

Argentina Cultural Etiquette



Meeting and Greeting

- A handshake and nod show respect when greeting someone.
- An embrace and one kiss on the cheek is common between friends and acquaintances.

Body Language

- Argentines are touchers and stand close to each other when speaking. Do not back away.
- The “O.K.” and “thumbs up” gestures are considered vulgar.
- Hitting the palm of the left hand with the right fist means “I don’t believe what you are saying” or “That’s stupid.”

Corporate Culture

- Personal relationships are important and must be developed before business is done.
- Argentines often need several meetings and extensive discussion to make deals.
- Decisions are made at the top. Try to arrange meeting with high-level personnel.
- Guests at a meeting are greeted and escorted to their chairs. The visiting senior executive is seated opposite the Argentine senior executive.
- During business meetings, sustain a relaxed manner, maintain eye contact and restrict the use of gestures. Don’t take a hard sell approach.
- Be prepared for a certain amount of small talk before getting down to business.
- Argentines are tough negotiators. Concessions will not come quickly or easily. Good relationships with counterparts will shorten negotiations.
- Contracts are lengthy and detailed. A contract is not final until all of its elements are signed. Any portion can be re-negotiated. Get everything in writing.
- An Argentine contact is essential to wading through government bureaucracy.
- Be punctual for business appointments, but prepare to wait thirty minutes for your counterpart, especially if you are meeting an important person.
- The pace of business in Argentina is slower than in the United States. A meeting that is going well could last much longer than intended, even if it means postponing the next engagement.
- Make appointments through a high-level person. Your Argentine contact can help with this.
- Confirm meetings one week in advance.

Dining and Entertainment

- Meals are for socializing. Refrain from “talking business” unless your Argentine colleague brings it up.
- Business dinners are generally held in restaurants. When you are the host, arrange payment ahead of time. If this is not possible, insist on paying when the bill comes.
- Don’t use toothpicks, blow your nose or clear your throat at the table.
- To summon a waiter, raise your hand with your index finger extended.
- Do not order imported liquor unless your host does. Taxes are exorbitant.
- Avoid pouring wine, which is a complex ritual in Argentina.
- For social events, arrive thirty to sixty minutes late. Arriving at a party on time is impolite.
- Be on time for lunch appointments, the theater and soccer.

Dress

- Argentines are extremely fashion conscious. Dress well if you want to make a good impression. Conservative, modest clothing is best.
- Women are expected to dress with a flair that does not detract from professionalism.

Gifts

- Do not give personal items, including clothing.
- When presented with a gift, open it at once and be appreciative.
- Bring flowers, candy, pastries, chocolates or imported liquor when invited to someone’s home.
- Business gifts are not expected until a fairly close relationship has been formed.
- High-quality gifts are appreciated, but very expensive gifts may be interpreted as bribes.

Helpful Hints

- Don’t be offended by Argentine humor, which may mildly attack your clothing or weight.
- Always greet officials before asking them questions.
- Don’t compare Argentina with the United States or with Brazil, which is considered a rival.
- Avoid talking about Great Britain or the Falkland Islands (Las Malvinas). These are sensitive subjects to many Argentines.
- Be careful when discussing the Perón years. People either love or hate the Peróns.

- Although Argentines may be very vocal about politics and religion, avoid adding your opinions to these discussions.

Especiallly for Women

While machismo persists in Argentina, it is being challenged and women are gaining visibility and influence in politics and business. Argentine businesswomen are similar in status to North American businesswomen.

- A kiss or a hug is considered a compliment to a woman.
- Propose - flirtatious comments - are common. Men may call out "Hey, gorgeous!" while you're walking down the street. Just smile, say, "Thank you very much" and keep walking.
- Defensive behavior will damage your credibility. Emphasize status and responsibility.

Resource: http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/ce_ar.htm