

Photos: Mark Johnstad

South Gobi

Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park

This journey will take us to the desert steppe and mountain areas of the Southern Gobi, the least populated province of Mongolia. We explore the "Flaming Cliffs" of Bayanzag, equally renowned as an important paleontological site and as place of great natural beauty. Close-by the Gurvansaikhan Mountains, the "Three Beauties of the Gobi" are an extension of the Altai Mountains deep into the desert. Here we will visit the Yol Valley, a dramatic ravine, which is covered by ice, in most years until mid summer. The Gobi is for the most part arid desert steppe, with only few sand dunes far between. On this trip we will visit the Hongor Sands, the most famous dunes of Mongolia.

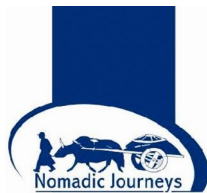
On this trip we will fly round-way on a domestic flight, offering a stunning bird's eye view of the rugged, empty Mongolian landscapes down below. In the Gobi we have a jeep or 4wd minivan at our disposal. Accommodation throughout the trip will be in Ger camps in traditional Mongolian yurts. The camps with the base price have basic facilities, but excellent locations. Upgrade options are available on this trip.

Day 1: To Bayanzag

We pick you up at your hotel in Ulaanbaatar and fly 1½ hours to Dalanzadgad airport in the South Gobi. Here we meet our driver and will drive 90 km to the northwest to Bayanzag. The name translates to 'Rich in Saxaul', indicating the 'forests' of salt-resistant Saxaul trees (*Haloxylon*) growing here. The main attraction, though, are the "Flaming Cliffs", made famous by American explorer Roy Chapman Andrews, who discovered the first fossilized dinosaur eggs here in the early 1920s. The name alludes to the red and orange hues, that come together to create an awe-inspiring sight, especially at sunset. On the way we will probably see wildlife, such as gazelle and fox. We spend the night in a comfortable ger camp.

Day 2: Hongor Sands

After breakfast we drive west for about 150 km, partly through the Gurvansaikhan Mountains. We reach the massive Hongor Sands. These giant sand dunes stretch for some 150 km from northwest to southeast. Up to 80 m high, they are just a couple of hundred meters wide in some places, and as wide as 20 km in others. We will check in at a nearby ger camp and visit the dunes in the evening light when their beautiful shapes come out best. There is also a possibility to meet local families with their livestock.



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Photo: Haroldo Castro

Day 3: Yol Valley

We drive half day (220 km) to the core of the Gurvansaikhan Mountains and up to the Yol Valley. We will explore this dramatic ravine on foot. In most years ice covers the narrower parts of the ravine until mid summer. Bird watching is rewarding here as you are sure to see the Bearded Vulture, also known as Lammergeier (*Gypaetus barbatus*), soaring high above the ravine. Yol is actually the Mongolian name for this large raptor. There are also several species of Rose Finch (*Carpodacus spp.*), and usually also the Wallcreeper (*Tichodroma muraria*). The ravine is usually teeming with pika (*Ochotona spp.*). We stay in a ger camp not far off.

Day 4: To Ulaanbaatar

After early breakfast, we'll transfer you to the Dalanzadgad airport for domestic flight back to Ulaanbaatar. After arrival at Chinggis Khaan International Airport, transfer to your hotel.

DATES ex Ulaanbaatar:

Daily mid May to end of September.

Practicalities

Transport: This tour is supported by a jeep or minibus depending on the number of travelers. Dependent on flight times and days, the trip may be done in reverse direction. If short on time, you can also skip the day at Baga Gazriin Chuluu and fly back to Ulaanbaatar out of Dalanzadgad a day earlier. This option is mostly available in July and August, when flights operate daily.

Accommodation: We stay in Ger (yurt) Camps for the duration of this trip. These permanent camps are equipped with a restaurant and shared bathroom and shower blocks. Along the way there are a few camps which offer attached facilities, for which you may pay an upgrade supplement. Moreover, you may upgrade further to the luxurious Three Camel Lodge, located near Bayanzag, for two of the overnights.

Staff: An English-speaking Mongolian guide will accompany you at all times. Other language guides such as Russian, French, German, Italian, Korean etc. available at additional cost, upon request.

Meals: The meals will be provided in the ger camps, or as picnic lunches.

Additional: We can organize hotel accommodation, city tours and transfers in Ulaanbaatar.

PRICE ex Dalanzadgad:

2 - 12 members: **USD 1950 per person**
Single supplement (3n): **USD 200**

Additional night at the ger camp:
USD 190 per person

Upgrade supplement :
Deluxe Gers 3n: **USD 360 per person**
Three Camel Lodge 2n:
USD 1560 per person

Includes: Guide, all meals outside Ulaanbaatar. All overnights in ger camps. All local transport and entrance fees. Domestic flight tickets.

Excludes: Beverages. Transfers and accommodation in Ulaanbaatar. Air or train tickets in and out Mongolia.

