

Questions before reading:

Speak about the table manners you should observe in your homes or in the public cafeteria. What do you do before eating? Are there rules about your hands or the way you sit? What do you do at the end of a meal? Why do we have rules about how to eat? Have you ever been in situations where the rules you are used to are not appropriate?

Different Countries, Different Etiquette

Whether one is travelling for business or for pleasure, new cultures are generally part of the process. Although there are many differences between cultures in the world, there are also similarities. The similarities do not get us into trouble, but the differences can destroy a business deal or a pleasure trip. Learning some facts and some of the patterns of other cultures, as well as various travel customs and tips, can help you be successful.

France

In a country where food is king, it's good to have courtly manner. So:

- Don't cut your salad with a knife or fork. Instead, fold your salad on your fork using your knife.
- Never cut bread. Break bread with your fingers. And usually there aren't bread/butter plates. So place your bread on the table above your dinner plate on the left.
- Cut cheese vertically. Do not cut off the points.
- Never eat fruit whole – Always peel and slice it before eating.
- When you're finished eating, place knife and fork side by side on the plate at the 5:20 position. The fork should be on the left and the knife should be on the right with the blade of the knife facing the fork.
- To signify that you would like more food, cross your knife and fork across your plate.

Italy

Italians are known for expressing themselves through body language. So:

- Greet friends with a kiss on both cheeks.
- Keep eye contact while talking. If not, Italians think you are hiding something.
- To call a waiter or waitress, raise your index finger and make eye contact.
- Stand when an older person enters the room.

China

In China, it's all about respect. So:

- When introduced to a group of Chinese people, they may greet you with applause. Be sure to applaud back.
- Greet the oldest, most senior person first.
- Address the Chinese by Mr., Mrs., Miss plus family name.
- The Chinese dislike being touched by strangers. Other than shaking hands when greeting them, do not hug, lock arms or make any other body contact.