

# A World Away Travels

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Phone 1-888-438-3612 ~email [info@aworldawaytravels.com](mailto:info@aworldawaytravels.com)  
[www.aworldawaytravels.com](http://www.aworldawaytravels.com)

## **Mongolian Traveler - Land of the Great Blue Sky**

Our two week journey to Mongolia captures the natural essence of the country from the vast sands of the Gobi to the alpine steppe and mountain forests surrounding the shores of Lake Khovsgol. After a short visit to the capitol city of Ulaanbaatar wandering through Buddhist Temples and learning about Mongolia's unique culture we fly to the Gobi to discover its vast landscape. From our base at the Three Camels Ger Camp we explore by jeep, foot and camel the desert's varied landscape visiting the striking Yol Valley known for its wildlife, the towering dunes of Hongoryn and the rich archeological sites found at the Flaming Cliffs. Along the way we will be welcomed by local nomads and have a chance to learn about their lives and how they have adapted to this often harsh environment. Completing our look at the Gobi we then travel to Mongolia's northern border with Siberia and Khovsgol Nuur National Park where we have three days to explore the pristine wilderness around Lake Khovsgol. From our gers beside the lake we will have a chance to embark on day hikes in the neighboring mountains and meadows, jeep trips to nearby settlements, kayak on the lake's clear waters, horseback ride on the steppe and if we are lucky have a chance to meet the Tsaatan, "reindeer people" a small culture of 50 families of reindeer herders who live to the west of Lake Khovsgol. Our trip concludes with our final visit to Ulaanbaatar and a day outing to Gorkhi-Terelj National Park with its vast plains and rock outcroppings. And to complete our journey in the land of the Great Blue Sky a final send off with Mongolian dance and Khoomi throat singing.

### ***Day 1-2 Travel to Ulaanbaatar***

Upon arrival in Mongolia you will be met by your guide and together you will transfer to your centrally located hotel within walking distance of many of the capitol's museums, sights, and shops. En route you will see Ulaanbaatar's unique blending of the old and new; where traditional ger tent suburbs and ancient Buddhist temples coexist with the city's modern high rises. The late afternoon is free to relax after your long journey or if you like to explore a bit by foot before meeting for a traditional Mongolian welcome dinner. Accommodations: Hotel Ulaanbaatar (Deluxe Room) *Dinner*

***Traveler's Note:*** Please note many travelers chose to make a stop in Beijing en route to Mongolia to explore the bustling capitol's famous sites and the Great Wall.

### ***Day 3 Ulaanbaatar***

We have a full day to explore Ulaanbaatar. We begin our look at Mongolia's rich history and culture with a visit to Ganden Monastery, the seat of Buddhism in Mongolia. One of the few monasteries to escape the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, Ganden today is the center of Mongolia's Buddhist resurgence with over a hundred practicing monks in

residence. With our guide acting as an interpreter we will discover the monastery's brightly painted temples filled with centuries old religious artifacts and wander through the grounds listening to the sounds of monks performing their daily rituals. The highlight of our visit will be the impressive statue of Migjid Janraisig. This 82-foot high statue, gilded in gold and clothed with silk and precious stones, completely fills one of Gandan's biggest temples. Our next stop will be the Natural History Museum's dinosaur hall which showcases the Gobi desert's rich paleontological sites. The museum's display include Tarbosaurus fossils (closely related to Tyrannosaurus Rex), dinosaur eggs, large Hadrosaur fossils (duck-billed dinosaurs), and many others found in the Gobi's sands. Our introduction to Mongolia will conclude with a visit to the National Museum of Mongolian History and a trip to Zaisan Hill for an expansive view of the city. Tonight enjoy dinner in one of the city's downtown restaurants. Accommodations: Hotel Ulaanbaatar (Deluxe Room) *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

#### **Day 4 Ulaanbaatar - Gobi / Flaming Cliffs**

This morning we will fly over Mongolia's steppe to reach the desert sands of the Gobi. The Gobi, literally meaning "waterless place", is one of the world's most arid regions. Hidden between the Siberian Wilderness to its north and the vast Tibetan plateau to its south the Gobi offers travelers a fascinating collage of natural wonders and cultural encounters. For four days we explore the Gobi's dramatic landscape discovering the region's important paleontological finds, visiting remote nomads and spotting diverse wildlife. The Gobi is home to Bactrian camels, Argali mountain sheep, goitered gazelle, golden eagles, saker falcons, jerboas and many endemic reptiles as well as some of the northern hemisphere's rarest and most elusive mammals including the dhole, snow leopard and Gobi Bear. In the afternoon travel to the legendary "Flaming Cliffs," named by Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews and his exploration team from the American Museum of Natural History who found the first nest of dinosaur eggs the world had ever seen. To this day the Flaming Cliffs remain one of the Gobi's significant discovery sites. In the evening light return across the vast expanse to our ger camp. After dinner enjoy your first night under Mongolia's endless desert skies. Accommodations: Three Camel Lodge *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

***Traveler's Note:*** *Gers are the traditional felt tents of Mongolia's nomadic herders. Handmade using a latticed wood structure covered with layers of felt and canvas, each ger at the Three Camel Lodge is heated by a wood stove and appointed with hand-painted wood-framed beds and furnishings. The Lodge's twenty Deluxe Gers include a private bathroom with a toilet and sink, a king size bed or twins and amenities such as felt slippers, Mongolian-styled bathrobes and locally produced toiletries and camel milk moisturizing lotions. The elegantly simple design of the gers blends with the Gobi's remarkable landscape, and each has a southward-facing door, a nomadic Mongolian tradition, providing an unobstructed view of the desert and the Gobi-Altai Mountains. Gers provide an authentic taste of Mongolian culture and allow travelers to visit the remote Gobi Desert in comfort, providing ideal sleeping conditions in the silence of the desert night.*

### **Day 5 Hongoryn Els Sand Dune**

This morning we drive overland to the base of the Hongoryn El Sand Dunes. The towering dunes in places are over 2,500 feet high and stretch over 62 miles in length and 7 miles in width along the base of the Altai Mountain range. Locally called the “Singing Sands” due to the eerie sounds the moving sands make when the wind sweeps across the range. We have the afternoon to climb on the dunes before we spend the evening beside our lush riverside ger camp. Before us are the rocky ridges of the Altai and the endless expanse of the dunes. Accommodations: Ger Camp *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### **Day 6 Hongoryn Els Sand Dune- Three Camels Lodge**

Today we will visit a nomadic Gobi family. Hospitality toward strangers is the rule across Mongolia and we will be welcomed and have a chance to learn more about their lives and the adaptations they have made over centuries to live in their harsh environment. Here we will have an opportunity to explore the surrounding region riding a Bactrian (two-humped) camel. Critical to the nomad’s existence the camels are used not only for transportation, but camel hair is woven into clothing, camel hides are fashioned into saddles, and camel’s milk is a daily staple of the nomad’s diet. After enjoying a picnic lunch including a traditional Mongolian barbecue (horhog) we will retrace our route to the Three Camels Lodge. Accommodations: Three Camel Lodge *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### **Day 7 Yol Valley**

Today we will drive to the Yol Valley, named for the Mongolian Lammergeyer; a bearded vulture with up to a ten foot wingspan. Nestled in the Altai Mountains the valley’s dramatic landscape and impressive bird life have lead to its protected status. We will embark on a hike though the valley spotting not only yol, but Altai snowcocks, ibex, yaks and Argali mountain sheep. Before returning to our ger camp we will make a short visit to the natural history museum to further discover the region’s flora and fauna. Tonight enjoy our final evening in the Gobi. Accommodations: Three Camel Lodge *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### **Day 8 Ulaanbaatar**

This morning we will return to the airport for our flight to Ulaanbaatar. After lunch, visit to Bogd Khan Winter Palace museum, home of Mongolia’s last theocrat, Bogd Jabzan Damba Hutagt VIII (who was referred to as Mongolia’s 8th Living Buddha). The museum displays elaborate ceremonial robes and other personal effects of the leader. The rest of the afternoon is free for individual sightseeing and shopping. This evening we again dine at one on of the city’s finer restaurants. Accommodations: Hotel Ulaanbaatar (Deluxe Room) *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### **Day 9 Lake Khovsgol**

Today we will fly north to Murov the capital of Khovsgol Province. Arriving we will meet our jeeps and drivers and will continue overland to Lake Khovsgol. En route traversing through Mongolian steppe land and densely forested mountains. Lake Khovsgol is Mongolia’s largest lake by volume, containing 70% of the country’s fresh water and the second largest by area after Lake Uvs. Lake Hovsgol extends 78 miles in

length and 19 miles in width and is fed by nearly 100 streams and rivers. Water exits the lake only through one river, the Egiin, whose waters eventually reach Lake Baikal in neighboring Siberia. This crystal-clear alpine lake, known as Mongolia's "dark blue pearl," remains untouched by industry and is situated among some of the most pristine forests, mountains and meadows in the world. Arriving at the lake we settle into our ger camp; our base for exploring one of the most beautiful regions of Mongolia. Over the course of the next few days there will be opportunities to hike in the neighboring mountains and meadows, visit local nomad dwellings, horse back ride, kayaking or fish for Siberian grayling and lenok (please contact us about gear and what we suggest you bring to Mongolia for fishing). Accommodations: Ger Camp *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

**Day 10 & 11 Exploring on Lake Khovsgol**

Two full days to explore the area. Accommodations: Ger Camp 2 *Breakfasts, Lunches, Dinners*

**Day 12 Ulaanbaatar**

Today we retrace our route to Murov enjoying a scenic picnic lunch at Lake Irkhel. Upon arrival in Ulaanbaatar in the late afternoon we transfer to our hotel. The rest of the late afternoon is free to independently explore before meeting for dinner downtown. Accommodations: Hotel Ulaanbaatar (Deluxe Room) *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

**Day 13 Gorkhi-Terelj National Park.**

On our final day in Mongolia we will drive to nearby Gorkhi-Terelj National Park. Located in the southern Khentii mountain range, Gorkhi Terelj is known for its beautiful mountain landscapes and unique geological rock outcroppings. We will spend the day exploring by foot or by horse back. A favorite walk is to a small meditation center from where we can enjoy sweeping views of the valley and its rock formations below. In the afternoon return to Ulaanbaatar for our final evening complete with a performance of traditional Mongolian dancers and *khoomi* throat singers and a festive farewell dinner. Accommodations: Hotel Ulaanbaatar (Deluxe Room) *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

**Day 14 Depart Mongolia**

Transfer to the airport for your flight home. *Breakfast*

**Day 15 Arrive Home**

**Price includes:**

- Private Ground Transportation and Airport Transfers
- Accommodations
- Meals Noted in Itinerary including 1 soda of choice
- 3 Bottles of Water Per Day
- All Noted Tours and Excursions
- Entrance Fees
- Private Guide

**Price does not include:**

- International and Domestic Flights
- Domestic and International Airport Taxes
- Alcoholic and Bottled Beverages Not Included in Set Meals
- Tips
- Personal expenses (telephone, email, laundry, etc.)