

Nomads Of The Khangai

July 18th - July 31st 2021 & 2022 - 14 Days

NOMADS OF THE KHANGAI

WITH YAK FESTIVAL



‘The impression I got about your commitment to responsible tourism was one of the things that made me want to travel with your company. I would recommend the company because it is ethical, it allows you to have a bespoke trip either on your own or with a very small group, and it offers an authentic experience. Everything felt natural and not orchestrated. I liked it that there was variety and every place was different, but also that we weren’t whizzing from one place to another.’

Elizabeth Taylor, Nomads of the Khangai

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 Nomads Of The Khangai In Brief



Mongolian's divide their country into three distinct eco regions - Gobi, Khangai and Tal Kherem Bus - desert, mountain and steppe. Khangai describes the mountain steppe and mountain forest steppe regions of their country and that's the region that this trip focuses on.

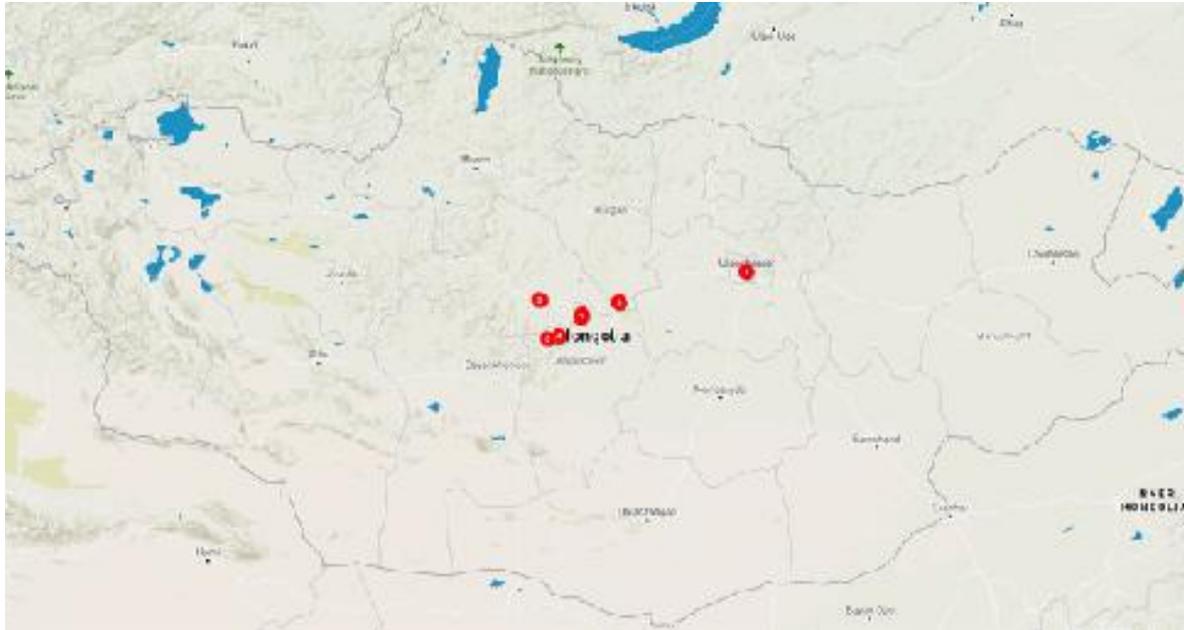
The whole area is dominated by wilderness - rugged mountains, alpine lakes, wildflower meadows, river valleys and the southern-forested fringes of the Siberian Taiga. Landscapes play an important part in the way of life of rural Mongolians and as you discover and explore the different regions of the Khangai, so you'll experience the diversity of the way of life of the people that make their home in these landscapes.

You'll also experience two rural community events - the Felt and Yak Festivals - held to promote tourism and industry by focusing on the region's special features. Don't get caught up in notions of authenticity - both festivals feature a lot of local involvement. The festival draws local Mongolian spectators as well as westerners and the locals are always more enthusiastic. Both are a celebration of the way of life in the Khangai Mountains and a chance for the local herders to come together as a community. There will be yak racing and yak polo and even a yak beauty pageant (although the criteria for the winning yak is never clearly announced or explained). As with most Mongolian festivals it includes a concert of traditional music and dance.

Quick Overview

Date	Location	Accommodation	Travel	Meals provided/ arranged by EL
Ulaanbaatar				
July 18	Final Arrival Day Discover Mongolia City Walking Tour	Your own choice of accommodation	Airport transfer	Local lunch and welcome drink
Central Heartland				
July 19	Khogno Khan Nature Reserve Elsen Tasarkahi Sand Dunes	Tent Camp	285km on dirt and asphalt road	L/D
July 20 & 21	Tsenkher	With Nergui herding family	July 20 - 215km on dirt and asphalt road	B/L/D
July 22 & 23	Ulaan Tsutgalan - Orkhon Waterfall Yak Festival	Ger at family operated ger camp - with Tomorbat family	July 22 - 130km on dirt road OR 280km on dirt and asphalt road July 23 - Short (bumpy) drives	B/L/D
July 24 - 28	Ulaan Tsutgalan Naiman Nuur 5 Day Horse Trek	July 24 - 27 - Tent camp July 28 - Ger at family operated ger camp - with Tomorbat family	-	B/L/D
July 29 & 30	Kharkhorin and Orkhon River Valley	With Tumees herding family	July 29 - 130m on dirt road	B/L/D
Ulaanbaatar				
July 31	Ulaanbaatar	Your own choice of accommodation	355km on asphalt road	B/L

Map Of Route



Online map - [https://www.tripline.net/trip/Nomads Of The Khangai %28July 18 2021 - 14 Days%29-223677512736101186A9891061299F5E](https://www.tripline.net/trip/Nomads%20Of%20The%20Khangai%20July%2018%202021%20-%2014%20Days%29-223677512736101186A9891061299F5E)

Why we tent camp on our Nomads of the Khangai experience

For those of you that are concerned about tent camping. Don't be. The reason we tent camp is to get 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.

Solo travellers receive their own tent.



Day To Day

July 18

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.

Logistics

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

July 19

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.

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!'). Solo travellers receive their own tent - no single supplement required. Alternative of simple shared ger next to Davaasuren herding family during bad weather. Outside Asian style squat toilet. No showers.
 - **Meals:** B/L
 - **Travel:** Roughly 285km total on asphalt and dirt road (approx 6 hours driving time not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual depending on road/weather conditions.
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July 20 & 21

Tsenkher Homestay



The Galbadrakh family are a young family - yak herders - that make their home in the district of Tsenkher in the Khangai Mountains. We form long-term local community partnerships throughout the country and work side by side with each family looking at ways we can provide long-term support. 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 live as part of a 'khot ail' - an extended family and make the family gers available for guests to sleep in. You will have to share a ger with 2-4 other members of the group. Asian style outside long drop toilet. No showers. 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

Staying With The Galbadrakh Family



Using the guest ger accommodation that Galbadrakh and his family provide allows you to experience their daily life side by side with them. It also means you are in location for the optimum photography times of sunrise and sunset.

However, please understand though that as their way of life is simple, so are the facilities they provide.

The family live as part of a 'khot ail' - an extended family and make a couple of guest gers available. You will have to share a ger with 2-4 other members of the group.

Asian style outside long drop 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 20 - Roughly 215km on dirt and asphalt road (approx 6 hours driving time not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual depending on road/weather conditions.
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July 22

Ulaan Tsutgalan | Orkhon Waterfall



The area surrounding Ulaan Tsutgalan was created by a series of volcanic eruptions (there are often different types of igneous rock lying on the surface – such as basalt and pumice stone which solidified from molten Magma after reaching the surface). The 20-meter high waterfall is formed by a series of small streams and rivers including the Ulaan Gol. For your stay at Ulaan Tsutgalan, you will stay at the small tourist ger camp of owned by Tomorbat and his family. They are retired herders but their son and son-in-law are still herders and they milk their yak herds in the early morning which you can partake in. Tomorbat and his wife have lived in the region all their lives and continue to live here all year round. Their knowledge of the area is vast and we love them for this.



This region is famous in Mongolia for the hand production and traditional decoration of gers. Although the family do not speak English and keep to themselves, they are very kindly hosts. At some point you should ask to visit their home ger - hand made, carved, decorated and painted by Tomorbat.



Go 'ger to ger' with Nangilma and Tomorbat

Tomorbat used to lead our longer adventurous style treks that we offer in the region but was getting too old to lead them. But, as Tomorbat and Namjilmaa get older, we wanted to continue working with them ... as part of our philosophy of providing long-term support to the rural families we work with.

So together with Tomorbat we created our 'ger to ger' walk. Led by Tomorbat himself, this simple concept just takes up a morning or an afternoon where our guests spend time with Tomorbat meeting local herding families in the area. We allow Tomorbat to decide the route and what families our guests visit and although it is a relaxed walk it provides a different more local perspective on Mongolia. It's a simple enough concept but as well as providing our guests with a local travel experience in Mongolia it means we can continue to work with Tomorbat and support him as well as tapping into his wealth of local knowledge.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Basic ger (shared with 2-4 other members of the group) at family operated ger camp (8-10 guest gers). Basic long drop outside toilet and no showers.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** Roughly 280km on dirt and asphalt road (approx 6 hours driving time not including stops) . Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual. A shorter route is possible but depends on the road and weather conditions.
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July 23

Yak Festival



The festival is a celebration of local community, networking and collaboration to ensure a better future for the region and its herding community. We always invite your hosts at Ulaan Tsutgalan to come with us so they can enjoy an 'one-day holiday.'

Don't get caught up in notions of authenticity. Yes, there will be other westerners there but the festival features a lot of local involvement. The festival draws local Mongolian spectators as well as westerners and the locals are always more enthusiastic.

They'll be yak racing and yak polo and even a yak beauty pageant (although the criteria for the winning yak is never clearly announced or explained). As with most Mongolian festivals it includes a concert of traditional music and dance.

Just remove your watch (there is always plenty of waiting around) and enjoy mixing with the herders from the region as well as the small town locals. Be prepared for plenty of waiting around as well - although there are always plenty of side stalls to explore and enjoy.



Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Basic ger (shared with 2-4 other members of the group) at family operated ger camp (8-10 guest gers). Basic long drop outside toilet and no showers.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** Bumpy drives to/from the festival site
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July 24 - 28

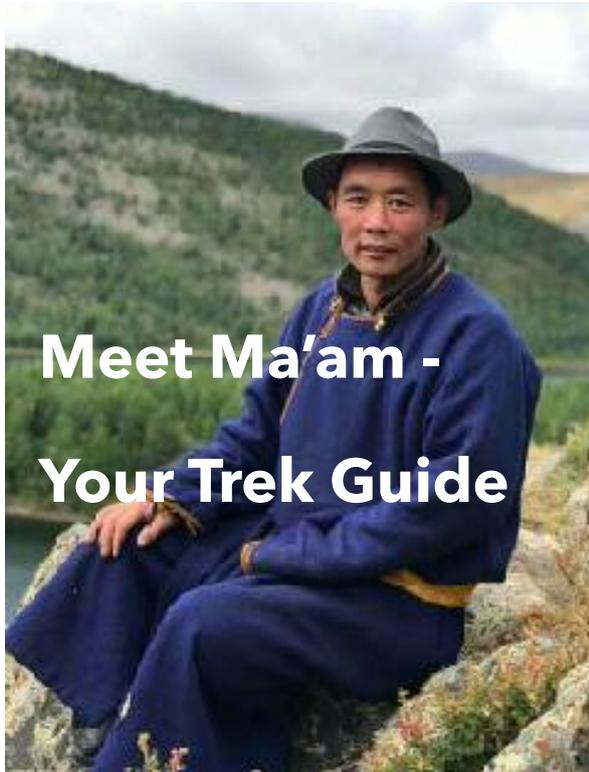
Ulaan Tsutgalan Foot Trek



Head out to pastures new. In the company of a modern day herder, get off the beaten track with a six-day wilderness trek guided by Maam - Tomobat's son. Enjoy the wilderness spaces of this glorious region including meeting other families that make their home in the region.

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.

If you need a rough guide you'll avoid the hot spots such as Naiman Nuur as it is just too busy. Instead, you'll trek through an ecoregion with habitats as diverse as long flat valleys, lava stone fields, barren mountain tops and high open Mongolian steppe, coniferous forests of Siberian Pine and Siberian Larch and sub-alpine meadows. The trek will be led by Ma'am and supported with a team of horse wranglers and pack yaks.



Meet Ma'am - Your Trek Guide

Our treks are led by your host family - at the Orkhon that is typically Ma'am - Tomorbat's son.

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. Or, if experienced enough, they run 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 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, pack-yaks 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.

July 29 & 30

Orkhon River Valley | Kharkhorin



Continue to the home of Tumee and Jargaa - a herding family we work with located close to the Orkhon River. They are modern-day herders, a strong part of the local community and move up to six times a year.

The Orkhon River Valley is one of Mongolia's four UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It's a cultural WHS and represents the evolution of nomadic pastoral traditions in Mongolia - this region is considered the cradle of Mongolian civilisation and an area rich in nomadic life as the Orkhon River provides as essential lifeline for nomads and their livestock. On the second day, there is nothing pre-planned as everyone is different in what they like to do. But there's plenty of flexibility and options. Ideas include visiting Kharkhorin, exploring the area on a horse trek, experiencing the way of life of the family or a mix of all three!

Kharkhorin is the ancient capital of Ogodei Khan and the Mongol Empire in the 13th Century. Visit Erdene Zuu - Mongolia's oldest monastery and visit the excellent Kharkhorin Museum with its clear and updated exhibits based on the history surrounding the Orkhon River Valley and the Turkish and Mongol Empire. Even if history doesn't really 'grab' you, we recommend a visit as it helps to bring the history of the area alive.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Basic ger (shared with 2-4 other members of the group) next to family ger. Or tent camp next to family ger (depending on availability / preference). Basic 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

Staying With The Tumeer Family



As with all the families we work with, we work in long-term local community partnership with Tumeer and Jargal. Local to the area - they both went to school in the region - one of their adult sons is a member of the Genghis Khan Polo Club. They are considered integral members of their local community. Although they agree their way of life has challenges, they love it for the sense of freedom it provides.

- **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** July 29 - Roughly 130km on dirt and asphalt road (approx 5 hours driving time not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual.
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July 31

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: B/L
 - Travel: Roughly 355km on dirt and asphalt road (approx 8 hours driving time not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual.
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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\$ 2690 pp
- 3-5 Guests US\$ 2515 pp
- 6 Guests US\$ 2230 pp

Where Does Your Payment Go?

- In our experience, how people choose who to book with usually comes down to the cost. Budget is a very personal thing and everyone is different in what they want to pay.
- We're a registered Mongolian business and registered social entrepreneurship. We are not a luxury tour operator. We're a small business that receives around 100-150 bookings per year. We can't compete on price with our budget competition that don't pay sustainable wages, or with the international companies that use agencies to run their trips and receive 1000s of bookings per year. We also can't compete with unregulated individual guides or drivers that offer cut-price trips.
- To help you see where your payment goes, we're very much driven by our philosophy of making a positive difference in Mongolia through tourism. Your payment remains in Mongolia and goes back into the communities through which you travel. We are also a member of Tourism Declares A Climate Emergency - a collective of travel organisations who have declared a climate emergency and are coming together to find solutions. We accept our responsibility to tell the truth, work together, and help build a new, regenerative tourism.
- We focus on community-based tourism - working directly with local people and communities - slowly building up relationships and what we call long-term local community partnerships with them. We work side by side with each family and look at ways we can support them.
- We also run our free long-term training school for Mongolian women that want to work in tourism but don't have the skills or knowledge to do so. We provide free training and then create long-term employment opportunities for them.

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 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

English speaking 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 free long-term training, development and employment 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. 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

21st Century Mongolia

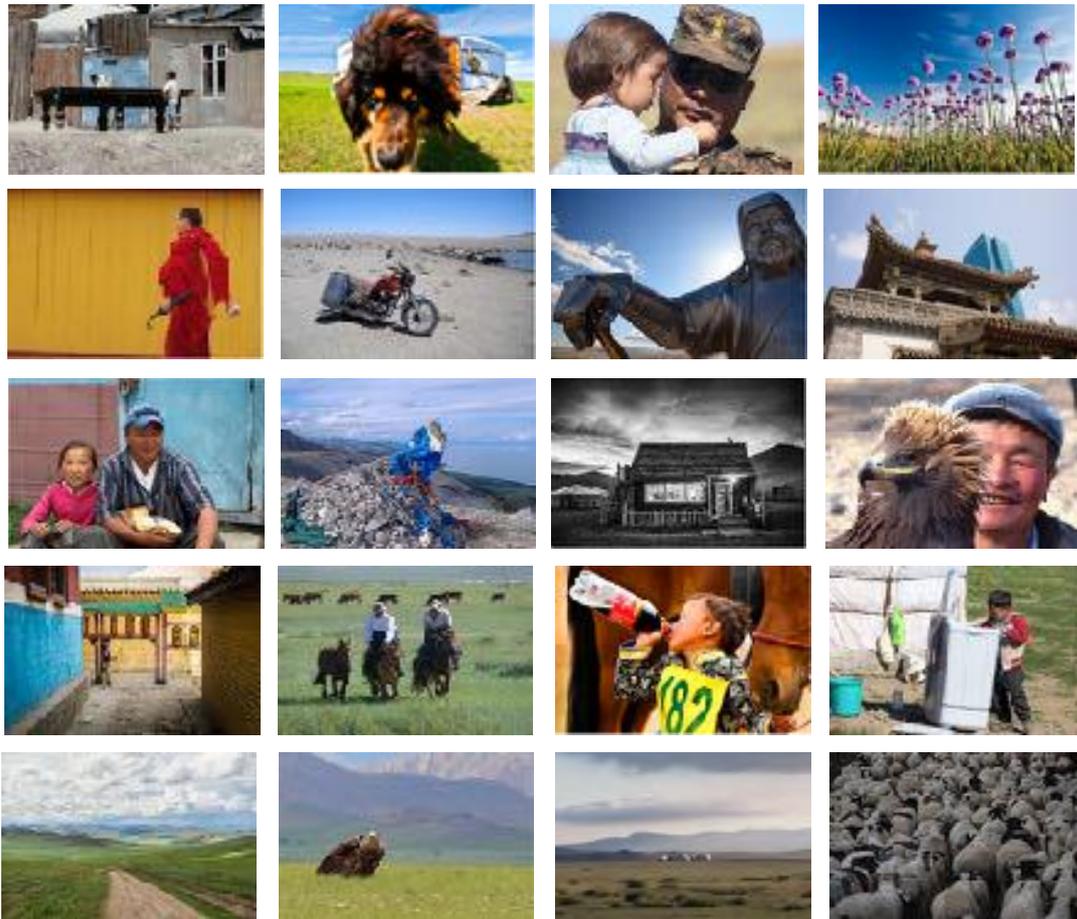


Mongolia is frequently depicted as a pristine untouched wilderness little changed since the time of Chinggis Khan. But this is not 21st Century Mongolia - this is stereotype or clichéd Mongolia. The traditional culture still remains but there is a drive for modernity and progress.

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.

landscapes.co.uk. I am always happy to be of help!



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.'

Jess