

Hospitality Tips For Traveling Abroad

(NAPSA)—If you're planning on—or just dreaming of—traveling abroad for business or pleasure, you're far from alone. The world has witnessed a peak in international travel within the last few years. Last year, travel by U.S. residents increased 8.6 percent to Asia and 8 percent to Central America, according to the Department of Commerce. Businesses continue to expand across borders while more and more families choose destinations abroad for their vacations, making cultural awareness increasingly significant. You may have a better time or do better business if you have sufficient knowledge of foreign customs, culture and etiquette.

An overwhelming 81 percent of Americans agree there is a need in the United States for an increased understanding of other countries' cultures, according to a recent omnibus survey conducted by The Hilton Family of Hotels. However, less than half of Americans surveyed say they research current events before visiting another country.

If you plan on traveling abroad, here are a few tips to help make your trip a mutually rewarding experience for yourself and the local people:

1. Do Homework—To be a responsible tourist, read up on the local culture before journeying to your destination—surf the Internet or browse through travel guides. By researching the culture ahead of time, you will be more conscious of local traditions and customs, which can help prevent you from making any social faux pas that may offend locals. Familiarizing yourself with current



U.S. Olympic hopefuls learn about cultural understanding in preparation for Beijing.

news can also help you be more aware of the present social and political situations in the country.

2. Keep An Open Mind—When you are out and about exploring another country, you may see or experience things that are outside your comfort zone. Cultures vary in their conceptions of acceptable social behavior, personal space and proper etiquette. Try to step out of your normal mind-set and see things from the locals' point of view. Doing so will allow you to appreciate the native way of life, no matter how different it is from yours.

3. Try New Things—While abroad, you may be asked to sample a native dish or participate in a local custom or ceremony. You don't have to dive in headfirst but trying new things can help you see the world from a fresh perspective. After all, part of the beauty of traveling is connecting with the local community and experiencing life in a new and exciting way. If you choose to opt out of an experience, politely

decline and thank your host for the opportunity.

4. Respect—No matter where you are in the world, respect is a universal concept that is practiced in all cultures. As a guest of a country, you should always treat the local population with respect. Thoughtful gestures like greeting the senior member of a group first or exercising patience in crowds can help foster an amiable relationship with the native people. In addition, you should also be considerate of the land—refrain from littering and disturbing the natural environment.

5. Represent Your Country—As you intermingle with the local community, keep in mind that you are representing your home country at all times. Your interactions with not only locals but also travelers from other countries can make a huge impression. Remember, your actions influence the way others perceive Americans, and it is important to present yourself—and your country—in a respectable manner.

To encourage Americans to embrace other cultures while traveling in a foreign country, programs such as The Hilton Family of Hotels Be Hospitable Traveler Program advocate respect for the customs and traditions of others. The initiative also aims to provide valuable tools and cultural information for U.S. Olympic and Paralympic athletes as they prepare to represent the United States and includes an online resource for business and leisure travelers planning to visit China.

For more helpful tips on how to be hospitable when traveling to other countries, you can visit www.behospitabletraveler.com.