

## Sites and Souns

Two **soums**, or towns, lie within the park: **Khatgal** at the south end of the lake, and **Khankh** at the north end. Both were once busy with trade between the Soviet Union and northern Mongolia. Goods moved in both directions across the nearby border. Most of that trade ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. The border crossing is still used, but is open only to Mongolian and Russian citizens.

The economy of Khatgal, which serves as the main entry point to the national park, is increasingly based on tourism. In contrast, Khankh is extremely remote, and despite its

beautiful natural setting, sees very little traffic. There is no scheduled boat service, and the single-track road from Khatgal is notoriously rough and boggy, due in part to the seasonal freezing and thawing of permafrost soils.

**Renchinlhumbe** and **Tsagaan Nuur** are both in the Darhat Valley, outside the park. It is possible to drive to either town from Moron. The trip takes about two days or longer, depending on water levels at river and stream crossings, many of which do not have bridges. Renchinlhumbe offers services similar to those of Khatgal: lodging, meals, post office, telephone, and small shops. Travelers making the Jigleg loop from Khatgal often include

Renchinlhumbe as a rest stop and chance to re-supply. Tsagaan Nuur is a smaller community, and location of a commercial fishing operation. From there, trails lead north into the Sayan Mountain borderlands, home of the Dukha reindeer herders. From a visitor's point of view, the western shoreline is perhaps the most appealing section of the park. Beaches of pebbles, delightful coves, flower meadows mixed with open stands of larch forest, good side-trip opportunities into the mountains above the lake, a famous medicinal mineral spring, and easy traveling on a smooth path all combine to make this an area of prime interest. A road follows the west shore for about 40 kilometers, passing tourist camps along the way. It is pos-

sible to walk, ride, or drive the first section; beyond the road, travel is by horse or foot only.

A day trip by foot or horse can be made by following the shoreline trail north from Khatgal until it meets the jeep road coming down to the lake from Jankhai Davaa pass. The road can be followed back to Khatgal, making a worthwhile loop.

The classic tour of Khovsgol involves a loop trip up the lakeshore some 60 kilometers to Jigleg Gol, then over Jigleg Pass to the town of Renchinlhumbe in the Darhat Valley, and back via one of the routes through the Khoridol Saridag Strictly Protected Area. The trip can be done in either direction. It takes ten days or more on horseback, and samples a broad range of Khovsgol landscapes.

It is possible to follow the west shore trail past Jigleg Gol, all the way to the town of Khankh. The eastern shore is less visited, and quite different in character. An extremely rough road goes up the east shore of the lake to Khankh (driving time 10 to 12 hours) but does not follow the shoreline closely. The middle section of the eastern shore is a restricted access area, where any use beyond the road corridor requires special permits from the park.

Hiking opportunities away from the lakeshore are as varied as the landscape, but challenging. Terrain can be rugged or boggy to the point of being impassible. There are virtually no foot-bridges, and river crossings during the wet season

are sometimes a problem even on horseback. High mountain slopes can offer pleasant rambling through pristine tundra flowers, but even these slopes can be too wet for easy walking. Route selection is important. Major travel routes (like the Jigleg Pass trail) are marked by well-used and easily followed trails. Other routes require careful navigation. In general, horse travel and a local guide are recommended.

Many of the park's mountains can be climbed without specialized equipment, although inexperience or poor judgement can turn any mountain into a dangerous one. It is important to remember that in Khovsgol, weather can change in a matter of minutes. Drenching rain, snow, hail, strong

wind, and lightning are a concern even in summer. The park has no rescue service. Mountain peaks often climbed near Khatgal include: Ikh Uul (2961 m) west of Hirbisteg Gol and Hirbit Uul (2515 m) just south of Ikh Uul. Munkh Sari-dag (3491 m), the highest mountain in the Eastern Sayan, and also the park's highest point, can be climbed from Khankh. A graceful pyramid that dominates the view at the north end of the lake, it is also called Buren Khan. The summit offers views into the adjoining Tunkinsiya National Park in Siberia.

Other area excursions include the Alag Tsar river mouth, an excellent bird habitat on the southeast corner of the lake about 30 kilometers

from Khatgal. Farther east toward the soums of Chandaman Oodor and Tsagaan Oor, places of interest include two medicinal hot springs: Bolnain Rashaan and Oorin Erhni Rashaan; and the ruined (and perhaps soon to be reconstructed) Arig Monastery.

Archaeologic sites are scattered throughout northern Mongolia. Travelers driving north from Moron, particularly to the Darhat Valley, can find kherekurs (stone monuments), and occasional deer stones. One of the most impressive sites is Uushgiin over, 20 kilometers west of Moron.

Information on these and other excursions is available at the visitor center in Khatgal.



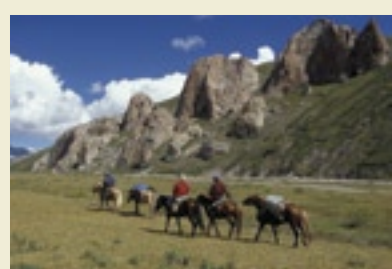
**Darhat Valley and Jigleg Pass**  
A computer-enhanced satellite photograph shows the much-traveled route from Renchinlhumbe to Lake Khovsgol along Arsayn Gol and over Jigleg Pass.



**1**  
The pure clear waters of Lake Khovsgol are an angler's dream, where Siberian grayling and lenok are among the nine species of fish in the lake.



**2**  
Dramatic rock formations and the towering peaks of the Khoridol Saridag can be explored by horseback from Khatgal.



**3**  
A group of springs on the west shore of Lake Khovsgol provide abundant water valued for medicinal qualities. The water also supplies a lagoon frequented by waterfowl.



**4**  
The main town in the Darhat Valley has lodging, meals, petrol, post office, telephone, and medical clinic. Driving time from Moron is two days or more depending on river levels at crossings.

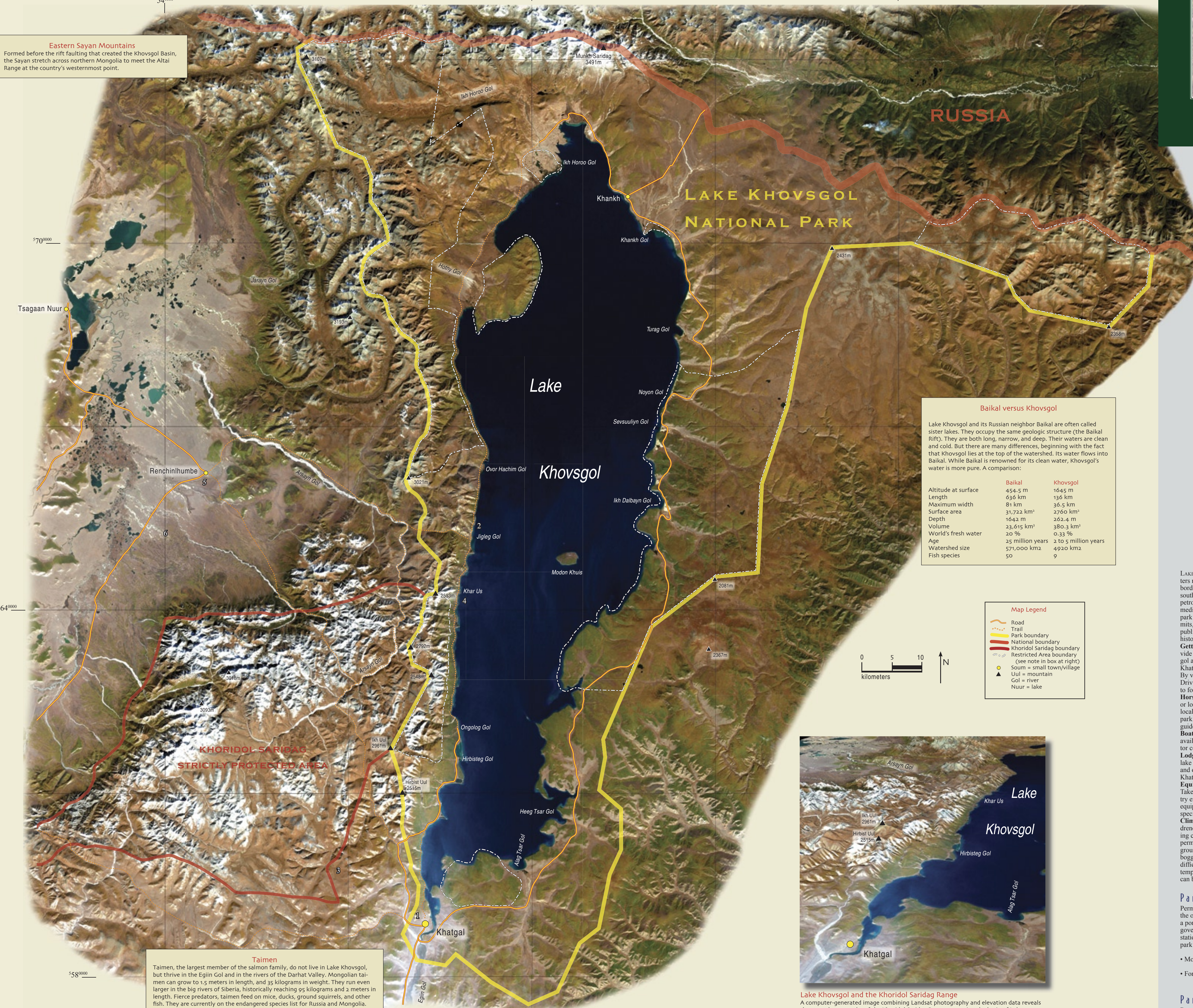


**5**  
The Darhat Valley is one of three parallel grabens, or rift valleys, created by the Balkal Rift System in northern Mongolia. Khovsgol Lake occupies the graben to the east. The Darhat once held a large lake. It is now an open landscape of steppe, forest, and wetland.



**6**

**Eastern Sayan Mountains**  
Formed before the rift faulting that created the Khovsgol Basin, the Sayan stretch across northern Mongolia to meet the Altai Range at the country's westernmost point.



## MAP AND GUIDE

**CONSERVATIONink**

CONSERVATIONink is a non-profit 501(c)(3) charity based in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Its mission is to support conservation efforts and environmental awareness in natural areas through the production and sale of published educational materials, particularly in developing countries where the very survival of parks is threatened by a lack of funding, where a small amount of money from the sale of interpretive materials can make a big difference, and where such materials do not currently exist.

All proceeds from the sale of this map are donated to conservation in the national parks of Mongolia.

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Map Imagery: The aerial photographs used for this map were taken by the Landsat 7 satellite on September 22, 2002. Launched in 1999, Landsat 7 supplies continuous high-resolution images of the earth from an altitude of 438 miles. Though the Khovsgol region is normally wet and green throughout the summer, September 2002 was unusually dry, turning the steppes and valley bottoms brown in these images.



## Visiting Lake Khovsgol

**LAKE KHOVSGOL NATIONAL PARK** is 900 kilometers northwest of Ulaanbaatar, on the Russian border. Most visits begin at Khatgal, at the south end of the lake. Khatgal offers lodging, petrol, restaurants, post office and telephone, medical clinic, several small shops, and the park visitor center. In addition to entrance permits, the visitor center provides information, publications, and exhibits covering the natural history and culture of the region.

**Getting there:** MIAT and Aero Mongolia provide service to Moron, the capital of Khovsgol aimag. MIAT offers continuing flights to Khatgal.

By vehicle, roads lead north from Moron. Driving time from Moron to Khatgal is three to four hours.

**Horsebacks:** Guides and horses for short rides or long wilderness excursions can be hired locally at various points around and in the park. The visitor center provides a list of local guides.

**Boats:** Owned by tourist camps are sometimes available for charter; ask in Khatgal at the visitor center or Nature's Door Guesthouse.

**Lodging:** Tourist camps on the southwest lake shore provide meals, lodging, showers, and other services. Lodging can also be had in Khatgal, Khankh, and Renchinlhumbe.

**Equipment:** Good rain gear is essential. Take your own camping gear for backcountry excursions (tent, sleeping bag, cooking equipment, compass, mosquito repellent, and special food items).

**Climate:** Summer can bring hot sunny days, drenching rain, strong wind, and below-freezing cold—sometimes all in one day. Because permafrost keeps water from soaking into the ground, it helps create wetlands, ponds, and boggy areas that can make summer travel difficult. Spring and autumn are drier but temperatures drop well below freezing. Winter can be dangerously cold.

**All visitors must have permits.**

- Leave no trash or waste in the park; carry out everything you carry in.
- Extinguish all fires before leaving camp. Use existing fire rings whenever possible. Building a new fire ring within 50 meters of an existing one is a violation. Burn only dead wood from fallen trees.
- Protect Khovsgol's pristine water by not using soap or chemicals within 50 meters of lakes, rivers, streams, or springs.
- Grasslands are fragile, and slow to recover from damage. Drive only on established roads and tracks. Do not drive cross-country. Do not park more than 50 meters from an established road or track. Avoid driving in wet conditions.
- Camping is limited to 14 days, unless special permission is obtained from the park director.
- Equipment or vehicles may not be left unattended more than 24 hours without permission from the park director.
- No hunting or firearms are allowed in the park.
- Fishing requires a permit available at the visitor center in Khatgal. Limits and other regulations apply, and are designed to conserve fish populations.
- Gathering plants and insects is prohibited unless by special permit from park authorities.

**Restricted Access Areas:**

**Lake Khovsgol National Park** includes eight special zones (designated on map by white dashed boundaries) where access is restricted and special regulations apply. Fishing is prohibited in these zones. In some, all access is prohibited. In others, travel is permitted on designated trails or vehicle tracks. Any other use requires special permission. Those wishing to visit these areas must register with park authorities.

**Khoridol Saridag Strictly Protected Area** is closed to all access except along corridor trails marked on the map. Travelers wishing to use corridor trails must register in advance.

**For more information, contact:**  
Khovsgol National Park Administration  
Khatgal, Khovsgol Aimag  
Mongolia  
or  
Ministry for Nature and Environment  
Government Building No. 3  
Bagu Toironu - 44  
Ulaanbaatar 11  
Mongolia

**On the web:**  
www.un-mongolia.mn/archives/  
wildlife/khovsgol.htm

**Park Regulations:**  
Regulations are designed to protect the environment and beauty of Khovsgol. Violations can result in fines or expulsion from the park.

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