



## Camel Trek in East Gobi



Photo: Andrea Pregnan



Photo: Jan Wigsten



Photo: Axel Braunlich



Photo: Jan Wigsten



Photo: Haroldo Castro

On this trek you will explore the little travelled Ikh Nartiin Chuluu Nature Reserve in the eastern part of the Gobi desert. This diverse upland area, consisting of rock formations, grassland and desert steppe, is often hot and very dry. There is a population of approximately 1000 Argali sheep (*Ovis Ammon*), the largest species of wild mountain sheep in the world. Although there is no guarantee to see them, they are actually not that shy here. The rocky outcrops are home to about 200 Siberian Ibex (*Capra Sibirica*) as well. Sometimes herds of Mongolian Gazelle (*Procapra Gutturosa*) migrate through the area. The reserve also has a sizeable population of Eurasia's biggest vulture, the Cinereous vulture (*Aegypius Monacha*). We will set out towards the East Gobi on the Trans-Mongolian railway line. For three days we will explore this spectacular area on foot (If you are an experienced rider, a horse may be rented for you). We will use our seasonal IkhNart Rocks ger camp and, while on the trek, will set up our own private Wilderness Camp of gers (Mongolian yurts). All our luggage and equipment will be loaded on to camel carts in the same way as nomadic herders used to transport their belongings, when moving from one pasture to another. This kind of trip is what we have labeled a 'Nomadic Journey'. Herders come and go to the Ikh Nart area. As they are essentially reliant on pastures and any precipitation in the dry environment, they migrate a lot. The Gobi herders are very interesting, hospitable and hardy people .

### Day 1: To Ikh Nart and Mankhan Sands

At 08h00 pick up from your hotel in Ulaanbaatar and transfer directly to Ikh Nart Nature Reserve by travelling southeast over the grassland steppe, which gradually turns into more arid Gobi steppe. We'll reach Mankhan Sands, on the west edge of the Ikh Nart upland and pitch our Tentipi camp here.

### Day 2: Camel trek

Today we load your luggage and all provisions on to the camel carts and set out on our guided walk through the reserve. We firstly head out south, leaving the great views of the plains below behind us. It is a labyrinth of rock formations and it is easy to get lost. Keep your eyes peeled for wildlife such as Argali Sheep and Siberian Ibex. We will arrive at our remote cozy mobile ger camp at Elst, which has been set up ahead of time. The name Elst indicates this is an area of minor sand dunes here.

### Day 3: Elst area

We will remain in the ger camp at Elst for another night and explore this wild area of rock formations, sands and grasses, growing up to two meters high. There is also a small ephemeral (seasonal) lake, which sometimes has desert tadpole shrimps (*Triops spp.*), a relative of other tadpole shrimps found in the deserts of the Middle East and the south-western United States. The surroundings are rich in petroglyphs and rock art, and we may come across Argali Sheep and Siberian Ibex as we explore this dramatic area.



#### Day 4: Camel Trek

Today we again load our luggage on to the camel caravan and head east. Exploring fantastic petroglyphs as well as ancient graves from Hunnu, Turkic Khanate, imperial and Manchurian times. All layers of Mongolian archaeology are present. We will also come across the ruins of a temple, Orogui Temple which was sacked in the Stalinist purges of the 1937-38. Because of horrible stories of lamas being burnt alive inside, locals avoid the place. The monastery was a large complex of some 50+ structures. The major standing structure is a Buddhist temple, said to originate from the 17th century. There has been no archaeological survey why best not touch anything here. We continue northeast towards the Red Rock Wilderness Camp, the semi-permanent ger camp of the area. It is nicely designed at the edge of the Ikh Nart plateau.

#### Day 5: To Ulaanbaatar

At mid-morning we set out for our journey back to Ulaanbaatar by car or minibus. We will drive until the tarmac road, and further on we will visit some remote Buddha statues in the rock faces at Choiriin Bogd Mountain. It is a detour to the east from the ugly little Soviet built town of Choir, 80km away from camp. Choir is also a railway station along the Trans Mongolian Railway between Ulaanbaatar and China. We will have a picnic lunch. The drive back to the capital takes approximately 4½ hours.

#### Practicalities

**Transport:** On this tour, apart from the short drive to the starting point of our trek and back to the city we will not rely on any motor vehicle support. Instead we utilize traditional wooden carts, that Mongolian families occasionally still use, when moving from one pasture to another. Here we will travel by camel carts and camels.

**Accommodation:** The gers in our mobile camp equipped with foldable bed-cots and full bedding. There is no need to bring a sleeping bag. The showers and toilets are in traditional Mongolian tents. A Mongolian ger (yurt) will serve as mobile restaurant. For one night there will be spacious tentipi tents for accommodation. We trek in style!

**Staff:** An English speaking Mongolian guide will accompany the group at all times. There will also be a cook. In addition, local herdsman will be employed. They provide the camels, camel carts and will accompany us on the trek.

**Meals:** Our cook will prepare the meals. We pride ourselves in having excellent cooks adept at both western and Mongolian cooking on our trips. There is no problem accommodating vegetarians on our trips. We can usually buy fresh milk and yogurt from local herdsman.

**Riding Horses:** This tour doubles very well as horse riding trip. There will be an opportunity for experienced riders at the time of booking to order a saddled riding horse, with a horse-man to follow.

**Trip Extension:** We also offer fixed dated treks supported by Yak carts in the Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area and enjoy the beautiful wilderness of the Khentii Mountains. Or trek through the Central Mongolian Hangai region surrounded with eight pristine mountain lakes Naiman Nuur Trek with pack yaks, offering a stark contrast to the Ikh Nart Nature reserve.

**Additional:** We can organize hotel accommodation, city tours and transfers in Ulaanbaatar. Please make sure to arrive in Ulaanbaatar by the evening before as there will be a welcome dinner and trip briefing.

#### PRICE ex Ulaanbaatar:

2 - 8 members: **USD 1050 per person**

Single supplement (4n): **USD 680**

Rent of riding camel: **USD 140**

Private trip supplement:

2/4 members **USD 300 per trip**

5/up members no charge

Children: 0-2 years free. 3-12 years 25-50%.

Group discounts available on request for 4 persons or more.

**Includes:** Guide and all meals outside Ulaanbaatar. Camping equipment and all local transport.

**Excludes:** Beverages. Transfers and accommodation in Ulaanbaatar. Air or train tickets in and out Mongolia.

#### DATES 2018 ex Ulaanbaatar:

CML01: 16-20May (We/Su)

CML02: 26-30May (Sa/We)

CML03: 05-09Jun (Tu/Sa)

CML04: 15-19Jun (Fr/Tu)

CML05: 25-29Jun (Mo/Fr)

CML06: 05-09Jul (Th/Mo) Naadam opt

CML07: 12-16Jul (Th/Mo) Naadam opt

CML08: 22-26Jul (Su/Th)

CML09: 01-05Aug (We/Su) Danshig opt

CML10: 12-16Aug (Su/Th)

CML11: 22-26Aug (We/Su)

CML12: 01-05Sep (Sa/We)

CML13: 11-15Sep (Tu/Sa)

