Sagsai Eagle Festival 2018
WITH
PANORAMIC JOURNEYS
MONGOLIA

Mongolia: there simply is nowhere quite like it. The birth place of the great Khan is largely the same now as it was then and the country is wonderfully diverse in terms of landscape. The magisterial Western Altai gives way to the fertile central Heartland, whilst the exquisite forested North fades into the endless sea of green steppe to the East. The amazing arid southern Gobi is the fifth distinct eco-region. Still largely undiscovered there is seemingly endless uninhabited wilderness around every mountain and in every valley.

The people of Mongolia are wonderfully adapted to their climate. Temperatures can differ by as much as 80°C between summer and winter. The Mongolian ger is perfectly designed to withstand such extremes as well as being portable to fit the nomadic way of life almost half of the population lead. Such a demanding climate leads the people of Mongolia to exhibit magical hospitality; only here does a traveller receive an unreserved welcome at every turn. No description of Mongolia is complete without reference to the ingrained equine culture present throughout the nation. The almost spiritual relationship between man and horse is captivating to all who visit and it remains central to Mongolian identity.

PANORAMIC JOURNEYS MONGOLIA

Panoramic Journeys was conceived in Mongolia, a country which is synonymous with the panoramic view of rugged mountains, endless forests and vast open steppe. As a business we have grown up in Mongolia: it is our home and always will be. Our drivers and guides are old friends and they too care passionately about the experience we deliver in Mongolia. We work with them to constantly improve and expand what we can achieve as a community in Mongolia at the same time as protecting the places we know and love.
An 8 day extravaganza to witness the ancient tradition of eagle hunting at the annual Kazakh eagle festival at Sagsai, in the rugged Altai Mountains.

Take the 3 hour flight west, from Ulaanbaatar to Ulgii, enjoy exploring the local market, museum and mosque before settling in to your 'Wilderness Camp' for the next 4 nights. Join our nomadic friends for a meal and to learn about their way of life. They will demonstrate how to handle and train a Golden Eagle as they prepare for the start of the Sagsai Eagle Festival.

The festival runs for 2 days, and eagle hunters travel long distances to compete and demonstrate their riding and bird handling skills. Watch and cheer as the participants show off in the traditional games of tug-o-war on horseback, fully clad in intricate and elaborate clothing before the prize giving and awards take place for the best in show.

Return to Ulaanbaatar for a day trip east to the giant Chinggis Monument and idyllic Terelj National Park. A wonderful end to a whistle stop Mongolian adventure.
**ITINERARY OVERVIEW**

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<td>Thu</td>
<td>Fly to Ulgii on to Sagsai in Western Mongolia</td>
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<td>Fri</td>
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<td>Sun</td>
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<td>Mon</td>
<td>Fly to Ulaanbaatar. Enjoy a traditional concert</td>
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<td>Tue</td>
<td>Visit Chinggis Monument &amp; Terelj National Park</td>
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- **Start**: 12 Sep 2018
- **Duration**: 8 Days
- **Group Size**: 3 to 8
- **Price per Person**: USD 2,885
ARRIVE IN ULAANBAATAR

Arrive in Ulaanbaatar, where you will be met and transferred to your hotel. At 2pm, if you are not too tired from your long flight, you may like to meet in reception for a walk across the Chinggis Khaan Square to visit the excellent Museum of National History where you can gain an understanding of Mongolia’s remarkable past - a worthwhile introduction to your stay in Mongolia.

If you decide instead to rest this afternoon, meet the rest of the group in reception at 7pm where we will take you to dine our favourite restaurants where your guide will run through the plan for tomorrow.

Travel Details – 260km / 5-6 hours
Accommodation – King/Twin room, Tuushin Hotel
Includes – Breakfast, lunch, dinner

THURSDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER
DAY 2

FLY TO ULGII, WESTERN MONGOLIA

Today you head off to the west! It is a 3 hour flight and you will need to put your clocks back an hour. Arrive in Ulgii where you'll be taken for breakfast in one of Ulgii’s slightly kitsch restaurants, and if there's time, have a look around the fascinating museum and perhaps visit the local mosque.

A walk in the local market will give you a real flavour of the region and its people. Stock up on any snacks and drinks at the local supermarket before driving west to tonight's rustic PJ camp in Sagsai, about an hour’s drive from Ulgii. The facilities are comfortable but basic - the gers are equipped with beds and a stove, but washing facilities will be limited to a bowl of water and the toilet is a hole in the ground.

Travel Details – 30-45 mins hotel to airport, 3 hour flight to Ulgii (Hunnu Air ULN-ULG 06:20-08:30),
Accommodation – Shared ger, Wilderness Camp
Includes – Breakfast, lunch, dinner
Today will be spent with our Kazakh eagle hunting friends, learning about their way of life, their eagles and about hunting. The hunters will be making their final preparations for the festival tomorrow. Decide who you might like to back in the festivities of the next two days and begin to really immerse yourself in the ways of the west.

Perhaps this evening (or on one of the following days) you will enjoy a Kazakh dinner called 'Beshparmak' (meaning five fingers because one uses five fingers to eat it).

Today marks the beginning of the well celebrated Eagle Festival of Sagsai, a two day festival which shows off the skills of eagle and hunter/trainer. If you have riding experience, let us know in advance if you would like to join some of the hunters as they ride, eagles in hand, to the festival site – an amazing experience!

Dressed in full regalia and mounted on groomed and decorated horses, the eagle hunters compete for various awards including 'Best Eagle at Hunting Prey'. Other 'manly' sporting activities you'll watch include horse racing, camel racing, and the highly entertaining 'Bushkashi' - goat skin tug-o-war on horseback (be ready to dive out of the way!). After the festivities head back to your ger alongside the eagle hunter family, and hopefully on one of the nights enjoy a traditional performance from local musicians.
**SUNDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER**
**DAY 5**

**SAGSAY EAGLE FESTIVAL DAY 2**

Drive to the site for today’s events, which, altogether, play a major role in preserving traditional Kazakh culture. Being a proficient eagle hunter takes years to achieve – by apprenticing with a master hunter. The ultimate goal is the ability to catch foxes for their pelts which protect against the bitter winters. It takes a very strong, fit and well cared for bird to catch a wild animal of this size.

Many hunters followed in their father’s footsteps and were taken to the mountains at a young age to begin training. Alongside the eagle hunters, there are opportunities to purchase local handicrafts, Kazakh tents and other traditional and locally made items.

**Travel Details** – No long drives today  
**Accommodation** – Shared ger, Wilderness Camp  
**Includes** – Breakfast, lunch, dinner

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**MONDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER**
**DAY 6**

**ULGII – ULAANBAATAR – CONCERT**

Depart Ulgii for Ulaanbaatar. Afternoon at your leisure in the capital. Meet again in the hotel reception at 4.30pm to go to a concert of traditional Mongolian music and dance including throat singing followed by dinner.

**Travel Details** – 3 hours flight to Ulaanbaatar (Hunnu Air ULG-ULN 0900/1350), 30-45 mins airport to hotel  
**Accommodation** – King/Twin room, Tuushin Hotel  
**Includes** – Breakfast, lunch, dinner
Today, head east out of the city to visit the giant Chinggis Khan Equestrian Monument at Tsonjin Boldog. At the base of the statue, you can try on traditional Mongolian costumes, tour the numerous portraits of the Khan lineage and climb to the horse’s head for a panoramic view over the surrounding landscape towards Chinggis' birth place.

Terelj National Park lies to the west and north of the monument. It has been rather spoilt by uncontrolled building, but looking past the rows of ger camps, the natural landscapes are still spectacular and with the pine and larch forests, at the very southern edge of the Siberian Taiga forest, the park is different from the steppe and desert landscapes you have seen throughout the trip. Head into the park for a walk amongst the weird and wonderful rock formations to a small monastery.

Back in Ulaanbaatar, enjoy a farewell dinner at another of our favourite restaurants in the city.

**Travel Details** – 180km / 3-4 hours, full day trip out
**Accommodation** – King/Twin room, Tuushin Hotel
**Includes** – Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Be met by your guide and driver in the hotel reception for transfer to the airport approximately 3 to 3.5hrs before your international flight home.

**Travel Details** – 45 mins hotel – airport
**Accommodation** – Check out is at 10am
**Includes** – Breakfast
ULAANBAATAR

Ulaanbaatar, meaning 'Red Hero', is the capital city of Mongolia. Situated on the Tuul River, it is a mixture of traditional and modern. The ornate flowing eaves of the monastery temples stand beside communist planned courtyards and modern skyscrapers. UB, as the capital is affectionately known, also has some excellent museums, galleries, theatres, bars and restaurants.

Gandantegchinlen Khiid (Gandan for short) is the largest and most important monastery in Mongolia. The monastery's main attraction is the magnificent white Migjid Janraisig Temple which houses a 25m high, 20 ton guilded statue. It is a working monastery with ceremonies every morning and 150 monks in residence.

Impressive and expansive, Chinggis Khaan Square in the heart of the city, has recently been renamed to honour the nations creator. Originally this square was named 'Sükhbaatar' after the hero of the revolution "Damdin Sükhbaatar", who declared Mongolia’s final independence from the Chinese. His statue takes centre stage in front of the Parliament building and looking south towards Peace Avenue.
ULAANBAATAR

The National History Museum, renovated in 1998, is a comprehensive and well-laid out showcase of key points in Mongolia's history. Journey through key facts and artefacts from the Bronze age, the Mongol Empire of Genghis Khaan, to the communist Russian years and the democratic revolution of the early 1990s. Learn about nomadic pastoralism of the steppes and the different ethnic groups of Mongolia.

Naraan Tuul, or the Black Market, as it is commonly known (although not illegal) - is a giant flea market 4km from the centre of town. It's a great place to enjoy the hustle and bustle of Mongolian traders, pick up some riding boots or material for getting a deel tailor-made.

Cashmere: Mongolia produces about 3,000 tons of cashmere per year, about 21% of the world market. Many quality cashmere products can be found at low prices. The Gobi company has a store on Peace Avenue and also a factory shop on the outskirts of town. Other central shops include Elite, Goyo - and the State Department Store has a range of cashmere labels all under one roof.
ULGII

The capital of the westernmost aimag, Ulgii is a predominantly Kazakh city that happens to be in Mongolia. Kazakh influence is widespread - from street signs, religion, clothes and food, and gives the town its special atmosphere. Kazakh culture is quite different from Mongolian. They generally adhere rather loosely to Sunni Islam, but religion is not a major force as they are nomads. Kazakh gers are taller, wider and more richly decorated than the Mongolian version.

The province of Bayan-Ulgii is rich in archaeological remains, as a reminder of the Bronze Ages and the time of the Huns and Turkic invasions.
EAGLE FESTIVAL

The Eagle Festival showcases the art of hunting with eagles practiced by the Kazakh inhabitants of this village in Western Mongolia. Dark, rocky mountainous terrain forms the backdrop to the festivities which incorporate an opening ceremony, parade, cultural exhibitions, demonstrations and handcrafts in the centre of town followed by sporting activities and competitions out towards the mountains. Sagsai is the smaller of the two festivals which are held during September and October months.
Hunting with eagles is a traditional form of falconry found throughout the Eurasian steppe and is practiced by Kazakh and Kyrgyz people. These Turkic people are most famously known for their skilful training with golden eagles, but they have also been known to train goshawks and falcons as well. Dark, rocky mountainous terrain forms the perfect landscape for camouflaged prey, primarily the Corsac and Red Fox and various breeds of hare. Hunting mainly takes place in the winter when the prey can be spotted easier against the snow and pelts are thick for supplying winter clothing for the Kazakh’s.
This 40 metre tall statue stands on top of the Chinggis Khaan Statue Complex, a visitor centre and museum on the bank of the Tuul River where, according to legend, Great Khan found a gold whip. The statue symbolically points east, towards his birthplace. Visitors are able to walk through the chest and neck of the horse to get a panoramic view of the river.
MONGOLIA - ACCOMMODATION
TUUSHIN HOTEL, ULAANBAATAR

Located in the centre of the capital the Tuushin Hotel provides comfortable rooms to relax and recharge in. All rooms have an ensuite bathroom and Wifi is available throughout the hotel. There is also an on site day spa and both local and international food is available at the hotel's restaurants.
**GER CAMPS**

In the countryside, accommodation is in ger camps. In these ‘countryside hotels’ each couple (or sometimes family) has their own comfortable, stove lit, traditional ger. Ger camps have fixed western style bathroom facilities, and hot showers are available at certain times of the day. There will normally be a restaurant in a separate building and most ger camps can now cater for a range of diets.
FAMILY STAY

Have a taste of nomad life as you live alongside local families. You’ll be able to help with the daily tasks of milking the animals, collecting wood & dung for the fire. Try your hand at fermenting mare’s milk into airag or cooking traditional treats.

Facilities will be basic, hot water will be provided by your hosts for washing, and there will be a long drop toilet.
GOBI, HEARTLAND AND ALTAI

PRICE INCLUDES:
Accommodation (based on 2 sharing twin rooms/gers · See single supplement below · Domestic flights (as specified) · Meals as per itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner) · Water in vehicles · Activities as per itinerary · English speaking guide/s · Surface transportation (vehicle and driver) · Park & museum entrance fees · Festival fees · Airport transfers

PRICE EXCLUDES:
Travel Insurance · Passport · Visas & vaccination charges · Private excursions · Bar bills · Laundry · Telephone calls & items of a personal nature · International flights or trains

Deposit $1,000pp plus any extras · single supplement of $90/ night for own hotel room plus $70 night to stay in your own ger
Full payment is due if departure is in less than 90 days