



Thursday · May 30th, 2019 - Wednesday · June 12th, 2019

International Crane Foundation ~ Journey to Mongolia

Itinerary for International Crane Foundation

Trip Dates
Highlights
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International Crane Foundation ~ Trip Leaders

Thursday · May 30th	Arrive Ulaanbaatar Shangri-La Ulaanbaatar (2 nights)
Friday · May 31st	Ulaanbaatar (B, L, D)
Saturday · June 1st	Drive to Altan Uul Raptor Sanctuary (B, L, D) Altan Uul Private Tented Camp (2 nights)
Sunday · June 2nd	Day in the Erdenesant Mountains (B, L, D)
Monday · June 3rd	Drive to Khustain Nuruu National Park (B, L, D) Khustain Nuruu Ger Camp (1 night)
Tuesday · June 4th	Drive to Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve (B, L, D) Gun-Guluut Ger Camp (1 night)
Wednesday · June 5th	Drive to the Khurkh Valley (B, L, D) Khurkh River Private Tented Camp (3 nights)

Thursday · June 6th	Khurkh River Valley Explorations (B, L, D)
Friday · June 7th	Drive to Binder, Community Crane Festival (B, L, D)
Saturday · June 8th	Drive to Onon River (B, L, D) Onon Private Tented Camp (2 nights)
Sunday · June 9th	Onon River Explorations (B, L, D)
Monday · June 10th	Drive to Ar Nuur (B, L, D) Baldan Private Tented Camp (1 night)
Tuesday · June 11th	Khangal & Khar Zurkhonii Khukh Lakes; Drive to Ulaanbataar (B, L, D) Shangri-La Ulaanbaatar (1 night)
Wednesday · June 12th	Depart Ulaanbataar

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Trip Dates

May 30 - June 12, 2019

Highlights

- Travel with George Archibald, co-founder of International Crane Foundation
- Explore important protected areas of Mongolia where endangered cranes and other avian species congregate
- Meet with local organizers associated with ICF
- Visit with local families and stay in private tented camps and traditional ger tents
- Overland excursions seeing Przewalski's horses, rare Argali Wild Sheep, and other wildlife

Introduction

Join George Archibald, the co-founder of the International Crane Foundation (ICF), and our Mongolian colleagues on this exciting expedition to northeastern Mongolia the major breeding area for the threatened White-naped Crane in East Asia.

There are six species of cranes native to Mongolia; Demoiselle (most abundant and throughout the country), Siberian (occasional small groups seen in summer in the northeast), Eurasian and Hooded (non-breeding flocks not uncommon), Red-crowned Crane (rare visitor in the northeast), and White-naped Crane (threatened breeder). Although cranes are protected by tradition in Mongolia, there are many challenges for the survival of cranes, in particular the wetland-dependent, White-naped Crane. Mongolia is experiencing an extended period of severe drought in the last several years. Many of the wetlands where White-naped Cranes nested have dried up. Many that remain are shared with thousands of sheep and goats and the nomadic people.

Throughout our journey we will experience the many wonders of Mongolia. We will have the opportunity to see firsthand the research activities for White-naped Cranes, and to work with the local people to develop activities that promote successful crane conservation.

International Crane Foundation ~Trip Leaders

George Archibald, Ph.D., International Crane Foundation Co-founder. The future of many crane species was once as fragile as the delicate and graceful birds themselves. George Archibald's visionary leadership in international conservation efforts over the past 40 years has given flight to crane conservation worldwide. In 1973, when cranes were in a perilous situation and many were on the brink of extinction, Archibald, along with Cornell University colleague, Ronald Sauey, Ph.D., established the International Crane Foundation (ICF) in Baraboo, Wisconsin as the world center for the study and preservation of cranes. Today, ICF has over 50 employees and supports conservation projects in 45 countries. Archibald is a true conservation ambassador who uses his unique brand of crane diplomacy to work in sensitive places. He leverages the charisma of cranes to unite people from diverse cultures and countries to work together to preserve the landscapes necessary for the survival of both cranes and people.

Nyambayar Batbayar, Ph.D., Director, Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. As an ICF Research Associate and active member of the Crane Specialist Group, Nyamba has worked with cranes for many years including coordination of a White-naped Crane breeding and migration study that is developing close cooperation between Mongolia and China. He worked as a Mongolian Saiga project coordinator for WWF Mongolia and recently completed his Ph.D. at Oklahoma State University on Bar-headed Geese that breed in western Mongolia and that winter in India following migration over the Himalayas. Nyamba is Director of ICF conservation partner, Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia (WSCC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving Mongolia's wildlife and their habitat through research, conservation, and public education.

Thursday · May 30th

Arrive Ulaanbaatar

On this day you will arrive in Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar. You will be met upon arrival and transferred to our hotel in the center of town. The remainder of the day will be free to relax and recover from your travels.

Shangri-La Ulaanbaatar

+976 7702 9999

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

<http://www.shangri-la.com/ulaanbaatar/shangrila/>

May 30

Check-in

Jun 01

Check-out

2 nights

Duration

Friday · May 31st



After breakfast, we will set out to explore some of the sights in and around Ulaanbaatar. In the morning we will visit Gandan Monastery, a vital spiritual center that gives a particularly vivid look at the Mongolia of old. After the immense conquests of Chinggis Khan and his descendants (including fabled Kublai Khan), Mongolia converted to Buddhism in the mid-thirteenth century and became a placid, largely untroubled land. Its presiding lama, the Jebtsundampa Khutuktu, was the third highest incarnation in the Mahayana Buddhist hierarchy, following Tibet's Dalai and Panchen Lamas. Gandan Monastery houses a treasure trove of exquisite thangkas (painted scrolls) and sculptures.

We'll continue to Chinggis Square (formerly Sukhbaatar Square), Mongolia's answer to Beijing's Tian'anmen. In July 1921, the 'hero of the revolution', Damdin Sukhbaatar, declared Mongolia's independence from the Chinese. The square in the center of Ulaanbaatar (where he made his historic declaration) now bears his name and features a statue of him astride his horse.

Next we will visit the National Museum of Mongolia which houses an impressive display of Mongolian national and religious history. Exhibits of the museum showcase the history and culture of Mongolia from the Stone Age and up through the twentieth century.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we will take a short walk up to the Zaisan Memorial, which is dedicated to the soldiers who fought in World War II. Our short climb up to the monument will reward us with a panoramic view of the entire city of Ulaanbaatar and surrounding valley below.

Time permitting, we'll continue to the Winter Palace of the last Bogd Gegen (or Bogd Khan). Considered a living Buddha, this erstwhile Mongolian ruler is roughly equivalent to the Dalai Lama of Tibet.

This evening we will enjoy a concert of traditional Mongolian music and dance, followed by a welcome dinner in town.

Ulaanbaatar Highlights:

- Ganden Monastery and its collection of exquisite thangkas and sculptures
- Chinngis Square and the National Museum
- Zaisan Memorial and panoramic view of the city
- Winter Palace (time permitting)
- Evening concert of traditional Mongolian music and dance

Saturday · June 1st

Drive to Altan Uul Raptor Sanctuary (B, L, D)

Today we will drive to a local conservation area established by the Wildlife Science and Conservation Center (WSCC) of Mongolia. Altan Uul and its surrounding mountains are home to many species of birds of prey including the largest Old World Raptor, the Cinereous Vulture. From here we may watch a collection of large soaring raptors such as Bearded Vultures and Himalayan Vultures. We will enjoy the view of a famous roost site of Demoiselle Cranes near a herder's ger.

We will camp at the site and meet with local researchers studying birds and bats in the area and will have the opportunity to visit local families and enjoy the hospitality of the local community.

Altan Uul Private Tented Camp

Jun 01 Check-in	Jun 03 Check-out	2 nights Duration
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Sunday · June 2nd



Day in the Erdenesant Mountains (B, L, D)

Erdenesant is an area of mountain steppe, rocky mountain and grassland, characterized by a chain of narrow mountain ranges. Erdenesant lies close to Batkhaan Nature Reserve, which is a regional level sacred site.

Over 110 bird species have been recorded at the site, including three Globally Threatened species: Eastern Imperial Eagle, Saker Falcon *Falco*, and Lesser Kestrel. The site is particularly important for Cinereous Vulture. Other species recorded at the site include Bar-headed Goose, Lammergeier, and Himalayan Vulture. Hundreds of Demoiselle Cranes congregate before fall migration, amounting to at least 1% of the flyway population of this species. In total, 19 diurnal raptor species are found at Erdenesant, with Cinereous Vulture being the most abundant breeding species, with one of the highest nesting densities anywhere in Mongolia.

We may also spot some mammals here: Mongolian Gazelle, Stone Marten, Red Deer, Siberian Ibex, and Argali Wild Sheep.

Erdenesant Highlights:

- Scenic region of grassy steppes, rock formations, herders, and mountains near the Batkhaan Nature Reserve
- Over 110 bird species pass through here including large numbers of Demoiselle Cranes, as well as other threatened species.

Monday · June 3rd



Drive to Khustain Nuruu National Park (B, L, D)

After breakfast, we will head out for the drive to Khustain Nuruu National Park. Established in 1992 with the help of international environmental agencies, the park is part of a program to reintroduce the indigenous takhi (an Asian wild horse) to its original territory.

Known in the west as Przewalski's horses (after the famed Polish explorer, Captain Nikola Przewalski, who first "discovered" them in the 1870's), the takhi are the last remaining wild horses in the world. In fact, Przewalski's wild horses are thought to be the oldest living ancestor of all modern horses. The word "takhi" is derived from the word "tahi" or "sacred", as horses are the most sacred animals to Mongolians.

Unlike the wild horses found in many other countries (which are essentially domestic animals gone feral), the takhi are an altogether different species from the modern horse. For centuries, the takhi roamed the steppes of central Asia in great herds. However, as human populations grew, hunting and competition with domestic livestock caused their numbers to decline drastically. The last takhi spotted in the wild was in 1969, in the western Gobi.

Although once extinct in the wild, there were about a dozen takhi living in zoos. Special breeding programs were set up in Australia and Europe, and their population has now reached nearly 1500 all descended from the bloodline of three stallions. When Mongolia opened to the world in the early 1990s, it became possible to reintroduce the takhi to its native territory. There are now over 100 takhi in Khustain Nuruu National Park. We will spend several hours roaming throughout the park in search of the horses and other wildlife.

Khustain Nuruu National Park Highlights:

- Przewalski's wild horses and other wildlife

Khustain Nuruu Ger Camp

Jun 03 Check-in	Jun 04 Check-out	1 night Duration
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Tuesday · June 4th



Drive to Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve (B, L, D)

Today we will drive east to the Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve. Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve has small steppe lakes where we will see White-naped Cranes, Swan Geese, other waterfowl, and shore birds. The landscape is predominantly steppe, grasslands, and medium hills. The Kherlen River, the longest river in the country, runs through this area. We hope to get a glimpse of the small herd of Argali Wild Sheep living in the park.

Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve Highlights:

- Scenic region of steppe lakes, steppes, grasslands and the Kherlen River
- White-naped Cranes, shorebirds, geese
- Argali Wild Sheep

Notes

Today's drive is approximately 4-5 hours.

Gun-Guluut Ger Camp

Jun 04 Check-in	Jun 05 Check-out	1 night Duration
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Wednesday · June 5th

Drive to the Khurkh Valley (B, L, D)

This morning we will depart on the drive to Khurkh River Valley, one of the North East Asian Crane Network Sites. It has a Ramsar Site designation due to its importance for breeding and migration for many wetland dependent species. The landscape is mostly mountains, rivers, many small wetlands that are rich in waterbirds and nesting cranes. We will see breeding White-naped Cranes, Great Bustards, Mongolian Gulls, and Amur Falcons.

Khurkh River Vally Highlights:

- North East Asian Crane Network Site
- Breeding White-naped Cranes

Notes

Today's drive is approximately 5 hours.

Khurkh River Private Tented Camp

Jun 05 Check-in	Jun 08 Check-out	3 nights Duration
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Thursday · June 6th



Khurkh River Valley Explorations (B, L, D)

Today you enjoy a full day to rest and explore the area surrounding your camp.

Friday · June 7th

Drive to Binder, Community Crane Festival (B, L, D)

This morning we will travel a short distance to the small village of Binder, located at the confluence of the Khurkh and Onon Rivers. Here we will have the opportunity to meet the local community and enjoy a special festival jointly organized by the International Crane Foundation and their local partner the Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia.

Binder Highlights:

- Visit with local community
- Enjoy a special crane festival

Notes

Today's drive is about 1 hour.

Saturday · June 8th

Drive to Onon River (B, L, D)

The Onon River runs for 500 miles along beautiful high mountains that support forests including boreal coniferous forests, through vast meadows and steppe s.

It is internationally recognized that Onon River is a head river of Amur River, one of five world biggest rivers that freely runs without any natural embankments and barriers. There are over 400 rivers and streams inflowing in Onon, Ulz, Kherlen, and Khalkh rivers in Mongolia that belong to Amur River basin. Amur River basin is one of 35 eco-regions that require inevitable conservation as announced by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Therefore, the protection of Amur river, which is specific with its scenery, natural resources, rarely found ecosystem features and regarded as one of the biggest not only in Asia but also in the world, should start from the protection of Onon river basin.

Situated at the southern edge of Siberian forest and boreal coniferous forest and stretched into Daurian steppe, Onon Balj basin is featuring with its natural formation and rich biodiversity.

Onon Private Tented Camp

Jun 08

Check-in

Jun 10

Check-out

2 nights

Duration

Sunday · June 9th



Onon River Explorations (B, L, D)

We spend the day exploring the Onon River basin.

Monday · June 10th

Drive to Ar Nuur (B, L, D)

Today we will continue our journey to discover more breeding sites of rare cranes. Ar Nuur and Kholboo Nuur are small lakes where cranes and herders live very close to each other. We will observe how nomadic people and cranes have co-existed for centuries in this country.

In addition to cranes, we hope to see Marsh Sandpiper, Common Redshank, Steppe Eagle, Amur Falcon, Cinereous Vulture, Ruddy Shelduck, Black-winged Stilt, Whooper Swan, and possibly Great Bustards.

If time permits, we will stop at the ruins of the Baldan Bereeven Buddhist Monastery located in the valley of the Baruun Jargalant River.

Ar Nuur Highlights:

- More breeding sites of rare cranes
- Baldan Bereeven Buddhist Monastery

Notes

Today's drive is approximately 4-5 hours.

Baldan Private Tented Camp

Jun 10 Check-in	Jun 11 Check-out	1 night Duration
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Tuesday · June 11th

Khangal & Khar Zurkhnii Khukh Lakes; Drive to Ulaanbataar (B, L, D)

This morning we will visit the areas surrounding Khangal Lake and Khar Zurkhnii Khukh Lake. Both lakes are situated very close to the Khentii Mountains and are located at higher elevation. We will look for several rare breeding species like Amur Falcon, Golden Eagle, Steppe Eagle, Grey Heron, Whooper Swan, Falcated Duck, Ruddy Shelduck, and three species of cranes, White-naped, Demoiselle, and Eurasian Cranes.

After our visit to Khangal Lake, we will return to Ulaanbaatar where we will gather to enjoy a festive dinner to celebrate our adventures in Mongolia.

Highlights:

- Khangal Lake and Khao Zurkhnii Khukh Lake
- Rare breeding species
- Farewell dinner in Ulaanbataar

Notes

- Today's drive is approximately 5-6 hours.
- Guests departing late this evening will be transferred to the airport after dinner.

Shangri-La Ulaanbaatar

+976 7702 9999

<http://www.shangri-la.com/ulaanbaatar/shangrila/>

Jun 11 Check-in	Jun 12 Check-out	1 night Duration
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Wednesday · June 12th

Depart Ulaanbataar

Today the remainder of the group transfers to the airport for our homeward bound flights.

Trip Price

Land cost:

\$9975 (8-9 guests)

\$9475 (10-12 guests)

\$8875 (13-15 guests)

Rates are per person, based on double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$785

Donation to International Crane Foundation & Wildlife Science and Conservation Center

Donation To International Crane Foundation:

\$2000 per person

Donation To ICF Conservation Partner

Wildlife Science & Conservation Center Of Mongolia:

\$1000 per person

Payment Schedule

Payment Schedule:

At time of reservation: **\$1000 per person**

90 days prior to departure: **Balance due**

Cancellations and Refunds:

If you cancel your trip, the following cancellation charges apply:

Nonrefundable cancellation charge: **\$1000 per person**

46-90 days prior to departure: **50% of trip cost**

45 days or less to departure: **No refund**

At or after departure: **No refund**

Inclusions & Exclusions

Included

- Services of International Crane Foundation Co-founder and Leader, George Archibald
- Services of Wildlife Science and Conservation Center Naturalist, Nyambayar Batbayar
- Services of expert GeoEx Trip Leader, local guides, drivers, and full camping staff, including cooks and camp helpers
- Accommodations and meals as noted in the itinerary
- Beverages including bottled water, soda, local beer, wine and other alcohol
- All ground transportation, including airport transfers

- All sightseeing, events, and visits as noted in the itinerary
- Gratuities for trip leaders, local guides, drivers, porters, and other staff
- All group camping gear (walk-in tents, cots, chairs, tables etc.)
- All entrance fees, service charges, and standard taxes
- Services of GeoEx in-house air reservations/support team
- Emergency evacuation services up to \$300,000; secondary medical expense insurance up to \$50,000 (restrictions apply; a description of coverage is available upon request)

Not Included

- Round trip airfare and en-route expenses to/from your GeoEx trip (USA/Ulaanbaatar/USA)
- Passport and visa fees
- Increase in VAT or other tourism taxes, which may occur at any time
- Excess baggage charges, departure fees, and airport taxes
- Personal expenses and incidentals, such as phone calls, internet, and laundry
- Trip cancellation, travel delay, and baggage loss insurance
- Charges incurred as a result of delays beyond the control of GeoEx
- Donation to International Crane Foundation (to be paid directly to ICF)*
- Donation to Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia (to be paid directly to ICF)*

**Please make your \$3,000 donation check payable to International Crane Foundation. \$1,000 of your donation will go to the Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia*

How to Book

If you are ready to sign up, or if you have questions about this itinerary, give us a call at 800-777-8183 between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. (Pacific Time) Monday to Friday.

Comfort Level

Rigorous Touring and Camping

This trip involves overland travel in 4-wheel drive vehicles over poor (and sometimes non-existent) roads. In the countryside, we will be using Japanese-made 4-wheel-drive SUV-type vehicles, which are ideal for maneuvering through the often challenging terrain. In Ulaanbaatar and surrounding regions the roads are paved so a 4X4 is not necessary. Roads can be quite bumpy in the countryside, so progress tends to be slow. Please bear in mind that on these drives there are no “rest areas” with western style toilets. The drivers will stop at suitable points on the trip or at your request. A small supply of biodegradable toilet paper should be taken along for these “au naturel” breaks.

This itinerary involves many nights camping. While camping, GeoEx will provide specially designed, sturdy tents, sleeping cots, pillows, sleeping bags, extra blankets. Our camp staff will set up the tents each night. Each morning in camp you will be provided with a basin of water for washing up. In each camp we will have a private tent set up for the bathroom and separate shower tent and washing unit.

Accommodations are always the best available, but please note that this itinerary involves both hotel stays and nights in tourist ger camps. Tourist ger camps generally have flush toilets nearby (the western, sit-down variety), plus facilities for hot showers. We pride ourselves on the level of comfort we provide while traveling through in these remote areas, but this kind of trip is not for everyone. Accommodations are very rustic outside of Ulaanbaatar, roads are poor or nonexistent, and luxuries like hot water and electricity are not guaranteed. It is important to remain open-minded and willing.

It is also important to understand that, while food, service and infrastructure are adequate and, at times, surprisingly good in Mongolia, you may still encounter mediocre meals, indifferent service, and faulty plumbing. These factors necessitate a flexible, tolerant attitude and a sense of humor.

A Typical Day in the Field

A typical day will include birding for those interested from dawn until 8:00 a.m. Breakfast will be served at 8:00 a.m. and departure from the camp site at 9:00 a.m. We will make many stops during the day to hike, visit local people, and see wildlife. Our advance team will prepare lunch and dinner at a designated location. The expedition will continue through the afternoon with many stops, arriving at the camp location at 6:00 p.m. for dinner. Hard-core birders may satiate their avian desires until dark.

Trip & Travel Considerations

Currency Exchange Rates

GeoEx actively manages currency risks. Unlike many other travel companies, we insulate our travelers from exchange rate risk by locking in the tour cost at the time of booking. In other words, we will neither assess a surcharge nor issue a refund as a result of exchange rate movements after you book your trip.

Single Supplement

We base our prices on double occupancy. If you would like a single room, a single supplement will apply. If you are a solo traveler and request a roommate, we will do our best to match you with a guest of the same gender. If none is available, the single supplement will apply.

Cancellations and Refunds

If you must cancel your trip (or any portion thereof), a cancellation charge will apply; refunds depend on the timing of the cancellation. GeoEx cannot offer a refund for any unused accommodations, services, or features once the trip has commenced. For more details, please refer to the payment/cancellation schedule for this trip, or to the Terms of Service section of GeoEx.com.

Travel to/from Your GeoEx Trip

Our trip price does not include transportation between your home city and the GeoEx trip. We encourage you to take advantage of GeoEx's complimentary, full-service, in-house air-ticketing department, whose staff comes with decades of experience arranging complex travel to remote destinations. Feel free to call us with questions about routings, fares, and even trip extensions - we're happy to assist you.

Before purchasing non-refundable flights for a scheduled group departure, please confirm that we have the minimum number of participants required to operate the trip.

Pre-Departure Packet

After signing up for the trip, you will receive a detailed packet of information that includes notes on health and safety, packing recommendations, suggested reading, and more.

About the Itinerary

While we endeavor to make this itinerary as accurate as possible, it should be considered an approximate schedule of activities rather than a rigid schedule of events. We are constantly looking for ways to improve our trips, and advance reconnaissance may present opportunities for superior routing or activities. **Trip itineraries are also subject to revision due to weather conditions, road and trail conditions, government restrictions, and other factors beyond our control.**

International Crane Foundation Mission

The International Crane Foundation works worldwide to conserve cranes and the ecosystems, watersheds, and flyways on which they depend. ICF provides knowledge, leadership, and inspiration to engage people in resolving threats to cranes and their diverse landscapes.