

THREE CAMEL LODGE  
The Gobi, Mongolia



*Five Days/Four Nights*



## MONGOLIA

### *The Gobi & Three Camel Lodge: Five Days/Four Nights*

With half a million square miles of sand dunes and endless blue sky, the Gobi Desert defines Southern Mongolia. Nestled in the heart of the Omnogobi Aimag (South Gobi Province), the southernmost province bordering northern China, Three Camel Lodge is a serene haven from the hectic modern day. It is nestled in the crossroads of the Gobi's diverse desert eco-systems and serves as a habitat for animals such as shaggy two-humped Bactrian camels, ibex, and gazelle.

After careful consideration for the preservation of the region's environment, culture and people, Three Camel Lodge was opened in 2002. It was, and remains, the only luxury eco-lodge in Mongolia's Gobi Desert. Built by and staffed by locals, Three Camel Lodge isn't just a place to stay; it's a state of mind.

This unique outcropping of gers, or traditional felt and canvas tents used by Mongolian nomads, rests in the heart of the starkly beautiful Gobi Desert. In addition to 40 gers, Three Camel Lodge's main lodge was modeled after traditional Buddhist temples, adhering to strict Mongolian Buddhist canons of "soum style." The Lodge is tucked beside a rock outcrop bearing ancient petroglyphs, but it is the vast expanse of desert and the nighttime sky filled with a million twinkling stars that will leave a lasting imprint on your heart.



**RECOMMENDED FOR:**

Travelers seeking to discover the beauty of the Gobi, while staying in an elevated take on the traditional nomadic lifestyle.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Discover the majesty of the Gobi
- Hike through Yol Valley National Park
- See ancient petroglyphs
- Flaming Cliffs
- Moltsog Els sand dunes
- Horse and bactrian camel ride

**Season:**

May through October

from bush to bush. These amazing little rodents are in the squirrel family and can only survive in elevations higher than 3,000 feet. Birds, from white ramped swifts to wall creepers, are plentiful in the Yol Valley, too.

Visit the small, but informative museum to learn more about the local wildlife of the Gobi region before driving 10 km/ 6.5 miles to the starting point for your hike. The narrow valley with a stream running through the center delivers a rewarding hike for outdoor enthusiasts.

After exploring the valley, drive (1 hour) to the award winning Three Camel Lodge – your home away from home for four nights. The Lodge is located at Bulagtai Mountain on the edge of Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park. The lodge offers a wide variety of activities such as horseback riding, archery, nature walks, a library with interesting books on Mongolia, a screening room for watching documentary films about nomadic culture, learning traditional Mongolian games, or enjoying a relaxing massage.

In the afternoon, reconvene with your guide in our Snow Leopard den for an informative session on the Gobi ecosystem, wildlife, fauna, geology and paleontology.

*(Three Camel Lodge; L, D)*

**Day 1**

**YOL VALLEY NATIONAL PARK**

Arrive at Dalanzadgad airport where you will be met by your private guide and driver.

Of all the world's arid lands, the Gobi has the greatest air of mystery, perhaps because it lies at the heart of Asia's remotest hinterland between the Siberian wilderness to the north and the Tibetan Plateau to the south. Contrary to the sameness that the word 'desert' suggests, the Gobi is a diverse and fascinating region, and includes sites of some of the most important paleontological discoveries of the 20th century. Explore the stunning landscapes of the Gobi, habitat for Bactrian camels, Argali Mountain sheep, goitered gazelle, Golden Eagles, Saker Falcons, jerboas (similar to kangaroo rats), and many endemic reptiles.

From the airport head to Yol Valley National Park (45 minutes), nestled at the heart of Zuun Saikhan Mountain of the Gobi Gurvan Saikhan Mountain range. This seven-mile valley is a lush landscape best known as a prime habitat for Yol vultures (lammergier), or bearded vultures. Lammergiers nestle atop the cliffs and when the air is warm, they fill the sky, soaring with the sun. Wonder why this valley is named for them? Simply look up, and the sheer number of vultures gliding through the sky will show you.

The Yol Valley is a wondrous place where ice formed during the winter does not melt until late June. It is a place where pikas jump

**Day 2**

**MOLTSOG ELS SAND DUNES**

**Moltsog Els Dunes:** After breakfast, drive to Moltsog Els, one of the few regions of the Gobi covered by sand dunes. Explore the dunes on foot, but don't miss riding a Bactrian camel. It is not everyday that you'll get the chance to get up close and personal with a two-humped camel. In fact, these woolly creatures are native to this region and are only found in Central Asia. Camel ride on the dunes are possible only if a local camel herding family is residing close to the dunes during the summer. *(If camels are not available, we will explore the dunes on foot and ride camels in another location.)*

**Ger Building Activity at Three Camel Lodge:** In the afternoon, experience ger building firsthand. Join locals to learn the process of raising a traditional Mongolian Ger. Participating in building and setting up a traditional Mongolian ger will have you feeling immersed in the local culture.

**Stargazing at Three Camel Lodge:** After a delicious dinner at the lodge, take advantage of the dark Gobi skies (zero light pollution) and enjoy an evening of stargazing with your guide.

*(Three Camel Lodge; B, L, D)*



# YOUR JOURNEY

## Day 3

### HAVSGAIT PETROGLYPHS

**Sunrise Walk:** Wake up early to enjoy a relaxing walk at sunrise around the Bulagtai hillside, located behind the lodge. Here you will be able to see 8,000-year-old petroglyph and learn more about our unique Lodge.

**Horse riding:** After breakfast, enjoy horseback riding around the lodge. After a safety briefing and helmet fitting, riders are led around the area by our wrangler. More experienced riders should speak to their guide to arrange more challenging rides.

**Havsgait Petroglyphs:** In the afternoon, drive to Havsgait Valley. Only 20 minutes from the lodge, Havsgait mountain provides a challenging hike up steep slopes, but the 30- to 45-minute hike rewards hikers for the climb—it's home to one of the largest collections of rock carvings in the region. Catch your breath and spend time exploring the rock faces while enjoying unrivaled views of the Gobi to the north.

**Bulgan Soum (optional):** You have the option of visiting Bulgan, a small town near a natural spring that has the only farms in the Gobi. Supplying local ger camps with fresh produce, a perfect example of local businesses being supported by ecotourism. Or head back to the lodge to enjoy its meditative setting or take in a spa treatment.

*(Three Camel Lodge; B, L, D)*



## Day 4

### FLAMING CLIFFS

**Archery:** After breakfast, participate in an archery lesson. Learn to fire an arrow like a Mongol warrior. You will have the opportunity to compete after mastering your new skill. This interactive experience provides fun to every age group. The lodge offers actual replicas of the bow that were used hundreds of years ago by the Mongol warriors.

**Bike Ride to a local nomadic family:** Observing the vast Gobi by bicycle is a treat for travelers and allows you to experience nature you might otherwise miss. This afternoon head out on mountain bikes (helmets provided) for an easy to moderate, guided bike ride through the countryside to a home of a local nomadic family. Learn more about their way of life. If you wish, you may participate in their daily chores including herding and milking their animals, and learn how to prepare milk tea. You may also get the chance to learn the traditional games of the steppe, utilizing the ankle bones of sheep and goats.

Mongolia is a home to one of the last remaining nomadic cultures in the world and often travelers compare Mongolia with traveling back in time to witness an old way of life that has not changed for centuries. About 30% of Mongolia's population still lead a nomadic way of life and move from pasture to pasture, living in harmony with nature and off the land.

**Flaming Cliffs:** In the afternoon, enjoy a documentary featuring Roy Chapman Andrews, the real-life Indiana Jones, whose expedition discovered the world's first dinosaur eggs at the Gobi's Flaming Cliffs, before driving out to the cliffs.

Bayan Zag, commonly known as the Flaming Cliffs for the orange glow of its rock at dawn and dusk. It was here in 1923 that Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews and his exploration team from the American Museum of Natural History found the first nest of dinosaur eggs. Although not obvious to the untrained eye, the Flaming Cliffs are rich with dinosaur fossils and have been the site of important paleontological discoveries.

*(Three Camel Lodge; B, L, D)*

## Day 5

### DEPARTURE

After breakfast, transfer to the airport in Dalanzadgad for your flight to Ulaanbaatar.

*(B)*

*B=Breakfast L=Lunch D=Dinner*

*Nomadic Expeditions reserves the right to change the above itinerary if necessary.*





## HOW TO BOOK

### STEP 1

Call or email  
to check availability for your  
desired travel dates

info@ThreeCamelLodge.com

+1-609-860-9008

1-800-998-6634  
(Toll free North America)

### STEP 2

Fill out the  
Lodge Registration Form

Pay Deposit : \$500 per person  
(credit card, check or bank transfer)

Digital confirmation packet sent out;  
includes visa, insurance and medical  
information, suggested clothing &  
reading lists, general information on  
travel in Mongolia and the Gobi.

## 2023 LAND COST

### May – June 10:

1 Traveler: \$6,435  
2 Travelers: \$3,720 per person, double occupancy  
3 Travelers: \$3,045 per person, double occupancy  
Single Supplement: \$800

### June 11 – July 6 & July 18 – September 15:

1 Traveler: \$7,035  
2 Travelers: \$4,120 per person, double occupancy  
3 Travelers: \$3,310 per person, double occupancy  
Single Supplement: \$1000

### July 7 - 17:

1 Traveler: \$7,395  
2 Travelers: \$4,360 per person, double occupancy  
3 Travelers: \$3,470 per person, double occupancy  
Single Supplement: \$1,120

### September 16 – October:

1 Traveler: \$6,795  
2 Travelers: \$3,960 per person, double occupancy  
3 Travelers: \$3,205 per person, double occupancy  
Single Supplement: \$920

**Additional Cost:** Domestic roundtrip (Ulaanbaatar-Dalanzadgad) airfare: \$380 per person (subject to change by airline)

### LAND PRICE INCLUDES:

- Ground transportation in Mongolia as described in the itinerary
- Transfers on arrival and departure
- All accommodations based on Deluxe double or twin occupancy
- Meals as noted in itinerary
- Horse and camel riding as noted in the itinerary
- All excursions, entrance fees, and visits as described in itinerary
- Extensive pre-departure Travel Guide, reading list, important information about your trip
- English speaking Nomadic Expeditions guide throughout your stay

### LAND PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- International airfare
- Internal Mongolia airfare (listed above)
- Passport and visa fees
- Comprehensive medical and trip insurance
- Gratuities to guides, drivers and Lodge staff
- Items of personal nature including alcoholic beverages, laundry and spa treatments
- Any excursions or activities not specifically mentioned as included.





Three Camel Lodge was born from our vision to create the country's most inspiring and sustainable eco-lodge. Using ancient Buddhist temple construction methods, the property was painstakingly built to reflect traditional Mongolian culture, respect our pristine surroundings, and serve as an active community resource, while providing a truly unparalleled guest experience.

We follow the three pillars of sustainable tourism at Three Camel Lodge and within our community: Environmental Stewardship, Natural and Cultural Preservation, and Community Empowerment.

## ENVIRONMENT STEWARDSHIP

Environmentally-friendly practices – 'going green' – is a globally-recognized concept that encourages innovative and sustainable practices that reduce, reuse and recycle, including energy, water, waste, and carbon.

- We are proud to be the first lodge in Mongolia to successfully eliminate all single-use plastic water bottles, and we provide our guests with a stylish reusable metal bottle that can be refilled throughout the property at our purified water stations. Every day, we pursue our goal of becoming completely plastic-free.
- In a region without formal recycling systems, we have developed our own comprehensive management program that diverts lodge waste from landfills – including paper, bottles and cans, and organic matter, which we compost onsite for re-use in our organic greenhouse.
- Nearly 100% of the lodge lighting, including all the lighting in our guest gers, is solar-powered, and we use only LED lights.
- We actively reduce our carbon footprint by sourcing over 50% of our lodge supplies, services and ingredients within 50 miles – supplemented by organic produce grown in our onsite greenhouse.

## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

When tourism in Mongolia directly benefits local people by contributing to their economic and social well-being, they also become active partners in protecting nature, alleviating poverty, and celebrating cultural diversity.

- From the beginning, we have remained deeply integrated with our Gobi community and continue to serve as a valuable resource in the region. Our onsite well provides water each day for thousands of animals belonging to nomadic herders; we also provide animal feed and grass during harsh winters. We sponsor English classes and sports teams in a nearby school, and in 2018 we brought a team of optometrists to give eye exams to community members, resulting in the distribution of over 1,000 eyeglasses.
- Providing full-time employment and professional capacity building to local community members is fundamental to our company's sustainability mission, and we are proud to employ a 100% Mongolian staff. By creating jobs in a remote region with limited opportunities, and investing in our employees through ongoing training, English lessons, and trips abroad to learn about global best practices, we strive to empower community members to become both hospitality

professionals and stewards of their Gobi home. We currently employ 20+ staff year-round, in contrast to most Mongolian lodges, which only hire for the three-month tourism season.

- We believe in the power of upward mobility opportunities and have a strong record in hiring, training and empowering our employees – women in particular – to achieve leadership roles within the company. Most of our department managers are women and many have worked their way up from entry-level positions, including our Head Chef, who started as a dishwasher seven years ago.
- In order to support sustainable community supply chains and help grow the local economy, our purchasing and contracting policies favor local families, small Gobi businesses, and artisans selling locally-crafted goods. We also pay our taxes to the local province rather than the national government, which funds local development where it is most needed.



## NATURAL & CULTURAL PRESERVATION

When tourism works to successfully protect Mongolia's natural and cultural heritage, it also invests in safeguarding this legacy for future generations.

- Past and present live as one in the Gobi, which is why we are committed to protecting the region's priceless dinosaur fossils from illegal extraction in nearby paleontological sites, while supporting scientific inquiry. Forming a first-of-its-kind cooperative agreement with other local stakeholders and national park authorities, Three Camel Lodge serves as a base for research within the Gobi and regularly hosts international experts, including at the 4th annual Symposium



on Asian Dinosaurs that was held onsite in 2019. The lodge also supports scientific excursions in the region to help further the field of Mongolian paleontology, and among other successes, one such excursion led to the discovery of a previously unknown species of ankylosaur – which was subsequently named *Zaraapelta nomadis* in 2014 in honor of our sister tour company, Nomadic Expeditions. Additionally, we actively support educational school programs that empower local students to become future stewards of the Gobi's natural heritage, including a scholarship program in honor of a leading Mongolian paleontologist.

- Since 2008, we have proudly supported local students studying traditional Mongolian music and dance at the Gobi's Hanhongor School, and we regularly share their talents with our guests through private lodge performances. In addition to donating supplies and musical instruments to the school, in 2018 we sent ten students and two teachers to Ankara, Turkey to perform at the International Children's Music Festival and share Mongolia's cultural heritage on a global stage. In partnership with the Arts Council of Mongolia, we also launched a scholarship program in 2019 to fully sponsor five talented local students who wish to continue studying music and performing arts at the university level.
- Rising from the arid steppe that stretches to the horizon in all directions, Three Camel Lodge was built to honor Mongolia's nomadic heritage and reflect the Gobi's distinct sense of place through traditional architecture and design, relying on local materials and guided by environmentally-friendly practices. The roof of the main lodge was built according to ancient Buddhist construction techniques, without nails, and our country's cultural legacy is on full display throughout the property, from traditional horse head fiddles, artful tapestries and preserved onsite petroglyphs to our felt-covered guest gers decorated with traditional hand-carved furniture and intricately painted ceilings. Guests can shop for local artisan handicrafts in our gift shop and appreciate the Gobi way of life while watching herds of animals drinking from our outdoor watering hole, accompanied by their nomadic owners. flight to Ulaanbaatar.

### RESTORING THE NATIVE BANKHAR

One of the newest sustainability initiatives we are most proud of is helping to launch and sustain the Mongolian Bankhar Dog Project—a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help preserve the Bankhar, a unique mastiff breed native to the Mongolian Steppe.

Bankhar dogs have traditionally performed a critical role—safeguarding the livestock of Mongolian herding families from

predator species such as snow leopards and wolves. The Bankhar Dog Project breeds, trains and places Bankhar dogs with qualified herder host families. The presence of the dogs serves to ward off these threats, thus reducing the use of shooting, trapping or poison—protecting not only herds and endangered species but also a traditional way of life.

Three Camel Lodge's founder, Jalsa Urubshurow, has enjoyed a longstanding relationship with Bruce Elfstrom, director of the nonprofit.

"I've known Bruce and his work for over a decade," says Jalsa Urubshurow, "and what he is doing to reintroduce the breed and protect snow leopards is nothing short of heroic. Three Camel Lodge has been longtime supporters, but in 2015 we got involved firsthand when we adopted Barbus."

The male Barbus has since been joined by female Ganuba, and their first litter was gifted to local nomadic herding families in Spring of 2021.

The Bankhar Dog Project has been steadily reintroducing the breed since 2011. The dog was nearly lost forever during 70 years of Communist occupation. Because the naturally strong and brave Bankhar was seen as a powerful cultural symbol, Russian forces purposely sought to eradicate the animal. Only a few scattered pockets of the breed survived.



