



Ice Lake and Monastery

- Winter Journeys

This winter journey will take us to the magnificent Khuvsgul Lake, the "dark blue pearl" as it is respectfully called by locals. It is the twin lake of nearby Baikal Lake. Khuvsgul freezes over rapidly and displays an amazing crystal clear ice. The lake is situated at an altitude of 1,645 meters above sea level at the foot of the eastern Sayan Mountains, close to the Russian border. It is one of the most ancient lakes in the world, being more than 2 million years old. It is the second-most voluminous freshwater lake in Asia, holding almost 70% of Mongolia's fresh water. The lake and its pristine surroundings are protected in the Khuvsgul Lake National Park, home to a variety of wildlife such as ibex, argali, elk, wolf, musk deer, brown bear, moose, and sable. On the way north we will visit Amarbayasgalant Monastery, one of the largest and most important centers of Buddhism in Mongolia, located in a broad, secluded valley far off the main road. It is one of only few monasteries to have largely survived the purges of the 1930s. The journey will lead us through the city of Erdenet, built within just a few years to support one of the largest copper mines in the world and onwards through beautiful northern Mongolian landscapes with densely forested hills, wide open valleys and across mighty streams.

Day 1: To Erdenet

Pick up from your hotel, and transfer to the railway station of Ulaanbaatar. We leave Ulaanbaatar in northerly direction for the city of Erdenet on the domestic night train which leaves at 20h35. Erdenet, situated in a valley between the Selenge and Orkhon rivers, is the third-largest city of Mongolia although it was founded as late as 1974. It owes its existence to the discovery of large deposits of copper in the 1950s. Just outside of the city operates the fourth largest copper mine in the world.

Day 2: Amarbayasgalant Monastery

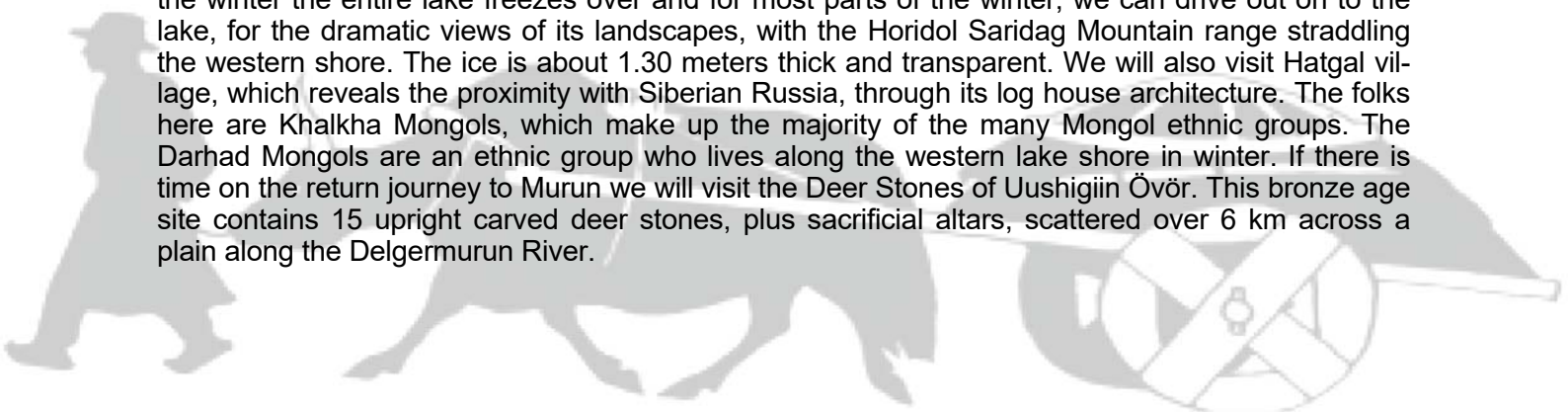
At 07h40 in the morning our train will arrive in Erdenet. After breakfast we will depart to Amarbayasgalant Monastery located 110 km to the northeast. The monastery was established and funded by order of Manchu Yongzheng Emperor (and completed under his successor the Qianlong Emperor) to serve as a final resting place for Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar (1635–1723), the first religious leader of Lamaism in Mongolia. It is unique among Mongolian monasteries in that it was erected in a consistent style between 1727 and 1736. After visiting the monastery we will head back to Erdenet. We will stay in a hotel in Erdenet.

Day 3: To Murun

Today we will use the day to drive to Murun, the small provincial capital of Mongolia's northernmost province Khuvsgul. We will cross Bulgan province where we will visit the Uran Togoo Mountain, an extinct volcano named for its characteristic crater, well visible in the forested landscape. Hike around the area. On arrival to Murun we may visit the so called Black Market, one of the largest of its kind in northern Mongolia and enjoy the bustle of commerce.

Day 4: To Khuvsgul Lake

Full day excursion to Khuvsgul Lake, which is a 1½ hours drive north from Murun. In the middle of the winter the entire lake freezes over and for most parts of the winter, we can drive out on to the lake, for the dramatic views of its landscapes, with the Hordol Saridag Mountain range straddling the western shore. The ice is about 1.30 meters thick and transparent. We will also visit Hatgal village, which reveals the proximity with Siberian Russia, through its log house architecture. The folks here are Khalkha Mongols, which make up the majority of the many Mongol ethnic groups. The Darhad Mongols are an ethnic group who lives along the western lake shore in winter. If there is time on the return journey to Murun we will visit the Deer Stones of Uushigiin Övör. This bronze age site contains 15 upright carved deer stones, plus sacrificial altars, scattered over 6 km across a plain along the Delgermurun River.





Day 5: To Ulaanbaatar via Erdenet

Today there is time in the morning hours to visit Murun and the Black Market in the morning, or drive to the Deer Stones, 25km west of Murun (If we did not go there the previous day). There is also the provincial museum, which displays the natural and cultural history of Khuvsgul province. After lunch in the hotel we will drive back to Erdenet to board the overnight train to Ulaanbaatar.

Day 6: Ulaanbaatar

We will be met in the early morning in Ulaanbaatar, and transferred to your hotel, or any other point in the city of your choice.

Practicalities

Transport: This tour is supported by a jeep or minibus depending on the number of travelers. Overnight train to/from Erdenet

Accommodation: We stay in so called Deluxe rooms in local hotels for the duration of this trip. Deluxe here merely means that there will be attached facilities in the room.

Staff: An English-speaking Mongolian guide will accompany you at all times. Other language guides such as Russian, French, German, Italian, Korean etc. available at additional cost, upon request.

Meals: The meals will be provided in the hotels, or as picnic lunches.

Additional: We can organize hotel accommodation, city tours and transfers in Ulaanbaatar.

Winter Dynamics: The train will operate on time. However, the drive in Khuvsgul Lake National Park depends on ice conditions on the lake. It is not always possible to drive out on the ice. Therefore adaptations of the itinerary are to be expected. There will be opportunity for walks. It is best to dress in layers, in order to accommodate being still or walking.

PRICE ex Ulaanbaatar:

2 - 8 members : **USD 950 per person**
Single supplement (3n): **USD 120**

Includes: English speaking guide, all meals outside Ulaanbaatar. All overnights in double occupancy hotel rooms and night train cabins. All local transport and transfers to/from Ulaanbaatar.

Excludes: Drinks, and laundry. Nomadic Journeys may add hotel accommodation and transfer in Ulaanbaatar at current rates.

DATES 2019 ex Ulaanbaatar:

Daily in off season.

