



# Turkey

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## *cultural note*

Turkey occupies one of the most strategic locations in the world. Turkey controls access to the Black Sea. Russia's only warm-water ports lie on the Black Sea; Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, and Georgia also depend upon their Black Sea ports. Access out of the Black Sea into the Mediterranean is via the straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, both of which lie entirely in Turkish territory.

Furthermore, as the only member of NATO in direct proximity to Russia, Iran, and Iraq, Turkey's strategic importance cannot be underestimated.

## Country Background

### History

The Republic of Turkey is the successor to a series of empires that have existed on the Anatolian peninsula since the dawn of recorded history.

The current state emerged from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after its defeat in the First World War. A war hero, Mustafa Kemal (later known as Kemal Atatürk), held the ethnically Turkish areas of the empire together. Despite invading armies, fundamentalist opposition, and the total absence of a democratic tradition, he turned the core of this crumbling Islamic empire into a secular republic. Founded in 1923, this Turkish Republic has survived and prospered to this day.

## *cultural note*

The history of modern Turkey is inseparable from the biography of one man Kemal Atatürk, Turkey's national hero.

At the time of his birth in 1881, the Ottoman Empire had been reduced to a Middle Eastern dominion. Possessions in North Africa, the Caucasus, and Europe had been taken away (in Europe alone, the countries of Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Albania were all once occupied by the Ottomans). But the beleaguered empire was still a power, and Mustafa Kemal attended the War College and rose through the ranks of the military. He was an energetic student and officer, and one of his teachers nicknamed him Kemal (excellence). He became involved in a nationalist reform group known as the Young Turks. The Young Turks finally achieved power, but failed to liberalize the government. Disappointed, Kemal broke with the Young Turks.

Since Russia (Turkey's traditional enemy) was allied with Britain and France, Turkey allied itself with the Central Powers in World War I. Kemal was then a lieutenant colonel of the infantry. He emerged as his country's greatest war hero, providing one of the Ottoman Empire's few victories by repulsing an overwhelming British attack at Gallipoli, saving the Ottoman capital of Istanbul (formerly known as Constantinople) from invasion.

After the defeat of the Central Powers, the victorious Allies proceeded to dismember the Ottoman Empire. A Turkish nationalist army was formed with Kemal as its leader, and a struggle that became known as the Turkish War of Independence was underway. After building the army up to a point where it threatened the Allied Occupation Forces, Kemal quit to become president of the new Turkish nationalist parliament in Ankara. Turkey then had two opposing governments: Kemal's nationalists in Ankara, and one in the old capital of Istanbul, under the thumb of the Allied Occupation Forces.

Unwilling to fight further, the Allies eventually recognized the new government in Ankara as the legitimate leaders of the Turkish areas of the Ottoman Empire. The modern Republic of Turkey was born on October 29, 1923, with Kemal as its president.

Kemal remained in power until his death fifteen years later and initiated an astonishing number of reforms. To Kemal, modernization meant Westernization. Turkey became a democratic secular state - no easy feat in a Muslim land. The old titles were abolished, and all Turks were ordered to adopt surnames. Kemal was awarded the surname Atatürk (father of the Turks) by the parliament. Illiteracy was reduced by replacing Arabic script with the easier-to-master Roman alphabet. These and other reforms were not accomplished without considerable opposition. For most of his tenure, Kemal Atatürk found it necessary to rule Turkey as a one-party state. But the government he founded was strong enough to endure even after his death.

Turkey managed to remain neutral in World War II. Choosing to ally itself with the West in the cold war, Turkey sent an infantry contingent to fight in Korea in 1950 and joined NATO in 1952. Political turmoil following the introduction of multiparty elections sometimes resulted in the Turkish military involving itself in government. But throughout it all, Turkey has maintained a more stable, pro-Western government than most countries with Islamic majorities.

The 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq put enormous strains upon Turkey. Turkey was a major trading partner of neighboring Iraq, but it supported both the embargo against Iraq and the multinational coalition that liberated Kuwait in 1991. Although Turkish troops did not serve in the liberation, the use of Turkish air bases was considered vital. Turkey experienced economic problems from both the embargo and high inflation during the Gulf crisis, although these were partially offset by \$4 billion in grants and credits from Turkey's grateful allies.

In June 1992, Turkey initiated the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Treaty. Signed by Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and several ex-Soviet republics, the treaty is designed to enhance trade within the region.

## Type of Government

The Republic of Turkey is a multiparty democracy. The president is the chief of state. The presidency was traditionally a largely ceremonial office, but the late President Turgut Ozal (who was also a former prime minister) turned it into a forum for directing Turkey's international affairs. The prime minister is the head of the government.

There is one legislative house, the 450-seat Grand National Assembly.

The Gulf crisis thrust Turkish President Turgut Ozal into the international spotlight. However, Ozal's foreign policies were not universally popular within Turkey. Opposition leaders accused him of exceeding his authority by involving Turkey in a war against Iraq. Problems increased with the establishment of the coalition-protected Kurdish zone in northern Iraq. Turkey's own Kurds agitated for autonomy, and the

secessionist Kurdish Workers' Party took advantage of the protected zone to establish bases from which they attacked Turkish security troops. A government program to meet some Kurdish demands failed to halt the rising violence.

Turkey is also concerned about wars in various regions of the former U.S.S.R., especially between Armenia and Azerbaijan (centered on the autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabakh). The Muslim Azeris are considered friends of Turkey, but there is historic animosity between the Turks and the Christian Armenians. Should the Armenians win this war, Turkey reserves its historic right to intervene in conflicts on its border.

### *cultural note*

With the breakup of the former U.S.S.R., Turkey and Iran are in a battle for influence over the Islamic republics of the former Soviet Union. This battle is being waged on numerous fronts - even over which alphabet to use. All of the Muslim ex-Soviet republics wish to drop the Russian Cyrillic alphabet, which was forced upon them by Moscow. Whether they adopt the Arabic alphabet used by Iran or the Roman alphabet used by Turkey is a matter of great debate. Turkey and Iran are trying to influence the decision by sending books and typewriters using their respective alphabets to the Muslim republics.

## Language

Turkish is the official language. It is a member of the Ural-Altai linguistic group, and thus totally unlike any Indo-European language (such as English, German, or the Romance tongues). Turkish used to be written in Arabic script, but in 1928 the Latin alphabet was officially adopted. This made education much simpler, and today the literacy rate has increased to over 70 percent. English is a popular second language.

## Religion

Turkey has no official religion, although 90 percent of the Turkish population is Sunni Muslim. The remaining 10 percent are mostly other Muslim sects, plus some Christians and Jews.

## Demographics

Of Turkey's 55.3 million inhabitants, some 85 percent are ethnic Turks. There are a significant number of minorities, including Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and Arabs, but the largest minority group (12 percent) is the Kurds.

## Cultural Orientation

### Cognitive Styles: How Turks Organize and Process Information

Historically, Turks are generally closed to outside information. This is ameliorated somewhat by Turkey's position as a bridge between East and West. Turks are trained to process information subjectively and associatively. Turkey is a secularized Islamic nation, and one's personal involvement is more important than rules or laws.

### Negotiation Strategies: What Turks Accept as Evidence

On any question, the answer comes from a combination of immediate feelings and faith in the ideologies of Islam. Among Turks, truth seldom comes from the accumulation of objective facts.

## Value Systems: The Basis for Behavior

Turkey's territory lies both in Europe and Asia, and its value systems have always been an amalgam of East and West. The following three sections identify the Value Systems in the predominant culture - their methods of dividing right from wrong, good from evil, and so forth.

### Locus of Decision Making

The male leader is the decision maker, but he always considers the family group upon which the decision is binding. Private life is overwhelmed by family, friends, and organizations, and these determine one's opinions. A relationship between participants must be established before any formal negotiations can take place. Identity is based on the social system, and education is the primary vehicle for moving up the social ladder.

### Sources of Anxiety Reduction

Stability and identity in life come from one's role in the social structure, plus the presence of a strong family orientation. There is a deeply ingrained work ethic, but time is not a major source of anxiety. Pride in one's country, society, and family bolsters one's self-image and self-esteem. Emotions are shown, assertiveness is expected, and risks are taken to develop self-reliance.

### Issues of Equality / Inequality

There is a definite social hierarchy, with some bias against classes, ethnic groups (especially the Kurds), and religions. The privileged elite control the country, with conspicuous consumption and education being the status symbols. There is not a lot of trust in people outside of the family and intimate friends. The old dominate the young, and men try to dominate women even though they have equal rights by law. Men and women historically had separate social subsocieties and did not mix in public, but this is changing rapidly.

## Business Practices

### Appointments



#### *punctuality*

- You are expected to be punctual for all business appointments.
- Traffic jams are frequent in both Istanbul and Ankara, so allow yourself plenty of travel time.
- Arrange appointments by mail well in advance. A personal introduction (or at least a letter of introduction) will be of great help to you in gaining acceptance.
- Turkish business people who deal internationally are usually able to communicate in one or more foreign languages. English is commonly understood, as are German and French. Given advance notice, your Turkish colleagues should be able to conduct business in English; they probably have an English-speaking person on their staff.

Business letters may also be in English. However, Turks will appreciate the effort if you learn at least a few phrases in Turkish.

- Do not expect to get right down to business in a meeting with a Turkish business person. The seemingly interminable small talk that precedes business allows him or her to get to know you.
- Business and banking hours: 9:00 AM to 12 noon and 2:00 P.m. to 5:00 P.m., Monday through Friday. (Note that business executives generally arrive between 9:30 and 10:00 A.m. and return from lunch around 2:30 P.m.)
- Although Friday is the Muslim holy day, business is still conducted on that day. Sunday is the government-mandated "day of rest."
- Business appointments can rarely be made during the months of June, July, and August; most Turkish business people take extended vacations during this time.
- Obviously, you cannot expect to conduct business on a Turkish holiday. Be aware that many people will begin the holiday around noon the day before.

### *cultural note*

both secular and Islamic holidays are celebrated in Turkey.

November 10 is a secular holiday remembering the death of the founder of modern Turkey, Kemal Atatürk, in 1938. It is a serious insult not to observe the moment of silence at 9:05 A.M., the time of Atatürk's death.

These Muslim holidays will fall on different dates each year:

- Ramazan (called Ramadan in other Muslim countries), the holy month. Observers fast from dawn until dusk. Dusk is announced by a cannon shot. The faithful are awakened before sunrise by drummers who roam the streets, reminding them to eat before dawn. It is impolite for nonbelievers to eat, drink, or even smoke in the presence of those who are fasting; be discreet. Office hours may be curtailed. No surprisingly fasting people may be short-tempered, especially when Ramazan falls during the sweltering days of summer. This is called Ramazan kafasi, or Ramazan irritability (literally, "Ramazan head").
- Sheker Bayram, the three-day festival at the end of the Ramazan fast. Children go door to door asking for sweets; Muslims exchange greeting cards, feast, and visit one another. Banks and offices are closed for all three days.
- Kurbon Bayram, the feast of the sacrifice. Celebrating the traditional story of Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son Isaac, this is the most important religious and secular holiday of the year. The holiday lasts for four days, but many banks and businesses close for an entire week. Resorts and transportation will be booked solid.



### Negotiating

- In a family-owned business, the decision maker may be quite elderly. Remember that elders are always deferred to in Turkey. Never lose your temper or shout at an elder.
- The pace of negotiation is much slower in Turkey than it is in the United States. Politeness is important, and negotiations may take place over innumerable cups of tea or coffee. Meetings start slowly, with many inquiries as to your background, your

education, and so on. Many of these questions will seem irrelevant to the purpose of your visit, but it is a serious breach of etiquette to cut them short.

- Business cards need not be translated into Turkish. Bring plenty of them, and give them to everyone you meet. When you enter an office and hand the receptionist your card, the receptionist will probably keep it rather than sending it in to announce you, so give another to the business person you have come to see.
- In conversation, avoid taking sides in any Turkish political question or on the Turkish-Greek dispute over Cyprus. Safe topics include families, personal hobbies and interests, professions, and noncontroversial international affairs. Always ask a Turkish father about his family; few subjects give a Turk more pride than his sons.
- Tobacco is everywhere in Turkey. No-smoking zones are virtually nonexistent. If you are allergic to tobacco smoke, you will have a difficult time in Turkey.



### Business Entertaining

- By and large, most business entertaining will take place in restaurants. This is not a drawback, as Turkish cuisine is one of the finest in the world. However, you may not get the chance to act as host; Turkish hospitality is legendary, and your colleagues may insist upon doing (and paying for) all of the entertaining. When your colleagues invite you to a restaurant, you will not be allowed to pay for even part of the meal.
- Only when you issue an invitation to a meal will you be allowed to pick up the tab - and even then you may have to fight off your colleagues' efforts to grab the check.
- In general, restaurants in the international hotels are bland and uninteresting compared to the average Turkish restaurant. However, Western-style alcoholic drinks are more readily available in such hotels.
- Turks use the same eating utensils that Americans use. The fork is held in the left hand and the knife in the right; the knife is used for cutting and to push food onto the fork.
- Service in Turkish restaurants is very quick. Except in the international hotel restaurants, Turks do not usually order the entire meal at once. Instead they order the courses one at a time, deciding what to eat next only after finishing the last course.
- Turks usually smoke between courses.
- A toothpick is usually offered at the end of the meal. You may use it at the table, but be sure to cover your mouth with your hand.

### *cultural note*

Tea, rather than coffee, is the national drink. A concentrated tea is poured into small, tulip-shaped glasses (hold the glass by the rim to avoid burning your fingers), and water is added to dilute the tea to your taste. Sugar may be added to tea, but never milk. As the glasses are small, you will probably go through many of them during a meeting. Outdoor tea gardens are common, and quite pleasant.

Turkish coffee is strong, and is best appreciated as an after-dinner drink. Each Cup is brewed individually, and the sugar is added at the time of the brewing, so you must indicate whether you want it plain or with little, medium, or lots of sugar. (U.S. palates usually require medium sugar.) Don't drain the cup; there will be coffee

grounds at the bottom. Milk is not usually added to Turkish coffee but is generally available with instant coffee or the less concentrated American-style coffee.

## Time

- Turkey is on Eastern European Time, which is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (G.M.T. + 2) - except between April and September, when Turkish clocks are advanced one hour, it is seven hours ahead of U.S. Eastern Standard Time, (E.S.T. + 7).

## Protocol



### Greetings

- Shake hands firmly when greeting or being introduced to a Turkish man. It is not customary to shake hands again upon departure.
- Turks may greet a close friend of either sex with a two-handed handshake and/or a kiss on both cheeks.
- Elders are respected in Turkey; if you are seated, rise to greet them when they enter a room. When being introduced to a group of men, shake hands with each one, starting with the eldest.
- Remember that Turkey is primarily a Muslim country, so the vast majority of your business contacts will be male. Women are usually kept out of business affairs by ethnic Turks. Do not address a Turkish woman unless she has been formally introduced to you. If this happens, wait for her to extend her hand before offering to shake hands. Any businesswomen you meet will probably be Greek or Armenian rather than Turkish.

### *cultural note*

The traditional Turkish greetings are "Merhaba" (MEHR-hah-bah; Hello) and "Nasilsiniz?" (NAHS-sulh-suh-nuhz; How are you?). The response to the latter is "Iyyim, teshekur ederim" (ee-YEE-yihm, tesh-ek-KEWR eh-dehr-eem; I'm fine, thank you!). Turks will appreciate any effort you make to speak their language.



### Titles / Forms of Address

- The easiest and most respectful way to address a Turkish professional is by his occupational title alone. Simply say "Doctor" (Doktor) or "Attorney" (Avukat). If the professional is a woman, add the word Bayan after the title (e.g., Mrs./Miss Attorney is Avukat Bayan).
- When your Turkish colleague does not have a title, the situation becomes more complicated. Realize that most Turks did not have surnames until they were made mandatory by the 1934 Law of Surnames. The order of names is the same as in the United States: first name followed by the surname.
- The traditional mode of address was to use a Turk's first name, followed by bey (for men) or hanım (for women). Use this form with older people unless instructed otherwise.

- Most of the Turks you will do business with use the modern form of address. The modern way is to use the surname, preceded by Bay (for men) or Bayam (for women). For example, Cengiz Dagci, a male novelist, would traditionally be addressed as Cengiz bey. The modern form of address is Bay Dagci (note the difference in spelling: bey vs. bay). Nezihe Meric, a female author, would traditionally be addressed as Nezihe hanim. The modern form of address is Bayam Meric.



## Gestures

- It is safest to keep both feet flat on the ground when sitting. Displaying the soles of your shoes (or feet) to someone is insulting. It is discourteous for women to cross their legs while facing another person.
- It is rude to cross your arms while facing someone.
- Keep your hands out of your pockets while speaking.
- Avoid blowing your nose in public, especially in a restaurant. If you must, turn away from others and blow as quietly as possible.
- Do not kiss, hug, or even hold hands with someone of the opposite sex in public.
- While Turks indicate "yes" by nodding their heads up and down (the same way as in the United States), the gestures for "no" are different. Two ways to indicate "no" are as follows:
  1. Raising the eyebrows is a subtle way to indicate "no." This arch look may be accompanied by the sound "tsk."
  2. A broader way to indicate "no" is to accompany the eyebrow-arching with a backward tilting of the head and lowering of the eyelids (rather like someone trying to peer through the lower half of a pair of bifocals).
- The U.S. gesture for "no" (wagging the head from side to side) is a Turkish gesture for "I don't understand." If you inadvertently make this gesture in response to a question, a Turk will probably assume that you did not comprehend the language and will ask the question in another tongue.
- Describing a desired length by holding the palms apart in midair (in the manner of a fisherman describing "the one that got away") will not be understood in Turkey. The Turks approximate length by extending one arm and placing the flat of the other hand on the arm; the length indicated is measured from the fingertips of the extended arm up to the side of the hand.
- To attract attention, Turks wave (palm out) with an up-and-down motion, rather than from side to side.
- The Turkish "follow me" gesture is done with the entire curled hand moved in a downward "scooping" motion, not by curling an upraised index finger. It is considered rude to point your finger directly at someone.



## Gifts

- Your gift-giving responsibilities are very limited as long as your Turkish colleagues entertain you only in public places like restaurants. If you know that your colleague drinks, a fine whiskey or liqueur is appropriate.
- If you are invited to a Turkish home - and an invitation may come more quickly from someone you meet socially than from a business colleague - a gift will be expected. If you are not the only guest, your hostess may not open the gift in your presence; seeing to the comfort of the guests takes priority.
- Again, wine or liquor is appropriate if you are sure your hosts drink alcohol. Other suitable gifts are candy, pastries, roses, or carnations. Glassware, such as a vase, goblet, or decanter is a prized gift.
- If your invitation is for an extended stay (rather than a meal), further gifts are advisable. Items such as records or books in English are prized, as they are hard to find in Turkey. Be sure to bring gifts for the children, such as candy (especially chocolate) or small toys.
- Orthodox Islam prohibits alcohol and depictions of the human body (including photographs and drawings). Ascertain whether your hosts adhere to these strictures before giving such gifts.



## Dress

- Business dress is conservative: dark suits for men; suits and heels for women. However, Turkey is very hot in the summer. Jackets and even ties may be removed in the heat. Women's clothing may be comfortable but should remain modest; even in severe heat, necklines may not be low and skirts may not be short.
- Formal dress is required to attend the balls held during New Years and the Turkish national holiday (October 29). Men need dark suits or tuxedos; women wear long gowns.
- Casual dress should also be modest. Shorts are appropriate only at seaside resorts. Jeans are acceptable for both men and women, but they should not be torn or frayed.

### *cultural note*

Should you enter a mosque, your clothing should be appropriate; it can be casual, but it must be modest. Expect to leave your shoes at the door, as one does not walk on mosque carpets in shoes. If you wish, you may rent slippers from an attendant at the mosque for a small fee. Pants are usually acceptable for women, but women are expected to cover their heads, shoulders, and arms. If your clothing is judged unacceptable, an attendant may offer you the loan of a long robe. A small donation to the mosque is always appreciated. Avoid visiting during prayer times or on Fridays (the Muslim holy day).