



Photo: Haroldo Castro



Photo: Jan Wigsten



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Lake Khuvsgul the twin lake of Baikal in Mongolia

This journey will take us to the magnificent Lake Khuvsgul, the "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 fresh water lake in Asia, holding almost 70% of Mongolia's fresh water. The lake and its pristine surroundings are protected in the Lake Khuvsgul 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 for overnight at local hotel.



Day 3: To Hanui, Balig River

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. Continue to Moilt Mountain in Hanui, Balig River basin for overnight in simple ger camp. Hike around the area.

Day 4: To Uushgiin Uvur via Murun

Today we will use the day to drive to Uushgiin Uvur, which is Bronze Age complex site with Deer stones. This complex site is considered as the largest with its number of statues and plays an important role in research of khirgissuur and the deer stone culture. Engravings of the statues were kept differently and the statue with image of human face is the most special.

Day 5,6 To Lake Khuvsgul

From Murun to Hatgal is one and half hour drive, once arriving in Hatgal, one of 24 soums and located at the edge of southern west of the lake, you will travel by boat to Ardavkhar, a simple ger camp on the peninsula, located in a secluded bay all on its own. The shoreline is spectacular, with forested hills coming straight down into the blue lake. We will hike up the hills and over to Somo Had, a sacred point of rocks jutting into the lake. It is worshipped by the locals, who travel there and leave hadag and others offerings. We will hike through the forest for a few kilometers until we reach the steppe, where several nomadic families live and where we will have a visit with these hardy people.

Day 7 To Ulaanbaatar via Murun

A.m. Supported by a yak cart, which will carry our luggage to the departure point, we will travel by boat for about half an hour to Hatgal village. Transfer from there to Murun airport. If you fly to Ulaanbaatar transfer on arrival to your hotel in town.

Hazard: You need to plan to stay in Mongolia for at least 2 nights after the return from Lake Khuvsgul. Flights from the interior may cancel due to poor visibility (rain/fog), which is why there needs to be some "rubber" time built in to the itinerary to ensure that you arrive back in time for your international flight departure. The approach to Ardavhar peninsula is by boat directly onto the beach. While for most wind directions the shore is not that exposed, the lake can be choppy and

windy to the extent we will use alternative arrangements to get there.

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

Practicalities

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

Accommodation: During this trip we will stay in spacious tentipis, with foldable bed-cots. We take along a Mongolian tent to serve as our mobile restaurant, as well as showers and compost toilets housed in traditional marquee style tents.

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: Our cook will prepare the meals. We pride ourselves in having excellent cooks adept at both western and Mongolian cooking on our trips. There is no problem accommodating vegetarians on our trips.

Trip Extension: Before heading back to Ulaanbaatar you may add days to the trip by turning north to the Hövsgöl River canyons, this very exclusive river adventure is a great addition to any Mongolian holiday.

Includes: Guide, all meals outside Ulaanbaatar. All overnights in tents. All local transport and entrance fees. Domestic flight ticket and train ticket. The luggage allowance (incl. hand luggage) is 15 kg, and above that overweight must be paid in domestic flights.

Excludes: Beverages. Transfers and accommodation in Ulaanbaatar. Air or train tickets in and out Mongolia.

PRICE ex Ulaanbaatar:

2 - 8 members: **USD 1800 per person**
Single supplement (4): **USD 160**

DATES 2020 ex Ulaanbaatar:

Daily mid June to mid September.