

# HARVARD

ALUMNI TRAVELS



## **MONGOLIA: LAND OF THE BLUE SKY**

**MAY 29 – JUNE 10, 2022**

**DETAILED ITINERARY**

One of the most sparsely populated countries in the world, Mongolia still retains its natural beauty of diverse landscapes and habitats relatively intact along with its well-preserved unique nomadic culture. The open countryside of Mongolia is awe-inspiring, and all sense of urgency seems to dissipate into the famous Mongolian blue sky.

Featuring one of Mongolia's magnificent natural wonders, the Gobi Desert, and the historical highlight Kharakhorum, this trip offers a special opportunity to travel back in time to the untouched land of Genghis Khan and hospitable nomads. Discover the incredible scenery, diverse wildlife, ancient history, and traditional culture of Mongolia on this adventure-packed journey.

**GROUP SIZE:** Up to 15 guests

**PRICING:**

\$8,995 per person double occupancy

\$10,570 single occupancy

**STUDY LEADER:** To be announced

## SCHEDULE BY DAY

*B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, R=Reception, D=Dinner*

### SUNDAY, MAY 29

#### DEPART HOME

Depart on overnight flight to Ulaanbaatar.

### MONDAY, MAY 30

#### ARRIVE ULAANBAATAR

Arrive in Ulaanbaatar and transfer to your hotel.

Overnight: *Shangri-La Hotel* (meals aloft)

### TUESDAY, MAY 31

#### ULAANBAATAR

Begin the day with a visit to Gandan Monastery, the seat of Buddhism in Mongolia and home of the Arts School of the Mongolian Buddhist University.

Next, visit the National History Museum for an excellent overview of Mongolia's history and culture. Peruse the Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum, named in honor of the Mongolian leader and artist from the 17th century.

After lunch, meet with a U.S Embassy official for a brief introduction to Mongolia's current political affairs and U.S-Mongolia relations.

Enjoy a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight: *Shangri-La Hotel* (B, L, D)

### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1

#### HUSTAIN NURUU / KHARAKHORUM

This morning drive to Hustain Nuruu National Park (2 hours), home to the last remaining species of wild horse, the *takhi*—commonly known as Przewalski's horse. Twenty-five years after becoming extinct in the wild, the *takhi* was reintroduced to the Mongolian steppe in the 1990s.

Learn about current conservation efforts and the status of the herds found within the reserve at the visitor's center before trying to spot the horses in their natural habitat. You will have an opportunity to ride the horses if you desire.

After lunch at a local camp continue to Kharakhorum (4 hours), a site of the 13th-century capital of the Mongol Empire. Chinggis Khan's son, Ogodei, created the city of Kharakhorum to serve as the empire's capital, but abandoned it 40 years later and moved the capital to Khanbalik, in what is now Beijing.

Overnight: *Munkhtenger Ger Camp* (B, L, D)

### THURSDAY, JUNE 2

#### KHARAKHORUM

Begin the morning with a visit to Kharakhorum museum. Founded to showcase the research findings from the ancient capital of Mongolia by the Mongolian and German joint archaeological expedition, the newly established museum offers insight into what was once the center of arts, politics, trades, and religions of the world.

Next, visit the Erdene Zuu Monastery. Kharakhorum was destroyed in 1388, but traces of this once-magnificent city still exist at Erdene Zuu, Mongolia's largest monastery, which was reputedly built from its ruins in the 16th century. Surrounded by 108 stupas, Erdene Zuu has been a place of Buddhist activity for centuries. Explore the monastery grounds and observe the monks as they perform their daily prayers and rituals in temples decorated with spectacular Buddhist art.

Return to your camp for lunch and spend the late afternoon walking through the grasslands of the Orkhon Valley, considered to be the cradle of Mongolian civilization.

Overnight: *Munkhtenger Ger Camp* (B, L, D)

### FRIDAY, JUNE 3

## SHANKH, KULTEGEN, KHAR BALGAS

Begin the day with a visit to Shankh Hiid, a monastery that was once frequented by Zanabazar, the influential Buddhist artist. After lunch, visit Khoshoo Tsaidam to see the monuments of Turkik King Bilge and his brother General Kultegen (AD 685–731). Then drive across the Orkhon River towards the Khar Balgas ruins, a part of the Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape UNESCO World Heritage site.

Overnight: *Munkhtenger Ger Camp* (B, L, D)

## SATURDAY, JUNE 4 ONGIIN MONASTERY

Drive to Ongiin Hiid and explore the ruins of this 17th-century temple. En route pay a visit to a local nomadic family and photograph their daily life including making of dairy products, daily chores of tending animals, and work around the ger.

Continue your drive to Ongiin Hiid. Still known as the “Pearl of the Great Desert,” Ongiin Hiid was one of the largest monasteries in Mongolia until its destruction during the communist purges in 1939.

Overnight: *Secret of Ongiin Camp* (B, L, D)

## SUNDAY, JUNE 5 HONGORYN ELS SAND DUNES

Today continue the drive to South Gobi (approximately 6 – 7 hours).

For the next three days, explore the stunning landscape of the Gobi, habitat for Bactrian camels, Argali mountain sheep, goitered gazelle, golden eagles, saker falcons, jerboas—similar to kangaroo rats—and many endemic reptiles. Continue to the towering dunes of Hongoryn Els, which run 60 miles alongside the Gobi Altai Mountain range. Reaching upwards of 600 feet, these are the most magnificent sand dunes in the Gobi.

Overnight: *Gobi Erdene Camp* (B, L, D)

## MONDAY, JUNE 6

### HONGORYN ELS / THREE CAMEL LODGE

This morning explore the dunes known as the “Singing Sands” for the remarkable low-pitched groan that is emitted when the surface is disturbed by wind. Those who are interested will have the opportunity to visit a camel-herding family and explore the area on the back of a Bactrian camel.

On the way to the Three Camel Lodge, stop at the local Bulgan temple.

Overnight: *Three Camel Lodge* (B, L, D)

## TUESDAY, JUNE 7

### YOL VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

Explore Yol Valley National Park today. A hike through the valley allows you to discover the habitat of indigenous vulture-like lammergeiers, Altai snowcocks, ibex, yaks, and Argali mountain sheep.

Later, visit the local natural history museum for an overview of the flora and fauna of the surrounding area.

Overnight: *Three Camel Lodge* (B, L, D)

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8

### HAVTSGAIT VALLEY / FLAMING CLIFFS

This morning drive to the Havtsgait Valley, site of ancient rock drawings left by early Gobi settlers. Visit the legendary Flaming Cliffs where, in 1922, Roy Chapman Andrews found the first nest of dinosaur eggs the world had ever seen.

Overnight: *Three Camel Lodge* (B, L, D)

## THURSDAY, JUNE 9

### ULAANBAATAR

Fly to Ulaanbaatar this morning. Upon arrival, meet with a well-known Mongolian politician for an insight into Mongolia’s current

economic situation.

In the afternoon meet with a representative of the Oyu Tolgoi mining project. The project manages the world's largest untapped reserves of gold and copper and is expected to help make Mongolia one of the fastest-growing nations in the world.

In the evening enjoy a performance featuring traditional Mongolian dancers and khoomi throat singers followed by dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight: *Shangri-La Hotel* (B, L, D)

## **FRIDAY, JUNE 10**

### **DEPARTURE**

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for return flights (B).