

Tip sheet: Do's and don'ts in PNG



More than just good manners

One of the great things about experiencing a new culture is learning and navigating the appropriate cultural norms and societal values so you can fully enjoy your time in-country.

One way to expediate this is knowing ahead of time some of the expected behaviours - i.e "do's and don'ts" - to help you hit the ground running. If you make a mistake and do accidentally commit a cultural faux pas, most people are understanding and likely to see the humour. This simple guide offers general rules to help you bridge the cultural gap quicker.

Do's

- Offer hospitality like food and drink when someone visits
- Take the time to talk, say hello, and tell stories
- Be patient and accepting of PNG time, noting that it may not replicate the Western standard
- Approach sensitive issues respectfully and with curiosity
- Respect those that are older than you, and defer to them for their thoughts and/or opinions
- Use a third party to voice grievances - indirect approach is often the starting point.

Don'ts

- Step over food that's been prepared and placed on the floor
- Point using your finger, opt for your chin or head movement instead
- Copy/mimic other regions or provinces practices (e.g. ceremony/dance) unless someone from that area is involved and consulted with
- Overtly flash wealth
- Overly criticise the country or its leaders (eg. politicians)
- Disparage Catholic faith/God
- Show frustration by making a public scene.