

ASIA · DESERT · ADVENTURE · CULTURE · OFF THE BEATEN PATH · ROAD TRIPS · HIKING



Mongolia

Mongolia is the most sparsely populated sovereign state on earth: a land of open steppe, Gobi dunes, forested lakes and snow-capped Altai peaks, where herding families still move with the seasons. Most visitors cover the vast distances in a 4x4 with a driver, sleeping in ger camps or with nomadic families during the short, glorious summer.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Mongolia and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 7 August 2026.

 CAPITAL Ulaanbaatar	 CURRENCY Mongolian tögrög (MNT)	 LANGUAGE Mongolian, Kazakh Russian	 BEST TIME Jun–Sep
 DAILY BUDGET £35–£220 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type C, E, F 220V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 15h via Istanbul, Seoul or Beijing ~£750–£1,250 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+8, UTC+7 standard time

Mongolia is almost three times the size of France yet home to only around 3.5 million people, and most of its road network is unpaved track. Trips are built around a few routes out of Ulaanbaatar: south to the Gobi's dunes and dinosaur cliffs, west to Kharkhorin and the Orkhon Valley, north to Lake Khövsgöl, or a long haul to the Altai and the Kazakh eagle hunters of Bayan-Ölgii. Many travellers combine the Gobi and central Mongolia in a two-week loop, adding a domestic flight to reach the far west.

Travel is slow, sociable and dusty. Expect long days bouncing in a Russian UAZ van, nights in tourist ger camps or with herding families, mutton at most meals and few showers away from the main camps. Costs rise with distance, and sharing a driver and guide makes tours far more affordable. The summer window is short, and July, with Naadam, is the busiest month. It suits adaptable travellers who love space, horses and big skies; people are often surprised by the hospitality of strangers and by how cold nights get even in August.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

NATURE

Khongoryn Els dunes

The Gobi's largest dunes rise up to 300 m and stretch for around 100 km beneath the Gobi Altai mountains. Climb them at sunset, ride Bactrian camels and stay in nearby ger camps.
- 2

SACRED SITE

Erdene Zuu and Kharkhorin

Mongolia's first Buddhist monastery, founded in 1585 beside the ruins of Karakorum, the thirteenth-century Mongol imperial capital, and enclosed by a wall of 108 stupas. It anchors the UNESCO-listed Orkhon Valley.

3

NATURE

Lake Khövsgöl

A deep, clear lake in the northern taiga holding most of Mongolia's fresh water, ringed by larch forest and mountains. Hike, ride or kayak from Khatgal, and meet reindeer-herding communities in the wider region.

4

CULTURE

Bayan-Ölgii's eagle hunters

Mongolia's far west is Kazakh country, where eagle hunters train golden eagles for winter hunting. Ölgii is the base for the glaciers of Altai Tavan Bogd National Park and for the October Golden Eagle Festival.

5

WILDLIFE

Hustai National Park

About two hours west of Ulaanbaatar, this steppe reserve is where the takhi, or Przewalski's horse, was reintroduced to the wild from 1992. Dusk is the best time to see the herds grazing.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Ulaanbaatar

≈ 1.7 million people

Home to almost half of all Mongolians, the capital is sprawling and traffic-choked, but Gandan Monastery, the Chinggis Khaan National Museum and the Bogd Khan Palace merit a couple of days.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Erdenet

≈ 100,000 people

A Soviet-planned copper-mining city in the north, built around one of Asia's largest open-pit mines; a convenient overnight stop on the way to Lake Khövsgöl rather than a destination.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Darkhan

≈ 85,000 people

An industrial city on the railway and highway north to Russia, of interest mainly as a stop en route to Amarbayasgalant Monastery, one of Mongolia's finest, a few hours' drive west.

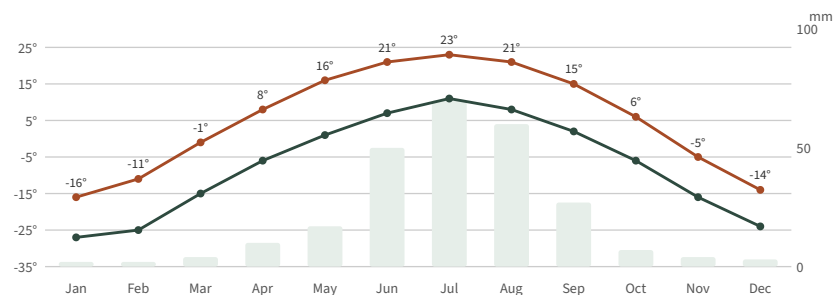
Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Mongolia

Best time: **Jun–Sep**.

**Average climate in Ulaanbaatar**

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan–Feb

Tsagaan Sar

The Lunar New Year, or 'White Month', is a family festival of visiting elders, exchanging greetings and eating mountains of buuz; much of the country closes for several days.

Jul

Naadam

The national festival of wrestling, horse racing and archery, held 11–15 July; Ulaanbaatar stages the grandest opening ceremony, while smaller local naadams feel more intimate.

Oct

Golden Eagle Festival

Held in early October near Ölgii, where Kazakh eagle hunters in fox-fur hats compete in speed and agility contests with their golden eagles, alongside horseback games.

How much does Mongolia cost?

SHOESTRING

£35

per person / day

hostels, street food, buses

MID-RANGE

£90

per person / day

3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis

COMFORTABLE

£220

per person / day

4-star+, guided trips, private transfers

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Buuz

Steamed dumplings stuffed with minced mutton or beef and onion, eaten by the hundred at Tsagaan Sar and sold at roadside canteens year-round.

Khorkhog

Mutton cooked in a sealed churn or pot with hot stones and vegetables, a countryside feast; diners pass the greasy stones between their hands, said to be good for health.

Airag

Fermented mare's milk, mildly alcoholic and slightly fizzy, made in summer and offered to guests in a bowl; sip at least a little out of politeness.

Getting around

Distances are vast and most roads are dirt, so visitors usually hire a 4x4 or Russian UAZ van with driver and guide through a tour company or guesthouse. Aero Mongolia and Hunnu Air fly to provincial centres such as Ölgii, Mörön and Dalanzadgad. Long-distance buses leave Ulaanbaatar for most aimag capitals, and the Trans-Mongolian Railway runs north to Russia and south to China.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



C E F

220V — bring a UK-to-C/E/F adapter

DIALLING CODE

+976

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **103**

Fire: **101**

Police: **102** (includes traffic police)

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONES

UTC+8, UTC+7 (standard time)

TAP WATER	DRIVING
Not safe — drink bottled or treated water	On the right
TIPPING	
Not traditional, but drivers, guides and ger-camp staff on tours expect a tip at the end; restaurants in Ulaanbaatar welcome around 10%.	
ETIQUETTE	
In a ger, step over the threshold rather than on it, move clockwise, never point your feet at the stove or altar, and accept food or drink with your right hand, supporting the elbow with your left.	
MAIN AIRPORTS	
Chinggis Khaan International Airport (UBN), Ulaanbaatar	

Visas & entry for Mongolia

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit Mongolia for tourism purposes for up to 30 days without a visa until 31 December 2026.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A Tetanus Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Hepatitis B Measles Rabies Tick-borne encephalitis Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Mongolia

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Tue 10 Nov 2026	Genghis Khan's Birthday
Thu 26 Nov 2026	Republic Day
Tue 29 Dec 2026	National Freedom and Independence Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day

Sun 7 Feb 2027	Lunar New Year
Mon 8 Feb 2027	Lunar New Year
Tue 9 Feb 2027	Lunar New Year
Mon 8 Mar 2027	International Women's Day
Thu 20 May 2027	The Buddha's Birthday
Tue 1 Jun 2027	Children's Day
Sat 10 Jul 2027	National Festival and People's Revolution Anniversary
Sun 11 Jul 2027	National Festival and People's Revolution Anniversary
Mon 12 Jul 2027	National Festival and People's Revolution Anniversary
Tue 13 Jul 2027	National Festival and People's Revolution Anniversary
Wed 14 Jul 2027	National Festival and People's Revolution Anniversary
Thu 15 Jul 2027	National Festival and People's Revolution Anniversary

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Mongolian

ENGLISH	MONGOLIAN	SAY IT
Hello	Сайн байна уу	<i>sain BAI-na-oo</i>
Thank you	Баярлалаа	<i>BAI-yar-la-laa</i>
Please	Гуйя	<i>GOO-ee-yaa</i>
Excuse me	Уучлаарай	<i>OOCH-laa-rai</i>
How much is this?	Энэ хэд вэ?	<i>EN khed veh</i>

Know before you go

Book Naadam-week tours, flights and accommodation well ahead; July is the peak month and Ulaanbaatar's hotels fill up fast.

Pack layers and a warm sleeping bag even in summer: nights in the Gobi and the north can drop close to freezing, and countryside toilets are usually basic long-drops.

Withdraw *tögrög* in Ulaanbaatar or provincial centres; there are few ATMs in the countryside, and herding families and small shops deal only in cash.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.