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Venezuela - Culture Smart!: The Essential Guide To Customs & Culture



Synopsis

An influential oil producer with a colorful and charismatic president at its helm since 1999, Venezuela is a vast, sometimes frustrating, but never dull country. It is one of the most complex countries in Latin America and one of the least understood. An ambitious attempt to benefit the poor and redistribute oil wealth by President Hugo Chavez has seen a major political transformation in recent years that has put a severe strain on its traditional ties with the USA. He has made steadfast attempts to confront his powerful northern neighbor and reduce Venezuela's economic dependence on the United States. However, Miami remains the top holiday destination for Venezuelans traveling abroad, baseball beats soccer as the preferred sport, and teenage girls still cover their bedroom walls with American idols like Justin Bieber. Venezuelans are known for being friendly, gregarious, and outgoing. They value family over everything and love to criticize the status quo, but they are also fiercely proud and protective of their homeland and react poorly to criticism of their country from outsiders. Culture Smart! Venezuela takes you beyond the stereotypical descriptions of a tropical petro-state, famous for its beauty queens and its populist president, to provide you with an insider's understanding of the country and its people. Practical tips, valuable insights, and vital statistics will help you get to the heart of this vibrant, sometimes contradictory, and increasingly important country.

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Customer Reviews

Culture Smart! has come to the rescue of hapless travellers, Sunday Times Travel - ...the perfect

introduction to the weird, wonderful and downright odd quirks and customs of various countries, Global Travel - ...full of fascinating, as well as common sense,

Russell Maddicks is a BBC-trained journalist who lived in Venezuela for eleven years. He traveled the length and breadth of the country, and to finance his stay he worked in jobs that helped him to get under the skin of his adopted home: as an English teacher at the British Council; a jungle guide taking tour groups to the base of Angel Falls and the top of Roraima; a translator and interpreter; and a reporter on an English-language newspaper. There are few corners of Venezuela he hasn't visited in his quest to explore every facet of this fascinating country. He is the author of the Bradt Guide to Venezuela (2011).

Good, great, topical, brief. It is interesting to hear the praises of a socialist paradise and to see what it is now. A true lesson in history. It brings to mind the question: if it was praised for being a socialist country when it was "working", why are we told that it is NOT a case in point against socialism now that it is in collapse? They have socialised medicine, gun control, redistribution of wealth and food and many other socialist policies in place. The govt owns everything and nothing is privately owned. It is INDEED a socialist nation. So there is NO dodging the bullet with this one. America and oil are not to blame either. Yes the oil market took a dip but so did the rest of the world and other countries are not a hell on earth. Moral of the story: free markets correct themselves; socialism implodes overtime.

I read Culture Smart China a few months ago ahead of a trip to Shanghai and found it very useful. I'm a Venezuelan living in Australia and I wanted to donate my local library a few books about my country of origin. Therefore I ordered this book. When I got the book I started browsing in it and ended up reading it over the week-end. I was positively surprised, the book describes everything you need to know to get by in Venezuela, from business etiquette to interaction with people of the opposite sex. What I found outstanding is how the every day life of Venezuelans is examined in this book, there's a guide on how to order coffee and arepas, it explains the importance of dancing in our social life, the attitude towards the law which is key both in business and to cope local life style. There's a chapter on Venezuelan's attitudes towards foreigners that I think will help "gringos" and "musiques" visiting the country. Frankly the author covers every situation you can think of and in a very accurate manner. On top of that, the book is very easy to read. In my opinion is "a must read" if you're visiting Venezuela.

I am Venezuelan and I consider that this book is an excellent guide for those who has any interest about Venezuela and Venezuelan people. I deeply thanks to Mr Maddicks to take the time and the dedication to write this book.

Good information, needs more information about doing business etiquette. Good for general travel, tourists and vacations, could use more information for business people.

An incredible book. I bought it when I visited Venezuela (I went to Los Roques and Caracas) and this book helped me a lot to understand this lovely country.

My wife recently got this book as she wanted to find a good Venezuelan reference in English for our US acquaintances. While this book certainly provides some interesting factoids for someone unfamiliar with Venezuela, I was worried about some aspects that, in my opinion, make it a less than ideal frame of reference for people trying to get smart about Venezuela. Unfortunately, as with a number of things in Venezuela over the last 10-15 years, it has to do with politics. This book was written during the final period of late President Chavez's government. It therefore does not cover the situation of late years with academic reports of over 150% inflation and over 55% poverty rates - higher than the 1998 figures by some accounts. The book can't predict the future but it lacks vision and portrays a sometimes romantic view of the government filling in gaps (Misiones, etc.) without addressing topics that in fact interests a lot of foreigners: nuanced separation of powers, self-gag reality, authoritarianism, etc. At some point the book seems to suggest that TV has given non-white models more airtime thanks to the government, at the same time it says the private media has essentially being antagonizing the government for years. I have to say that as a Venezuelan I was mildly infuriated to read the assertion that the post-WW2 migration waves from Western European were a government supervised "whitening" of the general population. This is certainly not something anyone from my generation grew up with, and I failed to find serious references to anything other than a welcome reality to the ethnic composition of modern Venezuela. Fortunately this part was buried in one of the earlier "reference" sections (Geography, I think). The day-to-day account of facts is generally accurate by the standards of any etiquette guide, which reflects on the author's actual experiences, and this is certainly welcome. I would have liked to read more about business etiquette (there was just one chapter about this) in particular about communication and negotiation styles. The chapter also lacks understanding of who does business in Venezuela today - the book does

talk about the FX challenges (which have worsened year after year for the last 10 years) but concludes that Venezuela is a dynamic business environment. Which is not untrue, just very unlikely for the type of international entrepreneur that would read that chapter. I don't have another book to compare it to, so I can't recommend it, but from a business etiquette standpoints there are good data providers based out of the US and the UK that have a more structured point of view. Other than that, if you're looking for some new facts, the book might provide them. I hope the review doesn't come across as a rant. But don't also attribute it to Venezuelans trying to correct people that point at negative things from their society. I had a couple nostalgic laughs with things mentioned in the book. Just imagine having to explain bank tellers that they have to stay after hours to craft the branch's nativity scene.

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