

Crossword: Welcome to Azerbaijan, where there are cities on stilts and musical national sports

We journey to a popular tourist hot-spot that has many unique sights, both new and old

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With influences from both Europe and Asia, Azerbaijan is a nexus of east and west, traditional and modern. Image Credit: Stock photo/Pixabay

With its name translating to “the land of fire”, Azerbaijan lies neither in Europe nor Asia – at a crossroad of ancient historical empires.

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Azerbaijan is full of beautiful landscapes – timeless rustic villages amid lush orchards with the backdrop of the Great Caucasus Mountains. But it will also surprise, with cities that stand on stilts, and a museum dedicated to carpets. Here are five things about this popular tourist destination that you may not know:

1. It's renowned for its horses

The Karabakh horse is the national animal of Azerbaijan. Native to the country, they are one of the oldest breeds in the world and known for their effortless speed, intelligence and stamina. This kind of horse is so important to the country, it appears on their postage stamps and in local literature.

2. It has a city on stilts



The settlement of Neft Daslari began as an oil rig, and a few walkways in the Caspian Sea. But today, it's an entire stilted city – or rather, a city built on oil platforms. Constructed in 1949, the area is now home to a variety of communities, with a smattering of bakeries, shops, cultural areas and hotels.

3. It has a lot of volcanoes

Azerbaijan is home to more mud volcanoes than any other place on Earth – over 400 of them. When the volcanoes erupt, the flames shoot up to a kilometre in the air, and when dormant, they bubble and pop with noxious gases that give off a decidedly rotten-egg smell.

4. It has a carpet museum



Opened in 2014, the Carpet Museum is located on Baku's seafont, and literally resembles a massive rolled-up rug. Inside, you will find weaving demonstrations and carpets of all ages, from all over Azerbaijan.

5. Its national sport is played to music

Like polo, chovkan is played with a curved wooden stick and players mounted on horses. But unlike polo, the game is accompanied by music, and all of the players wear their national costume: embroidered tunics, caps and pantaloons.

Have you been to Azerbaijan? Play today's [Crossword](#) and tell us at games@gulfnews.com.