

# Uush Sand Dunes Tour in Mongolia



## Highlights

The steppes of Central Asia are one of last great travel frontiers, a remote region of barren beauty and timeless tradition! Discover their magic and majesty on this four-day tour to the Uush sand dunes and beyond!

From the mighty Altai Mountains to the sweeping sandscapes of the Gobi desert, Mongolia is a land of spectacular diversity! Marshes, salt lakes, forests and glaciers lie side by side with rolling pastures and wind-carved dunes, home to wild horses, Corsac foxes and the legendary Bactrian camel. One of the 20 largest countries in the world, Mongolia is also one of the most sparsely populated. Over a third of the country's three million inhabitants live in the capital Ulaanbaatar, while another third is engaged in nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralism, a livelihood strategy unchanged in centuries. Thanks to its size and geographic isolation, Mongolia retains a truly unique cultural heritage, with indigenous forms of wrestling, horse-racing and throat-singing among the many ancient pastimes still practised today.

This four-day trip is an awesome introduction to the landscapes and culture of this little-visited land. Starting in Mandalgovi, you'll head by jeep out to the epic Uush sand dunes, famed for their miraculous healing powers! It's then on to the haunting ruins of Hutul Monastery and the vast Tagtaa Amni Agui cave. Each evening you'll stay with a local family in their traditional ger, offering a unique insight into the timeless traditions of this remote steppes region. As well as enjoying some authentic home cooking, you'll have the chance to partake in a host of household activities from milking the camel to playing teveg (hacky-sack) and shagai (a marbles-like game played with an old ankle bone)! On your final night, you'll be treated to a traditional Urtyн duu (long song) as the sun sets over plains – an unforgettable end to the trip.

## Is it for me?

Even by our own high standards, these Mongolia tours are that little bit special! This is a serious adventure, closer in kind to explorations of old than to the well-trodden trails of the modern traveller. There's an endless stream of unique experiences, from riding a camel to kipping in a ger, so these tours are best suited to adventurous types with wide-open minds (the kind of people who wouldn't say no to trying a horse steak, perhaps!?). You'll get most from this trip if you're not afraid to try new things and even look silly in the process – we find that's the best way to make friends! Put yourself out there and you'll be rewarded with sites and insights that most folk can only dream of!

## Accommodation

On this tour you'll be staying with Mongolian families in traditional gers (sometimes known as yurts), circular felt-covered tents used by nomads throughout the steppes of Central Asia. These wood-framed dwellings are carefully designed to protect inhabitants from the elements; whatever the weather outside, the ger remains warm and cosy within! You'll have cushions and blankets galore, and some stops have hot showers and laundry facilities on site. All meals are taken with the host families, offering a unique introduction to traditional Mongolian food. Standard fare includes meaty dumplings, noodle soups, hearty stews and sweet boortsog (a popular biscuit). You'll also have the chance to sample (and possibly prepare) some airag, the national drink made from fermented mare's milk!

Prices from

**110** GBP (4 days) per person

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## Itinerary

**Day 1:** Spend the afternoon in Gurvansaihan village with locals: Upon arrival at Mr. Namjilsvren's ger you will enjoy a nomadic lunch and tea. Then Mrs. Rentsen or her son Mr. Munkh-Erdene will introduce and guide you to his/her native village. In the evening you will have the opportunity to play basketball, "teveg" (traditional hacky sack kicking game), and Shagai, the famous ankle bone game. You can also use paid services like hot shower and telephone. Dinner will be served with the family.

**Day 2:** Visit Gandanchoinhorlin Monastery and enjoy some desert sun bathing at the silky Uush Sand Dunes: After breakfast Mr. Namjilsvren will lead you to Mr. Ravjir's house (lead lama of Gandanchoinhorlin Monastery). He has been working at the monastery as head monk for many years. He will wish you good blessing for your journey. Afterwards the local driver will pick you up to continue your journey (2-3 hours) to Uush Sand Dunes. Around 1 p.m. you will reach Mr. Jugdernamjil's ger. After lunch Mr. Jugdernamjil will guide you to Uush sand dunes and Zag Mod by trekking for 2km. The Uush medicinal sand dune is used for treating back problems, rheumatic fever, kidney complaints, etc. For this reason, many locals go to the nearby Uush sanatorium for treatment. In the evening your driver will bring you to Mr. Batbekh's ger for the night. You will have dinner with his family, including a demonstration of how to make Khoormog, a camel milk preparation.

**Day 3:** Listen to traditional 'long song' and melodies of the Horse Head Fiddle at sunset: Before breakfast, Mrs. Byambatsetseg will show you how to milk a camel, which you have the chance to try for yourself! Later, Mr. Batbekh will guide you to ruin of the Hutul Monastery. You will trek to Tagtaa Amni Agui (cave) before continuing your journey to Ulziit Soum (75km). Upon your arrival at Mrs. Uigarmaa's family home you will be served lunch and tea. In the late afternoon you will drive to Ban cliff around 6km away. Here you will have opportunity to listen to traditional long songs and the melodies of fiddle at sunset. It's then back home to rest for the evening. As well as the above you can use other paid services (hot shower, laundry, telephone, etc.).

**Day 4:** Departure: After breakfast (around 11 a.m.) you will continue your trip and head to Saikhan – Ovoo or back to Mandalgovi by local jeep.

## Details

### Getting there

Road: Bus from Ulaanbaatar.

### Price includes

Food, accommodation, activities, some transfers

### Price details

From \$167.75 per person

### Includes:

Bus from Ulaanbaatar to Mandalgovi

Jeep to first ger and pick-up

Booking and travel orientation with handbook

### Available

Jun—Oct

### Typical Duration

4 days

### Comfort level

Down to earth (hostels, camping, huts)

### Experience required

A reasonable interest is all that is needed