



Mongolia -
Travel Advice



Introduction

We have designed this document to provide an insight into the practicalities of travelling to Mongolia with us. Generic information combines with personal advice and an insight into what you can expect on a Goyo Travel journey. If you have any questions about your Mongolia trip that are not answered below, just e-mail olly@goyotravel.com or call +44 1869 866 520 (UK) or +976 9959 8468 (Mongolia) and we'll be happy to help.

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Our Service & Expertise - Although our itineraries are generally quoted exclusive of international travel, we are able to book international flights and train tickets for our guests. We are also happy simply to give advice on where to get information, plus the best deals, for those of you who prefer to make your own international travel arrangements.

International Flights

The number of flights and routes to Mongolia has increased significantly in recent years. The following cities have direct flights to Mongolia, and all are major international transit hubs providing connections to many countries. The flight frequency listed is based on summer schedule during June-Sep (winter schedules are often subject to reduced frequency).

Beijing - MIAT and Air China both fly direct daily

Frankfurt - MIAT fly direct 2 times per week

Hong Kong - MIAT fly direct 5 times per week

Istanbul - Turkish Airlines fly 'direct' 3 times per week (refueling en route!)

Moscow - Aeroflot fly direct daily; MIAT fly direct 2 times per week with connections from/to Berlin as well.

Seoul - MIAT and Korean Airlines both fly direct daily

Tokyo - MIAT fly direct 5 times per week

Prices (Economy Class Return)

From UK - Cheapest £550, Average £8500, Top £1,200+

From Europe - Cheapest €900, Average €1,100, Top €1,400+

From US - Cheapest US\$1,600, Average US\$2,300, Top US\$2,900+

From Australia - Cheapest AU\$1,500, Average AU\$1,800, Top US\$2,300+

From within Asia - Various Routes US\$450-800

Cheapest Flight Options

Use flight search engines such as www.kayak.com - the best deals are often found if you are flexible on airline choice, connections and transit times. However, Air China often come up with competitive pricing and good connections. Also, be aware that MIAT and Mongolian Airlines flight connections may often not show on search engines if it cannot be included on a combined ticket. So, sometimes, the cheapest way to fly may be to buy a ticket from your country of origin to one of the above hubs where MIAT fly to Mongolia from, and then purchase the onward MIAT flight separately (from them directly, or through us).

Recommended Flight Options

Flying with 1 airline and on 1 ticket is advisable for long-haul flights involving same-day international connections, as the airlines will simply put you onto the next onward flight if you miss a connection due to their fault. Air China provide the best worldwide options for this, whilst Aeroflot and Turkish Airlines provide additional options for European passengers.

If you are flying with different airlines and on separate tickets, ensure sure that your connection times are not too tight. Otherwise you have increased risk of having to buy a new ticket if you miss an onward flight.

Useful Contacts

Airlines

MIAT Mongolian Airlines	www.miat.com	+49 30 284 981 42
Air China	www.airchina.com	00800 86100999 (EU)/ +1-800-882-8122 (US)
Aeroflot	www.aeroflot.com	+44 (0) 20 7355 2233
Turkish Airlines	www.turkishairlines.com	+90 212 444 0 849 / +90 850 333 0 849
Hunnu Air	www.hunnuair.com	+976 7000 1111

Flightstores

Kayak	www.kayak.com	-
Trailfinders	www.trailfinders.com	+44 (0) 20 7368 1200



International Trains

One of the **Trans-Siberian Railway** routes runs from Moscow through to Beijing, passing through Mongolia.

Trains No. 4 & 6 from **Moscow to Ulaanbaatar** depart on Tuesday and Wednesday at 21:35, arriving the following Monday and Tuesday at 06:30. 1st Class berth c.£540/\$860; 2nd class berth c.£325/\$520. Lower prices available in other direction. Stopovers en route also possible - Irkutsk (for Lake Baikal) is highly recommended, and there are daily onward trains from here to Ulaanbaatar.

The journey from **Beijing to Ulaanbaatar** takes just 30hrs. Train No.24 departs on Saturdays (switching to Tuesdays during the winter), and Train No.3 departs on Wednesday. They both leave Beijing at 07:40, arriving the following day at 13:20. 1st Class berth c.£280/\$450; 2nd class berth c.£195/\$310. Lower prices available in other direction.

An extra Train 24 runs during the summer - usually Tuesday - but the timetable is often not confirmed until May (ask us for details).

We can also arrange tickets from **Mongolia to Russia** - the daily 21:20 Train 263 to Irkutsk, or the weekly Trains 3 & 5 to Moscow departing Thursdays and Fridays respectively.

The limited number of direct flight routes to Mongolia, combined with the allure of the main transit countries in between, have led us to design a variety of tempting foreign forays to complement our Mongolian journeys. We have carefully chosen like-minded partner companies in the principal transit countries of **Turkey, Russia and China** to provide short stopovers and longer extensions.

So why not sample the sights and smells of the **Istanbul** souks.....paint the town red with ballet at the Bolshoi in **Moscow**.....savour the Siberian jewel of Lake Baikal near **Irkutsk**.....design your own dim sum at a dumpling-making lesson in the hutongs of **Beijing**.....explore the Great Wall of China at Jinshanling.....or take a terracotta tour of the warriors in **Xi'an**.

We have many suggestions up our sleeve to suit a variety of interests - from our selection of the best hotels to stay at in between flight connections, to whistlestop tours of classic highlights, to longer sejours studded with hidden gems that we love to share with our guests. Choose from our selection of specially designed **1 to 5 day itineraries** or ask us to create something bespoke to suit your needs.

Why not also take the opportunity as well to experience one of the world's great railway journeys, arriving into Mongolia aboard the fabled **Trans-Siberian** train.



China

Beijing was once capital of the Mongolian Empire under *Khublai Khan*, and forms an integral part of the history between the two countries. China's capital showcases the ancient and modern, and is well worth spending a few days discovering the best of both that the city and its environs have to offer - classic must-sees plus extra touches that give a deeper insight into local culture.

Visit the magnificent **Forbidden City**, wind your way through the narrow alleyways of the **local hutongs**, enjoy a **dumpling-making class**, explore the less-visited section of the **Great Wall at Jinshanling**, walk the grounds of the tranquil **Temple of Heaven**, view exhibitions in the **Art District 798**, climb the steps of the imposing **Drum Tower**, and stay in a **traditional courtyard hotel**. Round off the trip with a journey on the **Trans-Mongolian train** to Ulaanbaatar.

We also arrange extensions to **Shanghai** and **Xi'an**, as well as designing journeys as far afield as **Tibet**.

Russia

The classic **Moscow** of the Romanovs, *Leo Tolstoy*, and ballet impresario *Sergei Diaghilev* is well known around the world. **The Kremlin**, the **Bolshoi Ballet**, the **Tretyakov Gallery**, the **Pushkin State Museum** and the **Conservatory** rightfully top most to-do lists. But there's another Moscow — equally fascinating — that we suggest you experience to get a feel for what this place is all about. Visit exhibitions at **Winzavod** in the meatpacking district; stroll down the **Bulvar**; hang out at **Gorky Park**; unwind at a traditional **banya** - plus get a taste for local living with a **homestay** in a classic soviet apartment.

Irkutsk is a charming Siberian city of classical architecture and traditional wooden houses - and is the gateway to stunning Lake Baikal. A recommended stop-off for anyone taking the train from Russia to Mongolia.



We also arrange extensions to **St. Petersburg** and **Ulan-Ude**. And of course, **Trans-Siberian** train tickets.

Turkey

Istanbul is a city at the crossroads of civilisation. Straddling Europe and Asia, it manages to be both lavishly ancient and vibrantly modern. The skyline alternates between skyscrapers, Ottoman mosques and Byzantine churches, and at street level the cobblestone streets lead into sprawling palaces and bazaars. Its spectacular location overlooking the waters of the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus adds a shimmering finish to this jewel of a city.

Visit the world-famous sites of **Hagia Sophia**, the **Blue Mosque** and **Topkapi Palace**; revitalise your body at a traditional **Turkish hamam**; descend into the cavernous **Basilica Cistern**; take a ferry to the tranquility of **Princes' Islands**; mosey through the art galleries of the **Istanbul Modern**; meander through the aromatic aisles of the **Spice Market**; shop in the **Grand Bazaar**; and stay in a traditional **Ottoman house**.



Mongolia is a large country with a limited, though steadily improving, transport infrastructure. In many ways, the network of pot-holed roads, gravel trails and dirt tracks are an integral part of what make the country so appealing for travellers. Driving here is not a sanitised asphalt chore indistinguishable from your daily lives back home, but a predominately off-road overland adventure through diverse landscapes rich with wildlife and nomadic culture.

At Goyo Travel we recognise the need to balance the time it takes to drive anywhere with the time that you have available in Mongolia, and the need to experience, do and see. Unlike many companies, we do not advocate rattling along in a vehicle for 7 hours every day just to tick off points on the map from behind a car window. On our journeys, any necessary long drives are offset by photo stops, picnic lunches, roadside pitstops, tea/coffee breaks, and of course seeing points of interest, leg-stretching walks, dropping in on nomadic families, popping into villages and markets.

Consecutive days of long drives are rare - we prefer to stagger trips so that guests can enjoy and explore special areas where you really benefit from staying 2 or more nights, especially if you're staying at one of our favourite ger camps.

To make the most of your time in Mongolia, we often design itineraries which combine overland driving sections with domestic flights between Ulaanbaatar and far-flung areas of interest. The airlines we use are reputable companies with impeccable safety and maintenance records, with ever-growing fleets of modern aircraft. The majority of provincial destinations also have paved runways.



UAZ

Our vehicle of choice is the UAZ. Fun, functional & practical, most of our guests fall in love with these indomitable vehicles and our fantastic team of drivers. With a high wheel base, large surround windows, ample luggage space, the flexible sociable layout comfortably seats 4-5 guests plus guide and driver. Quite simply, these beasts of the east were born for the wilds of Mongolia.

Landcruisers

If your priority is comfort & air-con, and are prepared to pay a bit extra, then the Landcruiser is the perfect option. These vehicles are ideal if you're travelling as a couple or as a smaller group looking for 2 or more cars to provide flexibility and privacy. Please note that, unless specified, we do not use Landcruisers for our group trips.

Domestic Flights

There are 2 companies who operate domestic flights in Mongolia - Aeromongolia and Hunnu Air. There is not much to choose between them in terms of quality or service, so we tend to choose airlines according to scheduling preferences and/or availability.

Domestic flights are operated using Fokker 50 and Airbus 319. The aircraft carry between 50-120pax depending on the type of aircraft and route flown.

During June-August there are twice daily flights to the most popular provincial destinations of Dalanzadgad (for Gobi Desert) and Muron (for Lake Khovsgol). During the off-season and winter months flights are much more limited.

Baggage Allowance

Hunnu Air and Aeromongolia allow 10kg hold + 5kg hand luggage. Both airlines officially restrict hand luggage to 1-piece but this is rarely enforced. Excess baggage charges are between \$2-5 per kilo depending on the route, so a few extra kilos isn't going to break the bank.



Road and Rail

Roads

The vast majority of Mongolia's official road network, some 40,000 km, are simple cross-country tracks. Around 5,000km are graded, gravel-covered or otherwise improved, but only c.3,500km are paved - although these latter two figures are increasing as the government is investing heavily in creating better road links between the main provincial centres and the capital.



Rail

The vast majority of the country is not served by any railway system. The main line carves a path from the Russian border at Sukhbaatar in the North to the Chinese border at Zamyn Ud in the south - a length of 1110 km. This is used for domestic and international freight and passenger transport, with an additional spur to the country's 3rd city of Erdenet.

Although slow and of limited use for tourism purposes, a ride on the soviet-style railway is a characterful and enjoyable experience. We recommend and arrange tickets for the route from Irkutsk or Beijing to Ulaanbaatar, and also forays within the country - from Ulaanbaatar to Erdenet, for example.

Accommodation

From the warmth of countryside hospitality, and the novelty of sleeping in a traditional ger, to the laid-back character of the capital's service culture, the accommodation Mongolia has to offer is diverse. Enjoy the relative luxury of lodge-style countryside retreats and Ulaanbaatar's modern hotels, plus homely and endearing rural ger camps, and other more rustic options - including homestays and camping.

We regularly personally review and research our accommodation choices to ensure that we provide our guests with the right balance of style and substance, with local flavour and character.

Your various overnight stays in Mongolia will offer variety and interesting experiences - mostly tremendously enjoyable (we hope!) and, above all, memorable.



Hotels

On most journeys you will spend your first and last night in Ulaanbaatar - often by necessity as well as by design. Like any rapidly developing metropolis, traffic, noise, and pollution are all issues - so location is key.

We have a preferred list of hotels that balance character, atmosphere, service, cleanliness, and comfort - all within convenient well-lit walking distance of the city centre.

Ger Camps

Outside of the capital, you will spend some - or perhaps all - of your nights at ger camps. These are locally-run enterprises set in rural locations near areas of cultural, historical or geographical interest. A ger camp typically comprises 20-30 gers, each with 2-4 beds and a traditional wood-burning stove. Separate male & female bathroom blocks with western-style facilities are located a short distance away, as well as a communal larger dining ger or lodge where meals are served.



Facilities can vary from civilised to basic. Some camps have 24hr mains electricity, hot water on demand, plus lighting and plug sockets in the gers. Others have no mains electricity, but have generators that operate only at certain hours. Hot water is often only available at certain times, and even then it is not guaranteed.

Extra services are provided by many ger camps - laundry, massage, sauna, equipment hire (e.g. fishing rods, kayaks etc. at Lake Khovsgol). Unless otherwise specified in the itinerary, the costs for these are extra.

Camping

Activity-based wilderness trips - trekking, riding, cycling, etc. - will mainly consist of wild camping. Some with vehicle support (incl. dining tent, portalo), others with pack animals and a more pared down equipment quota. We supply all camping and cooking equipment, except for sleeping bags. However, these can be rented from us at a small additional charge.



Homestays

Many itineraries include homestays with local families where you can experience Mongolian life up close. Stay in a guest ger, learn their customs, and enjoy traditional cuisine.



Food

We guarantee that you will be pleasantly surprised by the food available in Mongolia. This is partly because your expectations will be low (!), but also because, contrary to popular belief, dietary options are not just limited to mutton and fat. In Ulaanbaatar, there is a range of great local and international restaurants, and although in the countryside the choice and ingredients are more limited, there are some traditional culinary specialties to enjoy and savour.

Ger camps have set menus - e.g. cucumber & tomato salad; beef goulash; fruit compote. Traditional cuisine is served but often with a twist or refined to suit Western tastes. Russian influences are stronger than Chinese, although both feature.

We cater for all dietary needs - vegetarian, vegan, dairy & wheat-free., etc.

We like to vary meals during a trip - lunch may be with a nomadic family, or at a roadside cafe, or a picnic. Each vehicle is also kitted out with a snack box - chocolate, crisps, nuts, dried and fresh fruit. We often also stop and stock up on supplies at local villages and markets.

In summer, delicious local homemade yoghurt, clotted cream and wild berry jams are also available - often from nomadic families, but also at ger camps.

Fruit & Veg

Although mainly imported, a growth in organic farming has led to an increase in availability of fresh fruit and vegetables. Enjoy!



Drink

Water

We include an unlimited supply of still mineral water on all trips which involve overland travel in vehicles. We provide small bottles and also large containers from which we fill the small bottles from. This enables us to reduce the amount of plastic we use. Wherever you stay or eat, they will not mind you bringing in your own bottled water, so we advise stocking up from the vehicles each night to avoid you having to pay unnecessarily for water.

For adventure trips, during sections without vehicle travel (i.e. walking, on horseback), we either provide water filters which enable you to fill up your bottles at streams and rivers, or we boil enough water each morning for you to carry in your daypacks and drink as you go along.

Soft Drinks & Alcohol

We provide a complementary 'starter pack' selection of soft drinks and alcohol on all trips - but once these supplies have gone you will need to stock up yourselves, if desired. Ger camps have bars - some well-stocked including an array of soft drinks, mixers, drinkable wines, spirits and cold beers; and others less well-stocked, often just with fruit juice, vodka and room-temperature beer. The former tend to disapprove of - or not allow - guests bringing in their own drinks (other than water); but the latter tend to accept that guests will bring in other drinks to supplement their own poor selection!

Stocking Up

There are plenty of opportunities on most trips to stop in villages and towns en route to stock up on extra drink supplies if needed. Choice in the countryside is more limited than in Ulaanbaatar, so if you know you have a penchant for a specific imported soft drink, gin and tonic, a good red wine, or a nice whisky, then visit a supermarket in Ulaanbaatar at the start of your trip or the Duty Free shop before you arrive.

Local Drinks - On most trips you will have the opportunity, if you wish, to taste the following:

Mongolian tea is the local drink of choice - traditionally made in a large pot over a stove with half-water, half-milk, a handful of tea leaves, some salt, and perhaps a dollop of butter (or fat left over in the pan).

In the summer months, **airag** - fermented mare's milk - is widely available in the countryside. The fresh milk is stirred and aerated over a period of 2-3 days until it starts to ferment. A 'young' airag will taste light, slightly sharp and lightly fizzy with a very slight alcohol content (0.5%) - not too unpleasant. An 'older' airag - a week or two old - will taste rich, sour and fizzy, with a slightly higher alcohol content - this is an acquired taste!

There is a wide variety of **Mongolian beer** - much of it very good, partly due to the German-invested breweries and equipment. The classic Borgio lager is a national staple, as well as Sengur, whilst the pilsner style Chinggis and Golden Gobi offer a more robust flavour, and darker brews such as Khar Khorum add further variety.

No mention of drink would be complete without **vodka** - Mongolians drink a lot of it. Most is poor quality, but some (like Bolor) is very good. Nomads distil their own 'milk' vodka, which is around 10-12% and is surprisingly drinkable.

Activities

Our trips range from the adventurous to the laid-back. If you are mad about trekking, riding, cycling, and more, then there are specific adventure trips to cater for these activities. But equally, if you just want to dabble here and there in activities that Mongolia have to offer, then all of our itineraries offer the flexibility for you to be as active or inactive as you want. Unless specifically mentioned otherwise in your itinerary, we include all costs associated with activities.

Walking - The varied and wild landscapes of Mongolia offer great opportunities for walking. On any trip there will be time available to explore the countryside on foot - whether as part of a planned visit to a specific area, or as an optional activity. You will also find most overnight accommodation locations to be most eminently suitable to a pre-dinner stroll or, for the more active among you, a light morning jog!

Riding - Horse culture is inseparable from nomadic culture, and you are never far from being able to swing your leg over a trusty steed and gallop off into the horizon. Riding can be arranged at various times during your itinerary - often there will be times when riding is planned as an optional activity, or if you fancy a ride at any other time we can arrange it. Locals often bring their horses to ger camps to be rented on an hourly basis, or else a quick drive to a nearby nomadic family and negotiation by your guide can arrange a ride at short notice. In the Gobi desert, camel riding is also an optional part of all itineraries and can be arranged in a similar manner to horse riding.

Other - At various points throughout an itinerary there will be a chance to do a range of other activities. These could include - riding on a yak cart; milking animals; having a cooking lesson; dune sledging; kayaking; swimming; fishing; cycling; archery; wrestling - perhaps at a rural naadam festival!

Age & Fitness

We find that many of our guests over 50 are more fit and keen on activities than some of our younger travelers. If you are reasonably active and take regular exercise, it is likely you can participate on any of our trips. For those who need - or prefer - a more sedate experience, our cultural tours will fit perfectly, since many activities are optional and not integral to the main focus of the tour.





Goyo Travel Team - We know that it's the people, as well as the places, that are integral to the enjoyment of your Mongolia journey, and we also believe that our team are the best in the business. We place a strong emphasis on staff recruitment, rigorous selection process, regular training and skills development, and itinerary research. In a country where claims of being an 'approved' guide, or holding a guiding association certificate, is no guarantee of quality, it is important to nurture our staff in the Goyo Travel mould using our own cross-cultural knowledge and expertise. We also personally brief all our staff on every element of guests' trips - from the basic nuts and bolts of the itinerary schedule, to specific considerations based on our knowledge of each guests' interests, personal preferences and requests, plus special touches such as birthday and anniversary surprises.

Guides

You guide will be an English-speaking local Mongolian. For larger groups you may have an assistant guide, and/or a Western tour leader.

We aim to match guides carefully to suit the dynamics and requirements of each group. It is important to do this, since the guide will be with you for much of your journey. Your guide will also eat with you at mealtimes - a concept that may seem strange to some of you before you arrive, but once here you will find it perfectly natural. Mongolians are by nature warm and hospitable, and your guide will possess these qualities combined with a refined balance of other key attributes - knowledgeable, resourceful, energetic, proactive, intuitive, intelligent, sensible, flexible, sensitive to your individual needs, and attentive without being overbearing.

We aim to provide guide and pick-up details to all guests at least a week in advance of your journey.



Drivers

Our drivers all own their own vehicles - taking utmost pride in their care, and the safety and comfort of all of our guests. Although they generally speak very little English, language is no barrier to their invaluable interaction with the group and their enormous contribution to the success of any trip. The word 'driver' does not do justice to the importance and diversity of their role. Whilst getting you from A to B, they do everything from A to Z. They know the countryside like the back of their hand, even without maps and road signs - or roads! They are able to deal with all types of conditions, and are expert mechanics if the need arises. They also know the best picnic spots, local families to stop at, and with sharp eyes they are always spotting and pointing out wildlife - in between renditions of traditional Mongolian songs. Nothing is too much trouble for these guys - between stints behind the wheel they help with luggage, equipment set-up, lighting fires in gers, archery demonstrations, and teaching guests a bit of Mongolian.

Office Support

We do not outsource our ground operations in Mongolia. The people who look after every aspect of itinerary design and booking arrangements are the same people who then implement them. You may correspond with Olly in our UK office in February, and in July he may be hosting you for dinner on your first night in Ulaanbaatar. Goyo may arrange an audience with the head lama at Gandan Monastery, and also be the person who introduces you when you are there. When the person who plans an itinerary also executes it, it gives an added sense of trust and security.

During your trip, our office maintain regular but discreet contact with the guides and drivers - ensuring that every aspect of your journey is running as you, and we, expect. If a change of plan is needed, for whatever reason, we have the flexibility and authority to action it swiftly. In an emergency, we are well-placed to deal with it efficiently and professionally. In the unlikely event of anything going wrong, we can react and make amends quickly, ensuring any problems are kept to a minimum.



The concept of responsible travel is highly subjective, a turn of phrase that is overused, often mis-understood and under-implemented - both by travel companies and travellers alike. At Goyo Travel we don't pretend to be whiter than white, nor do we make overblown claims about our ethical credentials, nor use hackneyed quotes by historical figures and pretend we live by their mantras. What we are though is honest, fair and transparent, whilst doing our best to reduce our environmental impact and give back to the communities that we visit.

Local & International Perspective - We strive hard to make sure that any cross-cultural interaction or transaction is mutually beneficial. We pay locals a good wage - from our office staff, through to our guides and drivers, right down to nomadic families providing a meal or horses for rent. We also charge our guests what is fair - not what we can get away with. Thus closes the gap between expectation and reality, and everyone comes away satisfied. We also invest in people's futures and livelihoods - from simple things like paying tax and social insurance, to training and education of local staff and partners, cross-fertilisation of ideas to improve the Mongolian tourism industry, and creating new sources of income for nomadic families such as homestays or recruiting rural family members as cooks/assistants.

In tandem with our environmental concerns we also endeavour to source, where practical and available, a good proportion of equipment and provisions that are 100% Mongolian. A Mongolian biscuit can be equally as good as a British one, the difference being that it hasn't travelled 6,000 miles to get to you. Conversely, we also recognise the importance of imported goods bought by us in Mongolia, especially when there is not a suitable locally-made alternative - in these instances, quality combines with the added benefit of international investment in the country's economy and employment.

Environmental Considerations - We recognise that the environmental impact of travelling to Mongolia is considerable and it's not realistic or practical to think it can be completely offset in a vain attempt to clear our conscience. However, we can do our best to mitigate the damage. Here's a list of measures we take to do our bit for the environment:

- We carry 20 litre containers of water to refill smaller bottles, thereby reducing the amount of plastic waste
- We dispose of rubbish in large towns rather than rural areas, as otherwise it often ends up in unsightly and environmentally damaging open landfill sites in the open countryside on the edge of villages.
- A percentage of all our revenue goes to support environmental projects such as Gobi Oasis, a tree-planting nursery in Mandalgobi that fights against the increasing desertification - www.gobioasis.com
- We do not drive distances that are better walked, unless weather or guest fitness does not allow. This is particularly applicable in Ulaanbaatar where the traffic is horrendous - walking is not only by choice but also necessity!
- We request our staff pick up litter in rural areas if they come across it, sometimes encouraging guests to join in too! Litter is an all-too-common problem in a country where non-degradable food and drink packaging was almost non-existent 20 years ago, and its increase has sadly not been matched by environmental policies and education.
- We streamline our logistics. For example, if a driver needs to get to or from a remote pick-up or drop-off point for domestic flights, then we endeavour to manage different trip bookings so their drivers finish one job in the same place they start the next. If not possible, we make sure they don't drive empty - instead carrying equipment, staff and/or local passengers as a public transport service.
- Behind the scenes, we do what we can in the office, including walking to work; printing only what we have to, and on recycled paper or on back of used paper; doing bulk shopping at wholesalers every so often rather than regular car journeys to supermarkets.

Local Community Projects

We believe that supporting local community projects and charitable foundations is important - as part of our collective contribution to cultural, social and environmental regeneration. However, we like to combine financial donations with personal investment of time - with visits and active involvement in projects giving an insight into the work they do and delivering a more meaningful experience for both sides. Here's are just a couple of examples of how we do this:

Women's Quilting Centre - We support this group of previously disenfranchised ladies who have turned their skills to needlework, using a variety of quilting techniques, combined with traditional Mongolian design, to provide a great selection of handicrafts. We visit their workshop and outlet on most trips, use many of their products, and can offer guests the opportunity to spend a day learning techniques and making traditionally designed items. All monies go directly to the project.

Gobi Oasis - Byamba has been running the Gobi Oasis tree nursery tirelessly for over 35 years, planting seedlings to combat desertification. The project is located on the edge of the provincial town of Mandalgobi, and on many trips we stop by for an overnight stay in with Byamba's family, with a visit to the nursery to plant some seedlings. We also take volunteers to work at the nursery for periods of 1 -6 weeks and longer. All monies from these visits go directly to running of Gobi Oasis.



Photography

Many people travel to Mongolia for the photographic opportunities that the country offers - whether you are interested in landscapes, portraits, architecture or photo-journalism. All our itineraries are very flexible, building in time for unplanned photo stops, and taking advantage of sunrise and sunsets in key locations.

When it comes to photographing people, Mongolia is generally no different to other countries in the world - most people don't mind having their photo taken, but some don't. But either way, unless you are being discreet and at an unintrusive distance, please ask permission before you do it. Unless, they ask you first of course! This is also quite common particularly in rural areas or at festivals and other times of celebration when people love to have their photo taken, especially if they are in full traditional costume. On such occasions, the value of having a Polaroid camera is immeasurable, so it is definitely something to consider - particularly if you are likely to travel regularly to other countries where you might benefit from having one.

Photography is generally not permitted inside temples and museums, although many will allow it for a fee - usually around \$5 or so for still shots, and more for video. These costs are not included in any itinerary and must be paid in cash.

Employ a degree of care and sensitivity when taking scenes of everyday life - particularly in villages and markets, as people do not like feeling as though they are being objectivised or degraded. Also be sensitive about taking pictures of things that to Mongolians may seem odd for you to want to photograph - for example, a carcass of a camel at a market may be a novelty sight for any visitor, but to them it would be like you seeing someone in your own country taking a picture of chicken in a supermarket (for which you'd certainly get some odd looks!). In all these situations, perhaps explain why you want to take such pictures, so they understand your motives.

If in doubt, ask your guide - they will be able to advise, negotiate special permission in places if necessary, and also translate on your behalf.

Extra Tips:

- Bring a polarising filter to cut the glare on sunny days.
- Cotton buds are useful for cleaning hard-to-reach areas in dusty conditions
- Large, heavy-duty garbage bags or ziplocks can be useful to protect your camera in inclement weather.
- For travel in wet conditions, you might want to consider bringing a dry bag or Pelican Case.
- Please be particularly careful in the Gobi, as both dust and sand are plentiful and can wreak havoc on cameras
- Bring a spare fully charged battery if on a remote expedition, as charging opportunities could be limited.
- An 8gb memory card is advisable, perhaps 2!

Money

Currency

The tögrög - or tugrik - is the official currency of Mongolia. It uses the sign ₮ and code MNT. There are no coins - only notes, with denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 500, 1000, 5000, 10000, 20000.

The exchange rate (as of January 2016) is 1USD = 1990MNT; 1GBP = 2870MNT; 1EUR = 2165

Changing Money

You can't get MNT abroad - only in Mongolia. There are many banks, ATMs and exchange bureaus all over Ulaanbaatar, and some at the airport. Opening hours of the bigger bank branches are from 8 until 8, and some are 24hrs. Some close on Saturday, and all close on Sunday. You can also change money at the most hotels.

USD, GBP, Euro, Yuan, Yen, and other major international currencies (particularly Asian ones), are all fine to bring to exchange. But the best one is USD, because you can actually pay for certain things in USD - including tips (locals often prefer it). If bringing USD, make sure you bring crisp, clean notes, 2009 issue or later - otherwise most places won't accept or exchange them.

Do *not* bring traveller's cheques - they are hardly accepted anywhere.

Spending Money

You are unlikely to need a great deal of money, as almost all our trips are inclusive of meals and most activities. On a 2-week trip, a budget of \$400pp should easily do, probably less if you are a couple or family. Roughly half may go on tips, and the rest on miscellaneous things like alcohol, and small trinkets, arts and crafts etc. that you might buy in the countryside. This doesn't include any purchases you might make in Ulaanbaatar - e.g. cashmere, leather goods, traditional crafts - but these can be paid for on credit card, or by getting money out of the numerous ATMs around town.

Tipping

Tipping is quite a recent concept in Mongolia, but it is understood and appreciated. Drivers and guides will probably expect it - but only if they have earned it! Here is some basic guidance, but please use your own discretion. If in doubt during your trip please ask your guide for advice (except about their own tips, of course):

Porters - It's useful to have a small collection of \$1 bills or 500 and 1000MNT notes for porters at hotels and ger camps.

Restaurants - Service is not included. Tips are not generally taken for granted, but if you've had a good meal with good service we suggest leaving 10% - always in cash, not on card as the staff probably won't get it.

Airport transfers, city transport - In Ulaanbaatar you may have different drivers and vehicles than in the countryside, for practical reasons. It is not necessary to tip city drivers, and most wouldn't expect it. But if you do feel that they have gone the extra mile (and I don't mean taking the long way round!), then you could tip them \$2-5pp for the day or equivalent in local currency.

Guides - A guide might ordinarily receive tips between \$150-\$400 in total for a trip lasting 10-14 days, depending on group size. So, let's say you might budget between \$50-\$100 per person, depending on group size. On shorter trips, a calculation of \$5 per day per person - based on a group of 2-4 pax - would be our recommendation. Solo travellers may want to increase it slightly.

Drivers - You will discover just how hard the drivers work, so tipping levels should not be far off what guides get. As an indication, budget 60-75% of guide tip allowance for drivers.

Others - Horse/Camel guides up to \$5 per day per person; Cooks on camping trips - similar to drivers (see above); Ger Camp staff, not at all necessary or expected but \$1-5 here and there could be given at your discretion - for example, you may feel that a particular staff member at a camp deserves a little something. Perhaps they have been lighting the fire in your ger at dawn each morning, or have gone beyond the call of duty to help you or improve your stay.

Communications

Ulaanbaatar

Connection 24/7 - During your time in the capital, you should not have a problem with communications. Foreign mobile phones, Blackberries, iPhones, iPads, tablets and android devices should all work to make telephone calls - and usually also receive e-mails and internet connection. However, if these services aren't working, or you don't have an internet-enabled phone, many hotels and cafes have wireless broadband, which can obviously be used with laptops as well. Hotels also have business centres with desktop computers, internet, fax, printer, and copying services. There are also phones in the hotel rooms.

Countryside

Mobile Phones - During your time in the countryside, communications will be more limited. Mobile coverage is increasing every year, even in rural areas, so you and/or your guide will have access to mobile phone reception at some time on most days.

Internet Access - Internet access will be restricted to larger towns and villages which you will have the opportunity to pass through every few days - these will have internet cafes, often with slow connection (and also affected by sporadic power cuts). We advise all guests that it is best just to plan for no internet access whilst you are in the countryside.

Satellite Phone - We provide some trips with a satellite phone, depending on the remoteness of the route and/or activities and the associated risk involved. Your itinerary inclusion/exclusion sections will indicate whether or not your trip includes provision of a satellite phone. If it does not, and you would like one to be provided, please ask us in advance of your departure and we can arrange satellite phone rental at a small additional cost.

Useful Contact Numbers

You may like to leave family and friends with contact information in case they need to get hold of you, or get a message to you, whilst you are in Mongolia. Here's how they can get in touch:

Guide - We will send guide details, including their mobile telephone number, at least 1 week prior to departure.

Hotel - Most guests will be staying in the Ulaanbaatar Hotel (Reception - 00976 11 320620). Your hotel will be listed on the itinerary, so if you are staying somewhere else and require the number, please ask us or alternatively search online - almost everywhere has websites with full contact details.

Mongolia Office - We are in touch with our guides on a regular basis during trips, so if it is not possible to connect directly with you then please call our office manager Tuul on 00976 9989 1826 (24hrs emergency number), and she will pass on a message. Please note that you cannot leave voice messages on this number.

UK Office - If a message is not urgent, or for any reason you are having problems phoning Mongolia, please call Olly Reston on 0044 (0) 1869 866 520. You can leave voice messages if necessary, and these are checked regularly.

Cheap Calls - Telediscount provide cheap calls to Mongolia from the UK. Simply dial 0871 551 57 57 for calls to landlines, and 0844 566 52 52 for calls to mobiles, and follow instructions. Calls cost 8p per minute to Mongolian landlines and 5p to mobiles (prices correct as of May 2015).

Electricity

Electricity is 220V, 50Hz. Standard sockets throughout the country accommodate the European-style 2-pin plugs with round pins, but also many of the extension leads available in e.g. ger camp restaurants will have multi-plug sockets.

We recommend that you bring a multi-plug charger for use in your vehicle's cigarette lighter socket. These are cheap and widely available on the internet and at airports. Please note that we have some available to provide on trips but cannot guarantee them on all journeys. If it is essential that your trip has one provided please request in advance and we will try to arrange it.

There will be electricity at most ger camps - at worst it will be generator-fed at certain times of the day, with plug sockets in the main restaurant ger. At best it will be 24hr electricity with plug sockets in your ger.

If you require more specific information of electricity availability during your trip please ask us.

Climate

Mongolia is country of extreme weather patterns, with warm, short summers and long, dry and very cold winters. Known as "the land of blue sky", Mongolia usually has about 250 sunny days a year - but the majority of these are between September and May. In the coldest winter months of December-February, some areas of the country drop to as low as -50°C, with Ulaanbaatar often seeing temperatures of -35°C. In the summer the Gobi basks in 30°C+ temperatures, whilst it's colder the further North you go.

You might expect to see a chart of 'averages' in this section. Forget it - it's irrelevant! At best it just shows you how cold it is in winter, and at worst it is misleading about what to expect in the summer.

If travelling between May and September, 4 seasons in 1 day is a distinct possibility, and 4 seasons during the trip is an absolute certainty. Anything is possible, from 30°C and no wind in May, to 15°C and snow in August.

There are, however, some distinct benefits about this changeable climate - bad weather often passes very quickly. And more often than not, the weather is good. Here is a quick overview of what to expect during the main travel months:

May - Dry, windy, dusty, sunny. Large fluctuations in temperature. Day 10-20°C; Night 0-10°C

June - First half similar to May, then temperatures rise and less fluctuation. More cloud cover, some rain. Day 15-25°C; Night 10-15°C

July - A mixed bag. Very changeable - sunshine most days, but also cloud and rain most days. Day 15-30°C; Night 10-20°C

August - First half similar to July, then it becomes a lot drier and sunnier, but colder at nights. Day 15-30°C; Night 0-15°C

September - Dry, sunny, calm, chilly. Day 0-20°C; Night -5 to +5°C

It is usually colder in the North and warmer in the South - as is to be expected.

One thing is for certain - you will have to pack for all eventualities. See our 'Packing' section for advice on what to bring.

Etiquette

Mongolian culture is rich in social tradition and even in modern times there are many everyday situations where there are accepted ways of doing things. This is particularly true in the countryside, where there is an additional set of codes associated with visiting a ger, and other rural nomadic customs. Respect and superstition lie behind almost all of them - respect for ones elders and for nature, plus superstition linked to the powers that shape the natural world, manifested through beliefs rooted in shamanism. There are also Buddhist elements to many practices.

Don't worry though, no Mongolian will expect you to know many of their customs - if any at all - and most will delight in teaching you, including your guide. You will not insult people by making mistakes, but you might if you don't learn from them! Here are a few initial pointers, in the form of 'Dos' and 'Don'ts'.

Do	Don't
Pass and accept things with the right hand, palms up, with the left hand at the elbow for support. If giving or receiving a present, do so with both hands.	Pass or accept anything with left hand
Accept food or drink that is offered to you - if you don't like it, at least be seen to try it before passing it on or handing it back	Point with your finger
Shake the hands of someone who you have accidentally bumped feet with	Talk or joke about bad things that may happen
Proceed to the left as you enter a ger	Point the soles of your feet to anyone when sitting
Accept vodka if served and passed round - dip your ring finger in, then throw a few drops to the sky, into the wind (to the side), and to the floor. If you don't want to drink, you can still perform this ritual, then touch your forehead with the finger, and put the glass back on the table.	Say thank you too much or for small gestures
	Pass anything between or lean against the ger poles
	Touch other peoples hats, let alone to sit or stand on one
	Step on the threshold to a ger

Language

Mongolian is the primary language of Mongolia. Linguistically, Mongolian belongs to the Altaic family, which includes Turkish, Japanese, and Korean.

Modern Mongolian, based on the Khalkh dialect, developed following the Mongolian People's Revolution in 1921. The introduction of a new alphabet in the 1940s developed along with a new stage in Mongolia's national literary language - including the assimilation of many Russian words.

Mongolians still use two types of writing: the classical script and the Cyrillic alphabet. The classical Mongolian alphabet, which is written vertically, is a unique script used by speakers of all the various dialects for about a thousand years. In spite of increasing interest in using only the classical alphabet, along with the decision by Parliament to use it for official papers, the majority of Mongolian people use the Cyrillic alphabet, which was adopted in the early 1940s.

Most Mongolians speak little or no English - especially in the countryside. At hotels, bars, shops and restaurants in Ulaanbaatar, most staff will have basic knowledge, and menus/signs are often written in English.

Your guide and driver will teach you some basic phrases, but if you would like to come more prepared then please consult the 'Further Reading' section of this document for recommended language books.

Visas

Mongolia is a country that requires many foreign citizens to have obtained a visa in advance of travel. A Mongolian tourist visa is usually valid for a stay of up to 30 days, with entry within three months from the date of issue. It is your responsibility to ensure you have a valid visa to travel to Mongolia, if required, according to your nationality. Please note that all UK, Australian and most European citizens (excluding Germans) **DO** require a visa to travel to Mongolia, and this must be applied for in advance - usually at any country's Mongolian Embassy or Consulate (whether you are a citizen or resident of that country or not). Only in exceptional circumstances may it sometimes be possible to pre-arrange a visa on arrival.

The list of visa **exempt** countries include: USA, Canada, Germany, Russia, Turkey, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Brazil, Israel, Philippines, Cuba, Hong Kong and Singapore - but these countries do have rules and regulations associated with length of visit etc., so please check before travel.

Application Process

Obtaining a visa is a straightforward process, and usually very quick - especially if you are able to apply in person. Most embassies will return the visas within 2-3 days for a standard service, and some of them offer a same day express service.

Most embassies require minimal documentation - the 2-page application form; passport valid for at least 6 months after date of entry and with at least 1 blank page for the visa; fee payment; passport photo. Some embassies ask for additional documentation - an itinerary, flight reservation, a letter of invitation from your tour company (i.e. us) - so please check. We can usually help provide all additional documentation.

Some embassies have an online application form on their website, and sometimes the functionality is poor or confusing - so please be aware that embassies also accept hand-written forms, and there is one standard form worldwide. You can download this here - http://www.embassyofmongolia.co.uk/images/stories/visa_application.pdf - or else ask us for a copy and we will send one to you.

Filling the Form

There are some sections of the form that you may require help with. Please fill in as follows:

- Name and address of host person or organisation in Mongolia: [Goyo Travel, Door 1A, Tower A, Golomt Town, Peace Avenue, Ulaanbaatar; Tel. 9959 8468](#)
- Your home address and telephone number in Mongolia: [Ulaanbaatar Hotel, 14 Sukhbaatar Square; Tel. 320620](#)

Contact Details

Here is a list of website addresses of some key Mongolian Embassies worldwide, all of which should provide all you need to know about applying for Mongolian visas in these regions:

UK - www.embassyofmongolia.co.uk

USA - www.mongolianembassy.us

Australia - www.mongolianembassy.org.au

France - www.ambassademongolie.fr

Germany - www.botschaft-mongolei.de

Hong Kong - www.hongkong.mfat.gov.mn

Singapore - www.singapore.mfat.gov.mn

IMPORTANT - *The above information is intended as advice only, not official instructions, and valid at time of writing (Jan 2016). Goyo Travel cannot be held responsible for any changes in rules and regulations, or for your failure to obtain a valid visa. You must not rely solely on the information above, but **must** enquire as to the current requirements at your nearest designated Mongolian Embassy or Consulate.*

There are only six border points open to most foreign passport holders. They are at Chinggis Khaan International Airport in Ulaanbaatar, the road/train crossing to China at Zamyn Uud, the road crossing to Russia at Tsagaannuur in the far west, the train crossing to Russia at Sukhbaatar and the road crossings to Russia at Altanbulag and Ereen-Tsav in the north east. You may not cross into China or Russia at any of the other border points as they are either seasonal and/or are open only to Mongolians and/or Chinese/Russians.

If you intend to remain in Mongolia for more than 30 days or if you do not have an entry/exit visa, you must register your stay with the Mongolian Immigration Agency in Ulaanbaatar within a week of arrival. You can appoint someone to do this on your behalf if necessary, and Goyo Travel offer this service if required (please ask for details).

Foreigners on a tourist visa are legally required to carry their passports at all times. Failure to carry your passport may lead to a fine, and officially a photocopy is not sufficient - however in our experience checks are very seldom, and in reality passport copies are fine (so many of our guests leave their passports at the hotel when in Ulaanbaatar; or in their gers/bags in vehicles when out in the countryside). We recommend that whatever you do, you should keep separately and somewhere safe, a copy of both the bio data page in your passport and your Mongolian border immigration stamp. This will help you both to obtain a new travel document and to demonstrate that you entered Mongolia legally should you lose your passport.

For further information please visit www.immigration.gov.mn

By Air

Ulaanbaatar's Chinggis Khaan airport is small by international standards. Arriving and departing is usually a painless and relatively swift process.

On Arrival

- Exit the plane and queue up at passport control counters marked 'Foreign'. Usually there are 2 of them. This will take up to 30 minutes, depending on your place in the queue.
- Then proceed downstairs to collect your luggage (there is only 1 carousel) before exiting to the arrivals hall.
- After collecting baggage, you may be asked by customs officials to screen your luggage in a machine before exiting and/or check your luggage tags against the corresponding labels that you were given when checking in, to make sure you have taken the correct bags.

- It is rare that 2 planes arrive at same time, but if they do the immigration counter hall and baggage reclaim area may be a bit crowded.

On Departure

- check-in 2 hrs prior to flight time is ample for all international flights
- To avoid over-crowding, only passengers with a valid ticket are allowed into the check-in area.
- There is no departure tax to pay (all taxes are included in ticket prices)
- Fill in a departure card and hand in at passport control counters after going through security
- There are shops and cafes in the departure area near the gates.
- Boarding announcements are made for all flights.

By Rail

From/To China

Passengers travelling by train across the China/Mongolia border at Erlian/Zamyn-Ud should expect a delay of a few hours because of the need to change the bogies, as the railways use different gauges. If travelling from Beijing to Ulaanbaatar on Train No. 23 you should expect the following:

- Arrival at Chinese border c.8pm
- Hand over passports and declaration forms (these are provided by attendants in advance), which are taken away and returned later.
- You may or may not have the choice to stay on the train during bogie change. If you can, or have to, stay on the train, please note that the loos will be locked.
- If you can, or have to, leave the train this is for most people the preferred solution, but take a book/iPad/cards etc. You will be led into the station waiting room where there is access to loos and usually a small convenience store may be open. Don't count on it though.
- After 2-3 hrs you will get back on the train and passports handed back.
- The train will move a short distance into Zamyn-Ud, the Mongolian border. Your passports will be taken again, and returned once checked.
- You will finally be on the move again anytime between midnight and 2am, so do not expect unbroken sleep until then!

From/To Russia

No need to change the bogies, but the border crossings can take longer - up to 6-7 hours combined. Coming into Mongolia from Russia, you have to get off the train in Naushki whilst they uncouple carriages not going on to Mongolia. There is a station cafe, loos, and you can walk into the town if you want, although it is only worth it just to pass the time and to stretch your legs. Maybe 4hrs here, then back onto the train - more passport checks, no-mans land/border crossing, then 30kms the Mongolian border town of Sukhbaatar where it stops for an hour or so (get off and have a wander/drink if you want, or stay on train), and then you're off.

Most trains arrive in Naushki around lunchtime and you're off and rolling out of Sukhbaatar by around 9pm, arriving into Ulaanbaatar at 6am.



Insurance

You must take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance before travelling to Mongolia - including rescue and repatriation. Exclusions should be checked carefully and your policy should cover all the activities, especially adventure activities, that you intend to do during your trip. We will need your policy number and your insurance company's repatriation service contact numbers. Please provide this information when completing the booking form.

The FCO website contains useful advice on Travel Insurance - <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/staying-safe/travel-insurance/>

Locally-Purchased Insurance

International SOS Medica, together with Bodi Insurance, provide a comprehensive medevac/rescue insurance policy for travellers to Mongolia. If you have an existing travel insurance policy that excludes rescue, you may consider purchasing this policy as an add-on. Or if your trip is particularly remote and activity-based one, and you want to have the assurance that you are 100% specifically covered for instant medical evacuation by SOS Medica without having to get authorisation from your insurance company abroad following an accident. Goyo Travel can purchase this single-trip policy on your behalf - cost \$60. Please ask us if you are interested in finding out more.

Safety

Our Procedures

Your safety is of great importance to Goyo Travel. We recognise the need to be responsible and accountable, whilst accepting that travel in Mongolia carries with it intrinsic risks, and that the country's infrastructure is such that a middle ground has to be reached between international and local standards.

All of our staff have First Aid training, and our in-house training program includes a section dedicated to safety and client care. All of our drivers are experienced countryside drivers and have annual refresher courses in safe driving skills and accident prevention. In activity-based trips to remote areas, our guides are equipped with satellite phones and GPS units to assist us in locating your group and providing assistance or evacuation in case of an emergency. We maintain regular contacts with emergency evacuation services including helicopter and small plane charter companies and emergency medical service providers in Ulaanbaatar.

Safety is the first concern we have in the planning and preparation of each and every trip, and we have contingency plans for bad weather, vehicle breakdowns, and other unexpected events. At all times our Ulaanbaatar-based staff are available to resolve problems and assist in emergency situations, and will work with your guide or trip leader to ensure all efforts are made to provide timely, adequate assistance.

Medical Emergencies

In case of medical emergencies, there are various resources available:

- 1. First Aid** - In case of an accident that requires administering of First Aid at the scene, our staff are trained in basic emergency response techniques, and all trips carry LifeSystems first aid kits, equipped according to the nature of the trip. We check, replenish and/or replace our kits on a regular basis.
- 2. Local Hospitals** - For relatively minor injuries including cuts, sprains, dehydration, fractures etc., local hospitals will usually be able to provide adequate medical provision. In most instances you will be within 0-4 hours' drive of a local hospital. Doctors here will probably not speak English, so your guide would translate.
- 3. Evacuation to Ulaanbaatar (and Abroad)** - SOS Medica, in Ulaanbaatar, are part of a chain of international private clinics. They provide a helicopter medical evacuation service in partnership with A-Jet Aviation, and have English-speaking local and international medical staff. Their contact details and 24hr emergency number are in our 'Trip Manual', a copy of which is provided in each vehicle. On more remote trips that are equipped with satellite phones, their contact details are saved on the phone. For more information on SOS Medica, please visit www.sosmedica.mn.

We advise that you check with your insurance company that SOS Medica is on their list of approved service providers in case of an emergency that requires medical evacuation. If not, you can purchase extra cover locally (please see 'Insurance' section).

Crime

Mongolia is relatively safe, especially in the countryside, but petty crime is common in Ulaanbaatar, particularly in markets or other crowded public places. Watch out for pickpockets. Also be wary of large groups of street children and teenagers, particularly at night, who sometimes harass pedestrians for money when they are entering and leaving vehicles, pubs and restaurants. Keep your passports, money and other valuables well secured.

In the unlikely event that you are a victim of a crime, your guide and the Goyo Travel office in Ulaanbaatar will provide you every assistance. However, if for any reason you need them, here are some useful contact details:

- If your belongings are stolen, you should report it to the Pick-pocketing Department of the Police, phone +976-51-269 285. The police can provide a letter for insurance purposes.
- If you are the victim of any other crime in Mongolia you should call the police on 102 or +976 102 from an international mobile phone. There should be someone available on this number who can speak to you in English.

Vaccinations

No special inoculations are required for travel to Mongolia, but you should be up-to-date on standard vaccinations such as **Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Hepatitis A**. Please consult your doctor 4-6 weeks prior to travel.

To aid you in your decision, we recommend the website www.traveldoctor.info and www.mdtravelhealth.com, as together they highlight vaccinations recommended according to length and type of trip.

Rabies - The chances of being bitten in Mongolia by animals that could carry rabies are relatively slim. This low risk, combined with cost and lead-time for pre-vaccination, and the fact that pre-bite vaccination only reduces the number of post-bite vaccinations needed rather than preventing the contraction of the disease, mean that most people don't bother. In the unlikely event that you are bitten and are not vaccinated against rabies (most people aren't), then you can rest assured that on almost all trips you will be able to access the required first injection within the recommended 24hr post-bite period. An injection within 24 hours is required whether or not you have had the vaccination beforehand - the difference is that pre-vaccinated people have 3 injections in advance, and 3 after the bite. Non-pre-vaccinated people have 5 injections after the bite. *(source - Net Doctor)*

Encephalitis (Japanese and/or Tick-borne) - Only specifically recommended if going to heavily forested regions of e.g. Khentii and Selenge province, which is unlikely. If in doubt, ask us.

NB - The decision about which vaccinations to have is entirely your responsibility and you should consult your local doctor's surgery for the latest medical advice - the above information is guidance only.

Packing

Think layers. Think casual. Think practical.

Bags

100-150l duffle bags or predominately soft-shelled suitcases, perhaps with a rigid spine and/or pull-out handle are all fine. Over-sized hard suitcases are not generally suitable, but will depend on group size, trip itinerary and luggage room in vehicle. Weight is a consideration if taking domestic flights (see 'Transport' section) but you can always pay the excess baggage charges and/or leave unnecessary items and bags in the left luggage room at the hotel, or in our office.

Clothes

Loose-fitting, lightweight cotton materials are the most comfortable for humid and warm conditions; thermal undervest, fleece tops, jumpers for colder conditions; water/windproof jacket for possible inclement conditions. Dark colours are usually better than light so that dirt doesn't show up so much, but if you're heading to the Gobi when it's really hot some lighter colours may be preferable.

Laundry

A laundry service is available hotels in Ulaanbaatar, and at some ger camps – but the latter is usually only practical in places where you are staying for 2 or more nights. If you are happy to do so, handwashing your underwear, t-shirts and shorts as you go can cut down on the amount of clothes you need to bring.

Summer Trips (May-Aug)	
Don't Forget	May Come in Useful
Washbag and Toiletries	Car cigarette lighter charging plug/facility
Underwear	Head Torch
Swimming Costume	Moneybelt
Mix of t-shirts, shorts, trousers, shirts, jumpers	Swiss army knife or Leatherman
Fleece top/jacket	Waterproof trousers
Water/Wind-proof jacket	Sun hat
Worn-in sturdy trainers, boots or walking shoes	Water Bottle
Lighter shoes/sandals for hot days or in your ger	Earplugs
Suncream, lip-balm & aftersun	Travelwash for clothes (biodegradable)
Sunglasses	Pocket Tissues
Camera + enough memory card and batteries	Biodegradable toiletries
Insect Repellent	Antibacterial dry wash gel
Personal medical kit (Aspirin, Imodium etc.)	Binoculars
Daypack - small rucksack or bag	Generic antibiotic e.g. Amoxycillin
Wet Wipes	Travel Pillow
2-pin plug adaptor	Sleep/Eye Mask
Books & Guidebook	Trousers with detachable leg sections
	Ziplock bags to protect things from dust, wet etc.
	Portable music player - perhaps with speakers
	Games/cards

ADDITIONAL ITEMS - Spring/Autumn Trips (April, Sep, Oct)

<i>Don't Forget</i>
Gloves
Woolly Hat
Thick Socks

<i>May Come in Useful</i>
Hot Water Bottle
Hand Warmers
Thermal Undergarments

ADDITIONAL ITEMS - Adventure Trips with Multi-Day Camping

<i>Don't Forget</i>
Travel Towel
Sleeping Bag (good quality 3-4 season)

<i>May Come in Useful</i>
Thermal Undergarments
Thick Socks

ADDITIONAL ITEMS - Riding Trips

<i>Don't Forget</i>
Riding Boots or Chaps
Waterproof Trousers
Suitable trousers - not too loose as they will rub

<i>May Come in Useful</i>
Riding Hat
Riding Crop
Padded cycling shorts to wear under trousers

Gifts

Mongolians are renowned for their hospitality and generosity - particularly in the countryside. You will visit nomadic families during your trip - which may occur once or twice, or may be a daily occurrence, depending on your itinerary and personal preference. Locals will not expect anything in return for their hospitality - it is a natural, cultural tradition to welcome passing travellers into their home and offer tea, food, snuff, vodka etc. However, it is perfectly appropriate to offer gifts as a small token of your appreciation.

Gifts that are appreciated by nomadic families include both small tokens of friendship and also practical presents. Nomads in the remote areas of Mongolia rarely have stores nearby, are often on a tight budget, and they appreciate useful gifts. It is not necessary to bring large quantities - just a few items. Examples of suitable presents include:

- Pens, notebooks, and notepads
- Something specific to where you come from - postcards, decorated tea towels, coasters, keyrings
- Fabric, scarves, warm socks, and gloves
- Small flashlights with batteries or wind-up torches
- Small pocket knives
- Sewing kits
- Pictures of the Dalai Lama or khatags, the Buddhist blessing scarves (get in UB), will be appreciated by older people
- Incense & Lighters
- Picture books, colouring books, stickers and pencils for children
- Hair bands and hairclips
- Small toys, such as farm animals, model aeroplanes

We ask that you do not bring tobacco and alcohol for adults, nor sweets for children, for obvious reasons.

Shopping

Mongolia produces some good quality natural products, and traditional items. The most popular items are paintings, antiques, handicrafts, carpets, books, cashmere, traditional Mongolian clothing, musical instruments, Buddhist artefacts, leather goods, wall hangings, postcards, snuff bottles, and woodcarvings.

Throughout your trip you will have the opportunity to go shopping - from a roadside craft-stand selling yak wool products, to a cashmere factory outlet store in Ulaanbaatar. Our itineraries sometimes have shopping suggestions - but they are purely optional and you will never be taken shopping unless you have requested it or it has been offered as an option beforehand. In Ulaanbaatar there are a number of interesting shops, plus the usual standard tourist fare in souvenir shops. Your guide will be on hand to make suggestions if desired.

When buying any antiques, you need to be careful about what you buy as some of it is illegal. Make sure the shop you buy it from can produce a certificate of authenticity, as well as a receipt, in case you are asked for it by customs.

Bargaining - Most of the shops in towns have fixed prices which are often displayed on the goods. Do not try to bargain here. At markets, tourists are unlikely to be charged very much more than the locals, unless they are buying antiques, jewelry and other cultural items. By all means try and get a price down but be reasonable. For example, as a guide, don't try for less than 60-70% of the asking price. And only start bargaining if you're seriously interested in buying. Mongolians also don't mess around, unlike their Chinese cousins. They'll state a price to begin with, you then state a lower offer, and they will then generally state their lowest price that they are willing to go. You should, in most cases, take or leave it at that stage rather than trying to haggle further, as doing so will probably only frustrate or offend them.

Further Reading

Below are some suggestions for further reading in advance of, or during, your trip. These should all be available worldwide. Please note that we provide a book and map box with each vehicle - including some of publications below, but also books/pamphlets on different regions (only available in Mongolia), plus a selection of maps.

History, Politics & Culture

Title	Author
Genghis Khan - Life, Death and Resurrection	John Man
Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World	Jack Weatherford
The Secret History of the Mongols, The Origin of Chinggis Khan	Paul Kahn
Modern Mongolia, From Khans to Commissars to Capitalists	Morris Rossabi
Mongolian Buddhism, The Rise and Fall of the Sangh	Michael K. Jerryson
Genghis, Birth of an Empire	Conn Iggulden

Travelogues

Title	Author
Across Mongolian Plains	Roy Chapman Andrews
In the Empire of Genghis Khan, A Journey Among Nomads	Stanley Stewart
Beasts, Men and Gods	Ferdinand Ossendowski
Gobi - Tracking the Desert	John Man
Dateline Mongolia, An American Journalist in Nomad's Land	Michael Kohn
Men & Gods in Mongolia	Henning Haslund
Hearing Birds Fly	Louisa Waugh
Mongolia: Travels in the Untamed Land	Jasper Becker
Travels in Northern Mongolia	Don Croner
Walking the Gobi	Helen Thayer
Wild East, The New Mongolia	Jill Lawless
Mission Mongolia: Two Men, One Van, No Turning Back	David Treanor
Mongolia: Nomad Empire of Eternal Blue Sky	Carl Robinson
Edge of Blue Heaven: A Journey Through Mongolia	Benedict Allen

Guidebooks & Language

Title	Author
Bradt Guide Mongolia	Jane Blunden
Lonely Planet Mongolia	Michael Kohn
Birds of Europe, Russia, China, and Japan	Norman Arlott
A Field Guide to the Birds of China: Ornithology	John MacKinnon
Birds of East Asia	Mark Brazil
Lonely Planet Mongolian Phrasebook	J. Bat-Ireedui
Mongolian Grammar	Rita Kullmann and D.Tserenpil
Colloquial Mongolian	Alan J.K. Sanders and J. Bat-Ireedui

Fiction

Title	Author
The Adversary	Michael Walters
The Shadow Walker	Michael Walters
Wolf Totem	Jiang Rong
'Conqueror' - a series of 4 novels	Conn Iggulden

Websites

Country Information	Travel Information
www.infomongolia.com	www.lonelyplanet.com/mongolia
www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook	www.fco.gov.uk
www.ub-mongolia.mn	www.worldtravelguide.net/mongolia
	www.tomongolia.blogspot.com
	www.seat61.com