



Camel Trek in East Gobi



Photo: Andrea Pregnan



Photo: Jan Wigsten



Photo: Axel Braunlich



Photo: Jan Wigsten



Photo: Haroldo Castro

On this trek you will explore the little travelled Ikh Nartiin Chuluu Nature Reserve in the eastern part of the Gobi desert. This diverse upland area, consisting of rock formations, grassland and desert steppe, is often hot and very dry. There is a population of approximately 1000 Argali sheep (*Ovis Ammon*), the largest species of wild mountain sheep in the world. Although there is no guarantee to see them, they are actually not that shy here. The rocky outcrops are home to about 200 Siberian Ibex (*Capra Sibirica*) as well. Sometimes herds of Mongolian Gazelle (*Procapra Gutturosa*) migrate through the area. The reserve also has a sizeable population of Eurasia's biggest vulture, the Cinereous vulture (*Aegypius Monacha*). We will set out towards the East Gobi on the Trans-Mongolian railway line. For three days we will explore this spectacular area on foot (If you are an experienced rider, a horse may be rented for you). We will use our seasonal Red Rock ger camp and, while on the trek, will set up our own private Wilderness Camp of gers (Mongolian yurts). All our luggage and equipment will be loaded on to camel carts in the same way as nomadic herders used to transport their belongings, when moving from one pasture to another. This kind of trip is what we have labeled a 'Nomadic Journey'. Herders come and go to the Ikh Nart area. As they are essentially reliant on pastures and any precipitation in the dry environment, they migrate a lot. The Gobi herders are very interesting, hospitable and hardy people .

Day 1: To Ikh Nart

At 08h00 pick up from your hotel in Ulaanbaatar and transfer to the railway station. Depart by the slow train at 09h00 and spend 6h20 travelling southeast over the grassland steppe, which gradually turns into more arid Gobi steppe. Disembark at Shivee Gobi, the next stop after the town of Choir. The train platform is seemingly in the middle of nowhere, but actually there is a small town called Shivee Gobi just 1½ km distant. It serves a nearby open pit coal mine. From there we drive 60 km to our Red Rock Ger Camp, which is located on its own, right next to Ikh Nart reserve.

Day 2: Camel trek

Today we load your luggage and all provisions to the camel carts and set out on our guided walk through the reserve. It is labyrinth of rock formations and it is easy to get lost. We explore the ruins of a temple, that has been destroyed in the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. Because of horrible stories, locals avoid the place. There are fantastic petroglyphs in the area as well as ancient graves from Hunnu, Turkic Khanate, imperial and Manchurian times. All layers of Mongolian archaeology are present. We will arrive at our remote cozy ger camp at Elst, which has been set up ahead of time. The name Elst indicates this is an area of minor sand dunes.

Day 3: Elst area

We will remain in the ger camp at Elst for another night and explore this wild area of rock formations, sands and grasses, growing up to two meters high. There is also a small ephemeral (seasonal) lake, which sometimes has desert tadpole shrimps (*Triops spp.*), a relative of other tadpole shrimps found in the deserts of the Middle East and the southwestern United States. The surroundings are rich in petroglyphs and rock art, and we may come across Argali Sheep and Siberian Ibex as we explore this dramatic area.



Day 4: Mankhan Els

Today we load the camel caravan with our luggage. We walk north to the Mankhan Sands area, situated at the edge of the Ikh Nart plateau. The dunes here are much higher than at Elst and offer fabulous views over the vast desert steppe plains below. We set up our camp here for the night.

Day 5: To Ulaanbaatar

At mid-morning we set out for our journey back to Ulaanbaatar by car or minibus. We will drive until the tarmac road, and further on we will visit some remote Buddha statues in the rock faces at Choiriin Bogd Mountain. It is a detour to the east from the ugly little Soviet built town of Choir, 80km away from camp. Choir is also a railway station along the Trans Mongolian Railway between Ulaanbaatar and China. We will have a picnic lunch. The drive back to the capital takes approximately 4½ hours.

Practicalities

Transport: We leave Ulaanbaatar by train and will be picked up by car, to reach Ikh Nart. Only camel carts support us during the walks. This journey back to Ulaanbaatar is supported by jeep or minibus (depending on the number of travellers).

Accommodation: The gers at our low-impact Red Rock camp are each furnished with a wooden floor, two beds, chairs, table, simple wash basin and a wood burning stove. Electricity is generated through wind and solar power. There are composting toilets, showers are housed in heated gers. Triples are possible as an additional bed may be added. The gers in our mobile wilderness camp are equipped with sturdy cot beds, including full bedding, stools and a chair and also a wood burning stove. The showers and toilets are in traditional Mongolian marquee style tents here. At Mankhan Els there will be tentipi tents for accommodation.

Staff: An English speaking Mongolian guide will accompany the group at all times. There will also be a cook. In addition, the services of local herdsman will be employed. They provide the camels and carts and will accompany us on the trek.

Meals: Our cook will prepare the meals. We pride ourselves in having excellent 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.

Additional: We can reserve hotels and transfers in Ulaanbaatar for you. Please make sure to arrive in Ulaanbaatar by the evening prior to the day of departure as there will be a welcome dinner and trip briefing.

Includes: Guide and all meals outside Ulaanbaatar. Ger Camps throughout, and all local transport.

Excludes: Imported drinks, laundry, rent of riding horse and camel, air or train tickets in and out of Mongolia, transfers and accommodation in Ulaanbaatar, visa fee.

PRICE 2017 ex Ulaanbaatar:

USD 1050 per person (min 2 members)

Rent of riding horse or riding camel:
USD 140

Single ger outing supplement 4n:
USD 680 per person

Private trip supplement:
USD 300 per trip for 2/4 members
for 5/up **no supplement charge**

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

DATES 2017 ex Ulaanbaatar:

CML01: 16-20May (Tu/Sa)
CML02: 26-30May (Fr/Tu)
CML03: 05-09Jun (Mo/Fr)
CML04: 15-19Jun (Th/Mo)
CML05: 25-29Jun (SuTh)
CML06: 05-09Jul (We/Su) Naadam opt
CML07: 12-16Jul (We/Su) Naadam opt
CML08: 22-26Jul (Sa/We)
CML09: 07-11Aug (Mo/Fr) Danshig opt
CML10: 12-16Aug (Sa/We)
CML11: 22-26Aug (Tu/Sa)
CML12: 01-05Sep (Fr/Tu)
CML13: 11-15Sep (Mo/Fr)

