

# Cultural Etiquette Quick Guide

A respectful-travel reference you can skim before arrival.

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**REALITY CHECK** No guide covers every nuance. Use this as a 'safe default' — then adjust based on what locals do and what your host/guide says.

## Fill this in (so the guide matches your destination)

Field	Write it here	Notes
Country / Region		
City / Area		
Religion / holy days to be aware of (if relevant)		
Local greeting style (handshake / bow / cheek kiss / none)		
Dress expectations (modest / casual / mixed)		

## Fast defaults that rarely offend

- Start slightly more polite and slightly more covered up than you think you need.
- Use a soft voice indoors and in public transport (especially early/late).
- Ask before touching kids, pets, religious objects, or someone's belongings.
- When unsure: watch what locals do for 30 seconds, then copy the calm version.

## Etiquette at a glance (safe defaults)

Situation	Good default	Avoid
Greetings	Smile + simple greeting. Let the other person set the level of contact.	Big hugs, over-familiar jokes, 'too much' energy on first meeting
Personal space	Give people room, especially in lines and shops.	Standing too close; touching strangers
Shoes	If you see shoes at the door, take yours off.	Walking into homes/temples with shoes on
Dress	Cover shoulders/knees when entering religious sites; carry a light layer.	Entering sacred spaces in beachwear
Photos	Ask first. If it's a ceremony or a child, double-ask.	Sneaky photos; drones in sensitive areas
Pointing/gestures	Use an open hand to indicate direction.	Pointing with one finger; rude

		hand signs
Public affection	Keep it subtle until you know what's normal there.	Overt PDA in conservative places
Dining	Wait for cues: seating, ordering, when to start eating.	Eating/starting before host or group without cues
Markets & bargaining	Be friendly. Negotiate with a smile, not pressure.	Aggressive bargaining; treating it like sport
Tipping	Check local norms. If common, tip quietly and consistently.	Overt display; tipping where it causes problems
Sacred spaces	Speak softly, follow signage, and copy locals' posture.	Loud talking; blocking worship; flash photos
Alcohol	In mixed cultures, assume some places are dry or sensitive.	Drinking publicly without checking the vibe
Time & punctuality	Arrive on time for bookings. For social plans, ask what's normal.	Assuming your timing rules apply everywhere

## Quick prep checklist (10 minutes before you arrive)

- Look up: basic greeting + 'please/thank you' in the local language.
- Check: dress expectations for temples/mosques/churches (and pack a scarf/light layer).
- Save: your accommodation address in local script + a map pin offline.
- Learn: one respectful 'no thanks' line for vendors and offers.
- Confirm: tipping customs and what counts as polite in taxis and restaurants.

## Polite 'repair lines' (when you mess up — because humans)

- "Sorry — I didn't know. Thank you for telling me."
- "Can you show me the correct way?"
- "I mean no disrespect."

## Notes for this destination

### THINGS TO WATCH FOR

Write the small rules you learn on day one. These are usually the ones that matter.

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