

Austria Cultural Etiquette



Meeting and Greeting

- Shake hands with everyone present--men, women and children--at a business or social meeting; shake hands with women before men. Women should offer their hand first. Shake hands again when leaving.
- Viennese men may kiss the hand of a woman. Accept this tradition graciously. A foreign man should not kiss the hand of an Austrian woman, since it is not expected and may come as a shock.

Names and Titles

- Titles are very important. Use last names and appropriate titles until specifically invited by your Austrian host or colleagues to use their first names.
- *Herr/Frau* + professional title + surname are used when initially addressing someone. Example: *Herr Doctor Bauer*. *Frau* + professional title + surname are also used when addressing the wife of a professional. Example: *Frau Doctor Bauer*. All women over 18 are *Frau*, even if they are not married.
- After you initially meet someone, you can drop his/her surname and address the person using *Herr/Frau* + professional title alone. Example: *Herr Doctor* or *Frau Doctor*.

Body Language

- Austrians are reserved and formal. Kissing, hugging, touching and physical closeness in public are not common.
- Eye contact is very important to Austrians.

Corporate Culture

- Austrians take punctuality for business meetings very seriously and expect that you will do likewise; call with an explanation if you are delayed. Never cancel an appointment at the last minute.
- Light conversation usually precedes business.
- Rank and title are very important in business. Power is held by a small number of people at the top.

- The business community is very political. Everyone is careful about what they say to or about anyone else.
- Business is conducted at a slow pace. Be patient.

Dining and Entertainment

- Austrians insist on punctuality for social occasions.
- The host gives the first toast, then the honored guest returns the toast later in the meal. Maintaining eye contact during a toast is very important.
- Never cut a dumpling. Instead, hold the dumpling with your knife and break it apart with your fork.
- When finished eating, place your knife and fork side by side on your plate at the 5:25 position. An open knife and fork on your plate means you would like more food or that you are not yet finished eating. Do not leave any food on your plate at a dinner party.
- The person who extends the invitation pays the bill in a restaurant. Austrians will not appreciate a struggle over the bill. Reciprocate with a lunch or dinner invitation before you leave the country.
- Do not discuss business during a meal unless your host initiates the conversation.

Dress

- Austrians take pride in dressing well, regardless of where they are going or what position they hold. Avoid wearing shorts in the city, especially when shopping.

Gifts

- Gifts are opened immediately upon receipt.
- When invited to someone's home, always bring a gift for the hostess. Give: flowers (in odd numbers only, except for the dozen--an even number means bad luck—and unwrap before giving to hostess), wine, pastries, chocolates, brandy, whisky. Do not give: red roses, unless romance is intended, red carnations (official flower of the Social Democratic Party), perfume.
- Gifts are generally not expected in business, but come prepared in case a gift is presented. Give: desk attire, books, music, a regional or country gift. Do not give: personal gifts, gifts with sharp edges, gifts with company logo (unless very subtle) or a very expensive gift.

Helpful Hints

- Austrians are not Germans. Austria and Germany have very different customs. Never refer to an Austrian as a German.
- Greet salespeople when entering and leaving a shop.
- Austrians may find personal compliments embarrassing.
- Do not put hands in your pockets while speaking to anyone.

Especially for Women

- Foreign women will have no problem doing business in Austria.
- Lunch is the most common setting for business discussions. Women should stick to inviting male colleagues to lunch until they get to know them on a more personal level.
- Men enter restaurants before women.
- Offer your hand first upon meeting or greeting a man.

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