



## Mongolia Grand Traverse

### MONGOLIA

A **trail ride** from Khogno Khan to the Arkhangai across central Mongolia. This athletic riding holiday will take you through diverse Mongolian scenery, from the Elsen Tarsarkhai sand dunes to the impressive 8 Lakes natural reserve. **Historical locations** will also be part of your journey, as you will be **riding** through the ancient Mongolian Empire capital “Karakorum” and several UNESCO World Heritage sites. Gallop through the Mongolian steppes and be part of a real **cultural experience**.

<b>Trail Riding</b>	<b>23 days / 18 days riding -</b>	<b>From £0</b>	
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### ITINERARY

## Highlights

- A unique journey across central Mongolia
- Ride gentle and steadfast Mongolian horses across the immensity of the Mongolian steppe
- Immerse yourself in the nomadic family life
- Discover exceptional landscapes typical to Mongolia
- Ride along the great Gengis Khan trail.
- Visit the renowned sites of the Orkhon Valley: Karakorum, the Waterfalls of Orkhon, Tövkhön Monastery and explore the stunning 8 lakes region on horseback.
- This itinerary is exclusive to Equus Journeys and a very unique riding holiday.

## Day 1 — 1: Europe - ULAANBAATAR

Fly to Ulaanbaatar, the capital. Flights are not included in this package but can be booked on request - please contact us.

Most flights require a connection via Istanbul or Moscow.

## Day 2 — 2: ULAANBAATAR

Alpha Hotel

Our team will be waiting for you at the airport; and you will be transferred to your hotel for a short rest before starting your riding holiday. After lunch at the hotel, you will have the opportunity to explore the bustling and surprising city of Ulaanbaatar. This city is very well known for its cultural mixing pot influenced by both Oriental and Occidental civilisations, quietly transitioning from a nomadic lifestyle to a more sedentary one. Visit the National

Museum of History followed by the Gandan Monastery, which is the biggest religious centre in the country. These visits will provide you with a basic understanding of this country's astonishing history and customs. In the evening, you will enjoy a traditional singing and dancing show. Dinner and overnight at your hotel.

## Day 3 — 3: ULLANBAATAR- KHUGNU KHAAN - 3-4H DRIVE, 1-2H WALK

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 Nomadic yurt camp

Today you will discover the Przewalski wild horse, also known as "Takhi" or "Mongolian horse" in the Khustain Nuruu natural reserve. You will learn that this horse was never domesticated by humans, but was instead exhibited in zoos, which almost led to their extinction. The Khustain Nuruu natural reserve was created in 1993 with the primary goal of reintroducing the Mongolian horse to its natural wild state. Five years later, in 1998, it was declared a national park. You will then hit the road and head towards the Khugnu Khaan natural reserve. There, you will meet the first nomadic family and your hosts for the night. Have a taste of the traditional Mongolian specialties such as 'Suutei Tsai' (Tea with salty milk) and 'Aaruut' (the famous Mongolian dry cheese).

Overnight in a yurt.

## Day 4 — 4: KHOGNO KHAN - 5-6 HOURS RIDING

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 Campsite

Early wake-up call to admire the first rays of sunshine over the Mongolian steppe. Today also marks the start of your riding adventure. You will be stopping at the Elsen T asarkhai dunes in the Els Sands, stretching over 80 km long and 5km wide. This stunning scenery is typical of southern Mongolia and is your new riding playground: between dunes and oasis, you will ride for 5-6 hours.

Overnight at camp.

## Day 5 — 5: KHOGNO KHAN - 5-6 HOURS RIDING

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 Campsite

Get ready for two intensive days in the saddle in order to cross the sacred Khogno Khan Mountain. You will be crossing the Elsen Tarsarkhai dunes through vast green meadows where desert gave space to the local fauna. Between dunes and mountains you will set up camp to prepare for a night under the starry sky. Before dinner, you will leave your horse at camp and walk to the colourful 'Khadag cave'. Here, you will be shown a long silk cloth that Mongolians lay down to pay homage to the spirits. Once you reach the top of the mountain you will discover a natural water source. Take some time to admire the panorama and absorb the positive energy of this area before you head down for the night.

Overnight at camp.

## Day 6 — 6: KHOGNO KHAN - 5-6 HOURS RIDING

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 Nomadic yurt camp

After breakfast, you will continue your horseback ride south. You will arrive at the Ovgon-Khiyd Monastery. This historic Monastery was built at an altitude of 1,532 meters in the 17th Century by a famous religious figure of medieval Mongolia to honour his teacher. During anti-religious campaigns it was almost completely destroyed, leaving only ruins behind. There you will feel like an explorer who stumbled upon a long-lost world.

Overnight in a yurt with a local family.

## Day 7 — 7: KHOGNO KHAN - 5- 6 HOUR RIDING

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 Campsite

This morning, you will head to Karakorum, the former Mongolian Capital at the time of Genghis Khan. For 3 days you will ride across the steppe and travel between vast meadows and mountains. This is Mongolia at its best, and adventure at its finest. The environment has remained almost untouched by the presence of man due to a low population density. Even to this day it is still relatively unspoiled.

Overnight in a yurt or camping.

## Day 8 — 8: RIDING THE STEPPES - 5-6 HOURS RIDING

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 Campsite

Today you will continue your riding journey following the trail to Karakorum through the vast steppes of Mongolia. You will meet nomadic people during

your ride and even have the chance to be welcomed in one of their yurts. This is a very typical representation of the country's nomadic people, considered to be one of the last nomadic people on the world. Nomads move constantly during the summer in order to feed their animals and prepare for the harsh winter ahead.

Overnight in a yurt or camping.

## Day 9 — 9 - RIDING THE STEPPES - 5-6 hours riding

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 Campsite

After breakfast, you will hop in the saddle again and continue your trail ride over the same tracks that will lead you to the ancient capital, Karakorum. This is a time to reflect, enjoy the ride and admire the enchanting landscapes of Mongolia. Keep both eyes open, as you might even be able to encounter the local fauna.

Overnight in a yurt or at camp.

## Day 10 — 10: : ÖGII LAKE - 4-5 HOURS RIDING

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 Campsite

Before arriving to the mythical city of Karakorum, a small detour will be made to the Northeast to see Ögii Lake. The Lake is home to numerous migratory birds during the summer.

Overnight in a yurt or camping.

## Day 11 — 11: ÖGII - 4-6 HOURS RIDING

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 Campsite

Another day is spent riding around the lake. It offers breath-taking views over the landscapes of the Arkhangai region. Bird lovers will be in their element, as you can observe a great amount of birds that have migrated to the shores to gather during the summer.

Overnight in a yurt or camping.

## Day 12 — 12: KARAKORUM - 3-4 HOURS RIDING

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 KHOGNO yurts camp

This morning you will arrive to Karakorum, one of the most important cities in the history of the Silk Road. Founded in 1220, Karakorum was the capital of the Mongol Empire, and a prosperous centre of the Silk Road in the 13th century. It is also known as the city where Genghis Khan rallied his troops for the campaign against the Khwarem Empire. We strongly recommend you to take the some time and visit the “Erdenezuu” monastery dating back to the 16th century and considered to be one of the most beautiful monasteries in the country.

The night will be spent in a touristic yurt camp.

## Day 13 — 13: KARAKORUM- ORKHON VALLEY - 5-6 HOURS RIDING

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 Campsite

This morning will see you swapping horses for the second leg of your trip. Start your ride in a narrow part of the Orkhon Valley. The Orkhon Valley is known as the cradle of the Mongolian people and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. With an incredible variation of colours, the diversity of the landscapes makes this location look like something straight out of a painting! This Valley is one of the most populated areas in the country. The climatic conditions that it provides attract many nomadic families who make their living from livestock.

Overnight at camp or in yurt in the heart of the Orkhon Valley.

## Day 14 — 14: ORKHON VALLEY –TÖVKHÖN LAKE - 5-6 HOURS RIDING

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 Campsite

Today, when riding across the Orkhon Valley, you will be taken to Tövkhön Monastery for a short visit. It will give you the opportunity to observe the daily life of the Buddhist monks and learn about their fascinating history. Nestled at an altitude of 2,400m, the monastery is surrounded by several small temples dating back to the 17th century. You will also find two stupas there - stupas are commemorative monuments containing relics, used as a place

of meditation. It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996.

Overnight at camp or in yurts

## Day 15 — 15: ORKHON VALLEY - 5-6 HOURS RIDING

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 Campsite

Another day in the saddle in the land of the horse. Today, you will leave the Monastery behind and continue riding through the valley. You will progress slowly through landscapes and the distinctive steppes of Mongolia. Experience a relaxed ride through the atypical scenery of the Orkhon Valley, best experienced from the back of your sturdy Mongolian steed. From a distance you will follow the Orkhon River that has given its name to the valley. En route you will often meet herds of cattle.

Overnight at camp or in yurts.

## Day 16 — 16: ORKHON - ULAAN TSUTGALA WATERFALL - 5-6 hours riding

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 Nomadic yurt camp

The trail today continues heading west towards the end of the valley. Today's is a slower ride, due to the irregular terrain, and will give you more time to witness scenes from the local everyday life. You will ride over vast grassy plains dotted with igneous rock formations, surrounded by dormant volcanoes.

Overnight in a yurt or at camp.

## Day 17 — 17: ULAAN TSUTGALA WATERFALL–GYATRUUN - 5-6 HOURS RIDING

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 Campsite

Resume your ride in the early morning until you reach the falls of Ulaan Tsutgalan. This waterfall was formed 20,000 years ago as the result of an earthquake and volcanic eruption. The Ulaan Tsutgalan flows into the Orkhon forming an impressive waterfall.

Overnight at camp or in yurts.

## Day 18 — 18: GYATRUUN

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 Campsite

It is time for a well-deserved relaxing day! Enjoy the company of our nomadic friends in the heart of the peaceful Orkhon Valley. You are more than welcome to participate in the various daily tasks related to yak farming: take the herd to the pastures, catch the young yaks then milk the 'dri' (female yak), help them make dairy products (cream, yoghurt, butter, cheese, alcohol...) This wonderful outdoor setting is ideal for outdoor activities (hiking, horseback riding, fishing, etc). It is also possible to stay at camp to relax and perhaps later on participate in a friendly, but competitive, volleyball game with the community.

Please note: in July, this day may be scheduled differently to allow guests to participate in the Yaks festival, which is being held every year just a few miles away. The programme includes activities such as a yak race, rodeos, and many other entertaining events. Please contact us.

## Day 19 — 19: KHUISIIN NAIMAN NUUR - 5-6 HOURS RIDING

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 Nomadic yurt camp

Today you will start a new leg of your riding adventure. For the next 4 days, you will explore with your steadfast equine companion the region of the 8 lakes. These lakes are grouped in an isolated area, in the caldera of a dormant volcano. You will be surprised to find not 8 but actually 9 turquoise alpine lakes - picture perfect. Spend the night in a yurt with a nomadic family.

## Day 20 — 20: KHUISIIN NAIMAN NUUR - 5-6 HOURS RIDING

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 Nomadic yurt camp

Hop on for another day on horseback through the steppe. You will explore some of the country's most spectacular scenery. With some luck you might catch a glimpse of the local fauna such as deer, buck, boar or - less frequently, wild wolves. Overnight with a nomadic family.

## Day 21 — 21: KHUISIIN NAIMAN NUUR - 5-6 HOURS RIDING

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Today's ride will take you from lake to lake. For those of you with an adventurous spirit a swim would be an ideal afternoon activity... or why not try your hand at fishing? A new nomadic family will host you tonight and open their yurt to you. Once again you will be immersed in the hospitality and generosity that distinguish the Mongolian people.

## Day 22 — 23: GYATRUUN- ULAANBAATAR - No riding

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After saying goodbye to your hosts, transfer to Ulaanbaatar. Once in Ulaanbaatar you will be taken to your hotel for a well deserved good night's rest.

Note: this is a long transfer, between 8-10 h drive.

## Day 23 — 23: ULAANBAATAR - EUROPE - No riding

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Transfer to the airport to match your flight time.

### DATES & PRICES

We are currently updating our dates and prices they will be online soon. If you want details of this holiday, please do not hesitate to contact us.

## Price details

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No departure for this destination. Please contact our travel advisers for more information.

- International flights are not included, but can be booked upon request.

- The above rates are per person, based in sharing a twin room/tent or sleeping in a shared yurt (up to 6 beds).

- The group is made of 5-8 riders maximum.

- Please note: the ride will also confirm for 4 riders on payment of a supplement of c. €285/£250/\$335 per person in June/September, or €210/£190/\$245 in July/August. Once the group has reached 5 people, we will remove this supplement from your invoice and refund you if you have already paid it.

- It is possible to arrive a day before the group. We can organise your transfer, dinner and hotel night starting from €130/£115/\$150 per person.

- Young riders aged 14 and over are very welcome to join this trail, provided they are accompanied by a parent and meet the riding requirements.

- A visa is necessary and is your own responsibility.

- There is a rider weight limit of 85kg / 13,3 stone / 187lb.

Please Note

The itinerary may be modified at anytime for security reasons, meteorological or events beyond our control such as blocked roads, rivers in flood, drought, strikes and local holidays. Equus Journeys, our local partners and their local guides will always strive to find the best solution and will alter the itinerary as needed.

The names of the hotels and accommodation are given for information only and depending on availability, they may be modified without notice and replaced by another of a similar standard.

## Price includes

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### LOGISTICS

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1 local guide and team leader

1 support vehicle

1 cook

1 horse equipped with saddle and bridle per rider

### INLAND TRANSPORTS

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All applicable land transfers

Airport transfers if travelling with the group

## ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in yurts or tents (17 nights)  
2 nights in a hotel in Ulaanbaatar

## MEALS

Full board from lunch on day 2 to breakfast on day 23

## EXTRAS

Traditional dancing and singing show  
Entry fees to sites mentioned in the itinerary

## Price doesn't include

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### MEALS

Beverages (alcoholic drinks and mineral water) and personal extras

### TRANSPORTS

International flights  
Visa fees

### EXTRA

Small group supplement - see above for details

### EXTRAS

Tips to the local team

### INSURANCE

Cancellation and travel insurance are not included in the above listed price. Please note that insurance is mandatory. We recommend taking out an insurance policy as soon as your trip is booked to cover you in case of cancellation

## Optional

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### TRANSPORT

Airport transfers - outside of those stipulated in the itinerary

## EQUESTRIAN INFO

## Horses

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The Mongolian horse is legendary. They are small, energetic and tough but gentle and perfect for trail riding on all types of terrain. The horses are sociable and live happily in a herd. They are not difficult to ride but some will be more spirited than others. Leather saddle, suitable and comfortable for riding and Mongolian round stirrups..

## Guide & local team

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Your guide will be a local English speaker, which will allow you to easily communicate and exchange with him and the nomadic families.

The team is usually composed of:

- At least 2 horsemen (locals) who accompany you through your entire ride.
- A cook who will be cooking delicious meals on the trail, when in yurts the meals will be prepared by nomadic families.
- A driver.

## Minimum riding ability

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### MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

You need to be an experienced rider, capable of riding outdoors over varied terrain for several hours. Some riding hours are long and you must be

physically prepared to be riding for 17 days.

There is a rider weight limit of 85kg / 13,3 stone / 187lb.

## **PACE**

Walking is the main pace of this trail ride, with frequent trots and many unforgettable canters and gallops across the steppes. The horses selected for you are not especially challenging, but some are more lively than others.

## **TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION**

The horses are tacked and untacked for you by your Mongolian team.

## **TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE**

You must be physically fit and riding fit.

Previous experience of riding a trail for several days is a requirement. Riders who do not ride regularly must get riding fit before the holiday. You will have to be able to adapt to another riding style and understand that Mongolians have a different relationship with horses than what we are used to.

Visiting a new country offers the opportunity to meet other cultures with different mentalities, therefore it is important to accept these differences and respect the local way of life.

## **EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT**

Saddles are Russian style (locally made)

Whilst the stirrup leathers are adjustable, tall riders may find that they are short in length. If you are tall then we suggest you bring your own pair. We recommend our riders to wear a helmet to the correct standard and you should bring your own to ensure a proper fit.

## **TRAVEL INFO**

### **COMFORT**

Nights in Ulaanbaatar are in a comfortable 3\* hotel (Wi-Fi available)

Nights in yurts with the nomads: 5-6 beds in a yurt, basic outdoor toilet facilities, bucket shower.

Nights in yurt camps: 5-6 beds in a yurt, bathroom facilities and hot water.

Nights in camp: two-man tents. Mattresses are provided..

### **MEALS**

The food is simple and often freshly made, prepared by a cook or the local nomads. Meals are served on small camping tables with stools, except for some picnics at noon.

Breakfast: Occidental and/or Mongolian.

Lunch: a cook often provides a hot meal if the logistic vehicle is available at that phase of the journey, if not a picnic lunch will be available.

Dinner: full hot meal (soup, main, dessert). It is likely a sheep will be bought from a local shepherd - dinner straight from the source!

Water:

Do not to drink water from unknown sources. The cook will boil water each day for you to fill up your water bottles but you should also bring water-purification tablets such as Micropur.

### **CLIMATE**

Mongolia enjoys around 260 days of sun per year!! The majority of the country receives very little rainfall, however the north receives considerably more rain than the south. The country is located in the middle of a system of high-pressure fronts (anticyclone), which means that the skies are often completely clear of clouds. Because of the constant blue sky Mongolia has received the label 'blue sky country'.

On the other hand, the country is also blessed with a continental climate of extremes due to the country's geographical profile: vast semi-desert plateaus at an average altitude of over 1500 metres.

Winters are tough and long (from October to April), with temperatures dropping to surprisingly -30° or -40°C in January and February. Snowfalls are not unusual to be present in the Gobi desert up until April, even some lakes remain frozen up until June; you will start to see the end of winter around the last days of September.

Summers in Mongolia are inaugurated by a short rainy season, from mid-July to September, the rain is usually light and brief but and generally take place at the end of the day. Temperatures are mild in the north of the country and extremely hot in the Gobi desert in the south. Due to the high altitude, the evenings are cool, even during the summer.

Violent winds happen often, especially during the short spring, where they also bring with them sand storms. On top of this, the changes in weather can be vast and sudden. From spring and autumn temperatures can pass from - 5°C at the beginning of the day to + 30°C at noon.

The country also experiences dzud or zud, a Mongolian term for a severe winter; a white dzud signals heavy snowfall which impedes access to the grazing pastures for the livestock and a black dzud means that a lack of snowfall and freezing temperatures create a drought and the livestock suffer from dehydration.

Depending on the region of Mongolia you are choosing to visit, the best time to travel there is between May and the end of September.

## **TIPS**

Tipping is well received when you are happy with the service from your local guides and/or drivers. For Mongolia you could consider a tip around £40 however, tipping remains completely at your discretion.

## **PACKING LIST**

Important: For your riding holiday please make sure your luggage does not exceed 15kg. The cabin baggage limit is 5kgs.

You are in a mountainous area and temperatures can be cold, especially at night. Consider layered equipment and clothes that will allow you to adapt to each temperature you will face during your ride.

When packing, please remember that the region can be cold and it would be wise to bring layers!

Pack carefully and sensibly: the following guide is here to give you an idea of what to bring.

Soft bags are preferred as they are easier to fit into the back up vehicle

### Head

- Equus Journeys strongly recommend that you wear a riding helmet and that you take your own to ensure a correct fit. There are many lightweight options available nowadays
- Sunhat for when not riding
- Sunglasses - with a cord attached so they don't fly off when riding
- Buff or bandana
- Warm hat for cold nights

### Upper body

- Thermals (long or short sleeved)
- Long sleeved shirts provide protection from the sun and are an extra layer
- T-shirts
- Lightweight fleece or jumper
- Warm fleece or jumper (and a spare in case one gets wet)
- Warm and waterproof jacket - it can rain at any time of year and the evenings can be particularly cold. No ponchos or anything that can flap around!

### Legs

- Lightweight, comfortable riding trousers or jodhpurs - we recommend riding in them at home before taking them on holiday to ensure they don't rub
- Thermals
- Casual trousers for the evenings, such as jeans or tracksuit bottoms
- Waterproof over trousers

### Hands and Feet

- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend short boots with half chaps but you may wish to take long chaps as an extra layer against inclement weather. We don't recommend taking your favourite long leather boots in case they get damaged. We would suggest something with a good grippy sole.
- Waterproof shoes/boots can be useful for abundant dew in the mornings or when it rains
- Trainers or equivalent light shoes for moving around in the evenings
- Several pairs of warm, thick socks
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun, cold or rain whilst riding. Waterproof gloves can be particularly useful

### Nightwear

- Sleeping bag. You need at least a comfort factor down to minus 5°C, but would recommend at least minus 8 or 10°C (especially outside of

July/August). It is possible to request a sleeping bag from the local team (limited availability)

- Sleeping bag liner - silk, cotton or fleece - adds an extra layer

- Pyjamas or tracksuits or thermals for sleeping in

Please remember it can get very cold at night, especially if you are travelling in June/September: pack accordingly.

#### Other useful items

- Water-purification tablets

- Swimsuit - for swimming/bathing in lakes

- Towels - camping ones will both dry and pack more easily

- Small backpack for accessing items required during the day (carried by support crew)

- Camera and high capacity memory card. Spare battery

- Bumbag for carrying your camera and small items whilst riding

- Headtorch or small torch for moving around camp at night - bring spare batteries and bulbs

- Water bottle (2 litres or 2 x 1 litre)

- Wet Wipes or equivalent (for when washing facilities aren't available)

- Toilet paper and a lighter to burn it with

- Small plastic bags for rubbish

- Ear plugs (for light sleepers)

- Solar charger/powerbank

#### In your hold luggage

- Any liquids, such as shampoo, moisturiser, deodorant unless they are less than 100ml and all bottles can fit in a small, clear, plastic ziplock bag. We recommend biodegradable washing products where possible.

- Swiss army knife (or equivalent)

#### In your hand luggage

- Any valuables, such as your camera, ipod, ipad etc.

- Your riding hat

#### Medical kit

- Micropur tabs

- Sunscreen and lip balm - should be high factor

- Insect repellent, preferably containing deet

- Any medication you regularly take

- Blister plasters in case of any rubs

- Antiseptic cream, plasters, aspirin, anti-histamine, insect-bite salve etc...

- Spare prescription glasses/contact lenses

- Eye drops

- Imodium or similar anti-diarrhoea medication

- Re-hydration sachets

- Water purification tablets

- Antiseptic wipes

- Handwash gel

#### Our Recommendations

- Soft bags are preferred as they are easier to fit into the back up vehicle.

- Backpacks cannot be worn whilst riding. We recommend a small bumbag or a coat with pockets so that you can carry small items with you during the day (camera, sunscreen, lipbalm etc)

- We recommend travelling in your riding boots and carrying your hat and some riding clothes in your hand luggage - then if your luggage goes astray you are still able to ride!

- Tall riders may benefit from taking a pair of long stirrup leathers with them (the local stirrups are adjustable but are sometimes limited in length)

- We recommend taking a copy of your passport and insurance documents with you in case you lose your originals

- Please take your rubbish home with you. There are no recycling facilities in Mongolia, so take your used batteries, aerosols etc back home and dispose of them appropriately. Try to leave excess packaging material at home before travelling

- You may wish to take some photographs or postcards of your home with you to show your hosts. You may also wish to take some crayons, colouring books etc for the children

## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

1. **Travel light**. It's a little known fact, but the lighter you pack, the better for the environment as heavy bags will produce higher emissions (when

flying a plane or driving a car!).

2. **Reduce plastic waste.** Take your favorite reusable bottle with you. Avoid single-use bags, cups, or straws.
3. **Preserve nature.** Always take your rubbish with you during the ride and recycle them. Leave all the flowers or plants as you found them, and never get too close when observing wildlife. Make sure to use eco-friendly products such as body wash or laundry detergent (if camping) to protect both your skin and the environment.
4. **Choose your experiences carefully.** Respect animal life by not participating in any activities that abuse wild animals (shows, elephant rides, etc.).
5. **Support local populations.** Buy local handicrafts, be respectful of customs, and learn about the culture of local communities.
6. **Share!** Raise awareness among your family and friends about sustainable tourism.

For more information please [see this page](#) .