



Mongolia's Golden Eagle Festival

2020



Mongolia's Golden Eagle Festival **Nomadic Traditions of the Steppe & Gobi**

One departure in 2020 – Cultural Series – 12 Days

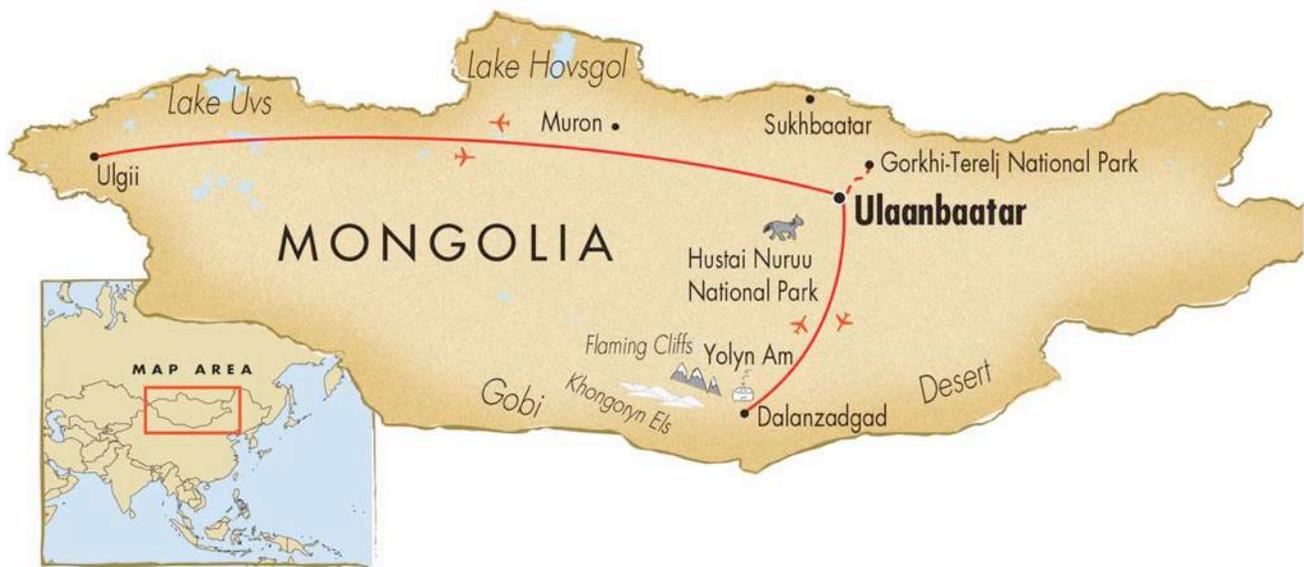
September 26–October 7, 2020

Explore Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar, with its Buddhist and nomadic heritage, and the fabled Gobi Desert, harboring sites of some of the most important paleontological discoveries of the 20th century. Admire the Flaming Cliffs, set foot on the shifting sand dunes of Moltsoq Els, and hike into the cool Yol Valley, habitat of the huge bearded vulture, the Lammergeier. Fly to Mongolia's westernmost province, remote Bayan-Ulgii, where the Altai Mountains unite Western China, Russia, Mongolia and Kazakhstan. Here on the rocky ridges overlooking the boundless steppe, a dwindling number of ethnic Kazakhs carry on a 6,000-year-old tradition, hunting with magnificent Golden Eagles, one of the world's largest predatory birds. Attend the annual Golden Eagle Festival where the eagle hunters, called berkutchi, display their birds' speed, skill and training, as well as the deep bond that forms between bird and human.



Daily Itinerary

Day 1, Saturday, September 26	Arrive Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
Day 2, Sunday, September 27	Ulaanbaatar
Day 3, Monday, September 28	Ulaanbaatar • fly to South Gobi
Day 4, Tuesday, September 29	South Gobi
Day 5, Wednesday, September 30	South Gobi
Day 6, Thursday, October 1	South Gobi • fly to Ulaanbaatar
Day 7, Friday, October 2	Ulaanbaatar • fly to Ulgii • Golden Eagle Festival
Day 8, Saturday, October 3	Ulgii • Golden Eagle Festival
Day 9, Sunday, October 4	Ulgii
Day 10, Monday, October 5	Ulgii • fly to Ulaanbaatar
Day 11, Tuesday, October 6	Ulaanbaatar • day trip to Gorkhi-Terelj National Park
Day 12, Wednesday, October 7	Depart Ulaanbaatar



MIR Signature Features

- Explore Mongolia's capital city, Ulaanbaatar, admiring its beautiful Gandan Monastery, and perusing a selection of its fascinating museums.
- Sip tea in a traditional nomadic ger as you watch the sun set over the vast expanse of the Gobi.
- Climb the sands at Moltsoq Els, some of the Gobi's few dunes.
- Gaze upon the Flaming Cliffs, where the first nest of dinosaur eggs was discovered.
- Cheer as Eagle Festival participants parade onto the field on horseback, wearing their handcrafted hunting outfits, and carrying their hooded birds.
- Observe the competitions in diving speed, agility, and ability to hit a target, the skills birds of prey are made for.
- Listen to the eerie, otherworldly sound of Mongolian throat-singing.

Tour Highlights

Ulaanbaatar	Gandan Monastery, National History Museum, Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum, Bogd Khaan Winter Palace Museum, Genghis Khan equestrian statue, throat-singing performance
South Gobi	Flaming Cliffs, Moltsoq Els, Togrogiin Shiree, Three Camel Lodge ger camp, optional camel riding, visit local nomads
Bayan-Ulgii	Golden Eagle Festival Opening Ceremony and competitions, Kazakh folk performance and celebration, <i>kukbar</i> (Kazakh tug-o-war on horseback), Golden Eagle hunter family visit
Gorki-Terelj National Park	High steppe of Mongolia, huge rock formations, Aryapala Meditation Temple



Daily Itinerary

For clients considering a flight itinerary with early a.m. Saturday arrival into Ulaanbaatar, please be aware that the hotel will be available at standard check-in time of 3:00 p.m. Those wanting room access earlier will have to purchase an additional night at travelers' expense. For those arriving early a.m. Sunday Day Two, the room is pre-booked and included in your package price, but touring will begin after breakfast on Day Two, which will mean a quick start. Please call us if you have any questions about arrival times and additional night expenses.



Day One, Saturday, September 26

Arrive Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Upon arrival in Ulaanbaatar, transfer from the airport to the hotel.

Ulaanbaatar is the political, industrial and cultural heart of Mongolia. Located in a basin 5,000 feet above sea level, Ulaanbaatar is surrounded by the beautiful Khan Khentii Mountains. Mongolians are traditionally nomadic people, and the concept of a settlement or city is fairly new. **Ulaanbaatar, or “Red Hero,”** was established only 350 years ago, when the trade routes between St. Petersburg and Beijing made it an important trade and

commercial center. At one time, over 90 percent of native Mongolians followed a nomadic lifestyle. Now, nearly half of the country's population lives in Ulaanbaatar.

Most travelers will arrive late this evening, and will overnight at the hotel on arrival.

Meals: Independent – *Best Western Tuushin or similar*



Day Two, Sunday, September 27

Ulaanbaatar

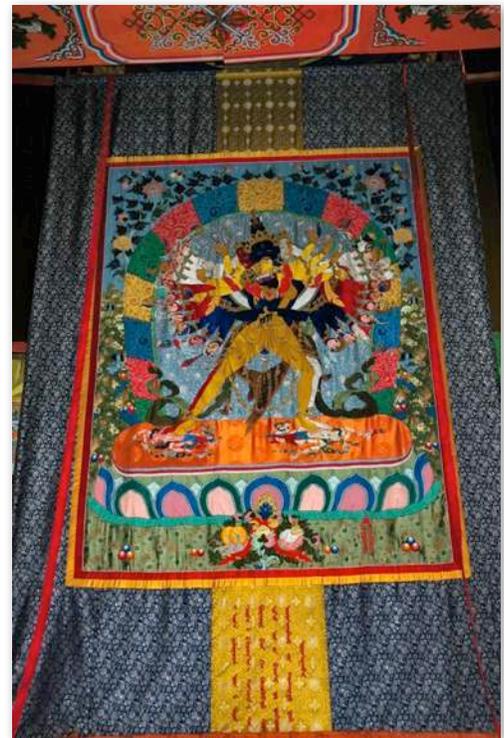
Spend the day getting to know Ulaanbaatar, beginning at the Gandan Monastery, with its temples and statues.

Gandantegchinlen Monastery on Dalkha Hill in Ulaanbaatar was originally founded in 1838. Until then most of Mongolia's monasteries had been small, mobile organizations that moved with the nomads. Meaning "Great Place of Complete Joy," the monastery was badly damaged during the 1930 Stalinist repressions, but the main temple was allowed to remain as a showcase for foreigners. Today this temple houses a 20-ton gilded statue of "the Lord Who Looks in Every Direction," created in the 1990s to replace the one destroyed in 1937. Feel free to light a candle here, or repeat the mantra, "*Om mane padme hum*," the most widely used of all Buddhist mantras.

Next, visit the fascinating **National Museum of Mongolian History**, providing a comprehensive look into the steppe nomad's history and culture ranging from the dawn of humanity through the incredible empire of Genghis Khan and on to the present day. The newly updated museum displays traditional implements of daily nomadic life, including Stone Age tools and enigmatic Bronze Age "deer stones," authentic costumes and ornaments of Mongolia's minority tribes, sacred relics, and agricultural, fishing and hunting equipment, including the type of bow that Genghis Khan's warriors made such deadly use of.

Enjoy lunch in the city before continuing to the **Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum**. 17th century Buddhist leader Zanabazar was a painter, sculptor, linguist and architect, and the museum includes some of his works. Featuring art from the Paleolithic Age to the early 20th century, the Zanabazar Museum contains a large collection of Buddhist art, including gorgeous fabric *thangkas*. The famous painting by B. Sharav, *One Day in Mongolia*, can be viewed here as well.

Meals: B, L, D – Best Western Tuushin or similar



Day Three, Monday, September 28

Ulaanbaatar • fly to the South Gobi

After breakfast, leave Ulaanbaatar for the flight to Dalanzadgad and the **fabled Gobi Desert**. The most likely flight time is this morning, though schedules in Mongolia are rather unpredictable. A morning flight allows time for touring on arrival in the Gobi.

Once in the Gobi Desert, imagine it stretching for 3,000 miles along the border of Mongolia and China, harboring sites of some of the most important paleontological discoveries of the 20th century. Explore the open landscapes dotted with hardy desert plants that serve as forage for wild Bactrian camels, Argali mountain sheep and goitered gazelle. This part of the Gobi is also home to Golden Eagles, *saker* falcons, *jerboas* (similar to kangaroo rats), and many endemic reptiles, and the surrounding mountains are home to some of the Northern Hemisphere's rarest mammals, such as the *dhole*, snow leopard, and Gobi bear.

Upon arrival in Dalanzadgad, transfer to **Three Camel Lodge** ger camp. Sheltered under a volcanic outcrop where ancient people carved their petroglyphs, Three Camel Lodge ger camp offers an authentic



Mongolian experience. Mongolia's premier eco-lodge, the ger camp makes use of Mongolia's most abundant resources – wind and sun. Local artisans followed the canons of Mongolian Buddhist architecture in constructing the main lodge, without a single nail. Travelers sleep in traditional felt gers, each with an unobstructed view of the Gobi and the heights of the Gobi-Altai Mountains beyond. Meals are served in a large ger, modeled after the ceremonial tents of the great khans. **All gers here feature private bathrooms with toilet, sink and shower.**



Visit **Moltsog Els**. The image that many have of the Gobi is of rolling sand dunes, but the vast majority of the terrain is actually sandy soil covered in very sparse scrub growth. Occasional stands of stunted trees indicate where water may be found, but with few exceptions dunes are absent. One of those notable exceptions is Moltsog Els, where the constantly shifting sands are piled by the wind and reach surprising heights. With luck here, the opportunity will present to mount up between the humps of a Bactrian camel and take a short ride.
Meals: B, L, D – *Three Camel Lodge Ger Camp*



Day Four, Tuesday, September 29

South Gobi

Continue today with a visit to the **Flaming Cliffs**. Named for their red-gold luminescence in the rays of the setting sun, the Flaming Cliffs are one of the most renowned paleontological sites in the world. Roy Chapman Andrews, leader of an American Museum of Natural History Museum expedition, found the world's first nest of dinosaur eggs here in 1922. Andrews, who is widely believed to be the inspiration for the film character Indiana Jones, gave these cliffs their English nickname. The nomadic Mongolians call the area Bayanzag. The heat and low humidity of this beautiful part of the Gobi have protected and preserved the numerous fossils that have been found here.



There may be nomad camps nearby; take the opportunity to visit with a family. Step inside a ger and share some salted and buttered tea or chunks of *aruul*, the dried camel's milk cheese that is a staple of travelers in the Gobi. If you choose, you may mount up between the humps and take a short ride into the desert. (Note, this visit is of course dependent on availability of local nomads, who by this time of year have sometimes already moved along due to the coming winter.) Return to the ger camp for dinner and overnight. Meals: B, L, D – Three Camel Lodge Ger Camp



Day Five, Wednesday, September 30

South Gobi

This morning head for the **Yol Valley**. At the foot of the beautiful peaks of the Gurvansaikhan Mountains towering 10,000 feet above the surrounding steppe, the cool Yolyn Am Canyon ("Vulture's Mouth") shelters snowbanks that in some years remain frozen into the hot summer months. Hike amidst the spectacular canyon scenery. Yaks are often pastured here in the mountains during the summer months. The Gobi is also the natural habitat of wild Bactrian camels, eagles, and the **Lammergeier, the bearded vulture**.



The Lammergeier, now nearly extinct in Europe, flourishes here in the high desert. With a wingspan of up to nine feet, these scavengers live almost exclusively on bones, which they drop from high above to crack them open. Then they spiral down and feast on the marrow and the bite-sized pieces of bone. Hiking around this region, you may get a glimpse of one preparing a meal for itself.
Meals: B, L, D – *Three Camel Lodge Ger Camp or similar*

Day Six, Thursday, October 1
South Gobi • fly to Ulaanbaatar

Following breakfast, transfer to the airport for the flight back to Mongolia's capital. After an arrival transfer to the hotel, take an afternoon tour around the city, stopping at the **Bogd Khaan Winter Palace Museum**. Mongolia's last Bogd Khaan, or Living Buddha, lived for 20 years in this compound, built between 1893 and 1903. Unlike other old sites in Ulaanbaatar, this one escaped destruction in the 1930s Stalinist purges. Six temples remain, as does a ceremonial gate built without the use of nails. On display are many of the gifts presented to the Bogd Khaan.

Return to the hotel for rest, followed by dinner at a local restaurant.
Meals: B, L, D – *Best Western Tuushin or similar*



Day Seven, Friday, October 2

Ulaanbaatar • fly to Ulgii • Golden Eagle Festival

This morning, transfer to the airport for the flight to Ulgii, which takes about three and a half hours. Ulgii is the capital of **Bayan-Ulgii**, the westernmost province of Mongolia, and one of its most scenic. Dominated by the Altai Mountains, the region is perhaps best known as the home of Kazakh nomads who, in the winter months, hunt with **trained Golden Eagles**. This tradition has been passed down from their Turkic ancestors. The majority of the local populace is ethnically Kazakh and religiously Muslim, though they share a pastoral-nomadic lifestyle with the Buddhist Mongolians. Kazakh women are renowned in Mongolia for their skills in embroidery and appliqué. Handcrafted felt carpets and embroidered tapestries decorate the gers. Each family has its own distinct design.

Upon arrival, transfer to the festival grounds for the **Opening Ceremony**. The official ceremony begins with the participants parading in on horseback with their eagles. The competition starts with each eagle hunter displaying his hunting outfit and accessories. The most elaborate and beautiful clothing and accessories are given the highest points. The hunters take pride in the handmade *tomaga*, the hood that covers the eagle's head and helps to domesticate it; the *bialeye*, the protective glove that the eagle perches on when it's being handled; and the *tomach*, the special hat made of fox-fur that signifies an eagle hunter.



Later, the Golden Eagles will be **evaluated for their speed and agility**. The eagles are released from a cliff and their owners stand below and signal for them to land upon their arms, as they do during hunting. Those with the fastest times and best technique will be awarded the highest scores. In the evening, **attend a traditional Kazakh performance of song, dance and music** in honor of the hunters and their eagles.

Note: While in Ulgii, accommodations are in temporary gers at the festival grounds of the Golden Eagle Festival. These temporary camps represent a rustic and authentic nomadic experience. It is important to

know that the gers in temporary ger camps **lack wooden floors**, and will not be as well appointed as the gers used in the South Gobi. Additionally, the temporary camps lack a central building with running water



and electricity. Pit toilets are set up in a separate tent, and meals are taken in a central, larger dining ger. Do not expect flush toilets or shower facilities in this remote part of Mongolia! Overnight in gers. Meals: B, L, D – *Temporary Ger Camp*



Sample only, accommodations will vary



Sample only, accommodations will vary

Day Eight, Saturday, October 3 **Ulgii • Golden Eagle Festival**

Continue today with **more festival competitions**. Golden Eagles can be found throughout the northern hemisphere. They prefer open areas like the Mongolian steppe, though they have adapted to woodland and forest up to about a 12,000 elevation. They have a lifespan of 35 years in the wild. Kazakh eagle hunters often set their birds free after a certain amount of time in captivity.

Today's competition finds the eagles attacking fox skins dragged by their trainers on horseback. Judges evaluate their skill at hitting the target, their diving speed and gripping technique. Later the horsemen play a mounted Kazakh game of tug-o-war called *kukbar*, as well as *Tenge Ilu*, which challenges horsemen to pick money up from the ground at a full gallop.

The awards ceremony is in the late afternoon and a celebratory dinner marks the closing of the festival.
Meals: B, L, D – *Temporary Ger Camp*





Day Nine, Sunday, October 4
Ulgii

This morning, drive to a nearby valley that is the home of **Golden Eagle hunter families**, and spend time learning about their lifestyle, culture, and their magnificent eagles. Hear about their methods for training eagles, sewing the special garments of hunter and bird, and about their way of life.

Return to the ger camp for an overnight stay.
Meals: B, L, D – *Temporary Ger Camp*

Day Ten, Monday, October 5
Ulgii • fly to Ulaanbaatar

Fly back to the capital this morning and enjoy a free afternoon to rest and relax. This evening, enjoy a performance of Mongolian throat-singing before dinner at a fine restaurant.

Throat-singing is practiced in both Tuva (Siberia) and Mongolia. This unique musical technique is more than an exotic novelty; it is part of a rich tradition. It is believed throat-singing evolved from human efforts to duplicate natural sounds such as a breeze blowing across the steppe or a rushing river.



In throat-singing, a single vocalist produces two, and sometimes three distinct tones, or overtones, simultaneously. There are several styles of throat-singing, including *sygyt*, the brightest style in which the highest register of the voice is used, *khoomei*, which is a softer style with the tones slightly muffled, and the *kargyraa* style, which produces a very low, growling sound. In many cases, the singer is accompanied on a horsehead fiddle.

In everyday life, throat-singers were herders taking a rest and amusing themselves. The singing can be heard from afar, and the singer may be sending greetings to his people who are living in a *ger* far from the pasture.

Meals: B, L, D – Best Western Tuushin or similar

Day Eleven, Tuesday, October 6 Ulaanbaatar • day trip to Gorkhi-Terelj

Head out of town today to Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, about a one-hour drive. On the way, stop at sacred Turtle Rock, an enormous granite rock formation resembling a turtle that climbers like to scramble up. On the side of the mountain behind the rock is set the lovely **Aryapala Meditation Temple**, created in 1998 to be a center for Buddhist retreat and meditation. Graced with majestic views and profound quiet, the temple is visited by Buddhists from around the world.

After a picnic lunch, explore the national park by foot. Named after an alpine plant related to wild rosemary, **Gorkhi-Terelj National Park** abuts the 4,600-square-mile Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area, where very few humans live. At over 5,000 feet, Terelj is a sweeping alpine landscape of temperate grassland and small pines dotted with rustic *gers* and grazing livestock. Huge rock formations crop up at intervals through the rocky soil. This is the high steppe of Mongolia, and here the traveler can get a feel for the huge distances and enormous sky that nomads have contended with for eons.

On the way back to town, visit the enormous **Genghis Khan statue**. Dominating the horizon about an hour's drive from the capital, the giant 131-foot stainless-steel-clad equestrian statue of Genghis Khan is an unforgettable sight. Sightseers can enter the interior of the horse on an elevator and admire the view from a platform perched on the horse's head. A recreation area, souvenir shops and lodgings are taking shape around the massive statue.

Return to the hotel to rest and prepare for tomorrow's departure, and tonight's **farewell dinner**. Raise a toast to the completion of your adventurous journey to the Mongolian outback.

Meals: B, L, D – Best Western Tuushin or similar



Day Twelve, Wednesday, October 7

Depart Ulaanbaatar

Following breakfast, the tour concludes with a departure transfer to the airport. Please note, many flights depart Ulaanbaatar late Tuesday night, or very early Wednesday morning. Travelers leaving late Tuesday/early Wednesday will have access to the hotel room until departure, but will miss breakfast on Wednesday morning. For travelers leaving later on Wednesday, the program ends with hotel checkout and departure transfers after breakfast; standard checkout times apply.

Meals: B (flight schedules permitting)

Special Note

This tour is timed to coincide with the Golden Eagle Festival in Ulgii. Attending a festival is an exciting way to see a country or city at its best, but please note schedules and itineraries are **highly likely to change** around the celebrations. Though we make every effort to adhere to our planned itinerary, the remote nature of this part of Mongolia, the less-developed infrastructure, and frequently changing flight schedules lead to this tour requiring a **larger than usual dose of flexibility and adaptability**.

About the Tour Manager: Michel Behar

2020 departure only

This journey will be accompanied and led by Michel Behar, who has been leading tours for MIR since 1998, with over 100 tours throughout MIR's realm. They include all the former Soviet republics, China, Tibet, Mongolia, Iran, Eastern Europe and the Balkans. He studied Russian and Arabic at the University of Amsterdam, and also studied Arabic at the University of Khartoum, Sudan. In addition, Michel, who lives in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, has an excellent command of English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Turkish, Russian and Hebrew, speaks some Farsi and Greek, and of course speaks his native Dutch. He specializes in current affairs (politics, economics, etc.) and 19th and 20th century history of the ex-USSR, Central Asia, the Balkans, Near East and parts of Africa. Michel's interests include photography and world music.



Dates for 2020 - One Departure - Cultural Series

The land itinerary is scheduled to operate on the dates listed below.

Please note that you need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to the tour start date, due to airline flight schedules.

September 26-October 7, 2020

Package Prices

6-16 travelers, \$7,995 per person, twin share

Plus internal air \$1,350 (economy class, subject to change)

Partial single supplement \$1,450 (does not include single accommodations in Ulgii)

Full single supplement \$1,950 (**only 2 'full trip' single supplements are available on this departure due to limited ger camp space in Ulgii - call for availability**)



Land Tour Includes

- Accommodations as noted in the itinerary. They range from a four-star hotel in Ulaanbaatar to 6 nights in ger camps. 3 nights are at deluxe Three Camel Lodge in the Gobi, where all gers offer en suite western-style toilet and a sink for running water, and showers are located in a separate building. The 3 nights in Ulgii are spent in a **temporary ger camp with shared pit toilets and no running water.**
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner every full day of the tour (11 breakfasts, 10 lunches and 10 dinners.)
- Restaurant tips for included meals.
- Services of experienced, English-speaking local guides, drivers and other staff, including a MIR Tour Manager.
- Arrival/departure airport transfers. MIR will arrange for all travelers to be met on arrival and seen off on departure whether we make your airfare arrangements or not, provided you arrive and depart on the tour start/end dates in the tour start/end city.
- Ground transportation throughout the itinerary by jeeps or minivans (type and number of vehicles depends on group size and terrain).
- Guided sightseeing tours and entrance fees as outlined in itinerary.
- Special events, excursions and cultural performances per the itinerary.
- Baggage handling where available - though porters are rare in the more remote parts of the program.
- Gratuities to local guides, drivers, porters and other service personnel.
- Complete pre-departure information including detailed packing list, reading list, *Touring with MIR* handbook with country-specific information, maps, and travel tips.
- Assistance booking your custom flight arrangements (on request; please note that international air fare is not included in the land tour cost).
- Final document packet, including luggage tags, final updates, and more.
- Golden Eagle Festival entrance fees.

Not Included

- Internal airfare (internal airfare is quoted separately and is subject to change by airlines).
- International airfare or taxes/fuel surcharges.
- Meals not specified as included in the itinerary.
- Partial single supplement charge, if requested or required.
- Items of a personal nature (phone calls, email, laundry, alcohol, excess baggage, etc).
- Gratuities to Tour Manager.
- Visa/passport fees, airport departure fees if required (note: no Mongolian visa is required for U.S. passport holders).
- Expenses incurred as a result of delay, modification or extension of a tour due to causes beyond MIR's control.
- Travel and trip cancellation insurance.

Interested in travel insurance?

To learn more about all the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp or contact Travel Guard at 1-877-709-5596.

Cultural Series

MIR's Cultural Series programs feature some of our most distinctive tour concepts and include uncommon and educational experiences, including visits to small towns and villages outside the major urban areas and capital cities.



Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?

This program, by nature, is designed to be adventurous, but also as comfortable as is possible for rustic travel in this region. Accommodations will vary from a four-star hotel in Ulaanbaatar to simple and basic accommodation in a temporary ger camp in Ulgii. Six nights are spent in ger camps (three nights will be spent in gers with shared pit toilets and no running water in Ulgii; three nights will be spent in Three Camel Lodge Ger Camp in the Gobi where all gers offer en-suite toilet, sink and shower). All gers, temporary in Ulgii or permanent at Three Camel Lodge are heated by wood stoves. Services are improving in the region; nevertheless, you may encounter problems with plumbing, bureaucratic service, unpaved roads, road conditions generally, unpaved sidewalks, uneven surfaces and steps and availability and quality of public restrooms. If you rely on electricity for CPAP, or for any other reason, you must have your own battery or other back-up, or please reconsider participation. You are traveling in some areas which, relatively speaking, have seen few travelers, and the infrastructure is not yet fully developed.

While in Ulgii, accommodations are in temporary gers about 20 minutes drive from the festival grounds of the Golden Eagle Festival. These temporary camps represent a rustic and authentic nomadic experience. The gers in temporary ger camps lack wooden floors, and will not be as well appointed as those in the Gobi. Additionally, the temporary camps lack a central building with running water and electricity. Overall camp conditions are rustic – pit toilets are set up in a separate tent, and meals are taken in a central, larger dining ger. Ground conditions can be uneven, or soggy/muddy. Electricity is extremely limited. Do not expect flush toilets or shower facilities in this remote part of Mongolia. Camp-style showers (warm water ‘bucket’ shower) may be available but should not be relied on.

This program is rated as **rigorous touring** due to several factors. Outside of the capital, there are almost no roads, so overland transfers around Ulgii will involve very rough and bumpy drives over dusty and unpaved tracks in basic vans, Russian jeeps or other vehicles. This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot, both in the city and out of it. In the city, you’re likely to encounter uneven surfaces and attractions accessible only via steep staircases. Museums generally do not have elevators. In the rural areas, there will be a variety of challenging terrains. If time and scheduling permit, you will have the opportunity to hike down the Yol Valley, which is mostly grass with occasional shallow streams or smooth rock. For those who wish to explore, the Flaming Cliffs feature rounded and often steep rocks, gravel, and loose sand.

To reap the full rewards of this adventure, travelers must be able to walk at least two to three miles a day, keeping up with fellow travelers; and must be able and willing to handle the rustic accommodations in Ulgii. Flexibility, a sense of humor and a willingness to accept local standards of amenities and services are essential components to the enjoyment of this trip.

Every effort has been made to make the information in this schedule accurate. However, trip itineraries are always subject to change. In Mongolia, the airline infrastructure is not as developed as it is in the west. Flight schedules change constantly, and there is a strong likelihood that the program as reflected in this document will have moderate to significant routing and timing changes based on changing flight schedules. We will do our best to inform participants in advance of any changes, but due to the nature of travel in Mongolia, this may not always be possible. This tour maintains a focus on cultural interaction; we will be visiting gers, and participants may share meals with local residents. It is therefore important that tour members have a desire to involve themselves in the local culture in order to enjoy this trip. If you are looking for a less adventurous experience, MIR offers other scheduled small group tour options featuring more comfortable accommodation and which do not venture into the remote and undeveloped Mongolian desert. Please ask for details on these tours (**Mongolia Explorer: Gobi & Beyond** and **Siberia & Mongolia: Spirits and Nomads**) as well as a custom private journey which may be a better match for your interests and physical capabilities.



Are You Prepared?

A Travel Guard travel insurance plan can help cover your vacation investment, offset expenses from travel mishaps and provide you with emergency travel assistance. To learn more about all of the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory regarding travel to Mongolia:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/mongolia-travel-advisory.html>

If you are not already enrolled in STEP, Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free service to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please consider enrolling. For more information:

<https://step.state.gov/step/>

Start Planning Next Year Now

Dates for 2021- One Departure - Cultural Series

At the time of writing, the land itinerary for this program next year is projected to be generally as depicted for this year. Next year's dates and prices are shown below – please call if you're ready to book now. **Note: No Tour Manager has been assigned for 2021 at this time, and Michel Behar is not planned to be the leader**

September 24-October 5, 2021

Package Prices - 2021

6-16 travelers, \$8,395 per person, twin share

Plus internal air \$1,350 (economy class, subject to change)

Partial single supplement \$1,500 (does not include single accommodations in Ulgii)

Full single supplement \$1,995 (**only 2 'full trip' single supplements are available on this departure due to limited ger camp space in Ulgii – call for availability**)

Weather

Mongolia has a short travel season, summer to early fall. While the Gobi remains warmer than the central and western parts of the country, temperatures in the early fall are generally moderate to cool to **cold**, with rain and even snow possible. The daytime temperature ranges you might expect to encounter are:

Ulaanbaatar: lows of 23-38°F; highs of 43-58°F

Gobi: average temperatures of 44-68°F

Ulgii: average temperatures of mid-40s

Due to Mongolia's extreme continental climate, nights can be much colder than days – **we definitely recommend** that travelers bring warm winter layers in order to bundle up for possible freezing temperatures throughout the itinerary, especially as a lot of time is spent outdoors.

Please remember, weather at all times of year has an element of the unpredictable. This information comes from weatherbase.com and is based on data from previous temperatures on record. It



is always advisable to check with weatherbase.com closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific region you will be visiting.

International Airfare

MIR's in-house, full-service air department is available to assist with your air travel needs. Check with MIR before booking air on your own, as we are happy to research and compare the best fares available through multiple channels. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel and seasonality, seat availability, special airline promotions, how restrictive ticket changes are, how long the fares can be held without purchase, routing considerations such as stopovers and more. Tour dates are based on the land tour only. Our preferred carriers for this tour are Aeroflot, Korean Airlines and Air China, as they offer convenient itineraries and competitive rates from multiple cities across the U.S. to Mongolia.

Flight arrivals into Ulaanbaatar tend to be late-night or early morning, and often require an additional night at the tour hotel at travelers' expense. Hotel check-in begins on Day One at around 3:00 p.m., and travelers arriving earlier than that will need to pay for an additional night in order to secure early access to the hotel. For those arriving early morning on Day Two, the hotel is included in the package price – but with such arrivals please be aware that touring starts after breakfast on Day Two which means a quick start to the tour without much time to rest prior to meeting the group. Please contact your tour specialist at MIR for any questions on this.

Please call us at 800-424-7289 to discuss air options and routings for this program, and to request a quote for your specific plans and dates of travel. We will be happy to put together a no-obligation suggested air itinerary and estimate for you at your request.

Visas

Please note: A Mongolian visa is not currently required for U.S. passport holders, but may be required for citizens of other countries. Other visas may be required for countries visited en route to Mongolia, such as Russia or China. Please call for more details.

Also Nearby...

For more tours to this region, you may want to check out:

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Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2020 Tour Reservation Form and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. Please read this document carefully and contact us with any questions.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

Payment Terms: Non-refundable deposits are accepted by check, Visa, MasterCard or American Express. Final land payments may be made by check or credit card for reservations made directly with MIR. If booking through a travel agent, please contact your agent to find out what form of payment they accept. (MIR can accept final payment from travel agents by agency check only.) Airfares are subject to change until ticketed; payment policies vary by carrier.

If you cancel your trip, please notify MIR in writing. Upon MIR’s receipt of notice, the following charges apply to land tours (policies for air tickets, custom group trips vary).

MIR Small Group Tours

Cost of cancellation, if received:

61 or more days prior to departure, deposit due or paid in full of \$750;

31-60 days prior to departure, 50% of land tour cost;

30 days prior to or after trip departure, no refund.

References

We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers. Please request a list of references.

Why MIR?

Regional knowledge is crucial to the success of any trip to our corner of the world. MIR combines detailed information about geography and infrastructure, history and art, language and culture, with the depth of knowledge that comes only from decades of regional experience. You may wonder how we differ from other tour operators...

Destination Specialization

MIR focuses exclusively on the exceptional region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This area has been our overriding passion since 1986; we don’t do the rest of the world. Our hard-earned expertise gained over the last three decades can take you from end to end of the largest country in the world –



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More Questions?

Please feel free to call us with questions at 1-800-424-7289, 8:30am-5:30pm Pacific Time.

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