

Happy Camel Travel

Presents

**Mongol Els Sand Dune Trekking in West
(15 days)**

Happy Camel Travel Co Ltd

Office location: 47.909875 106.8824722222
Post Office Box 13
Ulaanbaatar 46
Mongolia

Mobile / Whatsapp: +976 9911 8295
Mobile / Whatsapp: +976 9666 8295

E-mail: info@happycamel.travel
Web Page: www.happycamel.travel

MONGOL ELS SAND DUNE TREKKING IN WEST
(15 DAYS)

15 Days ♦ 1 Night in Hotel ♦ 10 Nights Tented Camp
♦ 3 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 the more.



- ◆ Trekking ♦ Karakorum ♦ Erdene Zuu Monastery
- ◆ Karakorum's New Archaeological Museum ♦ Terkhiin Tsagaan Lake ♦ Otgontenger Uul ♦ Holboo Nuur ♦ Bayannuur River
- ◆ Bor Khairiin Else Sand Dunes ♦ Khungiin River
- ◆ Family Stay



Trip Type: Rigorous Mongol Els Sand Dune Trekking in West

QUICK ITINERARY REFERENCE

DAY 1: KARAKORUM

DAY 2: TERKHIIN TSAGAAN NUUR AND KHORGO VOLCANO

DAY 3 : TERKHIIN TSAGAAN NUUR AND KHORGO VOLCANO

DAY 4: TOSONTSENGEL VILLAGE AND TELMEN NUUR

DAY 5: KHOLBOO NUUR, LAKE

DAY 6: BAYANNUUR VILLAGE

DAY 7: BAYANNUUR RIVER

DAY 8 : BAYANNUUR LAKE

DAY 9: DESERT LAKE

DAY 10: BOR HYARIIN ELS SAND DUNE

DAY 11: KHUNGIIN RIVER

DAY 12: ZAVKHANMANDAL VILLAGE

DAY 13: SOURCES OF KHUNGUI RIVER

DAY 14: ULIASTAI

DAY 15: FLIGHT BACK TO ULAANBAATAR

DETAILED TOUR DESCRIPTION

DAY 1: KARAKORUM

Today 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 **Genghis 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 Genghis Khan's order. It was completed 15 years later during the Ugedei Khan'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 Khan** 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 **Karakorum'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.

(Ger camp B, L, D)

DAY 2: TERKHIIN TSAGAAN NUUR AND KHORGO VOLCANO

A little before lunchtime we will reach **Tsetserleg**, capital city of Arkhangai province. It is a lovely little town surrounded by forested hills. Here we will visit the **Buyandelgeruulekh Monastery**, the town main functioning monastery and the nice little Museum of Arkhangai located in Zayaiin Gegeenii Monastery. From the museum we will walk hill upward to a small abandoned monastery and enjoy the beautiful view we have from there over Tsetserleg and the surrounding hills.

We will eat lunch in a local restaurant. In the evening we will reach **Terkhiin Tsagaan Lake**. It is one of the most beautiful lakes of the country. The lake is surrounded by extinct and craterous volcanoes, and was formed by lava flows from a volcanic eruption many millennia ago. As a result of the volcano eruptions the landscape is covered with black volcanic rocks.

(Ger camp B, L, D)

DAY 3 : TERKHIIN TSAGAAN NUUR AND KHORGO VOLCANO

Today we will relax around the **White Lake** (also named the Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur). We will make an excursion to the top of Khorgo Uul Volcano and we will pass the gorges that lead from Tariat to the volcano. The volcano crater is 200 m wide and 100 m deep and is covered with trees at the back and around the opening of the crater. To the south of Khorgo there are numerous basaltic "gers" formed during the cooling of lava; some of the gers have gates and upper holes and reach 1.7 m high.

(Ger camp B, L, D)

DAY 4: TOSONTSENGEL VILLAGE AND TELMEN NUUR

Today we will pass **Tosontsengel soum**, located in **Zavhan province** and head to Telmen Lake, a closed lake basin, is slightly salty (about 4g per liter salinity). It is a beautiful lake which hosts abundant birdlife. The lake lies near the boundary between the forest-steppe and steppe ecosystems. You will find different kinds of landscape around the lake such as sand dunes, beautiful mountains, green forest and several rivers and other lakes.

Here you can see the rare desert flower “**zambaga**”. We will enjoy some hiking and relaxing near the lake.

(Tented Camp, B, L, D)

DAY 5: KHOLBOO NUUR, LAKE

Zavkhan aimag is situated in the western part of Mongolia. The eastern edge of Zavkhan aimag is the western flank of the Khangai Nuruu, the second highest mountain range in Mongolia, and a spectacular area of forests and lakes, dotted with snow-clad peaks, white-water streams and hot and cold springs. The southern and western parts of Zavkhan, usually ignored by visitors and Mongolians because of poor roads and transport, is a sharp contrast - a land of vast deserts, salt lakes and sand dunes where rain falls once or twice a year.

Otgontenger Uul is the highest peak of the **Khangai Nuruu range** and Mongolia's 5th highest mountain. Its peak is at 4020 meters above the sea level. Othgontenger is the only mountain of the Khangai range that is capped with a glacier.

Otgontenger is one of the worshipped mountains of Mongolia. Worshipping began during Khunnu times by the first governing state of Mongolia, and this tradition continues to the present day. Historically, this mountain was initially protected in 1818. The peak and its environs have been protected since 1992 to conserve the high mountain ecosystem. The south face of Otgon Tenger Uul is the biggest granite wall in Mongolia.

We will have a long day driving to reach at the end of the day **Holboo Nuur Lake**. Today we will pass small towns such as Nomreg, Tudevteyand Santmargats. We will overnight close to the Kholboo Lake.

(Tented Camp, B, L, D)

DAY 6: BAYANNUUR VILLAGE

Passing **Bayannuur village** by jeep, we will reach our host family. Here we will get the camels that will carry all our gears. We will enjoy an evening with our host family. Engage in a friendly chat & listen to their amazing life stories over one or two shots of vodka. Herders make local vodka from fermented milk.

(Tented Camp, B, L, D)

DAY 7: BAYANNUUR RIVER

After a good breakfast at our host family, we will load our gears on our pack camels and set off for our trek. Our first step will be to reach **Bayannuur River** where we will set our camp for the night. We might pass by a small Salt Lake (if it rained enough).

(Tented Camp, B, L, D)

DAY 8 : BAYANNUUR LAKE

Today we will reach **Bayannuur Lake** and trek for two consecutive days along the lake. The Salt Lake, among the Bor Hyariin Els sand dunes is beautiful place, scenery is fascinating.

(Tented Camp, B, L, D)

DAY 9: DESERT LAKE

We will leave Bayannuur Lake behind us to trek to our sand dune crossing pass. It will take us a full day to reach that point. We will camp at the feet of the sand dunes and get ready for the big crossing.

(Tented Camp, B, L, D)

DAY 10: BOR HYARIIN ELS SAND DUNE

Today we will trek through the **Bor Kyariin Else Sand Dunes**. We will cross this 15 km wide sand dune to end the day along a small river running south of the sand dune. We will set camp between the sand dune and the Khungiin River.

(Tented Camp, B, L, D)

DAY 11: KHUNGIIN RIVER

For the next two days we will trek stream upwards along the **Khungiin River**.

(Tented Camp, B, L, D)

DAY 12: ZAVKHANMANDAL VILLAGE

At the end of the second day we will reach **Zavkhanmandel Village**. Here we will leave the pack camels behind us and load everything back into our vehicles.

(Tented Camp, B, L, D)

DAY 13: SOURCES OF KHUNGUI RIVER

We will drive to the sources of the Khungiin River.

(Tented Camp, B, L, D)

DAY 14: ULIASTAI

Today we will drive back to Uliastai town. Uliastai is surrounded by mountains on all sides. It is one of the remote aimag of the country. Quiet and pleasant town. Enjoy your free afternoon to explore this little community.

(Hotel, B, D)

DAY 15: FLIGHT BACK TO ULAANBAATAR

Flight back to Ulaanbaatar. We will drive back to Ulaanbaatar, the capital city. Our team will take you directly to your hotel. You may enjoy the free afternoon to catch up all the places you haven't visited yet. Opt to see the beautiful cultural show enjoy the colourful and rhythmic Mongolian dance, throat singing and admire the contortionists.

(B, D)

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
- Domestic flight
- Airport transfer
- Hotel stay
- Ger camp stay
- Tented camp stay
- Meals 14B, 15L, 14D
- Tour guides
- 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. Local flights are limited to 10 kg
- Alcoholic and soft drinks
- Meals not included in the itinerary
- Laundry
- Telephone calls
- Items of personal nature
- Other items not specifically mentioned as included

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.

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If interested we also offer during your countryside trip a family stay. In some cases, (because of cold or lack of Ger Camp) you will have to overnight in a Mongolian nomad family.

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.