



A Kazakh nomad lets his eagle fly over the open terrain of the Mongolian Altai.

MONGOLIA

Dave Stamboulis went to see and photograph the Kazakh eagle hunters in Mongolia. While the eagle hunters do have mobile phones, they still live a hard life on horseback, living in tents, and carrying on the traditions of their great great grandfathers.

Dave Stamboulis is a Greek-American photographer and travel writer based in Bangkok, Thailand. His photographic images and articles appear in publications around the world, and recently his book, *Odysseus' Last Stand* (the story of his 45000 kilometre bicycle ride journey around the world) received the silver medal for Travel Book of the Year from the Society of American Travel Writers. Dave specialises in ethnic minorities, festivals and mountain cultures, and is an avid trekker, climber, and adventure traveller.

Clockwise from below: Man's best friend: Kazakh eagle hunter and his bird. A lone ger sits alongside Lake Tolbo in Western Mongolia. Two Kazakh eagle hunters dressed in traditional furs ride near the Sagsai River in Bayan Olgii, Mongolia.







The Details

When to go:

Late May through to September is the best time to travel with clear and warmer weather – although you will still need to pack your cold weather gear as it can still be cold in the mountainous areas and temperatures can drop at night. You may experience some rainfall during the summer months (June and July). Mongolia's famous Naadam Festival occurs from July 11-13 each year in the country's capital Ulaanbaatar. The festival celebrates the nomadic traditions of Mongolia. Expect a lively atmosphere with traditional music and food, and enjoy watching the local men compete in the 'three manly games' – horse-racing, wrestling and archery.

How to get there:

Fly to Ulaanbaatar via Beijing with Air China.

Getting around:

The best way to get around Mongolia is by private bus companies which service the main cities such as Ulaanbaatar, Darkhan, Erdenet, Moron and Dalanzadgad. Trains also depart daily from Ulaanbaatar north to Darkhan and south to Sainshand.



Clockwise from left: Larch trees changing colour in the Orkhon Valley, Central Mongolia. Competitors battle over a fox pelt in the traditional Kazakh sport of kokbar at the annual Eagle Hunters Festival. Bactrian camels gathered at one of the few waterholes to be found in the Gobi Desert.

