



Yokhor Naadam Festival

The very colorful Yokhor Naadam in Batshireet features horse races, national wrestling and the Buryatian style of archery. It is one of the unique events of the Buryat nation. Buryat people will arrive from the Russian part. The Buryats' ancestral lands are across the border on the eastern lakeside of Lake Baikal and the Sayan Mountains. Buryats remain in Russia, around Lake Baikal, while some migrated into Mongolia during the Stalinist years in the 1930s. Since then, the living cultural heritage of the Buryats remains more intact in Mongolia compared to Russia. The objective of the Yokhor festival is to keep and protect the Buryat culture, traditional customs and transfer these to the next generation. Yokhor is a Buryatian dance. Chorus singers move faster and faster and then the round dance transforms into a jump. The participants of the festival compete with their dance, songs, and their national clothes which show the unique feature of the Buryat nation.

1/ Mo17Jul: To Rashaant Khad

Drive for a full day northeast out from Ulaanbaatar. For 200km on a tarmac road crossing the Herlen River, after which we enter the Khentii province. Picnic lunch will be provided on the way. You might see lots of cranes and some Great Bustards on the way. There are 6 different species of cranes in Mongolia. The Demoiselle Crane is the smallest and most common. The Great Bustard is the heaviest flying bird in the world. It is large and heavy like a Border Collie. It is rare. We will visit to Rashaant Khad which is a giant boulder. There are petroglyphs here dating back 40 000 years ago. I.e. early Stone Age. While most of the archaeological findings remain underground, these are found on the giant boulders. The spring emits drops out from the boulder, hence its name Rashaant Khad, the rock of the spring in Mongolian. It is in traditional medicine believed to heal eye disorders, for which locals visit still today. From ancient times the nomads have been worshipping this place. Rashaant Khad is only one place where mammoth was depicted on the stone in vertical position. You will spend your first night at mobile camp.



2/ Tu18Jul: To Batshireet via Öglögch Wall

We will start by paying our respects at Binder Ovoo, a sacred cairn. We will continue to Öglögch Wall. This wall is also known as ancestor's Almsgivers Wall. The length of the wall is 3 km. Some scholars date it back to Hunnu times, which is possibly until 200 BC. The wall is 3 meters high, and 2½ meters of width. It is made completely of round stones. The Russian archaeologist Kondratiev excavated the site in 1926. Some archaeologists suppose that this wall may be a burial place of Great kings, such as Genghis Khan or Khubilai Khan. Between 2003-2005, Mongolian-American joint expedition team "Genghis Khan" discovered around 60 tombs near the wall. We will enjoy our lunch here. After lunch we will drive to Batshireet located at the Eg River, a tributary of the larger Onon River. Batshireet is a Buryat village with log cabin houses similar to the Siberian ancient style. 2500 people live in this community.



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3-4/ 19/20Jul: Yokhor Naadam at Batshireet

The Opening Ceremony of the “Yokhor” festival will take place at the small square of Batshireet. We will spend the full two days on the festival. There will be Mongolian wrestling, horse races and competition in Buryatian style of archery. Local games. In one of the afternoons there will be a school kids horse race on 2 year old horses, as well as childrens wrestling. In the evenings there will be music and dance performances. This festival is mainly a local Buryat festival, but it will likely have Buryats coming from the Russian side as well. There will also be ankle bone shooting.

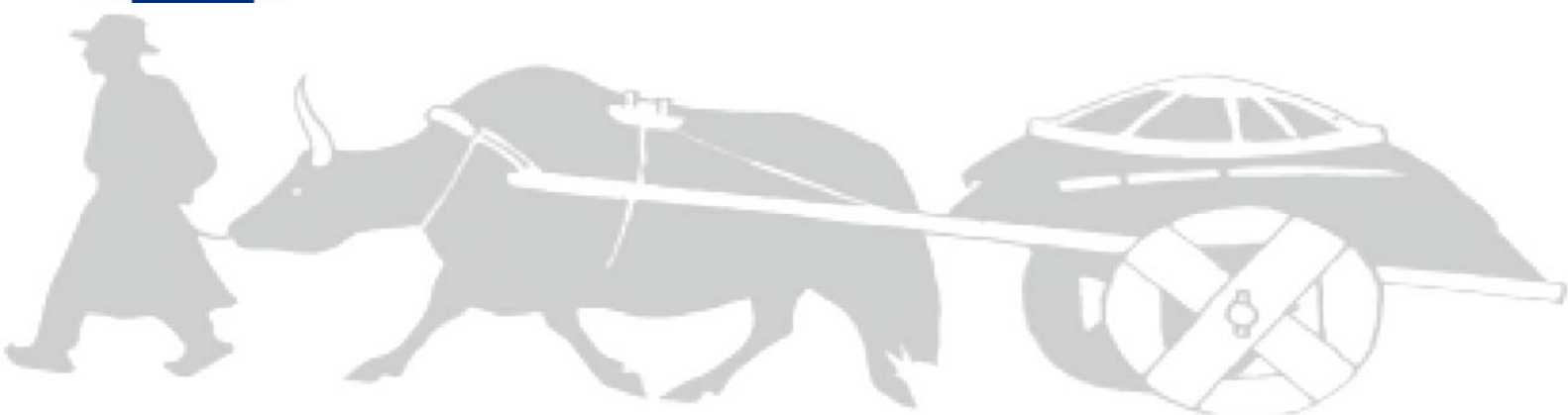
5/ Fr21Jul: To Hangal Lake via Baldan Bereeven

We will now drive 150km back southwest towards Ulaanbaatar, and today spend time at the dramatic location of the Baldan Bereeven Monastery. It is a Gelugpa / Yellow Hat/ Buddhist monastery, located in the Baruun Jargalant River Valley. The foundation of the monastery was made by Tseveendorj lama in 1654. The monastery grew to become one of the largest in Mongolia. There was up to 8000 monks in th3e 19th century. Architecturally, resembling the famous Utai Gumben monastery in Tibet. By 1850 when the main temple was remodeled, Baldan Bereeven reached its peak as a teaching monastery. It contained four separate colleges and more than twenty temples.

Nowadays Baldan Bereeven Monastery has three restored temples and nearly 50 temple ruins, stupas and other religious structures. There are also many rock paintings, stone carvings with different images of Buddhist gods, inscriptions of religious mantras. Our camp support crew will have gone ahead and set up camp by the pristine small Hangal Lake, where we will overnight.

6/ Sa22Jul: To Ulaanbaatar

Our mobile camp is now packed up and we will drive for 5 hours back to Ulaanbaatar. We will eventually come to the eastern trunk road and drive west until the Genghis Khan Monument, the largest equestrian statue in the world. Genghis was born in the land of the Buryats, either at Binder or Dadal. Arrive at your hotel.



Practicalities

Transport: This tour is supported by a jeep or minibus depending on the number of travelers.

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 tent to serve as our mobile restaurant, as well as showers and compost toilets housed in traditional Mongolian marquee style tents.

Staff: An English-speaking Mongolian guide will accompany you at all times. Other language guides such as Russian, French, German, Italian, Korean etc. available at additional cost, upon request.

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.

Additional: We can organize hotel accommodation, city tours and transfers in Ulaanbaatar.

PRICE ex Ulaanbaatar:

2 - 8 members: **USD 1850 per person**
Single Supplement (5n): **USD 200**

Includes: Guide. All meals outside the Ulaanbaatar All overnights in Tentipi tents. All transfers.

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

DATES 2018 ex Ulaanbaatar:

17 July - 22 July 2018.



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