



THE Rules *of* ENGAGEMENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KIM ROSEN

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN,
AND THE INTERNATIONAL
SOCIAL CALENDAR IS
BULGING. BUT JUST HOW
SHOULD ONE CONDUCT
ONESELF? **HELEN RUSSELL**
EXPLORES THE ETIQUETTE
FOR SUMMERING IN STYLE

It's that mysterious, unwritten code that affects everything we do – from eating a meal to conducting a conversation – and it differs all over the world. The Japanese spend an estimated US\$900 million a year on training related to it, while the Swiss have founded an entire industry out of conduct, with their renowned finishing schools. Each nation has its own rules, and some events on the social calendar have a protocol all of their own. Wherever you are and whatever you're doing, you're sure to be prepared with our good-manners guide to a month of the high life.

BLAZER OF GLORY

BELOW Under-the-knee dresses for ladies and blazers for men are de rigueur at the Henley Royal Regatta

OPPOSITE The beach at Amagansett in the Hamptons

HENLEY ROYAL REGATTA Start the month in style with the Henley Royal Regatta, in Oxfordshire. Rowing crews from all over the world converge annually on the River Thames to race over the mile-long course. Supporters watch from the Steward's Enclosure, before picnicking on the riverbank. But Henley isn't really about rowing: it's about what you're wearing and who's watching.

Ladies must wear dresses that end below the knee, and gentlemen in chinos wear striped blazers that must be kept on at all times. Those who dare disobey are reprimanded by stewards in bowler hats: "It's a little chilly not to be wearing

a jacket isn't it, Sir?" Most men wear Panamas, while ex-rowers take pride in sporting schoolboy-style caps to denote their former club.

Cheering on the rowers is de rigueur at Henley, and since the English public-school system has produced generations of fog-horned voices, there's no need to be shy. Whispering into a mobile phone, on the other hand, is strictly forbidden in the Steward's Enclosure. To get around this, gentlemen should kneel and tie their shoe to have a covert conversation, while the fairer sex can join the throngs of ladies in the loo (never "toilet"), which at times resembles a glamorous





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call centre. Champagne and Pimm's are the only things to drink, and when it comes to lunch, the coolest way to bring your picnic down the narrow banks off the Thames is by wheelbarrow. Or failing that, the Bentley.

SUMMERING IN THE HAMPTONS The towns of Southampton and East Hampton on the eastern end of Long Island are much loved by the rich and famous for their lush greenery, beautiful beaches and even more beautiful inhabitants. The summer season is packed with galas, benefits, soirees and openings, in a seemingly endless round of champagne and martinis. There are so many events to attend that the truly dedicated will often make three in one night. Stamina is the watchword, so get some training in before hitting town: two parties a night for a fortnight should do it. True professionals spend their days pool-side so that they're ready to party by sundown, and the dress code is simple: polo shirts or anything pink with the collar up in the daytime, and

cream linen, vintage lace or silk in the evening (all outfits must be accessorised with a golden tan).

Many functions hold silent auctions for charity to alleviate the party guilt. For the inexperienced bidder in danger of gesticulating wildly and accidentally buying a jet, it's advisable to sit on your hands. To join in, crib up on your auction rules – and pack your chequebook. Bids are on the high side: one charity evening last year raised US\$690,000.

WIMBLEDON The UK's famous tennis tournament has been going since 1877, and each year, 19 grass courts heave with players, public and VIPs. The competition is regularly blighted by inclement weather, so come prepared: take an umbrella; warm clothing (this is England, after all); tea, coffee or hot chocolate to avoid hypothermia (ditto); and a good book, as rain can hold off play for days. Wimbledon style is smart casual, but avoid large hats in case the people behind you actually want to watch some tennis.

**YOU CANNOT
BE SERIOUS**

THIS PAGE John
McEnroe
exchanges views
with an umpire
at Wimbledon

OPPOSITE
Strawberries and
cream, traditional
Wimbledon fare





Last year, attendees consumed 28,000kg of berries as well as obscene quantities of Pimm's and champagne

Be prepared to queue. For everything. There are queues to get in, queues to get on to court, queues for food, and queues to leave at the end of the day. The Brits love queuing and it is as much of a sport to them as the tennis. If queuing and rain aren't your idea of fun, there are always the strawberries and cream that the event is famous for. Last year, attendees consumed 28,000kg of the berries as well as obscene quantities of Pimm's and champagne. While alcohol-fuelled enthusiasm can run high, vociferous support is limited to the odd muffled cheer at Wimbledon. Language should be kept clean and John McEnroe-esque fiery outbursts to a minimum.

Flash photography and mobile phones are banned, as they can distract the players, and leaving your seat mid-match is frowned upon. All that tea and Pimm's can play havoc with one's bladder, but relief trips are only allowed during the players' break, after every two games. Matches can be long, but avoid the temptation to nod off mid-afternoon. Many a game has been interrupted by a call from the umpire's chair to wake up the second-row snorer who's putting the players off.

Dedicated spectators often suffer from "ten-

nis neck" – an acutely uncomfortable condition befalling fans who strain to follow the action as ball traverses court. Limbering up beforehand and a good massage at the end of the day can alleviate this.

CRUISING THE CARIBBEAN Cruises are a spectacular way to see the world and enjoy the azure waters, white sands and ideal climate of the Caribbean from your own floating hotel. Cruising lingo is the first hurdle for the uninitiated. Get to know your bow from your stern (the front and rear of the ship), the berth (a fancy word for where the ship parks), gangway (the passageway where you board), and tender (this doesn't refer to your feelings towards the attractive guest at the next table, but is the small vessel that transports you from ship to shore).

Cruise culture has changed since the days of white tie and tails at the captain's table, but dressing for dinner is still the done thing. Do practise moderation, as the combination of cocktails, motion sickness and a day of molten sun can at times be lethal – and tip generously. Complaining to your fellow guests about the weather is strictly

The Essential Guide

HENLEY ROYAL REGATTA

FAMOUS FANS

The Queen, Princess Anne, Olympic gold medallist Steve Redgrave

DO SAY "Is it Pimm's o'clock?"

DON'T SAY

"What's with the grown men in schoolboy caps?"

WIMBLEDON

CELEBRITY FANS

Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman, Jack Nicholson

DO SAY

"Anyone for tennis?"

DON'T SAY "You cannot be serious!"

HAMPTONS

CELEBRITY

FANS Aretha Franklin, Steven Spielberg, Paris Hilton

DO SAY

"Another party tonight? I'd love to."

DON'T SAY

"How much?"

CRUISING THE CARIBBEAN

CELEBRITY FAN

Coco Channel

DO SAY "Group dining – how lovely!"

DON'T SAY

"Rain? Again? I demand a refund."

THE VENICE BIENNALE

CELEBRITY FANS

David and Victoria Beckham, Matt Damon

DO SAY "Art rocks."

DON'T SAY

"Venice is pure poetry."



ABOVE
Sculptures
exhibited at the
Venice Biennale
in 1962
OPPOSITE
Yachts off the
Dalmatian coast

When in Venice, do as the Venetians do, from multiple air kissing (two is mean), to avoiding the tourist traps



forbidden – there's little anyone can do about a cloudy day.

Tolerance is essential when sharing a boat with 100 other people. If the blood pressure starts rising during dinner with the Joneses, take a lap of the promenade deck to walk off some of your creme brulee and calm down. Room etiquette is paramount and walls are thin, so try not to slam your cabin door, and contain amorous exclamations until you reach shore.

CULTURE CULTURE Founded in 1895, the Venice Biennale in Italy runs from June until November, and the festival attracts the elite of the international art world. Even if you don't know your van Gogh from your Gauguin, you'll have a great time in the city that has seduced everyone from Hemingway to Lord Byron. When in Venice, do as the Venetians do, from multiple air kissing (three is standard, four friendly, two mean – even between men), to avoiding the tourist traps. Poetic observations and cliches on the “timeless beauty” of the city are social suicide, and steer clear of gondolas unless you want to set yourself back several leagues in the credibility stakes. For the authentic experience, hire your own boat and

join the Venetian aristocracy as they sneer at the “tourist tubs.”

Italians dress well even during the sticky summer, so forgo shorts and t-shirts for something chic. All churches require knees and shoulders to be covered, so veer on the conservative side. There is no shortage of drinks receptions at the Biennale, and the preferred beverage is usually Prosecco – the fine sparkling wine that Venetians believe to be better than champagne. After that, it's on to the *osterias* to snack on *cicheti*, small portions of food similar to Spanish tapas. Venetians enjoy an *ombra* (a small glass of wine) while standing in the street, then cruise from osteria to osteria all afternoon. To ensure that you make it to the evening shows, keep the glasses small. Otherwise, all the art might seem a little abstract.

YACHTING ETIQUETTE The Dalmatia region on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea is a favourite with yachting types. Between the island of Pag and the Bay of Kotor are some of Croatia's most beautiful natural landscapes, and richest historical and cultural sites, and nothing could be finer than sailing around the stunning islands



Yachting is an etiquette minefield... Sunscreen on the boat is a yachting sin



and coves. But yachting is an etiquette minefield. First, there's the footwear: black or leather-soled shoes and high heels damage the deck of a boat, and some captains require everyone who comes aboard to remove their shoes (a wrench for ladies attached to their Manolos).

The captain's permission should be asked before boarding the boat, and there is an unwritten rule that "crew" (that's all random hangers-on) must never argue with the captain or first mate. It's courteous to offer to help when sailing, even if you know nothing about yachts. Fingers crossed they'll say no, and you can get on with the important task of tanning. But there are rules there, too. Getting sunscreen on the boat is a yachting sin that can have the whole crew slipping over in a temporarily amusing but potentially hazardous fashion. Always sit on a towel to slather up, and wash your hands afterwards.

Lunch is the highlight of many a day at sea, but watch your drinks. Not only is it bad form to become inebriated at sea, feeling woozy on a yacht is about as much fun as going on a roller coaster with gastric flu. If you are sick, try to lean over the side. When you recover, clean up after yourself. It is also a good idea to make sure you

know how to use "the head" (the toilet) before you really need it, as manual pumps can clog.

SAFARI CHIC For the jet-setter who's seen and done it all, going on safari is the ultimate adventure – there is nothing quite like seeing big game in their natural habitat. But even in the middle of the African plains, it still pays to observe a little etiquette. When on safari, drive slowly and avoid making loud noises. Shouting, "Look there's a herd of stampeding elephants!" has the potential to lure the goliaths in your direction and will, at the very least, scare other wildlife away.

Safari suits aren't just beige for fun – it's the colour that blends best with the environment. There's no need to go all-out Indiana Jones, but a nod to the look won't go astray. Think beige shorts with a crisp, white polo shirt for safari chic, and a note to the ladies: wear a sports bra. All that jiggling around does nothing for the décolletage. It's good practice to signal to the guide to stop the jeep if you think you see something – even if your "wildebeest" turns out to be a termite mound. This may frustrate your fellow passengers in the short term, but better to make 20 false calls than miss the big game. **T**

YACHTING ON THE DALMATIAN COAST

CELEBRITY FANS

Mariah Carey, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie

DO SAY "Would you like me to winch?"

DON'T SAY "This decking is ruining my stilettos."

SAFARI IN THE SERENGETI

CELEBRITY FANS

Bill Clinton, Jessica Simpson

DO SAY "Isn't nature a wonderful thing?"

DON'T SAY "Oh my God, there's a lion!"