

SURINAME CUSTOMS

Greetings:

A woman may greet a friend she has not seen for a while with a hug (*brasa*) and three kisses on alternating cheeks. In everyday encounters, however, greetings tend to be informal; people merely exchange oral greetings.

In Sranan Tongo one might say “How are you?” with the greetings *Fa waka?* (How are you walking?), *Fa'y tan?* (How are you staying?), or *Fa'y go?* (How are you going?). The reply is *Mi de* (I'm fine) or *A'y go* (It goes).

Young men may greet one another by bumping their right fists against the other's and then on their own chests. In Maroon forest communities, one is expected to start the day by greeting neighbors in a lengthy exchange. Such an exchange in Ndyuka would begin with *U-weekū* (“Good morning,” literally “You have awakened”) and include questions such as *I siibi moo?* (Did you sleep well?) and *Fa fu den sama?* (How is your family?).

Gestures:

Surinamers express dissatisfaction or annoyance by using the *tjuri*: one points the lips and sucks in air between the teeth and lips, while looking away.

Disapproval can also be expressed with the *skir ai* (rolling and blinking the eyes) and by drawing the corners of the mouth down and the lower lip out. Men use a wide variety of whistles, kissing sounds, and “psss-psss” sounds to draw the attention of women.

Surinamers also use many gestures common to North Americans, such as tapping the index finger on the forehead to question someone's intelligence.

Holidays:

National holidays are New Year's Day, Easter (Good Friday–Easter Monday), *Holi Phagwah* (the Hindustani spring festival, March or April), *Id ul Fitre* (the festival to end *Ramadan*, the Muslim month of fasting), Labor Day (1 May), Freedom Day (1 July), Independence Day (25 Nov.), Christmas (24–25 Dec.), and Boxing Day (26 Dec.).