

SENEGAL CUSTOMS

Greetings:

Senegalese greetings vary depending on the circumstances and how well people know each other.

Shaking hands and kissing alternate cheeks three times (a French tradition) is common in urban areas.

Rural Senegalese only shake hands, and social rules determine who may shake with whom. A minority of Muslim men do not shake hands with women. In traditional families, children and women respectfully curtsy to their elders when greeting.

When joining or leaving a small group, one must greet each individual separately. Whatever greeting was used between two people is also used when parting. Upon parting, most Senegalese ask each other to extend best wishes to their families and mutual friends.

Gestures:

Senegalese receive and give objects with their right hand or with both hands. Use of the left hand alone is considered unclean and disrespectful.

Senegalese tell street vendors they are not interested in their goods by motioning with a pushing back gesture and avoiding eye contact.

Men and women keep their distance in public and are expected to be dignified and reserved around members of the opposite sex. Public displays of affection are impolite, although some urban couples hold hands.

Senegalese avoid eye contact with a person who is of the opposite sex or considered a superior (in age or status).

Holidays:

Senegal celebrates Islamic, Catholic, and national holidays, including New Year's Day, *Mawloud* (celebrating the prophet Muhammad's birth), Easter, Independence Day (4 Apr.), Labor Day (1 May), Ascension, and Whitmonday. On *Tabaski*, the head of each household sacrifices a sheep in honor of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. *Korite* marks the end of the holy month of *Ramadan*, when Muslims go without food or drink from sunrise to sundown each day. *Tamkharit*, the Islamic New Year, is also the day on which *Allah* determines people's destinies. Islamic holidays follow the lunar calendar and thus fall on different dates each year. All Saints' Day (1 Nov.) and Christmas are also celebrated.