Mongolia

Valley of Cats



Pallas's Cat on a snow bank

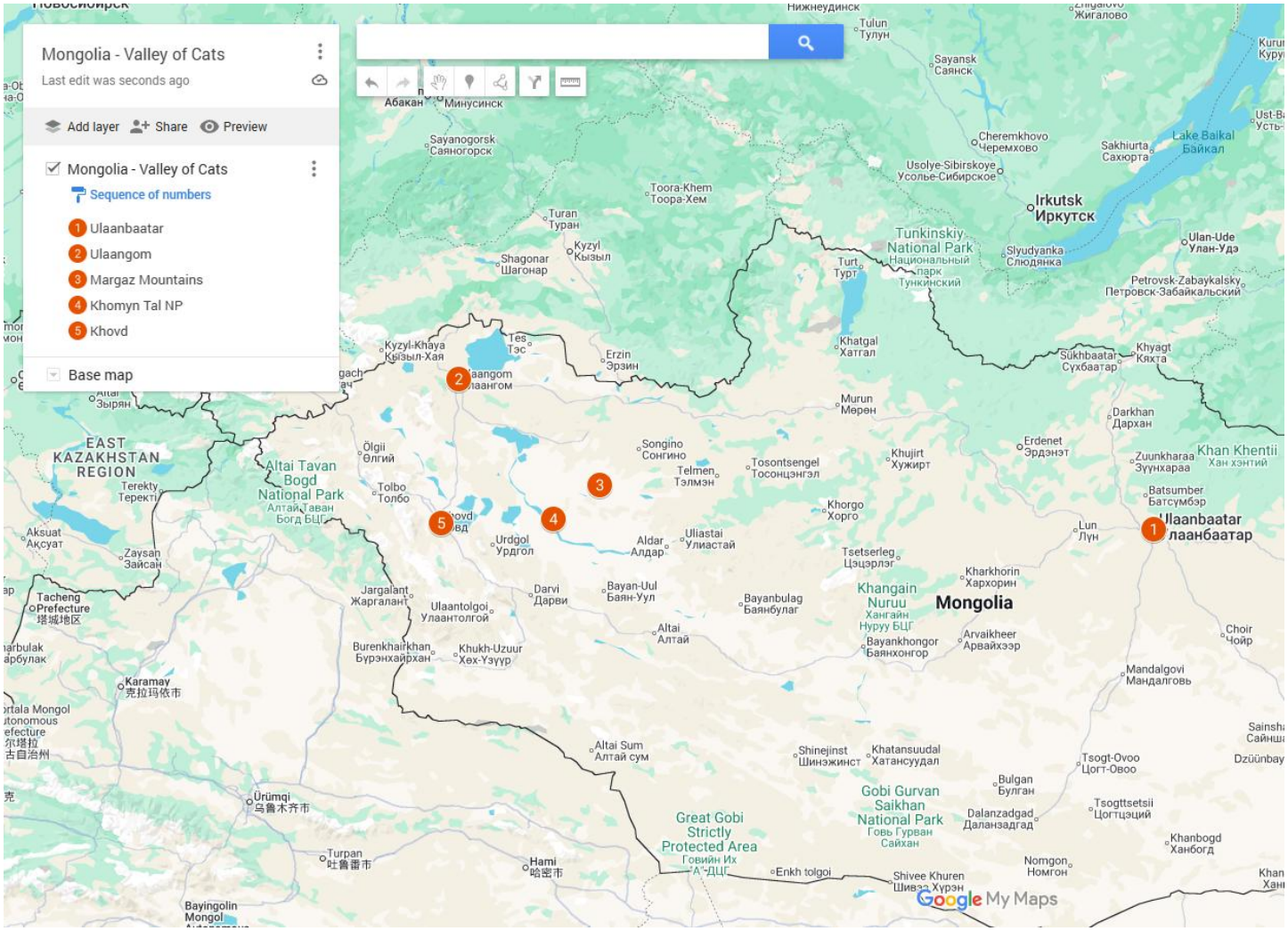
This extraordinary journey takes you deep into the breathtaking landscapes of western Mongolia, in search of the elusive Snow Leopard, secretive Eurasian Lynx and Pallas's Cat. The tour also provides opportunities to encounter iconic wildlife such as the Gray Wolf, Corsac Fox, Wild Horse, Goitered and Mongolian Gazelles, Mongolia Saiga, Siberian Ibex, and Altai Wapiti.

Bird enthusiasts will be treated to a fascinating array of Central Asian avian specialties, including Daurian Partridge, Hill Pigeon, Pallas's Sandgrouse, Little Owl, Bearded Vulture, Cinereous Vulture, Golden Eagle, Saker Falcon, Red-billed Chough, Azure-winged Magpie, Mongolian Ground Jay, Daurian Jackdaw, Azure Tit, Asian Short-toed Lark, Mongolian Lark, Horned Lark, Bearded Reedling, Güldenstädt's Redstart, Brown Accentor, Rock Sparrow, White-winged Snowfinch, Père David's Snowfinch, Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinch, Mongolian Finch, and Meadow Bunting.

Adding to the immersive experience, guests will stay in a traditional ger camps, managed by Mongolian nomads, offering an authentic glimpse into the region's rich cultural heritage.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Ulaanbaatar**
Day 2	**Ulaanbaatar; flight to Ulaangom, transfer to Margaz Mountains**
Days 3 to 8	**Margaz Mountains**
Day 9	**Margaz Mountains to Khomyn Tal National Park**
Day 10	**Khomyn Tal National Park**
Day 11	**Khomyn Tal National Park to Khovd**
Day 12	**Khovd; flight to Ulaanbaatar**
Day 13	**Final departure**



Birding sites in detail



Mongolian Ground Jay by Glen Valentine

Tuul River, Ulaanbaatar. Time permitting, we will visit this verdant river running through Ulaanbaatar for such exciting possibilities as Red-throated Thrush, Long-tailed Rosefinch, Daurian Jackdaw, Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinch, Azure-winged Magpie and Azure Tit. On the mammal front, we may find Daurian Pika and Altai Wapiti (Elk).

Margaz Mountains. The Margaz Mountains are a realtively new site encompassing vast sand dunes, steppe, lakes an mountins. Our ger camp is situated in the foothills, and is as remote a wilderness as one can find. Our focus during our time here is dedicated to searching for the Snow Leopard, Pallas's Cat and Eurasian Lynx. The 'Grey Ghost' needs little introduction; it is one of the most elusive and evocative species on our planet, and only in recent years has it become possible to see one. Here, we actually have a realistic chance of seeing three species of cat! Working with our local tracking team, we will head out each day to the best areas to find them.

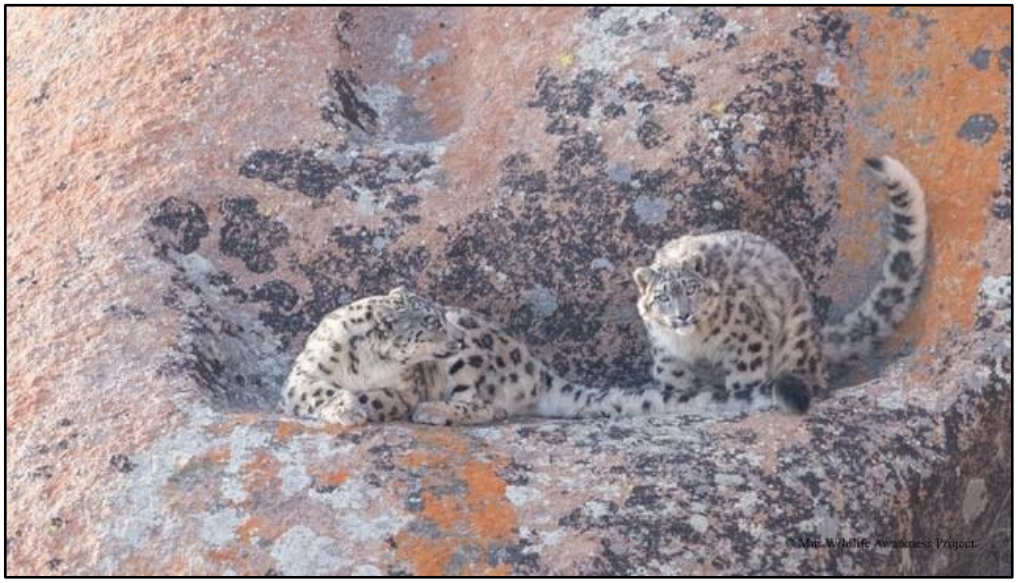
In comparison to some of the other sites for these cats, the Margaz Mountains have a few advantages. Firstly, it is at a much lower elevation, with the maximum elevation visited during this trip being about 3 000 metres above sea level. Secondly, the accommodation is more comfortable and, thirdly, much of the terrain can be covered by 4x4 vehicles rather than hiking!

Our search will be done through a mixture of driving and short hikes with lots of scanning. We will also be tuned in for any sightings from our trackers and even local shepherds.

Amongst the numerous birding possibilities, we shall be looking for Chukar Partridge, Hill Pigeon, Pallas's Sandgrouse, Little Owl, Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Bearded and Cinereous Vultures, Golden Eagle, Upland Buzzard, Saker Falcon, Great Grey Shrike, Red-billed Chough, Mongolian



Mongolian Saiga by Glen Valentine



Snow Leopard and cub

Ground Jay, Asian Short-toed, Mongolian and Horned Larks, Brown Accentor, Rock Sparrow, White-winged and Père David's Snowfinches, Mongolian Finch and Meadow Bunting.

A long list of posible mammals is several highlights such as Tolai Hare, Daurian and Pallas's Pikas, Mongolian Silver Vole, Midday Jird, Gray Wolf, Corsac and Red Foxes, Snow Leopard, Pallas's Cat, Eurasian Lynx, Siberian Ibex and Altai Wapiti.

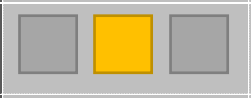
Khomyn Tal National Park. Khomyn Tal is a successful reintroduction site for the last Takhi, or Przewalski's Horse. Careful management of the environment has resulted in a popualtion of around 150 horses roaming the area. Not far from the park, we'll pass through panoramic sand dunes and steppe habitat that is home to the critically endangered Mongolian Saiga. The once-vast herds of this truly unique and remarkably speedy antelope are sadly fast disappearing, but this area still offers a great chance of seeing this special species. Goitered Gazelle is another threatened antelope that we should encounter in this area. We'll also keep an eye out for Tolai Hare, Midday Jird, Gray Wolf, Corsac and Red Foxes and Mongolian Gazelle.



Wild Horses by Nigel Redman

We'll also keep an eye out for Daurian Partridge, Bearded and Cinereous Vultures, Golden Eagle, Saker Falcon, Pallas's Sandgrouse, Mongolian Ground Jay, Red-billed Chough, Azure Tit, Red-throated Thrush, Rock Sparrow, Mongolian Finch, and Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinch.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Cold to very cold weather conditions. Reasonably short days & relatively moderate birding diversity. Wildlife watching is good.
Birding Ease		Mostly easy, in very open conditions.
Accommodation		Different, but mostly comfortable. Both traditional & 'tourist' gers.
Walking / Trails		Mostly easy to moderate walks. A daily maximum of +-2 km on comparatively flat terrain. The average altitude is between 1 500 to 3 200m (4 900 to 10 500ft)
Vehicles / Roads		4x4 vehicles, on both sealed and unsealed roads. Road conditions are variable, including windy, mountainous tracks and some off-road driving.
Photography		Can be good. Close-up photography of Snow Leopard is highly unlikely, other species may be at distance.
Annoyances		Very cold conditions from, moderate to strong winds are common.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 13;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour
- Internal flights (Ulaanbaatar – Ulaangom and Khovd - Ulaanbaatar);
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights (except as noted above);
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Internal flights have tight weight restrictions of 10kg per person for check-in luggage and 5kg per person for hand/cabin luggage. Excess baggage is charged at approximately US$1 per kg, to be paid in Mongolian tögrög.
- Most of the tour will be in remote areas with no medical facilities or hospitals. Please ensure that you have all the necessary medication that you require for the duration of the tour. If you have any medical concerns, please contact the Rockjumper office as soon as possible.
- The Margaz Mountains are extremely cold in winter, with temperatures from -15 to -35°C (can drop below -40°C). Expect snowfall, strong winds, and dry air, making it feel even colder. Days are short (7-8 hours of daylight) with mostly clear skies.
- Warm clothes, including gloves, woollen hat, raingear, hiking boots and thermals will come in handy for the cooler nights and mornings, especially at higher altitudes.
- We will stay in a comfortable hotel in Ulaanbaatar. These hotels might be just below the international standard but are clean and comfortable. We will stay in a community-based ger camp when we explore Margaz Mountains in pursuit of cats. The campsite is real heaven located on the mountain slope, facing the sublime scenery in all directions. The average altitude of the camp and its surroundings is 2 000 m above sea level. The camp provides clean and comfortable traditional Mongolian gers with two beds in it. The gers will be heated by a stove. The toilet is European style and shower house will be secured in the secluded area. There will be a place to wash hands and face in your ger.
- Fitness: In general, this tour does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health.
- Mongolia is not known for having a large variety of foods and often fresh food can be difficult to come by. We do, however, make a special effort to organize fresh fruit and vegetables where possible and these are regularly included in our meals on tour. In general meals consist of a variety of dishes that are generally tasty and appetizing. If you have any dietary requirements, please notify us in advance of departure.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour departs from Ulaanbaatar around midday on day 1 and concludes after breakfast on day 13.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Chinggis Khaan International Airport, Ulaanbaatar (IATA: UBN) is the main port of entry into Mongolia and is serviced by several major airlines.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.