



**How do singles in Bangalore approach love and relationships differently than their counterparts in Buenos Aires? Learn more in our global guide to dating culture below.**

**By Susan Johnston**

Though the modern idea of dating is still taboo in some parts of the world, many countries have rituals or traditions surrounding how couples meet and marry. Some of these customs have made their way to the United States, but many still remain foreign to us.

“America’s so good at adopting products from around the world if they work, whether that’s movies, fashion or technology,” says Franz Wisner, author of the *New York Times* bestseller, *Honeymoon with My Brother: A Memoir*. “One area where we haven’t really looked to the world at all is love.” That’s what inspired Wisner to travel the world studying different traditions and cultural attitudes towards relationships, which he shared in his second book, *How the World Makes Love: ...And What It Taught a Jilted Groom*. Read on to discover how other couples around the world find love — from Rio de Janeiro to Rome, Mumbai to Shanghai... and beyond!

### **Europe and Australia**

Group dating is popular amongst European and Australian singles, partly because it’s a safe and nonjudgmental way to spend time together. On a group date, you and 30 of your friends might go to a movie or dinner together and pick up more people along the way. According to [Dr. Faizal Sahukhan Ph.D.](#), a registered counselor and author of *Dating the Ethnic Man: Strategies for Success*, “friends are part of it from the beginning right up to marriage. You’re getting validation from friends you trust that you and the man (or woman) will get along well together.” Group dating also “lowers the expectations as to what should go on and how the date should end,” adds Sahukhan.

Now, that's not to say that European singles are generally shy about sex. In fact, Melissa Braverman, a self-proclaimed "dating anthropologist" and the blogger behind [Single Gal in the City](#), says that "sex is the European icebreaker. Here [in the U.S.], you make small talk with someone." And while many American couples have the "let's be exclusive" conversation at some point, their European counterparts simply assume they're exclusive once they start spending time with someone in particular. "Even though they're more forward sexually, they have a more romantic approach about dating and relationships," explains Braverman.

In Paris — often called the "city of love" — "a lot of single women told me there's a big house party circuit, so they prefer being introduced through friends," continues Braverman. Romance also reigns supreme in Italy, where a *ragazzo* (boyfriend) and *ragazza* (girlfriend) might go for an evening stroll together, thereby participating in a romantic tradition known as *la passeggiata*. In other parts of Europe where the pool of eligible daters is a bit smaller, singles (and, in some cases, their families) might look to online dating sites for love. "In the Czech Republic, out in a very rural village, a lot of people told me they like online dating, because once you exhaust the candidates in that village, it's tough," says Wisner.

## **India and China**

The biggest difference between how Western and Eastern cultures approach dating and love is probably the individual versus collective mentality, says Sahukhan. "In North American culture, we look at intimacy as basically a personal construct where we get happiness from [being with] another person," he explains. "It's more of a 'couple' dynamic. But in a collectivist culture, a person is only happy if his or her parents are happy, the siblings are happy, the religious leaders are happy... so, that type of framework goes into dating and [influences one's] choice of partner." And while historically, Indian couples have traditionally been paired via arranged marriages, "love marriages" (where individuals choose their own spouses) and "blends" (where adult children ask their parents to help arrange a marriage with a specific partner in mind) are becoming increasingly more common. Still, many Indian singles hold fast to the notion that, when it comes to marriage, family should be involved and that love is something that evolves and grows over time.

As Wisner traveled throughout India learning about arranged marriage traditions, "women explained that, in America, you see your wedding day as an apex — a high," he recalls. "You meet, you fall in love and you get married, but you're setting yourself up for problems. As soon as problems arise in the relationship, you start to talk about rekindling love. In India, they see their wedding ceremony as 'day one.' They see love as something that's only possible through time, commitment and effort."

Both Indian and Chinese cultures traditionally use astrology to assess the suitability of a match based on the couple's birth dates. However, as a result of the Chinese

government's "one-child policy," the gender ratios there are skewed heavily — meaning that, according to recent reports, there are 120 eligible bachelors for every 100 single females. Because of this, many Chinese men are now turning to online dating sites to find love, which allows them to screen potential matches according to such criteria as a woman's astrological sign.

## **Latin America**

While some cultures strictly forbid public displays of affection, Latin Americans embrace PDA with gusto. In fact, Wisner remembers walking into a bar in Brazil and being surprised to find nearly every couple kissing. He asked about it, and a woman explained to him that "you in America, you go out two, three, four times. Why don't you just kiss somebody right away? Then you know everything about the relationship. How many bad dates could have been avoided with one kiss?"

Usually, the man is expected to make the first move. Frank Kermit ([www.franktalks.com](http://www.franktalks.com)), relationship coach and author of the book, *Everything Out of Her Mouth is a Test*, explains that "depending on his immediate environment, he's not only encouraged to introduce himself, he might even be teased or punished by his friends for not approaching a girl he finds attractive."

Some common Latin American pick-up lines might offend North American women (i.e., "we should get together and you should make me dinner"), but according to Kermit, "in countries that embrace masculinity, that is looked at as a man communicating exactly what he wants... his expectations." Kermit believes incorporating some *machismo* (an air of extreme male confidence) into their romantic approach could benefit more hesitant American men, but he draws an important distinction between being assertive and domineering: "Any time you start putting pressure on a woman to do something you should be able to do for yourself, it can be domineering," he explains.

Still, there are some universal commonalities that hold true about courting, regardless of where you live. "In general, everyone in the world wants the same thing," concludes Wisner. "A family, partnership, economic success... it's the same goal, but thousands and thousands of different paths can lead to achieving that goal."

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