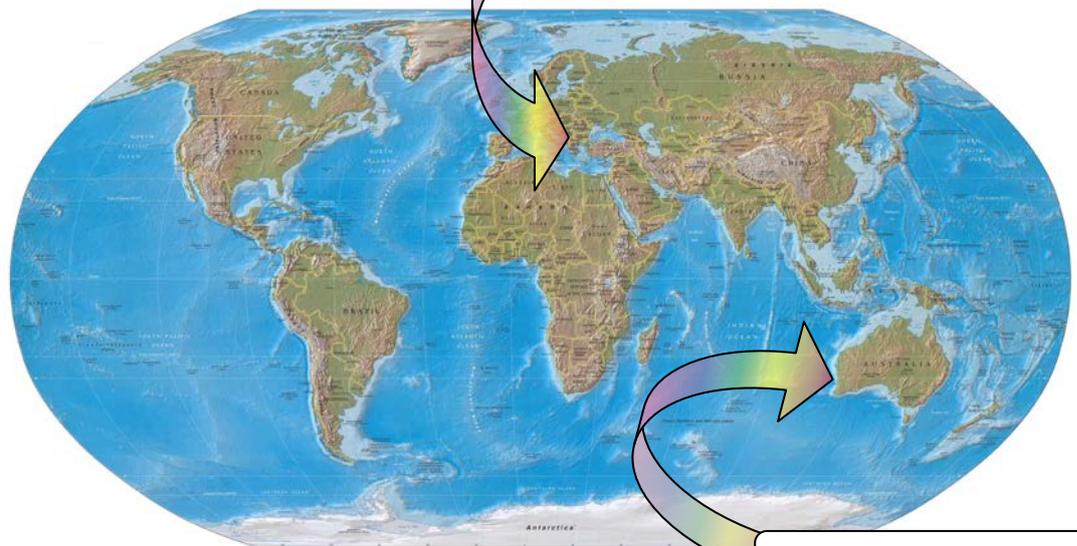


MACEDONIA



We were there



Now we are here

FACTS:

- **Full name:** Republic of Macedonia (listed by the UN as The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)
- **Population:** 2 million (UN, 2003)
- **Capital:** Skopje
- **Area:** 25,713 sq km (9,928 sq miles)
- **Major language:** Macedonian, Albanian
- **Major religion:** Christianity, Islam
- **Life expectancy:** 71 years (men), 76 years (women) (UN)
- **Monetary unit:** 1 denar = 100 deni
- **Main exports:** Clothing, iron and steel
- **GNI per capita:** US \$2,830 (World Bank, 2006)
- **Internet domain:** .mk
- **International dialing code:** +389

Macedonian Community in WA

Macedonian Community of Western Australia Inc. 51 Albert St, North Perth WA 6006
ph: 9328 7852

Macedonian Cultural Centre Perth WA Inc. 71 Grindleford Drv, Balcatta WA 6021
ph: 9345 1990

Macedonian United Society Community Centre of WA Inc. "St.Nikola" 69 Angove St,
North Perth WA 6006 ph: 9328 8552

Macedonian Community of WA Welfare Office 8 Macedonia Place, North Perth WA 6006
ph: 9328 7975

Macedonian Australian Community Organisation 3 Enterprise Crs, Malaga WA 6000
ph: 9248 8537

Macedonian United Society of WA 3 Victoria Rd, Westminster WA 6061

Overview of cultural groups

The largest ethnic group in the country is the ethnic Macedonians. According to the 2002 census, 1,297,981 inhabitants declared themselves to be Macedonians, representing 64.18% of the total population.

Approximately 535,000 inhabitants are declared as Albanians, representing 25.2% of the population. Smaller ethnic minorities include Turks 3.85%, Roma 2.66%, Serbs 1.78%, Bosniaks 0.84%, Vlachs 0.48%, and other 1.04%. The Macedonian national census records most ethnic groups, but the smaller ones are not enumerated separately in the final report.

Language/dialects spoken

Macedonian is official and most widely spoken language in Macedonia. It is the only language explicitly designated as an official national language in the constitution. Structurally, it is closer to Bulgarian than any other Slavonic language which belongs to the Eastern branch of the South Slavic language group. Its current form was codified after World War II and has accumulated a thriving literary tradition.

Other languages including Albanian, Bulgarian, Romani, Turkish, Serbian, Vlach (Aromanian and Megleno-Romanian), Circassian, Greek and others are spoken roughly in proportion with their associated ethnic groups.

Additionally, in municipalities where at least 20% of the population is from other ethnic minorities, their individual languages are used for official purposes in local government.

The wide variety of languages spoken in the Republic of Macedonia reflects its ethnic diversity.

Dietary preferences

Macedonian cuisine probably offers the richest variety of dishes. Some dishes date from ancient Greek days. The letters of Lygeas of Samos include reference to a Macedonian dish organized by Lamia of Athens for her lover Demetrius I Poliorcetes. A constant factor across the centuries has been sea produce and meats. In the wedding feast by Karanos, around 4th or 3rd century BC, we find grilled fish, eggs, oysters, orioles and a host of roasted delicacies. All supplemented with wine and half naked female flutists.

A continuation from ancient days are dishes such as, **lamb cooked** with quince or various vegetables and fruits, **goat boiled or fried** in olive oil. Modern recipes from Kavala to Kastoria and Kozani offer **lamb with quince**, **pork with celery** or leeks, trachana with crackling pitas of all types, cheese, leek, (spinach) and wild boar. Favourites are **Tyrokafteri** (Macedonian spicy cheese spread), **Sooupies krasates** (Cuttlefish in wine), **Mydia yiachni** (mussel stew). Unlike Athens, the traditional pita bread for the popular **souvlaki** (kebab) is not grilled but fried.

Religion/spirituality/observances

The majority 64.7% of the population belongs to the Macedonian Orthodox Church. It has 10 provinces (seven in the country and three abroad), 10 bishops, and about 350 priests. Macedonians, who are the majority of the population, are Christian Orthodox. The Macedonian Orthodox Church declared itself head in 1968, that is still not recognised by the Serbian and other Eastern Orthodox Churches, although the Archbishop's Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church has recognised the autonomy of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

Muslims comprise 33.3% of the population and other Christian denominations comprise 0.37%. The remainder 1.63% is recorded as "unspecified" in the 2002 national census.

Most of the native Albanians, Turks and Bosniaks are Muslims, as are a minority of the country's ethnic Macedonian population, known as Macedonian Muslims. Altogether, there are more than 1200 churches and 400 mosques in the country. The Orthodox and Islamic religious communities have secondary religion schools in Skopje. There is an Orthodox theological college in the capital.

Macedonia has the largest proportion of Muslims of any country in Europe after Turkey, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Public Holidays:

Date	English Name	Local Name
7 January	Christmas Day (Orthodox)	Прв ден Божик
	Easter Sunday (Orthodox)	Прв ден Велигден
	Easter Monday (Orthodox)	Втор ден Велигден
24 May	Saints Cyril and Methodius Day	„Св. Кирил и Методиј“, Ден на сесловенските просветители
2 August	National (Day of the Republic) Day	Ден на Републиката
8 September	Independence Day	Ден на независноста
11 October	Revolution Day	Ден на востанието
1 Shawwal (tenth month on the Lunar Islamic calendar)	Muslim Holiday (Ramadan)	Рамазан Бајрам
8 December	Saint Clement of Ohrid Day	“Св. Климент Охридски”

Customs/traditions

The Republic of Macedonia has a rich cultural heritage in art, architecture, poetry, and music. It has many ancient, protected religious sites. Poetry, cinema, and music festivals are held annually.

The most important cultural events in the country are the Ohrid Summer festival of classical music and drama, the Struga Poetry Evenings which gather poets from more than 50 countries in the world, Skopje May Opera Evenings, International Camera Festival in Bitola, Open Youth Theatre and Skopje Jazz Festival in Skopje etc.

The “Koupa” custom - the carnival custom of forgiveness and soul's purification. The feast involves much dancing and tasting of local cuisine.

Gatherings around open pit fires - Easter Orthodox feast.

“Kurbani” - custom dedicated to the patron saint of vine growers.

Christmas bonfires - a fete that makes Christmas atmosphere far warmer in the heart of winter.

The fete of Saint Tryphon - commemorates Saint Tryphon, the patron saint of vine growers.

The "tranos" dance in Vlasti - devotion to old customs and traditions.

Celebrating the Epiphany in Volakas - the feasts include masquerades and endless dancing.

Recreational activities

The Republic of Macedonia has a rich cultural heritage in art, architecture, poetry, and music. It has many ancient, protected religious sites. Poetry, cinema, and music festivals are held annually.

The most important cultural events in the country are the Ohrid Summer festival of classical music and drama, the Struga Poetry Evenings which gather poets from more than 50 countries in the world, Skopje May Opera Evenings, International Camera Festival in Bitola, Open Youth Theatre and Skopje Jazz Festival in Skopje etc.

Environment

The Republic of Macedonia is a landlocked country that is geographically clearly defined by a central valley formed by the Vardar River and framed along its borders by mountain ranges.

The Republic's terrain is mostly rugged, located between the Šara and Osogovo, which frame the valley of the Vardar River. Three large lakes - Lake Ohrid, Lake Prespa and Dojran Lake - lie on the southern borders of the Republic, bisected by the frontiers with Albania and Greece. Ohrid is considered to be one of the oldest lakes and self-sufficient environment in the world. The region is seismically active and has been the site of destructive earthquakes in the past, most recently in 1963 when Skopje was heavily damaged by a major earthquake, killing over 1,000.

The Republic of Macedonia also has scenic mountains. They belong to two different ranges: Dinarska and Rodopska. The Dinarska range is the oldest with subsequent erosion; the Rodopska range is younger offering rugged, alpine scenery.

The Republic of Macedonia has transitional climate from Mediterranean to continental. The summers are hot and dry and the winters are moderately cold. Average annual precipitation varies from 1,700mm in the western mountainous area to 500mm in the eastern area.

There are three main climatic zones in the country: temperate Mediterranean, mountainous and mildly Continental. Along the valleys of the Vardar and Strumica rivers, in the regions of Gevgelija, Valandovo, Dojran, Strumica and Radovish the climate is temperate Mediterranean. The warmest region is the Demir Kapija and Gevgelija region, where the temperature in July and August frequently exceeds 40°C. The mountainous climate is present in the mountainous regions of the country and it is characterised by long and snowy winters and short and cold summers.

Your Notes and Comments: