

Cultural Hints

Malawi Courtesies

Malawians always extend greetings and it is considered rude not to greet someone, especially an elder. *Muli bwanji*, is the appropriate greeting. It is customary to greet everyone with a handshake and a greeting. In rural areas, it shows respect if you lightly grasp your right forearm with your left hand. This can also be accompanied by a slight dip at the knees, accompanied by bowing down the head. The same goes for handing things. It should be done with the right hand, preferably held with the left hand.

Religion

Most people (80%) in Malawi are Christian, and mostly belong to one of the Protestant churches originally founded by the missionaries who came to Malawi in the late 19th century. There are Muslims, particularly along the lake, a legacy of the Swahili-Arab slave-traders who operated in this area. There are also other religions like traditionalists, Hindus and Buddhists.

Traditional food

There is variety of traditional food in Malawi, but below is our staple food.

- Nsima (made from maize flour)
- Mfutso (dried pumpkin or bean leaves)
- Chambo (Fish from Lake Malawi)
- Thobwa (Sweet Beer)



Nsima with beans and pumpkin

Language

The national language is Chichewa. English is the official language; however each tribe speaks a different language.

Following are some Chichewa and Tumbuka words, which might be useful to you while in Malawi.

Greetings and Phrases

English	Chichewa	Tumbuka
Good morning	Mwadzuka bwanji	Mwauka uli
Good afternoon	Mwaswera bwanji	Mwatandara uli
Good evening	Madzulo abwino	Mise iwemi
Good night	Usiku wabwino	Usiku uwemi
Welcome	Takulandirani	Tampokererani
How are you(How is it)	Muli bwanji	Muli uli
I am fine	Ndiri bwino	Ndiri makora



What will you build?

Thank you	Zikomo	Yewo
I am sick	Ndikudwala	Naluwala
Is it okay	Chabwino	Chabwino
Good bye	Tapita	Taruta
Go well	Yendani bwino	Rutani makora
Later	Nthawi ina	Nyengo inyake
What is your name? (How are you called)	Dzina lanu ndinu ndani ?(for someone older) Dzina lako ndiwe ndani (for a young person)	Zina lanu ndimwe anjani? (for someone older) zina lako ndiwe njani? (young person)
My name is.....Or am called....	Dzina langa ndine..... ine ndine....	Zina lane ni.....ine ndi
Very much	Kwambiri	Kwambiri
White person	Mzungu	Mzungu
Boy	Mnyamata	Mwanarume
A man	Bambo	Badada
A woman	Mai	Bamama
Girl	Mtsikana	Mwanakazi
Please	Chonde	Chonde
Friend	Mzanga	Mnyane
Help!	Ndithandizeni!	Novwireniko!

Other Common Words or Phrases

Can I have...?	Ndingapezeko.... ?	Ningasangako
Where are we going to?	Tikupita kuti?	Tikuluta nkhuhi ?
I am tired	Ndatopa	Navuka
I am leaving/going	Ndikupita	Nkhuluta
I am going to work	Ndikupita ku ntchito	Nkhuluta ku ntchito
I am going to the house	Ndikupita ku nyumba	Nkhuluta ku nyumba
Today	Lero	Mwanyahuno
Tomorrow	Mawa	Machero
White person	Mzungu	Mzungu
Me / You / Us	Ine, Iwe (Inu), Ife	Ine, iwe, (imwe), ise
Come....Come here	Bwera.....Bwera kuno	Zanga....Zanga kuno
Go	Pita	Luta (nga)
Yes / No	Eya/ayi	Inya / yayi
Stop	Ima	Yimilira (yima)

Sit down	Khala pansi	Khala pasi
Eat	Idya	Ilya
Speak/Talk	Yankhula	Yowoya
Sleep,	Gona	Gona
Write	Lemba	Lemba
market, shop	Nsika, Golosale	msika, golosale
Latrine	Chimbudzi	Chimbuzi
Water	Madzi	Maji
Drink	Imwa	Imwa
Brick	Njerwa	Njerwa
Cold weather	Kuzizira	Kuzizima
Sand	Mchenga	Mchemwa
Motor	Thope/Matope	Thipa/Mathipa
Sun	Dzuwa	Ziwa
Soil	Dothi	Dongo
House	Nyumba	Nyumba
Hot	Kutentha	Kuthukira/Kotcha

English	Chichewa	Tumbuka
One	Modzi	Chimoza
Two	Wiri	Viwiri
Three	Tatu	Vitatu
Four	Nayi	Vinayi
Five	Sanu	Vinkhonde
Six	Sani ndi chimodzi	Vinhkonde na chimoza
Seven	Sanu ndi ziwiri	Vinkhonde na viwiri
Eight	Sanu ndi zitatu	Vinkhonde na vitatu
Nine	Sanu ndi zinayi	Vinkhonde na vinayi
Ten	Khumi	Vikhumi

People usually use English, even in rural villages.

Week Days

English	Chichewa	Tumbuka
Sunday	Lasabata	Pasabata
Monday	Lolembe	Pamonday
Tuesday	Lachiwiri	Pachiwiri
Wednesday	Lachitatu	Pachitatu
Thursday	Lachinayi	Pachinayi
Friday	Lachisanu	Pachinkhonde



What will you build?