

# Azerbaijan



## Country Overview:

*Location: Southwestern Asia, bordering the Caspian Sea, between Iran and Russia, with a small European portion north of the Caucasus range*

*Size: 86,600 square kilometers*

*Population: 9,590,159 (July 2013 est.)*

*Capital: Baku (Baki, Baky)*

*Export-commodities: oil and gas 90%, machinery, cotton, foodstuffs*

*Import-commodities: machinery and equipment, oil products, foodstuffs, metals, chemicals*

*Currency: Azerbaijani mantas (ANZ)*

*Religion: Muslim 93.4%, Russian Orthodox 2.5%, Armenian Orthodox 2.3%, other 1.8%*

*Government Type: republic*

*Chief of State: President Ilham Aliyev (since 31 October 2003)*

*Head of Government: Prime Minister Artur RASIZADE (since 4 November 2003); First Deputy Prime Minister Yaqub EYYUBOV (since June 2006)*

*Language: The official language is Azerbaijani or "Azeri", a Turkic language. In addition, 38% of Azerbaijanis speak Russian fluently to accommodate Russian domination of the economy and politics.*



## Republic of Azerbaijan / Azərbyaycan Respublikası

### Meetings and Negotiations

-Azeris appreciate warm and friendly greetings.

-Punctuality **is not** paramount. Arriving within 30 minutes of the stipulated time is socially acceptable.

- Men greet each other with a handshake, a kiss on the cheek and "salaam" (literally 'peace' but meaning 'hello').

- Women hug and kiss each other once on the left cheek. Azeri women do not generally shake hands among themselves, although many will shake hands with a foreigner.

- Males should **wait** and see if a woman extends her hand (although most religious may not). If they do extend it— shake it lightly.

- **First names** are generally used in social situations if the speakers

are of similar ages. If you do not know the person well, use their first name followed by an appropriate **title**.

- Younger people always initiate greetings with older people.

- Use your **right** hand to eat and to pass things (like business cards).

-Expect a great deal of **bargaining and haggling**. Azeris are tough negotiators.

### Business Attire

-Dress **casually** but **smartly**. Never wear tight or revealing clothing.

-For your first meeting, make sure you dress sharply looking like a successful **westerner**.

### Behavior

-If there are many people present shake hands with **everyone**.

-Table manners are **fairly formal**. If in doubt watch what others do.

- **Remain standing** until invited to sit down. You may be shown to a particular seat.

-Keep your elbows off the table and your hands **above** the table when eating.

### Gift Giving

-Gifts are **not** usually brought to a first business meeting.

-Gifts should be offered three times; it is proper to refuse a gift twice and accept on the third offering.

-Gifts are generally not opened when received. It is best to wrap gifts nicely.

### Appropriate Gifts:

-Fruit, pastries and/or flowers

### Gifts to Avoid:

-An even number of flowers in colors of white, yellow, and red

-Avoid giving alcohol unless you are certain your host partakes.

## Business Tips continued

### Conversation

-Although direct communication is seen as a positive, one also has to be careful to employ such **directness**.

-If it is a new or formal relationship, **diplomacy** is critical. If the relationship is well developed a little more honesty is fine.

-Discussions will often start **slowly** over tea and the topics of discussion may be completely irrelevant. However, this is the make or break part of your relationship.

-Always maintain **eye contact** while speaking since Azeris take this as a sign of sincerity.

### Topics to Discuss:

-Azeris culture, climatic zones (of which they have nine), picturesque countryside and their ancient history

-At the initial meeting, it is a good idea to meet your Azeri counterpart on a personal level. Ask about his/her family without prying. Questions about the children will

be welcomed.

-Find out about their work, role and company.

### Topics to Avoid:

-Do not discuss local politics. Try to avoid discussing religion. Islamic values of Azeris vary from person to person.

-Avoid coarse language as part of humor or otherwise. It can be considered offensive.