



Living in Australia – Do it the Aussie way!

Down under they do things their way

Today's Australia has its cultural heritage in England. Still it seems as Australians got rid off all the rules that make life stiff and complicated and only kept the customs they like. That's maybe why Australians appear so laid back. But let me tell you, they actually have the tendency to be quite conservative. Australians like things the Aussie way!

Can you imagine people feel offended when you're spelling color the American way and not colour, you Hoover instead of vacuum, or that a TV channel dedicated a show to a national discussion after the Prime Minister on his visit in the U.S. saluted to American soldiers instead of giving them a thumb up as being un-Australian?

This Info letter will give you an insight of everyday situations and how to be Australian. They are applicable to social environments as they are to a workplace.

Equality vs. tall poppies

Equality is a core value to the Australian society. And this means, positively speaking, people are equal in their social status. But what about people that stand out?

Australians dislike the idea of the model they should aspire to be like. And high achievers make everybody else look bad. So if someone thinks he's better because of whichever success you might be surprised how people respond. Instead of activating their ambitions they criticise, resent or cut down successful people. There is even a name describing this social phenomenon: Tall Poppy Syndrome.

So what to do to fit in? The more humble and modest a person is who occupies a high position, the more likely this person escapes envy and resentment, is able to blend in and earns respect.

It doesn't hurt to ask

Australia is a big country with very little population. Comparable to a little town people maintain a certain level of politeness, always.

For example in a clothes shop: You walk in and have a look around. Before trying something on you would ask: "Is it ok if I have a look at these?" or "Is it ok if I try this one on?"

You might think: "What's the point? Don't they want me to buy that stuff?" But not asking is considered as rude and it will impact the way people respond to you.

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Each to their own

Australians have a tendency to react against authority. Apparently it's stemming from their convict history. What does that mean in practice?

There will be situations someone wants to do something a certain way. And it might be obvious to you that it isn't the right or best way. The more concrete, logical, scientific or any other rational reasons you come up with the higher the chance they will do it exactly the other way, on purpose. Just to prove you wrong. Just to do it their way.

If you disagree on something being the right way, it's nothing you have to worry about. Telling people what to do or how to do things is a form of criticism and considered as un-Australian. So be aware!

Don't tell people what to do

You need to get your car fixed. It's the same old story every summer. At the garage you want to save time. You give the mechanic your opinion and tell him what needs to be done. Bad call.

Australians don't like that. It's too direct and considered as being rude. They receive it as an order undermining their authority. The reaction might be: "If you're the expert why you're bothering me? Why don't you go home and fix it yourself?" Rude? Now that's understandable and therefore accepted.

Just describe the problem as it is, when it happens to appear and at max let the mechanic know what you got done in the past. The rest is up to him.

They wouldn't call it etiquette

Coming to Australia you might get the impression there isn't such a thing as etiquette. But that would be a misinterpretation. Aussies just have their own way of dealing with things. And they can be quite funny if confronted with something different from that.

This Info letter addresses core values and shows different situations you will certainly come across down under. Use the explanations to know how to act and react. It will make life much easier and pleasant for you.

Trust me, Aussies will appreciate and accept you much more when you're able to demonstrate Australian customs. Getting a feel for it and blending in assure you will have a good time and people will look after you.

