

Happy Camel Travel

Presents

**Cycling Expedition to Great Steppes
and Famous Gobi Desert
(12 days)**

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CYCLING EXPEDITION TO GREAT STEPPES
AND FAMOUS GOBI DESERT
(12 DAYS)

12 Days ♦ 2 Nights Tented Camp
♦ 9 Nights Ger Camp



Happy Camel invites you to discover the natural and cultural wonders of Mongolia, one of the last remaining seldom-explored countries. Largely inaccessible to the Western world until only recently, Mongolia offers a rare glimpse into an ancient nomadic culture that has changed little over the centuries.

The traveller will discover this untouched country by exploring the rare combination of ancient traditions of Buddhism, nomadic horse-based culture and natural beauties such as the high mountains, the grasslands and more.



- ◆ Cycling ♦ Kharkhorin ♦ Erdene Zuu Monastery ♦ Ongiin Monastery ♦ Kharkhorin's New Archaeological muzeum
- ◆ Tsenkher Hot Spring Resort ♦ Tuvkhun Monastery
- ◆ Orkhon Valley ♦ ♦ Delgeriin Choir Monastery
- ◆ Family Stay



Trip Type: Rigorous Cycling Expedition to Great Steppes
and Famous Gobi Desert

QUICK ITINERARY REFERENCE

DAY 1: KHARKHORIN

DAY 2: TSENKHER HOT WATER SPRINGS, BATHS

DAY 3: TUVKHUN MONASTERY

DAY 4: ORKHON WATER FALLS

DAY 5 : ONGIIN AND KHOSHUU MONASTERY

DAY 6: BAYANZAG OR FLAMING CLIFF

DAY 7: KHONGORYN ELS OR THE SINGING SAND DUNES

DAY 8: KHONGORYN ELS OR THE SINGING SAND DUNES

DAY 9: ON THE WAY TO DUNGENEEN AM

DAY 10: YOLIIN AM AND THE EAGLE GORGES OR VULTURE MOUNTAIN

DAY 11: BAGA GAZRIIN CHULUU

DAY 12: DRIVE TO ULAANBAATAR

MAP OF THE ITINERARY



DETAILED TOUR DESCRIPTION

Our days will be mostly divided into two parts: driving and cycling. Given the huge scale of territory of Mongolia and poor infrastructure, reaching from one destination to another is a big deal. Next to cycling in order to make our cyclers to experience most of Mongolia we make sure that our travellers see, visit, taste, experience and share as much as possible.

Our itinerary is carefully designed offering you to experience beautiful diverse landscape & sceneries, different lifestyle of Mongolian people: nomads as well as locals in little villages.

We will be covering different terrain tackling one of the world most famous inhabitable desert area Gobi.

However, don't be put off. We will be well supported. Our bikes will be put on trailers. Part of the team will travel in front of cyclers making sure that first arrivals have all and looked well after when they reach destination.

Slow pacers will be followed by trailers and in case you would like to stop we will put bikes on trailer and you can hop in the comfort of Land Cruisers. The vehicles following or travelling ahead the group will take enough distance from cyclers. Cyclers will not see the vehicles and they will be joined and called upon by radio when needed.

DAY 1: KHARKHORIN

After an early wake up, as a long & full of events day ahead of us, we will set off early to **Kharkhorin** (also called Karakorum). We will drive about 260 km on relatively good paved road and stop by noon at local restaurant. After lunch driving more and about 40 km before Kharkhorin we will reach start point of cycling. We will take a little time to test the bikes, make adjustments and ready to go. The road we will take was previous main road from Ulaanbaatar to Kharkhorin before the asphalt road was put in use. Now it is healed terrain not used by traffic perfect for us, going up and down between fields.

Depending on our arrival time in Kharkhorin we will visit sightseeing places of once famous medieval prosperous capital of Genghis Khan and his successors. Kharkhorin is the site of the 13th century capital of the Mongolian Empire created by **Genghis Khan**. The founding of Kharkhorin started on the ruins of Turug and Uigur cities in the Orkhon valley at the eastern end of the Khangai Mountains in 1220 by the Genghis Khan's order. It was completed 15 years later during the Ugedei Khaan's reign. The town was a very cosmopolitan and religiously tolerant place.

The silver tree, part of Möngke Khan's palace has become the symbol of Karakorum. Now **Erdene Zuu Monastery** is all that remains of what once was a huge monastery of 100 temples and about 1.000 lama's residence. We will explore the grounds of Erdene Zuu Monastery surrounded by its massive 400 m X 400 m walls. We will be guided around the 3 remaining temples: Dalai Lama, Zuu of Buddha and Lavrin Temple. We will also see the Turtle Rock and the Phallic Rock. Another place we will visit will be **Kharkhorin's New Archaeological Museum**. It is a small museum but

housed in a modern well-run building with good lighting and display cases with clear English labels. The exhibits include dozens of artefacts dating from the 13th and 14th centuries which were recovered from the immediate area, plus others that were found from archaeological sites in other parts of the provinces, including prehistoric stone tools. You'll see pottery, bronzes, coins, religious statues and stone inscriptions. There's also a half-excavated kiln sunk into the museum floor. Perhaps most interesting is the scale model of ancient Kharkhorin, which aims to represent the city as it may have looked in the 1250s, and is based on descriptions written by the French missionary William of Rubruck. Another chamber exhibits a most recent addition, a Turkic noble tomb with wall paintings and artefacts, including gold items and jewellery. There is a short video of actual burial site.

(Ger camp L, D)

DAY 2: TSENKHER HOT WATER SPRINGS, BATHS

We will drive westward in the direction of **Khangai Mountains**. The Khangai Mountain separates the South-Mongolian arid Gobi Desert region from the fertile rolling hills of the north. With its numerous little rivers in which water from melting snow flows the northern side of the mountain offers a lush, fertile home to many nomads.

On average, the Khangai Mountains are 2500-3000 M above the sea level and are composed of mainly granite, intrusive chert and sandstone belonging to Paleozoic era. The Khangai Mountains is about 800 km long, ranging from Zavkhan province territory to Tuv province. They function as the continental divide of the world water system.

After about an hour driving we leave asphalt road and set off to cycling through green mountainsides and the network of smaller and larger rivers offer excellent pastureland for the herds of horses, yaks and cows. We will often be greeted and observed by herd of curious yaks. Lunch on the way.

In the evening we will reach **Tsenkher hot spring resort**. This resort has a large open-air pool at its customer's disposal. The hot water of the pool flows continuously in from the hot water spring. At the spring, the temperature of the water is over 80 ° C. A complex pipelines system regulates the water temperature. Some will spend hours sitting in the pool talking to their friends while staring at the stars or scanning the nightly nature around them.

(Ger camp B, L, D)

DAY 3: TUVKHUN MONASTERY

After breakfast in our Ger camp we will cross deep water river on our jeeps mostly inundated in summer and start our full cycling day. We will cycle through a magic combination of forested hills, granite formations and broad fertile valleys dotted with scattered Gers. Our journey will take us through deep in Khangai Mountains: lush, green abundant with wild flowers and plants. Our tracks following flowing rivers and undulating hills.

To complete the perfection of nature many Gers of nomads peacefully minding their business taking care of their livestock. The area is the home to huge number of yaks of Mongolia. Today cycling will need more physical demand as we pass mountains up and down on a terrain quite rocky. As we are followed by our jeeps those who are tired can always sit in your vehicle. Early evening, we arrive at our campsite already settled for night and arranged by our team. We will sleep in spacious tents. Spend evening around camp fire and enjoy complete wilderness and quietness.

(Tented camp B, L, D)

DAY 4: ORKHON WATER FALLS

Leaving our campsite, we will be heading to **Tuvkhun Monastery** on our jeeps established during the 1650's by **Zanabazar**, one of Mongolia's most respected religious leaders. The monastery's wooden buildings are integrated with a natural system of caves perched near a hilltop, from which you have beautiful view of the **Orkhon Valley** and the surrounding pine forests. On the top of the cliff, a pile of stones to worship a god of this mountain forms a hill. It is called Ovoo.

After lunch we will be cycling to the direction Orkhon waterfall in Orkhon valley. The valley is registered as world cultural heritage by UNESCO due to its ancient findings, artefacts related to early 6th century and even before that. As well as, 12th to 13th century great Mongol empire had expanded its capital Karakorum here. Moreover, pasture nomadic lifestyle still remains here and it keeps both historic and nomadic view of life.

More we get close to waterfall the terrain will get quite challenging on rocky tracks. Quaternary era a volcano erupted near the beginning of the Tsagaan Azarga or White Stallion River and the lava flowed down the Orkhon valley forming the 10-meter-thick layer of basaltic rocks. The basaltic layer was crosscut by the Orkhon River continuously and the canyon was formed as a result. At the beginning of this canyon lays the 20 meters high, 10-meter-wide **waterfall**. The most adventures of you will climb down the canyon and swim the lake located at the foot of the waterfall. A famous Mongolian barbeque over hot stone is on menu tonight.

(Ger camp B, L, D)

DAY 5 : ONGIIN AND KHOSHUU MONASTERY

Today our longest driving day without cycling. After about 7-8 hours driving we will enjoy the peace and beauty of the **Delger Khangai Mountains**.

In the evening we will explore the ruins of Hoshuu Monastery on one side of the river and the ruins of **Ongiin Monastery** on the other side of the river. We will hike around in this massive series of rocky hills cut by the river.

The monasteries were built in the 17th century and destroyed in 1937. They were among the largest temples in Mongolia and housed over 1000 monks.

We will enjoy evening on the terrace of our Ger camp admiring sunset and nature changing its colour.

(Ger camp B, L, D)

DAY 6: BAYANZAG OR FLAMING CLIFF

After breakfast we will drive to world famous Gobi Desert. We will see the landscape changing dramatically from semi grassland to the inhospitably rocky land. The number of families and cattle we will see along the road will gradually reduce. Camels will slowly replace cows. After about 3 hours driving we start cycling. The day to discover Gobi Desert, the world-known place where not many visitors come. The climate is hot and dry and hardly rains. However, weather doesn't make you tired in contrast. Gobi Desert is rocky desert most of it is covered by gravels eroded by winds as a result making the track quite difficult. However, challenging maybe, the track it is liberating feeling to cycle through immense open wide space. After arriving in our Ger camp in the evening we will visit **Bayanzag** also known as the "Flaming Cliffs" is the worldwide renowned place where palaeontologist **Roy Chapman Andrews** found dinosaur bones and eggs. The surrounding landscape is a beautiful combination of rocks, red sand and scrubs. Here we will spend time exploring the cliffs.

(Ger camp B, L, D)

DAY 7: KHONGORYN ELS OR THE SINGING SAND DUNES

Today we will head 150 km westwards to the **Khongoryn Els**. These are Mongolia's largest sand dunes. Those impressive dunes of 275 meters high in some places, stretch from East to West over more than 100 km. Behind the sand dunes we will see the impressive black rocky mass of the Sevrey Mountain. Early afternoon we reach our Ger camp located in amazing beautiful place facing the massive sand dune and Rocky Mountains Sevrei. Even from your bathroom while washing hand you witness this unbelievably beautifully amazing view. Spend evening chatting with co travellers, sitting on terrace, drinking fresh drinks and enjoy sunset.

(Ger camp B, L, D)

DAY 8: KHONGORYN ELS OR THE SINGING SAND DUNES

After breakfast cycle about 20 km to the dunes. Those who are courageous will climb to highest dune equivalent of 40 store building. Once you reach the top of the dune, your effort will be rewarded. The whole environment looks full of mysteries, and you get amazed how possibly the landscape can be like that. After dune excursion will visit camel breeding family. It is our tradition to offer food and drinks without asking the visitors.

(Ger camp B, L, D)

DAY 9: ON THE WAY TO DUNGENEE AM

This will be our last day of cycling. From Khongor dune we will drive till little Gobi village Bayandalai. After lunch in little local restaurant under curious eyes of locals we will start cycling. First 10 km is quite nice on open plains before reaching the massive mountains with endless gorges and canyons. Here terrain will become once again quite challenging with hard soil with gravels and even bigger rocks.

Our road brings us to narrow gorge called Dungenee. Part of gorge is 3 to 4-meter-wide and only one car can pass with little river crossing through.

The **Gobi Desert** measures over 1,610 km from southwest to northeast and 800 km from north to south and stretches over Mongolia and China. It occupies an arc of land 1,295,000 km² in area, making it fifth largest in the world and Asia's largest. Much of the Gobi is not sandy but is covered with bare rock.

The Gobi is a cold desert, with frost snow on its dunes during the winter months. Besides being quite far north, it is also located on a plateau roughly 910–1,520 meters above sea level, which further contributes to its low temperatures. An average of approximately 194 millimetres of rain falls per year in the Gobi. Additional moisture reaches parts of the Gobi in winter as snow is blown by the wind from the Siberian Steppes. These winds cause the Gobi to reach extremes of temperature ranging from –40°C in winter to +50°C in summer.

(Tented camp B, L, D)

DAY 10: YOLIIN AM AND THE EAGLE GORGES OR VULTURE MOUNTH

After breakfast we will take a ride with our vehicles through the beautiful gorges of the imposing **Altai Mountain Chain**. We will pass through the **Yoliin Am** located in the **Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park**. Ancient rivers carved those green valleys. Most of summer thick ice still to be seen due to lack of sun shine through narrow gorge.

We may catch a glimpse of the wild Argali sheep, the Ibex, the desert gazelles or the Golden Eagles. We will also pay a visit to the little museum of the park where you can admire a collection of dinosaur bones. You will have plenty time to hike in beautiful gorge.

(Ger camp B, L, D)

DAY 11: BAGA GAZRIIN CHULUU

After breakfast in Ger camp we set off for driving day. Our destination will be 350 km north in the beautiful region of **Baga Gazriin Chuluu**. It is a huge granite formation in the middle of the Mongolian sandy plane.

On open plain we will visit the remains of a small monastery named **Delgeriin Choir Monastery**. There is a Ger, huge impressive 12 walls Ger richly decorated and carved used by monks to chant during colder season when the stone monastery gets too cold to be inside.

End of the afternoon we will drive and hike around in the area. We will visit the picturesque ruins of a small monastery that are hidden in a nice little protected valley and wander between huge endless piled granite rocky hills as if they were put.

(Ger camp B, L, D)

DAY 12: DRIVE TO ULAANBAATAR

We will have a driving day back to Ulaanbaatar. Afternoon is free time for last minute sightseeing. You might want to go and see the beautiful cultural show enjoy the colourful and rhythmic Mongolian dance, throat singing & admire the contortionists.

(B, L)

RESERVATION

Your trip will be confirmed after a deposit of 35% of the due amount is paid to our bank account. Once the payment is done, we will start organizing your trip and book the local flights if any.

INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

- Land transportation
- Tented camp
- Ger camp stay
- Meals 11B, 12L, 11D
- Tour guides/Cycling guide/
- Mountain Bike
- Camping and kitchen equipment
- National park entrance fees/Museum and Monasteries entrance tickets

NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

- Hotel in Ulaanbaatar
- City touring
- International transport
- Passport and visa costs
- Medical, trip insurance and evacuation costs
- International airport taxes, excess baggage charges.
- Alcoholic and soft drinks
- Meals not included in the itinerary
- Laundry
- Telephone calls
- Items of personal nature
- Other items not specifically mentioned as included
- Airport transfer

DELAYS

We are not responsible for any additional charges incurred arising from the delay or extension of a trip due to weather, equipment failure, illness, or other causes beyond our control. No refunds can be made for any unused services or accommodations on the trip.

TRANSPORT

Toyota Land Cruisers series 80, 100, 105 - have 4 passenger seats. Comfortable on our bumpy road, forward facing seats equipped with seat belts and has air condition and plenty space for luggage in trunk and on roof track.

Delica -Japanese 4X4 van. Delicas have 5 passenger seats. Comfortable on our bumpy road, bit slower on off-road than Land Cruisers. Forward facing seats equipped with seat belts and has air condition. Panoramic view windows. Having not much space in trunk, luggage mostly put on roof rack.

Furgon -Russian military van. Furgons have 7 passenger seats. Mostly forward facing seats. It has plenty space. Furgons have no air condition and not equipped with seat belts. If you are in group and looking for adventure on tight budget it might be a good solution. Excellent vehicle on rough off-road condition. However less comfortable than Land Cruisers and Delicas.

FOOD

Traditional Mongolian food based on different type of meat: mutton, beef, goat, horse and camel. As well as we eat dairies and usually heavy meals due to our radical climate of cold long winter and hot dry summer. However nowadays our food culture is becoming more diverse and you can easily find international food in restaurants and buy diverse imported food at supermarkets. We will do our best to accommodate your food requirement. Please let us know in advance if you have any special food requirement.

ACCOMMODATION

In Ulaanbaatar we can book your hotel. We offer accommodation from guesthouse to the most prestigious 5 star hotels with suites.

All hotel we recommend are centrally located and in walking distances from restaurant, shops and museums.

While in the countryside, depending on the trip you choose, you will overnight in Ger Camps, Family Stay and Tented Camp.

Gers from Ger Camp are the traditional felt tents of nomadic herders. Each ger is furnished with a wood stove and beautifully painted furniture such as beds, a table and stools. Gers are based on double occupancy. Each ger camp has its restaurant, western style toilet and hot water showers. Most visitors find their stay in gers, which provide an authentic

taste of Mongolian culture and adventure, their most enjoyable experience in Mongolia.

Family Stay. In summer time many nomads build extra Gers next to theirs and welcome guests. You will have mostly your private Ger. However, facilities stay basic and simple

Tented Camp is a camp build on a nice spot. The travellers will sleep in Western style tents. We will however do our best to offer you the best available service. We pride ourselves on the level of comfort we provide while camping in these remote areas, but camping is not for everyone. It is important to remain open-minded and physically willing.

REMARK

Mongolia is a developing country in terms of infrastructure. The standard of the roads is very low, with no tarmac outside the capital. As a result, be prepared for bumpy and dusty rides.

Travelling in a seldom-explored country, with very little infrastructure requires flexibility, tolerance, a spirit of adventure and respect and understanding for cultural differences. The trip itinerary is subject to changes due to weather, trail conditions, government restrictions, or other reasons beyond our control. We will however do every attempt to adhere to the given schedule.

PAYMENTS

Your trip will be confirmed after a non-refundable deposit of 35% of the due amount payable by bank transfer or visa. The rest payment is due to settle once you are in Mongolia before your trip starts.