

The legend of Kazakh Eagle hunting



The legendary image of an eagle taking down a wolf...

Here in the far west of Mongolia, Kazakh land, this culture, this myth, this symbiosis between the eagle and the man is an every day reality.

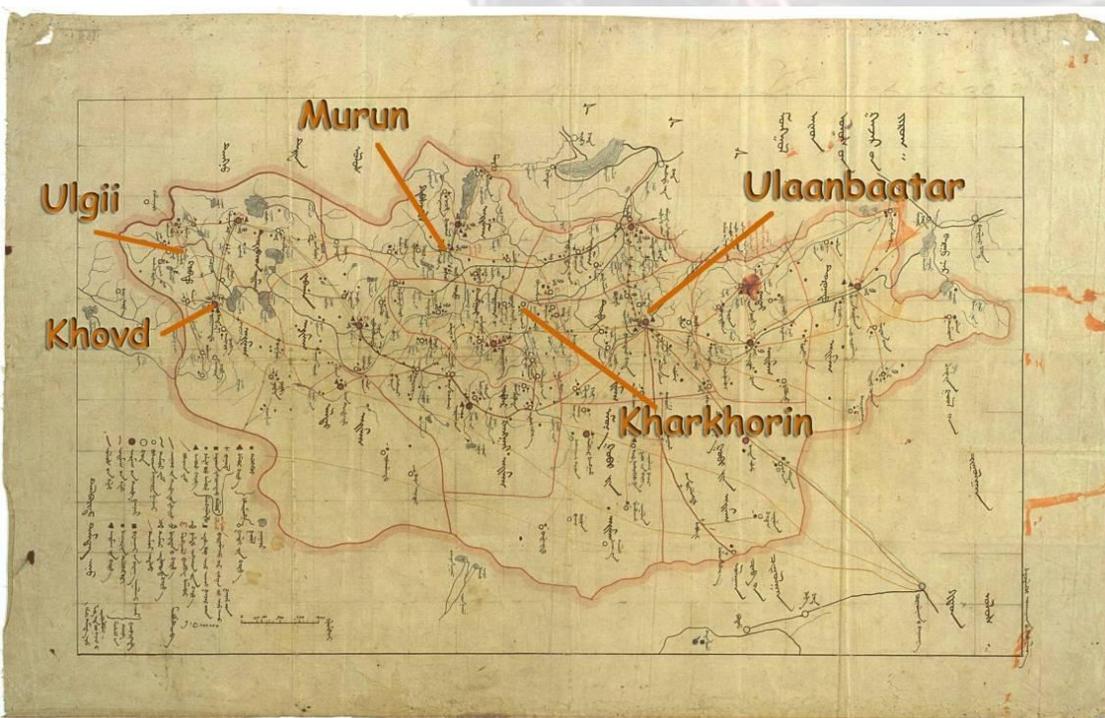
Kazakh culture is turned fully towards the eagles, the Burguitchins as they are called are the lords of the dry valleys of the foothills of Mongolian Altai.

Riding alone or in teams, they are the pride of the local people.



At the border between China and Russia, a few tens of kilometres of Kazakhstan, is the western Mongolia, populated by several ethnic groups- Khalga, Tuvas and Kazakhs as the most representative. Bayan Ulgii makes a crossroad of culture that gives this region a rather special appeal, but still unrecognized and preserved by its remoteness from the capital.

The most important culture is the Kazakh culture; dating from Kazakhstan in the late 17th century, the Kazakhs live in this semi desert area and have developed a unique culture- a mix between Kazakh and Mongolian culture and created a particularly strong identity and a sense of welcome marked by the kindness which is added as permanent delight.



It is in this harsh and savage land where the Kazakhs practice and perpetuate the cult of the eagle the eagle hunting. The eagle hunting has been practiced in Mongolia for centuries, it is even said that Chinggis Khan trained more than 100 eagles for his hunting. Today the Kazakh people of the west are the only ones who perpetrate this practice whose origins are lost in the mists of time. The Burgitchin, hunters, but also trainers, live in close relationship with their eagle, a symbiosis with the animal, respect and submission and not really knowing who actually submits to the other...



The eagle hunting.

The eagle hunting is a very ancient tradition of the rider tribes. The hunter must be able to move quickly with his eagle and climb very high, he must also be willing to help his eagle if necessary and only the horse can give the speed and flexibility of movement. The Kazakh people settled here in the late 17th century in the far West of Mongolia and this traditional hunt is still continuing until this very day.

The eaglets are captured in the nest, usually in the summer time.

The hunter marks in the spring time an eagle's nest and waits until the eaglet is mature enough to take off.



The capture of an eaglet is part of the tradition and remains a highlight of the relationship between the hunter and his eagle.

The broods are usually of 2 eaglets and often only one of them survives; hunters try to capture the eaglet at the moment when they are still two together in the nest, rather choosing a female which are known to be more aggressive than males. Brought back to the camp, the eagle is hooded and put down on a perch not allowing him to fall sleep, in order to make him lose his bearings and also to fight his resistance.



The eaglet is fed in the same way his parents do it, which should reassure and reduce the stress from the capture, so that the assimilation is made gently and the relationship between the hunter and the eaglet begins to establish.



During the following month, the trainer lets the eagle fly towards some pieces of meat placed a few meters away, while the eagle is pulled by a tether. The usage of the tether is necessary until the eagle learns return by itself to his trainer. The trainer spends the biggest part of the day to maintain connection with his eagle, feed it, train it to hunt, give him more and more freedom; for the rest of the time, the eagle is placed in a quite dark place to maintain the maximum from its sight.



Also there are the cabins and yurts of Kazakh families, especially for the eagle, to provide to it the most tranquillity possible and sometimes an entire yurt is made for an eagle, and it is common that one family owns several eagles. The training lasts several months, before the eagle has enough experience do go for his first hunt.

Then the young eagles are dropped in for a small quarry- very often rabbits or hares, but later also the foxes.

In late summer and in autumn, the hunter, refines his training to know that the eagle is ready for his first time hunting.

In Ulgii, the eagle hunting is practiced from October to late February, when the eagle is in full plumage, the hunt is also of a better quality. The first hunt for an eagle is a very important moment in the Kazakh life and culture.

The Burguitchins go on a horseback, holding the eagle on their fist. They head to a point from where the raptor is able overlook the whole valley. The Eagles remain hooded until the beginning of the hunting. In the bottom of the valley, the beaters hit on their coats, make noise to drive out from the cover foxes and hares.



The hunter then removes the cap that prevents the eagle from seeing, within some seconds his sight adapts to the light and he took all his acquittal. The hunter keeps his eagle by a small line attached to its leg, to prevent it from flying off when he first sees the quarry. Then the eagle is "launched" on its quarry. The eagle soars and then goes down to bite the animal, its speed can reach even 150km / h.



Just before the impact, the eagle straightens out to slow down his flight, he grabs its quarry to the base of the neck, paralyzing it with the tips of his talons carrying a pressure of more than one hundred kilos per square centimetre. The talons then penetrate into the vertebrate and into the rib cage of the quarry; the killing bite is usually coming from the powerful beak of the bird. The hunter must then go down the hill as fast as possible to retrieve the quarry, and reward his eagle with a piece of meat, before the animal is not damaged too much.



The Kazakh keep only seven or eight hunting eagles and also give them a freedom so than they can reproduce. Once the eagle has visited wildlife, burguichins return straight into the mountains, find another eaglet and repeat these ancestral traditions, thus perpetuating this knowledge so can be they then send to their sons.



The eagle chasing a wolf

A myth, legend or reality ...

Many stories and ancient manuscripts, talk about this kind of hunt, the supreme hunting where the lord of heaven is chasing the lord of the terrace steppes. This type of hunting was generally practiced in the vast plains of Asia, where hunters could follow the animal on a back of a horse to weaken it during the race, before the Eagles are thrown at him.

It was a time when the risk of losing an eagle did not matter

A time when the fur of a wolf was valuable for making clothes that were needed to cope with the winter cold, this also meant the survival of the tribe.

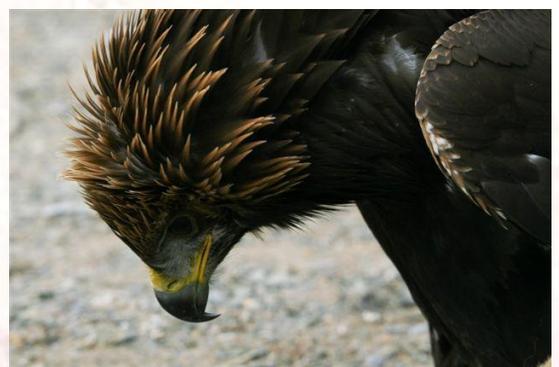


Today, the Burguichins Kazakhs don't hunt wolves as much as before, but practice their art on other animals, mainly on foxes and hares.

The hunting of the Lord of the steppes requests to have a very powerful eagle, aggressive enough, and especially with a huge experience.

The wolf is powerful in battle, although the eagle takes the dice over the impact it is likely to be injured and even minor injury to the leg, in a greenhouse or a tendon will make the eagle unable to hunt later.

Even this is a practice lasting for ages, hunters still are very careful when going it, hunting wolves with two eagles, or choosing a young wolf knowing that a reel will intervene quickly enough to kill the eagles and wolf to avoid any kind of injury of the raptor.



Your stay.

The hunts take place after the first snow, so your stay there will be in the winter time at the foothills of the Altai.

Incredibly beautiful landscapes, but also a bitter cold and biting, and even if the air is quite dry, making the cold less biting, you are expected to get used to low temperatures.

It is also advisable to know how to ride a horse, even though it is not an extreme must.



Accommodation will be only local in families, leaving a very little chance for any privacy.

But also leaving unforgettable memories, moments of exchange, sharing and unique discoveries.



The purpose of this trip surely is to help you discover and participate in the hunt with an eagle, but also to offer an immersion into the world of Kazakh Burguichins of Mongolia.

The permanent kindness and cheerfulness of your Kazakh hosts, will offer you some very special moments, that you will have to know feel and enjoy

In Bayan Ulgii, winter is tough and aggressive but no doubt in yurts or in the cob house, the warm hospitality of Kazakh people will refresh the traveller who will appreciate the intensity of great moments.



Day 1: Reception at the airport.

Transfer to hotel in Ulaanbaatar. Visit of the city and the great Gandan monastery. There are seven main Ulaanbaatar monasteries and several temples and palaces, from which the most visited are Gandan and the Bogd Khaan, or Winter Palace, whose construction began in 1890.

Ulan Bator is built on the banks of the Tuul River, previously called Urga, in honor of the son of a Mongolian nobleman. The name of Ulan

Bator was given to the capital of Mongolia, during the revolution of 1921. 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 more bustling in the summer time than in winter but there reigns a constant agitation, including late at night. 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,



Meeting with our team

Day 2 : Local flight to Ulgii, capital of the aimag (province) of Bayan Ulgii.

Ulgii aimag Bayan is the most Western part of the country, bordering with China and Russia; it is a Kazakh territory with 80% of the population while the rest of the country, represents only 5%.

At the foot of the Altai also live another minority of the country, it is the Tuvas, and Turkic-speaking shamanistic ethnic group, that consists of fewer than 2,000 people. It is the most mountainous part and the fringe of the steppes, deserts and hills that border the Altai massif is narrow.

Ulgii is a city founded in 1921, where you can find just about anything, shops, banks, hotel and guest house, theatre, a beautiful museum with Kazakh culture, a temple and a mosque, of course, the Kazakhs that are Muslims.

The best known expression of the Kazakh culture certainly is the eagle hunting.



A little bit more than 4 hour flight to cross 1700 kilometres and go from one side of the country to an other, beautiful and varied sceneries going from green expanses to sandy deserts.

Arrive at Ulgii in early morning; Kaderbeck will be there to welcome you. Breakfast, then a visit of the area the city, the countryside together with Kaderbeck,...

Ulgii is a surprising city, planted along the river, a city of another "age". Since the landing on the dirt track, we feel that there is another life in here....



City tour and overnight stay with Kaderbeck



Day 3 : Departure to Sagsai.

Sagsai is a small village lost in the middle of immensities.

It is not far from the hamlet where lies the yurt Amarbeck, a Kazakh eagle trainer.



Meeting the culture from the depths of ages.

Only the hunter takes care of the eagle, he is the one who feeds him, and under the yurt everybody sees the connection between the two partners.



Day 4: Departure to Ulaan Khuus.

Ulaan Khuus is another sum, or village in Mongolian, also lost between valleys and rivers.

You will be welcomed in the typical house of Murat.

In this region where trees are very rare, people have developed a technique to build their bricks, "blocks" as they call them, and build their homes using these "blocks" and some logs.



Murat is also a Burguitchin, like his father, his grandfather and the grandfather of his grandfather he was born Burguitchin.

Accompanied by Murat you can see this complicity, this symbiosis between man and his eagle.

But a man stays very proud of this heritage and will reveal only a part of itit depends on you to make Murat trust you and get to know some more secrets...



Evening with the family of Murat.

Day 5: Ulaan Khus - Preparation for hunting.

Meeting with the team of hunters and certainly few beaters, long discussions, talking, everyone must know what he has to do ... Then, the most import, "where to go?" "Because the quarry moves, valley changes from the waves of cold, prevailing winds ... the presence of predators.

It will take long hours of haggling before closing the preparations.

The evening will certainly be lulled by songs sung while having some Kazakh local dishes.



Overnight stay in a yurt, along with a part of the team ... your dreams will lead you safely into a gallop in the steppe ... with an eagle in a hand ... waiting for the wolves to be worn out enough to guide your eagle towards him



Day 6: Departure for the Hunt.

With the team of hunters you will be on the sector where the hunting is organized.

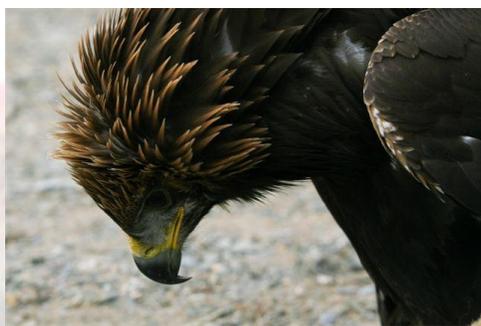
The hunts are conducted on a horseback, so that your Kazakh adventure will begin in a kind of a savage horde.



Day 7, 8, 9 & 10: Hunting with eagle

For this part, only Burguichins can have their say, it is them who organize the hunting, choose the right places, families in which to stay, etc. ...

It is indeed an authentic experience where hunters practice their art freely, so you'll need to adjust somehow to their wishes and the plan of your stay can not determine in advance because of various conditions - weather, quarry and other conditions that will be considered for these four days of our Kazakh adventure.



A unique and exclusive experience to live together with our friends of Kazakh Burguichins, your local guide and translator and your driver

In the midst of magnificent sceneries.

Moments and images that will stay in your memory ...

The eagles hunt hares, foxes, young wolves and antelopes, according to the current season.

The evening of "Day 10", returning to Ulaan Khus.

Festive evening to celebrate the end of this hunt hoping it will be successful.

Day 11: Back to Ulgii

It will certainly be a little hard to leave your hunter friends ...

Returning to Ulgii, back to civilization and what seemed to you to be the comfort zone.

Installation at Kaderbeck and local festivities for this last night in the Kazakh territory.



The Kazakhs have the sense of fun and you will only have to follow them into their world.

Day 12: Back to Ulaanbaatar.

Leaving early the airport and arrival in the capital in early afternoon with a time difference of one hour.

Checking in into your hotel and relaxing for the afternoon to give you some time to return back to reality.

Late afternoon meeting with your guide to go to dinner.

Day 13: Day at the capital.

Day for visits and souvenir purchases, passing through the local market - the lungs of the city.

Last night in Mongolia celebrated as it should.

Day 14 : International flight

Leaving early for the airport.

Price rate:

The price per person is..... € / person, based on 2 people.

3 people..... € / pers.

4 people..... € / pers.

5 people..... € / pers.

The price includes:

- All transportation in Mongolia.
- All accommodation, hotel and homestay nights.
- Your travel assistant and Kazakh translator.
- Food and beverages (tea, coffee and water)
- The horse activities, exploration of the eagle culture, and specialized Mongolian guides.
- All expenses related to the organization of hunting
- Driver + Fuel + 4X4 Russian vehicle in Ulgii
- Local flight UB / Ulgii / UB

