



Naadam Adventure • 10 days

Ulaanbaatar to Ulaanbaatar

- Mongolia

Join us as we mingle with the crowds at Mongolia's most famous festival, witnessing centuries-old traditions of wrestling, archery and horseracing. Always a spectacular display of noise, colour and fun, we balance the excitement of the Naadam with the tranquil countryside and history of Kharkhorin and Erdene Zuu Hiid.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The atmosphere and festivities of the Naadam Festival.
- ▶ Visiting one of the most important cultural sites in Mongolia - Kharkhorin and Erdene Zuu Hiid.
- ▶ Relaxing under the stars at the ger camps.

TRAVELSTYLE

Whilst traveling on this journey you will be staying in 3 star hotels, comfortable guesthouses and yurts (the traditional home of nomads across Mongolia). There is plenty of time to experience local life and enjoy the sights each city has to offer. During 'free time' you have the option to join in unscheduled group activities, explore independently or rest, and most itineraries include some optional evening activities also. Sundowners Overland Group Leaders and local guides accompany these journeys and sightseeing and some meals are included.

Fitness Guidelines

In order to participate fully in this journey you will need average level of fitness. A typical day will include sightseeing of up to 4 hours of combined bus/walking, including some steps, uneven surfaces and infrequent short rests with access to basic bathroom facilities. This journey does not include portage, and you should be able to carry your complete belongings (unaided) for walks of up to 10 minutes (for example loading vehicles, to gers or to some rooms in larger hotels). This itinerary includes uncomfortable driving conditions, basic accommodation and infrequent access to Western-standard facilities (including communication and medical). You should consider these itineraries only if you lead a fairly active lifestyle, have an adaptable diet and enjoy a degree of unpredictability!

LOCAL PAYMENT

Your contribution to the group Overland Fund is an integral part of the tour cost and is used by the Group Leader to pay directly for group services that would otherwise be difficult to pay by more modern methods. On this journey, you are required to contribute a local payment of USD\$150 per person. This should be given as 1x\$100 note and 1x\$50 note if possible, to be collected by your Group Leader at the Pre-Departure meeting on Day 1.

Please also see notes on tipping in the 'General Information' section below.

GROUP SIZE & GROUP LEADER

15 maximum, plus Group Leader. Every Sundowners Overland group is accompanied by a Group Leader, chosen for their experience, personal qualities and passion for our style of travel. Supported by our operations team and local offices, they take care of all the transport, accommodation and paperwork necessary to ensure a smooth running trip. They are not a tour guide but instead a combination of organiser, negotiator and bureaucracy battler, and their sheer enthusiasm, energy and spirit are your guarantee of an unforgettable travel experience. Our Group Leaders are a mixture of local specialists and western adventurers - and all have an absolute passion for the destinations in which they work!

EXPERIENCE IN THE REGION

Sundowners Overland ran its first journey in 1973 and have continued to offer exciting travel experiences ever since. We have over 20 years experience in Mongolia, and are pleased to be offering this variation on a classic itinerary.

ITINERARY

Day 1 - Ulaanbaatar

Arrive Ulaanbaatar and explore the city. Sukhbaatar Square, Gandan Hiid (Living Buddha Monastery), Bogd Khan Palace Museum and the Museum of Natural History all offer an excellent introduction to this wild corner of Asia. Ulaanbaatar, meaning 'Red Hero', became the capital of Mongolia when it was proclaimed an independent state in 1924. Tonight we meet our fellow group members and Group Leader and are treated to a wonderful show of traditional arts, music and song, including the unforgettable 'throat singing' as a welcome to Mongolia

Days 2-3 Karakorum + Erdene Zuu

Today we journey to Kharkhorin, the capital of Mongolia in the 13th century during the rule of Genghis Khan. The main attraction is Erdene Zuu Hiid Monastery, built in 1586, the largest monastery and first Buddhist centre in Mongolia. Over 100 temples were constructed, but most were destroyed during the Soviet era, nevertheless, Erdene Zuu Hiid retains much of its former glory, and is a remarkable sight to visit. We spend two nights here in traditional Mongolian gers.

Days 4-5 Khustai National Park

We break our return journey at the Khustai National Park. Here Przewalski horses, known locally as 'takhi', were reintroduced after previously becoming extinct in their native land. We visit the research centre to learn about the breeding program here before entering the park to see if we can spot these rare animals in their native environment. We spend another night in gers, with plenty of time to relax before returning to the capital. The city is alive with excitement on the eve of the Naadam Festival, as we join the crowds who have travelled to the city to witness the main events of the days to come - competitions and demonstrations of the 'three manly sports' - wrestling, archery and horseracing.

Days 6-8 Naadam Festival

We make our way with the crowds to the Naadam stadium for the spectacular opening ceremony. Taking our place for the procession, we see not only the athletes, but monks, officials and local celebrities. The first rounds of wrestling and archery begin with horseracing the focus on the second day. These races are the domain of younger children, who compete for the title 'tumnii ekh' ('Leader of Ten Thousand'). Join the crowds in cheering the winners, and singing songs to the losers and mingle with the locals - often taking as much pleasure from watching the audience as observing the competitors! As the festival draws to a close, we travel to the splendid alpine scenery of Terelj National Park

Day 9 Terelj

After our busy days at the Naadam, we enjoy tranquil surroundings of this countryside retreat. After a night in traditional gers - accommodation we are now quite familiar with - we visit a local family to experience their nomadic lifestyle firsthand. There are opportunities for hiking, or simply relaxing and enjoying the scenery.

Day 10 Ulaanbaatar

With the city and its inhabitants still recovering from the festivities, we say our goodbyes to Ulaanbaatar, with our tour concluding today.

SUMMARY ITINERARY - BEIJING TO ST PETERSBURG

July 6 Join Ulaanbaatar / Hotel / No meals
July 7 To Kharkhorin / Ger / Breakfast & Lunch
July 8 Erdene Zuu / Ger / Breakfast
July 9 Hutaisi reserve / Ger / Breakfast & Lunch
July 10 Return to Ulaanbaatar / Hotel / Breakfast
July 11 Naadam Festival / Hotel / Breakfast
July 12 Naadam Festival / Hotel / Breakfast
July 13 Naadam Festival and Terelj / Ger / Breakfast
July 14 Terelj and Ulaanbaatar / Hotel / Breakfast
July 15 Ulaanbaatar / no accommodation / Breakfast

SCHEDULED SIGHTSEEING

Scheduled Sightseeing is part of the itinerary and includes all transport, entrance fees and English speaking local guide.

- ▶ Ulaanbaatar: City tour, Gandan Hiid Monastery and the Museum of Natural History, folk concert.
- ▶ Kharkhorin: Erdene Zuu Hiid.
- ▶ Khustai: Takhi Wild Horses Research Centre
- ▶ Naadam Festival: tickets to opening ceremony.

NAADAM FESTIVAL

Please note that due to local conditions, exact daily program for Naadam Festival cannot be provided. With the exception of the Opening Ceremony (which we will attend) there is no clear timetable of events, and some competitions take place with amazing spontaneity! With the assistance of our local partners, we have endeavoured to put together an itinerary that will provide both a classic Mongolian countryside experience, and as much of the Naadam Festival as possible. The final itinerary will be determined by the options available on the day and we ask for your flexibility and understanding at this somewhat chaotic time!

CITY EXPLORING

City Exploring is optional sightseeing outside the itinerary guideline with the Group Leader. It is designed to be flexible, may change depending on group wishes and the time available, and is at the discretion of the leader. Travellers will be asked to share the transport cost, if required, and provide their own entrance fees.

Our Group Leaders know the 'off-the-beaten-track' sights and can make suggestions on the best places to explore, eat and relax. By combining Scheduled Sightseeing with City Exploring, they aim to share not only the 'must-sees' of each destination, but to introduce the more personal and idiosyncratic aspects they have discovered themselves. We use local taxis, public transport and go on foot - it's about getting involved with everyday life, and local people!

Optional Activities

Please note that City Exploring and any activities you participate in outside the specified itinerary and scheduled sightseeing are at your own risk. While your Group Leader will be happy to assist you in pursuing other activities and interests, Sundowners Overland makes no claims as to the safety of the activity, nor the standard of the local parties operating it. Your Group Leader has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the specified itinerary if it is felt to be unsafe. Although opportunities may be provided locally, Sundowners Overland recommends that travellers do not ride local animals.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotels - 5 nights (twin share)

We have chosen hotels of a standard we consider appropriate to the 'Discovery' Travelstyle. Hotel accommodation is based on a twin share and all rooms have private bathroom facilities. Hotels are chosen for the best available combination of location, comfort and facilities, but please be aware that in the destinations you are visiting, the choice of hotels in this category is very limited.

Traditional Mongolian Ger - 4 nights (shared)

The Ger experience is a highlight for many people, and certainly a wonderful opportunity to see the traditional way of life for Mongolians. Our ger camps are comfortable, clean and fully furnished (including linen and blankets), however bathroom facilities are provided separately. Depending on group size and ger availability, you will be sharing a ger up to a maximum of four people.

Single Supplement Option

Since this is the most popular time for visitors to Ulaanbaatar and the surrounding areas, accommodation is at a premium. For this reason we are unable to offer a pre-booked single supplement on this journey, and you must be prepared to share hotels rooms, gers and tents with another group member of the same sex for the full duration of the journey

GENERAL INFORMATION - FOR TRAVELLERS TO MONGOLIA

BEFORE YOU GO...

VOUCHERS & GROUP JOINING INFORMATION

With your final documents from Sundowners Overland, you will receive vouchers for your Small Group Journey, 2-Berth Rail or Single Supplements (when booked and paid in advance), and any pre or post-tour arrangements you have made with us. These are your 'tickets' and your Group Leader or our local agents will collect them when needed. Please check these vouchers carefully when you receive them, and do not hesitate to contact your travel agent or Sundowners Overland if you have any questions regarding your arrangements. You will also receive information regarding your joining hotel and how to find it, as well as emergency contact details for our local operators. Please refer to separate document 'Joining Instructions' (provided with your final documents) for the details of your group hotel and local contacts.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION & VISAS

Visas and Sundowners Overland Assistance

Required for Mongolia - Sundowners Overland will provide full visa support including detailed visa guidelines.

Your Responsibilities

You must ensure that you are in possession of a passport (with at least six months validity from the date you complete your Sundowners Overland arrangements), and any visas necessary to enter or transit any countries involved in the journey. You must also ensure that you have the necessary visas for any travelling you plan to do immediately before or after your Sundowners Overland arrangements. Please note that there is little time or opportunity to obtain visas for onward travel during your Mongolian journey, and you should seek Sundowners Overland' advice if you think this will be necessary.

Customs Declaration

To avoid problems on exiting Mongolia, Sundowners Overland strongly recommend that you obtain a customs declaration form and that you declare the currency that you are bringing into the country. This form should be stamped by a Customs Official and kept safe until departure. Sundowners Overland also recommends that you retain any currency exchange certificates and bank withdrawal receipts to produce on departure as these are sometimes requested in addition to customs declaration forms.

HEALTH

The pace of these tours can be tiring due to factors such as change of diet, change of environment, high and low temperatures, altitude, distances travelled, basic facilities and busy days. You should be in good health to satisfactorily participate in this tour. Mongolia is a very dry continent, so try to drink twice the amount of water that you normally would to avoid dehydration and associated illnesses. There is a considerable amount of walking, steps to sites of interest and climbing in and out of vehicles. Please advise Sundowners Overland of any pre-existing medical conditions. We recommend that you have a general medical and dental check-up before departure.

Our Mongolian itineraries include long days of travelling on very bumpy and dusty roads, and if travelling further than Ulaanbaatar, Terej or Kharkhorin, you should expect conditions similar to off-road / 4-WD driving for the majority of the time. We use sturdy vehicles suitable to these conditions (usually Russian jeeps), but they are not air-conditioned nor do they have the comfort level of the minibuses we use in the cities. Where camping is included, you should be able (and willing!) to assist in putting up and taking down a 2-man tent. Although local staff (driver, guide and - where necessary - a cook) accompanies our journeys, you will be expected to contribute to general camp chores such as tidying up and loading/unloading vehicles.

On our more remote camping itineraries, you may go several days without access to conventional toilet and shower facilities. Depending on the journey and resources available there may be 'camp showers' or the guide may find a stream or river to wash in. In this case, you will be bathing in rivers, streams and lakes, so we ask that you bring environmentally friendly soap with you, and restrict your use of detergents as much as possible (avoiding shampoo for example). Moistened tissues are a great way to freshen up, but please be aware of the environmental impact of disposing of these in the countryside. Your Group Leader will discuss these issues at the Pre-departure meeting.

First Aid

Medication and other items are widely available in Ulaanbaatar, but not in other cities in Mongolia. As the quality may not be as high as products from home, it may be useful to bring a supply of basic items with you. A first-aid kit may include band-aids, antiseptic, aspirin, cough medicine, throat lozenges, cold and flu medication, diarrhoea medication, mild laxative, eye ointments/drops for minor infections, a general antibiotic and any special medications you may need personally.

If you are taking special medication, it is a good idea to carry a letter from your doctor to show authorities if necessary. Since some medications can also be affected by changes in temperature or require special care, we recommend you discuss this with your doctor before departure. We recommend you carry a supply of heavy-duty mosquito repellent, as mosquitoes are common in all areas of Mongolia during the season in which our journeys operate.

Vaccinations

While there are no compulsory vaccinations for entry into Mongolia, we do recommend that you contact your doctor or a recognised travel health specialist for up-to-date advice, well in advance of travel.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel Insurance is compulsory for all Sundowners Overland Small Group Journeys. You must ensure that your insurance policy covers you for the entire duration of your journey, and that you have purchased the highest level of cover available to you for medical emergencies (including repatriation/evacuation cover) which is relevant to ALL the destinations that you will be visiting. Please bring a copy of your policy, as your Group Leader will check insurance details at the Pre Departure Meeting on Day 1 of the journey. You will not be permitted to join group arrangements until the Group Leader has seen evidence of comprehensive insurance cover. For passengers wishing to use insurance provided by credit cards it will be necessary for you to complete a "Credit Card Insurance Details" form prior to joining your Sundowners Overland journey for this insurance to be accepted. Please contact Sundowners Overland for further information.

LUGGAGE & PACKING

Luggage

Each year a number of our clients find the enjoyment of their journey lessened by the bulk and weight of their luggage. We cannot stress enough that you should only bring what you can comfortably carry unassisted!

You will be required to carry your own luggage - for example on or off the vehicles, through the camps and from the bus into the hotel. We recommend using a single rucksack or soft bag as your main luggage for this journey - these fit more easily into the luggage spaces in the vehicles. On itineraries using jeeps, the vehicle space is limited further by essential camping and cooking equipment. Please try to pack as lightly as possible - the amount of luggage will directly impact the available leg-room and general comfort of travelers. Your Group Leader will be able to assist you in storing excess luggage in Ulaanbaatar so that you can carry the absolute minimum on domestic flights and into the countryside.

We also recommend that you carry a small daypack for personal items used during the day (camera, water, snacks etc.) and a hidden money belt for carrying valuables. A good test after you have packed is to try carrying your bags (including all daypacks, jackets and camera cases!) for at least 200m, and try to include a set of steps too. If you have any difficulty, we would recommend a re-pack! Porterage is not available at all hotels and very rarely available at ger camps. You should not expect the Group Leader or other group members to assist you with your baggage.

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

A packing list will vary greatly depending on season, overall duration/destinations of travel, and of course personal experience and preference. It is impossible for Sundowners Overland to provide the 'perfect packing list' and so we prefer to direct you towards guidebooks and the internet so that you may research this yourself and decide what is appropriate. The temperature chart provided shows average temperatures and should give you an indication of what to expect. It is important that you do your own research on expected minimum and maximum temperatures as this will affect what you pack. Since this journey covers a huge area and varying terrain you may encounter a range of temperatures and weather conditions, and we would recommend that you bring layers of lighter clothing to allow for changes in temperature along the route. The following items are things that we feel are well worth considering

- ▶ money belt
- ▶ comfortable walking shoes or boots

- ▶ medical kit (see notes under health)
- ▶ small torch/flashlight
- ▶ sweater/fleece
- ▶ thermal underwear (Oct-May departures)
- ▶ waterproof & windproof jacket
- ▶ sandals / slip-on shoes
- ▶ casual lightweight clothes for train
- ▶ hat/sun block/lip balm/sunglasses
- ▶ toiletries (if you have preferred brands – most essentials are available in Ulaanbaatar)
- ▶ toilet paper/moistened tissues (eg Wet Ones)
- ▶ alarm clock
- ▶ mosquito repellent
- ▶ biodegradable soap

Some of our travelers have found the following items useful

- ▶ heat-proof mug with lid
- ▶ spoon/fork
- ▶ pocket-knife (pack in main luggage for flights)
- ▶ universal sink plug
- ▶ washing line and travel wash
- ▶ small travel towel
- ▶ lightweight sarong (multi-purpose!)

WHILE YOU ARE TRAVELLING...

CONTACT

Hotel Lists and Details

Since the accommodation we are using can vary according to season, availability and group size, we regret that we are unable to provide hotel lists for our journeys. We also find that the nature of our destinations is such that the contact information is often unreliable, and quickly outdated. Where it is possible to get through to a hotel, our experience is that there are often language barriers, and faxes and messages may not reach guests.

Phone, Fax and Internet

Since the hotels and ger camps are not a reliable point of contact, we strongly recommend that you establish an e-mail address before you leave home that can be used whilst travelling. There are a number of well-known free e-mail providers such as 'hotmail' and 'yahoo', and many smaller providers who can also offer this service. Internet access is readily available in Ulaanbaatar, but not in the countryside. In remote areas it is sometimes possible to find a local phone with international access, however this is rare and extremely expensive. You should assume that you will be out of contact for most of your journey - please warn friends and family this will be the case! Local guides carry communication equipment in case of emergencies, however this will not be available for general use by travellers.

In an Emergency

We do understand that there are some circumstances where people may need to contact you urgently. In this instance, please ask family or friends to contact the Sundowners Overland office in Melbourne, where they will either be able to speak to a staff member, or note the 24-hour emergency contact number from our after-hours message service. Our Operations team will be able to locate and contact the group as quickly as possible, as well as provide accurate information to those at home. Please phone: + 61 3 9672 5300.

MEALS AND FOOD

Food is plentiful and reasonably priced in Ulaanbaatar, and at the larger ger camps. Restaurant food is usually of a good standard (with an increasing choice of international cuisines) and there are many street stalls and small kiosks to purchase snacks. Bottled water, soft drinks and beer are widely available. If you are willing to try some buuz (mutton dumplings), and the local Chinggis Khan beer – budget around US\$10 per day for Ulaanbaatar. To eat at the more upmarket restaurants you will need US\$25 per day. Food at the Ger camps is around US\$6 per meal. Please see the Summary Itinerary for details of which meals are included in your journey.

The range of produce available in Ulaanbaatar supermarkets has improved dramatically in recent years, and many travelers find it convenient to stock up on snacks and treats before heading into the countryside. Seasonal fruit and vegetables are also available in the cities and local markets.

Special Dietary Requirements & General Health

If you are vegetarian please ensure we are made aware of this when you book, and our local partners will do their best to accommodate you. As traditional Mongolian food is meat-based, with few vegetables and little fruit, it is harder for vegetarians to get a balanced and varied diet in the countryside. If you have food allergies or preferences please let your Group Leader know, and they will do their best to ensure that your requirements are met. Unfortunately we cannot guarantee that special requirements can always be met, and we recommend you bring a small supply of food from home to supplement your diet if you have special dietary requirements.

Observing simple precautions such as peeling fruit, avoiding uncooked or reheated food and using only bottled or boiled water will minimise stomach upsets. Bottled water is widely available and recommended for drinking and also brushing teeth.

DAILY LIVING

Daily expenses

As a guideline we recommend that you budget an average of USD\$6.00 - \$10.00 per day over and above meal costs for day to day expenses. If you are an avid souvenir collector or have a particular indulgence, you may need to increase this amount. Entrance fees will be paid locally for additional sightseeing – see the Scheduled Sightseeing for exact inclusions. Most additional sightseeing is relatively inexpensive. In the countryside there is comparatively little to spend money on and most travelers will find their expenditure is limited to drinks and snacks as meals are included while camping.

Laundry

Laundry service is available at most hotels in Ulaanbaatar. Your Group Leader will advise you of available facilities. It is advisable to bring some biodegradable laundry soap, a universal bath plug and a small washing line if you wish to hand wash – most hotels do not provide plugs or clothes lines. Laundry costs an average of US\$2-\$3 per item.

Tipping

Across Asia, people have become accustomed to the new freedoms and opportunities of a capitalist economy. Tipping has become an essential (and expected) supplement for those working with foreign tourists, eg: drivers, guides and porters. We have found from experience that it is convenient for the Group Leader or an elected group member to collect a kitty and administer it according to the group's decision. A tip kitty saves the need for regular use of small denomination bills. Your contribution to the tip kitty will be collected by you Group Leader at the Pre-Departure Meeting on Day 1 of the Journey. Smaller denominations are appreciated. We recommend you allow US\$2-\$3 per day for tips. Please see notes at the start of dossier under 'Local Payments and Tipping' and below regarding cash.

Commissions

To ensure services are provided in the best interests of our clients, Sundowners Overland operates a no commission policy. Group Leaders do not rely on commissions or tips for salary – they are paid industry-leading wages and have their expenses covered while travelling. If you feel your Group Leader has done a fantastic job, and you wish to pass on a gratuity, please feel free to do so.

Personal Spending Money - A Summary

(Please also see notes under individual headings)

We recommend you allow an average USD \$10 - \$25 per day for meals and food (where not included).

We recommend that you budget an average of USD \$5 - \$15 per day for daily expenses.

CURRENCY

Due to potential difficulties in accessing funds whilst travelling, we recommend that you bring as much cash as you feel comfortable carrying, and have the remainder available by credit card. In Mongolia you will use a combination of the local Tugrik (approx. 1400 = 1USD) and USD for larger purchases.

Cash

Foreign currency is easily exchanged in hotels, banks and money changing offices. The USD is the most recognised and accepted of all foreign currencies. It is important that you obtain USD notes in good condition (not torn or too worn, with no stamps, ink or other marks) and issued after 1996 as older or damaged USD notes are not accepted.

Smaller denominations are less frequently needed now, and we would recommend you carry a mixture of \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 bills. Please see note above regarding Customs Declarations.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques are generally not accepted at most banks and hotels in Mongolia. Although it is possible to cash Travellers Cheques at selected banks and money changing offices, the process is very time-consuming and inconvenient. If you must use Travellers Cheques, ensure they are well-known brands such as Thomas Cook or American Express and preferably in US Dollars. Please be aware that between 3% and 10% commission may be charged.

Credit Cards

'VISA' and 'Mastercard' are usually accepted for purchases in large hotels and shops in Ulaanbaatar but are not accepted in rural Mongolia. Cash advances can be obtained from banks and bank machines (ATMs) in Ulaanbaatar. The ATM machines currently only take 'VISA' and require a 4 digit pin number. The ATM will let you withdraw local currency (Tugrik) for a charge of US\$1 per transaction plus your normal bank fees. You can also obtain USD or local currency 'over-the-counter' at most banks using 'Mastercard' or 'VISA'. Varying rates of commission and bank fees will apply. Please contact your card issuer for information regarding using your credit cards in this destination.

ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE

Sundowners Overland encourages its group leaders, operators and clients to be culturally sensitive and minimise negative impacts on the environment. Working with local operators we invest heavily in locally owned and run companies, employ local guides and national leaders, and offer opportunities for young locals looking to enter the tourism industry through our youth and student brand 'Vodkatrain'.

As a traveler to Mongolia you will quickly become aware of the ancient tradition of nomadic hospitality and the incredible generosity that accompanies it. A visitor to a ger will always be offered food, drink and accommodation. Payment is not expected, but the visitor will usually offer a gift in return – perhaps something very practical, or perhaps more of a luxury (chocolate or the latest newspaper from the city). This kind of trade enables the nomads to survive without ready access to shops, and provides the excuse for much socialising! Some companies operating in Mongolia use this hospitality to provide free accommodation for their travelers – Sundowners Overland have a clear policy against this practice. Our groups stay close to families – the social activity is fun for everyone - but carry sufficient supplies to ensure we do not need to deplete the resources of our hosts. Your Group Leader will use some of the tip kitty to purchase items that will be given to families you will meet along the way. In our experience families appreciate practical items that can be purchased in the Mongolian cities (for example flashlights, rope or matches) over novelty items from overseas. As alcoholism is a growing problem in Mongolia, we do not encourage giving vodka as a gift. Our local partners also ask that groups do not provide cash tips to nomads as it is not in keeping with their traditions and may encourage a more commercial attitude towards future travelers.

There are some simple ways you can help us minimise impact on the environment. These measures include reducing the amount of packaging you bring (as local waste collection services are well below western standards), using biodegradable soap for washing laundry, and collecting rubbish while in the countryside and ensuring it gets placed in appropriate places in the cities. This all benefits the environment, and will encourage environmental awareness in local communities. Many Mongolians are unaware of the impact of littering non-biodegradable packaging after centuries of discarding organic waste without harm. We expect our clients to lead by example and our Group Leaders and local guides will take a firm line on groups following good environmental practices whilst camping.

Respect, an open mind and understanding when dealing with local customs and value systems will enrich your experience and endear you to locals in your interactions. Learning a little of the language, reading as much about the history and culture of the region and observing local conventions in each country is a great way to start! Wearing appropriate clothing to religious sites, and on the street, avoiding expensive jewellery (which emphasises the wealth 'gap' between you and your hosts), using restaurants that are family owned and will have a flow on benefit for the local community, and never participating in activities that support crime organisations such as prostitution and black market currency exchange are just a few ways you can ensure our trips have a positive impact on local communities.

To fully enjoy this experience, avoid judging other cultures by Western standards and assumptions.

We are not here to judge, but to observe and understand.

GROUP BEHAVIOUR

Travelling in a group may require some compromise to accommodate the different desires and abilities of group members. A willingness to be involved, a positive and flexible approach to travel, understanding the particular demands of the journey and behaviour that is conducive to good group dynamics will ensure your enjoyment on one of the most satisfying and rewarding travel experiences of your life. Please see notes under 'Reasonable Behaviour' in the booking conditions.

FILM & PHOTOGRAPHY

Cameras & Videos

As film is often expensive, old or unobtainable en route, it is preferable to take all you will need from home, or purchase from Duty Free shops en route. A lead-lined film bag is useful for protecting film from security x-ray machines. While video cameras may be recharged in hotels we recommend bringing spare batteries for the countryside to avoid disappointment.

Fees

Please be aware that there are fees for the use of cameras and videos at some sites visited. Costs vary, but as a guide you can expect to pay US\$1-5.00 for a still camera and approximately US\$15.00 for a video camera.

Sensitivity

When photographing local people please respect their privacy. Many are happy to be photographed (some will expect payment), but many prefer not to be the subject of your interest. Some subjects may be sensitive and we do not recommend that you photograph military installations, border crossings or bridges. Consideration should also be given at religious sites or events. If you offer to send photographs to someone, please make sure you follow through and forward the prints as this is often the only way families can build a photo album without having cameras of their own.

RECOMMENDED RESEARCH

As well as conventional guidebooks, there are many travelogues, novels and websites that give compelling accounts of adventures and personal experiences in these destinations. They convey more inspiring impressions than mere facts and statistics can ever offer, and we recommend that you seek out and compare for yourself those that will appeal to your own interests and match the level of research you wish to undertake before you travel.

As an introduction, we suggest you look at the following titles - although this list should by no means be considered exhaustive or exclusive!

Guidebooks

- ▶ Mongolia - Claire Sermier & Helen Loveday (1st ed. Odyssey Guides)
- ▶ Lonely Planet - Mongolia - Bradley Mayhew (3rd ed.)
- ▶ Lonely Planet Mongolian Phrasebook - J. Bat-Ireedui

Travelogues & Novels

- ▶ The Last Disco in Outer Mongolia - Nick Middleton
- ▶ In the Empire of Ghengis Khan - Stanley Stewart
- ▶ Women of Mongolia - Martha Avery
- ▶ Gobi - Tracking the Desert - John Man
- ▶ Wild East: The New Mongolia - Jill Lawless
- ▶ In Xanadu: A Quest - William Dalrymple

DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT LINE

What does it cost to...

Ulaanbaatar	
Buy a cup of black coffee	USD\$0.50 - \$3
Buy a bottle of local beer	USD\$1 - \$4
Use 30 minutes on e-mail	USD\$0.50 - \$2
Launder a pair of jeans	USD\$3
Short journey in a taxi	USD\$0.20 - \$2