

ARMENIA (*Hayastan*)



Armenia is a mountainous republic in the Caucasus that received its independence in 1991 as a part of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Armenian culture and language have remained consistent and distinct since ancient times. The kingdom of Armenia was the first to adopt Christianity, before the Roman Empire, in the 4th century CE. During the long reign of the Ottoman Empire, Armenian minorities came to play a significant role in the imperial economy. Armenians suffered a genocide during WWI from the Young Turk leadership of the Ottoman state that remains contentious to this day. Mount Ararat is a prominent symbol of Armenian heritage and culture and Lake Sevan is the largest body of water accessible to the landlocked nation.

QUICK FACTS

- Population:** 3 million (2015)
- Area:** 29,734 sq km (about the size of Hawaii)
- Capital:** Yerevan (1.06 million)
- Languages:** Armenian (official)

EDUCATION

According to a Unicef EFA standard, Armenia's education system is ranked second lowest in the East European and Central Asian former Soviet Republics, with Moldova ranking behind them. Armenian primary education, inherited from the Soviet Union, is state run and has achieved near universal literacy, however, recent decades have raised concerns about student dropout rates, which hover around 13%.

RELIGION

Armenian religious affiliation is dominated by the Armenian Apostolic Church which claims 93% of the population. The deep Christian heritage in Armenia extends back to the story that two of Jesus' apostles, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, were the founders of the church in Armenia. Officially, the kingdom of Armenia became Christian in 301 CE. Due to the near total homogeneity of the Armenian ethnic and religious population, constitutional protection of freedom of religion was rather late in coming (2005).

ETHNICITY

Armenia is 97% made up of ethnic Armenians. There is a significantly sized Armenian diaspora as well, which by many accounts, outnumbers the internal population. There are small Russian, Georgian, and Yazidi minorities in Armenia. The Nagorno-Karabakh region, the subject of war and conflict in the early 1990's and contention ever since, is also primarily ethnic Armenian, despite its location inside of the republic of Azerbaijan. The Armenian language is part of the Indo-European group, however, it has a unique and ancient alphabet.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS

Armenian customs and family structures are based on Armenia's Christian heritage. As a Christian nation in contact with and predominantly surrounded by Islamic nations, Armenian Christian culture has been reinforced. National holidays include state holidays from the Soviet era, such as May 1 (International Worker's Day) and March 8 (International Women's Day) as well as a holiday in remembrance of the Armenian genocide (April 24). Armenians celebrate Vardavar, a holiday that takes place 98 days after Easter and has roots in an ancient pagan holiday, although it has become a Christian holiday, during which people soak each other with water.



Updated: 8/10/15 *Candle memorial service for the genocide.*

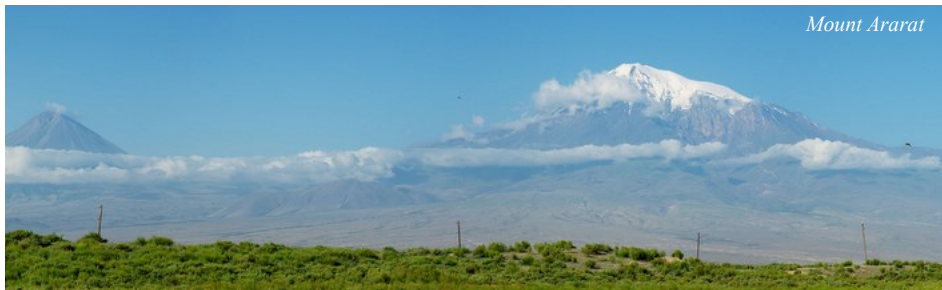


CONTEMPORARY ARMENIA

Modern day Armenia came into independence with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The first years following independence were consumed in conflict with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, a mountainous area fully encircled by Azerbaijan, but containing a primarily Armenian population. The collapse of the Soviet Union provided the catalyst for a full-scale conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which was brought to an unsatisfactory cease-fire in 1994. Violence in the region has continued, with 74 casualties reported in 2014 and a total of between 20,000-30,000 killed over the last 25 years.

Much of Armenia's current economic and political woes can be traced to trade embargoes maintained by Turkey and Azerbaijan against Armenia due to the conflict. Another point of serious concern for the Republic of Armenia and the global Armenian community is Turkey's refusal to officially recognize the Armenian genocide during WWI. Turkey continues to reject the term "genocide," despite ample evidence that over one million Armenians were displaced and systematically killed in desert marches.

Emigration from Armenia is of great concern for the republic. Estimates show that nearly one quarter of the population of Armenia has left the country for more prosperous nations since 1991. This has been facilitated by the large and prosperous Armenian diaspora community, much of which is located in Moscow, Glendale, Fresno, and Paris.



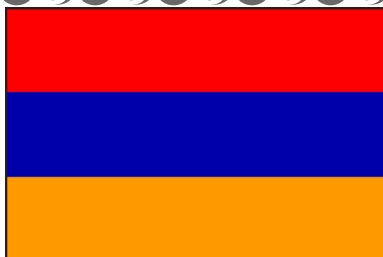
Mount Ararat

ARMENIANS IN THE USA

The Armenian population of the United States is officially recognized to be nearly 500,000. However, many estimates claim as many as 1.5 million Armenians reside in the U.S. Armenian Americans are the most influential of the diaspora communities. The Greater Los Angeles area and the state of California contain the largest Armenian American community in the country. Armenian Americans are fairly well integrated, nevertheless, a distinct sub-culture is vigorously maintained, through religious affiliation and special schools for language instruction.



The flag is comprised of three equal horizontal bands of red, blue and the color of apricot.



Haghpap Monastery

NAMES

Armenian surnames are fairly easy to identify as they usually end in *-ian*. Such as Darakjian or Kardashian. Fairly common Armenian male names include Hrant and Sahak; female names include Hourig and Anahit.

FAMOUS ARMENIANS

The most famous Armenian American author was William Saroyan, who wrote populist short stories in the middle of the 20th century about life in Fresno and California's Central Valley. Cher and the Kardashians are American celebrities of Armenian heritage. Gary Kasparov, world chess champion and Karen Shakhnazarov, famous Soviet and Russian filmmaker are of Armenian heritage as well.

ARMENIAN WORDS

Hi	barev
Bye	tesutyun
Good morning	bari luys
Yes	ayo
No	che
Please/You're welcome	kh'ntrem
Thank you	sh'norhakal em
How are you?	vonts es?
I do not understand	chem haskanum
Do you speak...?	khosum es ...?
What is your name?.....	anun't inch e?
My name is	anun's ... e
Where are you from?	vorteghits ek?

USEFUL LINKS

- <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/am.html>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17398605>
- <http://hetq.am/eng/>