

## **15 days - Camel Riding in Gobi Desert**

- Day 1. Arrival in Ulaanbaatar
- Day 2. Tsagaan Suvarga
- Day 3. Yoliin & Dungenee Am
- Day 4. Khongoriin Els
- Day 5. Camel trekking in Khongoriin Els
- Day 6. Camel trekking in Khongoriin Els
- Day 7. Drive to Bayanzag, Flaming Cliff
- Day 8. Camel riding in Flaming Cliff
- Day 9. Drive to Ongiin monastery
- Day 10. Camel trekking in Ongiin monastery
- Day 11. Orkhon waterfall
- Day 12. Karakorum
- Day 13. Drive to Ulaanbaatar
- Day 14. Free day in Ulaanbaatar
- Day 15. Departure

### ***Detailed Description***

#### **Day 1. Arrival in UB**

Arrival in Mongolia. You will be welcomed by our team and we will take you to your centrally located comfortable hotel. Depending on your arrival time, city tour will be organised. City sightseeing includes Gandan monastery, Chingis Khaan Square, Zaisan Memorial Hill and the last Mongolian king's winter and summer Palace. (Half-day city tour covers about 4 -5 hours)

#### **Day 2. Sum Khukh Burd & Tsagaan Suvarga**

After breakfast, we will start driving towards the Gobi desert. Today we will see the landscape changing dramatically from the fertile 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. During this nearly 250 km trip (5 hours driving) we will stop at some interesting spots. The first place we will visit is **Sum Khukh Burd Monastery Ruin** surrounded by tiny lake once used to be home to some remarkable bird life. Among others, the Mongolian lark, various species of prey birds, geese and swans come to this spring-fed lake. The ruins of **Khukh Burd Monastery** that was flattened

during the Mongolian purge period. (1928 – 1939) From here we will head for Tsagaan Suvarga.

In the evening after long hours of driving we will reach Tsagaan Suvarga. The Cliff is 30 meters high and 100 meters wide. Over thousands of years the wind has created his amazing structure.

From a distance **Tsagaan Suvraga** resembles the ruins of an ancient town with crumbling buildings. Painted and carved on the rocks are ancient images of people hunting ibex with long bows and petroglyphs depicting wild animals and cattle. There are also Turkic inscriptions with different seals and images in the caves here.

A fissure running east to west from the upper slopes of a mountain down across the steppe. Looking into the fissure you will see high mud columns rising from the depths below. The yawning gap looks like the open jaws of some fabulous animal. Some of the caves are multi chambered one of which stretches back over 70 metres.

### **Day 3. Yoliin and Dungenee Am**

Today we will take arrive at Vulture and drive through the beautiful gorges of the imposing **Altai Mountain Chain**. We will pass through the **Yoliin Am** and the **Dungenee Am** both located in the **Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park**. Ancient rivers carved those green valleys.

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 and local flora and fauna.

### **Day 4. Khongoriin Els**

After a good morning breakfast we will drive 150 km westwards to the **Khongoriin 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. Here we will visit two humped camel breeding family and get introduced to their simple, humble, hard yet amazing way of life. Gobi desert being the coldest desert of the world with cold wind blowing pretty much throughout whole autumn, winter and spring without any shelter exposed in plains demands extreme survival method of living. Gobi nomads are well-known for their hard working quality in whole Mongolia.

### **Days 5 and 6. Camel riding in Khongoriin Els**

For two days we will ride camels along the impressive Khongoriin Els sand dunes and explore its beauties. We will have time to hike on the dunes and the most energetic of us will climb to the top of the sand dunes and enjoy one of the most amazing views of Mongolia.

### **Day 7. Bayanzag and Flaming Cliff**

Today we will head 150 km to the **Bayanzag**. 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 some time exploring the cliffs on foot. In the evening we will meet the camel man and his family. We will have a dinner together and overnight at his family ger.

### **Day 8. Camel Riding in Bayanzag, Moltog Els**

After a good breakfast we will set for a day camel trip in the direction of another sand dune.

### **Day 9. Ongiin monastery**

Today we will continue driving to northwest to **Ongiin Monastery**. We will enjoy the peace and beauty of the **Delger Khangai Mountains**. 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.

Now day between ruins little monastery was built and in Ger museum are exhibited remains of old monasteries.

### **Day 10. Camel Riding in Ongiin monastery**

Today we will set off with our camels for the peaceful **Delger Khangai Mountains**. Once arrived 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.

### **Day 11. Orkhon waterfall**

In the 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. We will stay with nomadic horse breeding family. Your guide will help to forge contact with nomads and you will have better knowledge of their unique way of life by the time you say good bye to your hosts. We will get involved in many variety of daily activities of herders pursue. Milk sheep, goat, cows and horses. Process the milk to make butter, cheese & yogurt. Savour delicious, fresh dairy products you help producing. Fresh yak cream & yogurt with wild blueberry jam produced

locally are the best you have ever tasted anywhere in the world. Not to miss as well is fermented mare milk. A talented horseman will show his techniques to catch horse from freely roaming herd with Uurag – long wooden stick with ropes fixed at the end.

## **Day 12. Karakorum**

After an early wake up, we will set off for a driving day to **Karakorum** (also called Kharhorin).

Karakorum is the site of the 13th century capital of the Mongolian Empire created by **Chinggis Khan**. The founding of Karakorum 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 Chinggis Khaan'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.

The highest peak of its prosperity was from 1220 to 1260. The specific feature of this stage is that Karakorum existed as the great capital of the Euro-Asian Empire with Mongolia as its core and as the centre of politics, economy, culture, religion, intellect, and diplomacy and the prominent tie of international relations.

Between 1260 and 1380 Karakorum lost the status of the Great Mongolian Empire and became the capital of Mongolia. When Kublai Khan claimed the throne of the Mongol Empire in 1260, as did his younger brother, Ariq Boke, he relocated his capital to today's Beijing. Karakorum was reduced to the administrative centre of a provincial backwater of the Yuan Dynasty.

In 1368, the rule of Mongolian Yuan Dynasty collapsed and the centre of Mongolian government was shifted to its homeland after 110 years since **Khubilai Khaan** moved the Empire capital to China in 1260. It gave Karakorum a chance to prosper again.

In 1388, Ming troops under General Xu Da took and destroyed the town.

Today nothing is left from this legendary city.

In 1580, when Abtai Sain Khan together with his brother, lord Tumenkhen, visited the 3rd Dalai Lama and expressed their wish to build a temple in Mongolia, he advised them to reconstruct one old temple in Karakorum. The temple in Takhai ruins that was restored in 1588 according to the Dalai Lama's recommendation is the Main Zuu temple of Erdene Zuu monastery.

Now **Erdene Zuu Monastery** is all that remains of what once was a huge monastery of 100 temples and about 1.000 lamas residing there. 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.

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 Karakorum, 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.

We will also see the Turtle Rock and the Phallic Rock, visit little market behind walls exposing local arts by locals.

### **Day 13. Drive back to Ulaanbaatar via Khogno Khan Mountains and Elsen Tasarhai**

Today we will drive back to Ulaanbaatar. On the way we will stop Khogno Khan Mountains is an impressive massif in the open steppes. Not far from here runs the **Tasarkhai Els**, a 100 km long sand dune. Enjoy the incredible view over the plains, the sand dune and grasslands.

### **Day 14. Free day in Ulaanbaatar**

Today we will have a full free day to stroll around in Ulaanbaatar and buy some souvenirs before heading back home. On the way back from airport we will go and visit cashmere factory. We will see different process of goat cashmere going through into becoming fine delicate clothes. This afternoon we will have free time to explore further the town and to shop for souvenirs. In the evening we will share memories of our trip over final farewell dinner at one of the city's best restaurant.

### **Day 15. Departure**

You may depart anytime. Time to say final good bye to the Land of Blue Sky.

## **Day 2. Karakorum (360km/5hours)**

After an early wake up, we will set off for a driving day to Karakorum. Karakorum is the site of the 13th century capital of the Mongolian Empire created by Genghis Khan. The founding of Karakorum started on the ruins of Gokturk and Uigur cities in the Orkhon valley at the eastern end of the Khangai Mountains in 1220 by the Chinggis Khaan's order. It 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 Mungke Khan's palace has become the symbol of Karakorum. The highest peak of its prosperity was from 1220 to 1260. The specific feature of this stage is that Karakorum existed as the great capital of the Euro-Asian Empire with Mongolia as its core and as the centre of politics, economy, culture, religion, intellect, and diplomacy and the prominent tie of international relations. At the arrival, we will visit one of the biggest Buddhist monastery Erdene Zuu. Now Erdene Zuu Monastery is all that remains of what once was a huge monastery of 100 temples and about 1.000 lamas residing there. 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.

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 Karakorum, 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 Turkic noble tomb with wall paintings and artefacts, including gold items and jewellery. There is a short video of actual burial site. We will also see the Turtle Rock and the Phallic Rock, visit little market behind walls exposing local arts by locals.

(Ger camp, B, L, D)

## **DAY 1: ORKHON WATERFALLS (150 KM/4 HOURS)**

After our breakfast at the ger camp, we will set further westwards into to Orkhon valley where the Orkhon River flows. The Orkhon valley is surrounded by the foothills of the Khangai mountain range. Meadows and fir forests are prominent here. The Orkhon river valley is lined with the remains of an ancient lava flow.

We will have our lunch at our host family located nearby **Orkhon Waterfalls** which cascades down a basalt canyon to a depth of 20 meters. After lunch we will have plenty time to explore the waterfall, its canyon and surrounding area. Our translator will help us to forge contact with the host family.

(Family stay, B, L, D)

#### **DAYS 2-14: TREKKING IN KHANGAI MOUNTAINS:**

Today we will start our eleven days trek through Khangai Mountain. Here we will leave our vehicles and load our gear and food on pack horses. We will leave civilization and our comfort zone behind for eleven days start a true once in a life time adventure where still the nature decides everything.

We will leave the Orkhon Waterfalls and trek stream upwards along the **Bituu River** until we go through a pass that leads us to the **Eight Lakes** valley. This totally remote area was created by volcanic activities. It is locked between several extinct volcanoes and high mountain peaks. As its name says, the valley shelters a large number of small lakes, all interconnected by rivers. The lakes are supplied with fresh water running from the mountains.

The first lake we will reach is **Khuis Lake**. This lake is dotted with a large rock island. Our trekking path becomes a mix of everything such as rocks, forests, bushes and muds, and it gets more adventurous. We will continue our trekking towards **Shireet Lake**. On the way to Shireet Lake, our trek takes through other several smaller lakes. The Eight Lakes valley is one of the most beautiful, untouched and picturesque place of Khangai Mountain range. You will enjoy hearing only nature, the stream going downward to the lakes and birds tweet. One can feel deeply relaxed and refreshed. From second part of our trek we will leave the Eight Lakes valley for the **Baruun River**. We will trek through a pass from where we'll enjoy stunning views of volcano craters and the picturesque little lakes. The **Baruun River** valley is forested and rocky. In parts it flows through canyons. On the way along the river we will enjoy the never ending sound of stream and birdsong. After having walked down along the Baruun River we will turn left and hike along the **Suv River** stream upward.

At the source of the Suv River we will trek through the pass to reach Khug River. From here we will trek to **Erkhet Khairhan Mountain**. The mountain with its peak reaching 3535 meters is the second highest mountain of Khangai. We will climb the mountain and enjoy the stunning views from peak. We will descend the mountain into the direction of the **Tamch River**.

The path will take us to stream downwards to **Uliastai River**. After ten days trek we will slowly make our way back to where we started.

(Tented camp, B, L, D)

#### **Day 15. Tuvkhun Monastery / Tsenher Hot Spring (150km/4 hours)**

**Tuvkhun Monastery** was 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 views 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 spending some time exploring the monastery we will continue driving westward in the direction of **Khangai Mountains**. 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. The green mountainsides and the network of smaller and larger rivers offer excellent pastureland for the herds of horses, yaks and cows.

In the afternoon 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 16. Tsenkher Hot Spring**

Enjoy a relaxing day at the ger camp at Tsenkher Hot Springs. Visit the springs and soak in their healing powers. Opt to go horseback riding or hang out with the locals.

(Ger camp, B, L, D)

### **DAY 17: KHOGNO KHAN MOUNTAINS (230 KM/5 HOURS)**

After a good rest will drive to **Khogno Khan Mountains**. Khogno Khan Mountains is an impressive massif in the open steppes. Not far from here runs the **Tasarkhai Els**, a 100 km long sand dune.

End the afternoon we will hike in the region of Khogno Khan Mountains, walk up the mountain and enjoy the incredible view over the plains, the sand dune and grasslands. We will also visit the nice little **Uvgun Monastery**.

(Ger Camp, B, L, D).

### **Day 18. Drive to Ulaanbaatar (260 km/4 hours)**

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

(Hotel, B, L)

### **Day 19. Departure**

Depart at any time. We will take you to the airport (train station). (B)