CAMEL TREKS AUSTRALIA · NOMADIC SPIRIT JOURNEYS



THOUSAND CAMEL FESTIVAL IN THE GOBI DESERT

The Mongolia Journey

January 27th – February 9th, 2027

Nomad Family extension · February 9th – 11th, 2027



WELCOME

Welcome to our 8th Winter Gobi Desert expedition.

A celebration of tradition, culture & landscape.

Join our fully catered journey across the southern Gobi alongside local guides.

Discover Mongolia's nomadic culture amid vast winter landscapes.

◇

"If you endeavour, the fate will favour you."

MONGOLIAN PROVERB

This journey is designed for travellers seeking both cultural immersion and wilderness adventure. Winter in the Gobi is crisp, clear and deeply atmospheric. It is the season when nomadic families gather for the Thousand Camel Festival, and the Bactrian camels are in their thick winter coats.

Travellers join a fully supported expedition that combines the colour and energy of a cultural festival with the stillness of the winter steppe. Accommodation is a mix of traditional gers, heated expedition tents on the camel journey, and a hotel in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's capital city.

FROM KAREN JANE ELLIS

The cold and riding comfort are the two questions impending travellers ask about most, and this program has been designed with care and experience at every step. We recommend arriving in your warmest cold-weather clothing for the airport-to-hotel transfer, then shopping locally for high-quality layers. Yak wool is renowned for its warmth, breathability and comfort. Both cashmere and Bactrian camel wool are also excellent options. All warming textiles are readily available in Ulaanbaatar's markets.

The Mongolian traditional coat is called a deel, and deels vary widely in price depending on style, materials and practicality. Each guest is gifted a handmade deel. Travellers purchase layered underclothing and local boots, and together with the deel, they keep you warm throughout the Mongolian winter experience. On the camel journey we ride Bactrian camels, seated on a comfortable natural fibre saddle between the humps. Riding is very manageable for absolute beginners, with many previous travellers choosing to wear padded bicycle shorts as a base layer for extra comfort. Before departure, each guest receives the Guest Preparation Guide, and a group WhatsApp chat is created for each year's journey. For further support, we can arrange a catch-up call at a mutually convenient time.

Karen Jane Ellis

MONGOLIA TRAVELLER SINCE 2015



AT A GLANCE

The journey, day by day

JOURNEY	NOMAD FAMILY EXTENSION	GROUP
January 27th – February 9th, 2027	*February 9th – 11th, 2027*	*A maximum of 9 travellers*

Ulaanbaatar · *Dalanzadgad* · *Zuramtai Mountain* · *Khaniin Khets Mountains* · *Bayanzag* · *Ulaanbaatar*

Day 1	JANUARY 27TH	*Arrival in Mongolia · Ulaanbaatar*
Day 2	JANUARY 28TH	*Exploring Ulaanbaatar*
Day 3	JANUARY 29TH	*Travel to Dalanzadgad, gateway to the Thousand Camel Festival*
Days 4 & 5	JANUARY 30TH – 31ST	*Thousand Camel Festival*
Day 6	FEBRUARY 1ST	*Zuramtai Mountain · Otgonbaatar's camp*
Days 7 – 10	FEBRUARY 2ND – 5TH	*Bactrian camel journey to the Khaniin Khets Mountains*
Day 11	FEBRUARY 6TH	*Bayanzag Flaming Cliffs · Dalanzadgad*
Day 12	FEBRUARY 7TH	*Return to Ulaanbaatar*
Day 13	FEBRUARY 8TH	*Ulaanbaatar · free day or accompanied*
Day 14	FEBRUARY 9TH	*Departure day, or the Nomad Family extension*



A Winter Gobi Desert Journey

A winter camel journey in the Gobi is a true adventure steeped in local traditions, the perfect choice if you are seeking authentic, experiential travel. It is a journey that blends cultural encounters, breathtaking landscapes and a very special style of desert exploration.

On a winter camel journey, you will gain unique insights into the life of Mongolia's nomadic herders, who have roamed these vast desert landscapes for millennia. You will discover the remarkable Bactrian camel, with its two humps and extraordinary ability to thrive in this environment. Travelling at the gentle pace of our small caravan, you will have time to absorb the Gobi's sweeping horizons, wander through canyons and watch wildlife move across the open plains. Evenings bring the calm beauty of the desert winter, where crisp air and clear skies reveal a canopy of stars like nowhere else on earth.

The Gobi's winters are generally milder than those in much of Mongolia, often blessed with calm days and endless blue skies, but this is still one of the coldest deserts on earth, making it all the more remarkable. With the right warm clothing and sturdy boots, you will be fully prepared to embrace this extraordinary winter adventure.

Camels in Their Element

Bactrian camels are at their best in winter, covered in thick wool that insulates them from extreme temperatures. They browse on the sparse vegetation of shrubs and small plants scattered across the stony and sandy ground. Their feet are like large padded cushions, leaving behind the distinctive footprints you will soon come to recognise in the sand.

The traditional camel saddle is made of woollen carpet material, often from the camel's own hair, and decorated with colourful ornaments. You will find your riding seat between the two cosy winter humps of the Bactrian camel, and it is surprisingly comfortable. Riding high above the ground, much higher than on a horse, you will appreciate the camel's habit of kneeling for you to mount. The rein is held on one side only, but this method is easy to learn. Our local camel guides will teach you and lead your camel at first, until you feel confident to ride on your own.

Camels thrive in the wide-open spaces of their desert home, and when they move together across the plains, the pace is slow, steady and deeply relaxing. Once registered, guests receive the Guest Preparation Guide, a comprehensive PDF with suggestions on what to bring. Among them is a side-facing carry bag, carried over the camel's first hump so you ride free of carrying. No previous riding experience is required, just good general fitness and an ability to balance.





Desert Camps & Shelter

During our winter desert journeys, we plan each day so that the camel caravan reaches camp in the afternoon, with plenty of time to settle in and relax. Our shelters include traditional gers as well as modern tented camps, offering warmth, comfort and a welcoming space to enjoy meals and unwind in the evening. They also provide a cosy retreat should we wish to spend a full day in one location to soak in the tranquillity of the desert.

Camps are typically set near reliable water sources, and our local support team ensures that everything is prepared ahead of the group's arrival, with water, fuel and fresh provisions ready and waiting. Guests sleep in traditional gers and insulated igloo-style tents with fire boxes, with warm winter sleeping bags provided for a comfortable night's rest under the Gobi's incredible star-filled skies.

Arrival in Mongolia

Your journey begins with a warm welcome at the new Chinggis Khaan International Airport in Ulaanbaatar. Modern and efficient, the airport offers all the conveniences you would expect, including money exchange, eateries and shops, making your arrival smooth and stress-free.

From there, enjoy both a scenic and a city drive to your hotel, which takes at least two hours, and up to three hours in peak traffic. Our hotel is an easy two-minute walk from Sukhbaatar Square, the beating heart of Ulaanbaatar, where Mongolia's history and daily life meet. At its centre stands the bronze statue of Damdin Sukhbaatar, the "hero of the revolution", who in 1921 declared Mongolia's final independence from Chinese rule. Surrounding the square are some of the country's most important landmarks, including the Government Palace, banks, theatres and the main post office. Proudly facing the square are statues of Chinggis Khaan, his descendants and the generals of the Mongol Empire.

Welcome Dinner

After the transfer to the Springs Hotel, guests are welcomed over dinner with fellow travellers and crew. During the evening, the Mongolian winter deel is introduced, and arrangements are made for each guest to be equipped with their deel before the Gobi departure.

Getting to Mongolia

For international travellers, one of the smoothest ways to reach Mongolia is via Hong Kong. From there, MIAT Mongolian Airlines offers reliable direct flights into Ulaanbaatar. This route has consistently proven to be one of the most straightforward, minimising transit hassles and aligning well with onward travel arrangements. Air China via Beijing and Korean Air via Seoul are also suggested routes, and other airlines and routes are available.

> **Note:** *Please make certain to book your flight allowing for the group's evening dinner. If, when researching flights, your flight would arrive in the afternoon of January 27th, it is best to consider choosing an earlier flight or arriving the day before, on January 26th, and we can assist with accommodation.*



MEALS INCLUDED
Dinner

ACCOMMODATION
Springs Hotel



DAY 1 · YOUR DEEL

The Deel – Mongolia's Traditional Dress

Journeys into Mongolia are not complete without encountering the deel (pronounced "del"), the traditional garment of Mongolian nomads.

Practical design: A deel is a long, robe-like outfit, fastened with a sash at the waist. Its simple T-shaped pattern makes it incredibly versatile. It can serve as a coat in winter, a blanket for sleeping, or even extra padding when riding. Double-layered construction and high collars protect against Mongolia's harsh winds and sudden temperature changes.

Cultural significance: Each deel reflects the wearer's identity. Variations in colour, ornamentation and fabric differ across Mongolia's many ethnic groups, including the Khalkh, Zakhchin, Durvud, Uriankhai, Buryad and others. Historically, deels for ceremonies or festivals such as Naadam or Tsagaan Sar (Lunar New Year) were made of fine silks in vibrant colours, while everyday deels were simpler and more utilitarian.

History and heritage: Archaeological finds trace the deel back more than two thousand years to the era of the Huns, with elaborately decorated garments discovered in ancient burial mounds at Noyon-Uul. Even under the Yuan Empire, clothing laws dictated who could wear which colours and fabrics. The deel's endurance across centuries speaks to its practicality and cultural weight.

Modern connections: The deel continues to inspire global design. Its influence even reached Hollywood: elements of Queen Amidala's costumes in Star Wars were based on Mongolian traditional dress. Today, tourists often enjoy dressing in deels for photos, while contemporary designers reinterpret its shapes and colours for fashion shows.

A Living Tradition: For Mongolians, the deel is far more than clothing. It is a symbol of resilience, adaptation and identity. The sash is not only decorative: it protects a rider's kidneys through long hours on horseback, and carries knives, cups and fire-striking tools. The upper folds of the deel form large pockets for keeping small valuables safe.

When you see nomads wearing deels in the Gobi, you will understand why medieval travellers wrote of a garment that "fits all seasons and climates". Wearing a deel offers a tangible link to the history and living culture of Mongolia.

Exploring Ulaanbaatar

Morning: Begin the day with a visit to Narantuul Market, Ulaanbaatar's largest and most vibrant marketplace. This is the best place to pick up essential winter gear, such as warm boots, underlayers and other practical items for the Bactrian Camel Journey. The market is a fascinating experience in itself, offering a glimpse into everyday Mongolian life, with stalls selling everything from traditional clothing to horse tack.

Lunch: Enjoy lunch at a nearby restaurant, sampling hearty local dishes before continuing the day's exploration.

Afternoon: An optional guided walk to the Chinggis Khaan National Museum, Mongolia's newest and most impressive cultural institution. Here you will gain valuable insights into the history of the Mongol Empire, nomadic culture and the legacy of Chinggis Khaan.

Evening: Return to the Springs Hotel for an orientation and planning meeting, followed by dinner, where you can relax, share first impressions of Mongolia with fellow travellers and crew, and prepare for the adventures ahead.

The Narantuul Market

The Narantuul Market is one of Ulaanbaatar's most authentic attractions. Known locally as the Black Market, this sprawling market is where countryside nomads come to stock up on everything from leather boots and equestrian tack to ger-building supplies. For visitors, it is a feast for the senses, with vibrant stalls selling deels (traditional Mongolian robes), affordable cashmere, lined boots, cosy hats, Soviet-era curios and more. It is also one of the best places in the city for people-watching and authentic souvenir shopping.

The Dunjingarav Market

Nearby, the Dunjingarav Market offers an indoor alternative, with undercover stalls, neatly categorised products and a food court serving both Mongolian and international cuisine.

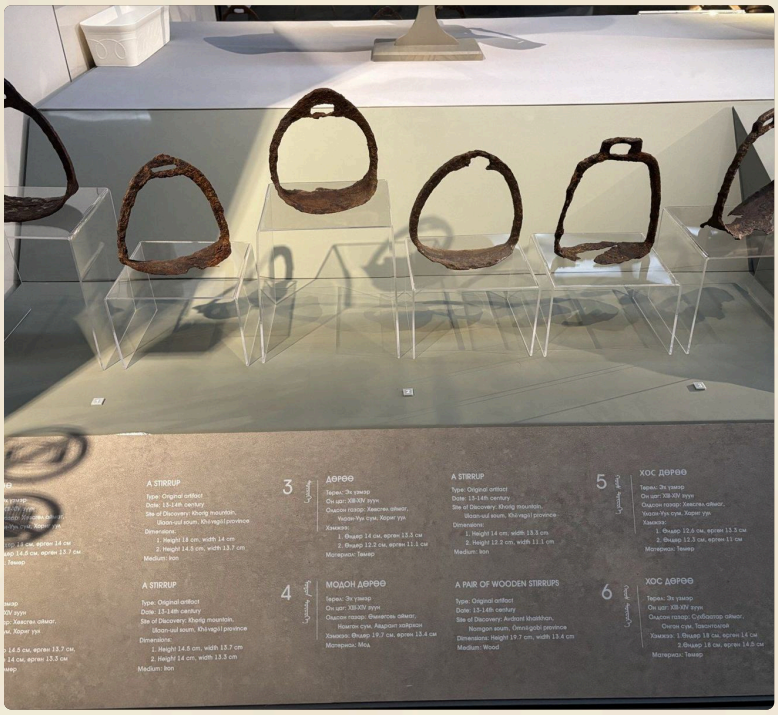


MEALS INCLUDED
Breakfast · Lunch · Dinner

ACCOMMODATION
Springs Hotel









DAY 2

Chinggis Khaan National Museum

The Chinggis Khaan National Museum was established in 2019 by the decision of Prime Minister U. Khurelsukh. Today it houses more than 10,000 original exhibits spanning Mongolia's long and remarkable history.

The collection ranges from artefacts of Modun Shanyu, founder of the Hun Empire (the first nomadic state), to the possessions and cultural treasures of Mongolian kings and nobles up to the early 20th century. Visitors will find displays of weapons, clothing, tools, ornaments and items of daily life that reveal the traditions and ingenuity of nomadic societies.

The museum combines historical authenticity with modern technology to create an engaging experience. Exhibits incorporate virtual reality, interactive displays, video installations, paintings, sculpture, embroidery, blacksmithing and models, bringing Mongolia's past vividly to life.

This landmark institution is not only a repository of heritage but also a showcase of Mongolia's pride in its nomadic culture and the enduring legacy of Chinggis Khaan.

Travel to Dalanzadgad – Gateway to the Thousand Camel Festival

Today we journey south from Ulaanbaatar to Dalanzadgad, the capital of Mongolia's south in the Ömnögovi Province and gateway to the Gobi Desert, in preparation for the Thousand Camel Festival. The drive takes approximately seven hours, offering uninterrupted panoramas of Mongolia's vast landscapes. Along the way we pause for lunch and often witness striking glimpses of nomadic life, from herds of Bactrian camels and Mongolian horses to local herders accompanying their livestock. Raptors such as vultures are also a common sight.

Dalanzadgad itself is a picturesque rural city, shaped by its contrasting seasons and distant mountain ranges. On arrival, travellers enjoy a local dinner at the Khan Uul Hotel or another suitable local venue, and rest at a festival Ger camp set up near the festival grounds. Traditional Gers are fitted with fire boxes and provide warm and authentic sleeping arrangements. At the festival site itself, another Traditional Ger with stoves serves as our kitchen, warm-up space and communal dining area, ensuring comfort throughout the event.

The Thousand Camel Festival

The Thousand Camel Festival, also referred to as the "Ten Thousand Camel" Festival, will be held in Dalanzadgad soum, Ömnögovi Province, on January 30th – 31st, 2027. It is a vibrant and growing cultural event that celebrates the role of the Bactrian camel in nomadic heritage. Once held in more remote areas, the festival has flourished since its move to Dalanzadgad, drawing ever-larger crowds of visitors and participants each year. Today it is recognised as one of Mongolia's most remarkable cultural gatherings, showcasing magnificent Bactrian camels in their full winter coats, traditional music, local crafts and community pride.

Far more than a single endurance event, the festival spans two days of community led, nomad competitions and traditional games. It has evolved from its initial tourism roots into one of the biggest annual celebrations for nomads. Originally established to protect and increase the population of the Bactrian camel, the festival has achieved remarkable success: the Bactrian camel population has soared from 192,000 to 460,000. This growth underscores the festival's positive impact on both the value and the conservation of these unique animals.



MEALS INCLUDED
Breakfast, lunch and dinner

ACCOMMODATION
Traditional Gers with fire boxes overnight. Another insulated Traditional Ger with a central heat stove serves as our group's warm-up / storage space and dining area on site at the Thousand Camel Festival.



DAY 3 · THE THOUSAND CAMEL FESTIVAL

Festival highlights

The Thousand Camel Festival feels more like a movie set than a local event. The festival has been organised for more than two decades by local camel herding communities. Its vibrant colours and uncommon festivities draw nomads together in celebration, along with a handful of foreign visitors, making it a renowned winter celebration.

The Thousand Camel Festival is a captivating cultural celebration that began in 1997 as a winter festival, offering a unique glimpse into the life of Mongolian camel herders. It made its mark in the Guinness World Records with the largest camel endurance ever recorded: 1,115 camels and jockeys started, and 1,108 completed the 15-kilometre course. Over the years it has grown beyond its endurance origins into a grand event eagerly anticipated by nomadic herders.

The day's competitions add a touch of flair, with categories such as “best-looking couple on camelback” and the endearing “most adorable male and female camels”. The central square comes alive with the excitement of a camel polo match, a unique and thrilling sight amid the Gobi's captivating landscapes.

Many Gobi families participate in a variety of cultural performances. You will also see Bactrian camels fully laden as nomads skilfully demonstrate the intricate process of relocating their Gers and personal belongings. These herders are proud, friendly, strong and remarkably resilient, and their camels are intertwined with a profound sense of identity and culture.

It is also possible to shop for local handicrafts made from wool and camel milk created staples.

























Days 4 and 5

JANUARY 30TH – 31ST

Gobi Desert · Thousand Camel Festival

The Thousand Camel Festival is the heart of this journey, offering two full days to immerse yourself in Mongolia's unique nomadic culture. Here we explore, observe and enjoy the foods, crafts, textiles and warm hospitality of the local herding communities. Travellers have the chance to watch vibrant celebrations and community competitions.

Our group has a private insulated Traditional Ger available for both days, with a stove, serving as our kitchen, warm-up space and dining area on site at the Thousand Camel Festival. This means there is no need to miss any events on the program, and you always have somewhere comfortable to pause and find our crew.

The festival grounds are filled with stalls and vendors, so please have Mongolian tögrög (MNT) in cash before leaving Ulaanbaatar. There are no ATMs on site, and local currency ensures you can fully enjoy the shopping and cultural offerings.

Mongolia's nomadic lifestyle is especially captivating at this time of year, offering a rare glimpse into the resilience of families who thrive in these winter landscapes. These local people extend a warm welcome to visitors and share their traditions with generosity. Staying nearby, within Traditional Gers and having one on site at the festival for meals and gatherings, provides both comfort and flexibility. At night we settle into bed with a warm fire box burning, a truly immersive way to experience nomadic Ger life first-hand.

The festival itself is a dynamic mix of entertainment and education, honouring the vital role camels play in nomadic life. By the end of these two days, you will not only have enjoyed a spectacular celebration, but also gained a deeper appreciation of the camel's central role in Mongolian culture and the enduring traditions of nomadic life.

Day visit and Evening Highlight

Travellers will visit The Gobi Museum of Nature and History whose goal is to preserve, research and enrich the natural and cultural heritage of the Ömnögovi Province on a sound scholarly basis, and to share it widely with the public. The Gobi Museum of Nature and History seeks to become the leading centre for studying and presenting the paleontological heritage of the Gobi, offering a modern, open museum service to local residents and to visitors from Mongolia and abroad.

Dalanzadgad Theatre production Өмнөговь Хөгжимт жүжгийн театр is situated in front of the government building in the heart of the city and this magnificent traditional manner building organises and hosts dance shows and enrichment programs regularly. Travellers enjoy a spectacular two hour performance facilitated by an ensemble of Mongolia's top cultural performers.









MEALS INCLUDED

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

ACCOMMODATION

Traditional Gers with fire boxes overnight. Another insulated Traditional Ger with a central heat stove serves as our group's warm-up / storage space and dining area on site at the Thousand Camel Festival.

Day 6 FEBRUARY 1ST

Gobi Desert · Bactrian Camel Journey · Zuramtai Mountain · Otgonbaatar's Camp

Travel with Gobi Desert dwellers

From our camp near the Thousand Camel Festival, we journey south into the Zuramtai Mountain area, where our local Gobi Desert dwellers prepare the camels and equipment for our camel journey. Here, surrounded by sweeping steppe and mountain backdrops, we begin to experience life through the eyes of nomadic herders whose families have relied on camels for generations. Overnight accommodation is at a local herder's camp.

Life here centres on the Bactrian camel: strong, resilient and perfectly adapted to desert extremes. These camels have carried goods and people across Central Asia for thousands of years. They are able to endure the Gobi Desert maximum temperature reaching 45°C during the summer, with July being the hottest month. While average winter lows hover around the extreme of −40°C, recorded temperatures have dipped even lower in specific locations. The Bactrian camels' broad padded feet leave the unmistakable tracks you will quickly learn to recognise in the sand.

Land of the Eternal Blue Sky

Travellers are introduced to the practical yet colourful traditions of herding life. It is common to be welcomed with salted milk tea, a gesture of hospitality that dates back centuries. Mongolian deels, leather boots and silver-buckled belts are not costumes for these families, but everyday attire tied to survival, heritage and identity.

Travelling with our nomadic hosts offers more than logistics; it provides perspective. Their deep connection to the land, the skies and their animals is evident in their routines, stories and rituals. Despite language barriers, humour and warmth transcend, and our bilingual guides help bridge conversations, ensuring a richer exchange.

The Gobi is known locally as the "Land of the Eternal Blue Sky", blessed with more than 250 sunny days a year. Crossing its vastness with true desert dwellers, free of fences, boundaries and distractions, leaves an impression that endures long after we return. It is a journey not just across space, but into a way of life that has remained largely uninterrupted for millennia.





DAY 6

Zuramtai Mountain (Ground Squirrel Mountain)

Zuramtai, known locally as Ground Squirrel Mountain, is a striking feature of the South Gobi landscape. The mountain's canyons provide a haven for desert birdlife, and with a little luck you may catch sight of species adapted to these rugged conditions. As we climb out of the canyon, the view opens onto sweeping desert plains that stretch endlessly toward the horizon, offering an unforgettable sense of scale and solitude.

The area is also culturally significant: ancient petroglyphs are etched into the boulders, silent reminders of the people who once moved through these same landscapes. Standing at Zuramtai, you experience both the wild beauty of the Gobi and a connection to its deep human history.

MEALS INCLUDED
Breakfast, lunch and dinner

ACCOMMODATION
Traditional Gers with fire boxes overnight at a local herders camp.

Days 7 to 10

FEBRUARY 2ND – 5TH

Gobi Desert · Bactrian Camel Journey · Khaniin Khets Mountains

Camel journey route: Zuramtai Mountain to the Khaniin Khets Mountains



Zuramtai Mountain

From our camp at Zuramtai Mountain, known locally as Ground Squirrel Mountain, we begin our westward camel journey across sweeping desert plains. This area offers striking canyon views and the chance to spot desert birdlife. Ancient petroglyphs are also etched onto boulders, silent witnesses to the long human history of the region.

Khaniin Khets Mountains

Our journey then leads us toward the Khaniin Khets Mountains, one of the most mysterious and majestic ranges of the Gobi Desert. These dark, dramatic mountains are formed from five rows of overlapping rock canyons, with the beautiful Sain Sariin Valley (Good Moon Valley) nestled between them. Crystal-clear mountain streams flow through the valley, feeding the celebrated Moon Spring, or Moon Eye Spring.

The Khaniin Khets are also home to a unique breed of brown camel, well adapted to the extremes of the Gobi. Prized for their strength, resilience and fine wool, these camels echo the colour of the mountains themselves. Wildlife thrives here too, from argali sheep and ibex to lynx and even the elusive snow leopard. Medicinal plants and wild onions grow around the mountains, adding to the richness of this landscape.

Desert camps

Each evening we arrive at a prepared desert camp. Insulated sleeping tents, a warm kitchen tent and dining facilities are set up ahead of the caravan by our dedicated crew, ensuring comfort after each day's ride. This blend of wilderness adventure and reliable support allows us to immerse ourselves fully in the grandeur of the Gobi while still enjoying the essentials of camp life.



MEALS INCLUDED
Breakfast, lunch and dinner

ACCOMMODATION
Ger camps on moving expedition · Insulated tents with fire boxes

Farewell to camels and Gobi Desert friends

Today we bid farewell to our camels and desert-dwelling companions as we journey by vehicle to Dalanzadgad, the capital of the Ömnögovi Province, pausing at one of Mongolia's most iconic natural and scientific landmarks: the Bayanzag Flaming Cliffs.

The Bayanzag Flaming Cliffs

The Flaming Cliffs rose to international fame in 1923, when Dr Roy Chapman Andrews and his team from the American Museum of Natural History unearthed the world's first known nest of dinosaur eggs. Since then, the vivid red sandstone has continued to yield remarkable fossils, including the legendary "Fighting Dinosaurs", a Protoceratops and Velociraptor preserved mid-battle, discovered in 1971. Today these discoveries are recognised as National Treasures of Mongolia, with specimens displayed in the Natural History Museum of Mongolia.

The Djadochta Formation

The cliffs themselves are a geological wonder, part of the Djadochta Formation, with layers dating back more than 70 million years. By day the terrain is striking, but it is at sunset that the cliffs truly earn their name, glowing with a fiery brilliance that leaves a lasting impression. Surrounding the escarpment is a unique ecosystem of saxaul trees, hardy desert plants whose gnarled trunks and roots anchor the sandy soil and provide forage for camels.

Palaeontological Heritage

As we explore, our local guides share insights into the site's palaeontological heritage and the importance of this region to Mongolia's scientific and cultural identity. Beyond its fossils, Bayanzag is a landscape of striking natural beauty, with vast horizons, rolling red cliffs and a silence broken only by the wind.

Return to Dalanzadgad

In the late afternoon we continue to Dalanzadgad, where we enjoy dinner and an overnight stay at the Khan Uul Hotel or a comfortable guest house with traditional log cabins or Gers. This evening offers a chance to rest, refresh and reflect on the extraordinary history and landscapes of our journey.



MEALS INCLUDED
Breakfast, lunch and dinner

ACCOMMODATION
Hotel, Guest house or Traditional log cabin / Ger



THE FLAMING CLIFFS *The name "Flaming Cliffs" was coined by the American palaeontologist Roy Chapman Andrews during the Central Asiatic Expeditions in the Gobi Desert in the 1920s. Together with its Mongolian name, Bayanzag, it has gained worldwide renown among palaeontologists and travellers. The site lies within Bulgan soum in Umnugovi Province and is a treasure trove of historical significance.*



THE FIGHTING DINOSAURS SCULPTURE *A sudden rush of sand may have rapidly entombed these two adversaries, preserving them in their intense combat stance. Discovered in 1971 by a Polish–Mongolian team, the specimen was embedded in the white sandstone cliffs of the southern Gobi Desert. Recognised as a National Treasure of Mongolia, these fossils are housed in the Natural History Museum of Mongolia.*

Journey to Ulaanbaatar

Today we make the return journey to Ulaanbaatar, travelling by road from the Gobi Desert back to the capital. The distance is around 600 kilometres, and depending on traffic and road conditions, the drive generally takes 6 to 7 hours.

One of the world's great road journeys

This is more than a transfer; it is a chance to experience one of the world's great road journeys. The open snow covered prairies and expansive deserts of Mongolia create a landscape unlike any other, and the sparseness of settlements makes the journey itself unforgettable. Travellers from across the globe describe a Mongolian road trip as a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and the return from the Gobi Desert is no exception.

Along the way we pause for lunch, taking in the views and perhaps spotting herds of livestock or nomadic families with their gers scattered across the horizon. The gradual shift from the vast, otherworldly desert into the busier outskirts of Ulaanbaatar is both literal and symbolic: a transition from the silence of the steppe back into the rhythm of city life.

Evening return to Springs Hotel

By evening we arrive at the Springs Hotel, where dinner is served and a comfortable overnight stay awaits. After days in the desert and immersed in nomadic culture, this return marks a fitting close to our Gobi adventure, with time to reflect on all we have experienced.



MEALS INCLUDED
Breakfast, lunch and dinner

ACCOMMODATION
Springs Hotel, Ulaanbaatar



Day 13

FEBRUARY 8TH

Ulaanbaatar · Free Day or Accompanied

Free day for textile shopping

Today is a free day in Ulaanbaatar, a chance to slow down and enjoy the capital at your own pace. Browse for souvenirs at the State Department Store, pick up high-quality cashmere at the Gobi Galleria, or simply wander through the city's shops and cafes. Karen Jane and Nara have recommendations and accompany travellers.

Explore Historical sites

For those interested in culture, highlights include Sukhbaatar Square, the Bogd Khaan Winter Palace Museum, and Gandantegchinlen Monastery with its towering Buddha statue.

This unstructured day is designed so you can follow your own interests, whether shopping, sightseeing or simply relaxing, before we gather for a final dinner together.

MEALS INCLUDED
Breakfast and dinner

ACCOMMODATION
Springs Hotel, Ulaanbaatar



Day 14

FEBRUARY 9TH

Ulaanbaatar · Departure Day

Farewell Breakfast

We enjoy a final breakfast together at the Springs Hotel before guests transfer to Chinggis Khaan International Airport, or depart for the Nomad Family extension. The drive to the airport takes at least two hours, and up to three hours in peak traffic, and Karen Jane is on hand to assist with timing and departures to ensure a smooth farewell.

As we say goodbye to our fellow travellers and new friends, we reflect on the incredible journey we have shared across Mongolia, the Land of the Eternal Blue Sky. This is a country where nomadic traditions remain strong, with nearly 40% of the population still herding livestock and one third living in portable Gers that are moved seasonally.

The warmth and pride of the Mongolian people, combined with the vast landscapes of the Gobi Desert and beyond, make this experience truly unforgettable.

MEALS INCLUDED

Breakfast

ACCOMMODATION

Airport transfers, or joining the Nomad Family extension: a winter home stay with a nomadic herder family from February 9th – 11th, 2027.

Nomad Family Extension

FEBRUARY 9TH – 11TH, 2027

Winter Home Stay with a Nomadic Herder Family

Following The Mongolia Journey, the Nomad Family extension takes guests into Gorkhi Terelj National Park for three days with a nomadic herder family at their winter camp. Guests stay in a traditional ger, ride through the winter valleys on horseback, share home-cooked Mongolian meals and spend the evenings in the stillness of the winter night. This is the family who made your winter deel, and they share their traditions, culture and skills in cooking, handicraft, livestock herding and horsemanship.



Day 1 · Chinggis Khaan Statue and the Winter Camp

The day begins with a drive from Ulaanbaatar to the Chinggis Khaan Statue, 1 to 2 hours east of the city. The giant figure of Chinggis Khaan on horseback houses a museum of Mongolian horse culture. From the top, the steppe of the eastern Khentii region stretches out below: the homeland of Chinggis Khaan, where he later organised his armies.

After lunch at a camp in Gorkhi Terelj National Park, we cross the Terelj River and follow the Terelj valley past the confluence of the Tuul and Terelj rivers. About 40 minutes on, we turn north into a wide valley where the herders' winter camps sit sheltered at the foot of the mountains, with rocky mountainsides to the north and forested slopes to the south. Sheep, goats, cattle, Yak and horses graze the winter pasture.

Our host family welcomes us in the traditional way and shows us around their camp and guest gers, with time for a walk before dinner.

Day 2 · On Horseback

After breakfast, we ride out across the valley, past the herders' winter camps and into the forest, climbing to a high point for views over the valley, weather permitting. On fine days, lunch is on the trail.

Back at camp, the afternoon is spent alongside the family in their household and livestock work before dinner.

Day 3 · Herding Life

The morning is spent with the herd: milking, feeding the horses and learning how the milk becomes the family's dairy products.

After a traditional lunch, we return to Ulaanbaatar in the afternoon and check into the hotel.

Your Hosts

Yadmaa and his wife Davasuren host the Nomadic Home Stay at their winter camp in the Darkhid Valley.

Yadmaa comes from a family of recognised herders and horsemen in Uvs Province, Western Mongolia, and has herded his own cattle, goats, sheep and horses in the Darkhid Valley for nearly 30 years. He is a craftsman in traditional Mongolian leatherwork, making lariats and hobbles from rawhide, and knows the valleys, forests and wildlife of the area from decades of daily patrols on horseback.

Davasuren comes from Ovorkhangai Province and has lived in the Darkhid Valley for over 20 years. She is an experienced herder specialising in dairy cows and dairy processing, and the community leader of the valley's local households. Her traditional Mongolian home cooking is well known among guests, with vegetarian meals on request.

> **Note:** *More information in the Guest Preparation Guide.*



Weather in the Southern Gobi and Ulaanbaatar

−7.6°C	−21.1°C	−3.7°C	−17.3°C
JANUARY AVERAGE DAYTIME HIGH	JANUARY AVERAGE LOW	FEBRUARY AVERAGE DAYTIME HIGH	FEBRUARY AVERAGE LOW

The Southern Gobi province, where we attend the Thousand Camel Festival, is at its most atmospheric in early February. In Dalanzadgad, the average daytime high is −7.6°C in January and −3.7°C in February, while nights dip lower, with average lows of −21.1°C in January and −17.3°C in February. Though February is one of Mongolia's colder months, it is also when the desert is at its most magical: crisp, calm and clear, with striking blue skies and spectacular star-filled nights.

Once dressed appropriately, keeping warm is straightforward, especially in high-quality local Yak, cashmere or camel wool underlayers. Travellers are also gifted with a traditional Mongolian deel, a practical and beautiful coat, made to measure, designed for Mongolia's weather conditions. Wearing the deel not only keeps you comfortable but also connects you to the nomadic heritage of the region.

Preparing from Australia

Travellers from cold winter climates may find it easier to prepare and arrive with warm clothing than those from predominantly warm climates. For Australians, this journey begins in the height of their summer, making it challenging to find suitable winter clothing before departure. If this is you, plan to arrive with your best Australian winter layers, to see you comfortably to Ulaanbaatar. Once there, Karen Jane and our local crew, Keith and Nara guide a shopping visit to the Narantuul Market (the Black Market), a favourite shopping spot for warm essentials.

The Black Market is a bustling centre where locals from the city and countryside shop. Here you will find everything from felt-lined leather boots and cashmere underlayers to beautifully made deels. The natural fibres of Yak, Bactrian camel and Mongolian cashmere offer warmth and comfort impossible to replicate. Investing in these garments is both practical for your time in Mongolia and a treasured reminder to take home and use in winter.

Staying warm and connected

Essential cold-weather clothing is set out in the Guest Preparation Guide, a comprehensive PDF sent to each guest once registered. A group WhatsApp chat is created for each year's journey, and Karen Jane Ellis can arrange a catch-up call at a mutually convenient time for any further support.

By combining thoughtful preparation with the warmth of traditional Mongolian textiles, you will discover that February in Mongolia is not only manageable but deeply rewarding: an experience of winter adventure unlike anywhere else on earth.

> **Note:** *Take sufficient Mongolian currency if you plan to shop at the Black Market, as there are no ATMs.*



Included

- Greeting at Ulaanbaatar Airport.
- Airport transfers on the specified arrival and departure dates.
- Ground transportation in Mongolia as described in the itinerary.
- Snacks in vehicles, and unlimited water.
- Experienced Mongolian drivers.
- All accommodation (Hotel rooms, Gers and tents with fire boxes).
- Shopping tour to Ulaanbaatar's Black Market, also known as Narantuul Market, on Day 2.
- Entry to the Chinggis Khaan National Museum, Mongolia's newest and largest museum.
- Meals as noted in the itinerary above.
- Two days' entry to the Thousand Camel Festival.
- Bactrian Camel Journey with locals: a journey that cannot be replicated.
- Each person is assigned their own Bactrian camel & saddle, with support nomads, for the duration of the camel journey.
- An experienced full-time bilingual guide and ample support staff throughout your journey.

Gobi Desert

- Clean sleeping bags, camping beds, extra blankets and pillows are provided.
- Each Ger & insulated tent has a fire box, or small stove, & dedicated staff keep them topped up throughout the night.

Not included

- International airfares. Internal airfares are quoted separately and are subject to change by the airlines.
- Any passport or visa fees.
- Comprehensive medical and trip insurance.
- Airport taxes and excess baggage charges.
- Tips to guides, drivers and support staff.
- Optional extra food and alcohol not included in the group meals.
- Food and beverages not included in the meals, for example tastings from stalls at the Thousand Camel Festival.
- Items of a personal nature, including alcoholic beverages, laundry and telephone calls.
- Other items not specifically mentioned as included.

Additional notes

- Comprehensive travel insurance is required to join the journey.
- Excess baggage charges at airports: please keep luggage to what is necessary for our vehicles.
- Photography and video fees at attractions. This excludes the festival.
- Tips to guides, drivers, camp & restaurant staff, and nomad camel handlers: estimated total 285 to 300 AUD per guest.



CHECKLIST

Before you go

- [ ] Review the packing list once you receive the Guest Preparation Guide.
- [ ] Check whether you need a Mongolian visa.
- [ ] Email your flight arrival and departure details, so we can align them with the airport transfers in your package. Suggested routes are Air China via Beijing, Korean Air via Seoul, and Cathay Pacific to Hong Kong, then MIAT into Ulaanbaatar. Other airlines and routes are also available.
- [ ] Alert your bank that you will be travelling overseas to Mongolia.
- [ ] Obtain comprehensive travel insurance, and email your certificate of insurance.
- [ ] Visit your doctor or a specialised travel doctor before departure.



Contact

Camel Treks Australia Pty Ltd
Nomadic Spirit Journeys
ACN: 609 922 349 · ABN: 50 609 922 349

WhatsApp: +61 432 236 131
Aus. mobile: 0432 236 131 (mid May – November)
Email: nomadicspiritjourneys@proton.me

Nomadic Spirit Journeys and Camel Treks Australia requires guests to read our Booking Conditions prior to booking attending an International or Australian Camel supported Bushwalking Journey, and to obtain travel insurance as a crucial component of our terms of participation – and at the time of booking to ensure comprehensive coverage for unforeseen incidents such as extreme weather conditions, flight alterations, or accommodation issues. Please be aware that journeys impacted by these events are non-refundable. Obtaining travel insurance is deemed mandatory for participation, and we urge all guests to secure a comprehensive policy covering the entire duration of their specific journey, as well as all travel arrangements to and from our designated destinations, whether within Australia or Overseas.

The Director, and the team at Camel Treks Australia and Nomadic Spirit Journeys acknowledge and thank the Adnyamathanha People, the Traditional Owners of the Flinders Ranges region. The name Adnyamathanha means "Rock People," reflecting the region's ancient and striking geological formations. We pay our respects to Adnyamathanha Elders past, present, and emerging, and recognise their enduring spiritual connection to Country. Many Adnyamathanha families continue to live in the region, including at Nepabunna and Leigh Creek — our home base and trekking home for the foreseeable future.