

LUXURY ADVENTURES

# Mongolia

Exploratory Series 2009

by land



TRAVERSING THE MYTHICAL GOBI DESERT



From verdant fields dusted with a kaleidoscope of wildflowers to pristine waters nestled in forested alpine mountains, the diversity and wild beauty of Mongolia's scenic wonders are overpowering. This inspiring journey provides a glimpse of Mongolian life and landscapes, as well as intimate encounters with nomadic herdsman and local cowboys.



# Horizon & Co.

## IMMERSE YOUR SENSES...

### SEE

proud young horseman as they ride across the vast desert

### SMELL

the subtle aroma of tobacco curling up from a nomad's pipe

### TASTE

a rich horhög, prepared with your own hands for a village feast

### TOUCH

the red sand of the Flaming Cliffs as you dig for dinosaur bones

### HEAR

the whistling winds of the Gobi as you run down an immense dune

# The Trip

## DAY 1 ARRIVAL IN ULAANBAATAR

The contrast between ancient traditions and the dawning of a 21st century democracy is most visible in Ulaanbaatar where traditional gers and Buddhist monasteries coexist with modern high-rises. Upon arrival at the airport, you will be welcomed by your local guide and transferred to a comfortable, centrally located hotel within walking distance of various museums and shops. In the evening, sample traditional Mongolian dishes while dining at Abtai-Sain Khan Palace in a large ger like one once owned by Chinggis Khan. *Hotel: Ulaanbaatar Hotel or similar. Meals: D*

## DAY 2 ULAANBAATAR / HOVSGOL

Begin the day with a visit to Gandan Monastery, the seat of Buddhism in Mongolia. Woven through Mongolia's nomadic culture is a rich Tibetan-Buddhist tradition with ancient Shamanist practices still evident. Although Buddhist monasteries were either destroyed or converted into museums during the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, Gandan Monastery continued to operate as a "showpiece" for government officials. However, in spite of the government's efforts to suppress Buddhism and other religious beliefs, Mongolia's spirituality persisted and a significant resurgence of Buddhism began in 1990 when Mongolia became a democracy. Monasteries across the country are again opening their doors to worshippers and the few lamas who survived the purges are training a new generation. Massive reconstruction and renovation projects were completed and priceless artifacts that were hidden for safekeeping by nomadic families were returned to monasteries.

Experience these exciting developments first-hand at Gandan Monastery. Strolling through the monastery grounds, you will hear the low tones of the horns used to call the lamas to the temple and can observe their daily rituals, including the reading of sutras (teachings of the Buddha). Also visit Chenrezi and Kalachakra Temples, as well as the magnificent statue of Migjid Janraisig ("the lord who looks in every direction"). This 82-foot high statue, gilded in pure gold and clothed with silk and precious stones, completely fills one of Gandan's temples. After lunch, fly north to Muron, the capital of Hovsgol Province, and continue overland to Lake Hovsgol (4 hours), passing through hilly Mongolian steppe. Overnight in a ger camp. *Hotel: Ger Camp Meals: BLD*

## DAY 3-4 LAKE HOVSGOL

Spend the days exploring the lakeshore and surrounding mountains and meadows. The beauty and mystical qualities of Lake Hovsgol are legendary. Mongolia's largest lake by water volume, it extends 85 miles in length, and 18 miles in width, and is fed by over 90 streams and rivers. Water exits the lake only through one river, the Egiin, whose waters eventually reach Lake Baikal in neighboring Siberia. This crystal-clear alpine lake, known as Mongolia's "dark blue pearl," remains untouched by industry and is situated among the most pristine forests, mountains and meadows in the world. You will have the opportunity to visit a local nomads' dwellings, sample horseback riding—Mongolian style—and hike the hilly shores surrounding the lake. *Hotel: Ger Camp Meals: BLD*

## DAY 5 MURON/UULAANBAATAR

After breakfast, return to Muron for your afternoon flight to Ulaanbaatar. Along the way, stop for a picnic lunch at Lake Irkh, a small, pristine lake in the midst of the steppe that is popular with a variety of birds. Upon arrival in Ulaanbaatar in the late afternoon, transfer to the hotel. Enjoy a farewell dinner in the evening. *Hotel: Ulaanbaatar Hotel or similar Meals: BLD*

## DAY 6 ULAANBAATAR / GOBI

In the morning, fly over vast steppe to the Gobi (1.5 hours), Mongolia's southernmost province of semi-arid desert. Of all the world's arid lands, the Gobi (which means simply "desert") has about it the greatest air of mystery, perhaps because it lies at the heart of Asia's remotest hinterland between the Siberian wilderness to the north and the Tibetan Plateau to the south. Contrary to the sterile sameness that the word "desert" suggests, the Gobi holds

## LOCAL DIVERSIONS...

### NATURAL WONDERS

The Gobi is the largest desert region in Asia. It covers parts of northern and northwestern China, and of southern Mongolia. The Gobi is made up of several distinct ecological and geographic regions based on variations in climate and topography. This desert is the fourth largest in the world. The Gobi is most notable in history as part of the great Mongol Empire, and as the location of several important cities along the Silk Road. The Gobi is a rain shadow desert formed by the Himalaya range blocking rain-carrying clouds from reaching the Gobi

### CULINARY DELIGHTS

Horhog is a traditional Mongolian meat dish, very popular in camping and outdoor activities. It should be made at least for 5 people. Meat cut in large chunks is cooked with hot stones in a tightly closed aluminum can until it forms a hearty stew. When the cooking is done, the stones are taken out first and given to all horhog eaters. While still hot and greasy, stones should be rolled between palms or held with fingers. Rolling or holding stones with hands is supposed to be good for health because Mongolians believe that the heat and grease from just cooked meat eliminates fatigue and boosts stamina.

### WILDLIFE ENCOUNTER

The wild Bactrian (two-humped) camel is adapted to arid plains and hills where water sources are few and vegetation is sparse. Shrubs constitute its main source of food. Herds of these wild camels move widely, their distribution being linked to water. Concentrations of up to 100 camels occur near the mountains, but most herds contain 2 - 15 members. The small average herd size in the past 100 years reflects not just the aridity of the environment but also heavy hunting pressure.

many fascinations including sites of some of the most important paleontological discoveries of this century. For the next three days, explore the stunning landscape of the Gobi, habitat for Bactrian camels, Argali mountain sheep, goitered gazelle, golden eagles, saker falcons, jerboas (similar to kangaroo rats) and many endemic reptiles. The Gobi is also home to some of the Northern Hemisphere's rarest and most elusive mammals, such as the dhole, wild camel, snow leopard and the Gobi bear.

Upon arrival, drive to the Three Camel Lodge, an eco-lodge located near the Gurvansaikhan Gobi National Park. After lunch, journey to the legendary "Flaming Cliffs" (1 hour), named for the red-orange sandstone which glows brilliantly at sunrise and sunset. It was here, in 1922, that Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews and his exploration team from the American Museum of Natural History found the first nest of dinosaur eggs the world had ever seen. To the trained eye, the ancient formations of the Flaming Cliffs are rich with fossils, and paleontological expeditions continue to make significant discoveries at this site.

Drive back to the Three Came Lodge, stopping to visit the town of Bulgan, a local settlement established near a natural spring. Bulgan has one of the only farms found in the Gobi and they supply local ger camps with fruits and vegetables (an example of local businesses being supported by ecotourism). *Hotel: Three Camel Lodge Meals: BLD*

### DAY 7 HONGORYN ELS

Wake up to the sun rising over the vast Gobi. After breakfast, drive overland to the towering sand dunes of Hongoryn Els (2 hours), which run 60 miles alongside the Gobi Altai Mountain range. These dunes, reaching upwards of 2,500 feet, are the Gobi's most magnificent sand dunes and due to their isolation, the secret of this area's beauty has been kept safe for thousands of years. Overnight in gers. *Hotel: Ger Camp Meals: BLD*

### DAY 8 HONGORYN ELS

After breakfast, explore the dunes, nicknamed by locals the "Singing Sands" for the remarkable, low-pitched groan emitted when its surface is disturbed. You will have the opportunity to camel trek across the dunes to see the landscape on top of the region's traditional mode of transport. Return to the Three Camel Lodge in the afternoon. While relaxing on the veranda of the Three Camel Lodge, take in the wild beauty of the Gobi and watch local nomadic families water their livestock—horses, camels, cows, sheep and goats— at the Three Camel Lodge's community well. Enjoy dinner and overnight. *Hotel: Three Camel Lodge Meals: BLD*

### DAY 9 YOL VALLEY

After an early breakfast, drive to Yol Valley National Park (2.5 hours), cradled between the foothills of the Altai Mountains. An ancient river carved this surprisingly green valley. Now, its remnant streams create ice formations at the base of the valley that sometimes persist as late as July. A hike through the valley allows you to discover habitat for indigenous vulture-like lammergeiers, Altai snowcocks, ibex, yaks and Argali mountain sheep. Return to the Three Camel Lodge in the late afternoon. *Hotel: Three Camel Lodge Meals: BLD*

### DAY 10 GOBI / ULAANBAATAR

Fly to Ulaanbaatar in the morning. Enjoy a tour of the stunning Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum. Named in honor of Zanabazar, the first Buddhist leader of Mongolia and renowned sculptor, artist and politician from the 17th century, the museum contains one of the best collections of Buddhist art and artifacts in the world, including many of Zanabazar's original works. In the evening, enjoy a performance featuring traditional Mongolian dancers and hoomi (throat) singers, followed by a farewell dinner at a fine local restaurant. *Hotel: Ulaanbaatar Hotel or similar Meals: D*

### DAY 11 DEPARTURE

Transfer to the airport for your international departure. Meals: B

# The Details



**Level of Activity:** *Moderate* – Rolling terrain at low altitude, strolling through city streets, valley walking, horse riding, camel riding, occasional optional hiking. Suitable for travellers in reasonable shape. Many opportunities for extended walks.

**Start:** Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia

**Finish:** Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia

## What's Included:

- all accommodations on a shared twin/double room basis
- all meals as indicated in the itinerary
- all domestic flights
- all transfers, events & local experts as indicated
- all special events and on-trip surprises
- all pre-departure materials, including documents wallets and destination details

**Trip Operator:** **Horizon & Co.** (founded in 1963), is Canada's leading boutique travel company. Horizon designs and stages authentic and deeply personal travel experiences that are carefully choreographed to induce a life-long memory. In addition to offering published trips on seven continents, Horizon builds private custom trips for discerning individuals and small groups.

**Trip Format:** **Independent Trips** are designed for independent-minded travellers who like to travel on their own (without a Horizon escort), but still want to experience our superbly designed itineraries at reasonable prices. The itinerary and prices are always fixed, and the departure dates may be flexible or fixed depending on the specific trip.

# Dates & Prices

DURATION	10 NIGHTS / 11 DAYS
DATES	MAY - SEPT
PRICE	\$5,995

# Horizon & Co.

GUIDED BY EXPERIENCE SINCE 1963

## MORE DETAILS...

Visit [www.horizon-co.com](http://www.horizon-co.com) to view more photos, read guide profiles, order brochures, subscribe to our newsletter, or email an itinerary to your friends.

## BOOK YOUR TRIP...

Consult your local travel professional, email us directly at [admin@horizon-co.com](mailto:admin@horizon-co.com), book online using our website at [www.horizon-co.com](http://www.horizon-co.com), or call us and speak to our travel experts at 1-800-387-2977.

## THE FINE PRINT...

The terms & conditions governing your booking are located in our brochures or on our website, as well as more information on insurance, cancellations and waivers and other policies.

## CONTACT US...

Horizon & Co.  
478 Queen St. E., Ste 400  
Toronto, Ontario M5A 1T7  
Tel: 1-800-387-2977  
Fax: 416-585-9614  
Email: [admin@horizon-co.com](mailto:admin@horizon-co.com)  
Web: [www.horizon-co.com](http://www.horizon-co.com)