

The following suggestions are practical tips for how to be a considerate guest. Remember every situation will be unique. This list is meant to generate thoughts on how to show respect and gratitude to the host.

- **Be upfront about how long you need to stay:** Be sure to solidify your travel dates in advance with your hosts. Clearly communicate and don't come in expecting that your host will automatically accommodate you if you want to stretch out your visit. Be prepared to make alternate plans if you have to extend your visit for unforeseen issues like weather delays.
- **Assume your host doesn't like surprises:** Show up at the agreed day and time and give adequate notice if plans are altered outside of your control. And never show up with a puppy, child, significant other or even a mutual friend unless you've cleared it with your host beforehand.
- **Choose a thoughtful gift:** Proper guest etiquette requires a gift. It's the least you can do for someone who has opened their home free of charge. If you're able to figure out your host's interests ahead of time, that's even better. Gift ideas include a tasty treat from your hometown, taking the host out for a meal to their favorite restaurant or a gift card for community goods, especially if you're staying with a family or single's household.
- **Ask about house rules:** Shortly after you arrive, inquire about how things are done in the house to avoid any misunderstandings. This will automatically communicate to the host your desire to respect them and their home while visiting. Questions might range from what quiet hours are to things to keep in mind with any children or pets. Also be observant to other rules that might not be directly communicated right away, like whether you should take your shoes off or the host's recycling practices.
- **Be mindful and appropriate:** We all have different levels of comfort, and oftentimes things are laid bare when you're staying with someone. Be mindful of modesty when moving through common areas, especially if you're staying with a family. Don't have your volume on ultra high for a video you're watching on your phone or engage in a lively exchange on your speakerphone.
- **Be of service:** Offer to assist the cook; set the table and clean the dishes; be the

one to drive if you have access to a car; entertain the kids while Mom or Dad takes a power nap; fix something minor around the house you notice could use some TLC if you have the skills; or take the dog for a walk. Your host will appreciate the gesture even if they decline your offer. And always take the initiative to clear your dishes when you're finished; buy a few groceries items for the house if you're able to stop by the store; and fill up the tank when you return the car you borrowed for the day.

- **Make independent entertainment plans:** Your host might be open to seeing that theatre production or art museum for the third time, but they are not necessarily on vacation and probably have other things to take care of during the day. If you are there for more than a weekend getaway, consider connecting with other locals in the city. Or be adventurous (yet wise) and do some exploring on your own. Communicate your plans to your hosts and give them an idea of when you think you'll be back.
- **BYOS (Bring Your Own Stuff):** Although most seasoned hosts have extra toiletries on hand, do your best to be prepared with your own items. If you realize you've forgotten to pack something essential and you're in a pinch, inquire if the host has it or if they can direct you the nearest store. Also, don't be the one to polish off the milk in the fridge or the cookies on the counter unless the host offers and insists.
- **Leave it better than you found it:** Leave a good impression and make sure the place is as clean as possible before you go. Your host shouldn't have to do anything extra outside of their typical cleaning tasks. Before you leave, double-check the spaces you occupied for your belongings, especially phone chargers and clothes hanging in the closet. Ask the host if they want you to strip the linens off the bed before just doing it. Do a quick wipe of the counters and floors in the bathroom for hair and residue. Make sure all the dishes you used are washed or loaded. And, of course, return items you used to their proper place.
- **Express gratitude:** You can't thank your host too many times, so it's okay to be excessive here. Leaving a handwritten note expressing your appreciation in detail should be a standard practice. And if your situation allows, offer the keys (figuratively speaking) to your own place should the host plan a future visit to your hometown.