

# TURKEY



## REGIONAL INFORMATION





## General Info

*Turkey – Asia meets Europe*

Standing at the forefront between Europe and Asia, Turkey has a long and colourful history. East Turkey is believed to be the location of the Garden of Eden and is home to many important biblical scenes. The Ottoman Empire ruled from Constantinople (Istanbul) from the late 13th Century until the early 20th Century. Today Turkey is a country of contrasts. Its scenery ranges from mountains and vast plains to lakes and coastline. Its political system is fiercely secular but its people are often quite religious.

## People



## Religion & Culture

*Overwhelmingly Muslim, mostly Sunnis*

Turkey population is believed to be 99.8% Muslim. Sunnis make up around 80% of this and Shias around 20%. There are very small Christian and Jewish populations though these were bigger before the turn of the century. When Attaturk, the founder of modern Turkey wrote up the constitution he ensured it was a strongly secular one. However since the 1980s the role of religion in the state has been much debated. The secular nature of the state is sometimes questionable in practice.

## Population

*Young and growing*

Turkey has a relatively young population – over 25% of the population are under 15 - and quite high population growth at over 1% per annum. The population stands at over 70m, 1m of which are foreigners. Ethnically Turkey is made up of Turkic-speakers (including Anatolian Turks, Turkmens, Kazakhs and many more), Indo-European language speakers (mostly Kurds and Zazas), Semetic-speaking and Caucasian-speaking peoples. The literacy rate is 95.3% for men and 79.6% for women.

## Language

*Turkish, Kurdish, Dimli and more*

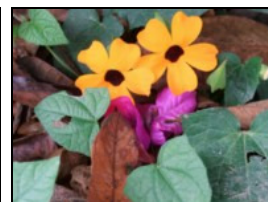
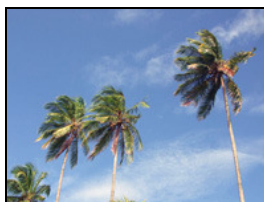
Turkish is the only official language in Turkey and at present the only one through which education may be practiced. Kurdish is widely spoken particularly in the East and Southeast and many are fighting for the right to an education through Kurdish. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne guarantees the language rights of Armenian, Jewish and Greek minorities. Other significant minority languages include Dimli (a Zaza language), Kabardian (a Caucasian language) and South Azerbaijani.

## **Food**

*A fusion of Asian, Middle Eastern and Balkan*

Turkish cuisine is a synthesis and refinement of Central Asian, Middle Eastern and Balkan cuisines. There are many regional differences, for example kebabs, mezze (small side dishes served together often as a starter), and dough-based pastries are popular in the Southeast, pasta is popular in Anatolia and Mediterranean style food is popular in the West of the country. Ayran (a salty yoghurt drink) is popular throughout Turkey as are strong black (Turkish) tea and coffee. Efes beer is a popular local brand and wine is popular in some regions.

## **Environment**



## **Geography**

*Roughly the size of Norway and Sweden*

Turkey covers about 78m square kilometres (roughly the size of Sweden and Norway combined). It shares land borders with Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Bulgaria and Greece. It also has more than 7,000 km of coastline. Turkey's highest mountain is Mount Ararat in the East at over 5,000m. Climates vary enormously across this vast country and it is one of the most fertile countries in the Middle East region, particularly in the East.

## **Flora & Fauna**

*Enormous number of fauna species*

Anatolia is one of the world's foremost sources of plants. Many disease-resistant forms of plants and crops have been exported including wheat to the US. Lentils, apricots, figs, chickpeas, almonds, hazelnuts and cherries are also native to Turkey. The number of species of fauna is staggering with over 80,000 (the rest of Europe has only 60,000) and includes the Anatolia leopard, monk seals, and other endemic species. The tiger's original homeland was in Turkey and it was indeed named after the Tigris River.

## **Climate**

*A wide variety of climates*

The climate of Turkey varies significantly across its regions with coastal areas having cool rainy winters and hot moderately dry summers. Further East there is less rainfall. Mountains near the coast create a Continental climate in much of the interior, keeping Mediterranean influences at bay. Winters in the Eastern plateau can be very severe with temperatures dropping as low as  $-30^{\circ}$  or even  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  in mountainous areas.

## **History & Economy**



### **History**

*Ottomans and Ataturk*

The history of Turkey is a long and colourful one. A recent archaeological discovery in East Turkey (Gobekli Tepe) dating back about 11,500 years has turned the world of archaeology on its head with the discovery of the oldest manmade place of worship in the world. The Ottoman Empire based in Constantinople (today Istanbul) ruled over vast areas of Europe and Asia from the late 13th Century until 1922. In 1923 the republic of Turkey was set up with Ataturk as the first president of the secular republic.

### **Economy**

*A leader of production in many fields*

Turkey is among the world's leading producers of agricultural products, textiles, motor vehicles, ships and other transportation equipment, construction materials, consumer electronics and home appliances. Turkey has the 17th largest GDP in the world and is often classified as a newly industrialised country by economists. Turkey's growth was averaging around 5% before the global financial crisis and while it has suffered from the crisis, it is better placed than most Middle Eastern countries to come out of it strongly.