



Mass Audubon Tours  
*supporting conservation here and abroad*

## **Mongolia:**

# **Great Lakes and Gobi**



May 21-June 8, 2007  
*with Chris Leahy*



Travel with the Massachusetts Audubon Society  
208 South Great Road, Lincoln, MA 01773  
800-289-9504

# Mongolia: Great Lakes and Gobi

May 21-June 8, 2007

## Itinerary

### *Summary*

*The trip is divided into several major segments of various lengths that will give us a thorough introduction to Mongolia's spectacular landscapes and wildlife.*

*In our first leg we will explore a national park only hours from Ulaan Baatar, which protects one of the best undisturbed tracts of rich Central Asian steppe left on the planet. The reserve is rich in resident birdlife including near endemics like Mongolian Lark and many raptors as well as such possibilities as Great Bustard. The supreme highlight here is the opportunity to see family groups of wild Takhis (Przewalski's Horses) living in their native habitat. The wildflowers here are varied and often profuse.*

*The "heart" of the trip, as it were, is an exploration of the Great Lakes Depression in far western Mongolia. Here we will travel across country camping next to a number of lakes all set in impressive landscapes within the Turgen mountain range. In addition to sampling the birdlife of the lakes (in many cases only partially documented) we will also explore remote mountain valleys, home to wilderness indicator species such as Lammergeiers (which we have an excellent chance of seeing well) and Snow Leopards (which are far more likely to see us than we them). We hope to explore the beautiful Khor-us Nuur lake in part by boat.*

*The grand finale will be a sojourn in the Gobi which will combine the relative comfort of a desert lodge and day trips to the famous dinosaur bone yard known as the Flaming Cliffs with a final adventure exploring the so-called Hurmengyn (or trans-Altai) Gobi home to the region's rarest endemic species, where few visitors have ventured. Between these segments we will return to the (relative) civilization of Ulaan Baatar, which has its own unique charms.*

**Please Note:** This trip is not for everyone. There will be many long drives over bad (or non-existent) roads and we will plan our daily activities as the realities of weather, wildlife and unexpected opportunities dictate. We will sleep mainly in traditional Mongolian gers (yurts) and in western tents. Weather is likely to be "continental", i.e. hot, cold, wet, and dry – not necessarily in that order. These are the prices we pay for being among the few western visitors one of the world's most interesting and beautiful places. A more detailed description of travel conditions is given in our trip preparation guide.

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### Daily Itinerary

**Day 1, May 21.** Arrive Beijing. Tiananmen and Forbidden City as time allows either this afternoon or tomorrow morning. Overnight at Great Wall Sheraton.

**Day 2, May 22.** Beijing to Ulaan Baatar (U.B). City sightseeing – and perhaps a spot of birding - as time allows. Overnight U.B. Hotel.

**Day 3, May 23.** Drive UlaanBaatar. to Hustai.

We will start the day visiting Gandan Monastery and National (or Natural) History Museum. After lunch, we will drive to Hustai National Park with an afternoon excursion to look for Takhi. We will take some

time to get an overview of the project and park in interpretive center. Today we will begin to get a feel for the great rolling expanses of the Mongolian steppe and keep watch for wildlife such as Red-footed (Amur) Falcons, graceful Demoiselle Cranes and comical Bobak Marmots. Dinner and overnight at Hustai ger camp.

**Day 4, May 24. Hustai and Return to Ulaan Baatar** Full morning exploring Hustai with park staff. The park contains a wide variety of habitats including flood plain copses and sand dunes as well as steppe. Because the marmot population is protected here, we have an excellent chance to see exciting raptors such as Saker Falcon, Steppe, Golden and other eagles, Upland Buzzard and the immense Cinereous Vulture. We will enjoy our lunch within the park, then return to U.B. for some shopping or an optional trip to gravel ponds for birding. Dinner and overnight in U.B.

**Day 5, May 25. Fly Ulaan Baatar to Ulan Gom (2hrs., 45 mins.)**. Drive to campsite on the shore of Uvs Lake and spend the afternoon exploring part of the lakeshore. Uvs is Mongolia's largest lake in terms of surface area, but is relatively shallow, five times saltier than the ocean and without an outlet. This makes it immensely attractive to a wide variety of nesting and migratory waterbirds. Here, and at the other lake we will visit, we can expect to see many of Eurasia's waterfowl and shorebird species including such often hard to see species as Red-crested Pochard, Pallas' Gull and Broad-billed Sandpiper. Overnight in lakeside campsite.

**Day 6, May 26. Uvs to Uureg Lake**. Further exploration of Uvs lakeshore in AM then drive to Uureg Lake, birding en route. Uureg Nuur is a freshwater lake lying at about 4500 feet above sea level and surrounded by high peaks over 10,000 feet and makes a different impression than Uvs. We will explore the lakeshore and surrounding uplands during whatever remains of the day. Overnight in camp overlooking lake.

**Day 7, May 27. Uureg Nuur to Khovd Sum in Uvs Aimag**. Today we will travel through the Turgen Mountains, exploring habitats and landscape features as weather and road conditions permit. This whole region of the Mongolian Great Lakes encompasses all of the major ecosystems found in Central Asia and as such has been selected as one of only 10 study sites in the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme for global climate change research. This ecodiversity will be most evident today as we encounter, in sequence: alpine tundra, freshwater reed beds, deserts with striking rock formations and flood plain forest. We may also have the opportunity to visit with the Kazakh people who live near Achiit Lake. Overnight in ger camp.



**Days 8 & 9, May 28 & 29. Khovd Sum Region**. We will spend the next two days exploring high valleys, lakes (Schaazgai Lake), and flood plain forest and visiting nomads in this area. One full day will be spent in a spectacular high valley where Snow Leopards were filmed not long ago (not that we're likely to see them!). In addition to the breath taking scenery, we have a good chance of seeing alpine species such as Argali big-horned sheep, Asian Ibex, Lammergeiers and other high altitude bird specialties as well as

mountain wildflowers. There are also lots of ancient stone circles and burial mounds in the area. In the small, mineral-rich Schaazgai (Magpie!) Lake which sometime abounds in waterfowl such as Bar-headed Geese and myriads of godwits, Ruffs and other shorebirds. We can also hope to find a variety of songbird migrants in the nearby poplar woods. Overnights in ger camp near the small provincial administrative center of Khovd.

**Day 10, May 30. Khovd Sum to Khar-Us Nuur.** Drive to Khar-Us Nuur, stopping briefly at Olgii Lake and elsewhere as time allows. This is largely a travel day, traversing more ever-changing landscapes, but we will stop as we encounter irresistible photo opportunities, interesting wildlife or to visit with local nomads. Begin exploration of Khar-Us Nuur in the afternoon as time allows. Overnight in ger camp.

**Day 11 & 12, May 31-June 1. Khar-Us Nuur National Park.** Khar-Us Nuur (Black Water Lake) is the second largest lake in Mongolia (15,800 square kilometers) and like the Uvs is a salt lake. It is set in a mountain and desert landscape. We hope to spend at least one full morning exploring the lake by boat with special focus on finding Dalmatian Pelicans, White-headed Ducks and the other waterbirds specialties that abound within this national park, but this will depend on weather conditions during our visit. Another morning might focus on a search for the excessively rare Mongolian form of Saiga Antelope which some authorities believe is a distinct species, but this too will depend on practical considerations. It is an extraordinarily rich area however with many options to explore and no possibility of being bored! Overnight in campsites.

**Day 13, June 2. Fly Khovd City to Ulaan Baatar.** Today is a travel day with the afternoon at leisure with sightseeing, shopping and birding options in both Khovd City - the capital of Khovd aimag (province) not to be confused with the sum (town) where we stayed a few nights ago – or Ulaan Baatar depending on flight schedules. Overnight in U.B. Hotel.

**Day 14, June 3. U.B. to Gobi.** Today fly to Dalanzadgad the Gobi region then transfer from airstrip to the comfortable Three Camel Lodge near Gurvansaikhan (“three beauties”) National Park. This new lodge and ger camp is situated near many of the Gobi’s most interesting areas. In the afternoon, we will have an excursion to Bayan Zag (Flaming Cliffs), site of Roy Chapman Andrews’ famous discovery of dinosaur eggs and of many other important paleontological finds since. We will enjoy a ride on Bactrian camels (more comfortable than Dromedaries) and a dinner al fresco as we watch the setting sun light up the red sandstone cliffs (weather permitting of course). Return to lodge for overnight.

**Day 15 –17, June 4-6. Hurmengyn (Trans-Altai) Gobi.** This leg of the trip will be yet another big adventure that takes us across the rugged Altai Mountains and down into the driest and wildest part of the Gobi where few travelers venture. En route we will explore spectacular dry valleys of the Gobian Altai where many Central Asian rarities such as Koslov’s Accentor and Pere David’s Snow Finch occur, as well mountain specialties such as Himalayan Griffon, Wallcreeper and large mammals such as Argali and Ibex. As we travel deep into the driest area of the desert we have a good chance of finding the second endangered wild equid of the trip, the Khulan or Asian Wild Ass. We will also be on the lookout for the world’s last wild camels – one of the rarest mammals on earth. Other desert delights may include herds of Black-tailed Gazelle and with luck the globally endangered Houbara Bustard. Overnights will be at various campsites en route.

**Day 18, June 7. Fly Gobi to U.B.** We will have the afternoon at leisure with sightseeing, shopping and birding options. Overnight in U.B. Hotel.

**Day 19, June 8. U.B. to Beijing and Home.**

## ABOUT OUR NATURALIST GUIDE



**Christopher Leahy** holds the Bertrand Chair of Natural History and Field Ornithology at the Massachusetts Audubon Society. He has been a professional conservationist for more than thirty years and his interests in natural history are comprehensive. He is a recognized authority on birds and insects. His published works include *The Birdwatcher's Companion*, *The First Guide to Insects*, *Introduction to New England Birds*, *An Introduction to Massachusetts Insects*, and *The Nature of Massachusetts*. Chris has designed and led natural history explorations to over 60 countries on all of the continents. He is especially fascinated with the world's great remaining wilderness areas and biodiversity hot spots such as Antarctica, Mongolia, Madagascar and Bhutan.

## A WORD ABOUT OUR ACCOMMODATIONS:

*Hotel in UB:* In the capital, you will stay in Ulaan Baatar's best hotels. These are comfortable tourist hotels and include in-room, western-style toilet and shower facilities, televisions with access to CNN, minibars, laundry service, and room service. They are not, however, luxurious by the standards of major international cities. All travel in Mongolia includes overnights in Ulaanbaatar, whether on arrival and departure or as the central hub for domestic flights.

### *Tent Camps:*

For our more off-the-beaten-path trips, we set up tent camps each day which allow us to visit even the most remote areas of the country. Our experienced field personnel set up camp with high quality, large three-person tents for every two people, outfitted with sleeping bags and self-inflating sleeping mats. A central dining tent is provided for groups and food is prepared by a field cook.

### *Ger Camps:*

Outside the capital, we are able to achieve a wonderful balance between nature and comfort with the use of ger camps. Traditional gers are the moveable, domed structures used by nomads for centuries. Made of a latticed wood structure covered with layers of felt and canvas, each ger is heated by a wood stove and furnished with beautifully painted wood-framed beds. Western-style toilet facilities and showers are located in a central building. These camps provide an authentic and memorable taste of Mongolian culture and allow you to visit areas which otherwise lack traveler accommodations. Most visitors find their stays in the [ger camps](#) to be among their most enjoyable experiences in Mongolia.



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## **MONGOLIA ~ TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

**PRICE:** \$6,800 per person, double occupancy  
Single Supplement: \$1,100, *Singles are limited.*

### **Price Includes:**

- All land costs from Day 1 - Day 19, including all meals and accommodations
- Services of Mass Audubon staff naturalist, Chris Leahy, as well as local guides
- Flights within Mongolia
- All Tips and Gratuities
- Baggage handling.
- All excursions, entrance fees, and visits as described in itinerary;
- Extensive predeparture notes, reading list, and travel tips.
- Basic Medical Evacuation coverage

### **Price Excludes:**

International airfare between US and Beijing; international airfare between Beijing and Ulaanbaatar; passport and visa fees; Trip cancellation insurance; airport taxes; excess baggage charges; photography and video fees; food and beverages not included in the group meals; items of a personal nature, including alcoholic beverages, laundry and telephone calls; other items not specifically mentioned as included.

**TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:** A U.S. Passport valid for *at least* six months *beyond* the trip's departure date is required. Because we will enter Mongolia via China - you will also need a double-entry Chinese visa for entry into China. We will send details upon registration. Those not citizens of the U.S. should contact the **Mongolian** Embassy for visa requirements.

**RESERVATIONS, APPLICATIONS, DEPOSITS:** Early reservations are required to ensure your place on this trip. All reservations must be accompanied by a completed reservation form and a \$500 deposit. In the case of questionable health, we reserve the right to require a physician's certification to affirm you are capable of the activities. Final payment due by 90 days prior to departure – Feb. 21, 2007

**RATES:** The itinerary and prices are accurate at the time of publication, August 2006, but are subject to change at any time prior to departure. It is our policy to only pass on the actual amount of any increases in airfares or land costs such as those increases due to the devaluation of the dollar. A price increase may be called for if the group falls below the minimum of 8. The maximum number of participants is approximately 14.

**FLIGHTS:** Travelers are responsible for arranging their own flights. We work with a local travel agent, The Travel Station, in Lincoln (phone Dave at 781-259-1200) frequently. They will have the most up-to-date information on the flight arrival and departure times that we recommend for our travelers (there is a \$35 charge for all bookings). Once your deposit and reservation form have been sent to us, we will send you flight and contact information. Please be aware that most tickets are non-refundable, therefore you should not book your flight arrangements until you have checked with us to be sure the tour has the minimum number of participants for the trip to go.

**CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS:** All cancellations must be done in writing and are effective upon receipt in the Massachusetts Audubon Travel Office. Cancellations received up to 91 days prior to departure will be refunded all money less a \$250 per person service fee. For cancellations between 90 and 61 days prior to departure, all deposits will not be refunded. There are no refunds for cancellations 60 days or less from departure. We strongly urge all travelers to purchase trip cancellation insurance. You will be sent information from the Massachusetts Audubon Society upon receipt of your deposit.

**RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONDITIONS:** The Massachusetts Audubon Society (the “Society”) and/or its agents assume no responsibility or liability in connection with the service of any train, vessel, carriage, aircraft, motor, or other vehicle or conveyance that may be used wholly or in part, in the performance of their duty to the passengers; neither will they be responsible for any act, error, or omission, or for any injury (including death), loss, accident, delay or irregularity that may be occasioned by reason of any defect in any vehicle or conveyance, or through neglect or default of any company or persons engaged in conveying the passenger; or for any hotel proprietor, or for any other person, engaged in carrying out the purpose for which tickets or coupons are issued.

In the event that the tour operators deem it necessary or advisable for the comfort or well-being of the passengers, or for any other reason whatsoever, to alter the itinerary or arrangements, such alterations shall be made without penalty to the tour operators. Additional expenses, if any, shall be borne by the passengers. The Society reserves the right to withdraw any or all tours offered should conditions warrant. The Society also reserves the right to decline to accept or retain any passenger as a member of the tour. In such instances, the full, or an equitable, amount will be refunded to the passenger, but this amount shall not exceed the amount paid by the passenger. No refund shall be made for any passenger during operation of the tour.

The sole responsibility for any airline used in these tours is limited to that set out in the passenger contract evidenced by the ticket. Airlines and other carriers are not responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their planes or conveyances. This restriction shall also apply to all other types of carriers, including car rental companies. The services of any IATA and ATC carrier may be used in connection with these tours. The Society shall not be held responsible for any penalties or charges made on special purchase on discount tickets that, due to schedule changes or cancellations, must be changed by the participants.

**Please Note:** We will experience heat, cold, and almost certainly some form of precipitation – quite possibly snow. There will be many long drives over rough terrain in jeeps and vans. We will be camping much of the time, and even in the capital, accommodations are not luxurious. Though the kinds of food available in Mongolia have expanded greatly in the last decade, we will subsist on hearty simple fare – including a number of savory Mongolian specialties - prepared by our resourceful camp cooks in the countryside; in the city the cuisine is a tad more sophisticated but far from haute.

Though there will be no long or especially strenuous hikes, we will spend long days in the field and will sometimes make changes in the program based on conditions we encounter as we travel.

This trip is designed for those who share the enthusiasm to discover off-the-beaten-path destinations. In order to reap the rewards of visiting a seldom-explored country, we expect that you will travel with flexibility, a willingness to accept local standards of amenities and services, and of course, a sense of humor.

The greatest reward is a treasure that can only be lived and experienced: an unrivaled hospitality that is inherent to nomadic people, a generous welcoming manner that is the heart of the Mongolian people.







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supporting conservation here and abroad



Mass Audubon  
Protecting the Nature of Massachusetts

**Reservation for ~ Mongolia: May 21, 2007 – June 7, 2007**

Mr./Mrs./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

**Passenger Name (1) – as shown as passport**

Mr./Mrs./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

**Passenger Name (2) – as shown as passport**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Day \_\_\_\_\_

Evening \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

**Passenger 1 - Passport Number, Expiration Date, Place of Issue**

Date and Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Dietary restrictions? \_\_\_\_\_

**Passenger 2 - Passport Number, Expiration Date, Place of Issue**

Date and Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Dietary restrictions? \_\_\_\_\_

**Accommodations:** I/We are non-smoker(s) \_\_\_ smoker(s) \_\_\_

\_\_\_ I request single accommodations where available. Singles are not guaranteed.

\_\_\_ I would like to be assigned a roommate. If one is not available, I will pay the single supplement.

**Emergency Contact:** In case of an emergency, please contact the following:

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Relationship to you:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Daytime and evening phones:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Deposit:** Please find my enclosed **check (\$500 PER PERSON)** \_\_\_\_\_ or please **charge** \_\_\_\_\_ my credit card for the deposit:

VISA MC Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

I/we certify that I/we have not recently been treated for, nor am I aware of any physical or other condition or liability that would create a hazard to myself or the other members of this tour. I understand and agree to the terms of this tour as set forth in the itinerary.

Signatures \_\_\_\_\_

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