



Educafe Chatty Corner Volunteer Cultural Reference Guide

This guide helps Educafe volunteers welcome visitors from different backgrounds. It covers languages, religions, customs, celebrations, do's & don'ts, and sensitivities. Use it as a quick reference before or during Chatty Corner sessions.

Main Cultural Reference (Quick Table)

Region / Country	Main Languages	Religions / Beliefs	Cultural Notes & Customs	Key Celebrations & Festivals	Do's	Don'ts	Sensitivities (esp. refugees/asylum seekers)
Afghanistan	Dari; Pashto	Islam (Sunni & Shia)	Strong hospitality; family-centred; tea offered to guests	Nowruz; Eid al-Fitr; Eid al-Adha	Ask about family; show respect for elders; enjoy Afghan food	Avoid political debate; don't probe women's rights	Ongoing war; Taliban rule; trauma; separation from family
Ukraine	Ukrainian (and some Russian)	Orthodox Christianity; some Catholic	National pride; music & dance; embroidery crafts	Orthodox Christmas (Jan); Easter; Independence Day (Aug)	Learn a Ukrainian word; show interest in traditions	Don't conflate Ukraine with Russia; avoid asking about 'when the war will end.	War trauma; loss of home; grief

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Hong Kong (SAR)	Cantonese; English	Buddhism; Taoism; Christianity	Respect for elders; collectivist mindset; education valued	Lunar New Year; Mid-Autumn Festival; Dragon Boat Festival	Enjoy talking about food and culture; be curious	Avoid political opinions about China/HK	Migration stress; identity uncertainty
Eastern Europe (e.g., Poland; Romania; Bulgaria)	Polish; Romanian; Bulgarian; etc.	Mainly Christian (Orthodox; Catholic; Protestant)	Folk traditions; community gatherings; hearty food	Christmas; Easter; Saints' days; Harvest festivals	Ask about traditional foods/music	Avoid stereotypes about poverty	Economic hardship; stigma; separation from families
Southern Europe (Spain; Italy; Portugal; Greece)	Spanish; Italian; Portuguese; Greek	Christianity (mostly Catholic/Orthodox)	Warm; family-focused; lively gatherings	Carnival; Saints' days; Easter; Christmas	Be warm & open; enjoy lively conversation	Don't rush; avoid being overly formal	Economic migration; homesickness
Turkey	Turkish	Majority Sunni Islam; strong secular traditions too	Tea/coffee culture; hospitality; respect for elders	Ramadan; Eid (Bayram); Republic Day (Oct)	Accept tea/coffee; admire Turkish food	Don't confuse Turks with Arabs; avoid politics (esp. Kurdish issue)	Political issues; earthquake trauma; refugee experiences
African countries (varied)	Arabic; Swahili; French; English; local languages	Christianity; Islam; indigenous beliefs	Oral storytelling; music/dance; community bonds	Independence Days; Eid; Christmas; cultural festivals	Ask about music; food; family traditions	Don't generalise Africa as one culture	Conflict; famine; displacement; colonial history

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South America (e.g., Colombia; Brazil; Venezuela)	Spanish; Portuguese	Christianity (Catholic/Protestant); indigenous faiths	Expressive; warm; music/dance central (salsa; samba)	Carnival; Independence Days; Christmas; Easter	Enjoy music/dance conversations; learn a phrase	Avoid stereotypes (e.g., drugs or crime)	Political instability; economic hardship; migration stress

Positive Talking Points (Conversation Starters)

- Food & Drinks — “What’s your favourite dish from home?”
- Festivals & Celebrations — “How do you celebrate New Year?”
- Music & Dance — “What music reminds you of home?”
- Family & Traditions — “What’s an important tradition in your family?”
- Language — “Could you teach me a word in your language?”

Volunteer Reminders

- Listen more than you speak — some visitors just need a safe ear.
- Respect privacy — don’t press for details about journeys, trauma or politics.
- Focus on joyful, everyday things (food, festivals, hobbies) to help people feel valued beyond their asylum status.
- Be mindful of trauma triggers — some visitors may not want to discuss home at all.

Quick Greetings & Polite Phrases

Region / Language	Hello	Thank you	Notes
Afghanistan (Dari/Pashto)	Salaam	Tashakor (Dari) / Manana (Pashto)	
Ukraine	Dobry den	Dyakuyu	
Hong Kong (Cantonese)	Nei hou	Mh'gōi (service) / Dōjeh (gift)	
Poland	Cześć	Dziękuję	
Romania	Bună	Mulțumesc	
Italy	Ciao	Grazie	
Spain	Hola	Gracias	
Portugal	Olá	Obrigado/Obrigada	
Greece	Yassas	Efharistó	
Turkey	Merhaba	Teşekkürler	
Swahili (East Africa)	Jambo	Asante	
French (West/Central Africa)	Bonjour	Merci	
Brazil (Portuguese)	Olá	Obrigado/Obrigada	
Spanish (South America)	Hola	Gracias	

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