

Journey in red Taiga

Immersion int Tsaatan land

The Tsaatans or Dukhas, best known in Mongolia under the name of Uriankhai.

More than an ethnic group, whose origins are mixed with the history of Mongolia and other tribes from Central Asia.

The Dukhas are part of the great family of Tuvans.

The Tuvans was the dominant people around the 6th and 7th century, present not only on the current territory of Mongolia, but also in China, Russia and further west.

The Dukhas are descendants of a proud people that has spread far North, East and North-West, their culture and their ancestors mix together with the Samoyeds, the Evens, the Evenkis and the Nenets. The Mongolian Dukhas are commonly called Tsaatans, meaning "who lives with the reindeer" or "reindeer breeders", Tsa is the Mongolian name ... or Uyghur to describe a reindeer.

The Tsaatans live in the far North of the country, above the depression of Darkhad in the taiga. At one time, before Soviet domination, the Tsaatan people from the Northern taiga of Mongolia lived throughout the area including Darkhad depression, taiga in the North and West, the mountains of Khoridol Saridag in the East, to the door of the big pass that separaties the taiga zone, from the lower part which goes down to Moron.



Tsaatan people are freedom-loving and certainly proud of ethnicity that suffered a lot from Soviet control, kolkhozes and purges Currently living in the Northern and Western taiga of Mongolia, to the North of the Aimag of Khuvsgul, on the borders of Mongolia and Russia, some 50 families, divided into two main groups.

Far from the image of a "gentle savage", endangered and living in poverty often described as "miserable", the Tsaatans certainly lead a rough life, but truly close to their origins, their culture, true to their "taiga" and in perpetual search of better grazing areas so that that is so necessary to the reindeer and their nourishment, searching for the freshest and coldest corners, for their reindeer to grow in best conditions.



After a very critical period, the herd of reindeer is regaining some strength, with the 10000th newborn celebrated two years ago. The Tsaatan people are on the right track and will continue haunting for many years in the Mongolian taiga.

On the other side of the border live some other Tuvan ethnics like the Tofilarys the Todjas and the Sayans

An entrance on the tiptoes in Tsaatan territory to try to discover this world where the man and the nature become as one, a world where nature takes a step forward towards human... or a world where only Tsaatans live in perfect harmony with all the "elements".



Day 1. Arrival in UB. Airport reception and settling into a hotel.

A few hours to recover a little from the tiredness of the travel, then lunch and a city tour.

In the late afternoon, live music and traditional songs.

Day 2. Late morning, departure to the airport.

Local flight to Moron.

Then Transfer to Khatgal, about 3 hours on a track sometimes unpleasant marking the beginning of the adventure

Arrive Khatgal in late afternoon and installation in the yurt in the lodge of Wind of Mongolia.



Khatgal is a peaceful village, an old town and wish is the most important transit port for imports from Russia.

Khatgal is located at the southern part of Lake Khuvsgul.

Day 3. A long day on the track, in breath-taking landscapes, between the worlds Of plants and minerals.

4 hours of crossing mountain passes and valleys, before reaching Tomiin Brigad, a tiny hamlet built around the only bridge that allows to cross the Beltes river.

You have another two hours before reaching Ulan Uul, literally " the red mountain".

But first he must comply some administrative forms of border crossing - the checkpoint of the border is a few kilometres from the village.

Ulan Uul is almost like a ghost town, you can sense some activity there, but there are very few people in the aisles that separate the different neighbourhoods.

It is a little bit further, 6 kilometres from the village, after crossing the river ... which usually an impressive moment... that you will reach the camp of Oyuna who lives there, close to his children, at the bottom of a green valley and protected from the icy winds.
Logement en yourte nomade.



Ulaan Uul



View on Khoridol Saridag from the camp of Oyuna Biluu-Bag

Day 4. Transfor to Tsagaan Nuur

Ulaan uul marks the beginning of the Depression of Darkhad, this area is traversed by several small streams and rivers, which disappear in the steppe or form multiple lakes and lagoons sparkling in the middle of this greenery.



Darkhad dépression.

The made by the dots from the white yurts is enchanting.
Installation in the guest house of Lagva with stunning views of the Lake Tsagaanuur ... the White Lake.
In winter it is always white and covered with a small shell of ice.
Another world begins here.... The world of "the depths of Mongolia."
Lkhagva's guesthouse



Lkhagva's guest-house

Day5. Departure on a horseback towards «the end of the world»...
The first part in a wide valley, to get used to the seat and adjust to the jerky trot of the Mongolian horses.
At the bottom of the valley there is located Nariin Ovur, literally "the narrow valley" and you will be there at the foot of the taiga.
This area is used as a winter camp of many families Tsaatan, family Zorigo will set up their winter camp there but who can predict what the Tsaatans do?
..Overnight stay in a tent

The beginning of an adventure in the land of Tsaatan people.



Nuurtè Shavnag

Day 6. Departure on a horseback to the spring camp Zorigo.
The larch forest is thickened and the track is distorted by some runoffs and areas of peat swamp, a long climb in a quite steep slope before arriving to the hill that leads into a valley in the middle of which there is a streaming river



Nariin Ovurin davaa

Of both sides, high hills or rocky slopes, on the left - several camps of Tsaatan people, installed near the forest.
It is a little further South, where Zorigo and his family live during the spring time. Settling under a tipi.

Welcoming from Tsaatan people in the tipi of family, traditional and ceremonial actions during which you will be served a bowl of reindeer milk for your welcome.

Discovery of the life Tsaatan people.



Day 7. Morning relax, to soak up the nature and the rhythm of Tsaatan people's life. Then, a ride on the back of reindeer, for a first impression



Shavnagin Khundii

An amazing animal that looks like a large goat, with quick and fast movements.... practically, riding the reindeer is easier than it might seem at the beginning ... and it is quite easy to switch between side and the other The reindeer stand on their feet incredibly safe, rocks, peat swamps, streams and even rivers do not bother this animal who has adapted perfectly to the taiga.



A loop to visit another family, located a little further into the valley and then back to the camp Zorigo.



Day 8. Departure to the Taiga "upside" as called by Tsaatans.

On a back of reindeer, this time, you will cross the forest of larch, a slope as steep as the first day, leading to a higher ledge, this is at the bottom of this beautiful circus where a small group of 3 or 4 families live with a hundred reindeer.

Tserma acts as a "chieftain", so it is under a tipi close to the family that you will visit.



Day 9. Day at the camp, dedicated to see learn about and this culture, devoted to the reindeer, calm rhythm, where everything has its own place, its own role and habits. The "tourists" must learn to keep their place, as guests, respect the wild and free spirit of Tsaatans, allow themselves to be guided and enjoy their fair values and have some very special moments together.



Day 10. Trekking in the program of the day.

Due west, the valley continues into an icy area, with two blue lakes which are pure marvels of nature, reflecting the high peaks in the middle.... The stream that feeds these two lakes, comes down from another circus above, in the middle of which one lake is still buried under its winter covers. Depending on timing, it will be possible to go a little higher and then join another circus before retuning back down towards the camp using the ridge.



Returning to camp in late afternoon.

The end of the day is also an important moment in the life of Tsaatans; boys usually gather the reindeer to prevent them from spreading too far apart and bring them near the camp; then comes the milking time, the females join their newborns to let them eat and give some protection from the cold of the night.



Day 11. Another day on the back of a reindeer to get back to Shamanagiin Khondi, a place of the spring camps of other Zorigo families. Along the way, you will probably stop to visit a few families who live in the heart of the forest. It is obligatory to make visits to the members of the group when passing near their camp, because it is a simple way to transmit some information, organize the transhumance, share.... or just drink a cup of tea with a friend.
Installation under "your" tipi.



Day 12. Certainly with some regret, you will leave this haven of freedom, this world of Tsaatan... with some regret, but rich in experience from these moments you will have shared.



With the guides on a horseback you easily descend to the "flat land", to Nariin Ovuur. If he could, Zorigo will not miss a chance to "come down" to spend the last evening with you, or just to take a trip to Tsagaan Nuur to refuel. Overnight stay in tents.



Day 13. A few hours on a horse back that will pass very quickly, before arriving at Tsagaan Nuur. Way to the guest house of Lagva, to wash up and cool off a little bit.



Tsagaan Nuur - The view from the guest house

Then transfer by a car to Ulan Uul.
Installation in a yurt or a wooden cabin of Oyuna.
With another eye you will enjoy this peaceful scenery ...



River at Ulaan uul

Day 14. Ulaan Uul - Moron

Long day of hiking, offset by the beauty of the place before a return to "civilization".

Moron, head of the department of Khuvsgul, a village in the middle of a wide valley surrounded by mountains.

Checking in into a the hotel and a shower, an almost unexpected shower!



Ovoo - the passage of large collar

Day 15. In the morning – walk to the local market where you can buy or sell almost everything..

In the afternoon, local flight Moron - Ulan Baator

Reception at the airport by our staff and settling in at the guest house.

Evening with our team dinner / concert.



Jour 16. Morning leave to the airport- international flight

Pricing and presentation:

The price per person is € / person for this proposal.

The price includes:

- All public transport vehicles. (Driver, fuel and a 4x4 car)
- The domestic flight Arrival / Back Ulaanbaatar / Moron / Ulaanbaatar
- All accommodation, hotel, guest house, camps and nights in tpees.
- Camping and cooking equipment.
- Food and beverages (tea, coffee, and water)
- Activities in horse treks and of course reindeer and specialized Mongolian guides.
- A French interpreter for the duration of the stay.
- The permission for boundary
- The performance of traditional Mongolian music and dance

Does not include:

International flights

- The Mongolian visa (but we provide the necessary invitation upon request)
- The personal consumptions
- In general, anything that is not mentioned in "the price includes ".