



Turkmenistan



Country Overview:

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

Size: 488,100 sq km

Population: 4,997,503

Capital: Ashkhabad

Export-commodities: Gas, oil, petrochemicals, cotton, oil, butter, wine, fish, and salt

Import-commodities: Machinery and equipment, chemicals, food and live animals

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

Ethnic groups: Turkmen 85%, Uzbek 5%, Russian 4%, other 6%

Government type: secular democracy and a presidential republic

Chief of State: President Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov (since 14 February 2007); note - the president is both the Chief of State and Head of Government

Head of Government: President Gurbanguly BERDIMUHAMEDOW (since 14 February 2007)

Language: Turkmen (official) 72%, Russian 12%, Uzbek 9%, other 7%

Turkmenistan is the 101st largest economy in the world.



Turkmenistan/Türkmenistan

Meetings and Negotiations

- Do not be surprised if the person you are meeting arrives **late** or starts the meeting after the agreed time. However, **punctuality** is expected of foreigners.

- When you greet the person you are meeting with, shake hands **firmly** and have **good eye contact**. However, if you are introduced to a **woman** as a male, it is advisable to wait and see if a hand is extended. If it is not, then **do not** try to shake hands. **Avoid** touching and prolonged eye contact with women.

- Do not be surprised if the Turkmen do not take **notes**; make sure to leave a business card so they have your contact details.

- Turkmen's are generally likely to conduct their dialogue in Russian, speaking through a capable English language interpreter. If you are not a Turkmen or Russian speaker you are advised to hire a good **interpreter**.

Business Attire

- Turkmen usually have high expectations of the way **western** business people should dress and tend to judge you immediately on the basis of this. It is best to try and dress **conservatively and smartly**.

- Turkmen women might be wearing a **scarf** covering their hair.

Behavior

- Turkmen's are **heavy smokers**. If you wish to smoke it is advisable to ask permission and always remember to **offer** them a cigarette.

- If you are asked to attend a lunch or dinner after the meeting, be aware that this is traditionally coupled with strong alcohol such as vodka or cognac. If you try to refuse, you risk **offending** your Turkmenistan associates, so accept a drink, but be careful not to consume too much.

- In restaurants it is traditional for the **man** to pay. If you are a wom-

an taking a man out to lunch or dinner, make it clear that the **company** is paying.

- There is also a tradition that the person who **invites** someone to restaurant also **pays** the bill.

Gift Giving

- It is worth preparing some small gifts to hand out to your business contacts.

- Gifts should be wrapped and they will most likely be opened in private.

- Gifts should not be too expensive, so as not to be viewed as a **bribe**.

Appropriate Gifts:

- Pens, solar calculators, promotional materials, compasses, items from your region/culture, good quality chocolates

Gifts to Avoid:

- Liquor, perfume, products or food from scavenger animals, leather goods from pig, souvenirs

Business Tips Continued

Conversation

- When your business partner arrives, you will begin with banter and conversation centered not on business, but on many other topics. Once you get down to business, you may be overwhelmed by the amount of argument and haggling. People in the Middle East love to talk, discuss, wrangle, and argue.

- People in Turkmenistan are well informed about a wide range of **non-business topics**. They will expect you to be able to reciprocate, so be prepared to show your interest in and knowledge of Turkmenistan.

- Never say **no** directly; it causes shame. Find other ways to express disagreement.

Topics to Discuss:

- Rich heritage of Turkmenistan, history of the Middle Ages, Turkmen carpets and rugs

Topics to Avoid:

- Try not to focus your attention solely on the problems of Turkmenistan even if the locals do this themselves.

related to religion

