

TIBETAN CULTURAL TIPS

FOOD

- Food and hospitality give warmth and welcome and convey the language of love
- Momos (delicious meat or vegetable dumplings), butter tea (an acquired taste) and tsampa (a porridge of parched barley flour, boiling water and butter kneaded together with the fingers into a tasty, nutritious ball to be eaten with the fingers) are Tibetan staples.
- Tibetans in their home land love meat. Diaspora Tibetans may be vegetarians or vegans as well as meat eaters.
- Give and receive objects, food, etc. with both hands
- Always take a gift to give when going to a Tibetan home (fresh fruit is always a good gift) Never go empty handed.

RELATIONSHIPS

- Families live together or in close proximity. They care for the aged respectfully and willingly.
- Tibetans are gentle and not forceful in their opinions. (Never debate an issue of faith.)
- They are non-confrontational. Be respectful of their understandings and aware that they may not outwardly show their hurt at a disrespectful comment.
- Refrain from showing public displays of affection with members of the opposite sex, even if it is with your spouse. However, holding hands, hugging members of same sex is common signifying only friendship.

SURPRISES

- Sticking out your tongue means I like you or the situation is a pleasant one. (Flatten the tongue. Not pointed.)
- Never show the bottoms of your feet, always sit cross-legged with feet underneath. Never cross your legs while sitting on a chair with your foot pointing at someone.
- Visitors who know you well may be comfortable staying over night after an evening visit at your home.
- When tea is being poured into your cup hold one hand open beside the cup
- Step over thresholds when entering homes
- Take off your hats and sunglasses so that Tibetan people can see clearly into your eyes.

WHO ARE THEY?

- Tibetans are fun-loving, hard-working people who love to laugh. They have a good sense of humour.
- They are relaxed and can sit together chatting comfortably for many hours without wearying.
- Their religion teaches that one should “kill desire” but like all people, they respond to genuine love and appreciation.