



Mongolia



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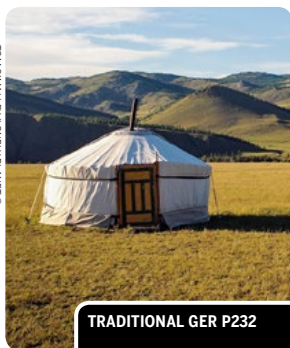
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Itineraries



1 WEEK Around Ulaanbaatar

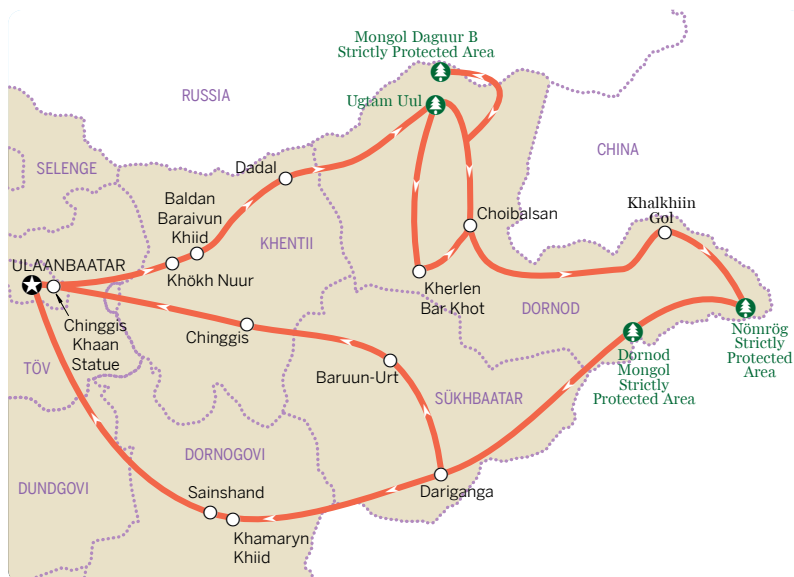
Short trips from Ulaanbaatar can offer a taste of the countryside without having to invest too much time travelling along endless country roads.

From **Ulaanbaatar**, head to **Khustain National Park** for the night to watch the wild *takhi* horses. Back in UB, 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 **Gorkhi-Terelj National Park**. There are a number of activity options here, including mountain biking, horse riding, rock climbing, hiking and river rafting. Here you can also taste local cheese and house-smoked meats prepared by Bert, the Dutch cheesemaker.

If you have your own vehicle, push on a little further east to see the enormous **Chinggis Khaan Statue** at Tsonjin Boldog.

Back in Ulaanbaatar, leave one day for visiting the **National Museum of Mongolia**, **Gandan Khiid** and the **Winter Palace of the Bogd Khan**. If you have time for one more day trip, visit **Aglag Khiid**, located 100km north of Ulaanbaatar.



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.

In a hired jeep, head east from **Ulaanbaatar** and pass the **Chinggis Khaan Statue** on the way to **Khokh Nuur**, a pretty alpine lake that saw the coronation of the great khaan. Continue northeast, visiting the restored monastery of **Baldan Baraivun Khiid** and nearby sights 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. Take a break in **Dadal**, a handsome village with horse-trekking options and an excellent naadam.

Following the Ulz Gol further east, you'll pass pretty Buriat villages and nature reserves including **Ugtam Uul**. If you're interested in meeting a shaman you may be fortunate enough to get the opportunity by asking around in this area. It's possible to continue northeast towards Chuluunkhoroot to visit **Mongol Daguur B Strictly Protected Area**, a protected area for wader birds. From northern Dornod, sweep south towards **Choibalsan**; some routes go via the ancient ruins at **Kherlen Bar Khot**.

The adventurous can push further east across the empty steppes to **Khalkhiin Gol**, a remote landscape of lakes, rivers, wildlife and historical sights. Highlights include a giant Buddha statue carved into a hillside and numerous WWII memorials.

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

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

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



3 WEEKS Western Mongolia

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

Start with a flight to **Khovd** or **Ölgii**, hire a vehicle and motor out to the beautiful pastures and valleys around **Tsambagarav Uul**. You'll find eagle hunters and opportunities for white-water rafting. 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 three to four days around **Altai Tavan Bogd National Park**. With proper equipment and permits 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. Malchin Peak is also climbable with help from local guides. With more time, consider doing a horse trek around **Khoton Nuur**. Around the area you'll spot interesting *balbal* (stone men) rock carvings and ancient burial mounds.

On the way to or from Tavan Bogd, stop in at **Sagsai**, an authentic Kazakh village that offers a taste of life in the Wild West. A few families here keep eagles and it may be possible to meet them. 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 **Üüreg Nuur**, another gorgeous camping spot, en route to **Ulaangom**. Allow a week for trekking around **Kharkhiraa Gol**. An experienced driver can get you from Ulaangom to Uliastai, visiting **Khyargas Nuur National Park** 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 at Khetsuu Khad.

From **Uliastai** you can take a horse-riding or hiking trip to **Otgon Tenger Uul**. Flights from Uliastai are few and usually booked out so you may need to bus it back to Ulaanbaatar via Tosontsengel and Arkhangai.



The Big Loop

The big loop combines desert and steppe scenery, and some of the country's top historical sites. It's a great area for horse or camel treks, dune walking and spotting wildlife.

From **Ulaanbaatar**, head south to the eerie rock formations of **Baga Gazryn Chuluu** and the ruined castle at **Süm Khökh Burd**.

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 here, go north to the ruined desert monastery of **Ongiin Khiid**, 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**, a monastery in pine forest, and then on to the **Orkhon Khürkhree**. 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).

On your way back to Ulaanbaatar, spend a night at **Khustain National Park**.



Northern Mongolia

Mongolia's northern aimags blend Siberia and steppe, a vast region of rolling grassland, mountains and lakes. Experiences include encounters with the native Shamanic faith and reindeer herders.

Start week one by flying from **Ulaanbaatar** to **Möron**. Hire a vehicle in Möron and drive to **Tsagaannuur**. Drop into the TCVC here 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.

In week two, get a lift to **Renchinlkhumbe** and then trek to the shores of **Khövsgöl Nuur**. Walk down the lakeshore until you reach **Jankhai**. Spend a few days relaxing and then continue 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 runs via the pleasant aimag capital of **Bulgan**. After passing through **Erdenet**, make a short detour to visit the magnificent **Amarbayasgalant Khiid**.



Top: Yolyn Am valley
(p180)
Bottom: Aglag Khiid
(p100)



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THIS BOOK

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LONELY PLANET **IN THE** WILD

Send your 'Lonely Planet in the Wild' photos to social@lonelyplanet.com
We share the best on our Facebook page every week!

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Body surfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro/MRT/MTR station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Skytrain/Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



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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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, 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



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