

DJIBOUTI CUSTOMS

Greetings:

Because Djibouti is an Islamic society, it is common to greet someone with the Arabic phrase *Asalam Allekhum* (Peace be with you), to which the reply is *Wa Allekhum salam* (May peace also be with you). This exchange is usually followed by Somali greetings, such as *Iska waran?* (How are you?) or *Ma fi'an tahay?* (Is everything okay?).

One may also say simply *Nabad* (Peace), to which the response is *Haah, waa nabad* (Yes, there is peace).

Gestures:

To beckon someone, one draws the fingers towards the body with the back of the hand facing up.

Pointing at people and objects with one's chin is commonplace.

The use of the left hand is often avoided, as it is reserved for personal hygiene.

A person who is called may say "Just a moment" by putting the thumb against the index finger in an upward pointing motion.

Raising one's eyebrows is a common way of gesturing "yes"; raised eyebrows with a little shake of the head indicates "no."

A closed fist with the pad of the thumb touching the bottom of one's chin denotes "full" (for example, when requesting a full tank of gas).

In the rugged rural areas, a gesture frequently seen is a request for water: a closed fist points with the thumb towards the mouth.

Holidays:

Djibouti's secular holidays include New Year's Day (1 Jan.), Labor Day (1 May), and Independence Day (27 June).

Muslim holidays are observed according to the lunar calendar. These holidays include *Eid Al Fitre* (a celebration at the end of *Ramadan*, the holy month of fasting), *Eid Al Adha* (Feast of the Sacrifice, a celebration of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son), Islamic New Year, *Moulid* (Birthday of the prophet Muhammad), and *Shab-e-Miraj* (Ascension of Muhammad).

The government also recognizes most Catholic holidays as official holidays (a remnant of French influence).