



In Search of Snow Leopards

Mongolia Tour

Overview

Venture into western Mongolia as we explore the heart of Mongolian wildlife, discover the vast array of creatures that call this region home, and search throughout the mountains for the elusive Snow Leopard.

On this adventure, we'll fly out from the bustling capital, Ulaanbaatar, and head out to the far west of Mongolia. The province of Khovd sits near the border with China and Kazakhstan and is one of the most beautiful regions in the entire country, if not the continent. We'll set out aboard our trusty 4x4s into the wilderness of this region in search of some of the world's most incredible wildlife.

On our journey, we'll search for wild horses, track down Saiga Antelope, and, of course, the elusive and majestic Snow Leopard.

Whilst these beautiful cats are notorious for being difficult to track down, our local friends in the region have an incredible track record of catching a glimpse of Snow Leopards, so we're in good hands on our adventure.

In addition to Snow Leopards, we may also catch a glimpse of the extremely rare Palla's Cat, the Mongolian Gazelle, and the plethora of other flora and fauna which grace these incredible peaks and deep mountain valleys.



What's Included?

Included:

- All Meals
- All Listed Accommodation
- Drivers and Vehicles
- Local guide
- Tour leader
- Internal Flights

Not Included:

- International Flights
- Mongolian Visa
- Snacks
- Alcoholic Drinks
- Tips



Itinerary Overview

*Check out the brief overview of our **In Search of Snow Leopards Tour** – or scroll down to see the in-depth run through of each day of the trip.*

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Day 1. | Arrive in Ulaanbaatar |
| Day 2. | Khovd City |
| Day 3. | Drive to Snow Leopard Encampment |
| Day 4. | Search for Snow Leopards Day 1 |
| Day 5. | Search for Snow Leopards Day 2 |
| Day 6. | Search for Snow Leopards Day 3 |
| Day 7. | Search for Snow Leopards Day 4 |
| Day 8. | Search for Snow Leopards Day 5 |
| Day 9. | Search for Snow Leopards Day 6 |
| Day 10. | Drive to Wild Horse Camp |
| Day 11. | Searching for Wild Horses |
| Day 12. | Flight to Ulaanbaatar |
| Day 13. | Departure Day |



Day 1

Arrive into Ulaanbaatar

Whenever your arrival, we'll be there to meet you at Chinggis Khan International Airport and drive you into downtown Ulaanbaatar to your hotel.

Our adventure will begin with a walking tour around Mongolia's capital city, starting with the central square. Sukhbaatar Square is the beating heart of Ulaanbaatar – named after the titular Damdin Sukhbaatar, a leading revolutionary in the early 1920s, the square is surrounded by some of the most important buildings in the city – from the government palace, hosting statues of Chinggis Khan and his descendents, to the Cultural Palace, Art and Drama Theatre, Post Office, and City Government Offices.

Skirting around the side of the Soviet-Era Government Palace, we'll take a walk down one of the city's tree-lined boulevards towards the Natural History Museum. Formerly the Museum of Lenin, today this grand building houses exhibits about the prehistory of Mongolia, and includes a vast room filled with stuffed animals that we'll hope to see out in the west (where they'll ideally be alive!).

Following on from our museum trip, we'll make our way through the bustling back streets to the State Department Store – the perfect chance to exchange currency to the local Mongolian Tugrik, find weird and wonderful souvenirs, and stock up on any snacks you might want for the upcoming adventure.

Near the State Department Store is an intriguing, yet charming, statue dedicated to the Beatles – so we'll head over here to discover why this Liverpudlian band is commemorated so far away from the UK.

Finally, we'll head to our first group dinner where we'll also have our pre-tour briefing. This is the chance to ask any pressing questions, find out about the imminent adventure, and make sure you know how to stay safe during the trip.

Accommodation: *Hotel 9, Ulaanbaatar*

Included Meals: *Dinner*

For more information about the accommodation on this tour, check out the 'Accommodation' Tab on the Tour Page.



Day 2

Flight to Khovd

It's up and out early this morning as we head out of the city to board our domestic flight from Chinggis Khan International Airport to the far western city of Khovd.

Once we arrive, before we grab some lunch, we'll make a stop at the Khovd Monastery – a typical small town buddhist monastery with some truly incredible architecture and filled with brightly coloured artefacts and immaculately kept by the resident monks.

We'll stop at the hard-to-miss Steppe Hotel for lunch – one of the most modern buildings in the city, this restaurant is also our hotel for the night, so we'll drop off our gear, enjoy some local delicacies, and head out for an adventure in Khovd.

Our first stop is the market – the perfect chance to rub shoulders with locals, and also an opportunity to pick up any last minute bits and bobs for our coming expedition. Khovd market has everything – whether you need wellington boots, a tennis racket, or 500 metres of string – this is the place to go. Grab the phrasebook – this is your chance to try out a little Mongolian language, something which always elicits a happy response from the market vendors.

After the market, we'll head over to the Khovd Museum – dedicated to the surrounding province. This Soviet-style museum hasn't yet got the memo from the modern age and is still very much a communist-era highlight. It'll be our chance to learn about the province that we will soon be travelling through – discovering what wildlife we may encounter, and finding out about the people we'll meet along the way.

We'll end the day with a free evening – your chance to explore downtown Khovd, relax on the rooftop balcony of our hotel, or get an early night before our expedition heads into the true countryside tomorrow.

Accommodation: *Steppe Hotel*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 3

Drive to the Snow Leopard Encampment

Today the adventure really begins!

We'll head out early to make the most of the day. Leaving Khovd, we'll make a stop at a lookout point just outside the city. This will give us a chance to see the Ovoo, which sits atop the mountain outside of Khovd. These Ovoos may look like piles of rocks, often with prayer flags sticking out the top, but they are an artefact of pre-Buddhist Mongolia. Many people here still believe in shamanism, and these Ovoos are home to spirits. Locals will walk around them three times, throwing stones onto them to bring themselves good luck – something we will need for our adventure.

It's here where we'll visit a local shaman. Shamanism continues to be an important aspect of life in Mongolia, and these traditional figures are considered to be finely tuned with the natural environment and the wildlife that surrounds them.

After we've had our journey blessed by the shaman and been granted with luck for the coming days, we'll leave the city and make our way east towards the mountains, forests, and valleys which serve as home for the elusive snow leopard.

Over the next week, we'll traverse the area we're now driving through hoping to catch a glimpse of these majestic mountain cats, and hopefully get some stunning photos in their natural habitat.

Accommodation: *Snow Leopard Camp*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 4

Search for the Snow Leopards Day 1

This morning we will head out in search of Mongolia's elusive mountain beast – the Snow Leopard. There are an estimated 35-40 Snow Leopards in this local region of the Altai Mountains, and we'll spend our day attempting to observe these magnificent creatures in their natural habitat.

Our local friends in the mountains have a series of observation points scattered throughout the area which we'll be able to drive to, followed by a short walk up to the final point. These observation posts are perfect for a snow leopard search, as well as watching for some of the other local wildlife which populates these high mountains and deep valleys.

In addition to their observation posts, our local friends have a team of trackers who spend their time in the mountains tracking these majestic creatures and keeping us updated on any opportunities to catch a glimpse.

Over the next six days, we'll be traversing five total peaks in the surrounding area, each with dedicated observation posts in search of Snow Leopards and other incredible wildlife.

After our day of mountainous searching, we'll head back to camp for a well-deserved rest.

Accommodation: *Snow Leopard Camp*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 5

Search for the Snow Leopards Day 2

This morning we'll enjoy a hearty breakfast and set out for our second day of searching amongst the peaks and valleys of the region.

Depending on our success so far, we'll head further afield to different viewpoints in our ongoing search for Snow Leopards. In addition, we will keep an eye open for some of the regions other aforementioned wildlife.

If we're really lucky, we may catch sight of the extremely rare Palla's Cat – Mongolia is home to the largest population of Palla's Cats in the world, however they are hard to spot as they have extremely expansive territories. Ground squirrels are their favourite food, and the best chance to spot these predators are while they're waiting for these small rodents to pop out of their holes.

Accommodation: *Snow Leopard Camp*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 6

Searching for Snow Leopards Day 3

This morning, we'll venture back out into the wilderness in our continuing search for Snow Leopards.

Depending on our success so far, our spotters will hopefully have worked out the ideal spot for our observations today.

As we head off into the mountains, we'll no doubt catch a glimpse of the steppe eagle. At this time of year, the eagles have begun to molt their summer coats and instead are a lighter, more camouflaged colour. This makes them harder to spot on their rocky perches, but no less beautiful to witness gliding silently above us.

Accommodation: *Snow Leopard Camp*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 7

Searching for Snow Leopards Day 4

Today marks the half-way point of our hunt in the wilderness. For those that wish, there is always the option to spend the day relaxing at the camp, taking in the surroundings, and spending some free time taking a break from our wild escapades.

However, for those keen to continue to search, we'll head out once more, following the path of wolves, ibex, and gazelles as we make our way to today's viewing point in the hope of catching that glimpse of silver fur that is unmistakably a Snow Leopard.

Accommodation: *Snow Leopard Camp*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 8

Searching for Snow Leopards Day 5

The hunt continues on our penultimate day at the camp.

Today, we'll be able to adapt our search tactics based on our experiences over the past few days in order to maximize the chance of a Snow Leopard encounter.

Once again, we'll depart the camp in our trusty vehicles, and spend our day trekking amongst the wildlife of Khovd Province to our observation spot. After which, we'll return for a relaxing evening.

Accommodation: *Snow Leopard Camp*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 9

Searching for Snow Leopards Day 6

Whether or not we've seen Snow Leopards so far on the trip, we'll head out one final time with all the experience of the past few days behind us, hoping for an encounter with these incredible creatures.

In the evening, we'll enjoy one final evening at our camp, reminiscing about the various creatures we've seen, and hopefully sharing our leopard photos!

Finally, it's off to sleep in preparation for a long journey tomorrow. As we depart the home of the Snow Leopard, it's not quite yet time to pack away your cameras and binoculars as our next stop offers more chances to view Mongolia's incredible wildlife.

Accommodation: *Snow Leopard Camp*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 10

Drive to the Wild Horse Camp

Today we've got a long journey ahead of us as we depart the Snow Leopard Camp and make the roughly 100km drive off-road to the Khomyn Tal National Park.

As we drive, we'll traverse some incredible landscape – distant steppe, the edges of the Gobi Desert, frozen rivers, and mountains which rise to pierce the open blue sky above us.

Today is mostly a day of travelling, an unfortunate by-product of Mongolia being so massive. However, when we arrive we'll have a late afternoon and evening free to rest, relax, take a short walk, or enjoy a drink as we prepare for the day ahead where we will go in search of another of Mongolia's wild beasts.

Accommodation: *Khomyn Tal National Park*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 11

Searching for Wild Horses

Today we'll set out into the Khomyn National Park. The national park is home to the rare Mongolian wild horse known as Perzevalski or Takhi; once extinct in the wild, the Perzevalski Horse is a true conservation success story with captive breed horses released into, and then surviving in the wild.

Initially, these horses were only extant in the Hustai National Park, near Ulaanbaatar. However, their incredible success and growth in numbers means many have been relocated here, to this much more remote park where they continue to live wild – the only such example in the world.

Mid-afternoon offers us the best time to catch a sighting of the beautiful Takhi horses, so we'll pile into our trucks drive out into the rolling terrain to spot them come down from mountains for water at the nearby river. As well as the famed Perzevalski horse, it is also possible to see fox, red deer, roe deer, eagles, and other various animals.

After our safari is complete, we'll head back to the camp for a relaxed evening sharing wildlife photos.

Accommodation: *Khomyn Tal National Park*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 12

Return to Ulaanbaatar

Leaving our horses, leopards, trucks, and friends behind for good, we'll head out back towards Khovd. This journey will be long, so we'll head off early. Upon arrival, we'll catch our flight back to the capital, Ulaanbaatar where we'll enjoy a final evening meal and reminisce about our adventures.

Accommodation: *Puma Hotel*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 13

Departure Day

We end our adventure in the morning, with transfers to the airport for international flights. Pack your souvenirs, your dirty clothes and your memories, and have a safe trip home!

Accommodation: *N/A*

Included Meals: *Breakfast*