



Fist-Bumping

In a previous podcast, Jen spoke about the **weird** and wonderful world of 'la bise', which for **new-comers** to France is never easy to manage, especially if you're a girl in St Gilles-Bains and you don't particularly fancy kissing the local **tramp**...

As for us boys, we have a similar dilemma related to greetings, but this one is very specific to Reunion: the fist-bump. Question 1: what exactly is it? Well, the perfect **well-oiled** fist-bump is a thing of beauty, with both participants ready to first **slap** hands, then form a **fist** and bang them both together, with style and nonchalance. But for new-comers to Reunion, this is rarely as easy as it seems.

This brings us to question 2: why is it difficult? Well, the problem is that you never know if the other person is going to fist-bump or simply **shake hands**. Like normal people. Which means you either end up going for the formal hand-shake and **grabbing** a wet fish which is already **slipping** away and preparing the fist-bump, or, horror of horrors, you end up slapping a firm handshake and the fist-bump hits the ends of their **bemused fingertips**.

So, question 3: how do you know which one to do? THAT is the **trickiest** of all! Charting my own progress, I would say that after two weeks in Reunion, I thought the fist-bump was a comedy reference to gangster rappers by the Erasmus students I had met in St Denis. After two months, I was **joining in** but getting it wrong every time - I was either horribly unfashionable or painfully embarrassing. After two years, I started to get it right. For once, it's not all about watching the other people around you and copying them - someone may bump fists with their friends, but that doesn't mean you'll get the same treatment yourself.

Anyway, at first I felt **awkward** - it is NOT a very British custom, as most Brits would rather look like Borat than Booba. But after fifteen years here, I now know that it means many things, such as friendship, acceptance, and complicity.

A final question: where does the fist-bump come from? I'm sure there are several theories, but most people I have asked say that it comes from teenage boys at school here, with different groups having their own secret handshake. As they left school, it continued. This must have been a long time ago, because I sometimes see guys in their **fifties** who **greet** each other like that.

But, like with Jen's kissing experience, it's just another part of Reunionese life. **As the saying goes**, 'When in Rome, do as the Romans. Or rather, 'When in Reunion, **chill out** and bump fists.'





Vocabulary

to fist-bump = checker

weird = bizarre

new-comers = nouveaux arrivants

tramp = clochard

well-oiled = bien-huilé

to slap = claquer

fist = poing

to shake hands = serrer la main

to grab = saisir

to slip = glisser

bemused = perplexe

fingertips = bout des doigts

the trickiest = le plus difficile

to join in = participer

awkward = gauche

the fifties = les cinquantes

greet = saluer

as the saying goes = comme dit le dicton

to chill out = se détendre

