



Photo: Haroldo Castro



Photos: Jan Wigsten



Hagiin Har Nuur Packhorse Ride in the Hentii Mountains

Hagiin Har Nuur (Hagiin Black Lake) is a remote lake hidden in the deep interior forests of the Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area, part of the Hentii wilderness northeast from Ulaanbaatar. It is Mongolia's only true wilderness in the sense that it is completely devoid of people and domestic animals. It is a realm of wolves, moose, red deer, gazelle, wild boar, lynx and brown bear. We will not meet any people for most of the journey. The Tuul River originates close to Hagiin Har Nuur, eventually wends its way through Ulaanbaatar and finally drains out to the north into the Selenge River, which in turn feeds two-thirds of its water into Lake Baikal, which ultimately empties into the Arctic Ocean. A couple of kilometers away the Herlen River originates. It belongs to the separate Pacific drainage basin. Hagiin Har Nuur is located within the taiga lifezone and near the starting point of a number of Asian rivers, some of which drain north to the Arctic Ocean and others east to the Pacific Ocean.

Brief Outline Itinerary

The support structure for our expedition will be local herdsmen with their riding horses and packhorses, which will carry tents, luggage and equipment. We ride cross-terrain and camp in the wild. Our trailfinder is a local herdsman who spends the winters with his herd and family at Jalman Meadows, an 8-hour horseback ride short of Hagiin Har Nuur. Jalman Meadows Ger Camp is also located there, from which our expedition will start. It has double occupancy gers. A cook and interpreter will follow.

Day 1: To Ulaanbaatar

Arrive by air to Ulaanbaatar. Transfer to the hotel. Overnight in a hotel. Dinner and trip briefing in the evening.

Day 2: To Jalman Meadows

A.m. Depart by vehicle from your hotel in Ulaanbaatar for the 3-3.5 hours ride to (110km) the Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area, which includes Terelj National Park within its boundaries. For an hour we will drive through a steppe valley that is summer pasture for numerous herdsmen and their cattle. P.m. On arrival meet the trail finder and horsemen. Trial ride around the area and cross the Tuul river to enjoy the view over Jalman Meadows, rich in wildflowers and berries during the summer season, located just below the Jalman Mountain (2051 meters above sea level).



Day 3-4: To Hagiin Har Nuur

Our route will be decided according to river levels and climatic conditions at the time.

There are three barely visible trails, known only to the local people, which make their way towards Hagiin Har Nuur. We will load the packhorses with the equipment. There is a saddlebag for each rider. We will ride further up the Tuul River Valley or the Zuunbayan River Valley and make our way into this fascinating area of rivers and small lakes via the Hongoriin and Hagiin River, setting up a base camp by the lake. We will remain here for two nights. The area is rich in wildlife, although it is difficult to see. The lake itself and the rivers are rich in fish such as grayling, lenok trout and taimen, which can grow quite large here.

Day 5: Hiydiyn Sardag & Höh Nuur

We will make a day ride, first in a north-easterly direction to the small and ruined Sardag Monastery. Built by Zanabazar, the first of the Mongol Bogdo Gegers (Living Buddhas like the Dalai Lama) in the 17th century. It was destroyed during the purges in the Stalinist 1930s. Then to the northwest to Höh Nuur (Blue Lake) which is considerably smaller than Hagiin Har Nuur. There are several small lakes connected to it. Return to the same campsite.

Day 6-7: To Jalman Meadows

We will now again load our packhorses and ride back to Jalman Meadows Ger Camp, via an alternative route, which will also provide an equally nice experience of the Siberian taiga lifezone.

Day 8: Jalman Meadows

Day of leisure at Jalman Meadows Ger Camp. Hike in the area. Sleep in a real bed in relative comfort. This is a buffer day, just in case there are delays in the wilderness, potentially caused by rains and flooded streams.

Day 9: To Ulaanbaatar

A.m. Picked up by vehicle and drive 3hrs back to Ulaanbaatar. Hotel.

Day 10: Fly out

Transfer to the airport and fly out. End of services after breakfast.

Practicalities

Equipment: During the daytime, sunny and warm weather is likely. However during the early morning hours it is equally possible to have frost! You need to bring your own sleeping bag and good rainwear. Just in case, bring thermal wear and gloves. Please also bring your own hard hat and short chaps.

Meals: Our cook will prepare the meals over an open fire. We pride ourselves in having cooks adept at both western and Mongolian cooking on our trips.

PRICE ex Ulaanbaatar:

USD 1580 per person (2-6 members)

Single room/ tent/ ger single supplement:
USD 30 per night.

Private trip supplement: **300 per person**

Includes: Leadership, breakfast every day, and all meals outside Ulaanbaatar. All overnights in hotel, ger camp and tents. Camping equipment and all local transport. Local medevac coverage.

Excludes: Imported drinks, laundry. Air or train tickets in and out of Mongolia. Visa fee.

DATES ex Ulaanbaatar: 2011

HHN 01: 11-20Sep (Su-Tu)

Other dates: This ride may be requested at other times. Please note that July and August, which have more rain, may cause small streams in the area to flood such that they become rivers too dangerous to cross. While it is possible to undertake this dramatic horseback journey at this time, your plans should allow for several days delay, just in case.

Reservations: