



Central Asia

Mongolia: Songs of the steppe with Stuart Davis



trip highlights

Start each day with relaxed group singing sessions led by Stuart Davis

Learn throat singing and traditional songs from Mongolia's leading musicians

Explore Kazakh Mongolia's rich musical culture and iconic dombra traditions

Stay in traditional gers beside lakes, dunes and sacred peaks

Share music and stories with nomadic families in remote steppe and mountain regions



Trip Duration	16 days	Trip Code: MMSD
Grade	Introductory	
Activities	Singing and music workshops, Day Walks	
Summary	16 day trip, Hotels, ger and tented camps	

welcome to World Expeditions

For over 50 years, we've been creating high-quality, expedition-style adventures for active travellers with a curious spirit. From our very first trek in the mountains of Nepal to pioneering remote routes across all seven continents, our journeys are built for those who want to truly explore – not just visit.

At the heart of what we do is a simple philosophy: take the paths less travelled.

This means travelling with care, supporting local communities, minimising our impact, and unlocking experiences that most travellers will never have.

If you're ready to go further and dig deeper, we invite you to join us on the Mongolia: Songs of the steppe with Stuart Davis, a journey that captures the essence of a unique adventure.



Mongolia: Songs of the steppe with Stuart Davis



the trip

Join Sydney-based choir master Stuart Davis on an extraordinary journey through the vast, untamed landscapes of Mongolia. This exclusive musical and cultural experience leads you deep into the steppe, where music is a way of life, echoing through the sand dunes, mountain passes, and hearts of its nomadic people.

Each day begins with relaxed morning singing sessions guided by Stuart, welcoming all voices and experience levels. We travel west to the remote Altai region and witness intimate performances by local throat singers in villages famed for their musical lineage, and sit in circle with masters who carry these ancient traditions forward. You'll meet nomadic families, learn the stories behind the Morin Khuur (horse head fiddle), and spend nights under the stars in ger camps beside shimmering lakes and singing sands. From the sacred Jargalant mountain to the Kazakh musical traditions of Bayan Olgii, every step of this journey connects music, land and culture. This is a pilgrimage of song – an invitation to listen, to sing, and to learn from a culture where the voice is inseparable from nature, spirit, and survival.

This tour has been created in conjunction with, and will be locally managed by, Tim Cope, who has worked with World Expeditions for many years. Tim journeyed over 10,000km from Mongolia to Hungary on horseback, an expedition which, along with others, saw him named Australian Adventurer of the Year. He has also been appointed a Mongolian Tourism Envoy and received a Mongolian Tourism Excellence Medal. He is the author of one of Australia's bestselling books, *On the Trail of Genghis Khan: An Epic Journey Through the Lands of the Nomads*. It's Tim's intimate knowledge of, and strong relationships in Mongolia that have made it possible for us to visit authentic nomad communities and connect with local music masters.

This exclusive tour departure will be limited to just 18 participants, book early to avoid disappointment.

about your leader/escort

Stuart Davis is a key part of Sydney's choir community, known for his genuine love of music and the way he brings people together to sing. For over ten years he's led singing trips around the world, from Morocco and Cuba to Italy, Croatia and Georgia, always curious about how songs are tied to local life and history. Back home, Stuart runs three choirs, fronts the roots band Big Merino, sings with the Heavenly Light Quartet, and works on projects like Big Heart Sing at the Sydney Opera House and the Boys Vocal Programme for the NSW Education Department. Travelling with Stuart means enjoying music in wonderful places, learning about local traditions, and sharing the simple joy of singing with like-minded people.

at a glance

DAY 1	JOIN ULAANBAATAR
DAY 2	IN ULAANBAATAR
DAY 3	FLY TO ALTAI IN WESTERN MONGOLIA AND TRAVEL TO THE 'MONGOL ELS' DUNES
DAY 4	EXPLORE THE 'SINGING DUNES' AND LEARN ABOUT MONGOLIAN LONG SONGS
DAY 5	TO DURGAN LAKE AND CHANDMAN NOMADS, ACCLAIMED FOR THEIR THROAT SINGERS
DAY 6	MEET WITH A LOCAL THROAT SINGING MASTER
DAY 7	SING BY THE SACRED JARGALANT MOUNTAIN, CONTINUE TO ZEREG VILLAGE
DAY 8	LEARN ABOUT THE ZAGCHIN PEOPLE OF THE WARRIOR MOUNTAINS
DAY 9	VISIT THE CAVE OF THE ALTAI HARP AND SING BY KHAR-US LAKE
DAY 10	SPEND TIME WITH A HORSE HEAD FIDDLE MASTERS AND EPOS SINGERS
DAY 11	TO THE LAND OF THE KAZAKHS IN BAYAN OLGII PROVINCE
DAY 12	ON TO OLGII TOWN
DAY 13	KAZAKH MUSICAL TRADITIONS

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trip dates

2027 19 Aug - 03 Sep

important notes

NB: - Dates to be confirmed pending domestic flight schedules (may vary by 1–2 days).

fast facts

Countries Visited:
Mongolia

Visas:
Yes*

Vaccinations:
Please consult a travel vaccination specialist for up to date information

Leader:
Expert Local Leader & Escort

Advice for people with limited mobility
This trip is not suitable for people with limited mobility.

trip grading

Introductory

This adventure travels to remote areas where facilities are more basic. Our travel will involve a few longer drives, as noted in the itinerary and on occasion, rough roads.

To enjoy these adventures we suggest reasonable fitness and health, a moderately active lifestyle and have a positive attitude.

DAY 14	RETURN TO ULAANBAATAR
DAY 15	IN ULAANBAATAR
DAY 16	TOUR CONCLUDES ULAANBAATAR

additional deposits required

In addition to the World Expeditions tour deposit, you will be required to pay an additional deposit to purchase the tour's domestic flights within Mongolia. This deposit is non-refundable and we recommend you take out travel insurance at the time of booking.

what's included

- Trip escorted by Stuart Davis
- Highly experienced local guide plus additional translator
- Private transport throughout in Toyota Land Cruisers convoy
- 4 nights four star hotel in Ulaanbaatar
- 4 nights simple hotel in Zereg village and Olgiy
- 4 nights ger camps
- 3 nights fully supported camping: spacious 4 season tents, heated dining tent, underlay mats, camp chairs, tables and toilet. Generator and lighting
- Internal flights (baggage allowance of 20kg per person, for check-in and carry-on in total)
- Sightseeing and entry fees: Gandan monastery, Chinggis Khaan Museum, National Museum, Folklore concert, Ulgi Museum
- 15 breakfasts, 15 lunches and 10 dinners
- Airport transfers for all flight arrival and departures
- National Park fees

what's not included

- Travel to/from Ulaanbaatar
- Travel insurance - compulsory
- Single supplement
- Sleeping bag - hire option available
- Visa
- Meals & beverages not indicated in the itinerary
- Tips
- Excess baggage charges above 20kgs per person for each internal flight. Subject to change, the approximate excess baggage charge is US\$2 per kg above the 20kgs (for both check-in and carry-on in total) luggage allowance; which is payable in cash at the check-in counter.

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important note

The final tour date will be confirmed pending domestic flight schedules and as such there is a small chance it may differ by 1–2 days.

Please contact us to discuss your flight arrangements which will happily book for you, when available for August 2027.

The itinerary should be seen as a guide only. By its very nature adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected.

Remote areas are sometimes unpredictable and itineraries may be altered. To get the most out of your adventure it is important that you are flexible, positive and eager to take on all the challenges that arise.

detailed itinerary

DAY 1 Join Ulaanbaatar

Welcome to Mongolia. Upon arrival in Ulaanbaatar, you'll be met at the airport and transferred to our comfortable city hotel. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's capital, is a city of contrasts – where Buddhist monasteries, Soviet-era buildings and modern high-rises sit side by side in a mountain-fringed valley along the Tuul River.

We will attend a traditional concert which provides a broad summary of the many different musical traditions across the diverse ethnic groups of Mongolia. This will be followed by a group dinner. This evening is a chance to meet your guide team, as well as your host, choir master Stuart Davis.

Overnight: Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel, Ulaanbaatar
meals: D

DAY 2 In Ulaanbaatar

We explore Ulaanbaatar's rich cultural landscape with a guided city tour, including a visit to the National History Museum, an essential introduction to Mongolia's deep nomadic roots. Of particular focus for us here will be learning about the "Altai Harp" which was discovered in a cave in 2008 near Jargalant Mountain in Western Mongolia. This is of particular relevance to our journey as we will later learn from the musicians of Jargalant mountain and visit the cave where it was discovered. The instrument, which is on display in the museum is thought to be 1500 years old. Mongolian musician, Ganpurev Dagvan, has since made it his mission to bring this forgotten tradition back to life. Following our visit to the museum we will be visit a workshop where the instrument was initially re-created and now produced.

We will then turn our focus to Mongolia's broader musical heritage including the iconic Morin Khuur - the horse head fiddle - believed to be among the world's oldest bowed instruments, and a spiritual symbol of nomadic identity. We will meet where possible with local musicians, and there will be time in the afternoon for a singing session with Stuart.

Overnight: Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel, Ulaanbaatar
meals: B,L,D

DAY 3 Fly to Altai in Western Mongolia and travel to the 'Mongol Els' dunes

Today is a travel day in which we will be getting our first glimpse of the wide expanses and contrasts of Western Mongolia. A domestic flight takes us to the remote province of Altai. From here, we will travel by four wheel drive vehicle further west to the into the vast dune system known as Mongol Els, the largest in the country. The drive is around six hours and we will have lunch on the way. We aim to make camp at Gun Nuur, a small freshwater lake nestled among the dunes that serves as a vital watering hole for local herders and their horses. The landscape here is stark and beautiful, rolling sand dunes interrupted by grassland, mountains on the horizon, and the occasional nomadic ger dotting the steppe. Tonight we will be staying in tented accommodation. Our set up will include four season tents, with a kitchen tent and dining tent where we will convene for meals.

Overnight: fully supported wilderness camping
meals: B,L,D

DAY 4 Explore the 'singing dunes' and learn about Mongolian Long Songs

Waking to the silence of the steppe, we enjoy a group singing session with Stuart. Today we walk a gentle circuit through the Mongol Els dunes, known for their

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haunting natural acoustics. As the wind moves across the sand, the dunes emit low, resonant vibrations, a phenomenon believed to have inspired the tradition of Khoomi throat singing. During our walk, we will be accompanied by local nomadic singers from the village of Khukh Morit who will introduce us to the Mongolian art of Urtiin Duu (Long Song) – a 2000 year old tradition that remains strong in this nomadic community. Atop the dunes or beside Gun Nuur lake in camp, we experience a special performance and an opportunity for collaborative singing in this unforgettable setting. Around the fire, we'll hear stories of life in the desert steppe and songs tied to the land.

Overnight: fully supported wilderness camping

meals: B,L,D

DAY 5 To Durgan Lake and Chandman nomads, acclaimed for their throat singers

This morning we continue our journey alongside the shifting dunes, driving toward the dramatic escarpment known as the 'Flying Coast' and on to the shores of Durgun Lake. This region is home to the endangered Mongolian saiga antelope. If we're lucky, we may glimpse these elusive, prehistoric-looking animals moving across the open steppe. After lunch by the lake, and an opportunity to sing, we travel across a wide, golden plain to reach Chandman, a remote village with a remarkable reputation of producing some of the country's most acclaimed Khoomi throat singers. Tonight we stay in a simple ger camp near Chandman, or in our tented camp. A ger (pronounced "gare") is a traditional circular tent used by nomads across Mongolia, built from felt and wood, and adapted perfectly to the harsh climates of the steppe. Staying in a ger is more than accommodation, it's a direct connection to nomadic life.

Driving time today will be 5 hours, plus a stop to take lunch.

Overnight: ger

meals: B,L,D

DAY 6 Meet with a local throat singing master

We meet a true bearer of Mongolian musical heritage, a master of Khoomi throat singing. In an intimate setting, they will share the techniques and philosophy behind Khoomi, and introduce us to traditional instruments and forms of Mongolian folk song.

We'll deepen this experience with a hands-on workshop and explore the vocal styles that connect to the land, animals and spirit of Mongolia.

Overnight: ger

meals: B,L,D

DAY 7 Sing by the sacred Jargalant mountain, continue to Zereg village

We travel into the landscapes surrounding Jargalant mountain, a sacred peak known not only for its snow leopard population, but for its presence in local legend and song. We walk and take in the sweeping views that stretch across grasslands, distant lakes and blue ridges. In this natural amphitheatre Stuart leads a group singing session.

We continue on to the village of Zereg, a quiet settlement nestled in a wide valley between the Baatarin Nuruu (Warrior Mountain Range) to the south, and Bumbat and Jargalant mountains to the north. Zereg offers a pause in the journey, a chance

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to relax and reflect on the rich musical and cultural experiences so far. Tonight we stay in a simple, locally run hotel with the welcome comforts of a hot shower and the opportunity to catch up on laundry. Dinner will be at the hotel.

Driving time today will be 2-3 hours.

Overnight: hotel in Zereg village

meals: B,L,D

DAY 8 Learn about the Zagchin people of the Warrior Mountains

We journey into the valleys surrounding Zereg to learn about the Zagchin people, one of Mongolia's lesser-known ethnic groups who have long lived in harmony with this land. Accompanied by a local nomad and musician, we drive an hour from the village into the, then walk up to a sacred Ovoo, a ceremonial stone cairn perched on a rise that offers sweeping views of a lake below and the Baatarin Nuruu mountain range beyond. During our walk we will hear stories of the Zagchin connection to place, from seasonal migrations to ritual offerings. At the lakeside, there's time for singing together with Stuart, letting our voices carry across the water. We will return to our hotel for the night in Zereg village.

Overnight: hotel in Zereg village

meals: B,L,D

DAY 9 Visit the cave of the Altai harp and sing by Khar-us Lake

After breakfast and some free time, the journey continues west through Zereg Valley, where we pause near the village of Mankhan to view ancient petroglyphs, rock carvings etched into stone by early steppe dwellers, some dating back over 3,000 years. We then continue off the main road 35km to the south side of Jargalant mountain where the Altai harp was discovered in 2008. We have lunch here before continuing on to Khar-Us Lake, one of Mongolia's largest freshwater lakes and a sanctuary for migratory birds, nestled within the Great Lakes Depression. The lake mirrors the endless sky, and from our ger camp on its peaceful shore, we gather for a lakeside singing session.

Driving time today will be 4 - 5 hours.

Overnight: ger

meals: B,L,D

DAY 10 Spend time with a Horse head fiddle masters and epos singers

The shores of Khar-Us Lake become a stage for one of the most evocative encounters of the journey, as master musicians of the Morin Khuur - Mongolia's two-stringed horse head fiddle - join us in camp. This instrument, carved with the likeness of a horse's head and believed to carry the soul of the horse, central to Mongolian life and mythology. The musicians arrive from Khovd town, offering an intimate outdoor performance and sharing the stories behind their craft.

Additionally we will also have the opportunity to hear from renowned 'Epos' singers from Munkh Khairkhan village. Epos singers are specialized in telling the ancient folklore of nomadic culture and history. Western Mongolia is unique in that this tradition is still very much alive.

In the spirit of exchange, Stuart leads a collaborative session with the group, giving us space to sing alongside these remarkable artists. We will stay a second night at the ger camp by the lake.

Overnight: ger

meals: B,L,D

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DAY 11 To the land of the Kazakhs in Bayan Olgii Province

Today is a travelling day as we head through the provincial capital of Khovd, before driving further into Bayan-Ölgii province, Mongolia's westernmost region and the heartland of its Kazakh population. Distinct in language, tradition and music, the Kazakhs here are known for their deep hospitality, rich oral culture, and iconic practice of hunting with golden eagles. We travel through sweeping mountain and lake country, where nomadic families still move seasonally with their herds. We will meet with a local Kazakh family and learn about their way of life as a nomadic family on the steppe.

Driving time today will be around 4 - 5 hours.

Overnight: fully supported wilderness camping

meals: B,L,D

DAY 12 On to Olgii town

We have a relaxing start to the day with our local family, witnessing their morning rituals and continuing our own, with a singing session with Stuart. After lunch our journey continues to Ölgii, the provincial capital of Bayan-Ölgii and cultural heartland of Mongolia's Kazakh community. Set in a broad valley framed by rugged peaks, Ölgii is a vibrant town where Kazakh identity remains proudly alive through language, craft, and a rich musical tradition. We explore the town's colourful market, then visit a local museum to gain insight into the Kazakhs of Mongolia - a Turkic-speaking, Muslim minority who have lived in this region for generations. Originally migrating from the west in the 1800s, they've preserved a strong cultural identity shaped by nomadic life, oral storytelling, eagle hunting, and the music of the dombra.

It's a rare opportunity to better understand how this proud community has flourished in Mongolia's far west, maintaining deep ties to tradition while shaping a unique cultural space within the nation.

Overnight: hotel in Olgii town

meals: B,D

DAY 13 Kazakh musical traditions

The day is dedicated to learning more about the vibrant cultural life of Mongolia's Kazakh community. Local musicians introduce us to the sounds and stories behind the dombra, a two-stringed instrument central to Kazakh identity. We may also encounter other traditional instruments such as the kobyz or jaw harp, each with its own role in storytelling and ceremony. Through demonstrations, conversations and music-making, we explore how these art forms remain deeply woven into Kazakh family life, celebration and history. There's time as well to explore the town of Ölgii' further.

Overnight: hotel in Olgii town

meals: B,D

DAY 14 Return to Ulaanbaatar

This morning we fly back to the city, where a comfortable hotel stay offers the chance to rest, enjoy a long hot shower and unwind after our time on the steppe.

Overnight: Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel, Ulaanbaatar

meals: B,D

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DAY 15 In Ulaanbaatar

Today is yours to enjoy Ulaanbaatar at a relaxed pace, perhaps browsing local markets for cashmere and handicrafts, exploring the city's museums, or simply taking time to rest and reflect on the journey. We'll come together for a final group singing session with Stuart, before celebrating the experience with a farewell dinner.

This day also allows some flexibility in the itinerary, ensuring a smooth and unhurried conclusion to the trip.

Overnight: Best Western Premier Tuushin Hotel, Ulaanbaatar

meals: B,D

DAY 16 Tour concludes Ulaanbaatar

After breakfast, our tour taking in the songs of the steppe concludes. Airport transfers are included for your onward travel.

meals: B

This itinerary is subject to change with any change in Community regulations as well as Governmental changes and natural circumstances beyond our control.

climate

Late summer is a great time to visit Mongolia. Days are generally warm, with temperatures typically ranging from 15 - 25C (59 - 77F). Evenings and nights can be cool, often dropping to 0 - 10C (32 - 50F), particularly in rural or higher-altitude regions. Rainfall is minimal, and clear skies are common. Due to Mongolia's expansive open terrain, windy conditions can occur, so warm and windproof layers are recommended.

a typical day

You'll make your way across Mongolia in a convoy of comfortable 4WD vehicles (Toyota LandCruisers or similar), travelling together as a group with a few passengers in each. A shared radio system keeps everyone connected, allowing Stuart and your local guide to share music, stories and insights as you travel through the landscape.

dietary requirements

We are able to cater for vegetarian diets and can assist with medically recommended diets (allergies and intolerances). Please ensure you discuss your requirements with us well in advance and be aware that options are likely to be limited in very remote locations or alternatives may be unavailable. We are unable to guarantee a peanut-free or allergen-free trip, and therefore, we strongly encourage that travellers with life-threatening or severe allergies take all necessary medical precautions to prepare for the possibility of exposure. Passengers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self-administering these medications.

accommodation on the trip

Accommodation on this journey reflects the spirit of Mongolia itself. Eight nights are spent in hotels in larger towns and cities, along with stays in traditional ger camps and fully serviced tented camps, offering a genuine connection to the country's nomadic heritage.

A ger (pronounced "gare") is a traditional circular dwelling used by Mongolian nomads for centuries. Constructed from a wooden lattice frame and layers of insulating felt. Staying in a ger is far more than simply a place to sleep, it is an opportunity to experience the traditions of nomadic life. Ger camps are typically communal in nature, with shared bathroom facilities and welcoming central dining areas where travellers gather for meals and conversation.

In more remote regions, we also utilise a four-season tented camp, complete with dedicated kitchen and dining tents where the group convenes for freshly prepared meals. These camps

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provide a comfortable yet adventurous base from which to explore Mongolia's vast and untouched landscapes.

Due to the communal style of ger camps, private rooms are generally only available on the nights spent in hotels and tents. Travellers are encouraged to embrace this aspect of the journey as part of the authentic experience of visiting Mongolia's remote and culturally rich regions.

visas

The Government of Mongolia has extended the temporary exemption from visa requirements for the nationals of 34 countries, including Australia, New Zealand, the UK for stays up to 30 days to the end of 2026. These 34 countries join the current 27 with existing exemptions which include the US and Canada. All other nationalities should check with your nearest embassy or consulate for visa requirements.

Please bear in mind that visas may be required for countries you are visiting en route or transiting through on the way to your destination. It is important that you check the requirements of all countries you will visit. Visa costs and requirements do change regularly so we suggest you check with your travel agent or World Expeditions reservations consultant.

how to book

To book this World Expeditions trip, you will need to complete an online booking and pay a non-refundable deposit. Link provided by Stuart Davis.