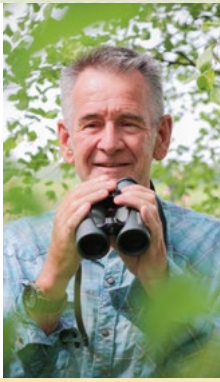


Join TV presenter **NIGEL MARVEN** and Big cat experts in Mongolia, on a special Ecotours Wildlife Holidays trip in search of snow leopards. We have a high chance of laying eyes on these elusive big cats. We'll also catch up with some remarkable birds and other creatures



MONGOLIA

Snow leopard and the amazing birds in Mongolia, 14 days



ECOTOURSWILDLIFE.CO.UK | INFO@ECOTOURSWILDLIFE.CO.UK | +36 30 606 1651

Snow leopard and the amazing birds in Mongolia, 14 days

An awe-inspiring, 14-day tour to Mongolia, at the heart of the Asian continent - with a dream list of sought-after Asian specialities, Snow Leopard, Saiga Antelope, resident birds and migrants to be seen amidst a majestic landscape of seemingly endless desert, steppe, and mountains. It's a journey that will carry you from the wilds of the Altai Mountains, via Gun Galuut and the bird-rich steppe lakes, to the taiga forests of Terelj National Park. We stay in good hotels and comfortable, permanent ger camps with good facilities - a tour highlight, not to be confused with traditional camping! - making this far-flung, incredible destination accessible to everyone. Snow Leopard, Saiga Antelope, Przewalski's Horse, Argali sheep, Mongolian Gazelle, Swan Goose, White-naped Crane, Pallas's Sandgrouse, Mongolian Ground Jay, Altai Snowcock, Siberian Rubythroat, Pine Bunting...



SNOW LEOPARD





HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Staying in the true wilderness with hardly any other people around
- ▶ Fascinating landscapes
- ▶ Snow Leopard, Saiga Antelope, Mongolian and Goitered Gazelle, Przewalski's Horse, Argali, Siberian Ibex, Siberian Marmot, Corsac Fox, Tolai Hare, Long-tailed and Pallid Ground Squirrel, Siberian Jerboa, Pallas's and Daurian Pika
- ▶ Altai Snowcock, Mongolian Ground-jay, Pallas's Sandgrouse, White-winged Redstart, Brown Accentor, Grey-necked Bunting, Asian Desert Warbler, Pallas's Gull, White-headed Duck, Dalmatian Pelican
- ▶ Lammergeier, Steppe and Golden Eagle, Upland Buzzard, Cinereous and Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Saker and Amur Falcon, Eastern Marsh Harrier
- ▶ White-naped and Demoiselle Crane, Mongolian Lark, Siberian Rubythroat, Azure Tit, Long-tailed Rosefinch, White-crowned Penduline-tit, White-cheeked Starling, Meadow Bunting, Daurian Partridge



PALLAS'S SANDGROUSE



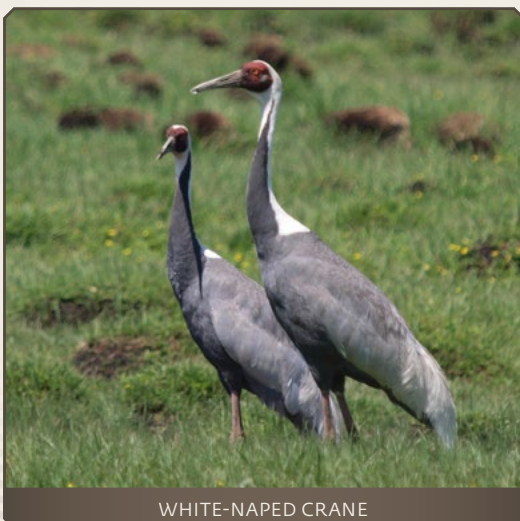
TOUR OVERVIEW

- ▶ 14 days in Mongolia's true wilderness
- ▶ Start and finish in Ulaanbaatar
- ▶ Visiting the Altai Mountains, Gun Galuut Reserve and Hustai National Park
- ▶ Staying in comfortable ger camps and a superb hotel
- ▶ Transport with comfortable 4x4 vehicles providing a window seat for each client

Sandwiched between the vastness of Russia to the north and China to the south, Mongolia lies at the heart of eastern Asia. It is a land of immense, open steppe grasslands, isolated by mountains in the north and west and by the vast Gobi Desert in the south, and populated by pastoral nomadic horsemen and their herds, from where Genghis Khan once ruled his mighty Mongol empire. Mongolia's treasure

trove of natural riches is becoming increasingly popular with adventurous birdwatchers and wildlife enthusiasts. From the sands of the mysterious Gobi Desert to the slopes of the towering Gobi Altai Mountains, cloaked with beautiful evergreen forests, this amazing country provides unspoilt scenery, stunning landscapes and a mouth-watering array of mammals and birds, many unique to the special habitats visited on our tour. Our carefully planned itinerary visits a choice selection of the very best areas for mammals and birds yet offers a compact and well-balanced holiday.

After running many successful bird and wildlife holidays over the years we have discovered the



WHITE-NAPED CRANE

possibility to design this very special tour that provides a wonderful opportunity for participants to see the mythical Snow Leopard without strenuous hikes, sleeping in tents, or being exposed to the cold in thin air at high altitudes. Our exciting itinerary has been designed to combine the very best of Mongolia's mammals and birds with the best possible accommodation – featuring a combination of comfortable ger camps (but no camping!) and hotels – and modern, well-maintained transport, including 4WD vehicles.

Our journey begins in the capital, Ulan Bator (Ulaanbaatar), where we'll be looking for Azure-winged Magpies, Azure Tits, Long-tailed Rosefinch and Amur Falcon.

To the east lies the wildlife reserve of Gun Galuut, with its rolling hill steppes and wide river valleys set amongst mountains, and shallow steppe lakes that abound with wildlife. Here we'll search for rare and localised specialities such as White-naped Crane, Swan Goose, Eastern Marsh Harrier and a good selection of ducks, waders, birds of prey. The reserve is home to a good population of Argali Sheep and Corsac Fox is often seen hunting the abundant Brandt's Voles, as well as the odd looking and very shy Pallas's cat.

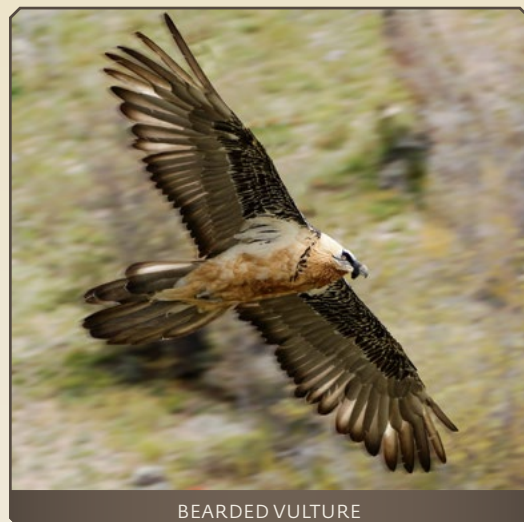
We spend some time in the taiga woodlands of picturesque Terelj National Park, where the charismatic Siberian Rubythroat, Daurian Redstart, Spotted Nutcracker, Pine and Godlewski's Buntings, woodpeckers, warblers and tits can be found.

Returning briefly to Ulan Bataar, we next fly west to Khovd - our gateway to the Altai Mountains and the surrounding desert, large lakes, and steppes. We shall spend 6 nights in our comfortable ger camp, venturing into the deep rocky valleys

or the higher regions searching for Snow Leopard, the mysterious "mountain cat" that has a healthy population of 10-15 animals in a limited range. On other days we will visit the nearby semi-desert area to look for other critically endangered mammals: Saiga Antelope and the delicately built, pretty Black-tailed or Goitered Gazelle. We will also look out for Siberian Ibex roaming the rocky slopes and Siberian Marmot. Pallas's Cat and Grey Wolf are also found in the area, but they are even more difficult and less reliable to see as the Snow Leopard, so we need to be very lucky to see them. There will be many birds to look at while we are scanning for mammals from the pretty White-winged Redstart to Brown Accentor, Altai Snowcock, Lammergeier,

the ever present Red-billed Choughs, Saker Falcon and Steppe Eagle.

Reluctantly dragging ourselves away from the magical surroundings of the Altai Mountains, we return to Ulan Bataar and conclude our holiday with a visit to famous Hustai National Park, which lies to the southwest of the capital. Set amidst



BEARDED VULTURE



PINE BUNTING

hills and grasslands, the main target here is Przewalski's Horse for which the park is famous. We will keep an eye open for Tarbagan Marmot, Long-tailed Sopslik and Mongolian Gazelle as well. The park is home to many raptors including Amur Falcon and Golden Eagle. The elegant Demoiselle Crane is often seen in the grasslands along with Mongolian and Asian Short-toed Lark.

We'll return to the capital for the last night before our flight home.



DEPARTURE DATE & PRICE

26 Aug- 8 SEP 2025 for 8510 USD pp + 695 USD single room supplement



OUTLINE ITINERARY

- DAY 1 Arrive to Ulaanbaatar. Local birding. Night in UB hotel
- DAYS 2-3 Gun Galuut Nature Reserve. Night in permanent ger camp, en suite chalets available.
- DAY 4 Birding Terelj NP. Night in UB hotel
- DAYS 5-10 Fly UB to Khovd, Western Altai Mts. 6 nights in Snow Leopard ger camp.
- DAY 11 Return UB. Depending on arrival time night in UB hotel or in Hustai NP ger camp.
- DAY 12 Hustai NP. Night in Hustai ger camp.
- DAY 13 Return to UB. Night in UB hotel
- DAY 14 Fly home



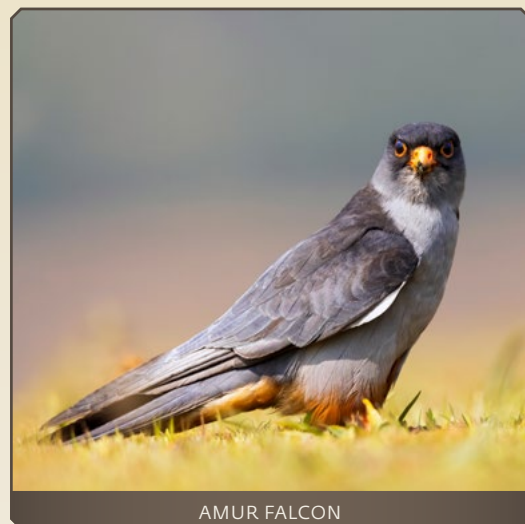
DAILY ITINERARY

- DAY 1 Arriving at Ulaanbaatar we check into our comfortable hotel. Depending on the time of arrival we will do an introductory birding walk in the east of the city. Amur Falcon, Azure Tit, Azure-winged Magpie, Long-tailed Rosefinch, White-crowned Penduline Tit, White-cheeked Starling are all possible along the Tuul River. Dinner in a traditional Mongolian restaurant offering delicious local and regional cuisine.



AZURE TIT

DAYS 2-3 After breakfast we start driving towards Gun Galuut Nature Reserve. On the way we may stop at the huge statue of Genghis Khan. Shortly before arriving to camp there will be some very productive shallow lakes and marshes where we should encounter suites of common shorebirds including Pacific Golden-Plover, Spotted Redshank, Wood and Marsh Sandpiper. The lakes have yielded many surprises in the past including Baikal Teal, Falcated Duck, and with luck we might find some late migrant too.



AMUR FALCON

Our ger camp is situated in a beautiful river valley surrounded by steppes and rocky hills.

Gun Galuut protects a range of mountain and steppe habitats along with some varied and exciting wetlands. The rocky hills are home to a strong population of Argali Sheep and Pallas's Cat in good rodent years. We will scan the rocky outcrops during late afternoon for the cats hunting Brandt's Voles, their favourite prey. Argalis are usually seen in small groups grazing on the mountainside in the early morning so after some 30 minutes driving and scanning we should be able to find them. Other mammals of the area include Corsac Fox, Daurian Pika, Mongolian Jird and the nocturnal Siberian Jerboa.

The birdlife of Gun Galuut is very rich. We will explore the vegetation along the river near our campsite for migratory songbirds. In the past, these have been quite rewarding, rendering a variety of warblers including Pallas's Grasshopper, Greenish, Two-barred, Dusky and Thick-billed, as well as Olive-backed Pipit, Taiga Flycatcher, and Black-faced and Pallas's buntings.



RUDDY SHELDUCK

White-naped Cranes nest in the marshes and we should find this magnificent bird in family groups along with other crane species including Common and the daintier Demoiselles. The lakes also attract numerous water birds including grebes, swans, ducks, gulls and as many as five species of terns. We may see Bar-headed and Swan geese, Whooper Swan, Common and Ruddy shelducks, Eurasian Wigeon, Garganey, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck and Stejneger's Scoter. As we drive across the shortgrass steppe we may find several species of larks including Asian Short-toed, Horned and Mongolian larks, Isabelline and Northern wheatears, and Richard's

and Blyth's pipits. We will particularly be on the lookout for the sandy coloured Pere David's Snowfinch that inhabits the steppes. Raptors will be represented by Upland Buzzard, Steppe Eagle, Cinereous Vulture, Black-eared Kite, Eastern Marsh Harrier, and Saker and Amur falcons. The rocky slopes are home to Rock Sparrow and Twite, while Pallas's Sandgrouse could be present anywhere in the area.

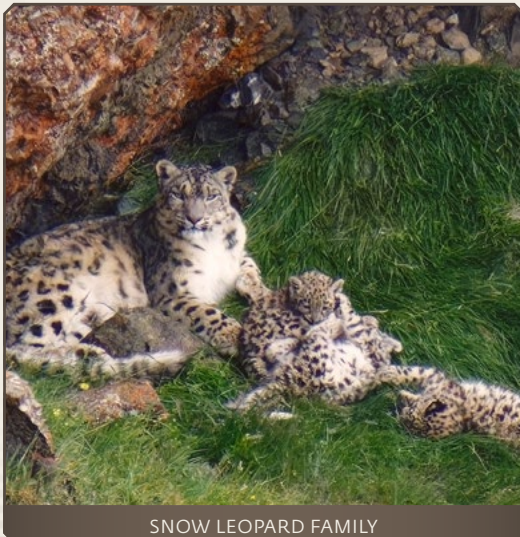


TOED HEADED AGAMA

DAY 4 We leave Gun Galuut and visit Terelj National Park on the way to Ulaanbaatar. Terelj has fantastic rock formations, coniferous and riparian forests and is home to many birds. Eastern Buzzard is usually seen patrolling the mountains and Lammergeier is also often seen. Rocky outcrops are home to Rock Thrush and Godlewski's Bunting. There are many woodland birds found in the coniferous forests including chances for Siberian Rubythroat, Red-flanked Bluetail, Daurian Redstart, Taiga and Dark-sided Flycatcher, Red-throated Thrush, Dusky, Hume's and Two-barred Warbler, Nutcracker and Black Woodpecker.

We have lunch in Terelj and in the afternoon drive back to the capital.

DAY 5 We take a domestic flight to Khovd and we drive to our ger camp where we will stay for the next 6 nights. It is operated by a local wildlife protection community, which is a local organization with the single purpose of protecting the extremely rich nature and wildlife reserve. The camp is located by the foothills of Jargalant Mountain facing at the mountain chain on the one side and the semi desert and a huge lake on the other. The facilities here are shared, but comfortable and clean. Our local team is keen to provide everything we need for the maximum comfort in the area where we will be literally on our own apart from a few nomadic herders and their animals.



SNOW LEOPARD FAMILY

DAYS 6-10 The next 5 days will find us searching primarily for the elusive Snow Leopard as one of our main priorities. We timed our trip to match the period when the cats are most likely to be seen hunting or guarding their prey.

It is difficult to say how good the chances are. There is no guarantee of sightings, but by working with the local conservationists to find the best location we hope to see this majestic animal as we did in most of our tours so far. The terrain here is considerably easier to negotiate than in their other

habitats where the conditions are generally much harsher (high altitude, low temperature, difficult terrain, need of acclimatization, hikes, sleeping in tents, etc.).

Our experienced drivers will take us as close as possible to the observation sites. At times walking will be limited to a few meters. At other times we will have to take a short or medium length walk that will demand basic fitness and ability to walk on rocky, uneven or steep terrain. However, many of the typical observation points can be reached by a 4X4 vehicle or a short walk. As we have plenty of time, we will be able to proceed at a speed that is comfortable for everyone. This holiday is planned to be a very slow



WAITING FOR THE SNOW LEOPARD...

paced one with plenty of time for everything. Our local scouts will be on the mountain most of the time looking for a Snow Leopard. They successfully locate one or more Snow Leopards during almost each tour, and we hope one will be in an easily accessible area. We are also in contact with local shepherds and if one of their animals was killed by the leopards, they will immediately report it to our local team. It is very important for conservation reasons and for us it is a great help. While our local helpers are scouting, we might opt to locate ourselves in a key area to scan the mountainsides where animals occur regularly during hunting or patrolling their territories.

To find a Snow Leopard needs patience, but it is in fact a special aspect of the holiday: it is a very slow-paced activity that allows us to admire the breath-taking scenery, incredible alpine flora and the highlights of the avifauna without haste. There will always be things to look at; the soaring raptors above us, the playful Siberian Marmots that keep whistling to each other signalling danger or grazing Siberian Ibex with their amazing ability to climb almost vertical cliffs. There will be White-winged Snowfinches, Mongolian Finches flying around us, as well as Brown Accentor and the local race of Horned Lark. Those with sharp eyes will be able to spot the beautiful Guldenstadt's Redstart that inhabits the highest peaks, and we will surely have time to track down some of the flocks of Altai Snowcocks by scanning the cliffs.

Lammergeier, Steppe Eagle, Black-eared Kite, Saker Falcon, Cinereous and Himalayan Vulture are often seen as they scan the pastures for prey or carcasses, the latter most probably left by the Snow Leopards.

The Saiga Antelope is probably one of the oddest-looking animals of its kind, and now it's critically endangered due to various factors. Mongolia has two populations; one of them is actually a few kilometres from our base, in a flat semi desert area. The local subspecies is called "tatarica"

which is sometimes considered to be a separate species. They can run at a very high speed and are easily identifiable as they always keep their head down, even while running.

Another possible highlight here is strictly an after-dinner activity just in and around our campsite. We will walk in the flat rocky desert area scanning with our torchlights for small “jumping, glowing eyes”. The tiny kangaroo-like rodents are most likely Siberian and Mongolian Three-toed Jerboas, which with luck and with some skill can be approached and observed as they feed on insects just a few meters away, sometimes even jumping between our shoes. Their long ears and tails that end in a fluffy ball of fur make them very special, unique animals to watch.

We shall also visit a nearby lakes and the adjacent wetlands, which offer a lot to see. Pallas’s Sandgrouse might come to drink on the shore, Whooper Swan and Dalmatian Pelican breed amongst the vast expanse of reedbeds, Pallas’s Gulls, Whiskered and Gull-billed terns are also here. Sometimes large concentrations of White-headed Ducks are seen and Red-crested Pochards are also found on the lake. The nearby grasslands seem to be perfect for many passerines including Asian Short-toed Lark, Richard’s Pipit, Western Yellow and Citrine Wagtail and Pallas’s Bunting. Another avian highlight of Mongolia, the Henderson’s Ground-jay is living near to our campsite, and a short walk or drive should produce sightings of these wonderful birds.



PRZEWALSKI'S HORSE

DAYS 11-12 Leaving this magical place behind, we drive to the airport and fly to Ulaanbaatar. In two hours we will find ourselves in Hustain Nuruu National Park, home to the successfully reintroduced wild horse, the Thaki or Przewalski’s Horse. Short walks along the rolling hills will bring us Long-tailed Souslik and Tarbagan Marmot, but most probably we will spend quite some time admiring the beauty of the world’s only true wild horse species. The rocky areas are home to Pied Wheatear, Meadow Bunting and Lesser Whitethroat. The elm trees along the valleys hold a small population of the elegant Amur Falcon, while Lesser Kestrels hunt on the hillsides and Golden Eagles patrol the skies. Some spots are productive for Daurian Partridge. This is our chance to add Mongolian Gazelle to our list of mammals. We shall drive a few kilometres away from the central part of the national park to find — hopefully large hordes of — them in the lowlands.

DAY 13 We drive back to Ulaanbaatar after a morning birding around Hustai NP.

We can also visit the capital in the afternoon if guests are interested in a short city sightseeing or in an optional fascinating cultural program.

DAY 14 We drive to the airport for the flight home.

i TRIP INFORMATION

GROUP LIMIT 12 participants & guides

BIRDS 150-200 species

MAMMALS 15-20 species

ACCOMMODATION The overall standard of accommodation on this tour is good, but please note that Mongolian hotels generally average below the international standard in the West. All hotel rooms are en suite. We spend ten nights in comfortable ger (yurt) camps, which for many visitors are a highlight of the tour. The ger camps are permanent and purpose-built to accommodate tourists, offering comfortable but simply furnished accommodation. Bathroom facilities at the ger camps are in shared permanent toilet blocks and are usually clean. Hot showers are also available in shared facilities.

Please note that there are en suite rooms (chalets) available at Gun Galuut camp, so please let us know if you want to upgrade.



GER INTERIOR

MEALS All included in the price. Food is generally good and wholesome although for some it may seem to lack variety. We can cater to most people with special diets.

WALKING Some easy to moderate hill trails, but all taken at a gentle pace. Comfy walking shoes or lightweight boots recommended. Be prepared for optional early starts tempered where possible with a break after lunch prior to birding again later in the afternoon.

WEATHER Mongolia has a continental climate and can vary considerably at this time of year - you need to dress accordingly. Generally, it

will be warm or hot during the day, but it can be chilly at night and in the early mornings. Cold weather can be expected at the higher altitudes with strong winds, and rain is also possible at almost any time. Temperatures during the day may range between 15-25°C, while night-time temperatures in the mountains can drop significantly.

ALTITUDE Most of the tour will be spent above 1300m and we will spend time in landscapes often at 1800m. Our camp in the Altai Mountains is situated at an elevation of 1700m and we will drive up to maximum 3000m in search of Snow Leopard.

INTERNAL FLIGHTS There are 1 or 2 companies offering flights between the capital and Khovd. Their annual schedule is usually not announced before March. It may happen that there are no daily flights, which may result in the slight rearrangement of our itinerary.

GROUND TRANSPORT Japanese 4WDs provide greater comfort and safety, with knowledgeable local drivers who will ensure we get to our destinations safely. There will be some long drives, some along unsealed roads through scenic landscapes, but we will stop regularly. A window seat will be provided to all clients and there is permanent radio contact between vehicles.

INSECTS There is no malaria risk on this tour. Mosquitoes can be a local nuisance in certain areas. Be sure to bring some repellent, just in case.

PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES Good, plus incidental photographic opportunities.



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WE USE SWAROVSKI OPTICS

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