

MONGOLIAN



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## **PRESENTS THE BIG LOOP OF MONGOLIA**

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**19 days**



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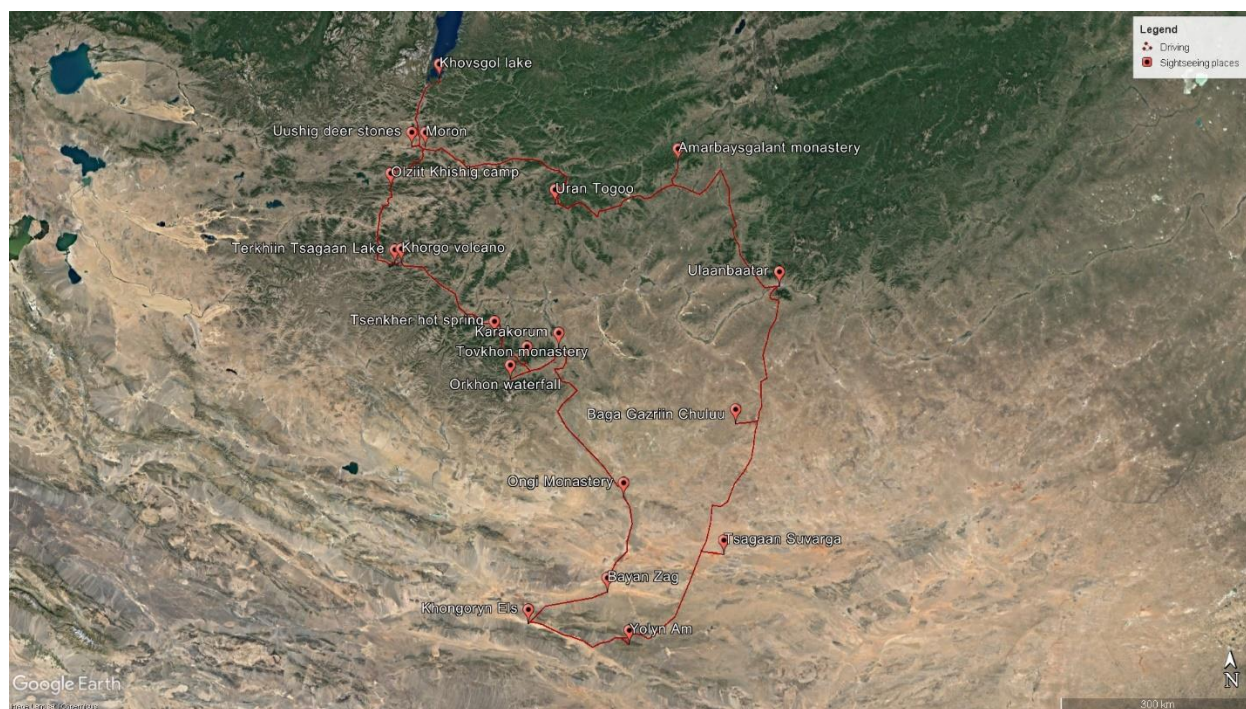
# **The Big Loop of Mongolia**

## **(19 days)**

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## MAP



## DETAILED TOUR DESCRIPTION

### Day 1: Arrival

Upon your arrival at the airport, our team will be there to greet you. We will escort you to your comfortable hotel, conveniently located in the city center. Ulaanbaatar is a rapidly growing modern metropolis with a population of over 1.5 million residents. Depending on your arrival time, we will arrange a city tour for you. The tour will include a visit to the newly constructed Genghis Khan Museum, the largest museum in Mongolia, which houses over 8,300 artifacts related to the Great Khans of the Mongol Empire and the country's history from the Xiongnu period to the end of the 20th century. A portion of these artifacts is displayed across nine exhibition halls.

Another highlight is the Bogd Khan's Winter and Summer Palace, a stunning complex of traditional buildings where the eighth Living Buddha and the last king resided. It now serves as a museum showcasing intriguing artifacts and costumes linked to the last king, along with his collection of stuffed animals.



We will also visit the Gandantegchinlen Monastery, the largest and most significant monastery in Mongolia. Here, we will explore various shrines and admire the magnificent statue of Migjid Janraisig, an impressive 82-foot statue adorned in gold and draped in silk cloths.

To conclude the city tour, we will ascend Zaisan Hill for a panoramic view of Ulaanbaatar. The city sightseeing tour will last approximately 5 to 6 hours.

### **Accommodation:**

- ✓ Hotel D

### **Activities:**

- ✓ Visit the Bogd Khan winter and summer palace
- ✓ Explore the Gandan monastery
- ✓ Check out the Genghis khan museum
- ✓ Hike Zaisan hill



## **Day 2: Baga Gazriin Chuluu (250 km)**

Your first destination will be 250 kilometers south, in the beautiful region of Baga Gazriin Chuluu. This area features a large granite formation right in the heart of Mongolia's sandy plains.

On this expansive plain, you'll discover the remnants of a small monastery known as Delgeriin Choir Monastery. Upon entering a Ger for the first time, you will be welcomed by a grand 12-walled structure. Monks utilize this intricately decorated and carved Ger to chant during the colder months when the stone monastery becomes too chilly. In the late afternoon, you can drive and hike around the region. You will wander through towering granite hills





that appear to stretch endlessly. As you explore, you'll stumble upon scenic ruins of a small monastery nestled in a serene, protected valley. Additionally, Baga Gazriin Chuluu is home to a spring known for its eye-healing qualities, where locals harness the magical water for eye ailments.

**Accommodation:**

- ✓ Erdene Ukhaa ger camp shared facilities B, L, D

**Activities:**

- ✓ Explore the Choir Monastery
- ✓ Discover the stunning rock formation of Baga Gazar
- ✓ Visit the ruins of the solitary monk's monastery



**Day 3: Tsagaan Suvarga (270 km)**

After breakfast, we will set off on an adventure to the Gobi Desert. The scenery will shift dramatically from lush green grasslands to rugged, lifeless terrain. We expect to arrive at Tsagaan Suvarga by the afternoon. This impressive cliff rises 30 meters high and stretches 100 meters wide, with the wind having intricately shaped this extraordinary formation over millennia.

From a distance, Tsagaan Suvarga resembles the remnants of an ancient town, complete with crumbling structures. Ancient illustrations capture scenes of people hunting ibex with long bows, while petroglyphs of wild animals and cattle are etched into the rocks. Additionally, the caves in this area showcase various Turkic inscriptions, seals, and images.



A fissure stretches from east to west, cutting down from the upper slopes of a mountain into the steppe. Through this crack, one can observe strong mud columns rising from below. The vast chasm resembles the gaping jaws of a mythical creature. Some caves feature multiple chambers, including one that extends over 70 meters in length.

**Accommodation:**

- ✓ Tsagaan Suvarga ger camp with shared facilities B, L, D

**Activities:**

- ✓ Explore the majestic Tsagaan Suvarga cliffs



**Day 4: Yolyn Am (270 km)**

Today we will be driving to the South Gobi province town Dalanzadgad. The **Gobi Desert** extends through Mongolia and China, measuring 1,610 kilometers from southwest to northeast and 800 kilometers from north to south. It covers an area of 1,295,000 km<sup>2</sup>, making it the world's fifth largest desert and Asia's largest although most of the Gobi is coated in bare rock rather than sand.

During the winter months, the Gobi is a cold desert with frost snow on its dunes. In addition to being far north, it is situated on a plateau between 910 and 1,520 meters above sea level, which leads to the cold temperatures. The Gobi receives around 194 millimetres of rain per year on average. In the winter, snow blown from the Siberian Steppes enters parts of the Gobi,



providing additional moisture. The Gobi experiences temperature extremes ranging from  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the winter to  $+50^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the summer due to these winds.

We'll take a trip through the majestic Altai Mountain Range's breath-taking gorges. The **Yolyn Am** located in the Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park, will be visited. Those green valleys were carved by ancient rivers.

Wild Argali sheep, Ibex, desert gazelles, and Golden Eagles are also possible sightings.

### **Accommodation:**

- ✓ Ger camp B, L, D

### **Activities:**

- ✓ Visit small museum of the park
- ✓ Visit Yolyn am gorge
- ✓ Hike through the gorge



## **Day 5: Khongoryn Els (180 km)**

After enjoying a substantial breakfast, we will journey 180 kilometers west to the Khongoryn Els. This location boasts Mongolia's largest sand dunes. Reaching heights of up to 275 meters in some spots, these dunes stretch over 100 kilometers from east to west. The sands exhibit alluring curves that culminate in sharp points, creating beautiful wave patterns. Behind the dunes, the striking black rocky formation of Sevrey Mountain stands majestically. The Gobi Desert holds the title of the world's coldest desert, where frigid winds sweep across the plains throughout autumn, winter, and spring. With little shelter available, inhabitants must rely on extreme survival techniques to





endure the harsh conditions. Gobi nomads are renowned in Mongolia for their unwavering commitment to hard work. We will encounter families who breed two-humped camels and discover their simple, humble, industrious, yet remarkable lifestyle.

**Accommodation:**

- ✓ Gobi Togol ger camp with shared facilities. B, L, D

**Activities:**

- ✓ Explore the Khongoryn Els Sand Dunes
- ✓ Hike to the tallest dune for those who are interested.
- ✓ Visit a family that breeds camels.



**Day 6: Bayanzag, Flaming cliff (150 km)**

Our journey today will take us to Bayanzag, commonly known as the "Flaming Cliffs." This extraordinary site is where the renowned palaeontologist Roy Chapman Andrews discovered dinosaur bones and eggs. The scenery showcases a breathtaking mix of red sand, rugged formations, and greenery. We will wander around the cliffs, explore the area, visit the museum, and learn about the discoveries and expeditions from the early 20th century.

**Accommodation:**

- ✓ Gobi Tour ger camp with shared facilities B, L, D

**Activities:**





- ✓ Explore the Bayanzag cliffs, the site where dinosaur skeletons and eggs were unearthed



### **Day 7: Ongiin monastery (180 km)**

Today, you will visit Ongi Monastery in northwest Mongolia, where the monasteries lie along the Ongi River. The tranquil Delger Khangai Mountains enhance the area's beauty. You'll explore the southern complex with various administrative buildings and 11 temples, while the northern complex, established in the 18th century, had 17 temples and four Buddhist universities. Originally built in the 17th century, these monasteries were destroyed in 1937 and once housed over 1,000 monks. A small monastery now stands among the ruins, with remnants displayed in the Ger Museum.

#### **Accommodation:**

- ✓ The Ongi Energy ger camp with shared facilities B, L, D

#### **Activities:**

- ✓ Explore the remnants of the Ongi Monastery



## **Day 8: Karakorum (300 km)**

Today, we explore Karakorum, the capital of Genghis Khan's Mongolian Empire in the 13th century. Established in 1220 on the ruins of Turug and Uigur cities in the Orkhon Valley, it was completed 15 years later under Ugedei Khan, known for its multiculturalism. The silver tree from Möngke Khan's palace became a symbol of the city, which thrived from 1220 to 1260 as a political, trade, and cultural hub.

However, from 1260 to 1380, it lost its capital status when Kublai Khan moved the capital to Beijing, reducing Karakorum to an administrative center in the Yuan Dynasty.

After the Mongolian Yuan Dynasty collapsed in 1368, the government returned to Mongolia, allowing Karakorum to regain some significance. However, in 1388, Ming troops destroyed the town, leaving no trace of it. In 1580, Abtai Sain Khan and Lord Tumenkhen sought the 3rd Dalai Lama's counsel on building a temple, leading to the restoration of the Main Zuu temple in Erdene Zuu monastery in 1588.

Erdene Zuu Monastery, once a large complex with 100 temples and over 1,000 lamas, now comprises three remaining temples: Dalai Lama, Zuu of Buddha, and Lavrin Temple, all within 400 m X 400 m walls. Visitors can explore the monastery grounds.

The Karakorum Archaeological Museum, though small, features a well-designed space with good lighting and clear English labels. It showcases hundreds of artifacts from the 13th and 14th centuries, as well as prehistoric



tools, pottery, bronzes, coins, religious sculptures, and stone inscriptions from various archaeological sites.

A half-excavated kiln is set into the museum floor, alongside a scale model of ancient Karakorum from the 1250s, inspired by William of Rubruck's descriptions. Another chamber features a Turkic noble tomb with wall paintings, gold objects, and jewels, accompanied by a short video of the burial site.

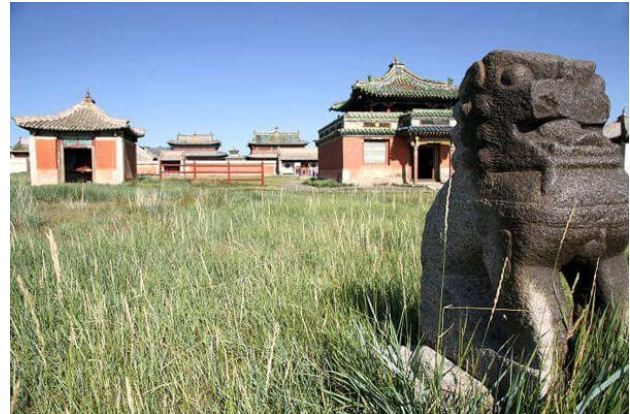
You can also visit the Turtle Rock and the Phallic Rock, as well as a small market that showcases local artists' work.

### **Accommodation:**

- ✓ Monkhtenger ger camp with shared facilities. B, L, D

### **Activities:**

- ✓ Explore the Erdene Zuu monastery
- ✓ Discover the Karakorum Archaeological Museum



## **Day 9: Orkhon valley and waterfall (130 km)**

Today, we will head west into the Orkhon Valley, where the Orkhon River meanders. This valley has been recognized by UNESCO as a world cultural heritage site due to its ancient artifacts that date back to the early 6th century and even earlier. In addition, the great Mongol Empire established its capital, Karakorum, here during the 12th and 13th centuries. The nomadic lifestyle of the pastures has continued, maintaining both historic and nomadic views on life. During the Quaternary period, a volcanic eruption occurred near the mouth of the Tsagaan Azarga, or the White Stallion River, causing lava to flow





down the Orkhon Valley and creating a thick layer of basaltic rocks, approximately 10 meters deep. The Orkhon River has cut through this basalt layer twice, leading to the formation of the canyon.

### **Accommodation:**

- ✓ Khosog ger camp with shared facilities B, L, D

### **Activities:**

- ✓ Explore the Orkhon Valley
- ✓ Discover the stunning Orkhon Waterfall
- ✓ Engage with a nomadic family that breeds horses and yaks
- ✓ Enjoy the opportunity for horseback riding



## **Day 10: Tovkhon monastery & Tsenkher Hot Spring (120 km)**

Tovkhon Monastery was founded in the 1650s by Zanabazar, one of Mongolia's most revered spiritual leaders. The monastery's wooden structures are harmoniously integrated with a natural network of caves located near a hilltop, offering stunning views of the Orkhon Valley and the surrounding pine forests. At the cliff's summit lies a stone pile known as Ovoo, which is used to honor the mountain god.

After our visit to the monastery, we will journey westward towards The Khangai Mountains. Rising between 2,500 and 3,000 meters above sea level, these mountains are predominantly composed of Paleozoic granite, intrusive chert, and sandstone. The Khangai Mountains extend approximately 800 kilometers from Zavkhan province to Tuv province and serve as the



continental divide for the world's water system. In the evening, we will arrive at the Tsenkher Hot Spring resort, which features a spacious open-air pool for guests. This pool continuously receives hot water from the spring, with temperatures exceeding 80 °C. A sophisticated pipeline system maintains the ideal water temperature. Guests can enjoy hours of relaxation in the pool, chatting with friends while gazing at the stars or observing the surrounding night landscape.

**Accommodation:**

- ✓ Shiveet Mankhan ger camp B, L, D

**Activities:**

- ✓ Hike 7 km to Tovkhon Monastery, which takes approximately 3 to 4 hours.
- ✓ Unwind at the hot spring spa (don't forget to bring your swimsuits).



**Day 11: Khorgo - Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur National Park (220 km)**

We will arrive in Tsetserleg town in the morning, where we will explore a local museum dedicated to Mongolian traditions and Buddhism from the early 1800s.

This museum was originally a prominent Buddhist temple, which was dismantled by the Mongolian government during the Soviet era. After our visit to the town's monastery-museum, we will continue our journey to Terkhiin Tsagaan Lake.



This stunning lake is one of the most beautiful in the country, formed by lava flows from an ancient volcanic eruption and encircled by extinct crater volcanoes. The surrounding landscape is adorned with black volcanic rocks, remnants of past eruptions. The lake stretches approximately 15 kilometers in length and has a maximum depth of 20 meters. The area around the lake features hills with steppe and woodland steppe vegetation, creating a picturesque setting.

**Accommodation:**

- ✓ Maikhan Tolgoi ger camp B, L, D

**Activities:**

- ✓ Explore Tsetserleg Town
- ✓ Discover the Zayiin Gegee Museum
- ✓ Experience Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur Lake



**Day 12: Khorgo - Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur National Park**

The Terkhiin Tsagaan Lake is an ideal spot to relax today. In the morning, we will embark on an excursion to the summit of the Khorgo Uul Volcano. Khorgo Peak, part of a volcanic field, is located approximately 4 kilometers from the lake. The crater of the volcano measures 200 meters in width and 100 meters in depth, beautifully encircled by trees at the back and around its opening. To the south of Khorgo Mountain, you'll find various basaltic "Gers" that formed during the lava's cooling process; some of these structures feature gates and upper openings, standing over 1.7 meters tall.





Additionally, we will explore the Single Man Cave, which may appear small from the outside but is surprisingly spacious inside. Afternoons are perfect for planning optional activities such as valley trekking, boating on the lake, swimming, horseback riding, or visiting a nearby family to immerse yourself in nomadic culture.

**Accommodation:**

- ✓ Maikhan Tolgoi ger camp B, L, D

**Activities:**

- ✓ Hike to the Khorgo extinct volcano
- ✓ Possibility of optional horseback riding



**Day 13: Grassland (180 km)**

We will embark on a two-day journey heading north to Khovsgol Lake. Our route will take us through expansive central grasslands, where you'll encounter large herds of horses, cows, and yaks. Along the way, you'll cross numerous rivers, both small and large, all teeming with fish.

**Accommodation:**

- ✓ Ulziit Khishig ger camp B, L, D

**Activities:**

- ✓ Explore the grassland
- ✓ Hiking is an option



## Day 14: Khovsgol Lake (270 km)

Our initial destination will be the Uushig Deer Stone complex, which features a collection of deer stones that date back to prehistoric times. This site showcases the artwork of ancient peoples, including deer stones and burial mounds. After exploring the complex, we will continue our journey north to Khovsgol Lake.

Khovsgol Lake, often referred to as Mongolia's blue pearl, spans an impressive 2,760 square kilometers (130 kilometers long and 40 kilometers wide). It is surrounded by mountain ranges that rise over 2,000 meters, along with dense pine forests and lush meadows where yaks and horses graze. The lake is fed by crystal-clear waters from more than 100 small rivers and streams. Only one river, the Egiin, drains the lake, and its waters eventually flow into Baikal Lake. The first stop will be at the Uushig Deer Stone complex. A complex of deer stones dating back to prehistoric time. Evidence of Prehistoric people's artwork known as deer stones and burial mounds. After visiting the complex, we will further drive north to the Khovsgol lake.

The Khovsgol Lake, Mongolia's blue pearl, is a massive 2.760 square km alpine lake (130 km long and 40 km wide), surrounded by more than 2.000-meter-high mountain chains, dense pine forests, and green meadows with grazing yaks and horses. The lake receives crystal clear water from over 100 small rivers and streams. Just one river, the Egiin, drains the lake, and its waters gradually meet Baikal Lake.

### **Accommodation:**

- ✓ Alag Tsar ger camp B, L, D



**Activities:**

- ✓ Explore the Uushig deer stone complex from the Stone Age
- ✓ Discover the beauty of Khovsgol lake



**Day 15: Khovsgol Lake**

We will dedicate an entire day to discovering the lakeshore and the surrounding mountains. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in activities such as horseback riding, visiting reindeer families, hiking, and canoeing (weather permitting), among others. We'll meet the Tsaatan or Dukha, one of the last remaining groups of reindeer herders in the world. Their distinct lifestyle is centered around reindeer and is guided by Shamanism and ancestral traditions. ral spiritual practice based on nature worship.

**Accommodation:**

- ✓ Alag Tsar ger camp B, L, D

**Activities:**

- ✓ Visit reindeer family
- ✓ Hike along the lakeshore
- ✓ Optional boat tour available
- ✓ Optional horseback riding experience.





### **Day 16: Bulgan & Uran Togoo Mountain (400 km)**

Located approximately 60 kilometers directly west of Bulgan city, the extinct volcano Uran Uul, along with the nearby Togoo Uul, is now part of the 1,600-hectare Uran-Togoo Tulga Uul Natural Reserve in the Khutag-Andor district.

Trails leading to the summit of this relatively unremarkable volcano start from the west side, which also features some pleasant camping spots. At the peak of the extinct volcano, you'll find a crater that measures between 500 to 600 meters in width and 50 meters in depth, containing a small "crater lake" approximately 20 meters in diameter.

#### **Accommodation:**

- ✓ Unit ger camp B, L, D

#### **Activities:**

- ✓ Explore Uran Togoo National Park
- ✓ Trek to an extinct volcano





## **Day 17: Amarbaysgalant Monastery (250 km)**

Today, we will arrive at Amarbayasgalant Monastery, which is beautifully nestled in a stunning valley embraced by mountains. Following Erdene Zuu Monastery, Amarbayasgalant is recognized as the second most significant monastery and the most well-preserved architectural complex in Mongolia. Constructed in the 18th century by the Manchu emperor Yongzheng, it is dedicated to the revered Mongolian Buddhist, Zanabazar.

### **Accommodation:**

- ✓ Amarbaysgalant Urguu ger camp B, L, D

### **Activities:**

- ✓ Explore the Amarbaysgalant monastery



## **Day 18: Ulaanbaatar (360 km)**

The moment has arrived to depart and make your way back to Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. You are free to spend your afternoon as you wish. You will have the opportunity to enjoy a beautiful cultural performance, featuring talented contortionists, while you take in the vibrant and rhythmic dances of Mongolia.

### **Accommodation:**

- ✓ J hotel B, L, D

### **Activities:**

- ✓ Attend a folklore show featuring throat singers
- ✓ Shop for souvenir or cashmere



## **Day 19: Departure**

Transfer to the airport. B