

# Austria

## COMMUNICATION - COMMUNICATION ESSENTIALS

Austrians tend to be egalitarian and direct. They prefer a frank, concise mode of expression.

Communication is formal and follows strict rules of protocol. It is important to use the formal word for you "sie" unless invited to use the informal "du". Address people by their academic title and surname. You may be referred to simply by your surname. This is not a culture that uses first names except with family and close friends.

It is important to adhere to established rules of protocol when developing a personal relationship. Austrians are suspicious of hyperbole, promises that sound too good to be true, or displays of emotion. They may, at times, be direct to the point of bluntness. This is not an attempt to be rude, it is simply indicative of their desire to move the discussion along. Time is money and they do not want to waste time. If you are from a culture that has a more subtle communication style, try not to be insulted by the directness.

As you might expect of a culture that reveres tradition, Austrians are reserved, formal, well-mannered, and follow tradition. Those who are over the age of 40 generally take etiquette seriously. When being introduced, shake hands, state your name, and make eye contact. Failing to do so is considered condescending and rude.

Austrians tend to have a good sense of humor that is not necessarily refined or subtle. They do not readily understand self-deprecating humor. Be cautious when teasing others, as such behavior may be interpreted as putting them down.

### Key Words/Phrases

- Yes: Ja
- No: Nein
- Good morning: Guten Morgen
- Good day: Guten Tag
- Good evening: Guten Abend
- Good night: Gute Nacht
- Goodbye: Auf Wiedersehen
- Please: Bitte
- You're welcome: Bitte
- Thank you: Danke
- Pleased to meet you: Angenehm
- Pardon?: Wie bitte

## SOCIAL ETIQUETTE - FAUX PAS

- Many Austrians find personal compliments embarrassing.
- Public displays of affection are frowned upon.
- Avoid exaggeration and excessive compliments.
- Do not draw attention to yourself.
- Avoid public displays of affection, even pats on the back.
- Do not keep your hands in your pockets.
- Do not jaywalk.

## SOCIAL ETIQUETTE - OTHER SITUATIONS

When you enter a shop, say "Guten Tag" or "Gruss Gott". When you leave, say "Auf Wiedersehen". It is rude not to acknowledge the shopkeeper. Most Austrians dress up to go shopping. If you do not, you will be looked down upon.

It is common to say hello when you meet people in a lobby, elevator, or other public area. It is expected that the younger person will greet the older person first.

Eating in public only takes place in restaurants. It is rude to eat while walking or taking public transportation. When buying produce, point to your selection and the attendant will put it in a bag for you.

Austrians expect proper manners at all times:

- Men stand when a woman enters a room.
- Maintain eye contact when speaking.
- Men enter restaurants before women.

## **SOCIAL ETIQUETTE - MEETING PEOPLE**

Greetings are formal. A quick, firm handshake is the traditional greeting. Maintain eye contact during the greeting and repeat your surname. Smiling while shaking hands may help build the relationship.

Titles are very important and denote respect. Use a person's title and their surname until invited to use their first name. Always use the formal version of you ("sie") until invited to move to the more informal "du". We cannot stress enough how imperative it is that you do not adopt the informal until invited to do so.

In general, wait for your hostess to introduce you to a group. Austrians are great believers in third-party introductions. If your host is unavailable, ask someone you know to introduce you. When entering a room, shake hands with everyone individually, including children.

## **CULTURE OVERVIEW - CULTURAL ESSENTIALS**

### **Gourmet Culture**

Traditional Austrian dishes are veal cutlet (Wiener Schnitzel), boiled beef (Tafelspitz), calf's liver with herbs in butter (Geröstete Leber), and paprika spiced stew (Goulash), as well as various types of smoked and cured pork. Viennese cuisine is strongly influenced by southeast European cuisine. Many of the simpler meals are made with rice, potatoes and dumplings (Knödel), and with sauces.

Mehlspeisen is the term for cakes and puddings, all of which are wonderful. There are more than 57 varieties of Torte, which is often consumed with coffee at around 3 p.m. The Austrian coffee shop (Kaffeehaus) is almost a national institution and provides the social focus of a town or neighborhood.

Local wines (often served in open carafes) can be excellent and quite inexpensive. Most local wines are white (Riesling, Veltliner) but there are also some good red wines from Baden and Burgenland. Austrian beers are relatively inexpensive and quite good.