

Photos: Jan Wigsten

Khar Us Nuur National Park

Great Lakes Basin

Khar Us Nuur National Park (Black Water Lake) lies on a arid plain which shares the same characteristics as the remote Changtang Plateau of Tibet. However, it is located in western-most Mongolia in the great lakes basin, which has both salt water and fresh water lakes with the largest reedbeds of Central Asia. Next to Khar Us Nuur is the Jargalant Hairhan Mountain (Happy Sacred), snow-capped into July. It is the habitat of snow leopards, Siberian ibex, argali sheep, Altai snowcock, wallcreepers and lammergeiers. You will be hosted by local nomadic families who participate in the snow leopard conservation efforts of WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) and The International Snow Leopard Trust.

Brief Outline Itinerary

You will fly on a domestic flight to Hovd, one of three ancient towns in Mongolia, along with Ulaanbaatar and Uliastai. Hovd is the provincial capital of the province (aimag) with the same name. You will be hosted by a community of herders of Chandman soum. They operate at least two satellite gers not far from their own gers. A local guide will meet you when landing in Hovd. You will stay in a ger at Jargalant Hairhan Mountain area and do excursions from there.

Day 1 To Hovd

Pick up at your hotel in Ulaanbaatar and transfer to the airport. Fly west on scheduled flight approx. 2-3 hours to Hovd. Visit the town and the aimag museum. Hovd is a multiethnic town with several Mongol minorities as well as a Kazakh population, which is why there also is a mosque. Overnight at Mōngön Uul Ger Camp outside of Hovd.

Please note, if the flight is scheduled to arrive early, you will proceed directly to Jargalant Hairhan Mtn and spend the last night in the ger camp instead.

Day 2 To Jargalant Hairhan Mtn

Drive to Elsen Shanaa Beach and visit the bird tower overlooking the reed beds of Tsagaan Gol, at the south side of the lake. Continue drive south of the lake about four hours you reach its eastern side. Meet the locals, who are nomads, which is why they alternate locations; camping on the mountainside (July and August) or at the lakeside (early and late in the season). They are local partners with both WWF and The International Snow Leopard Trust and have formed a cooperative to make and sell felt handicrafts, which you will have a chance to purchase.

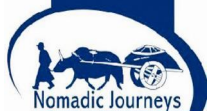


Photo: Jan Wigsten

Day 3 Jargalant Hairhan Mtn

Today we will hike or ride camels up into one of the valleys of the Jargalant Hairhan Mountain. It is a unique valley which has mountains on its sides and a sacred spring famous for its healing powers, so Mongolians come here for eight types of traditional treatments, placing haadags at the owoo. Poplars grow directly out of the rocks. With luck we will see Siberian ibex, lammergeier, chukar and wallcreepers. It is also the habitat of the elusive snow leopard and is covered by ice and snow for most parts of the summer. We will hike up to the end of the valley, where there is a 24m waterfall.

Day 4 Jargalant Hairhan Mtn

Today is dedicated to visiting the local nomads. If it is July or August the lakeside has too many mosquitoes, so the nomads take their animals to the higher altitudes. Their spring and fall pastures are at the lakeside. It may be possible – in season – to visit the Mandal Islands of the lake, if the little boat with a small outboard engine is working and there is someone on hand to drive it.

Day 5 To Ulaanbaatar

A.m. Drive back to Hovd. Lunch at a local restaurant in town or at Mōngön Uul Ger Camp near the airport. P.m. Fly to Ulaanbaatar. Transfer to your hotel.

Practicalities

PRICE ex Ulaanbaatar:

USD 980 per person (min 2 members)

Flight ticket each way to/from Hovd

USD 384 per person

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

Additional night at camp:

USD 100 per person.

Includes: All meals outside Ulaanbaatar. All overnights Community Gers. Park entry fee. Local cook and local guide from Hovd.

Excludes: Imported drinks. Laundry. Hotels and transfers in UB. Air or train tickets in and out of Mongolia. Domestic flights. Visa fee.

Hazard: If returning to Ulaanbaatar by flight it is recommended to plan for at least 2 nights after the return from Hovd. Flights from the interior may cancel due to poor visibility (rain/fog), which is why you need to allow some “rubber” time built in to your itinerary, in order to accommodate such changes.

DATES ex Ulaanbaatar:

Daily April to October

Subject to confirmation of domestic flight.

Reservations: