

MONGOLIA

From Ghengis Khan to the Gobi Desert!

July 15-29, 2011



Dear Travelers:

Join us as we explore **Mongolia**, "**Land of the Blue Sky!**" Mongolia stands alone among the Asian countries for its vast, sparsely inhabited hinterlands. The **Gobi Desert** spreads across the south, with steppe grasslands and conifer taiga forest to the north. Landscapes are bright, clean, nearly oceanic in their expansiveness. Wildlife is relatively abundant on the open steppes, and the mammals and birds are easier to see than they are in woodier places. Mongolian summer skies also have some of the most beautiful clouds that you will see anywhere in the world.

Despite its low population density, the Mongolian people often etch the most profound memories in the minds of their visitors. They are extreme in their self-reliance, unpretentiously graceful in their traditions, and possessed of a hospitality that is hard to find in the more congested parts of the world. Today many Mongolian people are aggregating in cities and towns, but even so a majority continue to



cherish their semi-nomadic ways. In summer, round white gers (we know them as yurts) are scattered widely across the grasslands. These practical structures of willow and felt are well insulated from winter's cold and summer's intense sunlight, yet they remain airy and pleasant inside with a small stove and a ventilation window at the apex. Each family may have one or a small cluster of gers. Mongolia's constitution guarantees all citizens unrestricted access to the land.

Mongolians are justifiably proud of their heritage. Seven hundred years ago the steppe grasslands gave rise to the greatest empire the world has ever known. Chinggis Khan (we call him Genghis) and his descendants famously conquered nearly all of Eurasia. Along the way, the Mongolians encountered Tibetan-influenced Buddhism.

Today, monasteries in the capital city of **Ulaanbaatar** provide some of the best expressions of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Families worship in the courtyards, monks chant in the lameries, and the chapels contain a priceless heritage of artwork and devotional objects.

Our expedition begins in **Ulaanbaatar**, urban center of a nation that remains nomadic at heart. Stretching along the valley of the **Tuul River**, embraced by hills, Ulaanbaatar hints at the adventure and open spaces of the landscape

beyond. Our accommodation in Ulaanbaatar will be a small, well-appointed hotel of international standard.

Outside of Ulaanbaatar we will stay in the traditional, but perfectly comfortable ger camps. One ger can accommodate one or two guests. Open to the fresh air, with a pleasant ambience and a light footprint, gers are certainly the best way to house visitors on the steppe. Meals at the ger camps are prepared family style, and the food is abundant and delicious, surprisingly European in character.

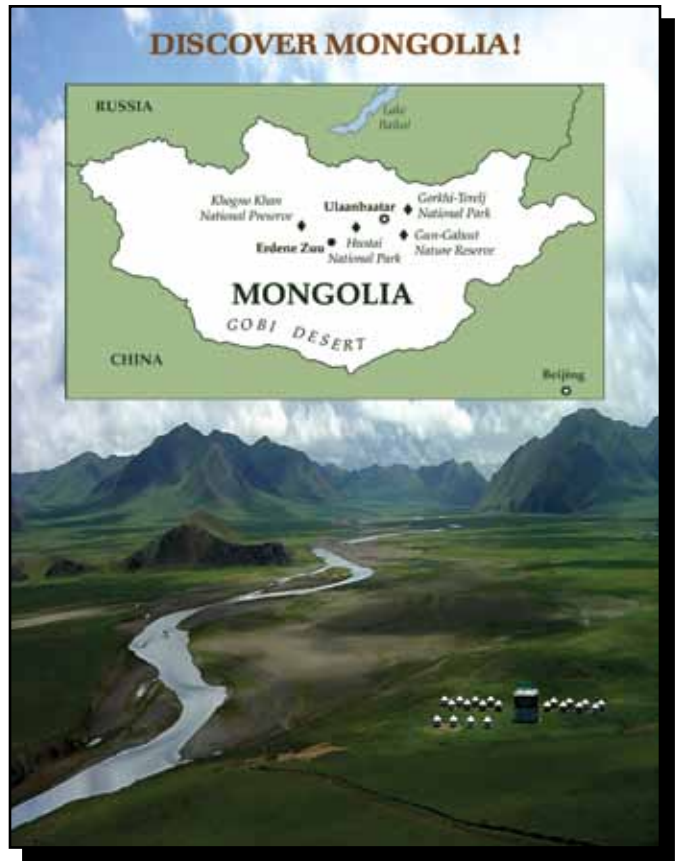
Highlights of our journey, as described in the itinerary include the **Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape** including **Erdene Zuu Monastery** and the remnants of ancient **Karakorum**, the national parks of **Hoyor Zagal** and **Hustain Nuruu** with its (re-introduced) population of wild Przewalski's horses, **Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve** with wild argali sheep and wetlands that support a variety of large water birds including swans and cranes, **Terelj National Park** with larch forests and sculpted granite mountains, and the **Gobi Desert** where we'll visit the **Bayanzag—Flaming Cliffs** dinosaur fossil site, **Yolyn Am Gorge**, and the **Moltsog Els** sand dunes.

Join us for an invigorating journey to explore the landscapes and cultural heritage of Mongolia.

Sincerely,

Chris

Dr. Chris Carpenter
Expedition Leader



ITINERARY

Days 1/2 USA 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, the urban capital of a nomadic nation. In the two decades since the Soviets left, Ulaanbaatar has become increasingly cosmopolitan, but it never feels that you are very far from the edge of the city. Our tour of Ulaanbaatar includes Gandan Monastery, a monument to Chinggis Khan in Sukbhaatar Square, and the museum of Mongolian history and culture. We may also visit the winter palace of Bogd Khan, Mongolia's last king. In addition to its wonderful collection of Buddhist art and ceremonial objects, the winter palace also reflects the worldly interests of its king: a large, eclectic collection of stuffed animals occupies one wing.

Day 4 Ulaanbaatar—Elsen Tasarkhai

We will begin our journey in Mongolia's hinterlands with a morning drive west to the mountain region of Elsen Tasarkhai and Khogno Khan National Park. We will arrive at our ger camp in time for lunch, then will enjoy an afternoon visit to the Ovgon Monastery ruins in Khogno Khaan. Like so many of Mongolia's steppe landscapes, the views at Elsen Tasarkhai are sweeping and expansive: distant sand dunes, rocky mountains, green meadows, and meandering streams. At Ovgon Monastery, there will be time to visit a tiny buddhist lamasery and follow a trail among the rocky slopes, covered in birch and elm. Accommodations at *Hoyor Zagal ger camp*.



Day 5 Elsen Tasarkhai to Karakorum

After a morning drive westward, we will reach our destination in the Orkhon valley in time for lunch. In the afternoon, we will visit Erdene Zuu and historic Karakorum, site of the short-lived urban capital of the Khan Empire. The city of Karakorum was established at a favorable site along the Orkhon River in 1220. Embellished with the riches of plunder and trade, it served for a few decades as a bustling, multicultural center, and capital of the Mongolian Empire. But then, as now, the Mongolian people were not particularly enthusiastic about city life—many preferred the steppes. Today, all but archaeological traces of the ancient city have vanished. In its place is the monastery of Erdene Zuu, built in the Tibetan style during Mongolia’s 16th Century Buddhist Renaissance. Erdene Zuu is exceptionally scenic, and houses many artistic treasures including a spectacular collection of Tibetan Buddhist tankha paintings and frescoes. Its square wall is about a quarter-mile on each side and embellished with 108 Stupas. Seventeen temples survive within.

The modern town of Karakorum has neighborhoods of seasonally occupied gers, well-insulated homes, and Soviet era granaries. In many ways, the history of settlement in this valley is a summary of Mongolian history. Accommodations at *Dreamland ger camp (2 nights)*.



Day 6 Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape

The Orkhon Valley was a nexus for many distinct cultures over the past several millennia, and today the region is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We will explore the central reaches of the Orkhon Valley. The cultural sites—commemorative stones, Oova rock shrines, small monasteries, and petroglyphs—are distributed across a vast area. And the landscape is stunning: broad valleys are covered in grasses and wildflowers, with ribbons of trees along the permanent water courses at the bottoms of the valleys, and white ger tents in favorable places. Damoiselle Cranes and various species of hawks and vultures are abundant here, as are songbirds like redstarts and Mongolian Larks. Mongolia’s five domestic animals (horses, cattle, camels, sheep, and goats) graze freely on this open range.

Day 7 Karakorum to Hustain Nuruu National Park

Today we will drive east to Hustain Nuruu National Park, an important site for conservation of the takhi, also known as Przewalski’s horse. During the 20th Century, this species was driven extinct in the wild. However, captive animals from Europe were released in the 1990’s and their descendants have successfully established themselves in their new Central Asian home—one of only a few cases of successful re-introduction of mammals to the wild.

At Hustain Nuruu National Park, we will have an orientation program about the takhi, then in the evening, we will set forth into the national park. If we are fortunate, we may get to see a band of takhi, often a male and his harem, descending hillsides to rich grass in the valley bottom. Visitors to Hustain Nuruu also sometimes see Red Deer and tarvaga (Mongolian Marmot). Overnight at *Hustain ger camp*.

Day 8 Hustain Nuruu National Park to Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve (via Ulaanbaatar)

This morning we will drive east to Gun-Galuut, a large, community-based nature reserve, passing Ulaanbaatar en route. Our destination is *Steppe*



Nomads ger camp (2 nights), located in a favorable spot near the bank of the Kherlen River. The Kherlen, which originates in the nearby Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area, is a nearly pristine wild river.

Day 9 Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve

Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve encompasses rocky hills, wetlands, and a marvelous stretch of clear river favored by shelducks and cranes. Most significantly, the mountains of Gun-Galuut offer sanctuary to wild populations of an endangered mountain sheep, the argali (*Ovis ammon*). Cousins of our bighorn sheep, argali are the largest of the wild sheep. More than 80 individuals inhabit the mountains of Gun-Galuut. With its wetlands, full of fish and mollusks, Gun Galuut is ideal summer breeding habitat for cranes. Damoiselle are most abundant. Swans and other members of the duck family also breed here during the summer.

During our visit to Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve, we will look for argali in the nearby Baits mountain range. We will also arrange a "horse-catching" demonstration, and have the opportunity to ride horses or camels, or to float down the placid Kherlen River. Steppe Nomads is a wonderful place to get acquainted with traditional Mongolian lifestyles. Overnight at *Steppe Nomads ger camp*.

Day 10 Gun-Galuut to Ulaanbaatar via Terelj National Park & Genghis Khan Monument

Today we will return to Ulaanbaatar with a side-trip to Terelj national park and a visit to the Giant Genghis Monument complex en route. Terelj National park is an appealing landscape of larch conifer forest and exposed granite with a rich assortment of central Asian montane plants, many of which will be flowering at the time of our visit. Evening arrival in Ulan Baatar. Overnight at *Narantuul Hotel (or similar)*.

Day 11 Ulaanbaatar to Dalanzadgad, Gobi Desert

Our morning flight takes us to Dalanzadgad, district center for a region of Mongolia that includes part of the Eastern Gobi Desert. A rocky desert, the Gobi is cold and dry for much of the year, but it enjoys a



brief flush of rainfall during the summer, at least in some years.

Today we will travel to our ger camp near the Bayanzag - Flaming Cliffs dinosaur fossil site, via Yolyn Am (Vulture Canyon). This winding cleft in the flanks of the Gurvan Saikhan mountain range is sheltered from the sun so that it holds ice throughout the year despite warm summer temperatures. In addition to the ice, Yolyn Am is also a good place to see Lammergeier (Bearded Vulture), one of Asia's largest birds. Ibex also sometimes appear on the precipitous slopes of the gorge. Afternoon scenic drive to ger camp near Flaming Cliffs. *Gobi Tour Camp (3 nights)*.

Days 12/13 Gobi Desert

Our two-day visit to the Gobi Desert will include the Bayanzag fossil site where Roy Chapman Andrews discovered dinosaur bones and eggs during the 1920's, and which he called the Flaming Cliffs. This site is iconic in the world of paleontology—it was the source of some of the best early discoveries of predatory dinosaur fossils. We will also visit the red-tinted sand dunes of Moltsof Els, and a nomadic family of camel breeders who consider the Gobi Desert to be their home. With a population density of only about three persons per square mile, this is one of temperate Asia's most sparsely populated regions and





the people who live here need to be especially resourceful, even by Mongolian standards.

Day 14 Bayanzag—Flaming Cliffs to Ulaanbaatar via Dalanzadgad.

This morning we will drive back to the Aimag (District) center of Dalanzadgad for our return flight to Ulaanbaatar. In the evening we'll enjoy a farewell dinner and an evening cultural performance of Mongolian traditional music, which includes local stringed instruments, throat singing, and a memorable contortionist act.

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.

RESPONSIBILITY

Betchart Expeditions Inc., the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society, and the American Chemical Society (ACS) act only as agents for the passenger with respect to transportation and hotels, and exercise every care possible. However, we 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, quarantine, terrorism, 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 reserve the right 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.

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 and Chris Carpenter

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RESERVATIONS #1191

Yes! I/we want to join the **Mongolia Expedition, July 15-29, 2011**, offered by **AAAS Travels, Sigma Xi & ACS Expeditions**. Please reserve _____ space(s). As a deposit, I/we enclose a check for \$ _____ (\$500 per person) payable to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Trust Account.

Name(s) _____ Age _____
 _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: Home (_____) _____

Work (_____) _____

Email Address _____

Membership:
 AAAS Sigma Xi ACS Planetary Society

Accommodations Preference:
 Twin Single Share (with a friend)
 Share (assign a roommate)
 Nonsmoker Smoker

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Please Mail To:
Mongolia 2011, Betchart Expeditions Inc.
17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5345





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17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014

FIRST CLASS



Discover MONGOLIA! . . .
From Ghengis Khan to the Gobi Desert!
July 15-29, 2011

COSTS & CONDITIONS

Expedition Fee: \$3,995 per person twin share + air of approximately \$1,200 + tax San Francisco/Beijing, RT + air Beijing/Mongolia, RT \$650 + tax. Single Supplement is \$695.

Expedition Fee Includes: Land transport; group airport transfers; accommodations twin share; meals from breakfast on Day 3 through breakfast on Day 15; in-tour flights to Gobi Desert, RT; entrance fees; baggage handling; leadership, administration.

Expedition Fee Does Not Include: Air fare (quoted separately); independent transfers; tips to guides and drivers; optional activities at the ger camps such as horse riding or fishing; photo fees at temples and palaces; 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 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 (comfortable, good quality walking shoes are recommended). It will be summer, with midday temperatures in the 70's to 80's and occasional rain, most of which comes in the form of brief thunderstorms accompanied by beautiful clouds and fragrant air that more than compensates for the inconvenience.

Please note that the ger camps are very comfortable, but they are not hotels. Gers are secure and weatherproof, most have electricity at least in the evening. Western-style toilets and showers are shared. The toilet facilities in the camps

we'll use are very clean, and the showers have hot water at certain designated hours. 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 \$695.

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 2011, Betchart Expeditions Inc., 17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5435**

The 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.**

Telephone (800) 252-4910

or (408) 252-4910

Fax (408) 252-1444

Email: Info@betchartexpeditions.com

On the Web: www.betchartexpeditions.com