THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE

Portuguese Social Culture

Despite some wrong stereotypes that portray the Portuguese people as loud and impulsive, the truth is that the Portuguese are usually reserved and patient.

As a people, we are also tolerant of differences and flexible and open to experimentation. Generally, we are also a hospitable and welcoming country.

As far as religion is concerned, the great majority of the Portuguese people consider themselves Christians. Portugal is mainly a catholic country and the Catholic Church still plays a considerable influence, even though the majority of ‘Catholics’ say that they are non-practising.

The Roman Catholic Church retained its influential status, especially in rural areas, where priests still have important roles in education and social life.

Even if the recent decades have shown a considerable decrease in the number of births, the family is still the basis of Portuguese life. In most cases, the family is still the foundation of the social structure. Individuals derive a social network and assistance from the family. For the Portuguese, family loyalty comes before other social relationships, even business.

Portuguese greetings

It is appropriate to shake hands with everyone present in formal situations, which generally means that you haven’t met the person before; this applies to men, women and older children. The handshake, whether at a social or business meeting, is accompanied by direct eye contact and the appropriate greeting. One is supposed to shake hands again upon leaving. When greeting acquaintances and friends, men embrace and pat one another on the back, and women kiss both cheeks, starting with the right. Between women you only shake hands in very formal occasions, and if you don’t know the person at all.

Communication

- The Portuguese are usually direct in their communication style. They often speak quite fast and tend to “close” the vowels when speaking. In some regions, it is common to speak loudly but this rarely signifies anger or displeasure.

- The Portuguese do not use a lot of gestures. As in a lot of cultures, pointing with your finger is considered offensive.