

## **KYRGYZSTAN CUSTOMS**

### **Greetings:**

The standard Kyrgyz greeting is *Salamatsyzby* (Hello). Adult men might use the Islamic greeting *Salaam Aleikum* (Peace be upon you). Russians greet with *Zdravstvuyte* (Hello) or the more informal *Privyet* (Hi).

Men often shake hands. Traditionally, a Kyrgyz woman bows to older men, especially her husband's relatives. Older women greet children with kisses or a handshake. These customs are most prevalent in villages.

When addressing an older person in Russian, one uses the first name plus a patronymic (father's first name with the suffix *-ovich* for a son or *-ovna* for a daughter). In Kyrgyz, a person is greeted by his or her father's first name, followed by *uulu* (son) or *kyzy* (daughter) and the person's own given name: *Kadyrbek uulu Ulan* (Kadyrbek's son, Ulan). In addition, Kyrgyz address people older than themselves with the titles *Eje* (older sister) and *Agai* or *Baike* (both mean "older brother"). The title comes at the end: *Gulsara Eje*. Young people address each other by given name.

### **Gestures:**

Pointing with the finger is impolite; one indicates direction with the entire hand.

Public displays of affection are considered impolite.

At the end of a meal, Muslims might bring the hands together in a "prayer" position in front of the chest, then raise them together to trace an invisible circle, and return them to face level while saying *Omen*.

### **Holidays:**

Kyrgyzstan's public holidays include New Year's Day, International Women's Day (8 Mar.), International Workers' Day (1 May), Constitution Day (5 May), World War II Victory Day (9 May), and Independence Day (31 Aug.).

Christian holidays include Christmas (7 Jan.) and Easter. *Nooruz* is the lunar New Year, celebrated on the first day of spring. Muslim holidays include *Orozo Ait* (Ramadan feast) and *Kurban Ait* (Day of Remembrance), both set by the lunar calendar.