

Some Cultural Do's and Don'ts

With its diverse ethnic groups and traditional beliefs, Nepal has numerous cultural practices that may appear unusual to a person on his/her first visit to the country. Therefore, it is important for any overseas volunteer to take into consideration the different cultural aspects of the country to enjoy their stay in Nepal.

Here are some tips which may be helpful to you.

Greetings

- "Namaste" is widely used for greeting people.
- Shaking hands is more western than Nepali and, whilst you may shake hands with a man if he offers his hand first, you should not shake hands with a woman.
- Holding hands/hugging between opposite sexes in public can be offensive (Relationships between men and women are usually restrained in public)

Dress

- Women should always dress modestly. Avoid shorts, skirts, low-cut dresses (and, in some areas, sleeveless dresses), open, tight-fitting clothes and see-through materials.
- Shorts are not acceptable for women, but men wear shorts at home.

Shoes/Feet

- Shoes and feet are considered to be unclean.
- Take your shoes off before entering the temple, religious buildings, kitchen, bedroom etc.
- Do not point at things/people with your feet.
- It is a sin to touch a book with your feet.
- Do not step over people, food, books etc.
- Do not put your shoes upside down.

Eating and Drinking

- Do not eat from someone else's plate.
- Do not serve/offer any food or drink if someone has already touched it with the lips.
- Always use right hand for eating.
- Wash hands and mouth after eating.
- Burping is acceptable.
- Nepalese prefer spicy food.

Others

- Do not ask question to someone - is he/she your husband/wife?
- Do not associate people or their behaviour with the animal. e.g. "You eat like a monkey."
- Learn to address a person according to the Nepali tradition of respect, status and age. e.g. daai, bhaai etc
- Privacy does not exist in Nepal in the same way as you understand in the West. if you really want to be alone, try to explain that you want to rest or have some important work to do.
- Do not be embarrassed if someone asks about your age; whether you are married, and if not, why not(!?); your parents; and other seemingly private issues.
- Do not be embarrassed if someone remarks that you've gained weight. It is considered a compliment.
- Always hand objects to other people using your right hand.
- Heads are considered sacred; do not touch children on the top of their heads. Touch their cheek instead.

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