

Turkey

Facts and Statistics

Location: southeastern Europe and southwestern Asia (that portion of Turkey west of the Bosphorus is geographically part of Europe), bordering the Black Sea, between Bulgaria and Georgia, and bordering the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, between Greece and Syria

Capital: Ankara

Climate: temperate; hot, dry summers with mild, wet winters; harsher in interior

Population: 68,893,918 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Turkish 80%, Kurdish 20% (estimated)

Religions: Muslim 99.8% (mostly Sunni), other 0.2% (mostly Christians and Jews)

Government: republican parliamentary democracy

The Turkish Language

The official language, Turkish, is the first language spoken by 90% of the 63m population. Minority languages include Kurdish, spoken by 6% of the population. Arabic is spoken by 1.2% of the Turkish population; most of those speakers are bilingual Arabic and Turkish speakers. Other minority languages include Circassian, spoken by more than 0.09% throughout the country, Greek, Armenian and Judezmo, a Romance language spoken by Jews.

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Turkish Society and Culture

Islam

Islam is the religion of the majority of Turks although the state is fiercely secular. Islam emanated from what is today Saudi Arabia. The Prophet Muhammad is seen as the last of God's emissaries (following in the footsteps of Jesus, Moses, Abraham, etc) to bring revelation to mankind. He was distinguished with bringing a message for the whole of mankind, rather than just to a certain peoples. As Moses brought the Torah and Jesus the Bible, Muhammad brought the last book, the Quran. The Quran and the actions of the Prophet (the Sunnah) are used as the basis for all guidance in the religion.

Among certain obligations for Muslims are to pray five times a day - at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and evening. The exact time is listed in the local newspaper each day. Friday is the Muslim holy day although this is not practiced in Turkey. However, most males will attend the congregational afternoon prayer. During the holy month of Ramazan (Ramadan) all Muslims must fast from dawn to dusk. Fasting includes no eating, drinking, cigarette smoking, or gum chewing