

## 4 Culture shock

### Reading and listening activity

1

- ◆ Don't be surprised if people you don't know well ask you how much you earn or how much your car cost. This is quite normal.
- ◆ If you are invited for a meal, people will always offer you a second helping. You should always say 'No', so as not to appear greedy. This will be understood, and your host will give you more anyway. If you really don't want any more, cover your plate with your hand.
- ◆ It is polite to leave some food on your plate at the end of a meal – if you eat everything, it's a sign that you want more.
- ◆ Don't drop litter – even cigarette ends. It will be noticed, and you'll be fined. You can also be fined if you fail to flush the toilet in a restaurant or other public place.
- ◆ In general, it is considered insulting to give tips, and many places have signs saying 'No tipping'.

2

- ◆ Greetings can go on for some time – 'How are you? How is the day? How's business? How's the family?' ... Your answer should always be 'Fine', even if you're not. If there's a gap in the conversation, this is usually filled with more greetings.
- ◆ Holding hands is common, even between strangers. Don't be surprised if someone showing you the way down the street leads you by the hand.
- ◆ In general, the left hand is used for 'unclean' activities, so use the right hand for giving things to people, handling food, etc.
- ◆ People younger than you will avoid looking you straight in the eye. This is not rude – on the contrary, it is a sign of respect.
- ◆ Hissing is a common way of attracting a person's attention, and is not rude. It's quite normal to hiss to call a waiter to your table.

## READING

1 Here are some texts containing tips for visitors to five different parts of the world. Which text do you think is about

- Britain?      – Thailand?
- Spain?        – West Africa?
- Singapore?

Which tips are illustrated in the pictures?

2 According to the texts, where is it either *polite* or *impolite* to

- a leave food on your plate?
- b visit someone without an invitation?
- c touch food with your left hand?
- d ask someone how much they earn?
- e look your boss straight in the eye?
- f open a present immediately?
- g arrive on time?

3 Imagine yourself in one of the five places. Which customs would you find it


- easy to get used to?
- difficult to get used to?

4 Imagine that someone from one of the five places is coming to visit you.

What tips would you give them about your own country?



## LISTENING

 You will hear someone talking about something that happened to him in the Sudan. The story is in three parts.

Part 1

- What was he doing?
- How many people were there?
- What did they start doing?
- What do you think the speaker did next?

Part 2

- What did everyone eat?
- Why do you think they didn't eat the tomatoes?

Part 3

- Why didn't they eat the tomatoes?



3

- ◆ People regard their homes as very private places, so if you're asked out to a meal it'll probably be to a restaurant rather than to the person's house or flat.
- ◆ It's common to see young children eating in restaurants with their parents, even quite late at night.
- ◆ Evening activity starts late. Restaurants start to fill up around 10 o'clock, and nightlife can carry on till four or five in the morning – or even later.
- ◆ Kissing (on both cheeks) is a common form of greeting between women, and between women and men. It is unusual between men, except when greeting a member of the family or a close friend.
- ◆ If it's your birthday, you're expected to invite friends or colleagues for a drink or a meal. You're the host, so you're expected to pay.

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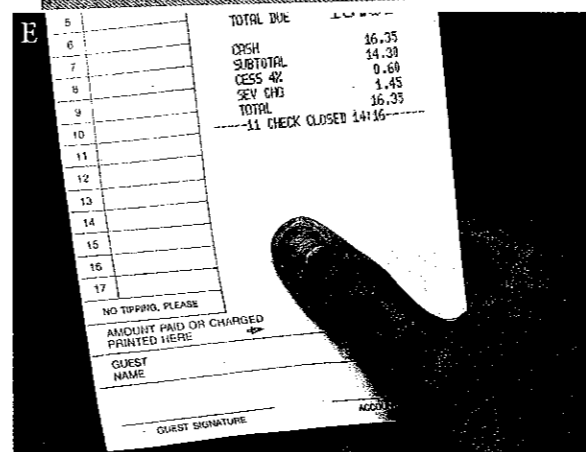


4

- ◆ Kissing is not common as a form of greeting unless you know someone well. It is especially unusual between men, who usually shake hands or just say 'Hello' without touching. People usually kiss on one cheek only.
- ◆ Unless you know someone well, it's impolite to ask them how much they earn, or how much they paid for something.
- ◆ In shops and at bus stops, go to the back of the queue and wait. If you 'jump the queue', other people will angrily tell you to wait your turn.
- ◆ Punctuality is important. If you arrange to meet someone, try not to be more than a few minutes late.
- ◆ On trains, especially underground trains, people tend to sit in silence and read. If you try to start a conversation with the person next to you, don't be surprised if you don't get much of a response.

5

- ◆ The head is considered the most spiritual part of the body, and the feet the dirtiest part, and it is very impolite to point your foot at someone, especially at their head. So don't sit with one leg crossed over the other, and never put your feet up on a chair or a desk.
- ◆ It is also rude to point at people with your finger. If you must point at someone, do it by nodding your head. If you want to call a waiter, do it with your palm down, moving your fingers towards you.
- ◆ It's quite normal to visit people at home without being invited. If you do, take a small gift with you.
- ◆ If you give someone a gift, they will usually thank you for it and put it aside without opening it. Don't be offended – it's bad manners to open a present in front of the person who has given it.



Adapted from *Britain, Singapore, Spain, Thailand* in the *Culture Shock* series; *The Rough Guide to West Africa*.