

KHOVSGOL WILDERNESS TRAILS

(WITH LOCAL HORSE FESTIVAL)



‘Everything was perfect: the way the tour was structured, the places, the families, the limited number the camping spots, the feeling of remoteness,... the list goes on. We had amazing time.’

Teo Marinska, tailor made trekking tour

This is a small group trip. However, our maximum is 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 Khovsgol Wilderness Trails In Brief



Khovsgol Nuur National Park in northern Mongolia is justifiably considered a highlights of Mongolia. But, there is so much more to it than just the lake. Biologists use the word ecotone for places where different habitats meet - where a forest meets a meadow or a lake meets a shore. Khovsgol is an ecotone on a very large scale. The result is a wide range of habitats - wet meadows, shallow ponds, coniferous forest, steppe woodland, open steppe, alpine meadow, high mountains and the lake and lakeshore. On this trip you'll get to experience all those different aspects of this remarkable area as we show you a more local and human side to this remarkable area.

This option includes a four day trek. You'll be hosted and accompanied by herders from the region that you'll be exploring. 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 and Mongolian type of exploration. So many horse 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 Mongolian herder guide / horse wrangler riding alongside them in the areas where they consider home.

Quick Overview

Ulaanbaatar

July 15	Final Arrival Day Discover Ulaanbaatar City Walking Tour	Your own choice of accommodation	Free transfer	Local lunch welcome drink
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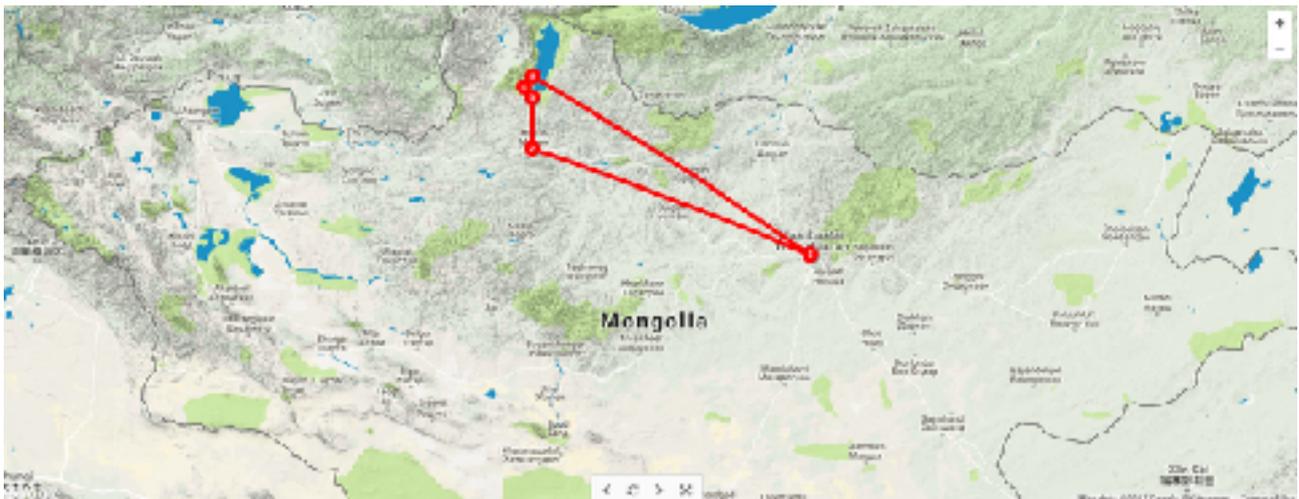
Northern Landscapes

July 16 & 17	Fly Murun Khovsgol Nuur National Park Option for day hike to Chuchee Uul	Standard tourist ger camp	July 16 - Up to one hour transfer time to Chinggis Khan Airport & 145km on dirt and asphalt road	July 16 - D * other meals depending on flight time July 17 - B/L/D
July 18 - 22	Khoriol Saridag 5 Day Foot Trek	Tent camp & Mattress on floor of wooden house within hasha (wooden fence)	-	B/L/D
July 23	Khatgal Boat ride	Standard tourist ger camp	45km on dirt road	B/L/D
July 24 & 25	Murun Deer Stones Delger Murun River Burentogtoh Horse Festival	Family owned rustic ger camp	July 24 - 100km on asphalt road July 25 - 40km on dirt road one way	B/L/D



Ulaanbaatar

July 26	Fly Ulaanbaatar	Your own choice of accommodation	100km on dirt and asphalt road and up to one hour transfer time from Chinggis Airport	B * other meals depend on flight time
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Day To Day

July 15

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 Nogoon 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.

Logistics

- Accommodation: Of your own choice
 - Meals: -
 - Travel: Free transfer
-

July 16 & 17

Fly Murun | Khovsgol Nuur National Park



Khovsgol Nuur is known as Dalai Ej - Mother Sea to Mongolians. It is a spiritual place for Mongolians and its natural beauty makes it a stunning location to take a little time out.

Khovsgol is 126km in length and represents roughly 70% of Mongolia's fresh water and is the younger sister to Lake Baikal in Siberia and part of the same Rift System. If the sky is clear, you can stand on the shoreline and see the snowcapped Sayan Mountains - the border with Siberia. It is truly spectacular.



On your second day, why not explore the Khoridol Saridag Mountains by hiking up the 2300m Cuchee Uul (above). Although an easy trail, it takes approximately 2.5 hours of walking (with approximately 700 metres of vertical climb) to get to the top with its remarkable view. However, even for those not keen on the 700 metres of climb you can still walk part way (still with views) or just enjoy walking along the lake shore with its lagoons.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Ger at the Gurvan Erdene Ger Camp. Western style toilet and hot shower in separate block although the **showers are limited to certain times of day**



We use Gurvan Erdene because it is the northernmost camp on the western shore - away from the main developed area. It has views out over the Koridol Saridag Mountains and has a lovely atmosphere. It is owned by a local Khatgal family who are trying to manage the 'footprint' of the camp with eco toilets and solar showers. We prefer only to use Mongolian owned ger camps as our payment remains in the local community. It also means you often get to mix with Mongolian holiday makers who help to give you a different perspective on modern life in Mongolia.

- **Meals:** D * other meals depending on flight time & B/L/D
 - **Travel:** July 16 - Up to one hour transfer time from Chinggis Airport and then 145km on dirt and asphalt road (approximately 4 hours driving time not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual.
 - **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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July 18 - 22

Kholidol Saridag Foot Trek



Enjoy the wilderness spaces of the Kholidol Saridag on a five-day foot trek. With many peaks close to or topping 3000m, the Kholidol Saridag Mountains are a 150 km-long mountain range of primarily uplifted dolomite that runs between the western shore of Khovsgol Nuur and the Darkhad Depression. The very barren, arid upland areas contrast with lower rich alpine meadows. It's a glorious region to explore on foot.

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 and Mongolian 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 Mongolian herder guide / horse wrangler in the areas where they consider home.

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. Your main luggage will be transported by pack-horses. If you need a rough guide, you will trek over the Khirvesteg pass down into the Arsain Gol Valley - depending on the weather. The altitude will vary from day to day, whether you are crossing over passes or down valleys, but you will be (approximately) between 1,700 to 2,500m.

Herders of the region typically move one or two times per year according to grazing conditions and weather cycles. One autumn migration route traverses from the Darkhad Depression through the Kholidol Saridag Strictly Protected Area along the route of the Arsain Gol. You will be following part of this route. The log cabins and stock corrals you will come across may appear abandoned and overgrown but they are simply waiting for the return of winter occupants.



Meet Bambakh - your trek guide

This trek will be led by Basaanchuluu (Bambakh) - a modern 'malchin' (herder). He's a member of the Darkhad ethnic group and has lived in the Khovsgol region his whole life. Like most herders in the area, Bambakh has a home within the town of Khatgal itself and this is where you will stay at the end of the trek - in his wooden house within the hasha - typical fenced compound that belongs to each extended family. We use Bambakh for all our Khovsgol treks and have been working alongside him for nearly 10 years. He's our go to man at Khovsgol and his knowledge of the area is as big as his personality.

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.

Your Trek



The Length

5 days

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 and you will just carry your small day-pack.

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. On the final day you will finish at the home of Bambakh in Khatgal. Asian style long drop outside toilet. Showers at local town shower house.

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.



July 23

Khatgal



Spend the day exploring the community of Khatgal at the south of Khovsgol Lake. Within Khatgal there are hills to walk up within the town for remarkable views. Or why not walk and explore Khatgal's port where the Sukhbaatar III (Mongolia's Navy) is located. We'll also plan a 3-4 hour boat ride for you - weather permitting - to give you an alternative perspective. In the evening, enjoy a traditional Mongolian barbecue at Bambakh's home.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Mattress on the floor of Bambakh's wooden house within his 'hasha' - fenced compound typical to most families. Asian style long drop outside toilet. 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:** -
-

July 24 & 25

Delger Murun River | Burentogokh Horse Festival



Travel to Murun - the provincial capital of Khovsgol Aimag. Explore this lively capital town of Khovsgol Province which bears the hallmarks of being a trading outpost close to the border with Russian Siberia, in that it is slightly wild and rough around the edges. However, this adds to its charm and unique atmosphere – especially the bustling market in the centre of town.

You'll head to just north of Murun to be rewarded with stunning views of the Delger Murun River ('wide river') at the Tultiin Tokhoi ger camp. Together with the Ider River, the Delger Murun it is one of the sources of the mighty Selenge River.



We don't dictate what to do as everyone is different in what they would like to do but why not explore the Ushigiin Uver deer stones complex located close to the spectacular Delger Murun River. Known as Bugan Khoshoo in Mongolian they are believed to possibly be ancient grave markers for warrior chiefs.



Travel to this small community that hosts an annual horse festival. Arranged by Esee - your host at Delger Murun - the aim of this small festival is to celebrate the traditions of Mongolian herders and horsemanship. Approximately 50 horsemen take part and competition is typically fierce. Competitions include using the lasso to catch a running horse, riding untamed young horses without a saddle or bridle, mounted archery and also the brilliant picking up the uurga stick from the ground. Don't expect anything to operate on time and be prepared for plenty of waiting around as well. But, although small, this event draws a number of Mongolian families creating a vibrant holiday atmosphere. You'll mix with the locals from the small town centre as well as with traditional Mongolian herders from outside the area.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Ger at Tultiin Tokhoi. Western style facilities hot showers in separate block



This is a small and intimate ger camp - a family run business rather than a corporate ger camp. There's even a wonderful greenhouse. The owner Esmedekh is local to the area and on site most of the time.

The ger camp has possibly one of the best sunset viewing platforms in Mongolia - perfect for enjoying a cold beer. And for those brave enough, you can swim in the river. An alternative is the short (30-40 minute) hike up the nearest hill for spectacular views over the extended river valley.

- **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:**
 - July 24 - Roughly 100km on asphalt and dirt road (approximately 3 hours driving time not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual.
 - July 25 - Roughly 40km on dirt road one way (approximately 1 hours driving time one way not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual.
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July 26

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 * Lunch depending on flight time
 - **Travel:** Up to one hour transfer time from Chinggis Airport. Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual.
 - **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

- 2-4 Guests US\$ 2860 pp + domestic flight of approximately 450,000 MNT pp
 - 5 Guests US\$ 2840 pp + domestic flight of approximately 450,000 MNT pp
 - 6 Guests US\$ 2485 pp + domestic flight of approximately 450,000 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 my 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 are willing and eager to learn, develop and strengthen based on feedback from our guests and from all we work with. If it helps, we get repeat custom.

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 its 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.**

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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

21st Century Mongolia

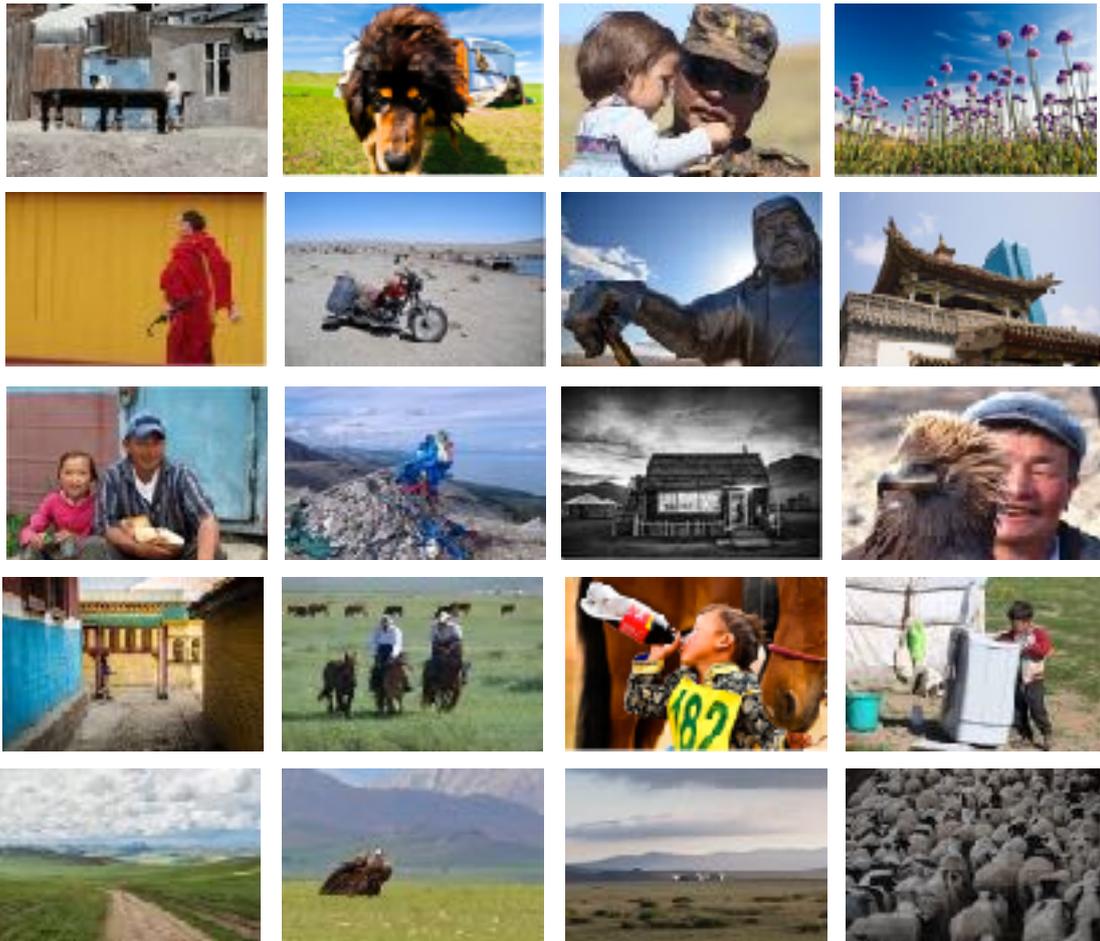


Mongolia is frequently depicted as a pristine untouched wilderness little changed since the time of Chinggis Khan. But this is not 21st Century Mongolia - this is stereotype or clichéd Mongolia. The traditional culture still remains but there is a drive for modernity and progress.

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.

Khovsgol Wilderness Trails With Horse Festival
July 15 2020 - 12 Days



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