

# Azerbaijan

**Status:** Republic in southern Caucasus

**Area:** 33,436 sq. miles

**Population:** 9,872,765 (2016 estimate)

**Currency:** 100 qəpik = 1 new manat, (1m = 56 U.S. cents)



Azerbaijan is a Turkish-speaking republic about the size of South Carolina in the eastern Caucasus. Home to some of the earliest known human settlements in all of Eurasia, the area on the western shores of the Caspian Sea became a crossroads for eastern and western cultures. Under the Persians in the 16th century, Shi'ite Islam became the prevalent religion. Czarist wars with Persia in 1813 and 1828 brought all of Azerbaijan under Russian control. The Russians established a postal office in Baku in 1816. This was elevated to a regional center in 1863. In 1880, the train line to Tblisi and Poli on the Black Sea was completed, greatly improving communications with the world. The first Russian postage stamps appeared in 1857 and were placed in use in Azerbaijan on March 1, 1858.



The low denomination of the set, Scott 1. Azerbaijan's first 10 stamps, from 1919, are colorful imperforates.



More than 40 overprints were produced from 1922 to 1924. Some are difficult to find today. Scott 63.



One of five stamps issued for the 1996 European Soccer Championships. Sixteen teams were in the finals, but not Azerbaijan. Scott 611.

The early 20th century saw a growing national consciousness. In 1901, it was the world's leading oil producer. After the collapse of the Russian Empire, Azerbaijan declared its independence on May 28, 1918, but control of Baku fluctuated with the fortunes of the Allies and the Central Powers. In October 1918, the Ottomans capitulated. Azerbaijan became a secular democratic republic with tacit British support. But pro-Bolshevik sentiment was strong, particularly among the oil workers in Baku. On April 27, 1920 Bolshevik troops entered Baku with little resistance, and the next day a Soviet Republic was proclaimed. The Azerbaijani Republic issued its first postage stamps on October 20, 1919. The Soviet government printed the same designs on yellow paper, in 1920, for its use.

On March 12, 1922, the Soviets organized the three fractious Caucasian states into the Transcaucasian Federation of Soviet Republics. Azerbaijan, like Georgia and Armenia, continued to use its own stamps until October 1, 1923 when they were replaced by those of the Federation. Russian stamps were used in the Federation after January 1, 1924, and stamps of the TFSR were invalidated on January 31. In 1936, Stalin reestablished Azerbaijan as a Soviet Republic.

As the Soviet Union began to weaken in the 1980s, ethnic violence increased in the Caucasus. In 1998, there was open rebellion by Armenians in the Azerbaijani territory of Nagorno Karabakh. Nationalist demonstrations in Baku resulted in the death of 132 demonstrators at the hands the Red Army.

The Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchevan declared its independence from the Soviet Union in January 1990 — the first Soviet territory to do so. The rest of Azerbaijan declared independence on August 18, 1991. The first new Azerbaijani stamps appeared on January 26, 1992.

The autonomous republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, supported by Armenia, declared its independence from Azerbaijan in 1991 and a bitter war ensued with Azerbaijan. Today, the enclave has a de facto independence which is not recognized by the world community. Nagorno-Karabakh issues its own stamps.



An unissued Soviet stamp depicting Caspian coast scene released by Azerbaijan through philatelic channels after independence.



A 1993 stamp promotes telecommunications between Azerbaijan and Iran. Scott 355A.



Stamps have been created for use in Nakhchevan, an autonomous region of Azerbaijan.



A set of eight definitive stamps in 1992–93 depicts Maiden Tower, a historic site dating to a 12th-century walled city. Scott 365.