

## European Travel Etiquette

By Jill Evans Kryston, Etiquette Consultant

**Q: Our family is planning a tour of Europe this summer and we don't want to be offensive to other cultures if we can help it. Would you give us some etiquette guidelines to follow?**

A: International travel provides a minefield of opportunities to offend, be misinterpreted or misbehave unintentionally. What may be considered good manners in one country, can be offensive and vulgar in another. The best advice is to do some solid research ahead of time. Areas to focus on are: communication, dress and dining.

A country such as France, who takes pride in its language, may frown upon those who don't speak it. Learn how to say "hello," "good-bye" and "thank you" as well as other useful phrases such as "how much does it cost?" and "where is a bathroom?" When in Great Britain, be aware that British English often has different meanings than American English - a "bonnet" is the hood of an automobile and not something to wear.

It is also important to understand that gestures vary from country to country. For instance, Italy embraces hand gestures while England does not. The American "A-okay" sign of forming a circle with your thumb and index finger is considered rude in Spain. In reserved Germany, even a smile can be looked upon with suspicion.

Attire should be tasteful and modest. In other words, stay covered up! Most of Europe values good-quality clothes and dresses fashionably smart in public. While jeans are generally well-regarded, shorts may be unacceptable. A woman in a sleeveless top could be turned away from entering a church. Refrain from trying to adopt local accessories and dress for fear you may misinterpret the customs and ultimately cause offense.

There is no better way to flatter your host country than to show appreciation for their cuisine. Be open-minded and pay particular attention to regional foods. Your overall travel experience will be heightened when you do. Follow standard tipping traditions and when in doubt, be generous.

Whatever country you are in, the locals will be friendlier if you immerse yourself and show respect for their culture. If ever unsure of what to do, observe others and follow their cue. Happy and safe travels!

*Do you have an etiquette question you want Jill to answer in her monthly column? Visit: [www.DefiningManners.com](http://www.DefiningManners.com) and click "In the News" to submit your questions or mail to: P.O. Box 1703, Shavertown, PA 18708.*

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