

SERBIA CUSTOMS

Greetings:

When strangers are introduced to each other, they shake hands and say their last name, followed by *Drago mi je* (I am pleased). If people already know each other, they shake hands or kiss (often three times on alternating cheeks) and say *Zdravo* (Hello) or *Dobar dan* (Good day). Widely popular among younger groups is the greeting *Ciao* (Hello), taken from Italian. In greeting someone older, the younger person must rise. Men rise when greeting women.

Adults are addressed by professional (i.e., “Dr.,” “Professor”) or conventional titles and their last names. *Gospodin* (Mr.), *Gospodja* (Mrs.), and *Komšija* (neighbor) are common conventional titles. *Tetka* (auntie) and *čika* (uncle) are reserved for older people who are not family but for whom “Mr.” and “Mrs.” are too formal. For example, one might use these terms for family friends or for a friend's parents. Likewise, they use *vi* (“you” formal) to address others, especially initially.

Gestures:

Serbs do not use hand gestures much when speaking. It is impolite to stretch, yawn, or crack one's knuckles in public. It is also impolite to point with the index finger.

Female friends commonly walk down the street holding hands. Smoking in public used to be rude, but it is increasingly common in both urban and rural areas.

Eye contact is valued and is expected when people are raising glasses in a toast.

Holidays:

Serbs celebrate Orthodox Christmas (7 Jan.) and New Year's Day (14 Jan.). The International New Year (1 Jan.) is also celebrated. Women's Day (8 Mar.) honors women in the home and at work. Easter is in the spring. Workers' Day (1 May), once a major holiday, is declining in importance. *Vidovdan* (28 June) is a religious holiday and also commemorates the Battle of Kosovo.

Four times throughout the year, Orthodox Serbs mark *Zadušnice*, which is a day to honor the dead. One such day is in early November soon after Catholics and Protestants have their own day (1 Nov.) to visit the graves of family and friends. Muslims celebrate various religious holidays throughout the year.