areas of the Gobi. A string of ger camps are dotted along its route. The Gurvansaikhan Mountains is an extension into the Gobi of the Altai. We will see the massive Hongor Sands, and Flaming Cliffs at Bayanzag. The visit to Karakorum will be on the site of the capital of the Mongol Empire, where now Erdenezuu Monastery is located.

Brief Outline Itinerary

We will fly to Dalanzadgad airport in the South Gobi, from where a jeep/vehicle will meet you. This is a journey in relative comfort, a roundtrip which make use of the best ger camps available around Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park and then proceeds to central Mongolia and the cradle of Mongol civilization, Harhorin. Our guide will meet you in South Gobi.

Day 1: To Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park

A.m. Pick up at your hotel in Ulaanbaatar, and transfer to the airport for 1½ hour flight to South Gobi. South Gobi (Ömnögobi) is the least populated province in all Mongolia. We will start our trip by going to our ger camp, in the proximity of Dalanzadgad and hike in the hills of Gurvansaikhan Mountains (Three Beauties). You may also join in Dalanzadgad as per our instructions.

Day 2: Yol Valley of Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park

A full day of exploration of the core of Gurvansaikhan Mountains and the gorge of Yol. Yoliin Am in Mongolian means the valley of Lammergeier. These majestic vultures are certainly present here as are Wallcreepers, Hoopoes, four species of Rose-finches and Kozlov's Accentors. Altai Snowcock may be heard from the high ridges above. It is possible to hike the entire length of this ravine, which is snow covered and with ice well into summer. For a week or two a complete passage is not possible as the snow and ice might not bear you.

Day 3: To Hongor Sands

We will drive west, some 200km to the famous Hongor Sands, a giant sand dune stretching lengthwise some 180 km away in the distance. Sometimes it is just a couple of hundred meters wide, sometimes as wide as 7-20 km. We will check in at any of the ger camps located here. These are ordinary camps, but with an excellent location for our purpose. Almost next to this giant sand dune. It is high and has a small stream following the leeward side of the sand dune. Herdsmen also live nearby the sand dune. On this stretch of grass that resembles a lawn a kilometer or two between them separates the families. Late afternoon on the dunes for sunset.

Day 4: To Bayanzag

We will explore some length of the Hongor Sands and go to a point where the sand reaches some 4-500 meters into the sky, and we will



climb it for a superb view around the desert steppes. We are also likely to come across herdsmen who breed camels. You may as an optional use their riding camels for a couple of hours, and go for an extended ride along and on the sands. In the afternoon drive east 120km. In the late afternoon, visit Bayanzag – the famous Flaming Cliffs – at sunset. Roy Chapman Andrews expedition, the famous explorer of the American Museum of Natural History in New York unearthed the first ever fossilized dinosaur eggs here, in the 1920s and labeled the site the “Flaming Cliffs”.

Day 5: To Ongiin Monastery

If you will like it, we can take another morning walk on the cliffs, and then return to camp for breakfast. Then we will drive half a day north to the Ongiin River, which usually is dried out. The Ongiin Monastery ruin is alongside the river near Saikhan Ovoo. Hike around the area in the afternoon.

Day 6: To Högnö Khan Mountain

Depart in the morning for a full day north through Övörhangai province and on to southernmost Bulgan province and the scenic Högnö Khan Mountain area. There will be steppe landscape all the way, and upon reaching the Högnö Khan Mountain area, we will see Mongol Els sand dunes in the middle of the steppe. They are locally known as “Little Gobi” or “Elsen Tasarkhai”. Next to them there is a small lake where waders such as herons and ducks may be seen in the summer. Overnight in gers.

Day 7: Högnö Khan Mountain

The Högnö Khan Mountain is a giant rock formation in the middle of the steppe and in it is the small Erdenekhombo Monastery, now being restored. It was destroyed during the purges of the 1930s. An interesting countryside area where many nomadic herdsmen live surrounds it. We will explore the area on foot today. As easy hike until Övgön Monastery ruin, located in a green oasis in the middle of Högnö Khan Mountains.

Day 8: Erdenezuu & Karakorum

Full day excursion to Harhorin. We will drive 80km, which is 2 hours, to nearby Harhorin (Karakorum). Erdenezuu is nowadays a functioning monastery. In the past, 1000 monks used to inhabit Erdenezuu. It had some 100 temples within its 400 by 400 meters long walls. The monastery was sacked during the purges of 1937. Erdenezuu is still one of the most fascinating sites of Mongolia. Return to camp at Högnö Khan.

Day 9: To Ulaanbaatar

Drive back to Ulaanbaatar. Picnic lunch en route. Check into your hotel in Ulaanbaatar.

Practicalities

For operational reasons, any of these trips may operate in the reverse direction ending with a return flight to Ulaanbaatar from Dalanzadgad.

Transport and Lodging: It is normal we add hotel accommodation and transfers in Ulaanbaatar, at additional cost if applicable. This journey is totally vehicle supported. We will overnight in ger camps for the entire trip. It is a fixed dated departure intended for independent international travelers to join.

Staff: A Mongolian English-speaking local guide will accompany you at all times. Plus one driver. Additional language guide (French/Spanish/German) is possible to order.

PRICES ex Ulaanbaatar:

USD 1480 per person. (2/11 members)

Single ger supplement: **USD 240**

Private trip supplement: **USD 200 per person**

Air tkt ULN/DLZ (2010 price) **USD 238 one way**

Including: Local English speaking guide, all meals outside Ulaanbaatar, all overnights in ger camps in double occupancy. All surface transport and entrance fees.

Excluding: Imported drinks. Air or train tickets. Transfers and hotel overnights in Ulaanbaatar.

DATES 2011 ex Ulaanbaatar:

GKM01: 23JUN-01JUL (Th-Fr)

GKM02: 01-09JUL (Fr-Sa)

GKM03: 12-20JUL (Tu-We)

GKM04: 20-28JUL (We-Th)

GKM05: 05-13AUG (Fr-Sa)

GKM06: 13-21AUG (Sa-Su)

GKM07: 26AUG-13SEP (Fr-Sa)

GKM08: 03-11SEP (Sa-Su)

Private departures: On request, and if available, the trip may operate on any day, at an additional cost of USD 400 pp for groups 2-5 people. Group discounts available upon request. Private departures may be customized adding days at Hongor Sands and Ongiin Monastery, even adding a several days trek supported by pack yaks caravan across Hangai Mountains. It is also possible to add Hustai National Park. Please ask for customized quote in such cases.

Naadam Games:

Between 09-12Jul is Naadam Games in Ulaanbaatar areas. You may request from us such extension itinerary separately if also taking GKM02 or GKM03.