



Ten amazing adventure lodges with a green conscience

By Molly Feltner, SmarterTravel.com

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Arcadian luxury in Asia's best-kept secret

Lodge: Three Camel Lodge

Price: from \$80 per person per night

Of the travelers I've spoken with about their experience visiting Mongolia, all have made essentially the same points: They mystified their friends by going, but they absolutely loved the country. "I fell in love with Mongolia when I first went in 2005 on a [Nomadic Expeditions](#) tour—there's an ancient, unifying energy between the land and the sky and the people," says Pennsylvania teacher Debra Eschbach. "I loved it so much I lived there for a year in 2006 and went back again for Christmas break."

"When discussing my vacation plans with coworkers, I got a lot of blank stares," says New Yorker Gary Lehman, who went to Mongolia last year with his wife, also on a Nomadic Expeditions tour. "Mongolia can be experienced and appreciated on many levels. Among a few of the top reasons to go: experiencing Tibetan Buddhism up close, physically rigorous but exhilarating trekking in the spectacular Altai Mountains, meeting the warm and hospitable Mongolian people, and touring the ruins of the ancient capital city and palace of Genghis Khan's Mongolian Empire."

Most visitors wanting to experience the Mongolian hinterlands book horse or camel treks, camping in traditional makeshift yurts called gers. However, in the Gobi Desert in southern Mongolia, Nomadic Expeditions operates what are probably Mongolia's most acclaimed accommodations, the [Three Camel Lodge](#), a luxury expedition camp that blends Mongolian design and culture with Western comfort. Local artisans built the main lodge and 45 oversized guest gers according to the tenets of Mongolian Buddhist architecture, using unprocessed stone, handmade latticework, felt and canvas skin, and no nails. Guest gers have luxurious amenities like cashmere blankets, en-suite bathrooms, and wood-burning stoves. Electricity comes from wind and solar power, and all trash is sorted for recycling, a rare practice in Central Asia.

"The Three Camel Lodge was by far the most comfortable ger camp with the best amenities we stayed at throughout our vacation in Mongolia," says Lehman. "We appreciated the commitment of the management staff to the local community and local college-aged students. [Each night] we were treated to a captivating musical performance of traditional Mongolian throat singing with musical accompaniment by the hotel staff, who studied music in university (and were employed by the lodge during their summer break)."

While at the lodge, you can visit a variety of sites nearby, including the Flaming Cliffs, a red rock wilderness famous for its well-preserved dinosaur fossils, and the Hongor Sand Dunes, which "sing" when swept by wind. The lodge can also arrange camel and horse treks, hiking, and archaeology trips.

http://www.usatoday.com/travel/deals/inside/2008-04-17-eco-lodges_N.htm