

## SWAZILAND CUSTOMS

### Greetings:

Swazis shake right hands and exchange greetings when meeting friends, acquaintances, or strangers. One's left hand briefly supports one's own right forearm. When the left drops away, the speakers may continue to grasp right hands for a while.

The most acceptable initial greetings are *Sawubona* when addressing one person and *Sanibonani* when addressing more than one. Both literally mean "I see you."

It is common for people to ask each other *Uphumaphi?* (Where have you come from?) and *Uyaphi?* (Where are you going?). Friends may ask *Kunjani?* (How are you?).

To show respect, one adds a professional title or a social title like *make* (MAH-gay) for an adult woman, *babe* (BAH-bay) for an adult man, *sisi* for a girl, and *bhuti* for a boy. *Nkhosi*, the praise name for royalty, may be used when one is unsure of a person's title.

### Gestures:

Hand gestures have great significance to Swazis. Hands add emphasis and description to spoken words.

Gestures alone may also be used, such as softly touching the mouth to indicate that the speaker should talk more loudly or placing an index finger against one's mouth to indicate a request for silence.

Using the left hand is extremely rude, as it is traditionally reserved for personal hygiene.

SiSwati has no words for "right" or "left." So, in giving directions to go left, one refers to "the side of the hand with which you do not eat."

It is considered improper to point one's finger at another person, especially an elderly person. When motioning toward a person or a grave, one uses the fist as a sign of respect.

### Holidays:

There are three major traditional Swazi events: *Lusekwane*, *Incwala*, and *Umhlanga*.

*Umhlanga* takes place in late August or early September.

New Year's Day, Easter, Ascension, Christmas, and Boxing Day (26 Dec.) are all observed.

Swaziland also marks Independence Day (6 Sept.) and National Flag Day (25 Apr.)

Swazis celebrate the birthdays of King Mswati III (19 Apr.) and King Sobhuza II (22 July).