

# Overview of Mongolia

Mongolia is an unlikely tourist destination but one that proves irresistible to lovers of wide-open spaces, untamed wilderness and raw natural beauty. Outside of the capital, Ulaanbaatar, where over half the population lives, visitors will encounter a land blissfully unaffected by the modern world. It is a journey back in time where nomadic lifestyles are perfectly in tune with the natural rhythms of the landscape, and the people are renowned for their warmth and hospitality.

Mongolia is three times the size of France and twice the size of Texas, yet with fewer than three million people it is the most sparsely populated country on earth. The main economic activity is livestock tending, though the country's considerable mineral wealth is beginning to be exploited.

Key attractions are the Gobi Desert with its astounding Khongor sand dunes, the varied sights of Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, the vast and pristine Khovsgol Lake near Moron, and Karakorum, former capital of the Mongol Empire and home to Mongolia's most important monastery. From desert steppes to snow-clad mountains, explorers and adventurers come from far and wide to brave Mongolia on horseback and embark on camel trekking, 4X4 excursions, rock climbing expeditions and desert safaris.

Ulaanbaatar itself is more a functional centre with few must-see attractions to speak of. One worthwhile site, however, is the National Museum of History (with an entire floor dedicated to Genghis Khan, founder of the Mongol Empire). Under his grandson Kublai Khan, Mongolia became the world's first superpower, spanning from modern-day Korea to Poland and encompassing 22 percent of the globe at its peak. Ulaanbaatar is also the main transport hub for Mongolia, with the only international airport, Chinggis Khaan International Airport, located 12 miles (18km) southwest of the city.

Following almost a century of Soviet domination, Mongolia became a democracy in 1990, but was left with the consequences of the USSR's anti-religious violence. The most destructive consequence of that regime was the systematic eradication of the Buddhist faith. Over 7,000 monasteries were destroyed, with only four surviving and over 20,000 monks were killed. Today, Buddhism is once again flourishing and people are rejoining the traditions that have sustained them for centuries.

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## Key Facts

### Language:

Mongolian is spoken by at least 95 percent of the population and Russian is the most commonly spoken foreign tongue, followed by English. (Korean and some European languages are spoken by Mongolian expats who've worked or studied abroad.)

### Passport/Visa:

Foreign passengers visiting Mongolia on business or on duty can obtain a visa on arrival at Buyant-Ukhaa International Airport (ULN) if they have confirmation from the Immigration Agency of Mongolia or Consular department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia stating that a visa has been approved before departure. They must have a completed visa application form, a passport photo, arrive from a country without diplomatic representation of Mongolia and have a sponsor in Mongolia who submits request to the Mongolian Immigration Authority. Visitors or their organizing parties must register at the Police Department within 10 days after arrival but before departure. It is highly recommended that travellers' passports have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

### Currency:

### Electricity:

Electrical current is 220 volts, 50Hz. European two-pin plugs are standard.

# Travel to Mongolia

## Overview

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Mongolia is famous for its landscape, particularly the ice-capped peaks of Bayan-Olgii, the roaring river mouth at the Yolyn Am, the surreal white limestone cliffs at Tsagaan Suvarga and the lush lakes in the Khuisiin Naiman Nuur Nature Reserve. Most tourists come in the summer, whether for hunting, fishing, horse riding or trekking,

A visit to Mongolia is incomplete without accepting local hospitality and experiencing its traditions. The famous Nomadic lifestyle of the Mongols exists as part of everyday life, and the friendly people are proud to share their customs and heritage.

## Climate in Mongolia

Mongolia has an extreme continental climate with long, freezing winters and short summers, when most precipitation falls. The country receives an average of 257 cloudless days a year.

Rainfall is highest in the north, which averages between 20 and 35 centimetres per year, and lowest in the south, which receives 10 to 20 centimetres. Parts of the Gobi region in the far south rarely receive any precipitation at all.

Eastern Mongolia's climate and landscape have more in common with northeastern China than Central Asia, as winds are less violent and temperatures are less severe than in the west.

The high season runs from June to August, and conditions are mostly warm and dry. Winds, dust storms and frigid temperatures characterise the low seasons (October to April), while weather in the shoulder seasons (May and September) can be changeable.

## Health Notes when travelling to Mongolia

No particular immunisations are required for travel to Mongolia, though standard vaccinations such as hepatitis A and B, typhoid, and rabies are recommended. Vaccines for meningococcal disease are recommended for extended stay or prolonged contact with the local population. Traveller's diarrhea is the most common complaint, and altitude sickness may be experienced in the Altai, Hangayn, or Khangai Mountains. There have been no infectious outbreaks reported in the last few years.

It is advisable to only drink boiled or filtered water in Mongolia, and to avoid raw and unpeeled fruits and vegetables. Long clothes will prevent bug bites and related illnesses. Medical facilities in Mongolia are limited, so travel insurance with evacuation provisions is recommended. There are some private hospitals suitable for foreigners in Ulaanbaatar, and travellers should be prepared to pay up front and claim back later. Some Western medications are not available, so visitors are advised to pack important medication, accompanied by a doctor's note explaining the need and purpose.

## Safety Notes when travelling to Mongolia

Travellers to Mongolia should not be unduly concerned about their personal safety. As in every city, they should exercise caution in Ulaanbaatar, especially at night, as theft has been known to occur. They should also watch out for pickpockets at the airport. Travellers will need to be careful when using public transport, or when driving around Mongolia, as there are few paved roads, road conditions can be poor, and visibility (especially at night) is often less than ideal. There are occasional protests and demonstrations, which should be avoided where possible.

## Customs in Mongolia

The most important aspect of Mongolian social etiquette is the ideal of hospitality. Mongolians are famously welcoming of foreigners, although they expect that visitors reciprocate by showing respect for Mongolian culture, and by being enthusiastic and compliant guests. This means guests should accept food and drink (even alcoholic drinks) when they are offered, though it is not required that people drink the beverage. Travellers who enjoy 'roughing it' will probably find more success in Mongolia if they maintain their personal appearance, as dirty clothes, long hair, and unkempt beards are generally frowned upon.

Friends of the same gender will often hold hands or put their arms around one another and Mongolians are quite physically affectionate too. Vodka-drinking is a feature of Mongolian culture, and being able to 'hold your liquor' is probably the shortest route to social acceptance. Although there are some harsh standards of conduct, and high expectations placed on Mongolian women, these do not apply to foreigners.

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## Duty Free in Mongolia

Travellers to Mongolia may bring with them up to 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars and 250g of tobacco, one litre of vodka, two litres of wine, and three litres of beer. Pornographic materials and narcotics are prohibited.

## Communication in Mongolia

The international access code for Mongolia is +976. The outgoing code is 00, followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 0044 for the United Kingdom). Visitors can purchase local prepaid SIM cards for unlocked phones; many pubs, coffee shops, guesthouses and restaurants in Ulaanbaatar offer free WiFi.

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## Entry Requirements

### Entry requirements for Americans:

US citizens must have a passport that is valid for a minimum of six months from the arrival date in Mongolia. No visa is required for stays of up to 90 days. For stays of more than 30 days, visitors must register with Mongolian Immigration within seven days of arrival.

### Entry requirements for Canadians:

Canadian citizens must have a passport that is valid for a minimum of six months from the date of arrival in Mongolia. A visa not required for stays of up to 30 days. Visitors who plan to stay for more than 30 days in Mongolia must register with the Office of Immigration, Naturalization and Foreign Citizens within 48 hours upon arrival.

### Entry requirements for UK nationals:

British citizens must have a passport that is valid for a minimum of six months from the arrival date. They will need a visa to enter or travel through Mongolia as a visitor. A Mongolian visit visa is usually valid for a stay of up to 30 days within six months from the date of issue.

### Entry requirements for Australians:

Australian citizens must have a passport that is valid for a minimum of six months from the date of arrival in Mongolia. A visa is required.

### Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

Irish citizens must have a passport that is valid for six months from the date of arrival in Mongolia. A visa is required.

### Entry requirements for New Zealanders:

New Zealand citizens must have a passport that is valid for a minimum of six months from the date of arrival in Mongolia. A visa is required.

### Entry requirements for South Africans:

South African citizens must have a passport that is valid for a minimum of six months from the date of arrival in Mongolia. A visa is required.





# Currency

## Overview of the Attractions in Mongolia

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# Public Holidays in Mongolia

	2023	2024
New Year's Day	Mon. January 1	Mon. January 1
Tsagaan Sar	Wed. February 21 to Fri. February 23	Sat. February 10 to Mon. February 12
Buddha Day	Tue. June 4	Thu. May 23
Chinggis Khaan's Birthday	Thu. November 14	Sat. November 16
Republic Day	Tue. November 26	Tue. November 26
Independence Day	Sun. December 29	Sun. December 29