

12 days/ 11 nights Mongolia Photography Safari Workshop
with Scott Trees

Detailed Itinerary

* Please note that changes in this itinerary might occur due to changes in flight schedules.

Day 1. 29Jul19. To the Gobi Desert (L,D)

Meet at about 0730 at the hotel lobby with the local guide and drive to the airport for the short domestic flight down to the Gobi Desert. Land in Dalanzadgad, the capital city of South Gobi Province. Once a remote desert town, today serves as the center of logistics for the developing mining industry. Over the last decade, massive exploration operations have revealed an abundance of precious metals and minerals in the Gobi Desert. Since then, the once peaceful desert is being trampled by excavators, monster trucks, and massive drills – all in the hopes of making a quick fortune. Luckily, most of these mines are far from the eye, but their environmental impact can be seen and felt throughout the massive desert. Upon landing in Dalanzadgad meet the driver and embark on a one-and-a-half-hour drive to the ‘Gobi’s Beauties’ Nature Reserve. Once at the reserve, head to the ‘Vulture’s Valley’ - a beautiful oasis at the foot of the ‘Three Beauties’ mountain range. As the rays of sun do not reach the small river at the creek’s basin, it is kept frozen during the beginning of summer (until early July usually), and hence, the place is commonly dubbed as the ‘Gobi Glacier’. Take an easy hike along the beautiful stream, and if lucky, get to see some of the wildlife inhabiting the reserve. Around noon time embark on the five hours’ drive to the mighty Khongriin Els Sand Dune, arriving there just in time for the first set of sunset shooting session over the dramatic dune. Overnight in a *ger* camp- the cozy yet simple, Mongolian version of a lodge, consisting of traditional felt-made dwellings the nomads of Central Asia often refer to as *yurt*.



Day 2. 30Jul19. The mighty sand dune (B,L,D)

With an early wake up, return to the sand dune to see how the sun gently rises over the dune, beautifully drawing lines of light and shadow over the dune’s curves. Here, we will have a local camel herder with his herd helping us to highlight the desert colors, and to hint on the rich local culture. Later in the

morning return to the camp and enjoy a day of leisure by the dune. As dusk nears, return to the foot of the dune for another session of sunset shooting, followed by a night shooting session. The Mongolian sky is known for its clear night views due to the absence of any sort of light pollution, being hundreds of kilometers from the nearest settlement. Return at night to the same camp.



Day 3. 31Jul19. The Flaming Cliffs (B,L,D)

Again, early wake up call for a last chance of sunrise photography at the sand dune. After breakfast, check out of the camp and drive to the place known to westerners as The Flaming Cliffs. Bayan Zag (rich with saxaul) is famed for its red sandstone cliffs which take on beautiful red and orange hues during sunset. The area is also recognized as one of the world's largest dinosaur graveyards. In 1921, American Roy Chapman Andrews discovered some of the most important Paleontological findings of the last century at this very location. Arrive at Bayan Zag around lunch time and spend the afternoon exploring the cliffs on foot while waiting for the sunset to set the cliffs "aflame", if weather permitting of course. Stay here until rather late at night, and again enjoy the desert starry nights for some of the best night scenes anywhere on earth.



Day 4. 01Aug19. Back to civilization (B,L,D)

In the morning, drive back to Dalanzadgad for the flight to Ulaanbaatar. Upon arrival back in the Mongolian capital, pay a visit to Gandan Monastery, Mongolia's largest religious institute and home to the 26 meters high Janaraysag Statue. This is one of the only religious institutes to survive the anti-religious purges of the 1930's. In the afternoon visit the Black Market. This huge market contains every single item a Mongolian might need, whether they are nomads or urban apartment dwellers. Goods brought from all corners of Mongolia are brought here for sale. A visit to the market is a colorful experience which gives an insight to the everyday life of the people of Ulaanbaatar. In the evening take a walk through the main square, where many city dwellers come to relax and play at the end of a long work day. This is a fantastic opportunity to meet (and photograph) the locals on their own turf. Stay overnight at a hotel in the city.



Day 5. 02Aug19. Ulaanbaatar – Mongol Nomadic – Khustaiin Nuruu (L,D)

Today drive back in time, to a place that recreates the lives of Mongolian nomads at the beginning of the 20th century. This was when Mongolia gained its independence from the Qing Dynasty and established itself as a reemerging nation under a living god-king. Attend a demonstration of how the nomads lived their lives during this era, and learn about some traditions that are carried on to this very day. After lunch in the camp arrive at Khustaiin Nuruu Strictly Protected Area (SPA). The SPA was established as part of a unique project to reintroduce the world's last surviving wild horses back to their natural environment. On the brink of extinction during the last century, only a very few *Takhi* or Przewalski's horses were left in zoos around Europe. This graceful steppe horse was returned to Mongolia, and today, thanks to this special project, two herds again roam the Mongolian steppes. Take a hike through the protected area, and learn about the tremendous efforts to preserve some of Mongolia's rarest flora and fauna. End the hike in a vantage point watching the herds of horses sprinting from the mountain tops to the narrow river valley, where they come to drink as the temperatures in the low-lands cool down. Overnight in a *ger* camp – the cozy, yet simple Mongolian version of a lodge, consisting of traditional felt-made dwellings the nomads of Central Asia often refer to as *yurt*.



Day 6. 03Aug19. Full day around Khustaiin Nuruu (B,L,D)

Very early in the morning drive again into the Strictly Protected Area for a chance to photograph the wild horses during sunrise and in the early morning light. Then drive to a local nomadic family in the reserve's buffer zone. Spend the entire day with the family and get an insight into the ancient traditions of the Mongol steppe nomads. Join them on their daily chores, and get a first-hand experience with their unique lifestyle which has been kept nearly unchanged for hundreds of years. Late in the afternoon drive back to the Strictly Protected Area to get images of the wild horses at dusk.



Day 7. 04Aug19. Khustaiin Nuruu – Karakorum (B,L,D)

Leave Khustaiin Nuruu, and take the four to five-hour drive to Kharkhorin. Built by Genghis (Chinggis) Khan about 800 years ago, Kharkhorin, better known as Karakorum, was famed throughout Asia as the capital of the Mongol Empire. Within the walls of this spectacular city, kings were chosen, laws made, and the fate of the next city to be conquered were determined. Pay a quick visit to the ruins of the old city and the Erdene Zuu monastery before driving out of town. Check in at the camp, and after lunch drive to the small local market in the city center. From here visit to the newly constructed Japanese-funded museum, to get an overview over the city's glorious history. Wrap up the day at the Monument of Empires, erected to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the crowning of a boy called

Temujin to the King of all Kings- Genghis (Chinggis) Khan. From here watch the sun setting over the Orkhon Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the epic center of several kingdoms and empires that controlled much of central Asia for much of the past Millenia. In the evening revert to the camp for the night.



Day 8. 05Aug19. The Journey of the 99 Little Heroes (B,L,D)

Leave Kharkhorin for an hour drive north to the site known as Khoshoo Tsaidam. This is where a Russian explorer and archeologist discovered two massive tombstones back in the late 19th century. Not far from the ancient tombstones lies the village of Khashaat, which today celebrates the Journey of the 99 Little Heroes. This very local festival is dedicated to the Mongolian culture through the eyes of children and includes competitions of the “three manly sports”, namely – traditional Mongolian wrestling, horse racing, and archery performed by children. The children compete on the way as they sing the “Gingoo”, a special tune which is supposed to encourage the race horses on the course. There are also other activities involving the children and showcasing their nomadic culture. Late in the evening return to Kharkhorin for the night.



Day 9. 06Aug19. Day excursion to Tuvkhon Monastery (B,L,D)

From the Khangai Mountain Range, the Orkhon River runs all the way to Lake Baikal in Siberia. A UNESCO World Heritage Cultural Landscape, the valley has been at the center of several kingdoms and empires that have ruled much of Central Asia. The UNESCO committee states: “Collectively the remains in the site reflect the symbiotic links between nomadic, pastoral societies and their administrative and religious centres, and the importance of the Orkhon valley in the history of central Asia.” (*UNESCO website*). Today head south, driving along the river valley. The first stop of the day will be for a three-and-a-half-hour hike (with the first hour uphill) to Tuvkhon Monastery, established during the 1650’s by Zanbazar, one of Mongolia’s most respected religious leaders. The monastery’s wooden buildings are integrated with a system of natural caves perched near a hilltop which offers spectacular views of the Orkhon Valley and the surrounding pine forests. With its unique natural features, the monastery was a perfect location for the great religious leader to meditate. At the afternoon take the journey back to Kharkhorin for a third night in the camp.



Day 10. 07Aug19. Horse Festival (B,L,D)

Today drive back to Khasaat Village (the place where the 99 Little Heroes festival was taking place two days ago), this time for celebrating with the people of Khshaat during their annual horse festival. Again, this is a very local festival. Nomads from the entire region come to compete over challenges such as “breaking” horses that have never been ridden before, catching a specific horse from a herd of some 200 trotting horses, various displays of horsemanship, and other displays highlighting the strong bond between the nomads and their horses – the pride and glory of the people of the Asian steppes. At the end of the festival return to Kharkhorin for a fourth and last night in the camp.



Day 11. 08Aug19. Kharkorin – Ulaanbaatar (B,L,D)

This morning visit Erdene Zuu Monastery, one of the most important Buddhist monasteries in the entire country. If lucky, get to attend the ‘*puje*’ ceremony- the traditional chanting of Tibetan Buddhist scripts, with occasional sessions of playing traditional instruments such as cone shells, drums, and cymbals. At around noon time leave Kharkhorin and take the five to six-hour drive back to Ulaanbaatar, arriving back in the capital city for a late dinner and a night at a hotel in the city.



Day 12. 09Aug19. Departure (B)

After breakfast at the hotel transfer to Chinggis Khan airport for the international flight out of Mongolia.



Accommodation in Mongolia



Please note that the vast majority of lodging facilities out of Ulaanbaatar do not provide en suite toilets and showers, but offer a shared toilet and bathroom facility located out of your ger.

Ger camps use the traditional home of steppe nomads, the felt covered Ger, as guest rooms. Each Ger normally has between 2 and 4 single beds in it, along with a traditional stove, a simple table, and sometimes cupboards and wash stands. We plan for a Ger to be shared between two travelers (or for those who have paid the single supplement, a Ger to themselves). There will generally be a central block that houses hot water showers, sinks, and western-style toilets. This block is usually some distance from your Ger.

The following is a list of locations and respective ger camps that offers upgraded gers (or other forms of accommodation) with attached showers and toilets:

- Terelj Lodge @ Terelj National Park: **US \$37/ person/ night (in a double room), this will be in addition to the trip cost**
- Munkhtenger Camp @ Kharkhorin: **US \$35/ person/ night (in a double room), this will be in addition to the trip cost**
- Toilogt Camp @ Khuvsgul (wooden house): **US \$66/ person/ night (in a double room), this will be in addition to the trip cost**

Quotation

Introductory special price of US \$5,500 per person sharing a double room if booked by June 1, 2019. The price will be US \$6,500 per person sharing a double room if booked after June 1, 2019.

Single Room Accommodations are an additional US \$369 per person, this price covers single room accommodations for the entire trip.

Domestic Flights to and from Ulaanbaatar to Dalanzadgad (for the Gobi Desert portion of trip) are an additional cost and estimated at US \$220 per person although this price is an estimate only as prices can fluctuate.



Notes:

- The above rates are based on cash payment, or wire transfer (bank to bank). For credit card payment, a surcharge of 4.5% will apply.
- Total luggage allowed on domestic flights in Mongolia is limited to 15 kg (33lbs) including hand luggage. Should you exceed this limit, you shall be required to cover the overweight fee, ranging USD \$2-4 per kg. (1 kg = 2.2lbs)

The price includes:

- 2 nights in a 4-star hotel
- 9 nights in a ger camp (tourist camp)
- Meals as indicated in the program (full board basis)
- Private 4X4 vehicles with AC
- Bottled water throughout the trip
- Local English speaking guide
- Entrance fees
- All transfers

The price does not include:

- International airfare to/from Ulaanbaatar
- Domestic flights to the Gobi Desert and back
- Travel insurance
- Mongolian Visa
- Excess luggage
- Gratuities
- Expenses of personal nature (food and drinks beyond those provided, laundry, etc.)
- Anything not mentioned in the program

Please note: all travelers should be holding valid medical insurance including med-evac during their tour.

Scott Trees reserves the right to change tour prices and programs due to changes in flight schedule, changes in airfares, and other local conditions.

Terms of payment, cancellation policies, and liability information are available upon request and upon booking tour.

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