

UK - Key:

Basic facts + Geography

The British Isles are formed by the two major islands of **Great Britain** and **Northern Ireland** and more than 5,000 small ones. The isles are washed off by the North Sea in the north and east, by the Irish Sea and Atlantic Ocean in the west.

The UK is situated **north-west** of the European continent between the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea. There is the **English Channel / La Manche Channel** between the UK and France. Most famous smaller islands are The Isle of Man, Hebrides Isles, Shetland and Orkney.

The capital of the UK is **London**. The official name is **the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**.

Its area is about 244,755 square miles. The longest river is the **Severn**. The biggest British lake is **Lough Neagh** in Northern Ireland.

The climate is mild and humid with average temperature ranging from 4°C in winter to 16°C in summer. For tourists, the summer is the best season with fine weather, not too hot for travelling 23-25 °C.

The British Commonwealth of Nations is a voluntary association of Great Britain and its former colonies in Europe, Asia, Africa and America. It was founded in 1931 and has 49 members.

Political system

Great Britain is a **constitutional monarchy** with the constitution as the supreme law and the **Queen Elizabeth II.** as the head of state. She is on throne since 1952 to now. The British parliament is one of the oldest in the world.

Symbols

The British national flag is called **Union Jack** and it is a combination of England, Scotland and Ireland cross. The national anthem is "God Save the Queen!".

Population

The original inhabitants were the **Celts** and there are remnants of their language in Welsh, Scottish and Irish Gaelic. The official language is English.

Sports

Sports play an important part in the life in Britain and are popular leisure activity. Many of the world's famous sports began in Britain, including **cricket, football, box, lawn tennis, table tennis, badminton, golf** and **rugby**. England's national sport is **cricket** although **football (soccer)** is seen as a national sport

because it is the most popular sport. Some of England's football teams are world famous, such as **Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool.**

Rugby originated from Rugby school in Warwickshire. It is similar to football, but played with an oval ball. The world's most famous tennis tournament is **Wimbledon.** It is traditional for visitors to eat strawberries and cream while they watch the **tennis.**

Netball is the largest female team sport in England. **Horse racing** and **greyhound racing** are popular spectator sports. People can place bets on the races at legal betting offices. **Polo** was brought to Britain from India by army officers and it is the fastest ball sport in the world.

Scotland is traditionally regarded as the home of **golf.**

In the nineteenth century, students at Oxford and Cambridge were huge fans of **rowing** and began to race against each other on the Thames River every year. Today, the University Boat Race is held every spring.

Angling is one of the most popular outdoor sports in the UK (fishermen can be seen sitting beside rivers and lakes) and **darts** is a very popular pub game. The game of darts was invented in the north of England.

Souvenirs

Popular souvenirs are **illustrated publications, porcelain and glass, jewellery, fashionable clothing and knitwear, shawls and scarves, crafts, and cookies in a stylish box and English tea with pictures of the Queen and her family.**

Cities, towns, important places

Oxford has been a university town since 12th century. It lies on the river Thames.

Cambridge has an important university. There are many museums.

Liverpool is the birthplace of the Beatles. It became one of the world's greatest cities and ports.

Canterbury - there is famous cathedral.

Stonehenge is a prehistoric monument located in the English county of Wiltshire.

Bath was founded by the Romans who built a spa there which is still well-known.

Stratford upon Avon is the birthplace of William Shakespeare.

The coast of **Cornwall** is called **English Riviera** as there are sandy beaches and palm trees.

UK has four parts - England, Scotland, **Wales** and **Northern Ireland.**

Wales

The capital of Wales is Cardiff and St David is the patron of the country. There are mountains called the Cambrians with the highest peak **Snowdon.** The national instrument is **harp** and the symbol is daffodil.

Scotland

The biggest city is Glasgow but the capital is the historical town of **Edinburgh.** The typical instrument is the **bagpipe** and typical Scot is dressed in the pleated tartan kilt.

Ireland

Ireland is divided into the Northern Ireland / Ulster and the Republic of the Ireland / Eire. The capital of Ulster is Belfast and the capital of Eire is Dublin. The symbol of the country is a **green clover**. The Irish like playing Gaelic football or curling.

Famous people:

Writers: George Orwell - Animal Farm, 1984; Charlotte Brontë - Jane Eyre; Emily Brontë - Wuthering Heights; Charles Dickens - Oliver Twist, A Christmas Carol, Little Dorrit, David Copperfield; William Shakespeare - The Taming of the Shrew, Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, Hamlet, Othello; Arthur Conan Doyle - Sherlock Holmes, Mark Twain - The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

Actors: Daniel Craig (secret agent James Bond), Colin Firth, Jude Law, Robert Pattinson (Twilight Saga), Daniel Radcliffe (Harry Potter).

Actresses: Rachel Weisz, Kate Winslet (Titanic), Sienna Miller (model, actress).

Explorers: Captain James Cook, Sir Francis Drake.

Filmmakers: Charlie Chaplin, Alfred Hitchcock.

Humourists: Rowan Atkinson.

Inventors: Sir Isaac Newton (founder of modern physics, inventor of the reflector telescope).

Musicians: Sir Elton John (pop star and composer), Adele (singer), Victoria Beckham (singer, songwriter, dancer, fashion designer, author, businesswoman, actress and model), James Blunt, Eric Clapton, Mick Jagger (rock singer and frontman of The Rolling Stones), Phil Collins (singer-songwriter, musician, member of Genesis (band), Robbie Williams, Amy Winehouse (singer-songwriter).

Sportsmen and sportswomen: David Beckham, Lewis Hamilton (British Formula One racing driver), Wayne Mark Rooney (English footballer), Andy Murray (tennis player).

Chefs: Jamie Oliver.

Music groups: The Rolling Stones, The Beatles.

Leisure time and holidays:

The weekends are a time for families in Britain. The parents are often not at work. Saturdays are busy because many families go shopping. People enjoy various indoor and outdoor activities. They spend most of their free time watching television, visiting or entertaining friends or relations, on sport and hobbies. Other popular leisure activities are listening to the radio, listening to music, reading, DIY, gardening, eating out and going to the cinema which is the most popular cultural activity.

The British are known as a nation of gardeners. Most people have a garden on their property. Many people in Britain are proud of their houses and gardens. They want their houses and gardens to look nice. Every town in Britain has one or more DIY (Do it yourself) centres and garden centres.

Sports and physical recreation have always been popular. Local governments provide cheap sport and leisure facilities such as swimming pools, tennis courts, parks and golf courses. People go to watch other

people play sports like football or take part in sports themselves. Going to the pub is the most popular leisure activity outside the home.

Two-thirds of all British people have their holidays in July and August, which are the most popular months for holidays. English school children are on holiday from the end of July to the beginning of September.

The traditional British holiday is a seaside holiday. Many British people spend much of their free time during the summer months down by the sea. Children enjoy swimming in the sea and building sandcastles. There are places near the sea, such as Blackpool, Scarborough and Bournemouth, where there is plenty to do even if it rains.

Holidays Abroad

Europe is the most popular destination for UK residents. Spain has been the most popular country to visit, France is second in popularity. More and more Britons are taking a second holiday abroad in the winter (skiing for a week) or spring (weekend / short breaks to European cities). Seaside package holidays are the most popular type of holiday. Most working people have 4 weeks holiday per year and take 2 weeks off in summer.

TEST

capitol	in the east	bagpipes
pleated tartan Scottish kilt	divide	sandy beach
daffodil	remnant	national flag
leisure activities	mild and humid climate	member
The British Commonwealth of Nations	voluntary association	former colony
found	supreme law	the head of state
national anthem	the biggest lake	Thames
spa	birthplace	port