Azerbaijan

Location

Azerbaijan is located east of turkey and on the western coast of the Caspian Sea. Azerbaijan also borders Russia in the north, Iran in the south, Armenia to the northwest and Georgia to the west. It is in the part of the world called Caucasus which is the Eurasian part of the world near Asia Minor.

Geography

Azerbaijan has mountain ranges in the west and north and a coastline with the Caspian Sea in the east. It has the longest river in the Caucasus region called the Mtkvari. The largest body of water in Azerbaijan is the Mingechaur Reservoir and was made by the damming of the Kura River in the western part of the country. The most interesting part of the geography of Azerbaijan is that part of the county which is separated from the rest by Armenia.

Climate

The climate of Azerbaijan is variable. It is cold in the higher elevation areas in the mountains, and subtropical and dry in the central and eastern part of the country while being subtropical and humid in the south. It is also different in the east where it is quite temperate from the Caspian Sea. On average, Azerbaijan receives 10 inches of rain annually which translates into agricultural land needing to be irrigated.
**History**

Azerbaijan was originally part of the ancient country of Albania. It was once part of the empire of Alexander the Great. It eventually was taken over by Islamic people. Azerbaijan was given to Russia as part of Treaty of Gulistan in 1813. Azerbaijan first declared independence from the Russian Empire after World War I. It became the first independent Muslim republic but only lasted for two years from 1918 to 1920, when the Soviet Union invaded and took it back over. It was very strategic during World War II since it supplied most of the Soviet Unions gas and oil used in the war. It regained its independence in 1991 upon the collapse of the Soviet Union but has been having conflict with Armenia ever since over land disputes.

**Important Dates**

Azerbaijan’s gained its independence from the Soviet Union on August 30th, 1991. On January 20th, 1990 Soviet tanks killed people in the streets of Baku and so this date is now observed as a holiday.

**Population**

Azerbaijan has a population of 7,911,974 people. 90% of the population is ethnically considered Azeri. Russians form about 1.8% of the population and are the second largest ethnic group.
**Currency**

The currency of Azerbaijan is the Manat. One U.S. Dollar is equal to .918 Azerbaijani Manats (2006).

**Education**

Azerbaijan is ranked 38th in the world with a literacy rate at 98.8%.

**Language**

The official language is Azerbaijani which has 23 to 30 million speakers throughout the world. Persian and Russian are also spoken significantly.

**Religion**

A majority, 96%, of Azeris are Muslim. The remaining 4% of the population are various Christian sects such as Russian Orthodox Church or are atheist or agnostic.

**Agriculture**

Most of the farms in Azerbaijan are irrigated. Despite only having 15% of the land being farmable, agriculture is responsible for 33% of the GDP. Seafood is a major portion of agriculture and caviar and fish are captured from the Caspian Sea. Also, silkworms are grown for natural silk production. Some crops such as cotton, tea, and tobacco are grown in Azerbaijan. Cattle, sheep and goats are often raised on the pasture in and around the mountain ranges where land is unfit for crop production.
**Trade**

A majority of Azerbaijani trade has to deal with oil. Azerbaijan is considered one of the biggest untapped oil sources in the world. They also export textiles made from domestic cotton.

**Landmarks**

One of the major landmarks in Azerbaijan is in its’ capital Baku. The landmark is called the Maiden Tower. This tower was built sometime in the 12th century with no distinct architectural design. It is one of the nations most noted landmarks. Once it stood right against the Caspian Sea but because of changes in the land it is a small distance away. In Baku is Martyr’s Cemetery, which is dedicated to the people killed by the Soviets on January 20th, 1990, and those killed in the war against Armenia.

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