



China-Mongolia-Siberia 2014

IN THE STEPPES OF GENGHIS KHAN – DRAFT FARM TOUR

| Date | Activity | Overnight |
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| DAY 1 Sat, Aug 9 (B,L) | Flights depart various Australian capitals for Shanghai On arrival, we are transferred to our hotel for a well-earned rest and freshen up before enjoying a "meet and greet", a light snack and then a free evening. | Shanghai |
| DAY 2 Sun, Aug 10 (B,L) | We have a city tour of Shanghai including the Bund, Oriental TV Tower/Jinmao Tower (the highest building in Asia) and Pudong Developing Area – an outstanding example of a city that "wasn't there yesterday". You have a free afternoon and evening for your own exploration of the city or maybe some bargain hunting. | Shanghai |
| DAY 3 Mon, Aug 11 (B,L,D) | This morning we board a bullet train for a 45 minute ride west to Suzhou, on the mighty Grand Canal. The Grand Canal is man-made and 1800 km in length – the world's longest – and once linked Beijing in the north with Hangzhou in the south. It is a striking example of Chinese engineering prowess and was built 1400 years ago! We enjoy lunch and a tour in one of Suzhou's world famous, classical gardens before visiting a silkworm farm to the south of the city with a chance to view and purchase some of the exquisite local silk fabrics, the finest in China. Later in the afternoon we continue south for 2 hours by charter coach to Hangzhou, widely regarded as China's most beautiful city. Marco Polo famously said: "In heaven there is paradise, on earth Suzhou and Hangzhou." Dinner and overnight in Hangzhou. | Hangzhou |
| DAY 4 Tue, Aug 12 (B,L,D) | Morning tour of Hangzhou's main sites including the beautiful West Lake. Afternoon direct flight from Hangzhou northwest to Xian, the ancient capital of China. This evening we visit the magnificent Xian City Wall on our way to dinner. Our meal this evening features a magnificent dumpling banquet, the regional specialty. | Xian |
| DAY 5 Wed, Aug 13 (B,L,D) | This morning we head out of town to enjoy a guided tour of the famous Terracotta Warriors and Horses. This afternoon we visit a local farm in this rich agricultural region before returning to Xian airport for our evening flight to Urumqi, China's most westerly industrial and agricultural outpost. We are now in Xinjian Province which has a fascinating agricultural and political history complete with ancient silk traders and Russian incursions. | Urumqi |
| DAY 6 Thu, Aug 14 (B,L,D) | Xinjian Province is home to around a third of the nation's 35 million bale annual cotton crop as well as one of China's biggest irrigation construction projects. Xinjiang is also a major grain and sugar producing area with wheat, rice, millet and sorghum all grown in the region. In short, this area of Western China is one of the most significant agricultural production regions in the world. Today we journey through a vast farm area to visit a large cotton corporation and its farm and meet with the local agronomists. We also visit a large sheep farm today before a late afternoon return to Urumqi. | Urumqi |
| DAY 7 Fri, Aug 15 (B,L,D) | This morning we board our charter coach and continue onto Turpan, two hours to the southeast. Turpan is literally an oasis 154 metres below sea level – and one of the most amazing farm settlements on earth. Turpan was a vital re-supply point for the 'caravans' travelling the Silk Road. The region is confronted by an extreme climate with virtually zero rainfall and huge evaporation. Snow melt from the surrounding Tian Shan Mountains feeds a 4000 km network of irrigation tunnels that have been burrowed by hand into the mountains. All this occurred several thousand years ago long before any excavators – or even dynamite – were on sale at the local co-op. We also visit the ancient city of Jiaohe (Yarkhoto). Corn, wheat and sorghum is grown in the region and we meet with local growers and inspect their unique irrigation system. This is a spectacular landscape of Gobi desert and Uyghur villages. | Turpan |

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| DAY 8 Sat, Aug 16 (B,L,D) | Return to Urumqi today for a mid-afternoon direct flight east to the city of Hohot, the capital of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in north-central China. A city with a rich agricultural background, Hohhot is also known for its historical sites and temples. | Hohot |
| DAY 9 Sun, Aug 17 (B,L,D) | A brief city tour this morning before we head east and out into the countryside. Hohhot is encircled by the Daqing Shan (Great Blue Mountains) to the north and the Hetao Plateau to the south. The region has a cold semi-arid climate marked by long, cold and very dry winters and hot, humid summers. This is also one of the main regions for spring wheat production in China. We will visit a farm where spring wheat harvest will be underway before arriving at Zhangjiakou in Hebei Province for overnight. | Zhangjiakou |
| DAY 10 Mon, Aug 18 (B,L,D) | Today we have a short drive to the southeast, via the historic village of Jimingi, and onto Badaling, the most spectacular and best preserved section of the Great Wall. It is called Badaling (8 Reaches) because of the maze of ridges stretching in all directions. This section was built in the reign of the Ming emperor Hong Zhi (1505) and was built with tall granite slabs on the outside. Here the wall has an average height of almost 8 metres and width of 6.5 metres – wide enough for five horses to gallop abreast and 10 people to advance shoulder to shoulder. Time to enjoy this magnificent testament to ancient human endeavour before continuing 70 km to the southeast and onto Beijing City. A brief city tour this afternoon to get your bearings. | Beijing |
| Day 11 Tue, Aug 19 (B,L) | While in Beijing we will enjoy guided tours of Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, the magnificent Summer Palace and the Temple of Heaven. Free time this evening with a performance of the world famous Peking (Beijing) Opera being a tempting option. The Opera commences at 7.30 pm. | Beijing |
| Day 12 Wed, Aug 20 (B,L,D) | This morning we transfer to the airport for our 2 hr 15 min direct flight to Ulaanbataar, the capital of Mongolia. We check into our hotel to freshen up before a guided city tour to get our bearings. With a population of over 1 million, 'UB' is the largest city in Mongolia. Located in north central Mongolia in the Tuul River valley, the city lies at an elevation of more than 1300 metres. The city was founded in 1639 as a nomadic Buddhist monastic centre. In 1778, it settled permanently at its present location – before that, it changed location 28 times! Mongolia boasts an eternal blue sky, a rich history, a unique culture and stunning landscapes – and just 2.8 million friendly people. | Ulaanbataar, Mongolia |
| Day 13 Thu, Aug 21 (B,L,D) | Mongolia's real attraction lies in the untouched beauty of the countryside, its exhilarating wide open spaces and rich nomadic culture. Mongolia is a large country with a very low population density – 30 per cent of the population are nomadic or semi-nomadic. The average elevation of Mongolia is more than 1500 metres and three mountain ranges stretch across the north and west. The east and south are largely occupied with Gobi desert. The steppes (grasslands) predominate, covering more than 75 per cent of the national territory. The traditional nomads raise livestock such as sheep, goats, horses, camels, yaks and cattle. The nomads generally move four times a year depending on weather conditions and grass. In recent years, government incentives have been offered to local farmers to help Mongolia move to a self-sufficient level of grain production. Over coming days we will be introduced to the traditional nomadic lifestyles that 1 million inhabitants (around a third of this intriguing nation) choose to follow. We will also learn more about the development of their modern farming enterprises. During our travels (by private charter coach) we will be comfortably accommodated in gers (Mongolian circular tents) with various nomadic farmers and their families. | Ger Camp |
| Day 14 Fri, Aug 22 (B,L,D) | Westward travel today into Mongolia's grassy, fertile valleys. We enter the imposing Khogno Khan Mountain region where we enjoy breathtaking panoramic 200 km views of the surrounding farmlands and steppes. We will also visit the Mongol Els Sand Dunes and tour the small Ovgon Monastery, nestled in the mountain cliffs. | Ger Camp |
| Day 15 Sat, Aug 23 (B,L,D) | Travel northwards today through stunning scenery – with visits to farms and cultural attractions along the way. | Ger Camp |
| Day 16 Sun, Aug 24 (B,L,D) | We continue our journey towards the Russian border and overnight at Sukhbataar – the Mongolian gateway to Siberia. With a population of around 20,000, Sukhbataar is the capital of Selenge Province in northern Mongolia and is located at the junction of the Orkhon and Selenge rivers. The Orkhon rises in the Khangai Mountains of central Mongolia and flows northwards for more than 1100 km before joining the Selenge River which flows into Russia, emptying into Lake Baikal – our destination in Siberia. | Sukhbataar |

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| Day 17 Mon, Aug 25 (B,L,D) | This morning we cross the border into Russia and travel north following the spectacular Selenge River Valley and onto Ulan Ude with farm and scenic visits along the way. 'UU' has a population of 400,000 and is the capital of Siberia's Buryat Republic. | Ulan Ude (Siberian Russia) |
| Day 18 Tue, Aug 26 (B,L) | A leisurely day in and around UU to recharge the batteries. A brief city tour is included to introduce us to one of Siberia's most likeable cities. Founded as a Cossack ostrog (fort) called Udinsk in 1666, the city prospered as a major stop on the tea-caravan route from China. Renamed Ulan Ude in 1934, it was a closed city until the 1980s due to its nearby – and very secret – military plants. The city has an intriguing mix of Mongol-Buddhist cultures and is the southern gateway to the amazing Lake Baikal. | Ulan Ude |
| Day 19 Wed, Aug 27 (B,L,D) | <p>Travel northeast today to the southern shores of Lake Baikal. This is the most voluminous freshwater lake in the world and contains roughly 20 per cent of the planet's unfrozen surface fresh water. At an average depth of around 1600 metres, it is also the world's deepest and is among the clearest. By surface area, it ranks 7th largest in the world. We are talking an awful lot of fresh water.</p> <p>Baikal is home to more than 1700 species of plants and animals, two thirds of which can be found nowhere else in the world and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996. It is also home to Buryat tribes who inhabit the eastern side of the lake rearing goats, camels, cattle and sheep. The regional average temperatures vary from a minimum of -19°C in winter to a maximum of around 14°C in summer.</p> | Lake Baikal |
| Day 20 Thu, Aug 28 (B,L,D) | We travel westwards today and into the spectacular and fertile Tunka Valley. This is one of Siberia's scenic and farming gems. The Tunka River's fertile plains are sprinkled with the agricultural settlements of the indigenous Buryat people – the descendants of Mongols. Overnight tonight in the valley. | Tunka Valley |
| Day 21 Fri, Aug 29 (B,L,D) | <p>We continue our exploration of this amazing landscape before heading two hours to the northeast to Irkutsk, the administrative centre of Irkutsk Oblast. With a population of nearly 600,000, this is one of the largest cities in Siberia. During the communist years, the industrialisation of Irkutsk – and Siberia in general – was heavily encouraged by Russia's central planners. The large Irkutsk Reservoir was built on the Angara River between 1950 and 1959 in order to facilitate industrial development.</p> <p>We enjoy a farewell dinner this evening to reflect on an amazing journey.</p> | Irkutsk |
| Day 22 Sat, Aug 30 (B) | <p>A brief city tour this morning and then free time for that last minute souvenir hunting etc. Mid afternoon transfer to the airport for our 5.10 pm direct flight to Beijing and connections home.</p> <p>Direct flight to Beijing (arriving 8.05 pm) with connections to various Australian capitals.</p> <p>There are various 'staying on' options available such as spending more time on Lake Baikal (private fishing and overnight charters etc) or you could catch the Trans-Siberian train in Irkutsk for travel east to Vladivostok (3 days) or west to Moscow (approx 4 days).</p> <p>Additional time in Beijing – or other Asian destinations – at the end of the tour can also be arranged.</p> | On plane |