

EXPLORE!

Land of the Great Khan
13 days

Mongolia - Trip code GK

Land of the Great Khan

On this trip, we discover everything that is unique and special about Mongolia - the endless blue sky, picturesque steppe, vast desert and welcoming nomadic hospitality. We enjoy traditional ger (Mongolian yurt) accommodation in the tranquil Mongolian wilderness and soak up the culture in Ulaan Baatar.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Ulaan Baatar** - In a capital city where the modern and the traditional collide, learn about Mongolia's rich cultural heritage in the museums and palaces
- ★ **Jalman Meadows and Hognu Khan Mountain** - Do as much or as little as you wish in these tranquil and astonishingly beautiful spots
- ★ **Gobi Desert** - Travel through one of the remotest parts of our planet and, as our driver sets off across trackless terrain, marvel at how he knows where he is going
- ★ **Karakorum** - Explore Genghis Khan's ruined capital and the revived Erdene Zuu Monastery, once again alive with the sound of chanting, after being destroyed in the Stalinist purges

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Simple

These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, sometimes with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Moderate

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**10 - 16**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join Tour Ulaan Baatar

Upon arrival in Ulaan Baatar you will be checked-in to your hotel where you will have the opportunity to relax after your flight. Largely modernised, this capital city is the hub of Mongolia in every sense and home to nearly half of the country's population. However, despite its concrete façade, many of its inhabitants can be seen in their traditional dress and a huge proportion continue to live in gers in the suburbs.



Accommodation: Puma Imperial Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Drive to Hognokhan Mountain

Today, a long yet scenic drive takes us to Hognokhan Mountain where we will spend the next two nights at our ger camp. Hognokhan Mountain is a particularly serene spot and you will have plenty of time to explore and relax here.



Accommodation: Delger Ger Camp (or similar)



Simple Ger



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 3 - Explore the monastery and waterfalls of Hognokhan

After breakfast there will be the opportunity to hike up Hognokhan Mountain - a three hour, strenuous walk that is amply rewarded with breathtaking views from the top. The beautiful flowers and butterflies en route also make it worthwhile. You may wish to visit the nearby freshwater pool and watch the impressive birdlife that inhabits this area. There is a chance to visit the

Erdene Khombo monastery, led by a lady abbot located in the mountain nearby. Alternatively, simply relax with a good book and an exceptional view.



Accommodation: Delger Ger Camp (or similar)



Simple Ger



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 4 - Visit Erdene Zu Monastery en route to Karakorum

Leaving Hognu Khan we drive to Karakorum, Genghis Khan's capital in the 13th century. En route, we'll visit the immense Erdene Zuu Monastery - Mongolia's first Buddhist centre established in the 16th century and now an active monastery as well as a museum. At its zenith, there were 1,000 resident monks and, although most of the temples were destroyed in the 1930s, the monastery is slowly being restored and is considered by many as the most important monastery in Mongolia. The political climate in Mongolia is changing and Buddhism, previously suppressed, is currently experiencing a resurgence. On a hill outside the monastery sits an interestingly shaped rock - a reminder for the monks to remain celibate. We also visit the Karakorum Museum which chronicles the history of the Khan Empire along with artefacts from the ruined city.



Accommodation: Anja Eco Ger Camp (or similar)



Simple Ger



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 5 - Drive to our camp near to Saikhan Ovoo

Today we undertake the longest drive of the trip, but the scenery is so spectacular that the eight hours is sure to pass quickly, especially as it is interspersed with plenty of stops. Once again, there are no roads and few tracks to follow. The other thing that will doubtless strike you when travelling through these great expanses of Mongolia is the varied bird life. Mongolian Lark, Demoiselle Cranes and Black Vultures may be seen, to name but a very few. Very bizarrely, this land-locked country also seems to attract many coastal species, such as plover, redshank and avocet. Our accommodation for the night is in a permanent ger camp, so the bathroom and restaurant facilities are in a purpose-built block, as opposed to our previous ger accommodation which had separate kitchen, restaurant and shower gers. Next to the ger camp are the ruins of the Ongi Monastery - once home to over 1,000 lamas until it was destroyed during the Stalinist purges in the 1930s.



Accommodation: Secret of Ongi Ger Camp (or similar)



Simple Ger



Single room available

DAY 6 - Cross the Gobi Desert to Bayanzag

Today we drive through one of the remotest parts of our planet. The sheer vastness of the desert is awe-inspiring and, as our driver sets off across terrain with no tracks, let alone roads, we marvel at how he knows where he is going. The Mongol culture of today is still mainly pastoral and we hope to come across itinerant herdsman, a group of two or three families, their gers pitched on the steppe. The nomads live in harmony with their surroundings and move with the seasons. Many rear camels, sheep and goats. It is likely that, at some point during our trip, we will be invited to share a drink of airag or koumiss (fermented mare's milk) with these friendly people. There are many polite points of etiquette to learn, but our guide will help us through these so we do not inadvertently cause offence. The provision of a gift when you visit a ger is part of the culture in Mongolia, so feel free to pack something small. We plan to visit the spot where the first dinosaur eggs were discovered in Central Asia.




Accommodation: Gobi Tour Ger Camp (or similar)



Simple Ger



Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 7 - Drive to Dungee and the Yol Valley

Moving on again today we make our way to Yol Valley. This gorge sees such little sunlight that there are usually traces of ice even though we are in the middle of the desert. Due to the altitude of the surrounding Gurvan Saikhan Mountains, a temperate ecosystem exists, with argali sheep, ibex and snow leopards living here - as opposed to the desert species we might expect. Our accommodation for the night is in a camp, with the smell of feverfew, camomile and thyme in the grass and looking out over the Gobi Desert and beside a mountain range, this spot exudes peace and tranquillity.



Accommodation: Gobi Oasis Ger Camp (or similar)



Simple Ger



Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 8 - Take a walk through the Yol Valley

We spend today exploring the Yol Valley. We start with a visit to the small museum and after visiting we take a short drive to the head of the valley where we take a leisurely walk. On the way back to the Ger Camp we will stop at the Havtsgait Petroglyph where there are hundreds of rock drawings dating to 7,000BC.



Accommodation: Gobi Oasis Ger Camp (or similar)



Simple Ger



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 9 - Fly to Ulaan Baatar

This morning we will take the short flight back to the capital. In the afternoon we have an opportunity to explore Ulaan Baatar. We will visit the National Museum of Mongolia, which, although stuck in a time warp from a presentation perspective, contains an impressive array of exhibits taking you through the ancient and more recent history. We will also visit the Bogd Khan Palace. Built at the turn of the last century as a winter palace for the last king and eighth living Buddha of Mongolia, this simple two storey wooden building was, for many years, the tallest building in Mongolia.



Accommodation: Puma Imperial Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 10 - Watch the start of the Naadam Festival celebrations

Today we have our first experience of the Naadam festivities in and around Ulaan Baatar. The itinerary for the festival is finalised at a very late stage, but we can expect to watch the horse races and wrestling competitions that are typical of this annual festival. It may be possible to watch some of the training sessions for the archery competitions as well. Naadam is the country's largest festival, locally known as 'Eriin Gurvan Naadam' which translates as 'the three games of men' - horse racing, wrestling and archery.



Accommodation: Puma Imperial Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 11 - Join in with the locals at the Naadam Festival

Today the festivities officially begin, with pomp and ceremony almost akin to an Olympic Opening Ceremony. Along with much of the population who will be tuning in on their TVs, we start by watching the parade of nine white horsetail banners entering the stadium. These banners were originally used by Genghis Khan, with the white colour symbolising peace and nine considered a lucky number. The horses and presidential guards then parade on to the National Stadium for the opening ceremony. We follow them to watch the ceremony which is opened by the President and followed by a wrestling competition featuring up to 500 participants. We'll join the locals for a picnic lunch in the gardens surrounding the stadium.



Accommodation: Puma Imperial Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 12 - Visit Ganden Monastery; drive to Jalman Meadows

An early start this morning to watch the lamas partake in their morning prayers at Ganden Lamasery. After soaking up the calm atmosphere, we leave the city and head for the countryside, driving for about three and a half hours through the stunning steppe landscape. Jalman Meadows is the peaceful setting of our semi-permanent ger camp which will be our home for the next two nights. Located in a true wilderness between steppe and taiga forest, the meadow may be covered in a blanket of wildflowers during July and August, with butterflies to rival those found in an English meadow one-hundred years ago. Your Tour Leader will lead you on one of the beautiful walks in the area, depending on the wishes of the group. Alternatively, you may wish to simply relax by the river and enjoy the tranquil surroundings.



Accommodation: Jalman Meadows Ger Camp (or similar)



Simple Ger



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 13 - Relax or try rafting at Jalman Meadows

Today is free to continue to enjoy your surroundings. One option is a two-hour stroll upstream along the banks of the river in the company of a raft-pulling yak. The one-hour drift back to camp is gentle and with a serene soundtrack of birdsong. Whilst life jackets are provided for rafting, to take part in this optional excursion we recommend you are confident swimming at least 25 metres unaided.



Accommodation: Jalman Meadows Ger Camp (or similar)



Simple Ger



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 14 - Morning at Jalman; Afternoon drive to Ulaan Baatar

You have the opportunity to spend the morning as you wish. You might choose to walk in the forest or relax at the ger camp, making the most of its well-stocked 'Library ger'. Or, discovering your inner Mongol, you may choose to challenge the rest of your group to

an archery competition, using the camp's kit. After lunch we will drive back to the capital for our final night in Mongolia.



Accommodation: Puma Imperial Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



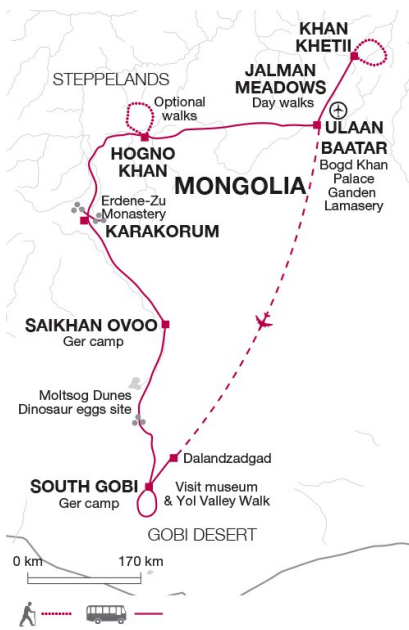
Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 15 - Tour ends Ulaan Baatar

Our tour ends this morning after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 14
Lunch: 13
Dinner: 12



Transport

Bus
Flight



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

9 nights simple ger
5 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Mongolia

Climate

Mongolia has an extreme continental climate similar to that of south-central Siberia or Manchuria and enhanced by a mean elevation of 1500m. Winters are long and very cold. There is a swift transition in May to a short, warm summer and an equally rapid return to the winter cold in October. Summer temperatures vary from around 35°C in the desert to as low as 15°C in the mountains. Frost can occur in the mornings in the Terej National Park. Rainfall is low everywhere; no more than 38-51cm a year in the mountains and as little as 13cm in the drier lowland parts although do come prepared for the occasional downpour. However, temperatures drop very quickly when rainfall does occur. (Rainfall can be heavy, therefore, a good quality rainjacket and waterproof trousers are essential). Be prepared for all weather conditions during your tour. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Upto-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Time difference to GMT

+7

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Buddhist, Atheist

Language

Mongolian

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Rafting with yak cart- In Jalman Meadows US\$ 15.
Horseshoeing - In Jalman Meadows US\$ 7 per hour.
Ulaan Baatar - Cultural evening US\$ 12.

Clothing

Daytime temperatures are warm and we recommend lightweight clothing plus some warm layers for the drop in night temperatures experienced in high desert areas and mountains of Mongolia. You will also need a good waterproof jacket as rain can be heavy.

Footwear

Light walking boots and comfortable shoes and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of lockable baggage ideally a soft holdall, kitbag or frameless rucksack. Keep luggage to a strict minimum as you will be expected to carry your bag throughout. Porters are not available in Mongolia.

Please note that the luggage allowance for the domestic flight is 10kg per person for the hold plus 5kg hand luggage. It is possible to pay for small amounts of excess baggage at a cost of approximately £1 per kilogram. Excess baggage can also be kept securely in Ulaan Baatar until our return to the city.

Equipment

Wet wipes
Torch and head torch
Walking poles (if you use them)
Insect repellent
Sun Screen

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 40 for tipping. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Country Information

Mongolia

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£5

Dinner price

£13

Beer price

£1.5

Water price

£0.7

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Tugrik.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Most people spend around \$200 to \$300 over the two weeks. It is easier to carry your funds in small denomination US\$ cash as this is the most readily accepted form of currency for the ger camps. Please bring only clean bills issued after 1991.

Where To Exchange

In major cities and towns

ATM Availability

Limited

Credit Card Acceptance

In major restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Can be exchanged in Ulaan Baatar.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Flight

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

The ger camps in Mongolia consist of several canvas and felt tents plus a large dining tent or restaurant. Each ger used on this tour has 2 or more beds, bedding, plus a table and stools. All are hand painted in local style. Although they are comfortable, we advise that you try to leave behind your western standards to fully appreciate the atmosphere of these traditional dwellings. Toilet and washing facilities are shared and separate to the living gers, with a mixture of flushing and long-drop style toilets. Should you wish to charge your cameras and electronic devices during your trip, there is electricity in the restaurant gers.

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Mongolia: A single entry visa is required by British, Irish, New Zealand, Australian, & Canadian citizens and must be obtained prior to departure. A Mongolian visit visa is usually valid for a stay of up to 30 days within six months from the date of issue. All passports must have at least 6 months validity remaining on entry to Mongolia.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Non refundable permits

Mongolia

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.
