A Custom Journey to Mongolia

A Special Departure for the
International Crane Foundation

12 Days of Moderate Touring and Field Explorations
June 5-16, 2015
## Trip at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hotel, Location; Meals*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 5</td>
<td>› Afternoon and evening arrival flights; You will be met upon arrival and transferred to our hotel</td>
<td>Khan Palace Hotel, Ulaanbaatar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| June 6 | › Ulaanbaatar: Gandan Monastery, Chinggis Square, National Museum of Mongolia  
› Evening traditional music and welcome dinner | Khan Palace Hotel, Ulaanbaatar; B, L, D |
| June 7 | › Drive Tuul River and Dashinchilen Bayan Lake  
› Observations of cranes and other wetland species | Deluxe Tented Camp; B, L, D |
| June 8 | › Drive Altan Uul Raptor Sanctuary in Erdenesant | Deluxe Tented Camp; B, L, D |
| June 9 | › Drive to Khustain National Park  
› Przewalski’s Horses | Ger Camp; B, L, D |
| June 10| › Drive to Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve  
› Observations of cranes and other wetland species | Ger Camp; B, L, D |
| June 11| › Early morning departure for Khurkh River Valley Research Camp | Deluxe Tented Camp; B, L, D |
| June 12| › Full day explorations in Khurkh River Valley | Deluxe Tented Camp; B, L, D |
| June 13| › Drive to Binder  
› Community Crane Festival | Ger Camp; B, L, D |
| June 14| › Early morning departure to Ar Nuur, Kholboo Nuur and  
› Baldan Bereeven Monastery en route | Ger Camp; B, L, D |
| June 15| › Visit Khangal Lake and return to Ulaanbaatar;  
› Farewell dinner | Khan Palace Hotel, Ulaanbaatar; B, L, D |
| June 16| › Transfer to the airport for departure flights onwards | B |

*B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner
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.

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**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.

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**Getting There**

We recommend that you depart your home city for Mongolia two days before the start of your trip. Departing the U.S. you cross the International Dateline and arrive in Seoul or Beijing one day later. Depending on the flight schedule, an overnight may be required en route. Please note that international flights and en route hotel accommodations are not included in the land cost. Our full service air department will be happy to assist with these arrangements.
**Itinerary**

**Day 1: Friday, June 5**

**ARRIVE IN 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.

*Khan Palace Hotel (no meals)*

**Day 2: Saturday, June 6**

**EXPLORING ULAANBAATAR** 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 Tien'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.

*Khan Palace Hotel (B, L, D)*
**Day 3: Sunday, June 7**

**DRIVE TO TUUL RIVER AND DASHINCHILEN BAYAN LAKE** After breakfast, we will depart for the countryside and Dashinchilen Bayan Lake. En route we will make a short stop near a local town to watch White-naped Cranes and other waterfowl breeding in the Tuul River valley near Lun Sum. After this short stop we will drive to Dashinchilen Bayan Lake which is considered one of the most important bird areas in Mongolia. Although the lake is small in size, it has rich bird diversity and four to five pairs of White-naped Cranes nest here. This location is one of the westernmost breeding locations of White-naped Cranes. Tonight we will make our first camp on a hill with a beautiful view of the lake.

*Approximate time on the road: 4-5 hours*

Deluxe Tented Camp (B, L, D)

**Day 4: Monday, June 8**

**DRIVE TO ALTAN UUL RAPTOR SANCTUARY IN ERDENESANT** Today we will drive for about three hours to reach a local conservation area newly 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.

*Approximate time on the road: 2-3 hours*

Deluxe Tented Camp (B, L, D)

**Day 5: Tuesday, June 9**

**DRIVE TO KHUSTAIN NURUU NATIONAL PARK** After breakfast, we will head out for the two hour 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. The process began in 1992 with the help of the Dutch government and various environmental agencies. 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.

Approximate time on the road: 2 hours to the park and 1-3 hours within the park

Ger Camp (B, L, D)

Day 6: Wednesday, June 10

DRIVE TO GUN-GALUUT NATURE RESERVE 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.

Approximate time on the road: 4-5 hours

Ger Camp (B, L, D)

Day 7: Thursday, June 11

DRIVE TO KHURKH RIVER VALLEY This morning we will depart for the roughly five hour 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.

Approximate time on the road: 5 hours

Deluxe Tented Camp (B, L, D)

Day 8: Friday, June 12

KHURKH RIVER RESEARCH CAMP Today we will enjoy a full day to rest and explore the area surrounding our camp.

Deluxe Tented Camp (B, L, D)
Day 9: Saturday, June 13

DRIVE TO BINDER  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.

*Approximate time on the road: 1 hour*

Ger Camp (B, L, D)

Day 10: Sunday, June 14

DRIVE TO AR NUUR AND KHOLOBOO NUUR 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.

*Approximate time on the road: 4-5 hours*

Deluxe Tented Camp (B, L, D)

Day 11: Monday, June 15

KHANGAL LAKE AND RETURN TO ULAANBAATAR 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 Common 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.

Guests departing late this evening will be transferred to the airport after dinner.

*Approximate time on the road: 5-6 hours*

Khan Palace Hotel (B, L, D)

Day 12: Tuesday, June 16

DEPART ULAANBAATAR Today you will be transferred to the airport for your flights home.

(B)
Trip Dates and Pricing

TRAVEL DATES
June 5 - 16, 2015

LAND COST
(per person, based on double occupancy)
$6,400 per person (14–15 participants)
$6,850 per person (8–13 participants)

Single Supplement $640

DONATION TO INTERNATIONAL CRANE FOUNDATION
$1,500 per person

Included in Land Cost
• Services of International Crane Foundation Co-founder and Leader, George Archibald
• Services of Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia Naturalist, Nyambayar Batbayar
• Services of expert local guides, drivers, and full camping staff, including cooks and camp helpers
• All ground transportation (including airport transfers)
• Accommodations as noted
• All sightseeing, events, and visits as noted
• Meals as noted
• Bottled water on all transfers and sightseeing
• Beverages including soda, local beer, wine and other alcohol
• Gratuities for all trip leaders, guides, porters, bellboys, restaurant staff, camp staff, cooks and local assistants
• All group camping gear (walk-in tents, cots, chairs, tables etc.)
• Services of GeoEx in-house air reservations/support team
• Global Rescue membership (includes emergency medical evacuation and medical advisory services up to $300,000) and Trip Mate medical expense insurance (up to $50,000)

Not Included in Land Cost
• Round-trip airfare to/from GeoEx trip (USA/Ulaanbaatar/USA)
• En-route expenses to/from GeoEx trip
• Passport/visa fees, excess baggage fess, or departure taxes
• Meals not noted in the itinerary
• Personal expenses and incidentals
• Laundry and internet access
• Trip cancellation, travel delay or baggage insurance
• Charges incurred as a result of delays beyond the control of GeoEx
• Donation to International Crane Foundation (to be paid directly to ICF)
Currency Exchange Rates
GeoEx actively manages currency risks associated with a weakening US dollar. Unlike most other travel companies, we insulate our guests from exchange rate risk by locking in the trip cost at the time of booking. In other words, no currency supplements will be assessed should the dollar decline prior to your departure.

Tier Pricing
Our trip costs are determined by group size. (As you can imagine, we’re able to secure lower per-person rates with larger groups.) When you sign up for a trip, its highest cost will be noted on your initial invoice and then adjusted 30 days prior to your departure. If for any reason the group falls below the minimum number of guests, a small group surcharge may be applied. Please note that lecturers and ICF staff are not included in the guest count to determine per-person trip cost.

Single Supplements
We base our costs and accommodations on double occupancy. If you would like to be a single occupant in a 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.

Refunds for Unused Portions Of Trip
No refunds can be made for any accommodations, services, or features not taken. If cancellation occurs while the trip is in progress, there will be no refund for any unused portion.

International Air and En Route Stopovers
Our trip cost does not include transportation between your home city and the GeoEx trip (starting and ending in Ulaanbaatar). 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. Not only do we offer professional travel planning consultation, we’re available 24/7 for our guests—particularly helpful in the event of delayed or canceled flights. We’ll make every effort to secure the best possible fare and routing for you. (Unfortunately we cannot initiate frequent flyer bookings, but we are able to assist you with frequent flyer ticketing upgrades.) Reserving early is the key to securing the airlines, routings, seating, and departure times you desire.

Feel free to call us with questions about routings, fares, and even trip extensions—we’re happy to assist you with these arrangements as well. If you have pre- and post-trip extension plans, please notify us immediately.

If you are booking your own air travel, it is essential that you give us your flight schedule at least 60 days prior to your departure so that we may confirm your arrival and departure hotels.
Trip Details

Important Note on the Itinerary
While we endeavor to make the 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 with minimal advance notice. Trip itineraries are also subject to revision due to weather, road and trail conditions, government restrictions, and other factors beyond our control.

Trip Grade: Moderate 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 and cots. 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. You will want to bring your own towel and biodegradable soap. In each camp we will have a private tent set up for the bathroom.

If you prefer not to carry a sleeping bag from the U.S. to use on the camping portion of the itinerary, there are some bags available in Mongolia though these sleeping bags will not be of the same quality as those available in the U.S. While these bags are laundered regularly, you should still plan to bring along a cotton or silk sheet sack (sleeping bag liner) to slip inside the bag. Please contact GeoEx if you would like to rent a bag so we can have everything in place for your arrival. **Unless you have confirmed with our office to use one of our sleeping bags, you should plan on bringing your own.**

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 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.**

Pre-Departure Packet
After you sign up on the trip, a detailed packet of information on health and safety, travel documents, clothing, background information and suggested reading will be sent to you.
Visas
Visas are not required for U.S. citizens traveling to Mongolia or South Korea. Visas are required for Canadian passport holders and U.S. citizens who are transiting through China. Visa applications and instructions will be sent to participants in the pre-departure packet.

Your ICF Trip Leaders and Expert Guides
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.

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.

What Next?
If you have questions about this itinerary, other GeoEx trips, or the company in general, give us a call at 800-777-8183 between 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (PST). To reserve your spot on this trip, we ask for an initial deposit ($500 per person). When we receive your reservation form and deposit, we’ll confirm your space and send you a confirmation packet containing a detailed itinerary; visa applications; medical,
health and insurance information; clothing and equipment recommendations; a suggested reading list; and general information on the countries you’ll be visiting.

**About GeoEx®**
Since 1982 we’ve taken adventurous travelers to the ends of the earth. We’re proud that *Travel + Leisure* readers have consistently voted GeoEx one of the World’s Top Ten Tour Operators and that our travel planners regularly make the prestigious *Condé Nast Traveler* Top Travel Specialists list.

**Questions?**

Please call us at 800-777-8183 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (PST)