MONGOLIA
From Yak to Kayak
From Yak to Kayak is one of our most unique adventures, exploring the diverse landscapes of Mongolia with traditional modes of transport. Kayak across the pristine waters of Lake Hovsgol, considered to be the cleanest freshwater lake on Earth, and travel on horseback through the forested mountains surrounding its shores. In the south, camel trek through the mysterious Gobi, an incredible region of canyons, sand dunes, and a deep desert valley sheltering frozen rivers and rare wildlife.

During horse trekking days, approximately four to six hours will be spent in the saddle atop Mongolian horses – small steeds legendary for their sturdy build, stamina, and ability to negotiate difficult terrain.

The kayaking portion of the trip will feature two to four hours of kayaking on Lake Hovsgol in quality one- and two-person Folbot™ expedition kayaks.

Riding two-humped Bactrian camels through the Gobi is easier than riding horses and requires no prior skill, but it is an experience never to be forgotten.
Day 1
WELCOME TO ULAANBAATAR

The contrast between ancient traditions and a 21st-century democracy is most visible in Ulaanbaatar, where traditional gers and Buddhist monasteries sit side by side with modern high-rises. Upon arrival at the airport you are welcomed by your Mongolian guide and transferred to a centrally located hotel within walking distance of various museums and shops.

(Shangri-La Hotel)

Day 2
ULAANBAATAR

Begin the day with a visit to Choijin Lama Temple Museum. Located amidst the modern high rises, one of the architectural gems of Mongolia was originally built by the order of the last king of Mongolia the Bogd Khaan dedicated to his brother and the state oracle Luvsan Haidav Choijin Lama. Choijin is an honorary title given to the high rank monks. Consisting of a group of five temples, the Choijin Lama Temple museum houses various Buddhist artifacts dating back to 1800–1900s, including the masterpieces of the famous Mongolian sculptor Zanabazar, some fine thangkas, and the best collection of tsam masks for the religious ceremonies in the country.

After lunch drive to Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum. Named in honor of Zanabazar, the renowned 17th-century artist and politician who was the first Buddhist leader of Mongolia, the museum contains one of the best collections of Buddhist art and artifacts in the world, including many of Zanabazar’s original works. In the evening, enjoy a welcome dinner at a fine local restaurant. Overnight at the hotel.

(Shangri-La Hotel; B, L, D)

Day 3
LAKE HOVSGOL

Begin the day with a visit to Gandan Monastery, the seat of Buddhism in Mongolia. Although Buddhist monasteries were either destroyed or converted into museums during the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, Gandan Monastery continued to operate as a showpiece for government officials. In spite of the government’s efforts to suppress Buddhism and other religious beliefs, Mongolia’s spirituality persisted and a significant resurgence of Buddhism began in 1990 when Mongolia became a democracy. Monasteries across the country are again opening their doors to worshippers, and the few lamas who survived the purges are training a new generation.

Experience these exciting developments first-hand at Gandan Monastery. Strolling through the monastery grounds, hear the low tones of the horns used to call the lamas to the temple and observe their daily rituals, including the reading of sutras and the teachings of the Buddha. Visit the recently renovated Chenrezig and Kalachakra Temples, as well as the magnificent statue of Megjid Janraisig, “the lord who looks in every direction.” This 82-foot high statue, gilded and clothed with silk and precious stones, completely fills one of Gandan’s temples.
After lunch, fly north to Murun (1.5 hours), the capital of Hovsgol Province, and continue overland to Lake Hovsgol (approximately 4 hours), experiencing the Mongolian steppe land, forested mountains, and passing by the Uushgiin Deer stones. Mongolia’s largest lake by water volume, it extends 85 miles in length and 18 miles in width, and is fed by over 90 streams and rivers. Water exits the lake through only one river, the Egiin, whose waters eventually reach Lake Baikal in neighboring Siberia. Known as Mongolia’s “dark blue pearl,” Lake Hovsgol is situated among some of the most pristine forests, mountains, and meadows in the world. Bird life and wildflowers abound, and there will be ample opportunity to discover the lake’s secrets in the following days. Overnight at ger camp.

Day 4
HORSE TREK, KHORIDAL SARIDAG MOUNTAINS

Begin the horse trek into the forested peaks of the Khoridal Saridag Mountains. Bordering the western shore of Lake Hovsgol, the mountains offer spectacular views of the lake and surrounding forests. Overnight in tents. Guides will set up tents for every two people, outfitted with high-quality sleeping bags and mats.

Day 5
KAYAKING ON LAKE HOVSGOL

After breakfast, return by horse to the base camp and enjoy an afternoon of kayaking on Lake Hovsgol using quality one and two-person Folbot™ expedition kayaks. Explore the shoreline and photograph the surrounding mountains from the lakeside. Return to the base camp in the late afternoon. Overnight in gers.

Day 6
ULAANBAATAR

Return to Murun for an afternoon flight to Ulaanbaatar. Stop for a picnic lunch along the way at Lake Irkh, a small pristine lake in the midst of the steppe that attracts a variety of birds. Upon arrival in Ulaanbaatar in the late afternoon, transfer to the hotel. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 7
GOBI | YOL VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

In the morning, fly over vast steppes to the Gobi (1.5 hours), Mongolia’s southernmost province of semi-arid desert. Contrary to the sameness that the word ‘desert’ suggests, the Gobi is a fascinating and diverse region, and includes sites of some of the
most important paleontological discoveries of the 20th century. Explore the stunning landscapes of the Gobi, a habitat for Bactrian camels, Argali mountain sheep, goitered gazelle, Golden Eagles, Saker Falcons, jerboas (similar to kangaroo rats), and many endemic reptiles. The Gobi is also home to some of the Northern Hemisphere’s most rare and elusive mammals, such as the dhole, snow leopard, wild camel, and Gobi bear.

Upon arrival, drive to Yol Valley National Park (45 minutes), cradled in the foothills of the Altai Mountains. An ancient river carved this surprisingly green valley, and its remnant streams create ice formations at the base of the valley that persist as late as July. Hike through the valley to the habitat of indigenous vulture-like Lammergeiers, Altai snowcocks, ibex, yaks, and Argali mountain sheep, before driving to the Three Camel Lodge (2.5 hours), an award-winning eco-lodge located near Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park.

Day 8
MOLTSOG ELS | FLAMING CLIFFS

Begin the day with a drive to Molsog Els (1.5 hours), one of the few regions of the Gobi covered by sand dunes. After exploring the area continue to the legendary Flaming Cliffs (1 hour), named for the red-orange sandstone that glows brilliantly at sunrise and sunset. It was here in 1923 that Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews and his exploration team from the American Museum of Natural History found the first nest of dinosaur eggs the world had ever seen. To the trained eye, the ancient rock formations of the Flaming Cliffs are rich with fossils, and paleontological expeditions continue to make significant discoveries at this site.

After a picnic lunch, meet the camel wranglers and become familiarized with the camels and riding equipment before beginning a camel trek across the Gobi towards Tugrugiin Shiree. Overnight in tents.

Day 9
CAMEL TREK TO TUGRUGIIN SHIREE

Wake early to the sight of the sun rising over the vast Gobi landscape. After breakfast, continue by camel, the traditional mode of transport in the Gobi, to Tugrugiin Shiree, the site where the famous “Fighting Dinosaurs” fossil of a Protoceratops and Velociraptor locked in combat was discovered in the 1970s. Explore this white-sandstone escarpment and nearby sand dunes. Return to the Three Camel Lodge in the afternoon, stopping to visit Bulgan, a small town near a natural spring. Bulgan has one of the only farms in the Gobi, which supplies local ger camps with fruits and vegetables – an example of local businesses supported by ecotourism. Arrive at the Lodge in time for dinner and overnight.
Day 10

ULAANBAATAR

Transfer to the local airport for the return flight to Ulaanbaatar. In the afternoon, visit Bogd Khan Winter Palace Museum, home of Mongolia’s last theocrat, Bogd Jaba Zan Damba Hutagt VIII. The museum displays elaborate ceremonial robes and other personal effects of “Mongolia’s 8th Living Buddha.” In the evening enjoy dinner at a fine local restaurant. Overnight at your hotel.

(Shangri-La Hotel; B, L, D)

Day 11

HUSTAIN NURUU NATIONAL PARK

In the morning, drive to Hustain Nuruu National Park (2 hours), home to the last remaining species of wild horse, the takhi - commonly known as Przewalski’s horse. Twenty-five years after becoming extinct in the wild, the takhi was reintroduced to the Mongolian steppe from zoo populations by the Foundation for the Preservation and Protection of Przewalski’s Horse. Sixteen horses were flown from the Netherlands to Mongolia in 1994, and around 280 now roam the re-introduction sites in Hustain Nuruu. Learn about current conservation efforts and the status of the herds found within the reserve at the visitor’s center before trying to spot these beautiful horses in their natural habitat.

(Ger Camp; B, L, D)

Day 12

HUSTAIN NURUU NATIONAL PARK | ULAANBAATAR

Continue exploring the park on foot in the morning. After lunch, drive back to Ulaanbaatar and spend the rest of the afternoon at leisure. In the evening, enjoy a performance featuring traditional Mongolian dancers and khoomi throat singers followed by a farewell dinner at a fine local restaurant. Overnight at the hotel.

(Shangri-La Hotel; B, L, D)

Day 13

DEPARTURE

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for departure.

B=Breakfast L=Lunch D=Dinner

Nomadic Expeditions reserves the right to change the above itinerary if necessary.
LAND PRICE INCLUDES:

- Ground transportation in Mongolia as described in the itinerary
- Transfers on arrival and departure
- All accommodations based on double or twin occupancy (hotel rooms and gers)
- Meals as noted in itinerary
- Horse and camel riding as noted in the itinerary
- Use of quality Folbot expedition kayaks and necessary paddling gear (paddle and PDF)
- All excursions, entrance fees, and visits as described in itinerary
- Extensive pre-departure Travel Guide, reading list, important information about your trip, map and luggage tags
- Bilingual Nomadic Expeditions guide throughout your stay

LAND PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- International airfare
- Porterage and tips to guides, drivers, wranglers, local ger camp and restaurant staff
- Passport and visa fees
- Comprehensive medical and trip insurance; airport taxes
- Excess baggage charges
- Photography and video fees
- Food and beverages not included in the group meals
- Items of a personal nature, including alcoholic beverages, laundry and telephone calls
- Other items not specifically mentioned as included

WHY TRAVEL WITH NOMADIC EXPEDITIONS?

Unrivalled Expertise

Nomadic Expeditions was founded in 1992. Nothing can compete with the experience we have attained over 25 years of designing luxury adventure travel to Asia. While each trip we design is slightly different than its predecessor, our breadth of knowledge, network of contacts, and experience in the field is unrivaled.

Our People

We hire the best in the business to create and execute memorable journeys for our clients. From our Expedition Specialists in the United States, Ulaanbaatar, Lhasa, and Thimpu who turn wish lists into reality to our English-speaking, professionally trained guides who share their extensive knowledge of the culture and natural history of our destinations, our staff is what makes Nomadic Expeditions successful.

Passion for Travel

While our journeys open your eyes to a whole new world of experiences, we understand that choosing to book a trip with us requires time spent away from friends, family, and work. Your time is precious and we take that to heart. It’s why we design journeys that go beyond a checklist of attractions. When you travel with us, we want you to remember drinking tea with a nomadic family or digging for fossils with a renowned paleontologist. We imbue our trips with encounters, whether it’s with a local resident, a high-ranking government official, or a renowned wildlife conservationist, so you take home more than a set of photographs to frame on your nightstand.

Our Philosophy

Nomadic Expeditions was founded on the principle of treading lightly long before sustainable travel was a buzz phrase. Every expedition is undertaken with the greatest respect for the lands we explore and the local people we meet. Those who travel with us do so with the assurance that the preservation and protection of the ecosystems and cultures we visit is of the utmost importance to us, both as individuals and as a company. Respect for the places we travel to is at the heart of everything we do, but over our 25 years we have realized additional opportunities where we can lend a hand. We have gone beyond simply treading lightly and have wholeheartedly partnered with local communities and regions. Read more about our sustainable practices and philanthropic efforts here.

We would love to share this exceptional adventure with you!

Our Expedition Specialists are available from 9:00 AM- 5:00 PM EST, Monday thru Friday

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