

Mongolian Expedition.



Hello team!

Epic Backpacker Tours is beyond stoked to welcome you to our newest (and possibly most exciting) destination: Mongolia! You're about to visit one of the most under-explored and fascinating countries in the world; one inhabited by nomadic horsemen, a vast array of landscapes, and uncountable adventures. We believe we have developed a truly special trip here and we aim to show you a damn good time on thjis Mongolian Expedition.

This information pack is LOADED with everything you need to start preparing yourself for the journey ahead. Please read this entire document thoroughly as there are many important details to take note of.

This information pack will be your primary trip resource and one you can keep circling back to in preparation for our Horse Trekking in Mongolia Expedition.

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Getting ready to experience Mongolia

A few months prior to the trip, we will be sending you a number of Google forms and documents to return in order to collect the necessary information from you.

Please do your best to fill in and return these in a timely manner.

Visa arrangements - general information

- MOST nationalities including USA, UK, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, etc are able to visit Kyrgyzstan without a visa or can obtain a visa upon arrival (VOA). Be sure to check the [official immigration website](#) to see if your nationality qualifies.
- All guests coming on the Mongolia Expedition MUST confirm their country's visa agreement with Mongolia well in advance of the start of the tour.
- Visa fees are **NOT** included in the tour price and it is your responsibility to obtain the correct visa in a timely manner from Kyrgyz Immigration if needed.
- NOT EVERY COUNTRY can receive a visa upon arrival. As such, it is a good idea to double check.

DOCUMENTS TO SUBMIT TO EPIC ASAP

- Although we play no part in you applying for and obtaining your Mongol visa (if needed), we still ask that guests to submit to Epic a copy of their passport. This is for our records and/or in case of an emergency.

Flights to Mongolia

Arrival Airport: Ulaanbaatar: Chinggis Khaan International Airport (UBN)

Departure Airport: Ulaanbaatar:Chinggis Khaan International Airport (UBN)

Ulaanbaatar (the capital of Mongolia) is the largest city in Mongolia.

Connections to Ulaanbaatar can be rather limited so it is a good idea to book your flight well in advance to ensure you have as many connection options as possible.

Delays do happen when you are traveling long distances via various connecting flights. Because of this fact, We advise that you arrive into Mongolia one day before the tour starts. That way you can be sure to both arrive into the country on time and get a good night's rest before we start the tour.

Note: Included tour accommodation does not start until the evening of day 1. If you arrive into Ulaanbaatar in the days before the tour starts, you will need to pay for you own accommodation. We can help make hotel suggestions for you if you'd like or we can book you into the same hotel as our guides. Cost is around \$90 USD/night.

AIRLINES

- Check the visa conditions of any country you plan to transit through, you may be required to have a transit visa. India and China are good examples of this.
- Please begin investigation of flights now, this will allow you to get an overview of prices, routes and possible connections. Keep an eye out for promo fares, particularly with low-cost carriers.
- Some may choose to fly into Almaty as it is a larger city and it's international airport is serviced by many more international carriers.

CONNECTIONS

There are flights to Ulaanbaatar connecting from the following cities:

- Istanbul (Turkish Airlines/MIAT)
- Seoul (if coming from west coast USA) (Korea Air/MIAT)
- Hong Kong
- Beijing
- Frankfurt

When do you need to be there?

- To experience the full itinerary, you need to be in the hotel/meeting place and be rested by the morning of day 1. We will confirm the exact time and meeting place just prior to the start of the tour.
- The tour ends on day 15 and with the exception of breakfast and airport transfers, no services are included this day, so it makes sense to try and leave by the evening.
- Checkout from the hotel is around 11 am.
- We stay as a group at the Puma Imperial Hotel in the Ulaanbaatar city center

Accommodation in Mongolia

We offer a variety of unique and comfortable accommodation options on this trip. From hotels to traditional Ger camps (yurts) and quality 4-season tents; we do our best to make sure where we sleep is part of the overall tour experience.

It is important to discuss the significance of Gers in Mongol culture and what it will be like staying in them. Gers are large temporary structures built from felt and wood or metal support beams. They are always circular in shape and sort of resemble large tents or a small pavilion.

Gers are extremely important to Mongol society. They are believed to have been used by Central Asian nomads for over 3000 years and were crucial to their lifestyle and prosperity. To this day, Gers are still a cornerstone of nomadic lifestyle and are used regularly, not only on remote pasture land, but also in the backyards of families living in medium sized cities.

Gers range in size but generally accommodate 3-6 people. Most of them are equipped with a coal-burning stove that is lit at night to keep guests very toasty at night; smoke is vented outside the tent.

Here is a brief rundown of what kind of accommodation to expect in each location:

Ulaanbaatar: 4-star hotel in the city center

Olgii: Ger camp owned by our local friends (2-3 people per Ger).

Trek: 4 season North Face Tents (2 people to a tent)

*** Single supplements are available upon request for an extra charge.**

Food in Mongolia

Mongolian food is actually more diverse than its reputation would suggest. Meat and bread are very integral to the local diet. Fresh fruits and salads are still common though – especially in cities, which bodes well for vegetarians. Food can vary greatly depending on where we are.

In Ulaanbaatar, there will be pretty much everything you would hope to find in a major city. International restaurants are plentiful and are of a high quality. In the more remote parts of the country, cooking is more traditional. Classic Mongolian cuisine is very hearty — there will be a lot of bread, dairy, soups, and red meat. Spicing is simple. Vegetables are generally hearty and include potatoes, dark greens, and roots, like carrots.

Mongolians are in general very hospitable and it is not uncommon for us to be invited into the home of a nomad family for local cheese, tea, and sweets. Kumis (fermented mare's milk) may also be offered. It is a very strange drink and we encourage going outside comfort zones to try it. Hosts will not be offended if you say no.

Food whilst camping will be the best possible quality. We hire a local chef to spoil us with amazing camp meals during the trekking portion of the trip.

DAILY MEALS - EXAMPLES

Breakfast: fried eggs, porridge, jam, sweets, bread, cheese, milk, tea, coffee, fruit

Hotel/City Lunch: Soup course, rice, veggies, meat, chicken, french fries, some sort of salad, pasta, tea.

Trekking Lunch: We serve a proper packed lunch. Example: pasta with meat and salad. Rice, beef, potato stew and dumplings or traditional savory pastries.

Dinner: larger meals, rice, stews, grilled meats, bread, salads, sweets. Always, always hot tea!

Please let us know early on if you have any diet restrictions/preferences. If you are vegetarian/vegan, you might want to consider bringing some of your own food (for snacks/breakfast stuff), as it can be very difficult to cater to individuals in a big group, though we always do our best.

PERSONAL SNACKS

If you have done some hiking or group travel before, then you know how important snacks are! While Epic does provide some snacks and hearty meals, it is always a great idea to bring some of your favorite trekking/travel snacks from your home country.

- It is possible to find snacks in Ulaanbaatar that are similar to those one might find in the Western world. We suggest bringing your favorite assortment of snacks and chow down during long car rides and trail breaks. Gummies, nuts, jerky, energy gels, Cliff bars, granola bars, dark chocolate, superfood powder, bliss balls... These are all solid snack foods.
- Choose high calorie, low weight snack foods.

Expedition safety

STAYING SAFE ON THIS TOUR

- You may have guessed, this adventure tour carries a certain amount of risk since we are traveling and trekking DEEP into the mountains in a developing country. This is not your average holiday per se. There will be no cocktails on the beach.
- Guest Safety is Epic's #1 priority and our experienced ground team does everything within their power to set our group up for a safe adventure.
- The name of the game is security and safety first and being mindful of injury prevention.
- In case of emergency, your Epic trip leader is equipped with a satellite communication device, which can contact outside emergency first responders from any place in Mongolia.

HORSE RIDING IN MONGOLIA

It is one of the aspects of the country that makes it so fascinating. Nomadic herders have been pasturing their animals on the Mongol step for millennia — a practice that is still very much alive and well today as it is in other parts of Central Asia.

The horses are tame and suitable for beginner riders. The concept of this trip is to break up the trekking and horse riding equally so that you spend half the day on foot walking and the other half of the day on horseback.

If you have a fear of horses, of course it is not mandatory to ride - but we encourage everyone to push their comfort zone limits and at least give it a go! This is the chance for a truly unique experience and if not in Mongolia, where else will you ride horses in such an epic location?!

Travel insurance for Mongolia

- You will need to prove you have insurance by providing a photocopy of your policy.
- If you want the best protection in case of a need for helicopter rescue, the important policy to take out is a [Global Rescue Membership](#). If you don't want to go with Global Rescue for medical travel insurance, that's fine - as that is a separate policy. The membership is only for heli insurance as is not actual medical insurance.
- There are lots of insurance companies on the market but many will not cover trips to Kyrgyzstan - we recommend that you use [World Nomads](#) or [Safety Wing](#) - they specialize in covering travel to unusual destinations and cover travel to Iran (but do not cover all nationalities).
- Make sure the insurance company chosen provides coverage for activities like trekking up to 4,000 meters and offers helicopter rescue coverage.

MEDICAL CONSIDERATION

Vaccination can be a contentious issue and ultimately down to the decision of an individual, there are some vaccinations that are recommended for travel to Mongolia so please consult with a travel clinic for further advice.

[General Information on health considerations](#) while traveling in Mongolia:

Money In Mongolia

The official currency of Mongolia is the Tugrik.

ATMs are common in the larger urban areas, like Ulaanbaatar and Olgii. We also recommend that you bring some foreign cash (for tips and souvenirs). USD, Euro, British Pounds are all fine. Cards seem to work everywhere in Mongolia as well.

As to how much money you should bring, here are some costs for you to take into account...

- Souvenirs vary in price from a couple of dollars to hundreds, depending on what you are buying and how good you are at haggling.
- Soft drinks and water are about \$1 to \$2.
- A meal will set you back between \$10 - \$15.
- **Money Recommendation for this trip:** If you take out the equivalent of 300 USD in Mongolian Tugrik, you should have more than enough to get meals on your own, get souvenirs, buy beer, pick up snacks, and extra drinks and meals along the way.

When we return to Ulaanbaatar or Olgii at the end of the tour, you will have a chance to get out more cash should you need (for shopping, tipping staff, last minute purchases, etc).

TIPPING STAFF AND HORSE HANDLERS

Epic staff including our ground team in Mongolia go above and beyond for guests before, during, and after the trip to make sure that everyone has the best possible trekking experience imaginable. So how do you show your guides some love? Well, besides bringing coffee, tipping is the next best option.

Note: Tipping is 100% optional and should reflect your overall experience with our staff. No guest is required to tip, however we have received many questions regarding tipping in the past which is why we include this info in this information pack. Below we have included the industry standard recommendation to offer our staff some additional compensation based on your overall experience and keeping in mind the length of the trip. Show your staff some love!

Tipping recommendations (in USD per guest)

- Lead Epic Guide: \$100-130
- Local Mongol Guide: \$100-130
- Cook team: \$50
- Horse/Camel Porter Team: \$50

SIM cards & internet access in Mongolia

The main cell phone providers in Mongolia are: MobiCom, Skytel, G-mobile, and Unitel. Each phone company has varying coverage and plans.

Coverage in Mongolia is pretty good, with the exception of the national park where we trek. Expect to be offline for about a week of the 15 day itinerary. In our opinion, it's not worth the hassle of getting a SIM card as our hotels in Ulaanbaatar and Olgii have Wifi. Keep in mind that this trip is a chance for our guests to unplug and fully embrace a proper digital detox.

The internet situation in Mongolia is likely not what you are used to, so please have realistic expectations regarding wifi and internet speeds/access.

Meeting the people & being culturally sensitive

Compared to its more authoritarian neighbors, Mongolia is a remarkably tolerant place (unlike China and Russia).

Locals freely express their opinions on topics as varied as religion to foreign relations, usually casually over a cup of tea or glass of vodka. Outsiders in Mongolia should be relieved to know that their presence will not be a nuisance or an insult in any way; in fact, most Mongol people are happy to have you visiting.

Mongolians, and Kazakhs in particular, are extremely welcoming and hospitable, which is customary of the nomadic lifestyle. Guests are treated with reverence, warmth, and lots of food. Respect is given to us and respect is expected in return. It is our responsibility as travelers to make sure that we pay our own respects and to leave a positive impact.

Here are some things to consider when interacting with local people:

- The official religion of Western Mongolia is Islam, though many people are not religious, they just have some cultural links to Islam.
- By many standards, Mongolia is one of the most westernized countries in this part of Asia. Dress codes are loose and genders frequently mingle. We will not visit any mosques so special dress for these will not be required.
- A good strong handshake and eye contact between men is the surest way to show respect. Handshakes are usually done with the right hand. Some Mongol men use the left hand as well and fully clasp yours. The position of the left hand on the arm indicates the level of respect being shown - the closer their left hand is to yours, the more comfortable they are with you. Some may also bring their right hand to their heart afterwards as an added gesture.
- In general, Mongol people do not shy away from drinking and shots of vodka or beer are regularly offered to guests. If you abstain, it is acceptable to say no. If you accept, it is customary to drink when there's a toast and to finish the entire drink in one go.

ABOUT THE GUIDES

Each tour group is accompanied by one western trip leader: Epic guide & founder, Chris Lininger. As well as the western trip leader, we have a Mongol ground team. Note that, aside from Chris and the regular Mongol guide, other guides/team members may or may not speak English well. For more information on our guides, check out our [meet the team](#) page on our website

Weather conditions in Mongolia

The weather in Mongolia during the summer can really vary depending on where you go. While it may be bright and sunny in the capital, it could be snowing in the mountains. Lower elevations are generally hotter and drier; snow is common at any time of the year in the mountains, even summer. Also strong winds can occasionally prevail too in the mountains.

Ulaanbaatar - Pleasant days, chilly nights. Highs between 16-20 C, and lows between 0 - 7 C. Rain and clouds rare in September but possible.

Olgii - Brisk in the morning, mild chill during the day, potentially dropping below freezing at night. Highs between 10-15. Lows between 0 and 5 C.

During the Trek in Tuvan Bogd National Park: If the weather is sunny, it is perfect trekking weather in September. Highs between 5-12 C during the day. Nights: expect freezing temperatures most if not every night. Lows between -7 and 0 most nights.

What to pack for Mongolia

Porter allowance for the trek: Each client has a 20 kg porter allowance (luggage is ported by camels).

It's extremely important that you bring the right gear for the trip. In case of emergency, there are outdoor shops in Ulaanbaatar but buying equipment at the last second will be inconvenient and costly. Prices for outdoor gear in Mongolia are no less than those in Europe or the USA.

The weather will at times be cold and, especially whilst we are around 3000 - 4,000 meters - it will be below freezing at night. You will want to be comfortable so it's worth spending money on decent quality warm gear. Though likewise it can be very sunny, pleasant and comfortable at lower elevations. It is always best to be prepared for a variety of climates and temperature fluctuations.

TEST ALL OF YOUR PERSONAL GEAR BEFORE COMING TO Mongolia. Please take the time to go out on an overnight backpacking/camping trip at least once before coming on this trip so that you know how your gear performs in the mountains.

Note: For our internal flight to/from Olgii - the airline has a weight limit of 15 kg per person for checked luggage. Cost is 5000 (\$2) tugrik per extra kg.

PACKS & BAGGAGE

Expedition Duffel Bag

Day Trekking Backpack with rain cover

ESSENTIAL PERSONAL GEAR

0F \ -17C Sleeping Bag

Inflating Sleeping Pad

Inflatable Camp Pillow

SPECIALTY EQUIPMENT

Trekking Poles

Headlamp

Grayl Filter Bottle

Gaiters

Spare Water Bottle

BOOTS & FOOTWEAR

Trekking Boots

Camp Shoes

Sandals/Tevas/Keens

OTHER PERSONAL GEAR

Dry Bags

Polarized Sunglasses

Personal First Aid Kit

Power Bank

Chargers/Phone Cable

Snacks

TOILETRIES

Toothbrush, Toothpaste

Biodegradable Soap

Personal First Aid Kit

Deodorant

Sunscreen

Fast Drying Microfiber Travel Towel

CLOTHING LAYER SYSTEMS

Rain Shell Pants

Hard Shell/Rain Jacket

Fleece

Base Layer Top

Base Layer Bottoms

Sun Hat and Beanie

Buff and Bandana

Gloves Mid Weight

Trekking Shirts

Trekking Pants

Synthetic Multisport

Merinos Trekking Socks

Underwear / Bras

Heavy Weight / Hi Loft Down Jacket

Spending extra time in Mongolia

If you want to stay in Mongolia and continue exploring - great idea! Tourist visas are typically good for 30 days in length. Guests often ask us where they should visit in Mongolia if they have extra time. There are many options; here are a few suggestions based upon different travels:

Gobi Desert: Visit epic sand dunes, sites where they discovered dinosaurs, and some truly dramatic canyons

Kharkhorin: Lying far in eastern Mongolia, Kharkhorin is the former capital of the Mongolian Empire before they moved their court to Beijing.

Lake Khuvsgol: A 100-mile alpine lake in Northern Mongolia. The area is part of a national park that makes up the greater region around Khuvsgol. Five distinct Mongolian ethnic groups populate the area, including the Buriat, Khalk, Darhat, Urianghai and Tsaatan. Shamanism has a strong influence on local traditions, culture, and general way of life.

Early client departure protocol

In the event that a trip participant needs to leave the planned trip itinerary early due to illness, injury, family emergency, personal reasons, or simply because they want to, etc then there are a few things to note:

Should a trip participant choose to leave the planned itinerary early for any reason, from the moment they leave the tour, all expenses from that point onwards are the responsibility of the trip participant. This includes, but is not limited to, hotels/accommodation, transportation, emergency helicopter evacuation, internal flights (even if we have purchased you a flight for the trip you are attending), meals, airport transfer, guide services - everything that is normally covered by Epic Backpacker Tours during your tour is no longer covered once a trip participant decides to leave.

Once the decision has been made to leave the tour, the trip participant must sign an "Early Departure Waiver Form" - formally releasing Epic Backpacker Tours of any further obligations to fulfill our tour/guide/transport/logistics services.

That said, in an emergency situation or in case of severe illness, Epic Backpacker Tours staff will do everything within our means to aid the trip participant until they are in a safe/stable condition. When possible, Epic staff can also help you book new accommodation, flights, transport, etc when possible - but all of these expenses are for the trip participant to pay.

Point being, our staff will always be available to the best of our ability to facilitate the logistics of your departure, should you choose to leave the trip early.

Liability waiver

All tour participants will be required to sign an industry-standard waiver releasing Epic Backpacker Tours from liability related to any aspect of this trip. Waivers are usually issued on day 1 of the tour at our first team briefing. If you would like to request a copy of the waiver in advance, please email us.

Paying the balance

Final balance payments will be due approximately 3-4 months before the tour begins. If you have a balance owing we will advise you of how and when to pay this. Please remember that deposits are non-refundable.

If you would like to pay the balance sooner, please email us!

Any questions? Email us at contact@epicbackpackertours.com

Again, we are very excited to get to meet you in person in Mongolia soon!

