



Muslim or Arab countries are very hospitable places but their traditions are deeply rooted and are strictly followed. As a guest it is important to show respect for their traditions by following some simple advice:

- When entering a living room or holy place it is customary to remove your shoes unless otherwise advised.
- Although shaking hands is customary in the Middle East, it is common practice for men to wait for a woman to extend her hand first.
- Familiarise yourself with the Muslim holidays especially *Eid-el-Fitr* (end of Ramadan, the month of fasting) and *Eid-el-Addha* (pilgrimage to Mecca, better known as the *Haj*). Be aware that during Ramadan it is an act of politeness not to eat or drink during daylight hours.
- Do not cross your legs or sit showing the soles of your feet when talking to someone.
- Men and women should never wear shorts except when swimming or playing sports. Women are strongly advised to present a modest appearance, keeping upper arms and shoulders covered.
- Use your right hand when offering or receiving something to or from an Arab or Muslim. Moreover, where food is served with no cutlery provided, only the right hand should be used to pick up and eat.

Try to learn some Arabic, as this will be highly beneficial to your business relationships. A few useful expressions can be found below. An apostrophe indicates where the stress should fall:

- When entering a room or office greet people with *As-salam 'Alaikom* (peace be with you). If you are greeted with *As-salam 'Alaikom*, answer *Wa 'Alaikom As-salam* (and peace be with you).
- Two forms of address to a man are: *Said* or *Saeid* (Sir) and *Abu* (father of) followed by a first name.
- Two forms of address to a woman are: *Sa'yida* (for married women) and *'Aani'sah* (for single women) followed by a first name.
- Some other useful expressions:
 - Hello: *Ah 'lan*
 - Thank you: *'Shokran*
 - My name is (...): *'Ana 'Esmi (...)*
 - How are you? *'Kiif 'Haalak* (for men)
'Kiif 'Haalik (for women)
 - Nice to meet you: *'Forsa Sa'iida*
 - Can I help you? *'Momken 'Asaa'dak?* (when addressing a man)
'Momken 'Asaa'dik? (when addressing a woman)

Useful tips when designing Arabic documentation:

- When producing documentation for countries in the Middle East remember that Arabic reads from right to left across a page.
- When creating a brochure for both the domestic market and the Middle East, remember that Arabic publications also read right to left in their page order and usually need the pages themselves to be 'flipped' or reversed. For this reason, avoid designs in the original that will look clumsy or unnatural when the Arabic version is created.
- When choosing photographs in documents, it is important to remember that images of a woman in a sleeveless top or a mini-skirt are frowned upon, and care should be taken to select images which will not cause offence. Likewise, depictions of certain religious symbols might be controversial.