

Heaven is where the cooks are French, the police are British, the mechanics are German, the lovers are Italian and everything is organized by the Swiss.

Hell is where the cooks are British, the police are German, the mechanics are French, the lovers are Swiss, and everything is organized by the Italians.

This is an old popular joke that never fails to make those who hear it cringe or laugh. National stereotypes have been the subject of many jokes for centuries. Even today when the international community promotes diversity and encourages tolerance, certain people are still tagged according to their nationalities.



Heck, I'm sure you already have heard or thought one or more of these stereotypes-turned-jokes:

- The Romanians are vampires.
- The Swiss love clocks.
- The French have poor hygiene.
- The Chinese know kung fu. And so on...

To some, national stereotypes may provoke racism. To others, national stereotypes are harmless jokes based on the identity that a certain nation or people has established or projected towards other countries through the years.

But is there a sliver of truth in these national stereotypes? Or are they just inaccurate preconceived notions, which can be pretty offensive to many people? Whatever your views are, here are ten of the most common national stereotypes and why they are *somehow* false. Note that these are stereotypes based on nationalities and not race.

10. Italians are good lovers but bad workers.

The Italians are known for three P's: pizza, pasta and passionate sex. Who wouldn't want that kind of reputation as a people? However, it doesn't end there. Italy is also seen by others as the land of the inefficient and the disorganized. Hmmm.

This preconceived notion is truly unfair to the Italians. If they were such bad workers who could only spend the entire day at a restaurant, make love, or exact revenge Mafia-style, how could they keep their gigantic textile, chemical and engineering industries going?

Aside from that, the Italians run and organize everything in Italy, which, by anyone's standards, is one of the most glorious nations in the world. Italy takes pride in its great cuisine, fantastic culture and fine architecture. If they were such an inefficient people, how come Italy's history is littered with splendid achievements?

9. Canadians are boring.

Those who say that Canadians are boring are probably the same people who think that the Canadian capital is Toronto, that the Canadian culture is based around Celine Dion, and that Canadians live in igloos.

The truth is, the climate is not the only thing that is cooler in this country. Canada offers a wide range of exciting activities such as snowboarding, kayaking and many other sports for the adventurous. You'll also not

run out of reasons to laugh in this more-than-maple country. After all, many comedians in Hollywood are Canadians — Mike Myers, John Candy, Matthew Perry, Eugene Levy and Jim Carrey among others. Their names hardly sound boring, don't they?

8. Filipinos are uneducated island people.

In early 2007, someone asked this question on Yahoo! Answers:

Where is the best Architecture school in the Philippines?

Hmmm. Interesting. But you know what's more interesting — the one and only answer. Okay, Breathe in... breathe out...

Janjararaaaaaan, the answer:

"I don't think they have any schools in philippines, its a 3rd world country they live in poverty with no running water. its sort of like africa but like a jungle."

Hey, hey, hey. Whaaaaat?!?!? Good thing the page is now closed.

Many people also hold a misconception that Filipinos are uneducated. Again, what they don't realize is that the people who answer their calls and tell what to do because they can't figure out how remote control works are actually Filipinos. The Philippines is the world's texting capital and Asia's blogging capital.

And trust me, there are lawyers, doctors, writers, businessmen and engineers here in the Philippines. And oh, architects, too.

7. Indians are poor, narrow-minded, conservative people.

India has a long history of slavery; thus, this type of stereotype doesn't really come as a surprise. Even so, it is still inaccurate. Although a significant fraction of the Indian population is still below poverty line, India has improved drastically in recent years. In fact, it is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, viewed as a potential superpower.

Moreover, it is also one of the countries with leading software industries as well as a prolific film industry. It is also the largest **democracy** in the world. Not to mention that with a variety of religions — Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity among others — all of which survive in tolerance. Is that what anyone could call narrow-minded?

6. The British are violently mad soccer freaks.

They say that British men love football more than they love their wives. Although their affection towards their partners may be very hard to prove, their supposedly extreme zeal for soccer doesn't need to be measured. The Brits love soccer. It is damn obvious. What should be debunked is the idea that they would always get into trouble for this almost romantic love for the ball.

If the Brits are violently crazy over their favorite soccer team, how come, according to The Economist, it is Sweden where there are more soccer-related assaults each year? If there's one reputation that the Brits should earn, it's that they are a business-crazy people. After all, the London Stock Market is bigger than any other European market and is one of the world's largest.

5. Spaniards are lazy.

Siesta is a well-known part of the Spanish culture. But is it enough to conclude that the entire Spanish people's deadly sin is sloth? If indolence could be measured, wouldn't it be by looking at the output or product?

In other words, a people's assiduity and laziness should reflect on the country's economic performance. But if that's the case, then it is Germany, and not Spain, that could be dubbed as the lazy man of Europe. Germany has been showing disgraceful economic performance in the past few years. Germany's GDP growth is only a little over 1%. Spain, on the other hand, is growing at a rate twice higher, with an average annual growth rate of 2.8%. (Figures not updated, sorry.)

4. The Irish are drunkards.



In many movies, we have seen the Irish being portrayed as those ill-tempered drunkards who love to have some cheerful bantering in their spare time, which is every time. In fact, many of us think of Ireland when we hear the word “pub.”

However, if they were so addicted to alcohol like pop culture shows, how come Ireland is the best performing economy in Europe with a fast-paced 7.7% growth rate? Not to mention that its highly educated population attracts massive numbers of pharmaceutical, hi-tech and financial services companies, despite fierce competition for jobs within the EU.

And how come Ireland ranks only third in a 2004 survey by World Drink Trends, behind Luxembourg and Hungary? Okay, I know it’s still high, but...

3. Americans are very liberal.

Outsiders usually have a very defined vision about the Americans — liberal. In general, many see the United States as the land of the open-minded. But is America really home to the world’s most socially liberal society in the world? The answer is a big “no.”

Americans are a little too conservative. Virtually every country in Europe has a much more open and liberal view of things such as sex and other social relations. For example, in many parts of Europe, nudity is not taboo. You may find naked people at some random European beach or hotel pool. If someone takes off all his clothes in the US, he’ll be making a big scene.

Surprisingly, gay marriage is illegal in America and allowed in some provinces of Canada, a nation that some see as boring.

2. The Chinese eat anything that moves.

They say that the Chinese can eat anything with four legs, except tables; anything on water, except boats; and anything that flies, except airplanes. Although Bruce Lee’s lot actually have a diverse range of foods to choose from, saying that the Chinese eats anything is a downright hasty generalization.

What many fail to realize is that every culture has its own food taboos. Some Asians find eating rabbits gross but it’s normal to Westerners. Moreover, for a culture as diverse as the Chinese, it can be very hard to group over 1 billion people and say that they ALL eat a certain “exotic” food. While some Chinese eat dogs, some don’t. Some like eating meat; some are Buddhist vegetarians. Some find cheese distasteful, but you’ll find

cheese shops in some streets of Beijing and Shanghai. Besides, if people really don't trust the taste of the Chinese people, how come Chinese food is so popular all around the world?

1. The French are arrogant.

"Never trust the French," they say. When it comes to national stereotypes, the French suffer the most. Only the French think that they are not arrogant. Outside France, ask any random guy who the chestiest people are and they are likely to include the French with a passion.

However, do they really think highly of themselves to the point that they get the ire of foreign nationals? One argument that is often mentioned is that an average Frenchman do not smile at strangers. The truth is, it doesn't mean that they are rude. It's just not part of their culture. Unlike others who wear a smile all day, the French do not show emotions that they do not feel. No one is required to smile in France and it has nothing to do with being polite or rude.

Moreover, if the French are so drowned in their mightiness, how come they are humble enough to donate to countries in need more than any other European nation? According to "The Economist," France is the third largest aid donor in the world, after the US and Japan. That is hardly what anyone would call "arrogant."

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Perhaps it's about time that we stop perpetrating unfounded myths about other people and accept that mankind is a mixture of fine, unique individuals with different ways of living life. We should avoid branding a certain nationality with a negative notion for it can be offensive and dangerous. But maybe for some of us, they are stereotypes for a reason. Maybe there's some truth in it. Maybe it applies to some people. But the problem with stereotypes is that they tend to generalize.

And remember that a person is judged not according to his race and definitely not his nationality. **Humanity is defined by how good we have been to ourselves and other people, not by the country we live in.**