

FIRE Mongolian Itinerary

June 27 – July 10, 2010

Sunday June 27

Arrive in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. You will be greeted and transferred to our centrally located city hotel. Depending on when you arrive, you will have some time to see the city. You will have a driver and guide for your convenience. The city was under the rule of the Soviet Empire for more than 70 years, finally breaking away in 1990. The architecture and feel of city reflects this soviet time quite a bit. It is quickly becoming a great mixture of old and new with soviet style block apartments buildings, ancient gers and modern glass buildings all mixed into one block. The traffic in the city is extremely difficult, to say the least, making even crossing the street a great adventure. There are wonderful places to eat, cultural performances, museums, markets and Buddhist Monasteries to explore. Ulaanbaator has a wealth of Buddhist relics, antiques and fabulous cashmere to indulge in.

Monday June 28

Transfer with our baggage and equipment to Chinggis Khan airport at midday for the 1 hour, 30 minute flight, northwest to Moron. Moron is a government and commercial center of 30 thousand residents, situated in proximity to the Delger-Moron River. The airport is a short distance from town. We will depart the airport directly for Ulan Uul by jeep, about 6 hours drive. The travel will take us on a meandering course, north from the steppes and on through hilly valleys and drainages. Our route will wind over rough and ill-defined tracks, in steppe land and forest, through great valleys, along ridge tops, across streams and rivers. As compensation for the rough travel, the countryside is spectacular. We have encountered wolves, Bactrian camels and herds of yaks. There are Golden eagles, falcons, and griffons aloft. Along the way we will stop and a visit the mysterious deer stones, erected thousands of years ago by Turkic-Mongol tribes and characterized by carvings of deer in a "flying gallop". We will spend the night at the mouth of the forest in a Shamanic compound, eating locally grown food and drinking home made vodka. This is a world renowned Shaman who was featured in the new novel "Horse Boy" about a young autistic man's transformational journey with his parents in Northern Mongolia.

Tuesday June 29

In the morning we will have a leisurely departure for Wind Horse Camp. This will be a one-hour drive. Wind Horse is the only-eco-friendly boutique camp of its kind in Mongolia to offer excellent comfort and service in absolute wilderness. It sits on the banks of the pristine Hoogi River, near Mongolia's legendary Blue Lake, close to border with the mysterious country of Tuva. This is the meeting point between the Mongol steppe and the mountain-forests of the taiga, in the heart of Inner Asia, where an ancient prophecies locate the hidden kingdom of Shambhala: The Atlantis of Buddhist legends. Set up like a traditional nomadic encampment, it is fully movable with the seasons, just like the camps of Mongolian herders, but with special attention given to comfort and details including hot-water bathtubs and well-appointed cave of good wines from around the world. The camp welcomes a steady flow of regular expats, as well as discerning travelers who seek a private intimacy and sophistication beyond what commercial tour operators can provide.

Wednesday June 30

We will spend an additional day relaxing and enjoying the remote and comfortable environment of Wind Horse Camp in the Khovsgol eco-region, where the Tsaatan Reindeer People live and patrol the evergreen forests and snow-capped mountains on the backs of their stocky reindeer. Whether you want to simply rest and go hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, kayaking, bird watching, and fishing on the fly on our world-class trout-river, the choice is yours. At Wind Horse Ger Camp, your eggs will always be cooked just the way you like them. The kitchen staff has been trained in France. They pay particular attention to detail; from the best local meats and vegetables to the finest seasonings, teas and breakfast jams. Delicious bread is baked daily in their wood oven. Friendly local nomads provide fresh milk and cream. There is a good stock of fine wines and a selection of Cuban cigars. Evening meals are usually accompanied by scheduled live entertainment drawing on the talents of indigenous Mongolian bards and fiddlers. Whether you dine under the immense sky or inside our cozy dining ger you will find every meal to be a true delight!

Thursday July 1

We will have a morning departure by horseback for the Tsaatan Reindeer People camp, about a 6-hour ride. Horses are the backbone of Wind Horse Camp. Their breeding program that aims to preserve the legendary 'White- Darhat' bloodlines which stand a hand taller than the average Mongol horse and are at the disposal of guests at all times (English and Western tack). Riding in the wilderness has a deep impact on the soul. Something unravels in the subtle anatomy, tapping into a source of peace and wellness that one observes among Mongolia's nomadic tribesmen." At Wind Horse they have dubbed this the 'thunderhoof' experience: A deep cleansing and rejuvenation of the spirit that takes place after a week of riding on a sturdy horse or on gentle reindeer over the wide open steppe or gentle reindeer on the highlands of the West Taiga, you have never felt this close to the vast blue sky! We will spend the night in a Tepee Hotel, hosted by the Tsaatan.

Friday July 2

We will spend the day enjoying the company and culture of the Tsaatan Reindeer People. The Tsaatan live a nomadic lifestyle in the coniferous forest, the Taiga, following the reindeer they herd to the pastures the animals choose. A distinct culture within Mongolian society, the Tsaatan practice a shamanistic religion and speak old Uighur dialects with one another. Today, the Tsaatan attempt to preserve their traditional ways of life in the midst of globalization. They use their reindeer not only to carry their belongings, but also for meat, milk, and clothing from animal hides. They continue to live in tepees like structures made of animal skin. Tsaatan dress is characterized by hats in the style of the Halkh people, and wide deels (traditional Mongolian overcoats). They wear strong and warm boots fabricated from the hides and sinew of their reindeer. These boots are known for their quality. To make it through the rugged winters, a family will slaughter two or three reindeer in order to store up food for the cold months. The food is hearty and delicious by most accounts. The Tsaatan, the Mongolian reindeer themselves, have dictated the Tsaatan's way of life. Mongolian reindeer are a unique species located only in the northern latitudes of the world. Tsaatan are most famous for their elaborate, towering horns. White moss is the preferred food, which grows abundantly in their habitat high in the Taiga Forest. We will again spend the night in a Tepee Hotel, hosted by the Tsaatan.

Saturday July 3

We will have a leisurely departure returning back to Wind Horse Camp, about a 6-hour ride.

Sunday July 4

We will spend one final day immersed in the beauty and amenities of the Wind Horse Camp. Among the previously mentioned activities you can also enjoy the traditional Mongolian Spa. You have never experienced a spa as traditional and remote as the Wind Horse pampering. Since the time of Kublai Khan, the Mongols have recognized the health benefits of mare's milk as a gentle and effective method of detoxifying the body, especially after a long winter of ingesting meats. Today, many Mongols continue to rely on mare's milk to clean out their bodies in the early summer months and acknowledge the detoxifying effects on the body's other organs, especially the colon, liver and the skin. The Wind Horse Spa includes traditional Mongolian 'bariachi' diagnosis based on the reading of the pulse. This allows the healer to feel where the body's circulation is weak or blocked. Your morning mare's milk concoctions milked directly at your doorstep (our mares are veterinary certified every season) are followed by our signature 'bariachi' massage, designed to improve circulation throughout the body and restored blood flow to limbs, joints and the brain. Combined with our mare's milk detox program, the massage treatments speed up the elimination of toxins from the body - an ideal way to begin or end your Mongol horse adventure!

Monday July 5

With a mid-day departure, we will travel by jeep through the breath taking Mongolian countryside known as the Darkhat Valley. The Darkhat Valley marks the boundary between the vast central Asian steppe and the forested Siberian taiga. From the earliest times, this region has been a crossroads, a place where the worlds of Central Asia and the Arctic met. The result is a landscape littered with dramatic archaeological monuments, especially huge rock burial mounds known as *khirigsuurs* and upright stones carved with mysterious symbols. We will camp at the base of the Horidal Pass. It is about a 3-hour drive.

Tuesday July 6

We will ride horse with reindeer support over the stunning Horidal Pass. This will be the most difficult day of riding, but suitable for every level of horseman. The views and landscape of these mountains are dramatic, often flanked with impressive scree and craggy outcrops, rising to nearly 10,000 feet. We will spend the night camped along the banks of the stunning Lake Khovsgol.

Wednesday July 7

We will spend the entire day riding along the banks of Lake Khovsgol, the Magic Lake or Blue Lake. Lake Hovsgol is a 100-mile long pristine alpine lake. It is the fourteenth largest freshwater lake in the world and second largest in Central Asia by volume. It holds almost 70% of Mongolia's fresh water and 0.4% of all the fresh water in the world. Its water is some of the purest water in the world. It is so pure you can drink directly from it. An amazing 90 rivers flow into the lake, but only a single one flows out - the Egiin Gol River making it strikingly similar to the Siberian Lake Baikal in Russia. The Lake is protected as a National Park and is

sacred to Mongolians who call it 'Dalai Ej', the 'Mother Sea'. We will spend the night camped along the banks of the stunning Lake Khovsgol.

Thursday July 8

In the morning we will leave our horses and board a private yacht for a day long cruise down Lake Khovsgol. We will enjoy a picnic lunch on Bird Island. Lake Khovsgol is thought to be several million years old. As such it is one of the few lakes in the world this old, and of these, it is the most pristine. The level of endemism (species found nowhere else) is 10-20% of the species in many groups, but many organisms are not well studied. The surrounding area is home to a wild sheep, ibex, bear and moose, as well as over 200 species of birds. It's inhabited by nine species of fish including the Siberian grayling and lenok. Nearby taiga forest, forest steppe, mountains, and the lake itself provide habitat for 68 species of mammals, including argali, ibex, elk, reindeer, musk deer, brown bear, lynx, marten, beaver, wolf, and moose, 244 species of birds, and 750 species of plants, including 60 with medicinal importance. We will overnight at a traditional ger camp in the town of Hatgal.

Friday July 9

Early morning departure to the airport in Moron and flight back to Ulaanbaatar. Overnight at your centrally located hotel in Ulaanbaatar with a dinner farewell dinner at one of Mongolia's best restaurants.

Saturday July 10

Depart for your home

Extra Days

You are welcome to arrive early and stay later to further explore the city of Ulaanbaator. The traditional Mongolian holiday of Naadam, is held every July 11 – 13. Additionally, FIRE is happy to arrange a personal tour including Nadaam in either Ulaanbaator or Moron. Please contact us for pricing and arrangements.