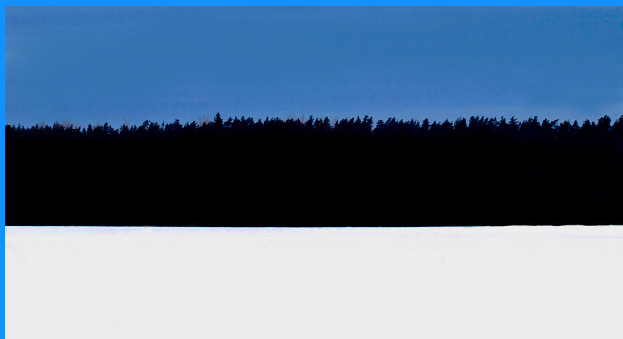


TIPS AND TRICKS

ABOUT

VISITING ESTONIA

WHAT TO DO AND WHAT NOT TO DO



Manners

- > Estonians on the whole are quiet and reserved.
- > They tend to speak softly and do not like to draw attention to themselves.
- > Being rational, calm and not going to emotional extremes are all qualities that respected.
- > At first Estonians can come across as being emotionally cold. Once a relationship warms up this becomes less so.

Meeting and greeting

- > Greetings can come across as rather formal and rather reserved.
- > Men should initiate greetings with women and the younger person always greets the older person.
- > When meeting someone make sure you are stood up, offer direct eye contact and give a nice firm handshake.
- > The most common greeting is "tere" ("hello").
- > Titles are very important. "Härä" is for Mr, "Prova" is Mrs and "Preili" is Miss. All should be followed with the surname.
- > Only use first names once you have been invited to do so.

Communication style

- > Estonians mean what they say and do what they say they will do.
- > They expect foreign businesspeople to keep their word.
- > Failing to do so can cause irreparable harm to a business relationship.
- > They are generally polite and courteous speakers.
- > Estonians are somewhat pragmatic and reserved, especially in the early stages of developing a business relationship.
- > Estonians are not emotive speakers.
- > If you are from a culture where hand gestures are robust, you may wish to moderate them to conform to local practices.
- > Soft voices are the norm. If you have a booming voice, you may wish to moderate it when conducting business with Estonians.

Communication style

- > Estonians do not always respond to what has been said, especially if they are uncomfortable with the subject or if they need more time to organize their thoughts.
- > Although they are direct communicators, Estonians temper their directness in order to protect the feelings of all concerned.
- > They are slow to pay compliments and may become suspicious of compliments offered too readily and without sufficient reason.
- > Passive silence is very much part of the communication style.
- > Estonians are not fond of conversational overlap and will not think highly of someone who interrupts them while they are speaking.
- > Estonians value their good reputations. Therefore, be careful not to criticize or embarrass anyone publicly.

Dining etiquette

- > Arrive on time. Punctuality is expected. Call if running late.
- > Check to see if shoes are being worn in the house.
- > Do not expect a tour of the house homes are private.
- > Dress conservatively.
- > Try and offer to help the hostess with the preparation or clearing up after a meal is served. This will be turned down but is nonetheless polite.
- > Do not discuss business.
- > Reciprocate any hospitality received.

Table manners

- > Table manners are relatively formal in Estonia.
- > Remain standing until invited to sit down.
- > Table manners are Continental, i.e. the fork is held in the left hand and the knife in the right while eating.
- > Do not begin eating until the hostess starts or someone says "head isu" ("good appetite").
- > Avoid resting your elbows of the table.
- > Compliment the hostess on the meal.
- > Try to finish everything on your plate.



FAQs

What do I need to know about verbal and nonverbal communications?

Touching, other than greeting with a firm handshake, is not an Estonian's way of meeting a visitor, a stranger or a colleague. Personal physical distance is considered very important by most Estonians.

Regular eye contact is used in judging whether a person is trustworthy. Estonians, usually, will maintain eye contact during conversation, and it is considered a sign of dishonesty if a person refuses to or is reluctant to make eye contact during business or social conversation. In Estonia, it is customary to shake hands (a firm handshake!) with both men and women, especially when greeting the person for the first time. It is not customary for men and women to give each other a kiss on a cheek. While talking, men generally do not touch other men or women, even if they are of a higher level than the other person.

Only very close friends sometimes touch each other during business or normal social conversations, by placing a hand on the other's shoulder or touching his/her elbow. Even then they will resume a distance when the conversation continues; personal space around an individual is considered private and inviolable. In professional contacts, eye contact is particularly important. Most Estonians make relatively little use of gestures during business and social conversations, and find frequent gesturing distracting, even annoying. Gestures such as middlefingerereacts, waiving a pointed index finger, and pointing a finger at someone are a definite nono.

FAQs

Should you bring something when you are visiting Estonian's house?

You definitely should bring something because it is considered as a good and friendly gesture from a guest. Of course, if you know your host very well, then depending on his/her interests or hobbies or tastes you know what to buy, but in other case you should stick to classical options. For example, a classical option is considered flowers or chocolate (better both). Also you can bring some cake, biscuits, ice-cream e.t.c. There is not a specific item or type of food that is strongly suggested for a male host (especially if you do not know what kind of alcohol is preferable to him or whether the man drinks at all or not), but some souvenirs, photos or other items from your country as a present would be a nice options in this case.

It is not suggested though to bring any items that have some religious or political ideology meaning in your country or something that represents some inside-joke, meaning of which could be misinterpreted by host or hostess and invoke conflict. Majority of Estonian's are atheists and have had a difficult political times (occupation etc) so it is better to respect these aspects if you visiting their house. Nonetheless, they have a great sense of humour and if you already know them well, these kinds of jokes can be appreciated.

If we are talking about general aspects of politeness when coming in an Estonian's house, a couple of things should be mentioned.

Take off your shoes and leave them in the corridor of the house. European etiquette is accepted.

FAQs

Are public displays of affection, anger or other emotions acceptable?

One's tone of voice ought to be friendly and speech straight forward, even if one is involved with a nasty subject.

What should I know about the workplace environment (deadlines, dress, formality, etc.) ?

Work styles and pace differ between workplaces but it is important to be clean and punctual at all times.

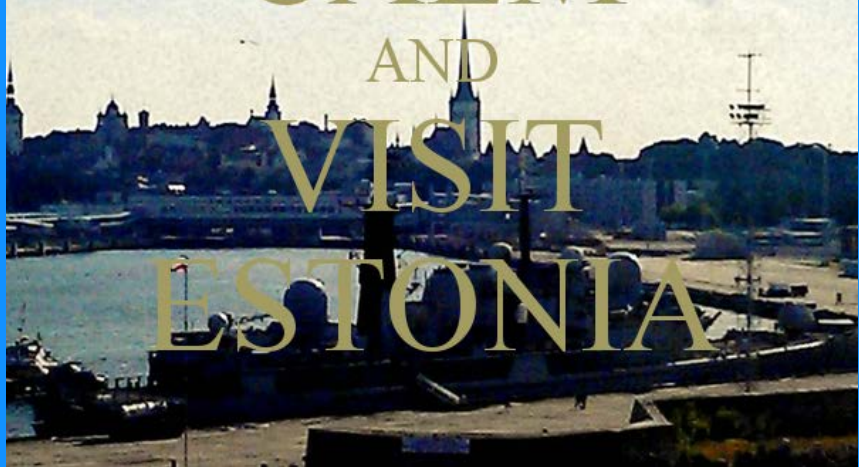
Supervisors and colleagues are usually addressed by their last name, and by using Mr. (härra), Mrs. (proua) or Miss (preili) with the name is considered to be most appropriate, especially at first and until you get to know them more, or after they propose to drop the formality.

Even though some workplaces allow employees to come to work earlier or later, and leave earlier or later than the usual 9-5, punctuality and reliability are highly valued in Estonia, both by your colleagues and bosses. Deadlines are usually set with the expectation that they will be met.

However, there is some degree of flexibility when setting them, but make sure that both you and the colleague or supervisor are fully aware of the expectations and of the agreed upon task. It is not uncommon to work considerable overtime in order to meet a deadline, and failing to do so may have negative connotations.



KEEP
CALM
AND
VISIT
ESTONIA





**VISIT
ESTONIA**

And see for yourself...