

# South Africa

**Capital:** Pretoria (executive), Cape Town (legislative), Bloemfontein (judicial)

**Religion:** The majority (73.5%) of South Africans declare themselves as Christians. This diverse religious group comprises Zion Christian, Charismatic, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Dutch Reformed and Anglican. Further 36% of the country's population belongs to other Christian churches. Minority religious groups include: Muslims, Hindus, followers of the traditional African religions and Judaism. Over 8% of South Africans do not affiliate themselves with any religion.

**Government:** A constitutional parliamentary republic. The President acts as both the head of the state and the head of the government and is responsible to the parliament.

**Ethnic Groups:** About 80% of the country's population is of indigenous African origin. The remaining percentage are represented by people of European, Asian and other descents.

**Language:** There are eleven official languages in the country. Two of them: English and Afrikaans are of European origin. Afrikaans is the most commonly spoken language, while English is the fifth most spoken home language, often used in public and commercial life. Other languages are: Ndebele, Sotho and Northern Sotho, Venda, Zulu and others. A number of unofficial languages are also in use.

**Currency:** The unit of currency in the country is South African rand (ZAR).

- South Africa is situated on the southern tip of the African continent and inhabited by 51 million people representing different cultures and ethnicities. It is a place where indigenous African, European, Asian and other cultures meet and influence each other. It is a dynamic and fast developing country, full of economic and cultural contrasts.
- In 1487, the Portuguese explorer, Bartolomeu Dias, landed in Southern Africa as a first European ever, opening the era of colonisation. At the time, the country was inhabited by Bantu-speaking tribes, which had migrated from other parts of the continent. Soon after, the Dutch, Flemish, German, French and British settlers started coming to South Africa. The slave market was flourishing and thousands of slaves were brought from other African countries to help the newcomers to settle. In 1806 Cape Town became a British Colony.
- The era of colonisation lasted till 1961 when South Africa became a republic following a referendum. The government of the new country continued the politic of apartheid, a system of racial segregation supported through legislation. In 1994, the African National Congress lead by Nelson Mandela won



the first multi-racial democratic elections in the country. This date marks the 'official' end of the apartheid era. However, the divisions in the society remain.

- Nowadays, South Africa is regarded as a newly industrialised country. It has the largest economy on the continent and the 5<sup>th</sup> highest income per capita. At the same time, about a quarter of its population is out of work and lives on less than \$1.25 a day. Other country's problems are poverty, crime, uncontrolled immigration and HIV/ AIDS pandemic.

## Business and Social Etiquette

- South Africans are open to new business opportunities and a long-lasting personal relationship is not required to conduct business. However, they are more inclined to do business with people they know.
- You may experience different styles of communication in South Africa, as those often depend on the individual person's cultural heritage
- Face-to-face meetings are mostly preferred to more formal ways of communications, such as e-mails, letters or telephones.
- The first meeting should be dedicated to introducing the company and establishing mutual trust rather than discussing strict business matters.
- Appointments are necessary to meet a company's executives. The appointments should be booked in advance.
- When setting an appointment remember that business hours start at 9 am and all meetings take places thereafter. Business people generally do not work on weekends.
- The period between mid-December and mid-January and two weeks around Easter are primary vacation times and it is rather difficult to set up meetings during these periods
- Business meetings can be held at the office or over lunch or dinner in a good quality restaurant.
- The most common greeting is a handshake, but the handshake styles vary between ethnic groups.
- Dress code: business people are expected to dress smartly in public places. Western style of dressing is in use in most urban cultures in the country. On the first meeting businessmen and businesswomen are expected to dress formally. Men should wear dark business suits, while women can either wear business suits or elegant formal dresses. The shirts and dresses should be long-sleeved. Once the relationship is established a less formal style is acceptable.



- When discussing a business, avoid confrontations. South Africans are looking for consensus in business dealings.
- Most business people speak English as a second language, therefore translating documents to Afrikaans or any other local language is not required.
- When negotiating, start with a realistic figure and propose deadlines. Haggling is not well regarded.
- Be prepared for informal gestures, like a slap on the back.
- Do not point your finger at anyone.
- There is no established formal protocol for exchanging business cards.
- After a meeting, it is a common practice to send a letter with a summary of what has been decided and what the next steps are.
- South Africans can be quite slow in making business decisions and they do not like to be rushed.
- Gift giving is not the norm in business in South Africa. However, when invited to a private house, the guests are expected to bring a small gift for the host, for example – a bottle of good wine. These gifts should be given by either using a right hand or both hands, but never a left one.



## Language

- When addressing people, use their titles and surnames.
- Do not interrupt speakers. Do not raise your voice and keep a neutral tone during the conversation.
- When speaking to a professional woman, do not address her as 'miss' if you are not sure about her marital status, as this may be regarded as offensive.
- Be aware that South Africans often use metaphors or sport analogies to demonstrate their points.

English	Afrikaans	Phonetics
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Hello	Hallo	Hellou
Good morning	Goeie môre	Hwee-uh mor-uh
Good evening	Goeienaand	Hwee-nand
Good bye	Good bye	Gud-baj
Yes	Ja	Ja
No	Geen	hjen
Please	Asseblief	Ass-eblif
Thank you	Dankie	Danki
You're welcome	Jy is welkom	Ji-nis-welkom
I don't understand	I dnot verstaan	I-dnot-verstaan

