



RIDE WORLD WIDE MONGOLIA 2024

RIDE INFORMATION

Mongolia is one of the world's last great frontiers with a natural environment that is amongst the most pristine left on the Asian continent. Although development is creeping forward, its fascinating ancient nomadic cultures are still largely untouched by western influence and its varying landscapes range from the vast, inhospitable Gobi desert of the south, to the alpine meadows, clear lakes, dense forests and rugged mountains of the north west. As the national symbol of Mongolia, the horse plays a central role in local life and provides a wonderful way to get to know the country and its people. Mongolian folk songs are still sung to the echo of horses' galloping hooves, many festivals are celebrated with horse races and games, and the much loved national drink of 'airag' is made from fermented mares' milk. These rides in Mongolia are organised through long and well-established contacts within the country. Their local knowledge and understanding, combined with an awareness of the expectations of western travellers, ensure you are in excellent hands to experience this extraordinary land - although anyone considering a visit to Mongolia should remember that it is still very much a developing country in terms of service and infrastructure, particularly outside the main centre, Ulaanbaatar and delays and changes to even the most carefully planned itinerary are, unfortunately, possible. Although your local guides will do their utmost to ensure your trip runs smoothly, if you plan to visit Mongolia you must be aware that flexibility, an open mind and a willingness to accept local standards and local expectations - which will not match those you are used to at home - are prerequisites!



DATES

Several set departure rides are planned in 2024 exploring the Hovsgol, Altai, Khentii, Terelj and Karakorum regions. Please see departure dates overleaf. Other departure dates and tailor-made itineraries for private groups can also be arranged on request. Contact us for availability and to chat about the possible options.

HORSES

Mongolia retains one of the last horse-based cultures in the world and horses are still commonly used for transport. Mongolian horses are small - around 13 hands - but they are strong, extremely agile and used to long hours of hard work. Their stamina and agility is outstanding and they are tough and extremely sure footed over rocky, **cont.**

HORSES cont.

even snow-covered mountains. They are generally unshod and are trained in a different style to our horses, although they are easy and fun to ride and will willingly canter for miles across open grassy meadows.

TACK

Australian stock saddles or English-style saddles are used rather than the extremely hard local Mongolian variety - but please note that tack (including the quality of leather) is fairly basic as little can be bought locally. An English-speaking guide will ride with you and helpers and horsemen are on hand to look after the horses at all times.

RIDING

The trips vary in length and number of riding days but there is generally between about 4 and 7 hours in the saddle on each riding day, either riding from camp to camp with rest stops for lunch and to drink tea with the locals or on some days, riding out from a base camp. Hours can be varied and tailored to suit on privately organised trips. When moving camp, luggage is transported by vehicles, or by pack-horses if vehicular access is limited. An introduction to the horses and to the Mongolian riding technique will be given early in the trip.

WEIGHT LIMIT

There is no strict weight limit, the horses are small but extremely tough and will cope with riders of up to 90kg. If you are over 83kg (13 stone) you should contact us to discuss.



PACE

Although small, Mongolian horses are tough and keen and all itineraries include plenty of chances for long canters and fun, energetic riding, although the overall pace of the ride will also be governed by the terrain of the area you are in. Generally, riding will be faster overall in the Hovsgol and Karakorum areas where the landscape is quite open and it is grassy underfoot. The Altai is more mountainous with some steeper, rocky slopes and rough ground so the pace here is usually slower. The Khentii and Terelj regions include alpine meadow with soft (sometimes quite boggy) ground but also quite a bit of forest, so rides here can also be slower on the whole. The pace can, of course, be varied to suit the ability of a group, terrain allowing.

RIDING EXPERIENCE

It is not essential to be a very experienced rider to join one of these trips as the Mongolian style of riding is quite different to our own and everyone will be learning a little. The horses are small, easy and well behaved to ride, inspiring confidence. However riding hours are generally quite long and you will definitely enjoy your trip much more if you are saddle fit. If you have not done much riding you need to prepare well with regular practise before you go or put up with some hardship as new muscles are discovered! We highly recommend that anyone planning to join a ride puts in several hours of regular riding before they go to get used to the time in the saddle. The Khentii Ride and the adventurous Altai & Valley of Great Lakes Ride require a slightly higher level of horsemanship, as they include some tricky, varied terrain and the latter particularly has several consecutive days with long hours of riding and little back up.

TERRAIN

Mongolia is a land-locked country of grass-covered steppe, desert and high mountains. The Altai mountains in the west reach 14,600 feet and have snow-covered peaks year round. The southern third of the country is covered by the Gobi desert, whilst much of the rest of the country is grassy plain and only about 10% is forested. **cont.**

TERRAIN cont.

Several of the routes followed originate from those used by local nomads when moving from winter to summer camps and the terrain changes along the route. In general, the areas around Lake Hovsgol (Mongolia's 'Blue Pearl') and Lake Uvs (Altai) are alpine, with meadows, clear streams and some forested valleys. The Khentii and Terelj region is also forested with larch and birch as well as open grassy valleys with some quite boggy terrain. The Karakorum area is one of open grassy steppe, dotted with tents (Gers) of the nomadic people, although some of the route followed on the Karakorum Ride is through the forested Orkhon valley.

WILDLIFE

Mongolia is home to a wide variety of wildlife with 139 species of mammal including Siberian ibex, argali sheep, marmots, elk, moose, roe and musk deer as well as wolf, brown bear and the rare and elusive snow leopard. It also has 450 recorded bird species (331 migratory and 119 resident year round) including White-naped, Japanese, Red-crowned and Demoiselle Cranes, Oriental, White and Black storks, Great Bustard, Relict Gull, Swan Goose, Asiatic Dowitcher and many birds of prey such as Golden and Steppe Eagle, Saker Falcon, Marsh Harrier and the Upland Buzzard. When riding you are most likely to see wildlife in the Hovsgol, remote Altai and perhaps Khentii regions where there are few local people - although remember that larger mammals are always elusive and hard to spot, hiding away in the mountains and thick forest.



ACCOMMODATION

Whilst staying in the capital Ulaanbaatar, accommodation is usually at the Bayangol Hotel, a fairly large (about 200 rooms), modern international style hotel (roughly equivalent to an international 4* standard) which is centrally located, clean, comfortable and has several bars, international restaurants and currency exchange facilities. When in the countryside, accommodation will either be in mobile tented camps or in traditionally styled 'Ger' camps. When mobile camps are used, small, lightweight two man tents are provided for sleeping (twin share although we will try to provide a single tent for anyone travelling alone), with sleeping mats (you need your own warm sleeping bag). Where possible a back-up vehicle transports tents and equipment and the camp will be set up ahead by staff, with a large mess tent for meals and a separate tent with a chemical or long-drop loo. Sometimes (particularly on the Khentii, Karakorum, Altai and Hovsgol Rides) when or if part of the route is inaccessible to vehicles, pack-horses transport equipment and then, as space is limited, only the small sleeping tents are carried and meals and loos are open air. Cooking equipment may also be more restricted, so the variety and quality of food can be more limited. There are no shower facilities at mobile camps although they are usually set up by a river where there is plenty of clean water for washing and a small amount can be heated on the fire in the mornings and evenings for shaving etc. 'Gers', dome yurt-like tents, with latticed walls covered in felt and **cont.**

ACCOMMODATION cont.

canvas, are the traditional home of the nomadic people and provide basic but comfortable accommodation. Traditionally Ger accommodation is shared (everyone sleeps in the Ger) and there are usually wooden framed beds, a dresser and a wood-burning stove in the centre to take the chill out of cool nights. The Ger Camps used on these rides are in effect hotels that offer Gers rather than hotel rooms. The number of Gers in in these camps varies (eg there are about 12 standard twin / double Gers and 2 or 3 deluxe / family Gers at the Tuul Riverside Ger camp) and the camps also have washing facilities with hot and cold running water and flush loos (either in a separate block or occasionally attached to each individual Ger) as well as a restaurant / dining hall.

MEALS

All meals are included whilst on the rides. Although food is definitely not one of Mongolia's famous attractions, with many items we are used to simply unavailable, a great effort is made and the best available produce is used on these trips to try and ensure you eat well. At hotels and Ger camps there is usually a choice of menu, with both Mongolian style dishes that include a lot of meat and some European style dishes, available. In mobile camps, food is prepared by a Mongolian cook trained in western style cooking so there is more variety. Mongolia is a meat eating country, with mutton and beef most frequently served, often as a stew with dumplings. Fish such as lennox (a relative of the trout) are plentiful in lakes and rivers and, if caught, will be freshly cooked for you although the locals rarely eat fish. Fresh vegetables are limited and rare outside the capital, but vegetarians can usually be catered for provided plenty of advance notice is given. Alcohol is not included but you are free to bring your own - Mongolian vodka and airag is readily available but should be drunk with care!



WEATHER

Winters in Mongolia are severe with temperatures dropping as low as - 40°C but in April the spring thaw starts. May to August is the mild Mongolian summer. In May and June average daytime temperatures in Ulaanbaatar are around 13 to 17°C, rising to around 20°C, sometimes 25°C in July and August, the warmest months and dropping sharply again in September. Days in mid-summer are generally warm and sunny but nights are cool, particularly at altitude where it can be cold. July and August, although the warmest months, are also the rainy season and the weather can be unpredictable with blue skies one minute and rain the next. Showers are, however, usually fairly brief.



WHAT TO BRING

We will send you a list when you book.

ITINERARIES

The following are summaries of the different itineraries offered and see below for day by day detailed itinerary for the Karakorum Ride. Please contact us for full itineraries of other rides. Please note that itineraries are only examples of what is planned and the day-by-day arrangements and routes may be varied by your guides in their discretion if weather or other local conditions require.



Khentii Ride - A 14 night itinerary that includes a linear riding route taking 10 days, moving camp most nights and using pack horses to carry camp equipment for much of the journey. The ride explores the remote and beautiful Khentii region, with its thickly forested valleys where bears, wolves, red deer and moose still exist (although are difficult to see!). It is also the area in which Genghis Khan is said to have been born and his body is rumoured to have been returned and buried here when he died - although no-one knows exactly where. The trip starts and ends with nights in Ulaanbaatar.

Mongol Ride - A 10 night itinerary, starting and ending in Ulaabaatar, with riding on 7 days in the Terelj and Khentii region, the homeland of Genghis Khan. Landscapes are similar to the Khentii Ride although the area you ride through is not quite as remote and the route includes more interaction with local Nomadic people, a great chance to experience their hospitality and learn about their lives, than the Khentii Ride. Pack-horses may be used for some of the trip, depending on weather conditions (vehicle back up is normally possible). One date includes a days visit to the Nadaam Festival.

Lake Hovsgol and the Reindeer People - A 16 night trip, starting and ending in Ulaabatar, with riding on 8 days (option on other days) in the northwest of Mongolia. This spectacular region just to the north-west of Lake Hovsgol - Mongolia's Blue Pearl - is renowned for its high mountains covered in thick taiga forest, crystal clear lakes, rivers that teem with taimen and lennox and lush open valleys. It is also in this part of Mongolia that the Tsaatan minority group live, herdsman who rely on Reindeer for transport, riding and food. There are now only 30 or 40 Tsaatan herding families living their traditional century-old lifestyle in one of the most remote and difficult areas of the country to reach. This trip includes an internal flight to Moron in north-west Mongolia then, after driving into the Dharkad Valley to meet local horseman, a ride for 4 days to visit some of the few remaining Tsaatan families at one of their mountain camps. After returning to base camp for a day's rest, the riding section continues on a 4 day linear route through Lake Hovsgol National Park to end at a Ger camp on the lake shore. There are usually two dates for this ride, one of which includes two days at the Nadaam Festival in Ulaanbaatar.



Altai & Valley of the Great Lakes - This relatively new program is for an adventurous 18 day trip, with riding on 11 days, visiting the far west corner of Mongolia. After two nights in Ulaabaatar and a flight to Ulaangom, the capital of the Uvs region, you will be driven to Lake Uvs, Mongolia's largest lake. From here, the trip follows a linear route, riding into the Kharkhiraa Turgen Mountains, before finally ending close to Ulgii, near the base of the Altai Mountains which border Siberian Russia and Kazakhstan. During the riding section, pack horses or camels will be used to carry luggage and equipment for much of the time as there is no vehicle access and you will cross a variety of terrain including grassy steppe, some fast flowing rivers and rough, rocky mountain passes. A real adventure ending with a flight from Ulgii back to Ulaanbaatar.



Karakorum Ride (with & without Nadaam Festival) - example itinerary

The Khangai Mountain range in Central Mongolia is drained by some of Mongolia's mightiest rivers. The most famous, the Orkhon has been a centre for thousands of years for the nomadic peoples who graze their animals on the Steppes of Arkhangai and the slopes of the Khangai Mountains. Their lifestyle has changed little in the last millennium - they still herd sheep, horses and yaks, protecting them against harsh weather and predators such as wolves, and relying on the Orkhon River for water. This journey aims to give some insight into their lives and the local horsemen who ride with you will give you the opportunity to visit the yurts where their nomadic friends and family live. (If joining the Nadaam Festival date, after riding you will witness the celebrations and displays of local sports and contests, including the famous horse race of 20 miles in which the jockeys are mostly children).

Day 1 - Arrive Ulaanbaatar and transfer to the Bayangol Hotel (or similar). On your way you will pass a large suburban area, where traditional nomadic felt tents can be found next to Western styled family houses. Ulaanbaatar, the energetic capital of Mongolia, is home to more than one million people, nearly half of the Mongolian population. Migration is a tremendous challenge to this fast-growing city. A day of sightseeing, including the Bogd Khan Palace, which is a series of beautiful traditional buildings in which the last King of Mongolia resided. It is now a museum displaying artefacts and costumes associated with the King as well as his collection of European furniture and stuffed animals. Next visit the Narantuul Market also known as "Black Market" - this is a good place to pick up a traditional Mongolian clothing & boots, horse-riding gear, shamanic and Buddhist ritual items, and cashmere products. Lunch at the hotel and in the evening a welcome dinner at a restaurant. Overnight hotel in Ulaanbaatar. (L,D)

Day 2 - After breakfast in the hotel you will begin driving to the west across wide-open steppe with rolling hills in the background, heading to the ancient capital of Karakorum. For 30 years under Genghis Khan, this town was capital of the largest empire the world has ever seen, which in 1279 covered nearly all of Asia and Europe (Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis, moved the capital to Beijing). There is little left of the former capital these days, but the walls of the massive Erdene Zuu Monastery, built in 1586, still stand. Other temples suffered damage under communist purges of the 20th century, as they attempted to eradicate the 60 temples that housed nearly 10,000 Buddhist monks. In the afternoon visit the Erdene Zuu Monastery, the most ancient surviving Buddhist monastery in Mongolia situated near the town of Kharkorin and part of the World Heritage Site entitled 'Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape'. After visiting Karakorum Museum continue driving to Orkhon Valley reach to Nariin Am where camp is set up. Meet the local horseman before dinner & the night in camp. (B,L,D)

ITINERARIES cont.

Day 3 - After breakfast you will be matched to your horse, saddles will be selected, and the ride begins. Today you will ride to a monastery situated at the top of Tuvshin Mountain, where the first religious King of Mongolia - the Ondor Gegeen Zanabazar - worked and lived. Then continue riding along the Orkhon river until you reach your overnight camping spot next to the river. Camp is moved ahead of you by back up vehicles. Dinner and night in camp. (B,L,D)

Day 4 - Ride along the Orkhon Valley to the Orkhon waterfall. This valley is known as the 'cradle of the Mongolian civilisation' as many of Mongolia's ancient monuments lie within its borders. The Orkhon Waterfall marks the half-way point of the Orkhon River, the longest river in Mongolia and the area around it is green and forested. Make camp near the Orkhon waterfall. (B,L,D)

Day 5 - Either a rest from riding with a chance to walk in the area of the Orkhon Waterfall or perhaps a morning ride in this picturesque area. This part of Mongolia is well known for producing the best airag, or fermented mares' milk, in the country. Locals love to challenge you to a singing game, the loser having to consume a whole bowl of the airag, so beware when visiting local families! Night camping by the Orkhon waterfall. (B,L,D)

Days 6 to 9 - Refreshed after a day relaxing in camp, you are back on the horses today. The packhorses are loaded by the horsemen - you will be amazed about how much these small, sturdy horses can carry but you are asked to take as little as possible with you on this part of the trip! The riding today becomes more challenging with obstacles to negotiate as you set off on narrow trails through forested mountains, heading into more remote areas up to altitudes of 2200m (7260ft). You ride through beautiful pristine nature towards your main destination known as Eight Lakes. Overnight in camp on the lake shore. On the following day ride between the beautiful lakes, with some exploration on foot, enjoying the birdlife and wild flowers. The Naiman Lake area was formed by volcanic eruption in the late Neogene and you still can see lava rocks on the barren mountain tops. On the 4th day ride on to Shurangin Tsohio, where Nomadic families lives. Here the vehicles and support team are waiting and camp will be set up. A farewell dinner with horseman. (B,L,D)

Day 10 - Breakfast and set off driving back towards Ulaanbataar to Khogno Khan close to Erdene Khamba Monastery which was built in a sacred valley, according to Mongolian Buddhist traditions. It is situated north of the Elsen Tasarhai sandunes in the Khogno Khan Uul Mountains. Today there are only ruins - but the monastery had two sections: the lower one called the Zaluu Khiid, or the "Novice Temple" and the upper one called the Uvgun Khiid, or the "Elder's Temple", which was built on top of the mountain. Time to explore before making camp nearby. Dinner and night in camp. (B,L,D)

Day 11 - After breakfast set off driving again to Hustai National Park, where you search for the world's last surviving subspecies of the wild horse (*Equus Ferus*, Przewalski's horse) or known as 'takhi' here. Poaching and livestock overgrazing decimated once large herds and after sightings ceased in the 1960s, conservationists pronounced the takhi extinct in the wild. Fortunately small numbers of these distinctive Mongolian horses were living in captivity and scientists collaborated internationally to breed and reintroduce the species into its native habitat. The reintroduction of the Przewalski's horse has been a success, with a free-ranging population of around 400. After Lunch drive to Tuul Riverside Lodge in Maikhan Tolgoi. This is an intimate and fully sustainable traditional Mongolian ger camp at the foot of the Bayanzurkh Mountain with beautiful surroundings that invite exploration! Dinner & night in Gers at Tuul Riverside Lodge. (B,L,D)



ITINERARIES cont.

Day 12 - Breakfast and a full day at the lodge. Your nomadic neighbour will arrive with his ox cart to take you for a drive! There will be a chance to test your archery skills - legendary for their prowess with the bow, Mongols perfected this ancient practice with bows constructed from wood, animal sinew, bone, and glue made from fish bladders in a process that could take up to a year. A stone inscription dating from the 13th century claims that one of Genghis Khan's generals hit a target from a distance of a third of a mile! In the evening the traditional Mongolian dish of Khorhog will be prepared. Mutton will be cooked slowly in a huge, metal urn with vegetables, water, and most importantly hot stones from the flame, creating a rich broth. The day ends around the camp fire, gazing at the stars - unforgettable on a clear night. (B,L,D)

Day 13 - After breakfast at the lodge and transfer to the airport for your flight home. (B)

Or, for the combined Karakorum Ride with Nadaam Festival:

Day 11 (10th July) - After breakfast drive to drive to Hui Doloon Khudag which is outskirts of Ulaanbaatar to watch the famous horse race. The horse racing tradition is said to date back to the Bronze Ages and is a favourite amongst the herdsman. The horses are categorized according to age and the distance of the race is determined by this and may range from 15 to 35km. After the race drive to your hotel in Ulaanbataar for dinner and the night. (B,L,D)

Day 12 (11th July) - Breakfast and Naadam Festival celebrations in Ulaanbaatar, starting with the ceremony in the main square and then watching the wrestling and archery competitions. In the late afternoon drive to Tuul Riverside Lodge. Dinner & night in Gers at Tuul Riverside Lodge. (B,L,D)

Day 13 (12th July) - Same as day 12 of standard Karakorum Ride



Day 14 (Monday 13th July) - Breakfast at the lodge then transfer to the airport for your flight home. (B)

DATES & PRICES 2024

Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are now quoted in USD. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the USD/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.

Khentii Ride (14 nights) - 11th to 25th June

USD 2650 per person, (9-12 riders); **USD 3050** (6-8); **USD 3490** (4-5); **USD 3975** (2-3);
(single supplement - USD 280)

Lake Hovsgol & the Reindeer people (16 nights) - 2nd to 18th August

USD 3750 per person, (9-12 riders); **USD 4350** (6-8); **USD 5090** (4-5); **USD 5350** (2-3);
(single supplement - USD 320)

Karakorum Ride (12 nights) - 15th to 27th May, 3rd to 15th June, 17th to 29th July,
29th August to 10th September

USD 2375 per person, (9-12 riders); **USD 2750** (6-8); **USD 3000** (4-5); **USD 3125** (2-3);
(single supplement - USD 230)

Karakorum Ride with Nadaam Festival (13 nights) - 30th June to 13th July

USD 2800 per person, (9-12 riders); **USD 3250** (6-8); **USD 3590** (4-5); **USD 3775** (2-3);
(single supplement - USD 320)

cont.

DATES & RATES cont.

Mongol Ride (10 nights) - 29th May to 8th June, 19th to 29th July, 18th to 28th August, 19th to 29th September
USD 2000 per person, (9-12 riders); **USD 2300** (6-8); **USD 2600** (4-5); **USD 2900** (2-3);
(single supplement - USD 210)

Altai & Valley of the Great Lakes (17 nights) - 15th July to 1st August
USD 4000 per person, (9-12 riders); **USD 4375** (6-8); **USD 5000** (4-5); **USD 5325** (2-3);
(single supplement USD 250)

Prices Rates quoted above are per person. They **INCLUDE** 10, 12, 13, 14, 16 or 17 nights (as indicated) accommodation based on two people sharing, all transfers and internal airfares within the itinerary, all riding, food and equipment and the services of local and an English speaking guide. Single rooms can normally be arranged if requested but a single supplement is charged.

Prices **DO NOT** include International flights to Ulaanbaatar and taxes, your bar bill, personal travel / medical insurance (which you must have), any visa fees, personal extras at hotels, nor any tips you might wish to leave.



FLIGHTS & TRAVEL INFORMATION

The meeting point is Ulaanbataar (UBN) and most flights from Europe are either via Istanbul, South Korea, Frankfurt or Beijing. You can fly to Beijing from London with British Airways and then onto UBN with MIAT (Mongolian Airlines) or Air China. MIAT have flights from Frankfurt to UBN, and Turkish Airlines have flights from Istanbul - although flights may not be every day. Airfares vary with the airline and season but fares with Turkish are from around £800 Economy return including taxes. Flights with British Airways and MIAT or Air China via Beijing, or with MIAT via Frankfurt, are usually a little more, from around £1500 per person economy return. If you fly via Beijing, you will often have to spend at least one night there, either on the outward or return leg, as flights do not always connect straight through to UBN. Please note that during peak times (eg Nadaam Festival) flights can be substantially more expensive and availability is limited. Please call us for more information - we can book certain flights and can advise on other flight options. Our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213.



GENERAL VISA & HEALTH INFORMATION

(NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking)

Visas - British Passport holders no longer need to pre-arrange visas to visit Mongolia for stays of less than 30 days. This also applies to most EU passport holders. You can check requirements the Immigration of Mongolia at this link: <https://en.consul.mn/>

Health - No vaccinations are required as a condition of entry to Mongolia from the UK and Europe although The TravelHealthPro website (NaTHNaC) recommends most travellers are up to date with Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid and other routine vaccinations in accordance with the recommended UK schedule. Other vaccines may also be recommended according to your personal medical history and you should visit your GP or a travel clinic about 4 weeks before departure for advice.

(DRAFT 07/11/23)

