



East Gobi Ride

On this new trip we explore the rich and unique landscapes of the Eastern Gobi on horseback. This is the closest you get to a safari experience in Mongolia. As we ride through the arid steppes and through a labyrinth of maze-like granite rock formations, we will come across game such as an estimated 1000 Argali Sheep (*Ovis ammon*), the world's largest wild sheep with impressive horns. Further about 200 Siberian Ibex (*Capra sibirica*) and sometimes Mongolian (*Procapra gutturosa*) and Goitred Gazelles (*Gazella subgutturosa*). And a fox every now and then. The area also abounds in prehistoric burial sites, petroglyphs and ruins of Buddhist monasteries, representing all layers of Mongolian archaeology. This horseback journey offers close encounters with Mongolian horsemen, nomadic people who have thus far been able to withstand modern pressures and lifestyles. There is no other nation in the world that depends on horses to such an extent. Mongolian horsemanship is famous and in many ways different than anywhere else. The herders keep their horses in a semi-wild condition, allowing them to graze freely in harem groups. During the harsh winter with extreme subzero temperatures, the horses fend for themselves and protect their foals against predators such as wolves. Fences or stables are virtually unknown. We will undertake this horse ride as a "Nomadic Journey", e.g. without vehicle support, in wild terrain. All our luggage will be loaded onto camel carts; even a ger (Mongolian yurt) will be carried to serve as our mobile restaurant. After a week of camping in spacious Tentipis we come to Nomadic Journeys' own IkhNart Rocks Ger Camp, a seasonal, low impact ger camp located on its own, at the edge of the reserve area.

Day 1: Ulaanbaatar

Upon your arrival in Ulaanbaatar you will be met by our horse guide, and transferred to your hotel. There will be a tour briefing and dinner.

Day 2: To Ikh Nart

After breakfast we transfer to the trainstation and board the domestic train bound for Sainshand in the East Gobi. The train ride is a great way to experience the gradual change of landscapes from the central grasslands into the drier Gobi. It takes a bit more than six hours and a picnic lunch will be provided on board. We get off at the station Shivee Gobi. We are met by our local driver and will soon be on our way across the Gobi plains until the Ikh Nart plateau. We will pitch camp at Adaatsyn Hudag, one of the many Gobi wells, which is about an hours drive. Here we will meet the local herders with the camel carts and our horses. We will get to know the horses and go an short trial ride.



Day 3: To Zuun Khöndlön

After breakfast in our fully private Tepee camp the entire camp, including the ger, is packed up and loaded onto the caravan of camel carts. We will head out in a long loop eastwards, while the camel carts will take a straight route to Zuun Khöndlön, which is only 8km away. Along our way we pass by some ponds and tiny lakes with rocks with fossilized trees from prehistoric times. Actually one of the longest surviving animals on the planet are the Desert Tadpole Shrimps, which are living fossils, having survived and changed little since the early dinosaur era. If it is arid there is no water, and no shrimps, but be sure to have a look if you find any small puddles. We also see some burial sites and tombs dating to the 13th century, i.e. from the times of the Mongol Empire under Genghis Khan and his sons and grandsons.

Day 4: To Baruun Khöndlön

Today we start our ride to Baruun Khöndlön. Early in the morning we first ride around the Ovoot Mountain to spot some wildlife which might be Mongolian Gazelles (*Procapra gutturosa*) and some waterfowl near a lake. This area is strewn with basalt stones from ancient volcanoes and many small lakes and ponds sometimes appear between the rocks.

Day 5: To Engeryn Tsohio

Today we ride over the vast plain to the south to reach the Ikh Khad area. Ikh Khad means "many rocks" in Mongolian as this place has many interestingly shaped and colored rocks. Along the way we have a fair chance seeing Argali Sheep, Siberian Ibex and Mongolian Gazelles.

Day 6: To Engeryn Bulag

After breakfast we ride to the southwest where many raptors like eagles, falcons and vultures will be spotted. Mongolia has an unusual large diversity of rodents, which explains the numerous raptors everywhere. The Cinereous Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) is the largest of all Eurasian raptors, and rivals the Condor of the Americas in wing span and weight. This vulture builds huge nests made of twigs on rocks and in small trees.

Day 7: To Tögrök Lake

We pack up and ride to the southwest along the plain until we reach a rocky and sandy area, where many 13th century burials and tombs of local kings and lords can be found. There is also a burial site of Buddhist lamas dating to the 1700s to 1800s. There are many petroglyphs and Tibetan writings on the rock faces. Tögrök Lake is tiny and does not always hold water. Ground water however comes up and there are very tall grasses surrounding it. It is located in very a scenic area of rock granite formations.

Day 8: To Ikh Nart

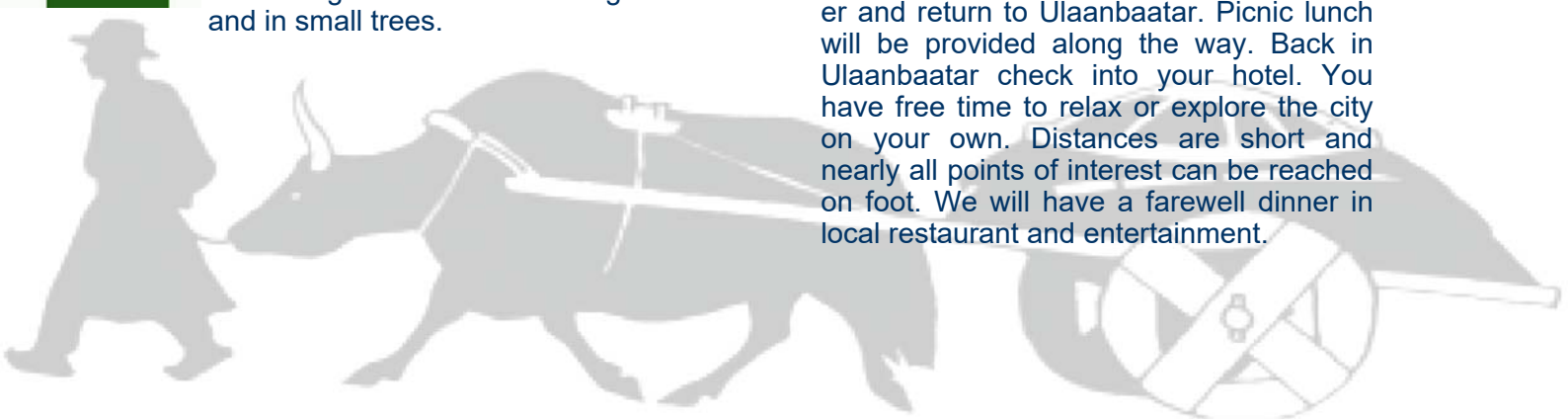
In the morning we ride to the IkhNart Rocks Ger Camp. We ride north to Red Rock Valley, on of the the spring-fed green places, with elms and poplars. Wildlife come here for water and so do small birds on migration such as warblers. In May, sometimes one can see Japanese Sparrowhawks on feeding frenzy targeting warblers. We continue to ride north until Khalzan Springs, where there is a derelict camp from the Soviet era, frequently used by locals, as the springs has medicinal properties. To the east, in the Khalzan Mountains, there are more petroglyphs and tombs dating from the Hunnu period, called Xiongnu by the Chinese, which may date back to 200 BC. Later the Huns evolved to become the first pastoral people, and perhaps some made it to Europe, to topple the Roman Empire. We will ride south until Bichigt Had, (Rock Inscriptions), where close by the IkhNart Rocks Ger Camp is et up during season.

Day 9: Ikh Nart

From the IkhNart Rocks Ger Camp we ride to the east between the rocks. We visit the natural wonders of Bichigt Had, Els Had and also have a chance to spot Argali Sheep. We can also visit a Gobi nomad family and learn about their daily life. You may also try riding a camel. We ride back to the camp before dinner time.

Day 10: To Ulaanbaatar

After breakfast we are picked up by a driver and return to Ulaanbaatar. Picnic lunch will be provided along the way. Back in Ulaanbaatar check into your hotel. You have free time to relax or explore the city on your own. Distances are short and nearly all points of interest can be reached on foot. We will have a farewell dinner in local restaurant and entertainment.





Day 11: Departure

Transfer out back home or on to your next destination.

Practicalities

We emphasize the quality of human contacts and encounters with local people and respect for the horse and local equestrian traditions, from which many lessons can be learnt. Traveling with Nomadic Journeys means a shared adventure with horses and camel carts in the great outdoors, choosing the life of the nomad.

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

Accommodation: During the horse riding trip we will stay in spacious tentipis, with foldable bed-cots. Bring your own sleeping bag. We take along a Mongolian ger (yurt) to serve as our mobile restaurant, as well as showers and compost toilets housed in traditional Mongolian marquee style tents. For two nights we stay at Nomadic Journeys own low-impact ger camp at Ikhnart Rocks. Two nights in Ulaanbaatar at a centrally located hotel. All accommodation in double occupancy.

Staff: A Mongolian English speaking guide will accompany the group at all times. A cook will follow with the camel cart caravan. In addition, the services of local herdsman will be employed along with their animals. The horsemen follow a traditional lifestyle in the areas where we will be riding. If the group consists of four riders or more, we will also have a Mongolian doctor come along as part of the crew.

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.

Minimum riding ability: You should be a competent rider, fit and capable of riding horse at all paces confidently. We will cover varying terrain, and will be in the saddle for several hours on most days.

Naadam Games: There is a Naadam Festival extension possible 10-12Jul. There will be horseraces with almost 1000 race horses on the plains outside the city. As well as wrestling and archery. The cost is additional USD 720 per person.

Reversal of trip: Riding tours may be done in the reverse for operational reasons.

There are other language guides such as Russian, French, German, Italian, Korean etc. available at additional cost, booked and confirmed ahead of time.

PRICE ex Ulaanbaatar:

2 - 8 members: **USD 2400 per person**
Single supplement (10n): **USD 400**

Includes: English speaking guide, breakfast every day in Ulaanbaatar, welcome and farewell dinner. All meals outside Ulaanbaatar. All overnights in hotels (2n.) gers (2n.) and tents (6n.) in shared double, camping equipment and all local transport.

Excludes: Beverages, laundry, lunch in Ulaanbaatar. Air or train tickets in and out of Mongolia. Bring your own sleeping bag, riding helmet and short chaps.

DATES 2018 ex Ulaanbaatar:

Mid May to Mid October.

