



TURKEY

SOME INFORMATION ABOUT TURKEY

Quick Facts:

Area: 780,580 sq. km

Population: 71,158,647 (July 2007 est.)

Capital: Ankara

Language: Turkish (official), Kurdish, Dimli (or Zaza), Azeri, Kabardian

Religion: Muslim 99.8% (mostly Sunni), other 0.2% (mostly Christians & Jewish) Currency: Turkish Lira (TRY)

Introduction:

Check your *Midnight Express* stereotypes at the door - this is a rapidly modernizing country with one foot in Europe and one in the Middle East. It's not all oriental splendor, mystery, intrigue and whirling dervishes but it is a spicy maelstrom of history knocking up against a fast paced present.

The Turkish people have an unrivalled reputation for hospitality, the cuisine is to die for, the coastline is a dream, and many Turkish cities are dotted with spectacular mosques and castles. And while costs are rising, Turkey remains one of the Mediterranean's bargain-basement destinations.

Area:

The territory of Turkey is more than 1,600 km long and 800 km wide, with a roughly rectangular shape. Turkey's area, inclusive of lakes, occupies 783,562 sq. km of which 755,688 sq. km are in Southwest Asia and 23,764 sq. km in Europe, thus making Turkey a transcontinental country. Turkey's area makes it the world's 37th largest country, and is about the size of Metropolitan France and the United Kingdom combined. Turkey is encircled by seas on three sides: the Aegean Sea to the west, the Black Sea to the north and the Mediterranean Sea to the south. Turkey also contains the Sea of Marmara in the northwest.

Turkey is geographically divided into seven regions: Marmara, Aegean, Black Sea, Central Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia, Southeastern Anatolia and the Mediterranean. The uneven north Anatolian terrain running along the Black Sea resembles a long, narrow belt. This region comprises approximately one-sixth of Turkey's total land area. As a general trend, the inland Anatolian plateau becomes increasingly rugged as it progresses eastward.

Climate:

Turkey has a Mediterranean temperate climate, with hot, dry summers and mild, wet and cold winters, though conditions can be much harsher in the more arid interior. Mountains close to the coast prevent Mediterranean influences from extending inland, giving the interior of Turkey a continental climate with distinct seasons. The central Anatolian Plateau is much more subject to extremes than coastal areas. Winters on the plateau are especially severe. Temperatures of -30°C to -40°C can occur in the mountainous areas in the east, and snow may lie on the ground 120 days of the year. In the west, winter temperatures average below 1°C . Summers are hot and dry, with temperatures generally above 30°C in the day. May is generally the wettest month, whereas July and August are the driest.



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Population:

As of 2005, the population of Turkey stood at 72.6 million with a growth rate of 1.5% per annum. The Turkish population is relatively young, with 25.5% falling within the 0–15 age bracket. Article 66 of the Turkish Constitution defines a "Turk" as anyone who is "bound to the Turkish state through the bond of citizenship"; therefore, the legal use of the term "Turkish" as a citizen of Turkey is different from the ethnic definition. The majority of the Turkish population is of Turkish ethnicity. Other major ethnic groups include the Kurds, Circassians, Roma, Arabs and the three officially-recognized minorities (per the treaty of Lausanne) of Greeks, Armenians and Jews. Due to a demand for an increased labor force in post-World War II Europe, many Turkish citizens immigrated to Western Europe (particularly Western Germany), contributing to the creation of a significant diaspora.

Language:

Turkish is the sole official language throughout Turkey. The Turkish language is not an Indo-European language. It belongs to the Altay branch of the Ural-Altay linguistic family. The languages of this family are called Altaic because they are believed to have originated in the high lands around the Altay Mountains of Central Asia. The public broadcaster TRT broadcasts programs in local languages and dialects of Arabic, Bosnian, Circassian and Kurdish a few hours a week.

Religion:

Nominally, 99.8% of the Turkish population is Muslim, of whom over 75% belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. A sizeable minority, about 20% of the Muslim population, is affiliated with the Shi'a Alevi sect. The remainder of the population belongs to other faiths, particularly Christian denominations (Greek Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Syriac Orthodox), Judaism, Yezidism and Atheism. There is a strong tradition of secularism of Turkey. Even though the state has no official religion nor promotes any, it actively monitors the area between the religions. Turkey prohibits by law the wearing of religious head cover and theo-political symbolic garments for both genders in government buildings, schools, and universities.

Government:

Turkey is a parliamentary representative. Since its foundation as a republic in 1923, Turkey has developed a strong tradition of secularism. Turkey's constitution governs the legal framework of the country. It sets out the main principles of government and establishes Turkey as a unitary centralized state. The head of the state is the President of the Republic and has a largely ceremonial role. The president is elected for a seven-year term by the parliament but is not required to be one of its members. Executive power is exercised by the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers which make up the government, while the legislative power is vested in the unicameral parliament, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature, and the Constitutional Court is charged with ruling on the conformity of laws and decrees with the constitution. The Council of State is the tribunal of last resort for administrative cases, and the High Court of Appeals for all others.

The Prime Minister is elected by the parliament through a vote of confidence in his government and is most often the head of the party that has the most seats in parliament.

There are 550 members of parliament who are elected for a four-year term by a party-list proportional representation system from 85 electoral districts, which represent the 81 administrative provinces of Turkey. To avoid a hung parliament and its excessive political fragmentation, only parties that win at



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least 10% of the votes cast in a national parliamentary election gain the right to representation in the parliament.

History:

Turkey's first known human inhabitants appeared in the Mediterranean region as early as 7500 BC, and the cycles of empire building, flexing, flailing and crumbling didn't take long to kick in. The Great Seljuk Turkish Empire of the 11th century was the first to rule what are now Turkey, Iran and Iraq. The Seljuks were shaken by the Crusades and overrun by Mongol hordes, but they hung onto power until the vigorous, ambitious Ottomans came along. The Ottoman Empire began as the banding together of late 13th century Turkish warriors fleeing the Mongols. By 1453 the Ottomans under Mehmet the Conqueror were strong enough to take Constantinople. Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-66) oversaw the apogee of the empire: beautifying Constantinople, rebuilding Jerusalem and expanding the Ottomans to the gates of Vienna. But few of the sultans succeeding Süleyman were capable of great rule and the Ottoman Empire's long, celebrated decline had begun by 1585. By the 19th century, decay and misrule made ethnic nationalism very appealing. The subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire revolted, often with the direct encouragement and assistance of European powers. After bitter fighting in 1832, the Kingdom of Greece was formed; the Serbs, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Albanians, Armenians, Romanians and Arabs would all seek independence soon after.

The European powers hovered over the disintegrating empire, while within Turkey various disastrous attempts to revive the country were undone by the unfortunate decision to side with Germany in WWI. In 1918, the victorious Allies set to carving up Turkey.

At this point, Ottoman general Mustafa Kemal began to organise resistance, sure that a new government must seize the fate of Turkey for the Turkish people. When Greece invaded Smyrna and began pushing east, the Turks were shocked into action. The War of Independence lasted 1920-22, ending in a bitterly won Turkish victory and the abolition of the sultanate. Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk or Father Turk) undertook the job of completely remaking Turkish society. By the time he died in 1938, a constitution had been adopted, polygamy abolished and the fez, mark of Ottoman backwardness, prohibited. Islam ceased to be the official state religion, Constantinople became Istanbul and women obtained the right to vote. Atatürk remains a true hero in Turkey: his statue is everywhere and there are laws against defaming or insulting him.

Economy:

Turkey is a developed country, a founding member of the OECD and the G20 industrial nations, which brings together the 20 largest economies of the world.

For most of its republican history, Turkey has adhered to a quasi-statist approach, with strict government controls over private sector participation, foreign trade, and foreign direct investment. However, during the 1980s, Turkey began a series of reforms and designed to shift the economy from a statist, insulated system to a more private-sector, market-based model. The GDP growth rate for 2005 was 7.4%, thus making Turkey one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Turkey's economy is no longer dominated by traditional agricultural activities in the rural areas, but more so by a highly dynamic industrial complex in the major cities, mostly concentrated in the western provinces of the country, along with a developed services sector.



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Education:

Education is one of the fundamental functions of the state and performed under state control and supervision. The Ministry of National Education is responsible for offering the educational services and the right to an education is ensured by the Constitution. Formal education includes pre-school education, primary education, secondary education and higher education institutions. There are both public (free of charge) and private schools providing education for all these levels.

Pre-school Education: It is optional and for the children between 3-5 years old. Pre-school education is provided by independent nurseries and a variety of ministries and institutions in kindergartens, nurseries and preparatory classes as well as day care and children care centers.

Primary Education: For children between 6 and 14 years old, compulsory and free of charge in public schools. Primary education is uninterrupted for 8 years and the graduates receive a primary education diploma.

Secondary Education: Secondary education is divided into two as general and vocational & technical education. General high schools offer at least three years of education for 15-17 years old to prepare them for higher education. They include the Anatolian high schools, high schools, science schools, Anatolia teacher training schools, Anatolia fine arts schools and multi-curriculum high schools. Vocational and technical high schools train the qualified manpower required in various fields of industry and prepare students for professional life as well as higher education. They include technical schools for boys, vocational schools for girls, vocational schools for commerce and hotel management and religious high schools.

Family Life:

Turkish families are very close knitted including the extended family. Neighborhood is still very important even in big cities. Turkish families enjoy visiting their relatives, friends and neighbors quite often. In the modern Turkish families, usually both parents work. The average Turkish family has 2-3 children. For families, it is quite important to spend time all together, most of the times involving the extended family members. Parents are usually over protective towards their children, who usually live with their parents until they get married, unless they go to another city for higher education. Education is very important for the parents, and the whole society. Therefore the teenagers are expected to have good grades and manners at school and pay attention to their homework.

Food:

For those who travel in culinary pursuits, the Turkish Cuisine is a very curious one. The variety of dishes that make up the Cuisine, the ways they all come together in feast-like meals, and the evident intricacy of each craft offer enough material for life-long study and enjoyment. It is not easy to discern a basic element or a single dominant feature, like the Italian "pasta" or the French "sauce". Whether in a humble home, at a famous restaurant, or at a dinner in a Bey's mansion, familiar patterns of this rich and diverse Cuisine are always present. It is a rare art, which satisfies your senses while reconfirming the higher order of society, community and culture.

The main meal of the day is dinner, when all the family members gather at home. Breakfasts are usually quick in the weekdays and big at the weekends with all the family. Both lunch and dinner are composed of hot meals, usually three courses in each meal.



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Recreation:

The most popular sport in Turkey by far is football, with certain professional and national matches drawing tens of millions of viewers on television. Nevertheless, other sports such as basketball and motor sports (following the inclusion of Istanbul Park on the Formula 1 racing calendar) have also become popular recently. The traditional Turkish national sport has been the Yağlı Güreş (*Oiled Wrestling*) since Ottoman times.

As education and school occupies a very big amount of the teenagers' time, they usually spend their time studying at home and/or school as well as private courses. The little free time they have, they spend with their friends in a café, going to a movie or getting involved in sports. Turkish families usually spend their free time by going to picnics (when the weather is nice) or with their friends, neighbors and relatives. The teenagers mostly join their families with these activities.

YFU Turkey

YFU Turkey has been established by a group of experienced youth workers in 2006. The head office is based in Ankara, the capital of Turkey. There are many volunteers working in the field in different cities of Turkey. There are YFU representatives in other cities such as Izmir, Adana, Antalya and Bursa.

Exchange activities for inbound students:

YFU Turkey organizes one-year academic programs and 6-week summer programs. All the exchange students arriving for one-year program are welcomed in the airport by YFU volunteers and are taken to the one-week on-arrival orientation program, which is organized by experienced and trained YFU volunteers. During the year, the students get together again for a two-day midyear orientation program. The re-entry orientation at the end of the year is organized for 3 days and includes some cultural trips as well. Besides these obligatory orientations, there are also optional cultural expeditions with special themes throughout the year.

For the summer program, the students are again welcomed in the airport and are taken directly to the on-arrival orientation of 3 days. During the summer program, they come together again to join a 12 days summer camp with other Turkish youngsters.. At the end of the summer program, the students gather again to join a 3 days re-entry orientation, which includes some cultural trips as well. During the summer program, there are also some optional cultural trips with themes.