



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on August 12, 2010

## In Britain, Don't Mention "The War"

In preparing for the 2012 Olympics in London, the British tourist office, VisitBritain, has issued a list of "obscure and demanding dos and don'ts" that it expect British workers, from cab drivers to hotel workers, to observe to avoid offending foreign visitors.

[Reports the Daily Mail](#), "VisitBritain hopes workers, from cab drivers to hotel managers, will master the cultural tips in time for the 2012 Olympics to ensure overseas visitors receive the warmest possible welcome — and unfortunate misunderstandings that could cause offence are avoided." Among the more hilarious entries in the list is an admonition for the British not to mention the Mexican-American War to Mexicans. Mexico lost that one, and apparently, such mentioning offends the descendants of Montezuma.



Unsurprisingly, the guide "was written by natives of the countries featured who work for VisitBritain." [The paper quotes](#) the agency's head honcho, Sandie Dawe: "Overseas visitors spend more than 16 billion a year in Britain, contributing massively to our economy and supporting jobs across the country. So giving our foreign visitors a friendly welcome is absolutely vital."

### No One Can Be Offended, Especially Muslims

This latest attempt to avoid giving offense is of a piece with what Britain has done throughout the past few years because of its massive influx of Muslim immigrants. The country's [immigration office stopped](#) Dutch Parliamentarian Geert Wilders from entering the country to show his film, *Fitna*, to members of Parliament. Wilders, [the home office said](#), was a threat to the internal security and peace of Britain. Wilders' film was a frank assessment of Islam and how Muslims use the Koran to justify terrorism. He is fighting a veritable Muslim takeover of the Netherlands. [Wilders won](#) his case on appeal and eventually showed his film.

As well, prison guards [may not wear](#) the St. George's Cross, the country's traditional symbol, because it reminds Muslim convicts of the crusades and offends them. In 2005, [Burger King withdrew](#) the packaging for its ice cream cones in Britain because Muslims thought its design, which [included a swirl](#) of ice cream, resembled the Arabic script for Allah.

And last year, as [TheNewAmerican.com reported](#), pools in London began requiring swimmers to wear "burkinis," a full-body swimsuit that takes its name from the burqa, if they want to swim during designated hours for Muslims.



## The List of No-Nos

So now Britain has expanded the list of potentially aggrieved foreigners. [The Daily Mail offers](#) this country-by-country breakdown and no-nos:

### MEXICO

It is best not to discuss poverty, illegal immigrants, earthquakes or the Mexican-American war of 1846-48. The U.S. had annexed Texas, which Mexico considered part of its territory. Mexico lost.

### HONG KONG

Avoid winking — it is often considered rude. Pointing with an index finger is not advisable as this is generally used only for animals. Point with your hand open.

### INDIA

Avoid physical contact when first meeting someone. Be tolerant if Indians at first seem impolite, noisy and impatient. This is partly the result of living in chaotic cities and environments.

### BELGIUM

Don't snap your fingers as it could be interpreted as impolite.

### ARGENTINA

Pouring wine backwards into a glass indicates hostility. Don't be offended by Argentinian humour, which may mildly attack your clothing or weight.

### CHINA

Avoid saying "thank you" to a compliment. Instead, politely deny it to show humility. If you compliment a Chinese person, expect a denial.

### JAPAN

A smiling Japanese person is not necessarily happy. They tend to smile when angry, embarrassed, sad or disappointed.

### UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Arabs are not used to being told what to do. Visitors from the UAE can take great offence if you appear bossy. They appreciate being looked after by staff who understand Arab culture.

### SOUTH AFRICA

Do not be alarmed if South Africans say they were held up by "robots" — to them it means traffic lights. Don't place your thumb between your forefinger and second finger, as it's seen as obscene.

### BRAZIL

Don't ask a Brazilian personal questions, especially about age, salary or marriage. And don't talk about Argentina — it's Brazil's fiercest sporting rival, especially in football.

### SOUTH KOREA

When accepting thanks Koreans will typically say "No, no." This means "You are welcome."

No word yet on whether the office has any directives on offending Americans. As well, what [the Daily Mail published](#) doesn't mention two others wars in its section on German tourists. That must mean it's fine to discuss [the firebombing of Dresden](#).



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