

# *Welcome in the Big Country with A Warm Heart*



## A Practical Guide on Community Based Tourism

Implemented by:

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GOVERNMENT OF  
 MONGOLIA  
 MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT  
 AND TOURISM



MONGOLIAN  
 PROTECTED  
 AREAS



*Welcome in the Big Country  
with A Warm Heart*

**Ulaanbaatar**





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On behalf of German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

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# Foreword

The government of Mongolia recognizes tourism as a potential economic sector and alternative to mining in its National Tourism Strategy. Nomadic culture and its landscapes are the primary tourist destination in Mongolia and by all means, protected areas and biodiversity values are crucial to be conserved where rural communities play an important role to make it sustainable.

Different models of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) have been developed with the support of various conservation projects and programs at the national level. Same time as a number of tourists visit to protected areas has increased and excessive number of livestock inside the protected areas, its biodiversity, scenic values, and ecosystem services are under threat.

The "Supporting Protected Areas for the Conservation of Ecosystem Services" (SPACES) project funded by the German Government and implemented by GIZ in cooperation with MET aims at enhancing the enabling conditions for the long-term strengthening of Mongolia's PAs system. One approach of the GIZ SPACES project is to support CBT as a local livelihood strategy and alternative to conserving PAs' values sustainably.

This CBT handbook in your hand was developed with the support of GIZ SPACES based on a comprehensive review of experiences with CBT in our country in the past 20 years and done by national tourism experts, and practitioners and reviewed by community members running CBT activities.

I am fully confident the Handbook will give you step-by-step practical guidance on how to set up and implement successful models of community-based tourism that promote long-term benefits to your livelihood while encouraging and supporting you to safeguard the values of your areas including PAs.

Also, the handbook will serve as a comprehensive resource book for Environment and Tourism Agencies at aimag level, trainers in this field, and tour operators to some extent. Last but not least, the Handbook will contribute to our effort to conserve PAs of the country for sake of our next generation by reaching out to its primary guardians – herders.

Therefore, I on behalf of MET of Mongolia would like to express my deep appreciation to the GIZ SPACES project team and our national experts for their sincere work in developing this Handbook.



MET, Department of Protected Area Management

Director D.Batmunkh

# Introduction

Has it been on your mind to get involved in tourism, but you are wondering whether its feasible and how to do it? Or you have gotten stuck and are looking for advice on the next step? This handbook was designed to help.

"Welcome in the big country with a warm heart" was developed as a practical handbook for local community members, whether as a group or individuals, in rural Mongolia to assess and develop their capacity to successfully engage in tourism and to establish their activities in line with legal requirements and principles of sustainable tourism for the conservation of nature and sharing of cultural experiences.

"Welcome in the big country with a warm heart" was created as a joint effort and in a participatory way, initiated and financed by GIZ SPACES<sup>1</sup>. A core team of project staff and consultants invited known experts with a wealth of work experience in tourism and with local communities in rural Mongolia as key contributors to the hand book. A series of meetings as well as drafting of individual contributions lead to the consensus on content, lay-out and format. Finally, the different sections were compiled into one coherent draft, which was then reviewed and edited for the final versions of the hand book in Mongolian and English language.

The handook is meant as a resource both for trainers and for self-study. Therefore, each chapter is divided into the main content and tips and tools for trainers. Information for quick reference, such as some definitions of terms, is provided in boxes within the text. More comprehensive back ground information, relevant sections on laws, regulations and standards, and more can be found as QR CODEs. It is available online at the GIZ Mongolia website and scan QR CODE to download full version of handbook.

The handbook does not go into an in-depth discussion to define "community based tourism", but provides references to further reading on the topic and provides definitions of "sustainable tourism" and "responsible travel". It takes a pragmatic approach in providing information and guidance to anybody, not only to formally recognized groups. However, it has dedicated sections to community based organizations in Mongolia and how to establish and manage them.

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<sup>1</sup>SPACES – Supporting Protected Areas for the Conservation of Ecosystem Services project, GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit. "Тусгай хамгаалалттай газар нутгуудад дэмжлэг үзүүлэх замаар экосистемийг хадгалан хамгаалахад хувь нэмэр оруулах нь" (SPACES) төсөл. Германы олон улсын хамтын ажиллагааны нийгэмлэг (GIZ)

Throughout the handbook, case studies of Community Based Tourism initiatives from across Mongolia illustrate various experiences in overcoming challenges, seizing opportunities, working in different organizational settings and in different natural environments.

"Welcome in the big country with a warm heart" is organized into seventeen chapters. Chapters 1 – 3 provide an understanding of why travelers visit Mongolia, on nature conservation and different kinds of state and local protected areas, and on the role local communities – in different organizational forms – can play in conservation and tourism. Chapters 4 – 10 guide you through all the steps to assess your opportunities

and challenges to engage in tourism, to legally establish a business entity and to run an enterprise and manage your team. Chapters 11 – 17 share suggestions on how to design your facilities and develop your activities, and provide information on how to operate safely and environmentally friendly and in line with required standards.

It is our wish that you enjoy this handbook and that it will serve you as a source of inspiration and encouragement and as a very practical resource for making your dreams come to life and your community based tourism venture a success!

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***Scan to download full version of handbook***

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# Glossary

**ALAMGAC** - Agency for Land Administration and Management, Geodesy and Cartography

**CBD** - Convention on Biological Diversity

**CBNRM** - Community-based natural resource management

**CBO** - Community based organisation

**CBT** - Community based tourism

**DPAM** - Department of Protected Area Management

**GDP** - Gross domestic product

**GIZ SPACES** - Supporting Protected Areas for the Conservation of Ecosystem Services project, GIZ

**ICCA** – Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas/Territories of Life

**IUCN** - International Union for Conservation of Nature

**KTT NGO** - Khomyn Talyn Takhi non-government organization

**LLC** - Limited Liability Company

**MET** - Ministry for Environment and Tourism

**NAMAC** - National Association of Mongolian Agricultural Cooperatives

**NGO** - Non-government organization

**NR** - Natural resource

**PA** - Protected Area

**PCC NGO** - People centered conservation non-government organization

**PUG** - Pasture User Group

**RUA** - Rangeland Use Agreement

**SME** - Small and Medium Enterprise

**TNC** - The Nature Conservancy

**UN** - United Nations

**UNDP** - United Nations Development Programme

**UNESCO** - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**UNWTO** - United Nations World Tourism Organization



## CHAPTER 1. WHAT ATTRACTS TRAVELERS TO MONGOLIA?

### ***Nomadic Herders are the Inspiration for Travelers to Mongolia***

"Somewhere between the sand dunes of the Gobi desert and the magnificent peaks of Khuiten in Altai Tavan Bogd, you'll uncover the meaning of Mongolian wealth. Our fortune is in our land, in our people and our way of life."<sup>1</sup>



This is how Mongolia portrayed its allure at one of the world's most prestigious tourism fairs, the ITB<sup>2</sup>, in Berlin in 2015. The short slogan to promote Mongolia was "Nomadic by Nature", capturing the essence of what attracts travelers to Mongolia – nature and nomadic traditions.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.mcgroup.com/campaigns/mongolia-tourism>

<sup>2</sup>Internationale Tourismus Boerse = German for "International Tourism Fair"





Lonely Planet<sup>3</sup>, one of the most widely used guidebook resource, notes that "Rugged Mongolia is an adventure destination where travelers can experience vast, untouched landscapes and learn about nomadic culture." A brochure on Mongolia developed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency is named "Go Nomadic - The Country of Nature and Nomads". There are many other examples, and tour operators also focus on "Nature" and "Nomads" when advertising adventures in Mongolia.

The words of these professionals promoting Mongolia as a travel destination make it clear – it is you, the local community and the herder family that travelers are intrigued by and interested to learn from. It is the land that your ancestors have managed for millennia as nomadic livestock herders and the protected and untouched wilderness of mountains, forests, steppes and oases that have evoked dreams in travelers to visit Mongolia, to explore its vast landscapes, to listen to the silence and to experience a star lit sky devoid of light pollution.

If you think something like "I cannot compete with a 5 Star Hotel of a big company" remember you can offer a "5 Million Star Hotel" by welcoming guests in the beautiful nature under the clear skies of your homeland. As a herder family or community, you are an important player in developing tourism in Mongolia, sharing your knowledge and daily life of nomadic culture directly with travelers, welcoming them to your home and guiding them to experience and learn about nature, wildlife and local history.

Do not think there is nothing interesting for foreign visitors about the endless grasslands, the familiar mountains and the clear night sky, or about your daily life as a herder family. Mongolia's ancient horse culture attract riders from around the world, eager for the experience to ride a Mongolian horse in unfenced open landscapes and learning about local practices of horsemanship.

Many travelers will have been inspired by books and movies about Mongolia's magnificent landscapes and outstanding natural and cultural heritage. The Gobi's wealth of dinosaur fossils, the story of their discovery, and their significance for science and our understanding of the evolution of reptiles, birds and mammals is a story told in well - known books abroad.

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.lonelyplanet.com/mongolia>



## **Why Travelers are attracted by Mongolia's Landscapes and Wildlife**

### **Landscapes and Wildlife of Mongolia**

The landscapes of Mongolia are a great attraction for international visitors, for their value as old cultural landscapes used by nomadic herders for millennia, for their relative pristine state and wilderness values, for their vastness and the low number of people inhabiting them.

The Mongolian steppe is considered as the last remaining pristine grassland in Eurasia that once stretched from Eastern Europe to Manchuria. The grassland steppe is home to many iconic species including an estimated about 2 million of Mongolian gazelles. The Mongolian gazelle's annual migration is one of the last large-scale migrations in the northern hemisphere.<sup>4</sup>

Parts of the Mongolian Gobi Desert region have been identified as among the world's largest and most intact (least converted) remaining wild areas with very low human population density until today.<sup>5</sup> The Gobi – Steppe Ecosystem is one of the most important regions for wildlife conservation. Mongolia's Southern Gobi area, in particular, is important for Khulan (Asiatic wild ass) and the goitered (or black-tailed) gazelle.

Mongolia's wildlife includes globally endangered and vulnerable species, namely the six iconic species of Wild Bactrian Camel, Gobi Bear, Takhi/Wild Horse, Khulan/Asiatic Wild Ass, Saiga Antelope, and Goitered Gazelle, all symbols of well-being and health of Gobi ecosystems. Mongolia is home to the world's second largest population of snow leopards, which are important indicators of the health of the landscapes they live in and one of the most inspiring wildlife species for visitors. Migratory birds visiting the wetlands of Mongolia are another draw for groups of travelers coming for bird watching alone.

### **Natural and Cultural World Heritage**

Mongolia has five areas that are inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Three as cultural heritage including the "Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain and its surrounding sacred landscape", the "Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape", and the "Petroglyphic Complexes of the Mongolian Altai". Two natural heritage sites are the "Landscapes of Dauria" and the "Uvs Nuur Basin".

<sup>4</sup><https://www.lonelyplanet.com/mongolia>

<sup>5</sup>[https://mongolia.panda.org/en/our\\_work/grassland\\_steppe/](https://mongolia.panda.org/en/our_work/grassland_steppe/)



## **Global Trends in Tourism – Opportunities for Community Based Tourism**

Connection to the land and nature is part of your life as herders and it is obvious to you, but travelers do not know about it and find it very interesting. More and more travelers today are looking for new insights that leave a lasting impression on them and transform their outlook on life and the world. They want to immerse themselves in the culture, traditions, and also language of the places they visit. International travelers today are also very aware of environmental and social practices and consider eco-friendly and socially responsible operations when choosing a service provider. This will likely be a high priority for guests staying with you. Those travelers, interested in “transformational” and “experiential” travel, will be your most likely guests.

Your visitors therefore expect authentic experiences that help them understand and appreciate your way of life. Local food and cooking is another topic that many travelers are interested in and enjoy learning about and taking part in. Visitors will be interested in local legends and folklore and in special local places. Frequently used terms to describe these global trends in tourism are “Sustainable Tourism”, “Responsible Travel” and “Ecotourism”. They all are a potential opportunity for you to develop community based tourism to improve income while protecting local natural and cultural heritage.

### **What is Sustainable Tourism, Responsible Travel, and Ecotourism?**

**Sustainable Tourism** aims to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive ones. Negative impacts to a destination include damage to the natural environment, overcrowding, and also loss of economic benefits for the local area. Positive impacts to a destination include job creation, cultural heritage preservation and interpretation, wildlife preservation, landscape restoration, and other positive effects. <sup>6</sup>

The UN Environment Program and UN World Tourism Organization defines it as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.”

<sup>6</sup>Encyclopedia of the World's Biomes, Goldstein, M. and DellaSala, D. (eds.), 2020, ISBN 978-0-12-816097-8



**Responsible Travel** is a term referring to the behavior and style of individual travelers. The behaviors align with making a positive impact to the destination rather than negative ones."<sup>7</sup> The "Center for Responsible Travel"<sup>8</sup> defines that responsible tourism maximizes "the positive contributions tourism can make to local communities and promotes it so that "local communities thrive and steward cultural resources and biodiversity."

**Ecotourism** The International Ecotourism Society describes it as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the wellbeing of local people and involves interpretation and education". The Encyclopedia of Ecotourism<sup>9</sup> identified three common characteristics of the many types of ecotourism:

1. Nature based.
2. Environmentally educated.
3. Sustainably managed.

Ecotourism has comprised up to 20% of global tourism and is a key contributor to rural incomes and the financing of protected areas in many countries.<sup>10</sup>

The term "ecotourism" is much used in Mongolia, as much of travel in Mongolia is in natural areas. However, caution should also be used not to overuse the term "eco"; nowadays it is often used just for advertising, in all sectors, even when practices are not particularly environmentally friendly.

There are also large projects in some countries in the name of ecotourism development that are being criticized for their impacts on indigenous peoples and local communities.

<sup>7</sup><https://www.gstcouncil.org/what-is-sustainable-tourism/>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.gstcouncil.org/what-is-sustainable-tourism/>

<sup>9</sup>[www.responsibletravel.org](http://www.responsibletravel.org)

<sup>10</sup>Weaver, D.B. (2001), (Ed.) The encyclopedia of ecotourism. ISBN 9780851993683

<sup>11</sup>ADB, Project Design Document, 2021



## What is Community Based Tourism?

In this handbook we call tourism services which have been developed by local community members "community based tourism" as long as the activities are environmentally and socially responsible while improving the income of those offering the services - no matter whether the service providers are working together as a formal or informal CBT group or are an individual household or person. As a practical, hands-on guide for local communities to engage in tourism, this handbook does not engage in the discussion on the exact definition of community based tourism. But here we are sharing suggestions and principles based on experiences worldwide that we find important for developing community based tourism.



Community based tourism means that community members design tourism programs based on special elements of local life, culture and nature which they feel proud and comfortable to share with visitors.<sup>12</sup> Visitors are offered a "unique opportunity to meet local people, experience and learn about local culture, livelihoods and the natural world - directly from local people."<sup>13</sup> It does not just address the question "How can communities benefit more from tourism?", but also the broader question "How can tourism contribute to the process of community development?"<sup>14</sup> The impact of tourism on the community

and natural environment should be a key concern, and communities must be adequately prepared before CBT operations."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup><https://www.unwto.org/node/12238>

<sup>13</sup><https://www.unwto.org/node/12238>

<sup>14</sup>Community Based Tourism Handbook, 2003. Published by REST (Responsible Ecological Social Tour), Thailand.

<sup>15</sup>Community Based Tourism Handbook, 2003. Published by REST (Responsible Ecological Social Tour), Thailand.





### **Guiding Principles for Developing CBT**

- Recognize, support and promote community ownership of tourism
- Involve community members from the start in every aspect
- Promote community pride
- Improve the quality of life
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Preserve the unique character and culture of the local area\
- Foster cross-cultural learning
- Respect cultural differences and human dignity
- Distribute benefits fairly among community members
- Contribute a fixed percentage of income to community projects

*Source: Community Based Tourism Handbook, 2003.  
Published by REST (Responsible Ecological Social Tour), Thailand.*

### **Different Expectations of International and Domestic Travelers**

While this chapter focuses more on international travelers and explains their motivation to visit Mongolia, domestic travelers can also be an important market for your local community. In fact, depending on your location, they may by far outnumber international visitors. One of the major constraints of international guests to visit Mongolia is the limited number of flights into the country, another reason that you should consider the potential of domestic visitors just as much.

For you as a local service provider it is important to understand the different expectations of domestic and international travelers. It is probably fair to say that Mongolian travelers more often travel in groups of family and friends, and they will have their own transport. More and more, they will be fully equipped with camping equipment, and many might expect just "support" from locals, such as meat and milk products, rather than full services including guiding and other activities your international guests would enjoy.

Individual or small group travelers from overseas, particularly from European countries, North America, Australia and New Zealand, are more likely to seek quiet and enjoy solitude, in accommodations and at the sites you guide them to, rather than spending time with large groups of other travelers. These are



of course just general guidelines. This hand book does not want to make any generalizations of travelers from any country, let alone make any judgements.

### **Ethical Conduct in Tourism - Rights and Protection of Local Communities**



While you should share authentic knowledge and traditions and offer genuine experiences reflecting your local life and culture, you NEVER have to share or show anything or any place you don't feel comfortable to share, for personal reasons or because it's not appropriate culturally. Explain to visitors what is not appropriate or acceptable for them to see or do, or ask. Most of them will truly appreciate this because they want to adhere to local norms; and in case they don't it is still your right. You can even place a

small sign or paper in your guest accommodation that gives visitors guidance on this. Also, do not bring guests to areas that might be environmentally too sensitive or crucial habitat of rare wildlife and don't risk disturbing wildlife for the sake of a sighting or photo by a guest.

A "Global Code of Ethics for Tourism" was developed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization to help minimize the negative impacts of tourism on the environment and on cultural heritage while maximizing the benefits for residents of tourism destinations. Its 10 articles were officially recognized by the UN General Assembly in 2001. While it is not a legally binding document, all those involved in tourism – travelers and providers - should commit to practice its principles. Its full text is provided as QR code.

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Scan to see Global Code of Ethics for Tourism by UNWTO

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### **A Brief History of Tourism in Mongolia**

A Tourism Bureau was established in Mongolia in 1954, but tourism was limited to visitors from socialist countries for exchange visits and hunting. In 1963, the Mongolian government started building tourism "bases", for example in Khankhongor soum of South Gobi Aimag as a base from which to bring visitors to the iconic Gobi sites of Yoliin Am, Baynzag and Khongoryn Els. Almost all tourism activities were managed through the state owned "Juulchin" company up to 1990, when this company was privatized.

After the end of the socialist period and the opening of the country, numerous tourist enterprises have been established since 1991. Today there are 571 registered tour operators and 526 tourist camps in Mongolia. the tourism sector today has 55,220 workers and entrepreneurs.

Earlier in the century, foreign visitors were explorers, adventurers and researchers. The most well known today in Western countries is probably is Roy Chapman Andrews, who led several expeditions from Beijing to Mongolia between 1922 and 1930, pioneering he first automobile travel into the Gobi, supported by camel caravans. These expeditions helped to make Baynzag famous as a site of very important dinosaur fossils, unearthing dinosaur eggs, new species of dinosaurs and the fossils of early mammals that co-existed with dinosaurs. Roy Chapman Andrews later became the Director of the American Museum of Natural History.

In 1946, a Russian Expedition to the Gobi did further paleontological research with Mongolian experts. After 1990, the American Museum of Natural History continued support to paleontological research in the Gobi, which is led by Mongolian scientists today. Baynzag, with a new Visitor Center and protection status, remains one of the most visited tourist sites in Mongolia, as well as a key paleontological site worldwide.

### **Challenges of Tourism Development in Mongolia <sup>16</sup>**

Tourism is considered an important strategy in Mongolia's efforts to diversify the economy, to create more income opportunities outside the mining sector. The tourism sector contributes about 7 % of GDP and offers nearly 8 % of employment in Mongolia. However, development of tourism has been held up by many challenges.

<sup>16</sup>World Bank (2021). Mongolia: Fostering Inclusive Tourism Development in the Aftermath of COVID-19.



Tourism in general and to Mongolia is very vulnerable to global and domestic events that discourage travel. Examples in the last two decades include the attacks in 2001 on the World Trade Center in New York City, the 2003 SARS outbreak, the 2008/9 global financial crisis, the 2014/15 measles outbreak in Mongolia, and the 2020/21 COVID-19 pandemic. Apart from this, Mongolia faces more challenges for tourism development.

***Tour operators and other companies involved in tourism (hotels etc.) listed as the top 10 challenges for tourism development:***

1. Not enough international flights are available
2. International flights are high cost
3. Tourism season is very short
4. Lack of centralized marketing support
5. Poor implementation of National tourism policy
6. Poor Tourism sector organization and coordination
7. Costs of domestic flights
8. Availability of domestic flights
9. Pollution and lack of environmental protection
10. Poor skills in the tourism workforce

***Some of these challenges are reflected in a survey by the Government of Mongolia with foreign tourists at the end of their visit. Their most common concerns were:***

- The scarcity and inadequate sanitation of public bathrooms.
- Road conditions, status of maintenance, and traffic in the capital.
- Irregular room/camp services such as changing of bed clothes and waste management.
- Inadequate training of staff and modest foreign language proficiency.
- The lack of private taxi services for mobility in and around the capital.
- Inadequate internet connectivity in tourist locations.
- Limited food menus and lack of choice of vegan and vegetarian dishes in restaurants.



## **International Visitors to Mongolia <sup>17</sup>**

*How many have been coming and from where?*

The number of foreign tourists arriving in Mongolia has grown since 1995. It grew rapidly between 1995-2011, and then slower between 2012-2019. The number of arrivals was highest in 2019, a peak year for the tourism industry. Then, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 was the worst year for tourism in Mongolia, and full recovery of the industry is not expected until 2023.

The increase of foreign tourists in the decade up to 2019 was from several key regions. Increase from East Asia-Pacific was +245%, and 64 % of total leisure visitors in 2019 were from East Asia-Pacific region. Increase from Europe was +87%, and 28 % of all tourists were from Europe in 2019. Increase from North America was +80%, and 5% of all foreign tourists in 2019 were from North America.



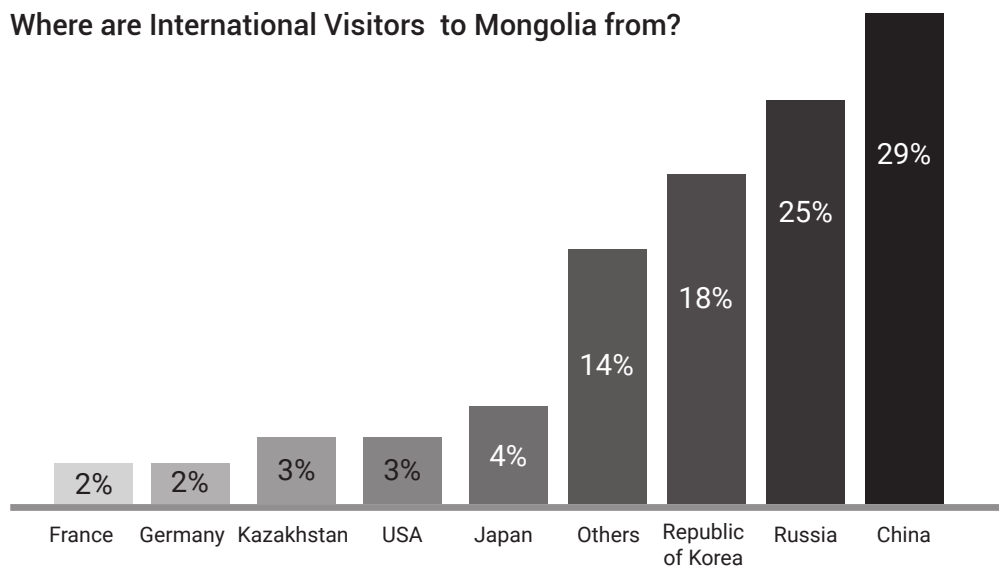
## **Where in Mongolia do International Visitors go?**

The distribution of foreign tourists across Mongolia is very uneven. Dornogovi Aimag receives more than 20 % of them; Tuv and Omnogobi Aimags receive 10 – 20 %; Huvsgul, Arkhangai, Uvurkhangai, and Dundgovi Aimag receive 5-10 %; Uvs, Zavkhan, Gobi Altai and Bayankhongor Aimags receive less than 1 %. The governments tourism development policy however has a focus on Western Mongolia.





## Where are International Visitors to Mongolia from?



Numbers of International Visitors to Mongolia and Changes 2015 – 2019

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	% 2019	% Changes 2015 - 2019
Total	386.204	404.163	469.309	529.370	577.297	100.0	49 %
China	145.029	131.312	142.481	163.979	168.298	29.2	16 %
Russian Federation	70.668	84.065	106.885	129.095	141.927	24.6	101 %
Republic of Korea	47.213	57.587	74.921	84.184	101.279	17.5	115 %
Japan	19.277	19.985	22.519	20.990	24.419	4.2	27 %
USA	14.420	15.859	16.667	17.838	18.838	3.3	31 %
Kazakhstan	14.434	13.370	14.234	16.144	16.264	2.8	13 %
Germany	8.992	9.709	10.582	10.819	12.405	2.1	38 %
France	7.989	9.026	10.038	9.773	10.572	1.8	32 %
Australia	4.804	5.631	7.287	7.495	7.014	1.2	46 %
United Kingdom	6.148	6.161	5.996	5.905	5.931	1.0	-4 %
Taiwan Province of China	2.810	3.732	4.452	5.233	5.930	1.0	111 %



Hong Kong, China	1.848	1.583	2.808	3.121	4.311	0.7	133 %
Italy	2.853	3.000	2.971	3.192	3.655	0.6	28 %
Netherlands	2.495	2.876	3.099	3.777	3.613	0.6	45 %
Canada	2.566	3.052	3.430	3.578	3.594	0.6	40 %
Singapore	1.755	2.064	2.485	2.649	3.010	0.5	72 %
Switzerland	2.378	2.627	2.767	2.665	2.927	0.5	23 %
Belarus	1.078	1.329	2.107	2.210	2.902	0.5	169 %
Thailand	962	1.100	1.492	2.259	2.631	0.5	173 %
India	1.478	1.713	1.874	2.298	2.478	0.4	68 %
Spain	1.309	1.461	1.647	1.969	2.080	0.4	59 %
Turkey	2.421	2.209	2.189	2.999	1.874	0.3	-23 %
Source: World Bank (2021). Mongolia: Fostering Inclusive Tourism Development in the Aftermath of COVID-19.							

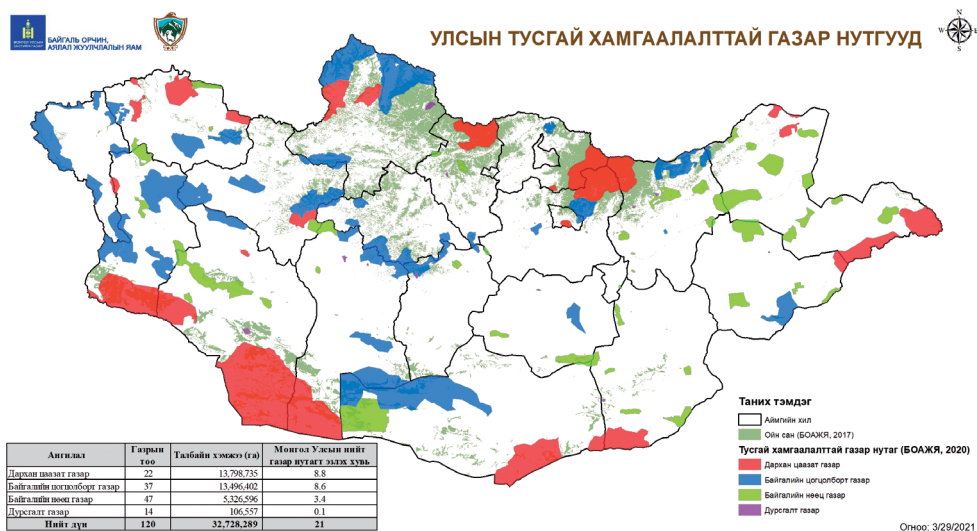
## CHAPTER 2. PROTECTED AREAS AND COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM IN MONGOLIA AND WORLDWIDE





## State Special Protected Areas in Mongolia

Protected Areas play a key role in sustaining the very conservation values that attract visitors to Mongolia. National Parks contain about 80 % of the tourist attractions in the country. Parks protect landscapes and rare wildlife species, some of them which represent the strongest remaining populations worldwide for their species as mentioned in the previous chapter Protected Areas are also crucial in helping to mitigate climate change, with their forest covers, wetlands and other natural landscapes acting as carbon sinks.



There are four categories of state protected areas in Mongolia:

**blue** - National Conservation Parks (in English commonly referred to as National Parks),

**red** - Strictly Protected Areas,

**green** - Nature Reserves,

**purple** - Natural Monuments.

Mongolia has an ambitious national goal of protecting 30 % of its territory by 2030, and has made such commitments under international conventions to which Mongolia is a signatory, like the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Mongolia's network of Protected Areas is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

Scan to visit DPAM e-information website





Each protected area, or sometimes two or more protected areas in geographic proximity are managed by a Protected Area Administration. Typically, a protected area administration has one specialist responsible for tourism. National and international NGOs, and international donors are contributing to strengthening the network.

Tourism, if not managed well, can negatively impact nature and protected areas, but when managed well by all involved and with good guidance and services to visitors, it can benefit and support protected areas, nature and wildlife. This tourism is also an opportunity to benefit local communities and local enterprises. However, income generation from tourism especially in the more remote rural areas has significant challenges and it is important not to create high expectations that cannot be met fast, or ever.

State protected areas in Mongolia are managed based on a management plan. The management plan is developed with the participation of all stakeholders including local communities. The plan describes management actions and responsibilities based on key conservation values to be protected, the values that are the reason that the area is under state protection. An important element of the management plan is the zonation of the protected area.

Entrance Fees are to be paid by both international and national visitors to protected areas. As a tour operator, guide or as local guide, ensure that all fees are paid. International travelers will be happy to pay these fees; they are used to the concept that entrance fees are used for park management from their home countries, and they will be happy to comply and know that their fees help protect Mongolia's natural and cultural heritage. They will appreciate the fact that you alert them to the need to pay fees and that your operation respects and adheres by these rules. Its another element of responsible travel.

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Scan to download Protected Area Law

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## **What Activities are Allowed in the different Protected Areas and their different Zones?**

**Special Protected Areas** are established for the conservation of the original conditions and features of their natural zones, in order to represent specific traits of the zones and scientific importance, and to ensure environmental balance.

### **Pristine Zone**

Only protection activities conformant with the need to preserve original natural features may be conducted within pristine zones. Research and investigation activities may be conducted within a pristine zone only by way of observation methods, and without causing any damage to the natural features. (for translation, this is article 9)

### **Conservation Zone**

All under 1, and: biotechnological measures making use of environmentally safe technologies may be implemented in conservation zones to enhance flora and fauna reproduction and to mitigate damages caused by natural disasters. Article 10

### **Limited Use Zone**

All under 1 and 2, and: Soil and plant cover restoration; Forest maintenance and cleaning; Animal inventories and activities to regulate animal population numbers, age, sex and structure, following an approved program and methods; Use of mineral water and other treatment and sanitation resources; Ecotourism organized following designated routes and areas, according to appropriate procedures; Use of accommodations constructed according to appropriate procedures and designated for temporary residence, camping, observation, research or investigation by travellers or other people with permission; Taking photographs, making audio or video recordings and using these for commercial purposes; Worshipping natural sacred sites and conducting other traditional ceremonies.



In the case of local residents, the collection and use of associated natural resources and medicinal and food plants, according to established regulations, for household needs. Article 11

**National Conservation Parks** are taken under state special protection whose natural original conditions are relatively well preserved and that are of historical, cultural, scientific, educational and ecological significance.

### **Special Zone**

In addition to protection measures aimed at preserving natural features, measures using environmentally safe technologies for the conducting of research and investigation, enhancement of flora and fauna reproduction, restoration of soil and elimination of damages caused by natural disasters may also be undertaken in special zones. Article 15

### **Travel and Tourism Zone**

All under 3 and 4, and: Fishing in designated areas. article 16

### **Limited Use Zone**

All under 3, 4, 5 and: Traditional animal husbandry; Authorized construction of buildings for travellers and others, using approved proposals and plans; Construction of roads and road stations following the appropriate procedures and using approved proposals and plans; Support and maintenance of fields required for sport facilities and public activities; Conducting ecological assessments for and developing the settled areas in the territory according to approved general plans. Article 17

**Nature Reserves** consist of areas taken under state special protection in order to create conditions for the conservation, preservation, and restoration of certain natural features and natural resources. There are ecological, biological, paleontological, geological and water reserves.



Traditional household activities may be carried out in nature reserves provided they do not have a negative impact on the natural features, the condition and location of certain types of natural resources, population levels, and the reproduction of flora and fauna for which the reserve is under protection. Article 21

**Monuments** consist of land taken under state special protection for the purpose of preserving the heritage of natural unique formation as well as historical and cultural traces in their natural state. There are natural, historical and cultural monuments.

Protection measures such as constructing fences, posting warning signs and assigning local residents to be responsible for the protection of the land shall be undertaken within the territory of monuments Article 24

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The legislation is not quite clear about the rights and responsibilities of local communities with regard to sustainable use and conservation of natural resources and community based tourism. In practice, formally established community organizations and also local communities in their customary social organization are, to various degrees, active partners in co-management in protected areas. A revision of the Protected Area Law is currently underway; it includes a provision to enable local communities to conclude contracts with the Ministry of Nature and Environment to manage an area within a Protected Area, whereby the protected area administration would have the right to approve/disapprove.

As there are still uncertainties in the legal framework regarding the rights and responsibilities of local communities in protected areas, it is particularly important to work closely with the park administration, and the soum government, when planning and establishing tourism activities so as to ensure that there is a common understanding and agreement about them and that PA and Soum government representatives support them.





## Collaborative Management in Protected Areas in Mongolia

"Collaborative management of protected areas" is a partnership by which various stakeholders agree on sharing among themselves the management functions, rights and responsibilities for a territory or a particular governmental agency staff - interested in pursuing the collaborative management option."<sup>20</sup>



It has been taken as an approach in Mongolia in buffer zones as well as inside protected areas. Other than in many countries, Mongolia's Protected Area law allows customary land use by nomadic herders in National Parks, though not in all zones.

Through collaborative approaches, local communities and other stakeholders are involved in developing the management plans of Protected Areas. There is an approved process and methodology on how management plans are developed, and the participation of local communities and other stakeholders is prescribed in this.

In some cases, local communities, through their established community based organizations (CBO) are active partners not

only in developing but also in implementing a Protected Area management plan. For example, in Kherlen Toonot National Park in Khentii Province the local Nukhurlul works with the park authority to develop the management plan and is responsible for management of the area, including monitoring wildlife including mountain sheep (Argali, *Ovis ammon*) and protecting them from outside poaching.

In and around Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park, Mongolia's largest national park, community managed areas were piloted around two decades ago. They were defined by tripartite contracts (15 years) between herder communities, protected area administration and local governor. The contracts recognized herders' collective grazing rights and conservation responsibilities in specific

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<sup>20</sup>Borrini, G. (1996): Collaborative management of protected areas: tailoring the approach to the context. IUCN, Gland. ISBN: 978-2-8317-0350-32-8317-0350-6



areas that could include land both inside and outside the boundaries of the national park.

The community managed areas of 25 community organizations overlapped or were situated entirely within Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park (in 2006), covering approximately 25 % of the entire park area of about 27,000 square kilometers. Not all of these may have had formal agreements at the time. The early community groups have since merged into the larger Pasture User Groups, three of which have territory inside the park. Rangeland Use Agreements (RUAs) of Pasture User Groups (PUGs) can include grazing areas within National Parks outside of the core zones. They are co-signed by PA authority.

Protected area management and tourism activities can be developed collaboratively in different ways, with different actors. Conservation will be even more successful if several organizations are involved, according to the needs to provide tourism services, scientific advice, and park management. In Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park new models of collaborative conservation and tourism management have been developed.

"Bayanzag Ulalzah Tsonj" NGO from Bulgan soum of South Gobi developed tourism in Bayanzag (Flaming Cliffs) through the creation of an information center, facilities for its staff an interpretive trail to view fossils, and establishing a managed entrance area . Board members of the NGO include researchers and tourism experts who advice on the preservation of this landscape and it's paleontological values.

In 2019, "Zuun Saikhan" Nukhurlul was established through the initiative of local herder households; its 18 current members are from 16 households from Khurmen, Bayandalai, Dalanzadgad and Khangkhongor Soum. The Nukhurlul runs a ger camp and souvenir shops, sells food and offers horse riding for tourists into Yoliin Am (Vulture Gorge). "Zuun Saikhan" Nukhurlul has concluded a contract with the

Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park Administration and organizes waste management in their area, and has built and maintains a public toilet. The annual income (in 2021) from tourism for each member household is 5-8 Mio MNT

Source: B. Otgonjargal, Nukhurlul leader



The protected area law in Mongolia permits delegation of the management of national parks to NGOs under contracts. The first such case was Hustai Nuruu National Park, where the managing NGO works closely with the local community of nomadic herders. Herders remain resource users in the park and adjacent buffer zones, with agreements to avoid grazing in areas critical to the re-introduced Takhi (Przewalski Horse, *Equus przewalskii*), an endangered endemic species of wild horse.

The delegation of national park management to an NGO has also been agreed between the MET and the Mongolian NGO KTT (Khomyn Talyn Takhi) for the newly established Khomyn Talyn Takhi National Park and hand over is being prepared.

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### **Local Protected Areas in Mongolia**

Local Protected Areas are under the jurisdiction of Aimag and Soum governments, or the capital city and district governments, and typically jointly managed by local authorities and local communities. In some cases, Nukhurlul or other community based organizations (CBOs) are involved. Otherwise, community members, usually local herders, play a role in monitoring and management, namely as rangers, often volunteer rangers. The total area under local government protection has increased significantly in recent years, covering a total of 27 Mio hectares as of 2021. This formal local protection is also an instrument to secure grazing rights and other customary resource use as mining licenses cannot be issued in them.

Local Protected Areas and the natural and cultural values they were established to conserve can play an important role for community based tourism. As local community member, you will be able to provide a unique perspective and insights when guiding visitors. Local protected areas are just as important for Community Based Tourism as state protected areas; not only can they protect the pastoral resources upon which herders livelihoods depend, but they can also safeguard other values of landscape, history and local culture that are also important for CBT development.

As a local community, you can propose the establishment of a Local Protected Area. It may be useful to request advice and assistance of experts to complete the justification why the area should be under local protection, and to



determine the boundary. The approval depends on the Soum Khural decision and the final step to formulize the Local Protected Area is its registration with the national cadastre at ALAMGAC (Agency for Land Management, Geodesy and Cartography).

At the time of compiling this handbook, an update of the Protected Area Law is underway, discussing the establishment of a 5th category of state protected area in Mongolia "Sustainably Managed Protected Area", and all Local Protected Areas would fall under this category and be under the responsibility of the Ministry of Nature and Environment too.

### **Buffer Zones of Protected Areas and Opportunities for CBT**

Most protected areas in Mongolia have a defined buffer zone around them in order to minimize, and prevent actual and potential adverse impacts to protected areas, to increase public participation, and to support local livelihoods. According to the law, buffer zones shall be established outside Strictly Protected Areas and may be either outside or overlapping with the Limited Use Zone of National Parks. Soum and Khoroo Citizens' Representatives' Khurals can also establish Buffer Zones around Nature Reserves and Natural Monuments.

It is important that you are well informed about and actively engage in discussions on establishing a buffer zone and in the development of the buffer zone management plan, through your elected member to the Citizens' Representatives' Khural, or in public events that may be organized to encourage local community participation in these processes. Buffer Zone management plans will define local economic activities that are well in line with the conservation objectives of the protected area, and community based tourism will be an important option.

You or a representative of your community can also become a member of the buffer zone council. Buffer Zone Funds are established for the purposes of developing the Buffer Zone and providing support for local people's livelihood, so they can be an important financial mechanism to support you and your community in developing CBT activities.

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Scan to download Buffer Zone Law



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<sup>21</sup>IUCN is the International Union for Conservation of Nature, an international organization active in research, field projects, advocacy and education in conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.



## **International Best Practices and Principles of Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas**

The IUCN<sup>21</sup> Best Practice Guideline on "Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas – Guidelines for Sustainability" (2018) has been translated into Mongolian; it describes the key characteristics of best practices in protected area tourism. These are valid globally and can be applied to and further specified for Mongolia, and for each protected area.

### ***In summary, the best practices include:***

- Tourism in protected areas should (i) contribute to the conservation of nature (environmental value); (ii) generate economic benefits to protected area authorities and owners to help support management costs, and also sustainable livelihood opportunities in local communities (economic value); and (iii) contribute towards the enrichment of society and culture (social value).
- For tourism to be an effective conservation and community development tool, a high quality visitor experience is important. The kinds of experiences managers and tourism operators provide in protected areas need to be different from those offered in other destinations. They should aim to build conservation ethic. Visitors should be aware of how and why conservation is taking place in the protected area.
- Both negative impacts as well as benefits of tourism in protected areas should be acknowledged openly. The social as well as the environmental impacts of tourism-related decisions should be stated, analyzed, and monitored.

Tourism in protected areas should respect the special needs of local communities. Benefits from protected area tourism should flow to local communities as well as to outside providers. Negative impacts from tourism should not fall disproportionately on local communities.



## **IUCN Guideline - 10 Principles of Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas**

Drawing on experiences from across the world, the IUCN Guideline states that by best practices, sustainable tourism can contribute both to the conservation mission of the protected area and to benefits for local communities. The challenge is how to maximize benefits from tourism while minimizing its negative impacts. The IUCN Guideline shares 10 Principles of Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas:

- Identify clear tourism and visitor management objectives that connect to equally clear conservation values.
- Plan proactively, with foresight of changes in the future, for the development, operation and decommissioning of tourism activities, both for commercial tourism and for individual visitors. For commercial tourism and infrastructure development, have in place a policy framework, prepare contracts, ensure EIAs and ongoing monitoring.
- Requirements for visitor experiences and for activities in different areas within the PA can change over time. This is a challenge, but also an opportunity to facilitate new visitor experiences that support conservation. The zonation as in place in parks in Mongolia already guides the different use types, however activities for specific areas can be planned in more detail than the zonation provides.
- Impacts on natural resource and social conditions are inevitable consequences of tourism activities. Approaches to assess and manage impacts include determining tourism carrying capacity by agreeing on "Limits of Acceptable Change", and on indicators of quality of PA management. The guidelines elaborate on these concepts and methods.
- There are four types of strategies to manage tourism and visitors to PAS and to reduce impacts: a) increase supply (of visitor experiences), b) reduce impacts of use, c) increase durability of experience/resource, d) limit use. The most common tools used to manage tourism impacts are zoning, rationing, and enforcement of rules and regulations.
- Negative impacts result from a range of factors such as mode of transport, group size, season of use. Differentiated pricing (by scenic value of campsites, by season etc.) and influencing visitors decision on activities may be a better long term strategy than simply restrictions.
- Sustained monitoring is an essential element of PA management to learn



whether management actions are efficient and what adjustments are needed. Key questions when designing a monitoring system are: Why monitor? What to monitor? Where and when to monitor are the Who will monitor? Who will analyze the data? How will the information be used. The role of citizen scientists, and especially of local community members in Mongolia, can be crucial for a functioning monitoring system. The guideline provides a wealth of examples of monitoring activities in protected areas around the world.

- In making management decisions, technical description should be separated from value judgement
- All groups (stakeholders, rightsholders) should actively participate in planning as true consensus and partnership is crucial for effective implementation of sustainable tourism in protected areas.
- “For a partnership to be truly successful managers must ensure that: 1. All partners decide on, understand and agree to their roles and responsibilities and document them in writing; 2. All those involved equally shoulder the duties and commitment; 3. The partnership is mutually beneficial; 4. Mechanisms are in place to evaluate the success and benefits of the partnership; and 5. Open and honest communication is a priority.

Partnerships between protected area agencies and NGOs, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and the private sector can be very rewarding, but also highly challenging because each group has different goals as well as different ways of achieving them. By working jointly through participatory planning to develop management plans and activities, effective partnerships can be established between multiple stakeholders and with local communities. (Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas, Guidelines for Sustainability, 2018, IUCN page 50).

### ***Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)***

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which entered into force in December 1993, is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 193 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries.





The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices, and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders, including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community.

The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, held in 2010, adopted a revised and updated Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for 2011–2020, comprising five strategic goals and 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The Plan is the overarching framework on biodiversity, not only for the biodiversity-related conventions, but for the entire United Nations system.

Currently, the post 2020 global biodiversity framework is being developed, with the COP 15 (Conference of Parties) meetings anticipated for March 2022 (Geneva) and April 2022 (Kunming) to agree on new targets until 2030.

Mongolia is a signatory to the CBD, and a member of the High Ambition Coalition, the group of nations that have committed to placing 30 % of their territory under protection by 2030.





## CHAPTER 3. COMMUNITY BASED CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### ***Nature Conservation and Local Communities Worldwide***

Today, there is a growing number of studies concluding that probably more biodiversity is protected globally by indigenous peoples and local communities outside protected areas than within state protected areas<sup>22</sup>. Studies also showed that conservation is more successful in Protected Areas where local communities are involved in co-management and derive livelihood benefits.<sup>23</sup>



<sup>22</sup>New estimates suggest that Indigenous peoples and local communities conserve at least a fifth of all land on Earth. The UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre/ICCA Consortium

<sup>23</sup>Johan Oldekop and others, "A Global Assessment of the Social and Conservation Outcomes of Protected Areas", *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 30, (2015)



Internationally, areas managed under collective tenure and customary rules have been referred to in general as ICCAs – Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas. More recently, the term “Territories of Life”<sup>24</sup> has been introduced which encompasses the great diversity of how any local community or indigenous group defines the area they have inhabited for generations and where they have developed their traditional knowledge and own ways of protecting or sustainably using natural resources and biodiversity.

Indigenous peoples and local communities are now more recognized for their role in conservation and respect for their rights to customary use of the land and natural resources is growing. Also, the nomadic way of using grasslands has been more understood and mobility recognized as a crucial tool for sustainable use of pasturelands by modern science and the international conservation community in recent decades.

### ***Community Based Conservation and Natural Resource Management in Mongolia***

In Mongolia, besides using nomadic practice to conserve grasslands, local herder communities have traditionally protected land, water and wildlife, as well as special sacred sites. In recent decades, community based conservation and community based natural resource management have been more formalized and different forms of community organizations are now practiced. They include “Nukhurlul”, which focus on collective conservation activities, “Pasture User Groups” (PUGs) for joint pasture management over larger territories, based on customary grazing patterns, and “Forest User Groups” (FUGs), for forest and NTFP conservation and management.

#### ***Nukhurlul - Community Organizations for Conservation***

Nukhurlul focus on collective conservation activities, pasture management and income generation activities. Nukhurlul conclude a contract with the Soum government and receive a Nukhurlul certificate.

The “community managed areas” of the first Nukhurluls established in and around Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park were defined by tripartite contracts between Nukhurlul, park administration and Soum governor.

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<sup>24</sup>ICCA Consortium – Territories of Life - [www.iccaconsortium.org](http://www.iccaconsortium.org)



The legal framework to clarify rights and responsibilities of Nukhurlul and strengthen tenure is still evolving. The current environmental law lacks clarity regarding local communities' tenure security and rights and responsibilities in resource use.

At the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, one officer is responsible for CBOs, and with MET support, an National Forum of Nukhurlul has been taking place every two years in recent times, before the pandemic. It has become a big event in Ulaanbaatar, including an exhibition/fair, experience sharing and meetings between communities, the public and government representatives. The national umbrella organization for Nukhurlul is the "National Nukhurlul Association"<sup>25</sup>

In 2021, 1692 Nukhurlul were active in 176 Soums of 21 Aimags. The area formally recognized as under Nukhurlul management was 8.3 Mio hectares, but de facto much more land is under Nukhurlul management, however not registered at ALAMGAC yet. Forest user groups are usually registered as Nukhurlul, the above numbers include forest user groups.

In the meantime, several manuals have been produced for the establishment and management of Nukhurlul, outlining success factors, suggesting planning formats and guiding the procedure to conclude a contract with the Soum government.

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Scan to download TNC Guideline on  
CBNRM in Mongolia




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Scan to download Handbook on  
Community Organization in Gobi

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<sup>25</sup>[www.facebook.com/nukhurlul.mongolia](https://www.facebook.com/nukhurlul.mongolia), [info@nukhurlul.mn](mailto:info@nukhurlul.mn)



## ***The Legal Framework for Community Based Conservation***

The Environmental Protection Law (1995) was amended in 2017. Article 8 was adopted to provide a legal basis for collaborative management of natural resources. It defines collaborative management of natural resources as a process under which local people organized as a Nukhurlul have the right to manage (use, protect, rehabilitate) natural resources. Transparent and democratic principles should govern the process, and the Nukhurlul members are entitled to derive social and economic benefits.



Article 8 defines as key stakeholders in the co-management process are Nukhurluls, Soum citizen khural, Soum governor, Environmental officer, and the entity/NGO involved in conservation work. A contract is to be concluded between the Nukhurlul and the Soum government, specifying the size of the Nukhurlul managed area, depending on the number of Nukhurlul members. Upon signing of the contract, the Soum governor is to support the Nukhurlul activities, and a certificate is to be issued to the Nukhurlul.

The Nukhurlul activity can be suspended if no conservation activities have been undertaken, or if members agree to discontinue. Nukhurluls should report about implementation of activities to their soum. Nukhurlul have a full right to be paid of/compensated if any NRs in their area are degraded by other parties. The Nukhurlul is to develop a management plan with the participation of all its members.

The formal recognition of CBNRM and CBOs still needs to be strengthened to be sustainable, and the collaboration and roles of CBOs in pasture management, conservation and management of other natural resources need to be worked out at local level, by herders and Soum governments, while the legal and regulatory framework is being up-dated.



## **Pasture User Groups**

"Pasture User Groups" have become the most widespread organizational form of herders in Mongolia. They are territory based and usually have more members than Nukhurlul, sometimes one Bagh is one Pasture User Group. Membership and pasture area of a PUG is decided in a participatory process involving all local herder households. While they are established primarily for pasture management, there is no reason why the group or some of its member cannot engage in conservation and community based tourism too.

PUGs conclude 15 year Rangeland Use Agreements (RUAs) with the Soum government. RUAs are registered in the national cadaster at ALAMGAC. RUAs can include grazing areas within national parks outside of the core zones. RUAs for PUGs that overlap with protected areas are co-signed by the protected area authority, as well as by all member households.

PUGs as the primary community organization with rights and responsibilities in pasture management are at the core of the draft pasture land law. When/if this law is approved, PUGs will have an even stronger status. Currently, the land law provides the legal basis for collective tenure by PUGs.

By 2021 (July), 1522 PUGs had been established in 170 Soums of 18 Aimags, managing over 80 Mio hectares of pasture land under RUAs. The number of RUAs registered at ALAMGAC was 930, covering nearly 50 Mio hectares in 140 Soums.

## **Community Organizations and Community Based Tourism**

It should be mentioned again here that this hand book on Community Based Tourism does not only address formally established community organizations or promotes the notion that CBT is only for organized community groups. This hand book is for all – group or individuals, formal or informal groups – among local communities, who want to engage in tourism activities.

However, it is crucial that a CBO wanting to engage in tourism business activities as a group has very good internal management in place and mutual trust is strong already, if business activities are to be successful and sustainable. Early experience sharing events among Nukhurlul have shown some success factors for developing strong internal governance.





- » Good leadership with transparent decision making
- » A community council to support the community leader
- » Participatory decision making including all members (women/men, old/young, better off/vulnerable)
- » Holding regular meetings
- » Having a community fund
- » Having a participatory monitoring system to track social, livelihood and environmental changes as a result of Nukhurlul activities.

It is also an option that only one or several members of an CBO form an entity for tourism activities. You cannot force all members to be part of a tourism venture, and not everybody has the talent, interest or ability to work in tourism. In CBT, it is often single households or a small group of families who form a tourism enterprise or work together under one. This can be a formal LLC, a business partnership (also called Nukhurlul, do not confuse with the CBO Nukhurlul), or individual ownership. For more detail on different business types, see Chapter 5.

### **Community Based Conservation and Tourism in Mongolia**

It is at the heart of the concept of Community Based Tourism that the community effort makes a real contribution to nature conservation while improving the income of the community members. It is not an easy goal to achieve, but some communities in Mongolia have already been successful or are on a very promising track.

As a first in Mongolia, Omnogobi Aimag started implementation of a program<sup>26</sup> called "Tourism – Household Income" between 2016 and 2020 to increase income for local households from tourism development. Under the framework of this program, the regulation on Mongol Ger Camp<sup>27</sup> was developed by Aimag Citizen representative khural.

<sup>26</sup>Order #09 by aimag citizen representative khural on Jan 25, 2017.

<sup>27</sup>Order #9/11, Dec 4, 2019. Source: N. Burmaa, Officer in charge of tourism development of Aimag Environmental Department



### ***Developing Community Based Conservation and Tourism in Omnogobi Aimag***

In Omnogobi there are currently 61 ger camps run by locals, 56 herders organize camel riding for tourists and 6 households operate ger shops in Yoliin Am. The local government of Sevrei Soum cooperates closely with the herder run ger camps and tourist camps. Every year before tourism season, the Soum organizes a joint workshop with the Administration of Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park, tourist camps and ger camps. The workshop defines the area managed and protected by the tourist camps and ger camps of local community members.

Herders have become involved in tourism, using their local knowledge and guiding visitors to sightings of rare wildlife, such as Snow Leopard (*Uncia uncia*), Pallas' cat or Manul (*Otocolobus manul*), and Marbled polecat (*Vormela peregusna*).

Also tourist companies work together with herders and make contracts to share information about wildlife location and their movements. The companies rent horses, hire local guides, buy milk products and rent spare gers from households as overnight guest accommodation.

These initiatives not only support the livelihood of local community members but also increase their participation in conservation activities and their knowledge on wildlife and nature. During a wildlife watching tour around 3-7 herders participate and one herder can earn 1 – 4 Mio MNT, equaling their total annual income from selling cashmere, meat and skin.<sup>28</sup> Of course, it is very important that conservation objectives remain primary. But the good income is a real incentive to ensure that the wildlife is not disturbed, so that wildlife watching can continue as an income generating tourism activity.

<sup>28</sup>Source: T. Tselmeg, Manager of Tumen Eco Tour of South Gobi Aimag





### **Local Festivals - Celebrating Natural and Cultural Heritage**

Local festivals have gained popularity and grown in number in Mongolia. They also help to prolong the short tourism season by providing an incentive for winter and spring travel. Festivals rely on local communities to be the main organizers, performers in parades, competitions, and races, to showcase their skills, traditions, best livestock, local costumes, handicrafts, foods, and more.



"Thousand Camel Festival" – takes place usually in early March in Omnogobi.

"Yak Festival" – late May in Omnogobi near Yoliin Am

"Yak Festival" – organized by yak herders in Arkhangai, Omnogobi, Bayankhongor aimag

"Eagle Festival" – several eagle festivals are organized in Bayan Ulgii.<sup>29</sup>

"Spring Eagle Festival" near Ulaanbaatar

"Horse Festival" – in Khentii aimag, showing horses, horsemanship and horse saddles and tack

"One Day of Nomads" – is organized several times per season in Ulaanbaatar, or Aimag Centers

"Tea Road Festival" in Khovd Aimag Center

"Silver Shagshuurga" in Khovd Aimag

"Blue Pearl -Winter Ice Festival" at Lake Huvsgul, Khuvsugul aimag

"Golden Sand Dune Festival" in Omnogobi

**What festival can you organize to share your traditions and local culture?**

<sup>29</sup>While the original Eagle Festival has become very well-known and popular among travelers and for photographers, some tour operators already do not bring guests there anymore, because of overcrowding. Also, foreign visitors have not liked some of the hunting activities that they consider cruelty to animals.



## CHAPTER 4. FEASIBILITY CHECK

### ***Make an honest assessment of your opportunities and challenges to successfully run CBT activities!***

Being really enthusiastic and committed to building your tourism venture is very important. Whatever business you want to run, you must love doing it. Otherwise you cannot make it through the challenges you meet when starting and growing your business. But passion and commitment are not enough. Your community may be talking already about the unique local landscapes, scenic sites and attractions they can guide visitors to, and the interesting local traditions, celebrations, and food they can share. These are great assets for developing tourism. But with that alone, you still fail if you don't reach the market.





Once you have set up your operation, challenges can come up that you did not consider. This can lead to disappointment, loss and even conflicts. Therefore, it is really important that you take the time to do a self-assessment first, and then an even more thorough feasibility study before you establish your business formally, build a camp or make any other investments. This chapter guides you to determine what are your opportunities, and challenges, to become very aware of what are your strengths and weaknesses, what resource you have and what you lack. It will help you identify what skills you need to develop, what trainings you may want to spend time, energy and money on.

Most important, if you want to operate sustainably in CBT, your activities need to be planned and developed from the beginning with two aims - to help protect nature and local culture and generate local income.

### **10 Steps to Develop Community Based Tourism**

Before going into more detail for the feasibility check, let's look at the overall process of developing community based tourism. It is summarized in 10 Steps below.

#### **Step 1. Select the area where to bring tourists**

- Identify the Bagh, Soum, Protected Area or other areas where you want to bring tourists to. List all the unique features of your local landscapes, wildlife, history, culture, traditions like songs for example, local crafts – everything that may be of interest to visitors and that actually can be shown and seen.

#### **Step 2. Feasibility Check and Self-Assessment of Your Capacity**

- Involve your whole community/group and work with Soum/Aimag experts, Rangers, Protected Area experts, NGOs/projects, tour operators, other professionals to complete all elements of the feasibility check
- Consider positive and negative impacts of planned activities
- Double check potential negative impacts on nature, wildlife, local community, local culture



### **Step 3. Develop the Vision, Mission, and Goals of Your Community Based Tourism Activities**

- Your vision is your dream<sup>30</sup>. It's what you envision as ideal conditions, how things would look if CBT was developed perfectly. Your vision statement should inspire your community to dream.
- Your mission statement then expresses practical steps for action to achieve the vision. It describes what you are going to do and why. Your mission statement should inspire your community to action.<sup>31</sup>
- Then you can develop goals to achieve in the next two years. Evaluate your progress towards them regularly and develop new goals after two years. Keep the planning realistic. But it is good to set yourself a bit of a challenge, then upgrade or develop your skills while you are reaching the goal. It will bring success and joy.

### **Step 4. Develop a Plan to Run Your CBT Activities**



- With vision, mission and goals in mind, you are ready to make a plan. First, try to learn from others, about successes and failures and the reasons.
- Involve all members of your group in learning and planning
- Identify the combined skills you have as a group, and what skills you need to develop. Make a human capacity development plan (see more detail on chapter 9 on skill development)
- Make a plan with all members who can contribute what, such as a ger, livestock for community fund, transport, and more.

### **Step 5. Establish/Strengthen your Community Norms**

- If you work as a Nukhurlul or other community based organization, you must have strong trust among members, based on transparent and participatory decision making and good leadership skills. This

<sup>30</sup><https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/strategic-planning/vision-mission-statements/main>

<sup>31</sup><https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/strategic-planning/vision-mission-statements/main>





is the foundation for any work as community, whether it is in CBT or other areas. If you don't have agreed rules and norms it is likely you will have problems, misunderstandings or even conflicts that break the community apart.

- Develop your rules/norms to clearly identify each team members role and responsibility, key products, all members meeting schedule, agreements on co-investments, financial management, benefit sharing. More detail is provided in Chapter 10.
- Organize meetings regularly and keep records of what was discussed and decided.

### **Step 6. Develop your Activities and Programs to offer to Guests**

- To develop good services and products, consider human capacity and experience, material capacity, how many guests you can receive at one time, your costs, how to manage the activity efficiently and safely,
- When developing products and services, consider your unique cultural and local traditions. For more detail, see chapter 12.

### **Step 7. Train your Team Members**

- Find out all the available training centers, training organizations, and what trainings are available where to train all your team members in their respective skills – for guiding and other services.
- Get in touch with Aimag Tourism Associations, Aimag Tourism department, inform them about your plan, request assistance for training and marketing (more details in Chapter 9)

### **Step 8. Develop Your Marketing Plan**

- Your marketing plan is an important part of your overall business plan. Plan a budget for marketing!
- Make connections with Tourism Association and Aimag Tourism department to help with marketing planning and linking you to the market (See chapter 6 for more detail how to reach your market)

### **Step 9. Conduct Test Tours**

- Its very helpful to organize a “mock” tour. Community members, or better outsiders, can act as tourists and give their comments and suggestions how to improve your services and products. (for more detail, see chapter 12)



### **Step 10. Monitor your Activities and Achievements**

- Keep in mind that your key objective for your service delivery should be to provide guests with a once in a life time experience.
- Constantly keep monitoring and ensuring a high standard in all operations (safety, cleanliness/hygiene, accurate and interesting information, etc.)
- It is a good idea to ask your guests to leave their comments, for example in a Visitor Book ! You can use their positive feed back for your further advertising! And take critical comments serious, follow up on them and respond to guests if possible.

### **A. Self- Assessment of Your Opportunities and Challenges for CBT**

#### **1. Ask yourself:**

- Are we really passionate about Tourism and about Nature Conservation?
- Do we enjoy spending time with visitors – international and domestic - to share our local culture and nature?
- Are we interested in their culture? or, are we looking at CBT only as another way of income generation?

**2.** If you know you are really enthusiastic about protecting nature and about sharing your local heritage with visitors, ask yourself:

- *Are visitors already coming to our area?*

#### **If so, ask yourself:**

- *Why are they coming? What is the attraction?*
- *How many service providers are already there, and what do they offer?*
- *Are more service providers needed? What different service can I provide? What better service can I provide?*
- *How will I attract visitors to my service? How to advertise? How to connect to market?*
- *Are there already too many visitors and activities in one area that are impacting the local environment and community negatively?*

#### **If no or not many visitors are coming to your area (yet) ask yourself:**

- *What could our area have to offer? Local nature, protected areas, culture, traditions, festivals?*
- *Is it realistic tourists will come here?*
- *Would our area and service be so unique that travelers would come all the way?*



- Does our Aimag/Soum Development Strategies and Plans include tourism development (infrastructure, transport)
- How far are we from Ulaanbaatar, from other popular destinations, from common travel routes?
- Are there flights to our area?
- How are road conditions? For how many/what months can our area be reached? What is the best season for our attractions/services/products? Is there public transport to or near to our area?

**3.** If you have an idea of what your area can offer, what service/product you could offer, and that it is fair to assume that tourists reach your area and that their number would grow, ask yourself:

- What is my/our capacity to provide the products and services ? Our skills, knowledge, experience?
- What do we need to learn?
- Do we have sufficient labor force especially in the tourist season? Do your young people if they are at university in the city come back for the summer to help?
- What are our conditions in terms of power and water supply? Phone Signal? Internet?
- What are our resources to start operations? How would we access finance?
- How will we attract visitors to our service? How to advertise? How to connect to market?
- Are we a strong community/group to start business activities together?

**4.** Now you have already reflected a lot on the opportunities and challenges for developing CBT you have. If you haven't done yet, get advice and support. Contact your Aimag tourism expert, Aimag Tourism Association, Protected Area Tourism expert, tour operators that you may know, other organizations. Discuss your ideas. And do a more thorough feasibility study.

### **B. Feasibility Study with Local Community and Experts**

A collaborative effort is the best way to do a more thorough feasibility study. Involve many local community members, as well as experts from Soum/Aimag, Protected Area, Tourism Association or other NGOs, and tour operators if you already have connections. Young and old community members both can play an important role. Young people can interview elderly community members about local culture and history that will be interesting to share with tourists. The feasibility study can be a whole community effort, to raise awareness of local traditions, cultural and natural history. Local schools could also be involved.





**Unique features in your area/community.** Identify what makes your area and community unique, what unique features of local culture and nature you have to share. Do some research how they differ from other community areas. This can include special historic and prehistoric sites. Famous people, historic events of which evidence can be shown. It could be local beliefs and legends, traditional greetings and sayings, celebrations, festivals, entertainment activities where tourists can be involved. Also local rules, do-s and don't do- s. It includes unique and beautiful landscapes, scenery, and wildlife. Places where events and activities can be organized. Identify special features of local ways of living, special local skills and interesting occupations in livestock husbandry, agriculture; local handicraft and craftsmanship. Local foods and cooking can be very interesting for visitors.

**Local Natural Resources Protection and Sustainable Use.** It is important to have a good picture and common understanding of local natural resources, their condition and special values to protect. This should be the basis for planning. The aim of community based tourism is to generate benefit for the local community and to contribute to nature conservation. Tourism will not be sustainable if the very values of the natural scenery, wildlife or other resources are damaged through tourism activities.

For the assessment, work with the relevant officers (land manager, environmental inspector), rangers, protected areas experts and other experts if necessary, to identify areas and resources that are vulnerable, where activities cannot take place or need to be managed carefully. Consult existing plans – protected area management plans and buffer zone management plans if available.

The Soum Landscape Development plan is also an important resource and guideline to help with CBT planning. Consult the plan for details on natural resource maps for the Soum and the general development strategy outlined for the Soum. Also the Soum pasture management plan should be considered, as it identifies areas for resting pasture, hay making etc. In fact, it may be interesting information to explain to tourists how nomadic livestock husbandry is organized in your local area.

**Your/Community Capacity for Developing CBT.** It is equally important to have a clear idea of your current capacity in terms of your knowledge and skills on tourism, your financial resources, your available labor force, your seasonal workloads for livestock husbandry and other work.



Work with the experts/advisers to answer all the questions listed under the self-assessment section above.

Visit a CBT enterprise for experience sharing – other groups involved in CBT may be the best experts of all to give advice to you!



## CHAPTER 5. ESTABLISHING YOUR CBT ENTERPRISE FORMALLY

Once you have made the decision to establish a CBT operation based on the feasibility check and thorough discussions in your community, you want to develop your vision and mission. This will inspire and guide you, in the short, mid and long term development of your venture. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the vision is your dream, and the mission is a practical description how to achieve it.





It's an important step and it's very important that all your community members, or all team members of your CBT enterprise, are involved in developing the vision and mission. It's a great exercise to start building your team and its spirit to join forces to achieve your common goals.

The process will be most effective and creative if all team members actively participate, freely expressing their own ideas, dreams, fears and concerns. And it ensures that everybody understands what you are all working for together. Last not least, it should be a fun exercise to mark the start of your journey together.

Keep your original charts of your discussions and also write down the minutes of meetings for your records, and share them with all members. You now also have a basis on which to make your work plans - annual plans as well as shorter term activity plans, which ever suits you best. An example of the Vision, Mission and Value developed by the members of one Nukhurlul in Mongolia.

#### **Example Vision, Mission and Value of a Nukhurlul**

- **Mission:** Increase additional income of its members through developing ecotourism to preserve and restore Zahchin ethnicity and nomad culture and to protect local nature and manage natural resources in sustainable way.
- **Vision:** To develop responsible tourism to preserve nomad culture and living tradition to our next generation while protecting and keeping the local nature in wilderness.
- **Value:** Create responsible and trustworthy team while putting customer satisfaction as a key mission through learning and implementing sustainable tourism standards.

#### **Choose Your Organizational Form as a Business Entity or CBO?**

In order to run your operation properly, you have to decide as what kind of formal entity you will operate. Will you establish a company, such as a joint stock company or a Limited Liability Company (LLC), or a business Nukhurlul (partnership), with its different liability options. Or, will you remain or establish a community based organization, such as a Nukhurlul under the Environmental Law?

It is also possible, if you are already a Nukhurlul, Forest User Group or Pasture User Group, and some of your members want to work as a CBT group and



establish their enterprise. Or, you can establish a Nukhurlul for CBNRM and CBT within a larger PUG. Another option is to run CBT activities if you are already an established cooperative, or to form a cooperative for CBT.

To provide a clear overview of the different types of companies and CBOs/NGOs, we have prepared a table that shows the names, legal status, license/permits/certificate requirements, and purposes of the different types of business entities and of CBOs/NGOs – and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each entity for CBT. View the Table [here](#).



Nº	Category	Types	Purpose	Documents needed	Permission or License needed	Collaboration	Advantage	Disadvantage
1.	Company	A. Joint stock company	Earn profit, income from tourism activities	By law	Get registered in state registration office of Mongolia as a legal entity	Run business independently or establish joint entity	Easy to extend your business and market on tourism	Have to have staff who is certified to run tourism activities (at least bachelor degree on this field)  Should have an office to run business activities and obtain website  Required to have a staff to be able to do tour operation  Staff should have sufficient foreign language ability
		B. LLC/LtD						
		A. All member's liability						
		B. Some member's liability						
2.	Nunkhurlul (profit making)	B.Limited liability Nukhurlul		Contract for establishment	Get registered in state registration office of Mongolia as a legal entity	Every member can represent the entity  Leaders are chosen on vote of all members		
Nonprofit entities								
3.	NGO	A. Serves for society  B. Serves for its members		By law	Get registered in state registration office of Mongolia as a legal entity	Board of directors		Run to reach the objective
4.	Cooperative	Serves for its members, at least 9 people should get together to establish	Collaborate to run any sort of business	By law	Get registered in state registration office of Mongolia as a legal entity	Every members have right to share their opinion		
5.	Foundation	Serves for society		By law	Get registered in state registration office of Mongolia as a legal entity			
6.	Natural Resource Collaborative management Nukhurluls	For tourism activities (hunting and receiving tourists)	Manage and protect NRs and get benefit out of it	Contract and Management plan	The establishment will be disused during bagh meeting.  Soum governor issues a certificate based on the order by Soum Rep. Khural	Nukhurlul members	Manage and protect natural resources  All members get equal benefit	Not registered as legal entity, thus have no right to open bank account, not obtaining seal.  Only work in the framework of MNET. The legal aspects of nukhurluls are still unclear  Contract shall be extended every year
		FUGs						



There are no rules what entity you have to be to become active in CBT. However most successful examples of CBT initiatives are probably communities that are registered as a Nukhurlul for community based natural resource management under the Environmental Law.

There are several points that are in favor of a Nukhurlul (CBO) for CBT. You will need quite a labor force to efficiently manage you small camp, and to run all the activities. And your Nukhurlul members can take on different responsibilities and it is advantage that they have different skills and can provide different local experiences that are so important for guests and characteristic for CBT.

As a Nukhurlul, you already have, or will develop, your norms, mutual trust and supportive mechanisms such as a community fund, all of which are also conducive for CBT activities. Importantly, as a Nukhurlul your heart and actions are already committed to nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, which is the other "half" of the concept and principles of CBT – namely to contribute to local natural and cultural heritage protection.

## Case studies

### 1. "Buurliin Magnai" community

In 2010 "Buurliin Magnai" community was established in Mankhan soum of Khovd aimag. Nukhurlul consists of 21 members of 10 households.

The key activity area of Nukhurlul is CBT, vegetable growing, and felt product production. Nukhurlul became one of the best communities on vegetable growing among the western 5 aimag communities.

They worked together with film making crew from Korea on snow leopard about herder's lifestyle between 2012 and 2013.

The community also cooperated with the WWF study on snow leopards.

The members make felt products by closely working with Irbes Enterprises.

The community played a guiding role in the Russian and Mongolian expedition study of flora.

Since 2020 the community has been actively involved in different wildlife studies with research organizations and individuals, which led them to run CBT activities by guiding bird and wildlife research groups in their area.

During summer time they operate ger camp, providing services like guiding and organizing camel trips for both foreign and domestic visitors.

Additionally, the members make souvenirs getting the order from different organizations as an additional income.

The community made an official agreement/contract with the governor





upon which received the Nukhurlul certificate. Nukhurlul makes an annual report to its government on the activities they have undertaken each year.

## **2. "Tsast Undarga" community**

"Tsast Undarga" community was established in 2008 with the support of Altai Sayan project of UNDP. Their main activity is nature conservation. The members work with Snow Leopard Foundation to market their felt products in the countries of EU.

The community-managed area has a unique landscape rich with rare wildlife and plants and community became Natural Resource Collaborative Management Nukhurlul in 2018. In their community-managed area, 30 members from 13 households live and work. The community operates ger camp with 12 beds in total. The members routine their roles to help with receiving guests and serving them. They also work as a guide for visitors.

## **3. Tsaatan community**

The taiga communities became popular among tourists in 1990 when one foreigner made the documentary about tsaatan community and their life.

Then Itgel Foundation was established with the initiative of one tourist in Mongolia and established in 2005 opened the door for tsaatan communities to start developing CBT in their area. Itgel foundation opened its office in UB and started helping Tsaatan communities to work together (west and east taiga communities) on developing CBT and get benefits out of it. The foundation supported the communities to get trained in many different ways to develop their own community-based tourism.

Under the support and initiative of Itgel Foundation, Tsaachin Information Center was built in Tsagaan Nuur soum center. The center organized numerous training and coaching activities for the local communities working with the professional organization on guidance. For instance, the community members got trained on organizing horse and deer tours, received First Aid training, English language training, cooking for tourists and waste management, etc.



One key intervention initiated was that all local communities agreed to have a fair share of receiving tourists and developed one community fund. It even helped the tour operators from UB. The tour operators contacted directly to the information center to order the tour, from where the tours are coordinated. The center made a schedule by allocating the tours to the communities. It helped the local communities to fairly share their tourists.

The tourism business developed more there since one foreign family came to the area with their kid who suffered from autism. They made a documentary named "Boy on the horse". The movie got the prize from Sundance festival, known as Oscar for the documentary. The book from the movie was developed and translated into 23 languages,

The tour operators made transfers directly to their community fund, where the communities got their fee and put some amount to be kept in the fund to support the community members' social, health and education activities. The community manager is the one who handled the fund and the one who coordinated everything. He/she is elected by all the members.



All these efforts and successes ended when the community manager took all the money from the community and disappeared. Since then tsaatan communities have individually operated their CBT activities. Now the information center is occasionally used during summertime to receive guests stopping by.

However, still, tsaatan communities receive tourists all year round. They are the only communities working on CBT in the extended season.

### ***Establishing a Nukhurlul for Natural Resource Management***

Currently, there are some uncertainties in the Environmental Law (Section 8) as to the exact definition of what natural resources Nukhurluls manage and what are exactly the rights and responsibilities. However, the legal framework is being developed and more good experiences and best practices in real life can help shaping the laws and regulations so that they enable sustainable, community based natural resource management and conservation and support local livelihoods.

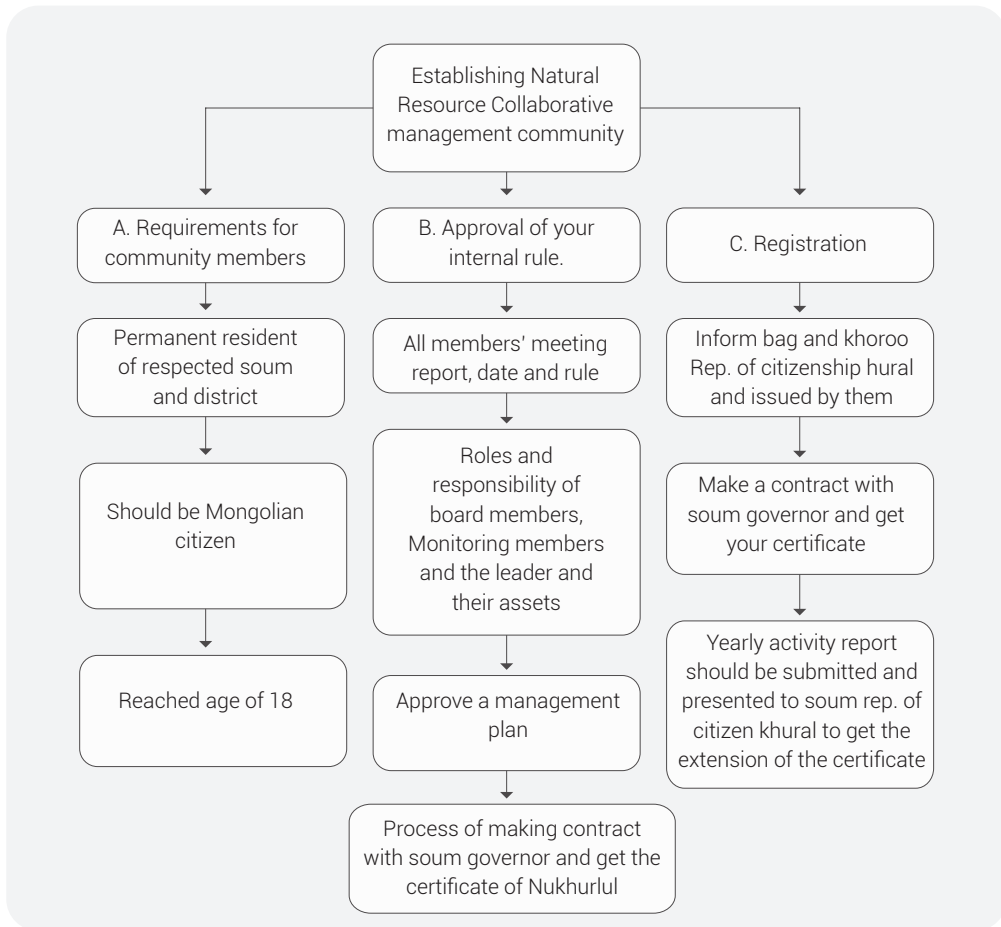
For easier understanding of the required procedure to formally register as a Nukhurlul, and to make a contract with the Soum government, see the charts below. Also the establishment of the Nukhurlul's Community Fund and the development of the Nukhurlul's Natural Resources Management Plan are illustrated as diagrams.

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Scan to download Environmental Law,  
Section 8

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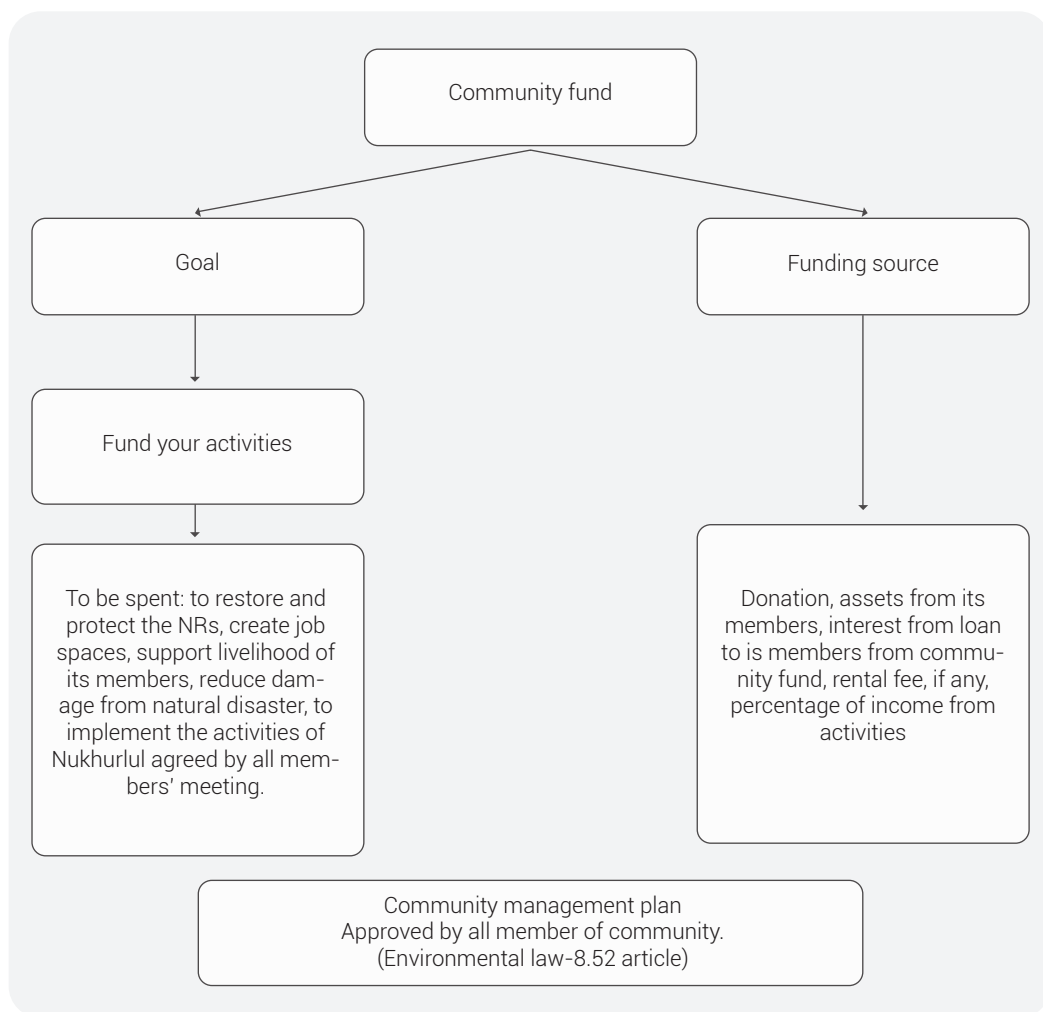


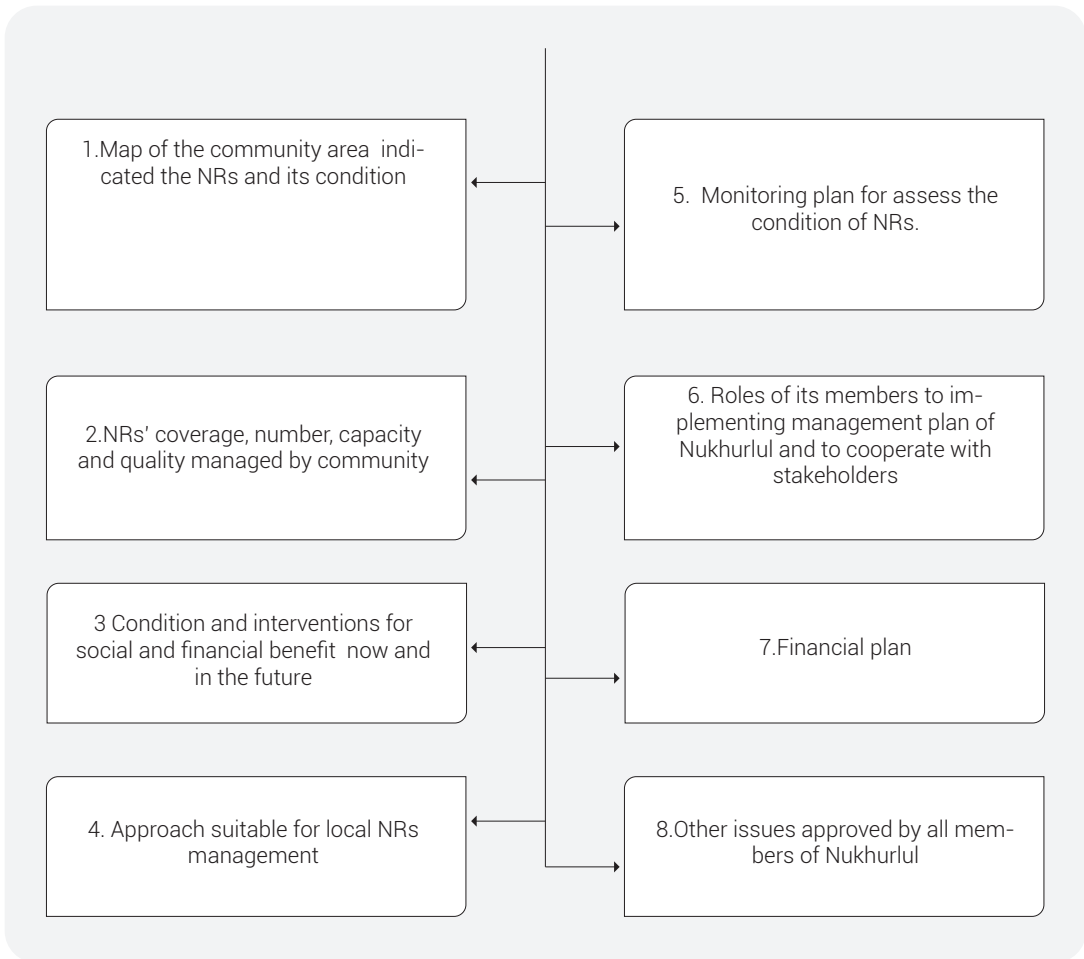
1. Contract with all members to work together and the copy of each member's passport

2. Management plan of community developed and approved by all members

3. Request of Nukhurlul to run NR management activities

4. Comments from Bagh and Khoroo Citriizen khural and Resolution of rep. of citizen khural





### ***Developing Your Business Plan***

Regardless what organizational form you have chosen, you want to improve your income through CBT, and make a profit. Therefore, you should to develop a business plan for your CBT activities.

If you are new to developing a business plan, it is a good idea to attend a training on it, or to get advice on how to develop it. Ask your Soum SME officer. If they cannot advice themselves, they can refer you to an organization or expert who can provide training/advice.

During the feasibility check you have already considered all important aspects of establishing a CBT enterprise. But developing a business plan forces you to think in even more detail and that is very helpful to do before you start your actual activities. Besides, if you are planning to apply for a loan (or other





support), you will be asked to show a business plan detailing how you intend to develop your business and succeed financially.

Developing your business plan will help you in several ways. You will plan your activities well and in the right sequence. You will determine how much investment you really need. It will make you study your right costumer to develop your products. It will create opportunities for you to work with potential partners to develop and extend your business, such as individuals, NGOs, international organizations, banks and local government. Thus you will build your network and you will be more socially active.

### **Typical Business Plan Format**

A typical business plan could be divided into the sections named here. But just use the sections that apply to your situation and make the most sense for your needs.

#### **Executive summary**

- Briefly explain what your company is and why it will be successful.
- Include your mission statement, your product or service, and basic information about your company's leadership team, employees/team members/community members, and location.
- If you ask for financing, include financial information and the plan how the business will grow/succeed if you plan to ask for financing.

#### **Description of Your Enterprise (Company or Community)**

- Describe your CBT enterprise/initiative. Be specific, and list out the different customers you target to serve.
- Really explain your strength! in this section. Sound confident, but keep it realistic and credible.
- Explain the competitive advantages that will make your business a success.
- Describe Your experience, and special skills. Your location, unique attraction, service, product.

#### **Market Analysis**

- Show that you have a good understanding of your outlook and target market; so it will be good to add some information on tourism trends in Mongolia, and how travel to rural areas, especially your area, and how visitor interest in CBT can be expected to increase.



- Provide some information on competitors - what other businesses are doing and what their strengths are. What do successful competitors do? Why are they successful?
- How will you be better or at least competitive with them?

### **Organization and Management**

- Explain how your company or community is organized, and who is leading it.
- Describe the legal structure of your business or community, or what structure you intend to have. (see above table or options of legal structures).
- You can use an organizational chart to show responsibilities and lines of decision making. Show who is in charge of what and how each person's unique experience will contribute to the success of your venture.
- Consider including short resumes, CVs or just key prior work experiences and successes of key members of your team.
- Consider including references from respected persons, officials, former employers, and others

### **Services and Products**

- Describe your services and products in more detail and explain how they benefit your customers.

### **Marketing and Sales**

- Describe how you'll attract and retain customers. Describe how a sale will actually happen, how exactly you reach tourists, in one or several ways.
- You will refer to this later when you make financial projections, so make sure to thoroughly describe your complete marketing strategies (how you find tourists).

### **Financing Request**

- If you are asking for financing, outline your financing requirements.
- Clearly explain how much finance you need, what exactly it will be used for, and over what time.



### **Financial projections**

- When applying for finance, you need to show your financial projections. Here you have to convince the reader that your business will be stable and financially successful.
- If your business is already established, include income statements, balance sheets, and cash flow statements from previous years.
- List any other collateral you could put against a loan.
- Provide a financial outlook for the next (five) years with as much detail as possible, including expected income and expenditures. For the first year/season, be even more specific and use monthly projections if possible. Make sure to clearly explain your financial projections, and match them to your financing requests.
- If you already have been running your CBT business, you can use graphs and charts to explain the financial story, if helpful.

### **Appendix**

- Provide supporting documents or other materials specially requested.
- Include, for example, credit histories, resumes, product/services pictures, letters of reference, licenses, permits, other relevant legal documents, and contracts (for example with tour operators).



## CHAPTER 6. REACHING THE TOURISM MARKET TO SELL YOUR CBT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

This chapter is designed to help you understand how you can attract customers, what are your opportunities and different ways to connect to the market to sell your products or services.

You must first understand to whom you are trying to sell your services and products, so you can focus your strategies on your target market and find your target customers. So, when you start, it's important to think about who exactly your product or service is designed for.



There are different segments of the tourism market. Travelers are divided into quite different groups, such as geographical location where they come from, age and gender and other demographic criteria, their income bracket, special interests and hobbies, and their travel goals. Dividing your potential customers



into groups means that you can better understand their characteristics, adapt your services to their needs and desires, and set the appropriate price. This will increase your ability to sell your products and services.

Travelers can be divided into different groups under several criteria, such as:

- **Geography.** Customers from different geographic region will have different needs. For instance, the desires of Ulaanbaatar consumers are different from those of Khovd Aimag, The needs of Mongolians are different from those of Japanese tourists, etc.
- **Demography.** Different demographic groups means travelers of different age, gender, occupation, income, education, religion, and more.
- **Attitude, Mind Set and Travel Interests.** Different groups of travelers have different knowledge, attitude, interest and expectations.

As mentioned earlier, the number of travelers concerned about environmentally and socially responsible products and services is ever increasing. They are interested in "ecotourism", they consider themselves to be "responsible travelers"; they are willing to support nature conservation. They are most likely interested in local culture and lifestyle and want to experience what it's like to be a livestock herder.

There are sub-groups such as those interested in hiking, cycling, horse riding or more extreme adventures such as mountain climbing. Other sub-groups are photographers, wildlife and bird watchers, or star gazers. Others are interested in cross country travel by motor bike and 4x4 vehicles.

A very different segment of travelers is more interested to travel in large groups, visit "big" attractions, stay in fancy hotels in the city etc. They are not the target group of CBT.

Traveler's budget and spending priorities. Travelers come with different budgets to spend, based on their regular income, and the savings they made for a long planned trip. Some may want to relax at a low price, others can afford a moderate price, and others are willing to pay a high price for luxury and high-quality services at high end accommodations. Others are not interested in expensive accommodation, but in special experiences and activities that may also be expensive.

Many international travelers are of retirement age; having worked for many years, they now have time and money to spend for travel and visit places they



always wanted to see. Many of them will also be interested in nomadic culture and therefore in CBT services.

However, there are also many young and middle-aged travelers with good jobs and money to travel during their annual holiday. They may prefer to travel independently and be “backpackers”. In other countries, such “backpackers” were found to spend maybe less on hotels, but a lot on “adventure” and other “experiences”, and this may become true for Mongolia too. Therefore, do not disregard this market segment.

People who travel very cheap, not willing or able to pay a fair price for staying with local families, have a wrong attitude and understanding. They are not what is called “backpacker” in other countries where tourism is a big revenue earner and “backpackers” contribute much to that.

### ***The Target Market for Herder Households or Communities***

We are discussing here the target market for CBT herder households and communities divided by geographical location, including

- **Local market** or consumers of soums, aimags, and settlements closest to you
- **National market** or Mongolian consumers who are coming from UB or remote provinces
- **International market** or foreign customers coming to your country, your aimag and your household

### ***How to Reach the Local Market and how to Attract Local Customers***

The first thing to do is to inform others that your household or your khot ail has started a CBT service and is operating, for example, at Khairkhan mountain, Galuut bag, Bumbugur soum, Bayankhongor aimag.

If you share your information about your services and location, tourists who travel to your area can have prior information and make plans to use your services. You are already connected to the nearest market then.





Of course as a herder you will move to different locations for much of the year according to your nomadic pastoral traditions and lifestyle.

Therefore, it is important that you don't change your phone numbers so you can be reached by tour operators and travelers. Let them know in advance what is your current location, keep them updated of your moves and intended moves. Also update your advertising on social media/ FaceBook.

You can learn how to use the application What3Words to let your location be known accurately, or provide your coordinates through other GPS applications. Tsaatan families living in the Khuvsgul Taiga already have experience using such applications to provide Airbnb service to foreign guests.

### **Channels to Reach Local Customers**



- Post and update your information on Soum and Aimag local media, television, and tourism-related websites of Aimag.
- Share your printed information during Aimag, Soum level meetings and events
- Place banners in public places during public events such as Aimag and local festivals and give an advertisement speech at the festival. If possible, sponsor such events
- Depending on your target audience, offer services, trips, and give a lecture to primary, secondary, and high school educators and students
- Attract office workers and offer travel programs on weekends for them
- Use all your networks to advertise your service and product
- Use customers' feedback to attract new customers. Word of mouth, when customers themselves talk about the good service or product they received from you, is the best advertising! Ask your guests to share their good experiences in their networks.



**Establish or update your Facebook page about your CBT activities, and include on it:**

- What different services and products you offer.
- When you began your services
- A map that shows how to get to your place
- Your contact information
- A quote/testimonial from a happy guest
- Nice photos

**Keep Your Facebook page updated! with new posts whenever you can.**

**How to Find Customers from the Domestic Market – Ulaanbaatar or Aimag far from You**

With the global COVID 19 pandemic starting in 2020 and the closure of many countries around the world for international travel, domestic travel has seen an increase. This also happened in Mongolia. Since the summer of 2020, the flow of domestic tourists has much increased to some key areas. The majority of them tend to travel with their own vehicles, and bring their tents and food. The majority of domestic travelers also said that they choose their destination on the advice of family and friends. Therefore, it would be effective to use the following channels to reach and attract domestic tourists.



- Use your own social media. It is the cheapest way to advertise your services, activities, and products, and nowadays has become the most effective way to reach your customers. Facebook and Instagram have become the most popular social media channels worldwide. Facebook is very popular in our country, therefore, create a Facebook page and keep it updated with information on your services, location and contact details. When Your tourism business is growing, you can also set up a Facebook business page and run paid ads.
- Use your customers' feedback, and encourage them to share their experiences on their social media and in their networks; use your own networks of friends and family in the city and other Aimags.



- Be active to share your information with Aimag and local tourism associations, and on Aimag's local websites. In recent years, aimag tourism associations have become more active, and all aimags have a unified tourism database, website, and printed catalogs. Aimag Citizens' Khurals and Governor's websites could also be a place to introduce and promote your CBT services and activities.

### ***Aimag Tourism Associations***

Aimag and local tourism associations protect the common interests of tourism businesses in the region, speaking with one voice, and cooperating with state organizations as well as NGOs.

If you become a member of your Aimag's Tourism Association, you will have the advantage to link to tour operators, receive tourism information, and have support to protect your rights financial interests. Before you become a member, we recommend that you first familiarize yourself with the objectives of the association, its board members, actions plan, implemented activities and reports. You can talk to the head as well as to several members of the association. Then you can decide whether to become a member.

- Joinme.mn has become the main tourism website that domestic travelers check for ideas and advice on travel in our country and on CBT services. It has all related information on 21 Aimags, the scenic landscapes of Mongolia, and possible domestic travel routes.
- You can upload your tourism service information and products to the site for an annual fee .When guests contact/find you through the website, you pay a 10 % commission of what you charge for your services to Joinme. mn. Such commissions are common practice in tourism if one agency or other tour operators sends guests to another operator. It's a win-win for all.
- Nowadays, not only larger tour operator companies offer tourism services, but experienced individuals who formerly worked as tour guides or drivers set up their own tourism business. You could contact those individuals who organize such tourism activities and introduce your tourism services and ask them to cooperate with you.



One of the important segments of domestic tourism is foreigners who live and work in donor organizations, embassies, and projects in Mongolia. They are probably more willing to support CBT and interested to experience authentic Mongolian countryside lifestyles than Mongolians. You can try sending your information leaflets to them directly to these organizations by email, or official post, and offer your services. There are also sites Expats Mongolia. (<https://www.facebook.com/MongolExpat/>) You can contact them to see whether they are willing to place your information as a post/article, or you can place a paid ad.

- If you have time and budget to participate in domestic tourism expos you can participate in annual events like the "Ulaanbaatar Expo" in May and "ITM" in October in Ulaanbaatar.
- If you cannot join yourself you can give your CBT information materials to aimag tourism specialists or other people who participate in such events.

Perhaps you can get together with other CBT operators from your Aimag and join a booth to present your services. Ask the Tourism Association and your Aimag tourism department how they can support you.

Present your information on social media - **Facebook** and on **JoinMe.mn**  
Describe your services and products using **nice images**.

Make a **space where your customers can leave a comment**. Its most valuable if potential customers hear from your guests about their experiences.

### ***How to reach the international market or attract foreign visitors to Mongolia, to your Aimag and your place?***

International visitors to Mongolia come for different reasons. Some foreigners may come to Mongolia to visit friends, relatives or to participate in conferences, official meetings. Most come for Mongolia's beautiful nature and to learn about nomadic culture.

Foreign tourists organize their trips in different ways. They come alone, or they may travel in a group with friends and family. Many use the services of a tour operator and book a whole package that includes transportation in Mongolia, accommodation, all meals, guiding fees and different activities and experiences such as visiting herder families. Other travelers like to design their own itinerary independently, using different ways of transport and choosing activities and experiences exactly to their special interests. Below, we talk about both groups – the travelers buying a package, and independent travelers.



### **1. Tourists who Bought a Travel Package from a Tour Operator**

Tour operator companies offer travel packages to foreign customers through their channels and organize the trips for tourists who bought them. Today, there are 571 registered tour operators in Mongolia, most owned and operated by Mongolian citizens. There are a few tour operators that are foreign invested companies with their office in Mongolia, and a few tour companies are owned by foreigners and their head office is overseas. Tour operators often collaborate with travel agents overseas who send travelers to them for a commission.

Tour operators all have their own target countries and customer segments. For example, a tour operator may receive almost only German tourists, another may target just the Korean market. Another one may be specialized on horse riding tours only, others offer wildlife watching or photography tours. According to their market and customers, tour companies have different channels to attract their guests.



Some participate in international tourism exhibitions and advertise their companies. Unless it's a very big company, this is best done as a group, as it is very expensive for one company alone. Some tour operators have contracts with or links to specialized tourism agencies. Last not least, for any tour operator today the internet is the main marketing channel, including through company websites, pages on Facebook, Instagram and other social media and advertising strategies on social media.

If a tour operating company agreed to include your CBT service in their travel package, it is a very good chance that tourists will come to your place, and that you can have add to your household income as a CBT host. However, you must understand that the tour operator will have very high expectations from you.

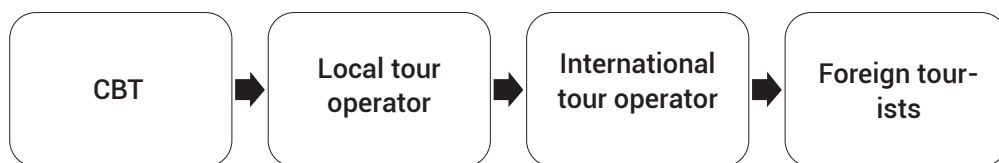


You must be reliable, reachable and fully prepared when the tour with guests arrive at your place. Your service must be as agreed, of high standard and consistent no matter what your other circumstances or workload is.

For the tour operator who brings tourists to you, it's a very big commitment and risk. They will advertise on their website or other channels, promising a great experience for guests; they spend money for marketing. Then they bring guests all the way to you. If your service is not good, it reflects bad on the tour operator. If your service is as agreed and guests have a great experience, it's good for everybody – the travelers, the tour operator and for you. And it's the only way such collaboration can be sustainable. Most likely, the tour operator you work and have a contract with will provide some training and guidance, and does some practicing with you. If not, suggest it to them.

To be included in the tour package of tour operators, your CBT should offer also a unique service that is different from others. It will be more interesting to offer activities and services that involve tourists, not just sitting in the ger and riding horses or camels, but engaging them into a nomadic life, making Mongolian "deel" together, embroidering, making things by using leather knot, and more. Be creative you have much to share based on the skills for your daily life and your local traditions.

Usually, travelers sign up to such a package tour well in advance, ideally a year ahead. So the tour operator knows usually several months in advance whether and how many guests they will bring. Sometimes, there are also short term bookings. In any case, make sure you have regular contact and updates from the tour operator, stay in touch, and make plans accordingly and will ahead to receive guests in your accommodations, and to be ready to provide meals and activities.



## **2. Independent Travelers, Backpackers**

How to promote your service online- depending on the target market you can choose whether to work in a local or international online platform to share and advertise your service and direct booking possibilities and conditions.





Many tourists prefer to travel privately or with few people rather than traveling in a group of tourists. More than half of tourists who come to Mongolia are individual travelers. So, we should not ignore this market. And remember the earlier comments about “backpackers”; they are usually not backpacking because they are “poor”, but because they are more adventurous, curious and independent minded. There are popular social platforms that those individual travelers share their experiences on, including Trip Advisor and Airbnb.

Some of them were inspired by guidebooks, handbooks, and websites written about Mongolia. Most of them read blogs or comments of other individual travelers before they choose and plan their trips. Therefore, if a tourist or backpacker comes to your place be aware that they will probably share their experience online in text and photos, in blogs and on social media. Ask them to comment on Facebook page, and in your onsite Guestbook, and to spread the word about your service by word of mouth in their networks. Use the positive comments they leave in all your advertising materials.

### ***Your Many Challenges as local CBT Operator – and Some Suggested Solutions***

As you have already realized going through the feasibility check (chapter 4) and in real life if you already started operations, running a CBT operation in the countryside is VERY challenging.

In most cases, communities are in remote areas, far from the city, from well visited places and well traveled routes.

You may be new to tourism and lack good experience, the language barrier/ lack of foreign language skills make it almost impossible to reach international markets directly, channels for communication and marketing are limited, you are not used to communication required to establish and maintain your connections to the travel market, you are busy with herding and daily life challenges.

Challenge	Potential Solutions
Isolated location	Make your weak point into an advantage by building on the unique culture, tradition, and landscapes, for both domestic and foreign visitors.



Lack of clear road signs and information boards to your location	<p>You can use locally available materials such as wood, rock etc. to make nice looking, authentic sign boards.</p> <p>Talk to your local government to have standard signs</p> <p>Use modern communication technology, such as GPS system and What3Words.</p> <p>Please update your contact information, location, phone numbers, whenever there are changes.</p>
Your services and products are not well known/ not well advertised	<p>If you already decided to start CBT activities, make sure your services and products are always at high standard.</p> <p>Use all the channels provided above to advertise your products and services.</p> <p>Once you plan well and provide consistent good quality services, your products and services will be eventually popular and well known among tourists and tour operators.</p>
Lack of Experience in CBT	<p>Your experience will grow as you develop and run your operations. Keep up the good work and experience will be accumulated.</p> <p>At the same time, identify what trainings you/your team needs. Make training plan. Find out training providers. Ask Aimag Tourism experts and Tourism Association for advice and support.</p>
Lack of foreign language skill	<p>There are several ways to solve this problem. First, you can start learning yourself. With Phone App, online courses, watching foreign language movies.</p> <p>Secondly, support one of your members/relatives to learn language (as above or take course). Lastly, you can work with tour operators who can communicate with tourists for you.</p>
Lack of communication skills	<p>Use your smart phone to improve your communication skills. There are many different opportunities and options to learn online and acquire necessary knowledge and skills.</p> <p>See who of your members is the best communicator; involve your young people.</p>

### **Setting the Prices for Your Products and Services**

Setting the right price is important, and tricky. In general, consider the kind of product and service and the type of customer you are targeting. Look at what other CBT operators charge for their products and services to get a general idea. Your price should be competitive in the market, affordable for customers, and give you a profit. Keep in mind that you want to make your product or service unique, standing out from those of others

To determine the price, you really have to sit down and calculate all your



expenses (materials/foods, fuel, payments to others, your own time, electricity, and more depending on your product/service), and based on that set a price that leaves you with a reasonable profit.

Do not make the mistake of setting a low price because you think that will make you competitive. It will not, it will only make you look cheap and customers don't value your service. The right strategy is to provide an excellent service, be ambitious, be proud of your high quality work and unique experience you provide – and charge a bit higher price. Travelers can and happily will pay the price when they see the high value and uniqueness of your provided service.

Don't make the price unreasonably high of course. As in any business, it takes some time to break even, to recover all your costs of your initial investments. That's the nature of business. But if you keep your work at high standard and have established your marketing channels, your outlook is good, - assuming that tourism will continue to develop in Mongolia once recovered from the pandemic and that it is supported by government policies. If you are not recovering your investment costs and not making profit even after years, you need to review your business model.

Tourism is very seasonal in Mongolia, and this influences prices too. The active tourism season is considered to be from June to September/October. July and August are the peak season. The Off season is from November to May. Efforts are underway to make the off season shorter, for example by developing winter tourism activities, and winter time festivals. As most travelers come in peak season, prices in peak season are highest. To attract travelers beyond the peak season, discounts may be offered.

It is always good to have a package price – it gives customers the feeling that they are getting a lot for their cost. You can design and offer a package that includes, for example, ger accommodation for the night, all meals, and horse ride or other activity. Be creative in developing your packages.

### ***Your Service/Product Price and Different Marketing Channels***

You have to find the best option for you in terms of marketing and channels through which to sell your products and services. Weigh the pros and cons carefully to determine your best strategy.

Most commonly today, as a CBT operator you will receive your guests, namely international travelers, through a tour operator. When the tour operator pays you, they will have to consider their costs of marketing and transport to bring



the guests to you, and the payment you receive under contract is less than you charge a guest who made it to your place independently.

However, the fact that the tour operator can bring guests regularly, will probably still make it more profitable for you, as you have more guests and less own marketing costs and efforts. You have to weigh these factors. For domestic marketing, for example through Joinme.mn, you pay an annual fee and a 10 % commission to Joinme.mn. If you have your own connections, perhaps relatives overseas who market your services directly, your own advanced social media outreach or a website that ranks well on search engines such as Google, you can see whether your own marketing will work enough, and you don't need to rely on tour operators.

If CBT in Mongolia will develop their own network, like a central organization and online platform, it may become more feasible to not rely on tour operators.

### ***Payment Conditions***

Make the payment conditions clear and fair, whether you work with a tour operator or market directly to travelers. Conclude a contract with the tour operator that describes the responsibilities of both parties, including payment conditions. Do some research if you are unsure about the reliability of the tour operator company or individual you are dealing with. It is good to agree on an advance payment of a deposit (20 – 30 %) for your services; that way, you have some operating costs to prepare and more of a guarantee that the guests will come and you will receive full payment upon delivering your service.

### ***Financial Planning and Management***

For your own good practice to have a good understanding of your expenditures and income and to see whether you need to adjust prices or your business model, make it a habit to plan/estimate your expenses and income. Monitor them regularly and calculate your profit at the end of the year.

Keeping financial records like this will be beneficial for your own business management and development. Also, it will help you with reporting income to the government and pay your taxes. Becoming a successful CBT operator, you will also become a responsible business owner/citizen, paying taxes and contributing to society. Chapter 10 will give more detail on business management.



## CHAPTER 7. FINANCING YOUR CBT ENTERPRISE

It is likely that you will need some investment to start your CBT activities, whether it's for one or more extra guest gers, furnishings or other equipment and facilities for kitchen, toilet, safety and more. Or you may need to upgrade and increase horse riding equipment. It is of course best to start small and build your business step by step.





You will already know how difficult it is to get a small loan in the country side, whether it's for household support, consumption or emergency or whether it's for establishing a business. A business plan and collateral is needed, and repayment conditions are too hard to be met, with high interest rate and repayment required in a short time period.

As tourism is a very seasonal business activity, and income from tourism is mostly supplementary income to that from livestock and other sources, lenders will be even more hesitant to extend a loan for CBT activities. For communities that are organized as Nukhurlul or other community based organization (CBO) or as an NGO, it is even more difficult to access finance from a bank or non-banking financial institution, as compared to a small enterprise.

However, there are ways to find funding to realize your plans. Whichever way of funding you try, make sure that you have a well thought out plan with realistic estimates of expenditures and income for the specific activity and your overall operation. It is not only required by the funder but also helpful for you.

### **Self Reliance**

Besides starting small it is best of course to fund your first CBT activities from your own sources. If you run other activities, for example bee keeping or vegetable growing, besides livestock husbandry, these are not only a possible funding source but also an interesting element to include in the CBT experience you offer to your guests. So if you can grow your CBT business slowly, with your own funds, and perhaps with support/loans from family, it's the best option and you can avoid debt to a bank.



If you have a good and trustful working relationship with a tour operator, you could propose to them to support you with some equipment and materials, as an advance payment or as grant/support to get you going.





## **Community Fund**

The next best option to access finance is from your Nukhurlul's Community Fund. Having a community fund is a very important success factor for a community based organization, and it is common that Nukhurlul, Forest User Groups and Pasture User Groups have a community fund. Members have to agree on the rules on how the fund is managed, the decisions on how the fund is spend must be participatory and transparent. A responsible person for fund management should be identified, and how they work with the community leader and council. There should be ongoing monitoring of the fund and regular reporting to all members on the status of the fund.

The community fund is a revolving fund. Members make their contributions to it (in cash or kind such as livestock). Decide with all members on the criteria and conditions for small loans to member households and other ways that the fund can be used for. Typically, the fund of Nukhurluls is used for some nature conservation activities and for loans to members. Of course the community can also give a support/donation in emergency to a member family or support its vulnerable members from its fund. Establishing and running a community fund successfully is a good mechanism to build trust among members and strengthen the community internally.



If you are planning to run CBT activities with all your community members, as a Nukhurlul or other CBO, you can jointly decide to allocate an amount from the community fund for the CBT activities – both for facilities/equipment for tourism and conservation activities. To protect and sustain local nature or the special landscape, historic features, wildlife etc. that attract your tourists is just as important as your business activities if you want to operate sustainable.

Once you generate income from CBT, this can further contribute to your community fund. In Thailand, for example, communities have adopted this practice. They put some income from tourism back into the community fund



to spend it for food for tourists, fee for guides, phone units, community meeting expenses, payment to book keeper, and more. In addition, they contribute to local nature conservation activities or to solving social problems in the community from CBT income.

### **Local Development Fund**

Another possible source for developing CBT might be the local development fund in your Soum. Its objective is to support local sustainable development initiatives by community members. It is governed by a participatory process from bottom up, whereby local citizens take part in the decision making on how funds are spent.





**These are the steps of the decision making process:**

**Step 1. Proposals are Submitted by Local Citizens**

Submit your CBT proposal by

- a) giving it to your Bagh governor between January and May in writing on the provided form, or
- b) suggesting it during the focus group discussion on this year's use of local development fund organized in the Soum, or
- c) submitting it online here: <https://tusuv-oronnutag.mof.gov.mn/>)

**Step 2. Public Discussion and Prioritization of Submitted Proposals**

Before 31st of May of each year you will be invited to attend soum citizen khural meeting to discuss all the proposals from your soum, including yours, and to jointly decide on priorities.

**Step 3. Prioritized Proposals forwarded to Soum Governor's Committee**

Then, the prioritized proposals will be given to the Soum governor's committee.

**Step 4. Approval of Proposals by Soum Citizen Representative Khural**

Lastly, Soum Citizen Representative Khural approves the prioritized proposals.

**Step 5. Soum receives Funds from Central Government**

The budget to implement the proposed activities will be made available from the central government in autumn.

Scan to visit Local Development Fund  
official website



Scan to watch What is the Local Development Fund  
Video Information



### **SME – Small and Medium Enterprise Fund**

The SME fund has been established by the Government of Mongolia to enable entrepreneurs to access loans with lower interest rate than from commercial banks. The SME fund is managed at Aimag level. Applications need to include a detailed business plan. Ask for detailed information from Soum/Aimag about applying to the SME Fund. Unless you already have good experience as a business person, you will probably need support by a professional individual or government or non-government organization in developing your business plan, and completing and submitting the application to the SME fund. See also Chapter 5 for guidance on developing a business plan. There are some donor supported projects that provide assistance in accessing loans from SME fund. Ask your Soum government whether such project is being implemented in your area.

### **Cooperatives**

#### **Production and Marketing Cooperatives**

There have been many challenges with developing a functioning rural cooperative model since 1990. First, people were reluctant and distrustful to any collective organization after it was mandatory in socialist time. Then there were some cooperatives that failed or there was fraud with the finances, and lack of transparency of benefit sharing. However, it is now well understood that herders in Mongolia have to work together in production, processing and marketing to create sustainable livestock husbandry that generates decent income for households and makes a significant and lasting contribution to the national economy.

Finally, after years of advocacy and discussions, the Law on Cooperatives was amended in 2021, and the national government promotes cooperatives as an important element in developing the livestock sector. Importantly, under the new cooperative law, the combined assets of cooperative members are recognized and counted towards a collateral when applying for loans. This has much empowered cooperatives to access loans. Cooperatives also establish a community fund usually, which is an opportunity for members to access low interest loans. Cooperatives are exempt from VAT (Value Added Tax).

Perhaps your household or some members of your Nukhurlul or Pasture User Group, are member of a cooperative. Perhaps your group is discussing to transform yourself into a cooperative. For more information on your opportunities to join or become a cooperative, or benefit from the new opportunities under the revised law, ask your Soum SME and agricultural officers. Or contact NAMAC, the National Association of Mongolian Agricultural



Cooperatives, a very experienced and effective organization that provides information, training and ongoing support to cooperatives and those who are interested in forming one.

Scan to visit NAMAC website



### ***Savings and Credit Cooperatives***

In some areas, namely in Bayan Ulgii and Khovd Aimags, there have been very encouraging examples of Soum level Savings and Credit Cooperatives. When managed properly, they can accumulate significant finance capacity and even exceed that of a local commercial bank. This happened for example in Dariv Soum of Khovd Aimag, where a successful Savings and Credit Cooperative is acting as a micro finance institution, providing small loans to local residents, and outdoing the Khan Bank in the Soum.

### ***Donor Organizations and Projects***

There are opportunities to receive loans, or sometimes small grants, from projects supported by international donor organizations and NGOs. Also embassies sometimes have regular/ongoing programs of small grants or will announce opportunities. For example, the Canadian Embassy has been operating the Canada Fund for many years to support community projects and enterprises.

Other projects, especially if their objectives are in strengthening protected area management, conservation and tourism, or particularly CBT, may have special funds to support CBT initiatives, with training, loans and grants. We mention here the project SPACES<sup>32</sup>, the GIZ supported project that also initiated and supported the creation of this hand book, has tourism around protected areas and therefore also community based tourism as an objective and established a fund for CBT.

Projects, donor organizations and national and international NGOs might be helpful even if they don't have a fund themselves – but they may be able to provide you with information, training or support in developing business plans and loan applications.

We do not list projects here, because project information will be outdated as soon as the project ends. It is better to ask from your local government whether your Soum is included in ongoing projects on livelihood development, conservation or even specifically tourism development and whether there are opportunities to access loans or grants as a community or small enterprise in CBT. Be proactive to inquire and do your own research, with local government, your networks, your collaborating tour operator, and online.

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<sup>32</sup>Supporting Protected Areas for the Conservation of Ecosystem Services project, GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit.





## CHAPTER 8. UNDERSTAND AND SECURE YOUR LAND RIGHTS

If you are planning to establish a small ger camp or any other facility for CBT activities, it will be important that your tenure rights are clear and secure. If it is not clear what rights you have – use, possession, ownership, and for how long, you cannot plan properly. It would be very bad if you put a lot of time, effort and finances into establishing your facility, and after some time it turns out you cannot stay there.







Or, it could happen that you have established your ger camp or homestay and are attracting customers because you have become well known for your good service and the scenic area you are in. If then others move into the same area, it will soon be overcrowded, and its not enjoyable anymore, the scenic value is destroyed and other environmental impacts are likely to occur, such as waste, pollution, and disturbance to wildlife. Everybody loses!

### **Outside Protected Areas**

It is of course up to the authorities in Soum and Aimag governments and Protected Area Administrations to regulate the use of areas for tourism, based on studies that assess which and how much tourism activities can be undertaken in an area, how many visitors should come within a certain time frame, what activities should be prohibited and which ones encouraged. A tourism management plan should set the framework for decisions on land use and relevant permits.

This is all under development in our country and more and more Aimags consider tourism in their development strategies and plans, and some have specific tourism strategies. The Soum Landscape Development plan also specifies which economic activities are most suitable and promising, and the land use planning procedures and documents should reflect this.

If you are in a buffer zone around a State Protected Area, the buffer zone management plan will probably have certain provisions on and opportunities for tourism development (see Chapters 2 and 3, and QR Codes for more details on buffer zones and their management plans). Being located in a buffer zone makes for a good condition to develop your CBT facility and activities. You are close to a Protected Area with its visitor attractions, and can take visitors there, or provide accommodation for park visitors, but with your facility you are not subject to the same restrictions as you would be inside the Protected Area.

So before you develop your plans further, establish a camp or start activities, make sure you know the local development plans and procedures. Discuss with your Soum governor about your plans, learn what permits you need. If there is no tourism plan for your local area, propose that it be developed, and become

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Management Plan

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active for it. Explain that tourism needs to be managed well to be sustainable, that an area should not be overcrowded with too many tourism activities, and especially not if everybody is doing the same, like ger accommodation. Get other tourism professionals involved to support you.

### ***Inside Protected Areas***

If you are planning to operate inside a State Protected Area, rules are stricter of course, and the procedures are more complex, because the legislation on special protected areas of Mongolia consists not only of the Law on Protected Areas, but of the Constitution of Mongolia, the Law on Land, the Law on Protected Areas, and other legislative acts issued in compliance with them. It can be confusing trying to understand and follow the procedures as they are defined under the current laws.

Changes to the Protected Area law are currently being discussed (spring 2022, at the time of writing this handbook), and the updated law may provide more clarity on the issue of Nukhurlul rights and responsibilities inside Protected Areas including with regard to CBT activities.

We are describing here key points and procedures on land use inside Protected Areas, while referring to the relevant sections in the legislation.

### ***Land Use by Mongolian Citizens, Business Entities and Organizations inside Protected Areas***

According to Article 33.1 of the Law on Protected Areas, land can be used by citizens, business entities and organizations of Mongolia in the limited use zones of protected areas for ecotourism activities and accommodations not harmful to the conservation values of the protected area, and based on an agreement detailing the conditions, period of use and purpose. Only land use agreements are allowed, but not possession and ownership.

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<sup>33</sup>The exact procedure is described in the Law on Protected Areas (Articles 33 – 37) and in the Law on Land (Article 44. 7) and in Articles 32, 33.1.2, 33.2, 34.1-34.5, 34. 6.1-34.6.8, 34.6.10, 34.6.11 and 34.7-34.10 of the Law on Land.



## **Applying for a Land Use Permit in a Protected Area – the Step by Step Process<sup>33</sup>**

### **Step 1 Submit Application to Protected Area Administration (or Soum Governor)**

According to Article 35. 1 of the Law on Protected Areas, citizens, business entities and organizations shall submit their applications for land utilization with the Protected Area Administration or, if an Administration has not been established in the special protected area, with the Governor of the Soum or District.

Citizen and business entities intending to run activities should proof with relevant documentation that they have the financial capacity to undertake them and that they have no tax or bank debt, and describe in writing how the intended activities are in line with the Protected Area Management Plan.

Scan to visit MET Official Website's Documents Section



### **Step 2 Protected Area Administration (or Soum Governor) send application to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism)**

According to Article 35.2 of the Law on Protected Areas, the Protected Area Administration or Soum Governor shall send the application of the citizen, business entity or organization for land utilization, along with their recommendations, to the state central administrative body (the Ministry of Environment).

### **Step 3 Ministry of Environment and Tourism approves/disapproves the application**

According to Article 36 of the Law on Protected Areas, the state central administrative body shall make decisions on allowing citizens, business entities or organizations to use land in the limited zones of the conservation areas and national parks, nature reserves and monuments on the basis of the recommendations of the Administrations and Soum and District Governors.

The state central administrative body shall choose among citizens, business entities and organizations who lodge applications for using lands for tourism.



If two or more persons make applications to use one piece of land, the state central administrative body shall choose one of them considering the purpose of land utilization, environmental impact, and the costs of environmental protection measures.

Applications requesting land use for tourism purposes will be evaluated considering how their facilities meet the international standards.

In case the application for land use and its supporting materials are found not to be complete or appropriate for evaluation and approval by the Ministry for Environment and Tourism (MET), the Department of Protected Area Management (DPAM) of the MET shall send refusal and its explanation to citizen and business entities within 15 days after the request submission.

#### ***Step 4 Tripartite Agreement is developed between Land User, Protected Area Administration and Soum Governor***

Upon receiving the permission for land use from the Ministry for Environment and Tourism, the tripartite agreement is developed between Protected Area Administration, Soum government and the land user.

According to Article 37 of the Law on Protected Areas, the tripartite agreement should include the following important aspects:

- 1) measures to preserve, protect and reclaim the original condition of the land and costs of such measures;
- 2) amount of land fee and payment term;
- 3) rights, obligations and liabilities of parties regarding land utilization and protection;
- 4) the conditions and procedures to returning the land upon termination of the agreement and the procedures for reclamation, repair, improvement and acceptance of the land.

#### ***Step 5 Department of Protected Area Management issues Certificate of Land Use***

Based on the land use permission, tripartite agreement, and considering environmental impact assessment the Department of Protected Area Management (DPAM) of MET issues a **certificate of land use**.



### **Step 6 Tripartite Agreement is approved by Department of Protected Area Management**

Within 3 months upon receiving the certificate of land use, the tripartite agreement among citizen, PAA and local government should be finalized, and approved by DPAM.

Scan to visit DPAM Official Website



### **Current Challenges and Practice in Law Implementation**

Under current law, the contract over land use (tripartite agreement) is to be concluded for 5 years maximum, and only renewed one time for 5 years. However, it is not feasible for tourism operators including CBT communities to develop their operation for 10 years, and then not have an extension of the permit.





In practice therefore, this is not implemented mostly. Rather, land use permits are being renewed every 5 years, as long as a satisfactory management plan and Environmental Impact Assessment are submitted at the end of each 5 year period.

### ***Roles and Responsibilities of Land Users inside Protected Areas***

The roles and responsibilities of citizen and business entities with land use permits inside a Protected Area include those defined under the Law on Land (Article 45), and in addition:

- to take measures to protect, preserve and reclaim the original condition of the land at its own expenses;
- to enter and exit the land plot they obtained to use through an established route;
- if they want to change the condition and intended use of the land that they are using in connection with activities provided in the law or agreement, they shall submit the relevant project to the state central administrative body for approval;
- to reclaim, repair and improve the land upon expiration of the license for land utilization and to hand it over to the Administration or Soum/District Governor.

**Land use by legal persons of foreign countries, international organizations, foreign citizens, stateless persons and business entities with foreign investment.** Article 33.2 of the Protected Area law states that legal persons of foreign countries, international organizations, foreign citizens, stateless persons and business entities with foreign investment shall be prohibited from using land in the special protected areas.

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Scan to view Protected Area Law

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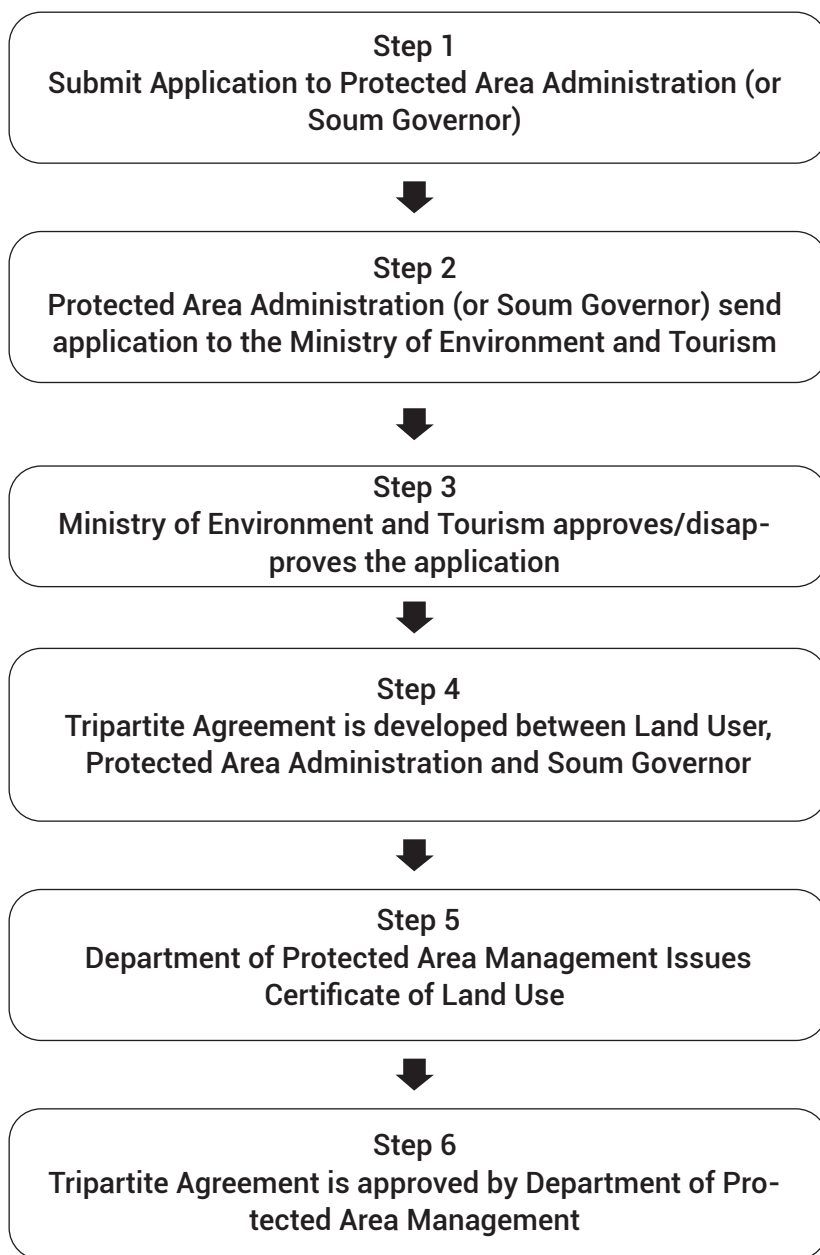
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## Step by Step Processing of Land Use Permit Application in a Protected Area





## CHAPTER 9. BUILD YOUR SKILLS TO RUN YOUR BUSINESS AND CBT ACTIVITIES

### ***Community Based Tourism - A Very Broad Skill Set***

It is a very broad range of skills that you need to successfully develop your CBT business and to run your activities sustainably and safely. Not only do you need to understand how the tourism industry works and what travelers expect, how to reach the market and with whom to collaborate in the tourism sector.





You need to learn business management skills, including financial planning, report writing and team management. Your communication skills need to be very good so as to work well with partners, such as tour operators.

With your combined skills as a community or company team you need to be able to perform at a high standard for every task in every service you offer. Among your team you need all the different technical and “soft” skills, from skills in driving and car repair, facilities management, hospitality, cooking, guiding, souvenir making, and many more. According to the different roles and responsibilities of your team members and yourself, each of you will need to develop their specialized set of skills. But there are also some areas where all team members should have basic skills and understanding of, such as safety issues and general principles in hospitality and in dealing with guests.

### ***Upgrade/Update Your Local Knowledge***

While you are of course the local experts, you may still need to upgrade your knowledge on local ecology and wildlife, geology and paleontology, local history and prehistory, local legends, and more. That is all apart from your primary skills and knowledge in livestock husbandry, dairy processing, farming or whatever your main livelihood strategy is.

### ***Your Daily Life Skills Adjusted to Tourism***

Of course as herders you are very skilled in horse and camel riding and packing, but you have to learn how to do it safely and enjoyably for guests. Many of them are for the first time in their life on horseback, and probably none of them has ever ridden a camel. As a local horse/camel guide you also need to share information on local culture and natural history. It will take practice to become a good guide. More detail on Guiding is provided in Chapter 16.

Obviously, you are very experienced in cooking local food, but you have to consider what to cook for guests and how to serve it. As the dedicated cook in the ger camp or on a tour you need to know the specific “local” dishes. You need to attend training to learn about hygiene standards and food security. Also, you need to know how to adjust the menu to different seasons, and how to cook for guests with special needs and preferences. More detail on Food Preparation. Is provided in Chapter 13

Likewise, you may be an experienced seamstress, felt maker, wood worker and more. But to make hand made souvenirs, you need to make them as local brand products that show the unique characteristics of your area. Trainings should cover this kind of local branding, local history, culture and traditions,



information on raw materials for the handicraft products, and be practical. You can find more detail on souvenirs in Chapter 12.

### **Communication Skills - Personal and Online**

You need good communication skills also to share your knowledge on all these topics with your guests in a way that is understandable and enjoyable, interesting and polite. Be confident, be yourself – that is best. And most of you are good story tellers anyhow and have a natural talent for sharing and performing. Also keep in mind that most travelers are actually very experienced, likely having traveled to many countries. So don't try to fool them either.

Nowadays, to promote your services and products, you have to use modern information and communication technology to directly target your market and customers. If you don't know yet, learn how to use social media on your smart phone, create your own business page on Facebook, create groups, post photos, write clearly and speak well to attract customers by Facebook live. Your younger generation community/team members for sure know how to do all of this; they can assist and show you, or you can put them in charge of your social media.

As you know "One Picture says more than a Thousand Words". So, photos are really important – of guests having fun during their stay and activities with you, of your community members and daily life, your home stay or ger camp accommodation, scenic landscape, and more. But images of people are most important. Almost everybody takes photos today with their phone; you can select the best photographer(s) in your team, learn some tips and tricks about photography and about editing photos before you post them. Again, your younger members probably will be good at it already. When editing photos, keep them natural looking; sometimes colors are made to bright and it doesn't look genuine.

### **Know the Laws, Regulations and Standards**

You will need to know all the regulations and recommendations for operating safely in all aspects. You need to know and adhere to regulations in hygiene, food safety, sanitation standards, and more.

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Scan to download Environmental Law, section 8

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Scan to download Improved Pit Toilet  
Standart MNS 5924:2015

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### **Strive for Excellence**

Each member in their special area must strive for excellence. So that your guests have a good time, from that "first impression" upon arrival to their departure. You want them to leave a very high rating and good recommendation of your services in your guest book or on social media. It takes only one activity or facility that is below standard and this is what a guest might write or talk about. And it takes only one bad review to damage your reputation. So each team member must be excellent at their job to create an overall excellent experience for guests. There is no shortcut.

### **Develop Your Capacity Building Plan**

As for any business, it is a good practice also as a CBT operator to have a capacity development plan for each team member, building on the skills, talents and interests they already have and considering their responsibilities. With your whole team, you can first make an overall assessment of how the overall performance is, and in what areas skills and knowledge are lacking to provide excellent service.

Decide what are the priority needs for skills improvement and who needs to acquire them. Then you can make a short - term plan for training. And with each team member, you can make a tentative medium - term plan to develop their skills; you can agree on how you share costs perhaps, how they can take time to do the training etc.

### **Develop Your Skills through Training and Practice/Learning by Doing !**

There are many training institutions in Mongolia, specifically for tourism related skills as well as for business and other skills, both in Ulaanbaatar City and in Aimag Centers.



If you are working with a tour operator, or planning to do so, you can also discuss with them that they provide basic training themselves, as many of them do for their tour guides, or they can recommend other training institutions and trainers.



#	Topic and context	Training provider institution	Website
1	Training on hospitality service	Center of tourism mastery	<a href="http://www.tourismmastery.mn">http://www.tourismmastery.mn</a>
2	Professional tour guide training	Mongolian professional tourism guide association	<a href="http://www.mptga.org">http://www.mptga.org</a>
3	Cook training and other relevant vocational trainings	Aimag vocational training and production centers	
4	Information technology, digital and marketing	IT companies & Digital marketing agencies Nathouse – social channel development, online trade training, and advice HORECA soft	<a href="https://www.sortlist.com//mongolia-mn">https://www.sortlist.com//mongolia-mn</a> <a href="https://nathouse.mn/social-media-surgalt">https://nathouse.mn/social-media-surgalt</a> <a href="http://www.horecasoft.mn">www.horecasoft.mn</a>








5	Online platforms where you can list and market your services	iHotel – database of hotel booking  JoinMe – domestic tour database	<a href="https://ihotel.mn">https://ihotel.mn</a>  <a href="https://joinme.mn/">https://joinme.mn/</a>
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Much information is available online.

#	Topic and content	QR code
1	A tour guide's training material co-authored with the Ulaanbaatar city Tourism Department and the Mongolian Association of Professional Guides	
2	Service, hospitality service training / Tourism mastery center, Ulaanbaatar city tourism department	
3	Tourist camp service/ Tourism mastery center, Ulaanbaatar city tourism department	



4	Occupational safety and health handbook for herders (in Mongolian)	
5	A comprehensive nine-module training materials on "Herders of the 21st century" with simple illustration of principles to be followed in a herder's daily life and a step-by step guide of essential knowledge for a herder.	
6	A set of self-study guides for young herders to improve their skills in pastoral animal husbandry, entrepreneurship, and social insurance.	



## CHAPTER 10. MANAGING YOUR BUSINESS AND TEAM

The management of your business and team is the foundation for running all your CBT activities. It is therefore very important that it is done well, even though it is more in the background, whereas the CBT activities are what customers, business partners, and the broader community see and experience.

You will have to build your team and business/community "culture" so that all team members have a common understanding of the objectives you are all working for under your short, mid and long term plans, that there is a good attitude, ethics and spirit in your team, and that each team member knows their own role and responsibilities.





It's a challenging task, but by following some key principles outlined below you are creating conditions to succeed.

### ***Always plan ahead***

- Always look ahead to plan activities in detail. Assign tasks, ensure all financial resources, equipment and materials are available.
- It is a very good practice to have a detailed plan for the whole year, or tourism season, detailing activities and responsibilities of your community members. You can develop simple indicators of achievements so you can measure and celebrate your successes. As an example, the tourism activity plan of Bortiin Mandal Nukhurlul, Munkhkhairkhan soum of Khovd aimag,

### ***Foresee and manage risks***

- Equally important is the preparation of a risk management plan. It helps you to foresee all possible risks you could encounter and how to prepare to prevent or minimize them. Shows an example of a risk management plan, giving ideas on potential risks and how to prepare and manage them.
- Make your own list of potential risks in your area and situation (weather, availability of your team members, workloads in herding or other daily activities, other) and discuss with your team how to manage them.
- Have back-up plans ready in case you cannot carry out an activity as planned.

### ***Hold regular meetings with all your team members***

- Hold regular meetings with your team, for planning activities, for evaluating your work and results, and for reporting back to team members on finances and other issues. Remind everybody in advance of the meeting.
- Encourage everybody to share their ideas and opinions, and ask questions. But also keep the meetings brief and efficient, otherwise people get tired of them and you all waste time.

### ***Be transparent about financial matters***

- It is very important to regularly share financial information and to be very transparent about expenses and income of CBT activities to your joint fund (either the CBT fund or overall community fund).
- Train selected member(s) of your community in financial/fund management and ask them to report regularly, in writing and in meetings with all members.
- Designate one day each month to discuss about finance with all members



### **Establish a management structure best for your situation**

- The Nukhurlul leader does not have to be the leader of CBT activities necessarily. If you have many members and your Nukhurlul is very active in conservation and natural resource management, or if not all members are involved in CBT, you can elect a manager/coordinator of the CBT activities. Otherwise, it may be too much workload for the Nukhurlul leader. Or, it may well be that a person other than the Nukhurlul leader has skills and talent for CBT. Decide with all members what's best for you.
- Have a community council to support the leader
- Have a community fund manager who is qualified and trusted by all

### **Know, manage, support and appreciate your team members**

- As the leader of the Nukhurlul (or the CBT activities), you will know your team members and what are their best skills they can contribute to your CBT activities.
- Know their strength and weaknesses, and discuss and agree with them on their role and exact responsibilities.
- Agree with team members what kind of trainings they should take to develop their capacity and how the training is organized and paid for, whether/how they contribute themselves too.
- Assess their performance and discuss problems early and openly with team members. Encourage them to share their opinion and tell their problems.
- Let them know and feel that you appreciate and value them and their work.
- Explain clearly if their performance is not satisfactory and how they can improve.





### **Create an incentive system**

- Based on your indicators, evaluate the performance of your members and give incentives for those who worked hard during a season. This can be mentioned in the work agreement with each member.
  - Tourism business depends on good communication skills and attitude, so it will be good if from the beginning your business encourages positive attitude and behavior among all team members.
  - The incentive types can be different, including experience sharing trips, trainings, tour to other areas, and more.
  - Make the incentive system transparent, and fair to everyone.
  - Don't favor some team members over others, otherwise the incentive system creates jealousy and a bad attitude in your team, exactly the opposite effect of what you intended with it.
- 
- Every team member should understand their role in the overall operation and their responsibilities in each activity
  - Most important is that each team member knows exactly what their role and responsibilities are. And it is also important that they have a good idea of the overall operation and how their role fits into it, how it is part of the big picture.
  - Team members should also have good guidance and a structure of who they ask in case they are unsure of something, and who they report to.
  - When we analyze complaints by guests, it often turns out that the problem was caused by a lack of good coordination among team members, or lack of awareness of team members of their exact duties, or a lack of clear division of tasks.

### **Establish emergency procedures that everybody knows.**

- It is also a very good idea to have emergency procedures in place and a clear "line of command" for such situations. Develop it with all members, and you can involve relevant experts from Soum. You can develop procedures for medical emergencies/injuries, for natural disasters, but also for events such as tourists arriving unannounced.
- Send some (or all) members to trainings, such as FirstAid, or organize trainings in/for your community.
- See Chapter 17 for more detail on safety precautions and procedures for all aspects of your operations.





### **Practice good paper work.**

- Make a written work agreement with members that clearly lays out responsibility, how performance is assessed and how they are compensated.
- Make a simple manual of your operations, describing what needs to be done/prepared when (months/date), and by whom. For complex activities, write down the exact sequence of steps. This manual can be available for all team members at all times to check.
- 
- Conclude a clear agreement with the tour operator. File your orders from tourists and tour operators neatly and systematically. If bookings are canceled by the tour operator, charge the tour operator a portion of the price since you prepared for guests. Prepare your own voucher (expenses).
- Set one day each week to check your expenses and income, and complete all paperwork/reports due.
- Prepare accurate and truthful financial reports. Your whole community will be respected and good citizens, contributing to the common good. It pays in the long term and grows your self-respect.
- Also keep your registration as Nukhurlul and all requirements up to date; prepare and submit the required reports on natural resource management properly and timely to the relevant authorities.

### **Practice good communication**

- Communicate clearly and timely.
- If you work with a tour operator, give prompt feedback to them on orders. Always communicate on time about orders.
- Communicate well with your team members, about plans, upcoming events/activities, sudden changes.
- Be a good listener too!
- Make sure you can be reached by phone at all times. If you are going to be out of reach, notify business partners. Ask somebody to be reachable instead and give their contact to your business partner. You could get a community phone/number and make sure it is always with somebody and calls are answered.
- Check your e-mails, phone and chat messages regularly and reply promptly.

### **Develop community capacity – pass on your skills**

- It is of direct benefit to your venture in the long term if you have others, especially young people, able and willing to take over responsibilities, and eventually take over the whole operation.
- Otherwise years of your hard work might be lost if nobody can take over. Of



course, it will always be different how younger people will run the operation. Be prepared to accept that, while still providing support based on your experiences.

- Building capacity in your community is rewarding for you and of benefit for all.

### **Example of Tourism activity plan, Bortiin Mandal Community, Munkhkhairkhan soum of Khovd aimag**

The community leader and 12 other members of the community planned to work from 1st of June to 25th of August to implement the following plan. The implementation status of the plan will be discussed May and October, annually. The income and expenditure report will be presented to all members of the community in monthly base.

Nº	Members	Position	Will also work as	Planned activity
1.	Soyolmaa	Manager	Cook	Get order from guests, record registration and for information sharing in this regard
2.	Bayarkhuu	Horse and camel guide		
3.	Ankh-Erdene	Horse and camel guide		
4.	Bataa	Horse and camel guide		Organize horse and camel trip, manage horses and camels, and all the equipments
5.	Shagdarsuren	Horse and camel guide		
6.	Choiijiljav	Finance	Driver	Bookkeeping of income and expenditure, cash record
7.	Ganbold	Ger service		
8.	Tserendorj	Ger service	Driver	Build ger, unpack ger and cleaning
9.	Choiijilsuren	Ger service		
10.	Gantulga	Shift guard		
11.	Ganchimeg	Shift guard		
12.	Gantulga	Shift guard	Assistants	Cleaning, cooking and help horse guides
13.	Tsogt-Erdene	Shift guard		



## Example of Risk management plan, Bortiin Mandal Community, Munkhkhairkhan soum of Khovd aimag

Nº	Causes of risks	Types of potential risks	Potential ways to overcome risks
1.	Potential risks from supplier	Supplier refuse to have service, the services from supplier are not sufficient.	Indicate it in the contract from the beginning, compensate insufficient services  To make contract with different supplier
		Bad quality work and low standard service from client.	
2.	Potential risks from client	Misunderstandings  Client refused the provide services, violate the contract and bad quality service	Develop collaboration agreement, review and access the agreement, organize meetings and discussions and document damage or violations, if any.
3.	Risks due to information technology	Due to network, internet service not able to get order or lose customers	Have designated date and time to contact with clients to share information.  Warn guests about it and guide them if you have different options
4.	Risks due to bad infrastructure	Bad condition of road, block road due to snow storm or heavy rain, no clear road signs, car accident	Report road condition often to your clients. Every time you move inform the place and how to get there your clients.  Also, inform if transportation cost has increased.  Always place reliable signs to reach out you.
5.	Risk due to local and national level conditions and holidays	National holidays, no electricity hours/days announced by authorized agencies, border issues, human and livestock disease etc.	Indicate those risks in the contract and specify the potential measures
		Problems in transferring money, withdrawing, loss due to foreign currency rate etc.	Use community fund
	Financial risks	Price increase of common goods	Indicate to use/spend/borrow from community fund
6.		Due plane re-schedule guest visit postponed or canceled	Indicate disposal amount and make compensation if trip canceled



7.	Risks related to natural disasters	Trip canceled due to an extreme weather condition, strong wind, heavy rain, earthquake, disease etc.	Indicate disposal amount and make compensation if trip canceled
		Fraud news about your activity: negative news among clients about your services etc.	Correct them as much as possible using your social networks
		Did not reach guests' expectation	Train staff and follow the standard
		Threat to guests safety	
		Insufficient human capacity	Train your staff, allow them to grow professionally
		Misunderstanding due to lack of information sharing in regular base	Inform your staff about organizational rules and ensure the staff follow them
		Bad vehicle condition, limited availability of petrol and car parts	Inform drivers to report about their car conditions often Monitor vehicle condition often



## CHAPTER 11. PLANNING AND OPERATING YOUR GUEST ACCOMMODATION/GER CAMP

In most cases, your CBT services will include providing accommodation for guests. Your other activities may be guiding guests to cultural sites, to wildlife viewing, demonstrating local crafts and let guests have a try at them, going on a horse or camel ride, and many more.

When guests arrive, you will welcome them at your homestay, small ger camp, or perhaps wooden houses. They will spend time to relax and rest, night time and meal times in the facilities you provide. The design, comfort, functionality, safety and security, and cleanliness of your place will shape the lasting memory that your guests will leave with and that they will share with their friends and family, their networks and on social media. It takes only one bad experience that is shared on Facebook to be very damaging for your reputation.

A homestay, where you have one or two guest gers near your family ger, or a small ger camp, is the most common guest accommodation in CBT, and we focus on this kind of facility here. This chapter points out some general rules for establishing a ger camp, and then discusses criteria for choosing a suitable location, facilities to include, aspects of lighting, harmonious design with the surrounding nature, services and activities, and safety.





### **General Principles for Overall Planning of Your Ger Camp**

Consider the following general points to establish and sustain your ger camp:

- Tourism is a professional field and you need to manage your camp and all other activities in CBT professionally in order to achieve success.
- If you have already decided to run tourism business, you should share your ideas with people who have professional background knowledge and experiences to get their comments and thoughts.
- Learn from others who already started a similar venture and learn from their mistakes.
- While ger camps take up less land area than large tourist camps, they still may attract at times a crowd of people and vehicles; so you should foresee potential impacts to nature, land and living condition of locals and avoid negative impacts in your planning and operations.
- Ensure there is enough space between gers, and use double cover material to reduce outside noise penetrating that could disturb guests. Consider also the prevailing wind direction and to reduce the ger being exposed to wind and gusts.
- Make a border marked by stones, or a stone wall or fence/wall from other natural materials of your area around the ger camp to ensure vehicles do not drive near or park directly at the ger. Make sure that cars do not go between gers, do not let vehicle tracks be created between gers. This is very important for safety, it is also unsightly and it will be very uncomfortable for guests.
- Most importantly, designate one parking area for vehicles, at least 30 meters distance and downwind from the gers/accommodation.

Last not least, develop your program and options of activities just as much as your facilities. Some travelers will just come for an overnight stay. But others come for experiences – they want to explore the area, learn about your culture and lifestyle. So be ready to offer your guests interesting activities. Chapter 12 goes into more detail on this topic.

### **Choose the Right Location – For Your Camp and for Guest Gers**

The location is very important for any kind of facility development. Most people want to build their facility near or in the wilderness or other popular visitor areas such as historical sites. This however has negative impacts on the value of these areas; not only do you create damage to landscape, wildlife or cultural heritage, you also undermine tourism activity. Once the damage is done, visitors will not come anymore.

So always consider the following when choosing the location of your ger camp and when placing the guest gers.

- Avoid negative impacts. Choose the location so it does not negatively





impact the area, site or natural and cultural heritage that attracts visitors in the first place. Work with professionals to make your choice. If you are near or in a Protected Area, learn about the zonation and the rules of use and activities in the different zones.

Consult with the Park Administration, park and soum rangers, environmental inspector, land manager, your tour operator if applicable, experts from NGOs or research institutions.

Consider all the land use and conservation management plans including protected area management plan, Soum development plan, land management plan, buffer zone management plan, pasture management plans.

- **Scenic views.** Consider the views that guests can enjoy from their ger. Many travelers like watching the sunrise and sunset. Seeing the starry sky and milky way is a special experience for many of them. All guests like to have a scenic view from their ger door, onto open space of the steppe or onto a forest, mountain range and other landscapes. A view onto a rural scene, with herder households and livestock - but not too close, or where birds or small mammals can be seen.
- **Undisturbed from noise, pollution, traffic, crowds.** It might feel convenient for you to be near infrastructure, but tourists come to Mongolia to experience wilderness, peaceful countryside, solitude and quiet. They want to rest in undisturbed nature. Therefore, ensure that your guests are far from noise, pollution, roads and traffic, modern infrastructure.
- **Lay-out (map) of camp.** From the beginning please carefully plan where you put the guest gers, toilets, car parking area, and the gers where you stay and work yourself. Consider the wind direction, and plan in such way that the guest gers have maximum protection from wind, and from smell, noise, dust carried by the wind, and from any other disturbances.
- **Weather and environmental conditions.** When planning the guest ger location, consider the prevailing wind direction during the different seasons, where snow may blow from and accumulate, where water could rise after a heavy rain, where flashfloods could rush through. Where there could be a pleasant breeze or shade during summer heat.
- **Quiet Night Time.** Many tourists are elderly, and once they wake up during night time it is hard for them to go back to sleep. Another reason to place guest gers in the most quiet location, away from roads/tracks, parking areas, and any other noises.
- **Clean and neat Host Ger area.** Keep the area around your own ger(s) clean and neat.



### Natural Designs and Guest Comfort

Traditional Mongolian gers or small wooden houses, comfortable and in Mongolian style, will be the best choices for guest facilities. Whether gers or houses, any structure and building should blend nicely into the natural setting, like it is part of the landscape, like it belongs there. Use, without negative impact of course, timber, dried woods, or stone from local rock formations. If your design and construction is inspired by nature and fits with the surroundings, your guests will feel comfortable and relaxed.

For the traditional Mongolian Ger as guest accommodation, consider these points:

- Most ger camps have 5 wall gers (sometimes 4 wall). Consider the number of beds in one ger. If there are more than 3 beds in one ger, space is limited and the ger may become uncomfortable for tourists.



- Guest beds should be no less than 90 cm wide, and no less than 2 meters long. The mattress should be thick enough to avoid feeling the wood below, but also not too soft.

- Sheets must be very clean, always fresh and washed! Provide enough bedding and extra blankets as nights can be cold for guests.

- Provide a simple hand wash basin and always keep water filled or at least available. Empty the waste water bucket. Let guests know there is a bucket below that needs emptying. Tourists are not used to that. Provide soap, and clean towels.

- Do not use cement to make the foundation and floor of the gers. It is more eco-friendly and nice looking without cement. Use a wooden floor, or place linoleum cover on the bare ground. If

you use carpets, make sure they are clean. Dirty, old carpets give a very uncomfortable feeling.

- Most people build ger camps with one felt layer for summer time use. But a one-layer-ger has bad insulation. It is also not stable in the spring wind, and it lets in too much noise from outside or vice versa. It is not water proof in the rain, and when the felt gets wet it often smells bad, like sheep, and tourists do not like it. Always have "orgh"/top roof for every ger.



- In Gobi it is often best to have protection from dust on the roof. Lately, people use thick plastic. However, while it protects from wind and dust, it blocks air circulation.
- The “Dul” stove type has become the most used stove in ger camps, as it is fuel efficient, has a good heat output and is clean to operate. Most guests however, will not know how to start a fire in a stove. You can show guests how to start the fire and maintain it; show them the functions of the stove, how to regulate the airflow and heat. You can also place instructions how to make fire and be safe. Ask guests whether they need fire and whether they want/need help with it. Sometimes, hosts make the guest ger too hot.
- It will be a nice feature and much appreciated by guests if they can sit outside, for morning tea/coffee or to watch the sunset. So its good to provide chairs and table. This can be picnic/camping tables that are portable and collapsible. Or, if its possible, you can build a wooden picnic table with benches, or something similar.
- Toilets/sanitation and waste management are VERY IMPORTANT aspects of your ger camp design and operation, and we have included dedicated chapters on these topics in this handbook.

Please see Chapter 14 – Toilets and Sanitation ! and Chapter 15 Waste Management and other Environmental Concerns !

### **Lighting**

- Almost all foreign tourists enjoy watching stars at night time. Remember that “light pollution” is effecting most parts of the world. In most countries, unless in very remote wilderness, it’s not possible to see a night sky like in Mongolia, because all the artificial light disturbs the view of the dark sky. Its important to consider this when planning and installing lighting for your ger camp. Make it safe and comfortable, but minimize “light pollution.”
- Install lights at your ger camp in a way so they do not shine right into peoples’ eyes and avoid placing lights high so that they do not shine into someone’s eye when they are looking at the night sky. When you avoid such lighting and “light pollution” guests will be able to enjoy themselves watching the stars and galaxies.  
It is best to place lights in lower places with sufficient distance from each other and with a top cover for each light.



- It is best to use self-sufficient renewable energy resources for each lighting equipment, such as outside lights that come with their own small solar panel. It is cheapest in the long run, eco-friendly, safe and will be appreciated by guests. If you use one energy source for all lights, your lighting may be more vulnerable to failure and damage, and electrical wiring can be dangerous if not correctly done.

### ***Designs in Harmony with Nature and Traditional Mongolian Styles***

- For all design aspects, for the overall look of your camp, the gers and the interior of the gers, keep it as natural looking as possible.
- Chose colors that match your natural surroundings, color tones that are like the earth, sand, and rocks. Make colors match each other, do not use many different colors. Avoid bright colors outside and inside (except for signs that are important to be seen)
- Make the design in harmony with nature and with traditional Mongolian styles. Use materials (rock, wood) from your natural surroundings. Design buildings to blend in with the landscapes, avoid too high structures.
- You can look up online how facilities for eco-tourism are designed in other countries, in desert, mountain or forest environments, and inside protected areas.
- Rehabilitate an area or site that impacted, where rocks, trees or other vegetation was removed. Make it look natural again, restore the soil cover and replant it.

### ***Signs and Information Boards***

- If many signs are not allowed, or will not look good, design one information board with all important information and place it at an appropriate location where it is easily accessible but does not obstruct the view. Make signs look pleasant and from natural material.
- Provide accurate and relevant information, in a nice design. Get professional support, ask from protected area, rangers, Soum/Aimag, tour operator, if needed - to include more information on wildlife, landscape, protected area, local cultural and natural heritage so that the facts are right and the information is interesting for visitors.

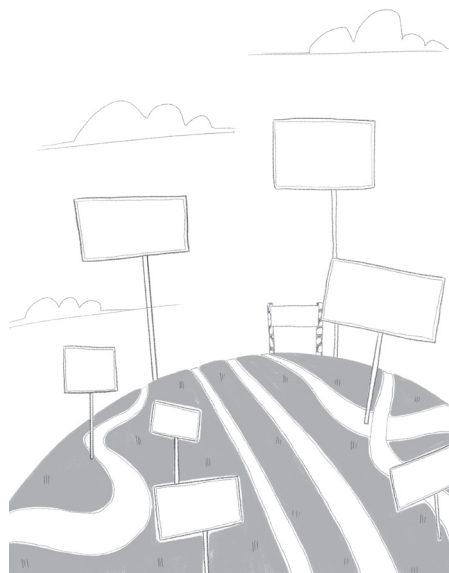


- The only exception to making signs blend in well are of course signs that should stand out. For example, a sign pointing out fire extinguishing equipment and materials, FirstAid Kit, and a sign to warn foreign guests to watch their head when entering the ger.

### **How to Provide the Best Services**

There are some key criteria to make your operation successful.

The “first impression” that guests have upon arrival is very important. Make sure your area, facilities, gers are well designed and organized as described above, and in clean and neat condition, so that the “first impression” of visitors is good.



You want guests to feel welcome, inspired, comfortable, relaxed and safe - in a clean environment, at a nice place that reflects local nature and culture, and with beautiful views.

A key part of a good first impression of course is you and your staff/team members - right there to welcome and assist guests, and give them information of the camp facilities and the program, meal times etc. ahead. And looking neat and clean too, and best if you wear traditional Mongolian clothes.

A good first impression creates the foundation for tourists to have a good rest and nice time in your area. If there are some small mishaps later on in the program, guests can easier overlook or forgive them if they had a great first impression. On the other hand, if you ruin their first impression, they are more prepared to be critical of your activities and services and start complaining. So, really work on create that good first impression.

**Good Attitude and Communication Skills.** To create the “good impression” you have to have a nice attitude for greeting, welcoming and caring for your guests. To develop this attitude and communication skill you need to practice and get training which often takes time. But don't worry either, be yourself and natural



and build on your normal practice of hospitality. Nomadic herders of Mongolia are known for their hospitality.



Working in the tourism sector gives you the opportunity to develop yourself. In tourism, we are always encouraged to meet with new people, to work and communicate with them while creating a positive attitude among our team and push us to learn foreign languages.

**Cooperation and Good Business Practices.** In tourism, we work and make agreements with different individuals, businesses and organizations, in private sector and government. If you want to run your business smoothly you have to learn about and practice good principles of cooperation, with mutual trust, reliability and understanding based on clear agreements and communication. To grow your business by attracting more tourists, you make agreements and contracts, be trustworthy, keep up your good quality and efficient service, and keep improving your activities and services all the time.

**Professional Skills.** There is still a lack of properly trained/skilled professional staff in our country's tourism sector. Ger camp directors and bosses themselves should educate themselves and acquire the required skills and knowledge for their work.

**You and Your Team.** As a director/boss, always have close working relationship with your staff, be close to them, have good relationship with them while





implementing your internal rules. Make job descriptions clear for everyone and follow all the safety rules for your activities and services.

It is often said that for a business, its people are its greatest asset. Always make an effort to improve the capacity of your staff, improve your communication skills and attitude, create your own organizational culture and be an organization of "learning by doing" together. This will drive your business's further development and your success.

Chapters 9 and 10 provide more detail on developing your and your team members' skills, and how to work with your team.

**More Domestic Travelers and Longer Tourism Season.** While the tourism season in our country is largely still limited and rather short, your opportunities to provide CBT services have improved in recent years. The number of domestic tourists has increased significantly, in part due to the pandemic, which gives you the opportunity to develop more products, and have a longer tourism season; challenging you to find ways to run your business into and through the colder season. Please see Chapter 12 for more ideas on developing your activities and programs.

### **Safety Issues**

Keep in mind "Safety First" in designing, building and running your facilities, and activities. A few points are mentioned here, and Chapter 17 gives much more detail on safety.

**Ger Entrance.** A very common hazard and cause of injury for foreign visitors is the low door opening of the Mongolian ger. Tourists often hit their heads when entering the ger. Therefore, maybe place a sign "Watch Your Head" above the door, and/or fix a piece of felt or other soft material to the upper door frame.

**Dogs.** Most foreigners, travelers from North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Korea and more countries, have a very different attitude towards dogs than is common in rural Mongolia. In their home countries, dogs are pets, treated as family members, living inside. Families often get a puppy when they have a new baby, so these two grow up together.

So when guests come, they may want to meet and pet your dog; they don't know how different your dog's lifestyle is and what it eats. Make sure you explain to them that your dog is a guard dog, not used to being petted, and that it may not react friendly. Let guests know to practice good hygiene after touching a dog.



But if you have friendly dogs, especially puppies, it most likely will be an attraction for guests, they will like to see it and play with it. Just handle the situation safely and with common sense.

Many countries have strict laws against animal cruelty. Guests will have a very bad impression if you mistreat a dog, or any animal.

**Fire extinguishing equipment/materials.** Have basic fire fighting equipment/materials in your camp, kitchen, or even in each ger. You and your staff should know where it is and how to use it.

**First Aid.** Have a basic First Aid kit at your camp. You and your staff should know where it is and how to use it.

See Chapter 17 for much more information on safety!





## CHAPTER 12. DEVELOPING YOUR TOURISM ACTIVITIES, (PRODUCTS AND ITINERARIES)

As mentioned in the previous chapter on how to establish and run your home stay or ger camp, it is equally important to have interesting activities and experiences to offer to your guests.

When developing your activities, remember why tourists come to Mongolia and what Community Based Tourism is.

A 2018 survey<sup>34</sup> asked international visitors for their reasons to come to Mongolia, and this is what they said:



- 70 % of them mentioned nature and untouched wilderness
- 50% mentioned the nomadic culture and way of live
- 25% mentioned history of Mongolia and Chinggis Khan.

Also, 70% of the survey participants had planned their visit to be 2 weeks long and with the idea to experience the Mongolian countryside. 62% of them thought there are good opportunities for local herder communities to develop CBT.

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<sup>34</sup>Bayasgalan, B, 2018, Tourism Market Study, GIZ IMRI Project.



The survey confirmed that a majority of visitors to Mongolia not only have a great interest to see nature and nomadic culture. They in fact want to be part of it, they want to experience the real nomadic way of life, stay in a ger and talk to members of herder households. They want authentic experiences.

This interest of travelers is your opportunity to promote your local nature, culture, traditions and history through developing tourism activities that give a once in a life time experience to international guests.

Taking advantage of this by developing, owning and managing a CBT venture as a local community group or Nukhurlul you can achieve several objectives.

- Protect and preserve your local resources such as nature, history, culture, tradition, wildlife and livestock to pass them on to your next generation
- Promote local tourism products and features that are unique for your area and community. Coordinate among different CBGT groups in your Soum/Aimag to develop a very interesting travel itinerary, with various, locally specific activities and features.
- Create additional income for your member households. Fairly share the benefits and profits from tourism activities among members, seeing it as blessing from mother nature

### ***Designing Your Tourism Activities***

Your CBT activities are developed based on the unique way of life, culture, and history of your area and community. As local resident, and with your family having lived there for generations, you have the best knowledge to share the unique local features with international and domestic visitors. Your local community members will have the best knowledge on wildlife and natural sites to see. Since you own and run your CBT activities, you choose what to show to visitors.

Before choosing what to show, and making a program, you can look at different areas of interest, and what may be of special interest to visitors:

**Nature-** Unique, wild landscapes, beautiful scenery, mountains, forest, taiga, plants with valuable medicinal power, grassland, lakes, rivers and basins, and more.

**Culture –** Traditional costumes, local foods and drinks, traditional way of living, traditional dwelling, cultural events, and more



**People** – Local traditional wisdom, local history, leaders, artists, local legends/ folklore, local crafts and skills, traditional horseman ship, livestock husbandry skills, songs, and more

### ***Some General Guidelines when Planning Activities for Guests***

- Offer interesting, entertaining, and safe activities that provide guests with knowledge and experiences
- Consider both "sightseeing", visiting natural and cultural heritage sites, and "experiential" tours
- Aim to involve guests in activities. Offer activities not only to watch, but to join, to "make it by hand". Give an opportunity to tourists to use their senses and their imagination
- Strive to show to tourists the connection between people, culture and nature through tourism activities
- It is always interesting for tourists to meet local people and talk to them
- Activities and products should be designed with visitors' perspective in mind. When planning specific activities, consider guests' interest, age, ability, health, on a case - by - case basis.
- Also assess carefully whether you have the resources, team members with required skills for the activities in question when planning a program. Don't plan anything beyond your capacity, that you cannot do at a high standard and safely.
- Also think what activities can be offered year-round, and which are seasonal.
- Think of what tours you can offer – half day, full day or multi-day, and what is required for these - especially for multi-day, overnight tours. They are much more complex to plan and run, having to consider transport and accommodation or camping for the night.
- If you already run activities, keep notes on what worked, what was guest's favorite activities, what didn't work, what needs to be improved. Have a Guest Book for comments.
- Train your local guides well, so that they can give accurate and interesting information to guests



- Always be aware of safety issues (see Chapter 17) and time management, when planning and running a trip.

### ***Developing a Tour Itinerary***

Having thoroughly considered all options for local activities and listed the best choices for sites, areas and events to visit and experiences to let guests participate in, you can develop your tour itineraries, or event schedules.

Some guidelines for a good itinerary are:

- Remember to start with a warm welcome and introduce community members
- Start by giving the guests the “bigger picture” – an impression of daily life in the local community, such as visiting herder family, having a local meal.
- Then go into more details to let guests learn and experience. Meet other community members, maybe local craftspeople, musicians, arts, show them your places of worship if you like.
- Be creative and remember that things that may be very common for your life might be very interesting for foreign guests. It is interesting for them to visit a small shop in Soum or Bagh center.
- Involve guests in chores of livestock herding, let them take part in cooking, felt making and other crafts.
- Also plan for free time in your program and itinerary. Do not fill too many activities and too long distances into one day.
- Plan well where and when to have meals.
- Plan for bathroom breaks – whether it's at a real toilet facility or “nature's bathroom” with some privacy.





## **Making and Selling Souvenirs**

In addition to developing tours and offering services, as a community you can also generate income from tourism by selling local products. Some of these products are already produced in your community and used by the community, like honey, sea buckthorn, meat, aruul and other dairy products. With a little change concerning packaging or labeling, these products can be sold as souvenirs.

But there are more opportunities. There might be members of your community who are skillful craftsmen or craftswomen who can create an item that reflects the uniqueness of your area or that tourists find handy to use while travelling through Mongolia.

## **What are Souvenirs?**

Souvenirs are items that tourists buy or keep as a reminder of a person, an event or a place they visited. It can be almost anything, from a small stone they pick up at a lake shore to a pair of felted slippers, from a cashmere shawl to a leather bag, from an ankle bone game to an Arag.<sup>35</sup> And many more.

In general, we identify the following categories of souvenirs:



<sup>35</sup>Basket for collecting livestock dung as fuel for household stove



- » Wearables like mittens, slippers, sweaters, hats, scarf, jackets, T-shirts, etc.
- » Food products like locally produced tea, honey, jam, candies, cheese, (alcoholic) drinks, etc.
- » Jewelry like necklaces, bracelets, earrings etc.
- » Toys and games like stuffed animals, felted puppets etc.
- » Books, stationery and music
- » Collectables like fridge magnets, key chains, miniature traditional puppets
- » Beauty products, like soap, creams, lip balm etc.
- » Practical items like a bag, leather wallet, knife, felted slippers etc.
- » Art like paintings and sculptures

### ***Developing Your Souvenirs***

Since there are so many options - you have to keep a few things in mind if you are thinking of developing souvenirs. Never just start producing souvenirs, hoping that you will sell them, but carefully develop your products.

#### ***A few tips:***

1. Have a **clear idea who your (potential) customers** are and what they would like to buy as a souvenir. The interests of domestic tourists are different from those of international tourists and international tourists from different countries, ages, and with different personal interests, will look for different souvenirs. Domestic tourists will probably travel with their own car, making it easier for them to carry bigger and heavier things.

For international tourists, who come to Mongolia by plane, weight and size of what they buy are much more limited. Domestic tourists will like the food products from the countryside while international tourists might like to try these items while in Mongolia, their interest focusses probably more on items they can use (like a warm pair of winter socks, a nice leather bag) or decorative items (local embroidered cushion covers or a well painted Mongolian landscape)

2. Understand that **a visit to your community is part of a bigger trip**. International tourists usually start and end their journey in Ulaanbaatar, where there are many souvenir shops that offer a wide variety of items to choose from. Meaning that many international tourists might want to wait



with buying souvenirs till at the end of their trip. But they will buy a locally produced item, when this item reflects the uniqueness of a specific area. Khovd Aimag for instance, is known for its watermelon cultivation. Tourists visiting Khovd will certainly be attracted to watermelon-themed souvenirs. Communities with many yaks, might want to consider making products from yak wool, like socks for instance. Maybe not a unique item in itself, but if the souvenir is somehow linked to the visit to that specific community, it will make a good souvenir. Tourists visiting the countryside, admire the herder lifestyle and like to support local communities by buying their products, especially when the price of these souvenirs is modest.

**3.** It is key to offer souvenirs that **are not easily available elsewhere in the country**. Making felted slippers in the countryside might not be such a good idea. There are specialized shops in Ulaanbaatar that offer felted slippers in different designs, colours and sizes, making it hard to compete with, unless you can offer a type of felted slipper that is not for sale in Ulaanbaatar.

**Engaging the tourist in the process of making a certain souvenir**, will add to the experience and increase sales. Bayan-Ulgii is known for textile products with the typical Kazakh embroidery, while Uvs is known for its products with sea buckthorn and the taiga of Khuvsgul for its souvenirs using reindeer antlers.

**4.** Try to work as much as possible with **locally available material**. Leather products make usually good souvenirs. However, if nicely processed leather is not available in your community and you have to buy the leather from Ulaanbaatar, the extra costs of organization and transportation, will make the souvenir more expensive. Only when the quality of the souvenir increases significantly, you can consider using raw material from outside your community.



**5. Use your ethnicity.** Mongolia has many different ethnic groups who distinguish themselves from each other not only by their traditional dress but also through other aspects. Blending these aspects into your souvenirs, will give it more meaning. For domestic tourists these ethnic items might be a good reason to collect them all, like miniature dolls in the traditional



costume of each ethnic group, miniature size boots of each ethnic group etc.

**6. Consider working together with shops in your region.** The tourism season is short and only selling your souvenirs during the tourism season might not generate enough income. Working together with local or regional shops (bookshop, coffeeshops, a shelf in a hotel or restaurant), will increase sales opportunities.

**7. Set the right price** for your souvenir. Calculate the cost of the material and determine the time investment to produce the souvenir. Asking too little for the souvenir, and you will not be able to buy enough new material to sustain your souvenir production. Asking too much for the souvenir and you will not sell enough items to continue your production.

**8. Consider developing souvenirs linked to special festivals or events in**



**your region.** Festivals and events play an important role in the tourism sector and provide opportunities to sell your souvenirs, especially when the souvenirs are related to the theme of the festival or the event. The Tea Road festival in Khovd provides a good opportunity to sell miniature stuffed toy camels carrying tea or to create a Khovd local tea in a nice package with an image of the camel caravan. Different Ice festival in the country or the Yak festival also provide inspiration to create souvenirs.

**9. Labelling and packaging of souvenirs.** Adding a label to the souvenir, provides the opportunity to inform the buyer about the product, but also about your community, adding a little story. And you can add contact details making it easier to order items. For food items and beauty products, a label is essential. Date of production, expiry date, information about the ingredients and how to use the product. When it comes to packaging, consider the environment and avoid using plastic as much as possible. Making gift bags from fabric, that can be used separately, will for sure be appreciated by international customers. Packaging should be functional, mainly to protect the souvenir during transportation.

**10. Be inspired by nature.** Mongolia is known for its vast landscapes and nature-based tourism is what motivates most tourists to visit Mongolia. Souvenirs inspired by nature, like a special bird or mammal species seen in one of the protected areas, enforces the image of Mongolia as a paradise for nature lovers. But do not use any parts of endangered plant or animal





species.

**11. Start modest.** Finding the right type of souvenir to produce and sell, takes time and is a process. When you think you have a good souvenir to offer, produce first just a few and see if it sells. Only when tourists show an interest, you can start thinking about upscaling the production.

**12. Maintain a high quality and continuously do quality checks.**

**13.** Over time, further **finetune your souvenirs and constantly develop new ideas.**





## CHAPTER 13. LOCAL FOOD EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR GUESTS

Along with accommodation and scenery, food is one of the key experiences for travelers. "Food tourism" has even become one of the growing segments in travel, where the exploration and experience of national and local food is the main purpose of travel. International tourists are interested in our traditional food as it is part of the nomadic life and culture. But it is very important that food is safe, and that preparing and serving food adheres to good hygiene standards.

The comments of international travelers in box below about their food experiences in Mongolia give you an idea of what you have to consider when preparing and serving food and drinks to guests. The comments are from tourists from different countries, but certain experiences were mentioned in many of the comments. They illustrate why (most) international travelers cannot eat our daily food exactly as we do.



**What Travelers have said about Food in Ger Camps:**

- Variety of food served was the same in each ger camp.
- Some big tourist camps decorate their dining hall with skins of wild animals, it looks and feels strange.
- Meals were often mostly meat.
- I got stomach ache after eating vegetable salad.
- When source of water changed I felt bad.
- Often only one kind of coffee and tea is offered. Same with desserts.
- Some take-away food was not good and cold.
- I visited many different aimags, but really could not see local differences in food.

**What Travelers have said about food served on tours:**

- A variety of food and salad was served.
- They use plastic utensils in the kitchen and excessively use single use/plastic utensils. Also, small plastic water bottles were served a lot.
- Often meals are prepared from canned food.
- The meals had lots of meat which made it difficult for us to sleep at night.

**What Travelers said about their food and drink experience at Herder Home Stay:**

- They were very hospitable.
- We were forced to drink a lot of Mongolian vodka. They said we have 3 times culture, so we had to drink 3 times. I had headache next morning.
- They served us lots of homemade airag and yogurt which are not fully cooked/processed.
- I ate khorhog, buuz and khuushuur after one another which caused me stomachache.
- I could not eat aaruul. I broke my artificial teeth.
- I burned my mouth because I did not know that it is juicy and hot.
- The hygiene was not satisfactory.



### ***Understanding Travelers' Eating Habits***

First, understand that travelers are used to quite different eating habits from ours in Mongolia, based on their climate and geography, culture and religion. Also, many travelers will be very conscious about their lifestyle and health in which their diet plays an important role. Of course it is not possible to generalize, but following here are some tips to improve our knowledge and capacity on serving food to tourists from other countries

Travelers from warmer, tropical regions, are probably used to eating more fruit and vegetables, fish, and chicken. Often, mealtimes are a very social event and families take time for long meals, with many courses of different dishes, along with friends. Having wine with dinner is also common, especially in the Mediterranean countries like Italy and Spain, and in France.

Quite a few travelers are vegetarian (no meat) or vegan (no animal products), while others may be on diets (keto, paleo) that favor meats and fats but don't eat flour (carbohydrates). Travelers are conscious about harmful, chemical ingredients in foods like many processed foods have. Canned foods are sometimes handy on trips, but they are not much appreciated by health conscious guests.

And, as already mentioned, there are many allergies, some of them can be life threatening, and they are increasing in many countries. It is common that people cannot digest dairy products or foods with gluten such as in flour, noodles, bread and other bakery goods.

There are also religious practices and cultural norms of travelers to consider. In general, Muslim travelers do not consume pork, guests from India may not want to eat beef. For North Americans its likely unusual to eat horse meat. It of course differs by individual how much they follow religious and cultural norms, so don't stereotype anybody. Its best to ask your guests about their preferences if you are unsure.

Just imagine what it would feel like if you are traveling in another country and you cannot eat what you are used to as daily food. If we are away from home and every day have meals served to us that we never experienced before, it may not be pleasant for us. Of course, we also might want to try famous local dishes, but if we are served food that we are not used to or we do not like constantly during the entire trip, it won't be nice for us as well.



### ***Cooking and Serving Food to Your Guests***

You are probably asking now “then what can we offer to guests”? Actually, it is not so difficult. And as mentioned at the start of this chapter, in general guests are very interested in your cooking and food, in national and local specialties and recipes. But please keep in mind:

#### **Don'ts**

- Don't push your guests to eat or drink anything!
- Don't be offended if they turn down certain foods and drink, or cannot finish it after tasting !

#### **Dos**

- Respect their cultural, religious, and individual rules and preferences
- Be aware of food allergies – ask your guests about it
- Ask in advance, if possible, about restrictions and allergies

If they have had a taste of Airag, or dairy products of cow and camel milk and they don't want more, that's fine. If they cannot finish their milk tea, don't be offended. It is very strange for many to have tea with salt. Don't push your guests, men and women, to drink vodka, or any alcohol.

### ***Cooking Local Food – Together!***

But don't be discouraged by the above points. In general, local food and how it is made is very interesting for tourists. And you have many options to serve your guests and give them a good food experience.

They love to see how local households prepare and serve food. Also, traditional ways of preserving and preparing food for travel, without relying on a freezer, are very interesting – for example, dried meat (borts) and “shuuts” to have safe meat supplies for travel.

### ***Cooking Lessons and Providing Food Experiences***

There are quite a few foods, drinks and dishes for the preparation of which you can invite guests to watch and to take part in. The traditional Mongolian milk products and ways of preparing meats offer lots of opportunity for interesting demonstrations, “cooking lessons” and enjoying food together.

- Making all the different dairy products offers many options for guests to watch and try themselves – starting with milking, then making yoghurt, and more.
- It will be very interesting for travelers to witness how Airag is made, from milking the mares to keeping it in the special leather bag , to daily “stirring” it.



- Watching Khorkhog being prepared and served is real experience for travelers, plan some time so they see the process. Making bortsog, preparing shuuts, preparing buuts, khushuur, bansh, tsuivan, various soups, and more.
- Seeing how traditional vodka is distilled on the ger stove is very interesting. Tasting this milder alcoholic drink is also nice, but again not for everybody and be careful to warn guests that it still has quite some alcohol content even if it tastes milder.

Especially if you have a real local dish typical for your area, that is interesting to present. Explain to guests what you could cook together and ask how much they want to participate and try themselves. You know best what are your options.

### ***Sourcing Your Foods***

It is best if you can use foods that are produced locally - meat and dairy, as well as vegetables from your community gardens or greenhouse. These are also nice to show tourists. Some of the most highly rated restaurants in the world today cook only what they produce on their own local farm. It is another new trend not only in travel but in gastronomy.

Of course you will probably need some items from shops, but think carefully and keep them at a minimum. Ensure that you have a way to keep groceries fresh and safe. If you are a vegetable grower, you already may have a cellar. Try to minimize packaging already when shopping.

### ***Developing Your Menu***

Local, authentic and simple is good. Sometimes ger camps or households try to make "fancy" foreign dishes, and they don't come out right. And it is not necessary. It is nice if you or your cook knows some "foreign" recipes, but don't develop your menu based on these. When you develop food menu always consider what food fits well with each other. As mentioned in chapter 9, it's a good idea that you or your cook undergo training to learn about menus, recipes, food safety, hygiene standards and more.



## Examples of a daily menu

### Breakfast

Local foods you can serve for breakfast

- Bortsog, Cream, Milk, Mongolian cheese, Aarul (fresh, not hard), yoghurt, jam (local), berries,
- Soup (Asian guests will probably like Mongolian soup for breakfast, guests from Western countries probably less)

**What you can add - if you can get these items fresh and store them safely.**

- Bread
- Muesli, or plain Oats
- Fruit (apple, orange)
- Sausage, cheese (fresh)
- Eggs (fried, scrambled or boiled) – make sure they are fresh!

### Consider Tea and Coffee !



Many travelers will not prefer milk tea in the morning – but really appreciate if coffee and teas are available! It is easy enough to have several kinds of teas (tea bags) – black, green and an herbal tea.

For coffee, instant is easiest. If you can make fresh coffee (in a plunger or coffee machine) it's a real bonus for some guests! It's not a must. But if you invest in a coffee maker, make sure you do prepare the coffee right.

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Scan to watch How to Use Moka Pot

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### Lunch

Soups, Tsuivan, Khushuur filled with some cooked vegetables or salad are good. "Soup and salad" is a very common lunch in other countries.





If you make a Khorkhog, lunch time is probably better than dinner. It is too heavy for dinner.

You can make packed lunches with khushuur, or tsuivan, both kept warm in a thermos container. You can make sandwiches, or easier take bread and sausage, fruit and vegetables (cucumber). For sausage, foreigners probably prefer salami type sausage, and its safer to keep. When packing lunches, avoid plastic containers and utensils and cut down on packaging.

### **Dinner**

Unless they come back from a hike or long ride and are very hungry, a light dinner is probably best. Soups are always good, especially after exercise, to rehydrate and get salts. Khushuur, buuz, vegetables are fine too, just make it different than lunch time.

Other simple dishes are goulash, beefsteak etc., always not too heavy with meat, but with enough vegetables and salads.

### **Some Tips for Preparing Vegetables - cooked and as salad**

- Don't overcook vegetables, and don't make salads too "soggy" (wet), but rather fresh and crunchy. Make sure vegetables for salad are washed properly and safe. Avoid mayonnaise; its not safe unless really fresh, and its not liked that much either. A salad with just olive oil is best. Home made "salads" – pickles go well with most Mongolian meat dishes.
- Refer to cook training for more information and to Food Safety in Chapter 17.

### **Some Tips for Preparing Meat Dishes**

- For guests its best to separate the fattiest parts of the meat from the lean meat. Most guests probably like lean meat better.
- Let guests know what meat it is you are serving, best to ask beforehand whether they mind to eat the kind of meat you are planning to cook. Especially horse meat might not be acceptable. Too much sheep/ mutton is also not popular probably. Many travelers might not like the smell of mutton.
- After a heavy meat dinner, guests might take a shot of vodka. But again, do not force it.
- Intestines, all the animal parts you enjoy after an animal was slaughtered,



blood cooked in animal guts etc., or animal heads, tongue are likely to be not liked, or even make guests upset. Some may like it and find it interesting to taste. Be careful when suggesting and offering such local delicacies.

- Do not offer marmot! It is illegal, not safe and will not be appreciated by most guests. The same goes for meat of other wild animals. Unless your guests are hunters who have come to hunt with a proper license according to the law, in the hunting season.
- When you prepare any meat for cooking, clean it well skin and hair. Be careful that the meat is fresh and safe. Refer to your cook training and food safety information in Chapter 17.

### **Special Needs**

If you haven't asked beforehand, or if guests arrive unexpected, ask them if they have any dietary restrictions due to allergies or other medical conditions, chosen diets, or religious and cultural reasons.

- **Vegetarians** don't eat meat (they may eat fish).
- **Vegans** do not eat any animal products – so no meats, no milk products, no eggs, and no dishes with any such ingredients. They eat vegetables, fruits, rice, noodles, potato, breads.
- If somebody is **lactose intolerant**, they cannot have milk products.
- If somebody needs **gluten free** food, they **cannot** have wheat, rye, barley, meaning normal breads, cookies, crackers and other bakery goods as most of these have wheat. Gluten is also in many processed foods; soy sauce, ketchup and other such sauces; noodles/pasta made from wheat; beer, chocolate milk, coffee mixes 3 in 1; and many processed and canned foods such as breakfast cereals, , canned soups, etc.. They **can eat**: fruits and vegetables, legumes (lentils, beans etc.), buckwheat ("brown rice" in Mongolian), millet, oats, quinoa; eggs, meat, fish, yoghurt and fresh cheese; nuts and seeds.
- **Allergies** are too many to list here. Most common are peanuts and other nuts, cow's milk, eggs, wheat, soy, fish, certain fruits and vegetables.
- Allergies can cause mild reactions, but also life threatening conditions. So take it serious if a guest has an allergy. In extreme cases of allergies, its enough for the allergic person to use a utensil or plate that was in touch with the food they are allergic to, or even if they smell it.
- Guest with a serious allergy (to certain foods, and also bee stings) likely will carry their own medication including antihistamines and an "epipen"



to administer adrenaline/epinephrine to themselves in an emergency. They still should see a doctor after that.

### **Safe Drinking Water**

- We should not forget about drinking water. Most travelers probably drink more water than you are used to. Sufficient water intake is stressed as part of a healthy lifestyle and people are very aware of that. Many travelers probably have their own water bottle. Set up a supply of safe drinking water at your ger camp or provide it in the guest accommodation.
- Be very aware of drinking water safety. You may drink from the creek (and even you can get sick from it), but foreigners are much more likely to get sick. To be on the safe side, always treat (boil or filter) drinking water for guests, even if its from a clean creek or spring.
- Boiling water might be the most practical way to make it safe. A few minutes boiling is sufficient. You can boil water in the evening and let it cool overnight. You can make it available in a clean metal pot, with a cup/spoon, or in a container with a tap. If it's a plastic container, try to use a plastic that's safe (PBA free); such containers are available in Ulaanbaatar on household and camping shops.
- There are different kinds of water filters. Some are a for table top use, with a pump. Others are more for travel use. Good filters are not cheap though. See Chapter 15 for more information.
- Be also aware of the environmental aspects. If you have to provide water in plastic bottles, buy large bottles, at least 2 liter bottles or best the 5 liter ones. You can serve water in cups (paper or give guests their cups for the tour), give a larger bottle to guests, or refill their own water bottles.
- If you are near a center and have electricity, you could have a water balloon, or hot/cold water station.
- Guests will like not only the fact that you make safe drinking water available, but also that you reduce plastics waste. Keep in mind that most travelers are environmentally very aware. There is even a movement "Travelers Against Plastic".

### **Your Ger Kitchen – Set-up and Good Practices**

The tips below are both for your ger kitchen at your camp or homestay, and for your field kitchen during travel.



## **Food Safety, Cooking and Kitchen**

### **Hygiene**

Personal Hygiene and safety

- As a cook, use an apron
- Tie your hair in pony tail or cover it.
- Wear clean clothes, wear shoes not slippers.
- If you feel unwell, don't cook for guests and team members
- Have a health check before the season
- Wash your hands before preparing food, wash your hands after using toilet!
- Have hand washing station with water and soap station near, plus hand sanitizer
- During pandemic - use mask and disposable gloves, and have PCR or rapid test before trip (72 hours or less)
- Have thick gloves to safely handle hot pots and pans
- Be safe when making Khorhog ! Consider the high pressure of the Khorhog container and handle with care, for your and everybody's safety!
- Have knives, cutting boards and bowls/plates that are used for meat only.

### **Cleaning and storing utensils and dishes**

- Always keep utensils clean, pack and store them properly so that they are not exposed to dust and dirt.
- Try not to use chemical dish wash liquid, but use local natural materials like salt, soda, khujir etc.
- There are also organic, dish wash soap bars; they have the advantage that you don't have another plastic bottle. Rinse dishes with very hot/boiled water.

### **Kitchen towels**

- Do not mix up towels for hand and for dishes washing and drying
- Sanitize towels after each use by boiling.

### **Storage of Foods**

- Keep your foods and ingredients separate and in cotton (or paper) bags. You can easily make such cotton bags.



- Keep drinking water in clean containers that are only used for water and marked clearly as such

### **Safety in Your Ger Kitchen**

- If you use a traditional chimney in the ger kitchen, be cautious about dust, and always check your safety.
- If you use a gas stove, buy containers and gas from reliable suppliers. Follow the instructions. Check for leaks (smelling and listening). Turn off gas when stove is not in use. Safely store and transport gas containers. Make sure you have full spare containers.
- If you use small size gas stove, set it up in a safe and stable place; dispose of empty gas containers responsibly and safely.
- Prepare thick gloves to handle hot pots. You can easily sew them yourself.
- If you use electricity, make sure wiring is properly and no hazard to cause fire, and safe to prevent electrocution. Have a professional install and check it.

### **Safety in Your Field Kitchen**

When you cook for guests and guides on a hiking or riding tour, the same rules and guidelines as above apply for safety, food storage and waste management. And there are additional points to consider to take food that does not spoil, to store food safely for travel and in camp, to make a safe and comfortable place for cooking and for meal times. Some tips are:

- Kitchen tent should have enough space, for the cook(s) to work, store foods and allowing enough distance of stove from tent wall for fire safety.
- Chose a tent design that is stable in the wind and secure it well when pitching it.
- Buy gas containers and gas from reliable suppliers/refillers, check that it is safe.
- If you use small stove with gas cartridges, make sure to bring out all empty cartridges (they have become a common rubbish item in the countryside and wilderness areas)
- Place gas stoves on a table or something else, off the ground
- Store water only in designated water containers
- Do not purchase food that cannot last safely for the duration of the trip
- Store food in cotton bags
- You can use cold bags for some food to store (for a day or two)
- Keep food away from direct sun exposure
- Best to use meat that's preserved for travel like borts or shuuz; for short



trip or one/two days store meat properly to keep it safe.

- Prepare tent or shelter for serving meals to guests, and where guests can relax before and after meal time
- If you use plastic utensils, choose thick, strong ones that are safe for cooking
- Keep a clean kitchen and camp site, do not attract wildlife to food or leftovers
- Take out all rubbish, except organic/vegetable skins etc.

See also Chapter 15 for eco-friendly travel and camping practices, and Chapter 17 for more detail on safety.

### **Waste Management**

Chapter 15 provides more information on waste management. Here are just a few rules:

- Separate your waste into: plastic, cans, glass, metal, paper, organic, and non-recyclable
- Bring out all waste from field trip.
- Burn only paper, and if so do it safely! Do not burn plastic.
- Bury or leave only organic waste/vegetable skins
- At your ger camp, vegetable skin can be used as compost in your / greenhouse or for livestock
- Do not practice feeding birds and wildlife with leftover foods, at ger camp and in field camps.

### **Making a Kitchen available for Guests**

There is also the option that you don't cook for guests, but make a kitchen facility and water available for them to cook their own meals. This may be the case if a tour operator is bringing guests and they come for the overnight accommodation and a certain experience, like camel ride or seeing daily life of herders. But they may have their own cook. Or, it could be independent travelers especially Mongolian tourist who are bringing their own supplies and need a kitchen to cook. Make sure the kitchen is well set up, clean and safe as described above.

Ask well in advance whether tour operator or travelers want a kitchen to cook their own food.





## CHAPTER 14. SANITATION AND TOILETS

### ***Providing safe and sanitary toilets for your guests is a high priority!***

As mentioned earlier and as surveys with visitors to Mongolia show, a rural toilet experience may be the only bad experience visitors will leave Mongolia with. Most likely, they will take with them fond memories of great adventures, of the hospitality of their hosts, of amazing landscapes and learning about culture and history of Mongolia. But toilets in the country side likely will have made a bad impression, and indeed can pose a health risk for your community and a threat to the environment.





### **The Health Hazards of Common Pit Toilets**

Improving toilets and sanitation is not only a priority for your guests. The commonly used open-pit latrines in the country side increase the spread of infectious diseases like typhoid fever, dysentery and hepatitis A. They are particular unsafe for children, and diarrhea is the cause of 6% of mortality of children under five in Mongolia.<sup>36</sup> The hazards from open pit latrines include direct soil contamination as well as threats to water sources in case of flooding and airborne health risks as germs also evaporate into the air. In 2017, poor sanitation and hygiene conditions have been estimated to cost the Mongolian economy 35.5 billion MNT (US\$ 26 million), or 0.5% of GDP.<sup>37</sup>

More information on pollution caused by open-pit toilets and how to reduce it is available, for example, in a handbook on reducing soil pollution, published by a UNDP supported project<sup>38</sup> in Orkhon Aimag to deliver clean and safe sanitation system for residents, in line with the MNS 5924:2015 standardization for eco- toilets in Mongolia.

Scan to download Improved Pit Toilet  
Standart MNS 5924: 2015



<sup>36</sup>Source: UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/mongolia/stories/improving-childrens-well-being-through-innovative-solutions-sanitation>

<sup>37</sup><https://www.unicef.org/mongolia/press-releases/sanitation-cold-climate-meeting-held-mongolia>

<sup>38</sup><https://www.mn.undp.org/content/mongolia/en/home/blog/2021/OrkhonSoilProject.html>



### **Regulations for Toilets inside Protected Areas, and Approved Standards**

To avoid soil pollution, a decree<sup>39</sup> to ban the use of non-standard toilets in Protected Areas was issued in 2018, and became effective June 1 the same year. Several toilet designs are permitted as “standard”. They include a) “improved pit latrines” that prevents human waste from seeping into the soil, b) eco-friendly dry toilet, c) portable or mobile toilets or d) improved and air-conditioned sanitary facilities.

According to the degree, citizens and entities operating in Protected Areas must use sanitary facilities that meet standard requirements starting June 1, 2018. In case of failure to comply with the requirements, licenses will be revoked.

A standard for “pit latrine and sewage pit” MNS 5924: 2015 was approved by resolution #59 of 24th of December in 2015 by the National Council of Standardization and Metrology, and became effective February 1, 2016. The purpose of this standard is to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, protect the environment from pollution and create a safe living environment. It applies to the assembling, operating, maintaining and designing of sewage pits and pit latrines for households and organizations who are not connected to the central or piped sewer systems.

The technical requirements document<sup>40</sup> (scan QR Code), available in English and Mongolian, for standard MNS 5924: 2015 (for pit latrines and sewage pits) provides guidance on all requirements in general and with regard to hygiene, environment, fire safety, assembling, emptying/disinfecting/reusing the pit, and dismantling.

### **Make the Right Choice for Your Toilet Design**

When deciding on what toilet design to choose, be very realistic. Obviously, you need to adhere to the legal requirements. But importantly also ask yourself - will the design work for my circumstances and in our environment?

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<sup>39</sup>On 27 March 2018, Minister N. Tserenbat of MET issued a decree (No.A/73) prohibiting the further use of hygiene facilities and pit toilets that are not in accordance with the government standards MNS5924:2015 (technical requirements for pit toilets and sewage pits) and MNS6426:2013 (prevalent requirements for eco-tourism related to housing and accommodation in protected areas). Responsible for the implementation of the decree are governors, heads of Aimags, city tourism departments and heads of PAA. Within MET, the head of PAMD is obliged to monitor the implementation and take relevant measures accordingly. The head of Green Development Policy and Planning Department of MET is in charge to integrate and report on matters related to the decree. (Source: Toilet Design for Ranger Posts of BACCP Sub-Projects, Consultant Report to the Biodiversity and Adaptation to Climate Change Project (BACCP) (MET/KfW)

<sup>40</sup>Pit latrine and sewage pit Technical requirements, MNS 5924: 2015, Official Publishing, MONGOLIAN NATIONAL CENTER FOR STANDARDIZATION AND METROLOGY ULAANBAATAR 2015



### **Eco Toilets**

Eco-toilets need regular maintenance - after each use, or at least daily, and one person needs to be in charge of it. Users need to have clear instructions on how to use them properly. If not used and maintained properly, "eco toilets" become just as bad in terms of hygiene, aesthetics and environmental hazard. Its great if you can install and maintain an eco-toilet properly, but make an honest assessment whether it's feasible before investing in it.

At much visited sites, eco-toilets can work if, for example, a ranger is responsible for maintenance, or a fee is collected from users to go to a maintenance person, or a maintenance person can have a shop nearby.

### **Improved Pit Toilets**

An "improved pit" toilet may in most cases be the better, more realistic solution. The basic features of the "improved pit" toilet are the pit lined with material that prevents soil pollution and simple measures to prevent odors and to keep flies from accessing the pit.

These measures are 1) a ventilation pipe – a simple pipe (chimney) that lets odors escape from the pit through the roof or back of the toilet building; often these pipes are now outfitted with a ventilator to draw air out more efficiently; 2) a lid on the hole for defecation; 3) screens on any windows and other openings to prevent flies from entering.

If you have two toilet houses next to each other, you can built one with and one without seat. In most cases you will have one toilet, and need to decide whether with or without seat. There is a good argument against toilet seats – it is easier to keep a toilet in a hygienic condition when it's just a surface with a hole, rather than a seat. But, for some international visitors it is difficult to squat, as they have never been used to it. Therefore, it is good to install handles for toilet users to hang on to; make sure they are safe and solid.

If you decide to install a toilet seat, chose one that is easy to keep clean and hygienic, plastic being the best in this case, and better don't cover them with soft/textile material, for hygiene reasons. Also make sure that its at a convenient height and position to sit on.



Install a handle for a toilet paper roll, and ensure that there is always toilet paper available. For hygiene, make available a simple hand wash facility, with water and soap. This can be on the outside wall or on a post nearby. Hand sanitizer is a good idea too. Ensure that the toilet has a simple lock for users to have privacy and the door is not opening in the wind and breaking.

Also ensure that people feel safe to visit the toilet at night. Solar powered, motion triggered lights to light the way to the toilet are a good idea, and it will be helpful to have an inside light option too.

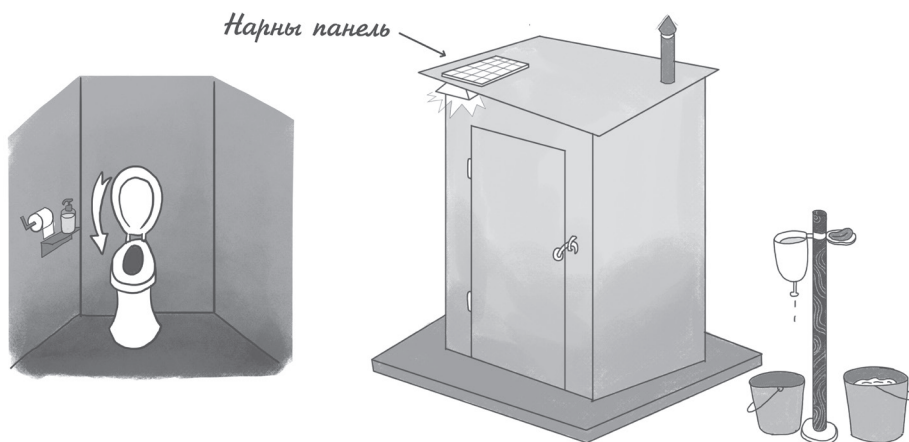
### ***Choose the right Toilet Location***

When choosing the place of the toilet, ensure it is far enough from water sources and the pit does not reach the water table.

### ***Practical Designs of Improved, Dry Pit Toilet***

We are providing designs and construction details for improved pit toilets that have been developed and tested in Omnogobi and found to be practical and hygienic. In the Gobi region, the pit does not need lining with wood. If you are in Khangai region, make sure the pit is lined/re-enforced with wood.

**Important! Make it a "dry" toilet - Do not combine waste water pit with toilet pit!**





### **Providing Shower/Bath for Guests**

Often your guests will stay only one night, and therefore it is not absolutely necessary you provide a shower. It is easier, and will be appreciated, if you provide a bucket with warm water, with a ladle, soap and shampoo and a clean towel. Make sure there is a place of privacy for the guest to take a "bucket bath". This can be a separate tent or ger, or a closed area made by walls of cloth/tarp, or other materials. A floor cover/grid that lets water run through is helpful, or alternatively plastic slippers for guests.

Also, wet/hot towels, neatly and cleanly provided, are a welcome surprise for a guest to freshen up after a day of travel.

If you want to provide a shower, you can set up a shower with a "solar" bag, or a bag where warm water can be filled in, both to hang high safely. Another option is a camp shower that can be pressurized to create the shower effect.

Make sure, there is a privacy shelter for guests wanting to shower.

### **Toilet and Sanitation Procedures on Hiking, Climbing and Riding Tours**

Safe and environmentally friendly toilet and hygiene procedures for back country travel when no facilities are available, like on multi-day hike or horse ride when travelers and guides camp overnight, are just as important as sanitation at your home stay or ger camp.

It should be your responsibility when taking guests on a camping trip on foot or horseback to provide them with instructions and equipment to practice an eco-friendly back country toilet procedure. It has become a terrible sight and hazard in the vicinity of camp and picnic sites to come across the remains of open defecation, human waste and toilet paper, as well as wet wipes and menstrual pads or tampons. Not only is it extremely unsightly, it is a health and environmental hazard, and even a hazard for wildlife if they ingest it.

The recommended procedure is to bury human waste and toilet paper. And in





most situations (unless it's a very large group of campers) it is better to do this individually. Bring a dedicated shovel for the purposes of digging the hole, and "train" your guests in the procedure.

- Find a spot far enough from camp and from any water source (minimum 100 meters) where it is possible/as easy as possible to dig.
- Make a hole (approx.. 20 x 20 cm wide) and about 15 – 20 deep. This is the depth where enzymes, bacterial activity is most active in the soil, where fecal matter will be broken down the fastest. If its shallower, there is a risk of animals uncovering it; if its deeper it takes longer to break down.
- Do your business, and SAFELY burn the toilet paper.
- Cover the hole again. Ideally, if you made the hole with a spade, you set aside the top cover of grass or other vegetation and you can put it back again like a "lid".

As a guide/tour leader, it is good to have available, or better give to each guest, a toilet kit consisting of toilet paper, a lighter and hand sanitizer. You can either have a larger shovel/spade for everybody to use. Alternatively, you can give guests small shovels, like for gardening, or purpose built ones. Also, please advice female guests not to throw out wet wipes, toilet paper or feminine products. If needed, provide them with a garbage bag to take out.

If the individual toilet procedure is not suitable, build a temporary group pit toilet at a suitable location, far enough from camp and any water sources. Provide a shovel to throw soil after each use of the pit, and make a shelter for privacy, at least to two sides. Before leaving the camp site, ensure the pit is covered and the surrounding area restored.

For mountain climbing or glacier hiking trips, procedures must be stricter. No human waste should remain on snow or ice. In such cases, carry out any solid human waste. This will be more pleasant in cold temperatures, when the material is frozen, but should be done in any case. Bring suitable plastic bags for this purpose.

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Scan to watch How to Use Bio Toilet Bag



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### **Hygiene in Camp – Bathing/Washing, Dish Washing, Laundry**

Share with guests how in Mongolian culture water sources are revered and protected, and what to do and not to do. This information can also be part of the sign/sheet you provide for guests at your ger camp or home stay (suggested in chapter 17, page 173)



It is good practice to have a facility for hand washing in camp, for staff and guests. It can be a simple bucket/container or a bag or container with a tap that is filled and hung on a tree or elsewhere. Provide water, soap and a brush. Nowadays also hand sanitizer should be available – at the wash facility and at meal times.

If guests want to wash or bath, ask them to NOT use soap or shampoo in natural water sources, unless its special, biodegradable detergent. But even in that case, it is better to wash/shower not directly in the river or lake. Instead, make available a bucket or two for a "bucket bath", away from the water source. Or, set up a camp shower as described above.

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Scan to download Eco Toilet Examples and Experiences

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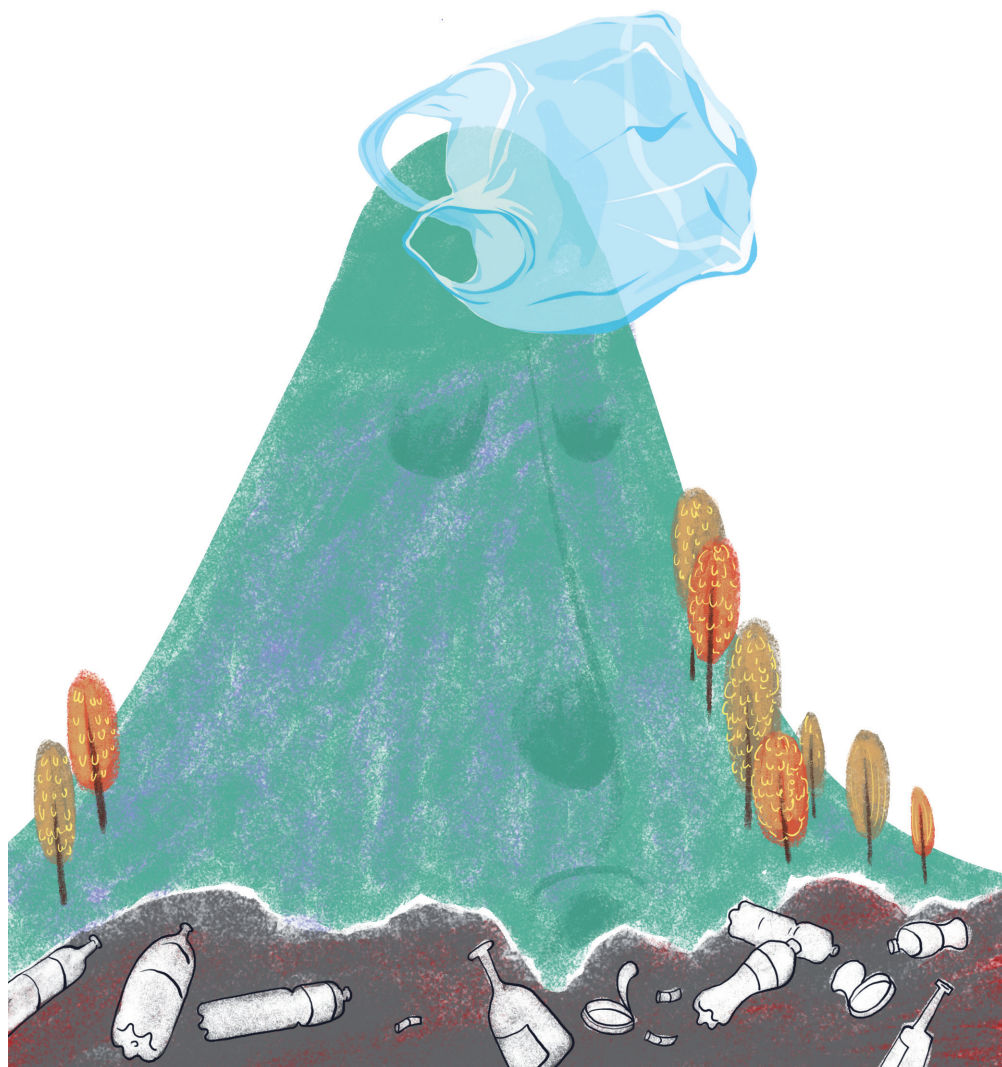




## CHAPTER 15. WASTE MANAGEMENT AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Waste has become an enormous problem worldwide, with huge islands of plastic floating on the oceans, plastic items becoming a threat to marine and terrestrial animals when they ingest plastic or get caught in it, suffering and dying from it. Small micro particles of plastic today are found in many foods, in water, and in humans and animals.

While two decades ago this would have seemed not a problem for Mongolia, now it pervades even the country side almost everywhere in Mongolia, including protected areas. Everybody has seen unsightly rubbish heaps, witnessed livestock “grazing” on garbage and many have seen rubbish inside the organs of animals that were slaughtered, or died from the ingested rubbish.





Waste and its improper disposal leads to pollution of water sources, soil and air, apart from the unsightly appearance of rubbish in the landscape. Tourists returning to Mongolia year after year to enjoy the pristine nature have definitely noticed the difference and are appalled to see places like Gorkhi Terelj National Park and the Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area littered with rubbish, along trails, at campsites and around much visited, iconic sites.

It degrades the very values that attract visitors, apart from the hazards to the environment and wildlife. It is actually incomprehensible why people take full containers and bottles of food and drink into the back country and wilderness, but leave empty packages there!

### ***Reduce, re-use, recycle!***

You are surely well familiar with the slogan reduce, re-use, recycle! These are the most important and basic principles to follow. They are also the key principles of the government policy on waste management.

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Scan to view National Program of  
Improving Waste Management

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### ***Reduce - be mindful during shopping to reduce waste***

Reducing of course begins with shopping for supplies. Plastic bags of certain specifications have already been banned in Mongolia since 2019<sup>41</sup>; many shops offer alternatives, or cardboard boxes, and if you shop frequently to provide for guests it is easy to have bags or boxes of a durable material to use for shopping. You can even cut down on small plastic bags commonly used for fruit, vegetables and other items by having your own cotton or mesh bags.

Such cotton bags of different size, are needed also for storing and transporting food during tours. You can make them from the white cotton used for ger cover and more. You can even sell them to guests, perhaps with your logo or some other nice design on it. And guests surely will notice and appreciate all these small efforts you as a host make to operate environmentally friendly.

So, the first step is to try to reduce packaging when buying. It's not totally avoidable nowadays to shop without packaging, but when you pack for a hike or horse ride, you can cut down even more on packaging materials, filling provisions in re-usable containers and sacs. Take as little packaging as possible on the trip.

<sup>41</sup>Government resolution No 189 bans import, sale, production and use of disposable plastic bags came into effect from March 1, 2019. The ban prohibits single-use plastic bags thinner than 0.035 mm nationwide.



### **Avoid/Reduce Plastic Bottle Use**

It has become a bad habit to give people small bottles of water, whether its during meetings in the city, or to guests traveling in the country side.

Its best to avoid plastic bottles at all. As explained in chapter 13 under the section on Safe Drinking Water, many travelers have their own water bottle and its best to refill those, with SAFE drinking water. Boiled or filtered, or from a larger water container or at least from larger plastic bottles (2 or 5 liters). Or, give people bigger bottles, at least 2 liters. The larger bottles can also be re-used easier - by herders for milk products.

Also bear in mind that water from plastic bottles, especially when its stored longer and exposed to the sun, is contaminated with small plastic particles. It is not healthy, though it might still be a safe option in terms of avoiding sickness like food poisoning, or germs from open water sources.

If you have no other safe method, you can provide bottled water to guests. But for the long term, plan to have a way of providing safe drinking water differently. By having a special container/canister for cooled down/boiled water, or a well functioning and efficient filter set-up, or a water station like in offices. Guests can refill their bottles there.

### **Avoid Single Use Plastic Containers**

Avoid using plastic utensils and containers that are only for single use. As utensils you can have stronger plastic (if you don't want to use metal) so that it can be cleaned and re-used. If you pack lunches, avoid the thin, single use plastic containers. You can buy containers for the same purpose made of paper/waxed paper/cardboard.



### **Re-cycling**

For re-cycling, probably your Aimag, Soum have certain rules and programs and provide advice and perhaps support in organizing it.

Omnogobi Aimag also has a guideline for waste management in tourism that requests that all garbage will be transported from the country side to Soum centers, where it will be managed according to government procedures.





Arrange your rubbish collection, in your ger camp or at your home stay so that it is in line with the local recycling program. So usually plastics, glass, cans/metal, cardboard is separated for recycling. It is important to educate your guests about it, also not to mix organic waste, like food leftovers, with any other garbage.

Scan to view Waste Management Law

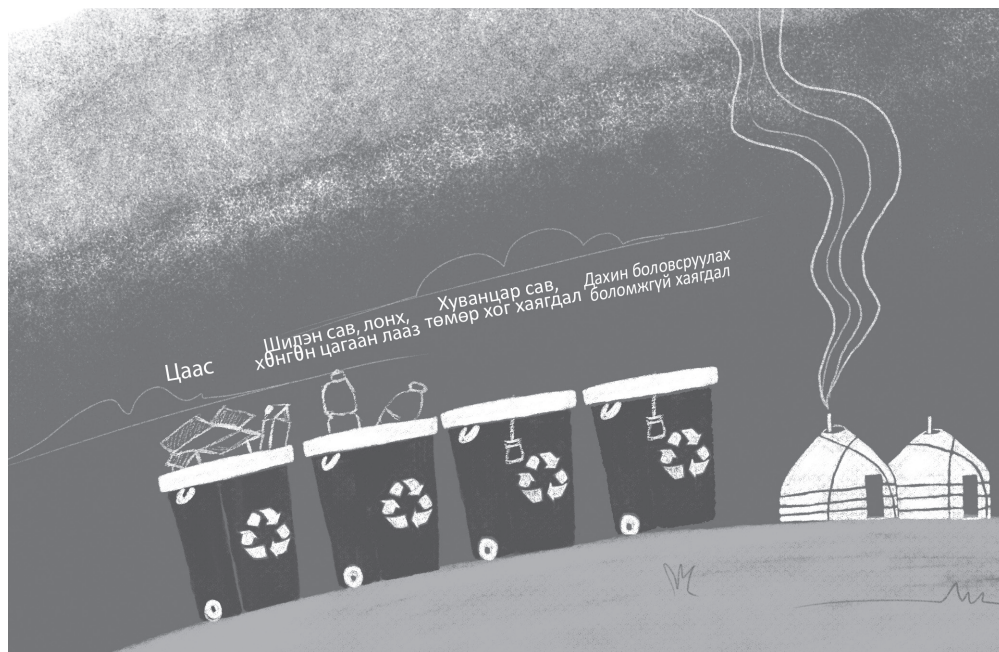


### Separating Waste

Arrange waste collection that makes it easy to separate waste, as is practiced and required in public places. You can buy waste bins that are colored and marked for the different types of waste:

- Paper
- Glass bottles and jars, and aluminium cans
- Plastics (and metals)
- Non-recyclable materials (mixed material packages, plastic coated packages, foil coated packages, non-recyclable plastics/without the "recyclable" symbol, and more)

Or, you can make your own containers to separate waste into these categories. Make sure that containers are heavy enough not to be blown over, that they have a adequate lid so materials don't blow away, and that livestock cannot get to the content, or open or knock over the containers.







### **Organic Garbage, Food Waste, Grey/Waste Water**

Make the best use of organic waste. You know what vegetable skins you can feed to livestock, but make sure there are no heaps lying around, rotting or blowing around until livestock eats it. The best use for all other organic waste is to make compost, in a separate container, for your garden or greenhouse.

If there is other food waste and liquid waste that is disposed in the ground, make sure the hole for this is well away from guest gers, and that it is covered safely. Chapter 14 has mentioned that toilets at your ger camp should be "dry" toilets, not combining human waste and waste water in one pit.

### **Garbage Collection Site**

Dedicate an area, as much as possible out of sight from guest gers, downwind from guest gers, but easiest to bring garbage there.

You can also set up the waste collection containers - or one container if you transport rubbish to the Soum center and separate it there – on a trailer that is lowered into the ground as in the illustration below. Once it is filled, it can be easily hooked up to a vehicle for bring to Soum or Aimag center. Make sure it is safe to access, garbage does not blow away, animals don't get to it, and transport is safe too.

### **Burning rubbish at your Ger Camp/Home Stay**

Burn only paper, cardboard, wood waste, in a stove inside. Or, when it is safe to do (no wind), in a metal barrel or other specially designed metal container outside. Prevent sparks and burning materials to be carried by wind. Attend to the fire, make sure it is safely finished/extinguished. Have a safe cover/lid for the barrel.

**Do not burn** plastics! It is harmful for you and the environment.

### **Tour Operators and Travelers – Do not leave rubbish**

Discuss and agree with your tour operator, or independently traveling guests including Mongolian travelers that they do not bring and leave rubbish at your ger camp or home stay. They should take measures to reduce, re-use and recycle themselves – collecting their rubbish in bags and bringing it out and back to Soum or Aimag center or the city and dispose of it properly so it can be processed/recycled in the waste management facilities there.



### **Waste Management on Hiking and Riding Tours**

Firstly, as emphasized above, reduce – take as little packing materials and containers of plastic, glass or cans, on your trip. If you provide authentic, simple cooking, these items will be less anyway. For any rubbish that will accumulate, take suitable bags with you.

### **Bring all rubbish out!**

Burying rubbish has been practiced a lot in the past in Mongolia's countryside and in protected areas, but its not an environmentally safe practice. And it will always be less weight and volume to bring out empty packaging and some additional rubbish that has accumulated on a trip. Depending on the circumstance, you can collect rubbish in separate bags/containers during a trip, or separate the recyclable materials daily or on return. Ensure that rubbish and bags/containers are secured to not blow away in wind, or that dogs or wild animals get to it.

### **Prevent Wildlife Accessing Food and/or Rubbish**

In areas that are in bear habitat, it is vital that rubbish and food scraps are not accessible to wildlife. If you are a small group, couple or single traveler, you might consider hanging food and rubbish that may smell, high into a tree. Bears accustomed to foods at camp sites have become a problem and danger in other countries, US and Canada namely. Do not create such a situation in Mongolia. One day, as bear populations seem to be increasing (in Gorkhi Terelj and Khan Khentii in recent years), this could also become a problem in Mongolia.

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### **Other Environmentally Friendly Practices**

#### **Clean Sheets for Guest Beds**

ALWAYS change sheets after guests leave. A bed sheet that is not fresh and cleaned is totally unacceptable for a guest, even if it was cleaned but does not look and smell fresh, clean and hygienic.

In case guests stay with you for more than 1 day, ask the guests whether it is ok that sheets are not cleaned every day. Most hotels do this nowadays as an eco-friendly practice to save using power and detergent. It is most likely that guests will be happy with such arrangements, in fact even appreciate your environmental awareness and eco-friendly practice.

The sheets do not have to be white as long as it is cotton and comfortable to sleep. It is nice to dry it under sun and wind and not iron the sheets, unless the air is dusty or its too windy.

#### **Hygiene in Field Camp – Bathing/Washing, Dish Washing, Laundry**

Share with guests how in Mongolian culture water sources are revered and protected, and what to do and not to do.

It is good practice to have a facility for hand washing in camp, for staff and guests. It can be a simple bucket/container or a bag or container with a tap that is filled and hung on a tree or elsewhere. Provide water, soap and a brush. Nowadays also hand sanitizer should be available – at the wash facility and at meal times.

If guests want to wash or bath, ask them to NOT use soap or shampoo in natural water sources, unless its special, biodegradable detergent. But even in that case, it is better to wash/shower not directly in the river or lake. Instead, make available a bucket or two for a “bucket bath”, away from the water source. Or, set up a camp shower – either a “solar” bag, or one where warm water can be filled in, both to hang high. Another option is a camp shower that can be pressurized to create the shower effect. For all, either have a purpose made shelter/tent, or create a makeshift shelter from a tarp.



### **Eco-friendly and Safe Camp Fires**

Firstly, its best to avoid open fire altogether. Check the status of seasonal fire restrictions and safety rules that are in place for the area and time of your trip. If you have to make a fire for cooking, warmth or enjoyment, consider using some kind of a “fire – pan” – a metal sheet or container off the ground. This way, the fire is contained and controlled, there is no danger of grass fire, and the ground does not get burnt.



If you have made a fire on the ground, restore the place where you made the fire afterwards. Bring the large stones that made the ring around the fire place back to where they came from. Remove ash and coal, and any burnt/half burnt materials. Bury ash and coal in a hole in the ground. Any plastic, glass and other remains – carry rubbish out! Sprinkle some soil from another area, forest floor material and such, on the barren spot where the fire was. This gives some substrate for vegetation to regrow faster and restore the spot.

If there is a camp fire spot from previous users, use it if possible and don't make new spot. Some camp sites at popular places, around lakes and elsewhere, are spoilt by many fire places. And even if you used a fire pit that was already there, restore it as above or leave it clean and neat so others can use it and don't make more fire pits.

### **Eco-friendly Power**

In any case, it is likely you have solar power at our ger camp, for lighting and other purposes. On the long term, it is a good investment, it is safer and it makes also a good impression on guests if they see solar panels, or small wind generators, to provide power for their ger and for operating your camp.



## CHAPTER 16. GUIDING

### ***Your Role as a Local Guide***

As a local guide you have several roles and to fulfill them all well requires a number of skills, qualifications and talents. As the guide, you are the link between the visitors, the local community, and the local area and its natural and cultural heritage. Your role is to bring all of them together. You are an ambassador to promote tradition and culture, you are seen by guests as representative of the community and its values, behavior and voice.

So, the local guide is actually much more than the local person who shows guests around the local landscape and scenery. And guiding is not only about showing the area, or guiding a horse or camel trek. Guiding can also be a walk through the soum center and visiting the local museum. Your community can have several guides for the different types of activities.



Tourists will be eager to learn about nomadic culture and how it is preserved by local herders till now. There is much information to share that guests find interesting – about your way of living, family life, how children are educated, what are important holidays, how are weddings and other events celebrated, and more.



Guests want to have a once in a life time experience through seeing and experiencing, talking with local people and be part of their lives during their journey. As discussed in Chapter 12, actively taking part in activities, trying their hand in milking a cow, preparing local foods, helping to set up a ger – these will all make for great memories for your guests.

Also don't neglect things that are normal for you and don't seem interesting. A visit to a soum center shop can be very interesting for tourists; they want to learn about real daily life and living conditions in rural areas. And the local shop keeper will appreciate it too.

We see from the above that it's really a diverse set of skills and talents that are expected from a good guide. All local guides must have in common that they give true and interesting information to visitors in an interactive way. There is much more to it though. But don't worry, you can acquire the skills and experience to do a good job. Keep in mind that your knowledge is already vast – about your lifestyle, herding, your area; that you have amazing skills to live and survive in the countryside in all seasons with your livestock. Be confident and your natural self.

Below is an overview of qualifications, skills, behavior and attitudes that make for a good guide, and more tips on how to organize your work and yourself to give your guests a good experience.

### ***Planning and Time Management***

Planning and time management skills are very important for the guide to master and apply at all times. Important points for planning and time management are:

- Plan and manage time very well!
- Plan together and make sure all involved know about their role and the schedule. You can create and write down your own script, especially for multiple day trips, to cover different topics and spread them out over different days. All members can check it.
- Know how long travel and activities take.
- Know of any changes in routes, roads and trails and their condition
- Plan everything in a logical sequence.
- Have packing lists – for your personal gear, horse/camel riding/packing equipment, camping equipment, camp kitchen.





### **Your Appearance, Attitude and Aptitude**

To be a good guide, you have to have certain skills and knowledge, but also have a good feel for people. You have to have an ability to remain calm, friendly, supportive and reassuring to guests even when things are going wrong. You have to find the right balance between being alert all the time, and at the same time relaxed.



You have to manage time well, but also be flexible when something unexpected happens, either good or bad. Be creative and have initiative. You could come across something new and interesting and you can build it into the activity. Or, a planned route may not be possible to take, and you have to find a good alternative. Always anticipate and prepare for possible problems. Remain calm and mindful when dealing with a difficult situation

A good guide has good social skills, is energetic and cheerful, and has a sense of humor. Is always friendly, kind, generous and hospitable. He/she has to be mature, polite and humble. At the same time, be active, curious in a pleasant way, and show much initiative. He/she must also be tactful, sensible and able to be discreet.

A good guide has a good understanding of the expectations of tourists, of what is their main reason to visit Mongolia, and respond to these. He/she has to be able to motivate their guests for activities, to explore and learn and participate. The guide has to speak clearly and pleasantly.

### **Do's and Dont's for the Guide**

- Wear traditional clothes if possible
- Keep your overall appearance neat and clean
- Be punctual.
- Do not drink alcohol when on duty as a guide, before or during the tour
- Avoid smoking near guests. No spitting!
- Go far from guests, if possible out of sight, to relieve yourself/use toilet.
- Don't mistreat animals. Make sure that horses and camels are in good condition, that they get no saddle sores or other injury, that they are not overloaded.



Most tourists are very concerned about how animals are treated, and animal welfare is among the criteria to rate tour experiences or evaluate operators

### **Knowledge**

One part of your knowledge as a guide is about your specific activity, such as horse riding, in order to provide a safe trip, and about the routes you travel, the campsites you stop, the places to get water.

Besides that, you should have good knowledge about local culture and history, local legends and folklore, wildlife and plants, landscape and special scenic sites.

So its important to make an effort to brush up on your knowledge. Chapters 4 and 9 have mentioned some ways to compile local knowledge, from elders in the community and by making inventory of all historic sites, cultural traditions etc.

If you are working with a tour operator, they may be able and willing to provide you with some good guidebooks on wildlife, for example. Look for other books, applications and online sources. Ask from Aimag tourism experts and tourism association about good sources of information about your area.

Always stay enthusiastic about your work, and keep thinking on how to improve your skills and knowledge. Take pride in your job, and remember you are representing your community in front of your foreign visitors.

See Chapter 9 for training institutions for guides. Some applications to use are:

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GIZ SPACES (from Google Play Store)

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Scan to download FEEL Mongolia App by  
MET (from Google Play Store)

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## **The Guide's Job - from Arrival to Departure of Guests**

### **1. Welcoming Guests Upon Arrival**

- Inform all community members well ahead of guests' arrival so that all your community members are gathered to introduce themselves. You can do a quick practice beforehand.
- Introduce yourself and your community nicely. This is fun and relaxed, setting the atmosphere for the whole experience, making guests feel welcome, safe, comfortable, curious, and excited.
- This is a good time to ask guests about their experiences and expectations? Have they been to Mongolia before? What is their riding experience etc.
- Explain the camp and all its facilities to the guests
- Give an overview of the schedule of planned activities, and of meal times
- Give guests opportunity to ask questions
- Point out things they should not do or be aware of (ger door, dogs) and refer to the Do's and Don't's Sheet in their ger.
- Give guests some time after the welcome to settle in, rest, and freshen up if they want

### **2. Before the Tour/Activity**

- Try to find more information about your tourists, if they came to Mongolia before and if they have done such travel before etc.
- Inform tourists one day prior about planned activities (dressing suitably for different activities) or details of the tour program so that they can prepare accordingly (they may need to be informed if they need to get ready early in the next morning).
- Make sure guests know how long the planned tour/activity is and what level of physical activity it requires. Assess and ask them if they can participate in outdoor activities for the whole day.
- If necessary, plan alternative activities that are suitable and interesting and just as rewarding. Otherwise the guests might feel left out or that they missed experiences.



- Always plan enough time, so that the whole schedule is not rushed, that guests have enough time to talk to people and look at things, that it is not overwhelming and too tiring. Plan for breaks in between and make sure there is enough time in the evening to rest and relax.
- For each activity, make sure all involved are informed and prepared. If you will bring guests to a family to see and try milking cows, inform the household early enough and also plan it for the appropriate time – for herders and livestock.

### **Prepare yourself well and be ready!**

- Make sure your own household chores are managed; prepare in advance, and delegate tasks for the time you are away with guests.
- As the guide, you have to make sure you are well prepared, and that you are well, with your body and mind in good condition. Guests will depend on you, so you must be fit. It's not selfish, but good practice to take care of yourself – both of your appearance and your wellbeing.
- Before the season even prepare your gear – everything you need for a trip, whether it's riding or walking/hiking or driving. Have a list and know what you need to pack. Be ready and packed before the guests. It looks unprofessional if you are running around looking for your things. And you are needed to help the guests, to make sure they take all they need.
- Essential Items the Guide should pack: Your own clothing including rain gear, warm clothes, good boots, hat. Your own cup and utensils. Flashlight. Phone with units and charger. Your tent and sleeping bag. Knife. Lighter or matches. Binoculars. FirstAid kit. Personal toiletries (soap, toothbrush, comb). Towel. Other items according to type of tour.
- Have all equipment required for the trip ready – loaded in vehicles or on horses/camels when guests are getting ready. Riding equipment, camping gear, camp kitchen, and food – properly packed and stored.
- Take care of guests' luggage – make sure any luggage they may leave behind at the ger camp is safely kept. Make sure all the trip luggage is packed. Pack so that luggage and items are not damaged. Be aware that guests are watching and worrying.



### **3. During the Tour/Activity**

#### **Interacting with Guests**

- Always give guests a good idea of what is the plan. Follow the plan unless circumstances require changes. Tell guests about changes and the reasons.
- Be engaging with guests, but find the right balance of looking after them and letting them experience, explore and enjoy on their own.
- Watch them to make sure they are safe, comfortable and happy. But you also have to feel not to watch them too much, stare at them. Leave them enough privacy and space. Just ask if you are unsure, whether they are ok. Leave them alone if they want to have a quiet moment, enjoy nature or the view.
- Communicate with guests by teaching them some Mongolian, and you using/learning some of their language. It's good to know a few important words and phrases in English. And you could carry a little phrase book Mongolian/English.
- Share about your culture and traditions. If a guest breaks a rule that are important to your community, explain to them about cultural norms in a polite way. Don't be offended if they break a rule without knowing. Be calm and assertive if they are disrespectful.
- Explain to guests about things and situation that may be very strange to them – for example, they might be very surprised of many people sleeping together in one ger.
- Respect and be interested in their culture, country and customs. Respect and treat all people equally, regardless of their country of origin, nationality, culture, religion, color of skin, gender, age, sexual orientation.
- You sometimes may have to help guests physically, getting on and off a horse or camel, climbing up somewhere or extending a hand to cross a creek. But be conscious that foreigners may easier feel offended or harassed by touching, namely by someone of the opposite gender. So just be mindful, while putting safety first.



- Let tourists join in the activities with the host family and community. Explain to them what's happening, invite them to watch and participate.
- At the end of each day, ask and check with guests whether they are happy and satisfied, if there were any problems, was it too much, too long, anything to do different, etc.
- At the beginning of day, check that all guests are feeling well and happy. Do they have drinking water for the day?

### ***Working within Your Team***

- Prepare well so all team members know their responsibilities. Keep in mind you are one the same team and most important is to give a good service together.
- If there are misunderstandings or arguments among team members, stay calm, don't argue in front of guests.

### ***Meeting other Tours***

- In case you meet another team of travelers on the way, greet them and be polite. Should you camp near another team, don't have noisy "party" at night with other guides.
- If you meet another horse trek, act with foresight as not to get pack horses mixed up, and creating scary situation for guests.

### ***4. After the Tour/Activity***

- Guide's job is not finished before
  - all guests are "delivered" safely back to camp, to tour operator, or whatever is the planned destination
  - all guests' luggage is sorted and returned to guests complete and in good condition
  - all animals are taken care of
  - all equipment is sorted, returned, stored, cleaned, etc.
  - all waste is returned, separate, for proper disposal





- Report back to team leader/camp, and report anything they need to know. Equipment to repair or replace etc.
- Share any suggestions you have what to improve next time

### **Select and Train Your Local Guides**

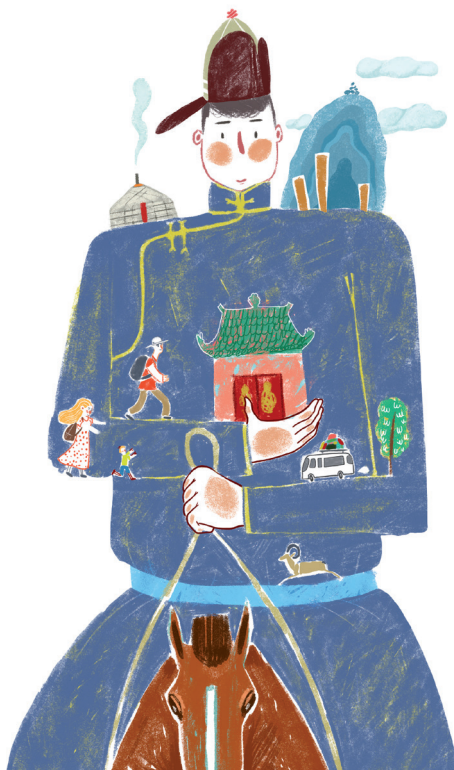
- Discuss within your community who are the best members to be guides – for horse and camel rides, for a drive around the local area, for visiting herder families, for a nature hike, for wildlife viewing, for a walk around the Soum, for showing and explaining about special historic, prehistoric, cultural and spiritual sites, for taking guests to the local museum, and more.
- If you are working with a tour operator, coordinate with them and the tour guide or translator how you divide your tasks – what exactly the local guide does. You can also discuss with the tour operator whether they can provide some advice and training, and do some practice with your local guides before the season.
- Select your local guides according to their skills, ability and talent. Having horses and camels is not enough to be a good horse/camel guide. If the horseman or camel herder is to be the guide for riding tours, they have to have a good attitude towards treating their animals, select and prepare the animals for riding and packing way ahead of the planned trips, learn and implement measures to keep guests safe and comfortable, and know how to communicate with guests.
- Of course, you will have developed your CBT and activities plan based on the abilities, skills and talents of your community members. But look again, and discuss who can be a guide for what and where. Then see what skills each of them needs to acquire or improve. Besides getting some training from the tour operator, there are other options to access training for guides, please refer to table in Chapter 9.



## CHAPTER 17. SAFETY AND SECURITY

### **General Safety Measures and Preparedness**

Acquire and Keep up Your First Aid Skills and Certification If not all, at least several members of your team, both at the camp/home stay and guides should have basic knowledge and skills in First Aid. Such training is offered by the Mongolian Red Cross, they are the certified organization to provide First Aid training, and they issue certificates to participants to attended and passed the tests.



It is best, if gradually all team members receive training, and it is also important that it is updated regularly. Best if you can do a refresher course before each season. This is not just because you might forget, it is also because emergency medicine is constantly evolving and improving, and new techniques, methods, materials, medicines and equipment are becoming available all the time.

If the costs for the FirstAid course are too high, you can try to organize a course together with several other organizations or companies. Ask from the health professionals in your Soum about opportunities to participate in a course or organize one.

Scan to visit Red Cross Mongolia Website





Study especially the sections on how to:

- treat wounds and **stop bleeding**
- treat fractures and how to **stabilize broken bone(s)**
- **check for airway, bleeding, circulation** (is the person breathing/can they breathe? Are they bleeding anywhere? Do they have a pulse?)
- check/**assess vital signs** (breaths/minute, heartbeats/minute, body temperature), also blood pressure if possible
- give **CPR** (cardiopulmonary resuscitation = restarting breathing and heartbeat)
- check for spinal injuries and how to **properly stabilize! person, and move them only when properly stabilized**

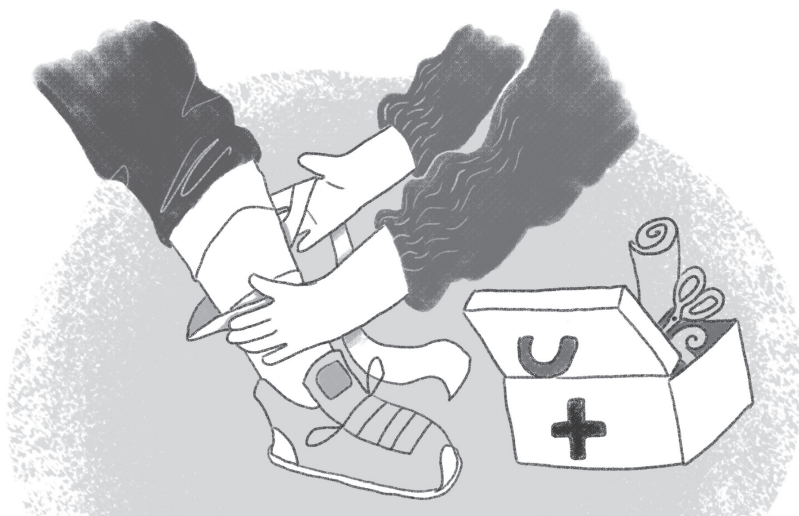
In case of an emergency/accident, always remember:

- Make sure **you are safe and the accident scene is safe** before and when you help or provide First Aid
- Remain calm. Take charge and tell team members what to do. Keep everybody calm.
- Be very careful about traditional treatments and practices – do NOT use them in case of serious injuries or illness.

### **First Aid Kits – for Ger Camp and Tours**

Prepare basic First Aid kits, based on what you learn in the First Aid course, or ask a professional for advice. It may be easiest to buy a First Aid kit (in a box) made for car travel, and add some items and medicines to it. Keep on First Aid kit at the ger camp/home stay. Make sure all your team members know where it is, and know how to use it. Put it in a place where it can be seen easily. Keep it complete and updated. Replace items, materials, medicines that were used. Check before every season. Check that medicines are not expired. Below is a suggestion what a basic First Aid kit could contain.

Prepare First Aid kits that are available to take on tours, so that each group of travelers has one, in the car or on horse/camelback or carry when hiking.





A basic First Aid Kit should contain: band aids of different sizes, sterile gauze dressings of different sizes, triangular bandages (to stabilize an arm), elastic, rolled bandages, safety pins, disposable sterile gloves, tweezers, scissors, cleansing wipes, small sticky tape. Alcohol wipes. Iodine. Antiseptic cream.

Basic medicines may be: paracetamol, aspirin, ibuprofen, an antihistamine (for allergies), rehydration tablets or powder. However, make sure medicines are not outdated, and you know how to use them/what they are for. It could include a thermometer (digital).

It may also be useful to keep a basic first aid manual or instruction booklet with your first aid kit. Also, include a list of important phone numbers such as emergency agencies, hospitals, police, as well as a map of where the closest hospitals are.

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### **Information for Emergencies**

Prepare emergency contact information and other important documentation to have with you during a tour. Besides the above mentioned information on emergency services, police, hospitals, also include:

- Contact information of embassies of the guests' countries
- Insurance documents (car insurance, accidents insurances)

### **Reporting an Emergency**

When reporting to a medical professional, ambulance, or hospital about an injured or sick person – be calm, speak clearly and give relevant and important information, including:

- Your name and who you are (guide), and contact (in case your phone number does not register on their phone)
- Location of accident/injured or sick person. Place name (Soum, Bagh, local



place name). GPS coordinates

- What happened (describe accident, fall off horse etc.). When did it happen.
- Details on injured/sick person (age, gender, other details such as prior health condition, allergies, etc.)
- Details of the condition, injury of the person. Symptoms, vital signs if you can (heart rate, breathing, temperature). Changes in condition/trend.
- Care/treatment you are providing. Or how are you stabilizing and sheltering the injured person.

### **Warnings and Precautions for Common Causes of Injury**

- Besides **car accidents** and accidents during horse or camel riding, there are some common causes of injuries to visitors.
- Visitors are not used to the **low entrance of the ger**, and hit their head. Warn your guests upon their arrival and remind them, watch them when they enter the ger. Place a sign "Watch you head" above the ger door, or place a soft material on the upper part of the door frame.
- Visitors like to approach and want to pet **dogs**. As mentioned in chapter 11, their attitude to and expectations of dogs is quite different than that of Mongolian countryside people. Warn guests to not approach the dog alone and that the dog is used to be a guard dog.
- Most guests are not used to living with heating by a stove, and touching the **hot chimney** is another common cause of injury. Warn/remind guests not to get too close or touch the chimney, with their body and clothing, and not to place items too close to it. It's common that people want to dry their clothes and damage them at hot chimney or stove,

### **Fire Safety**

Knowledge and skills to prevent and fight fires are an important part of safety, both at the ger camp and on field trips. Organize fire safety training if possible for your team members.

#### **1. Fire Safety at Your Ger Camp**

- have fire fighting equipment ready at a dedicated location:
- Place fire extinguisher, in kitchen and guest gers. Check them regularly to make sure they are operational.
- If you are in area with risk of steppe fire, you will have fire fighting equipment/tools according to the Soum disaster risk preparedness plan for household level
- Determine a mustering point where everybody gathers in case of a fire.



- Do fire drills with your team so everybody knows what to do, where the equipment is and where to gather.
- Be careful with candles, provide candle holders that are safe
- Take precautions for stove fire in guest gers. Give proper instructions how to use stove and not to place items close to stove and stove pipe.

## **2. Fire Safety on Tours**

- Observe official fire restrictions – when open fires are not allowed due to high fire risk (springtime)
- check about fire risk level warnings and when fires are not permitted due to dry or hot weather
- If possible, do not make open camp fires at all
- If you make a fire, use a fire “pan” – a metal sheet or pot to make fire in, off the ground – it is safer and prevent destroying the vegetation cover
- Watch for sparks flying – to trees and bushes, dry grass, tents
- Make sure fire/ashes/amber are totally extinguished. Pour water on it to make sure. Best to bury ashes in a hole, pour water and cover. See chapter 15 on how to restore fire site.
- Use camping stoves carefully so as not to start grass fire, or have anything else catch on fire
- Be very careful with cigarette butts – or best don't smoke!
- Be careful with glass – it can ignite fire when exposed to sunlight

## **Vehicle and Driving Safety**

Car accidents are one of the common causes of injury, or worse, to travelers.

### **1. Responsible and Qualified Driver**

- Ensure the tour driver has proper licenses, experience as a driver in the country side, knows the routes well and is a responsible person.
- Driver should have skills as a mechanic to diagnose and fix common problems.
- No alcohol consumption while on the tour.
- The driver must also know how to keep the car in safe and working condition as well as clean and neat.

### **2. Car in safe and good condition**

- Car should be in good working order
- Tires should be in good condition and spare tires available.
- An adequate tool kit should be carried,
- Seat belts must be available and functioning.



### **3. Driver's occupational safety and permits**

- Routes should be planned so driver does not get too tired; take regular breaks on long tours for driver
- Adhere to all regulations regarding vehicle conditions and permits, driver licenses, traffic rules, occupational safety and workers' protection

### **Food, Cooking and Kitchen Safety**

Please see chapters 13 and 15. Chapter 13 provides details on

**1. Food Safety, Cooking and Kitchen Hygiene**, and on safety in your ger kitchen and field kitchen, and chapter 15 on waste management.

**2. Drinking Water Safety.** It is very important to provide sufficient and safe drinking water to guests. See Chapter 13 and 15 for details.

### **Guest Ger Safety and Security**

It is your responsibility as the host of a ger camp or home stay that your guests are safe and secure. Safe from any health or accident risks, and secure from becoming a victim of theft or assault or harassment. You also have to make them FEEL safe and secure. Foreign guests might have fears and concerns that are unfounded. Because they don't know the country and customs, or don't know the sounds they hear, they may be frightened or concerned about harmless things. So think about that, explain to guests if needed, and take precautions that they are, and feel, safe and secure.

### **Do's and Don'ts for Guests<sup>42</sup>**

#### **The Mongolian Ger**

Mongolian gers are set up so the door is always facing south. So when you step into the ger, you are facing the north side, and this is the most honored place, where the family's altar usually is. Very honored guests will be asked to sit at the north side.

The west side of the ger is the mens' side and where saddles and other equipment will be stored. The east (right) side of the ger is usually where women sit and work. The stove door is always facing east, and cooking/kitchen equipment is stored on the east side.

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<sup>42</sup>Some of the content of this guideline was adopted from [https://notesofnomads.com/mongolian-gers/?utm\\_source=pocket\\_mylist](https://notesofnomads.com/mongolian-gers/?utm_source=pocket_mylist)





### **When You Visit A Family in their Ger Entering the Ger**

- Do not to step on the threshold when entering
- Usually, guests entering the ger go to and sit at the left (west) side.
- Do not to stop at door with one foot inside and one outside ger
- You don't need to wait to be invited to sit down. Sit down on the bed or stools, or on the floor. Don't squat, rather touch the ground sitting cross legged with one or both legs.
- Don't sit with your feet pointing to the altar
- It is nice to bring a gift – candy is common as a gift. Hand it to the woman upon entering.

### **Snuff Bottles for Greeting Guests**

It is a common ritual that the man of the household will offer a snuff bottle to guests, to one after the other.

- When he offers it to you, receive it with your right hand, while your left hand supports your right elbow.
- Open the bottle and try a little of the snuff, (careful it can be powerful and make you sneeze or burn) best by putting a little on your fingers and carefully sniffing a bit.
- Hand it back to the host, with the "lid" NOT closed down, with your right hand, left hand supporting your right elbow.

### **Accepting Food and Drink**

The family will offer you drink and food. Most likely milk tea, home made, deep fried bakery (bortsog) and curd (aruul).

- Don't turn down the tea.
- But if you don't want to finish any drink or food, its ok, place it down.
- Receive the tea bowl with two hands, or with your right hand, your left hand supporting your right elbow

Vodka, homemade milk vodka or Airag (fermented mare's milk) is commonly offered to guests. You do not HAVE TO drink alcohol if you don't want. But if you can, at least take a sip or try it. The procedure is this:

- The host will pour the drink and pass it to you. Receive it as described above
- Drink/taste and then pass the cup back to the host who refills it and then passes it to the next person. Don't pass it to the next person, always pass it back to the person who gave it to you.
- You can observe a Mongolian custom and dip the ring finger of your right



hand into the vodka, and then sprinkle some vodka into all four directions, by flicking ring finger against your thumb. This is a symbolic offering.

- If you don't want to drink, you can do the offering as described above without drinking, or by only touching the vessel to your mouth, and pass it back. This is also a sign of accepting their gesture of hospitality.

### ***Inside the Family's Ger***

- Do not walk over bowl, cups, food, or anything in the ger
- Do not walk between the two main center poles, and do not lean against them
- Do not whistle in a ger
- Do not throw trash directly into the fire/stove
- If you accidentally touch someone's feet/legs with your feet/legs, it is customary to do a handshake/touch hands (anywhere, not just in ger)

### ***When sleeping in a Ger as Guest of Family***

- Do not sleep facing your feet to altars
- Do not step over someone sitting or lying on the floor.

### ***In Your Ger at the Camp or Homestay***

- Watch your Head when entering !!
- Do not hang things from the red (sometimes it's not red) rope that is placed in loops between the roof poles and the roof cover. It has a special meaning as a symbol for the family's happiness and long life.
- Do not sit on threshold (and don't step on it or stop over it)

### ***Receiving and giving gifts and other Items***

- Do not receive or give things with your left hand
- In general, do not point fingers at anything or anybody. Show a direction or point to something or somebody with your whole, open hand.
- When giving something to somebody (money, gift, etc.) hold and offer it with both your hands. Do not hold, for example, a bank note between fingers of one hand, and present it with fingers pointing at the receiving person.
- Have your sleeves rolled down when giving and receiving.

### ***Handling Knives and other Sharp Items***

- Do not point at someone with a knife or sharp tools
- Do not hand sharp tools to someone with the sharp end pointing at them.
- Do not stir food with knife
- Do not use knife for picking up things from stove



## **Other Rules to Observe**

### **Household and Livestock**

- Don't step over a saddle or any other gear for herding and livelihood
- Do not hit the head of a horse or any other livestock
- In lightning thunder storm horse bridle (bit) should be removed

### **Visiting monastery and temple:**

- Do not wear a hat in a monastery and temple.
- Do not enter monastery or temple without shirt. Wear modest clothes.

### **At places of workshop, sacred mountains and ovoos**

- Do not pick up any stones, plants or other items
- Do not hunt, or kill any animal/ insects
- Do not urinate near Ovoos (or close to any water source)

### **1. Guest Ger**

- The low entrance to the ger has already been mentioned as something to warn or protect guests from. Also check whether the wood is fine, sometimes its rough and can give wood splinters.
- When guests settle in for the night, they want to lock the ger door from inside. So make sure there is a lock at the inside.
- If at anytime you want to enter the ger, please knock. It is very unusual for foreigners that people enter without knocking or calling before entering.
- Explain to guests if they want you to start the stove in the morning, not to be startled if you come in in the morning, or that they have to open the door or leave it open. It is very unusual for guests that strangers would enter the room while they are in bed. Although they will very much enjoy when it gets warm in the ger! 12. Just make sure all is well understood beforehand.
- If ger floor is made from linoleum, make sure it is dry and not slippery.
- Keep batteries (with solar panel) at a safe place and in safe condition
- Make sure stove and chimney are safe, sealed, that chimney does not touch ger cover in "toono". Give instructions how to use stove safely. Place a fire extinguisher in the ger.
- Make sure the ger is set up well, that poles are all tightly connected to the wall and none falls down.

### **Places, Situations and Behaviors**

Advice and watch guests on how they can be most safe and secure, how to not create situations that could lead to problems, such as

- Guest should not count their money, display their valuables in public places



- Remind guests to look out for their luggage, and keep an eye on their luggage too
- Don't bring guests to local pubs, bars
- Stay away from people drinking alcohol, or are already drunk
- Stay clear of any situations and people that are or could become violent
- Approach strangers in ger camp or field camp and make sure they have no ill intentions. If in doubt, make them leave without arguments or fight.
- Don't let or make guests get drunk

### ***Stressed Travelers - Lost or Stolen Items, Fear and Worry***

It can be quite stressful for a traveler if they lose documents such as passport or airline tickets, or their bank cards or money. So be calm and helpful, make sure they can make the phone calls and arrangements they need to make. It is in such a situation that your guests may feel scared, and it makes them feel very vulnerable and worried to be in a foreign country, not knowing the language.

Guests may also suddenly become worried or frightened about something that they don't understand and interpret wrongly. When the driver or guide asks for the way, or what's the best road, or only stops for a chat, guest might think they are lost and get scared. Or they may just be tired, and then all kinds of worries come up. Just use your common sense and feeling to monitor how guests are feeling, whether they are getting stressed or worried.

- If a guest has lost their passport, make it possible for them to contact their embassy as soon as possible.
- If a guest has lost their wallet, and/or credit card(s), help them to call their banks, credit card companies, or other support.
- Let the tour operator know about such incidents, to talk to the guests and assist.

### ***Illegal Activities***

Should travelers engage or attempt to engage in illegal activities, do not let it happen. This could be tourists asking for illegal substances/drugs, trying to obtain wildlife or wildlife parts that are illegal to possess, trade, export, or asking for services of sex workers, wanting to pay for sex or worst it could be human trafficking intentions. Use common sense to prevent it without altercation. Stay safe yourself and don't get involved. Notify the police.





## **Workers Protection and Occupational Safety**

To protect yourself from financial hardship and ensure you get medical care in case you are injured or fall ill while you work in tourism, take these precautions.

- Ask tour companies to include you in their insurances; insist that it is included in your contract with them that you have insurance cover with them.
- Get (additional) insurance coverage if possible on your own
- Pay social insurance taxes on time and get support that you are intitled to in case of injury or illness

## **Safety Measures before Leaving on Tour**

### **1. Leave Your Trip Plan**

When leaving on a trip, whether it's a day hike or several days hike or ride make sure that somebody reliable knows where you are planning to go and when you plan to be back. They should be familiar with the area you travel to. If you are not back at or soon after the agreed time, they have to decide whether it is necessary to look for you, or even alert officials at the Soum government, police, NEMA, park administration or other Search and Rescue organizations.

### **2. Know Emergency Contacts and Procedures**

Do you know who to contact in case of an emergency? Medical services, ambulance, search and rescue. Have any emergency contact numbers ready at your camp, ger, and take with you on a trip. Somebody at your camp or home should also know whom to contact. If you are hiking or riding, think about what places are accessible by car, in case somebody has an injury or cannot go on and has to be picked up by car.

If you are traveling in areas with phone signal, it's a good idea to have an App based on GPS – Global Positioning System) on your phone that shows your coordinates; familiarize yourself to use it, so you can send the coordinates to somebody looking for you.

### **3. Ensure proper Clothing and Equipment for Safe Travel**

Check that everybody is well equipped – both you as the guide and/or tour leader, as well as your guests. Do they have proper clothing and equipment to protect them against cold, wind, snow, rain, heat, sun? Do they have shoes appropriate for the activity? Explain to guests if needed that evenings in camp can be cold in any season in Mongolia.

Also assess whether all guests are fit enough for the planned activity? Are they clear where they are going, and how long it takes?



#### **4. Check the Weather Forecast and for Any Warnings of Severe Weather**

##### **Events**

Check with TV/radio and online forecasts, other weather warnings by local or national authorities, or with local knowledgeable people if you are not experienced yourself or not a local. Think of possible river crossings, campsites that could flood. Be aware of flashflood risk and camp in safe spots.

For mountain hiking/climbing, take experienced guides only who know the mountain, have the needed skills, knowledge and equipment for mountain, snow and glacier travel and to assess weather and snow/ice conditions.

##### **Safety on Horse and Camel Riding Tours**

Accidents from horse riding are among the most common causes of injuries that travelers present with at some of the clinics in Ulaanbaatar. By its nature, horse/camel riding is never totally safe, but as guide or horsemen you have to make it as safe as possible.

If you hire out horses or camels for short rides, make sure that ALL guest riders have proper instruction and supervision. Don't have too many guests or groups at the same time.

##### **1. Preparation and selection of riding and pack horses**

One problem with many horse riding tours is that horses are from different herds and don't know each other. They will then have "arguments" and fight over rank during the trip. It may be just annoying and a challenge for their owners/horsemen to handle and control them. But it is disturbing and scary for guests and can create dangerous situations.

Horses used on a horse trek, whether they are for riding or carrying gear, should be used to their "job". Obviously, they should be "Nomkhun". They should be well used to have people around them and to be mounted, i.e. standing still while the rider gets into the saddle. They should know to start moving when the rider is secure in the saddle and "asks" them to start walking, not WHILE the person is mounting. It is advisable to hold the horse while the guest rider gets on, but it shouldn't be necessary to have to really hold him back hard because he wants to go.

Herders and countryside children can jump on the horse when he is already moving and sure can do all kinds of tricks. Don't show off with your horse riding skills, but be calm and safe, around and on horses, thereby instilling calmness into all horses and riders.



## **2. Instruct and Watch Guest Riders**

Most travelers will have little or no experience riding. Even "experienced" riders among international guests are likely to have a very different kind of experience on horseback, with saddles and with horse care in general.

Do not assume or demand that every Mongolian person can ride a horse. Mongolian guests from the city can be totally inexperienced as riders. Many accidents have happened to young women guides just because horsemen say "You are Mongolian – you can ride a horse", giving them any horse and not helping them.

## **3. Animal Welfare**

Make sure the horses used for riding with guests are in good health and condition, well fed and without saddle sores from poor fitting saddles or from using saddle without a blanket (tokhum). International riding guests will watch very carefully in what condition your horses are and how you treat them when riding, loading and in general.

## **4. Saddles and Tack**

Mongolian saddles and tack will be unusual, and often uncomfortable, for international riding guests. Make sure saddles are in good condition. Of course a Mongolian saddle is beautiful and its interesting. Ensure that it is in safe condition – that cinches are safe, stirrups straps don't break. Observe what shoes or boots riders are wearing. More dangerous than falling off probably is getting caught in a stirrup with a foot and being dragged. Check that boots are not too big to get stuck in the stir-up. If people wear sneakers, or other shoes without heels, warn them to be careful NOT to slip through the stirrup with their foot. Best if they wear boots with some heel - but not high heels either.

Check all equipment for safety – for both riders and horses. Riding guests will notice if the saddle or cinch hurts the horse. Foreign riding guests are also not used to how tough Mongolian horses are and what endurance they have. So they may be worried that the horses get too tired. Of course you don't want to tire out the horses, and explain to guests about the skills, and smarts and way of life of Mongolian horses. Guests will enjoy watching the horses at the campsite, when the horses enjoy good pasture and water.

## **5. Safe Riding Speed**

Except for very experienced riders who come for the thrill and adventure of an endurance ride or race, riders will want to enjoy the experience of being on a horse and seeing beautiful Mongolian landscapes from horseback. At a slow pace. It is scary, and very dangerous, to start galloping and taking the whole





group of horses and riders with you. If one or few guests are experienced and want to go fast, leave the group and when you are some distance away, go for a canter or gallop. While the others keep moving at a slow pace.

Have enough experienced guides/horsemen or -women on the ride to watch and take care of all guests.

Most or all of the above is the same for camel riding. Chose animals that are calm and used to guest riders, make sure all equipment is in good order and safe, create a calm atmosphere, instruct and watch riders at all times, go slow.

## **6. River Crossings**

Mongolian horses are very skilled and courageous in crossing rivers, even when running quite high. But make a good assessment whether a river is too fast, too high to cross safely.

It can be a hard decision to make and to tell guest that you have to camp and wait for the river to go down. But it is better to be a day late, even miss a plane, than to drown. It is up to you as the guide to make that decision and stick to it when needed.

Know the river well, and know the places where it could be crossed even at high water. Ask locals for these places. If locals say don't cross – don't cross!

## **Choosing Camp Sites**

- Chose camp sites that provide shelter from wind/storm, but watch for possible risks. If camping near a river, watch the weather for rain. Even rain far upriver could cause the river to rise suddenly and significantly and flood your camp. Therefore, best to chose a site above the river, not at water level, or away from the river.
- Avoid places where flashflood could occur. Never camp in dry riverbed!
- When camping near forest, watch for large/dry trees that may fall in a storm or get struck by lightning
- Don't camp too close to rock walls or slopes where rock fall could occur
- Don't camp near water sources that are used by wildlife
- Don't camp near sacred/workshop sites or directly near, on historic, prehistoric sites.
- Don't camp where you and your horses would impact water and pasture resources of locals
- Don't camp close to rodent dens



### **Adventure Tours and Extreme Sports**

For adventure and extreme and specialized sports activities, including mountain climbing, and boating on lakes and rivers, **expert guides** should be involved to prepare and lead such tours.

It is not sufficient to have ropes and climbing gear to take guests on a mountain climb, You need to know how to use these, have the skills and experience for mountain travel, know the mountain and the weather, and much more.

Even if you take guests for a hike on a mountain, it can easily turn very dangerous. If the weather changes and you are exposed to cold temperature and rain or snow. If snow of the mid-day turns to ice in the afternoon and you cannot climb down safely. If warmer weather creates avalanche conditions.

Be very careful about mountain travel. Work with an expert guide, local rangers, local weather forecast.

The same goes for boating activities. If you take guests out on the water, do it with an expert operator/guide, who has safe equipment, knows the river, or lake, and has the skills and experience to operate safely. Every person should have a safety/swim vest.







*Welcome your guests in your "5 million star hotel" - vast and beautiful nature under the eternal blue sky of your homeland.*