

SLOVAK REPUBLIC CUSTOMS

Greetings:

Shaking hands is the most common form of greeting. In a group, one should not cross over another handshake to shake hands with a person.

Upon parting, a man will firmly shake hands with other men in the group and hug or kiss the women on the cheeks. A man might also shake a woman's hand, waiting for her to extend her hand before he does.

In formal relationships, people are addressed as *Pán* (Mr.) or *Pani* (Mrs.), followed by any professional title (doctor, engineer, professor) or the surname. First names are used among friends and the youth. More formal greetings include *Dobrý deň* (Good day) or *Teší ma* (Pleased to meet you), said upon being introduced to someone new. "Good-bye" is *Dovidenia*. More casual terms are *Ahoj* (Hi), *Čau*, and *Servus* (both mean "Hello" or "Good-bye"). Some older villagers still use the traditional *Zbohom* (God be with you). "Thank you" is expressed with *Ďakujem*. The word *Prosím* (Please) is used for polite requests and for saying "You're welcome."

Gestures:

Hand gestures are frequently used to emphasize speech. To wish luck, instead of crossing fingers, Slovaks "hold thumbs." That is, they fold the thumb in and close the fingers on it.

Yawning in public is considered improper, and chewing gum is not acceptable during polite social interaction.

Smiling is courteous. It is considered polite to give up a seat on the bus to an older person, a pregnant woman, or a woman with a small child.

During conversation, personal space is much closer in Slovakia than in the United States.

Holidays:

Holidays include Sylvester's Day (New Year's Eve), Independence Day and New Year's Day (1 Jan.), Three Kings Day and Orthodox Christmas (6 Jan.), Easter, Labor Day (1 May), Liberation Day (8 May), Cyril and Methodius Day (5 July), Constitution Day (1 Sept.), and All Saints' Day (1 Nov.). Slovak National Uprising Day (29 Aug.) commemorates the 1944 rebellion against the Nazis.

Christmas is the most celebrated holiday. Children receive gifts of candy, fruit, and nuts on St. Nicholas Day (6 Dec.). Slovaks celebrate Christmas Day with family gatherings featuring ham or poultry, baked goods, and drinking. Following the meal, people decorate the tree and exchange gifts. Church attendance is also traditional. Birthdays are celebrated with family while name days are occasions for parties among friends or colleagues. A name day, commemorating the saint after whom a person is named, usually is more important than a birthday. It is celebrated with gifts and flowers.