

MONGOLIA

Snow Leopards of the Altai Mountains

Best Time: August – October & March - April

With Machiel Valkenburg as leader

Khustain Nuruu NP extension for Przewalski's Horse

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August 00, Days 1: To Ulaanbaatar

The tour starts with an international flight from Europe/USA taking you to the capital of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar. If you like to come in earlier please contact the RBT office this will gladly help you with extra hotel arrangements.

NIGHT: Day 1, on aircraft.

August 00, Day 2: Arrival Ulaanbaatar

Arrival in Ulaanbaatar is followed by a transfer to the hotel to relax from the long travel, or optional is a sight-seeing tour in this ancient capitol. The first birds in the local parks are Azure Tit, White-cheeked Starling and Long-tailed Rosefinch.

NIGHT: Comfortable tourist hotel, Ulaanbaatar.

August 00, Day 3: Domestic flight to Ulaangom

Throughout the day we will transfer to the Ulaanbatoor airport and board our domestic flight to Ulaangom in western Mongolia. We will explore the city on foot in the hope of finding the first birds like Black-eared Kite, Brown Accentor and Pacific Swift. In the afternoon we plan a meeting about the upcoming Snow Leopard expedition.

NIGHT: Comfortable tourist hotel, Ulaangom.

August 00, Day 4: Transfer to Uureg Lake

We depart early morning by sturdy local jeeps to the Uureg Lak region, from where we will explore the valleys for Snow Leopard. Along the way we will be birding en-route and hoping to find such gems like Mongolian Ground-Jay, Steppe Eagle and Hill Pigeons. In the afternoon we arrive in our camping site where we will settle in to our traditional Ger camp. Throughout our stay this will be our base from where we explore the nearby mountains for the enigmatic Snow Leopard!

NIGHT: Basic Ger camp near Uureg Lake.

August 00 – September 00, Day 5 - 12: The quest for the Snow Leopard

Over the coming nine days we will be exploring and checking the nearby foothills and mountains together with a group of experienced local trackers and researchers involved in the Snow Leopard project. Over the many years of researching this majestic animal our trackers have developed an instinct for the movements of this large cat. To most points in the tour we can drive by car but sometimes we will need to walk for several

website www.rubythroatbirdingtours.com ° contact machiel@rubythroatbirdingtours.com

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kilometers on high altitude over mostly flat terrain, however as always with nature, we might need to climb up a hill side asking some physical effort for a short period of time. Due to the experienced trackers and their unrivalled knowledge of the terrain we have a very good chance on finding a Snow Leopard, however this is unfortunately not guaranteed!

Wherever we go there will always be something interesting to entertain us. This tour is also very suitable for the photographers amongst us due to the great Mongolian lights and time available you will be able to wonder on several occasions and do your own photography works. In the higher mountainous areas the Altai Snowcock occurs commonly together with the gorgeous Güldenstädt's Redstart. Here we also always keep on eye on the sky to check for patrolling Lammergeyer and Cinereous Vulture. Along the nearby lake the birding is excellent with large groups of waterfowl and hopefully some groups of Whooper Swan and Swan Goose will be amongst them while overhead Pallas's Gull show themselves wonderfully. In the famous Mongolian steppes, we find Upland Buzzard, Saker Falcon, Desert Wheatear and Pallas's Sandgrouse.

The avifauna is excellent but the mammalian world is represented as well in good numbers. Along with the main target Snow Leopard their main food source Argali will be seen, this is the largest sheep occurring in the region. In the high mountain slopes we will find Ibex while in the lower areas Siberian Marmots are calling. During the evening we will make excursions around our camp in the hope to find the interesting Northern Three-toed Jerboa. Another large predator roams the steppes, packs of Wolf are seen in the early mornings and sometimes heard howling in the evening. More steppe species occurring in the vicinity of our camp are the weird Saiga Antelope and Goitered Gazelle.

All by all these days will be amazing and mesmerizing with loads of great wildlife sightings. We dare to mention they are a guarantee for great memories of a once in a lifetime trip!

NIGHT: Basic Ger camp near Uureg Lake.

September 00, Day 13: Depart for Ulaangom & flight to Ulaanbaatar

Today that long travel back to Europe starts, we will transfer to Ulaangom and board our domestic flight to Ulaanbaatar. We expect to arrive in the afternoon after which we immediately set sails for our tourist hotel in the center of the city. We follow up with a lovely final dinner in a good local restaurant.

NIGHT: Comfortable tourist hotel, Ulaanbaatar

September 00, Day 14: Ulaanbaatar to home.

In the morning we depart for the Ulaanbaatar airport where we say goodbye to each other and from where all will fly home.

****EXTENSION****

September 00 - 00, Day 14 - 16: Khustain Nuruu NP

After enjoying our breakfast we head on the road again and drive within around 2 hours to the Hustai Nuruu National Park. The NP is the home of the once nearly extinct Przewalski's Horse, an intensive reintroduction program rescued the species. Along with the horses also Mongolian Gazelles will be a target and we have good changes on coming across good numbers of these attractive mammals. On the vast grasslands Siberian Marmots and Long-tailed Susslick are stacking up their winter reserve before the hard Mongolian winter enters!

As migration is in full swing we expect to see some good birds as well like Brown Flycatcher, Lesser Whitethroat, Pintail Snipe and the resident Mongolian Larks will be for many the stars of the list. In the nearby bushes near the lodge we search for Red-tailed Shrike and Asian Grey Shrike while Pacific Swifts and Steppe Eagles come overhead.

In day 16 we do our final birding and mammal watching in the reserve and transfer in the afternoon back to Ulaanbaatar.

NIGHT 00 & 00 September: Basic lodges near the park, Khustain
NIGHT 00 September: Comfortable tourist hotel, Ulaanbaatar

September 00, Day 17: Ulaanbaatar to home

In the morning we depart for the Ulaanbaatar airport where we say goodbye to each other and from where all will fly home.

**** The tour schedule depends closely on weather conditions, which may change the itinerary listed. If so, the itinerary will be altered, with all of the special regions still being visited.**