

PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

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month by month

January
Cold. Snow. Cold. Heavy snow and sporadic cold but don't worry, most people visit the country for the scenery, sports, restaurants and other services still available. This is a good time to visit.

Bulgan Camel Festival
The annual festival celebrating the arrival of the winter season. It's a great time to see the camels and their riders.

Ice Activities
Experience the winter wonderland with ice skating, ice fishing and other winter sports.

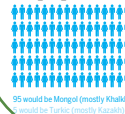
UNDERSTAND MONGOLIA

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

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If Mongolia were 100 people



95 would be Mongol (mostly Khalkha)
5 would be Turkic (mostly Kazakh)

The Mongolian Way of Life

Every Mongolian has a nomadic heritage. In a city, you'll find a mix of modern and traditional life. The nomadic way of life is still practiced in many areas, but more and more people are moving to cities. The nomadic way of life is still practiced in many areas, but more and more people are moving to cities. The nomadic way of life is still practiced in many areas, but more and more people are moving to cities.

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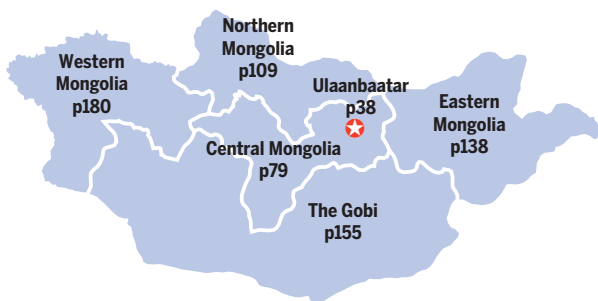


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THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

**Michael Kohn,
Dean Starnes**

Mongolia



Top Experiences >





Look out for these icons:



Our author's recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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On the Road

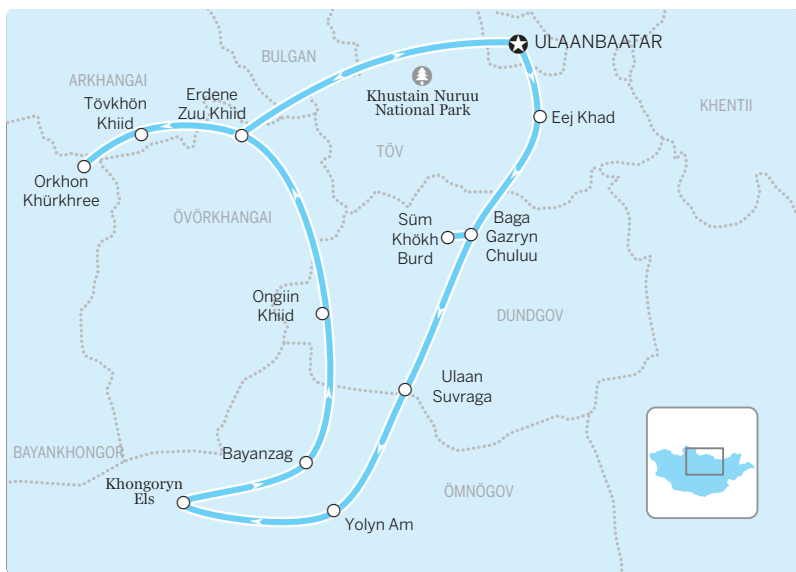
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itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



Two Weeks

The Big Loop

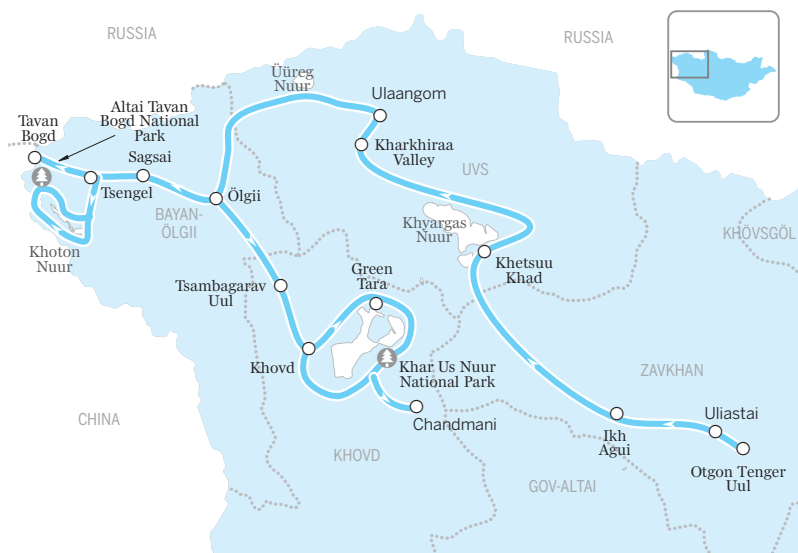
Spend a day in **Ulaanbaatar** visiting Gandan Monastery and the main museums. On day two, head south to the eerie rock formations of **Baga Gazryn Chuluu** and the ruined castle at **Süm Khökh Burd**, stopping at **Eej Khad**, Mother Rock, en route. From **Süm Khökh Burd**, stop by **Ulaan Suvraga** on your way south.

At least three days are needed to explore Ömnögov: check out the spectacular ice canyon at **Yolyn Am**, the massive sand dunes at **Khongoryn Els** and the dinosaur quarry at **Bayanzag**.

From Bayanzag, go north to the ruins of **Ongiin Khiid desert monastery**, a perfect place to organise a camel trek.

Leaving the Gobi, your first stop is **Erdene Zuu Khiid**, the country's oldest monastery. Head west up the Orkhon Valley, to **Tövkhön Khiid** and then onto the **Orkhon Khürkthree**. The waterfall is the perfect place to unwind after a long trip to the Gobi, so spend a couple of nights here (and wash away the Gobi dust in the falls).

If there's time on your way back to Ulaanbaatar, spend a night at **Khustain Nuruu National Park**.



One Month Western Mongolia

The western aimags offer adventurous travel and exploration. Adrenalin junkies can break out the mountain bike, kayak or mountaineering gear.

Start with a flight to **Khovd**, from where you can hire a jeep and driver for a bird-watching and wildlife expedition to **Khar Us Nuur National Park**. At nearby **Chandmani**, visit the renowned throat singers. Stop by Dörgön sum for the chance to meet Megjin, a bona fide Green Tara (enlightened Buddha).

Looping back through Khovd, continue northwest to the beautiful pastures and valley around **Tsambagarav Uul**. You could easily spend a couple of days here before moving on to **Ölgii**, a great place to recharge your batteries.

Heading west from Ölgii, spend at least five days getting to, from and around **Altai Tavan Bogd National Park**. With more time, consider doing a horse trek around **Khoton Nuur**. With proper equipment, permits and some logistic support, it's even possible to scale Mongolia's highest peak, the 4374m **Tavan Bogd**, though a visit to the base camp and glacier is more feasible.

On the way to or from Tavan Bogd, stop in **Tsengel** or **Sagsai**, authentic Kazakh villages that offer a taste of life in the Wild West. From Sagsai it's even possible to go rafting back to Ölgii.

The best time to make this journey is in late September or early October, which gives you the chance to watch the spectacular Eagle Festival in Ölgii or Sagsai.

From Ölgii, the main road winds northeast, passing **Üireg Nuur** en route to **Ulaangom**. Allow a week for trekking around **Kharkhiraa Valley**. An experienced driver can get you from Ulaangom to **Uliastai**, visiting **Khyargas Nuur** and **Ikh Agui** en route. If you arrive at Khyargas Nuur before mid-September, you'll have a chance to see hundreds of squawking cormorants that roost here in summer.

From pretty Uliastai you can get a flight to Ulaanbaatar, but not before mounting a horse or hiking to **Otgon Tenger Uul**.

If you've done this itinerary in reverse order, it may be possible to catch a flight from Khovd to Urumqi in Xinjiang. Contact AeroMongolia or EZ Nis in Ulaanbaatar for more information.



Two Weeks

Eastern Mongolia

Eastern Mongolia offers a delightful romp through grasslands, forest and some unique historical sights. Best of all, it's almost completely devoid of tourists.

Heading east from UB, you'll pass the new **Chinggis Khaan statue** on the way to **Khök Kh Nuur**, a pretty alpine lake that saw the coronation of the great *khaan*. Continue northeast, visiting **Baldan Bereeven Khiid**, **Öglögchiin Kherem**, **Batshireet** and **Binder** as you travel through Khentii's scenic countryside. There are ger camps all along this route where you can stop for horse-riding trips in the mountains.

Dadal is another good place for horse trekking or just kicking back with some locals, and is an excellent destination for Naadam. Make sure to visit Zundoi-Davag, a retired hunter who has assembled a small museum at his home.

Following the Ulz Gol further east, you'll pass pretty Buriat villages, such as **Bayan-Uul** and **Bayandun**, and nature reserves including **Ugtam Uul**. If you're interested in meeting a shaman you may be fortunate enough to meet one by asking around in this area. Continue south towards **Choibalsan**.

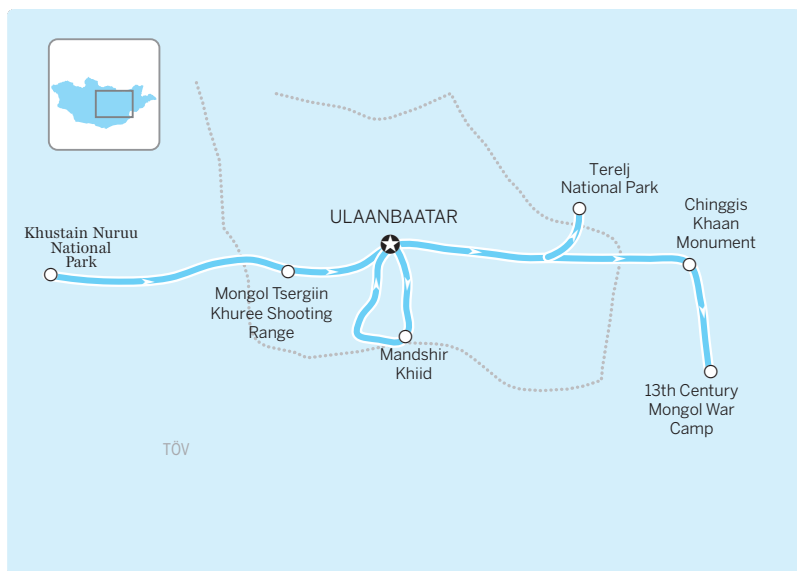
An alternative route to Choibalsan goes via the nature reserve **Toson Khulstai** and ancient ruins at **Kherlen Bar Khot**.

From Choibalsan take the train to **Chuluunkhoroot** to visit **Mongol Daguur B**, a protected area for wader birds, or travel across the empty steppes to **Khalkhiin Gol**, a remote landscape of lakes, rivers, wildlife and historical sights. Highlights include giant Buddha statues carved into a hillside and monuments dedicated to soldiers who died here during WWII.

You'll need another couple of days to visit the lush **Nömrög Strictly Protected Area** and **Sangiin Dalai Nuur**. From Nömrög, tackle the rough terrain in **Dornod Mongol Strictly Protected Area** to spot some truly massive herds of gazelle.

The **Dariganga region**, with its sand dunes, cinder cones and scattered stone statues, requires two or three days. Horse trekking is also possible here. If you happen to be in the area in early October, this is the time to catch the large migration of swans at Ganga Nuur.

Return to Ulaanbaatar via **Baruun-Urt** and **Öndörkhaan**, or travel to **Sainshand** for a taste of the Gobi and a visit to **Khamaryn Khiid**.



One Week

Around Ulaanbaatar

› If you've got some spare time to kick around Ulaanbaatar, there is enough to see and do around the city to keep you busy for a few days.

After a day of sightseeing around UB, head to **Khustain Nuruu National Park** for the night to watch the wild *takhi* horses. On the way to or from the park, stop at the **Mongol Tsergiin Khuree Shooting Range**, where you can sharpen up your tank-driving skills.

Back in Ulaanbaatar, catch a ride to **Mandshir Khiid** in Töv aimag, from where you can hike back over the mountain to Ulaanbaatar. This can be done either as a full day trip or as an overnight hike.

Next, head east to **Terelj National Park**. There are a number of activity options here, including mountain biking, horse riding, rock climbing, hiking and river rafting. If you have your own vehicle, push on a little further east to see the enormous **Chinggis Khaan Monument** at Tsonjin Boldog. The company that built the statue also runs the nearby **13th-Century Mongol War Camp**, where you can watch mini naadams and see artisans create traditional products.



One Month

Northern Mongolia

Start week one of this trip by flying to **Mörön** from Ulaanbaatar. Hire a vehicle in Mörön and drive to **Tsagaannuur**, breaking up the journey with a night at Ulaan Uul. In Tsagaannuur, drop into the TCVC and hire a guide and horses to get you out to the taiga and **Tsaatan camps**. Plan for a week of travel in the area.

To start week two, get a lift to **Renchinkhumbé** and then trek your way over the **Khoridol Saridag Nuruu** to the shores of **Lake Khövsgöl**. Then walk down the lakeshore until you reach **Jankhai**. Spend a few days relaxing at Nature's Door Guesthouse and then continue on to **Khatgal**.

From Khatgal, the adventurous will make their way all the way up to **Khankh** on the northern shore of the lake. Alternatively, there are some gorgeous areas east of the lake in the **Chandman-Öndör** area. You'll need another week to explore this region.

The trip back to Ulaanbaatar goes through a remote part of Bulgan aimag to the pleasant aimag capital of **Bulgan**. Further east, after passing through **Erdenet**, make a short detour to visit the magnificent **Amarbayasgalant Khiid**.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Michael Kohn

Coordinating Author, Ulaanbaatar, Central Mongolia, Northern Mongolia, Eastern Mongolia Michael first visited Mongolia in 1997. The first years were spent

working as a reporter and editor for the *Mongol Messenger* newspaper. During that period, he interviewed the president, played a lead role in a Mongolian film, hosted a radio talk show and had a brief stint as a news presenter for a local TV station. His travels have led him to all 21 aimags, occasionally by bicycle or in the

back of trucks, and when he is lucky by Hummer with politicians and diplomats. Michael's articles on Mongolian culture, politics and history have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *San Francisco Chronicle*. He is also the author of two books, *Dateline Mongolia* and *Lama of the Gobi*. He splits his time between Ulaanbaatar and California. Find him on the web at www.michaelkohn.us.



Dean Starnes

The Gobi, Western Mongolia Dean has travelled extensively throughout central and northeast Asia, but it wasn't until 2005 while researching his book *Roam: the Art of Travel* that he finally made it to Mongolia. That trip, which involved several near-death experiences and a growing dependency on vodka, confirmed his belief that Mongolia remains one of the best places on earth to experience genuine adventure. This trip, however, may have been his last. A shaman he met

in Ölgii foretold that he would return to New Zealand and father four children. Until then, Dean is happy to spend his days writing for Lonely Planet, freelancing as a graphic designer and shirking responsibilities. Check out his website, www.deanstarnes.com, for photography and more.

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