

Greece 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.
- Good friends are most likely to embrace and kiss.

Body Language

- Greeks are very demonstrative and affectionate.
- Nodding your head "yes" is not polite; say "yes" instead.
- "Yes" is signified by a slight downward nod of the head; "no" is a slight upward nod of the head.
- The "O.K." sign is a rude gesture; "thumbs up" means O.K.

Corporate Culture

- Punctuality is not particularly important in Greece, but foreigners are expected to be on time for business meetings, even though his/her Greek counterpart may be late.
- Greeks want to get to know you before they will do business with you. Business meetings will usually begin with general conversation before business is discussed.
- Trust is a major ingredient for acceptance and is much more important than qualifications, expertise or performance. Greeks and may be slow to trust foreigners.
- Greeks distrust written communications. Put everything down on paper and get the appropriate signatures. Letters/memos are often stiff and formal.
- Avoid telephoning unless it is impossible to meet. Personal, face-to-face contact in all matters is vital to communications.
- There is one boss, and he/she takes complete responsibility. The boss is the owner or the owner's most trusted employee.
- Meetings are often forums for expressing personal opinions (usually contrary) or to inform the group about what is taking place; they seldom have a formal agenda.
- Consensus is important and meetings may last or be reconvened until unanimity is reached.
- The official work day starts early, ends at lunch and may start again at 5:00 p.m.

Dining and Entertainment

- Arrive at least 30 minutes late for a dinner party. 8:00 means "after 8:00."
- Greeks are extremely generous hosts.
- Greeks may share the bill with the host, but a foreigner should not try to do so. The person who extends the invitation pays.
- Eat everything on your plate. If you cannot eat everything on your plate, you must tell the hostess that it is too much food the moment you are given your plate. At that time, your plate with either be brought back to the kitchen and some food taken off, or the hostess will insist that you try to eat what you can.
- Eat more, stay longer or do whatever a host insists upon. The offer will be very sincere.
- Try to join in Greek dances. It is greatly appreciated.
- Business dinners are social occasions. Follow your host's lead as to whether or not business is discussed at dinner.
- Be extremely careful of your wine intake.

Dress

- Dress is more informal than in most European countries.
- Women most often wear dresses.

Gifts

- Always bring the hostess a gift when invited to someone's home. Give: expensive wines, brandy, pastries, whiskey, cut flowers. Do not give: inexpensive wines, knives, sharp objects.
- Business gifts are commonly exchanged among business colleagues. Give: expensive wines, something for the home, Greek handicrafts, gifts with company logo. Do not give: inexpensive wines, sharp objects.

Helpful Hints

- The Greeks "pass" time, not "use" it.
- Expect Greeks to ask personal questions, such as "Are you married?" or "Do you have children?" This is not considered rude, but an attempt to get to know you personally.

Especially for Women

- Foreign women will find Greece a good place to do business.
- Women's opportunities in business depend on their connections, the same as for men.
- It could be a problem for a foreign woman to invite a Greek man to lunch or dinner. Invite others along as well or, if for dinner, invite his wife.
- A Greek man will always try to pay, but if you make arrangements beforehand and are insistent, he will probably give in.

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