Briefing Your Country

**ASIA**

*(The People's Republic of) China*

Contributed by: Zhanying Cao; Liu Xiaobei; Yiwen Hu; Yihao Zhou; Yang Jihao; Muyuan; Xu Hanyue; Yezi Yang; Liu Jingjia; Yuzhu Xiang; Jinqiao Lin

**Capital:** Beijing

**Population:** 1.3 billion

**Main religion(s):** Atheism; Taoism; Buddhism

**Political leader(s):** Chairman/President - Hu Jintao; Premier - Wen Jiabao

**Little known fact:** The longest dynasty of China is Zhou; only a small number of Chinese could do Chinese Kung Fu; Chinese people consume 45 billion pairs of chopsticks per year.

**Language(s):** Mandarin Chinese; Cantonese; Other regional dialects depending on cities

― “Hello” in Mandarin Chinese: 你好 (Ni hao)

― “Goodbye” in Mandarin Chinese: 再见 (Zai jian)

― “Delicious” in Mandarin Chinese: 好吃 (Fei chang hao chi) or 美味 (Mei wei)

― “Thank you” in Mandarin Chinese: 谢谢 (sie sie)

**How to greet:** Shaking hands

**Greeting among friends:** Hello; 最近怎么样啊（how are you doing these days); Chi Le Ma? (Have you eaten?)

**Food(s) and drink(s):** food: rice, noodles, wontons, jiaozi (Chinese dumplings), zongzi (rice dumplings), nian gao (Year Cake), tangyuan drinks: green tea, shaojiu (white liquor), huangjiu (yellow wine)

**Most important holidays:** The Spring Festival, Lantern Festival, Qingming Festival (Tomb Sweeping Day), Labor Day (May 1), Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-autumn Festival, National Day, Qixi Festival (Chinese Valentine's Day), Ghost Festival, Double Ninth Day, Spirit Festival, Dongzhi Festival

**Famous musician & songs:** Song Zuying & Jay Chou 茉莉花 (Jasmine; musicians: Liu Tianhua, Xian Xinghai, Tan Dun, Liu Sola, Lang Lang, Yo-Yo Ma, Cui Jian, Ye Xiaogang, Lo Ta-yu, Teresa Teng songs: You and me, Moli Hua, The Moon represents my heart; Jay Chou “Nunchakus”, Lang Lang; Song Zuying <La Mei Zi>

**Popular sport(s):** Soccer, ping-pong

**Celebrities:** Confucius; Yao Ming, Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Yuan Longping, Tsien Hsueshen, Lang Lang, Li Yundi, Yang Liwei, etc.
**Japan**

*Contributed by Kyoko Sakai*

**Capital:** Tokyo

**Population:** 128,000,000 for the country. 12,060,000 for the largest city, Tokyo

**Religion(s):** Atheism, Shinto, Buddhism

**Political leader(s):** Yoshihiko Noda, Prime Minister

**Little known fact:** Japanese government has a debt that is nearly twice its GDP

**Language(s):** Japanese

“Hello” in Japanese: こんにちは (kon ni chi wa)

“Goodbye” in Japanese: さようなら (sa yo na ra)

“Delicious” in Japanese: O-i-shi-i (おいしい) or U-ma-i (うまい)

“Thank you” in Japanese: casual one: ありがとうございます (a ri ga to)

**How to greet:** Bowing

**Greeting among friends:** I personally wave my hand to my friends, but I wonder if it’s the majority

**Food(s) and drink(s):** rice, miso soup, fish dishes, pickled vegetables, green tea

**Most important holidays:** New Year

**Popular sport(s):** Either soccer/football, or baseball.

**Celebrities:** Ichiro

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**South Korea (Republic of Korea)**

*Contributed by Minah Kim*

**Capital:** Seoul

**Population:** Approximately 48,860,500. Population of Seoul: 10,464,051

**Religion(s):** Buddhism, Christianity

**Political leader(s):** President - Lee Myung-bak; Prime Minister - Kim Hwang-sik

**Little known fact:** Most households don't have dryers or ovens. Many have separate refrigerators for kimchi, though.

**Language(s):** Korean

“Hello” in Korean: Korea has several different speech levels. The words below are higher level ones, used to indicate respect and formality towards your seniors or to strangers (an-nyung-ha-sae-yo)
India

Contributed by Sana Naz; Rothin Datta; Aman Imani

Capital: New Delhi

Population: 1.22 billion. Largest city - Mumbai

Religion(s): Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism

Political leader(s): Prime Minister - Dr Manmohan Singh. President - Mr Pranab Mukherjee. Vice President - Mohammed Hamid Ansari

Little known fact: The world's first university was established in Takshila in 700 BC. More than 10,500 students from all over the world studied more than 60 subjects; The University of Nalanda built in the 4th century was one of the greatest achievements of ancient India in the field of education; The number zero was invented by an Indian mathematician; Algebra, Trigonometry, Calculus and the Decimal System originated in India.

Language(s): Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya; Official languages: English, Hindi. Apart from this, there are 1652 languages officially recognized by the Government of India

Hello” in Hindi: “Namaste”

“Goodbye” in Hindi: “Alvida”
“Delicious” in Hindi: “Swaadisht”
“Thank you” in Hindi: “Dhanyavaad”

**How to greet:** When greeting another person, Indians say ‘Namaste’, commonly accompanied by a slight bow made with hands pressed together, palms touching and fingers pointed upwards, in front of the chest.

**Greeting among friends:** The informal greeting among friends is similar to the US. We say ‘Hello’ or ‘Hi!’ when meeting friends. In Hindi, it is "Kaisa hai?" which translates to "How are you?" in English.

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Indian Mughlai cuisine that includes Biryani, Tandoori chicken, Naan (Indian bread), kheer (dessert). South Indian cuisine includes dosas, sambar, idli and uttapams. Drinks include lassi (made with curd), chai (tea) and sherbets.

**Traditional Music:** Carnatic tradition in Southern India and Hindustani tradition in Northern India

**Most important holiday(s):** 15th August - Independence Day

**Famous musician and song:** AR Rahman. His most famous song is ‘Jai Ho’ from the award-winning movie Slumdog Millionaire.

**Popular sport(s):** Most popular sport is cricket. The national sport is Hockey although it is not very popular. Tennis, badminton and football are also played.

**Celebrities:** Shah Rukh Khan, Amitabh Bachan, Aishwariya Rai (Bollywood celebrities). Sachin Tendulkar, Sania Mirza, Saina Nehwal, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Mahesh bhupati (Sportspersons). Laxmi Mittal, The Ambanis, The Birlas (Famous Businessmen); Amartya Sen (Economist), M. F. Hussain (Painter).

**Indonesia**

*Contributed by Wynonna Ardiensyah*

**Capital:** Jakarta

**Population:** Indonesia (237,424,363 people), Jakarta (10,187,595 people)

**Religion(s):** Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism

**Political leader(s):** President Susilo Bambang Yudhyono (normally referred to as SBY)

**Little known fact:** One of Indonesia's signature drinks is the "Kopi Luwak". It is one of the world's most expensive types of coffee and is actually made of weasel droppings.

**Language(s):** sa Indonesia, Javanese, Sundanese

“Hello”: “Halo“

“Goodbye”: “Selamat tinggal”

“Delicious”: “Enak sekali!”

“Thank you”: “Terima kasih”

**How to greet:** For adults it is common to greet by kissing both cheeks. However, children would normally greet their elders by kissing the older person's hand.
**Greeting among friends:** “Apa kabar?” = “How are you?”

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Traditional Food: Nasi goreng (fried rice), Rendang (simmered beef), Gado-gado (vegetables in peanut sauce)  
Traditional drink: Bandrek (spiced, ginger tea), Bajigur (a mix of palm sugar and coconut milk)

**Most important holiday(s):** 17th August = Independence Day, Idul Fitri = to celebrate the end of Ramadhan, the month of fasting

**Famous musician(s) and song(s):** Chrisye's "Lilin-Lilin Kecil" which translates to "Small Candles" is an evergreen classic in Indonesia. Nidji's "Laskar Pelangi" is much more recent and is a very popular song made famous by an Indonesian movie of the same name.

**Popular sport(s):** Soccer and badminton

**Celebrities:** Anggun is Indonesia's most successful singer on an international stage. She is especially popular in France and having become a naturalized citizen, actually represented France in the 2012 Eurovision song contest.

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**Singapore**

*Contributed by Zexin Nai*

**Capital:** Singapore

**Population:** 4.5 Million, Singapore is a city-state

**Religion(s):** Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism

**Political leader(s):** Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

**Language(s):** English is the official language; Malay is the national language. All students are bi-lingual and study their mother tongue, mainly Chinese, Malay or Tamil. However, most people speak Singlish.

“Hello” in Malay: In Malay, we say hello by saying good morning, (“Selamat Pagi”) good afternoon (“Selamat Tengah Hari”), and good night, (“Selamat Petang”).

“Goodbye” in Malay: “Selamat Tinggal” (Stay Safe) or “Selamat Jalan” (Have a safe trip).

“Delicious”: “Sedap” (Malay) / “Shiok” (Singlish)

“Thank you”: !Terimakasih! (Malay), “Kum Sia” (Singlish)

How to greet: Wave and greet the person by name and their relationship to you.

**Greeting among friends:** “Hello”

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Chicken; Rice

**Most important holiday(s):** Chinese New Year, National Day
Famous musician(s): Stephanie Sun, Ti Aw Aw, Joi Chua, Pei Ni Kan Ri Chu

Popular sport(s): Football

Celebrities: Fann Wong

Cambodia:

Contributed by Kim Eng Ky

Capital: Phnom Penh

Population: 14.8 million.

Religion(s): Buddhism

Political leader(s): Hun Sen, Prime Minister

Little known fact: Cambodia has the Angkor Wat temple, which is one of the world heritages.

Language(s): Khmer

“Hello” in Khmer: “Sour-Sdei Jum-reab-lea”

“Delicious” in Khmer: “Chnganh”

“Thank you” in Khmer: “Or-Kun”

How to greet: We use a bow combined with a bringing of the hands together at chest level, chin, nose or forehead level according to whom we greet.

Greeting among friends: “Sok-Sabay-te?” (How are you?)

Food(s) and drink(s): Prahok, a strong, fermented fish paste Green Tea

Most important holiday(s): Khmer New Year, usually 14th, 15th and 16th of April.

Famous musician and song: Preap Sovat Jet-Prei-Phsai (Cruel mind)

Popular sport(s): Badminton

Celebrities: Samdech Chuon Nat Norodom Sihanouk

Vietnam

Contributed by Bách Hoàng Phúc (Phuc Bach); Dung Hanh Pham Vu; Lam Tung Lai

Capital: Hanoi

Population: ~90 million. Ho Chi Minh City (also known as Saigon) is the biggest city.

Religion(s): Buddhism & Christianity.

Political leader(s): President - Trường Tấn Sang. Prime Minister - Nguyễn Tấn Dũng

Little known fact: Not sure if this counts as "little known", but some people are surprised when I tell them that our national language (Vietnamese) uses the Latin alphabet; There are 54 ethnic minorities in Vietnam.
Language(s): Vietnamese & English.

“Hello” in Vietnamese: “Xin chào”

“Goodbye” in Vietnamese: “Tạm biệt” (or “Chào”)

“Delicious” in Vietnamese: “Ngon”

“Thanks” in Vietnamese: “Cảm ơn”

How to greet: We wave hands when meeting acquaintances and shake hands when meeting someone for the first time (shaking hands is more common between men); When meeting for the first time, men often shake hands, though women don’t. Among acquaintances and friends, an acknowledging eye contact or friendly wave is commonly used.

Greeting among friends: “Chào” (Hello or Hey); “Ê” (Hey)

Food(s) and drink(s): Phở, Bánh cuốn, Bún bò Huế, Bánh chưng; Noodle Pho, Nem Spring rolls, ruou quốc lũi

Most important holidays: Tết (Lunar New Year) Trung thu (Mid-Autumn Festival) Christmas & New Year

Famous musician(s) and song(s): Famous musicians: Đàm Vĩnh Hưng, Hồ Ngọc Hà, Thu Minh, Trần Lập, Hồ Quỳnh Hương

Famous songs: Đè gio cuốn đi, Cá nhà thương nhau, Nơi vòng tay lớn; songwriter Trịnh Công Sơn, songwriter Van Cao, Anthem song; Điểm Xưa (Diểm of the Past), Cát Bụi (Dust), Ngẫu Nhiên (Random)

Popular Sport(s): Football (Soccer), badminton, tennis, volleyball, ping-pong, basketball

Celebrities: Lê Công Vinh (football player), Nguyễn Nhật Ánh (writer), Ngô Bảo Châu (mathematician), Le Duc Tho; Mỹ Tâm (singer)

Pakistan

Contributed by Mohammad Haroon Shah Bokhari; Marium Ibrahim; Ahmad Buksh Chattha

Capital: Islamabad/Karachi

Population: 177 million, Karachi (13 million)

Religion(s): Islam

Political leader(s): Pakistan follows a democratic system of government. President - Asif Ali Zardari; Prime Minister - Raja Pervez Ashraf

Little known fact: Pakistan has the second highest mountain "K2" (8611m) and the second largest salt mine in the world, which covers a distance of 110 km underground. Indus Valley and Mohenjo-Daro are the lands of oldest civilization.

Language(s): Urdu is the main language, and the four other major provincial languages are Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto and Balochi.

“Hello” in Urdu: “Assalam-o-Alaikum”

“Goodbye” in Urdu: “Allah Hafi”

“Delicious” in Urdu: “Mazaydaar”

“Thank you” in Urdu: “Shukria”/”Mehrbani”

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Language(s): Urdu is the main language, and the four other major provincial languages are Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto and Balochi.
**How to greet:** It varies. Some men hug each other, and some only shake hands. Women also either hug or shake hands. Men and women rarely ever shake hands or hug though. If you don't know a person you usually just say “Assalamualikum.”

**Greeting among friends:** Shake hands and say "Kya haal hai?" translation: “How are you?”

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Karahi, Biryani, Chicken tikka and kebab, halwa puri, palak & gobi gosht, Lassi (Drink); Biryani, Jalebi, Korma, Pulao, Haleem, Nihari.

**Most important holidays:** Eid-ul-Fitr (Follow Islamic Calender); Eid-ul-Azha (Follow Islamic Calender); Pakistan Day (23rd March); Kashmir Day (5th February); Quaid-e-Azam Day (25th December)

**Popular sports:** Cricket, hockey, football, kabbadi

**Famous musician and song:** "Aadat" by Atif Aslam; “Dillalgi” by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

**Celebrities:** Shahid Afridi & Shoaib Akhtar (Cricketers); Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Noor Jehan (Singers); Dr Abdus Salam (won physics Nobel prize in 1979); Sohail Abbas (Hockey Player); Shaan Shahid (Actor); Imran Khan (Ex-cricketer + politician); Mahira Khan (actress); Strings (band).

**Lebanon**

*Contributed by Samia Habli; Bassem El-Remesh*

**Capital:** Beirut

**Population:** Population: 4.2 million. The largest city is the capital, Beirut.

**Religion:** Lebanon is one of the most religiously diverse countries in the region with 18 different sects.

**Political Leader(s):** Lebanon is a parliamentary democracy, which implements a special system known as confessionalism. This system is intended to deter sectarian conflict and it attempts to fairly represent the demographic distribution of the 18 recognized religious groups in government. High-ranking offices are reserved for members of specific religious groups. The President, for example, has to be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, the Speaker of the Parliament a Shi’a Muslim, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Deputy Speaker of Parliament Greek Orthodox.

**Little known fact:** Lebanon is one of the only two Arab countries that do not have a desert.

**Language(s):** Arabic, French, English and Armenian languages

“Hello”: “Marhaba”

“Goodbye”: “Ma'a al salama”

“Delicious”: “Shahey” “Tayybe”

“Thank you”: “Shukran”

**How to greet:** Usually, greeting in Lebanon consists of shaking hands and exchanging 3 kisses on the cheeks. However, if the person is conservative or a stranger, shaking hands is enough.
**Greeting among friends:** "Salam" which means "peace" or a simple "Hi"; Hi kifak? Hi, how are you?

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Tabbouli (green salad), Falafel, Hummus, and kebbe are famous traditional foods.

**Most important holiday(s):** Ramadan (the Holy month of fasting for Muslims), Christmas, Eid (celebration after Ramadan ends), New Year's eve, Easter.

**Popular sports:** Football and basketball are a big deal in Lebanon.

**Famous musician and song:** Fairouz is a very popular and loved singer who sings traditional music.

**Celebrities:** Fairouz and the band Mashrou' Leila are my favorites

**Jordan**

*Contributed by Omar Mansour*

**Capital:** Amman

**Population:** 6.5 million. Amman is the largest city with a population of almost 2.2 million

**Religion(s):** Islam

**Political leader(s):** King Abdullah the Second

**Little known fact:** Petra is in Jordan!

**Language(s):** Arabic

“Hello”: “Salam Alekom” or “Marhaba” for "hello"

“Goodbye”: “Salam Alekom” or “Ma' al salameh” for "goodbye"

“Delicious”: “Zakee”

“Thank you”: “Shukran”

**How to greet:** Shake hands and kiss many times, although it depends on the person.

**Greeting among friends:** Salam (peace)

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Food: Mansaf and hummus. Drinks: Black tea

**Most important holidays:** Big and small Eid (the small one is after Ramadan and the big one is during Hajj time "pilgrimage")

**Popular sport(s):** Football

**Famous Musician:** Omar Al-Abdallat

**Celebrities:** Queen Noor

**Turkey**

*Contributed by Onur Ünal*

**Capital:** Ankara

**Continent:** Europe and Asia
**Population:** 75 million, largest city İstanbul with 13.6 million.

**Religion(s):** Islam. Armenian orthodox, Armenian catholic, Greek orthodox churches are organized.

**Political leader(s):** President - Abdullah Gül. Prime Minister - Recep Tayyip Erdogan

**Little known fact:** It is a secular state, secularism guaranteed in the constitution.

**Language(s):** Turkish. A significant minority also speaks Kurdish.

“Hello” in Turkish: “Merhaba”

“Goodbye” in Turkish: “Hoşçakal.”

“Delicious” in Turkish: “Lezzetli”

“Thank you” in Turkish: “Teşekkürler”

**How to greet:** For formal greetings we shake hands. For more informal ones we kiss each other touching our cheeks together on both sides.

**Greeting among friends:** N'aber? (What's up?)

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Different kinds of kebab (shish kebab, döner kebab etc.) Sarma (rice and optionally meat cooked wrapped in vine leaves)

**Most important holiday(s):** Eid-al Ahda, Eid-ul Fitr (Religious holidays); Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day, National Sovereignty and Children's Day, Victory Day, Republic Day (National holidays)

**Famous musician:** Fazıl Say

**Popular sport(s):** Football, basketball, volleyball

**Celebrities:** Ahmet Ertegün, co-founder and founding chairman of Atlantic Records

**Malaysia**

*Contributed by Rowena Foo*

**Capital:** Kuala Lumpur

**Continent:** Asia

**Population:** 28.8 million. Biggest city - Petaling (1.8 million)

**Religion:** Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. (Islam being declared the state religion whilst other non-Muslim citizens have the freedom to choose their own religion).

**Political leader(s):** Head of government, Prime Minister - Najib Tun Razak; Head of State - Yang di-Pertuan Agong (the King). Political system - Federal constitutional elective monarchy.

**Little known fact:** We are a multi-racial country. People usually think Malaysians are all Malays.

**Language(s):** Malay, English, Mandarin, Tamil. The official language of Malaysia is Malay, which is a compulsory subject for all local students along with English. Mandarin and Tamil are taught only in Chinese and Indian schools respectively. The use of language in our education system is largely influenced by politics, which has caused many controversies between races.
“Hello”: No such greeting as 'hello' in Malay; the Malays usually greet each other with Islamic terms whilst 'Apa khabar?' (How are you?) is used between Malays and other races. In Mandarin: Ni hao.

“Goodbye” in Malay: Selamat tinggal; in Mandarin: Zai Jian.

“Delicious” in Malay: Sedap; in Mandarin: Hao chi

“Thank you” in Malay: Terima Kasih; in Mandarin: Xie xie ni

How to greet: Between the Malays, the younger one would greet an elder one by slightly kneeling down with the elder's hands in his/hers. They normally call this 'cium' (kissing) but usually the younger one would just placed the other's hands near his/her forehead, rise up and place both of his/her hands at heart. Between the Chinese, usually only in Chinese schools and Chinese formal occasions, they would bow while greeting. On non-ethnic related occasions, a hand shake would be used.

Greeting among friends: Throughout my years in Chinese schools, there has been no common greeting among friends. Probably we would just say, 'zen yang?' in a casual manner. Meaning 'how (are you)?' In my years in an international school, the greetings between friends are the same as in the US or any western countries.

Food(s) and drink(s): Malaysia is known for being a food paradise, traditional foods come from all races, some even stem from a combination of few races. Common traditional Malay food: Nasi Lemak, Pisang Goreng, Ayam Rendang, Kuih Lapis etc. Common traditional Chinese food: Asam Laksa, Bak kut teh, Chao Kuay Tiao, Wan tan min, chicken rice etc. Common traditional Indian food: all kinds of roti canai (e.g. roti tisu, roti telur etc), nasi biryani etc.

Important holiday(s): Chinese New year, Hari Raya (Malay New Year), Deepavali (Indian new year)

Popular sport(s): Football amongst the Indians and badminton amongst the Chinese.

Famous musician and song: P. Ramlee, all-time famous Malay actor and singer; Siti Nurhaliza, famous Malay singer; Malaysia's icon Guang Liang; and Fish Leong are among some of the Chinese Malaysians that have made it big in Taiwan. Guang Liang's Tong Hua (Fairytale) was the hit single in South East Asia and Taiwan back then in 2005. Namewee is a popular local singer who has sparked a lot of controversies when he was studying in Taiwan. He made a video with an emphasis on the corrupted politics in Malaysia and how the Malays are always prioritized. His video made in Mandarin - brought him fame amongst the Chinese but the local politicians and Malays threatened him. His case has now simmered and he has since become a local actor/ director. Currently, Yuna is a rising star from Malaysia, she has left to the US to pursue her career. Despite being a Malay, her songs are all in English. She is known to be the singer of Canon's advertisement soundtrack.

Celebrities: Lee Chong Wei - famous Malaysian badminton player who came closely to win the Olympics gold medal but lost to China's badminton superstar, Lin Dan. His close win moved many Malaysians.

Americas

Jamaica
**Jamaica**

*Contributed by* Jacob Phillips

**Capital:** Kingston

**Continent:** Americas (Caribbean)

**Population:** 2,709,300 and in Kingston - approx. 950,000.

**Religion(s):** Christianity, Rastafarianism

**Political leader(s):** Portia Simpson-Miller (Prime Minister) and Patrick Allen (Governor General). Jamaica uses the first past the post system for the purpose of changing/electing government. The country still recognizes the Queen of England as head of state and is thus a member of the Commonwealth.

**Little known fact:** We are the home of reggae music and terrific sprinters, like Usain Bolt.

**Language(s):** English Patois (more of a creole, not an official language).

"Hello": "Hello"

"Goodbye": "Goodbye"

"Delicious": "Delicious"

"Thanks you": "Thank you"

**How to greet:** Shake hands, sometimes hug if the person you are greeting is familiar.

**Greeting among friends:** "Hi, how are you?" "Hey, what's up?" "Wha gwaan" (in patois)

**Food(s) and drink(s):** ackee and saltfish (national dish), jerk cuisine

**Important holiday(s):** Independence Day (August 6); Emancipation Day (August 1); Christmas (December 25); New Year's Day (January 1)

**Popular sport(s):** Track and field, football, cricket

**Famous musician and song:** Bob Marley, "Three little Birds"

**Celebrities:** Sean Paul, Yendi Philipps, Beenie Man, Sean Kingston

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**Argentina**

*Contributed by* Andrea Grimaldi

**Capital:** Buenos Aires

**Population:** 40 million

**Religion:** Catholicism

**Political leader(s):** President Cristina Fernandez

**Little known fact:** It is one of the most Southern countries of the world
**Language:** Spanish

“Hello” in Spanish: “Hola”

“Goodbye” in Spanish: “Chau”

“Delicious” in Spanish: “Delicioso”

“Thank you” in Spanish: “Gracias”

**How to greet:** Generally people kiss, unless it's two unknown men.

**Greeting among friends:** “Che, hola.”

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Asado (barbecue) and empanadas. Drink: Mate.

**Important holiday(s):** 25th of May: Revolution against Spain; 9th of July: Independence from Spain; Christmas and New Year

**Popular sport(s):** Football

**Famous musician and song:** Mercedes Sosa - Sólo le pido a Dios

**Celebrities:** Che Guevara - Guerrilla man; Jorge Luis Borges – Writer; Carlos Gardel - Tango Singer; Diego Armando Maradona and Lionel Messi - Football Players; Astor Piazzola – Musician.

**Sint Maarten**

*Contributed by Jonathan van Arneman (AJ)*

**Capital:** Philipsburg

**Continental:** North America

**Population:** 75000

**Religion:** Christianity

**Political leader(s):** Governor Eugene Holiday; Prime Minister Sarah Wescott Williams.

**Little known fact:** It is the smallest landmass in the world to be divided between two countries. (France and The Netherlands)

**Language:** English, Dutch, French, Spanish, Papiamento

“Hello” and “Goodbye”: Pretty much the same thing.

“Delicious”: (Sint Maarten slang) “It bangin”

“Thanks”: “ Tanks”

**How to greet:** Between peers usually a hug or a handshake but when greeting older people the Dutch kiss twice on the cheek and the French thrice.

**Greeting among friends:** (Sint Maarten slang) Question: “Hey wa you sayin?” Response: “I kool man, chillin.”

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Food: conch soup; Johnny Cake and chicken; Drinks: Mauby, Sorrel

**Important holiday(s):** Carnival Celebration (April); St. Martin’s Day (Nov. 11); Christmas; Easter

**Popular sport(s):** Cricket, basketball, football (soccer)
Famous musician and song: The Mighty Dow: St. Maarten Rhumba

Celebrities: Elektra Voltage - Radio Host; Nick Maley - Creator of Yoda from the Star Wars movies who resides and has a museum on the island.

Venezuela

Contributed by Guillermo Vera

Capital: Caracas
Population: 28,800,000. Caracas - 5,900,000

Religion: Roman Catholicism

Political leader(s): President Hugo Chavez Frias. Considered by many a dictator that obtained power through illegal ways. He's been president for more than 14 years straight.

Little known fact: As of today, Venezuela is the country with the largest known oil reserves on the planet.

Language: Spanish

“How to greet: Men shake hands when greeting other men and kiss once on the cheek when greeting women. Women kiss once on the cheek when greeting other women as well as men.

Greeting among friends: “Epa, ¿Qué más?” Translation: Hey, what's up?

Food(s) and drink(s): Arepa: circular shaped dough made with corn flour. It can be roasted or fried and it's then filled with ham, cheese, and many other ingredients.

Important holiday(s): July 5th - Signature of the Declaration of Independence; April 19th - Declaration of Independence; June 24th - Battle of Carabobo (Most important independence battle).

Popular sport(s): Baseball (Many Venezuelans play in the MLB), soccer

Famous musician and song: Franco de Vita (Song: Si la ves), Voz Veis (Song: Aunque sea poco), Gustavo Dudamel (Orchestra director)

Celebrities: Edgar Ramirez (Actor)

AFRICA

Ghana

Contributed by Dubie Toa-Kwapong

Capital: Accra
Population: 25 million

Religion(s): Christianity/Islam/Traditional Religion

Political Leader(s): Unitary presidential constitutional republic (President, vice president. etc)

Little known fact: It has found oil in the last few years and is about to become an oil-exporting nation.

Language(s): English (official), Akan (Twi), Ewe and Ga.

“Hello” and “Goodbye”: “Ete den” (one greets by inquiring about the well-being of the person one meets). “Goodbye” – “Ye be hyia” (we will meet again).

“Delicious” in Ewe: Eye de

“Thank you”: Medase! In English - Ta! or Cheers!

How to greet: Ghana has a hierarchical society with greetings dictated by age. Friends and age-mates can hug or shake hands. A young person greeting an elder might bow their heads a little out of respect. Greetings are also done using the right hand

Greeting among friends: Ghana: Apo mu e? - How is it going?

Food(s) and drink(s): Banku ne Nkruma and Sobolo

Important holiday(s): Christmas, Easter and 6th of March (Independence Day).

Popular sport(s): Football

Famous musician and song: Osibisa, "Sunshine Day"

Celebrities: Kojo Antwi (singer-songwriter). Kwame Nkrumah (freedom/fighter, first president)

Ethiopia

Contributed by Sophia Ibrahim Ali

Capital: Addis Ababa

Population: 82 million. The largest city = Addis Ababa (4 million)

Religion(s): Islam and Christianity

Political leader(s): Prime Minister - Meles Zenawi and President - Girma Wolde Giyorgis
Little known fact: The fact that the first human beings lived in the Eastern depression of Ethiopia.

Language(s): Amharic

“Hello”: “Selam”

“Goodbye”: “Chaw”

“Delicious”: “Tafach”

“Thank you”: “Ameseginalehu”

How to greet: Shake hands and kiss on the cheek at lest three times.

Greeting among friends: Selam new? (Hey, how are ya?)

Food(s) and drink(s): Enje ra and chicken

Important holiday(s): Eid Al Fitr, Eid Al Adha, New Year celebration, Christmas

Popular sport(s): Long distance run (5000m and 10000m)

Famous musician and song: Tilahun Gessesse, Tedy Afro

Celebrities: Model Liya Kebede

Capital: Freetown

Population: 6 million people and the capital is the largest city

Religion(s): Christianity and then Islam

Political leader(s): My country operates by a democratic rule wherein elections are done after every 5 years

Little known fact: It has the second biggest natural harbor in the world

Language: “Krio”

“Hello”: “Kuche”

“Goodbye”: “Byby”

“Delicious”: “A lek am”

“Thank you”: “Tenki”

How to greet: Shake hands and sometimes hug

Greeting among friends: “Hi” = “Adu ooo”

Food(s) and drink(s): Foo foo, gari

Important holiday(s): Christmas, Easter, New Years Day, Eidul Adha, Eidul Fitri, Independence day 27 April, African Child's Day June 16

Popular sport(s): Football

Famous musician and song: Emerson Bockarie Borbo Bele, Balance

Celebrities: DJ Lulu, Kao Dinero

Sierra Leone

Contributed by Joseph Vandy Sengoh
**Lesotho**

*Contributed by Puleng Moshele*

**Capital:** Maseru

**Population:** Around 2 million people; largest city is Maseru

**Religion(s):** Christianity - Orthodox

**Political leader(s):** Prime Minister Timothy Thabane

**Little known fact:** It is completely surrounded by South Africa

**Language:** Sesotho and English

“Hello”: “Lumelang”

“Goodbye”: “Ke a tsamaya”

“Delicious”: “Monate”

“Thank you”: “Ke ya leboha”

**How to greet:** Shake hands

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**Greeting among friends:** Sharp ho Jwang: It translates into “I am good how are you?”

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Maize and ginger beer

**Important holiday(s):** Christmas

**Popular sport(s):** Soccer

**Famous musician and song:** Tshepo Tshola: Ho lokile

**Celebrities:** Tshepo Tshola

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**EUROPE**

**France**

*Contributed by Alizee Vignon*

**Capital:** Paris

**Population:** 65,350,000. In Paris: 2,300,000
**Religion(s):** Roman Catholicism

**Political leader(s):** President - Francois Hollande. Prime minister - Jean Marc Ayrault. It is a republic.

**Little known fact:** France is the most visited country in the world

**Language(s):** French

“Hello” in French: “Bonjour”

“Goodbye” in French: “Au revoir”

“Delicious” in French: “Delicieux”

“Thank you” in French: “Merci”

**How to greet:** We usually kiss, or we can shake hands if it's the first time you meet the person

**Greeting among friends:** salut (hi)

**Food(s) and drink(s):** cheese, wine, pastry, bread

**Important holiday(s):** Summer break

**Popular sport(s):** Soccer, tennis, horseback riding, martial arts, basketball, handball, golf, skiing, cycling

**Famous musician and song:** Vanessa Paradis - Emmenez moi

**Celebrities:** Sophie Marceau (actress), Jean Dujardin (actor), Audrey Tautou (actress), Marion Cotillard (actress)

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**Italy**

*Contributed by Ariana Feldman*

**Capital:** Rome

**Continent:** Europe

**Population:** 60,626,442 inhabitants. In Rome - 2.8 million residents

**Religion(s):** Catholicism

**Political leader(s):** Prime Minister Mario Monti. It’s a "technical government". The Prime Minister was chosen by the President and not elected by the people because of the economic crisis. It is a temporary government to try to pull Italy out of the crisis

**Little known fact:** There are two States within Italy - the State of Vatican and the State of San Marino

**Language(s):** Italian

“Hello” and “Goodbye”: "Ciao" is the informal way to say both. Formally you would say "Buon giorno" "Buona sera" to say hello and "Arrivederci" to say goodbye.

“Delicious” in Italian: “Delizioso!”

“Thank you”: “Grazie”

**How to greet:** Two kisses on each cheek

**Greeting among friends:** "Ciao!", "Hello!"
Food(s) and drink(s): Pasta, pizza, olive oil, wine
Important holiday(s): Christmas, Easter, New Year, The Epiphany
Popular sport(s): Soccer
Famous musician and song: Nel Blu, Dipinto di Blu (Volare)- Domenica Modugno
Celebrities: Pavarotti, Maria Callas, Totti, Tiziano Ferro etc.

How to greet: Shake hands, hug
Greeting among friends: “Hey”
Food(s) and drink(s): Sausages, beer, dark bread
Important holiday(s): Christmas, and October 3rd – the day of the German unification.
Popular sport(s): Soccer, handball
Famous musician and song: Cro - Eimal um die Welt

Germany

Contributed by Elizaveta Bekmanis
Capital: Berlin
Population: 82 million; Berlin - 3 million
Religion(s): Christianity (Catholic/Protestant)
Political leader(s): Chancellor Angela Merkel
Language(s): German
“Hello” in German: “Hallo”
“Goodbye” in German: “Auf Wiedersehen”
“Delicious” in German: “Köstlich”
“Thank you” in German: “Danke”

Portugal
(Portuguese Republic)

Contributed by Nichil Dipaque Kantelal
Capital: Lisbon
Population: 10,581,000. 547,000 is the population of the largest city.

Religion(s): Roman Catholic

Political leader(s): Prime Minister - Pedro Passos Coelho. President - Cavaco Silva

Little known fact: We are the largest producers of cork in the whole world.

Language(s): Portuguese

“Hello” in Portuguese: Ola

“Goodbye” in Portuguese: Adeus

“Delicious” in Portuguese: Delicioso

“Thank you”: Obrigado-if you are a man and Obrigada if you are a woman

How to greet: In general, being a man - two kisses on the each cheek of a woman and a handshake for a man. A woman also gives two kisses on each side of the cheek of another woman but generally does not shake hands with a man; they just acknowledge their presence.

Greeting among friends: “Tudo bem?” - “All good?”

Food(s) and drink(s): Foods – bacalau (cod fish) cooked in a variety of ways, pasteis de nata (custard filled cakes), soupa alentejana (traditional south portuguese soup). Drinks - Vino de douro (wine from the douro region), sangria

Important holiday(s): Christmas, Easter, Liberty Day (25th April), Proclamation of Portuguese Republic (5th October), Portugal day (10th June)

Popular sport(s): Football

Famous musician and song: Mariza - Oiça lá ó Senhor Vinho


Sweden

Contributed by Sofie Pederson

Capital: Stockholm

Population: 9.4 million

Religion(s): Lutheran Church, Atheists /Agnostic
**Political leader(s):** Fredrik Reinfeldt (Prime Minister) and monarch King Carl Gustaf XVI.

**Little known fact:** We're one of the top seven weapon exporters in the world.

**Language(s):** Swedish, Sami and Finnish

“Hello” in Swedish: Hej

“Goodbye” in Swedish: Hejdå

“Delicious” in Swedish: Utsökt

“Thank you” in Swedish: Tack

**How to greet:** It depends on who you are but friends and family usually give each other a hug, otherwise we shake hands.

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Meatballs with potato and brown sauce, Surströmming (rotten fish) and beer.

**Important holiday(s):** Midsummer, Valborg (1st of May) and Christmas.

**Popular sport(s):** Football (soccer), ice hockey, swimming and horse riding

**Famous musician(s) and song(s):** Robyn - Dancing on My Own, Abba - Gimme Gimme, Cardigans - Lovefool

**Celebrities:** Ingvar Kamprad (founder of IKEA), Alfred Nobel (inventor of the dynamite and founder of the Nobel prize), Greta Garbo (actress), Stellan Skarsgård (actor)

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**Ukraine**

*Contributed by Svitlana Lukhymovych*

**Capital:** Kyiv

**Population:** About 45 million

**Religion(s):** Ukrainian Orthodox Christian

**Political leader(s):** Ukraine is a presidential - parliamentary republic. Currently our president is Victor Yanukovych, and our Prime Minister is Mykola Azarov.

**Little known fact:** Strangely, people don't know that Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe.

**Language:** Ukrainian

“Hello” in Ukrainian: dobrogo dnya
“Goodbye” in Ukrainian: do pobachennya
“Delicious” in Ukrainian: smachno
“Thank you” in Ukrainian: dyakuyu

**How to greet:** When greeting, a handshake is more common among men; women shake hands when meeting someone for the first time. A nod or a slight bow is also taken as a greeting.

**Greeting among friends:** Hi = Pryvit

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Borscht (beet soup), varenyky (pierogi), salo (fat), kruchenky (meet rolls)

**Important holiday(s):** New Year, Christmas, Schedrukha, International Women's Day (8th of March), Independence Day, Teacher's Day etc.

**Political leader(s):** King Harald V and Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg

**Language:** Norwegian

“Hello” in Norwegian: Hei/Hallo

“Goodbye” in Norwegian: Hade/Hadebra

“Delicious” in Norwegian: Hm. I guess you could say 'Kjempegodt' which means ‘Giantly Good!’ Can't really think of any adjective that's specific to food. Maybe a Norwegianification of delicious: "delisiøst" (the ø is pronounced like the German ö). I doubt many people would use it seriously though; Deilig

“Thank you” in Norwegian: Takk!

**How to greet:** When meeting someone for the first time, you shake hands. Then you can hug the person, this is especially common if the person is of the opposite gender.

**Greeting among friends:** Hallo or Hei, with various different lengths of the vowel sounds. Ranging from Haaaaaaaaaaallo or Hallooooooooooooooooooooo down to a short Hei! In English I suppose that would be Heeeeeeeeeeeloo/Hellooooooo and Hi!
Hei, skjer? - Hey, what's happening?

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Imagine any kind of nice food. Like salmon, lamb, or a nice cheese. Now do one of two things to it: A) something weird to preserve it. Like leaving a cheese for so long it goes all grainy and weird. (gammelost = old-cheese) Or dig a hole in the ground and leave some fresh salmon there for a few weeks. (gravlaks = buried salmon) In fact we have many different ways of making traditional fish dishes in Norway; think only of the tørrfisk (dried fish) and lutefisk (lye fish) which is a traditional Christmas dish. The second way of making traditional food in Norway is to exploit every little edible thing you can get from an animal or its products. Like smalahove (sheep head) and the Northern Norwegian mørje (cod boiled with everything you can eat on it. Liver, cheeks, tongue, eggs). There's also the brown cheese made of goat milk, and dried reindeer heart. Not to mention the ever-controversial whale meat.

**Important holiday(s):** Easter and Christmas. At Easter everyone goes skiing in the mountains looking for Easter eggs while reading crime novels, and at Christmas time everyone gets drunk for a week. Unless you're a doctor and have to work during the holidays.

**Popular sport(s):** Football (soccer) and skiing (cross country, biathlon, jumping, downhill, slalom, super-G, telemarking)

**Famous musician and song:** Aha - Take on me. Although I suppose the most played might be some of Edvard Grieg's work. Like Dovregubbens Hall (In the Hall of the Mountain King)

**Celebrities:** Current? Not really many international celebrities. I think I would have to say Anders Behring Breivik. Unfortunately. Historically, maybe Henrik Ibsen? Fridtjof Nansen? Edvard Munch? Maria Mena (singer-songwriter)

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**Montenegro**

*Contributed by Andjelka Radevic*

**Capital:** Podgorica

**Population:** 0.7 million inhabitants.

Largest city is Podgorica with
around 160,000 inhabitants

**Religion(s):** Christianity - Orthodox

**Political leader(s):** President and Prime minister. Montenegro is a democratic republic. The Prime Minister is the head of the government and of a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the Parliament of Montenegro.

**Little known fact:** Montenegrin nature- little country, but has everything (sea, mountains, lakes, rivers). Has the Euro as a currency, but not part of EU.

**Language:** Montenegrin-Serbian

“Hello”: Zdravo

“Goodbye”: Dovidjenja

“Delicious”: Izvrsno

“Thank you”: Hvala

**How to greet:** Depends on the person. If we are greeting a good friend, we shake hands and kiss. When we are greeting someone whom we do not know, we just shake hands.

**Greeting among friends:** Ćao = Hi

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Food - Thick soups (prepared with noodles, potato and vegetables, and including cooked fresh meat), sausage, smoked ham called prsuta, kacamak (mushy, strong meal made of wheat, buckwheat, barley, or corn flour and which is being served with cheese and sour milk), Montenegrin lamb in milk, the food from grill (ćevapi, grilled meat patty). Drinks - brandy (rakija), wine and beer. All made in Montenegro.

**Important holiday(s):** Statehood Day, Independence Day, Christmas.

**Popular sport(s):** Basketball, volleyball, water polo, football, skiing

**Famous musician and song:** Band- PERPER, Song- Kome dolaziš u san

**Celebrities:** Nikola Peković (Basketball player for Minnesota Timberwolves), Mirko Vučinić (football player), Michael Anthony Stepovich (former Governor of Alaska)...

**England**

*Contributed by Dubie Toa-Kwapong*

**Capital:** London

**Population:** 51 million

**Religion(s):** Christianity

**Political Leader(s):** Unitary presidential constitutional republic (Monarch and Prime Minister)

**Little known fact:** The most multicultural city in England is not London, but Birmingham

**Language:** English

“Delicious”: “Yummy”
“Thanks”: “Cheers!”

**How to greet:** For friends - hugs or hand shakes. For new acquaintances - shake hands. Firmness of grip is important in this case.

**Greeting among friends:** “What's up?”

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Shepherd's Pie and Pint of Lager

**Important holiday(s):** Christmas, New Years, Guy Fawkes Night and the Notting Hill Carnival

**Popular sport(s):** Football, rugby, cricket

**Famous musician and song:** Spice Girls, "If You Wanna Be My Lover"

**Celebrities:** Adele (singer-songwriter), Lianne La Havas (singer-songwriter)

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**Russia**

*Contributed by Elizaveta Gorkova*

**Capital:** Moscow

**Population:** 142 million

**Religion(s):** Russian Orthodox Christianity (75% of the population)

**Political Leader(s):** Vladimir Putin is the president. Dmitriy Medvedev is the Prime Minister.

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**Little known fact:** About 2 million Buddhists live in Russia.

**Language:** Russian

“Hello” in Russian: "Zdravstvuitye"

“Goodbye” in Russian: "Do svidaniya"

“Delicious” in Russian: “Vkusnyi”

“Thank you” in Russian: “Spasibo”

**How to greet:** Males always shake hands. Gestures are similar to those in the States.

**Greeting among friends:** Privyet - hi.

**Food(s) and drink(s):** Borsch, schi, and okroshka (all are soups), pelmyeni and varyeniki (kinds of dumplings); sour milk products like kiefer, tворог, ryazhenka, varyenets. Drinks - kvas, tea.

**Important holiday(s):** New Year, 9th of May (Victory Day).

**Popular sport(s):** Football, hockey, tennis

**Famous musician and song:** Boris Grebyenshikov, "Gorod Zolotoi"

**Celebrities:** Yuri Gagarin! Anna Netrebko and Dmitriy Khvorostovsky (opera singers), Kseniya Sobchak, Edward Limonov and Mikhail Prokhorov (politicians).