

Khangai Wilderness Trails
August 8th - 24th 2020 - 17 Days

KHANGAI WILDERNESS TRAILS



‘We feel really privileged to have had such a personal experience being immersed in normal Mongolian life! The focus on authentic and personal experiences with local people is quite unrivalled we find.’

Alex van Vliet / Annelies Quaegebeur

This is a small group trip. However, our maximum group size is six - which is refreshingly small. These small group sizes mean that our trips are more respectful for your host families that we work in long-term local community partnerships with. It also means you'll be one of few rather than one of many and this leads to a more genuine experience as well as a more personal and real insight for you as our guest. It also means that no two trips are ever the same as we can keep things flexible.

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 Wilderness Trails In Brief



One of our favourite regions in Mongolia is the stretching wild landscapes of the central Khangai Mountains - one of the three main mountainous regions that dominate Mongolia.

On our Khangai Wilderness Trails you'll explore the ancient Khangai Mountains range from east to west - the rugged mountains, alpine lakes, wildflower meadows, river valleys and the southern-forested fringes of the Siberian Taiga that make up the area as well as learning more about the way of life for the local people that make their home in the region.

The centrepiece of the experience is five-days trekking off grid in the stunning Tarvagtai National Park. No formal trekking routes really exist here and that's what makes trekking in this region such a glorious experience - it's just you, your trek guide/ horse wrangler and your choice of which horizon to explore and discover. Our Khangai trek is led by Monkhoos - together with his family they herd their livestock in the region through which you will trek and know their home area like the back of their hands.

This experience is not about the highlights or 'must see' sights. This is about travelling in a Mongolian way - discovering what we call the real Mongolia.

Quick Overview

Ulaanbaatar

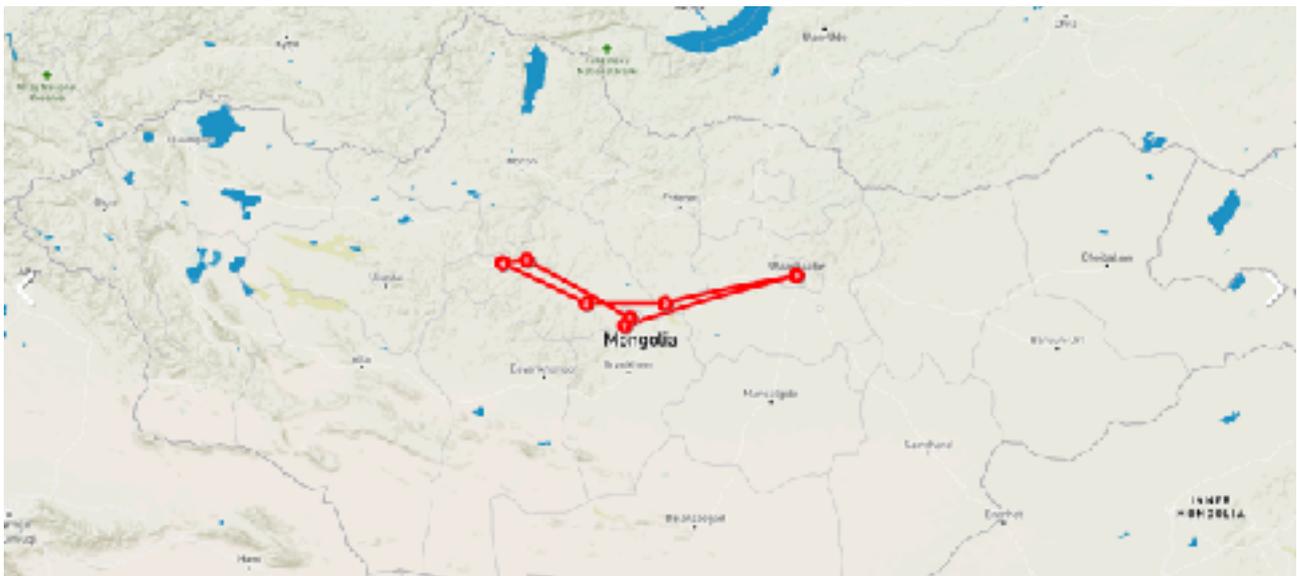
August 8	Final Arrival Day Discover Ulaanbaatar City Walking Tour	Your own choice of accommodation	Free transfer	Local lunch and welcome drink
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Central Heartland

August 9	Khogno Khan Nature Reserve 3-Hour hike	Wild Camping	285km on dirt and asphalt road	L/D
August 10 & 11	Tsenkher Homestay	With Galbadrakh family	August 3 - 215km on dirt and asphalt road	B/L/D
August 12	Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur National Park	Basic ger at family operated ger camp	180km on dirt and asphalt road	B/L/D
August 13 - 17 	Tarvagatai National Park 5 Day Trek	Wild Camping	-	B/L/D
Aug 18	Telmen Nuur	Wild Camping	220km on dirt and asphalt road	B/L/D
Aug 19 - 22	Mukhartiin Gol Khar Nuur	Wild Camping	It's the journey as well as the destination!	B/L/D
Aug 23	Uliastai	Local Hotel	160km on dirt and asphalt road	B/L/D

Ulaanbaatar

Aug 24	Fly Ulaanbaatar	Your own choice of accommodation	Up to one hour transfer time from Chinggis Khan International Airport	B * other meals depending on flight time
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Day To Day

Aug 8

Final Arrival Day | Discover Ulaanbaatar | City Walking Tour



Ulaanbaatar is home to roughly 45% of Mongolia's population and our free city walking tour will give you a more local introduction to this vibrant frontier style city with a strong Mongolian identity of its own.

Yes, the city is chaotic and loud and not as glamorous as other capital cities but it is the beating heart of Mongolia and the hub of contemporary Mongolian urban life. The reality for many Mongolians takes place in this urban context, in a city they are striving to develop and improve. Ulaanbaatar deserves to be appreciated and explored as the urban centre that it is.

Our informal and relaxed city walking tour will give you a contrasting insight into a way of life, compared to that of the rural population. This day is not about museums or shopping – it's about getting out and about and exploring and discovering.

Today you'll spend the day in the company of one of my female Mongolian trip assistants. The day will include Nogoön Nuur (Green Lake) community project - a community space created for the local population of the nearby Bayangol ger districts by Ulzii - a Mongolian philanthropist - as well as other areas of the city including Gandan Monastery.

You'll also have lunch with a local family as well as exploring other areas of the city.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Of your own choice
 - **Meals:** Local Lunch and Welcome Drink
 - **Travel:** Free transfer
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Aug 9

Khogno Khan Nature Reserve | Elsen Tasarkhai Sand Dunes



Drive to explore this sacred granite mountain. within an area of secluded valleys, fresh water springs, open steppe and the Elsen Tasarkhai sand dunes. Khogno Khan Nature Reserve was taken under state protection partly due to the specialised taiga and steppe plants that grow in this area. The small but vital Tarna River provides an essential water source for the herders in the region.



Explore the hidden interiors of the mountain on an easy 3-hour hike to the small working temple of Erdene Khambiin Khid and the ruined Ovgon Khiid Monastery. A birch bordered path leads to this location and offers one of the most beautiful panoramas of the region.



There's an option for camel trek along the Elsen Tasarkhai sand dunes. Davaasuren is at his happiest on showing off his home landscapes of Khogno Khan. He's a bit of an entertainer as well and his camel treks can include sand sculpting, impromptu wrestling matches and singing.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Tent Camp. UK VANGO tents. We also provide a kitchen tent and a toilet tent (well, a tent to cover the hole in the ground. I call it a 'loo with a view!'). Outside Asian style squat toilet. No showers. Ger accommodation is available during bad weather.

The reason we love wild camping is that it gets you out into the wild beauty of Mongolia. It's a chance to sit around a camp fire, observe the night skies, feel the immensity of Mongolia's landscapes and listen to the sound of silence.



- **Meals:** B/L
 - **Travel:** Approx 285km total on asphalt and dirt road (roughly 6 hours driving time not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual.
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Aug 10 & 11

Tsenkher Homestay



The Galbadrakh family are a young family - yak herders - that make their home in the district of Tsenkher in the Khangai Mountains. This is a personal friendship that we have built up over the past 13 years. We form long-term local community partnerships throughout the country and work side by side with each family. Our experiences are put together in a way which benefits the families, rather than disrupting their lives. Galbadrakh and his family are members of the Cooperative Ar Arvijn Delgerekh - a NGO that works solely with yak herders in Arkhangai Province helping them to produce spun yak down thus helping to sustain and improve the livelihoods of the member herders as it allows them to diversify and increase their income (the herders being paid the full value of their harvest for a higher price than the local market).

You will notice that we don't detail what you will do on your arrival - that's because we do things a little differently and leave the plan flexible as this leads to a more respectful experience but there's plenty of flexibility and options including experiencing the way of life in this river valley or even taking an informal cookery lesson.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** The Galbadrakh family have simple guest gers. They live as part of a 'khot ail' - an extended family and make one of the family gers available for guests to sleep in. Hot shower available at the local town shower house - your own private cubicle with plenty of hot water. Queue with the locals and enjoy experiencing a little of their daily way of life
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** August 3 - 215km on dirt and asphalt road (approx 5-6 hours driving time not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual.
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Aug 12

Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur National Park



Drive to Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur and explore the volcano that created this beautiful area with an alpine lake at its core. Then there's a chance to enjoy the legendary hospitality of our great friends, Batbold and Jargaa.

Why Do We Stay Here?

Yes, I know it can be busy but it makes an excellent base to start a one-day hike / horse trek from. Also, Batbold and Jargaa own and run the Surtiin Eco Ger Camp. Both have grown up in the region and are at the centre of this rural community and it is with them and the protected area rangers that we arrange our annual two-day community rubbish collection. Their kitchen is the hub and Jargaa is one of the best cooks we know. Why not join her for an informal cooking lesson?

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Basic ger at family operated ger camp (8-9 gers). Asian style sit down outside toilet. A single hot electric shower is available.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** 180km on asphalt and dirt road (approx 4-5 hours driving time not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual.
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Aug 13 - 17

Tarvagtai National Park Foot Trek



Head out to pastures new, get off the beaten track and enjoy the wilderness spaces of this glorious region in the company of a modern day herder - Munkhoo.

Our treks are different in that we leave the route entirely flexible and in the hands of your herder guide / horse wrangler as this leads to a more organic type of exploration. So many trekking experiences offered in Mongolia have rigid routes and itineraries and that just seems wrong in a country of such freedom. Instead, the focus becomes getting to meet and know the herder guide / horse wrangler in the areas where they consider home.

The whole area is dominated by wilderness – rugged mountains, alpine lakes, wildflower meadows, river valleys and the southern-forested fringes of the Siberian Taiga. You'll be trekng in the mountains to the north of Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur National Park including in the remote districts of Jargalant and Galt.



Our treks are led by your host family - at Tarvagtai that is typically Munkhoo.

However, one of our way of supporting the local families we work with is by allowing them to bring their younger siblings or older children as helpers on the treks. It helps to create a space where traditional Mongolian knowledge can be passed from older to younger generations, as it always has been. This helps keep the routes, water sources, place names and the stories of the land alive, in a real, breathing way for the future.

When the younger generation come with their fathers or brothers and start off learning to load horses and getting to know the routes, water sources, place names and the stories of the land.

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The Length

5 days

The Trek

There will be challenges - maybe the weather or maybe some of the terrain at times. However, our treks aren't meant to be physical endurance events. The focus is on enjoying the wide open spaces and the feeling of freedom to be found when hiking and exploring the Mongolian landscapes.

The Trails

There isn't a network of clearly defined trails. You have to be prepared for a mixture of terrain - everything from dry river beds to mountainous alpine routes with potentially some river crossings. Your main luggage will be transported by pack-horses or tour vehicle (depending on the final route chosen).

Distances

Approximate distance per day is 10-20km. Be prepared that some days will be shorter or longer. Although we set the location in advance, the route is not set in stone as this allows us to be as flexible as possible in relation to the weather and ground conditions.

Accommodation

For tent camps, we provide a kitchen tent, a toilet tent and VANGO tents. There are no single supplements - each traveller gets their OWN tent. Don't worry about lack of showers - we provide heated water for washes en-route.

Meals

Meals will be hearty and rustic as all food has to be carried with us. Also, there is no chef. Your EL trip assistant treks with you during the day and prepares all your meals as well.



Aug 18

Telmen Nuur



Head west into the vast plains of Zavkhan Province - the valleys around this region are magnificent – tranquil and serene. Telmen Nuur is a shallow salt lake with peninsulas, salt marshes and sand dunes. It is one of Mongolia’s 70 Important Bird Areas and has three small islands where water birds such as Ruddy Shelduck can gather in vast numbers. One reason why we love this lake is that it feels a little bit like the sea and its atmosphere resembles the sea.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Tent Camp. UK VANGO tents. We also provide a kitchen tent and a toilet tent (well, a tent to cover the hole in the ground. I call it a ‘loo with a view!’). Outside Asian style squat toilet. No showers.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** Approx 220km on dirt and asphalt road (roughly 6 hours driving time not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual.
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Aug 19 - 23

Mukhartiin Gol | Khar Nuur | Uliastai



Through the centre of Zavkhan Province is a series of sand dunes centring around the community of Erdenekhairkhan where you will spend time exploring the landscapes including the spectacular (and surprising) Mukhartiin Gol – although this brief description does not do this remarkable region justice.

Also continue to the glorious Khar Nuur. Zavkhan Aimag occupies a transitional zone between the Khangai Mountains and the Great Lakes Depression. Khar Nuur is a combination of both these zones - an alpine lake surrounded by the Bor Khyarin sand dunes. The contrasting landscapes are completely unexpected.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:**
 - **August 19-22** - Tent Camp. UK VANGO tents. We also provide a kitchen tent and a toilet tent (well, a tent to cover the hole in the ground. I call it a 'loo with a view!'). Outside Asian style squat toilet. No showers.
 - **August 23** - Local hotel. Be prepared to be flexible - the rooms may not be en-suite.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:**
 - **Aug 19** - TBC. Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual.
 - **Aug 21** - Mukhartiin Gol to Khar Nuur - we don't give a driving time. This drive is rough in places but that doesn't matter. This drive is really about the journey as well as the destination).
 - **Aug 23** - 160km on dirt and asphalt road (roughly 6 hours driving time not including stops. Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual.
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Aug 24

Ulaanbaatar



Return back to UB where we'll transfer you to your accommodation 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 Ulaanbaatar. Alternatively, one of our trip assistants could be made available but please let me know in advance.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Of your own choice
 - **Meals:** Breakfast * other meals depending on flight time
 - **Travel:** Short transfer to Uliastai Airport | Up to one hour transfer time from Chinggis Khan International Airport
 - **Flight Departure and Arrival Time** TBC. Weight restriction 15kg (10kg check-in and 5kg hand luggage). Hand luggage 'officially' restricted to 1-piece. Excess baggage charges are between \$4-\$7 per kilo depending on the route. Please note that the domestic airline may change the flight time schedule closer to the day of departure
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Pricing And Group Size

For all of our small group trips I offer a sliding price scale. I appreciate your holiday funds are precious and so the more people that book so the price comes down and everyone benefits.

Group Size - Maximum of six. Minimum of two required for a guaranteed departure

- 2 Guests US\$ 3335 pp + domestic flight of approximately 350,000 MNT pp
 - 3-4 Guests US\$ 3160 pp + domestic flight of approximately 350,000 MNT pp
 - 5 Guests US\$ 3130 pp + domestic flight of approximately 350,000 MNT pp
 - 6 Guests US\$ 2750 pp + domestic flight of approximately 350,000 MNT pp
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- Although carbon offsets are imperfect and not the whole answer, they make a difference. Emissions per kilometre for domestic flights are always much higher because such a large proportion of the flight is spent taking off and landing. With this in mind, as a company we will be calculating the offset for all domestic flights used by our guests and paying the offset price into the well-project fund that focuses on supporting Mongolia's herders (http://www.camda.org.uk/Well_Project_Appeal.html). Exclusions

Please be aware that our trip pricing excludes the price of accommodation in UB though.

Why? Everyone is different is the standard of accommodation they prefer at the start and end of a trip.

As there is now such a variety of hotels in UB it is easier to exclude this cost. I provide a list of ideas covering varying standards and budgets and I can also help with booking. There's everything from a homestay through to Airbnb, US\$10 guesthouses and the Shangri-La!



I provide detailed Pre Departure Guidelines but this is your 'quick (ish) glance' introduction to the EL travel style.

Why this section? I'm not greedy. EL is not a general travel agency and we don't want to be all things to all people. We are an independent micro business driven by the philosophy to support local so that our style of trip is beneficial to all. We use no outside agencies.

We are not perfect. We are just ordinary people trying our best to do something we love. We are not an ever-expanding group of travel professionals. We make mistakes. But we genuinely know and love Mongolia and

Travelling In Mongolia

Mongolia is the second largest landlocked country in the world. The infrastructure is basic. Mongolian people are tough and resilient and make their way of life in both the city and countryside look easier than it is. Mongolia will challenge you and at times irritate you but it's worth the effort. We're on hand to iron out any niggles and make the experience as smooth as possible but please remember that most of these hiccups are part of life in Mongolia and therefore travelling in Mongolia. We expect you to bring your flexibility and sense of adventure with you.

Travel Times

The travel times are listed under the breakdown of the daily itinerary (under the subheading logistics). Please make sure you are aware of these travel times but remember that an integral part of Mongolian culture is not to ask about the length (time) of any road journey. Mongolia can be a challenging destination, road conditions can change dramatically with the weather and some drives may become longer as a result. But, don't be put off by the road journeys. They're part of Mongolian life. Accept them as part of the experience - Mongolia really is about the journey as much as the destination.

Your Tour Vehicle - The Russian UAZ \ Furgon Van

- Our Furgons are driver owned but we support the drivers with maintenance fees.
- Each Furgon has a high wheel-base, ample luggage space, a sociable layout with forward and backward facing seats, surround side windows and most importantly, impressive off-road capability.
- As is typical with all Furgons, due to the design of the vehicle, seat-belts are not available (2019 although we're working on it for 2020. Get in touch for details if you're concerned) but our Furgons are fitted with grab handles in the passenger area.
- Each EL vehicle has it's own simple mobile kitchen, its own sunshade, a small library as well as a 220v inverter/charger. We only put a maximum of three to four EL guests per vehicle.

Your EL Team

Female Mongolian trip assistant

- As a female, it is important to me to use my skills and influence to improve the prospects for other women.
- We don't source the best guides that work the tourism circuit and that already have guaranteed work with other companies. Instead, we provide training and development opportunities to Mongolian women that want the opportunity to work in tourism (whether that be for a professional reason, for development of personal skills or for economic empowerment) but that other companies won't take as they don't fit the stereotype or have the Our female Mongolian trip assistants are dynamic women who are searching for an opportunity to train and develop and we provide that long-term opportunity.
- You'll travel with someone who sincerely loves their home country, loves their job and genuinely care about you as our guests. They also have a respectful connection with each of the families we work with and this leads to a more genuine insight for you.
- For us, this is a long-term investment and we invite you to part of this bigger travel philosophy. We're proud to be able to provide a starting block to women in Mongolia.

Male Mongolian Driver

- We employ ten drivers. We know each one and their family personally.
- They are not modern city men - they are more traditional men - often now overlooked by other tour companies who prefer younger more international Mongolians who speak English. We wanted to provide equal opportunities and so as our trip assistants are female and typically younger with a more modern outlook, so our drivers are all male, older and from more traditional backgrounds. We find it is a partnership that works well.
- Yes, their English is limited but their role is to handle the Mongolian roads and not to converse fluently in a multitude of languages.
- Our 'boys' have superb driving skills, are expert mechanics and are supremely talented at the skill of 'mongolclokh' - improvising the Mongolian way. It's a joy to watch so if your vehicle does break down, don't get angry. Instead, watch the drivers do what they do best - improvisation.
- They are of the strong and silent type but take the time to know them and you'll see why we employ them and why they are an essential part of our EL family and great, all-round men.

Our Local Long Term Community Partnerships

- We work with a network of local families throughout the country. These are long-term local partnerships we have built up over the 13 years+ we have been based here. These are also our own personal friendships.
- BUT ... We never ask a family to change their daily living for us. We do not try to change Mongolians or their way of life for our/your own benefit or comfort. We don't ask them to change their daily schedule or to put on an 'act' as this would lead to a contrived experience.
- BUT ... Guidebooks portray Mongolians as being warm and welcoming. They are. But they can also be stubborn, taciturn, reserved and very very indifferent. Yes, they can be welcoming but they really do not like displays of impatience, superiority, arrogance or anger and will make it known when they are not happy. They also rarely wear a watch let alone work to an agenda.
- BUT ... As in our everyday lives, sometimes plans change and a family has to go to UB (for a medical reason etc). You will almost certainly comment that you will wish you had more interaction with local families but their livestock and their family life must come first. Reverse the situation for a moment and think about the impact on your life if visitors wanted to document everything about you.
- BUT ... Nothing is planned in any program, because we do not disturb the rhythm of life of the working families visited. We are just trying to share / experience a portion of their life.
- **Yes, there will be tasks in which you can participate. But, you need to be proactive. Offer your time and help.**

Logistics - Meals

- Mongolia one of the most remote countries in the world with a population of 70 million+ livestock. The food Mongolians eat reflect this.
- However, each of our vehicles has a simple portable kitchen as it offers you more freedom and flexibility as we're not reliant on anyone else to provide meals. It also means we can have picnic lunches en-route so as we prepare them you can be exploring the local landscapes or sitting and taking in the view.
- But, it's not the same as a modern well-equipped kitchen. Also, your trip assistants prepare your meals and we're not professional chefs. Also, we take food miles into consideration and prefer to purchase produce local to Mongolia so **we do not provide kale smoothies or Thai curries or paella or Chinese stir fry. We just provide honest, heartening grub.**
- We buy as much fresh produce as possible but fresh fruit is not available daily. Please remember where you are and that there will be limitations as to what we can provide. If you're the type of person that must have five pieces of fruit a day then you may struggle.
- We often include the families we work with in our meals and so cook to please all including the EL team. However, we do adapt to those with dietary requirements. We frequently cater for vegetarians, those who are following dairy or gluten free diets and even vegans but as mentioned, there will be limitations in place.

Logistics - Weather

Mongolia's weather system has a reputation for a reason. And yes, it may well rain. See it as a blessing. Mongolian herders celebrate rain as without it fresh pasture cannot grow and they lose their livelihoods. We'll prepare you for what weather to expect during your trip (including links to the long-range weather forecast for the regions you will be visiting) and also provide a detailed packing list on booking.

Accommodation - Family Operated Ger Accommodation & Homestays

- As much as possible we use rural family operated ger accommodation. We prefer to support this local form of accommodation as it helps provide a supplementary income and extra financial security for them meaning they are one step further away from having to consider urban migration.
- These are all families we work in long-term local community partnership with - we NEVER turn up unannounced and we never just turn up to a herding family demanding accommodation.
- The circumstances and type of ger accommodation provided will change from family to family. Consider them as small rural businesses NOT rustic luxury homestays. Some accommodation is offered by herders (maybe one separate ger), some is offered by 'retired' herders who no longer migrate (two to four separate gers), some by families that live in small town communities and some by families that own small ger camp businesses (mini ger camps of between 7 to 10 gers). On a couple of itineraries it may also involve sleeping on the floor of the family ger on a mat (such as in western Mongolia).
- Be prepared for a variety of standards. Please remember that this is someone's way of life and home and that they provide what they can in relation to their circumstances.
- Beds will vary in comfort - most rural family members still traditionally sleep on the floor so don't really understand the concept of double memory foam mattresses! See below for more details on toilets and showers.
- You should have your own private ger either to share as an EL group (small group trip) or on your own (tailor made trip) but we don't offer exclusivity as this limits the income of the families so do expect other westerners during peak times. We try to get the right balance but during peak season please accept that you might see other westerners

Accommodation - Toilets & Showers (Family & Homestay)

- **A majority of Mongolia's population do not have access to running water.**
- Toilets - Some will be better than expected. Some will be worse than expected. Most will outside long (or short) drop Asian style and if it is at a family home then the toilet will be shared by you and the family. The toilets are not there to disgust you - this is the reality of life on the ground.
- Showers - Most Mongolians visit the local town shower house. So this is what you do as well. It gives you an introduction to real daily life for a majority of Mongolians in both urban and rural areas as well as a hot shower. You get your own private cubicle with plenty of hot water. Queue with the locals and enjoy experiencing a little of their daily way of life

Accommodation - Tourist Ger Camps

- If requested and in some locations (such as Khovsgol), we do offer accommodation at ger camps. We don't book the most luxurious or the most exclusive. Instead, we choose the ones that we think work best for you and your style of trip as well as the locations you are visiting.
- There **WILL** be times during your journey when the availability of certain amenities at these ger camps may be lacking. The reasons for this can be varied - low season; high season; electricity/generator problems; remote locations; the simple fact that some amenities are only catered for between certain times of the day. Examples of this could be a ger camp having a lack of hot water, or only having hot water at certain times.
- Lighting in the evening at some places may be by candle-light, and electricity may not be available.
- **Also be prepared for noise - especially if it is in the busy summer season. Not just from the large tour groups that use the ger camps but also from staff members that often congregate in the evenings, the noise of generators when used and also from the parking area ... where drivers head to carry out mechanics and to meet other driver friends they haven't seen in a while. Not all ger camps will be the peaceful idyll you may expect.**

Accommodation - Tent Camps

- Not all itineraries include tent camping. Please check your itinerary.
- We use VANGO Hurricane or Nemesis tents. There is also always a kitchen tent and also a toilet tent. However, this is not the same as a 5* safari in Africa!
- When camping, we do not camp too close to family gers as this intrudes on their privacy. However, local life is only a short walk away. If you like landscapes then you will love our campsites.

Accommodation - Local Hotels

- We don't use hotels in all itineraries.
- Where we do use a hotel, it is locally owned - built for the passing Mongolian trade rather than for western visitors so they have been built with the local population in mind so they are not corporate chains. However, one or two will pleasantly surprise you.
- Why do we do this? It brings money and support into the local communities. As well as staying at the hotel we eat in local restaurants and buy our tour produce from the local market so you get a more real insight into the way of life for the locality.

21st Century Mongolia



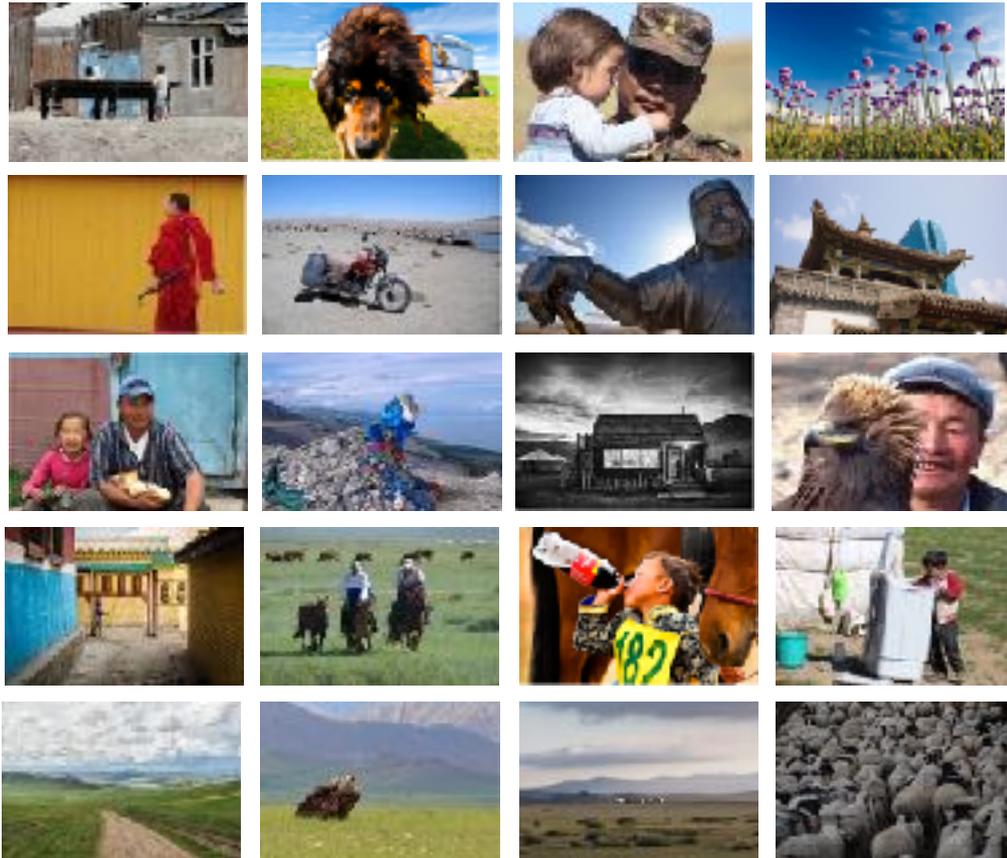
Mongolia is frequently depicted as a pristine untouched wilderness little changed since the time of Chinggis Khan. But this is not 21st Century Mongolia - this is stereotype or clichéd Mongolia.

The traditional culture still remains but there is a drive for modernity and progress.

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. We're proud of the long-term local community partnerships we have formed with all spectrums of Mongolian society - from a philanthropist in Ulaanbaatar, to female Kazakh eagle huntresses and also the Tsaatan community. However, 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.

Don't come in search of what you term the authentic Mongolia. Discard the perceptions that perpetuate the stereotypes of Mongolia and aim for a more true encounter of real life. We ask you to ditch your preconceptions based on what you've read and watched. Instead come with an open mind and be challenged, surprised and often delighted.

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There's a hunger for knowledge, understanding, and excellence that drives Mongolian society, and things are changing quickly, but remember that a lot of major changes have happened within just a couple generations. Be patient with Mongolia. While it works through the changes that are going to make it a better place, savour the gifts it offers and try to spend less time worrying about small issues that aren't being met - such as hot showers or lack of western toilets. Remember, Mongolians are living this life everyday through all seasons not just for a few weeks.

Mongolians are tough people and make living in their country look easy. But, Mongolia is not an easy option - tourism is still in its infancy so there is only a rudimentary tourist infrastructure in place. It's actually quite refreshing but will be challenging for you.

As Jack Weatherford writes in *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* - 'Compared to the difficulty of daily life for the herders, living permanently in those areas, ours were only the smallest of irritations.'

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

Jess