



SNOW LEOPARD RESEARCH AND MONITORING TRIP

SEPTEMBER 2021

Altai-Sayan Eco-Region (ASER) located in the center of Eurasia linking together Russia, Mongolia, China and Kazakhstan, lies on the last remaining areas of practically pristine nature in the world. Encompassing an area the twice the size of France, the ecoregion hosts Snow leopard, Siberian lynx, Saiga antelope and world's largest sheep, the Altai argali. The area is also considered as one of the cradles of human origin and an extinct species or subspecies of human in the genus *Homo* – the Denisovan or Denisova hominin (currently carries the temporary names *Homo sp. Altai*, or *Homo sapiens ssp. Denisova*) – was first found in the remote cave in the Russian part of the Altai Mountains. Today, the ASER is a home to diverse ethnic groups that differ



DAY 1 ARRIVAL IN UB

Arrive in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. As a socio-economic, political and cultural center of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar welcomes you with various destinations and attractions.

After visiting WWF-Mongolia office for short period of time, you will explore history, arts, and natural museums that can give you ample understanding about not only the country itself, but its connections, roles and influences in the region and the whole world.

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ACTIVITIES:

Natural History Museum, Zanabazar fine art museum, Bogd Khaan's palace museum, Chojjin Lama museum, Chinggis square



DAY 2

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

After a day exploring the ancient Mongol capital Ulaanbaatar, we fly to Khovd town in far western Mongolia. Flight will take approximately 3 hours.

Once in Khovd (1420 meters a.s.l.), we visit the WWF-Mongolia field office for a short introduction to our work. We then depart to Baatarkhairkhan Mountain, our expedition base camp roughly 3 hours drive from the province capital. Our camp, at 2900 meters a.s.l., sits at the base of the Majestic Baatarkhairkhan Mountain.

That evening after hot showers in our ger shower tent, we settle into our traditionally fitted private yurts and then meet as a group for dinner and an update from our biologists on the latest movement of snow leopards in the area. We end the day in our ger where sleep will come swiftly under the vast, silent Mongolian sky.

Throughout the trip, informative presentations or videos will be displayed during breakfast or dinner.

***NOTE:** The primary goal of this journey is to set up automatic cameras to capture snow leopard in order to obtain essential information. Automatic camera became an important research tool to study the elusive and secretive snow leopard, because they catch images of individuals inhabiting the particular area, where the cameras are placed, and provide important data on the species movements. WWF has been monitoring snow leopards in this region of Altai-Sayan for over a decade. This familiarity combined with the relatively easy of access to this mountain location give participants the best chance possible in Asia to actually encounter a snow leopard in its natural habitat. Therefore, though there are many sorts of activities listed below, we will always prioritize snow leopard work and activities may be rearranged or dropped in order to maximize our chances of seeing a snow leopard in wild.*

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ACTIVITIES: Sightseeing,
Photograph



DAY 3 AUTOMATIC CAMERAS



The day begins with a breakfast presentation on WWF-Mongolia's snow leopard conservation work. The group is fully briefed on what occurs step by step when setting up a camera trap. We then travel by our Land Cruisers to higher altitude, where our cameras will be placed. We take part in setting the camera traps watching our lead biologists carefully place them. After trap setting we follow our biologists on a short foot survey and learn how to spot signs of the snow leopard's passing including scraping, scent-spraying, scat, claw-raking and tracks assisted by a local ranger. After a picnic lunch we return towards camp for a much deserved rest before dinner. Total of 10 automatic cameras will be placed during this trip.

“ ACTIVITIES: Hiking,
Observing wildlife,
Photograph

DAY 4 MONGOLIAN CULTURE

In the morning we will visit a local family nearby and learn about their way of life, where you will experience daily lives of nomads. That includes riding a two humped Bactrian camel and horse, assembling a ger, leather and felt making process, trying on traditional clothing, making milk vodka, and tasting authentic Mongolian cuisine while enjoying traditional performance.

These nomads have for centuries used the two humped Bactrian camel for transport and herding-and a kind of respectful companionship which evolves between people and animals in remote locations. There is also excellent wildlife spotting from our chosen locations.



ACTIVITIES: Hiking,
Observing wildlife,



DAY 5

SAIGA, WILDLIFE & CHILDREN



This day we take time to meet special conservationists – children. The children's eco club from Mankhan village have initiated and successfully implemented an anti- hunting trap campaign to save snow leopards from increasingly ubiquitous frequency in hunting with steel traps. The illegal hunting traps are set with different purposes in the mountains. Our automatic camera traps have revealed several snow leopards caught in traps which often results in loss of limb and/or death. In order to address this threat, children initiated a campaign and organized a six-week barter sale of hunting traps in return for household items. Within short period of time, they collect 234 hunting traps and were congratulated by the community and authorities.

We will meet some of these children and hear their stories. Our presence is immensely encouraging to them.

On the way to our camp, we will get to observe saiga and Argali sheep since the location is near Argali home range.



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ACTIVITIES: Observing wildlife, Photograph, Meeting children, Watching a play

DAY 6 - CHECK ON CAMERAS

Today, we immerse in the biology of the desert and mountain steppe ecosystem of western Mongolia. While we travel to check on our cameras, we might see Siberian ibex, Altai snowcock, Red fox, Black-tailed gazelle and endangered Mongolian Saiga.

Specialists from WWF-Mongolia have been successfully continuing the studies from automatic cameras placed on mountains since 2013.

Camera traps are located in the mountain for 3 months. Participants will receive information every 10-14 days from the camera.

That evening, we arrive back to our ger camp where local artists from surrounding semi-nomadic communities will perform traditional steppe opera.



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ACTIVITIES: Observing wildlife, Photograph, Enjoying traditional performance

DAY 7 - KHOVD-UB

Today we drive back to Khovd for a flight to Ulaanbaatar city. Overnight in hotel.

DAY 8 - FAREWELL

After check-out from the hotel, we will drive to the Gobi Cashmere factory store for those who are interested. Gobi Corporation is the biggest and the most qualified cashmere manufacturer in Mongolia, holding 66% of domestic market share, established in 1981. We will accompany you to the international airport of Ulaanbaatar according to your schedule.



TRIP ROUTE



USEFUL INFORMATION

Weather

Mongolia enjoys over 280 sunny days a year. However, because Mongolia has a continental weather pattern, weather can fluctuate drastically during any given day. We recommend you packing both warm and light clothes and as well as lightweight rainwear. July is one of the hottest months of the year for Mongolia. At this time of year, the average temperature is 15-20 Celsius daytime and 4-7 Celsius at night.

Safety

Mongolia is devoid of any political, religious and ethnic sectarian conflicts and is considered one of the safest countries in the world for international travelers. Additionally, Mongolians are hospitable people who love to interact with foreigners.

Food

Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar, hosts an excellent collection of fine restaurants of international cuisine. In the countryside, however meals are predominated with meat, especially beef, mutton and goat. Meat in Mongolia is excellent in that the whole country is essentially "free-range" terrain. In the camp site, the meals are mostly traditional Mongolian dishes with beef and mutton. When you visit a local family you will be offered with milk tea and some other milk products.

Accommodation

Newly renovated hotels are located at some of the best locations in downtown Ulaanbaatar. They offer comfortable rooms and friendly services.

The countryside accommodations are arranged in tents which provides authentic nomadic feel. Shower tent and toilet facilities will be set-up nearby. Staying in tent is a great way to be in the fresh air.

Visa

To travel to Mongolia you must need to get a visa. Our office will provide all the necessary assistance required for the visa application including document preparation and making application from Mongolia.

For more information, please visit their website:

- Mongolian Visa Information
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mongolia

Information about Currency and Payment Methods

Mongolian national currency is called tugrik and the exchange-rate is about 2700 tugrik to a US dollar (as of February 2020).

Major currencies can be exchanged at the hotels and pawnshops, and ATM machines are widely available throughout Ulaanbaatar and provincial centers. Traveler's checks can be cashed at banks and major credit cards are accepted at most places in the capital, but only Mongolian cash is accepted in the countryside.

We recommend that you travel with Mongolian national currency equal to US\$100-\$200 depending on whether or not you intend to buy gifts, souvenirs, cashmere, etc.

Souvenirs

Like any other places, Mongolia offers great souvenirs ranging from camel wool sweaters to cashmere scarves and traditional wooden puzzle games and Mongolian musical instruments such as the famed morinhuur or "horse headed fiddle" in cities and towns.

If you plan to shop for souvenirs, we recommend purchasing locally as many items as possible since your purchases will be a direct contribution to the local community.

Travel Insurance

With Mongolia stretching over 1.5 million square kilometers and its population concentrated in the cities, we will be travelling through some remote areas away from good roads and medical facilities. We strongly recommend that you consider getting standard emergency medical evacuation insurance as a means to protect yourself from unexpected accidents that can happen during any trip. Nothing is better than traveling with peace of mind knowing that you have prepared for the trip.

Electricity and internet

The camp will have small generator that will provide lighting and electricity for charging your electric items like phones and cameras. The tents will have portable solar lamps. We have outlets for American and European electronics. Internet connections will be available only in the vicinity of soum (county) and aimag (provincial)

centers. No internet connection, no mobile network coverage is available at our camp sites.

Special dietary requirements

Please alert WWF-Mongolia if you have any special dietary requirements (e.g. diabetes, lactose intolerance, nut or other serious food allergies).

WHAT TO BRING

Clothing/footwear

Shorts, long pants/trousers, jacket and gloves. Beanie hat and broad brim hat would need to protect your head, neck and face from sun, wind and dust. Sun glasses and sun block cream are essential. Fleece/jumper/ sweater, windbreaker, sturdy and comfortable hiking boots. Light weight waterproof and windproof rain jacket.

Light weight, quick- drying, long-sleeved shirts and pants/ trousers are optional.

Warm sweater and pair of pants are always make comfortable evening chat around campfire.

Field supplies

Small daypack to carry your personal and necessary items together. Drybag or plastic sealable bags (good for protecting equipment like cameras from dust, humidity, and water). Flashlight or headlamp (preferred) with extra batteries and extra bulb (although the gers have solar power lanterns, you may need a light at night, so it is useful to bring a smaller lantern-style flashlight as well).

Health and personal supplies

Basic toiletries (towels, soap, and tissue) and sleeping bag will be provided at the field camp, but you need to bring your personal toiletries such as:

- Personal toiletries (biodegradable soaps and shampoos are encouraged).
- Antibacterial wipes or lotion (good for cleaning hands while in the field).
- Personal first aid kit (e.g., anti-diarrhea pills, antibiotics, antiseptic, itch-relief, pain reliever, bandages, blister covers, etc.) and medications.
- Mosquito repellent.

Caution:

Felts (sheep wool) are used for warmth in gers and for mattresses. If you allergic to this material you should bring appropriate medication.

Optional items

- Camera, film, or memory card(s), extra camera battery.
- 300-400 mm telephoto lenses are the best for

taking any wildlife photos, because wildlife in Mongolia keep distances from humans.

- Binoculars (WWF provides with 1-2 spotting scopes)
- Travel guidebook, book, journal or other things you are interested in for free time.
- Small gifts for Mongolian locals (t-shirts, hats or calendars featuring your home town etc.)
- Pillow (you may need a road/car pillow).
- Earplugs (very useful if you are a light sleeper).
- Walking poles for hiking. Spare batteries.
- Insulated cup.
- Gaiters.

