



## CULTURAL ETIQUETTE

It is worth the time and effort to research global etiquette as Australian business travellers can make or break a deal just by the way they exchange business cards, introduce themselves, and behave at business and social meetings.

Body language, gestures, eye contact, facial expression and touching vary across cultures. For instance, nodding the head up and down in Bulgaria means "no", not "yes". Travellers should avoid using any gestures considered rude or insulting in their host country. For example:

- Never touch anyone's head in Buddhist cultures, as the head is considered sacred
- In Muslim countries, never touch, pass, receive, or eat with the left hand as it is considered unclean
- Pointing with the index finger is thought to be rude in the Sudan, Venezuela and Sri Lanka
- Crossing your ankle over your knee is considered rude in Indonesia, Thailand, and Syria
- Pointing your index finger toward yourself is insulting to the other person in Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland

### **Social Introductions Vary per Country**

A general rule in addressing people is to not use first names unless invited to do so. In Sweden and Israel, titles are relatively unimportant while in Germany and Austria, titles should be included during introductions. In Korea, titles are often used in place of names.

Personal space and handshakes vary as well. Venezuelans tend to get close, while the British prefer more personal distance. In Latin and Mediterranean cultures, people greet with a combination of handshake, hugs and shoulder pats.

To make the most of your next foreign business trip, keep in mind the following:

- Research the culture before you go
- Stay alert to cultural nuances
- Be flexible to modify your behaviour
- Keep an open attitude of patience and respect