



Western Mongolia

POP: 347,800 / AREA: 191,000 SQ KM

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Why Go?

With its raw deserts, glacier-wrapped mountains, shimmering salt lakes and the hardy culture of nomads, falconry and cattle rustling, western Mongolia is a timeless slice of 'Central Asia'.

Squeezed between Russia, Kazakhstan, China and the Mongol heartland, this region has been a historical transition zone of cultures and traditions, the legacy of which is a patchwork of peoples including ethnic Kazakhs, Dörvöds, Khotons, Myangads and Khalkh Mongols. Lost arts such as *khöömii* throat singing and eagle hunting are still practised as they have been for thousands of years.

The region's wild landscape and the rugged mountain backbone of the Mongol Altai Nuruu create ample opportunity for trekkers to explore and mountaineers to challenge themselves on peaks that soar to over 4000m.

With time and flexibility, you too will discover why this region packs a powerful punch.

Best Places to Stay

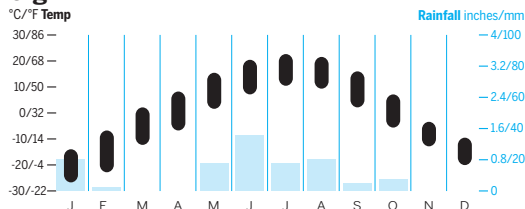
- » Tsambagarav Hotel (p184)
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Best Places to Trek

- » Altai Tavan Bogd National Park (p188)
- » Kharkhiraa Uul & Türgen Uul (p199)
- » Tsenkheriin Agui (p195)
- » Tsambagarav Uul National Park (p187)

When to Go

Ölgii



March Kazakh families celebrate Navrus with traditional games and feasting.

June–September Brief snowstorms occur in the Altai Mountains. Trekkers need sub-zero sleeping bags.

October–February The eagle-hunting season kicks off with Ölgii's Eagle Festival.



Western Mongolia Highlights

- 1 Soar above the borders of Mongolia, China and Russia when you climb to the top of **Tavan Bogd** (p189)
- 2 Rub shoulders with Kazakh eagle-hunters during Ölgii's **Eagle Festival** (p183)
- 3 Trek to the twin peaks of **Tüрген Uul and Kharkhiraa Uul** (p199), a rugged

landscape of glaciers, green meadows and boulder fields

- 4 Camp by the shores of **Üreg Nuur** (p199), a lovely, accessible freshwater lake filled with fish

- 5 Strike a chord with a **khöömii throat singer** in the village of Chandmani (p194)

- 6 Walk around **Khoton Nuur** (p189), a beautiful alpine lake dotted with Kazakh settlements around its shore

- 7 Horse trek around the lakes and valleys beneath **Otgon Tenger Uul** (p203), abode of the gods and Mongolia's holiest peak