

# THE GATES OF ŠAMBHĀLA

## A VAJRA PATH PILGRIMAGE IN MONGOLIA

*From the Gobi Desert to the Altai Mountain*

August 12 – 26, 2026



*'Let your wisdom blaze brighter than the sun, and your insight be as boundless as the endless sky.'*

–Noyon Khutuktu Dazan Ravjaa (1803–1857)

Join Dr. Nida Chenagtsang, Dr. Ian Baker, and other facilitators on an expedition across the Mongolian plateau, exploring the intricacies of the Kālacakra Tantra whereby cosmic and socio-historical events correspond to transformative processes in the bodymind, alterable by yogic techniques of inner alchemy leading to perfect Buddhahood—as encoded in accounts of Šambhāla. From Ulaanbaatar to the outer portal to Šambhāla in the Gobi Desert to the inner gates in the glacier-covered Altai Mountains, we will meet with indigenous wisdom holders, shamans, lamas, and practitioners of traditional Mongolian medicine, learning how to open the innermost gates of timeless awareness while exploring one of the last living nomadic cultures on earth and its vibrant spiritual heritage.

Please see the trip synopsis and itinerary below for more information about this journey.

To register, please write to us at [TheVajraPath@gmail.com](mailto:TheVajraPath@gmail.com)

## TRIP SYNOPSIS

This pilgrimage across Mongolia's vast landscapes and wisdom traditions is an invitation into the living mystery of *Śambhāla* — understood not as a mythical place, but as a state of awakening cultivated through relationship with land, lineage, and practice. Mongolia, home to just 3.5 million people spread across a territory the size of Western Europe, is a land of astonishing spatial scale, where nomadic culture and sacred landscapes endure in remarkable continuity. The journey encompasses Mongolia's Buddhist heartlands and desert monasteries and continues to the primordial shamanic landscapes of the Altai, the ancient cradle of Tengrism, Mongolia's cosmology rooted in sky, earth, water, and ancestral spirits.

The Vajra Path pilgrimage offers an immersion into one of the last living nomadic cultures on earth. Under the Eternal Blue Sky (Munkh Khökх Tenger), half of Mongolia's population continues to live seasonally in gers (traditional yurts), guided by ecological intelligence, ritual reciprocity, and ancestral memory. This journey offers rare access to elemental wisdom and embodied spiritual practice, as revealed in the inner yogic tradition of the *Kālacakra Tantra*, which is said to have emerged from *Śambhāla*.

Across desert, steppe, forest, and high mountains, participants will explore how Tengrism, shamanism, Tantric Buddhism, and traditional medicine have shaped Mongolian philosophy, healing, art, and culture for centuries. Activities include meditation and yogic practices, mountain hiking and immersive nature exploration, horse and camel riding, and engagement with Buddhist masters, traditional tantric healers, shamans, and eagle hunters offering both contemplative and experiential approaches to understanding Mongolia's living spiritual traditions. Core teachings from the *Kālacakra Tantra* and *Śambhāla* tradition will be integrated throughout the trip.

## ITINERARY

### Day 01 (Wed, August 12) - Arrival in Ulaanbaatar

Arrive in Mongolia's capital and settle into your hotel. In the afternoon, visit Gandan Monastery, home to the 26-meter statue of Migjid Janraisig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Gandan is Mongolia's spiritual center, surviving political purges of the twentieth century, and remains active with over one hundred monks practicing daily rituals and reciting prayers.

Next, explore the Centre of Shaman Eternal Heavenly Sophistication, where sacred objects and rituals reveal Mongolia's shamanic traditions rooted in Tengrism, the pre-Buddhist cosmology emphasizing harmony between sky (Tenger), earth, water, and ancestral spirits. Welcome circle, followed by traditional Mongolian dinner.

Accommodation: 4-star hotel

Meals: B, L, D

## **DAY 02 (Thurs, Aug 13) – Ulaanbaatar → Sainshand → Khamriin Khiid**

Start the morning with a teaching by Dr. Natsagdorj of Manba Datsan Monastery, introducing Buddhist philosophy and Mongolia's traditional medical system, followed by a panel discussion on holistic healing traditions in Asia, highlighting Sowa Rigpa, Tantric healing, and Buddhist healing practices from Bhutan.

Then Drive south toward the Gobi Desert to Khamriin Khiid, known as the 'Gate of Śambhāla', regarded as a center of spiritual energy and set in a landscape dedicated to esoteric Buddhist practices. Founded by Danzanravjaa Dulduityn, the nineteenth-century fifth reincarnation of Noyon Khutagt from the Nyingma tulku lineage in the Gobi Desert, the monastery once housed up to 5,000 monks across more than eighty temples. En route, pause for a picnic on the open steppe.

Accommodation: Khairkhan Ger Camp

Meals: B, L, D

Driving: ~450 km tarmac road

Driving estimate: ~6-6.30hrs

## **DAY 03 (Fri, Aug 14) – Khamriin Khiid & Sainshand**

Begin the day with teachings on the outer, inner, and 'other' Kālacakra. Afterwards, visit the energy center, the Door to Śambhāla (Kālacakra Maṇḍala), and perform traditional rituals. Make offerings at the 108 Ovoo – a sacred stone shrine to local protectors of the land – and visit the meditation cave where Danzanravjaa previously meditated. Take a short hike to Wish Fulfilling Mountain, a site with deep spiritual connections to ancestral energy.

Stop for lunch in the town and visit the Danzanravjaa Museum. Danzanravjaa, founder of Khamriin Khiid Monastery, was also a prominent Mongolian writer, composer, painter, Buddhist scholar, physician, women's rights advocate, and the fifth Noyon Khutagt. He was enthroned by Ishdonilhudev Rinpoche as the Avshaa Gegeen (Venerable Lama). Famous for his poetry, prophecies, and treatises on medicine, philosophy, and astrology, his legacy offers insight into Mongolian Buddhist culture both historically and today. We then continue to our camp for the night, enjoying a traditional Mongolian dinner before experiencing Mongolian Tsam, an ancient Buddhist ritual combined with dancing.

Accommodation: Khairkhan Ger Camp

Meals: B, L, D

## **DAY 04 (Sat, Aug 15) – Khamriin Khiid → Terelj National Park**

In the morning, head to Khamar Monastery via Khamba Lamo Khamar Monastery. Then drive north to Terelj National Park, a granite and forest landscape long used by shamans and

meditators. En route, visit a nomadic family to learn about herding life, seasonal movement, and ritual relationships with land and livestock. Relax and integrate for the evening.

Accommodation: Eco lodge

Meals: B, L, D

Driving: ~380 km tarmac road

Driving estimate: ~5-5.30hrs

### **DAY 05 (Sun, Aug 16) - Terelj National Park: Aryabal & Shamanic Experiences**

Morning visit to Aryabal Monastery, a spiritual sanctuary and witness to Mongolia's layered history. Established centuries ago, it became a center for Buddhist practice, meditation, and ritual, yet its story is intertwined with periods of cultural upheaval, when much of Mongolia's pre-Buddhist heritage was suppressed.

Visit Turtle Khad, a towering rock formation shaped like a tortoise and revered as a guardian of the local environment, echoing ancient shamanic and elemental traditions, and receive an introduction to Astrology and Geomancy. Optional horse trekking along the scenic Terelj drive offers meditation in motion and immersion in the park's natural beauty.

Participate in a shamanic ceremony in the evening and meet local shamans for rituals, divinations, and blessings.

Accommodation: Eco lodge

Meals: B, L, D

### **DAY 06 (Mon, Aug 17) - Terelj → Mini Gobi (Elsen Tasarkhai)**

Depart Terelj and continue west to the Mini Gobi Desert, where rolling sand dunes meet grasslands. Walk among dunes, ride Bactrian camels, and engage in desert meditation, connecting with the vastness and silence as an invitation to inner reflection.

If time allows, explore Erdene Khamba Monastery, a historic seventeenth-century Buddhist complex at the foot of Khögnö Khan Mountain, built by Zanabazar for his teacher, Lama Erdene. At its peak, the monastery housed over a thousand monks and is still used for occasional ceremonies. Its architecture, inspired by Tibet's Potala Palace, and successive restorations by notable figures like Undur Gegen Zanabazar, offer a vivid glimpse into Mongolia's rich Buddhist heritage.

Accommodation: Sweet Gobi Ger Lodge

Meals: B, L, D

Driving: ~300 km tarmac road

Driving estimate: ~4 hrs

### **DAY 07 (Tue, Aug 18) - Mini Gobi → Kharkhorin (Ancient Karakorum)**

Enroute to Kharkhorin, the capital of the thirteenth-century Mongol Empire, pause along the way for an experiential workshop with Mongolian Tantric Buddhist traditional doctors, exploring medicinal plants, mineral substances and stones of the desert, gathering and preparing remedies guided by the healers' knowledge.

Transfer to Kharkhorin, a crossroads of religions and cultures, including Buddhism, shamanism, early Christianity, and Islam. Kharkhorin offers a unique glimpse into Silk Road spiritual and cultural intersections. Visit the Kharkhorin Museum to discover artifacts from the ancient Mongol capital, including imperial relics, Buddhist and shamanic ritual objects, and insights into the daily life and spiritual practices of this historic crossroads.

Accommodation: Urgoo Camp

Meals: B, L, D

Driving: ~100 km tarmac road

Driving estimate: ~1.30hrs

#### **DAY 08 (Wed, Aug 19) – Kharkhorin → Ulaanbaatar (via Khustai National Park)**

Continue to Erdene Zuu Monastery, built on the site of the old Mongolian capital Kharkhorin using stones from the ruined city. The oldest and largest Buddhist monastery in Mongolia, it was commissioned in 1585 by Abtai Sain Khan, a descendant of Genghis Khan, after visiting Tibet and meeting the Third Dalai Lama. The main deity, Gombogur Buddha (Sita Mahakala), remains the monastery's principal shrine. Meet with Khambo Lama for a talk on kхиимор, the internal raising of 'windhorse' (*lungta*) energy.

Depart Kharkhorin and stop en route at Khustai National Park, home to the famous Przewalski's horses (takhi), the last truly wild horse species in the world. Observe these resilient and iconic animals in their natural habitat, a living reminder of Mongolia's wild steppe and the balance between human culture and untamed nature.

Accommodation: 4-star hotel

Meals: B, L, D

Driving: ~360 km tarmac road

Driving estimate: ~5 hrs

#### **DAY 09 (Thu, Aug 20) Free rest day in Ulaanbaatar**

Start the day with morning meditation. Take the day to rest, relax at the spa, enjoy wellness or healing sessions, go cashmere shopping, or simply recharge and prepare for the Altai segment of the trip. Lunch, dinner, and transportation are on your own, so you can enjoy the day at your own pace.

#### **DAY 10 (Fri, Aug 21) – UB → Ulgi → Altai Tavan Bogd Base Camp**

After arriving in Ulgii (a two-hour flights from Ulaanbaatar) and traveling through the Tsagaan Gol Valley, reach Altai Tavan Bogd National Park, home to Mongolia's five sacred peaks, revered as the dwelling of sky gods, water spirits, and ancestral beings. Stop in a local town to visit a shaman in the Kazakh village, experiencing the depth of Tengrism, the ancient spiritual system of Mongolia, still alive in Altai villages. Kazakhs are an ethnic community in Mongolia, primarily living in the far western province of Bayan-Ölgii, in the Altai Mountains, known for centuries-old eagle hunting traditions.

At base camp nearby at Altai Tavan Bogd, explore the region's spiritual geography: witness how nomadic Kazakh herders and shamans read the land as a living network of spirits, energies, and ecological signs.

Practice the Protector Puja in the evening.

**Accommodation:** Ger Camp

**Meals:** B, L, D

**Driving:** Two-hour flight & ~180 km mostly dirt road

**Hours estimate:** ~5-6 hours

## **DAY 11 (Sat, Aug 22) - Altai Tavan Bogd: Tengrism & Shamanic Rituals**

Drive to President Ovoo Hill, a sacred vantage point offering panoramic views of the Altai peaks. Experience the ritual significance of ovoos — sacred cairns that mark spiritual, territorial, and ecological thresholds. Hike or ride horses toward Potanin Glacier, Mongolia's longest glacier, reflecting on its ecological importance, spiritual resonance, and role in nomadic understanding of seasonal and climatic cycles.

At Potanin Glacier, observe the interplay of glacial ice, mountain streams, and sacred terrain, as shamans interpret these forces as sentient entities influencing human life and natural harmony. Return to base camp for overnight in traditional ger accommodation.

Accommodation: Ger Camp

Meals: B, L, D

Driving: 20 km mostly dirt road

Hours estimate: ~1 hour

## **DAY 12 (Sun, Aug 23) - Altai Tavan Bogd: Water Spirits & Nomadic Life**

Drive to Tsagaan Gol (White River Valley) and enjoy lunch by the river. Visit ancient rock art before staying with an eagle hunter's family. Meet local herders and observe the art of eagle hunting with trained female eagles — an ancient practice combining skill, patience, and a deep spiritual connection with the land.

Accommodation: Ger Camp

Meals: B, L, D

Driving: ~100km mostly dirt road

Hours estimate: ~3-4hrs

### **DAY 13 (Mon, Aug 24) – Altai Tavan Bogd → Ulgii**

Visit the stunning Tolbo Nuur (Tolbo Lake), a serene high-altitude freshwater lake framed by the Altai Mountains. Meet a local eagle hunter's family, learning about their unique traditions of falconry, horsemanship, and the training of Golden Eagles. Afterward, drive back to Ulgii, stopping at small Kazakh villages along the way to engage with nomadic families, explore traditional craft and seasonal herding practices.

Accommodation: Makhsum Hotel, Ulgii

Meals: B, L, D

Driving: ~30km

Hours estimate: ~40 mins

### **DAY 14 (Tue, Aug 25) – Ulgii → Ulaanbaatar**

Fly back to Ulaanbaatar in the morning. Afternoon free for optional rest, spa, shopping, or consultations with traditional medicine practitioners. Evening closing circle and farewell dinner.

Accommodation: 4-star hotel

Meals: B, L, D

Flight: ~2 hrs

### **DAY 15 (Wed, Aug 26) – Departures**

Transfer to Ulaanbaatar International Airport. Depart with a profound connection to Mongolia's sacred landscapes, the Eternal Blue Sky, and the living traditions encountered along the Gates of Shambhala.

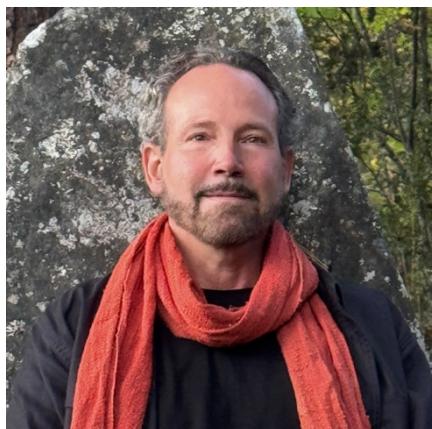
Meals: B, L

## PRIMARY PROGRAM LEADERS



**Dr. Nida Chenagtsang** is a traditional Tibetan physician and lineage holder of the Yuthok Nyingthig, the unique spiritual healing tradition of Tibetan Medicine. Born in Amdo, in Northeastern Tibet, he began his early medical studies at the local Tibetan Medicine hospital. Later he was awarded a scholarship to enter the Lhasa Tibetan Medical University, where he completed his medical education in 1996 with practical training at the Tibetan Medicine hospitals in Lhasa and Lhoka. Alongside his medical education, Dr. Nida trained in Vajrayāna with teachers from every school of Tibetan Buddhism, especially in the Longchen Nyingthig

of the Nyingma school from his root teacher Ani Ngawang Gyaltsen and in the Dudjom Tersar lineage from Chönyid Rinpoche and Semo Dechen Yudron. He received complete teachings in the Yuthok Nyingthig lineage, the unique spiritual tradition of Tibetan Medicine, from his teachers Khenpo Tsultrim Gyaltsen and Khenchen Troru Tsenam, and was requested to continue the lineage by Jamyang Rinpoche of the Rebkong ngakpa/ma (non-monastic yogi and yogini) tradition. He is the author of many articles and books on Sowa Rigpa (Traditional Tibetan Medicine) and the Yuthok Nyingthig tradition both in the Tibetan and English languages which have been translated into several languages. Dr. Nida is the Medical Director and principal teacher of Sorig Khang International and the Sowa Rigpa Institute of Traditional Tibetan Medicine; Co-Founder of the International Ngakmang Institute, established to preserve and maintain the Rebkong ngakpa non-monastic yogi/inī culture within modern Tibetan society; and Co-Founder of Pure Land Farms: Center for Tibetan Medicine, Meditation and Rejuvenation in Los Angeles, California. In addition to his work as a physician, he trains students in Sowa Rigpa and the Yuthok Nyingthig tradition in over forty countries around the world.



**Dr. Ian Baker** holds a PhD in History from the University of Strathclyde and a MPhil in Medical Anthropology from University College London, following earlier graduate work in Buddhist Studies at Columbia University and English Literature at the University of Oxford. He is the author of seven critically acclaimed books on Himalayan and Tibetan cultural history, environment, art, and medicine including, *Tibetan Yoga: Principles and Practices*, *The Dalai Lama's Secret Temple*, *The Heart of the World*, *The Tibetan Art of Healing*, and *Buddhas of the Celestial Gallery*, with introductions by the H.H. the Dalai Lama and Deepak Chopra. He was lead curator

for an exhibition at London's Wellcome Collection entitled 'Tibet's Secret Temple: Body, Mind, and Meditation in Tantric Buddhism', and was co-curator at London's Victoria and Albert Museum for a scheduled exhibition on the interface of art and science in esoteric traditions of yoga and Vajrayāna Buddhism. He is well known for his extensive field research in Tibet's 'hidden lands' (beyul), resulting in National Geographic Society designating him as an 'Explorer for the Millennium'. He also undertook prolonged meditation retreats in the Himalayas of Nepal under the guidance of the

Nyingma masters Chatral Sangye Dorje Rinpoche, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, and Kyabjé Dungse Thinley Norbu. He has designed and led international groups in Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan for Smithsonian Institution, National Geographic Expeditions, as well as other organizations specializing in educational travel.



**Tshering Choden** was born in a traditional Vajrayana family in Orgyen Choeling, in the Bumthang region of Central Bhutan. She later studied in Thimphu, Bhutan's capital city, where she continued her training in Vajrayāna Buddhism. She completed the foundational practices of Ngondro during her early school years and went on to develop expertise in advanced tantric practices. In 2001, she relocated to Italy where she studied at Perugia University and continued her training in Vajrayāna and Dzogchen with her root teacher, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. She is an accomplished practitioner of the Longchen Nyingthik, Longsal, and Yuthok Nyingthik, as well as the founder of Pure Land Bhutan, an emerging center for Vajrayāna practice and holistic Himalayan wellness. Her research interests focus on female lineages and yoginī practices in Vajrayāna Buddhism.

Dr. Nida Chenagtsang, Dr. Ian Baker, and Tshering Choden are directors of The Vajra Path, an initiative for bringing the practices of Vajrayāna Buddhism into interdisciplinary dialogue with the contemporary world as well as with parallel traditions across time and geographies. Curated Vajra Path Journeys are central to their mission. The trip in Mongolia will be further assisted by additional experts and local guides.

## REGISTRATION & PAYMENT

The cost of this fifteen-day pilgrimage & teaching program in Mongolia, inclusive of domestic airfare and on a twin-share basis in boutique hotels and lodgings, is U.S. \$6,250. The additional cost for single accommodations throughout the trip is \$700.

The comprehensive trip fee covers all accommodations, road transportation and domestic airfare within Mongolia, and all meals except when indicated otherwise in the itinerary.

The trip price does not include international airfare into and out of Mongolia's capital city of Ulaanbaatar.

Additional expenses for the trip include optional travel insurance, customary gratuities to guides and drivers, and personal expenses for shopping, laundry, and alcoholic beverages, etc.

To reserve a place on this trip, please send an advance payment of \$2,500 to the following account in Mongolia to secure your domestic airlines' seats and as a deposit towards your hotel rooms.

The balance of payment to our Mongolia service providers will be transferred from the Vajra Journeys company account in the United States after receiving your final payment.

**Initial \$2,500 trip deposit to be made to the following account:**

Beneficiary / Account Holder: Altan Sorig LLC  
Company Representative – Khaliunaa Naranbayar  
Bank Name: Trade and Development Bank of Mongolia  
Bank Address: Trade and Development Bank Headquarters, Peace Avenue 19, 1<sup>st</sup> Khoroo, Sukhbaatar District, Ulaanbaatar 14210, Mongolia  
Account Number: 413140705.  
IBAN: MN380004000413140705.  
SWIFT/ BIC Code: TDBMMNUB  
Beneficiary Address: Chingeltei 1-r, Khoroo Juulchin 12-2, 15710, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia  
Company Representative Telephone Number: +976 99118236

**Balance of Payment (\$3,750 for twin-share or double; \$4,450 for single) to be made to the following account:**

Account Name: Vajra Journeys  
Account Number: 1100030849  
Routing Number: 101100621  
Bank Name: Sunflower Bank, First National, 1870  
Swift Code: SNBAUS44  
IBAN: 1100030849  
Vajra Journeys Business Address: 21 Vaquero Trail, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87508 U.S.A.

Please be sure to include all bank transfer fees when you make your payments.

After sending your trip payments you will be asked to complete and return a Personal Information Form, a Final Payment Form, and a PDF of the photo page of your passport, which is needed for registration purposes in Mongolia. Further trip updates, including packing guidelines, will be sent to you after receipt of your trip payment.

If you choose to cancel your participation in the Gates of Śambhāla journey, you may receive a full refund up until July 1, 2026, minus a \$300 processing fee. After August 1<sup>st</sup>, no refund will be possible.

In the highly unlikely event that the trip is cancelled, any payments you have made will be refunded in full, minus \$150 for bank processing fees. It is nonetheless highly recommended that you acquire travel insurance that covers you for the duration of the journey.

Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions at [TheVajraPath@Gmail.Com](mailto:TheVajraPath@Gmail.Com)