



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Mongolia – Naadam Festival – Off the Tourist Trail

Tour Duration – 14 Days
July 2021



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Adventure ●●●○○ | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●●○ | Wildlife●●●●○

Tour Pace

Busy

Tour Highlights

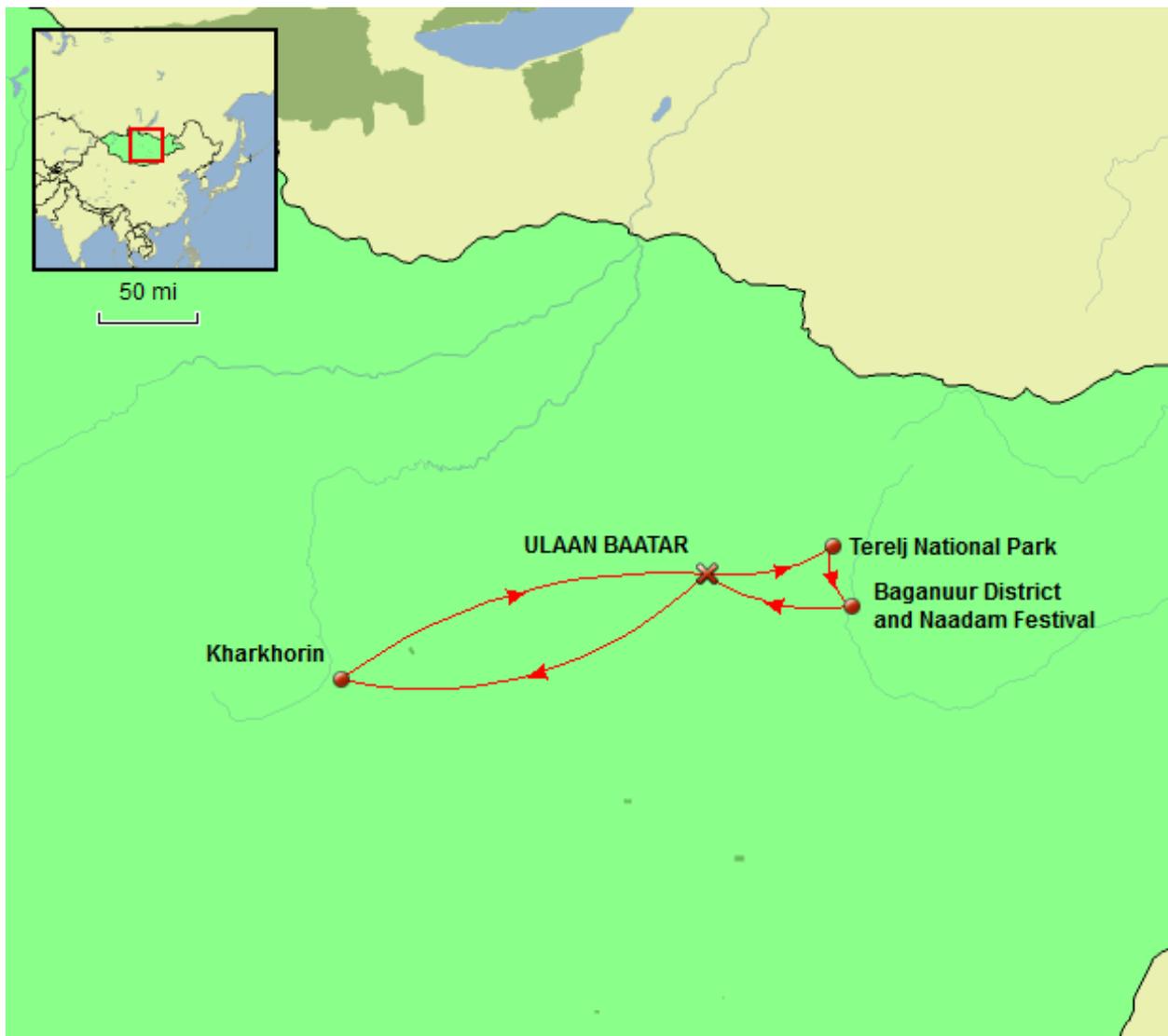
- ✓ Witness the incredible Naadam Festival in off the beaten track surrounds
- ✓ See the enormous statue of Genghis Khan
- ✓ Interesting rock formations of Terelj National Park
- ✓ Clamber amongst Mongolia's huge sand dunes
- ✓ See the wild horses of Hustai National Park
- ✓ Explore historic monasteries such as Tovkhon and Amarbayasgalant
- ✓ Beautiful natural scenery





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Tour Map: Mongolia – Naadam Festival



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mostly traditional 'ger' (yurt) tented camps and 3 nights in a comfortable hotel
- Included Meals:** Daily breakfast (B), plus most lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
- Group Size:** Maximum of 12
- Start Point:** Ulaan Baatar – you can arrive any time before 17:00 on the first day
- End Point:** Ulaan Baatar – you can depart any time on the last day
- Transport:** Mini-vans and/or private buses
- Country Visited:** Mongolia





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Mongolia – Naadam Festival – Off the Tourist Trail

Ask travellers why they want to visit Mongolia and often you will be told that it is to experience the world famous Naadam Festival which takes place every July. Indeed, it is an incredible festival and an excellent time to visit the country. But rather than enjoying Naadam in Ulaan Baatar, which can be overcrowded and touristy, we will travel instead to the countryside where the real flavour of this epic event can be experienced and enjoyed with the local people. On this tour we will visit the cultural city of Ulaan Baatar before heading to the Terelj and Hustai National Parks, stopping along the way at the giant Chinggis Khan's statue. After enjoying the Naadam Festival in Baganuur District, we travel west to explore the country's sand dunes and to visit the mountain top Tovkhon monastery, before finally heading to the majestic north of the country. A truly memorable trip to the rarely visited land of Genghis Khan.

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

Itinerary

Day 1, 2nd July 2021: Arrival in Ulaan Baatar

We arrive in Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia's capital where we are transferred from the airport to our hotel. Depending on the time of your arrival this evening you will be invited by your guide to a traditional folk concert. Overnight Bayangol Hotel or similar. (D)

Day 2, 3rd July: Ulaan Baatar - Hustai National Park

This morning we drive to the Hustai National Park which is home to the only truly wild horses on earth; the Takhi horse. Several decades ago, wild horses had disappeared from Mongolia, victims of habitat loss and poaching. However small numbers survived in European zoos and from these scattered remnants, through a program of careful breeding and international cooperation, the wild population was rebuilt. Now Hustai is home to some 250 wild horses, of which 130 were born in the wild. Overnight in ger camp. (BLD)

Total driving: 100km on tarmac road, 10km on dirt road approx. 2hrs.

Day 3, 4th July: Hustai - Kharkhorin

This morning after breakfast we drive to Kharkhorin town, the ancient capital of Chinggis Khan's Mongolia in the 13th century. We visit Erdene Zuu monastery, which was built from leftovers of Kharkhorin's ruined city in the 16th century. Sadly, a communist purge destroyed almost everything but a few main monasteries. There are numerous unusual cultural and religious exhibits here as well as a Tibetan-style monastery still active in the Erdene Zuu and important to the area. Overnight at Urguu ger camp. (BLD)

Total driving: 290km on tarmac road, approx. 4-5hrs.



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Day 4, 5th July: Kharkhorin - Little Gobi

After breakfast we drive to Mongolia's sand dunes Elsen Tasarkhai, otherwise known as the Little Gobi, an 80km long beautiful stretch that is unlike anything else in this country. After a good walk in the sand dunes we ride a Mongolian two-hump camels for 1-2 hours in the fantastic scenery of Little Gobi (the camel ride can be skipped if you do not wish to do it). Overnight in ger camp. (BLD)

Total driving: 100km on tarmac road, approx. 1-2hrs.

Day 5, 6th July: Little Gobi - Terelj National Park

After breakfast, we drive to the giant stainless-steel statue of Chinggis Khan, located 50km east of the capital. On our way there, we will have lunch at the capital. After visiting the statue complex, we continue driving to Terelj National Park, a granite rocky area, where we transfer to our 'ger' tented camp. Overnight in ger camp. (BLD)

Total driving: 335km on tarmac road to Chinggis Khan statue, approx. 5-6hrs. and 30km to Terelj National Park, approx. 40mins.

Day 6, 7th July: Terelj National Park

This day we will go and explore the park - an outstanding region of alpine scenery and unique granite rock formations such as the "Turtle stone". After lunch we go on a short walk through the forest to the Aryabal meditation and initiation temple of the all-seeing Aryabal diety of compassion and mercy. Overnight in ger camp. (BLD)

Total driving: 30 km on tarmac road in the area of Terelj National park, approx. 40 minutes.

Day 7, 8th July: Terelj National Park - Gun Galuut National Reserve

This morning we will head into the Gun Galuut National reserve boasting its beautiful pristine nature which will give us the opportunity to walk in the famed grasslands and truly appreciate the beauty of this sparsely populated country. The Argali, listed as the very rare species of wild sheep, are the main inhabitants of the reserve. Those wishing to have a horse ride can do so while beginners are also able to have lessons (the activity can be skipped if you do not wish to do it). Overnight in ger camp. (BLD)

Total driving: 65km on tarmac road to Gun Galuut, approx. 1 hour.

Day 8, 9th July: Gun Galuut - Naadam Festival – First day

This morning we visit the opening ceremony of the Naadam Festival and enjoy a full day watching various activities including archery, wrestling and horse racing. The colourful festival of Naadam is the highlight of the Mongolian summer, with celebrations taking place across the country. We are lucky to be out of the rush and heat of Ulaan Baatar, and able to enjoy the festival with local families in a relaxed and friendly place for a truly authentic experience. Everyone in town, as well as people from other provinces, arrive at Naadam in their best traditional suits, called a Deel. It is very colourful and Deels are worn everywhere, even when on horseback. Competition is fierce as men compete against one another to win titles for horse racing, archery and wrestling – 'war games' based on ancient Mongolian soldiers' everyday exercises. Overnight in ger camp. (BLD)

Total driving: 30 km on tarmac road to Baganuur and back to our ger camp, approx. 40 minutes.

Day 9, 10th July: Naadam Festival

This morning is spent enjoying the second day of the festival watching the horse racing. Horses have long played an important role in Mongolian history and this sport is greatly prized. The build-up and training for this event is vigorous and the crowd of onlookers are known to get quite vocal! Overnight in ger camp. (BLD)

Total driving: 30 km on tarmac road to Baganuur and back to our ger camp, approx. 40 minutes.



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Day 10, 11th July: Jargalant – Aglag Creation Monastery Gun Galuutaas

This morning we will go on a drive to Jargalant village where we visit the Aglag Creation Monastery. Visiting rock carvings of several deities of Buddhism, spirits of nature and unique rocky formations. Overnight in ger camp. (BLD)

Total driving: 225km on tarmac road, approx. 5-6hrs.

Day 11, 12th July: Jargalant - Amarbayasgalant Monastery

After breakfast we drive towards Amarbayasgalant Monastery; considered the second most important in Mongolia (after Erdene Zuu Khiid in Kharkhorin) and the most intact architectural complex in Mongolia. The area is famed for its stunning scenery of steppe and grasslands, its national parks and wildlife. In the afternoon we'll have the chance walk up and visit the monastery. Overnight in ger camp. (BLD)

Total driving: 35km on dirt road and 180km on tarmac road, approx. 4-5hrs.

Day 12, 13th July: Ogii Lake

This morning we drive to the beautiful steppe at Ogii Lake. It is a wonderful place for birdlife and a multitude of cranes and ducks migrate here, attracted by the rich fish-life that populates the lake. Overnight in ger camp. (BLD)

Total driving: 190km on dirt road and 205km on tarmac road, approx. 7hrs.

Day 13, 14th July: Ogii Lake - Ulaan Baatar

This morning we return to Ulaan Baatar and transfer to our hotel. On our way we will have picnic lunch. In the late afternoon there will be an opportunity for shopping or to explore the city on your own, before our farewell dinner. Overnight Bayangol Hotel or similar. (BLD)

Total driving: 350km, approx. 5-6hrs.

Day 14, 15th July: Departure from Ulaan Baatar

The tour finishes this morning after breakfast and a transfer to the airport will be provided to coincide with your departure. (B)

Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
Transport throughout
All accommodation
Services of English-speaking guide
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights
Any airport taxes
Travel Insurance
Visas
Drinks
Items of a personal nature
Tips (discretionary)





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Important Information

Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At the time of writing the Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not advise against travel to any of the areas within Mongolia that we visit on our tours. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or if you would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

Wherever possible we aim to use characterful accommodation that enhances the overall travel experience, not just offers a bed for the night. This can obviously vary dramatically from country to country and from trip to trip. On this particular trip we will stay in a comfortable 3* hotel in Ulaan Baatar. In the Ger camps you will sleep in the native Mongolian dwellings which Russians call "yurts". Although not luxurious, they are clean, comfortable and cosy. Bedding is provided, and there are shared showers, washing and toilet facilities with hot water. Please note that the accommodation mentioned in the itinerary is intended as a guide only and is always subject to availability.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.



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Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £5 / Dinner £13

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Bottle of Beer £1.50 / Bottle of Water £1.00

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is common practise across Asia. If your local guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. This amount can obviously be left to you. When tipping a driver, a guide or hotel staff a few dollars will always be gratefully received.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: Generally limited to Ulaan Baatar. We would recommend that you bring cash

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are not widely accepted except for high hotels and restaurants

Local Currency: Tugrik

Recommended Currency for Exchange: The US Dollar can generally be changed without too much difficulty in larger towns and cities. We would advise against travelling with sterling as it will be more difficult to exchange.

Where to Exchange: In major towns and cities. Your guide will provide assistance.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.





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Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

Most nationals, including those from the UK will require a visa for entry to Mongolia. This must be obtained in advance of travel. Please contact your nearest Mongolian embassy or consulate for further information. Upon request we will provide any necessary documentation to support your application.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Vaccinations & Protection

As with travel to most parts of Asia, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

Mongolia has an extreme continental climate similar to that of south-central Siberia or Manchuria and enhanced by a mean elevation of 1500m. Winters are long and very cold. There is a swift transition in May to a short, warm summer and an equally rapid return to the winter cold in October. Summer temperatures vary from around 35°C in the desert to as low as 15°C in the mountains. Frost can occur in the mornings in the Terelj National Park. Rainfall is low everywhere; no more than 38-51cm a year in the mountains and as little as 13cm in the drier lowland parts although do come prepared for the occasional downpour. Be prepared for all weather conditions during your tour. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable.





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Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, with a jumper or fleece for the nights. It is advisable to wear a hat through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy.

Equipment

Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. It is advisable to take a torch, as the electricity supply can be erratic.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Sturdy but comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended. Sandals or lighter shoes are fine when we travel between destinations.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220V/50 Hz and plugs usually have two round pins.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were revised on 1st June 2020.