

Preface

- How foreign will South Africa appear to a German?

Depends on the German's frame of reference! Obviously the concept 'foreign' should be defined. South African etiquette could appear a bit different. South Africans tend to tell new people a lot about themselves and their private lives, unlike the Germans. In my experience shops and restaurants do not appear that foreign to Germans.

- Do the cities appear more European and the countryside more African?

Not really, big cities like Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban etc. had been strongly influenced by European building styles when they were established. The countryside to a certain extent too. There are shops and the normal services a big city provides.

Greeting each other in South Africa

- Do the different cultures in South Africa have different forms of greetings?

Yes. But I can only speak for Afrikaans people, as I am Afrikaans. When you are introduced to a person in an informal situation (i.e. at a party, or braai) you shake hands and usually address the person, regardless of their age, informally (du) in Afrikaans and on his/her first name although you don't know each other well yet. In a formal situation (i.e. at work or in a business meeting) you also shake hands and address each other on the surname as Germans do.

- Are there any differences to consider when greeting men or women?

No.

- Do South Africans know about the handshake for greeting as in Germany? If so, how strong do they shake hands?

Yes, of course. ;-) Handshakes aren't as strong as in Germany. If you are very well acquainted with a person/if they are family/best friends (Afrikaans people) greet each other with a quick kiss on the mouth. Women kiss women and men, whereas men only kiss women.

Conclusion of contract / business

- Where do South Africans conclude contracts? In the office, in the restaurant or in the private area?

Depending on the kind of contract, contracts are usually concluded in the office.

- Do South Africans usually bargain about prices or do they not like bargaining?

No, they don't usually bargain.

- Is it ok to talk about business during a meal?

Yes, it is expected to discuss business affairs during a business meal. In general the topic of discussion is usually more of a personal/private nature.

Cliches

- Which cliches or stereotypes do South Africans see in German people?

Difficult to generalize, but I perceive them as punctual and sometimes somewhat impersonal.

- Which typical German things do South Africans like about Germans?

Their cars and efficiency.

Clothing

- Which clothes do men and women wear for business causes? Do there exist any differences between the different cultures of South Africa?

Depending on the type of business (let's say in a government office, law firm etc.) South African women dress more 'flashy' and trendy than German women. South African men wear formal suits or trousers, but not always with a tie.

- How should a person from middle Europe dress for business causes in South Africa?

The same as they would in middle Europe.

Culinary

- What makes a good Braai?

Boerewors (Spicy sausage), Chops, Sosaties (Meat screwers), Pap (thick maize porridge), Salad and alcoholic drinks.

- How should a vegetarian behave at a Braai? Will South Africans be appreciative of his attitude?

Vegetarians rarely attend braais. In my opinion there aren't many vegetarians in South Africa, as everyone loves meat! South Africans may frown upon a vegetarian attending a braai, and will make fun about him, but will never chase a vegetarian away and will provide ample suitable food for him.

- Which other culinary specialties does South Africa have?

Curry, biltong (raw dried meat), potjiekos (translated: food in a pot – slow cooked stew in a pot over open fire), melktert (milk tart – tart made from milk)

- How much tip is common in South Africa?

10%, because service is not included in the bill as in Europe.

Apartheid

- Are there still any impacts of the Apartheid-system in South Africa?

No. But politicians childishly like to give this previous system the blame for everything that goes wrong.

- Does a white have to fear of any hostilities by coloured people?

Yes. Crime has escalated in black townships too, not just in white areas. Whites' (AND BLACKS') wealth is targeted.

Education policy

- South Africa spends relatively much money for its educational system. Do all parts of the population benefit from this?

No. Funds for educational purposes are rarely distributed fairly and equally. Partially due to insufficient management thereof or corruption.

- What is the relation between white and colored university graduates?

- Do exist any differences in the chances of education depending on the colour of skin?

Yes. Depending on the sector (government, private economy) you're applying to work in age and colour play a significant role. Often younger dark skinned people with little knowledge/skills are given preference to older, experienced whites.

Topic of conversation

- What are good small-talk topics with a business partner?

Most topics. South Africans like to tell a bit about their private lives (not major dramas though!). Even if you do not know a person well, you'll mention something from your private live to make small talk. Germans may perceive this as odd. For example: Suppose you got a new lively puppy. You would then say something like: 'I miss our new puppy. Hope she's not too alone at home, with all of us at work. Luckily my son is only going back to university in two weeks time so he can still look after her for a bit!'

- About which topics should I absolutely not talk in South Africa?

Giving your strong opinions (how wrong it was etc.) about Apartheid and positive criticism about the ANC.

- How do South Africans react when someone runs them down in a talk? How do they handle criticism?

Depending on the topic they will run you down too and will try to prove you wrong by illustrating facts.

Corruption

- Generally, how common is corruption in South Africa?

Very common.

- Does it happen, that foreign people are forced to pay money by policemen or other law enforcement? What should I do, if I get into such a situation?

- Do I have to calculate bribe money for doing business in South Africa?

No. If any business includes bribing, you might be involved in illegal business.

Health

- South Africa has a very high percentage of people infected with HIV or AIDS. Is any part of the population especially hit by this?

Especially people from rural areas (countryside) and townships are affected.

- Is the supply water dangerous for middle europeans? Or is it generally better not to try it?

No, tap water is in general safe to drink. Some holiday makers like myself who do not live in the Cape area, are not used to the kind of water in Cape Town and tend to get an upset stomach from Cape Town's water. But this does not imply that the water is dangerous! Water in rivers and streams is a risk and shouldn't be drunk and played in, because it may contain diseases like bilharzia. Check with the locals first with the locals before touching the water in rivers and lakes.

- What other risks for my health do exist in South Africa?

Malaria in parts of the Kruger National Park, as well as on the Zimbabwean border to South Africa.

Security

- In general, townships are known as very dangerous for white people. Is this correct or do townships exist, which are not dangerous for white people?

Townships can be dangerous because white people might not know how to go about in them and how to react in a threatening situation.

- Should foreign people avoid such areas?

Foreigners should have a South African (preferably one who knows the township) accompany them.

- What is about security in the countryside for white people. Is it dangerous to travel by car through the countryside?

In recent years there has been a tendency to brutally murder white farmers and target their farms.

When passing through the countryside one just has to be careful and on the look out for danger as everywhere else in South Africa.

Conclusion

- Which habits or customs should I respect in business, that were not mentioned in the questions before?

South Africans are not as punctual as Germans. If a business meeting/proposal/lunch is set for 12:30 South Africans might arrive at 12:45 only. But they are usually on time for business matters! If friends/anyone are invited to your home/a party/restaurant they will arrive after the scheduled time. It is common to arrive a couple of minutes after the set time rather than arriving early, because it could be perceived rude to arrive early.

- Do exist other forms in South Africa I should know about?

No.

- Which other important things about South Africa have not been mentioned in the questions before?

Etiquette and customs are mostly culture specific. This implies that my Afrikaans etiquette and customs will distinctly differ from those of a black Zulu person.