authentic beauty
cultural vibrance



azerbaijan

TAKE ANOTHER LOOK

salam
hello

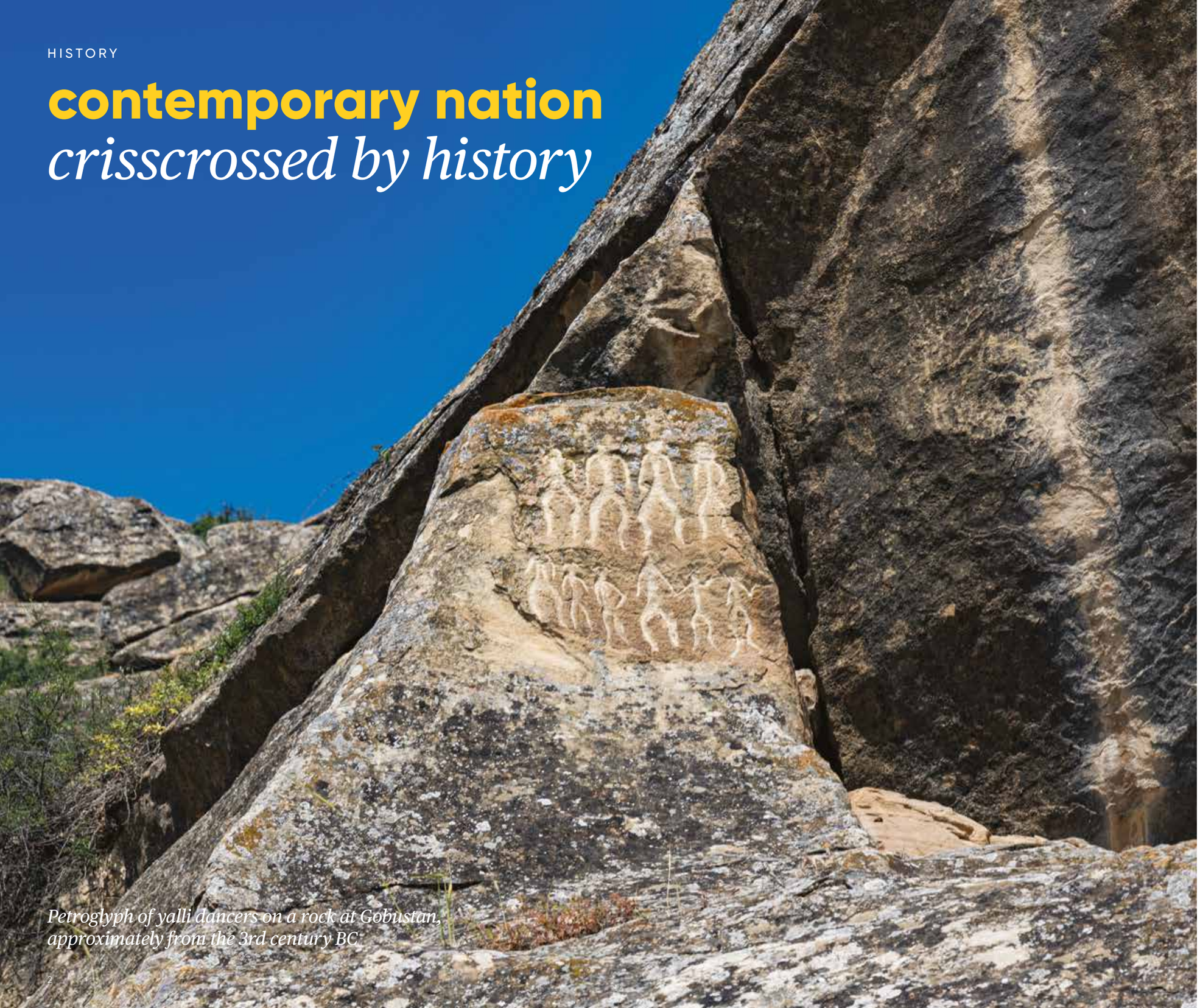
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Welcome to Azerbaijan, a land of dramatic landscapes, ancient culture and 21st-century ambition. We may not be a big country but our amazing diversity more than makes up for it! We're located in a fascinating part of the world, between Europe and Asia, so expect a cultural and geographical fusion. The Great Silk Road has left a legacy here of tolerance, multiculturalism and incredible hospitality.

contemporary nation *crisscrossed by history*



Petroglyph of yalli dancers on a rock at Gobustan, approximately from the 3rd century BC

Our land shows evidence of the earliest civilisations. The Great Silk Road brought a constant stream of travellers, all leaving traces of their passing. And our history is still being explored today, giving us an endless supply of fascinating stories.

Azikh and Taghlar caves

Both of these caves are among the oldest known sites of human habitation in the world. In 1968, a lower jaw fragment belonging to a woman living 350,000 years ago (during the Ashel Period) was found in Azikh Cave, while Taghlar Cave belongs to the Mousterian culture and is considered one of the richest archaeological sites of this period in the Near East.

Gobustan

Rising out of the semi-desert here is the UNESCO Cultural Landscape of over 7,000 rock engravings, which dates from the Upper Paleolithic period to the Middle Ages. You can also see graffiti by a Roman legionary - the furthest east it has ever been found.

Ateshgah

This Fire Temple is a sacred place for Zoroastrians, fire worshippers and Hindus. The temple, built in the style of the Shirvan-Absheron school, was erected by local craftsmen in the 17th-18th centuries with funds from Hindu merchants travelling along the Silk Road. Its construction was prompted by natural flames coming out of the ground, which capture the imagination of visitors.

German heritage

There's no better place to see the influence of German culture in Azerbaijan than the towns of Shamkir and Goygol, which were built and inhabited by German settlers in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The beautifully restored Germanic streets and Lutheran churches make this a must-see destination.

Black gold

In the first years of the 20th century, Baku supplied half of the entire world's oil, making the fortunes of the Rothschilds, the Nobel brothers, the philanthropist Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev and others. Thanks to the oil barons of Baku, a new city was born out of the old, and it's fascinating to discover the stories behind every facade.

Today

Modern Azerbaijan is a thriving contemporary nation, with cutting-edge cultural, leisure and business facilities. Our hospitality is as warm as ever, and our history is still being explored by our many guests.

land of leisure *buzzing with energy*

Azerbaijan has the perfect landscape for every kind of holiday you can imagine, from the relaxation of a spa or beach to more energetic pursuits.

Hiking
With mountains accounting for over 60 percent of Azerbaijan's total area, you can enjoy memorable moments hiking through the stunning scenery and stopping at timeless rural villages to witness local life. There are many popular marked trails in the Greater and Lesser Caucasus Mountains, and some in the Talish Mountains in the south.

Kitesurfing
You'll find the perfect conditions to learn kitesurfing on the flat-water lagoon at Shorabad, close to Baku. Once you've mastered it in the shallow waters here, you can take your board out into the open Caspian. Windsurfing is also on offer.

Birdwatching
Our unique East-West location produces a remarkable range of landscapes and habitats, with high mountains, coastline and lowlands interspersed with lakes, rivers, wetlands, pristine forests, steppes and semi-deserts. Most of them teem year-round with birdlife, with many unique species to discover.

Golf
If you'd rather spend the day avoiding the sand, Baku has a challenging and enjoyable course close to the city centre, or you can travel to Guba to play on The National Golf Club course, which has breathtaking mountain views.

Skiing
The classy resort at Shahdag has first-class amenities and well-prepared slopes, as well as friendly, accommodating instructors and staff. For more challenging pistes, try the black runs at Tufandag. And for something totally different, try skiing in Nakhchivan at Agbulag.

Sport
From the traditional equestrian game of 'chovgan' to football and freestyle wrestling, we've always prided ourselves on staying fit and healthy. We're also into gymnastics, chess, judo and boxing. And we host big events too, such as the 1st European Games in 2015 and the annual F1 Azerbaijan Grand Prix. Our stunning sports venues are well worth visiting!

Sim Waterfall in the Talish Mountains

modern art
traditional masterpieces

Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum

From the latest cultural experiences to traditions that haven't changed in hundreds of years, our country exudes the influence of all the artists that have passed through and called it home.

Art

The collections at the Heydar Aliyev Center, YARAT Contemporary Art Centre and Museum of Modern Art show the incredible diversity and energy of Azerbaijani art today. We've always been famed for decorative arts like ceramics, jewellery and metalwork, but Faig Ahmed has taken carpets to a new level with his mind-bending designs!

Fashion

The traditional 'kelaghayi' silk scarf is still a strong expression of our cultural identity. But these days we're at the forefront of contemporary chic with our own fashion week and style, even providing the inspiration for Leonie Mergen's 'Karabakh' collection at Berlin fashion week.

Music

Here we love to sing, dance and play music. The classic form of Azerbaijani music, mugham, is so good that it represented world music on the Voyager space probe! We wrote the first opera in the Islamic world, and our jazz mixes mugham with blues, African music and modern Western styles. We also love the Eurovision Song Contest. We started competing in 2008, and it only took us until 2011 to win! You may have seen it in 2012, when it was broadcast from Baku.

Crafts

You can still see the influence of the Silk Road in time-honoured crafts practised in quiet corners of our country. A great example is the village of Lahij in the Greater Caucasus Mountains, whose coppersmithing traditions are protected by UNESCO. Basgal settlement is another good example, known as a centre of weaving and handicrafts, especially traditional kelaghayi making, which is a wonderful example of Azerbaijani folk art and included in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO.

latest cuisine *classic dishes*

Azerbaijan's unique geography and location have resulted in a cuisine influenced not just by its varied ingredients, but the tastes of many peoples travelling along the Great Silk Road. So it's full of surprising flavours and combinations!

Plov

Our favourite dish is plov - rice served with meat, fish or fruit. Every family has its own recipe and there are hundreds of varieties in total, so plov can never be boring!

Pakhlava

Pakhlava, symbolising the sky, the stars and the equinox, is a festive dish made for Novruz, the traditional celebration of the coming of spring. Our classic pakhlava is cut into diamonds, but in Sheki they have halva, which comes in squares, while in Gabala there's a triangular version called 'uchgulag' ('three ears').

Wine

We've been making wine for thousands of years and the varied terrain of our wine regions results in a myriad of flavours and bouquets. You can discover them at picturesque wineries across the country which welcome visitors, or at Baku's growing number of stylish wine bars.

Caviar and fish

Caspian fish has its own special taste and is best served with 'narsherab' (pomegranate sauce). Our most famous fish is the beluga sturgeon, which don't reach reproductive age until they are around 20 years old. No surprise then that beluga caviar is now one of the world`s most expensive delicacies.

Bazaars

The bazaars of Baku are the soul of the city, where you can find the freshest organic fruits, veg, herbs and spices, nuts and dried fruits from all around Azerbaijan. Hospitable vendors are always ready to assist you in sampling and buying succulent tomatoes from the village of Zira, sweet pomegranates from Goychay and delicious feijoas from Lankaran. A visit to Yashil and Sharg bazaars is a must; you'll find local delicacies from caviar and saffron to the large selection of pickles, compotes and jams.

Cooking dolma from grape leaves and mutton is listed as an element of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

summer hillsides
winter slopes

The Greater Caucasus Mountains in summer and winter

If you are imagining any one kind of terrain in Azerbaijan, you'll be surprised! Our climate has eight distinct zones, and we have every kind of geography, from mountains and plateaus to lowlands and coasts.

Sand
It's not just in the desert! We've got hundreds of kilometres of Caspian coastline, home to beaches composed of three different types of sand - healing black volcanic sand, shell sand and fine yellow sand - as well as a host of relaxing resorts and wellness sanatoria, from the Absheron Peninsula resorts, which are easily within reach of Baku, to the reme-dial black sands of Lankaran in the south.

Mountains
Azerbaijan is largely mountainous, so we get great summer hiking and winter skiing. Our ski resorts are based in Gusar, Gabala and Nakhchivan. In the summer, you should head up to Khinalig, a village which has its own language!

Fire
You'll be amazed by Yanardag, which is a hill that has been blazing away with a 10-metre wall of flames for thousands of years. It's no wonder people here used to worship fire!

Mud
We have 700 mud volcanoes, and approximately 350 of them are active. They are fuelled by underground stores of oil, gas and mineral water and come in all shapes and sizes, from entire islands in the Caspian Sea to tiny pools gurgling with therapeutic mud. Most are perfectly safe, but some occasionally like to show off!

Flowers and trees
The flora of our country is impressive all year round thanks to the variety of habitats. Wild flowers are particularly impressive in late spring, with massed poppies giving a splash of colour to the young, emerald green corn fields. In June, it's the turn of the mountains to bloom. The Hirkan National Park in Lankaran has even been the inspiration for a perfume made from the native ironwood tree.

fluid simplicity *intricate details*

The buildings of Azerbaijan are a glorious mixture of styles, reflecting the cultural shifts and changing trends of hundreds of years. From minarets to mosaics, medieval to modern, every corner reveals something different.

Momine Khatin Mausoleum
Located in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, a region of dramatic semi-desert mountain landscapes, this stunning 25-metre-high decagon of red brick and turquoise enamelled tiles is the finest example of the Nakhchivan architectural tradition and dates to the 12th century.

Shirvanshahs' Palace
You can see a fascinating variety of Islamic architecture in this medieval palace complex, which was built over several centuries as the residence of Baku's old ruling dynasty. It's one of the main sights of Icherisheher, our buzzing capital's beautiful UNESCO-listed old town.

Sheki Khan's Palace
Our craftsmen are famous for their 'shebeke' - a mosaic of coloured glass set in a wooden latticework and assembled without nails or glue. The round-form shebeke in the windows of the 18th-century Sheki Khan's Palace, part of Sheki's UNESCO-listed Historic Centre, is an incredible visual feast!

Shusha Fortress
Built in 1752 to protect Shusha, the former capital of the Karabakh Khanate, Shusha Fortress is one of the top historical sights in the naturally stunning region of Karabakh. And the incredible views from this hilltop location will take your breath away!

Heydar Aliyev Center
World-famous architect Zaha Hadid designed the crown jewel of our architecture in central Baku. It flows seamlessly from the plaza around it, joining the exterior and the interior to represent the inclusion of everyone in a place of shared ideas. A museum, exhibition halls and an auditorium are housed together in this single eternally flowing shape.

Heydar Aliyev Center

modern life
ancient city

The incredible Flame Towers rise above Baku's Old City

From the modern elegance of The Flame Towers standing proud above to the medieval UNESCO World Heritage Site at its core, there is something for everyone in stunning Baku. With its constantly evolving tapestry of life and energy from bazaar to penthouse, prepare to be astounded!

Flame Towers
These three skyscrapers dominate the skyline of Baku. They're over 30 storeys tall, and completely covered with LED screens. At night they light up with a display that's visible from anywhere in the city.

Maiden Tower
The Maiden Tower is so old we still don't know for sure when it was built and what it was originally used for. Perhaps it was a watchtower, a fortress or even a Zoroastrian fire temple - there are many theories! Today it houses a museum.

Nightlife
However you let your hair down, you'll find somewhere to do it here. As well as traditional entertainment, Baku has a thriving jazz community and DJs from around the world come to contribute to our lively club scene.

Carpets
In 2010, the Azerbaijani carpet was proclaimed a masterpiece of intangible heritage by UNESCO, and this museum has the largest collection in the world. Of course, this is Azerbaijan, so these traditional crafts are housed in a modern building, shaped like a rolled-up carpet!

Shopping
The malls of Baku have all the luxury brands as well as modern comforts like restaurants, cafes, kids' areas and cinemas. High street shops and upmarket boutiques are all around the city centre, especially in bustling Nizami Street, and souvenir shops are dotted throughout the atmospheric old town.

one country
millions of flavours

We are as varied as the colours of the carpets or the fruits of the bazaars. A basket of herbs and spices, made up of about 40 ethnicities and nationalities. Harmony in diversity, a dazzling collection of opposites. A collection of stories ready to amaze you at every turn. Come visit us in the land of contrasts.

Azerbaijan. Take another look.

EXPERIENCE AZERBAIJAN

one journey
many roads

RUSSIA
GEORGIA
ARMENIA
TÜRKİYE
IRAN
CASPIAN SEA

Balaken
Zagatala
Gakh
Sheki
Kura River
Gazakh
Tovuz
Shamkir Reservoir
Shamkir
Ganja
Gadabay
Dashkasan
Goygol
Naftalan
Tartar
Barda
Yevlakh
Mingachevir Reservoir
Mingachevir
Oguz
Shahdag
Tufandag
Gabala
Ismayilli
Goychay
Ujar
Zardab
Kura River
Agjabadi
Aghdam
Khankendi
Shusha
Lachin
Fuzuli
Jabrayil
Gubadli
Zangilan
Kalbajar
Sadarak
Sharur
Shahbuz
Nakhchivan
Ordubad
Araz River
Khachmaz
Gusar
Guba
Shabran
Khizi
Shamakhi
Sumgayit
Baku
Sabirabad
Shirvan
Alat
Salyan
Neftchala
Masalli
Lerik
Lankaran
Astara

Key

- City experience
- Culture experience
- Wellness experience
- Nature experience
- Airport
- Winter resort
- Port
- Border crossing point

eastern city *western outlook*

Baku is an exceptional combination of antiquity and novelty

Top 10 places to go

Icherisheher (Old City) is the pearl of Azerbaijan's cultural heritage and a UNESCO World Heritage site with a history of thousands of years. Located in the historical centre of Baku, it is home to the Maiden Tower, an ancient symbol of Baku that is shrouded in myth and legend. Meanwhile, the Shirvanshahs' Palace, built in the 12th-15th centuries, exhibits a fascinating variety of medieval Islamic architecture.



2 Baku Boulevard – Beyond the Old City, there is no better way to get a feel for Baku's relaxed atmosphere - reminiscent of the Mediterranean - than by strolling the Boulevard, a sweep of Caspian waterfront promenade that forms a gentle arc past the whole length of the central city area. The whole stretch offers potentially hours of pleasant wandering with ever-changing views around the bay and back towards different sections of the city. It has national park status and year by year is being extended along the seafront.



3 Flame Towers are a trio of skyscrapers that dominate the skyline of Baku. They are our most visible landmark and symbolise the eternal flames on the historic logo of the capital. Over 30 storeys tall, they are completely covered with LED screens, and at night they light up with a display of fire that we can see from anywhere in the city.



4 Heydar Aliyev Center – World-famous architect Zaha Hadid designed the crown jewel of our architecture. This astonishing masterpiece is likely to leave you speechless. Not a single straight line was used in the design, the overall shape resembling a wave-like flow that portrays an eternal cycle. The lines on the building bridge past with present, and the harmonious link between the exterior and interior symbolises a desire to bring all types of people together, united by shared ideas.



5 Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum – In 2010, the Azerbaijani carpet was proclaimed a masterpiece of intangible heritage by UNESCO, and this museum has one of the largest collections of carpets in the world. These traditional works of art are housed in a modernist building that itself resembles a rolled-up carpet. While visiting the museum you can learn to decipher our history and heritage from the patterns and symbols indicated on the carpets.



6 Nizami Street & Fountains Square are the city centre's main pedestrian area, lined with 19th-century buildings displaying an eclectic mix of European architectural styles. The area has a great selection of highstreet shops, cafes, bars and restaurants, and is a great place to feel the city's non-stop energy.



7 Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre – Housed in a beautiful old building on Nizami Street blending elements of Baroque, Rococo and Moorish styles, at the Opera and Ballet Theatre you can watch classic Azerbaijani shows like 'Leyli and Majnun', 'Shah Ismayil', 'Arshin Mal Alan' and 'Koroghlu', as well as selected foreign performances. The building was built in 1911 in just 10 months by one of Baku's wealthiest oil barons.



8 Istiglaliyyat Street – The Oil Boom in Baku in the late 1800s led to the city's growth beyond the medieval fortress walls. One of the first roads to be built was Istiglaliyyat Street, which exhibits some of our finest turn-of-the-century architecture, characterised by its incredible mix of styles and amazing stories. This street is home to masterpieces like the Baku City Hall building and the Ismailiyya Palace. Many of its most recognisable buildings were designed by Polish architects!



9 Central Park & Teze Pir Mosque – It's not just New York that has a Central Park. We've got one too! Ours is Baku's newest park - 20 hectares of beautifully landscaped terrain where you can relax and enjoy amazing views of the city centre. And from here it's a short stroll to one of our most eye-catching mosques, Teze Pir, which was built between 1905 and 1914 on the tomb of the scholar Abu Seyid Abdulla.



10 Azerbaijan National Museum of Art – We love art in Azerbaijan and have lots of museums and galleries for you to visit. This one is the home of Azerbaijani classical fine arts, housed in twin mansions dating back to the late 19th century. The museum also exhibits masterpieces from Türkiye, Iran, Japan, China, Russia and Western European countries. Highlights include the works of Azerbaijani miniature painters of the 15th-16th centuries and thousands of artefacts including carpets, ceramics and jewellery.



colourful glass *scorched hills*

Visit the fascinating sites that tell the story of Azerbaijan's diverse culture

Top 10 places to go

1 **Gobustan** – Rising out of the semi-desert of eastern Azerbaijan is an outstanding collection of over 7,000 rock engravings dating from the Upper Paleolithic to the Middle Ages. Designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, here you can also see a mysterious inscription left by a Roman legionary in the 1st century AD.



2 **Ateshgah** – The ancient fire worshippers and Zoroastrians left their mark at the Ateshgah Fire Temple, which has amazed visitors with its spouts of flames for centuries. The present temple dates to the 17-18th centuries but it has been a sacred place for millennia.



3 **Yanardag** – Just 20 minutes' drive from Ateshgah you might notice a strange orange glow rising from the hillside. That's because the hill itself is on fire! Gas escaping from subterranean flues has been burning incessantly here for millennia and now attracts the curious from all over the world.



4 **Shamkir and Goygol** – You can clearly see the influence of European culture in the towns of Shamkir (formerly Annenfeld) and Goygol (formerly Helenendorf), which show the presence of German settlers in the 19th century. The beautifully restored Germanic streets and Lutheran churches make this a unique destination.



5 **Sheki Khan's Palace** – The lavish decoration of this palace in Sheki is a visual feast. The façade is covered with coloured tiles and the windows show off the art of shebeke - mosaics of coloured glass set in a wooden latticework, assembled without glue or nails. The place comes to life through the expert commentary of the guides, and afterwards check out the exquisite Sheki cuisine at local restaurants.



6 **Momine Khatin Mausoleum** is an icon of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, a region of dramatic semi-desert mountain landscapes stretching from the looming shadow of Mount Aghridag to the historic town of Ordubad. The stunning 25-metre high decagon is representative of Nakhchivan's medieval architectural tradition, typified by its use of brick and turquoise enamelled tiles.



7 **Chukhur Gabala and Nij** – History hunters have plenty to do seeking out the archaeological reminders of the once-great kingdom of Caucasian Albania. That state's 4th-century capital was some 20 km west of Gabala, a site that's now a beautifully set, rural archaeological site with a splendid new museum. In the nearby village of Nij, the Udi people still speak a unique language that's essentially the same as that of the mysterious Caucasian Albanians.



8 **Lahij** – Less than two hours' drive from Gabala, via a geologically spectacular canyon, the pretty little village of Lahij woos visitors with its antique copperware workshops, white-cobbled streets, stone houses and plethora of craft shops. It's a great place to unwind in relatively cool summer air and hike a series of accessible mountain trails to the crumbling remnants of half-forgotten fortresses.



9 **Shusha Fortress** – Shusha is our cultural capital due to its incredible musical, literary and crafts heritage. This is the home of Azerbaijani mugham music, the birthplace of poets, and the centre of the Karabakh school of carpet weaving. The city has many historic sites too, such as Shusha Fortress, built in the 18th century when Shusha was the capital of the Karabakh Khanate. Enjoy the incredible views!



10 **Pomegranate Festival** – Goychay is a quiet city in central Azerbaijan which bursts into life every autumn. That's because it's the centre of a region that may be the pomegranate capital of the world and hosts the UNESCO-listed Pomegranate Festival during the seasonal harvest. Dozens of different types are grown in Goychay, located in the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains. We love pomegranates so much that they're part of our national culture – a symbol of abundance and energy.



liquid mud *crystal salt*

Feel the benefit of our natural cures at these stunning destinations

Top 10 places to go

1 **Naftalan** city is a well-known petroleum spa resort and the centre of medical tourism in Azerbaijan, located near Ganja, the second largest city in the country. The unique Naftalan oil has no equivalent anywhere in the world. The curative properties of the oil are particularly helpful in the treatment of musculoskeletal diseases, as well as neurological, urological, gynaecological, skin and other ailments. While unforgettable as a one-off experience, for the full effect you will need a 10-day course.



2 **Duzdag** is one of the oldest salt deposits in the world. According to French and Azerbaijani scientists, the exploitation of this mine began as early as 4,500 years ago. Salt deposits here are so abundant that its production is still active, and one of the salt mines has been specially equipped for patient treatment. Nowadays, Duzdag has been transformed into an asthma treatment spa and hotel complex.



3 **Mud volcanoes** – Azerbaijan is home to 700 mud volcanoes, and we can easily visit many of them from Gobustan. These geological oddities bubble and burp constantly, producing endless streams of liquid mud. Volcanic clay and mud are used in the treatment of diseases related to the nervous system, skin and rheumatism.



4 **Chenot Palace** – Surrounded by the silence and tranquillity of magical pine woods, and overlooking the peaceful Nohur Lake, the new Chenot Palace Hotel in Gabala offers a plethora of detox and rejuvenation programmes at the foot of the Caucasus Mountains. It's a perfect getaway from the hustle and bustle of congested cities, where you can fully recharge your batteries.



5 **Mineral waters** – Since ancient times, mineral waters have been widely used for medicinal and preventive purposes in Azerbaijan. There are more than 30 deposits of thermal mineral waters with different concentrations, sulphur levels and organic substances near the Caucasus Mountains. You can experience them at architecturally striking medical and recreational resorts like Galaalti Hotel & SPA in Shabran, Qafqaz Thermal & Spa in Gabala and Lankaran Springs Wellness Resort.



6 **Baku's spas** – Baku boasts a world-class selection of 5-star hotels, each equipped with sumptuous spas offering a fantastic range of treatments, relaxing therapies and good old-fashioned pampering, as well as pools and gyms. And many of them have stunning views of the city centre and the Caspian Sea.



7 **Baku's hammams** – For a classic Azerbaijani wellness experience, head to one of Baku's old-style hammams. For centuries, hammams in Baku were places not just to wash but also to relax and socialise. Many have vanished but a few remain and still offer the traditional treatments – warm water immersion, steam rooms and all-over body scrubs followed by a tea ceremony.



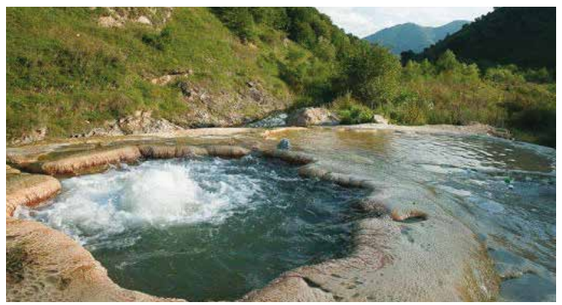
8 **Caspian beaches** – In summer, Caspian Sea beaches are great places to escape the heat of the city and boost your immune system with sunshine, seawater and cool breezes, not to mention the fresh watermelon and fish that are a part of the coastal lifestyle. The Absheron Peninsula has plenty of great resorts and private beaches, while Lankaran in the south is famous for its therapeutic black-sand beaches.



9 **Sheki** – The 5-star Marxal Resort & Spa is just a few kilometres from Sheki, whose historical old town has UNESCO World Heritage status. Situated at the foot of the Greater Caucasus Mountains, the resort has a wonderful spa with indoor swimming pool, sauna and fitness suite, as well as salt and sand rooms. The 'pièce de résistance', however, is the Amber Room which, laden with natural Baltic amber, infuses with positive energy and treats cardiovascular diseases, joint problems and the central nervous system.



10 **Kalbajar Hot Springs** – The wildly beautiful mountainous Kalbajar region in North West Karabakh is home to a dozen hot springs. A place called Istisu (which translates as 'Hot Water') is the popular one, which in Soviet times hosted a famous sanatorium. The nearly 70°C water is used to treat a wide variety of ailments and is said to be similar in substance to that of the famous Karlovy Vary hot springs in the Czech Republic.



dramatic mountains *placid lakes*

Enjoy the natural landscapes of Azerbaijan at these amazing locations

Top 10 places to go

1 **Hirkan National Park** is located in the south of the country in the heart of the Talish Mountains. This protected area is known for its endemic tree species, notably the ironwood tree.



2 **Shahdag Mountain Resort** sits on a glorious shoulder of green mountain, offering a fine range of summer hiking options across shepherd pastures towards the dramatic crags above. Or you might take an easier path to the gloriously set village of Laza, surrounded by waterfalls that freeze in winter, when snow turns Shahdag into one of the most spectacular ski resorts imaginable.



3 **Gabala** is one of Azerbaijan's foremost resort towns, combining beautiful landscape with an exceptional array of upmarket yet great value hotels. Activities abound – quad biking, skiing, hiking, skating, paintballing, bowling, horse riding, spas, shooting and several fantastic swimming pools. Kids will love Gabaland Theme Park while classical music lovers can attend the prestigious annual International Music Festival. In winter, Tufandag is another of Azerbaijan's excellent ski resorts.



4 **Goygol National Park,** located in the western part of Azerbaijan is one of the most picturesque parts of the country. Celebrated in Azerbaijani poetry, painting and song, it's named after our best-loved mountain lake, set beneath the dramatic rocky beak of Mount Kapaz and ringed by thick green forests that turn golden in autumn. Nearby Lake Maralgol is arguably even lovelier.



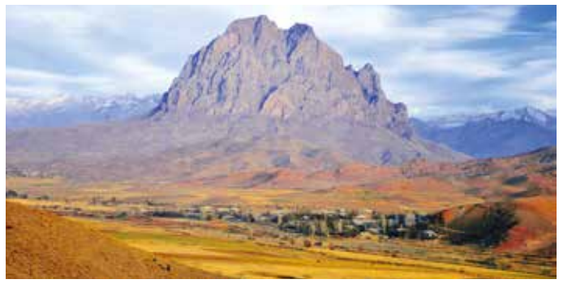
5 **Khinalig** – You can really travel back in time in our traditional mountain village of Khinalig, perched on a hilltop about 2,200 metres above sea level. The village's ancient stone houses are scattered across steep terrain and sit so compactly that the roof of one acts as the courtyard of another. The locals are an ancient tribe of the Caucasus Mountains who speak a completely unique language. Nearby there's also a restored Zoroastrian fire temple. The village now forms part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



6 **Lesser Caucasus Mountains** – Our Lesser Caucasus Mountains in the South West are no less captivating than the Greater ones in the North. Here you can enjoy some amazing road trips into the heart of them, to places like Gadabay and Dashkasan. Or you can spend days hiking through the mountains, stopping at quiet villages and coming across centuries-old historical monuments. Head further south into Karabakh and you can explore the awe-inspiring scenery of the area around Kalbajar.



7 **Nakhchivan** – Considered one of the first areas settled by humans in the region, Nakhchivan is a place of breathtaking semi-desert mountain landscapes. The road from the city of Nakhchivan to Ordubad is one of the most scenic drives in our country. On the way, you'll see the iconic Mount Hachadag, whose cleft peak was carved out by Noah's Ark, according to local legend. Up north tranquil Lake Batabat is surrounded by truly inspirational mountain scenery and is a favourite picnic spot for locals.



8 **Shirvan National Park** is one of our top all-round nature sites and is famous as the home of the goitered gazelle, one of our national animals which is well protected. This huge area (54,000 hectares) of semi-desert is also a paradise for birdwatchers where over 270 different species have been recorded. Explore the park further and you'll find mud volcanoes, local shrines and wild Caspian beaches. So much to discover!



9 **Shusha** – As well as being a cradle of Azerbaijani culture, the spectacularly set hilltop city of Shusha is known for its superb surrounding nature replete with breathtaking mountain views, mineral water springs, waterfalls and dramatic canyons. The area's cool climate and pure air and water have made it a sought-after summer destination for centuries.



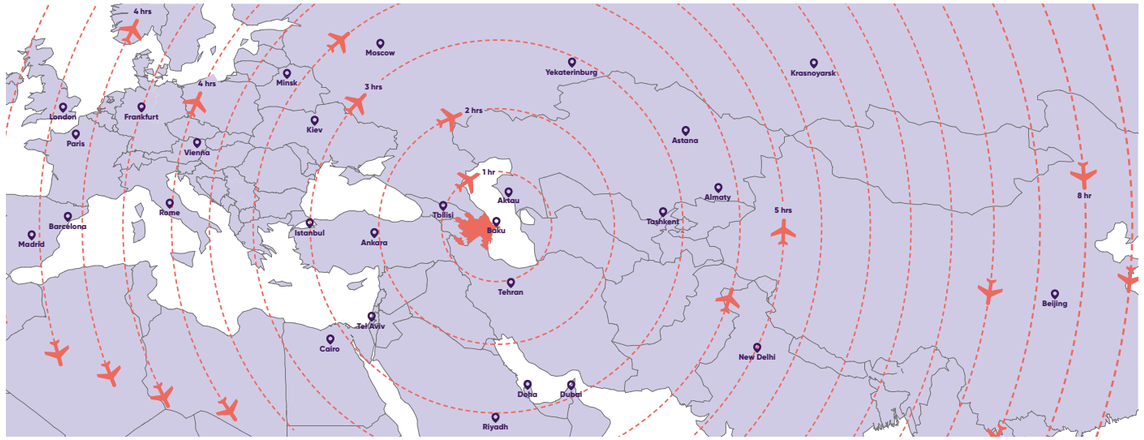
10 **Lerik** – Situated high in the Talish Mountains, Lerik District's lush, pure nature is thought to be the reason why it's been home to so many long-lived people – who are celebrated in Lerik town's unique Museum of Longevity. Drive up here and you'll be rewarded with idyllic landscapes of rolling meadows and rocky canyons. The area is rich in medicinal plants, fresh produce, waterfalls and birdlife, and the Buzeyir Caves were inhabited as far back as Paleolithic times.



salam *Azerbaijan*

Country Size
86,600 km²

Population
10 million



When to visit

Dec-Mar: Cold but perfect for skiing.

Apr-Jun: Getting warmer so try walking in the foothills. But take an umbrella in spring.

Jul-Aug: Very warm and ideal for hiking in the high mountains or relaxing on the Caspian coastline.

Sep-Oct: Still warm so perfect for both city exploring and trips to the regions.

Nov: Enjoy the stunning colours in the countryside but wear layers!

Time zone

We're 4 hours ahead of GMT but we don't put the clocks forward in summer, so while we're 3 hours ahead of Western Europe in winter, that drops to only 2 in April-October.

Religion

While we are a secular country, most of the population follow Islam. Muslim dress code is not enforced nor expected. Alcohol is very widely available. All religions have somewhere to worship in Azerbaijan.

Language

Our state language is Azerbaijani, which is similar to Turkish. Basic English is understood by most of the population. Russian is widely known, especially in Baku.

Visa

Some nationalities are issued a visa on arrival, while many others can get an e-visa within 3 days via **evisa.gov.az**. All others need to apply for a visa at their nearest Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Please check the latest requirements before booking your trip.

Money

Card payments are accepted at most shops and restaurants in the country. Mastercard/Visa ATMs are widely available in all main cities and towns. Changing money back is no problem. The manat (AZN) is our national currency.

Accommodation

We have a complete range of options, from luxury and mid-range hotels to rural ensuite bungalows, provincial motels and even private homestays.

Transportation prices

On the bus and Baku metro one journey costs 50 gepiks. Taxis are also widely available as an alternative option.

Driving

An international driving licence is advised. Car rental is increasingly available in Baku.

Telephone

The country code is +994, the dial out code from Azerbaijan is 00.

Internet

Most good hotels are fully equipped with Wi-Fi throughout, and big hotels will also have business centres with at least a few computers. Also, Wi-Fi is free in many cafes and restaurants across Baku and beyond. Mobile phone providers offer relatively inexpensive dongles so that you can access the web through 4G mobile networks.

*For the latest information on travel during the COVID-19 pandemic, see **azerbaijan.travel/covid-19-en***



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