

**Destination: Khovsgol Khovsgol Lake, North – West Mongolia**

| Day | Description   | Meals inc       | Kms cycled |
|-----|---|-----------------|------------|
| 1   | Arrival day into Ulaanbaatar                                    | D               |            |
| 2   | Morning visit to the Winter Palace of Bogd Khan. Free afternoon | B               |            |
| 3   | Fly to Moron. Cycle to Lake Achimag                             | BLD             | 29         |
| 4   | Cycle from Lake Achimag to Ikh Uul Sum                          | BLD             | 64         |
| 5   | Cycle from Ikh Uul Sum to Huvityn Dorolj                        | BLD             | 74         |
| 6   | Cycle from Huvityn Dorolj to Tsagaan Uur                        | BLD             | 81         |
| 7   | Rest day. Optional visit to Dayan Deerki Cave                   | BLD             |            |
| 8   | Cycle from Tsagaan Uur to Chandamani Ondor (Ulaan Asgat)        | BLD             | 60         |
| 9   | Cycle from Chandamani Ondor to Bulnayn Rashaan hot springs.     | BLD             | 41         |
| 10  | Cycle from Bulnayn Rashaan to Khovsgol Lake                     | BLD             | 40         |
| 11  | Boat across Lake Khovsgol to the western Shore, Ongolog Nuur    | BLD             |            |
| 12  | Cycle from Ongolog Nuur to Hatgal                               | BLD             | 49         |
| 13  | Free day.   | BLD             |            |
| 14  | Drive to Moron (100km). Fly to Ulaanbaatar.                     | BL              |            |
| 15  | Departure day.  | B               |            |
|     |   | <b>Total km</b> | <b>438</b> |

### Day 1

Welcome to Ulaanbaatar! As this is arrival day there are no activities planned, so check into the hotel and go exploring. The city is fairly small and contained so it is perfect to explore on foot. The streets are spacious and parts of the city reflect the different history and influences from various periods; from the Russian-influenced Communist era architecture and planning like Sukhbaatar Square, the suburbs filled with ger homes and the Buddhist-inspired temples (sum) and monasteries (khiid). There are several museums and galleries to check out if you want to see dinosaur skeletons, modern art or rare religious items. The leader will leave information for you at the hotel to let you know when and where to meet for the group meeting in the evening. After all the formalities have been completed, we'll head out for our first taste of Mongolian food – maybe a horsemeat steak for the adventurous eaters!

**Dinner**

**Day 2** We will spend the morning out at the Winter Palace of Bogd Khan, the last king of Mongolia. The afternoon will be free time for you to do last minute sightseeing or shopping for supplies.

**Breakfast**

**Day 3** We have an early morning flight to the city of Moron in the north of the country. We get straight on the bikes at the airport car park and cycle the 10km into town, from where we turn east and ride a further 30km on a mix of paved roads and dirt tracks to our first campsite for the trip, Lake Achimag. This ride is a fairly gentle introduction to the bikes and terrain.

**Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner**

#### **Day 4**

After breakfast, we have a short climb out of the lake valley and spend the morning cycling through a series of valleys, on dirt tracks, with a backdrop of rolling hills, white gers, goatherds and winding rivers. Passing from valley to valley involves riding over passes, usually steep but short. In the afternoon we'll descend through a long valley floor, crossing old riverbeds on undulating terrain. Heading eastward, on our left is the famous Selenge mountain range. As we climb out of the valley, we catch our first glimpse of the mighty Selenge River. We have another descent into the town of Ikh Uul sum, and pass on to the mountain of the same name. Our campsite for this night is in the forest at the base of the mountain.

**Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner**

**Day 5** We have an 8km climb on rocky and grassy surfaces, cycling below the imposing northern face of the Ikh Uul sum mountain. This also marks the point where we change direction and head north (towards Lake Khovsgol – still 3 days ride away). The finish of our climb is marked by an Ovoo – a shamanistic pyramid-shaped collection of stones, logs, vodka bottles, animals' bones and blue kata scarves. They are considered sacred by Mongolians and most will circle the Ovoo three times in a clockwise direction. We have a downhill ride on dirt tracks, then undulating terrain until we reach Zulegtin town and river. The landscape of wide green valleys and rolling hills on either side make for great lunchtime picnics. We have our second climb for the day before arriving in Tarialan town. The terrain in the afternoon is mostly dirt tracks, some flat and then climbing for the third time on this day, through a stunning landscape. As we climb, we reach forested areas which will be perfect for a campsite for this evening.

**Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner**

**Day 6** The terrain in the morning is undulating downhill for 10 kms, and then uphill through a forest with the trees coming in close to the path on either side. This is our only climb before lunch, and at 120 metres, it's quite a small one. With the tracks hugging some of the eastern hills we follow the valleys that lead us to the Urtiin River. With grassy banks beside the river, it's a perfect

spot to sit for a morning break with cup of coffee or tea. We have to cross at this spot in order to continue on to Erdene Bulgan. Travelling through more forested areas on rocky terrain, we arrive at the Egiin River – one of the largest rivers in this area of the country. Passing through town, we continue north, arriving at the Arig River which we travel beside until our campsite for the night.

#### **Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner**

**Day 7** Rest day! You can sleep in, go for a hike, play cards, read a book... whatever you choose. We will organise a trip up to Dayan Deerki cave, once used by monks for seclusion meditation and considered holy by the local people. It is located up in the hills off one of the tributary rivers that flow into the Arig River.

#### **Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner**

**Day 8** We pass through the town of Tsagaan Uur and continue west towards the lake. The cycling is through some very scenic forest areas. We'll stop at the 13 Ovoos which are made out of long tree branches and each is dedicated to a different local deity/spirit. Continuing on, the valley opens up so we can see the Arig River to our right, weaving in and out of sight during the afternoon. The roads are packed dirt, at a fairly even altitude but with some slight undulations. After passing through Chandamani – Ondor, we climb 150 metres over the next 15 kilometres to the village of Ulaan – Asgat, where we will camp for the night.

#### **Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner**

**Day 9** We cycle a few kilometres west through some hilly terrain and then we turn north up the Bugat River and we should reach our destination at the Bynayn Rashaan hot springs in time for lunch. We can spend the afternoon at the hot springs and exploring the local area.

#### **Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner**

**Day 10** Picking our way through the mountains, we will be cycling on small tracks that lead west to Khovsgol Lake. We'll join the eastern lakeshore road and cycle south to our campsite which is also our departure point for crossing the lake on the following day. We can watch the sun set over this magnificent fresh-water lake. It is one of the largest in the world, and considered to be the sister lake to Lake Baikal in Russia, with a similar landscape, environment and look. They are in fact joined by the Egiin River. For those brave enough, we highly recommend a swim in Lake Khovsgol waters which are so clean and clear you can see through several metres of water to the sandy lake bed...and it is VERY refreshing!

#### **Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner**

**Day 11** We stay off the bikes as we travel across the lake by boat – what better way is there to view a lake than by boat! Our destination is the eastern shoreline, at Ongolog Nuur. We will stop on one of the lake islands for lunch

and a walk around. We'll set up camp on the lakeshore, in the grasses growing near the edge of the water. The view from this side is even more stunning as the sun sets behind us. The deep blue of Khovsgol, against the backdrop of the white clouds and the tree-covered mountains surrounding the water make this one of the truly spectacular spots on earth.

**Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner**

**Day 12** For our last day of cycling, we follow the western lake shore south towards Hatgal. Following right beside the lake for over 20 kilometres we will most likely see our first foreign tourists here. There are dozens of tourist ger camps, tracks for horse riding, and even a few restaurants! As we lose sight of the lake we have a slow, steep climb (over 300 metres) on a difficult, rocky road. Then comes a descent and, for our final few kilometres, fairly flat dirt tracks into the town of Hatgal. Hatgal is a focal point for travellers coming to the Khovsgol area to horse hike or trek on horseback. We will stay for a night in a hostel which uses gers for the guest rooms, and they have a really hot shower! It is party night as we celebrate the finish of our eight days cycling in one of Mongolia's most talked-about scenic regions.

**Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner**

**Day 13** This is a free day for you to relax, ride a horse or recover from the night before!

**Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner**

**Day 14** We travel from Hatgal back to Moron airport (100kms) by vehicle and fly straight out to Ulaanbaatar in the early evening.

**Breakfast and Lunch**

**Day 15** As this is departure day there are no activities planned so you are free to leave at any time.

**Breakfast**

## **Bike Asia Travel style**

We think cycling through a region for the first time with a group of like-minded people is a great way to travel in Asia. Our aim is to provide you with the opportunity to meet new people, learn about new cultures, experience different landscapes and most all to have some fun. Cycling is a major part of our trips – they are cycle tours after all. We have designed our trips so that they are accessible to people with a reasonable level of fitness. Different trips will require varying degrees of physical ability. Each trip dossier has specific details on terrain, cycling conditions, distances covered each day and an altitude profile. All of our trips are fully supported, so should you want or need to take a rest, there will be a seat for you in the support vehicle and a place to put your bike. Our trips are also designed to allow you the opportunities and time to appreciate the environment, scenery and culture around you, and to participate in any activities that may be on offer.

## **Ethical travel**

An integral part of travelling is to have a positive impact on the country that you are visiting. On this trip there are a number of things you can do to have a positive impact on the communities which we visit.

Dress Mongolia is still quite a conservative country. In rural areas and temples overly revealing clothing is considered offensive. You should make an effort to dress more conservatively in these situations. Walking around a village in bike shorts is not appropriate so if you wish to cycle in just bike shorts you should have something with you, on the bike, to put on over the top (long loose shorts or a skirt/sarong). A good solution to this is 'shy shorts' which combine cycling shorts with loose long shorts over the top. When visiting temples shorts are acceptable providing they cover the knee. Singlet tops are not acceptable in temples.

Phrase Book A highly memorable part of your travels will be the local people you meet. In the tourist areas some people will speak English but away from these areas you should learn a few words of Mongolian. We will teach you some of the basics but if you want to really interact we recommend bringing a phrase book.

Donations Often when coming on trips overseas people like to bring items such as sweets, pens and books for children or old clothing for families. While this is a fantastic idea, if distributed in the wrong way it can actually create more problems. Giving away anything to local people can create an expectation that visiting foreigner equals free give-aways. In some communities in Asia this has created whole villages where the only interaction is the locals asking for things. If you would like to donate anything to the communities that we visit we suggest that you give the items to us and we will then pass them on to development organizations, schools or whole communities. In this way items are distributed to those really in need by those working in the communities.

Poverty In Mongolia there is poverty which you may see, mainly in the capital Ulaanbaatar. If you choose to give something to a beggar you must bear in mind the value of money in the country you are visiting. There are organizations which are working to alleviate this poverty and may be able to do more good with donations that you make. Your Tour Leader will be able to provide more information about this.

Support Organizations There are a number of organizations which we hope you can support in one way or another. Your Tour Leader will provide more information on these as you travel.

## **Group size**

Minimum 2

Maximum 12

## **Accommodation**

For this trip, nine of the fourteen nights are spent camping. We provide tents for all passengers and the sleeping arrangements are for twin-share so if you are a single traveller you will be paired up with someone of the same sex. This ensures that whether you are travelling solo or with friends, everyone is paying the same rate. We also provide one foam mat for each participant. Should you want to bring your own 'super deluxe' self-inflating, ultra-light, ergonomically designed mattress...you're most welcome! For those non-camping nights, we will be staying in a mixture of hotels and guesthouses. We choose hotels (where possible) that are comfortable, centrally located places which are adequate in every way, with twin-share facilities and private bathrooms. The guesthouse we stay in is more basic with shared washing and toilet facilities.

## **Transport**

All transport listed is included in the trip price: the domestic flight (return) to Moron, all vehicles whilst cycling (one or two depending on the group size), the vehicle transfer between Hatgal and Moron at the end of the cycling component. You will need to pay for any transport taken during free time.

**Transfers** Individual arrival and departure transfers can be organised through us for a fee, if you let us know when you book the trip.

## **Bikes**

Bikes are included in the trip cost. Our mountain bikes are entry-level standard. We keep them well-maintained and we travel with all necessary tools and spare parts. We use specialised bikes with the following specifications:

- Hard tail (front suspension)
- Shimano Alivio 21 speed gears
- Shimano Alivio v-brakes
- Off road tyres
- One bottle cage
- Ergonomic seat
- A range of sizes

You may wish to bring your own pedals, clips, seat and handle extensions, as we can easily fit them to our bikes.

You are of course welcome to bring your own bike. Keep in mind though, that while we offer maintenance and spares for the bikes we provide, we can't guarantee that we can cater to your particular bicycle needs so it would be best to bring your own. If you are unsure we recommend that you speak to your local bike shop about what parts to bring.

To see the bikes we use click on the link below:

[www.bikeasia.net/info/bike.html](http://www.bikeasia.net/info/bike.html)

## **Food**

Food is a very important part of any travel experience. Most of the meals on this trip are included in the cost, with a few exceptions like free days. To see which meals are included, read the inclusions list or the itinerary. The areas that we will be travelling in just do not have any amenities such as restaurants, so we have to bring our own cooks and food with us! Breakfast, lunch and dinner are always a cooked meal, usually of several courses...! Pasta, stews, soups, vegetables, steaks, eggs, bread, cheese...they have all of it. Vegetarians and vegans are well catered for and should you have any other dietary restrictions, you just need to inform us so that our cooks can prepare for this when they are buying all the food supplies for the trip in Ulaanbaatar. Due to the climate and land quality in Mongolia, it can be difficult to obtain several things such as fresh fruit, green vegetables. We are aware of this and compensate where possible.

## **Money**

You will need to bring money on the trip to pay for the following: some meals, drinks, activities in the free time, departure tax and of course shopping. We suggest various ways to access your cash. These include:

- Licensed money exchanges will provide local currency in exchange for all major forms of foreign currency (but please note that it will be very difficult to exchange old, well-worn notes). At these exchanges it will also be possible to change travellers' cheques but only those in US dollars and from major companies.

- ATMs where you can use your Visa/MasterCard, (but they do **not** (as of 2005) accept Maestro/Cirrus cards)
- Credit card facilities, but only at top-end hotels, expensive souvenir shops, all airline offices and most travel agencies.

The amount you bring will depend on how much you plan to spend. The following will give you an indication of prices.

Beer would cost MNT 1000 (supermarket) -MNT2500 (bar)  
 Dinner at local restaurant MNT 1500 – MNT 3500  
 Dinner at foreign restaurant MNT 5000 – MNT 10000

The Mongolian currency is the Mongolian Tugrik (MNT). Exchange rates at the time of writing are:

1 AUD = MNT837  
 1 USD = MNT1120  
 1 EUR = MNT1316  
 1 GBP = MNT1949  
 1 CAD = MNT966  
 1 NZD = MNT784

There will be very few opportunities to spend money, Ulaanbaatar will be one of the few places where you can do any shopping.

We also recommend that you bring US \$100 in emergency funds, to be used when circumstances beyond the control of Bike Asia necessitate a change in itinerary.

### **Insurance**

Obtaining your own travel insurance is required in order to participate on a Bike Asia trip. It will need to include a minimum coverage of medical expenses with emergency evacuation. Your group leader will need to see a copy of your insurance at the group meeting on the first day.

Some recommended insurance companies are;  
 World Nomads;

[www.worldnomads.com](http://www.worldnomads.com)

Covermore;

<http://www.covermore.com>

### **Joining point instructions**

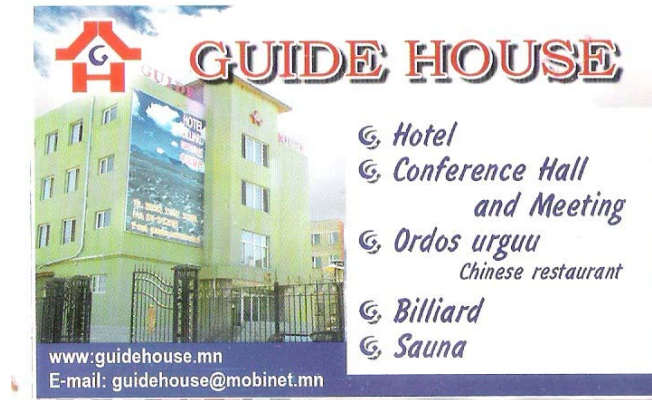
You will need to arrive at the starting point hotel in time for the group meeting, which will be held on the evening of day 1. The hotel is located in the centre of the city, with twin-share rooms, private bathrooms, hot water and television and 24 hour reception. The hotel address is:

### **Guide House Hotel**

**Address:** Amar Street, Ulaanbaatar, MN, 212121

**Telephone:** 976-11-353582

**Fax:** 976-11-354408



### **Fitness**

You will need to a good level of fitness to participate in this trip. There are eight cycling days in total, with several days cycling over 70km on off-road terrain. Whilst this trip does not involve a lot of long mountain climbing, on most days we are cycling on undulating terrain with climbs over valley passes. The cycling is done at an altitude between 1000 – 2000 metres above sea level.

### **Cycling conditions**

The terrain is almost completely off-road with the greater part being hard-packed dirt tracks strewn with rocks. There is almost no traffic but you still need to be constantly alert for rocks, potholes and track divots.

### **Health**

In order to make the most of your holiday, you need to be as healthy as possible! For a list of vaccinations we recommend that you seek advice at a travel clinic at least six weeks prior to departure. Our group leader will have Senior's Level first aid training and will travel with a first-aid kit, however it is also recommended that individual travellers have a basic first aid kit with any personal medical requirements. Our group leader is not authorised, for legal reasons, to administer any kind of drugs including pain relief tablets, antibiotics etc so be sure to pack

a supply of your favourite painkillers. Pharmacy products vary in different countries and you may not be able to buy products that are widely available at home. Include the following: plasters, dressings, bandage, calamine lotion (a must for soothing sunburn), oral re-hydration treatment (in case of bouts of diarrhoea), insect repellent, insect sting relief, antiseptic cream and antiseptic wipes.

For more information on travel health, you can click on the links below: Australia;

<http://www.tmvc.com.au/>

United States

<http://www.cdc.gov/page.do>

United Kingdom

<http://www.travelhealth.co.uk/>

Lonely Planet

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/health/>

### **Visas**

Most travellers will need to obtain a Mongolian visa, either through a travel agent or direct with the Mongolian Embassy. For the latest information, see your travel agent.

If you are travelling through another country, to get to Mongolia (e.g. China, Korea, Japan or Russia) you should make enquiries as to whether a visa for that country will also be needed.

### **Luggage/Packing list (guide only)**

We strongly advise against using a hard shell suitcase for this trip. Mongolia is not a suitcase or wheellie-bag friendly country. We will be camping most nights and the ground will be grass and earth. A soft backpack would be the most suitable, and the easiest to transfer in/out of the trucks in the morning and evening. Keep in mind when you are packing that often our local crew are lifting our bags before we cycle into camp, so try to pack as lightly as possible. Please check our climate charts to assess your clothing requirements, or contact us if you are unsure.

#### **PERSONAL**

- Long trousers
- Shorts
- Shirts
- Warm jacket
- Thermals
- Woollen socks
- Jumper
- Hat
- Sandals/light shoes
- Swimming Costume
- Sunglasses
- Light rain coat
- Toiletries
- Tampons
- Small towel
- Sunscreen
- First aid kit
- Mosquito repellent
- Camera and film
- Contact solution
- Eye drops
- Gloves/scarf

#### **TRAVEL**

- Passport with 6 months validity and spare pages
- Passport photo
- Travel insurance details
- Flight tickets
- Money/travellers checks/cash/credit card
- Guide/phrase book
- Money pouch
- Sleeping bag
- Sleep sheet
- Medication (i.e.; cold tablets, headache tablets, sleeping tablets)
- Main/day pack
- Alarm clock
- Plastic bags
- Pocket knife
- Torch
- Telescopic fishing rod & lures
- Playing cards
- Frisbee/football

#### **BICYCLE**

- Something to carry your personal belongings in while cycling, eg. daypack, bum bag, handlebar bag.
- Helmet
- Cycling gloves
- Water bottle/bladder
- 2 x Padded bike shorts with something to put on over the top when off the bike.
- Your own seat, pedals, cleats. (optional)
- Light wind-proof jacket for cycling
- Cycle shoes (with cleat attachment if you use them)
- Handle extensions
- Gel-seat

### **Pre/post trip accommodation**

If you would like us to organise some extra nights accommodation either before or after the trip at our starting or finishing point hotel, just let us know when you book the trip. Prices are;

## **Tipping**

One of the reasons that our trips run so well, and are so much fun is the effort and energy put in by our local crew. On this trip, we will have drivers, cooks and a local guide. Their mix of professionalism, enthusiasm and sense of fun are infectious. We recognise that the wages in an economically developing country are vastly different to ours and ask that if you are satisfied with the service you show your appreciation with a tip. Your group leader will collect this at the end of the trip and organise a small thankyou presentation. As an indication only, we recommend you allocate USD 30. Tipping is **NOT** compulsory and it is meant to be a reward for good service.

## **Inclusions**

14 nights accommodation (3 nights hotel, 2 nights guesthouse, 9 nights camping) Tents and sleeping mats for camping All transport en route (whilst cycling) including the domestic flight tickets Ulaanbaatar–Moron (return) Transport to/from Winter Palace – Ulaanbaatar Bike Meals: Breakfasts (14), Lunch (12), Dinner (12) All water and snack food whilst cycling Local guide, cooks and drivers Cycling group leader Bike tools and spare parts Entry tickets to Bogd Khan Winter Palace

## **Safety**

Our cycling tour leader has the authority to change or cancel all or part of this trip if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns. This decision would not be taken lightly, and where possible it would be made in consultation with our local crew, local operator and Bike Asia management. Your leader will be present on all included activities, staying at all the same hotels, guesthouses and of course cycling with you. During free time, should you choose to participate in any optional activities that are not part of our itinerary, please note that we cannot give any representations or guarantees about the safety of the activity, the standard of the operators running them or the equipment that they use.

In the group meeting, the cycling leader will run a session on cycling safety. Whilst some travellers will have years of touring experience, for others, this might be their first cycling trip ever. We need to cater for a range of abilities and experience and it is in everyone's interest to learn about the particulars of cycling in this region from someone who has already done it. It goes without saying that by running and participating in a cycling trip, both parties accept an inherent level of risk. However, we take the safety of our passengers very seriously and we ask that you cycle in a safe and responsible manner and that you look out for the well-being of your fellow travellers. Cycling helmets must be worn by all cyclists at all times whilst cycling.

Most national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest information before departure. The links for some major travel advisories and updates are listed below;

Australia;

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Mongolia>

Britain;

<http://www.fco.gov.uk>

Canada;

[http://www.voyage.gc.ca/consular\\_home-en.asp](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/consular_home-en.asp)

New Zealand;

<http://www.mfat.govt.nz/travel/>

United States;

<http://travel.state.gov>

We recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling in the cities, for the safe-keeping of your passport, money, credit cards and traveller's cheques. Utilise the hotel's safety boxes or safe once you arrive in Ulaanbaatar.

**Communication**

In Ulaanbaatar, you will be able to access email, phone, fax and post offices. Outside Ulaanbaatar there will not be a chance to email. The only communication will be phone, which is available in most towns that we cycle through. You should leave your family or friends the Bike Asia contact details. Our office staff will be able to get in touch with us in an emergency.

**Group Leader**

Our leaders are passionate about Asia and cycling...phew! They love what they do and take their job seriously. They will make every effort to ensure you have a safe, enjoyable trip with as much fun as possible. They bring many qualities and skills to this role, knowledge of group cycling, safety, management and liaising between you and the local crew. In working for us, they have made a commitment to learning as much about the culture, language and customs of China as possible, and they are happy to share any of this knowledge with you. However, please keep in mind that they are not local and will not know everything.

**Rules**

We don't have many, but the ones we do have are important. We always abide by the laws of the country that we are travelling through. This means you are not to use any illegal drugs or use prostitutes. Any passenger who partakes in either of these activities will be asked to leave the trip immediately.

**Feedback**

After you have completed the trip, we want to know what you thought about it. This is important to us, as it is through your feedback that we monitor our trips and make improvements for the future. Log on to our website and click on the feedback link. It will take you a minimum of 3 minutes, or should you feel like writing in more detail, then a little longer. If you fill in the feedback form, we'll give you an automatic 5% discount on any of our trips in any other region.

**Photos**

We are always looking for good photos of the regions we travel through. If you have some that you would like to send us, we would love to have a look.

**Newsletter**

Our quarterly email newsletter has information on events happening in Asia, travel stories, cycling stuff, last-minute deals on our trips, travel tips and more. If you would like to subscribe, just go to our homepage and click on the link to subscribe. Your email address will be kept confidential.