

PAKISTAN CUSTOMS

Greetings:

A handshake is the most common greeting, although close friends may embrace if meeting after a long time. Women might greet each other with a handshake, hug, or kiss.

It is inappropriate for a man to shake hands with or touch a woman who is not his close relative; however, he may greet a man's wife verbally without looking directly at her.

Verbal greetings often include lengthy inquiries about one's family and health; men might place the right hand over the heart during this part of the greeting.

The most common greeting is *Assalaam alaikum* (May peace be upon you). The reply is *Walaikum assalaam* (And peace also upon you). "Good-bye" is *Khoodha haafis*. In more formal situations, people address others by title and last name. They use first names for friends and relatives.

Gestures:

It is not proper for the bottom of one's foot or shoe to point at another person. Therefore, people often squat or sit with both feet on the ground. If sitting on the floor, or if crossing the legs, one positions the feet so as not to point them directly at others.

Items are passed with the right hand or both hands. To beckon, one waves all fingers of the hand with the palm facing down. Using individual fingers to make gestures is impolite.

Except in the conservative provinces of Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province, male friends may walk hand in hand or with their arms over each other's shoulders.

It is inappropriate for members of the opposite sex to touch in public.

Holidays:

Secular holidays include Pakistan Day (23 Mar.), Labor Day (1 May), Independence Day (14 Aug.), Defense of Pakistan Day (6 Sept.), Anniversary of the Death of Quaid-e-Azam (Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the nation's founder, 11 Sept.), Allama Iqbal Day (9 Nov.), and the Birth of Quaid-e-Azam (25 Dec.). Bank holidays are in December and July.

Islamic holidays are determined according to the lunar calendar. The most important include *Eid-ul-Fitr*, the three-day feast at the end of the holy month of *Ramadan*; *Eid-ul-Azha* (Feast of the Sacrifice), which commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, as well as the *haj* (pilgrimage) to Makkah, Saudi Arabia; and *Eid-i-Milad-un-Nabi*, the birth of the prophet Muhammad. During *Ramadan* evenings, many towns sponsor fairs and other celebrations.