



Photo: Jan Wigsten



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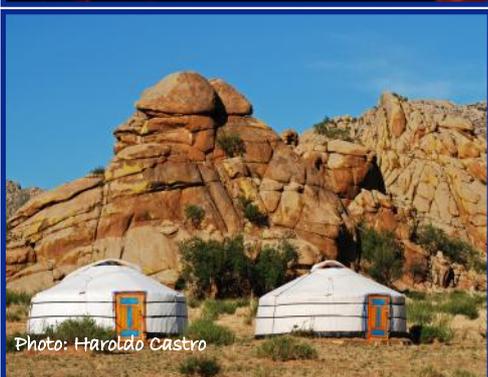


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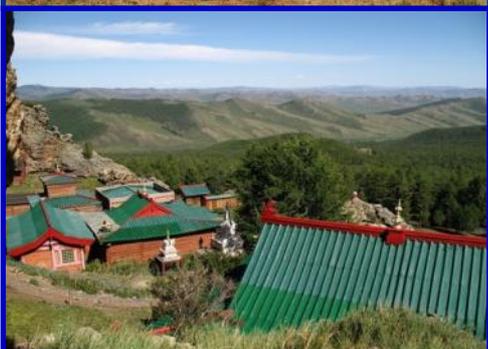


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Orkhon Valley & Karakorum Erdene Zuu & Tövkhön Monasteries

This 5-day journey explores the heart of Central Mongolia, blending ancient history, Tibetan Buddhism, and the region's diverse landscapes. We visit Karakorum (Harhorin), the 13th-century capital of the Mongol Empire, once the seat of Khubilai Khan-grandson of Genghis Khan. Though little remains of the original city, its ruins formed the foundation for Erdene Zuu, Mongolia's first Buddhist monastery. Destroyed during the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, it was later reopened and is once again a functioning monastery with resident monks. We'll also visit the secluded Tövkhön Monastery, founded by Zanabazar-the first religious leader of the Mongols-on a remote mountain ridge, where he composed the Soyombo script, now seen on Mongolia's national flag. On our return journey, we explore Hustai National Park, the site of the reintroduction of the wild Przewalski's horse (*Equus przewalskii*), known locally as Takhi. Extinct in the wild by the 1960s, the species was reintroduced to Hustai in 1992 and now roams freely in healthy numbers. Overnights are in deluxe gers at comfortable ger camps, with optional upgrade to luxury lodge Assa Land.

Day 1: To Hustai National park

Depart Ulaanbaatar in the morning and head west along paved roads across the open steppe. After approximately two hours, visit a local herding family living near the park to learn about traditional nomadic livelihoods and their involvement in Hustai's wildlife conservation efforts. Enjoy a home-cooked lunch of *buuz* (steamed dumplings), a classic Mongolian dish. Continue to Hustai Ger Camp, operated by the Hustai Trust. In the afternoon, visit the nearby Öngüt graves, ancient burial sites dating from the 6th-7th century A.D., and explore the Tuul River valley, a haven for birdlife-red-footed falcons are frequently spotted here. In the evening, take a game drive into the park to observe the famous Takhi (Przewalski's wild horses), which roam freely in their natural habitat. Overnight in Hustai Ger Camp.

Day 2: Orkhon Valley

After breakfast, drive to the Orkhon Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its breathtaking landscapes and deep historical significance. The valley is dotted with traditional nomadic encampments and is especially noted for its yak herding culture. En route, stop at Elsen Tasarkhai, a striking area of sand dunes often referred to as the "Little Gobi." Enjoy a scenic picnic lunch among the dunes and camels. Continue your journey through rolling hills and steppe to Ursa Major Eco Ger Camp, nestled in the heart of the Orkhon Valley. Overnight in Ursa Major Ger Camp.



Day 3: Orkhon Valley – Tövkhön Monastery – Karakorum

Today, venture into the forested Khangai Mountains for an excursion to one of Mongolia's most sacred sites. Hike a scenic but steep 2.5 km trail to reach Tövkhön Monastery, perched on a rocky ridge at an elevation of 2,312 meters. The trail rewards you with sweeping mountain views and an intimate look into Mongolia's spiritual heritage. Founded by Zanabazar, the revered Buddhist leader and artist, the monastery served as his retreat for meditation and creation. You can still visit the cave where he meditated. Tövkhön remains a living pilgrimage site for local Buddhists and offers a deeply tranquil atmosphere. After the visit, continue by vehicle to Karakorum, the ancient capital of the Mongol Empire. Upon arrival, check in at Secrets of the Silk Road Camp, located near the historical ruins.

Overnight in Secrets of the Silk Road Camp.

Day 4: Karakorum & Erdene Zuu Monastery

This morning, visit Erdene Zuu Monastery, Mongolia's oldest Buddhist monastery, built in 1586 using stones from the ruins of the ancient capital, Karakorum. Once home to 62 temples and over 1,000 monks, only three of the original temples remain standing today — yet daily prayers continue, preserving its spiritual legacy. Afterward, explore the Karakorum Museum, which offers an impressive collection of artifacts from the era of the Mongol Empire, including relics from the time of Genghis Khan and archaeological finds from the surrounding Orkhon Valley. Enjoy a relaxing evening back at camp.

Overnight in Secrets of the Silk Road Camp.

Day 5: Karakorum – Ulaanbaatar

After breakfast, begin the return drive to Ulaanbaatar, enjoying the changing landscapes of central Mongolia along the way. Arrive in the city by late afternoon. End of Services

Practicalities

Transport:

Travel by jeep or minibus depending on group size. Itinerary may reverse during June or September due to limited flights.

Accommodation:

Deluxe Gers with ensuite bathroom. Luxury upgrade available at Assa lodge in Karakorum.

Staff:

Accompanied by an English-speaking Mongolian guide throughout. Other languages available on request (additional cost).

Meals:

All meals provided outside Ulaanbaatar, either at ger camps or as picnics.

Included:

PRICES ex Ulaanbaatar:

2 members: **USD 1350 per person**
Single supplement (4n): **USD 200**

Upgrade supplement:
Assa Land Lodge (2n): **USD 300 per person**

English-speaking guide
All meals outside Ulaanbaatar
Accommodation in ger camps
All local transport and entry fees
Domestic flights.

Excluded:

Beverages
Accommodation and transfers in Ulaanbaatar.

Dates:

Daily mid-May to end of September

