

ARMENIA



Interesting facts:

- ✓ Armenia (Biblical landing spot of Noah) is a republic in the Transcaucasia region of eastern Europe, bordered by Georgia on the north, Azerbaijan on the east, and Turkey on the west and south.
- ✓ Armenia occupies about 29,800 sq km (about 11,500 sq mi) of the northeastern portion of the Armenian Highland (slightly smaller than Maryland)
- ✓ Armenia is a landlocked country characterized by high elevations and is extremely mountainous. Its average elevation is about 1800 m (about 5900 ft). Mount Aragats is the highest point in the republic, with an elevation of 4090 m (about 13,420 ft).
- ✓ Climate: highland continental, hot summers, cold winters



ARMENIA



Capital of Armenia-Yerevan



To get idea of how old Yerevan is, consider that the city celebrated its 2,750th anniversary nearly 30 years ago. In fact, Yerevan is one of the world's oldest cities, which was proved by archeological findings in 1950 that showed the city dated to the fortress of Erbuni, built in 783 B.C.

ARMENIA



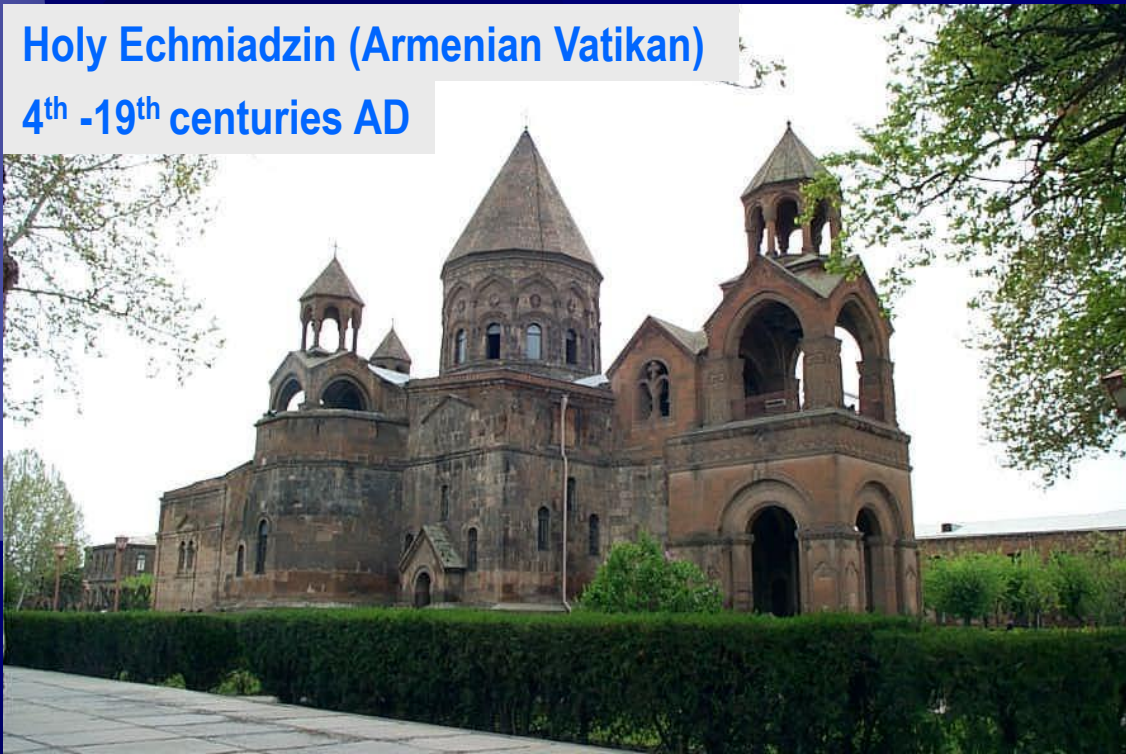
Armenia is one of the earliest sites of human civilization. It is considered by some specialists to be one of the first areas of iron and bronze smelting, and some cereal grains, such as rye, may also have been first developed here. For most of its history, Armenia was controlled or occupied by external powers, including Assyrians, Persians, Romans, Mongols, Ottomans, and Russians.

ARMENIA



Holy Echmiadzin (Armenian Vatikan)

4th -19th centuries AD



Armenia was the first country to accept Christianity as the state religion, in 301 A.D., and it is known for number of beautiful ancient churches and temples. Armenia has remained Christian from that time in spite of numerous conquests and persecutions,

Last year Armenia celebrated 1700 years of Christianity. Pope Of Rome John Paul II paid his visit to Armenia to participate in the celebrations.

AZERBAIJAN



*Agsakkal is greeting you
with typical Azeri hospitality.*

Agsakkal comes from an extraordinary country called Azerbaijan. Some people say it is in Europe, others say it is in Asia. Well, both are right as one fourth of this little country falls into Europe and the rest into Asia.

AZERBAIJAN



- ★ Did you know that Azerbaijan has 9 of the 13 climatic zones known in the world?
- ★ Did you know it has the largest number of mud volcanoes in the world?
- ★ Did you know that there are 47 million Azeris around the world and only 8 million of them live in Azerbaijan?

AZERBAIJAN



- ☀ Did you know that the world's #1 chess player Garry Kasparov was born in Baku and went to a chess school here?
- ☀ Did you know that famous Nobel brothers made their fortune in Baku drilling oil from local oil fields?
- ☀ Did you know that Landau, who won the Nobel Prize in physics for discovering the liquid helium, was born in Baku?

AZERBAIJAN



Azerbaijan is situated in Caucasus right between Europe and Asia, and has always been dependent from it's geographical location. Through out of it's history, this land has been a gate between cultures of Europe and Asia, the East and West. The present day inhabitants of Azerbaijan are the heirs of it's rich history, the descendants of a long and fascinating blend of cultures and civilizations.

BELARUS



- ✳ Belarus is an ancient Slavonic country situated in the East of Europe. It occupies the territory of 207,600 sq. km. and is populated by 10.3 million people.
- ✳ Belarus stretches 650 km from the West to the East and 560 km from the North to the South. It has 6 regions, about 4000 rivers and 1000 lakes. The largest rivers are the Dnieper, the Western Dvina, the Nieman, the Bug; the biggest lake is Narochn.
- ✳ Belarus borders on Russia in the North and the East. On the Ukraine in the southeast, on Poland in the West and on Latvia and Lithuania in the northwest
- ✳ **Climate:** cold winters, cool and moist summers; transitional between continental and maritime
- ✳ **Terrain:** generally flat and contains much marshland

BELARUS

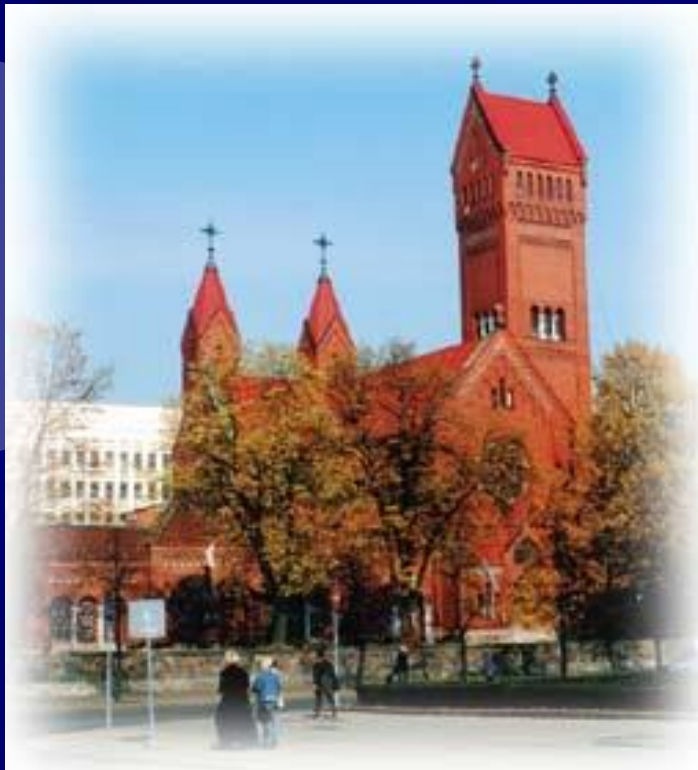


The history of the Belarussian nation has been long and complicated. The first written documents of the Belarussian state go back as far as to 980 AD. From the 14th till the 16th centuries the territory of modern Belarus was the centre of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Being situated on the crossroads of the commercial routes from the East to the West and from the North to the South, Belarus was doomed to get into the focus of infinite wars waged by European countries to control the strategic overland routes. It has been invaded by Russians and Poles, Germans and Swedes, Danes, French and Ukrainians.

BELARUS

Capital of Belarus Minsk



There are several opinions as to the city's name. Some historians refer to an old legend about Menesk (or Minch), a man of extraordinary physical strength who used to protect the town from enemies. Others believe that the name has something to do with the Menka River, some 16 km. to the West of the city's present location). Still others are sure that the town's name was derived from the Slavonic word "mena" (barter,

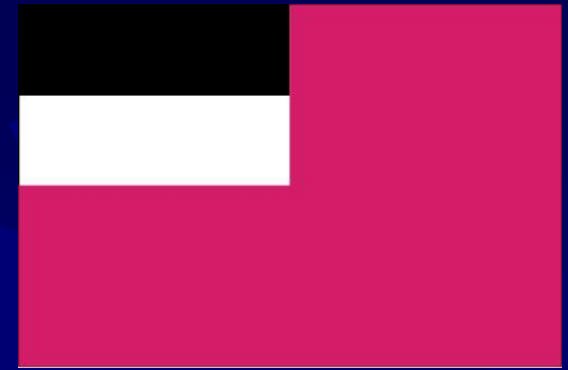
exchange) because in the ancient times there used to be a barter market where the merchants from many countries of Europe and Asia struck deals and exchanged their goods.

BELARUS



Belarus is famous by its beautiful nature: rivers, lakes and forests. One among these forests is Belovezhskaya Pusha, which recently became more famous, but not because of its beauty. On 8 December 1991 in Viskuli, the residence of the Belarusian Government in Belovezhskaya forest preserve, the leaders of the Republic of Belarus, Russian Federation and Ukraine have signed the Agreement on establishment of the **Commonwealth of Independent States** (CIS), which in fact meant end of USSR.

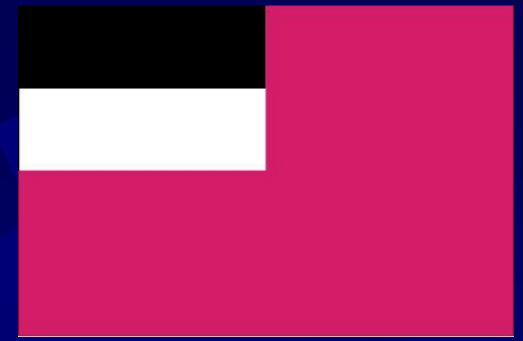
GEORGIA



Interesting facts

- ★ Location: Southwestern Asia, bordering the Black Sea, between Turkey and Russia
- ★ Territory: slightly smaller than South Carolina
- ★ Geography: largely mountainous with Great Caucasus Mountains in the north and Lesser Caucasus Mountains in the south; Kolkhet's Dablobi (Kolkhida Lowland) opens to the Black Sea in the west; Mtkvari River Basin in the east; good soils in river valley flood plains, foothills of Kolkhida Lowland
- ★ Climate: warm and pleasant; Mediterranean-like on Black Sea coast

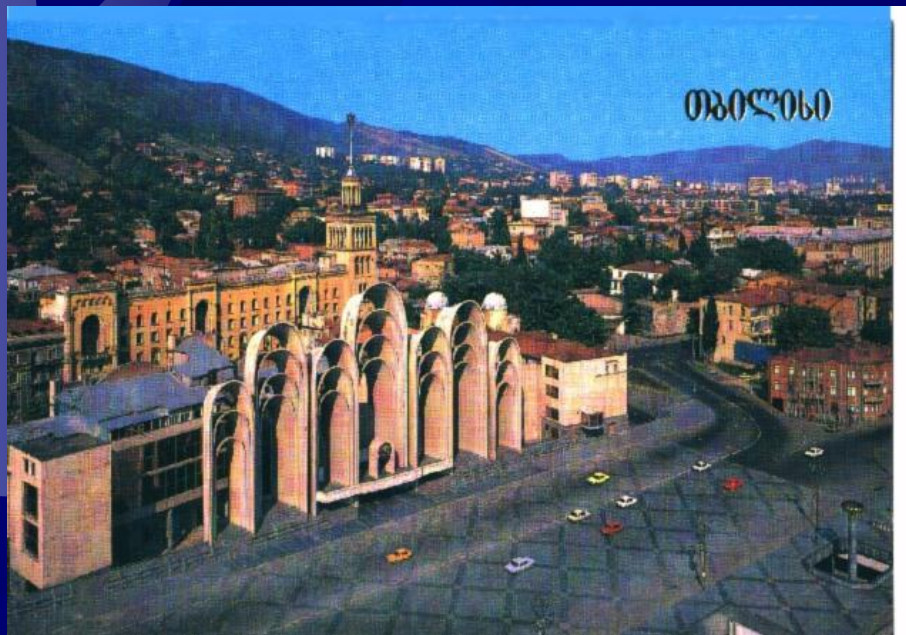
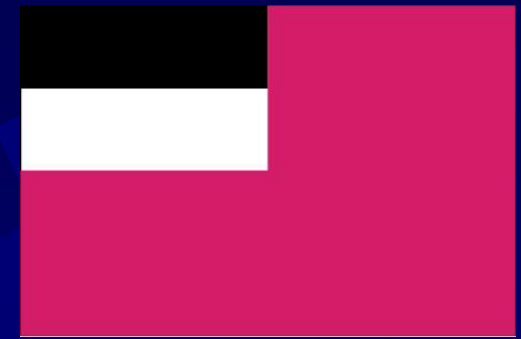
GEORGIA



Definitely you have heard the Greek myth about the Argonavt, Yason and his search for the Golden Fleece. And of course of his beautiful and ominous wife taken from far and mysterious Kolhida. But maybe you have never thought that Kolhida is nothing else but Georgia - one of the ancient and historically developed states in Caucaus.

GEORGIA

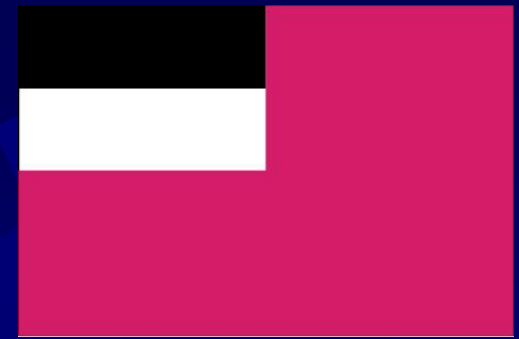
Capital-Tbilisi



The word Tbilisi derives from "tbili" meaning warm in Georgian. According to a legend, Georgian tzar Vahtang Gorgasaly was falcon hunting in the area where he was going to build a new capital.

His falcon caught a bird, but dropped it. The bird was found later in a hot stream almost boiled and ready to be served for lunch. Those hot streams turned to be very healthy mineral sources long used for in Tbilisi Turkish baths 19th and 20th centuries.

GEORGIA



An unusual phenomenon for foreign visitors is the Georgian table, which has a deeper implication than an ordinary meal. Complicated ritual relationships are manifested in it. The table is led by "tamada", who proposes traditional toasts. Each toast is interpreted by table members before drinking it.

Georgian toasts are numerous but the most important and popular are the toasts to the guests, friends, ladies, family members, relatives, mother land, those, who passed away, etc. You can extend the list yourself. In Georgia you never drink wine without toasting, which is not applicable to beer. Traditional tables are usually accompanied by singing.

ESTONIA



INTERESTING FACTS:

- Estonia is a sea country - the length of coastline (3,800 km) is about 6 times longer than the mainland borderline
- Estonia is very rich in woods - various kinds of forests cover almost half of Estonia's territory.
- Estonia's area of 45 227 km² is similar to that of the Netherlands but the population (1.4 million) is ten times smaller
- There are more than 1,500 islands, 1,000 lakes (5 per cent of the Estonian territory), 7,000 rivers and streams in Estonia

ESTONIA



The building of the *Riigikogu* - parliament of the Republic of Estonia, built in 1922 according the ground plan of the former castle.

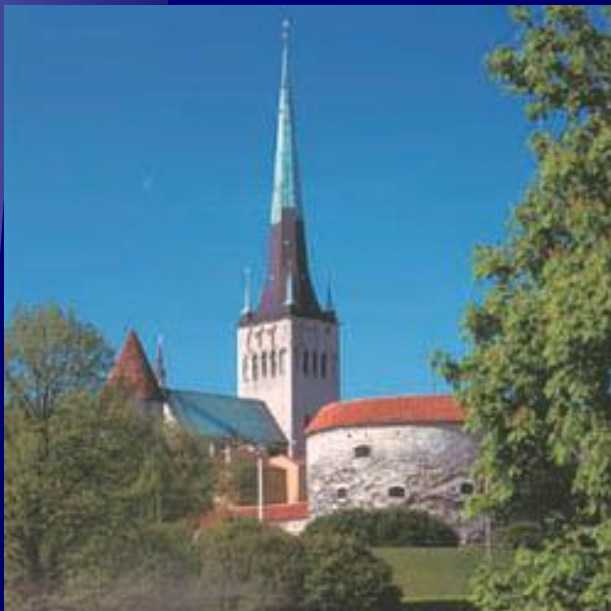
- ⑩ **People in Estonia speak English, but also Finnish, German, and Russian**
- ⑩ **Handshaking is customary and giving flowers is always welcome, especially when visiting somebody**
- ⑩ **Estonians value their language and culture and they are always very delighted when foreigners know something about it as**

ESTONIA



Tallinn, the capital of Estonia

The City that will Never be Completed



St. Olaf's Church, the tallest building of Europe until 16th century.

One of Tallinn's legends tells of the old man, who will push the waters in Ülemiste Lake over the banks and drown the city on the day when the city is completed.

Once a year, the keeper of the waters goes to the city gates, asking whether the city is nearing completion. Tallinners always answer: *"Not quite yet, not quite yet..."*

ESTONIA

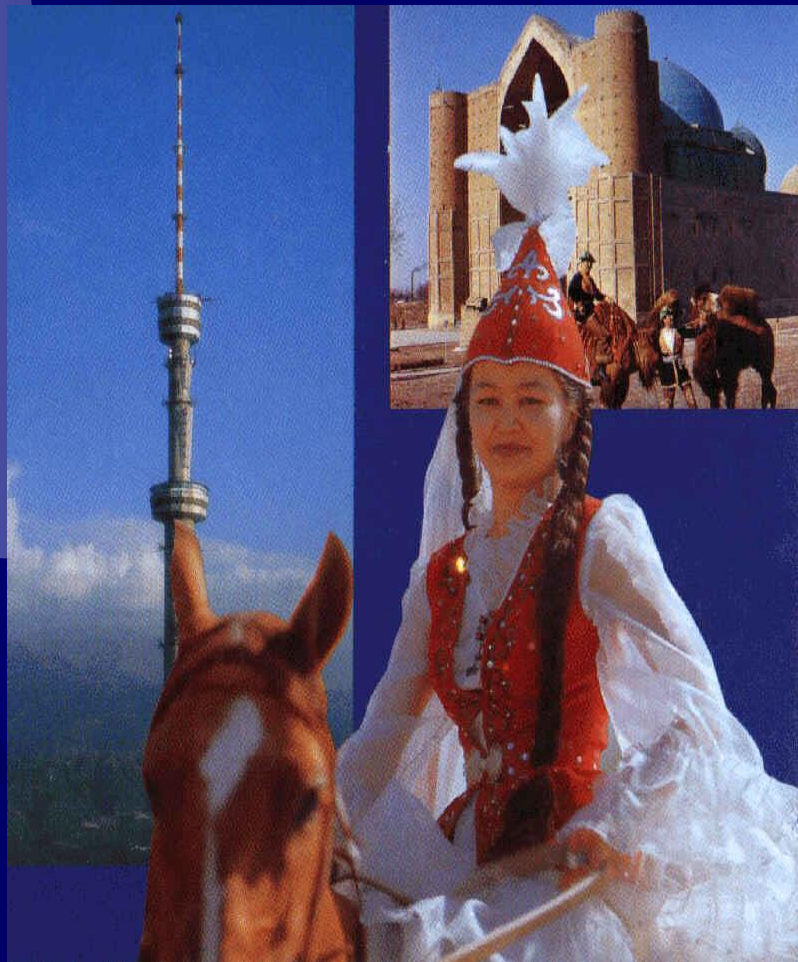


A BIT OF HISTORY:

- ✱ In 1219 the Danes, led by King Waldemar II, conquered Northern Estonia and founded their own stone fortress.
- ✱ In 13-15th centuries, Tallinn, with its 66 defense towers, belonged among the most powerful fortified towns in Northern Europe.
- ✱ After the Swedish period (1561-1710), Tallinn capitulated to Russian forces led by Tsar Peter the Great in 1710, during the Northern War
- ✱ On February 24, 1918, Estonia is declared an independent republic, but in 1940 is annexed by the Soviet Union
- ✱ Estonian independence was reestablished in 1991



KAZAKHSTAN



The original nomadic Turkic tribes inhabiting the region had a culture that featured the Central Asian epics, ritual songs, and legends.

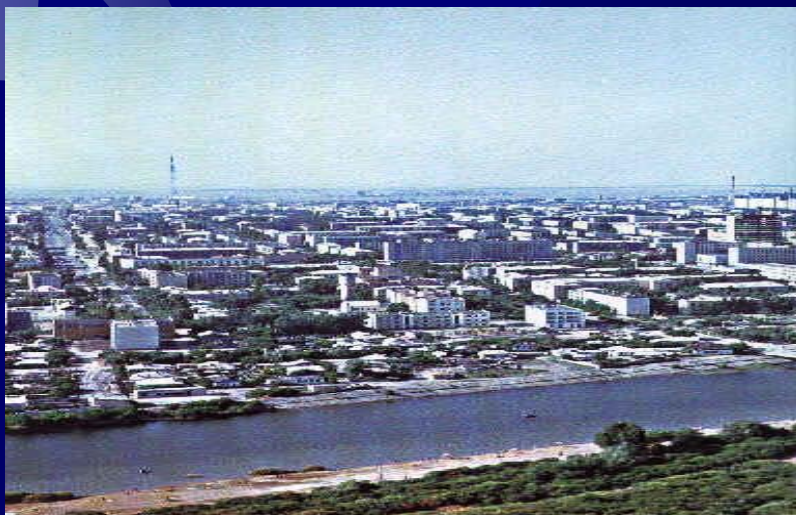
KAZAKHSTAN



Khan-Tengri- the highest mountain peak in Kazakhstan (6995 m)

Kazakhstan consists of a vast flatland, bordered by a high mountain belt in the southeast. It extends nearly 2,000 miles from the lower Volga and the Caspian Sea in the west to the Altai Mts. in the east.

KAZAKHSTAN



- ☀ Official records of Almaty goes back to 1854 when the fortress was erected which took the name Verny and in the year 1857 it became a city.
- ☀ Since 10 December 1997 Astana became a new capital of Kazakhstan

KAZAKHSTAN



- ✴ Currently Turkestan is a place of mass pilgrimage for tourists all over the world, who come to see the matchless masterpiece of medieval architecture - Hodja Ahmed Yasavi Mausoleum.

KYRGYZSTAN



- ✴ The Kyrgyz are descendants of the nomadic Mongol herders who first settled the area.
- ✴ The region was under the control of various Turkic alliances from the 6th to 10th centuries, with a sizeable population living on the shores of Lake Issyk-Kul.
- ✴ The Kyrgyz began migrating from the north into the Tian Shan with the rise of Genghis Khan in the 13th century. Present-day Kyrgyzstan was part of the inheritance of Genghis' second son, Chagatai.



KYRGYZSTAN



An entire cycle of oral legends, 20 times longer than the Odyssey, about a hero-of-heroes called Manas is a part of a wider, older tradition, but have come to be associated with the Kyrgyz people and culture.

A man in Bishkek – capital of Kyrgyzstan – is playing the role of Manas.

KYRGYZSTAN



Men playing ulak, a Kyrgyz game like horseback rugby. Instead of a ball, a calf or goat carcass is carried to the goal line to score.



A feast inside a yurt, the traditional home of the nomadic Kyrgyz, now mostly used for celebrations and by sheep herders in summer time.

KYRGYZSTAN



What Kyrgyzstan lacks in gracious buildings and fancy cakes, it more than makes up for with nomadic traditions such as laid-back hospitality, a healthy distrust of authority and a fondness for drinking fermented mare's milk.

It is also the home of central Tian Shan and Pamir Alay, Central Asia's finest mountains.

LATVIA



Interesting facts:

- ✓ Latvia is one of Europe's great "get away from it all" discoveries. With 12,310 rivers and 3,000 lakes the country has many opportunities for boating and walking and just enjoying the outdoors.
- ✓ There are many small medieval towns, country castles, museums and folk parks to be visited.

LATVIA



- ✓ The Baltic Sea embraces Latvia just like a nurse embraces a child: 500 km out of 1800 km of the Latvian border is coastline



LATVIA

Capital of Latvia - Riga



- Riga was founded in 1201 by German invaders, whose Knights of the Sword built fortresses by the river and founded the Livonian Order.

- The Dome Cathedral in Riga houses one of Europe's finest organs and is a frequent venue for concerts

LATVIA



One of Riga's central streets is the Brīvības (Freedom) Boulevard. In this century alone the Boulevard has been named after Alexander of Russia, Hitler and Lenin! Now it is Brīvības again and you can feel freedom in the air of Riga

LITHUANIA



Interesting facts:

- ✓ For the first time Lithuania was mentioned in 1009 in Qedlinburg annals.
- ✓ The Lithuania as a state emerged in early XIIIth century after the union of the main lands.

LITHUANIA



- ✓ In 1992 Lithuania had a population of over 3.76 million.
- ✓ Approximately 2.9 million of Lithuanians live outside their homeland.
- ✓ More than one million people of Lithuanian origin live in USA, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Germany, UK, Australia, Poland and elsewhere.



LITHUANIA



Capital of Lithuania - Vilnius



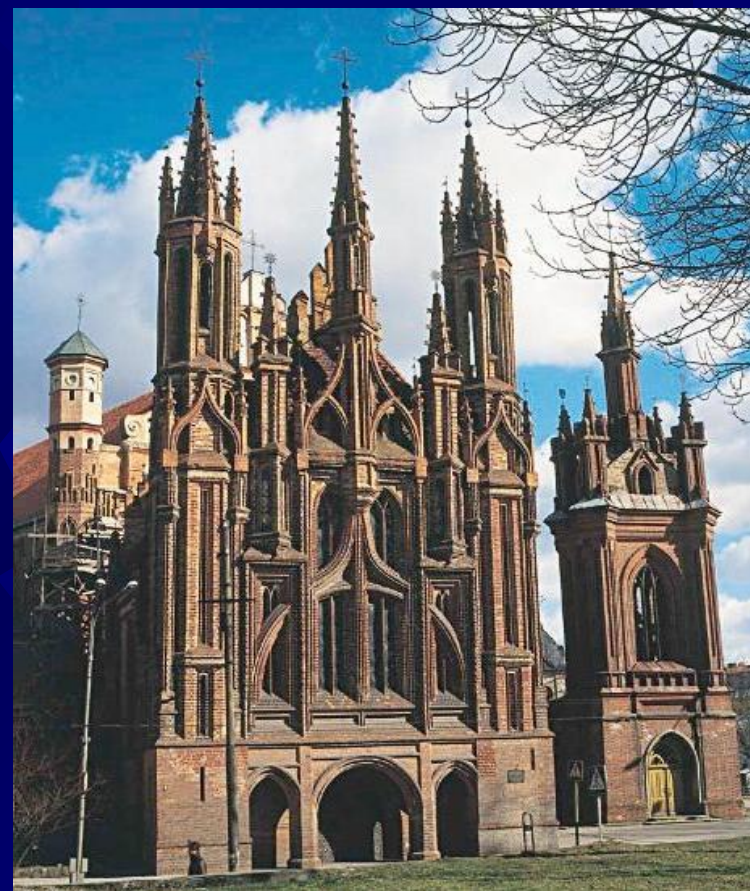
- Vilnius is located on the Neris River.
- Vilnius has the ruins of a 14th-century castle and buildings in a variety of architectural styles, ranging from Gothic to Baroque.
- It is the seat of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, it has a University, founded in 1579

LITHUANIA



In Vilnius there is a world-famous sanctuary of the Blessed Mary Mother of Mercy, the Gate of Dawn, which Pius XI visited before becoming pontiff.

Pope John Paul II prayed here in the fall of 1993



MOLDOVA



Interesting facts:

- ✳ Strategically located at the crossroads between Central, Southeast and Eastern Europe, the Republic of Moldova is one of the newly independent European states (the smallest, in terms of territory, after Armenia).
- ✳ Moldova has a population of 4,762,000, which makes it, four size, the most densely populated of all countries in the former USSR.
- ✳ It borders Romania in the West and Ukraine in the East and South. Its central region is the Basarabian Plateau with forested and mountainous highlands up to 400 metres in elevation. This area retains its ancient name Codru meaning "old forest".



MOLDOVA

Capital: Kishinev



One can hardly find a city, that celebrated its 500-year anniversary twice, but Kishinev is the one: under the Romanians in 1936 and in 1966 in the time of the Soviet power. It happened, because Kishinev was firstly mentioned in historical documents in 1436 in the official document of voivodes (a voivode is the head of the army, district or province). And according to the Soviet historiography a built-up area in the place of the contemporaneous Kishinev was mentioned in 1466 in the charter of the Moldovan gospodar Stephen the Great to his uncle, boyar Vlaicul.

MOLDOVA



We have just celebrated February 14 but do you know that in Moldova this holiday will take part only in March? So if you were too late to congratulate your sweetheart - jump on the plain and you will be given another chance to emerge in the festival of love and romantic: Martisor (Spring festival) is there for you..

Martisors, small pins or pendants, are exchanged as signs of friendship or love and pinned on the outside of a shirt or coat, on the left side, over your heart.

RUSSIA

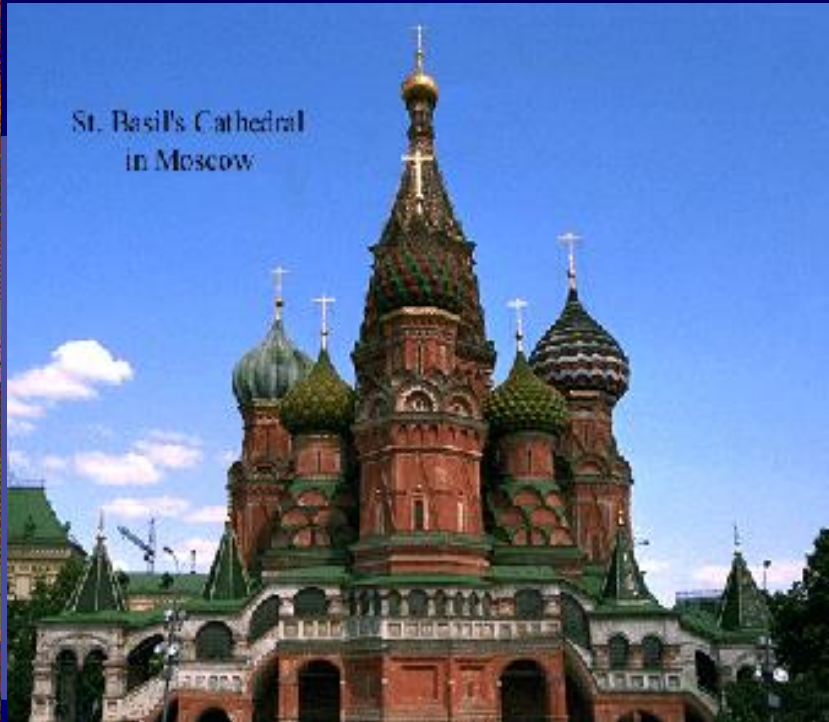


Interesting facts:

- ✓ Russia is the largest country in the world with the total area over 6.5 million square miles, what is about 2 times the size of the USA. It includes 11 time zones and is home to more than 100 peoples.
- ✓ Russia is one of the coldest countries in the world. The town of Oymyakon in north-east Siberia is the coldest inhabited place on earth, with temperatures recorded at more than 70°C below zero.
- ✓ The Russian flag was originally used by the Russian Empire. The red, white and blue stripes stood for the union of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine.



RUSSIA



St. Basil's Cathedral built in 1550s in Red Square fascinates visitors by irresistible profusion of colors and shapes.

Ivan IV known as Ivan the Terrible became the ruler of Russia at age three. He eventually became the first person crowned Czar. He quickly unified an otherwise rocky country into a very powerful nation.

Moscow – the capital of Russia – dates back to year 1147 and by the late 14th century it had risen in power and prestige to become the seat of the Russian Orthodox Church.

RUSSIA



St. Petersburg often called the northern capital of Russia was built three centuries ago by Peter the Great.

Peter the Great was only ten when was named Czar. Arguably the greatest Czar who ever lived, Peter became extremely motivated to redesign Russia imitating Western Europe. Over the years he conquered more and more of Europe and by 1723, his dream of Russia becoming a western power was realized.

RUSSIA



Fountain on Grounds of
Petrodvorets, Russia

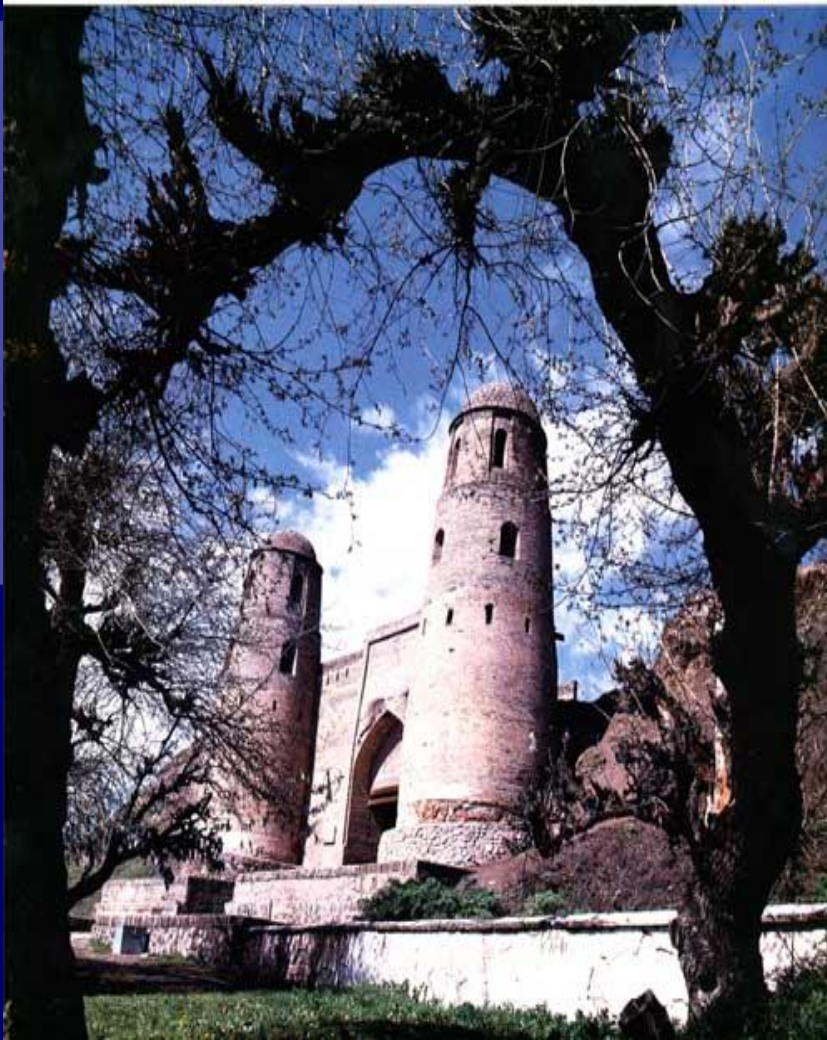
Petrodvorets, an estate of Peter the Great, stays a magnificent reminder of the past wealth and glory. It is difficult to visit its vast, crystalline squares and palaces without feeling the enormity of the gulf that separates that time from our own.

TAJIKISTAN



Most of Tajikistan's land area is mountainous, ranging from the Fann Mountains in the west to the rocky heights of the Pamirs in the east. Peak Samanid is the highest (23,400ft) formerly called Peak Communism, in 1999 it was renamed for the 1100th anniversary of the Samanid State.

TAJIKISTAN



Tajik ancestry seems to begin with the 1 st century BC Bactrians, with empire covering most of what is now northern Afghanistan and the Sogdians, inhabited the Zeravshan valley in present-day western Tajikistan, displaced by the Arab conquest during the 7th century bringing Islam to the region.

TAJIKISTAN



Abuali ibn Sino monument
(Dushanbe city)

The most revered figures from Tajikistan's Persian past are the 10th century philosopher-scientist Abu Ali ibn Sina, author of two of the most important books in the history of medicine, and the poet Rudaki, court poet in Bukhara in the time of the Samanids.

TAJIKISTAN



Tajikistan has experienced three changes in government and a bloody civil war since it gained independence in 1991. More than 30,000 had been killed by mid-1997, when a peace accord was signed between the government and opposition forces.

TURKMENISTAN



- ★ Turkmenistan was originally a part of the kingdom of ancient Persia
- ★ The desert lands of Kara Kum occupy 90% of Turkmenistan's total area.
- ★ Turkmenistan is important to world energy markets because it contains the world's third largest reserves of natural gas

TURKMENISTAN



Turabeg Khanym
Mausoleum

- ★ The Turkmen are a Turkic-speaking people who are largely Sunni Muslims, they still retain tribal and clan affiliations.
- ★ The father of Turkmen literature is poet and thinker Fragi Makhtumkuli (1770-1840), whose words are held in greater reverence than even those of the Koran.

TURKMENISTAN



Turkmenbashi tower and - to the far right - the Palace, rebuilt after the 1948 earthquake, Ashgabat

Ashgabat or 'City of Love' - was wiped off the face of the earth by an earthquake in 1948. 110,000 people died and for five years the area was closed to outsiders while bodies were recovered and the wreckage cleared

TURKMENISTAN



- ✴ The remains of the vanished ancient cities of Nisa and Anau are located just outside Ashghabat.
- ✴ Buried 60m (200ft) underground in the slopes of the Kopet Dag is a hot-water mineral lake known as the 'Father of Lakes' where you can take a dip in 36°C (97°F) waters.

UKRAINE



Interesting facts:

- ✴ Richly endowed in natural resources, Ukraine has been fought over and subjugated for centuries; its 20th-century struggle for liberty is not yet complete.
- ✴ Ukraine's area is 233,088 square miles (603,700 square km.), slightly larger than France. Ukraine is the second largest state in Europe, appeared on the map of the world in 1991.
- ✴ Geography: Mainly vast plains with no natural boundaries except the Carpathian Mountains in Southwest and the Black Sea in the South.

UKRAINE

Capital of Ukraine Kiev



Founded in the 5th century, it became the capital of Kyiv Rus. It was in Kyiv that Christianity first found a foothold among Eastern Slavs when Prince Volodymyr [Vladimir] the Great had his people collectively baptized in the Dnipro [Dnieper] River in A.D.988. Even after the decline of Kyiv Principality

(13th century) when Eastern Ukraine was a part of the Russian Empire, Kyiv remained a major cultural center of the Empire, famous for its remarkable architecture, theaters, fine arts, music, etc.

UKRAINE



Although Ukraine has only been independent for five years, it has an ancient history. The ancestors of Ukrainians began settling in the region during the Trypilian period several thousand years ago. In ancient times, present-day Ukraine was inhabited by the Anteans and the Ros',

the ancestors of the Eastern Slavs. And it was here, in Ukraine, that one of the most powerful states of medieval Europe was founded in the 9th century. This was Kyivan-Rus', which was founded by the Kyivites and included number of cities even Moscow.

UKRAINE



In the 11th century, two monks settled in the hills to the south of the city of Kyiv, and eventually a cave monastery was established in the area. Today this monastery is renowned as the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra (Monastery of the Caves). Later it became a site of pilgrimage for Orthodox Christians throughout Europe.

UZBEKISTAN



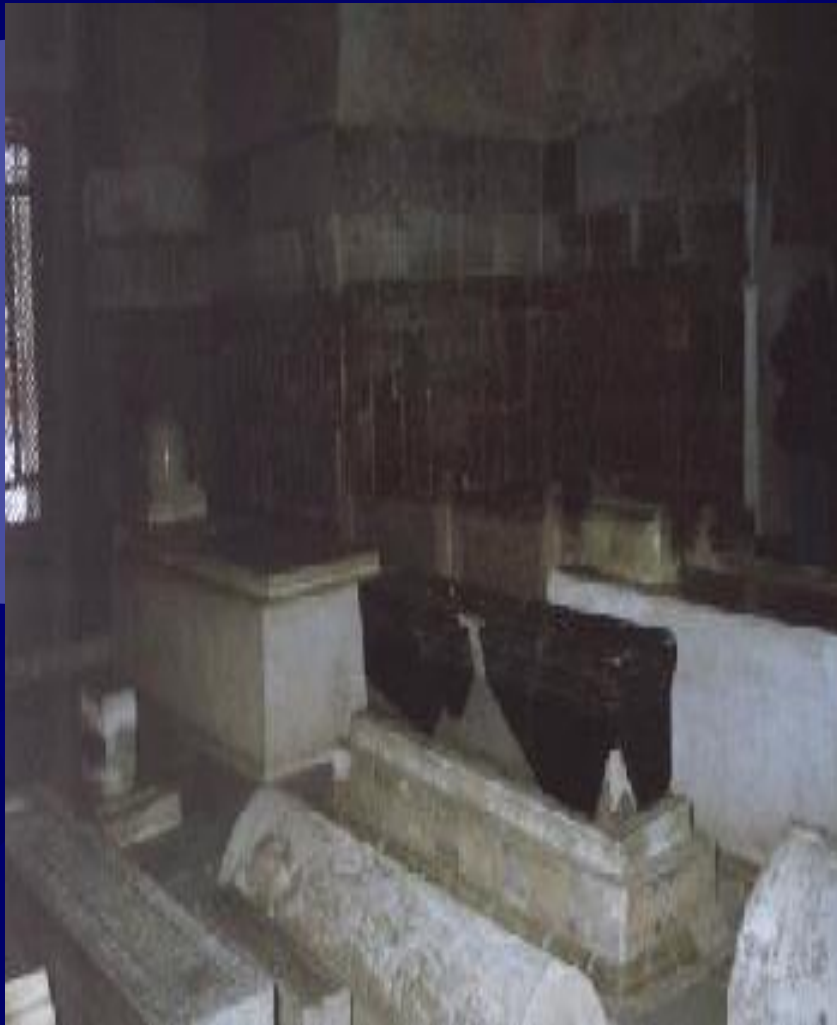
Uzbekistan, in the ancient cradle between the Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya rivers, is the most historically fascinating of the Central Asian republics. Within it are some of the oldest towns in the world, some of the Silk Road's main centers and most of the region's architectural splendors.

UZBEKISTAN



- ★ Built around 1400 by the fierce and powerful Tamerlane, the magnificent Registan is the most famous landmark in the mysterious city of Samarkand, the jewel of the Silk Road from Europe to China.

UZBEKISTAN



Under the largest piece of onyx in the world lies Tamerlane, the baddest guy of the Silk Road since Genghis Khan. Tamerlane conquered Afghanistan and North India (including Delhi), and founded the Moghul Empire.

UZBEKISTAN



Capital of Uzbekistan – Tashkent - was first settled around the 1st century BC.



Kukeldash Madrassa (XVI century) is one of the few remained monumental architectural monuments of Tashkent and at present is an acting mosque with a primary school, which teaches the basis of Islam.