

Fact Sheet

Kenya



Welcome



Where is Kenya?

Kenya is located in the Great Lakes region of East Africa, between Tanzania and Somalia. Its capital is Nairobi.



Time difference

South Africa is one hour behind Kenya.



Population

Kenya's population is about 44-million. Kenyans belong to one of 13 ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Kikuyu, Luhya and Kamba.



Language

Official languages are Swahili and English, but 62 different languages are spoken in Kenya.



Make a Kenyan's day

Enquire about family, health and business.

Be diplomatic and respectful at all times.



Economy

Kenya is considered Eastern and Central Africa's hub for financial, communication and transportation services.

GDP above 5% is expected in 2014 due to expansion in tourism, telecommunications, transport and construction, and agricultural recovery.

There are high levels of computer literacy, particularly among the youth.

The government is open to investment opportunities, with regulatory reforms in place to simplify foreign and local investment. The most important of these changes is the establishment of an export processing zone.

Kenya has a well-developed social and physical infrastructure, which makes it the primary alternative to South Africa for African investment opportunities.

A labour force of around 20-million is engaged primarily in agriculture (75%), industry and services (25%).

Main industries: small-scale consumer goods, agricultural products, horticulture, oil refining, aluminium, steel, lead, cement, ship repairs and tourism.

Export goods: tea, coffee, horticultural products, petroleum products, fish and cement.

Import goods: machinery, transport equipment, petroleum products, cars, iron and steel, resins and plastics.



Kenyan manners

Kenyan culture is group-orientated, with the extended family forming the basis of social structure. This would include relatives on both sides of the family and close friends.

Kenyans place a large emphasis on respect for and reverence of their deceased ancestors.

The most common greeting is the handshake. If you know someone well, the handshake lingers for longer than it would for a casual acquaintance. When greeting an elder, respect is shown by grasping your right wrist with your left hand while shaking hands.

It is a sign of respect to lower your eyes when greeting someone older than you or someone of a higher social status.

Rather than shaking hands, close female friends hug and kiss once on each cheek.

Women over 21 are often addressed as 'Mama' and men over 35 as 'Mzee'. Children refer to adults as 'aunt' or 'uncle', whether they are related or not.

Restaurants

Guests are expected to wash their hands before and after a meal. In some homes, a washing basin is brought to the table. Impress your guests by providing a finger bowl. You could even go the extra mile and do the traditional custom of pouring the water onto your guests hands as they hold them over the bowl.

The guest of honour is usually served first, followed by the men, children and women.

It is good manners not to start eating until the eldest male has been served, and has begun his meal.

Drinks are not usually served with meals, as it is considered impolite to eat and drink at the same time. Ask your guests when they would like to have their drinks

Many Kenyans like you to finish everything on your plate, but this is not mandatory.

Professionalism

Business colleagues and superiors are expected to inquire about a person's family before launching directly into a business discussion.

Direct and frank discussion is not the norm in Kenya. Metaphors and stories are often used to make a



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point.

Kenyans qualify what they say to deliver a message tactfully. This is done out of respect and to preserve the relationship.

Communication in new, especially formal, relationships is conducted with utmost diplomacy.

If you need to be critical during a discussion, rather wait until an opportunity to do this directly with the person concerned, in private.

Kenyans often gesture for emphasis when speaking, and loud voices are only used during business disagreements.

Kenyans pride themselves on emotional control and expect to be shown the same courtesy. A display of anger is considered a sign of mental instability.

It is expected to exchange business cards. Present and receive your card with both hands.

Wait for an invitation before moving to a first-name basis during business or social interaction.

Meetings seldom have scheduled ending times because emphasis is placed on concluding the meeting in a manner that is satisfactory for everyone.

Kenyans value tradition, so it's advisable to provide a historical framework before presenting a new idea or process. They will ask questions until they feel comfortable about proceeding.

Phone calls

Kenyans usually consider it polite for mobile phones to be set on 'vibrate' or 'silent' in public places.

Important calls should be taken in a private place, away from others.

In public, calls should be kept short, with a promise to return the call, and voice levels should be kept as low as possible. When speaking on the phone to your Kenyan guests, show this courtesy and talk to them in a quiet place.

All calls of a personal, emotional or aggressive nature should be made in private. It is considered very disrespectful to conduct such calls in the company of others.

Greeting

Kenyan greeting is the word 'jambo', followed by a handshake.