

# be responsible

OUR BASIC CHECKLISTS TO SUCCESS

February 2023 Edition v1



committed to the  
advancement of the  
United Nations

# SDGs

# Sustainable Travel

Mongolia's Great  
Nomadic Lifestyle Adventures  
- Learn, Live & Travel Safely!

[GERToGER.org](https://GERToGER.org)



GERToGER.ORG Nomad Centered Community Based Tourism  
Second Edition Synopsis - Responsible Travel Handbook 2022



**“Kindness is not an act  
but rather a reflection  
of your heart. ”**





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In 2022, as part of our post-COVID policy, GER to GER decided to start providing its pre-departure training via trimmed down learning materials and checklists... though it won't be as intensive nor will you have the opportunity to have tons of Q&A time with us Founders anymore - we felt that this is a good step in the right direction for us at GER to GER.

You, yourself, are now responsible for the quality of your experience - the level of preparation you invest will directly impact the quality of your overall experience... it's now 100% up to you!

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# the root of any travelers' disappointment is **false expectations** owing to the lack of LOCAL LEARNING

**It's our deepest hope that we are able to assist you through the transition of greater awareness, understanding, and adaptiveness before you begin your "Great Nomadic Lifestyle Adventure" in Mongolia with our Nomadic Communities. This nomad centered experience is MUCH different than any other travel/tourism experience you may have experienced in your life... like stretching, preparation is required.**



# 04

## **Lesson 01 - LEARNING to ADAPT to LOCAL EXPERIENCES**

First and foremost you **MUST** do away with any/all typical "tourist itinerary expectations"... As our Ger to Ger Nomad Centered experiences are not designed to be a itinerary point-by-point/day-by-day walkthrough and/or entertainment but quite the opposite. If you enter into this with High Tourist Expectations that you'll be following a rigid itinerary, etc., then you'll miss the whole point of this unique cultural adventure experience and will indeed be greatly disappointed... However if you are flexible and open minded, able to go with the flow, enjoy being around different types of "real" people in "real" situations - then you'll greatly enjoy what Ger to Ger has to offer!

This checklist, with other materials, are being developed to help you learn how to best adapt to succeed - with a wide range of uniquely different types of nomadic families across Mongolia... As everyone is different, it's important that you learn, as what you put into this experience is what you will indeed get back - hence responsible travel is about **YOUR** efforts.

**The point of Nomadic Lifestyle Adventures is to EXPERIENCE nomadism within Mongolia via their environs, their situations, their lifestyles, etc...**

**It's for this reason that Ger to Ger's Nomadic Lifestyle Adventures are just that - they are Adventures with real nomadic families living life their way....**

**Not ours.**





**CHECKLIST 01 - DON'T JUST RIGIDLY FOLLOW THE ITINERARIES, RATHER, HAVE A REAL NOMADIC ADVENTURE!**

## MEET & GREET WITH NOMADIC FAMILIES ETIQUETTE

At Ger to Ger we have shy nomads, energetic nomads, lazy nomads, and even the occasional normal nomad (by western/european standards)... From day one it's our ethos that "nomads must be who they are" and not what we expect them to be within the tourism industry e.g. entertainers, hold-your-hand escorts, methodical itinerary following professional guides, etc... if we did this - then what's the point of coming to Mongolia to experience "nomadism" via "their real environment"? If you have those expectations, then it's best to remain home (your comfort zone) and watch a movie... because that's not what GER to GER's Nomadic Lifestyle Adventures are all about. Having stated that, Nomads do follow a lot of their old traditional ways and we are going to give you the rundown of what to do and what not to do - and when.

## Pre-Departure Preparations (Short Checklist)

**Besides the Standard Outback Packing List e.g. clothes, sleeping bag, rain jacket, bug spray, head lamp, etc.**

As you prepare to visit your nomadic families, we strongly encourage you to read online resources, watch youtube videos, etc., as they will all contribute towards your learning and local comprehension development.

From our side at Ger to Ger we recommend the following basics...

1. Learn some Mongolian Language - locals love it when you try!
2. Watch some YouTube videos about Mongolian culture, food and lifestyles.
3. Download some Mongolian videos that you like onto your smartphone that you can watch together with the nomadic kids or family when you are traveling.
4. Grab a couple of kilos of mixed candies that you can share along your journey with all the kids in the rural areas!
5. Make sure that you take along some coloring books, crayons, playing cards, hackie sack, small frisbees, post cards of your city/word map to show where you came from, etc., lots of fun small stuff that you can share or play with - and even give as gifts.
6. Buy a Mongolian Language Dictionary (e.g. English-Mongolian/Mongolian-English) for your every-day communications.

### Arriving at a Nomadic Family (Short Checklist):

- As all families have a dog - before you approach - with the guide shout out "Nohoi Hor"... most dogs are really friendly but sometimes they are tired and should be tied up, as you approach with the family members - the dog will get to know you.
- As we have 3 different types of Nomads (like the 7 Dwarves) you'll need to be flexible as they are shy, energetic and at times lazy (tired from all the daily routines, weather, etc.)...

Some will greet with a smile and a handshake while others may open the door and invite you in with a hand gesture - while others may already be inside the Ger and you just enter with your Guide.

- Watch your head, don't step on the door's threshold, hold your backpack in your hands as you enter, and step into the Ger with your right foot first - keep your hands still. From the door (6 o'clock) go leftwards (clockwise) till you are at 9 o'clock and have a seat.
- When anything is served or given to you always accept it graciously with your right hand (with your left hand under your right arm's elbow area). If food and drink are given, immediately taste before putting the food onto the table. If snuff-tobacco is given, also accept it and just smell the top area (lid area) and then hand it back with your right hand - it's not necessary to do it.
- During your meal is a GREAT time to reach into your back and give a huge handful of the mixed candies to the kids - they might be shy but the parents will encourage the kids to get the candies from you. This is a nice way to make friends with the family.

- In relation to their religious objects that are at the Northern area of the Ger (doors are always directed to the South), please never touch them NOR turn your backs to them - always make sure that part of your front-body is exposed to the altar.
- When walking around - make sure you walk clockwise... never walk between the 2 wooden pillars nor lean against them.

### VERY IMPORTANT!!!

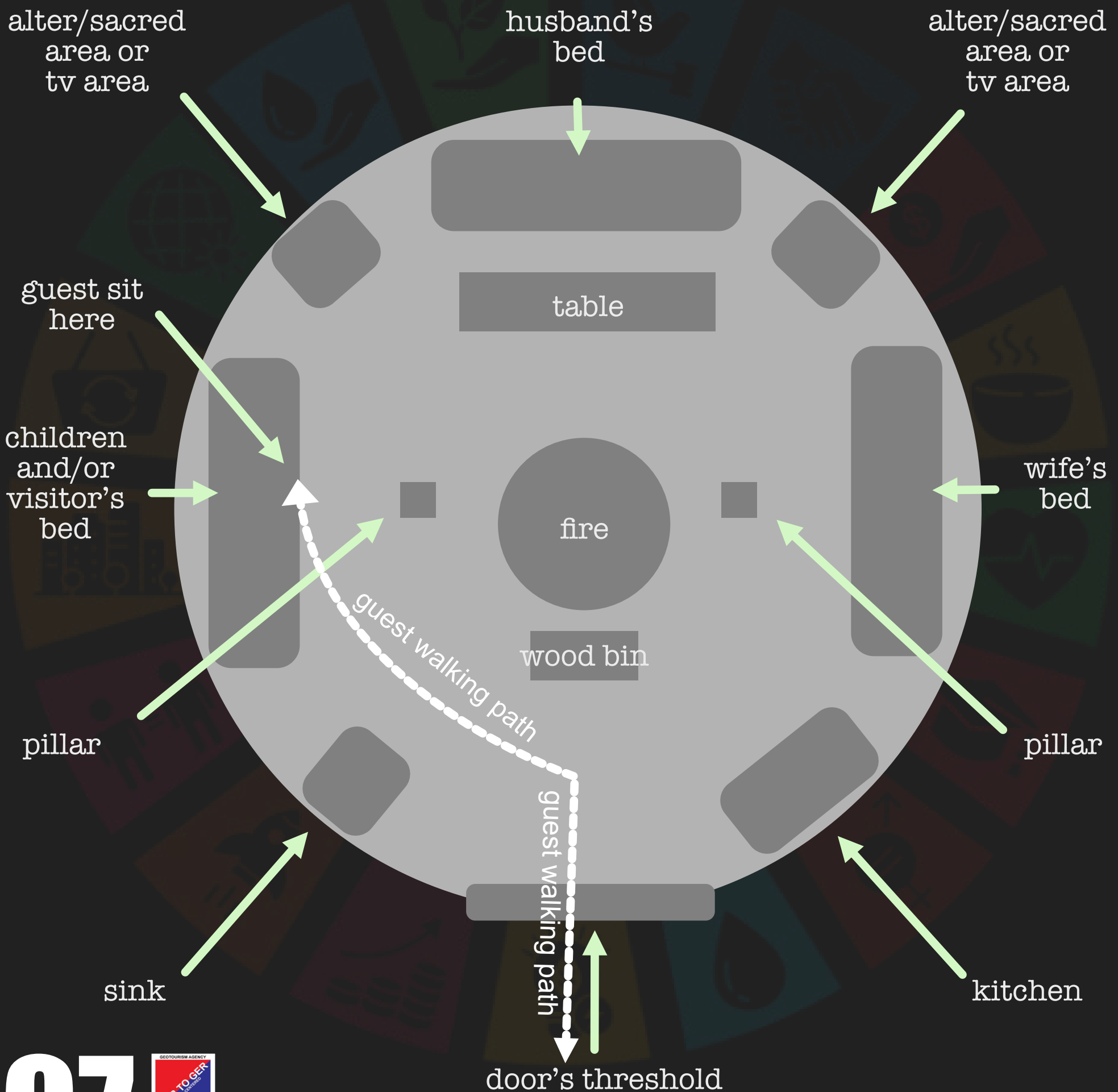
- If wearing a hat, please leave it on - if you take off your hat, hang it high - not on ground!
- If wearing a jacket, please leave it on for awhile before taking it off
- Do not ignore food and drink that is given to you - immediately taste or drink a little

**"At GER to GER, we have shy nomads, energetic nomads, lazy nomads, and even the occasional normal nomad (by western european standards)..."**

**Having stated that, Nomads do follow a lot of their old traditional ways and we'll explain you the basics of what to do and what not to do."**



# NORTH



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## DO NOT DO THE FOLLOWING:

- DO NOT ENTER A GER SHAKING YOUR HANDS - IT'S A SIGN THAT YOU WANT TO FIGHT
- DO NOT TOUCH THE ALTER AND SACRED ITEMS NOR SHOW YOUR BACK TO THEM EITHER
- DO NOT THROW TRASH INTO THE FIRE NOR INTO THE WOOD BIN
- DO NOT WALK BETWEEN THE PILLARS NOR LEAN AGAINST THE PILLARS
- DO NOT: URINATE, POOP NOR BATHE ANYWHERE OUTSIDE NEAR THE FAMILIES' GER PLEASE



**CHECKLIST 02 - HERE ARE SOME OF OUR PERSONAL SUGGESTIONS TO GET CLOSER WITH YOUR NOMADIC FAMILIES**

# QUALITY TIME WITH NOMADIC FAMILIES ETIQUETTE

**Sometimes it's BETTER to Forget the Itinerary  
& HAVE SOME FUN!**

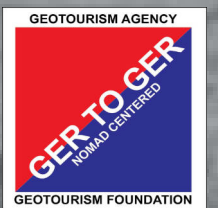
You are definitely going to get a lot of “free time” - remember - nomadic families lifestyle is the priority and community based tourism is secondary... which means YOU need to take on an anthropologist approach to getting to know the families... e.g. lots of observation from a distance, make friendships and learn when to dive into activities and when not to dive in - besides the guide - nobody is hear to hold your hand and entertain you all day long; they are good hosts e.g. food, drinks, snacks, etc.... but they have nomadic works to do. Having stated that, there is a methodology to become closer to your nomadic families which requires effort from YOU.



Here Is Our Personal Short Checklist of

# 20 IDEAS TO BE ACTIVE

1. Give out those candies to the kids first and then the adults!
2. Get out those fun games that you prepared!
3. Spend some time with the kids goofing around and having fun!
4. Involve your guide/interpreter in the fun! You guys are a team!
5. If you brought a ball or hackie-sack, all kids and even adults, love to give it a try as they have a similar game made from a metal bolt and sheep's hide.
6. Everyone has a smartphone these days - so pull yours out and share photos or even watch that Mongolian movie or cartoons that you downloaded with the kids and family.
7. Learn, via your Guide, how to play the Mongolian card game called "Huzer".
8. Learn, via your Guide, how to play Mongolian "Shagai" games.
9. Mongols play a variant of "red rover, red rover send over that person" to which that person runs and tries to break the interlocked hands of the opponent's team.... they call it "gagnasan genjiig taslahtun"... it's a fun game that kids, teens and even adults can play!
10. Grab a rope and play a game of "limbo" with the kids!
11. Grab a rope and play a game of "tug a war" with the family and kids.
12. Organize a game of "hide and seek".
13. Organize a football game!
14. Organize a game of "capture the flag"... each person has a cloth tucked into their waist area which you chase each other to grab and keep - the one who collects the most flags wins!
15. Organize a game of "tag your it!" The person who is "it" needs to touch another person to pass the "it" to them - everyone else tries to run away and escape from the "it" person (trying not to get touched).
16. Organize a game of "duck duck goose" with the kids.
17. Organize a game of "hot lava" with the kids - like hopscotch make a route that you have to jump from one specified location to another... One false move and you will wind up in the Lava! The one who completes or gets the farthest wins! Each time you can redesign the challenge routes.
18. Organize a paper game of "tic tac toe".
19. Bring a travel chess board and play with the kids and adults.
20. Just enjoy the Great Outdoors and go out for a walk, enjoy the rivers, learn to sing a Mongolian song from the family and kids! Yes, you can learn some really cool songs in Mongolia!



**"Sometimes you just need to dive right in... even if they didn't ask you too."**

**As these are REAL nomadic families, they often are shy to ask you to do their daily works - in fact almost all nomadic family just desire you to eat, sleep and rest... or HAVE SOME FUN!"**



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**CHECKLIST 03 - HEALTH & SAFETY IS VITAL.. REMEMBER YOU ARE FAR FROM BASIC MEDICAL ASSISTANCE.**

# HORSE RIDING WITH NOMADIC FAMILIES ETIQUETTE

Owing to Mongolian unique situations, geography lifestyles, weather, etc., it's important to note that the following information is important for Pros and beginners alike. Mongolia's horses react to people and situations differently than horses in the United States or Europe, etc., so it is vital that everyone carefully reads through this and even send us your questions via email - we'd be delighted to assist you!





# Preparing / Riding Horses (Short Checklist):

1. Prepare your bags, give all the heavy items to the nomads to pack onto the designated pack-horse. DO NOT wear any backpacks while riding - you may scare the horse and/or fall off the horse when you lose your balance.
2. Make sure that your clothing isn't flapping around and making noises that can scare the horse.
3. Make sure that you have a riding-helmet to wear.
4. Make sure that your riding boots are smooth on the bottom so they don't get caught in the stirrups when mounting/dismounting - and PLEASE DO NOT wear sneakers, slippers, and other non-riding shoes.
5. Please make sure that you spray bug repellent BEFORE you mount the horse and DO NOT spray yourself while riding as the fumes get into the eyes of the horse and might make it upset.
6. Do not walk behind any horses (keep a couple meters distance) - they might kick you.
7. Before you mount/dismount, make sure that the families' dogs are not bothering the horses! If so, then have your guide tell the Nomads to tie them up!
8. Only mount/dismount the horse via the horse's left side (that's the left side when you are sitting on the horse not staring at it face-to-face) - you may upset the horse if you try from the right side of the horse.
9. Only mount/dismount the horse with the assistance of your guide and/or nomads.
10. When riding - NEVER shout and yell... you may upset your horse.
11. When riding - NEVER change clothes... dismount and change.
12. When riding - NEVER use SLR cameras with long telephoto lens - please use pocket cameras or iPhones with the 'sound off'.
13. When riding - LEARN to hold/steer the horse's reins in one hand and not by two hands which spreads the reins apart which makes the horse uncomfortable as it may have difficulty understanding your navigation commands. When you steer with one hand - it sends a clear signal to the horse.
14. When mounting/dismounting - GENTLY BUT TIGHTLY - hold the reins in the back-neutral position on the horse's neck so that the horse stays put (like a car - you put into park/break position when turning off the vehicle)... but not too far or it may get upset.
15. When riding - if you go upwards in a steep incline - lean a little forward and find that sweet balance spot.
16. When riding - if you go downwards in a steep decline - lean a little backwards to find that balance point, but not too far.
17. When riding - if you are in a really rocky area e.g. mountain pass, etc., with a narrow road and lots of slippery rocks - please dismount and walk past any/all risk areas. Your horse could slip and fall on your leg which would easily break it. OR, you could lose your balance and fall and put all your weight on your hand which could compress fracture or even break your collar bone or dislocate your shoulder.
18. When riding - make sure that you are not riding when there is a lightning storm... please speak to your guide and delay the riding trip till the storm passes.
19. When riding - if you get tired, feel uncomfortable with your balance, feel like you have motion sickness, feel like you have heat exhaustion or nausea, feeling sleepy, etc., call your guide/nomads and dismount from the horse - it's time for you to take a break, rest, hydrate, etc., for awhile.
20. If you are not a skilled rider (YEARS OF EXPERIENCE) then please NEVER race the horses - terrains can be broken and the horse will toss you off its back and you could fall and break a rib, tear your liver (internal bleeding via compression) and/or worse!
21. When approaching a Nomadic family's ger - get off in advance - horses may race to the family uncontrollably and/or the dogs could scare the horse.

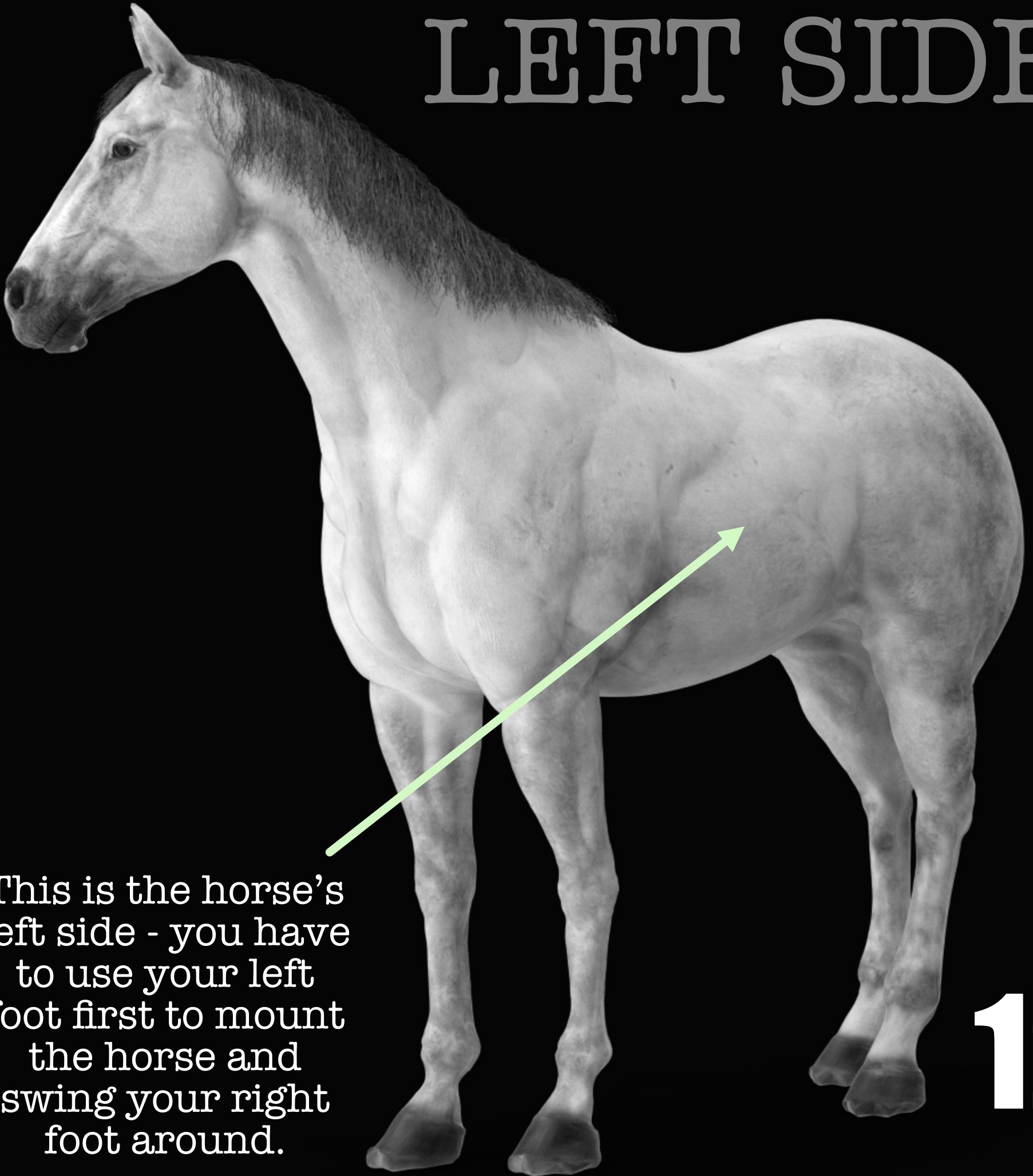
# 11

**"Please don't become a liability for our Nomads & us as well... use your common sense!**

**Whether hiking or riding horses - you MUST adhere to a good level of health and safety. Remember you are far from medical assistance!"**



# HORSE'S LEFT SIDE



This is the horse's  
left side - you have  
to use your left  
foot first to mount  
the horse and  
swing your right  
foot around.

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DO NOT MOUNT NOR DISMOUNT FROM HORSE'S **RIGHT** SIDE





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**CHECKLIST 04 - TRY MITIGATING UNNECESSARY RISKS.... IF THE WEATHER IS REALLY BAD - JUST WAIT.**

# HIKING & TREKKING WITH NOMADIC FAMILIES ETIQUETTE

A lot of folks, over the years, wonder what could we possibly train people on about hiking and trekking... Any good mountaineer, climber and hiker will all know that every location has its geographic, weather, etc., nuances - all of which does greatly impact the geographic terrains and the individual(s).

Hence, this section is mainly focused on how to best prepare, assess and mitigate a variety of Mongolia related factors that may negatively influence your hiking and trekking within Mongolia.

# Hiking & Trekking (Short Checklist):

Firstly, for the best trekking and hiking results - it's all in the preparation!

**Most important is YOUR feet e.g. what types of socks, shoes, Teva-like slippers, drying powders, medical bandages, etc., etc., etc.**

1. **Socks:** I would prepare at least 3 socks per day - they should 'wick away' moisture and reduce heat and moisture blisters.
2. **Shoes:** breathable GORTEX e.g. Salomon, Merrill, etc.
3. **Teva Sandals:** you'll need them for the wet days and/or crossing rivers and streams
4. **Powders:** if you sweat easily - then you'll need to keep your feet dry
5. **Breathable Medical Bandages:** popping blisters is normal - bandages make it that much easier to keep going via an easy pace when your feet are healing.
6. **Good Walking Sticks:** if you have blisters - sticks will help reduce the amount of pressure you apply to your feet when walking.
7. **Antibacterial Wipes:** keeping wipes with you is a good idea when you don't have access to water and it's due time to wash them feet.
8. **Antibacterial/Anti-fungal Creams:** at night time, before bed/after washing the feet, it's a good idea to let your feet rest with a soothing foot massage via creams to keep your feet healthy and fit... by morning they'll be plenty dry.

Secondly, for the best trekking and hiking results - it's all in the assessing!

## Mongolia's Geography, Weather, etc., Conditions & Risk Mitigation Suggestions

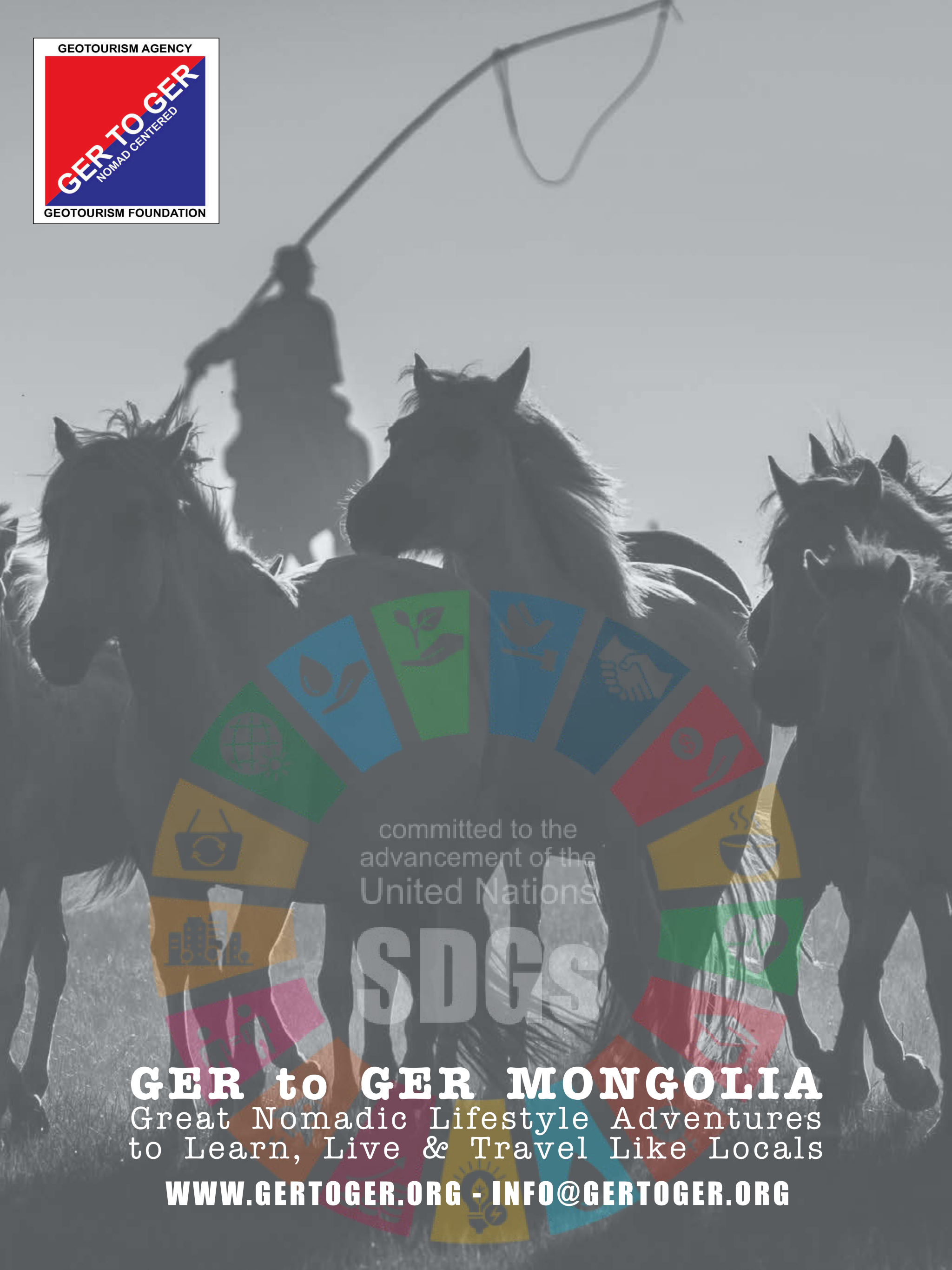
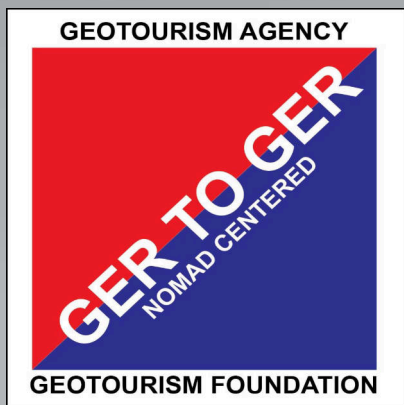
1. **Understanding General Seasons:** Mongolia has four seasons, however, owing to its geography it has very clear zones - desert, khangai, mountainous, etc. For YOUR activity, you'll mainly be hiking in khangai regions - spring till July is rainy season, July till August can experience extreme weather e.g. flash floods, lightening storms, etc.
2. **Understanding Geographic Seasons e.g. mountains, river valleys, deserts, etc.:** When it rains in Mongolia, this can have adverse impacts on travel routes, travel speeds, camping sites, etc... It's important to use radar data when planning trips and routes.
3. **Understanding Geographic Nuances e.g. mountains, river valleys, deserts, etc.:** Beyond rain, it's important to determine other associated risk factors along routes and camping sites e.g. in the mountains - loose rocks above can roll down the hill sides when you are sleeping or hiking, or deserts can become quick-sand like and your feet can get stuck via its suction... or river valleys flash floods washing your campsite away, etc.
4. **Understanding Extreme Weather e.g. heavy rains, lightening storms, etc.:** Always delay travel during lightening storms and extreme rain - even if you must delay for an entire day or two (it's a force majeure).
5. **Understanding Extreme Weather on Geography e.g. flash floods, mud slides, etc.:** The greater and longer the storm - the great potential for a variety of natural disasters... Keep campsites away from river banks, no standing under tall trees during lightening storm, no hiking steep inclines/declines during heavy rains, etc.
6. **Understanding Extreme Weather on YOU:** don't be a liability! All it takes is one lightening bolt to hit the wet ground near you to give you an unforgettable charge! Or a flash flood hitting your campsite, etc! Be smart, plan in advance!

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**“one should never ever underestimate the raw power of mother nature.**

**For example, always look for the domino effect - if it rains at your location - then the build up upstream can impact your crossing! So plan with the goal of looking for additional crossings or not crossing at all.”**





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