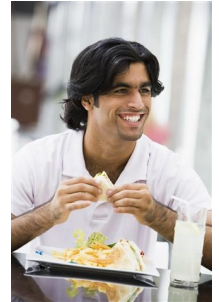


Brush Up on Travel Etiquette

We live in a wonderfully diverse world and one of the greatest benefits of travel is the opportunity to experience different cultures and lifestyles. No one likes to be stereotyped as a “Tacky Tourist” or an “Ugly American.” Yet, travelers who are polite, patient, and pleasant at home sometimes behave and dress in ways that are inappropriate and offensive in other cultures.



1. While you research where to stay, eat, and sightsee at your destination, include research on customs and cultural sensitivities.
2. Embrace the concept that because something is different, it is not funny or wrong. On a recent trip to Hong Kong, at breakfast, a member of a tour group complained loudly about being tired of the “funny money, funny food, and funny accents.” Sadly, she didn’t consider how rude her comments were to Asian diners, restaurant staff, and fellow travelers.
3. Think before you speak. If tempted to criticize or make jokes, bite your tongue. Humor is frequently misunderstood or misinterpreted. Grandmother said, “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything.” Good advice.
4. Learn a few words in the language of your destination. Even if your pronunciation is not perfect, words like good morning, please, and thank you are appreciated. Get a copy of the Worldwide Multilingual Phrase Book by Eric Dondero, a great small guide to basic words and phrases in over 40 languages.
5. Dress appropriately. Tourists are turned away daily at The Vatican because they are clad in shorts and tank tops. Unless you are at a resort or on a cruise ship, shorts mark you as a tourist and restrict admission to many shrines, temples, museums, restaurants and theatres. We are proud to be Americans, but this is not the time or international climate to broadcast our identity with brand name sportswear or distinctively U.S. attire. When in doubt, err on the side of a conservative appearance.



6. Actions do speak louder than words. Gestures and non-verbal communication differ from culture to culture. A positive gesture in the U.S. may be offensive in another culture. For instance, making a circle with thumb and index finger to say okay symbolizes something is worthless or obscene in some countries. In many cultures pointing or beckoning with the index finger is insulting. The Internet puts customs of world at your fingertips or read *The Simple Guide to Customs & Etiquette*, published for many countries worldwide.

7. Hold the cigar. Park the chewing gum. Silence cell phones. Good etiquette at home and abroad. Be a considerate smoker. Choose a smoking location that doesn't impact others. In some countries such as Singapore, chewing gum is illegal...so is littering. Violators incur heavy fines. Learn the rules and obey them.

8. Practice good photo etiquette. Travelers snap rolls of film from speeding tour buses, at performances, and of men, women and children on the street. Flash photography and video are restricted at performances and museums. Photography of some private corporate or government locations may violate the law. Photographing people without asking their permission violates personal rights. Ask before you aim that camera.

9. The Golden Rule says, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The Golden Rule assumes others want to be treated just as you do. When it comes to travel etiquette, the Platinum Rule says, "Do unto others as they would like to be treated" Treating others by their standards has dramatic and lasting effects.

10. Be receptive to new experiences. Try exotic foods. Seek classes or exhibits that teach new skills and appreciation. The more you experience your destination, the more you gain from your travel experience.

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