

Riding With Eagle Hunters
8 Days & option of free city walking tour of Ulaanbaatar

RIDING WITH EAGLE HUNTERS



‘A unique package that wasn’t mainstream, and a true taste of the heart of the country. We truly did experience the real Mongolia living with families for the two weeks. They opened their homes to us.’

Eibhlin Fletcher, Altai and Eagles

This is a customisable trip. It is adaptable, giving you the freedom to build a unique and personal trip for your chosen date. Upgrade your accommodation for all - or just part - of your trip, slow down the pace with few extra nights here and there or add a few more active adventures along the way. 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 Riding With Eagle Hunters in Brief



The Kazakhs are Mongolia's largest ethnic minority group with approximately 100,000 living in the provinces of western Mongolia. Amid arid yet strikingly beautiful landscapes those that are eagle hunters have a way of life that has been shaped by history, geography and political change.

Hunting with eagles (*'berkutchi'*) is a form of falconry traditionally found throughout the Eurasian steppe and still practiced by a percentage of Kazakhs in western Mongolia. It is a winter activity and this is what the focus of this tailor made experience is about as you stay with Kazakh eagle hunters and their families - experiencing the traditional Kazakh way of life, riding out with the Kazakh eagle hunters and learning about the skill of hunting with eagles.

These are our own personal friendships that we have built up over the past 15 years. We form long-term local community partnerships throughout the country and work side by side with each family. Our experiences are put together in a way which benefits & supports the eagle hunters and their families, rather than disrupting their lives. We like to do things a little differently so we leave the plan each day entirely flexible and in the hands of your Kazakh eagle hunter host. This leads to a more respectful and genuine experience as well as a more personal and real insight for you as our guest.

Because of the way we work and that this is a tailor made experience, it also means that no two trips are ever the same. Rather than a standard itinerary you'll get an original insider experience.

Quick Overview

Date	Location	Accommodation	Travel	Meals provided/ arranged by EL
Ulaanbaatar				
Day to suit you	Discover Ulaanbaatar City Walking Tour	Your own choice of accommodation	Free transfer	Local lunch and welcome drink
Altai				
Day One	Fly Ulgii Altai Kazakh eagle hunter homestay	With Asker family	Up to on hour transfer time to Chinggis Khan Airport 130km on dirt road	D * other meals depending on flight time
Day Two & Three	Riding with eagle hunters	With Asker family	-	B/L/D
Day Four	Ulaankhuus Kazakh eagle hunter homestay	With Bashakhan family	190km on dirt road	B/L/D
Day Five & Six	Riding	With Bashakhan family	-	B/L/D
Day Seven (Contingency Day)	Ulgii Embroidery Lesson	At the home of our Kazakh fixer - with Jako	60km on dirt road	B/L/D
Ulaanbaatar				
Day Eight	Domestic flight back to UB	Your own choice of accommodation	Up to on hour transfer time from Chinggis Khan Airport	B * other meals depending on flight time



Online map - https://www.tripline.net/trip/Riding_With_Eagle_Hunters_Winter_-_9-Days_Mongolian_tailor-made_experience-6222364341611013804CD84B99F3D7C2

Winter is a quintessential Mongolian season. It is cold, very cold, but the cold is an important part of what makes Mongolia and its landscapes extraordinary at this time of year. For all of our winter trips, we provide traditional felt boots, hand-made goat skin blankets and can provide winter deels as well. You'll spend most nights in a ger - warming yourself by the stove. The night skies more than make up for the challenge of the temperatures. Winter in Mongolia is a remarkable experience - especially as the Mongolians you meet will be very proud to welcome foreign visitors in wintertime.

Day To Day

Day to suit you

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 Nagoon 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
-

Day One

Fly Ulgii or Khovd | Altai | Kazakh Eagle Hunter Homestay



The Asker family

Transfer through Ulgii - stopping for a hot shower - before you head to the small community of Altai district - in the south of Bayan Ulgii Province.

Altai is a remarkable location - deep on the Chinese border. Your destination is the winter pasture of Kazakh herder and eagle hunter Asker (left) and his wife Ahgul. What makes this family so special is that they have one son (Nargulan - left) and five daughters - Ahjakar, Ardagul, Aijarin, Jakarke and Aigerim. The oldest of which, together with Nargulan, are also training to eagle hunters. This delightful family will be your hosts as you spend time in the company of their son and daughters.

Don't try to find the location in a guidebook ... you won't. But, the lush alpine meadows, the open plains, the dense forests, the high snowy peaks and the crystal-clear rivers and lakes are worth the effort.

There is nothing planned as everyone is different in what they like to do and not planing in advance leads to a more respectful and naturally Kazakh experience. But there's plenty of flexibility and options including learning more about the way of life or even a great horse trek or full day hike into the landscapes of the interior in the company of Aigerim or one of her sisters.

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Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Homestay. A felt mat on the floor in the traditional clay house of the Asker family. Asian style long drop outside toilet. No showers.
 - **Meals:** D * other meals depending on flight time
 - **Travel:** Up to one hour transfer to Chinggis Khan Airport and roughly 130km on dirt road (approx 4 hours driving time). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual but depend on road and weather conditions. If the flight is into Khovd then it will be 280km on dirt & asphalt road (approx 5 hours driving time not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual but depend on road and weather conditions.
 - **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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Day Two & Three

Riding With Eagle Hunters



Eagle-hunting is only done during the winter months when the snow cover helps the birds spot fleeing prey – it also when the prey such as Corsac Foxes have thickest winter coats that are used to make warm clothing. The hunters usually take a younger family member with them to help flush out the game.

These days are left entirely flexible. Out here, all schedules go out of the window. You're on nomad time, and the daily activities depend on your host family, the eagle hunter, and the weather conditions. Days are spent trekking in the mountains on foot, or heading out on horseback. You'll witness the

Meeting the eagle huntress (es) of Mongolia



You've probably heard of Aisholpan (the main star of the documentary *The Eagle Huntress*). However, you may not have heard of Aikerim or Ahkelik. They are also young eagle huntresses and have been training and hunting with their eagles as long as Aisholpan ... just they had no documentary made about them.

We are proud that we work with all three and their families. Yes, they are eagle hunters and the subject of many media images. But they are also young women who enjoy going to school and meeting with their friends. They are very sociable young women and like to meet people from other cultures and countries.

At EL all of our trip assistants (guides) are Mongolian women and we believe that seeing women in independent positions is surely one of the best ways to inspire younger girls within the rural communities of Mongolia - including the eagle huntresses - and to let them understand that they can do the same. What I love is that eagle hunting has allowed both these young women to become courageous whilst at the same time teaching them the strength of perseverance as they continue to overcome obstacles such as centuries of tradition.

However, whether you get to meet them will depend on their schooling - schooling is important to their future and we like to support rather than impose. But, you'll be part of their household and therefore part of their daily life. Another way of supporting the local families we work with is by allowing their sons or daughters to accompany on any day hikes or horse treks. It helps to create a space where traditional Kazakh knowledge can be passed from older to younger generations, as it always has been. This helps keep it alive, in a real, breathing way for the future. It also makes for a great informal and relaxed day out ... like an extended family picnic. Expect selfies and jumping photos as well.

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Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Homestay. A felt mat on the floor in the traditional clay house of the Asker family. Asian style long drop outside toilet. No showers.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** -
-

To witness eagle hunting there are a few options available to you depending on your level of fitness. You can stay with the vehicle and drive round to a viewing spot below the action using binoculars. (You're not expected to just wait in the vehicle - you're free to explore as well). Or, travel by horse with the hunters but you must be a confident rider and happy with heights. The ground will be rocky and uneven and the horse may at times slip. Alternatively, walk to the high spot where the eagle hunters will release the eagle. With either the horse or the walking option you may not see much of the actual hunt but it's remarkable to be alongside the hunters as they release the eagle.



As Kazakh culture dictates, they are warm and generous hosts and this image shows the incredible table that awaits visitors at each home. At some point during your time in Ulgii you will try 'Besbarmak', a dish consisting of boiled horse or mutton. This is one of the most popular Kazakh dishes and is also called 'five fingers' because of the way it is eaten - using your hands.

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Day Four

Ulaankhuus | Kazakh Eagle Hunter Homestay



Stop in Ulgii to have a hot shower at the local town shower house - just as each of the family members that host you do. Then transfer to through the Altai landscapes to the small community of Ulaankhuus. In this river valley, the Kazakh eagle hunter Bashahan and his family have their winter home where you'll be warmly welcomed like old friends and you'll share their home with them.

Spend the rest of the day experiencing the way of life of the family in the stunning setting of their winter home where you can spend time with the family experiencing their rural way of life including spending time with Bashakhan's wife and daughter-in-law - Jamalgan and Tolhyn - both are talented embroiders and will show you the skill behind this ancient tradition.

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Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Homestay. A felt mat on the floor in the traditional clay house of the Bashakhan family. Asian style long drop outside toilet. No showers.
- **Meals:** B/L/D
- **Travel:** Roughly 190km on dirt and asphalt road (approx 5 hours driving time). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual but depend on road and weather conditions

Hunting With Eagles

The Kazakh eagle hunters only hunt in the winter months (early November through to February) as they hunt specifically for the winter coat of the prey of their eagles. We do not arrange contrived experiences where live prey is pre-captured, held and then released on purpose for our guests to be able to photograph the experience. We will never arrange any artificial experiences as they damage the culture, the way of life or wildlife itself.

For those concerned about the welfare of the eagles, the Kazakh eagle hunters have a respectful yet practical approach to their eagles – they have a close connection with their eagles – they are virtually family members although it is sometimes hard for outsiders to recognise this. The eagles are released back into the wild after about ten seasons so that they can breed. Once released, the birds are observed to make sure they successfully

Day Five & Six

Riding With Eagle Hunters



Both Bashakhan and Asker have an incredibly close connection with their eagles, they are virtually family members. Hunting with their eagles is also part of the identity of each hunter. You'll have two days hunting with Bashakhan or with his adults sons Tileukjan or Serikjan - all are eagle hunters - and you'll see that hunting with their eagles is a practice that the hunters have had to learn - building a relationship of trust with their eagle. As you join them with their eagles you will start to understand that it is the communication between the hunter and eagle, which is key to a successful working relationship. But, as well as experiencing the unique relationship between the hunters and their eagles you'll also experience traditional horsemanship and other aspects of the Kazakh culture.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Homestay. A felt mat on the floor in the traditional clay house of the Bashakhan family. Asian style long drop outside toilet. No showers.
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
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Day Seven

Ulgii (Contingency day)



Travel back to Ulgii where you will be hosted by our Kazakh translator Jako and her family.

Ulgii is a predominantly Kazakh city where a Muslim influence is widespread, from street signs to clothes and food, and gives the town its diverse atmosphere. As well as spending time at the family home do as the locals do and visit the market where you can purchase some locally made wool and embroidery crafts and take in the view from Ulgii's 'Zaisan' - always popular with local families. Also consider the surprisingly interesting local museum.

And for those that think why bother visiting Ulgii?... remember, for each of the families you live with, Ulgii is part of their way of life ... they use it for shopping, for meeting friends, for attending school or visiting the doctor. It's as much part of their life as hunting with eagles is.



Meet Halmira

Halmira was widowed when her youngest child was just two. A mother of five, Halmira survived financially by creating traditional Kazakh embroidery. However, apart from local sales she has never really had an outlet for her remarkable skill ... until now. With Halmira, her home is her workshop. Self taught, Halmira uses her own motifs as well as more traditional designs for the Kazakh embroidery and wall hangings she hand makes. She works freehand but uses hand made stencils. For those that wish to, we arrange for you to spend time at the home of Halmira learning this incredible skill.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** A mattress on the floor of the family living room. Outside toilet. 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:** Roughly to 60km on dirt and asphalt road (approx 2 hours driving time not including stops spread throughout the day). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual but depend on road and weather conditions
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During your time in Bayan Ulgii Province you will have the services of a Kazakh translator working alongside your EL trip assistant. This is not a professional translator. This is either Jako or her husband Baurjan - local Kazakhs who can speak Mongolian (and depending on who works on your specific trip, a little English) and who supplement their income by working as translators specifically for EL. It could be that your questions have to be translated from English into Mongolian and then into Kazakh (and the answers vice versa). It might at times test your patience but just relax and enjoy being with Jako and Baurjan who have become part of the EL family.

Day Eight

Ulaanbaatar



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

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Of your own choice
 - **Meals:** Breakfast * other meals depending on flight time
 - **Travel:** Short transfer to Ulgii Airport. If flying from Khovd then rough 220km on dirt and asphalt road (approx 4 hours driving time not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual but depend on road and weather conditions. Up to 1 hour transfer time from Chinggis Khan airport
 - **Flight Departure and Arrival Time TBC. Weight restriction 15kg (10kg check-in and 5kg hand luggage). Hand luggage 'officially' restricted to 1-piece. Excess baggage charges are between \$4-\$7 per kilo depending on the route. Please note that the domestic airline may change the flight time schedule closer to the day of departure**
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Pricing And Group Size

- For all of our low season experiences we offer a sliding price scale. We appreciate your holiday funds are precious and so the more people that book so the price comes down and everyone benefits with **discounts available for children (get in touch for details)**. In addition, we appreciate our guests have been financially impacted by Covid-19 so for 2021, we are offering all our trips at our 2020 prices.

Group Size - Minimum of two. Maximum of six. Minimum of two required for a guaranteed departure or pay a surcharge for one traveller.

- 2 Guests US\$ 2375 pp + domestic flight of approximately 550,000 MNT pp
 - 3-4 Guests US\$ 1760 pp + domestic flight of approximately 550,000 MNT pp
 - 5 Guests US\$ 1745 pp + domestic flight of approximately 550,000 MNT pp
 - 6 Guests US\$ 1575 pp + domestic flight of approximately 550,000 MNT pp
- The above prices include a 15% discount pp as a thank you for choosing to travel with EL outside of the main season. We are keen to extend the season for the benefit of our Mongolian team and the rural families and Mongolian businesses we work with - to make tourism less concentrated around peak season (July) and to help the income of the people we work with be more evenly distributed. Thank you for being part of that :-)

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.

Carbon Offsets

- Although carbon offsets are far from 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 to buy Plan Vivo Foundation carbon certificates which are used to support the Plan Vivo Mongolian Nomad Project - working in partnership with the Mongolian Society of Range Management. Check our website for more details.

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!

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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 In Winter

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. 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. Also, winter trips can sometimes be susceptible to unforeseen problems which might result in last minute itinerary changes. Things will not happen on a perfect schedule and conditions will be very rugged - you will be required to step outside your circle of comfort. Please base your expectations on this important point. You will be expected to be flexible and patient and bring with you your willingness to participate and your sense of adventure and humour.

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. Also remember that sunrise is not until around 0830 and sunset can be as early as 1630 so this will also impact on the day.

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 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. 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. Although the temperatures can scare at first sight, it is a very dry cold and with good clothes, -25°C in Mongolia could be compared with -5°C in Europe. However, the concept of cold is very subjective! We need you to be responsible for yourself. Do not try to put a brave face on it. It is not a competition to see who is the strongest - remember your EL team and the Mongolians you will meet are used to the winter weather conditions. You may not be.

Accommodation - 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 - 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.

Accommodation Winter

- Facilities will be more limited than you have maybe experienced on previous winter trips elsewhere.
- In towns, accommodation is heated through a central piping system which gets turned on in late September and turned off in May. You may find the rooms overly warm and stuffy but there is typically no thermostat so the only option is to open a window.
- Apart from in the towns, your accommodation will be in family provided accommodation where there won't be hot showers and the toilets will be OUTSIDE Asian style long drops. All family accommodation will be prepared for winter and heated by a stove but you're probably used to an insulated house with central heating. There is a substantial difference.

Riding With Eagle Hunters
8 Days & option of free city walking tour of Ulaanbaatar

21st Century Mongolia



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

Our trips focus on 21st Century Mongolia - we try to provide a 'realistic' overview rather than that portrayed by guidebooks and other tour companies. To just want to experience the life of the traditional nomadic way of life is to ignore a majority of the population. We're proud of the long-term local community partnerships we have formed with all spectrums of Mongolian society - from a philanthropist in Ulaanbaatar, to female Kazakh eagle huntresses and also the Tsaatan community. However, Mongolians live in the cities of Darkhan and Erdenet. They also live in the other provincial centres as well as the smaller town and rural communities. There are teachers and Christians and those with disabilities and policemen and musicians and military personnel and accountants and miners and geologists and drivers and shop owners and construction workers and street cleaners - they are all Mongolians.

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

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

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

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

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

Jess