

Singapore

Capital: Singapore City

Religion: There is tolerance toward all religions in Singapore, and many are practiced. The approximate breakdown is 29% Taoist, 27% Buddhist, 16% Muslim, 10% Christian, and 4% Hindu. Small Sikh and Confucian minorities also exist.

Government: Republic. The head of the state is the president, who is directly elected for a four year term. There is an 81 member unicameral parliament elected for a five year term. Effective power rests with the prime minister and cabinet responsible to parliament.

Ethnic Groups: 76% Chinese, 15% Malay, 6% Indian, 3% other.

Language: English is the official language, and Malay is the national tongue. Mandarin (Chinese) and Tamil are also widely spoken.

Currency: The unit of currency is the Singapore dollar, signified by the symbol 'S\$'.

- Singapore is an island state linked to the southernmost tip of the Malay peninsula by a causeway. It comprises the main island of Singapore and 57 smaller islands.
- Singapore gained its independence in 1965, when it became a separate, sovereign nation and a member of the British Commonwealth.
- Singapore is a booming centre of capitalism in Southeast Asia. Main industries are petroleum refining, electronics, oil-drilling equipment, rubber processing and rubber products, processed food and beverages, ship repair, financial services, and biotechnology. It has almost no natural resources and imports all its energy, water and food needs (although it is self sufficient in pork and eggs). Its wealth (accumulated reserves of over \$60 billion) is based on its strategic position and the talents of its people.
- The Chinese and Indians live very well, with the Malays the poorest and least catered for group.
- Singapore is considered very safe, but Singapore's myriad laws apply to natives and foreigners equally, so foreigners should become familiar with these laws. For example, no littering, no chewing gum, no illegal drugs, no pornographic materials, no weapons, no jaywalking, no spitting, no smoking in most public places.



Business and Social Etiquette

- As Singapore is a multi-ethnic society with at least four different cultures (Chinese, Malay, Indian and British), the correct etiquette depends on the nationality of your contact. However as a general rule, use a formal style when communicating with Singaporeans.
- It is important to be on time for all business appointments. Making a Singaporean executive wait is insulting and impolite.
- With younger or foreign-educated Singaporeans, a handshake is the most common form of greeting. The standard Asian handshake is more of a limp handclasp. Among Singaporean Chinese, the traditional greeting was a bow. However most now shake hands or combine a bow with a handshake. Singaporean Malay are generally Muslim, so a female foreigner should not offer to shake hands with a Malay male.
- At business meetings, foreigners should dress conservatively – a suit jacket and tie. Women should always wear blouses that cover at least their upper arms. Skirts should be knee length or longer.
- Upon first meeting, there will be an exchange of business/name cards at the start of the meeting.
- Formal meetings should be held during office hours which is between 10am and 4pm.
- The pace of business negotiations in Singapore is much slower than that in the United States. Be patient.
- Politeness is the single most important attribute for successful relationships in Singapore. This politeness in no way hinders the determination of Singaporean business people to get their own way.
- Since politeness demands that a Singaporean not disagree openly, the word 'no' is rarely heard. In Singapore, 'yes' can mean anything from 'I agree', 'maybe' to 'no'.
- Singapore is more authoritarian and hierarchical than most Asian societies. Accordingly, foreign business people should show respect for the country's rules and regulations. In communications, pay close attention to the positions Singaporeans hold in their organisations and community, and make a point of deferring to persons in positions of importance.
- Shoes are usually removed when visiting and entering a person's home. As a visitor to a home, for foreigners a bottle of wine is acceptable, or an *even* number of fruits, cakes or sweets (Chinese



homes), or an *odd* number (Indian homes). Do not give flowers. Gifts will be unwrapped after you leave.

- Gifts are given between friends. Do not give a gift to anyone before you have established a personal relationship with that person. Otherwise, the gift may have the appearance of a bribe (Singapore has strict laws against bribery).
- Among both Muslims and Hindus, the left hand is considered unclean. Eat with your right hand only. Do not touch anything or anyone with your left hand.
- The foot is also considered unclean, and you should not show the soles of your feet or shoes.



Language

- Family names are traditionally mentioned first, then the given name composed of one or two parts eg. Suan Imm is the given name of Lim Suan Imm. Given names should not be broken up. Many overseas Chinese have adopted Western first names or reversed the order of their name. Chinese women keep their own family names when they marry, and the Chinese rarely call each other by their given names. Use Mr, Mrs or Miss unless an alternative is offered.

English	Mandarin	Phonetics
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Hello	Ni hao	Knee how
Good morning	Zao shang hao	Tzaow shang how
Good evening	Wan shang hao	Wahn shang how
Good bye	Zai jian	Dzye jee-en
Yes	Dui	Doo-ee
No	Bu dui	Doo doo-ee
Please	Qing	Ching
Thank you	Xie xie	Shee-yeh shee- yeh
You're welcome	Bu xie	Boo shee-yeh
I don't understand	Wo bu dong	Wah boo dong

