



# GOBI INSIGHT WINTER

## Eight Days

All images used throughout this document were taken either by EL guests or members of the EL team. This is the Mongolia that you will also experience.

# Our Gobi Insight In Brief



The Gobi Desert forms the spectacular backdrop to this adventure as you explore, discover and understand the Gobi in winter as well as meet some of the people that make their home in these remarkable landscapes.

The Gobi principally spans six of Mongolia's aimags (provinces) and our Gobi Insight winter trip takes in two of them - Middle (Dudgobi) and Southern (Omnogobi). Mongolians say they have at least 33 different types of desert - with the types frequently varying depending on water supply, minerals and location. For certain it is huge open expanse of extremes. Granite and limestone rock formations, vast gravel plains, sand dunes, 2800m mountains, gorges and canyons and Saxaul forest - this itinerary is designed so you experience the variety and diversity of the Gobi.

# Your Itinerary Overview

## Ulaan Baatar

Day One



### Final Arrival Day Into Ulaanbaatar

A more local introduction to this vibrant frontier style with our free city walking tour

Your own choice of accommodation - we do offer a homestay in UB

Free transfer

Lunch with local family in the ger districts

## Gobi Desert

Day Two



### Gobi Oasis Tree Planting Project

Travel to and explore the provincial capital of Mandalgobi including enjoying an informal stay with the family at the Gobi Oasis Tree Planting Project - a small, family run, non-profit conservation project that has been operating since 1975.

EL and our guests have now planted over 108 of our own trees which represents around 3% of the total number of trees planted at Gobi Oasis. A single young tree can absorb 26 pounds of CO2 per year so we're (very) slowly doing our bit towards managing carbon emissions!

Very comfortable private ger at homestay in town. Basic sit down long drop outside toilet

\* Hot shower available at local town shower house - your own private cubicle and plenty of hot water

\* You will stay as the guests of Byamba and Radnaa - the founders of Gobi Oasis. Urnaa is their daughter-in-law and she will be your main host - you can help her to prepare your evening meal if you would like to

Roughly 280km on asphalt and dirt road (approximately 5-6 hours driving time not including stops)

L/D

Day Three



**Tsagaan Suvraga,**

Named for the unique colour of the area, this open expanse consists of sun-scorched rock, scrub, 30m high limestone formations and emptiness. It is an eroded landscape rich in marine fossils.

Basic but private ger at small family (Zorgio )operated ger camp (5-6 gers). Asian style outside long drop toilet.

\* For your stay at Tsagaan Suvraga, we will stay at the small tourist ger camp owned by Zorgio and Deegii - camel herders who have lived in the region all their life. Due to the limited water sources and challenging climate resulting in little pasture for their livestock, Zorrgio is frequently absent as he has taken his main camel herd further away in search of pasture.

180km on dirt and asphalt road (approx 4 hours driving time not including stops)

B/L/D

Day Four



**Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park**

Explore the interior of the Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park - Mongolia's largest national park – a mountainous terrain rising out of the extensive desert plains and a region of incredible biological diversity. This mountainous region was formed by the same tectonic activity that created the Himalayas and is part of the Gobi Altai Range – the outer crumple zone of the Himalayan geological activity.

Basic but private ger at small family operated ger camp (2-3 gers) in town. Asian style outside long drop toilet.

\* Hot shower available at local town shower house - your own private cubicle and plenty of hot water  
\* We'll stay at the home of Oyunaa. She lives in the ger neighbourhood in a small house. Her extended family live next door in a ger. They all live within their 'hashaa' (fenced area belonging to each family).

180km on dirt and asphalt road (approx 4 hours driving time not including stops)

B/L/D

## Day Five



### Bayanzag

Continue to explore the interior of the Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park. This will include a visit to the spectacular Khavtsgait rock petroglyphs en-route to the Flaming Cliffs.

\* The Khavtsgait petroglyphs show the culture, art and religious beliefs of the Bronze Age people who lived in the Mongolian Gobi and its neighbouring areas starting about 4000 years ago. The views are stunning

Basic but private ger at small family operated ger camp (5-6 gers). Asian style outside long drop toilet. No showers

\* The Gelgegarash family are retired herders and grandparents and part of the Ankh San Cooperative - a herder cooperative engaged in small-scale vegetable growing and sustainable tourism.

They are of the older generation and are typically reserved and keep themselves to themselves. However, they warmly receive visitors if you would like to meet them

200km on dirt road (approx 4 hours driving time not including stops)

\*Your accommodation tonight is located roughly 6km from the Flaming Cliffs so you have to visit by vehicle. However, the area of 'zag' (Saxaul) which gives the area its Mongolian name, is only a short walking distance from your ger accommodation so could easily be explored.

B/L/D

Enjoy meals (dinner on March 5th and lunch/dinner on March 6th and 7th) at a local ger guanz (road side restaurant) in the small town community of Bulgan (where the documentary A Weeping Camel was filmed).

## Day Six and Seven



### Erdenedalai

Erdenedalai is Mongolian for 'Jewel Ocean' and although far from the ocean this small town located in the middle of the Gobi steppe provides a genuine insight into everyday life in Mongolia. It is also the hometown of a majority of the EL team and a very tight knit and traditional community.

Having arrived in the region, the rest of your time will be spent at the home of the mother and father of Turuu - my business partner. They live roughly 14km from the main centre of Erdenedalai. Even though annual precipitation in this area is low, with no permanent lakes and very few springs, roughly 5880 herder households make their home in this transition zone between steppe and desert. It is a beautiful region little visited by others.

Basic but private ger at small family operated ger camp (3 gers) in local town. Asian style outside long drop toilet.

This ger accommodation is provided by Myadag and her family - the sister of one of the EL drivers. She is a wonderful host but can be a little shy to begin with.

\* Hot shower available at local town shower house - your own private cubicle and plenty of hot water

255km on dirt road (approx 5 hours driving time not including stops)

\* En-route, why not stop and explore Moltsoq Els - an area of sand dunes. Although smaller than the southern Khongoryn Els sand dunes, this region of sand is still worth stopping to spend time at as only 3-5 % of the landscapes of the Gobi actually consists of sand.

B/L/D

## Ulaan Baatar

Day Eight

**Return UB**

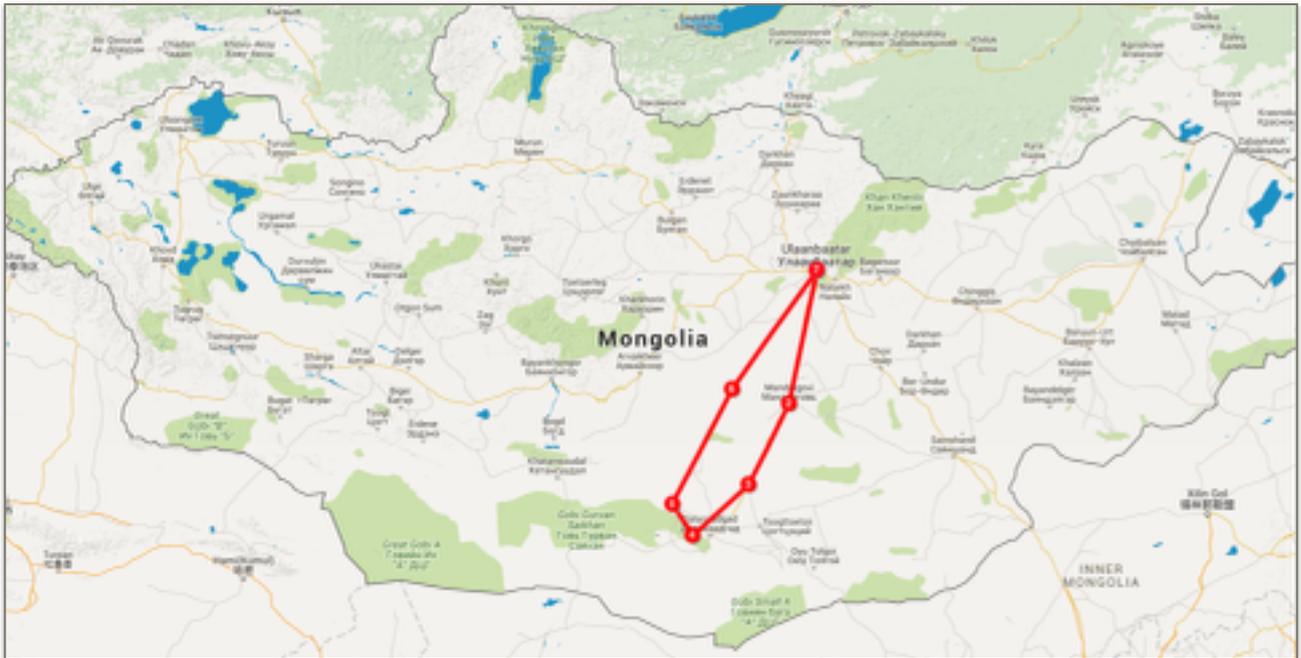
We'll transfer you to your accommodation in UB and the rest of the day will be yours to create your own experience. Remember you could use our UB guide to help you to explore the urban side of Mongolian life in downtown Ulaan Baatar. Alternatively, one of our trip assistants could be made available but please let me know in advance

Accommodation of your choice in UB

280km on dirt road (approx 5 hours driving time not including stops)

B/L

# Map Of Route



## Pricing

Pricing will depend on the number of people travelling. Just email me for details!

# Winter Travel With EL



Mongolia is a challenging country and offers a tough experience at any time of year - from its lack of infrastructure to its climate. You will be travelling during one of the most challenging times of year. Things will not happen on a perfect schedule and conditions will be very rugged - you will be required to step outside your circle of comfort. Winter trips can be susceptible to unforeseen problems which might result in last minute itinerary changes. Please base your expectations on this important point.

You will be expected to be flexible and patient and bring with you your willingness to participate and your sense of adventure and humour.

However, winter in Mongolia is stunning. Truly stunning.

## **Driving**

On the road, there can be ice or hard-packed snow and winter storms create white-out driving conditions. However, our drivers are not just summer tourist drivers and drive all year round. Also remember that sunrise is not until around 0830 and sunset can be as early as 1630 so this will also impact on the day.

## **Weather**

We need you to be responsible for yourself. Bring the correct clothing (I have a suggested packing list. I also provide details on the expected average temperatures). If you're cold let your EL team know - do not try to put a brave face on it. It is not a competition to see who is the strongest - remember your EL team and the Mongolians you will meet are used to the winter weather conditions. You may not be.

## **Accommodation**

Facilities will be more limited than you have maybe experienced on previous winter trips elsewhere. Apart from in the towns, your accommodation will be in family provided ger accommodation where there won't be hot showers and the toilets will be **OUTSIDE** Asian style long drops. The ger will be insulated for winter with extra layers of felt as well as a lit-stove but you're probably used to an insulated house with central heating. There is a substantial difference.

**Travelling in the winter in Mongolia is as much about experiencing the landscapes and meeting and spending the time with the locals rather than hard-core adrenaline activities. Instead of competing with other travellers to see who can have the most 'authentic' or 'challenging' experience in the furthest, highest, remotest, or the most off the beaten track location just come and enjoy being part of a minority who visit Mongolia in the winter and enjoy slowing-down and seeing and experiencing Mongolia like few other people get to do.**

# 21st Century Mongolia Versus Guidebook Mongolia!



Mongolia is frequently depicted as a pristine untouched wilderness where the traditional nomadic way of life still remains. Well. It is. And it isn't. Our trips focus on 21st Century Mongolia - we try to provide a 'realistic' overview rather than that portrayed by guidebooks and other tour companies. To just want to experience the life of the traditional nomadic way of life is to ignore a majority of the population.

Mongolians are not just divided between those who live in Ulaanbaatar and nomads. It's not just about the minority groups of the Kazakhs or the Tsaatan either. Mongolians live in the cities of Darkhan and Erdenet. They also live in the other provincial centres as well as the smaller town and rural communities. There are teachers and Christians and those with disabilities and policemen and musicians and military personnel and accountants and miners and geologists and drivers and shop owners and construction workers and street cleaners - they are all Mongolians.

Mongolia's herders are under a lot of pressure. Yes, you want to experience their way of life but for them, their most important focus is looking after their livestock. The guidebooks mention the traditional hospitality of Mongolia's nomads, but they don't mention their daily workload and how this often means there is not time to welcome visiting guests with tea. Don't travel to Mongolia expecting to sit each evening discussing with your hosts about their way of life as nomads. It just won't happen.

So. What do you do? Ditch your expectations based on what you've read and watched. Instead come with an open mind and be challenged and surprised. The landscapes are immense and weathered and stark and remarkable. But you will be shocked by the amount of rubbish. Yes, there is still a nomadic way of life. But herders have smartphones. The traditional culture still remains. But the literacy rate hovers around 97% (yes, 97%) and there is a drive for modernity and progress.

But it is a country that will impact on you greatly. Of that there is no doubt.



I do have detailed Pre Departure Guidelines available with more details on our travel style, what to expect and safety. Please just ask for them.

Any questions, queries or concerns? Just send them across to me at [jess@eternal-landscapes.co.uk](mailto:jess@eternal-landscapes.co.uk). I am always happy to be of help!

*Jess*