



Arburd Sands The Gobi Steppes



Photo: Ana Nordenstahl



Photo: Andrea Pregnan



Photo: Ana Nordenstahl



Photo: Polar Quest

Surprisingly close to Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar, lie the northernmost reaches of the Gobi steppes—vast, treeless grasslands stretching beyond the horizon. Here, the open steppe slowly transforms into sand, culminating in the Arburd Sands, a 20-kilometer stretch of golden dunes dotted with traditional nomads' camps. Nearby stands the striking Zorgol Hairkhan Mountain, a massive granite formation that rises abruptly from the plains. This sacred site, mentioned in the *Secret History of the Mongols*, is home to Argali Sheep (*Ovis ammon*) and, occasionally, Siberian Ibex (*Capra sibirica*). The area is rich in natural beauty, ancient legends, and history. This is place where Mongolian nomadic steppe culture thrives unspoiled. Herders live traditionally, raising horses, cows, sheep, goats, and camels across the land. The ger camp owned and managed by a local herding family renowned for their horse training skills. They regularly compete in the Naadam Games and provide horses for our riding adventures. There are no other tourist ger camps nearby, making this an authentic and tranquil steppe experience.

Day 1 – To Arburd Sands

We pick you up from your hotel in Ulaanbaatar and drive south across the vast steppe (approx. 2–3 hours). Upon arrival at Arburd Sands Ger Camp, you'll settle in and enjoy lunch. In the afternoon, we visit nearby nomadic families to experience daily life in the Gobi steppe.

Day 2 – Zorgol Hairkhan Mountains

We travel 35 km across the steppe to reach Zorgol Hairkhan, an awe-inspiring sacred mountain mentioned in Mongolia's oldest literary work. Along the way, we may discover petroglyphs of exceptional quality. With luck, we may spot Argali Sheep or Siberian Ibex along the rocky ridges. The area is also home to sacred springs and caves, where locals continue to make offerings.

Day 3 – Exploring Arburd Sands

We spend the day exploring Arburd Sands on foot or by camel or horse. The dunes extend for over 20 km and offer stunning desert scenery. Interestingly, wolves are known to shelter in the dunes and are sometimes seen at a distance. Encounters with herdsmen are common, and you'll likely be welcomed into a ger to learn about traditional nomadic life.



Day 4 – Return to Ulaanbaatar

After breakfast, we drive back to Ulaanbaatar. You'll return to your hotel in the early afternoon with time to explore the city on foot—most landmarks and attractions are within walking distance.

Low Impact Ger Camp:

Nomadic Journeys is committed to sustainable tourism, creating local jobs rooted in traditional livelihoods. These include the use of camel carts, packhorses, riding horses, and other herder services. The camp also purchases milk and dairy products from nearby herding families. The camp accommodates up to 30 guests in double occupancy gers. Vehicles are parked a short walk away, maintaining the peaceful natural setting. Fully collapsible and it is designed to leave minimal environmental impact. Electricity for the kitchen and refrigerator is generated by solar panels. All waste is separated and managed responsibly. The camp's footprint is no greater than that of a traditional herding family—making it a true model of low-impact travel.

Practicalities

Transport:

Private jeep or minibus, depending on group size.

Staff:

An English-speaking guide accompanies you. The camp team includes a manager, cook and local staff. Herders assist with horses and camel carts.

Meals:

Served three times daily in the restaurant ger: Buffet breakfast, 2–3 course lunches and dinners, tea and coffee are available throughout the day. Packed lunches for excursions can be pre-ordered.

Additional Services:

We can arrange Ulaanbaatar hotels, city tours, and transfers.

Price ex Ulaanbaatar:

- 2 members: **USD 950 per person**
- Single Supplement (3n): **USD 150**
- Group discount available on request for 4

Includes:

- English-speaking guide throughout
- All meals outside Ulaanbaatar
- Accommodation in double occupancy gers
- All local transfers
- All activities in the camp

Excludes:

- Beverages
- Accommodation and transfers in Ulaanbaatar.

DATES ex Ulaanbaatar

Daily Jun to mid September

