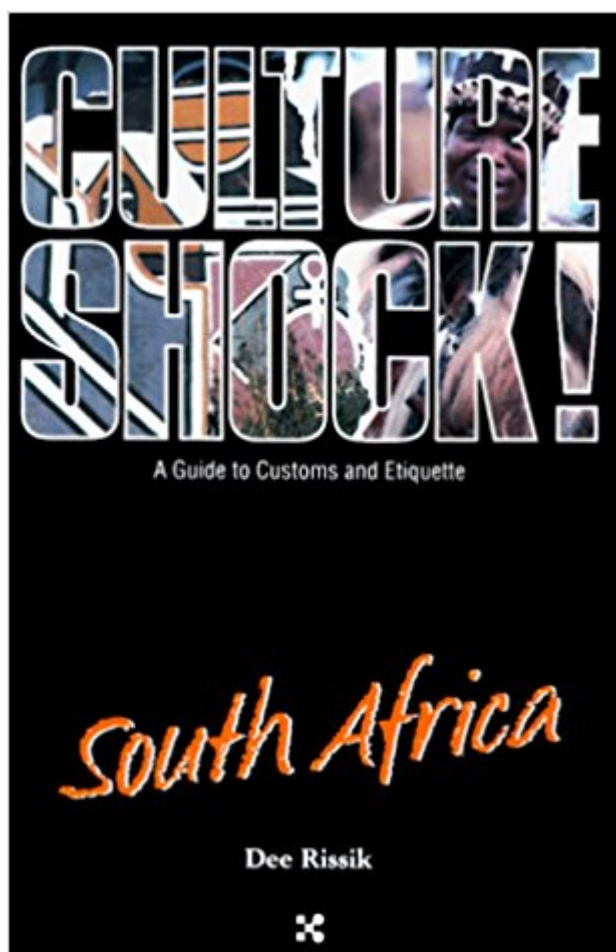


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Culture Shock! South Africa (Culture Shock! A Survival Guide To Customs & Etiquette)



Synopsis

Whether you travel for business, pleasure, or a combination of the two, the ever-popular "Culture Shock!" series belongs in your backpack or briefcase. Get the nuts-and-bolts information you need to survive and thrive wherever you go. "Culture Shock!" country guides are easy-to-read, accurate, and entertaining crash courses in local customs and etiquette. "Culture Shock!" practical guides offer the inside information you need whether you're a student, a parent, a globetrotter, or a working traveler. "Culture Shock!" at your Door guides equip you for daily life in some of the world's most cosmopolitan cities. And "Culture Shock!" Success Secrets guides offer relevant, practical information with the real-life insights and cultural know-how that can make the difference between business success and failure. Each "Culture Shock!" title is written by someone who's lived and worked in the country, and each book is packed with practical, accurate, and enjoyable information to help you find your way and feel at home.

Book Information

Series: Culture Shock! A Survival Guide to Customs & Etiquette

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Customer Reviews

Amateurish, at best, but somewhat helpful. I have really appreciated the Culture Shock series as a way to prep for overseas travel. But this one was superficial and offered little insight in the complex cultures and history (histories) of S. Africa -- a deeply attractive and frightening country that stumbles forward through time.

In preparing for my six month stay in South Africa, I purchased a number of travel guides, including this one in the Culture Shock! series. Despite the foreboding cover, I had some hope that it might

contain relevant information. Unfortunately, it is a smattering of weird advice from a strange white woman who apparently has little to no understanding of the current state of South African culture today. Her most insane advice is to "try not to mention race at all when describing someone in South Africa," advice so absurd and inaccurate that it makes Afrikaner rugby players seem multicultural. Moreover, the book seems to be aimed at middle-aged businessmen settling in Jo'burg, so unless you fit that category, best to steer clear. Especially as a student studying at university in Pietermaritzburg, I find the content of the book to be transparently racist, classist, and decidedly unhelpful. It does say that you shouldn't bring your pets across the ocean with you when you move here because one of her friend's dogs died from the shock of the plane ride. Culturally shocking, no?

This book was a tremendous letdown after the other excellent books in the Culture Shock series I have read - you can find just as much information in a good travel guide. I bought the book expecting insightful comments from a South African writer about 'customs and etiquette', as it is subtitled; instead the book is filled with trite comments and self-explanatory 'cultural tips.' In the 'cultural quiz' at the end of the book, there are questions like "You are invited to a dinner party by your boss at their home. Do you..." answers include "Say yes, and whoop around the office telling everyone, including those who may well have not been invited, that you are off to eat with the boss." In another book, this might have been a joke answer, but the level of 'cultural insight' in this book is so poor that it wasn't funny at all. Unlike some of the other books in the series, this book is clearly aimed for a audience planning to be in South Africa for the long-term, perhaps immigrating. It gives insufficient attention to shorter-term visitors, off-the-beaten track travellers, volunteer NGO workers, or people who might be living somewhere other than the rich white suburbs. Though the author has travelled to other countries, she doesn't seem to have a grasp on what situations are most 'culture-shocky' to new arrivals. An immigrant author from another country would probably have done a better job at pointing at what visitors will find most odd or difficult to adjust too. Dee Rissik does not even address the topic of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender visitors or immigrants to South Africa, despite the fact that this is the only country in the world where sexual orientation is legally protected in the constitution. Her sections on women, lifestyles, marriage, nudity, pub culture, and even sex, never once mention GLBT concerns or interests. This is enormous heterosexist oversight is unforgivable. I was ready to give up halfway through the book, but pushed all the way to the end, hoping for some redeeming quality. The closest it comes is two or three pages of 'common south african words used cross culturally.' And that, in itself, is not sufficient to justify purchasing the other 200-odd pages of

this book.

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