

TURKMENISTAN

**Country Dialling Code (Tel/Fax): ++993**

Turkmeniyakhat (State Tourist Corporation of Turkmenistan): 17 Pushkin Street, 744000 Ashgabat, Turkmenistan Tel: (12) 354 777 Fax: (12) 396 740 E-mail: travel@online.tm

Capital: Ashgabat **Time:** GMT + 5

Background: Annexed by Russia between 1865 and 1885, Turkmenistan became a Soviet republic in 1925. It achieved its independence upon the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. President NIYAZOV retains absolute control over the country and opposition is not tolerated. Extensive hydrocarbon/natural gas reserves could prove a boon to this underdeveloped country if extraction and delivery projects can be worked out.

Location: Central Asia, bordering the Caspian Sea, between Iran and Kazakhstan

Map References: Commonwealth of Independent States

Area: total: 488,100 sq km, land: 488,100 sq km, water: 0 sq km

Climate: subtropical desert

Terrain: flat-to-rolling sandy desert with dunes rising to mountains in the south; low mountains along border with Iran; borders Caspian Sea in west

Natural Resources: petroleum, natural gas, coal, sulfur, salt

Population: 4,518,268 (July 2000 est.)

Nationality: *noun:* Turkmen(s), *adjective:* Turkmen

Ethnic Groups: Turkmen 77%, Uzbek 9.2%, Russian 6.7%, Kazakh 2%, other 5.1% (1995)

Religions: Muslim 89%, Eastern Orthodox 9%, unknown 2%

Languages: Turkmen 72%, Russian 12%, Uzbek 9%, other 7%

Economy: Turkmenistan is largely desert country with nomadic cattle raising, intensive agriculture in irrigated oases, and huge gas and oil resources. One-half of its irrigated land is planted in cotton, making it the world's tenth largest producer. It also possesses the world's fifth largest reserves of natural gas and substantial oil resources. Until the end of 1993, Turkmenistan had experienced less economic disruption than other former Soviet states because its economy received a boost from higher prices for oil and gas and a sharp increase in hard currency earnings. In 1994, Russia's refusal to export Turkmen gas to hard currency markets and mounting debts of its major customers in the former USSR for gas deliveries contributed to a sharp fall in industrial production and caused the budget to shift from a surplus to a slight deficit. With an authoritarian ex-communist regime in power and a tribally based social structure, Turkmenistan has taken a cautious approach to economic reform, hoping to use gas and cotton sales to sustain its inefficient economy. Privatization goals remain limited. Turkmenistan is working hard to open new gas export channels through Iran and Turkey to Europe, but these will take many years to realize. In 1998-99, Turkmenistan faced revenue shortfalls due to the continued lack of adequate export routes for natural gas and obligations on extensive short-term external debt. Prospects in the near future are discouraging because of widespread internal poverty and the burden of foreign debt. IMF assistance would seem to be necessary, yet the government is not as yet ready to accept IMF requirements. Turkmenistan's 1999 deal to ship 20 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas through Russia's Gazprom will help alleviate the 2000 fiscal shortfall, but will not make up for the absence of meaningful progress in economic reform.

Industries: natural gas, oil, petroleum products, textiles, food processing

Currency: 1 Turkmen manat (TMM) = 100 tenes

Railways: total: 2,187 km, *broad gauge:* 2,187 km 1.520-m gauge (1996 est.)

Highways: total: 24,000 km, paved: 19,488 km (these roads are said to be hard-surfaced, meaning that some are paved and some are all-weather gravel surfaced), unpaved: 4,512 km (1996 est.)

Waterways: the Amu Darya is an important inland waterway

Ports and Harbors: Turkmenbashi

Airports: 64 (1994 est.) Airports - with paved runways: total: 22, 2,438 to 3,047 m: 13, 1,524 to 2,437 m: 8, 914 to 1,523 m: 1 (1994 est.) Airports - with unpaved runways: total: 42, 914 to 1,523 m: 7, under 914 m: 35 (1994 est.)

Visa: required by all. Special permission must be sought by those wishing to visit border zones.

Duty Free: permitted goods: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco; 1.5 litres of spirits and 2 litres of wine; personal belongings up to a value of TMM500.

Health: cholera is a risk Turkmenistan and precautions are advisable. Malaria risk exists from June to October in some villages located in the southeastern part of the country, mainly in the Mary district. All water should be regarded as a potential health risk.

HOTELS•MOTELS•INNS

ASHGABAT

AHAL, Berzengy, Tel: 48 87 38 (9) Fax: 48 01 92, 16 rooms, 5 apartments, 1 restaurant, ahal@online.tm

AK ALTYN, 141 Makhtumkuli Ave, Tel: 36 37 00 Fax: 36 34 94, 136 rooms, 18 suites, 2 restaurants

ARKACH, Berzengy, Tel: 48 03 51, 11 rooms, 1 restaurant

GARA ALTYN, Berzengy, Tel: 48 93 22 Fax: 48 93 23, 6 rooms, 10 suites, 1 apartment, 1 restaurant

GRAND TURKMEN, 7 Gerogly Str 744000, Tel: 51 05 55 Fax: 5112 51, 96 rooms, 24 suites, 2 restaurants, grandhtl@online.tm

NISSA, 18b Atabaeva Str, Tel: 22 10 25 (26), 123 rooms, 12 suites, 3 apartments, 1 restaurant ahal@online.tm

SHERATON GRAND TURKMEN HOTEL, Gorogly Street 7, 744000 Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, Tel: +993 12 510555, Fax: +993 12 511251

TURKMENISTAN, 19 Bitarap Turkmenistan Str, Tel: 35 05 44, 48 rooms, 5 suites, 1 restaurant



AIRLINES/HELICOPTERS/AIRPORTS

ASHKABAD AIRPORT, Turkmenistan, Petrozavodskaya Street, 744000 Ashkhabad, Tel: +993 1 225-60-64, +993 1 229-39-64, Fax: +993 1 225-44-02

TURKMENISTAN AIRLINES, 80 Magtymguly St, ASHGABAD Tel: +99312-393469 Fax -510144, <http://www.turkmenistanairlines.com>

