



Photo by Alexander I. mander@img.com

Altai Eagle Festival

The Kazakhs is an ethnic minority in Mongolia, but the majority in Bayan-Ölgii province. Most of the ancient Kazakh traditions survives here, outside the actually territory of Kazakhstan. These hardy Turkic speaking people are sunni muslim nomads and they hunt foxes and other small mammals with domestic Golden Eagles. Only the females, as they are heavier than male eagles. The eagle festivals marks the start of the eagle hunting season, which is throughout the winter in the surrounding Altai Mountains. Hunting with eagles seems to be ancient, dating back some 6000 years. The traditions have been revived over the past two decades following the democratization in Mongolia. Now there are such festivals in March, September and October in various communities.

1/We18thSep—Arrival in Ulaanbaatar

Arrive in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia. Transfer to your hotel. Free in the city. Tour briefing before dinner.



2/Th19thSep—Arrival in Bayan-Ölgii

Likely, in the early morning we will transfer to the airport and fly 3½ hours to Ölgii or Hovd. Both towns are small towns, being capitals in their respective provinces. Both towns have a local interesting museum on its natural history. Hovd was a town already during Manchurian times, prior to 1910 and it has several ethnic minorities with a majority of Mongols. Hovd has both mosques and Buddhist temples. Ölgii is younger and with a majority of Kazakh people. Tuvans and Uriankhai peoples also live here. If we land in Hovd, there will be a nice drive of four hours with the Altai Mountains on both sides of the road, being the Hökh Serkhiin Nuruu and Tsambagarav Uul National Parks. We will use the time for sightseeing. Check-in at Eagle's Nest Hotel.



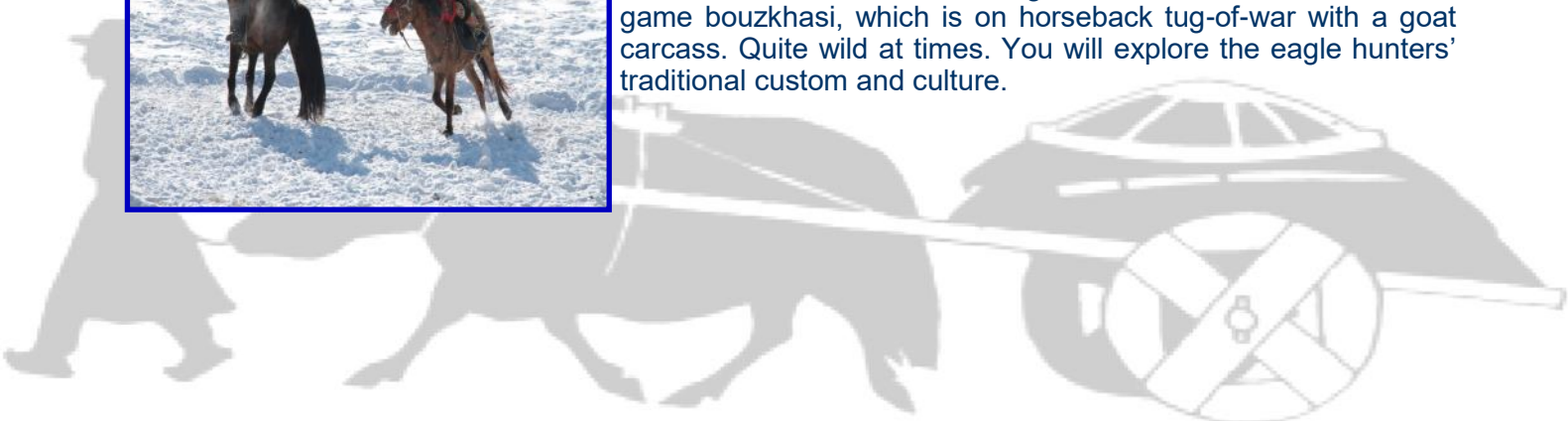
3/Fr20thSep—Excursion

Today, one day prior to the Eagle Festival, we'll visit the nearby Eagle Hunter nomad family to see how they're preparing for their festival and competitions. You can experience the nomadic life-style firsthand and close encounter with the Golden Eagles.



4/Sa21thSep—Opening ceremony

The Altai Eagle festival starts this day, near the village of Tolbo which is organized in third weekend of September. It is a spectacle with eagles released from the hills, hunting for a fox skin in tow behind a horseman. Horse games such as the Central Asian game bouzkhasi, which is on horseback tug-of-war with a goat carcass. Quite wild at times. You will explore the eagle hunters' traditional custom and culture.





5/Su22thSep—Eagle festival

Explore another full day at the festival. Some shows of eagles are played. Eagles fly to the own trainers' hand and catch the moving objects or prey while flying. Today there will be a camel race. In the evening, traditional concert of Kazak ethnic group performed and enjoy a farewell dinner.

6/Mo23thSep—To Ulaanbaatar

Transfer to Ölgii airport and fly back to Ulaanbaatar 3½ hours.

7/Tu24thSep—Ulaanbaatar

A.m. Visit to Gandan Lamasery, center for the revival of Buddhism in Mongolia. Visit Sukhbaatar Square, where the Parliament Building is located as well as the statues of Sukhbaatar and Genghis Khan, Ögödei Khan and Khubilai Khan. Visit the National Museum of Mongolia.

8/We25thSep—Departure

Transfer to the airport for international flight out.

Practicalities

Transport: This tour is supported by a jeep or minibus depending on the number of travelers.

Accommodation: For early bookings there will be space at the only new small hotel sporting ten rooms with attached facilities. If the flight schedules are unfavourable, we will stay in a small two-star hotel in Hovd.

Operations: Domestic flight days and times are confirmed latest in April. It means you may fly to any of Ölgii, Hovd or Ulaangom airports.

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.

Includes: Guide. All meals outside the Ulaanbaatar. Breakfast every day in

PRICE ex Ulaanbaatar:

2 - 10 members: **USD 3750 per person**
Single supplement (7n): **USD 1090**

Group discount available from 6 pax

Ulaanbaatar. Domestic flight. All transfers.

Excludes: Beverages, lunch and dinner in Ulaanbaatar. Air or train tickets in and out of Mongolia.

DATES ex Ulaanbaatar:

18 - 25 September 2024

