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Turkey Cultural Standards

Photo and Graphic Images to Avoid

- ~ The "OK" sign in Turkey means that someone is homosexual.
- ~ In Turkey, putting your thumb between your first two fingers is the equivalent to raising your middle finger in the United States.
- ~ Handkerchiefs are also associated with funerals.

Body Language

- ~ Turkish people generally have a small area of personal space and may stand closer than most foreigners are used to.
- ~ Never point the sole of your foot toward a person.
- ~ Do not stand with hands on hips when talking to others, especially older people or superiors, or put your hands in your pockets.
- ~ It is common for Turkish men and women to cheek-kiss one another when meeting and parting.

Language: Turkish (official), Kurdish, Arabic, Armenian, Greek

Turkish is the official language of the country. Some people of Kurdish origin speak Kurdish. A small number of people also speak Arabic. English, German and French are spoken as the second language in cities and more often German in small towns

Religion:

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government imposes some restrictions on Muslim and other religious groups and on Muslim religious expression in government offices and state-run institutions, including universities.

The Turkish state has been officially secular since 1924. Approximately 99% of the population is Muslim. Most Turkish Muslims follow the Sunni traditions of Islam, although a significant number follow Alevi and Shiite traditions. Questions regarding role of religion in society and government, the role of linguistic and ethnic identity, and the public's expectation to live in security dominate public discourse. Turkish citizens who assert a Kurdish identity constitute an ethnic and linguistic group that is estimated at up to 12 million in number.

Government: A multi-party parliamentary democracy since 1946

Media: Free and privately-owned media, with 16 nation-wide TV Networks



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Economy: Member of NATO since 1952. Turkey is a part of the EU Customs Union since 1996, a candidate country to the EU since 1999 that started accession negotiations in October 2005. Turkey has the 17th largest and 4th fastest growing economy in the world.

Culture:

- ~ Turkey is a vibrant amalgamation of two unique cultures, reflecting a diverse collection of ideas, beliefs and values. Crossing both European and Middle Eastern boundaries makes Turkey a fascinating market.
- ~ Modern day Turkey is a secular state: however the philosophy and ideology of Islam still remains a prevalent feature of Turkish culture.
- ~ Although not so prominent in the more Western-influenced areas of the country, the Islamic culture of Turkey continues to influence cultural life, beliefs, language, teaching, social relationships and democracy. It infiltrates all level of society, providing guidance, values and rules for personal life, public behavior and business etiquette.
- ~ Turks are extremely patriotic. They are proud of their ancestors and of the achievements of their modern society. The family is the most important social unit. Rural life is still traditional, but in cities women frequently work outside the home.
- ~ It is common for Turkish men and women to cheek-kiss one another when meeting and parting.
- ~ Western-style clothing is most common. European fashions are especially popular among the youth.
- ~ Some younger women prefer to wear trousers, jeans, T-shirts, in a casual manner, but they also like to put more “womanly” clothes such as mini-skirts and high heels. Many women cover their heads, some in a modern fashion, and some in a more traditional way.
- ~ Except perhaps at universities or in large urban areas, dating in the Western sense is not common. Young people associate more in groups. It is against the law for women to marry before age 15, and men before age 17. The average age for marriage is 22 for women and 25 for men. Most Turks expect to marry and have children.
- ~ Wealth is mostly defined by cash; in country sites by gold and land. Poorest members of the society mostly dream about a life with more cash and in big cities. They mostly believe that in big cities they can increase their life quality; however this is not always true. Most of the people are working for their children to have high level of education which is highly valued. Those who have high level education, work to gain leisure opportunities. In big cities “working for leisure opportunities” is increasing.
- ~ Hospitality is an integral part of Turkish culture. Friends, relatives and neighbors often visit each other. The tradition of hospitality dictates that visitors are always invited in and offered something to drink and eat. Turks to great lengths to make their guests feel comfortable and will even tolerate behavior that they consider inappropriate. In general, the Turkish people are open-minded, hospitable and well educated.
- ~ Throughout history, Anatolia, like Istanbul, has hosted and produced many centers of culture and the legacy of various civilizations attests to that fact. Today, this heritage also determines the cultural life of turkey. The culture of tolerance for all religions and languages living together in peace, spread from Istanbul to Anatolia. This tradition of tolerance is one of the most important inheritances that Turkey can share with the world.

