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Essential Rules to Being a House Guest

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August is the most popular month for summer vacations, and if you are lucky, you have some friends who will invite you to visit them at their beach house, their mountain cabin, or their lakeside get-away. Before you accept their invitation, please make sure you've mastered these simple rules for house-guest etiquette, especially if you want to increase your chances of being invited again next year.

1. **Google Is Your Friend** -- Seriously people, do not bother your hosts with minutia such as last minute texts or emails asking for directions. Open up Google maps and plug in the address. You will be fine.
2. **Don't Bare It All** -- If there was ever a time to invest in a pair of appropriate pajamas and slippers, it is now. Nobody needs to see your personal business -- least of all, your hosts and their other guests.
3. **Don't Be Cheapy** -- Bring a hostess gift, at the very least a nice bottle of champagne or wine (a basic French or Italian -- now is not the time to experiment with New World wines) and a candle or coffee table book at the very least. And make a point of buying one meal as a gesture of appreciation.
4. **Get Lost** -- Give your hosts some breathing room. Chances are you are together for three meals a day. Take a break after lunch to go explore the town, go for a hike, a bike ride or a drive -- **for the love of God**, just get out of the house and out of their hair for just a few hours a day.
5. **Don't Impose -- No!** It is *not* okay to ask if you can bring friends, your kids, your kid's friends, your pets, your mother or your cousin visiting from Europe. Don't even think about asking.
6. **Don't Be a Pig Pen** -- Most people are clueless when it comes to basic manners. I'm not saying you need to mop the floors but at the very least pick up after yourself and put your plate in the sink. And no wet towels on the floor.
7. **Limit Your Stuff** - I get anxiety when I see people pulling up to my house with multiple suitcases and stuff tied to the roof of their car. Pack essentials only. Your hosts don't have room for all your stuff, nor do they want it all over their house.
8. **Living Quarters** -- Do not contaminate public spaces with your personal things. Charge up your devices in your room. No one wants to trip over your laptop or cell phone cord on the way to the kitchen.
9. **Don't Linger** -- Just like a hotel has to turn over and clean the room for the next guests, most likely so do your hosts. Agree well in advance when you're coming and when you're leaving and stick to plan. Most people arrive for dinner on Friday and depart after lunch on Sunday. So know when to say adios amigos!
10. **Don't Break the Rules** -- Most households have unspoken rules about meal times, sleep times, and noise. When you arrive, gently inquire how things are done to avoid any misunderstandings. Also clue into any other house rules -- like whether you should take your shoes off, or whether it's okay to smoke -- by being in tune with your hosts.
11. **Boob Tube** -- It's not okay to lounge around all day in the main room watching The Kardashians, Dr. Ozz or CNN all day. Your vacation is for socializing or exploring so power off.

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