

TAIGA REINDEER TRAIL



Trip Cost: \$3500 per person*

Ride duration: 6 days riding

Total itinerary: 14 days in Mongolia

Next join-in ride: 16th to 29th September 2020

Ride starts/ends: Darhad Valley

Ride to the reindeer herders and explore the wild Taiga. The ride begins at a trailhead on the edge of the Taiga, reached by a long drive over two days across the steppes and through the Darhad Valley. Local herders then escort us up into the Taiga to the Dukha reindeer herder's tipi camps. After visiting with the Dukha we continue deeper into the Taiga, over a mountain pass and onto Joshim Nuur, a remote alpine lake. The return route follows the Tengis river as it flows out of the Taiga.

Mongolian Trails

Trailsmith LLC

Trailsmith LLC | Registered Office: 8 The Green, Suite A, Dover, Delaware 19901 | US Mailing Address: c/o 7722 14th Ave NW, Seattle, WA 98117 | Phone/Whatsapp +84707301563 | MongolianTrails.com

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The *Dukha* reindeer herders are one of Mongolia's most fascinating and iconic communities, living in teepees and herding reindeer in the wild Taiga on the border with Tuva and Siberia. They are also known as the *Tsaatan*, which is the Mongolian word for reindeer herder, but they identify themselves as *Dukha* in their own language.

Taiga is the general term given to the Boreal Forest or Snow Forest, between the steppes and the tundra of Siberia and North America. It's actually a Mongolic or Turkic word in origin, and in Mongolia takes on a more specific meaning to describe a particular kind of mountain and forest landscape. This is rugged terrain comprising mountains reaching 3400m, numerous lakes, alpine tundra, glacial formed valleys, forest and swamp. Wildlife includes bear, moose, deer (red, roe, musk), lynx, wolves and wolverines.

Being landscapes of important conservation, cultural, and environmental significance, most of the Mongolian Taiga is now either part of the Tengis-Shishged National Park or Ulaan Taiga Special Protected Area.

This experience is designed to give you an opportunity to visit the *Dukha* without overly imposing on their hospitality, and then to continue deeper into the taiga to explore this wild landscape on horseback.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit the Dukha reindeer herders in Mongolia's taiga
- Travel deep into Mongolia's wildest landscapes on the border of Siberia
- Ride hardy Mongolian horses in the company of local horsemen
- Enjoy wild camping with camp fire evenings and starry nights



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OUTLINE ITINERARY

Day 1.

Arrive Ulaanbaatar. Overnight at Hotel (meals: none included).

Day 2.

Fly from Ulaanbaatar to the regional centre of Muron. Once we arrive in Muron we will pick up supplies from our local representative and take our passports and border permits to the Mongolian Border Guards office to register (special permits are required to visit the border areas we will visit). After formalities are completed we will begin the drive to the Darhad Valley.

It's a long drive to the trailhead, so we will camp overnight nearby a Mongolia herder family and their ger (we'll aim to drive around 5 or 6 hours today depending on flight arrival times). This will be your first opportunity to visit a ger, learn about nomadic herding life such as milking horses, and enjoy dinner with the family. Camping in tents (Meals: B, L,D).

Day 3.

Continue driving today through the stunning Darhad Valley. We will pass the National Park Headquarters in the village of Ulaan Uul and continue to Tsagaan Nuur village where we will again need to check in at the border guard post. After registering we continue to the trailhead where we meet our local team and their horses. Camping in tents (Meals: B, L,D).

Day 4.

Riding towards the East Taiga reindeer herder camp. Depending on the seasonal location of the reindeer herders we may arrive at their camp today, or next morning after camping en route. Camping in tents (Meals: B, L,D).

Day 5.

At the Tsataan Camp to learn about the Dukha life in the taiga. Camping in tents (Meals: B, L,D).

Days 6-8.

Riding deeper into the Taiga to the wild Tengis River valley and to a scenic alpine lake. Camping in tents (Meals: B, L,D).

Day 9.

Ride out to the confluence of the Shiskhiid and Tengis rivers where we'll meet the jeeps for the return drive to Muron. Camping in tents (Meals: B, L,D).

Day 10.

Drive through the Darhad Valley: we'll take the scenic route, visit a Darhad herder family, and then camp near the village of Ulaan Ul. Camping in tents (Meals: B, L,D).

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Day 11.

Drive to Muron. Overnight at a ger camp by the river a few miles from the town. (Meals: B,L,D)

Day 12.

Return flight to Ulaanbaatar from Muron (Meals: B L)

Day 13.

Spare day in Ulaanbaatar for sightseeing (buffer day in case of flight delays or schedule changes). Hotel (Meals: B).

Day 14.

Onward travel. (Meals: B).

B – Breakfast L – Lunch D – Dinner



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DETAILS

Trip Style. We'll need to travel relatively fast and light, but take what camp comforts we can. The wranglers will have a string of packhorses to carry all the gear. We'll sleep in mountain tents, couples can share and individuals will get their own tent. There will be a large tipi tent as a group shelter, this is heated with a stove for fall trips when the nights start getting cold. Food will be a combination of hearty western meals, like dutch oven cooked shepherd's pie, and local dishes such as steamed dumplings.

The Saddles. Saddles we use on these rides are locally made cossack saddles. The saddle tree comprises two wooden boards connected with iron bars at cantle and pommel. This is then strung with raw hide over which is placed a leather cushion stuffed with wool. Over our years of riding in Mongolia we've found our own made-to-order cossack saddles (known locally as Russian saddles) to be comfortable for both rider and horse, and suitable for the riding and terrain we cover.

The Riding. Considering the nature of the terrain, including some boggy marshy ground, steep hills and mountain passes, we firmly recommend that the taiga is not the place to learn to horse ride. Some riding advice and supervision will be provided but we expect guests at least have some prior experience and confidence on horseback.



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PRICE

2020 rates:

14 day itinerary: USD **\$3500 per person***

- based on join-in departure with group size 4-8 participants, please enquire for private trip pricing (including self-catering option).

plus Ulaanbaatar Hotels (Hotel 9) from **\$95 per room per night**

- generally one night before and two nights after the ride required as per the itinerary.

Notes :

We'll add the hotel nights that you need to your invoice on a single or shared room basis as required. You are welcome to arrive earlier or depart later than the start/end dates in the itinerary, or change/upgrade Ulaanbaatar hotels.

Includes:

- All in-country ground transportation,
- Domestic flight from Ulaanbaatar to Muron rtn
- Accommodation and meals as per itinerary,
- Special protected area permits,
- All camping equipment and trip support ,
- All meals indicated as B, L or D;

Excludes:

- International airfare;
- Personal laundry;
- Alcoholic beverages;
- Travel insurance; medical evacuation costs;
- Excess baggage charges;
- Visa fees;
- Gratuities;
- Photography and video fees (e.g. at museums);
- Any other item not mentioned as included.

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WHAT IS IN THE PRICE?

- ❖ The price *includes* the domestic flight (or when necessary overland travel) between Ulaanbaatar and Muron (this is a \$225-250 return ticket).
- ❖ The price *excludes* your hotel nights in Ulaanbaatar. We'll book the hotel nights you need (whether sharing or single) and add to your final invoice, this way we don't need to charge single supplements, and its easy to arrive a day early or stay later. Typically room cost for standard tourist hotels is \$95 per night.
- ❖ All trips are accompanied by an experienced English-speaking Mongolian guide. Your guide will be in Ulaanbaatar to meet you the day before departure to the countryside and will accompany you on the domestic flight.
- ❖ Price includes being met at the airport or train station on arrival in Ulaanbaatar, and all airport transfers including final departure.
- ❖ For trips of 4 or more riders we send an additional local horseman to accompany and supervise the riding group. This is in addition to the wranglers required to manage the packhorse team.
- ❖ We use Toyota land cruisers (or equivalent) as the standard vehicle for overland transport, with only 3 passengers per jeep. These jeeps are more comfortable and

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reliable than the Russian vans (aka forgun or buhanka 'bread loaf') and cover the distances faster.

- ❖ These are horse-packing trips accompanied by a team of local wranglers leading their packhorses. This means more crew and more horses (and more costs) than a vehicle supported trip, but of course allows us to get deep into the wilds.
- ❖ Fully catered trips include a cook and all meals outside of Ulaanbaatar. Hopefully you'll be pleasantly surprised by the standard of meals that we provide in the wilds.
- ❖ Filtered water is provided on the ride, and bottled or filtered water is provided during overland travel. Alcohol is not included (although we might be able to find some space in the panniers for you to take a few beers or a couple bottles of wine, which we can buy in Muron).
- ❖ It is also worth pointing out that our local partner operating these trips actually pay their taxes in Mongolia diligently, including social security and income tax contributions for all the staff including local herders who work as wranglers.



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BOOKING DETAILS

How to book this trip

Bookings are through Trailsmith LLC, a Delaware US registered company (Registered Office: 8 The Green, Suite A, Dover, Delaware 19901, USA.). Trailsmith LLC is agent for a select group of local tour operators in Mongolia.

Once you are ready to book we will send you the trip application form and invoice you for the deposit. Payments will be by bank wire transfer to our US account.

All reservations are subject to 25% deposit (subject to minimum \$500 per person). Deposits are refundable until 60 days prior to start of the program less a \$250 administrative fee.

Once we receive your trip application form, we will send you a confirmation letter along with information related with visa and international airfare reservations. You will also receive a pre-departure Travel Guide, which will include information on weather, suggested reading list, items to pack, etc.

Payment and Cancellation Policy A deposit is required at the signing-up of the departure. Full payment is due 60 days prior to the start of the trip.

In case of cancellation the following charges apply:

- Up to 60 days prior to departure, \$250 per person admin fee;
- 60-30 days prior to departure, 50% of the trip cost per person;
- 29 days before the trip starts, no-refund.

Some airfare costs may be nonrefundable. Once an expedition has departed, there will be no refunds for any unused portions of the trip. The above policy also applies to all extensions and independent travel arrangements made in conjunction with this program.

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Photo: Andy Parkinson while exploring this route in 2001.



Hello, I'm Andy Parkinson.

I've been guiding and organizing trips in Mongolia since 2000. I'll work with you to recommend or design your ideal trip. When you have decided on a option booking is with my US company, Trailsmith LLC. This ride is run to my specifications by a trusted local partner in Mongolia, who I've known for the past twenty years, and the guide team also includes many local friends.

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