THE ELEVEN OLDEST COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD

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Category: Opinions

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The oldest countries in the world are difficult to rank, but a number of nations celebrates a long and continuous history. While Iran and Egypt have ancient civilizations dating back millennia, San Marino is considered the oldest continuous republic. Other contenders include China and Greece.

The idea of a "country" or "nation-state" as we know it today is a fairly new one, which makes it hard to figure out which countries are the oldest. We can make a list of the oldest countries in the World by looking at the most ancient civilizations and political groups that are still around today.

However, this list of the oldest countries takes into account both the founding of a stable political state and a civilization with a long, unbroken cultural history. While many of the oldest European countries have a rich history, the absolute oldest tend to be found in other parts of the world. In fact, some of these nations, such as Egypt and China, have a history stretching back thousands of years.

List of Oldest Countries in the World by Age

The following table presents some of the world's oldest countries, ranked by the approximate date of their founding as a continuous civilization or political entity. The dates often refer to the emergence of a unified state or the beginning of a recognized dynasty.

Rank	Name of Oldest Country	Date of Foundation
1.	Iran	c. 3200 BCE
2.	Egypt	c. 3100 BCE
3.	Vietnam	c. 2879 BCE
4.	Armenia	c. 2492 BCE
5.	China	c. 2070 BCE
6.	India	c. 2000 BCE
7.	Georgia	c. 1300 BCE
8.	Ethiopia	c. 980 BCE
9.	Greece	c. 800 BCE
10.	Japan	c. 660 BCE
11.	San Marino	301 CE

1. **Iran**

Iran, which used to be called Persia, has a strong case for being the world's oldest country, with a history that goes back to around 3200 BCE. The Elamite civilization began to grow on this date. It set

up some of the first organized governments in the area. Iran's rich and long-lasting culture has survived many dynasties, including the Islamic Republic that was set up in 1979.

2. **Egypt**

King Menes united Upper and Lower Egypt around 3100 BCE, marking the start of Egypt's history as a single kingdom. This event began the First Dynasty and a civilization that lasted for thousands of years. The pyramids, hieroglyphs, and pharaohs that are so well-known are proof of its long and important history.

3. **Vietnam**

The Hong Bang Dynasty, which began in 2879 BCE, is said to be the beginning of Vietnam. This early history is a mix of legend and documented fact, but archaeological evidence from the Dong Son culture shows that there was a unique and advanced civilization in the area. Vietnam kept its own identity even after 1,000 years of Chinese rule. It became independent in the 10th century CE.

4. **Armenia**

Armenia is at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Its history as a recognized state goes back to 2492 BCE, when the legendary Haykazun dynasty was founded. In 301 CE, Armenia became the first country to make Christianity its official religion. It has a rich cultural history that has lasted through hundreds of years of foreign rule and influence.

5. **China**

China has one of the longest histories of a civilization that has always been there. People think that the Xia Dynasty, the first dynasty, started around 2070 BCE. The later Shang Dynasty (c. 1600 BCE) is well-documented and marks the start of a long line of dynastic rule that eventually led to the unified China we know today. However, scholars disagree about whether it really existed.

6. **India**

The first civilization in India was the Indus Valley Civilization, which began around 2500 BCE. This civilization fell apart, but the Vedic Period that came after it, which started around 2000 BCE, laid the groundwork for modern Indian culture. India has had many different kingdoms and empires in the past, and its culture and philosophy have been passed down through the years.

7. **Georgia**

Georgia is at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, and it has been an organized state since about 1300 BCE. In this area, Greek mythology talks about the old kingdoms of Colchis and Iberia. Georgia's unique language, alphabet, and Orthodox Christian faith have survived centuries of foreign invasions

and occupations, showing how strong its national identity is.

8. **Ethiopia**

Ethiopia says it is one of the oldest countries because of the ancient kingdom of D'mt, which was founded around 980 BCE. It is interesting that it is the only African country that has been able to resist colonial rule for most of its history, keeping its own unique cultural identity.

9. **Greece**

People often say that Greece is where Western civilization began. Its history goes back to the rise of ancient city-states around 800 BCE. The modern state was officially formed in 1830, but the Greek people have a long and rich cultural history that has had a big impact on art, philosophy, and democracy around the world.

10. **Japan**

660 BCE is the traditional date for Japan's founding. This is when Emperor Jimmu is said to have taken the throne. This means that the Japanese imperial dynasty is the oldest hereditary monarchy in the world that is still going strong. The historical details of the earliest emperors are a mix of legend and fact, but for thousands of years, the country has kept a strong sense of national identity and cultural continuity.

11. **San Marino**

The Republic of San Marino, which has been a sovereign state and constitutional republic since 301 CE, is the oldest one still in existence. This small country, which is surrounded by Italy, has been able to stay independent for more than 1,700 years. The constitution, which was written in 1600, is thought to be the oldest written constitution still in use today.

How do Countries Come into Existence?

Countries come into existence through a blend of historical, political, and social factors. Some countries, like many in Europe, evolved over centuries from kingdoms and tribal lands as a shared culture and government solidified. Others were formed more recently through wars of independence, treaties, or decolonization, where a people group asserted its right to self-governance. A country needs a government that can keep things in order, a defined territory, a population, and a shared sense of identity.

Which was the First Country in the World?

Egypt is often thought of as the first "country" because it was the first big state with a common culture and territory. Around 3100 BCE, King Menes brought Upper and Lower Egypt together, making a centralized state that lasted for thousands of years. This was the beginning of what we

now think of as a nation.

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Harshita Singh specializes in US affairs and general knowledge, simplifying intricate geopolitical and historical subjects into clear, digestible insights for learners. Holding a BA (Hons) in English from the University of Delhi and with over three years of experience in educational writing, she produces authoritative, thoroughly researched content that empowers readers to engage confidently with global current affairs. For inquiries, you can reach out to her at harshita.singh@jagrannewmedia.com

Comments

Sana – 2026-08-11 05:31:20
Well, technically, if you were to say when humans started living in Iran, it would date back to 6000BCE and would be 8000 years old, because of the first sign of human life that was found in Tepe Silak, but if you were to speak civilization, as in cities and villages it would date back to 3000BCE, which is 5000 years ago, in Ilam and Shahr-e-Sukhteh

Yusef – 2026-07-07 14:49:56
I am of Persian descent and was raised thinking Persia/Iran had the first sovereign state but the article helps me understand the possibility that there was more going on back then than we may currently understand. I assume that it's fairly difficult to arrive at some of these dates in antiquity. I am no expert but ancient history fascinated me and I appreciate the author giving an unbiased perspective of ancient times. The more we learn about our ancient past the more we can do to prevent unnecessary collapse of modern civilization, or at least that is my hope!

Moe – 2026-06-04 23:55:27
Iraq ?

Vahakn – 2026-04-09 09:09:47
1. Why stop at apparently arbitrary 11 oldest civilizations? 2.What is civilization? When people stopped being hunter-gatherers or when they began to build fortresses, temples, palaces? 3. That Armenia was born in 2400 BC contradicts the widely accepted idea that it was in the 8th century B.C. , following the decline of Urartu. What about the theory that Armenia is the "Cradle of Civilizations"? 4. The article needs more work.

Rip – 2026-04-08 04:02:28
Brother Iraq is known to have the first ever civilization in humanity itself (Babylon)(بابليون)