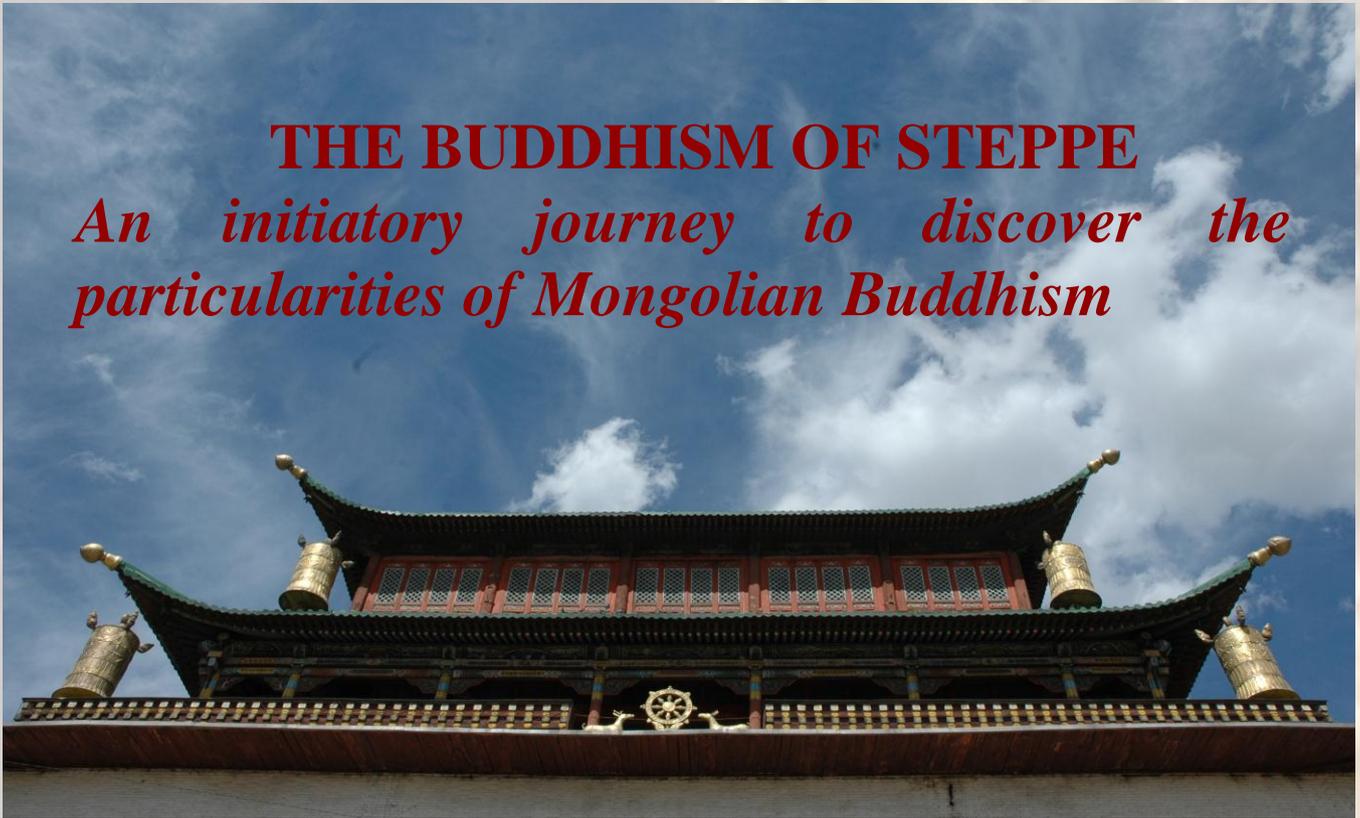


THE BUDDHISM OF STEPPE

An initiatory journey to discover the particularities of Mongolian Buddhism



Situated in the heart of steppes, you will be guided by a young Lama, who will guide to the discovery of Mongolia Buddhism: how was it born, what is its history, how this religion lives today?

Myagmarsuren will be together with you all along this trek and will explain to you his way of living and his ebullience in the countries, social, economic and politic issues.

Many cult places were destroyed under the communism during the repressions again intellectuals and religion in the 1930s. But since the beginning of 1990ies Buddhism, which was never completely removed, has a chance to be born again. More than 90% of Mongolians call themselves Buddhists and the temples are visited every day.

Along your way you will meet some Lamas who practice traditional medicine, Lamas painter, scientists, young and older Buddhists who will bring their own way of living.

This journey also brings you to the heart of Mongolia to meet the nomad animal breeders. Ancient beliefs and Buddhism have melted together to better adopt in these large areas, where the life depends so much from the nature and the spiritual conviction...



Day 1: Arrival with an international flight

Settling in a hotel

Meeting with your guide and a visit of the city.



Oulan Bator was founded on the banks of river Tuul, previously known as Urga, in the honour of the son of well known a Mongolian lord. The name of Ulaan baatar (the red hero) was given to the capital at the time of the proclamation of People's Republic of Mongolia. The streets of the capital are bustling in the summer time and intriguing in the night time. The city is divided in several districts which present large diversities and there are even yurts in the very centre of the city.

The development of Ulan Bator is surprising and you will find there all the conveniences of a modern city.



Day 2: UB – Manzushir – Eejiin Khaad – Öndör Döv

We will visit Manzushir – a temple made to spread the religion, built in honour of Manjusri, bodhisattva of wisdom.

Manjusri is considered as the patron of Manchuria.

His name has an origin of its people and the name of the monastery.

At a side of a hill, surrounded by larches of Siberia, the monastery consists from more than 17 temples.



Many historical events have taken place on this site, in particular a famous battle between Manchurians and Mongols in 1696. In 1921, the monastery served as a refuge to Bogd Gegeen.

Afterwards we will continue the road to the sanctuary of 'Eejin khad, 25 from the monastery. Here we are going to discover popular beliefs that were forbidden during the period of communism as a religious practice. People's beliefs melt together with symbols of Buddhism by creating the characteristics of Mongolian Buddhism.

Night in a yurt camp (Öndör Döv)

Day 3: Öndör Döv – Zorgol Khaïrkhan – Lake Sangiin Dalai

Going down to Gobi, passing the granitic mountains of Zorgol Khaïrkhan (1686m). The sceneries change, the mountains transform into steppes and into plain dried – up deserts. We reach the lake Sangiin Dalai, where many birds do a stopover while migrating. In the middle of the lake, there is a little island with the ruins of the Khökh Burd, built in 10th century.

The poet, writer, painter, physician and philosopher Danzanvarjaa (1803 – 1856) who also was a figure of the development of Buddhism, chose this island like a decoration for his representations of theatre pieces.

Night in a yurt camp in Sangiin Dalai.



Day 4: Sangiin Dalai – Monastery of Ongi

We will move deeper into the Gobi desert to the Ongi river, to the extreme West of the Dundgobi province. On it's shores there is located the ancient monastery of Ognii. The volcanic environment is always a bear witness of the ancient blasts.

We will discover the two rested temples and their history.
Night in an Ongi camp



Day 5: Ongi – canyons of Oosh – Sources of Mogoit – Natural Park of 8 lakes

We will cross the province of Övörkhangaï to get to the forest and enjoy its freshness. A long day passing the canyons of Oosh, impressive bottoms of oceans that have disappeared nowadays.

We will visit the beautiful chain of 8 lakes in the massive of Khangai, where we will share a bit of a daily life with our nomad hosts. It will also be a good chance to find out more about the actual religious vision of the animal breeders.

Night in a yurt camp



Day 6: Park of 8 lakes – Valley of Orkhon

We will pass the mountains that separate us from the famous valley of Orkhon, a place that many tribes chose as a favourable place of gathering, trade, agriculture and warfare...



Day 7: Valley of Orkhon – Monastery of Tövkhön – Tsenkher

We will pass the bustle canyons of the river, called Öörtiin Tokhoj, all the way to the waterfalls.

Afterwards, the way to the monastery of Tövkhön, placed on a side of a hill. The monastery includes 14 temples of whom the very first was built by Zanabazar, the first Bogd Gegeen of Mongolia. This hermit served him as a refuge far away from the throes of the court. Over there he found his inspiration for his artistic creations and used the surrounding caves for some meditation.

We will get back to the vehicles to reach the Tsenkher hot water sources where we will also spend the rest of the night. Overnight stay in a yurt camp.

Day 8: Tsenkher – Tsetserleg – Battsengel – Lake Ogii

Departure to the centre of the province Arkhangai: Tsetserleg.

A green town not far from the sacred mountain of Bulgan. Tsetserleg means “garden”. The city was built in 1616 all around numerous monasteries. We will visit an interesting Zaya Pandita temple- museum which hides the treasures of Mongolian history.



A road through a small town called Battsengel. A visit of Dungguin monastery which has a pure Tibetan architecture, and which shelters the ancient tangkas (religious paintings).

Then, road all the way to lake Ogii, where we will spend the rest of the night. Overnight stay in a yurt camp.

Day 9: Lake Ogii – Monuments of Kul-Tegin – Fortress of Khar Balgas – Kharkhorin

Diving into the Turkish period- Ouigour, we will reach the site of

Khöshöö Tsaïdam and its two monoliths created in 7th-8th centuries. The oldest traces of Turkish literature, its writings reveal the history of prince Kul-Tegin and his brother Bilge-Khagan.

Steles, burial buttes, alignments of standing stones... Many testifies of the ancient rituals.

After that we will go deeper in the past all the way to the ruins of the fortress of Khar Balgas. Founded in 715, the place is full of culture (architecture, agriculture, writings...) of this civilisation.

In the afternoon we will arrive in Kharkhorin- the actual city which is located a few kilometres from the old capital founded by Genghis Khan in 1220. An agricultural, political and trade centre- the city of Karakorum existed for 140 years and was totally destroyed by the Ming dynasty in 1380.



A visit of Erdene Zuu monastery, one of three most important and most visited monasteries of the country. Its founder Avtai Khan, was also an initiator of the Buddhist religion development in Mongolia.

Night in a yurt camp.

Day10: Kharkhorin – Monastery of Shankh – Sand dunes of the small Gobi

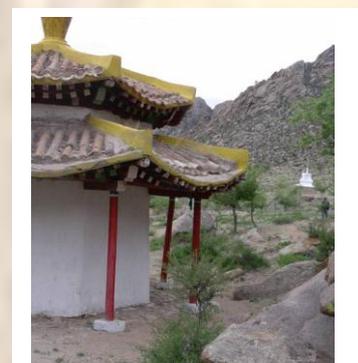
We will leave the city and head to the monastery of Shankh, one of the oldest in Mongolia. It took a while for the monastery to find its actual place as it is right now. The main temple is renovated and every morning there are some monks officiating.

We will reach cordon of dunes of Mongol Els, which stretches for 80 kilometres. It is also a place where we will spend the night.

Overnight stay in a yurt camp.

Day 11: Sand dunes – Khogno Khan – National Park of Khustain Nuruu

A natural reserve at the foot of dunes Khogno Khan is made from rocks and granite which shelters the ruins of a monastery dating from 16th century. The relicts were renovated and the two temples are functioning.





After that, a road all the way to the National Park of Khustain Nuruu, founded in 1992 connected with the programmes of reintroduction of savage horses of Przewaski, called *Takhi* in Mongolian. They disappeared due to the large amount of hunting and very tight competition for areas of pasture. Several breeds of them have survived only in the zoos.

Today many countries, including France, take part in the reintroduction of some horses native to the plains of Central Asia.

Overnight stay in a yurt camp close to the National Park.

Day 13: National Park of Khustain Nuruu – UB

Visit of the park in appropriate time to have a chance to see the horses, who come down to the valleys in the night time, but climb back to the hills after breakfast time.



Return to the capital, Oulan Bator.

Dinner in the city.

Night in a hotel.

Day 14: A day in UB

Visit of the Grand Market, a chance to grab some souvenirs.

Performance in the evening.

Night in a hotel

Day 15: Return.



Prices & logistics :

Group: minimum of 3 and maximum of 8 people

Activities: Off road transport, discovery of Buddhism in Mongolia through visits of monasteries, meetings with representatives of religion and nomads, discovery of different ecosystems of the country.

Prce: From 1....€/client/15 days
For a group of 5 people

Price includes:

- Driver and transport
- Petrol for all the journey
- Lama Guide English translator
- Cook for a group of 4 people or more
- Logistics and transfers
- Night in a hotel in Oulan Bator
- Night in a yurt camp in steppe
- Two nights in the yurts of hosts
- Restaurant & meals
- Visit of museums, entrance of parks and reserves

Price does not include:

- Personal spending and purchases
- International ticket and airport taxes
- Additional group of 2 people

Additional simple hotel room in Oulan Bator

... €/person for 5 nights