

# Overseas Adventure Travel<sup>®</sup>

THE LEADER IN CUSTOMIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide<sup>®</sup>



Mongolia & the Gobi Desert

2026

# Overseas Adventure Travel<sup>®</sup>

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

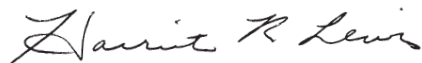
When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis

Chair

Overseas Adventure Travel

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Local horseman, Mongolia

## Mongolia & the Gobi Desert

### Small Group Adventure

**Mongolia:** Ulaanbaatar, Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, Khovsgol Lake, Gobi Desert

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

**19 days starting from \$6,895**

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit [www.oattravel.com/uln2026pricing](http://www.oattravel.com/uln2026pricing)

Discover Mongolia's diverse land and people, from the bustle of Ulaanbaatar and alpine beauty of Khovsgol Lake to the vast expanse of the Gobi Desert. Meet with nomadic herding families, learn about ancient shamanistic beliefs, ride a camel in the desert dunes, and discover why Mongolia is known as the "Land of Blue Sky" during stays in authentic *ger* tents—just as modern-day nomads and their ancestors have done for centuries.

### IT'S INCLUDED

- 16 nights accommodations
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation and 5 internal flights
- 41 meals—16 breakfasts, 13 lunches, and 12 dinners (including 3 Home-Hosted meals)
- 18 small group activities
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure
- 

*Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.*





## ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1-3	Fly to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia via Seoul, South Korea
4-5	Ulaanbaatar
6-7	Gorkhi-Terelj National Park
8	Ulaanbaatar
9-11	Fly to Moron • Khovsgol Lake
12-13	Fly to Ulaanbaatar
14-16	Fly to South Gobi Desert
17-18	Fly to Ulaanbaatar
19	Fly to Beijing, China

## WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

**Pacing:** 4 locations in 17 days with three 1-night stays

**Physical requirements:** Lengthy overland travel of 2-4 hours each on several days and 6 internal flights (5 internal flights for travelers who purchase their own airfare). Frequent travel in 4x4 vehicles over poorly maintained—and occasionally non-existent—country roads in South Gobi

**Flight time:** Travel time will be 17-25 hours and will most likely have two connections

View all physical requirements at [www.oattravel.com/uln](http://www.oattravel.com/uln)

## MONGOLIA: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

**Unbeatable Value:** Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

**People-to-People Experiences:** Spend time with a nomadic horse-breeding family in Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, enjoy lunch with an local ice cream shop owner in their home in Khatgal, and savor a meal during a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with a Mongolian family in Ulaanbaatar.

**O.A.T. Exclusives:** Experience **A Day in the Life** by meeting members of a yak-herding family on the Mongolian steppe, and visit a local Child Protection and Development Center supported by **Grand Circle Foundation** where we will speak to its founder about the **Controversial Topic** of human trafficking and child abuse.

## PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

### OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

South Korea: Seoul

PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,995**

### ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Seoul** before your Seoul pre-trip extension from **\$190** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Ulaanbaatar** before your main adventure from **\$250** per room, per night

# Mongolia & the Gobi Desert

## YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

### BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

#### 5 nights in *South Korea: Seoul*

**Day 1** Depart U.S.

**Day 2** Arrive in Seoul, South Korea

**Day 3** Explore Seoul

**Day 4** Seoul • Visit the DMZ

**Day 5** Seoul • Visit Starfield Open Library

**Day 6** Seoul • Conversation with a North Korean defector • Optional lunch with a local Korean family

**Day 7** Fly to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia • Join main trip

#### **Day 1** Depart U.S.

Depart late tonight on a flight from the U.S. to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia via Seoul, South Korea.

#### **Day 2** Overnight flight

Continue flying toward Ulaanbaatar today.

#### **Day 3** Arrive in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia via Seoul, South Korea

- Destination: Ulaanbaatar
- Accommodations: Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** Due to the remote locations of this adventure, the itinerary is subject to change. While you will still enjoy all the included features detailed below, frequent updates to local flight schedules may result in a change in the order of your itinerary. You will be sent a personalized letter if your departure will be affected by these flight changes.

**Afternoon/Evening:** Arrive in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia via Seoul, South Korea today. You will be greeted with an O.A.T. representative, who will assist with your transfer to the hotel. Our small group will be joined by those travelers who took our optional pre-trip extension to *South Korea: Seoul*.

#### **Day 4** Ulaanbaatar • Gandan Monastery visit

- Destination: Ulaanbaatar
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** This morning, our Trip Experience Leader will conduct a Welcome Briefing. We'll review our itinerary in more detail, including any changes that may need to occur.



Then we will set off to discover Ulaanbaatar. Built in 1838, Ulaanbaatar is Mongolia's largest and most important center of Buddhism. The capital city is situated on the banks of the mighty Tuul River and surrounded by holy mountains. The first capital of the modern Mongolian empire was founded in 1639 as a nomadic encampment. This ancient "city" of *gers* (traditional felt tents) was moved to the present site of Ulaanbaatar in 1778. Today, UB (as Ulaanbaatar is commonly referred to) is a bustling metropolis of roughly 1.5 million people, where modern buildings vie with Mongolian *gers*.

Our exploration of UB begins with a visit to Gandan Monastery, a large, influential center of Buddhism, built in 1838. During our time exploring here, we'll also meet with a lama, who will share stories about his life and his understanding of Buddhism in Mongolia. As you stroll the complex, admire the tiered-roof architecture and listen for the sound of chanting monks.

**Lunch:** On your own.

**Afternoon:** Afterwards, we'll return to our hotel. From there, we'll enjoy a walk within the vicinity of our hotel led by our Trip Experience Leader.

Afterwards, enjoy free time to make your own discoveries. You may want to venture to the National History Museum to view exhibits on Mongolian history and culture. Another option is to visit Sukhbaatar Square, featuring a famous statue of Damdin Sukhbaatar, the "hero of the revolution." It was on this spot that Sukhbaatar declared Mongolia's independence from China in 1921. Less than 70 years later, in 1989, Sukhbaatar Square was also the site of the first protests against Soviet oppression, and rallies and ceremonies are still held here today.

**Dinner:** Tonight, enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

## **Day 5 Explore Ulaanbaatar • Overland to Gorkhi-Terelj National Park**

- Destination: Gorkhi-Terelj National Park
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Terelj Hills Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll check out of our hotel for a day of discoveries. We'll begin with a visit to a local market, browsing stall after stall of local produce and dairy.

Next, we'll drive to the home of a local Kazakh family. When we arrive at the family's home, we'll be invited to join them for lunch. This is an excellent opportunity to get an authentic glimpse of what life is like in this part of the world.

**Lunch:** We'll enjoy traditional cuisine like mutton and dumplings, followed by time to discuss the local culture with our hosts. During our visit, we'll have the opportunity to try on Kazakh national costumes and ask any questions we may have about what it's like to be Kazakh in Mongolia.

**Afternoon:** We'll say goodbye to our hosts and drive to our *ger* camp in the Gorkhi-Terelj National Park. Upon arrival, you'll have some free time to settle in and explore the compound. Our accommodations are in individual *ger* tents, like those used by Mongolian nomads, and each *ger* comes with its own private bath facilities.

**Dinner:** At camp.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

**Day 6 Explore Gorkhi-Terelj National Park • Optional tour: Meet a golden eagle hunter • Visit nomadic cheese-making family**

- Destination: Gorkhi-Terelj National Park
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Terelj Hills Lodge or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's optional tour to meet a golden eagle hunter is only offered from May 15 to August 15.

**Breakfast:** At camp.

**Morning:** Today we'll set out to explore the Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, a nature reserve set in a deep valley between forested hillsides, granite boulders, and mountain streams. Nomads roam the surrounding hills, which are home to some birds like wagtails and magpies, herds of yaks, alpine forests, and intriguing rock formations. We'll begin our day with a short drive to a trail head. From there, we'll hike to Aryabal, a scenic meditation temple. We'll have time to explore the temple and grounds and admire the view from the hillcrest. Then we'll make the return hike back down and drive back to camp. Along the way, we'll also stop at the park's famous Turtle Rock to admire the natural settling and take photos.

**Lunch:** At camp.

**Afternoon:** Enjoy a few hours of free time after lunch.

Or, you may choose to take our optional tour to meet a local golden eagle hunter. Similar to the European practice of falconry, hunters across Central Asia have been perfecting the

traditional practice of hunting prey such as foxes, hares, and even wolves with the help of a highly trained golden eagle.

Later, we'll drive to meet a local nomadic family. During our time here you'll have plenty of opportunities to ask the family any questions you may have about nomadic life, such as how often they move and what challenges they face. With the family's help, we'll learn how to turn their cows' milk into cheese.

Afterwards, we'll return back to camp where you'll have some free time to relax and soak in the surrounding nature. You may wish to take a walk around the camp. A walk up the hill reveals a pristine, panoramic view of the valley below.

**Dinner:** At camp.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

**Day 7 Genghis Khan monument • Meet nomadic horse-breeding family**

- Destination: Gorkhi-Terelj National Park
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Terelj Hills Lodge or similar

**Activity Note:** During our afternoon visit to a horse-breeding family, sampling mare's milk is only available from July to the end of September.

**Breakfast:** At camp.

**Morning:** This morning, we'll drive to a rather remarkable monument. The people of Mongolia decided to honor Genghis Khan in a big way—by erecting a statue of him astride his horse that stands 131 feet high atop a 33-foot-high coliseum. Built at the site where legend has it Genghis Khan found a horsewhip that inspired his future conquests, it is said



to be the world's largest equestrian statue. We'll admire the statue from all angles and learn more about the life and legacy of Genghis Khan at a small exhibit on the premises. Feel free to ask your Trip Experience leader what Genghis Khan means to him or her—many Mongolians share an intense pride over their legendary patriot.

Afterwards, we'll drive back to camp in time for lunch.

**Lunch:** At our camp.

**Afternoon:** We'll set out on a quick drive to visit a nomadic horse-breeding family. This will be a rare opportunity to experience modern Mongolian life firsthand and to better our understanding of the nomadic lifestyle. Nomads learn to ride horses as soon as they can walk, and spend much of their lives in search of stray animals—for there are almost no fences in the entire country. During our visit, we'll have the chance to sample fermented mare's milk—a local specialty—and glean insight into the daily lives of our nomadic hosts. Feel free to ask them any questions you may have.

Then we'll drive back to camp where the rest of the day is free to explore.

**Dinner:** At camp. For our final night here, we'll partake in a Mongolian specialty: *khorkhog*, or Mongolian hotstone barbecue.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Stargazers may enjoy looking at the night sky; this far from UB, the skies are often clear, affording exceptional views of the Eastern hemisphere.

## **Day 8 Overland to Ulaanbaatar • Grand Circle Foundation visit to Magical Land: Child Protection and Development Center of Mongolia • Home-Hosted Dinner**

- Destination: Ulaanbaatar
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At camp.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll return to Ulaanbaatar.

Our first stop will be to Magical Land: Child Protection and Development Center of Mongolia, supported in part by **Grand Circle Foundation**. During our visit, we will have the opportunity to interact with the children, engage in conversation with the staff, and ask any questions we might have about the center. The Magical Land organization was created to raise awareness about the continuing issues of human trafficking and domestic violence that children in Mongolia face today. The institution we visit was designed to both help children who have already been affected by these issues and to also aid in the prevention of future abuse. Magical Land offers protection, support, guidance, and assistance to build a community that provides a circle of safety and opportunity for children.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll drive to our hotel to check in. Your afternoon is free for you to do as you'd like. Perhaps you'll seek out a local market, explore a new neighborhood, or visit a museum. Wherever your interests lie, your Trip Experience Leader is sure to have some recommendations up their sleeve.

Later this afternoon, we'll reconvene back at the hotel lobby. We'll then split up into smaller groups and local families will pick us up from our hotel to take us to their homes.

**Dinner:** We'll be welcomed into the home of a local family for a **Home-Hosted Dinner**. In our small group, we will help the family prepare the meal as well as speak freely with them about their daily life in Mongolia.

**Evening:** After dinner, our generous hosts will drive us back to our hotel. You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

### **Day 9 Fly to Moron • Transfer to Khovsgol Lake**

- Destination: Khovsgol Lake
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Lake Forest Lodge or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's itinerary is dependent on the domestic flight schedule. In the summer, the departure time is likely to be very early in the morning. Drives to and from the airport will be around 2.5 hours each way. No matter the schedule, all included features will still happen today or tomorrow.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll check out of our hotel and drive to the airport. From there, we'll catch a short flight to Moron, the administrative center of northern Mongolia's Khovsgol Province.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Moron.

**Afternoon:** We'll drive to our *ger* camp along Khovsgol Lake. One of Mongolia's most picturesque destinations, Khovsgol is an idyllic landscape of thick evergreen forests, flowering meadows with grazing yaks, rugged mountains,

and crystal-clear streams and lakes. Khovsgol Lake is a pristine alpine lake some 100 miles long, situated close to the Siberian border. The surrounding region is home to reindeer of the taiga (coniferous forest), as well as several Mongolian ethnic groups, including Buriat, Khalk, Darhat, and the Tsaatan.

When we arrive, you'll have some free time to settle into your *ger* and explore the camp grounds.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

### **Day 10 Boat ride on Khovsgol Lake • Shaman visit • Horseback ride**

- Destination: Khovsgol Lake
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Lake Forest Lodge or similar

**Activity Note:** The boat ride is not available on departures before mid-June due to weather conditions.

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll walk to a local boat launch. Weather permitting, we'll begin the day's discoveries with a 2-hour boating excursion on Khovsgol Lake, whose crystal-clear waters are home to such species as Siberian grayling, pike, perch, salmon, and sturgeon. After exploring this tranquil area, we'll disembark the boat and drive to the home of a local female shaman where we'll delve deeper into Mongolia's spirituality as she helps us to understand Mongolian Shamanism as one of the oldest belief systems in Mongolia. Our visit will reveal how many modern-day nomadic practices—including the blue flags and mounds of sacred stones called *ovoos*—can



be traced to shamanistic beliefs that have been shaping Mongolian culture since the days of Genghis Khan.

**Lunch:** At the lodge.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll see the water from another perspective: on horseback. We'll explore the area on these majestic animals, then drive back to camp. Enjoy a few hours of free time before dinner. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

### **Day 11 A Day in the Life of modern Mongolia**

- Destination: Khovsgol Lake
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Lake Forest Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll drive to the Mongolian steppe, where we'll experience **A Day in the Life** of modern Mongolia. First, we'll meet with members of a yak-herding family, revealing the austere lifestyle of nomads who depend on the long-haired bovine for virtually all of their core needs: milk, food, shelter, and clothing. We'll get an authentic glimpse of this family's daily tasks when we have a hands-on experience of milking yaks. Later, we may have the chance to help the family with other typical tasks like maintaining their camp or doing daily chores. Then we'll sit down with our hosts in their traditional *ger* to discuss the nomadic way of life and have the chance to ask any questions we may have.

We'll then say goodbye to the family and drive to the nearby village of Khatgal, where yak-herding nomads shop, attend school, and access medical services. Upon arrival, we will walk to a local ice cream workshop to meet with an entrepreneur.

**Lunch:** We'll join the local entrepreneur in their home for lunch where we'll get a glimpse of their daily life and learn how they balance running a small business while herding yak on the side.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we may take a short walking tour of the village before driving back to camp. The rest of the afternoon is free for your own discoveries.

**Dinner:** At the lodge, including a bonfire by the lake.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

### **Day 12 Overland to Moron • Fly to Ulaanbaatar**

- Destination: Ulaanbaatar
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll drive back to Moron, stopping briefly along the way to stretch our legs. Upon arrival at the airport, we'll find a spot for a quick lunch.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, our short flight back to Ulaanbaatar departs. Upon arrival, we'll drive to our hotel, where we'll receive room assignments and check in. Then, you'll have a free afternoon for individual pursuits. You may wish to ascend Zaisan Hill. Walk up 284

steps to enjoy panoramic views of the city and the four sacred mountains that surround it—Bayanzurkh, Chingeltei, Khairkhan, and Bogd Khaan.

Our small group will depart the hotel later this evening to walk to a local restaurant for dinner.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** Following dinner, we'll walk back to the hotel. You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

**Day 13 Ulaanbaatar • Controversial Topic: Mongolia's relationship with Russia and China • Visit *Morin khuur* workshop • Traditional Mongolian performance**

- Destination: Ulaanbaatar
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** The horse head fiddle factory we'll visit today is open Monday through Friday. If your visit falls on a weekend, your Trip Experience Leader will try to rearrange the visit to another day.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll drive to Mongolia National University and meet a local expert in international affairs who will speak with us about the **Controversial Topic** facing Mongolia's government as it works to maintain relationships with Russia and China—the two superpowers that flank the country. He or she will sit down with us and discuss the current issues facing Mongolia's government, which became a democratic country in the early 1990s, as it balances working alongside these powerful neighbors while also maintaining relationships with other developed countries around the world.

After our conversation, we'll drive to a workshop that produces traditional *morin khuur* (horse head fiddles), registered on UNESCO's World Heritage of Art and Cultural Objects list. Mimicking the shape of the all-important horse, this bowed instrument features a long neck with a carved horse head at its end and two horse-hair strings. During our workshop experience, we'll learn how the ritual of *morin khuur* playing has become intertwined with Mongolia's history and culture.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll drive back to our hotel. You'll have a few hours of free time for independent exploration.

Our group will reconvene in the hotel lobby later today and walk to a nearby performance venue. Here we'll enjoy some traditional Mongolian entertainment such as the unique art of Mongolian throat singing, a horse head fiddle performance (like the ones we learned about earlier today), acts of contortion, traditional and contemporary dances, or folk singing.

**Dinner:** On your own after the performance. Perhaps you'd like to seek out *buuz*, a traditional steamed dumpling filled with beef or mutton.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

**Day 14 Fly to the Gobi Desert**

- Destination: Gobi Desert
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Dream Gobi Camp or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's itinerary is dependent on domestic flight schedules. In the summer, the departure time is likely to be very early



in the morning and therefore will require an early wake up call. No matter the schedule, all included features will still happen today or tomorrow.

**Early Morning:** Today's agenda is likely to require an early wake up call.

**Breakfast:** A boxed breakfast at the airport.

**Morning:** Our short flight to the Gobi Desert departs early this morning. After collecting our luggage, we'll drive to our desert camp.

Covering much of southern Mongolia, the Gobi Desert is a breathtaking region of semi-arid desert terrain that is dazzling in its variety—from rocky outcrops to barren stretches of seemingly endless, rolling gravel plains. It is the world's coldest and northernmost desert, as well as a great repository of dinosaur remains. Caravan routes have been crossing the Gobi since ancient times. When Marco Polo, seeking the fabled capital of the Kublai Khan, encountered this vast and unforgiving landscape in the 1270s, he proclaimed, "It consists entirely of mountains and sands and valleys. There is nothing at all to eat." But nomads—and wildlife—do survive here (and you will certainly be well-fed as we venture into this mysterious, otherworldly region). It's also the last refuge of wild two-humped Bactrian camels and home to the rare snow leopard and desert-dwelling Gobi bear.

Upon arrival, we'll check in to our desert camp. As we settle in, we'll enjoy another light breakfast and have some time to relax.

**Lunch:** At camp.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll enjoy free time to explore our surroundings. You may choose to participate in an archery lesson, or you may also check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

**Dinner:** At camp.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

## **Day 15 Gobi Desert • Camel ride • Flaming Cliffs**

- Destination: Gobi Desert
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Dream Gobi Camp or similar

**Breakfast:** At camp.

**Morning:** While only about 5% of the Gobi Desert is sand, we begin the day by exploring one of the few regions of the Gobi covered in dunes at Moltsoog Els. We'll begin our discoveries driving out to visit a family who breeds Bactrian camels. There, we'll have an opportunity to ride one of their twin-humped animals through the desert sands.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** This afternoon, we'll drive to Bayanzag, more commonly referred to as the Flaming Cliffs. This region is famous as the location of the first nest of dinosaur eggs and other fossils found here by the American paleontologist Roy Chapman Andrews in the 1920s—and it was he who nicknamed the site "Flaming Cliffs" for the surreal, glowing orange color of the surrounding rocks and cliffs. We'll enjoy a bit of light trekking among Flaming Cliffs before driving back to our camp. The remainder of the afternoon is free for your own discoveries. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

**Dinner:** At camp.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

## Day 16 Explore Yol Valley

- Destination: Gobi Desert
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Dream Gobi Camp or similar

**Breakfast:** At camp.

**Morning:** Today we will depart for the Yol Valley (also known as Vulture Valley). We'll travel across the Gobi Desert toward the Gurvan Saikhan Mountains and enter the deep gorge of this national park. This area sees little precipitation; however, it does contain a deep ice field that grows to more than 10 feet thick and over 2 miles long by the end of winter. Decades ago, it remained intact year round, but due to the effects of climate change, it now tends to disappear by July.

We'll begin our discoveries with a visit to a small museum at the entrance to the protected zone, where we'll learn more about the petrified trees, flora, and fauna of the Gobi Desert. Then, we'll drive to the Yol Valley visitor arrival area. There, we'll set out on a 2-hour hike amid impressive mountain scenery, taking time to notice the region's endemic plants and local wildlife—including the valley's namesake, the lammergeier vulture (*yol* in Mongolian).

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** We'll drive back to our camp, where we'll enjoy some free time. Perhaps you'd like to relax after our hike this morning, or you may wish to take advantage of the camp's amenities, such as the pool, sauna, and spa.

**Dinner:** At camp.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

## Day 17 Fly to Ulaanbaatar

- Destination: Ulaanbaatar
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel or similar

**Early Morning:** Today's agenda is likely to require an early wake up call.

**Breakfast:** A boxed breakfast at camp.

**Morning:** Early this morning, we depart our camp and drive to Dalanzadgad, where we board a short flight to Ulaanbaatar. Upon arrival, we'll drive to the hotel, where we'll check in and receive our room assignments.

**Lunch:** On your own in Ulaanbaatar. Perhaps you will try *khuushur*, fried savory pastries typically filled with mutton or goat meat.

**Afternoon:** This afternoon, you can relax at the hotel or explore on your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

**Dinner:** On your own in Ulaanbaatar. Perhaps you'd like to try *khorkhog*, a Mongolian barbecue dish consisting of lamb cooked inside a pot over an open fire with carrots, onions, and potatoes.

**Evening:** Free to spend as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

## Day 18 Ulaanbaatar • Optional *Tsam* dance experience

- Destination: Ulaanbaatar
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Explore on your own in Ulaanbaatar today. You may visit the the Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts, home to a collection of Mongolian art from prehistory through the early 20th

century, along with works by Zanabazar, a 17th-century artist and Mongolia's first spiritual head of Tibetan Buddhism. Zanabazar has been referred to as the "Michelangelo of Asia."

Or, you may choose to learn about traditional *Tsam* dance during an optional tour this morning. We'll head to nearby Dashchoilon Monastery—the first Buddhist monastery to introduce *Tsam* dancing to Mongolia. A masked and costumed performance, *Tsam* combines music, storytelling, and religious symbolism to bless and purify the community while driving away evil spirits, and is traditionally performed by monks.

**Lunch:** On your own. Or, if you have joined our optional tour, sit down to enjoy a light meal at the monastery during an included lunch.

**Afternoon:** Spend the afternoon making your own discoveries in Ulaanbaatar. Those on our optional tour will have some free time to explore the monastery before heading back to the hotel.

Our group will reconvene later today to walk to a local restaurant.

**Dinner:** This evening, we gather to celebrate our adventure at a Farewell Dinner, toasting to the many discoveries we made.

**Evening:** The remainder of the evening is free. You may wish to turn in early to prepare for your flight home tomorrow.

### **Day 19 Return to U.S.**

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll check out of our hotel after breakfast and drive to the airport for our return journey to the U.S.

## **OPTIONAL TOURS**

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During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

**Please note:** *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*



## Meet a Golden Eagle Hunter

(Day 6 \$65 per person)

Depart your camp this afternoon to learn about the ancient sport of golden eagle hunting from a local hunter. Across Central Asia, hunters have been perfecting the traditional practice of golden eagle hunting. Similar to the Western sport of falconry, Central Asian hunters enlist the help of highly trained golden eagles to locate prey like foxes, hares, even wolves. These majestic animals are more than just a trained pet, as you will learn. Hunters form lifelong bonds with their eagles over the course of their lives, and train them to locate and retrieve prey without eating it themselves. We will watch a training between a golden eagle and its handler.

**Please note:** *This optional tour must be purchased prior to departure and is only offered from 5/15 to 8/15.*

## Tsam dance experience

(Day 18 \$85 per person)

Learn about traditional *Tsam* dance during a visit to nearby Dashchoilon Monastery—the first Buddhist monastery to introduce *Tsam* dancing to Mongolia. A masked and costumed performance, *Tsam* combines music, storytelling, and religious symbolism to bless and purify the community while driving away evil spirits, and is traditionally performed by monks. You will also enjoy an included Buddhist vegetarian lunch at the monastery.

**Please note:** *This optional tour must be purchased before departure.*

## PRE-TRIP

### South Korea: Seoul

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- » Roundtrip air transportation from Seoul and Ulaanbataar
- » Accommodations: 5 nights in Seoul at the Pacific Hotel or similar
- » 10 meals—5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 2 dinners
- » 4 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers
- » **Please note:** Travelers purchasing their own international flights will be responsible for additional internal flight costs.

#### PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Explore the modern, yet deeply traditional, capital city of Seoul, South Korea. From the serenity of the mighty Han to the traditional teahouses and bustling city streets, this vast metropolis is brimming with discoveries. Experience traditional food markets, explore ancient palaces, and learn about the Korean Peninsula's controversial history at the Demilitarized Zone (or "DMZ"), the 160-mile long stretch of no-man's land that separates communist North Korea from the capitalist South.*

##### Day 1 Depart U.S.

**Afternoon/Evening:** Depart today on an overnight flight from the U.S. to Seoul, South Korea.

##### Day 2 Arrive in Seoul, South Korea

- Destination: Seoul
- Accommodations: Pacific Hotel or similar

**Afternoon:** Arrive in Seoul where an O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist with your transfer to our hotel, where you will meet your Korean Trip Experience Leader.

Nicknamed "The Miracle on the Han" for its stunning rebirth after near destruction in the Korean War, Seoul is sure to make quite an impression at first sight. Watched over by four

"guardian" mountains, the metropolis is home to ten million residents. Awash in neon lights at night and buzzing with activity by day, its energetic spirit might keep you from noticing that it is also home to serene temples and hiking trails leading into the mountains.

Later in the day, your Trip Experience Leader will offer to lead an orientation walk to show us where to find the nearest convenience store, pharmacy, and local dining spots, and whatever you may need.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. You may wish to seek out *bibimbap*, a warm rice dish topped with

seasoned vegetables, egg, sliced meat (typically beef), *kimchi* (fermented cabbage) and various spices.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

### Day 3 Explore Seoul

- Destination: Seoul
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Pacific Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll meet with our Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Briefing in the hotel. During this briefing, we will introduce ourselves and review our itinerary in more detail.

After the briefing, we'll drive to Gyeongbokgung Palace, also known as the Northern Palace. This 14th-century site is the largest of the "Five Grand Palaces" of Korea's longest ruling family, the Joseon Dynasty, and earns its nickname from its location which is farther north than the other four palace complexes. We'll enjoy a walking tour of the palace, stopping to take in sights such as Geunjeongjeon (the Imperial Throne Hall), Gyeonghoeru Pavilion, the royal quarters, banquet hall, and more.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Afterwards, we'll drive back to the hotel, where we'll enjoy some free time. Later this afternoon, your Trip Experience Leader will offer another orientation walk to help the group get more acquainted with the area, answer any questions you may have, and provide activity and restaurant recommendations.

**Dinner:** We'll toast to the beginning of our pre-trip discoveries with a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps catch up on your travel journaling or enjoy a drink at the hotel bar after your first full day in Seoul.

### Day 4 Seoul • Visit the DMZ

- Destination: Seoul
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Pacific Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll drive into the Demilitarized Zone (or "DMZ") between North and South Korea. Upon arrival, we'll board a special DMZ coach.

In 1953, North and South Korea worked out an agreement (with prodding from China and the U.S.) to allow for a buffer zone separating the ideologically opposed regions. Whenever the two Koreas need to negotiate, they enter the DMZ. As carefully controlled as that may sound, four tunnels beneath the DMZ have been discovered, one of which appeared to be part of a North Korean plot to attack Seoul. Monitoring has been constant ever since.

During our excursion, we'll visit an exhibition hall detailing the Korean War, as well as the Dorasan Observatory where we'll get another glimpse across the border and into North Korea. We'll also visit the nearby Dorasan Train Station, designed to connect the railroads of the two Koreas, and a "peace market," where DMZ-produced goods are for sale.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.



**Afternoon:** We'll drive back to Seoul after lunch. Enjoy free time to explore for the remainder of the day. Feel free to check with your Trip Experience Leader for activity ideas.

**Dinner:** On your own. Perhaps you'd like to try *japchae*, a sweet and savory dish of stir-fried glass noodles, vegetables, meat, soy sauce, and sesame oil.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

### **Day 5 Seoul • Visit Starfield Open Library**

- Destination: Seoul
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Pacific Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll drive to Seoul's impressive, and relatively new, Starfield Open Library. During our visit, we'll have the opportunity to talk with young Koreans and learn about their hopes and dreams for the future.

**Lunch:** A local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Enjoy free time for the afternoon. Perhaps you'd like to visit Changdeokgung Palace, one of the "Five Grand Palaces" built by the kings of the Joseon Dynasty. Considered the most favored palace of many Joseon princes, the palace has retained many original structural and environmental elements over the centuries, though, like the other grand palaces, it was heavily damaged during the Japanese occupation. A few highlights to see here are the Donhwamun Gate (the main palace gate), Geumcheongyo Bridge (the oldest bridge in Seoul), and Injeongjeon Hall (the throne hall).

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** You'll have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you'd like to embark on a moonlight cruise down the Han River. This is a wonderful way to soak up the skyline and wind down after a day of exploration.

### **Day 6 Seoul • Conversation with a North Korean defector • Optional lunch with a local Korean family**

- Destination: Seoul
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Pacific Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Our group will gather at the hotel to meet with a North Korean defector, who will give us a sobering glimpse of life living under that country's oppressive regime. We'll have the opportunity to ask questions about the transition from life in the North to life in the South and understand firsthand the effects of this toxic political divide.

You have the freedom to spend the remainder of the day as you wish. Perhaps you'd like to enjoy a leisurely day of exploration, such as walking through the neighborhoods of Hongdae and Itaewon-dong. These areas provide a great opportunity to observe daily life and various aspects of local culture, such as K-pop dance (you may encounter street performers illustrating this performance style), tea house traditions, and Korean architecture. You may also wish to explore the upscale area of Gangnam-gu, made famous by the K-pop song "Gangnam Style," sung by South Korean performer Psy.

**Lunch:** On your own.

Or, you may wish to join our optional lunch at the home of a local Korean family. Sit down with our hosts and enjoy this unique opportunity to enjoy traditional Korean dishes while learning about daily life here in Seoul.

**Afternoon:** For those not on the tour, the afternoon is at your leisure. For those on the tour, we'll return to the hotel after lunch, where we'll enjoy free time for the remainder of the day.

**Dinner:** On your own—check with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas. Meat-eaters may enjoy *bulgogi* (literally translating to “fire meat”), marinated slices of beef or pork grilled on a barbecue or stove-top griddle.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. As this is your final night in Seoul, perhaps you'd like to grab a drink with your fellow travelers to reminisce about the discoveries you've made in South Korea.

## OPTIONAL TOUR

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### Lunch with a Korean Family

(Day 6 \$105 per person)

This afternoon, join a local Korean family for lunch in their home. As you sit down with our hosts, you'll enjoy this unique opportunity to enjoy traditional Korean dishes while learning about daily life here in Seoul.

**Please note:** *This optional experience must be reserved prior to departure.*

### Day 7 Fly to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia • Join main trip

- Destination: Ulaanbaatar
- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** You have the freedom to make your own discoveries in Seoul today.

**Lunch:** On your own.

**Afternoon:** Later this afternoon, we'll check out of our hotel and drive to the airport in Seoul where we'll catch our flight to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

**Dinner:** On your own at the airport in Seoul.

**Evening:** We'll arrive in Ulaanbaatar later this evening and transfer to our hotel. Here, we'll join our fellow travelers at the hotel and begin our *Mongolia & the Gobi Desert* adventure.

# TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

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## Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

## Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

## Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** You will need 4 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Seoul, South Korea:** No additional passport pages needed.

## No Visas Required

Travelers with a U.S. passport do not need any visas for this adventure, including the optional trip extensions.

## Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **[www.pvsinternational.org](http://www.pvsinternational.org)**.

## Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.



## **Travel Protection Required:**

For new bookings starting 1/1/25, Overseas Adventure Travel requires all travelers purchase travel protection with Medical Evacuation coverage of at least \$200,000 and Medical Expense coverage of at least \$50,000, due to the remote nature of your adventure.

## **O.A.T. Travel Protection:**

If you **purchase your Travel Protection Plan** through O.A.T., no further action will be needed, as the Medical Evacuation coverage and Medical Expense coverage meets these requirements.

## **Your Own Travel Protection:**

If you purchase your own travel protection, we recommend you review the plan to ensure Medical Evacuation coverage of at least \$200,000 and Medical Expense coverage of at least \$50,000 is included. Once you confirm your plan meets the requirements, you will need to email the following information to **TravelCoverage@oattravel.com**:

- Traveler Name(s)
- Reservation Number
- Trip Protection Provider
- Policy Number
- Date of Purchase
- Copy of your Policy Documents

You can also contact our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814** to review this policy. You will be required to provide proof of coverage by 60 days prior to departure at the latest.

## **Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents**

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

## **Overseas Taxes & Fees**

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

## RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

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### Is This Adventure Right for You?

**Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure.** We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

### PACING

- 4 locations in 17 days with 1 to 2 one-night stays, depending on your departure
- Lengthy overland travel of 2-4 hours each on several days
- 4 internal flights, which could be delayed due to frequent weather changes (5 internal flights for travelers on the pre-trip extension to Seoul, South Korea)

### PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 3 miles unassisted and participate in 6-8 hours of physical activities each day
- You must be able to stand without the assistance of a grab-bar in Asian-style squat toilets if Western-style toilets are unavailable
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

### CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 77-95°F in July and August, to 41-60°F in May and September, when snow is also expected
- Due to the varied geography of Mongolia, you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions

### TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Frequent travel in 4x4 vehicles over poorly maintained—and occasionally non-existent—country roads in South Gobi

- During most transfers, Western-style toilet facilities may not be available; however, drivers will make every effort to find suitable rest area stops upon request
- City travel by 45-passenger air-conditioned motorcoach (no toilet on board). In the Khovsgol Lake area, ride in an 8-passenger van with air-conditioning; and in the South Gobi, ride in 4X4 Jeeps, with seating for 3 travelers each
- Three 3-hour drives, 4 internal flights of 1-2-hours each

## **FLIGHT INFORMATION**

- Travel time will be 17-25 hours and will most likely have two connections of between 2-3 hours

## **ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES**

- Lodgings in Ulaanbaatar are standard hotels, but in many locales, we stay in traditional *ger* tents, with Western-style bath facilities

## **Steps to Take Before Your Trip**

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel) or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

## **No Vaccines Required**

### **Recommended Vaccines**

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

### **Medication Suggestions**

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness or electrolyte packets
- Prescription pain medication in the unlikely event of an injury in a remote location
- Motion sickness medication, if you are susceptible

**This is one adventure where you don't want to forget your medications—it may be hard to get them in Ulaanbaatar, and it may be impossible in the countryside of Mongolia.**



## Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

## Bringing Medications to South Korea

At time of writing, the State Department had detailed instructions about bringing medications into South Korea. We encourage you to read the entire post online, but here are the key points:

- Prescription medications containing narcotics and/or amphetamines are not permitted without submitting a written application to the Narcotics Control Division of the Korean Food and Drug Administration (KFDA) before traveling. Over-the-counter amphetamines are illegal to bring into South Korea.
- For prescription medications not containing narcotics or amphetamines, travelers are allowed to bring up to six bottles of medication (a three month supply) for personal use. All medications must be accompanied by the original prescriptions, a letter from your doctor specifying the medical condition being treated with the prescriptions, and a statement from your doctor listing the medications that you will be bringing into South Korea.
- For more information on whether or not you will be allowed to bring the particular medication into South Korea, you could consult the U.S. Embassy Seoul website at **<http://kr.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/doctors/>**.

## Staying Healthy on Your Trip

### Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying

- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

## Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

## Special Meal Requests

If you have a dietary preference (i.e. Atkins diet, low-salt, etc.) or religious diet, please let us know at least 30 days prior to your departure. Keep in mind that these types of special meal requests **are not guaranteed** in Mongolia or South Korea where most restaurants do not offer them due to cultural differences.

## Water

- Tap water is not safe to drink. We recommend that you stick to filtered, boiled, or bottled water instead.
- If you prefer bottled water, it is available for sale. But a better alternative is to bring a reusable water bottle from home and fill it up from safe water sources when available.
- Avoid drinks with ice in them (unless your Trip Experience Leader advises that the water at that establishment is safe).

## Food

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals, and fresh fruits and salads at these establishments are generally as safe as they are in restaurants in the U.S. Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest restaurants for the meal you take on your own.
- When eating on your own be very careful with food sold from vendors on the street, and with uncooked fruit and other foods. Fruit that you peel yourself is usually safe—avoid lettuce and other unpeeled produce (unless your Trip Experience Leader states the establishment has safe water).

## Electricity Supply

**A constant electricity supply cannot be guaranteed during overnight stays.** Travelers dependent on electricity supply (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) should consider a different O.A.T. adventure or ensure their apparatus has back-up battery power. We strongly recommend bringing a flashlight with you—the lighting in the camps can be dim.

# MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

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## Top Three Tips

- **Bring a cash reserve to cover expenses in Mongolia.** ATM cards, credit cards, and debit cards are not accepted in rural Mongolia so you should not rely on these alone. Torn, worn, dirty, or taped U.S. bills may not be accepted. Look for bills issued in 2009 and later.
- **However, you should still bring other types of payment as a Plan B**, such as an ATM card and a credit card. These will be more useful in cities like Seoul or Ulaanbaatar.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and are rarely accepted in shops and restaurants.

## Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like [www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter), your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

**Mongolia:** Tugrik (₮)

**South Korea:** Korean Won (₩)

## How to Exchange Money

You can change money when you arrive at the airport, or at banks. For more information on what type of currency can be used on this trip, see the “Currency” section. Torn, dirty, or taped U.S. bills may not be accepted for exchange or payment. It is best to use new bills—both in terms of use and issue date. Please try to use bills issued in 2014 and later.

Using a local ATM on an international network will allow you to withdraw money from your U.S. account in local currency; your bank at home will calculate the conversion rate and charge you in U.S. dollars. However, do not rely on ATMs in rural Mongolia where they can be hard to find. (You can find them in Ulaanbaatar.) Plan to bring a cash reserve to cover most of your expenses and think of the ATM as a Plan B.

## ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

**Mongolia:** ATMs are really only available in large cities like Ulaanbaatar. But even in Ulaanbaatar, the ATMs that are available may not accept your card; you may need to try more than one before you can withdraw money. For these reasons, you should NOT expect to rely on ATMs the way you might in the U.S. or in Europe. It is probably more practical to bring a reserve of cash for daily expenses and view the ATM as a backup. Another option is to bring enough cash to get part way through the trip, and then plan on making one large withdrawal in Ulaanbaatar to cover the rest of the trip.

**South Korea:** ATMs are very common. Look for ATMs listed as a “Global ATM” as they accept international cards.

## Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

**Mongolia:** Credit card use is becoming more common in Mongolia, especially in Ulaanbaatar, but not in the countryside. Many businesses, shops, and restaurants are still “cash only”. Therefore a credit card will be useful in some situations, but not all, which is why bringing a cash reserve for daily expenses is recommended. Businesses that do take credit cards will often charge a fee to do so; ask before making your purchase.

**South Korea:** Credit cards are common but may not be accepted by street vendors or at small restaurants.

## Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don’t assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don’t work outside of the U.S.!

## Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$8-\$12 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader

is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*

- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1-2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** Tipping at restaurants is not a part of Mongolian culture or tradition. If you receive such good service that you would like to leave a tip, 10% of the bill is a generous amount. (At restaurants, you may see a 10-15% charge on the bill. This is a sales tax, not a tip.)
- **Taxi drivers:** If you are taking a taxi by yourself, keep in mind that tipping is not common practice, but many people simply let the driver keep the change by rounding up the fare to the next whole number.

*Please Note:* Your tour price includes gratuities on the main trip and optional extensions for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters that may assist you during the scheduled activities on your adventure. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.



## AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

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### Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

#### Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Customization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Customization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our customization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Customization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner) under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

### Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

### Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: [www.rome2rio.com](http://www.rome2rio.com)

## Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

## What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner)).

## Optional Tours: Reserve Before You Go

We strongly recommend that you reserve the following optional tours in advance. Unless otherwise noted, the deadline to do so is 45 days prior to your departure. Occasionally, space will be available for booking onsite, but this not guaranteed. Optional tours with O.A.T. can only be purchased with a credit card (Visa or MasterCard) or a debit card with credit card functionality. Because our headquarters are in Boston, charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as "OPT Boston" (depending on your credit card company).

### **Lunch with a Korean Family**

This afternoon, join a local Korean family for lunch in their home. As you sit down with our hosts, you'll enjoy this unique opportunity to enjoy traditional Korean dishes while learning about daily life here in Seoul.

**Please note:** *This optional experience must be reserved prior to departure.*

This optional tour is offered during the *South Korea: Seoul* trip extension. The cost is \$105 per person.

### **Meet a Golden Eagle Hunter**

Depart your camp this afternoon to learn about the ancient sport of golden eagle hunting from a local hunter. Across Central Asia, hunters have been perfecting the traditional practice of golden eagle hunting. Similar to the Western sport of falconry, Central Asian hunters enlist the help of highly trained golden eagles to locate prey like foxes, hares, even wolves. These majestic animals are more than just a trained pet, as you will learn. Hunters form lifelong bonds with their eagles over the course of their lives, and train them to locate and retrieve prey without eating it themselves. We will watch a training between a golden eagle and its handler.

**Please note:** *This optional tour must be purchased prior to departure and is only offered from 5/15 to 8/15.*

This optional tour is offered during the main trip. The cost is \$65 per person.

### **Communicating with Home from Abroad**

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

### **Cell Phones**

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one. Factory unlocked GSM system phones will work in Mongolia.

## Calling Apps

We recommend you use WhatsApp while abroad to communicate home and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

## Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

## How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

**Mongolia:** +976

**South Korea:** +82

## PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

### Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Checked bag and carry-on <b>combined</b> weight: <b>33 lbs TOTAL</b> . May bring up to 55 lbs total <b>if</b> using hotel's left-luggage service.
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+ width + depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Please do not bring a hard-sided (clamshell) suitcase.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
South Korea pre-trip extension: Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p><b>Luggage rules:</b> Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p> <p><b>Luggage limits in Mongolia:</b> Some of our flights within Mongolia have very strict luggage limits—33 lbs TOTAL, all luggage added together. However, your flights between South Korea and Mongolia have a larger limit—55 lbs total.</p> <p><b>So what does this mean for your adventure?</b> It means you may bring up to 55 lbs worth of luggage total. But you but if you do, there will be times during your trip that you must leave extra luggage behind at the hotel in Ulaanbaatar. Bring an extra bag—either as your carry-on for the international flight, or packed into your suitcase—that you can use to carry what you need for 3 to 4 days while the rest of your luggage is in Ulaanbaatar.</p>	

#### Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.



- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

## Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** One duffel bag or suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- ***TIP:** The popular wheeled carry-on bags often do not fit in local overhead compartments, particularly on our motor coaches and smaller aircraft. If you decide to bring a wheeled carry-on bag, be sure to include the wheels when you measure its dimensions. Or factor the space the wheels take up when selecting a carry-on.*
- **A Small Additional Bag: This small bag is a necessity for certain portions of your trip.** It should have a luggage tag and a lock. You can use this smaller bag as your carry-on for the international flight or pack it into your main luggage. You'll need it for those times when luggage storage is so limited that we must leave some luggage behind. (For example, for flights to/from the Southern Gobi on the main trip.) At these times, we stow your main luggage in the Ulaanbaatar hotel, while you carry just what you need for 3 to 4 days in this small duffel. Then we'll pick up our main luggage when we return. A waterproof bag is preferable, to protect your things from rain.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

## Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest several layers of clothing. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. We recommend you wear sturdy walking shoes, light hiking boots, or similar supportive sports shoes that offer good traction.

- **Warm layers:** Bring some warm layers, even in summer. While July and August can be very hot during the day, the nighttime temperatures in the mountains can be a chilly 40°.

### Style Hints

- Dress on our trip is functional and casual, consisting of basic pants or everyday skirts, shirts, and sportswear.
- Your dress should be somewhat conservative, to be respectful of the local, traditional culture.

### Recommended Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. Each travelers packing list may be different depending on the climate you are used to. We recommend using [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don’t forget a reusable water bottle—you’ll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

### Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric, like cotton or cotton-blend. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts.
- ☐ Trousers and/or jeans: Comfortable and loose fitting is best. Avoid tight-fitting jeans for comfort and ease of movement.
- ☐ Shoes and socks: Shoes should be comfortable walking or running shoes
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat or visor for sun protection
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Light cotton or wool sweater
- ☐ Fleece jacket or heavy sweater for the mountains (Yes, even in summer. It gets chilly at night.)
- ☐ Underwear and sleepwear
- ☐ Optional: Swimsuit, in case a hotel has a whirlpool or pool

## Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

**For June through August departures, add these items to your list:**

- ☐ Walking shorts: Cut long for modesty. Most likely you won't want shorts for every day of the trip, but they can be useful in the warmest places, like the Gobi.
- ☐ You should still bring a warm layer as it can get chilly at night in the mountains.

## Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses, sunglasses
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues
- ☐ Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial "water-free" hand cleanser
- ☐ Flashlight—the lighting in the camps can be dim.
- ☐ Electrical transformer & plug adapters: see "Electricity" for details.

## Medicines & First Aid Gear

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- ☐ Prescription antibiotic for gastrointestinal illness or electrolyte packet
- ☐ Optional: A face mask or buff. This can be handy in the Gobi and in Ulaanbaatar, where smog is an issue (especially in the winter). Travelers with asthma are advised to bring their medication.

- ☐ Optional: A strong prescription pain medication for rare emergency purposes
- ☐ Optional: Motion sickness medicine if you are susceptible

## Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

### Voltage

Electricity in Mongolia and South Korea is 220 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

### Plugs

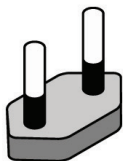
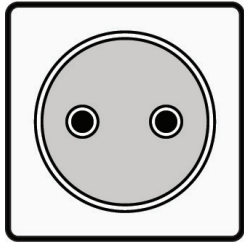
The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because there are many different types of plugs in this region, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

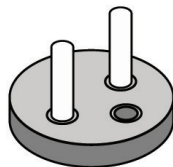
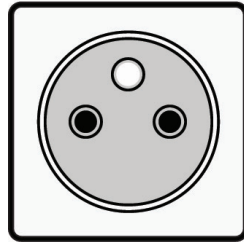
**Mongolia:** C or E (Note: C plugs will fit in E sockets)

South Korea: C and F

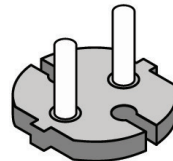
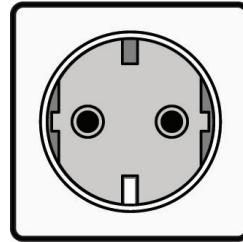
Type C



Type E



Type F



### Availability

**A constant electricity supply cannot be guaranteed during overnight stays.** Travelers dependent on electricity supply (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) should consider a different O.A.T. adventure or ensure their apparatus has back-up battery power. We strongly recommend bringing a flashlight with you—the lighting in the camps can be dim.



## CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

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**Mongolia:** Mongolia's climate can be summed up in a few words: cold, dry, and windy (winter) or hot, dry, and windy (summer). Of course there are seasons when the temperatures vary, rain falls, and the wind stops, but since the country is completely landlocked, there is no nearby ocean to moderate the seasons. The result is a dramatic climate largely influenced by Mongolia's two main topographical features—its mountains and its deserts.

Mongolia is a four-season country. Spring is usually mid- or late-March through May. Summer runs until August. Fall is brief—September and October—with winter sometimes starting at the end of October, and sometimes holding out until November. Winter's arrival depends on your location; just like in the U.S., it arrives earlier in the north and in the mountains.

Spring can be a tough season to predict because the weather is so changeable (freak snowstorms have been known to occur as late as May). Summer is the warmest time of year, with average highs in the 70s, but the Gobi Desert can hit 100°F and Ulaanbaatar can sometimes get up to the low 90s. Despite these high daytime temperatures, keep in mind that even in July and August, the nighttime lows can be a chilly 40°, especially in the mountains. Summer is also usually the rainiest season, bringing color and life to the steppes. Many parts of the country experience long daylight hours in the summer—in Ulaanbaatar sunset can be as late as 9 or 10 pm. Fall brings moderate temperatures and, in the north, changing colors on the trees. Winter is very cold, with frost and snow almost everywhere—even in the Gobi Desert.

**Lake Khovsgol, Mongolia:** By the mountains, the winters are harsh and frequently below freezing. And even in the height of summer, it can be cool near the mountains, with temperatures ranging from the 60s to the 40s. On the shores of Lake Khovsgol, the winter can be just as harsh as in the mountains, but summer tends to be a bit more moderate as highs do get into the 70s. On the other hand, summer can be more rainy here than in other parts of the country. Despite being a desert, the Gobi is not always warm—the temperature drops sharply at night even after warm summer days. However, the daytime temperatures can be extremely high, especially in the summer.

**South Korea:** The climate in South Korea is temperate and is characterized by four distinct seasons, similar to the east coast of the United States. Spring and autumn are temperate, offering mild temperatures and little rainfall. The warm spring weather coaxes flowers into bloom, creating colorful landscapes. Autumn brings cooler weather and brilliant clear blue skies perfectly juxtaposed against the orange and red foliage. The summer months bring a hot and humid climate, peaking from late July to late August. The majority of South Korea's annual rainfall also occurs during the summer months. The summer months yield bountiful fresh fruits and vegetables and leave the mountains covered in luscious green. Although South Korea does not experience typhoons on the same scale as Southeast Asia, typically one to three typhoons hit South Korea each year. The typhoon season runs from June to September. Winters are the longest season with cold and dry weather typically in the 20s and 30s. Snow topped mountains are a

common sight, though it does not often snow in the plains. A phenomenon known as samhansaon occurs during the winter—a seven-day cycle during which the region experiences three cold days followed by four milder days.

On this adventure, we'll be visiting more than one climate zone, so you may need to pack for a couple types of weather. When not in the capital city Ulaanbaatar, we'll be visiting places as diverse as the foothills of the Khogno Khaan Mountains, the shores of Lake Khovsgol, and the Gobi Desert.

**TIP:** Because of the unpredictability of the climate in Mongolia, it is fairly common to experience a wider variation from the average temperature than in other countries. A good “rule of thumb” for Mongolia is to use the average highs and lows as a guideline, but to add/subtract at least 10 degrees either way. So for example, if you are traveling at a time of year that the average temperatures fall into the 70–40 degree range, be prepared for anything from 80–30 degrees.

### Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

## Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	ULAANBAATAR, MONGOLIA			GACHUURT, MONGOLIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	3 to -13	83 to 71	0.1	6 to -22	55	0.1
FEB	12 to -8	81 to 65	0.2	17 to -15	51	0.1
MAR	27 to 6	74 to 50	0.2	32 to 1	48	0.2
APR	44 to 23	66 to 40	0.5	49 to 18	39	0.6
MAY	59 to 37	64 to 37	0.9	62 to 32	40	0.8
JUN	68 to 48	73 to 43	2.5	73 to 45	56	2.4
JUL	71 to 53	78 to 50	3.1	77 to 51	68	3.2
AUG	68 to 50	80 to 49	3.3	73 to 47	68	3.1
SEP	58 to 38	76 to 44	1.6	62 to 31	55	1.7
OCT	43 to 23	75 to 48	0.5	46 to 16	45	0.5
NOV	21 to 3	79 to 60	0.3	24 to -4	47	0.3
DEC	7 to -8	83 to 72	0.1	10 to -17	50	0.1

MONTH	LAKE KHOVSGOL, MONGOLIA			DALANDZADAGAD, MONGOLIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	5 to -20	69	0.2	16 to -7	65	0.2
FEB	15 to -12	65	0.2	28 to 1	59	0.1
MAR	32 to 3	54	0.1	41 to 16	47	0.2
APR	48 to 21	43	0.1	55 to 30	37	0.2
MAY	61 to 32	42	0.5	68 to 43	33	0.3
JUN	70 to 46	52	7.0	79 to 54	40	0.5
JUL	73 to 50	64	3.3	81 to 58	48	1.7
AUG	71 to 46	67	2.3	79 to 56	50	1.5
SEP	61 to 32	58	0.5	68 to 44	46	0.5
OCT	46 to 16	56	0.6	54 to 28	43	0.0
NOV	24 to 0	61	0.1	35 to 11	59	0.3
DEC	9 to -13	67	0.2	23 to 0	63	0.1

MONTH	SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	33 to 21	72 to 52	1.0
FEB	38 to 25	72 to 50	1.4
MAR	49 to 35	74 to 47	2.2
APR	62 to 46	75 to 46	3.0
MAY	72 to 55	80 to 50	4.5
JUN	79 to 64	85 to 58	6.8
JUL	82 to 71	90 to 70	18.0
AUG	84 to 72	87 to 66	7.2
SEP	77 to 63	85 to 56	7.2
OCT	66 to 51	81 to 49	2.4
NOV	51 to 38	76 to 51	2.4
DEC	38 to 27	74 to 54	1.0

## ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

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### O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

### Mongolian Culture

With wide-open plains, never-ending steppes, and an otherworldly desert landscape, the best word to describe Mongolia is: vast. This is a country where you can roam for days without seeing another person and whose very name conjures an image of untamed wilderness—which isn't surprising, as Mongolia has the lowest population density of any independent country in the world. Journey to the "Land of the Blue Skies" to encounter pristine nature and a wild remoteness untouched by humanity.

Nomadism has deep roots in Mongolia: various nomadic empires controlled these lands until 1206, when Genghis Khan and his legendary horseback warriors galloped across the steppe to create the Mongol Empire, the largest land empire in history. Today, half of Mongolia's population is still nomadic or semi-nomadic, living in traditional *gers* or yurts and herding yaks to survive. Horses remain as important to the local culture as ever, and the annual Naadam Festival celebrates the "three manly sports" of wrestling, archery, and, of course, horse racing.

Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Mongolians have followed Buddhism, more specifically Tibetan Buddhism—or Lamaism. During the Soviet Union's rule over Mongolia, religious practices were greatly suppressed and over 700 monasteries and temples were destroyed by the Soviets.

Throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mongolia was ruled by the Soviet Union. With the dissolution of communism in the early 1990s, Mongolia conducted its own peaceful democratic revolution and enthusiastically entered the free market economy. Mongolians take pride in their country's democratic institutions of civic participation. They are extremely eager to enter the global community. In fact, they have troops on peacekeeping missions around the world and seek to host northeast Asian peace talks. But despite this initial foray into modernity, traditional Mongolia still remains a land largely passed over by time.

## Naadam Festival in Mongolia

The Naadam Festival is a public holiday that takes place annually from July 11–15. Known as “the three manly games,” this festival features wrestling, archery, and horse racing. While the most of the main events (such as the opening and closing ceremonies) are typically held in or around Ulaanbaatar on July 11–13, there are many smaller events held during the 5 day festival throughout the country. For more details and information, visit <http://naadamfestival.com/>.

## Taking Photographs

When taking photos of people in most countries, be polite and ask permission to take a close-up. In many countries, you should not be taking photos of children or older women without permission. Do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

Please obey any signs regarding photos at museum or sites; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

## Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don’t leave valuables unattended in your hotel room – use a room safe as needed. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt.

## Mongolian Cuisine

Only a very small percentage of Mongolian land is arable, which means that few crops grow there. Most agriculture is based in livestock—cattle, sheep, goats, horses, and camels. The result is a cuisine that leans heavily on meats and dairy but is light on vegetables. **Mutton, barley, yogurt, cheese**, a few vegetables, and either **noodles** or **rice** are common ingredients that Mongolian cooks use to their advantage.

- Some typical dishes include a trio of hearty dumplings called **buuz**, which are steamed; **bansh**, which are boiled, and **khuushuur**, which are fried. The dumplings are often filled with either mutton, goat, or beef seasoned with onion, garlic, and/or fennel seed.
- **Arvain guril**: Is a dish made with fried and malted barley eaten as a porridge made with milk fat and sugar.
- **Guriltai shul**: A Mongolian noodle soup that is made with onions, meat, and fried noodles.
- **Tsuivan**: This popular stew is made with cabbage, root vegetables, noodles, and mutton—although regional meat substitutes may be beef, camel, or horse.
- On special occasions, meat is cooked over hot stones to create dishes like **khorkhog**, which is mutton cooked in a container or a can, and **boodog**, which is meat (usually goat) cooked from the inside out. Yes, you read that correctly—the hot stones are inserted inside



the animal's stomach cavity, and then left to cook the meat from the inside. Only an experienced cook should try to prepare **boodog**, because if left too long, the steam from the hot rocks can buildup pressure and cause a goat explosion.

- Dairy products are also a mainstay of Mongolian cuisine and butter and cheese is made from many types of milk—**cow, sheep, goat, yak**, and even **camels**.
- Cheese may be in a form familiar to the West, or may be **aaruul**, dried curds.
- **Urum**: Or butter, which is similar to clotted cream, is often served in tea, or it may be caramelized into **khailmag**.
- Milk even takes on an alcoholic edge with **airag**, which is fermented mare's milk, and **arkhi**, which is a milk-based liquor. (With about 2% alcohol by volume, **airag** is closer to slightly spiked yogurt. **Arkhi** is stronger, usually about 10% ABV.)

## South Korean Cuisine

The key ingredients in Korean cuisine are **rice, noodles, vegetables, meats**, and **tofu**. Many dishes are simple with strong, pungent flavors. The harvest, preparation, and sharing of meals is an important part of the social fabric of Korea. Koreans from all levels of society pause at mealtime to come together for a communal experience. Korean meals often include a wealth of side dishes, or **banchan**, including the most famous example, **kimchi** (fermented Napa cabbage seasoned with chili peppers and salt).

- **Bibimbap**: This popular Korean dish is a “lunch in a bowl” combination of rice, vegetables, and beef that is often topped with a fried egg.
- **Jajangmyeon**: A Chinese dish of noodles with black bean sauce that the Koreans elevated and made their own using thicker noodles and adding more flavor.
- **Chimaek**: Another countrywide Korean favorite, which literally translates to “chicken beer,” and is just that: crispy fried chicken and beer.
- **Sundae**: A type of blood sausage that is a popular Korean street food.
- **Bulgogi**: Thin, marinated slices of beef or pork typically grilled on a barbecue. It is often stir-fried and eaten with Korean BBQ.

## Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

## Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

## Crafts & Souvenirs

### Mongolia

Mongolia offers many fine craft items at good prices—cashmere, leather goods, traditional clothing, hats, musical instruments—these are just some of the items to be on the look out for while shopping in Mongolia. Generally you can pay with local currency only, although some businesses will take credit cards and occasionally you can use U.S. dollars (see the previous “Credit Cards” and “Currency” sections for details).

You can find lovely and unique antiques in Mongolia for reasonable prices, but be aware that there are export laws in place, so some items cannot leave the country. Make sure the shop understands that you'll be taking the item out of the country and that they provide the correct documentation to do so. Also note that most stores do not allow returns (it is just not a part of the culture).

### South Korea

From department stores and high-end boutiques to more traditional markets, there are many shopping opportunities in South Korea. In Seoul, the main shopping area is in the city center, featuring two department stores and malls in addition to the popular Myeong-dong and Namdaemun markets.

- **Crafts:** Traditional crafts in Korea include products made from bamboo, pottery, lacquerware furniture, wooden masks, macrame, and embroidery.
- **Brush painting:** You will find a variety of brush paintings and calligraphy, as well as supplies in Korea. Brushes come in all different sizes and you will find a colorful array of inks. You may also find traditional paper of various textures at specialty shops.
- **Fashion:** Try on a *hanbok*, the traditional Korean garment or some beautiful hair pins, brooches, and other accessories. You may also find great deals on leather items, including coats, belts, gloves, shoes, and wallets.
- **Jade:** Jade, a symbol of purity in Korea, is made into statues as well as many different types of jewelry, including necklaces, bracelets, and hair pins.
- **Food:** You will find lots of interesting and healthy packaged snacks and treats that can make great gifts for friends and family at home. Some items to look for include *tteok* (a Korean rice cake), *soonja* cookies (also called “well-being” cookies), and rice wine, such as *soju* or *makkolli*. And while you might not be able to bring it home, don't forget to try *kimch'i*!

## U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, **[www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)** has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

## DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

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### Mongolia

#### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 603,909 square miles
- **Capital:** Ulaanbaatar
- **Languages:** Khalkha Mongol 90%, Turkic, and Russian are spoken.
- **Ethnicity:** Khalkh 81.9%, Kazak 3.8%, Dorvod 2.7%, Bayad 2.1%, Buryat-Bouriates 1.7%, Zakhchin 1.2%, Dariganga 1%, Uriankhai 1%, other 4.6%
- **Location:** Mongolia is bordered by Russia and China.
- **Geography:** Mongolia encompasses a wide range of terrain, with mountains, grassy steppes, and vast flat desert. Most of the north and west of the country is mountainous or hilly grasslands; the Gobi Desert takes up most of the south and the east. The country is land-locked, and although there are lakes and streams in certain areas, the combination of the terrain and low water supply means that a very small percent of the land is arable.
- **Population:** 3,495,090
- **Religion:** Buddhist 53%, Muslim 3%, Christian 2.2%, Shamanist 2.9%, other 0.4%, none 38.6%
- **Time Zone:** Mongolia observes Ulaanbaatar Time, twelve hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 6pm in Ulaanbaatar.

## National Holidays: Mongolia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Mongolia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

February Tsagaan Sur Lunar New Year (moves each year; see note above)

03/08 International Women's Day

07/11 Naadam Holiday (Day 1)

07/12 Naadam Holiday (Day 2)

07/13 Naadam Holiday (Day 3)

07/14 Naadam Holiday (Day 4)

07/15 Naadam Holiday (Day 5)

12/29 Independence Day

## Mongolia: A Brief History

Human habitation in Mongolia stretches back a surprisingly long time. The earliest traces date from 800,000 years ago, when *Homo erectus* lived in caves in the southwest. Modern man (*Homo sapiens*) arrived much later—only 40,000 years ago. By about 1000 BC, it appears that many local tribes turned away from farming and took up a nomadic existence instead. Horseback riding and nomadic way of life were to become hallmarks of Mongolian culture for thousands of years.

It wasn't until 209 B.C. that an official confederation of tribes emerged under a single head—King Modu Chanyu of the Xiongnu tribe. His military force soon emerged as the greatest threat to the Chinese kingdom, prompting the Chinese emperor to build a very large defensive wall—now known as the Great Wall of China. From 209 B.C. to 93 A.D., the Xiongnu Dynasty ran an empire that was larger than modern-day Mongolia. Subsequent dynasties, such as the Xianbei (93–234 A.D.), the Rouran (330–555), and the Gokturks (555–745) continued to enlarge the empire's holdings.

It was most likely the Rouran who were the first to use the words “Khan” as a title meaning “king” and “Khagan” meaning “emperor.” The use of two titles reflects the feudal nature of the society at the time—as no one man (or woman, there were “Khatun”)—could hold such a large territory, each region or tribe tended to have its own leader, equivalent in rank to a king. The Khagan, or emperor, was typically the strongest of these kings, and the one who would lead the others in military campaigns. When more than one strong king rose to power, the title of emperor was up for grabs. Such a situation occurred in 745, when the Uyghur, Karluk, and Basmyl tribes all rebelled against the ruling Gokturks. In the resulting power vacuum, the Uyghurs dominated the other tribes, and formed their own empire. Although ultimately defeated by the Kyrgyz (the ancestors of modern-day Kyrgyzstan), the Uyghurs left a strong cultural legacy—it was their script that was adopted as the official writing of Mongolia by Genghis Khan in the 13th century.

With the decline of the Uyghurs, a period of uncertainty followed until the rise of a chieftain named Temujin. In 1206 Temujin took the title Genghis Khan (King Genghis), united the Mongol tribes, and began a remarkable series of military campaigns across Asia and Europe. The result was the largest continuous land empire that has ever existed in human history. At its height, the Mongol Empire covered roughly 22% of the world's landmass. Yet when the Great Khan died in

1227, he was buried in an unmarked grave, in accordance with the customs of his tribe. After his death, the Mongol Empire gained lands and fame under Genghis' immediate descendants. The most notable of these successors was his grandson Kublai Khan, who founded the Yuan Dynasty in China. It wasn't until the fall of the Yuan in 1368 that the Mongol Empire collapsed back into smaller states.

For the next 200–300 years, the tribes of Mongolia would follow a pattern of fighting amongst themselves, uniting briefly under a strong leader, and then returning to disunion. The constant shifts in power only ended with the conquest of Mongolia by the Chinese Qing Dynasty in the 17th century. But in many ways, the Qing simply added new layers to the existing Mongol hierarchy. The Mongol nobles still attended on the Mongol emperor, who in turn was a vassal of the Qing emperor. The biggest change was at the bottom level of society—the Chinese assigned different levels of serfdom to the Mongol peasants.

The Chinese also divided Mongolia into different areas of administrative control; this is where the terms “Inner Mongolia” and “Outer Mongolia” come from. When the Qing Dynasty collapsed in 1911, Mongolia turned to Imperial Russia for protection and recognition as an independent state. Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, China reasserted its claim; ultimately Outer Mongolia won its independence in 1921 with Soviet backing. A communist regime was installed in 1924 and remained in power until a peaceful democratic revolution in 1990. (Inner Mongolia remained a part of China. Today Inner Mongolia is still considered an official part of China, but not quite Chinese—like Tibet or Hong Kong.)

## South Korea

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 38,502 square miles
- **Capital:** Seoul
- **Languages:** Korean
- **Ethnicity:** Homogeneous Korean (except for about 20,000 Chinese)
- **Location:** The southern half of the Korean Peninsula bordering the Sea of Japan, Yellow Sea, and North Korea by land.
- **Geography:** South Korea is composed mainly of hills and mountainous terrain, its highest point being approximately 6,400 feet above sea level, with wide coastal plains in the west and south.
- **Population:** 49,115,196 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Christian 31.6%, Buddhist 24.2%, other or unknown 0.9%, none 43.3%
- **Time Zone:** South Korea is on Korean Standard Time, 14 hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 8pm in Seoul.



## National Holidays: South Korea

In addition to the holidays listed below, South Korea celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Seollal. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

03/01 Independence Movement Day

05/01 Labor Day

05/05 Children's Day

06/06 Memorial Day

08/15 Liberation Day

10/03 National Foundation Day

10/09 Hangeul Proclamation Day

12/25 Christmas Day

## South Korea: A Brief History

Legend has it that a king named Dangun established Korea in 2333 BC. But similar to Britain's King Arthur, King Dangun may be a well-loved national symbol, but there is little evidence that he actually existed. It is more likely that Korea was first populated during the late Stone Age as the earliest pottery fragments that have been found date back to about 8,000 BC. As the Iron Age began (roughly 400 BC) the agricultural communities on the Korean Peninsula banded together as loosely-organized states, and then federations that became known as the Three Kingdoms: Goguryeo (founded in 37 BC), Baekje (18 BC), and Silla (57 BC), each of whom left their mark on Korean history.

With Silla the dominant power in southern Korea and a former Goguryeo general dominating the north, some historians call this time "the North and South States Period". And even today, South Korea tends to identify with Silla while North Korea tends to reference Goguryeo. It wasn't until 200 years later—in 918—that the two states were united under a single ruler, the charismatic Taejo Wang Geon, who took advantage of internal fighting in Silla to seize power and found his own dynasty. The new kingdom was known as Goryeo—which is the origin of the word "Korea"—and is usually seen as the start of modern Korea. Once in power, Taejo Wang Geon set about reconciling the two former rival states with leniency and tact. Instead of punishing the defeated Silla, he sought alliances with the local clans, allowed the Silla nobles to keep their place in society, and even married a Silla princess to ensure their royal line did not die out. This policy of reconciliation through diplomatic measures—plus his work in codifying laws and promoting Buddhism—gave his dynasty a stable foundation that would last four centuries.

In the early 1300s, Korean society was mostly stable, prosperous, and orderly. Citizens had a place in the social order based on rank, with the aristocratic elite at the top, the military and scholarly classes in the middle, and peasantry (mostly farmers) as the lower class. At the bottom were slaves and the *cheonmin* (an outcast group of butchers, tanners, and entertainers). Culturally, the country drew inspiration from China. There was a great deal of trade between the two nations, and while Buddhism was the official religion in Korea, Chinese-style Confucianism was also practiced and respected. All this changed when the Golden Horde swept across Asia.

By 1231 the Mongols had reached Korea, which was prized because of its maritime experience, and for most of the next century Korea was either fighting the Mongols or serving them as a dependent state. The Mongols created internal struggles within Korea that only became worse when the Mongol Empire itself was overthrown in 1316. This paved the way for General Yi Seong-gye to overthrow the Goryeo rulers and found his own dynasty, the Joseon. Joseon rule, which lasted about a century, was a period notable for a rise in Confucianism while Buddhist monks were exiled into the mountains, along with many policies introduced to advance Korean society. By the end of the 1880s Koreans were divided between those who wished to embrace traditional culture and those seeking reforms to modernize and level class differences.

The Gapsin Coup in 1884 was meant to drive reform, but instead created an opportunity for foreign powers like Japan, China, and Russia to insert themselves in Korean politics, effectively creating an international rivalry over Korea. Tension mounted when two of the rivals—Japan and Russia—went to war in 1904. With Japan proving victorious, Korea fell into their sphere of influence and was formally annexed in 1910, with Japan ruling Korea until 1945. Although relatively brief, Japan's brutal rule left deep scars in the Korean psyche. Among Korea's shameful humiliations were Japan's use of Korean girls as so-called "comfort women", prostitutes for Japanese soldiers during World War II.

After the war, Korea was in a difficult position. As subjects of Japan, the Koreans had been forced to take part in the war on the Japanese side in spite of their horrific treatment by the Japanese themselves. To further complicate matters, Russian troops occupied the north of the country above the 38th parallel, while American troops held the south, and neither wanted to give up their position. Ultimately Russia and the U.S. wanted different people to lead the new Korea (Russia picked Kim Il-sung; the U.S. wanted Rhee Syngman). When each man formed provisional governments in "their" half of Korea, it effectively split the country.

Each side claimed they were the legitimate government, and each claimed the right to rule the entire peninsula. Tensions mounted from 1948 to 1950, during which time there were conflicts along the border. The United Nations tried to intervene, but to no avail. In 1950 war broke out between the communist north and the U.S.-backed south. Three years later neither side had won control of all of Korea, but the destruction and loss of three million lives convinced both parties to agree to a compromise—the division of the peninsula into two separate countries, today's North Korea and South Korea. After the division, South Korea's history fell into a pattern of political instability. A series of republics, military coups, martial law, and corruption charges plagued South Korean politics through the 1990s. However, recent years have seen more political stability and a focus on renewing the national economy.

## RESOURCES

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### Suggested Reading

#### Mongolia

***The Dinosaur Artist: Obsession, Betrayal, and the Quest for Earth's Ultimate Trophy*** by Paige Williams (2018, Non-Fiction) A red flag was raised when “a superb Tyrannosaurus skeleton” appeared on the cover of New York auction catalog in 2012. The problem was that the nearly complete fossil (which sold for more than \$1 million) was of *T. bataar*, close cousin of *T. rex*, and had been unearthed more than 6,000 miles away in Mongolia’s Gobi Desert. Politics, science, and greed collide in this fascinating book that looks at the murky world of fossil collecting and asks who owns natural history—especially in places like the remote Flaming Cliffs of Mongolia, home to one of the richest fossil beds in the world.

***On the Trail of Genghis Khan*** by Tim Cope (2013, Travel Narrative) Recommended by our regional office for the epic sweep of its author’s endeavor: To travel from the ancient Mongolian capital of Karakorum to Hungary by horseback—the same journey taken by Genghis Khan.

***Khubilai Khan’s Lost Fleet: In Search of a Legendary Armada*** by James P. Delgado (2008, History) How could a fleet of 700 ships, owned by the most powerful empire on earth, be lost in only 15 years? Archeologist Delgado joins with a Japanese dive team to try to answer that very question. But first they must locate the lost fleet, which most historians consider nothing more than a legend.

***Wolf Totem*** by Jiang Rong (2004, Literature) This novel tells the story of a Chinese student who is sent to Inner Mongolia during the Cultural Revolution, where he develops a special connection with the Mongolian wolf. Although set in Inner Mongolia (not Mongolia proper), the novel is based on the author’s real-life experiences during the 1970s, and gives a strong sense of Mongolian culture and the nomadic life.

***Hearing Birds Fly*** by Louisa Waugh (2003, Travel Narrative) A charming look back at her year teaching English in a Mongolian village. Winner of the 2004 Ondaatje Prize, which is awarded by the Royal Society of Literature for a work that evokes “spirit of place”.

#### South Korea

***Daughters of the Dragon: A Comfort Woman’s Story*** by William Andrews (2014, Historical Fiction) This is a powerful story about a young Korean woman who is torn from her family at a young age and forced to become a comfort woman for Japanese soldiers during World War II. While this is an elegantly written novel, the story is based on a disturbing part of Korean history that some readers may find distressful.

***Please Look After Mom*** by Kyung-sook Shin (2008, Literature) A Korean bestseller that gives a contemporary view of Korean life. This story is about a family’s search for their mother who goes missing one afternoon in Seoul.

***The Coldest Winter*** by David Halberstam (2007, Non-Fiction) The best comprehensive account of the Korean War to date, covering the battles, strategies, politics, and personalities on both sides of this tragic period of American history. Halberstam himself, who won the Pulitzer Prize for his defining book on the Vietnam War, *The Best and the Brightest*, considered this his best work.

***When My Name Was Keoko*** by Linda Sue Park (2002, Literature) A compelling story about a brother and sister living in Korea and struggling to maintain their identities during the Japanese occupation leading up to World War II.

***This Kind of War: The Classic Korean War History*** by T.R. Fehrenbach (1963, History) A comprehensive history of the Korean War written by an officer who witnessed the conflict firsthand.

## Suggested Films & Videos

### Mongolia

***Wolf Totem*** (2015, Action) The film adaptation of the book by the same name. A Chinese student adopts a wolf cub during his exile in Mongolia under the Cultural Revolution.

***Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan*** (2008, Biopic/Foreign) A sweeping historical epic that focuses on the early life of Genghis Khan. The director used Mongolian actors and filmed on location. If you'd prefer a non-fiction approach, look for *Genghis Khan: Terror and Conquest* from A&E's Biography series.

***The Cave of the Yellow Dog*** (2005, Drama) A gentle fable about a nomadic girl who takes in a stray dog. The film won several awards, including "Best Children's Film" at the Deutscher Filmpreis (Germany's Oscars). By the same director as *The Story of the Weeping Camel*.

***The Story of the Weeping Camel*** (2003, Documentary) A film that focuses on a Mongolian family's attempts to save a rare white camel that has been rejected by its mother. Nominated for a "Best Documentary" Oscar in 2004.

***Dinosaur Hunters: Secrets of the Gobi Desert*** (2002, Natural History) Part of the wide-ranging National Geographic series, this documentary follows a joint expedition by members of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences and the American Museum of Natural History.

### Korea

***Parasite*** (2019 Drama/Thriller) This brilliantly dark comedy from Korean writer-director Bong Joon-ho (*Snowpiercer*) about a poor family in Seoul insinuating themselves into the lives of a wealthy family won four well-deserved Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

***The Last Princess*** (2016, Foreign) A dramatic period piece about Princess Deokhye (the last princess of Korea's Joseon dynasty) who was forced to live in Japan against her wishes. A story that echoes the love-hate relationship between Korea and Japan.

**Kimchi Chronicles** (TV series, 2011) A PBS program that delves into Korean cuisine and culture in this travelogue series following a Korean-born woman raised in Virginia as she rediscovers her heritage.

**Seoul Train** (2004, Documentary) This documentary dives into the lives of North Korean defectors who put their lives on the line to escape their homeland.

**M.A.S.H.** (1970, Comedy) Although really meant to criticize events in Vietnam at the time, Robert Altman's black comedy takes place in a Korean War field hospital where the staff uses humor as a coping mechanism for dealing with the atrocities of the war.

## Useful Websites

### Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

[www.oattravel.com/faq](http://www.oattravel.com/faq)

### International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

### Electricity & Plugs

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

### Foreign Exchange Rates

[www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter)  
[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

### ATM Locators

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm)  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator)

### World Weather

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
[www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

### Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

### Packing Tips

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

### U.S. Customs & Border Protection

[www.cbp.gov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/travel)

### Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

[www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)

### National Passport Information Center

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### Holidays Worldwide

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)

## Useful Apps

### **Flight Stats**

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

### **LoungeBuddy**

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

### **Timeshifter**

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

### **GoogleMaps or Maps.me**

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

### **Triposo**

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

### **Rome2rio**

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

### **Flush or Sit or Squat**

Find a clean toilet anywhere

### **Uber or Bolt or Grab**

Ride sharing around the world

### **Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus**

#### **ATM locations**

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

### **TunnelBear**

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

### **What's App or Skype or Signal**

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

### **Duolingo or FLuentU or Babbel**

Learn dozens of foreign languages

### **Google Translate**

Fast and simple translations

### **XE**

Currency conversions

### **SizeGuide**

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

### **Best Units Converter**

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

### **Tourlina**

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

### **Happy Cow**

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

### **Eatwith**

Dine with locals all over the world

### **Meetup**

Connects you with locals who share your interests

### **Skyview**

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

### **Travello**

Find travel friends on the road

### **ALIX for One**

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

### **TripWhistle**

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

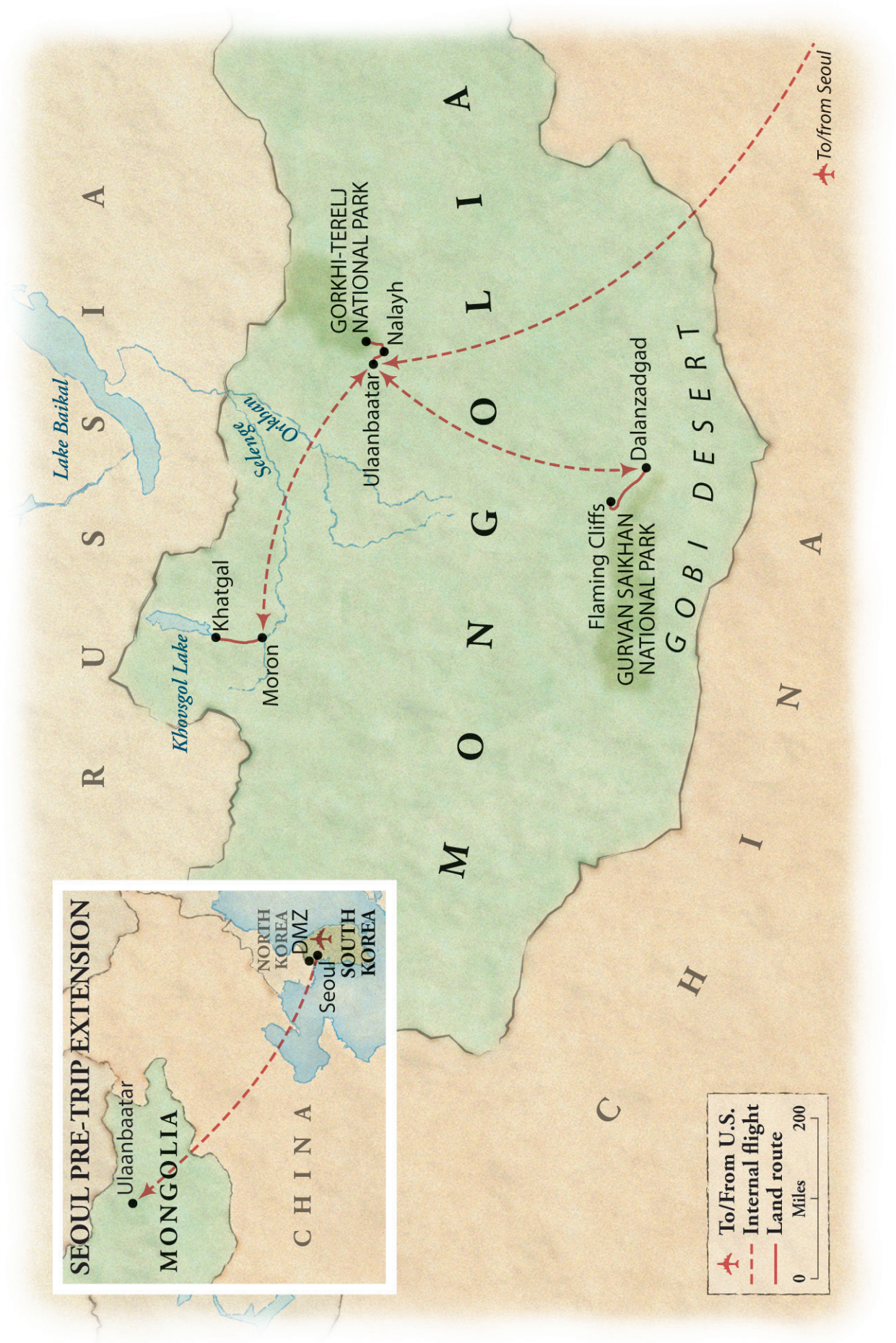
### **GeoSure**

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

### **Chirpey**

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



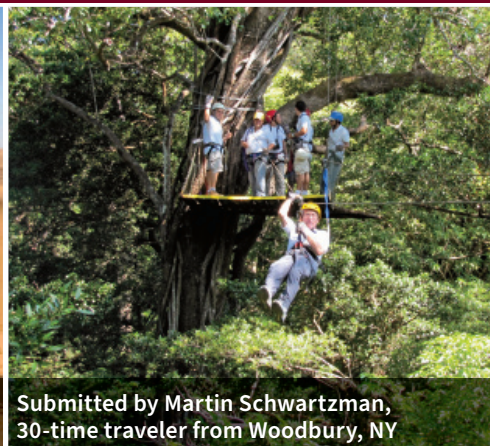




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