

# PRINCETON JOURNEYS

**Discover Mongolia**  
Ulaanbaatar • Karakorum • South Gobi



**August 17-28, 2023**

## About the Journey

Mongolia's endless grassland and desert steppe make a dramatic backdrop for *gers*—tiny round tents—of lone nomadic families. Buddhist monasteries mark the vague tracks across the steppe, and the annual national festival, Naadam, still showcases nomadic skills. This inspired itinerary will venture deep into nomadic Mongolian culture and communities.

Begin with an exploration of monasteries and traditional arts in Ulaanbaatar, the political and cultural heart of Mongolia. Then venture overland to Karakorum, Genghis Khan's capital. This UNESCO-listed 13th-century city served as the seat of power for an empire that stretched across two continents, and at its zenith was visited by delegations from all over the world. Spend four nights at Mongolia's premier eco-lodge, Three Camel Lodge in the South Gobi Desert. Experience a local county Naadam festival, which showcases Mongolia's best in wrestling, horse racing, and traditional sports, before returning to the capital to witness the rich musical tradition of Khoomei (throat-singing). Our journey includes expert local guides and a rich academic program.



### Study Leader:

**Julian Dierkes \*03, Associate Professor, School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, University of British Columbia**

Julian Dierkes is a German-Canadian sociologist who focuses his research on Japan and Mongolia. His research on contemporary Mongolia has particularly concentrated on democratization and political development, and on mining governance. Over his years of involvement with Mongolia, Professor Dierkes has developed a generalist's understanding of many aspects of that country's development, and he has contributed to various training, consulting and development activities with Mongolian and international partners. On this journey, Professor Dierkes will share his understanding of Mongolia's current developments and some of the challenges its democracy is facing, as well as how to promote equitable and sustainable growth drawing on natural resources. He will also talk about the challenge that Mongolia's geopolitical situation — wedged between China and Russia — poses.

## Itinerary:

### Thursday, August 17

#### Arrive Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Upon arrival at the Ulaanbaatar airport, transfer to our centrally located hotel.

*Shangri-La Ulaanbaatar* (meals aloft)

### Friday, August 18

#### Ulaanbaatar

After breakfast at the hotel, depart for a day of exploration in Ulaanbaatar, considered the political and cultural heart of Mongolia. Receive a monk's blessing at Gandan Monastery, one of Mongolia's most important Buddhist temples. Explore the monastery grounds and observe the monks as they perform their daily prayers and rituals in temples decorated with vibrant Buddhist art. Continue to the National Library, the oldest and most significant book repository in the country, and home to the world's largest collection of Buddhist texts. Next, visit the Union of Mongolian Artists founded in 1942 as a collective for traditional craftspeople. Gather this evening for a festive welcome dinner.

*Shangri-La Ulaanbaatar* (B,L,D)

### Saturday, Aug 19

#### Ulaanbaatar • Karakorum

After breakfast, journey overland to the former capital of the Mongol Empire, Karakorum, founded by Genghis Khan in 1220. Here, learn more about the mighty empire that stretched over two continents and profoundly impacted the history of both East and West. Tonight, experience your first overnight in a ger camp.

*The Blue Sky Ger Camp* (B,L,D)

### Sunday, August 20

#### Karakorum

Begin the morning with a visit to Karakorum Museum. Founded to showcase the research findings from a joint Mongolian and German archaeological expedition, the museum offers insight into what was once a thriving center of arts, politics, trade, and religions. Next, visit the Erdene Zuu Monastery. Karakorum was destroyed in 1388, but traces of this once-magnificent city still exist here at Mongolia's largest monastery. Surrounded by 108 *stupas*—commemorative monuments housing sacred relics—Erdene Zuu has been a place of Buddhist activity for centuries. Your final stop today is at the Ordu Baliq ruins, once a strategic Silk Road capital city, now an essential part of the Orkhon Valley cultural landscape. A dinner of traditional favorites is served this evening at camp.

*The Blue Sky Ger Camp* (B,L,D)

### Monday, August 21

#### Karakorum

Depart camp for a horse trek through the Orkhon Valley, considered to be the cradle of Mongolian civilization. Enjoy a scenic three-hour horseback ride along the banks of the Orkhon River to a small village. After visiting with the local people, participants may choose to hike through the valley's grasslands or return to camp via horse or motor vehicle. This evening, a local nomadic herding family welcomes you inside their ger for a home-cooked dinner and conversation about Mongolian traditions.

*The Blue Sky Ger Camp* (B,L,D)

## **Tuesday, August 22**

### **Karakorum • Ulaanbaatar**

About 25 miles from Karakorum are two stone monuments erected between 732 and 735. These obelisks are inscribed with the life stories of two princes of the first-known Turkic state. The Orkhon Inscriptions, as they are called, are your first destination this morning. Later visit the Bilge Khan Memorial Museum which honors early Turkish heroes Bilge Khan and Kul Tigin.

This afternoon, return to the capital for dinner at leisure.

*Shangri-La Hotel (B,L)*

## **Wednesday, August 23**

### **Ulaanbaatar • Dalanzadgad • South Gobi • Yolyn Am Valley**

Transfer to the airport early this morning for a flight to Dalanzadgad, gateway to the South Gobi. Upon arrival, explore the South Gobi's open landscapes dotted with hardy desert plants that serve as forage for wild Bactrian camels, Argali mountain sheep, and goitered gazelle. This part of the Gobi is also home to golden eagles, saker falcons, jerboas, and some of the Northern Hemisphere's rarest mammals, such as the dhole, snow leopard, and Gobi bear. After lunch, embark on a gentle hike into Yolyn Am Canyon, an important protected wilderness area established to help conserve the region's diverse animal life. The last stop this afternoon is the luxurious Three Camel Lodge, your home for the next four nights.

*Three Camel Lodge (B,L,D)*

## **Thursday, August 24**

### **South Gobi**

After breakfast, depart for a camel trek at Moltsog Els Sand Dunes. This once-in-a-lifetime adventure introduces you to a local camel herding family and allows you to ride Bactrian camels across Moltsog Els, a magnificent array of dunes situated to the northeast of Flaming Cliffs. This cinematic journey gives a dramatic sense of place and beautifully connects you with the earth and the history of the East. Next, visit the small town of Bulgan and experience firsthand the village life of the region's nomadic families. This evening, enjoy lodge amenities at your leisure.

*Three Camel Lodge (B,L,D)*

## **Friday, August 25**

### **South Gobi**

Today, you are joined by a paleontologist from the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. A drive up switchbacks through rugged mountains brings you to a vantage point dotted with flat rocks that serve as canvas to hundreds of petroglyphs left by early Gobi settlers more than 5,000-7,000 years ago. The Bronze Age images depict animals of the region, hunting game, families and settlements—truly a window to the past. This evening, enjoy cocktails as the sun casts a magical glow on the most dramatic sight in the Gobi Desert: The Flaming Cliffs. It was here in 1923 that Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews and his exploration team from the American Museum of Natural History were the first to find a nest of dinosaur eggs. Although it's not obvious to the untrained eye, the Flaming Cliffs are rich with dinosaur fossils and have been the site of many major paleontological discoveries.

*Three Camel Lodge (B,L,D)*

## **Saturday, August 26**

### **South Gobi (country Naadam Festival)**

Today, we will get the chance to witness a local countryside Naadam festival. Wrestling, horse racing, and archery are the three age-old competitions traditionally used to measure the courage and strength of nomads and warriors. Contemporary Naadam games showcase the abilities of local men, women, boys, and girls and are also a time when family and friends get together to celebrate

the joyful summer season.  
Three Camel Lodge (B,L,D)

**Sunday, August 27**  
**South Gobi • Ulaanbaatar**

Transfer to the airport for a morning return flight to Ulaanbaatar. Back in the capital, shop for authentic goods at Narantuul Market, the largest open-air market in Mongolia. Later, experience the rich tradition of Khoomei (throat-singing), a guttural style of chanting that is one of the world's oldest forms of music. Gather this evening for a festive farewell dinner to toast the end of your adventure.

*Shangri-La Ulaanbaatar (B,L,D)*

**Monday, August 28**  
**Depart Ulaanbaatar**

Transfer to the airport for flights home.  
(B)

Key: B-Breakfast, L-Lunch, D-Dinner

**Accommodation:**

**Shangri-La Ulaanbaatar** (four nights)

*Located in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, the stately five-star Shangri-La Hotel opened in 2015. Drawing from its surroundings, the Shangri-La's lobby contains decorative glass lights in the shape of hunting horns to represent the nomadic culture of Mongolia, and the suites feature traditional Mongolian carved patterns. The hotel also boasts three impressive restaurants and a 7,000-square-meter fitness club with swimming pool and dedicated spinning room.*

**Munkh Tenger "Blue Sky" Ger Camp** (three nights)

*The Blue Sky Ger Camp near Erdene Zhu is beautifully set in the valley surrounded by mountains on two sides. The collective dining ger has a nice deck attached from which to enjoy the vistas. Shower, toilet, sink facilities are shared in a central area to the camp. A very limited number of gers (must be booked in advance and subject to confirmation) have toilet/shower access in proximity to the ger.*

**Three Camel Lodge and Ger Camp** (four nights)

*Nestled in the heart of the Omnogobi Aimag, the Three Camel Lodge is Mongolia's premier ecolodge. From hand-carved wood furnishings created by local artisans to the well house crafted to resemble a miniature temple, guests are firmly planted in Mongolia's Gobi Desert but surrounded by amenities of modern luxury. Travelers sleep in traditional felt gers, with en suite bathrooms and unobstructed views of the Gobi Altai Mountains. Meals are served in a large ger, modeled after the ceremonial tents of the great khans. The lodge also features a full-service spa, screening room, organic greenhouse, and horse stables.*

**\*\*Please note:** Accommodation selected for this program is of the highest quality available in Mongolia. While both the Shangri-La and Three Camel Lodge are deluxe properties with modern amenities, Blue Sky Ger Camp provides simple, clean accommodation.

### Size

This trip is limited to 20 participants. Single accommodations are limited.

### Cost

\$10,695 per person, double occupancy

\$12,425 per person, single occupancy

### Included

- Educational program with lecture series from Princeton Study Leader
- Services of a professional tour manager and local guides
- All tours and excursions as described in the itinerary
- Gratuities to guides and drivers for all group activities
- Four nights of deluxe hotel accommodations, four nights of deluxe ger accommodations, three nights of simple ger accommodation
- Eleven breakfasts, ten lunches, and nine dinners
- Local beer or wine at dinner as available
- Bottled/purified water with meals and throughout the journey
- Transportation per itinerary within Ulaanbaatar by Country Bus; outside the capital by overland four-wheel drive vehicles (Land Cruiser or similar)
- Transfers and baggage handling on program arrival and departure days
- Internal flight from the Gobi Desert to Ulaanbaatar
- Basic accident and evacuation insurance

### Not Included

- International flights to and from the program
- Passport and visa fees
- Immunization costs
- Meals and beverages other than those specified as included
- Independent and private transfers
- Medical and cancellation insurance (highly recommended)
- Baggage insurance
- Excess baggage charges
- Personal items such as internet access, telephone calls, laundry and gratuities for nongroup
- International airfare to and from Mongolia

### Reservations:

Register online at [journeys.princeton.edu/booking/start/23-08-17-MIR/tour](https://journeys.princeton.edu/booking/start/23-08-17-MIR/tour)

or contact our team:

609.258.8686 - [journeys@princeton.edu](mailto:journeys@princeton.edu)

### What to Expect

Due in part to the developing infrastructure and the remoteness of some stops on our itinerary, we consider this to be a strenuous program. It will be physically demanding and busy at times, suitable only for travelers in excellent health. Daily excursions involve one to three miles of walking, often on uneven and rocky terrain. Stairs are sometimes unavailable or do not have handrails. Roads are often unpaved and bumpy. Driving times range from one to four hours except for one all-day drive, which takes about seven hours with a lunch stop. Temperatures in Mongolia can fluctuate from the

upper 40s F at night to the 90s F during the day. Participants should expect an adventurous, rather than luxurious, travel experience.

All travelers will be asked to submit a doctor's note approving his/her mobility.

### Terms and Conditions

**Cancellations:** All cancellations must be made in writing to Princeton Journeys and MIR Corporation and the following cancellation charges will apply: Cancellations received 91 days or more before the tour start, forfeit 50% of the \$1,000 deposit (\$500) per person; those received 75 days to 90 days before the tour start, forfeit the full \$1,000 non-refundable deposit; those received 61 days to 74 days before the tour start, forfeit 50% of land tour cost per person; those received 60 days or less before the tour start, no refund. Refunds or partial refunds cannot be made to passengers who do not complete the full tour for any reason at all. Princeton University and our tour operator MIR Corporation reserve the right, without penalty, to withdraw the tour announced (i.e., cancel a tour). MIR Corporation reserves the right to decline to accept any person as a participant in a tour, or to require any participant to withdraw from a tour at any time at his/her own expense, when such action is determined by tour staff to be in the best interest of the health, safety, or general welfare of the tour group or of the individual participant, and subject only to the requirement that the recoverable cost of unused services and accommodations be refunded, if any.

**Note:** Neither Princeton University nor MIR Corporation accept liability for any airline cancellation penalty incurred by the purchase of a non-refundable ticket in connection with this tour. It is recommended that you not purchase international flights until instructed by MIR Corporation. Itinerary and the Study Leaders' participation is based on a minimum of 10 travelers. The exact schedule of events and speakers is subject to change.

**Insurance:** Trip cancellation/interruption insurance is highly recommended and details will be sent upon receipt of registration.

**Responsibility:** A detailed statement of limitations and exclusions of liability of Princeton University and MIR Corporation for loss of property, injury, illness or death will be provided to passengers upon enrollment and is available to prospective travelers upon request. A signed release of liability/assumption of risk agreement is required for trip participation.

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