

UNTAMED MONGOLIA



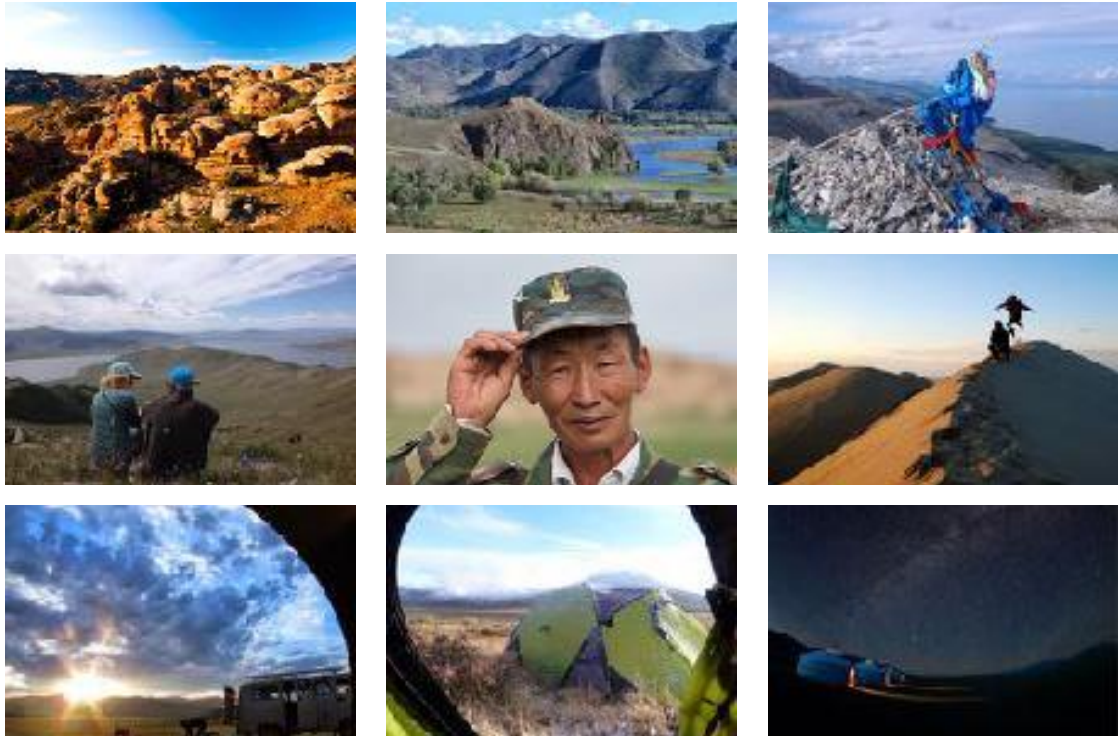
‘From the moment we were taken off the tourist trail of UB to visit the Green Lake community project in the ger district, I knew that I had picked the perfect company to show me Mongolia. It really has been a privilege to visit this extraordinary country and to experience first-hand the day-to-day lives of Mongolians. Every day brought a new and wonderful aspect to the holiday, and I never tired of taking in the landscape and the human presence.’

Dean Andrews, Untamed Mongolia

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 Untamed Mongolia In Brief



Embrace Mongolia's glorious, limitless space on our Untamed Mongolia small group experience - a celebration of the diversity of Mongolia's 'eternal' landscapes. Mongolia's landscapes form a backdrop to any journey in Mongolia but are a central element in our Untamed Mongolia experience where the focus is about exploring and discovering the striking landscapes of the Gobi Desert, the high open steppe and the spectacular lakeland and northern regions of Mongolia, including Lake Khovsgol.

Yes. A majority of other companies will tell you to fly to your destination. But you'll be then caught up in the stress of queuing and weighing your luggage and domestic flight delays. When instead, you could be on the ultimate road trip combined with a camel trek, wild camping, day hikes and living alongside Mongolia's herders. Join our Untamed Mongolia for an introduction to the real 21st Century Mongolia - its diversity of landscapes, its people and its way of life.

Overview

Date	Location	Accommodation	Travel	Meals provided/ arranged by EL
Ulaanbaatar				
Day One	Final Arrival Day Discover Ulaanbaatar Free city walking tour	Your own choice of accommodation	Free transfer	Local lunch and welcome drink
Middle Gobi				
Day Two	Baga Gazriin Chuluu Granite rock formations	Tent Camp	235km on asphalt and dirt road	L/D
Southern Gobi				
Day Three	Dalanzadgad	Apartment - with Uurna	410km on dirt and asphalt road	B/L/D
Day Four	Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park Yolyn Am	With Batsuuri herding family	100km on dirt and asphalt road	B/L/D
Day Five & Six	Khongoryn Els Sand Dunes Camel Trek	Day Five - Tent Camp Day Six - Ger at family operated ger camp - with Baasankhuu family	100km on dirt road	B/L/D
Day Seven	Bayanzag Flaming Cliffs Petroglyphs	Ger at herding family operated ger camp - with Gelgergrash family	145km on dirt road	
Day Eight & Nine	Erdenedalai Community	With Nergui herding family	Day Nine - 255km on dirt road	B/L/D
Central Heartland				
Day Ten	Khogno Khan Nature Reserve Elsen Tasarkhai sand dunes	Tent Camp	260km on asphalt and dirt road	B/L/D
Day Eleven & Twelve	Tsenkher Homestay	With Galbadrakh herding family	Day Eleven – 215km on dirt and asphalt road	B/L/D
Day Thirteen - Fifteen	Terkhiin Tsagan Nuur National Park	Day 13 - Ger at family operated ger camp - with Batbold & Jargaa Day 14 & 15 - Tent Camp	Day Thirteen - 205km on dirt and asphalt road	B/L/D
Northern Landscapes				
Day Sixteen & Seventeen	Jargalant and Zuun Nuur	Tent Camp	Roughly 300km on dirt road over two days	B/L/D
Day Eighteen & Nineteen	Khovsgol Nuur National Park Khoridol Saridag Mountains	Standard tourist ger camp	Day Eighteen - 200km on dirt and asphalt road	B/L/D

Northern Landscapes

Day Twenty	Selenge Gol	Tent Camp	240km on dirt and asphalt road	B/L/D
Day Twenty-One	Bulgan	Provincial Hotel	240km on asphalt road	B/L/D
Day Twenty-Two	Khustain Nuruu	Tent Camp	280km on dirt and asphalt road	B/L/D

Ulaanbaatar

Day Twenty-Three	Ulaanbaatar	Your own choice of accommodation	100km on dirt and asphalt road	B/L
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Map Of Route



Online Map - https://www.tripline.net/trip/Untamed_Mongolia_%28July_31st_2021%29-136434730673101095F9A1C040E4BD48

Why we tent camp on our Untamed Mongolia 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

Day One

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 and short drives only
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Day Two

Baga Gazriin Chuluu Rock Formations



Your destination today is Baga Gazriin Chuluu - the site comprises an area of extensive granite rock formations, and dry riverbeds with elm trees surrounded by steppe habitat. By-passed by most companies for the more famous 'southern Gobi', Baga Gazriin Chuluu is so much more than just the rock formations. The underground springs provide a water source and as a result, Baga Gazriin Chuluu is rich in history as well as the herding culture. We include our great hike into the interior where you'll be the only people and the views are stunning.

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 private ger next to Dembee & Batar herding family during bad weather. Outside Asian style squat toilet. No showers.
 - **Meals:** L/D
 - **Travel:** Roughly 235km on dirt road (approx 6 hours driving time approx not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual depending on road/weather conditions.
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Day Three

Dalanzadgad



A transfer day through epic landscapes down to the southern Gobi - see it as a Mongolian road trip. True, it might feel like a long day on the road but we break it up with a picnic lunch where you can stop for a while and take in the immense views. We recommend removing your watch and let the day and the journey unfold. Do not spend time in the van thinking 'when will we get there'- you are already there; surrounded by the beauty that is Mongolia.

Is Dalanzadgad considered a highlight of Mongolia by the guidebook writers? No! But, it is a vibrant town and staying here will give you an understanding as to the way of life of Mongolia's small town inhabitants. You can also explore the Dalanzadgad Museum and the surprisingly great Camel Museum with their presentation of the Gobi. The square with its dinosaur statues is where locals of all ages come to take the air. It is worth spending time in, especially in the evening and you may well be approached by local students wanting to practise their English or who just want to interact with a foreigner.

You'll be hosted by a young family headed by Uugantuya and her husband Galbadrakh at their simple apartment in Dalanzadgad. Consider this a one-night Gobi Desert Airbnb! You get to experience real life and at the same time help to provide an additional income to a young family starting out in life.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Simple apartment in Dalanzadgad. Consider this a one-night Gobi Desert Airbnb! You get to experience real life and at the same time help to provide an additional income to a young family headed by Uugantuya and her husband Galbadrakh - although they may not be there due to work commitments.
- **Meals:** B/L/D
- **Travel:** Roughly 410km on asphalt and dirt road (approx 8-9 hours driving time not including stops. Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual depending on road/weather conditions.

Day Four

Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park | Yolyn Am | Homestay



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



This includes exploring Yolyn Am - meaning Vultures Gorge/Mouth/Canyon it takes its name for the Lammergeier's (Bearded Vultures) that you may see circling on the thermals. It is renowned for its sheet of ice several meters thick that forms during the winter in the narrow defile (often preserved until early July as the overshadowing peaks of Yolyn Am ensure a slow melt). The water tables beneath the Gobi Gurvan Saikhan were laid down by ancient processes - when the mountains began to lift, and fault lines cracked open, water squeezed up from below sought the easiest route downhill.



The young Batsuuri family live in the shadow of the Gobi Gurvan Saikhan. As herders they follow a pattern typical to the Gobi - moving twice a year. In the summer, they head out onto the vast plain and in the winter closer to the protection of the foothills. Life in the Gobi is tough - extremely tough - and a sequence of weather events such as drought or floods could easily destroy their fragile way of life. As a way of supplementing their income they offer their home to our guests as a one-night homestay. It's for one night as it helps to provide an additional income without disrupting their lives too greatly. They get the financial benefit and we as guests get to experience the reality of life in the Gobi. If you come with the attitude of wanting to be entertained or to have dinner with the family, then you'll be disappointed. They're too busy. Instead, come and experience a little of their way of life and enjoy the expansiveness and silence.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Mattress on floor of ger provided by Batsuuri family. The group share one ger. For those not comfortable with sharing as a group, tent camp next to ger. Asian style outside short-drop toilet. No showers. Solo travellers receive their own tent - no single supplement required.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** Roughly 110km on asphalt and dirt road (approx 4 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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Day Five & Six

Khongoryn Els Sand Dunes Camel Trek



For centuries, up until the 1920s, the Gobi was traversed by camel caravans – mainly on the trade route between Urga (UB) and Beijing. We still think this is one of the best ways to experience the Gobi and it is a journey well worth the effort and the sense of peace you will experience amongst the dune landscapes is one rarely found in every day life.

The trek is designed for one day/one night. There will always be time for climbing and exploring the dunes. Not sure? Don't be! The camel trek will be vehicle supported so if you need to hop off and take a break you can. On the afternoon of Day Six you will return to the family operated ger camp.



Your ger accommodation at Khongoryn Els is a short walk to the base of the dramatic sand dunes. These are Mongolia's highest dunes with the range stretching over 180km - known locally as Duut Mankhan - the singing sands. Mongolians say the Gobi consists of 33 different types of desert but only 3% is sand dunes. Khongoryn Els dunes make up a large proportion of that percentage.

What's our favourite experience? Climbing to the top of the dunes for an outstanding view – best at sunrise or sunset. It's not easy though and will require at least an hour's challenging physical exertion!

Logistics

- **Accommodation:**
 - **Day Five** - 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. Outside Asian style squat toilet. No showers.
 - **Day Six** - Basic ger at small family operated ger camp (5-6 guest gers). You will have to share a ger with 2-4 other members of the group. Asian style outside long drop toilet. No showers. The location is key here - you are not reliant on a vehicle to access the dunes. It's approximately a 30-40 minute walk to the base of the dunes from the family ger which gives you so much more freedom and flexibility especially for exploring at sunrise etc.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** Day Five - Roughly 110km on dirt road (approx 4 -5 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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Day Seven

Petroglyphs | Bayanzag | Flaming Cliffs



Bayanzag is an ancient rock formation, one of the most important areas in Mongolia for dinosaur fossils. Bayanzag means 'Rich in Saxauls' and the name shows what is important for the Mongolian people – not the red sandstone cliffs named the 'Flaming Cliffs' by Roy Chapman Andrews but the small desert shrub that is nurtured by the rare outwash from the surrounding gullies.

En-route, visit the spectacular Khavtsgait rock petroglyphs en-route to the Flaming Cliffs. The petroglyphs show the culture, art and religious beliefs of the Bronze Age people who lived in the Mongolian Gobi and its neighbouring areas starting about 4000 years ago. The views are stunning. You can also visit the small, windswept town community of Bulgan where the documentary *A Weeping Camel* was filmed. Enjoy a meal at the local family run restaurant that we've supported for over a decade - although it's not luxurious in anyway, it helps show you what local life is like.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Basic ger at small family operated ger camp (5-6 guest gers). You will have to share a ger with 2-4 other members of the group. Asian style outside long drop toilet. No showers.

Staying With The Gelgegarash Family



The Gelgegarash family are retired herders and grandparents and part of the Ankh San Cooperative - a herder cooperative engaged in small-scale vegetable growing and sustainable tourism. They are of the older generation and are typically reserved and keep themselves to themselves. However, they warmly receive visitors if you would like to meet them.

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

- **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** Roughly 155km on dirt road (approx 5 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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Day Eight & Nine

Erdenedalai

Erdenedalai is our secret. Far from the 'highlights,' the 'must sees,' and large tour groups it is a beautiful region little visited by other international visitors. And that's exactly why we make it one of our bases. It's great for slow travel experiences of a more immersive kind.



Erdenedalai is Mongolian for 'Jewel Ocean' and although far from the ocean this tight knit and traditional community located in the middle of the Gobi steppe provides a genuine insight into everyday life in Mongolia.

Even though annual precipitation in this area is low, with no permanent lakes and very few springs, roughly 5880 herder households make their home in this transition zone between steppe and desert. It is a beautiful region little visited by other international visitors as it's not considered a highlight by guidebook writers or tour companies. And that's exactly why we make it one of our bases. As mentioned, it's great for slow travel experiences of a more immersive kind. Although just wide stretching semi-desert steppe, the views are expansive.

Having arrived, the rest of your time will be spent at the homes of the herding families that we work with in the area - roughly 14km from the main centre of Erdenedalai. 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 and more naturally Mongolian style experience but expect to spend the second day exploring the local way of life through the eyes of the rural families we work with in the region.

As well as experiencing the daily way of life or taking an informal cookery lesson, other options include:

- A full-day horse trek
- A bike ride (summer only. We currently have four mountain bikes for use for free)
- For those interested, we also support a local musician who can provide an informal concert - he is also the manager of the local weather station



This is the first of EL's own ger homestays in partnership with the herding families of Erdenedalai. We focused on a region little visited by other western groups as this meant our support would have more impact. The income raised from this homestay provides an additional income to the herding families that host you during your stay. We work side by side with the family making sure our experiences are put together in a way which benefits the families, rather than disrupting their lives. As our guest you benefit from a more intimate and genuine experience.

Logistics

- Accommodation: With herding family. 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: Day Eight: Roughly 255km total on 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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Day Ten

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 private ger next to Davaasuren herding family during bad weather. Outside Asian style squat toilet. No showers.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** Roughly 260km 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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Day Eleven & Twelve

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.

Galdbadrakh and his family are members of the Cooperative Ar Arvijin 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 and naturally Mongolian style 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 with Bor.



En-route, visit Kharkhorin - 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:** The Galbadrakh family live as part of a 'khot ail' - an extended family - and make one of the family gers available for guests to sleep in. You will have to share a ger with 2-4 other members of the group. 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: Day Eleven - 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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Day Thirteen

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 (8-10 guest gers). You will share a ger with 2-4 other members of the group. Asian style sit down outside toilet. A single hot electric shower is available.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** Roughly 205km on dirt and asphalt road (approx 5 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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Day Fourteen & Fifteen

Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur National Park



Choice of a day-trek on foot or by horse from Batbold and Jargaa's home to our White Lake campsite - exploring this diverse lakeland area - especially the ridge tops with their outstanding views over the surrounding mountains and the lakeshore. A natural highlight of Mongolia, White Lake National Park encompasses an area of wild nature - volcanic craters, rugged mountains, river valleys and rolling steppe.

If you prefer not to join on the trek, you can always travel with the drivers to our campsite and then enjoy your own freedom to explore from there.

After 13 years in Mongolia, this remains one of our favourites. That's why we haven't filled the itinerary with options. There's nothing pre-planned as everyone is different in what they like to do.

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 ger accommodation during bad weather. Outside Asian style squat toilet.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** -
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Day Sixteen & Seventeen

Jargalant | Zuun Nuur



A majority of companies just drive straight on through, but the region connecting Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur with Khovsgol is one of our favourite areas. Perfect for a short slower drive and early arrivals at two of our favourite campsites. You will also visit Jargalant - a lovely rural community based along the Toin River Valley. Stunning views from the 108 Steps Temple.

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.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** Roughly 300km on dirt road over two days
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Day Eighteen & Nineteen

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.



Stretch the legs?

On your second day, why not explore the Khoridol Saridag Mountains by hiking up the 2300m Chuchee 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:** Twin-share ger or four-bed teepee at 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 is owned by a local Khatgal family and has a lovely atmosphere 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:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** Day Eighteen - Roughly 200km on dirt and asphalt road (approx 5-6 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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Day Twenty

Selenge River



Tonight you'll be rewarded with a spectacular sunset view over this magnificent river valley and Mongolia's principal river which flows into Lake Baikal.

En-route, explore Murun - the 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.

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.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** Roughly 240km 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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Day Twenty-One

Uran Togoo Volcano | Bulgan



Continue to the Uran Togoo Volcano. Uran Togoo - Tulga Uul is a national protected area consisting of the extinct volcanoes of Uran Togoo, Tulga, Togoo, and Jalavch Uul. All four mountain names allude to their volcanic past with designations borrowed from around the fireplace - a bowl shape, three mounds reminding of the traditional iron tripod kettle support and a small pot. They are part of the Khanuy-Gol Volcanic Field which has 10 cones with heights of 30–190 me

Why Do We Stay In Bulgan?

Is Bulgan considered a highlight of Mongolia by the guidebook writers? No! Although Bulgan is the capital of Bulgan Province life is quiet in this small town but remember, this is the way of life for a majority of its inhabitants. Why not head to the small square where the local students like to practise their English with visitors.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Provincial Hotel with shared western facilities although not necessarily en-suite
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** Roughly 240km on asphalt and dirt road (approx 5-6 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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Day Twenty-Two

Khustai Nuruu



Rather than rushing back to UB and arriving late, spend one more night out in the Mongolian countryside. Tonight camp overlooking Khustai Nuruu and an expansive view of sand dunes, agricultural fields and mountains.

As this is your final night in 'wild' Mongolia, we suggest you spend a little time saying good-bye to the epic landscapes of this remarkable country. Why not watch the sunset from the nearest ridgeline - taking in the views out over the steppe and back across to the mountains.

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!'). No showers. Solo travellers receive their own tent - no single supplement required.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** Roughly 280km 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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Day Twenty Three

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 * other meals depending on flight time
 - Travel: Roughly 100km on asphalt and dirt road (approx 2.5 hours driving time depending on city traffic). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual depending on road/weather conditions.
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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\$ 3655
- 3-4 Guests US\$ 3215
- 5 Guests US\$ 3095
- 6 Guests US\$ 2760

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 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 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 'mongolclock' - 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.

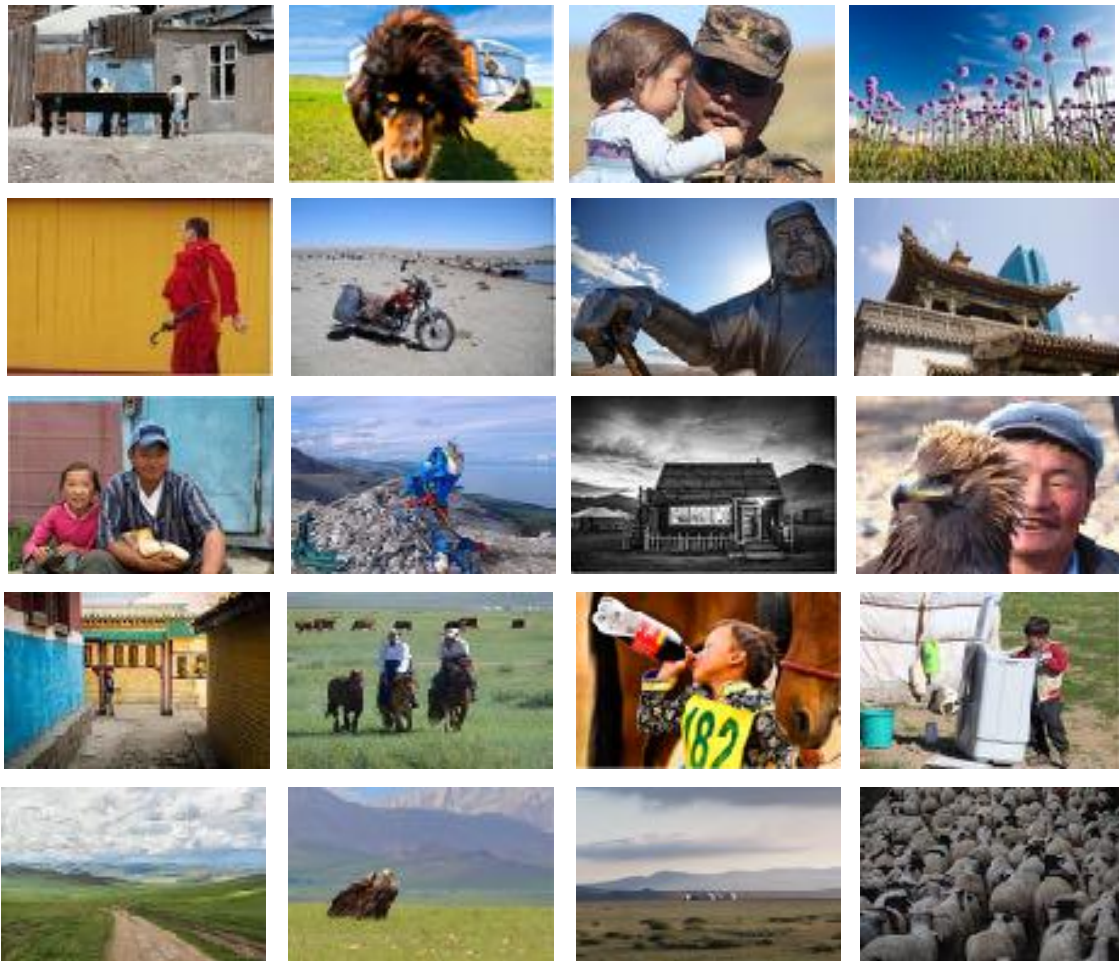
21st Century Mongolia



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.



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