Travel Guide

Baku

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Quick view
Baku – a brief overview

Azerbaijan, which rejoices in the poetic nickname “Land of Fire,” has always been a center of trade with Central Asia. The capital city is Baku, “City of Winds,” located on the Abşeron Peninsula in the Caspian Sea. The city population numbers some two million and rising sharply. İçəri Şəhər, the historic center of Baku, has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2000. Its picturesque narrow streets are lined with well-preserved palaces, mosques and fortifications.

Some monumental buildings still remain from the period of Soviet rule, including the presidential palace. The skyline, however, is now dominated by futuristic skyscrapers, the most famous of which must be the ensemble completed in 2012 of the three gracefully curved Flame Towers rising 190 meters into the sky. The oil wells off the coast in the Caspian Sea are the country's (and also Baku's) main source of income. Baku is a city with a young and exceedingly hospitable population.

Azerbaijan
General Information

Country overview

Azerbaijan is situated at the meeting point of Europe and Asia. It borders the Russian Federation, Georgia, Armenia, Iran and, through the exclave of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, Turkey.

The highest elevation is Bazar Dyuzi (4480 m). The longest river is the Kura with a length of almost 1500 kilometers, which flows into the Caspian Sea and is dammed in the Mingachevir reservoir (Mingetschaur), forming the largest artificial lake in the country.

Geography

Azerbaijan is bordered by the Russian Federation, Georgia, Iran and Armenia. Much of Southwestern Azerbaijan in the ethnically Armenian region of Nagorno-Karabakh is occupied by Armenian forces following the Armenia-Azerbaijan war (1988-1994).

Azerbaijan also includes the exclave of Nakhchivan, which is located between Turkey, Iran and Armenia.

General knowledge

Key facts
Capital: Baku

Language

The official language is Azerbaijani. Russian was the official language until 1991 and is still widely used. About 14 other minority languages from four different language families are also spoken. English is not widely spoken as a foreign language – only in Baku and other major cities is it spoken occasionally.

Currency
Azeri New Manat (AZN) = 100 gopik. Notes are in denominations of 100, 50, 20, 10, 5 and 1 AZN. Coins are in denominations of 50, 20, 10, 5, 3 and 1 gopik.

Electricity
220 volts AC, 50Hz.

Public holidays
Listed below are the public holidays for the period January 2020 to December 2021.

Note
Holidays falling on the weekend are usually observed the following Monday.

Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and the dates given below are approximations. During the lunar month of Ramadan that precedes Eid al-Fitr, Muslims fast during the day and feast at night and normal business patterns may be interrupted. Some disruption may continue into Eid al-Fitr itself. Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha may last up to several days, depending on the region.

2020
Yeni il (New Year’s Day): 1 and 2 January 2020
Qadınlar günü (International Women’s Day): 8 and 9 March 2020
Novruz Bayramı (Persian New Year): 20 March 2020
Faşizm üzərində qalaba günü (Victory Day): 9 May 2020
Ramazan Bayramı (End of Ramadan): 24 to 26 May 2020
Respublika günü (Republic Day): 28 May 2020
Azərbaycan xalqının Milli Qurtuluş günü (National Salvation Day): 15 June 2020
Azərbaycan Respublikasının Silahlı Qüvvələri günü (Army and Navy Day): 26 June 2020
Gurban (Feast of Sacrifice): 31 July to 3 August 2020
İstiqal liyyət günü (Independence Day): 18 October 2020
Konstitusiya günü (Constitution Day): 12 November 2020
Milli Dırçəlş Günü (National Revival Day): 17 November 2020
Dünya azərbaycanlıların hamrayliyi günü (Day of Azeri Solidarity): 31 December 2020

2021
Yeni il (New Year’s Day): 1 and 2 January 2021
Qadınlar günü (International Women’s Day): 8 March 2021
Novruz Bayramy (Persian New Year): 20 March 2021
Faşızm üzərində qalaba günü (Victory Day): 9 May 2021
Ramazan Bayramı (End of Ramadan): 13 to 15 May 2021
Respublika günü (Republic Day): 28 May 2021
Azərbaycan xalqının Milli Qurtuluş günü (National Salvation Day): 15 June 2021
Azərbaycan Respublikasının Silahlı Qüvvələri günü (Army and Navy Day): 26 June 2021
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All information subject to change.
Travel etiquette

How to fit in

Social Conventions
Azerbaijanis are very generous and like to give presents, especially flowers, souvenirs and small treats. To reciprocate this friendliness, it’s best to pack some small items in your luggage. Local women usually keep very much in the background. They serve food to foreign guests, but almost never take part in the meal. They’re happy to receive a bouquet of flowers, but you shouldn’t try to involve them in conversations.

Women are expected to dress modestly. For both women and men, shorts and swimwear are only appropriate on the beach.

People greet one another with a handshake. Business cards are presented not only at business meetings but usually also as part of the first personal introduction.

Smoking
Since 2017, smoking has been prohibited in most public buildings, including schools and universities, hotels, theaters, cinemas and museums. Smoking is also prohibited on public transport, bus stops, playgrounds and beaches.

Tipping
Restaurant staff expect tips, as do taxi drivers.

Health

Food & Drink
All water should be regarded as being a potential health risk. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Some parts of Baku have their own water supply from natural mineral springs. Milk is pasteurised and dairy products are safe for consumption. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Other Risks
Vaccinations against hepatitis B and tuberculosis are sometimes advised. There may be some risk of meningitis, tick-borne encephalitis and leishmaniasis. Rabies is present in some areas. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay.

Phone calls & Internet

Telephone/Mobile Telephone

Dialing code: +994

Telephone
International calls from Azerbaijan may be dialed directly from Baku and some other towns throughout the country.

Mobile Telephone
Roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone companies.
Coverage is mostly limited to the capital and main towns and is non-existent in many mountain areas.

**Internet**

Available in all cities and towns.

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**Top 10 sights**

**Top 10 sights in Baku**

**Qız Qalası (Maiden Tower)**

Situated in the Old City, this 30-meter-high limestone tower is one of Baku’s landmarks. The oldest sections date back to the 5th century, others to the 12th century. It probably belonged to the city fortifications, which no longer exist in the area around the tower. To date, neither the year of construction nor the function of the tower has been completely established. Inside, historical displays and photos can be seen. The view from the top of the tower is spectacular.

Asaf Zeynalli küçəsi 65

Baku, Azerbaijan

Opening times:

Every day: 10:00 am – 6:00 pm

**Müasir İncəsənət Muzeyi (Museum of Modern Art)**

This museum was opened in 2009. It features about 800 paintings and sculptures created after 1950, mainly works by Azerbaijani avant-garde artists, but also some works by Chagall and Dalí. Temporary exhibitions also take place. There’s a well-stocked bookstore and a charming museum café.

Yusuf Seferov küçəsi 5

Baku, Azerbaijan

Tel: +994-12/49 08 404

Opening times:

Tuesday–Sunday: 11:00 am to 8:00 pm

www.mim.az

**Cümə məscidi (Juma Mosque)**

Not all of the Old City’s mosques are recognizable as such, but that’s not a problem with the Juma Mosque (or “Friday Mosque”). Its minaret and magnificent exterior make it one of the most beautiful in the city. The building dates back to the 15th century, but it only acquired its present appearance in the course of reconstruction 100 years ago.

İşəri Şahər

Baku, Azerbaijan

**Mixayil Arxangel kilsəsi (Church of Michael the Archangel)**

You can recognize this Russian Orthodox church in Yasamal by its distinctive onion tower. The iconostasis is richly decorated, and the interior frescoes have been lovingly restored.

Zargar Palan

Opening times:
Şəhidlər Xiyabanı (Martyrs’ Lane)

The cemetery and monument site commemorates the victims of the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the victims of the Soviet invasion of Baku on the 20th of January 1990. Marble slabs line the avenue, and commemorations are held here to mark the anniversary. The best way to reach the site is by the rack railway, the upper station of which is very close by. The observation deck is also on the hill. It offers a beautiful view of the Old City of Baku and the oil rigs.

Mehdi Hüseyn
Baku
Azerbaijan

Şərvanşahlar Sarayı Kompleksi (The Palace of the Shirvanshahs)

You will find this restored building complex at the highest point of the Old City. On the terraced grounds, you can find the residential palace as well as the palace mosque, the Mausoleum of Seyid Yahya Bakuvi (dervish mausoleum), the Bailov stones, the hammam and the burial chamber of the Shirvanshah dynasty. The Divankhana, a rotunda and arcade with pointed arches, is especially picturesque.

İçərə Şəhər
Baku
Azerbaijan

Azerbaiyan Milli İncəsənət Muzeyi (Azerbaijan National Museum of Art)

Opposite the Philharmonic Hall is the National Art Museum, founded in 1936. Azerbaijani, Russian and Western European works are on display in two neighboring buildings. The museum also houses a carpet collection and a collection of modern art.

Niyazi küçəsi 9/11
Baku
Azerbaijan

Opening times:
Tuesday-Sunday: 10:00 am to 6:00 pm

www.nationalartmuseum.az/

Heydər Aliyev Mərkəzi (Heydər Aliyev Cultural Center)

The cultural center was built in honor of Heydar Aliyev (1923-2003), President of Azerbaijan from 1993 to 2003, and inaugurated in 2012. The imposing structure, designed by star architect Zaha Hadid, doesn’t follow straight lines. Instead, its contours all seem to be in a state of flow. The center of the building houses a museum dedicated to the history of Azerbaijan and the life’s work of Heydar Aliyev.

1 Heydər Aliyev prospekti
Baku AZ1033
Azerbaijan

Opening times:
Vary

heydaraliyevcenter.az
Taze Bey Baths
This beautiful bath was built in 1886. It was the first bathhouse in Baku to be built following European models. Unlike the oriental hammams, this bath included quiet, secluded rooms. The bath was completely restored in 2003. Besides the baths, peelings and massages are also offered. The bath also features a restaurant with Oriental and European cuisine.

Sheikh Shamil küçəsi 30  
Baku  
Azerbaijan  

Opening times:  
Vary

Nizami Gəncəvi adına Milli Azərbaycan ədəbiyyatı muzeyi (Museum of Literature)
Just outside the city walls, to the east of the city center, the Museum of Literature is housed in a truly magnificent building dating from 1850. You can easily recognize it, because there are statues of the most important poets of Azerbaijan underneath the arches of its facade. The exhibits of the museum's collection range from the Middle Ages to the present day. They originate from Azerbaijan, Russia and the Far East and include manuscripts and miniatures.

İstiqlaliyyat küçəsi 53  
Baku  
Azerbaijan  

Opening times:  
Monday-Sunday: 11:00 am to 5:00 pm

nizamimuseum.az

Shopping in Baku

Key Areas
Baku’s main shopping districts lie between Nizami (Torgovaya) Street and Fountain Square near the Old City. The pedestrian street is also lined with cafes and restaurants. The Old City’s backstreets are filled with atmospheric (though touristy) bazaar stalls, if you want to pick up a hand-woven kilim-style rug or copper tray.

Markets
There are several daily farmers’ markets, selling fresh as well as dried food, herbs and spices, including the Baki Takhil Bazar, Aliyar Aliyev Street, and 8 Km Bazar, Jamshid Nakhchivanski Street. Seasonal markets take place throughout the year in various locations, including one in the Teze Bazar, Nasimi district.

Shopping Centres
The AF Mall, 34 Samed Vurgun Street, is one of Baku’s newest, with eateries and a rooftop pool in addition to an upmarket selection of boutiques and stores. Opposite the Park Inn Hotel is the Park Bulvar Mall, with a huge range of shops, fast-food outlets, a cinema, bowling alley and planetarium.

Restaurants

Everyday Azerbaijani cuisine fuses oriental and Caucasian culinary traditions. It is based on kabab (shashlik), bread and salad with fresh regional ingredients, deliciously seasoned with fresh herbs – small meals like this are available at every...
corner. Restaurant dining is a festive experience and almost always includes several courses. The meal starts with a range of colorful appetizers, followed by grilled meats, usually spicy, and is rounded off with tea and sweets such as halva (made from oil seeds, sugar and honey) or paxlava (sweet pastries). The Old City is home to many Azerbaijani restaurants. You can also try out a number of restaurants with Georgian, Turkish and Western European menus.

**Şirvanşah Muzey**

Here you’ll experience typical Azerbaijani cuisine and live mugham music. The Oriental-looking chambers once served as a hammam.

Salatin Asgarova 86
Baku
Azerbaijan

**3 Floor Terrace Garden & Q-Bar**

The Q-Bar and the Floor 3 Terrace Garden Restaurant are located above the Hotel Sultan's Inn, housed in a former palace. The eatery boasts an international menu and a wonderful view of the Qız Qalası (Maiden Tower). One of the most beautiful spots in town for a romantic dinner.

Sultan Inn Boutique Hotel
Icheri Sheher Boyuk Gala 20
Baku
Azerbaijan

**Sahil**

This chic restaurant on the beach promenade specializes in Azerbaijani cuisine, served with exquisite wines and cocktails.

34 Neftçilar prospekti
Baku
Azerbaijan

**Tarihi Sultanahmet Köftecisi**

Traditional Turkish cuisine is the specialty of this friendly little restaurant.

Abdulkarim Ali-Zadeh küçəsi 16
Baku
Azerbaijan

**Adam's Curries**

The lively atmosphere and spicy dishes draw a loyal clientele to this Indian curry house. There is also a charming summer terrace.

Tarilan Aliyarbeyp küçəsi 24a
Baku
Azerbaijan
Nightlife in Baku

The overwhelming majority of the population in Azerbaijan are Muslim, which of course also affects everyday life in Baku. Alcohol is served despite this. In the summer, you can stroll through the city center or along the beach promenade and take part in karaoke singing, for example. Since the country’s independence, countless bars and clubs have opened, both in the Old City and outside the city walls – though sometimes you have to climb down a few dark steps into a cellar to reach your destination. A visit to the caravanserais, the merchants’ accommodations in the city center, takes you back to an Orient of bygone times. Here, you can listen to mugham music and watch belly dancing performances while you eat.

Mugham Club

Mugham is the traditional music of Azerbaijan. It has Persian and Arab roots and is considered to be a forerunner of jazz. This restaurant is one of the best spots in Baku to experience this music live in a palatial setting while enjoying Azerbaijani cuisine.

Hagigat Rzayeva küçəsi 9
Baku
Azerbaijan

Crystal Hall (Bakı Kristal Zali)

This huge event hall was built in only seven months and opened just in time for the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest. Nowadays, the venue hosts concerts and shows.

Dövlət Bayrağı Meydanı
Baku
Azerbaijan

Maqomayev adına Azərbaycan Dövlət Filarmoniyası (State Philharmonic Hall)

The building was erected in 1910 as a casino for the oil barons and was based on the Monte Carlo Casino. It was reopened in 2004 after extensive renovations. These days, the building hosts performances by the State Philharmonic Orchestra of Azerbaijan all year round.

İstiglaliyyat küçəsi
Bakı
Azerbaijan

Alov Jazz Bar

This chic club, housed in the Fairmont Hotel within the futuristic Flame-Towers complex, entertains guests with live jazz and R&B.

Fairmont Baku
Flame Towers
Mehdi Huseyn küçəsi
Baku
360 Bar
The Hilton's fully glazed panorama bar is a revolving restaurant that offers guests a complete panoramic view of Baku and the Caspian Sea from their seat within the space of an hour. Here you can sip on an aperitif or enjoy a meal from the light bar menu.

Hilton Baku
Azadlig Avenue 1B
Baku
Azerbaijan

Calendar of events

Novruz Bayram (Persian New Year)
Baku’s Old City is the heart of the festive celebrations that herald the arrival of spring. Stands are set up in the streets where you can buy souvenirs and regional specialties.

March 20, 2020

Venue: Throughout Baku, especially the Old City

Gül Bayrami (Flower Festival)
To commemorate the birthday of the late President Heydar Aliyev, Baku revels in floral decorations. In parks, gardens and squares, the flowers are arranged into patterns and pictures depicting figures and instruments, the national flag or the portrait of Aliyev.

May 10, 2020

Venue: Various event locations

Ramazan Bayrami
Muslims celebrate this festival at the end of the fasting period of Ramadan. It involves not only extensive house cleaning but also a major purchase of sweets and other foodstuffs. People go to the mosque and visit family and friends. They also give gifts, both to each other and to the poor.

May 24–26, 2020

Venue: Throughout Baku and Azerbaijan

National Salvation Day
The people of Azerbaijan commemorate the day when Heydar Aliyev returned to power in 1993 with a national holiday and a number of ceremonies. Baku hosts open-air concerts on the beach promenade, culminating in a fireworks display.

June 15, 2020
National Armed Forces Day
Crowds line the streets to watch the grand military parade in honor of the armed forces of Azerbaijan, held each year on the anniversary of the foundation of the Azerbaijani Army in 1918.

June 26, 2020

Hotels
Hotels in Baku
Most of the hotels in Baku are quite expensive, and the number of upscale hotels is still growing. Many hotels are new buildings with the comfortable furnishings to match their recent vintage. You'll find the international chains on Nizami küçəsi and the beach promenade in Bulvar.

Qafqaz Point
This modern hotel, built in 2009, is located in Yasamal, a charming neighborhood with old residences just north of the Old City. The hotel offers spacious, comfortable rooms and a business center.

Art Gallery Hotel
This boutique hotel borders the Old City wall in the historic center of Baku. The guest rooms, lobby, halls and dining rooms are all decorated with paintings, sculptures and designer furniture.

Teatro Boutique
This modern-style boutique hotel is located near the Nariman Narimanov metro station. The historical sights and a wide range of shopping facilities are within easy reach. The hotel features a quaint rooftop restaurant, a fitness room and a sauna.

Bilgah Beach Hotel
This 5-star hotel is situated directly on the popular Bilgah Beach. In addition to a private beach, the hotel has large indoor and outdoor swimming pools. It also
offers a wide range of culinary delights – thanks to four restaurants serving European and Azerbaijani cuisine.

Gelebe küçəsi 94  
Bilgah District  
Baku  
Azerbaijan  
Category: Moderate

GEO tip  
**Evening excursion to the burning mountain**

Evening excursion to the burning mountain

Azerbaijan is also known as the “Land of Fire,” and from the slopes of Yanar Dağ (Fire Mountain), it’s easy to see why. For more than 1000 years now, gas from natural deposits has been seeping from a crack in the earth’s crust, sending flames leaping three meters into the air above the limestone hillside. A rare natural spectacle at any time, it is particularly impressive at dusk.

*Mehr auf GEO.de*  
https://www.geo.de/reisen/reiseziele/3527-rtkl-staedtereise-baku

24 hours in ...  
... Baku

9 a.m.: Four Seasons Hotel

A certain standard of luxury and comfort is what one expects from a Four Seasons hotel – and this one located between the old-town walls and the waterside promenade fulfills all expectations. Entering the lobby, guests are greeted by marble splendor gleaming beneath crystal chandeliers, and from their generously proportioned rooms, they enjoy a magnificent view of the city. All rooms offer every comfort and convenience and feature exquisite details, such as a golden Queen Anne washbasin, and also a television set in the bathroom. In other words, the hotel reflects the typical – slightly zany – Baku mix of the historical and the modern.

Neftchilar Avenue 1  
www.fourseasons.com/baku
11 a.m.: Yarat Contemporary Art Center

The fine arts are sometimes thought to have a hard time of it in majority Muslim countries, even in a secular state like Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, a modern art scene picking up on European trends has been growing in Baku for some years now. It has found a home at the Yarat Contemporary Art Centre, which was founded by the artist Aida Mahmudova in 2011. The Yarat occupies two former shipyard maintenance buildings, where it showcases both Azerbaijani and international artists with some fantastic exhibitions and installations.

Bayil District
Baku
Azerbaijan
Tel.: +994-12/40 42 424

Open:
Tue–Sun, 11:00–20:00
(October to May)
Tue–Sun, 12:00–20:00
(June to September)

www.yarat.az

1 p.m.: İçərə Şəhər, the old town

Baku’s old-town quarter is a tourist magnet and also provides a counterpoint to the city’s modern architecture. Sections of the ensemble date from the 11th century. Encircled by defensive walls, the old town has been a listed UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2000. Its best-known structures include the 12th-century Maiden Tower and the Shirvanshah Palace at the top of the hill. At peak times, hundreds of tourists from all over the world stroll through the winding streets and alleyways, where niqabs are as frequent a sight as miniskirts. Restaurants and cafes serve local specialties, and among them, the Qaynana (Kichik Qala, Tel: +994-70/43 40 013, to the website) deserves a special recommendation for its amazing vegetarian appetizers: hummus, baba ganoush and gavurdag (tomatoes with finely chopped nuts and pomegranate juice).

İçərə Şəhər
Asaf Zeynalli Street
Baku
Azerbaijan

3 p.m.: Heydər Aliyev Cultural Center

Designed by Zaha Hadid, this white building’s undulating walls were inspired by the waves of the Caspian Sea lapping against Baku’s shore. Its outer skin reflects the light and transforms the architectural structure into an installation that appears to have a life of its own. The building, which was officially opened in 2012, takes on a constantly changing face depending on the observer’s perspective and the prevailing light conditions. The center houses a museum of Azerbaijan’s history and the life work of Heydar Aliyev (1923-2003), who was the country’s president from 1993 to 2003. It is also used as a venue for events and exhibitions.

1 Heydar Aliyev Avenue
Baku

www.heydaraliyevcenter.az
5 p.m.: The Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum

A carpet is considered a work of art in Azerbaijan. The history of carpets is an important element of the national heritage, and a state carpet museum has been committed to preserving it since 1967. In 2014, the collection relocated to this spectacular new building, designed by Franz Janz, which resembles a rolled-up carpet. It now contains carpets dating from the 18th and 19th centuries featuring traditional patterns as well as models from the Soviet era depicting oil rigs and workers, school students and athletes.

Mikayıl Useynov Avenue 28 www.azcarpetmuseum.az
Baku Azerbaijan
Tel.: +994-12/49 72 016

7 p.m.: Waterside promenade and Boulevard Park

In the days of Soviet rule, the promenade skirting Baku Bay was short and rather shabby. These days, thousands of Bakuvians stroll along the magnificent corniche extending between the Olympic swimming pool in the south and the White City in the northeast. Roughly ten kilometers in length, the promenade takes you past the Crystal concert hall, the Baku Eye, the Deniz Mall that calls to mind the architecture of Sydney Opera House, and the Port Baku Towers. The promenade is particularly impressive at dusk, when the three Flame Towers’ ingenious illuminations appear to set them on fire. A string of restaurants lines the promenade – or if you prefer, you can retrace your steps to the Four Seasons Hotel – also on the promenade – and dine at the Zafferano, the hotel’s own restaurant (fourseasons.com).

Nefchilar Avenue
Baku Azerbaijan

11p.m.: Madrid Bar

If you still have the energy to enjoy some late-evening entertainment, this bar, roughly two kilometers south of the hotel and one of the hottest tips among Baku’s elite, is worth a visit. On the weekends, there’s an array of gleaming, pimped-up Mercedes G-Class wagons, BMW 7s and Jaguars parked outside, while inside, well-known DJs man the consoles. People generally dance right next to the tables, and the place doesn’t normally fill up until around 1 a.m.

National Flag Square Complex www.facebook.com/madridbarbaku
Baku Azerbaijan
Tel.: +994-51/22 54 825