

Finland Cultural Etiquette



Meeting and Greeting

- Shake hands with everyone present--men, women and children--at a business or social meeting. Shake hands again when leaving.

Body Language

- Keep some physical distance from Finns. Respect their shyness and desire for privacy. Do not engage a Finn in conversation on a bus or in a line, restaurant or other public places.
- Never hug, kiss or touch a Finn.
- Maintain eye contact when speaking to someone.
- Never talk to anyone with your hands in your pocket.

Corporate Culture

- Finns take punctuality for business meetings very seriously and expect that you will do likewise; call if you will be more than five minutes late.
- The Managing Director is the decision maker.
- Finns do not make small talk; they get right to business.
- Doing business in Finland takes time and patience.
- Two- to three-minute pauses of silence are common. Don't interrupt this silence.

Dining and Entertainment

- The sauna is a venerated Finnish tradition. Business discussions may be held in a sauna, or a business lunch may be preceded or followed by a sauna.
- All Finns sauna naked. You do not have to sauna naked, but it is considered strange not to. You may wrap a towel around yourself or wear a bathing suit.
- Finns insist on punctuality for social occasions.
- Conversation may continue approximately one to two hours after dinner. Never leave until coffee/dessert/cognac is finished.
- Checks in restaurants are never split. If you make the invitation, you pay.

- Business can be discussed at any time during lunch, but is not discussed during dinner, only after coffee.

Dress

- Dress is conservative and fairly informal.

Gifts

- When invited to someone's home, always bring a small gift for the hostess. Give: flowers (odd numbers are best; white and yellow flowers are for funerals only; tulips are a favorite), wine, chocolates. Do not give: potted plants.
- Gifts are normally not exchanged in business meetings, but small gifts may be appropriate at the successful conclusion of negotiations. Give: books, cognac, local/national gifts, recordings, art, glass, liquor (very expensive in Finland).

Helpful Hints

- Do not show emotions in public.
- Never ask personal questions, such as those related to someone's religion, job or political party.

Especially for Women

- Women are treated as equals in business and at home.
- A foreign businesswoman may invite a Finnish man to dinner and pay without any difficulties.

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