Kyrgyzstan is among the most mountainous and the second smallest in size of the Central Asian Republics. The Tian Shan mountain region covers 80% of the country and has earned Kyrgyzstan the title “Switzerland of Central Asia.” Kyrgyz national identity emerged in the 20th century under Soviet rule. Prior to Russian imperial rule, Kyrgyz social groupings were primarily tribal and confessional. Kyrgyzstan shares complicated border arrangements in the Ferghana Valley with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Under Soviet rule, Kyrgyzstan was known as Kirghizia.

EDUCATION
Like all countries that experienced Soviet rule, Kyrgyzstan has universal public education made available to all citizens. Literacy is touted somewhere in the high 19th percentile group and women are granted equal access to institutions of learning, secondary or otherwise. Secondary education tends to extend through the 11th grade, although many students may choose to opt out after ninth grade in order to pursue a more focused vocational training track. Public education in Central Asian republics has always aspired to greater universality than actually demonstrated and many of the facts on the matter were manipulated during the Soviet period to appease Party officials and meet quotas.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS
Kyrgyzstan celebrates many of the same holidays as other former Soviet Republics, such as May Day (May 1st) and Victory Day (May 9th) as well as the Persian new year/Spring festival Nooruz (March 21st). Kyrgyz cuisine includes plov and manti like Kazakh food, as well as the popular cold-noodle spicy vegetable dish ash-lam-foo. Marital patterns are dominated by tribal concerns, and as opposed to endogamy among many of the Central Asian tribal groups, Kyrgyz practice demands exogamy. Potential spouses are vetted in advance to determine that shared familial and tribal blood can’t be traced within seven generations.
CONTEMPORARY KYRGYZSTAN

When the Soviet Union collapsed Askar Akayev led the fledgling republic for 15 years, until he was forced to flee the country in 2005 during the “Tulip Revolution.” Ethnic conflict between Uzbek minorities and Kyrgyz military have led to strong criticism from human rights groups. Concurrently, the Kyrgyz government has cracked down on critical journalism, imposing registration measures and censorship practices that have alarmed freedom watch groups. The president of Kyrgyzstan since 2011, Almazbek Atambayev had previously served as Prime Minister and has made promises to curb the corruption and waste widely acknowledged to be ubiquitous in the government. Similar to many countries in the region, Kyrgyzstan has seen an increase in the powers of its executive leaders. In 2016, a controversial referendum expanded the power of the Prime Minister.

Kyrgyzstan’s most significant physical export is gold. It also exports significant amounts of hydroelectric energy. It is currently in midst of a massive development project in conjunction with Russian investment to construct 11 new hydroelectric dams across the nation. Progress has been slow and the deal may have soured.

NAMES

Kyrgyz names are frequently derived from one of the three languages that have had the greatest influence: Persian, Turkic, and Russian. A popular Kyrgyz name is Jyrgal which means “happiness” and can be used for a man or a woman, or Anara, which means “pomegranate” and is derived from Persian.

FAMOUS KYRGYZ

Chinghiz Aitmatov is the most famous literary voice of Kyrgyzstan, having grown up and written in the Communist period, his novels The Day Lasts More Than A Hundred Years and Jamila immortalize Kyrgyz people in Kyrgyz settings. Bübüsara Beyşenalieva was a famous ballerina born in Soviet Kyrgyzstan in 1926 she studied at the Vaganova Ballet Academy in Leningrad and earned the adoration of her country, which put her face on the 5 som note after independence. A statue of her can be found in Bishkek near the opera house.

KYRGYZ WORDS

Welcome....................... Kosh kelingiz!
Hello..................................Salam!
How are you?................. Kandaysyng?
What is your name?........ Senin atyng kim?
Pleased to meet you.....Taanyshkanyma kubanychtamyn!
Good Luck ..................Ak jol kaalaym!
Cheers!.................Den soolugubuz üchün!
I don’t understand.... Tüşüngön jokmun

USEFUL LINKS

http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Kyrgyzzstan.html

The flag is comprised of a sunburst with 40 rays representing the 40 tribes of Kyrgyz people. The cross-hatch of a traditional yurt fills the center.