



Photos: Jan Wigsten

## Mongol Horse Trails yak carts supported

*This journey on horseback is a close encounter with Mongolian horsemen and their horses, nomadic people who have thus far survived modern pressure and lifestyles. There is no other nation in the world that so much depends on horses. Mongol horsemanship is famous and strikingly different than anywhere else. The herders keep their horses in a semi-wild condition, allowing them to live freely in harem groups. During the harsh winter of subzero temperatures, the horses fend for themselves and protect their foals against predators such as wolves. There are no fences or any stables anywhere. We will ride out on the steppe, which is the summer pastureland of Mongolian nomads. We will ride in two strikingly different areas; first, the treeless steppe and then through the Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area, which is in the mountain and forest taiga zone.*

### Brief Outline Itinerary

We will start this horse ride as A Nomadic Journey, e.g. without vehicle support, in wild terrain. Our luggage will be loaded onto yak carts; a ger will be carried to serve as our mobile restaurant. The beginning of the ride will be on the steppe and gradually we will ride into the very scenic forest steppe and southern taiga lifezones. You will experience mountains, steppes, forests, wooded meadows and camping along the rivers.

#### Day 1 Ulaanbaatar

Arrive in Ulaanbaatar. Transfer to your hotel. Tour briefing after dinner.

#### Day 2 To the Steppes

A.m. Visit the Gandan lamasery, possibly in time for the prayers, the center for the Buddhist revival in Mongolia. The Mongols follow the Tibetan version of Lamaism, the Dalai Lama being the supreme theocratical leader. We depart for the steppe and have a picnic lunch on arrival, pitching camp near some nomadic families. Here we will meet the yak carts and our horses.

#### Day 3-4 Steppe ride

Ride over the treeless steppe. We will ride across rather hilly terrain with occasional patches of birch forest. Throughout the ride we will have contact with local herdsmen, often relatives and friends of our wranglers. Our support structure is free from vehicles. All our provisions, camping equipment and luggage will be loaded onto yak carts. Even a ger (yurt) will be brought, and we will learn how to set it up. On the last day, forests will suddenly start to appear and we are now riding towards the



Hentii wilderness area, which includes the Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area and Gorkhi Terej National Park. In Mongolia the Siberian boreal forest meets the Central Asian desert and steppe. All the while we will be riding in this transition zone.

#### **Day 5-6: To Sharbulag Valley**

The horses will now make it possible to ride through the larch forests, up the slopes of the mountains and to follow ridges that have views of superb scenery, whilst the yak carts will follow the broad river valleys. We will arrive and pitch camp at the Sharbulag Valley. We will spend two nights here and it will allow for some flexibility in the middle of our ride.

#### **Day 7: To Tuul River**

Cross a pass and ride into the upper part of the Tuul River Valley. We are now near the main ridge of the Hentii Mountains. The horses will help get us up onto the ridges where the panoramic views are extraordinary. It is a partly forested area.

#### **Day 8-9: To Jalman Meadows**

We will ride towards Jalman Meadows, famous for its wildflowers, and reach our semi-permanent ger camp, which is situated next to a beautiful wooded meadow on the upper parts of the Tuul River. We will overnight for two nights at Jalman Meadows, making a superb last day ride in the area.

#### **Day 10: To Ulaanbaatar**

A.m. Return to Ulaanbaatar and check into the hotel. See the capital city on your own. Distances are short. The local guide is standing by to assist finding out where your points of interest are located.

#### **Day 11: Departure**

Transfer out to your next destination.

### **Practicalities**

**Transport:** Mongolian families frequently move from one pasture to another using traditional wooden carts. These are hitched to the animals available in the region. Here we will use yaks, or rather yak-cow crossbreeds called hainag. The services of some herdsmen will be hired by the expedition and they will provide us with their animals.

**Staff:** A local guide who speaks English and Mongolian will accompany the group

at all times. A cook will follow, with an assistant. In addition, the services of the local herdsmen will be hired along with their animals. When six riders or more, we also have a Mongolian doctor as part of crew.

**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. For breakfast we can usually buy fresh yogurt from the herdsmen in the local area.

**Minimum riding ability:** Competent rider. Fit and capable of riding at all paces confidently. Varying terrain, in the saddle for several hours for several days.

#### **PRICE ex Ulaanbaatar:**

**USD 1850 per person (2/10 members)**

Single room/tent/ger supplement:

**USD 30 per night.**

Additional night in Ulaanbaatar:

**USD 108 per room.**

Private trip supplement:

**USD 400 per trip**

**Includes:** Leadership, breakfast every day, and all meals outside Ulaanbaatar. One dinner with tour guide in Ulaanbaatar. All overnights in hotels (2n.) in shared double, gers (2n.) and tents (6n.), camping equipment and all local transport. Local medevac coverage.

**Excludes:** Drinks, laundry, Lunch and dinner in Ulaanbaatar. Air or train tickets in and out of Mongolia. Visa fee. Bring your own sleeping bag.

#### **DATES ex Ulaanbaatar: 2011**

MHT01: 11-21Jun (Sa-Tu)

MHT02: 30Jun-10Jul (Th-Su) Naadam ext

MHT03: 20-30Jul (We-Sa)

MHT04: 17-27Aug (We-Sa)

MHT05: 24Aug-03Sep (We-Sa)

MHT06: 01-11Sep (Th-Su)

MHT07: 08-18Sep (Th-Su)

**Naadam:** There is a Naadam Festival extension possibility following MHT02 for Ulaanbaatar Naadam Games July 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>.

**Reversal of trip:** Trips may be done in the reverse for operational reasons.