

## AFGHANISTAN CUSTOMS

### Greetings

A handshake is common among men, who tend to be expressive in greeting friends and may pat backs during an embrace.

Lengthy verbal greetings are often accompanied by placing the right hand over the heart.

A man does not shake hands with or otherwise touch a woman in public, although he may greet her verbally.

Women friends embrace and kiss three times on alternating cheeks. Women might also shake hands.

Greetings vary by region and ethnic group, but Arabic greetings are accepted universally. *Assalaam alaikum* (Peace be upon you) is replied to with *Walaikum assalaam* (And peace also upon you).

A common Dari greeting is *Khubus ti?* (How are you?), and the Pashto equivalent is *Sanga ye?* “Good-bye” is *Khoda hafiz*.

### Gestures

Afghans do not use the hands much while speaking.

To beckon a person, one motions downward with the palm of the hand facing down.

To request divine assistance at the beginning or end of an activity (trip, meal, project), one holds both hands in front of the chest, palms up as if holding a book.

Afghans typically sit with legs crossed but make sure not to point the soles of the feet toward someone else, as doing so is impolite.

Using the left hand for passing items is also impolite and considered unclean.

### Holidays

Secular holidays include *Nawrooz* (New Year's, in the spring), Victory of the Muslim Nation (28 Apr.), Remembrance Day (4 May), and Independence Day (18 Aug.).

Islamic holidays are more important and are scheduled according to the lunar calendar. They include the first day of the holy month of *Ramadan*, the three-day feast (*Id al-Fitr*) at the end of *Ramadan*, *Id al-Adha* (Feast of the Sacrifice, honoring Abraham for his willingness to sacrifice his son), *Ashura* (a Shi'i day to mark the martyrdom of Imam Husayn), and *Roze- Maulud* (the birthday of the prophet Muhammad).

During *Ramadan*, people fast from dawn to dusk; families and friends gather in the evenings to eat and visit.