

Yemen



Capital:	San'a (political capital); Aden (economic capital)
Population:	21.4 million (approx)
Religion:	Islam - Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims. There are very small Christian, Hindu, and Jewish communities.
Government:	Republic, with a President. Multiparty republic with two legislative houses (Consultative Council [111 non-elected seats]; House of Representatives [301])
Ethnic Groups:	90% Arab, 10% Afro-Arab - Indo-Pakistani, Somali, Amhara, and Swahili. Also Jewish, Persian and European minorities.
Language:	Arabic is the official language. English is also commonly understood.
Currency:	The Yemeni rial (YER).

- The merger of North and South Yemen in 1990 gave birth to a new nation, the Republic of Yemen, on the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, with coastlines on the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea.
- Despite the refusal of the USA to give additional aid to Yemen (as a consequence of the country's support for Iraq during the Gulf War), the unification process appeared to have been more successful than many observers believed possible. A free press flourished, most political prisoners had been released, and parliamentary elections were set. Oil formed the bulwark of the united Yemen economy, although neither a stock market nor banking system was yet in place.
- Unfortunately, the task of national unification was interrupted by civil war, with the north being victorious, and the south experiencing much violence and upheaval.
- The climate is predominantly desert, mitigated by relief. Hot and humid on the coasts, becoming mild and temperate in the interior highlands with cool winters.
- Tribal loyalties – the sense of being united by a common ancestor – are strong in Yemen.

Business and Social Etiquette

- Class distinctions are important in Yemen, and guide decision making. Bureaucrats (qadis) are on the top of the Yemeni social ladder.
- Punctuality is not considered a virtue in Yemen. Your associate may be late for an appointment or not show up at all. You, however, should endeavour to be prompt.
- An appointment is rarely private. Expect your visit to be interrupted by phone calls and visits from your associate's friends and family. Westerners frequently find these distractions infuriating; try to maintain your equanimity.
- Officials in Yemen are prohibited by tradition from working more than six hours per day. Mornings are usually best for appointments.
- Friday is the Muslim holy day; business may not be conducted on this day.
- As there are several styles of greeting currently used in Yemen, it is safest to wait for your associate to initiate the greeting, especially at a first meeting.
- Westernised men shake hands with other men. Some men will shake hands with western women. Women in Yemen take no part in business.
- Business cards should be printed in English on one side and in Arabic on the other.
- Foreigners are not exempt from local standards of dress. Foreigners should wear western clothes that approach the modesty of local dress. Despite the heat of the desert, most of the body must remain covered. Local law prohibits the wearing of neck jewellery by men, and westerners have been arrested for violating such rules.
- The pace of business is much slower in Yemen than in the west. Be patient. Business meetings always start slowly with long inquiries into one's health and journey. Decisions will take a long time to be made.
- Coffee is often served toward the end of a business meeting. This is a signal that the meeting will soon conclude. Incense is often lit at this time as well.
- When a person in Yemen says 'yes', it usually means 'possibly'. Be encouraged by this, but do not assume that the negotiating is over.
- Saving face and the avoidance of shame are vital to people in Yemen. You may have to compromise on some issue to protect someone's dignity even if there is no substantive reason to do so.
- The topics of Israel and women should be avoided. Do not even inquire as to the health of your associate's wife or daughter.
- Be prepared to remove your shoes before entering a building. Follow the lead of your host. As a general rule, keep both feet on the ground. Arabs do not cross their legs when sitting. Never show the bottom of your foot to an Arab; this is considered offensive.
- Eating is done with the right hand only. The left hand is considered unclean in the Arab world.

Language

English	Arabic	Phonetics
Hello	a-ssalāma alaykum	See notes
Good Morning	sabaH al-kheir	
Good Morning (response)	sabaH al-nuir	
Goodnight (to a man)	tisbaH ala-kheir	
Goodnight (to a woman)	tisbaHin ala-kheir	
Goodnight response(man)	wa inta min alil-kheir	
Goodnight reponse (wom)	wa inti min alil-kheir	
Goodbye	ma'al salamā	
Yes	aiwa/na'am	
No	lā	
Please (to a man)	min fadhilk	
Please (to a woman)	min fadhilich	
Thankyou (to a man)	mashkur	
Thankyou (to a woman)	mashkura	
You're welcome	afwan/al afu	
I don't understand	ana afHām	

Notes:

,ā as in the 'a' in father

s as in 'so'

ay as in the 'y' in by

kh as in 'ch' in Scottish 'loch'

H a strongly whispered H as in a sigh of relief

sh as in 'ship'

r a rolled 'r'

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