



FAIRfield
GUESTHOUSE CAFE BAKERY TRAVEL

**12 DAY WINTER PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR
HORSE FESTIVAL AND KHUVSGUL ICE FESTIVAL
FEBRUARY 25TH - MARCH 8TH, 2023
USD\$1995 PER PERSON**



An 'Ovoo', a Buddhist shrine

MONGOLIA

Mongolia is a country of wide open steppes, rugged mountains, inhospitable desert, lush river valleys and stunning rivers and lakes. Most visitors come in the brief summer period, but the 'real' Mongolia is arguably seen in the winter, which makes up the majority of the year. Come and see this amazing, harsh, beautiful and stark country in its winter glory.



TSAIKHIR VALLEY HORSE FESTIVAL

The herdsmen of the Tsaikhir Valley have realised that individually, they are unable to adequately protect their horse herds. They therefore bring all their horses together into one mob of up to 2000 horses and entrust them to the care of four young men who take them from pasture to pasture and provide a 24 hour watch against predatory wolves. The horses are taken from early October, and returned to their owners on March 1st. On this day, the herders celebrate the return of their horses, their wealth, with this celebration. This is NOT a tourism event, but rather one of the most genuine nomadic cultural celebrations you'll ever experience.



HISTORY

Mongolia's history is breathtaking. You will visit monasteries built in the 14th and 15th centuries, some destroyed in the Russian purges in the 1940's and restored, and another which was spared.

Visit ceremonial burial sites and 'Deer Stones' that date back to the Bronze Age.

Get a glimpse into the history which formed this unique culture, and the amazing list of civilisations that vied for this land over the millennia.



Erdene Zuu Monastery, Kharhorin



NOMADIC CULTURE

Many places in this world offer beautiful landscapes and scenery, but the thing that is truly unique to Mongolia is the ancient nomadic culture, which in many ways remains untouched by modern times.

During your tour you will spend one or two nights staying with nomadic families in their gers, which apart from amazing photographic opportunities, will give you incredible and unique experience of genuine nomadic lifestyle and culture.

Many families will have children, who can become the highlight of your visits, and present opportunities for stunning photography.

TOUR ITINERARY

DAY 1 – Sat Feb 25th – arrival into Ulaanbaatar. You will be met at the airport upon arrival and transport provided to your hotel. Gather together for a welcome dinner.

DAY 2 – Sun Feb 26th – Ulaanbaatar tour. After a breakfast at the hotel, take a day-long tour of Ulaanbaatar and environs, beginning at the Chingiss Khan Equestrian Statue. Visit the Naran Tuul Market (Black Market) to purchase traditional winter clothing and boots if required. Enjoy a cultural performance, and then dinner together.

DAY 3 – Mon Feb 27th – to Arkhangai. Two vehicles with drivers and guides will be provided for the duration of the tour. Travel approx 8 hours from UB to Arkhangai, stopping enroute to photograph a region of sand dunes sometimes referred to as 'The Little Gobi'. Continue on to briefly explore the 1586 Erdenezuu Monastery in Kharhorin, the ancient capital city of the Mongol Empire. Enjoy the hospitality and comfort of Fairfield Guesthouse.





ITINERARY (CONTINUED)

DAY 4 – Tue Feb 28th – to Tsagaan Nuur. After a hearty Full English Breakfast, drive to Tsagaan Nuur (White Lake), stopping enroute to photograph Taikher Chuluu and the Chuluut Gorge. Climb the Khorgo Volcano and take in the enormous crater, and the beautiful landscape over the lava field and the lake. Stay with a nomadic family not far from the lake.

DAY 5 – Wed Mar 1st – to the Taikhir Valley. Drive into the Tsaikhir valley which is very rarely ever visited by foreigners and begin to engage with the local herders of the valley. This day is central to the tour, when the herders of the Tsaikhir Valley are reunited with their horse herds (their wealth) after months without them. They celebrate this day with food and song and shows of horsemanship. This is NOT an event for tourists, but rather for themselves. It is an incredible honour to be invited to witness and partake in this celebration, and to be in the thick of the action to capture images of it all. A short video [here](#).

Photo credit: Brett Rushworth

ITINERARY (CONTINUED)

DAY 6 – Thu March 2nd . If weather permits and the interest is there, hike for a few hours in a stunning valley which may provide sightings of the elusive ibex and other wildlife. Stay with a herder family and experience and photograph the incredible way of life of these tough and hardy nomadic Mongols.

DAY 7 – To Khuvsgul. Drive north to Khuvsgul Lake, the 'Blue Pearl' of Mongolia ... though frozen solid at this time of year. The lake is known for crystal clear water that freezes clear, in places allowing you to see through to the stony bottom metres below. Check into a Tourist Ger Camp on the lake edge and prepare for the Ice Festival the following morning.

DAY 8 – Sat 4th March – Khuvsgul Ice Festival – Spend the day on the ice at this unique festival involving ice sculptures, wrestling, dog sledding, horse sleighs, ice skating, song and dance, and much more.





ITINERARY (CONTINUED)

DAY 9 – Sun 5th March – Khuvsgul Lake. Day two of the Ice Festival. Continue to take part in the festivities, or take some time in solitude in this stunningly beautiful part of Mongolia. Drive about 2 hours to Murun city and stay in a comfortable hotel for the night.

DAY 10 – Mon 6th March – Amarbayasgalant. Begin a two-day drive back towards Ulaanbaatar, stopping at the Amarbayasgalant Monastery, the largest and one of the most important monasteries in Mongolia.

DAY 11 – Tue 7th March – UB. Continue the drive into Ulaanbaatar and check back into your centrally located hotel. A final dinner together.

DAY 12 – Wed 8th March – Departure. A shuttle service to return you to the airport (or railway station) will be provided in plenty of time for your check-in.



CHECKLIST

An opportunity will be provided to purchase additional winter clothing if required.

Clothing – You will experience some extremely cold temperatures, so you must be prepared. Thermal underwear, thick socks, multiple layers of warm shirts and jackets. Heavy winter coat. Gloves, beanie, scarf. Light gloves for photography.

Footwear – Winter boots suitable for walking and hiking

Sleeping bag – Bedding will be provided in all locations, but a winter sleeping bag is recommended as an additional layer as temperatures in gers tend to fluctuate during the night.

Photography equipment – Cameras, zoom and wide angle lenses, tripod, shutter release cable, batteries and chargers.

Insurance – Travellers are required to register travel insurance details with Fairfield prior to the tour.

A more complete packing list is available upon request.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Terms of Payment

A 50% deposit is required to be paid prior to arrival. The balance of payment will be made upon arrival at Fairfield in local currency or by credit card.

What is included

- A private car and driver for the entire tour including all fuel costs
- An English-speaking guide, and his/her meals and accommodation expenses.
- All accommodations
- All meals. There will be opportunities to purchase snacks at various points throughout the tour.
- Drinking water for the entire tour.

What is NOT included

- Flights to and from Mongolia
- Mongolian entry visa fees (see notes re visa application following)
- Travel insurance. We recommend seeking travel insurance coverage prior to travelling
- Accommodation and activities before or after the tour
- Daytime snacks.
- Personal expenses such as laundry, beverages, alcoholic drinks, telephone calls, optional activities, sightseeing or meals which are not included in the itinerary

Fitness and health considerations

This tour does include a number of hiking / walking opportunities, and as such a basic level of physical fitness and ability is required. It is not, however, an enormously demanding trip.

Visas

Visitors from most countries require a tourist visa to enter Mongolia, and these are quite easy to obtain online, or through a Mongolian embassy, consulate, consulate-general or honorary consul. We are able to provide an official letter of invitation to facilitate this process. Please request this if needed, and we will advise you of the information required to produce this letter.

