

learn your world south africa

To support your global practice, *ACC Docket* offers country-specific fun facts from your peers who've been there – literally.

Economy

GDP (current US\$)
\$350.6 billion

Population

54,002,000
(2014 estimate)

Corruption

According to Transparency International's "2013 Corruption Perception Index," South Africa is the 72nd "cleanest" (i.e. least corrupt) country out of the 177 that were scored.

Additional Resources

Mail & Guardian, South African weekly newspaper
mg.co.za/

African Economic Outlook
www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/southern-africa/south-africa/

South Africa's Department of Tourism
www.tourism.gov.za/Pages/Home.aspx



KALAHARI DESERT, SOUTH AFRICA © JOHAN SWANEPOEL

When doing business in South Africa, knowledge of the history, cultural inter-play, politics and the economy are invaluable assets.

It is common for people to refer to themselves as "blacks" or "whites"; do not be offended or surprised, or consider this racist behavior.

An introduction by a mutual contact is helpful for doing business in South Africa. Also note that a first business meeting should be more about getting to know one another than a strict discussion of business matters. Personal face-to-face meetings are preferred to telephone or online conference calls or emails.

While South Africa recognizes 11 official languages, English is used for most international business dealings. Most South Africans speak English as a second language, and it is not expected that you translate documents or materials into any of the African languages. South Africans generally prefer using simple language as opposed to diplomatic, technical jargon or legalese. This should not be confused with lack of commitment or incompetence.

In South Africa, it is important to always show respect to elders, even if they are not part of the organization. Elders are considered wise and deserving of respect; those who disrespect them are considered undesirable business partners.

South Africans are very friendly and may express affection openly. You may find an associate slaps you on the back as a sign of friendship or shakes your hand using both of his hands or in the form of a "one-handed double handshake" – you will know exactly what I am referring to when you experience this!

The accepted greeting is a firm handshake with eye contact. Some South Africans view eye contact as disrespectful; therefore, do not be surprised to find that some people will not look you directly in the eyes when shaking your hand as a sign of respect and others may just nod their heads as a greeting.

Exchange of business cards is not a very common practice. In some circles women are seen as inferior to men in the business world; therefore, one must be sensitive to this and make a concerted effort to be inclusive of female business partners.

South Africans have a more relaxed sense of urgency; therefore, if someone tells you they will do something "just now," it may not necessarily mean this instant. Accordingly, you should find a way to ask for a more specific deadline.

JONATHAN MAPHOSA
ASSISTANT GENERAL COUNSEL,
SOUTH AFRICAN RESERVE BANK

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