

RWANDA CUSTOMS

Greetings:

Greetings are extremely important in Rwanda. It is impolite not to return a greeting or to start a conversation without a proper greeting. Younger persons must greet older persons first, and women greet men first.

When being introduced for the first time or when greeting a professional colleague, Rwandans shake right hands and may place the left hand under the right forearm as a sign of respect. Some young urbanites “kiss the air” near each cheek while shaking hands.

Common verbal greetings include *Muraho* (Hello, it's been a while), *Mwaramutse* (Good morning), or *Mwiriwe* (Good afternoon/evening). The initial greeting is usually followed by *Amakuru?* (How's the news?) or, among close friends, *Bite se?* (How are things going?). The typical response is *Ni meza* (Fine) or *Ni meza cyane* (Very fine).

Gestures:

Body language, gestures, and facial expressions convey meaning, respect, or emphasis. One avoids eye contact with a superior or elder.

The distance between people when they converse indicates their relationship: friends require little or no distance, while superiors must have more. Friends of the same sex often hold hands while walking or talking, but such public contact between members of the opposite sex is not appropriate.

One passes an item to an older person with both hands. Rwandans toss their head to the side with a verbal *eh* to express disbelief, usually when they are listening to a personal experience.

Pointing with the finger or hand is impolite; instead, the head is used, with the chin and mouth jutting in the direction indicated.

Egyptian Society & Culture:

Official holidays include New Year's Day; Democracy Day (28 Jan.); Genocide Memorial Day (7 Apr.), commemorating the beginning of the 1994 genocide; Easter Monday; Labor Day (1 May); Ascension Day (21 May); Independence Day (1 July); Liberation Day (4 July), marking the end of the genocide; Assumption Day (15 Aug.); Republic Day (25 Sept.); Heroes Day (1 Oct.); Armed Forces Day (26 Oct.); All Saints' Day (1 Nov.); and Christmas. Muslims observe *Idil-Fitr*, a three-day feast at the end of *Ramadan*, their holy month of fasting.