

MONGOLIA

From Genghis Khan to the Naadam Festival

June 28 - July 12, 2010



BETCHART EXPEDITIONS, INC.

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OVERVIEW

Join us! as we explore Mongolia, the 'Land of the Blue Sky,' and home to one of the greatest empires the world has ever known. Mongolia is a vast undiscovered wilderness. Awesome expanses of rolling steppe, home to Mongolia's famous horses and herdsmen meet high glacial mountains, impenetrable forests, and deep crystal lakes. To the south, the great Gobi Desert stretches to the horizon. Across much of this vast land little has changed since the days of Genghis Khan. You will relish the hospitality of the Mongolian people and the breathtaking natural beauty.

Our expedition will begin with an introduction to **Ulaanbaatar**, the urban capital of this nomadic nation. Stretching along the valley of the Tuul River and embraced by four sacred mountains, Ulaanbaatar hints at the adventure and open spaces of its nation beyond the peaks. Our visit will include the **Bogd Khaan's Palace Museum**, home of Mongolia's eighth living Buddha and the last king. Outside of Ulaanbaatar accommodations are in comfortable traditional ger (yurt) camps.

A drive will take us to **Elsen Tasarkhai**, a picturesque combination of Mongol Els sand dunes, the rocky mountains of Khogno Khaan National Park, green meadows and lovely lakes. At **Karakorum**, Erdenezuu monastery shows its glory with collections of many priceless religious objects and Mongolian art. We will stop next at the Turkic monuments at **Khoshoo Tsaidam** and then continue to **Lake Ogi**, the only lake in the heart of Mongolia. The lake abounds in fish and birdlife. We will look for White Pelican, Gadwalls, Demoiselle Cranes, geese, sandpipers, and more! We will have optional opportunities for boating, swimming, and other activities.

Our journey will continue to **Hustai National Park** where the wild **Takhi-Przewalski horses** have lived peacefully since 1993 when they were reintroduced to their native Mongolia. There is a chance we will see red deer, wolves, marmots and other wildlife here, too.

We will next venture to **Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve**, a beautiful combination of mountains, steppes, lakes, rivers, and wetlands. It is home to the endangered wild mountain sheep, **the Argali**, several cranes, whoopers and more. There are opportunities for kayaking and hiking in addition to visiting a nomadic family and horse riding.

We will go to **Terej** via the **Giant Genghis monument** complex. Terej has stunning granite mountains and flowery green meadows. Here we will visit Turtle Rock and the Temple of Meditation and explore on foot, with a traditional folk concert in the evening.

Our trip will culminate at the famous **Naadam Festival**, which originated in 209 BC. It consists of 3 games for men: archery, wrestling, and horse racing. During the opening ceremony, hundreds of artists in traditional Mongolian costumes will dance and sing. The wrestlers dress in the traditional costume: the "zodog," "suudag," and Mongol boots. There are 6 horse races with 6 ages of horses. Hundreds of horses compete, with jockeys from 6-12 years old! Female archers also compete in this extraordinary festival!

Trip Fee: \$3,295 per person twin share + air \$1200 San Francisco/Beijing, RT
+ air Beijing/Mongolia, RT \$500. Single Supplement: \$495.

**FOR RESERVATIONS, PHONE Renee, (800) 252-4910
or Email: renee@betchartexpeditions.com**

Betchart Expeditions Inc. - 17050 Montebello Road - Cupertino, CA 95014-5435

ITINERARY

Days 1/2 San Francisco to Beijing & Ulaanbaatar

Depart from SFO International Airport on United Airlines for Beijing. Arrive on Day 2. Take a direct connecting flight to Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. Meet your guide, and transfer to *Narantuul Hotel *** or similar (2 nights)*.

Day 3 Ulaanbaatar - Gandan Monastery & Museums

Today, we will explore Ulaanbaatar. As an urban capital of a nomadic nation, Ulaanbaatar is something of a paradox. With the modern world rapidly sweeping away the monolithic remnants of the Soviet era, the city has become a forward-looking, if laid-back, base from which to explore this remarkable country. Stretching along the valley of the Tuul River and embraced by four sacred mountains, Ulaanbaatar hints at the adventure and open spaces of the nation beyond the peaks.

Our city tour of Ulaanbaatar takes you through some of the principal sights of this unique city, including the Gandan Monastery, the Genghis Khan monument on the Sukhbaatar square and the Palace Museum of Bogd Khan. From the central square you leave the city for a panoramic view of Ulaanbaatar city at Zaisan Memorial. Then enjoy a welcome lunch.

Built between 1893 and 1903, the Winter Palace of Bogd Khaan is where Mongolia's eighth Living Buddha, and last king, lived for 20 years. The palace museum is an excellent place to visit, with a great collection of priceless Buddhist art works and instruments. The Bogd Khaan's penchant for unusual live animals explains the extraordinary array of stuffed animals – including an elephant that had to walk for three months from the Russian border to Ulaanbaatar!

Day 4 Ulaanbaatar - Elsen Tasarkhai

We will start the day by traveling to Elsen Tasarkhai. En route we will reach the Hoyor Zagal ger camp for lunch, and check into our ger camp accommodations. In the afternoon, we will visit the Ovgon Monastery ruins in Khogno Khaan National Park. The common border share of Tov, Ovorhangai and Bulgan provinces, Elsen Tasarkhai is a picturesque combination of Mongol Els sand dunes, rocky mountains of the Khogno Khaan, green meadows and lovely lakes. The nearby Khogno Khaan national park is a good place for hiking with spectacular views & several small monastery ruins. *Accommodations at Hoyor Zagal ger camp.*

Day 5 Elsen Tasarkhai - Karakorum - Tsaidam camp

This morning we will head for historic Karakorum. A potent echo of the lost Mongol Empire, Karakorum was chosen as Genghis Khan's new capital in 1220, serving in this role for only four decades before Hubilai Khan moved the center of state to his seat in Beijing. The city flowered again during Mongolia's 16th century Buddhist renaissance with the construction of the expansive Erdene Zuu monastery. In these post-empire and post-communism years, what remains of the monastery and the older remnants of Karakorum are in some ways a summation of all Mongolian history. Today Erdene Zuu monastery still shows its glory with collections of many priceless religious objects and incredibly beautiful Mongolian art. It has a massive square wall, 420 meters in length each side, 108 Stupas & 17 temples. Lunch at Orgoo camp. Then drive to Khoshoo Tsaidam and transfer to *Tsaidam ger camp*. Visit a nomadic family and return to Tsaidam camp for dinner.

Days 6/7 Tsaidam - Ogi Lake

This morning we will visit the Turkic monuments at Khoshoo Tsaidam and other historic remains around Tsaidam. Khoshoo Tsaidam is a Turkic inscribed monument of the Turkic State. The inscription was written by the grandson of Kulitegin and devoted to the Bilge Khan of the Turkic state and his old brother Kulitegin in 732. It is noteworthy that the 'Orkhon inscription' has both a historical and scientific significance. In late morning, we will drive to the *ger camp at Lake Ogi*. **Lake Ogi** is the only lake in the heart of Mongolia. It covers a 27 square km area. The lake abounds in various types of fish and birds, which creates a special

natural beauty, attracting travellers, fishermen and naturalists from Mongolia and abroad. More than 150 species of birds dwell in Lake Ogii. For this reason Lake Ogii was included in the Ramsar Convention in 1999 for the purpose of protecting nature and the environment. Here you can watch White Pelican, Goose, Swan, Gadwall, Duck, Demosille Crane, Sandpiper, Gulls, and more! It is home to many species of fish including Lenok, Perch and Pike. They are widely spread, thus every fisherman has an opportunity to have a good catch at the Ogii lake. We'll have free time this afternoon and the next day birdwatching, or optional fishing, swimming, or other activities around Ogii Lake.

Day 8 Ogii Lake - Hustai National Park

Today, we will start driving back to the east via Karakorum. We'll have lunch at Hoyor Zagal camp, and continue to *Hustai ger Camp* in Hustai National Park. Hustai is where the wild Takhi- Przewalski horses have lived peacefully since 1993 when they were reintroduced to their native land of Mongolia. Here we are able to see and photograph these beautiful wild horses at pasture and Red Deer, Wolf, Asian Marmot, various species of water fowl, birds of prey, and more.

Days 9/10 Hustai - Ulaanbaatar - Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve

This morning, we will drive east to the Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve. Arrive at the *Steppe Nomads camp where we will stay 2 nights*. Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve is a truly marvelous combination of mountains, steppes, pretty lakes, rivers and wetlands with its famous rare wildlife species. It is a home to the endangered wild mountain sheep, the Argali. Also found here are White-napped Crane, Siberian White Crane, Hooded Crane, Swan Goose, Whooper swan and other species. Over 80 Argali sheep inhabit the park. We will drive and hike to Mt. Baits this afternoon to see them.

During our visit to Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve, there will be opportunities for birdwatching and photography, as well as opportunities for fishing, rafting and kayaking in the lakes and rivers, hiking, visiting nomadic families, riding horses, yaks, or camels. It is also a wonderful opportunity to become introduced to the traditional Mongolian nomadic lifestyle and culture.

Day 11 Gun-Galuut - Terelj & Giant Genghis Monument

This morning, we will start our drive to Terelj National Park, visiting the Giant Genghis Monument complex en route. Terelj National park is one of the most popular national parks in Mongolia. Terelj is just 60 km from Ulaanbaatar in the east and features stunning granite mountains and endless flowery green meadows. This picturesque national park is a part of the Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area. It is a great place for hiking and trekking, and attracts rock climbers who wish to tackle its natural steep granite walls. We will explore the park this afternoon. *Terelj camp or similar*.

Day 12 Ulaanbaatar - Naadam Festival

Visit the Turtle Rock and Temple of Meditation in Terelj this morning as we hike in the park. At noon, we will return to Ulaanbaatar and check into *Narantuul Hotel or similar (3 nights)*. Afternoon for personal interests in Ulaanbaatar. Then enjoy a traditional folk concert tonight.

Days 13/14 Naadam Festival

For the next two days, we will see the world famous Naadam Festival! The festival originated in the Hunnu era (209 BC) and has continue through the centuries. It consists of three games for men, namely, archery, wrestling and horse racing (though women now participate in archery).

The Opening Ceremony is the most impressive part of the festival. During the Opening Ceremony you will admire the ritual of Genghis Khan's nine white flags carried into the stadium by soldiers in the military uniform of Genghis Khan. Hundreds of artists in traditional

Mongolian costumes of different eras perform dances and songs, parading with hundreds of musicians and Tsam masked dancers.

Wrestling: Five hundred to a thousand wrestlers take part in the wrestling competition of Naadam for high ranking titles. They dress in the traditional wrestling costume: the “zodog,” “shuudag,” and “Mongol boots.”

Horse racing consists of six races with six ages of horses. Horses race for 15-30 km depending on their ages and 300-500 horses compete in each race. The jockeys are between six and twelve years of age.

Archery is one of the oldest sports of the Mongols besides wrestling and horse racing. Male archers shoot for 75m while female archers shoot for 60m with traditional Mongolian bow and arrows.

The Festival is an extravaganza for photographers, and is truly an opportunity to enjoy a classic traditional festival of the Mongolian culture. Then enjoy a farewell dinner in celebration of our journey!

Day 15 Ulaanbaatar - Beijing - San Francisco

Today we will bid farewell to our guide and take our return flights to Beijing and San Francisco, arriving in the USA the same day.

COSTS & CONDITIONS

Expedition Fee: \$3,295 per person twin share + air \$1200 San Francisco/Beijing, RT + air Beijing/Mongolia, RT \$500. Single Supplement: \$495.

Expedition Fee Includes: Land transport; group airport transfers; accommodations twin share; meals from breakfast on Day 3 through breakfast on Day 15 (except 3 dinners in Ulaanbaatar); entrance fees; baggage handling; leadership, administration.

Expedition Fee Does Not Include: Air fare (quoted separately); independent transfers; 3 dinners; tips to guides and drivers; optional activities at the ger camps such as horse riding or fishing; personal items such as laundry, phone calls, alcoholic beverages, snacks; personal insurance, or foreign airport departure taxes.

What to Expect: This expedition is for travelers who would like to explore the spectacular cultural and natural heritage of Mongolia. This is a rich natural history experience with great opportunities for wildlife and scenic photography as well as historic and cultural visits. The itinerary includes the famous Nadaam Festival, with outstanding photography opportunities. The group will travel from 2 to 5 hours by bus or van many days. This is a very outdoorsy trip with opportunities for hikes and walks, with optional fishing, horse riding, camel or yak riding (at a small additional cost). It will be at a leisurely pace suitable for discovery and photography (good quality hiking boots are recommended). It will be summer with midday temperatures in the 70s - 80s with some rain. The expedition will be a tremendous experience for travelers with an appetite for adventure who would enjoy a backcountry adventure in one of the great natural areas in Asia! We will have a grand adventure of discovery. (No smoking in vehicles, during lectures, or meals please.)

Air Fare & Airline Ticketing: Please phone **Renee at Betchart Expeditions, (800) 252-4910** for information about the group flights. AIR FARES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Accommodations: Are in a comfortable first class hotel in Ulaanbaatar and in Mongolian style ger camps (round yurt tents with modern facilities) in the national parks twin share. Limited single accommodations are available for a supplement of \$495.

Reservations, Deposits & Payments: To reserve a place on this expedition, please mail a deposit of \$500 per person with the completed reservation form to: **Mongolia Expedition, Betchart Expeditions Inc., 17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5435.** Balance of land fee is due 60 days before departure.

Cancellations & Refunds: The initial deposit is refundable up to 60 days before departure less a handling fee of \$100 per person. There is no refund after the 60-day period unless your place is resold, then only the \$100 per person handling fee is withheld. There are no refunds for unused meals or other expedition features.

Questions: Please call **Renee Apostolou, Betchart Expeditions Inc., (800) 252-4910 or (408) 252-4910.**

Responsibility: *Betchart Expeditions Inc. acts only as agent for the passenger with respect to transportation and hotels and exercises every care possible. Betchart can assume no liability for injury, damage, delay, loss, accident, or irregularity in connection with the services of any airplane, ship, motorcoach, or any other conveyance used in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, terrorism, quarantine, acts of God, or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to substitute another leader of similar expertise or to cancel any tour prior to departure in which case the entire payment will be refunded with no further obligation on our part. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour. No refund will be made for the unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The price of the program is based on current tariffs and rates, and is subject to change. Any tariff, exchange rate, or fuel increases will be passed on to participants. Baggage is carried at the owner's risk entirely. It is understood that the air ticket when issued shall constitute the sole contract between the passenger and the airline concerned. The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance.* c 2009 Betchart Expeditions Inc. All rights reserved. CST#2036304-40

RESERVATIONS

#1137

YES! I/We want to join the **Mongolia Expedition, June 28 - July 12, 2010**, offered by Betchart Expeditions Inc. Please reserve _____ space(s). As a deposit, I/we have enclosed a check for \$_____ (\$500 per person), payable to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Trust Account.

Name(s) _____ Age _____ Sex _____
_____ Age _____ Sex _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone: Home (____) _____ Work or Cell (____) _____

Email #1: _____ #2: _____

Membership (please circle): AAAS Sigma Xi ACS Planetary Society

Accommodations Preference: _____ Twin _____ Twin share _____ Single
_____ Nonsmoker _____ Smoker

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please mail to: **Mongolia Expedition
Betchart Expeditions Inc.
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