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CULTURAL DIPLOMACY TRAINING

WORLD CUP COUNTRY TIPS SHEET

BRAZIL (GROUP C, JUNE 19)

The Vibe: "Cordialidade" (Cordiality)

Brazilian culture is built on the "man of the heart." Social harmony and warm personal connections are more important than rigid rules or schedules. If a Brazilian visitor is "taking too long" to talk, they aren't being inefficient—they are building the trust necessary to do business with you.

The Protocol: Physicality & Space

- **Green Light (Physical Touch):** Brazilians stand much closer than Americans. Expect a hand on the shoulder or arm during a conversation. Moving away can be seen as a sign of dislike or "coldness."
- **Red Light (The "OK" Gesture):** Never use the "OK" sign (index finger and thumb in a circle). In Brazil, it is an offensive gesture equivalent to "the bird" in the US.
- **Greetings:** Between women, or men and women, "kisses" on the cheek are standard (actually just touching cheeks and kissing the air). In Rio, it's usually two; in São Paulo, usually one.

Communication Style: The "Circular" Approach

- **The "No" that isn't a "No":** Brazilians find it impolite to say a direct "No." If you hear, "It's difficult," or, "I'll see," it is likely a polite refusal. Listen for the vibe, not just the words.
- **Enthusiastic Interruptions:** In Brazil, interrupting someone while they speak is a sign that the listener is excited and engaged. It is a compliment, not a lack of manners.

Philadelphia Connection: "The Little Brazil"

- **Community Hub:** Direct visitors toward Castor Avenue in Northeast Philly. This is the heart of the Brazilian community, filled with authentic bakeries (padarias), grocery stores, and salons.
- **Food Recommendation:** If they are homesick, suggest Picanha Brazilian Steakhouse in the Northeast for a taste of home-style service.

Football (Soccer) Soul: The "Pelé" Standard

- For Brazilians, football isn't just a game; it is a manifestation of national joy and "Ginga" (soulful movement). They don't just want to win; they want to win with beauty.
- **Conversation Starter:** Ask them which young player they think is the "next Neymar." It's an endless debate they love to have.

SUPPORTED
BY:



Terri Morrison
Author of
Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands



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CÔTE D'IVOIRE (GROUP E, JUNE 14 AND 25)

The Vibe: Hope, Hospitality, and Respect

Ivorian culture is rooted in hospitality and respect for hierarchy and elders. Social status is acknowledged by formal address and body language. There is a saying in the region: "The stranger does not have a home, but the stranger has a family." Expect warmth, but warmth that follows social order.

The Protocol: Physicality & Hierarchy

- **Green Light (Use Your Right Hand):** Always use your right hand for everything—giving a visitor their credentials, shaking hands, or pointing out a direction. In Ivorian culture, the left hand is reserved for private hygiene and using it in public is a significant social slight.
- **Red Light (Eye Contact with Elders):** Prolonged, intense eye contact with an Ivorian elder or a high-ranking official can be perceived as defiant or aggressive. Use a slightly lowered gaze instead.
- **Greetings:** The "Three-Way Handshake" is the gold standard for men. It's a regular handshake, followed by a slide into a thumbs-up grip, and back to a regular handshake.

Communication Style: Indirect & Relational

- **The Greeting Ritual:** Never rush into "business" or logistical instructions. You must ask: "How are you? How is your family? How was your journey?" Skipping this makes you appear untrustworthy.
- **Non-Confrontation:** Ivorians may avoid saying "no" directly to avoid causing discomfort for the person they speak to. If an answer seems vague, they might be trying to be polite, not deceptive.

Philadelphia Connection: Africatown

- **Community Hub:** Southwest Philadelphia, particularly along Woodland Avenue, is the heart of the city's West African community.
- **Food Recommendation:** Suggest Kilimandjaro or African Small Pot on Chestnut Street. These restaurants serve a variety of West African dishes, including familiar flavors of Attiéké (fermented cassava) and Alloco (fried plantains) that are staples of the Ivorian diet.

Football (Soccer) Soul: Political Past and the New Generation: "Les Éléphants"

- For Côte d'Ivoire, the national team (The Elephants) is a symbol of peace. During the civil war in the mid-2000s, the players famously knelt in the locker room to beg for a ceasefire.
- **Conversation Starter:** Didier Drogba and Yaya Touré are retired, but remain national icons. Ask, "How does this new generation compare to the 2006 legends?" to spark passionate conversation!

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CROATIA (GROUP L, JUNE 27)

The Vibe: Pomalo & Pride

Croatian culture is a blend of Central European efficiency and Mediterranean "joie de vivre." The guiding philosophy is Pomalo—a word that translates to "slow down," "take it easy," or "no rush." This relaxed lifestyle is balanced by a fierce national pride. For a country that gained independence in the 1990s, the national team is a primary symbol of sovereignty and international standing.

The Protocol: Physicality & Respect

- **Green Light (Firm Handshake):** A handshake in Croatia should be firm and accompanied by direct eye contact. A weak handshake can be perceived as a lack of confidence or interest.
- **Red Light (Three-Finger Salute):** Never raise your thumb, index, and middle finger. This Serbian nationalist gesture is considered a grave insult to Croatians due to history of the Homeland War.
- **Title Etiquette:** In initial interactions, use formal titles. Address men as Gospodin (Mr.) and women as Gospođa (Ms.) followed by their surname.

Communication Style: Indirect & Relational

- **The Ritual of "Kava":** In Croatia, coffee is not a "to-go" activity, it is a social ceremony. If a Croatian visitor asks where to get coffee, they are looking for a place to sit, talk, and build relationship.
- **Punctuality:** While social life is Pomalo, professional life is not. Arriving on time for official events is a sign of respect and reliability.

Philadelphia Connection: The Dalmatian Roots

- **The "Lodge" History:** Historically, Croatian immigrants in the Philly area settled near the riverfront and in the riverwards (like Port Richmond). While the community has dispersed, the United Croatian Club in the broader region (and nearby New York/Jersey hubs) remains a focal point for matches.
- **Food Recommendation:** Many famous oyster and seafood dynasties in the U.S. (like Drago's) were founded by Croatian immigrants from the Dalmatian coast. While in Philly, suggest visitors try the Oyster House on Sansom Street, whose raw bar quality mirrors an Adriatic seafood tradition.

Football (Soccer) Soul: The Vatreni (The Blazers)

- The Croatian team is famous for "punching above its weight." Their consistent Top-3 finishes are seen as a product of "Dišpet"—Dalmatian for "productive spite" or desire to prove the world wrong.
- **Conversation Starter:** Ask about Luka Modrić. As he nears the end of his career, he is a national deity. Mentioning his "grit" or "longevity" will earn you instant respect.

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CURAÇAO (GROUP E, JUNE 25)

The Vibe: "Dushi" & Multilingualism

The essence of Curaçao can be summed up in the Papiamentu word "Dushi," which means sweet, nice, or good. It describes everything from food to a person's soul. Curaçaoans command a blended cultural landscape, characterized by a multilingual heritage that pairs a welcoming Caribbean social grace with a steadfast commitment to civic precision. They are world-class travelers and linguistic experts.

The Protocol: Physicality & Space

- **Green Light (Multilingual Greeting):** Most visitors will speak four languages: Papiamentu, Dutch, Spanish, and English. Starting with a warm "Bon Dia" (Good morning) or "Kon ta bai?" (How are you?) in Papiamentu will instantly signal that you respect their unique island identity.
- **Red Light (Personal Space):** While friendly, Curaçaoans often maintain a larger "personal bubble" in professional settings than their Latin American neighbors. Be aware of personal space.
- **Pride in History:** Curaçaoans take great pride in their distinct history, their brightly colored colonial architecture, and their high level of education.

Communication Style: Direct but Gentle

- **Directness:** Influenced by Dutch culture, Curaçaoans can be more direct than other Caribbean cultures. They appreciate clear answers and punctuality.
- **The "Yes" Check:** If a visitor says "Yes," they generally mean "I understand and agree." They are less likely to give a "polite yes" to avoid conflict.

Philadelphia Connection: The Maritime & Dutch Link

- **Historic Ties:** Philly's history as a major port city mirrors the naval importance of Willemstad. While there isn't a specific "Curaçao Neighborhood," visitors may feel at home in Old City due to the colonial architecture and the proximity to the Delaware River.
- **Food Recommendation:** Suggest The Reading Terminal Market. The variety of fresh tropical fruits and the bustling, "covered market" strongly mimics the Marshe Bieu (Old Market) in Willemstad.

Football (Soccer) Soul: The Blue Wave

- Curaçao is the "Cinderella Story" of the 2026 World Cup. As they make their debut, the team represents the "Next Generation." Many players were trained in the top Dutch academies (Ajax, PSV), bringing a tactical style of play to the pitch.
- **Conversation Starter:** Ask about their coach or their journey to the finals. Since this is their first World Cup, every fan will have a story about where they were when the team qualified.

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ECUADOR (GROUP E, JUNE 14)

The Vibe: "Amabilidad" & Formal Sincerity

Ecuadorian culture is marked by a profound sense of politeness and "unfailing good manners." The culture—particularly in the Andean highlands—tends to be more formal and conservative than its neighbors. They value social hierarchy and professional respect, believing that how you present yourself reflects how much you value the person you are meeting.

The Protocol: Physicality & Hierarchy

- **Green Light (Tactile Warmth):** Once a rapport is established, physical contact is the norm. Men may engage in an abrazo (a firm hug with shoulder pats), while women often exchange a single kiss on the right cheek. Let the Ecuadorian visitor initiate this transition to a more "tactile" greeting.
- **Red Light (The Lip Point):** You may see an Ecuadorian visitor point at something by puckering their lips or nodding their head in a direction. Pointing with your index finger is considered rude.
- **Titles Matter:** Addressing someone as Señor or Señora is the baseline. However, if you know their professional title (e.g., Doctor, Ingeniero, Arquitecto, Licenciado), use it to show respect.

Communication Style: Indirect & Diplomatic

- **Reading the "Maybe":** Ecuadorians are non-confrontational and will go out of their way to avoid saying a flat "no," which can be interpreted as blunt and aggressive. If you hear, "We will see," or "I will consider it," it often means "no." Listen for the subtext and the tone.
- **Small Talk Foundation:** Begin conversations with small talk, asking about their trip, their impressions of Philadelphia, or their family. This builds trust, and must precede any logistics talk.

Philadelphia Connection: The "Centro de Oro"

- **Community Hub:** Visitors will find the most vibrant Latin American community in El Centro de Oro (The Golden Block) around 5th and Lehigh in North Philly.
- **Food Recommendation:** For a taste of home, suggest Tierra Colombiana (4535 N. 5th St). While the name is Colombian, it is a legendary hub for broad South American cuisine. They serve high-quality Ceviche and Lomo Saltado that will feel very familiar to Ecuadorian palates.

Football (Soccer) Soul: La Tricolor

- The national team is nicknamed La Tri (short for La Tricolor), referring to the yellow, blue, and red of Ecuador's flag. Many of Ecuador's home games are played in Quito. At 9,000 feet above sea level, the thin air, matched with La Tri's speed and energy, makes it hard for opponents to keep up.
- **Conversation Starter:** Mention Enner Valencia, the nation's all-time top scorer, or talk about the "new generation" of players from the coastal academies to show you've done your homework.

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FRANCE (GROUP I, JUNE 22)

The Vibe: "La Courtoisie" & Intellectual Rigor

French culture is built on a foundation of formal politeness, logic, and a deep appreciation for heritage. There is a clear distinction between the "public" self and the "private" self. To French visitors, a professional encounter requires respectful behavior and etiquette. They value intellectual debate and can be skeptical of "over-the-top" American friendliness, which they may perceive as superficial.

The Protocol: Physicality & Composure

- **Green Light (The "Bonjour" Requirement):** This is the most important rule in French diplomacy. Say "Bonjour" (or "Bonsoir" after 6:00 PM) before asking any question or providing a service. Skipping this is seen as a sign of disrespect.
- **Red Light (Excessive Volume):** In France, being loud in public is considered "unbecoming" and shows a lack of self-control. Avoid shouting across a room or using overly boisterous hand gestures.
- **The Handshake Greeting:** Keep it brief and light. A "bone-crushing" American handshake is seen as aggressive. One or two quick shakes, without too much pressure, is sufficient.

Communication Style: Direct Logic & Debate

- **Intellectual Honesty:** If a French visitor disagrees with a logistical plan, they aren't being difficult; they are engaging in a "constructive critique." Don't take it personally.
- **Respect for Privacy:** Avoid asking personal questions like "What do you do for a living?" or "Do you have kids?" in the first few minutes of conversation. Keep the topics on the event, the city, or the sport until a rapport is established.

Philadelphia Connection: The French City Plan

- **Community Hub:** Direct visitors to the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. It was explicitly designed by French urban planners (Paul Philippe Cret and Jacques Gréber) to mimic the Champs-Élysées in Paris. They will immediately recognize the scale and the "allée" of trees.
- **Food Recommendation:** For an authentic experience, suggest Parc on Rittenhouse Square. It is widely considered one of the most accurate "Parisian Brasserie" experiences in the United States.

Football (Soccer) Soul: "Les Bleus" & The "Republic"

- The French team is a symbol of the "Universal Republic." They are a powerhouse that expects excellence. In France, football is a tactical game, where strategy matters as much as the goals.
- **Conversation Starter:** Mention Kylian Mbappé, a global icon and French national hero. Ask: "Do you think the team's tactical depth is better now than in 2018?" to invite some intellectual debate.

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GHANA (GROUP L, JUNE 27)

The Vibe: Interdependence & Emancipation

Ghanaian culture is rooted in a sense of "community over individual." As the first sub-Saharan African nation to gain independence, there is a deep sense of national pride and pan-African leadership. Visitors from Ghana often display a warm, leisurely social pace where "people matter more than the clock."

The Protocol: Physicality & Order

- **Green Light (The Snapping Handshake):** Between friends, the traditional "West African Handshake" ends with a loud "snap" of the middle fingers upon release.
- **Red Light (The Right-to-Left Rule):** When entering a room with a group of people, you must greet them in order from right to left, regardless of age or status. Walking past someone to greet a "more important" person out of order is considered a major breach of etiquette.
- **The Left Hand Taboo:** Never use your left hand to hand a visitor their ticket, take their money, or point out directions. It is strictly reserved for personal hygiene not social interaction!

Communication Style: The "Family First" Buffer

- **Pleasantry Requirement:** Never jump straight into logistics. You must ask, "How is your morning?" or "How is your family?" Directness without these pleasantries is perceived as aggressive or rude.
- **"Polychronic" Time:** While the World Cup runs on a strict FIFA schedule, your visitors may practice relationally-driven punctuality. In these cultures, cutting a conversation short just to be 'on time' for the next meeting is seen as a sign of poor character or disrespect.

Philadelphia Connection: "The Black Star of the Northeast"

- **Community Hub:** The Ghanaian community in Philadelphia is vibrant, with a significant presence in Northeast Philadelphia and parts of Southwest Philadelphia. Mention Philly's Africatown in Southwest Philly, a hub for West African and Caribbean businesses.
- **Food Recommendation:** Suya Suya is a beloved spot for a West African fusion experience closer to University City, and Lè Mandingue has three locations in the region to choose from.

Football (Soccer) Soul: The "Black Stars" & Pan-Africanism

- The team is named after the Black Star Line, the shipping line founded by Marcus Garvey to connect the global African diaspora. The team is a symbol of African excellence and emancipation.
- **Conversation Starter:** As the top African goal scorer in the history of the World Cup, asking, "How does the current squad compare to the 2010 legends like Asamoah Gyan?" will build rapport.

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HAITI (GROUP C, JUNE 19)

The Vibe: Resilience & "L'Union Fait la Force"

Haitian culture is defined by a deep sense of historical pride as the world's first independent Black republic. The national motto, "L'Union Fait la Force" (Unity is Strength), is not just a slogan; it is a survival strategy. While visitors may be coming from a place of significant national hardship, they carry an immense dignity. They value formal respect, religious faith, and a vibrant approach to art and music.

The Protocol: Physicality & Dignity

- **Green Light (Formal Greetings):** Always use a title when addressing someone. "Bonjour Monsieur" or "Bonsoir Madame" is the expected baseline. If you speak French or Kreyòl, using the formal "Vous" (French) or "Ou" (Kreyòl) rather than the informal "Tu" shows respect to adults.
- **Red Light (Aggressive Directness):** Avoid being overly blunt or "all business." If you are too direct without a warm greeting, it may be seen as coldness or a lack of upbringing (manque d'éducation).
- **The "Touch" Standard:** Handshakes are firm. Between women, a kiss on each cheek is the standard social greeting. If a Haitian visitor reaches out to touch your arm while talking, it is a sign of trust.

Communication Style: High-Context & Narrative

- **Storytelling:** Haitians often communicate through anecdotes or proverbs. They may not give you a "yes/no" answer, instead providing context. Listen to the whole story. The answer may be at the end.
- **Language Pride:** While French is an official language, Haitian Kreyòl is the language of the heart. Even knowing a few words like "Sak pase?" (What's happening?) and the response "N'ap boule" (We're hanging in there/doing well) will break the ice instantly.

Philadelphia Connection: The "Mount Airy" & "Upper Darby" Hubs

- **Community Hub:** Philadelphia has a significant and growing Haitian population, particularly in Mount Airy, Cedarbrook, and across the border in Upper Darby.
- **Food Recommendation:** Suggest Gigi's Caribbean Kitchen or La Kay Restaurant for Griot (fried pork) with Pikliz (spicy pickled vegetable slaw) and Diri ak Djon Djon (black mushroom rice).

Football (Soccer) Soul: "Les Grenadiers" & National Hope

- The national team is called "Les Grenadiers." For Haiti, qualifying for the 2026 World Cup is a transcendent event—it is a rare moment of pure, unadulterated national joy that transcends politics.
- **Conversation Starter:** Mention Joe Gaetjens, the Haitian-born player who scored the winning goal for the USA against England in the 1950 World Cup (which was played in Brazil). It is a legendary piece of "football trivia" that connects Haiti, the US, and the World Cup.

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IRAQ (GROUP I, JUNE 22)

The Vibe: "Karam," Respect, and Generosity

Iraqi culture is anchored in Karam—an ancient code of magnanimous hospitality where guests are considered a "gift from God." Despite decades of conflict, Iraqis are known for being incredibly warm, resilient, and deeply proud of their identity as the "Cradle of Civilization." For a visitor from Iraq, the quality of their personal relationship with you is far more important than any logistical detail.

The Protocol: Physicality & Space

- **Green Light (Heartfelt Greetings):** Handshakes are standard and often long. Between men, placing the right hand over the heart after the handshake is a sign of deep sincerity and respect. If they are close friends, they may engage in multiple cheek kisses (starting with the left).
- **Red Light (The Sole of the Shoe):** Never cross your legs in a way that points the sole of your shoe toward an Iraqi visitor. In Middle Eastern culture, the shoe is considered "unclean," and showing the sole is profoundly disrespectful. Keep your feet flat on the floor or ankles crossed.
- **The Right Hand Rule:** Always use your right hand to pass documents, tickets, or food. The left hand is traditionally reserved for personal hygiene and is considered inappropriate for social exchange.

Communication Style: High-Context & Honorable

- **Politeness:** Iraqis value social harmony, saying "Insha'Allah" (God willing) to avoid perceived rudeness or saying "No." If an answer feels non-committal, they are trying to save your feelings.
- **Gift Giving and Hospitality:** If an Iraqi visitor offers you a gift, even something small like a date or tea, it is culturally essential to accept it. To refuse is to refuse their "honor." Conversely, if you are hosting, ensure water or tea is provided immediately upon arrival.

Philadelphia Connection: The "Northeast" & "West" Community

- **Community Hub:** Philadelphia has a significant Arabic-speaking community centered in Northeast Philadelphia (near Bustleton and Castor Aves) with a small Iraqi community.
- **Food Recommendation:** Iraqi-specific restaurants may be hard to come by, but Manakeesh Cafe on Walnut St. or Al-Sham on Bustleton Ave. will serve Levantine dishes reminiscent of home.

Football (Soccer) Soul: "Lions of Mesopotamia"

- The Iraqi team is a unifying force in a country with diverse ethnic and religious groups. Their 2007 Asian Cup victory is cited as one of the greatest "unifying moments" in modern sporting history.
- **Conversation Starter:** Ask about Younis Mahmoud, the legendary captain. Asking, "How does this squad compare to the golden generation of 2007?" will generate an enthusiastic response.

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