

Business Abroad: The Etiquette Handbook

Your quick-reference guide to mastering local customs and leaving the best impression when you're on a business trip overseas.

Travelex

worldwide
money

PARIS

HOW TO BEHAVE



- Eye contact and smiling isn't as essential as in other major capitals
- When meeting someone for the first time, follow their lead; they may simply shake hands, or kiss on each cheek (known as la bise)
- The French don't like unexpected visitors, so ensure they know to expect you
- Wait for those hosting the meeting to remove their jackets before removing yours
- Strict punctuality is not essential; if you're running 10 minutes late, your hosts won't be offended

FOOD AND DRINK



- In restaurants, fill your wine glass halfway
- Keep both hands above the table (this applies to meetings, too)
- Follow your grandmother's advice, and keep elbows off the table
- Splitting the bill is considered rude – typically, the party who made the invitation will pay

HOW TO DRESS



- Dressing smartly is important in the fashion capital
- A clean, ironed shirt and a pair of shiny shoes will do nicely

BASIC PHRASES



- *Bonjour* (bon-zhoor) – Hello
- *Au revoir* (oh ruh-vwahr) – Goodbye
- *Merci* (mer-see) – Thank you
- *Parlez-vous anglais?* (par-lay voo ahng-leh?) – Do you speak English?

DID YOU KNOW?

There are more bakeries in Paris (1,784 at the time of writing) than bars (1,124)*

*Source: www.thelocal.fr/20150203/ten-facts-you-definitely-didnt-know-about-paris

AVERAGE PRICES (2015 TO 2016)



Cost of lunch in the business district

EUR €17
GBP £12.50



A five-mile taxi ride on weekdays

EUR €19
GBP £14



A ticket to the Louvre Museum

EUR €15
GBP £11



A Paris Visite Pass (1 days' public transport)

EUR €15
GBP £11

BERLIN

HOW TO BEHAVE



- Introduce yourself with a firm handshake
- Refrain from swearing or using pejoratives
- Address people by titles and surnames e.g. Mr. Hoffman
- Introduce your colleagues by order of seniority
- Keep small talk to a minimum
- In Germany they typically appreciate a direct approach. Say what you mean
- Schedule meetings well in advance and be on time
- Refrain from sarcasm. Berliners can consider it inappropriate

FOOD AND DRINK



- Wait for the host to say 'Guten Appetit' before starting your meal
- Make eye contact when you clink glasses with everyone
- Belching is a big no-no, even if you've really enjoyed your food!

HOW TO DRESS



- Aim to dress neatly and conservatively for a Berlin business meeting. A dark suit and limited accessories are ideal

BASIC PHRASES



- *Hallo* (ha-loow) – Hello
- *Auf Wiedersehen* (owf vee-dur-zane) – Goodbye
- *Danke* (dan-kuh) – Thank you
- *Sprechen Sie Englisch?* (shprekhun zee eng-leesh) – Do you speak English?

DID YOU KNOW?

Berlin was the first European city to install a set of traffic lights – at the Potsdamer Platz in 1924

AVERAGE PRICES (2015 TO 2016)



Cost of lunch in the business district

EUR €9
GBP £6.50



A five-mile taxi ride on weekdays

EUR €22
GBP £16



Entry to the Berlin Wall Memorial

FREE



A one day travel card

EUR €7.50
GBP £5.50

NEW YORK

HOW TO BEHAVE



- New Yorker's value their personal space, so be sure to keep a polite distance when possible
- Start off using people's titles, but chances are they'll give you the thumbs-up to use their first name after that
- Greet people with a firm handshake
- Don't be ruffled by a New Yorker being direct. There's an urgency about everything they do, and won't have the patience for endless social politeness
- Standing up when someone walks in the room will get you off to a great start

FOOD AND DRINK



- Even if you don't like the idea of tipping, waiters and waitresses in New York often rely on the income. Go for 15–20% of your bill
- Try not to chew with your mouth open
- Hands should be either on your lap or the table while eating

HOW TO DRESS



- A quality, fitted suit is ideal, as are a pair of freshly-buffed shoes
- In summer, it's okay to loosen your tie and shirt collar a little

BASIC PHRASES



- *Hello* or *Hi* are fine for a personal introduction
- Try to talk as you would in a business meeting in the UK

DID YOU KNOW?

The first people to settle in what's now New York City were the Dutch. It was called 'New Amsterdam' until the British renamed it

AVERAGE PRICES (2015 TO 2016)



Cost of lunch in the business district

USD \$17
GBP £11



A five-mile taxi ride on weekdays

USD \$22
GBP £14



A ticket to the MoMA (Museum of Modern Art)

USD \$25
GBP £16



A seven day MetroCard

USD \$31
GBP £19.75

BEIJING

HOW TO BEHAVE



- Introduce yourself and your colleagues formally, using full titles
- Give and receive business cards using both hands, and read any you are given word for word before putting them in a small case, never your wallet or pocket
- Senior people never sit closest to the door; these seats should be occupied by the junior members of the meeting
- Most Chinese people don't tend to gesture with their hands, so keep hand movements to a minimum

FOOD AND DRINK



- If you're presented with chopsticks with your meal, don't drop them as this is considered bad luck!
- It's typical to share food during informal dinner meetings, often served on a spinning plate

HOW TO DRESS



- Business suits and conservative colours are the norm
- White is often associated with mourning in Beijing, so stick to a pink or lilac shirt/blouse instead

BASIC PHRASES



- *Ni hao* (nee how) – Hello (Mandarin)
- *Zai jian* (zai dgin) – Goodbye (Mandarin)
- *Xie xie* (she she) – Thank you (Mandarin)

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 85 million passengers used Beijing Capital International Airport in 2014, making it the second busiest in the world, after the Atlanta International Airport in the US

AVERAGE PRICES (2015 TO 2016)



A reasonably-priced meal for two

CNY ¥120
GBP £12.40



A five-mile taxi ride on weekdays

CNY ¥24.50
GBP £2.50



One-day entry to the Forbidden City

CNY ¥40 - ¥60
GBP £4.10 - £6.20



A 3.7-mile subway journey

CNY ¥3
GBP £0.31

OSLO

HOW TO BEHAVE



- Avoid hyperbole; Norwegians are straight to the point when it comes to business
- If you're going to be late for a meeting by even a couple of minutes, letting your host know is fully expected
- Ensure your points are backed up with research, facts and figures; businesspeople in Oslo want to know about the bottom line
- Leave room for questions at the end of any presentations as Norwegians are unlikely to interrupt you whilst you're speaking

FOOD AND DRINK



- Almost all food, including those you might typically eat with your hands, such as burgers and sandwiches, should be eaten with cutlery
- Timeliness at a meal is as important as with meetings – don't be late!
- Don't turn up casually dressed; maintain the dress code dictated by your industry

HOW TO DRESS



- Those working in formal sectors – finance, sales – should wear a suit
- Less-formal industries will be fine in smart-casual clothing

BASIC PHRASES



- *Goddag* (goo dag) – Hello
- *Ha det bra* (ha de bra) – Goodbye
- *Takk* (tukk) – Thank you
- *Snakker du engelsk?* (snakka doo eng-elsk) – Do you speak English?

DID YOU KNOW?

The UN named Oslo the best place to live in the world, thanks to its low unemployment rate and high human development

AVERAGE PRICES (2015 TO 2016)



Cost of lunch for two in the business district

NOK kr356
GBP £28



A five-mile taxi ride on weekdays

NOK kr81.60
GBP £6.45



Entry to the Nasjonalgalleriet

NOK kr50
GBP £3.95



24-hour public transport travel

NOK kr90
GBP £7.15

MEXICO CITY

HOW TO BEHAVE



- Start with a firm handshake, and if you're female reach your hand out first
- Being understated and polite is highly appreciated in Mexico
- If you want a meeting with someone you don't know, it's more common in Mexico to establish contact with them through an acquaintance rather than approaching them yourself
- Schedule meetings in advance of your trip and ring or send a message to confirm after you've landed
- Stick to titles and surnames rather than first names

FOOD AND DRINK



- Always keep your hands above the table when eating
- Place your knife and fork parallel on the right side of your plate to signal you've finished eating
- Traditionally, only men are allowed to give toasts
- Don't begin eating until the host/hostess starts

HOW TO DRESS



- A dark suit for men, blouse and skirt combination for women
- Ensure what you're wearing is spotless. If it's not, it can be seen as disrespectful

BASIC PHRASES



- *Hola* (oh-lah) – Hello
- *Adios* (ah-dyohs) – Goodbye
- *Gracias* (grah-syahs) – Thank you
- *Habla inglés?* (ah-blah een-gleh?) – Do you speak English?

DID YOU KNOW?

Erected in 1910 in central Mexico City, the Angel of Independence monument is sinking because it was built on a dried lake bed

AVERAGE PRICES (2015 TO 2016)



Cost of lunch in the business district

MXN \$123
GBP £4.75



A five-mile taxi ride on weekdays

MXN \$65
GBP £2.50



A ticket to the Frida Kahlo Museum

MXN \$80
GBP £3



A one-day weekday travel card

MXN \$125
GBP £4.75

SHANGHAI

HOW TO BEHAVE



- Be on time – punctuality is respected
- Steer clear of physical contact; a gentle handshake to greet is fine, but always wait for others to offer their hand first
- Being cool, calm, and collected is the name of the game, both in your facial expressions and body language
- In Shanghai, Confucianism – the concept of harmonious relationships – is cherished. This means that duty, respect, and loyalty should be shown to senior figures

FOOD AND DRINK



- Many dishes in Shanghai's restaurants are shared communally
- More senior people are seated towards the head of the table
- It's seen as polite to leave a little bit of food on the shared/public plate once you've finished dining

HOW TO DRESS



- Looking the part is essential for making a good impression in meetings; a sharp suit for men, and a trouser or skirt suit, or smart dress for women will be ideal
- Some workplaces can be less formal, especially in the hotter months (June to September)

BASIC PHRASES



- *Ni hao* (nee how) – Hello (Mandarin)
- *Zai jian* (zai dgin) – Goodbye (Mandarin)
- *Xie xie* (she she) – Thank you (Mandarin)

DID YOU KNOW?

Shanghai is home to the world's tallest statue of Polish composer Frederic Chopin. It's in Zhongshan Park

AVERAGE PRICES (2015 TO 2016)



Cost of lunch in the business district

CNY ¥65
GBP £6.50



A five-mile taxi ride on weekdays

CNY ¥42
GBP £4.25



A ticket to the Shanghai Museum

FREE



A one-day travel card

CNY ¥18
GBP £1.80

SINGAPORE

HOW TO BEHAVE



- Listen intently at all times
- Be patient – in some instances, locals leave a few seconds before answering your question
- Pause before asking a question, as it shows you've been thinking about it
- Introduce the more senior persons in the room first
- Titles and surnames are generally preferred over first names
- Men shake hands in Malay and Indian culture, whereas nodding and smiling is deemed more appropriate between men and women

FOOD AND DRINK



- As a rule of thumb, wait until everyone else has begun to eat and drink to do so yourself
- Pork is mainly off-limits in Malay culture, while beef is definitely so in Indian cuisine

HOW TO DRESS



- Men should wear a clean, sharp suit and women can wear something light-weight but formal
- Not every workplace will wear suit jackets, and some won't even wear ties, it could be worthwhile checking ahead to find out.

BASIC PHRASES



- *Ni hao* (nee how) – Hello (Mandarin)
- *Zai jian* (zai dgin) – Goodbye (Mandarin)
- *Xie xie* (she she) – Thank you (Mandarin)

DID YOU KNOW?

The name Singapore comes from the Sanskrit, *Singapura*, which means 'lion city'

AVERAGE PRICES (2015 TO 2016)



Cost of lunch in the business district

SGD \$13
GBP £6



A five-mile taxi ride on weekdays

SGD \$12
GBP £5.50



A ticket to Singapore Zoo

SGD \$32
GBP £14.50



A one-day travel card

SGD \$20
GBP £9.15

SAO PAULO

HOW TO BEHAVE



- Schedule your meeting two to three weeks in advance
- Always arrive on time – punctuality is essential here
- Don't be impatient if waiting for an answer; outcomes take priority over timing
- Face-to-face communication is preferred to more impersonal emails and phone calls
- Interruptions are acceptable and often the norm in meetings
- Having one side of your business card in Portuguese will go a long way in earning respect

FOOD AND DRINK



- A typical venue for business lunches is a churrascaria – a traditional Brazilian steakhouse
- Cutlery is essential for all foods, with the exceptions of sandwiches and boned chicken
- When you've finished your meal, place the knife and fork in centre of the plate parallel to each other

HOW TO DRESS



- Dark-coloured suits are the norm for business attire in Sao Paulo
- Women should wear either suits or elegant dresses with quality accessories

BASIC PHRASES



- *Bom dia* (bon dee-ah) – Good day
- *Tchau* (chow) – Goodbye
- *Obrigado* (ob-ree-gah-doo) – Thank you (used by a man)
- *Obrigada* (ob-ree-gah-dah) – Thank you (used by a woman)
- *Fala inglês?* (fah-la in-glays?) – Do you speak English?

DID YOU KNOW?

As of 2013, there were 26 billionaires living in Sao Paulo, with each one worth around GBP £3 billion

AVERAGE PRICES (2015 TO 2016)



Cost of lunch in the business district

BRL R\$30
GBP £11



A five-mile taxi ride on weekdays

BRL R\$32
GBP £14



A ticket to a Corinthians game

BRL R\$100
GBP £16



A Bilhete Unico for three hours on the bus

BRL R\$3.50
GBP £19.75

BANGALORE

HOW TO BEHAVE



- When addressing someone, do so either by their title or, if you don't know their name, 'Sir' or 'Madam'
- Exchange business cards at the start of the meeting
- Have one side of your business card translated into Kannada, if possible – it's the official language here, rather than Hindi like in much of North India
- Avoid scheduling meetings that coincide with religious holidays such as Diwali
- Try not to discuss geopolitical issues, such as the India-Pakistan relationship. Religion, family life, and sport are good subjects to talk about, but not in meetings

FOOD AND DRINK



- For many in Bangalore, eating meat is a religious taboo, so you may want to stick to vegetarian options
- When someone offers you the chance to eat, it's customary to reject the first time, but fine to accept the second or third
- It's deemed polite to eat as soon as others have started doing so

HOW TO DRESS



- Men are expected to wear suits, whereas women have the option of wearing jackets and trousers with a shirt or blouse provided the outfit shows modesty
- In some industries, a button-down shirt and trousers will be fine

BASIC PHRASES



- *Namaskara* (nam-ah-scar-ah) – Hello (Kannada)
- *Hogi barutheene* (ho-gee bah-roo-thee-nee) – Goodbye (Kannada)
- *Dhan'yavāda* (dan-ya-vad-ah) – Thank you (Kannada)

DID YOU KNOW?

Bangalore is known as both the fashion and technology capital of India

AVERAGE PRICES (2015 TO 2016)



Cost of lunch in the business district

INR ₹295
GBP £3



A five-mile taxi ride on weekdays

INR ₹197
GBP £2



A ticket to the Visvesvaraya Technology Museum

INR ₹40
GBP £0.40



A Gold Day Pass travel card

INR ₹140
GBP £1.40

RIYADH

HOW TO BEHAVE



- A sponsor (known as a 'wakeel') from the area will be required to arrange meetings
- Arrive on time for meetings, but expect to be kept waiting by your hosts
- Upon meeting for the first time, men will shake hands with one another, and once a friendship is established, a kiss on the cheek will be exchanged
- Small talk is a big part of meetings in Riyadh, so you'll get lots of questions about family, health and other general chit-chat before speaking about business

FOOD AND DRINK



- The meal will not be served for a while after small talk and general conversation, whilst conversation is limited during eating
- The meal may be served on the floor, so sit cross-legged
- Eat only with the right hand, as the left is considered unclean
- As with business, other types of entertainment including meals are almost always same-sex

HOW TO DRESS



- Dress code across all industries is formal and conservative. Whilst business men from Riyadh will most likely wear the traditional ankle-length thobe, visiting men should wear a suit
- Women must ensure that their collarbones, arms and knees are covered, and that clothing is loose fitting

BASIC PHRASES



- *As-salām 'alukum* - Hello
- *Ma' al-salāmah* - Goodbye
- *Shukran* - Thank you

DID YOU KNOW?

It is forbidden to play music in public, including restaurants and shops, so expect a different atmosphere to home

AVERAGE PRICES (2015 TO 2016)



Cost of lunch in the business district

SAR رِيَال 120
GBP £21



A flat-fare taxi ride in central Riyadh

SAR رِيَال 17.80
GBP £3.10



Entry to the National Museum

SAR رِيَال 10
GBP £1.75



A seven day MetroCard

SAR رِيَال 2
GBP £0.35

Before you jet off...

Business trips abroad need not be purely about business; they can and should involve at least a taste of the culture of the country you're visiting.

To make the most out of your trip then make sure you're armed with some travel money. Visit the [Travelex Travel Money page](#) for foreign exchange details for your next business trip.

[Visit our Travel Money page >](#)

