

THE UNITED KINGDOM: COUNTRY AND PEOPLE

“Great Britain” is a geographical expression but “the United Kingdom” is a political expression. Great Britain is the biggest of the group of islands which lie between **the North Sea** and **the Atlantic Ocean** and separated from Europe by the **English Channel**. It is approximately two and a half times the size of **Ireland**, the second largest, separated by **the Irish Sea**. “Britain” and “British” have two meanings. They sometimes refer to Great Britain alone and sometimes to the UK including Northern Ireland. “England” and “English” are often incorrectly used to refer to the whole of Great Britain.

The British Isles are shared today by two separate and independent states. The smaller of these is **the Republic of Ireland (or Eire)**, with its capital in **Dublin**. The larger, with **London** as its capital, is *the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*. The long title is usually shortened to the United Kingdom or the **UK**. With an area of about 243, 000 sq km (93,000 sq mi), the UK is just under 1,000 km (about 600 mi) from the South coast to the extreme North of Scotland and just under 500 km (about 300 mi) across at the widest point.

The island of Great Britain contains three “nations” which were separate at earlier stages of their history: **England, Scotland and Wales**. Wales (with its capital city **Cardiff**) has become part of the English administrative system by the 16th century. The Welsh call their country **Cymru** and themselves **Cymry**, a word which has the same root as “a friend”. Scotland (poetically called **Caledonia** with its capital city **Edinburgh**) was not completely united with England until 1707. The United Kingdom is the name, which was introduced in 1801 when Great Britain was united with Ireland. When the Republic of Ireland became independent of London in 1922, the title was changed to its present form. (The capital city of Northern Ireland is **Belfast**). There are two small parts of the British Isles which have special political arrangements. These “**Crown Dependencies**” – The **Isle of Man** and the **Channel Islands** – are not part of the UK. They are largely self-governing with their own legislative assemblies and systems of law. The British Government is, however, responsible for their defence and international relations.

The flag of Britain, commonly known as the **Union Jack** (which derives from the use of the Union Flag on the jack-staff of naval vessels), embodies the Union of three countries under one Sovereign. The emblems that appear on the Union Flag are the crosses of three patron saints: the red cross of St. George, for England, on a white ground; the white diagonal cross of St. Andrew, for Scotland, on a blue ground; the red diagonal cross of St. Patrick, for Ireland, on a white ground. The final version of the flag appeared in 1801, following the union of Great Britain with Ireland. The cross remains in the flag although now only Northern Ireland is part of the UK. Wales is not represented in the Union Flag because, when the first version of the flag appeared, Wales was already united with England. The national flag of Wales – a red dragon on a field of white and green – dates from the 15th century.

The national flower of England is the *rose*. The flower has been adopted as England’s emblem since the time of the Wars of Roses (civil wars) – 1455-1485 between the royal House of Lancaster (whose emblem was a red rose) and the royal House of York (whose emblem was a white rose). With the defeat of King Richard III (of York) by the future Henry VII on 22 August 1485, the two roses were united into the Tudor rose (a red rose with a white centre) when Henry VII married Elizabeth of York. The national flower of Northern Ireland is the *shamrock* (трилисник), a plant similar to clover which is said to have been used by St. Patrick to illustrate the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The Scottish national flower is the *thistle* which was first used in the 15th century as a symbol of defence. The national flower of Wales is usually considered to be the *daffodil*; however, humble *leek* (лук-порей) is also considered to be a traditional emblem of Wales, possibly because its colours, white over green, echo the ancient Welsh standard.

In the centre of the national emblem is situated a heraldic shield, divided into 4 parts. Left upper part and right lower part symbolize England (3 gold leopards on a red ground). Right upper part – Scottish emblem (a red lion on a gold ground). Left lower part – Irish emblem (yellow harp

on a blue ground). Around the shield there is a garter with French words “Honi soit qui mal y pense” (“Evil be to him who evil thinks”). This garter symbolizes the Order of Garter, an ancient order of knighthood founded by Edward III in 1348, of which the Queen is the Sovereign. The shield is held by two **Royal Beasts** – the Lion with the crown in the left, the Unicorn in the right. Under them there is a blue ribbon with words “Dieu et mon droit” (God and my right) chosen by Richard I which since then have been the official motto of the Sovereign. In the background there is rose (England), thistle (Scotland), trefoil (Ireland), and leek (Wales).

Britain is unpredictable in climate and varied in scenery. There is a dramatic contrast between **Highland and Lowland Britain**. The most precise distinction is geological. The rocks of most of the *North and West* of Great Britain are harder and older than those of the South and East. These older rocks are covered by large areas of **moorland** such as the **Lake District, the Pennines** (England’s main mountain chain, “the backbone of England”) and much of Scotland and Wales, where the soils are poor, thin and stony. In addition these areas are wetter and harder to reach than the lower land to the south and east. As a result these areas of the British Isles are thinly populated except where coal or iron have been discovered. *The South and East* are rarely flat, but instead of continuous moorland there are bands of hills which alternate with areas of lowland. The soils are generally deeper and richer, the climate is drier and better suited for farming. Industry benefits from easier communications. Thus human settlement in these areas is dense and more evenly spread.

- The highest mountain **Ben Nevis**, in the Highlands of Scotland, 1,343 m (4,406 ft)
- The longest river **the Severn**, 354 km (220 mi) long which rises in central Wales and flows through Shrewsbury, Worcester, and Gloucester in England to the Bristol Channel. The largest lake is **Lough Neagh** [lok nei], Northern Ireland, 396 sq km (153 sq mi).
- The closest point to mainland Europe: Dover, Kent. The Channel Tunnel, which links England and France, is a little over 50 km (31 mi) long, of which nearly 38 km (24 mi) are under the English Channel.

The weather. Britain is as far north as Canada's Hudson Bay or Siberia, yet its climate is much milder because of the Gulf Stream, which brings warm water and air across the Atlantic from the Gulf of Mexico. Snow only falls occasionally and does not remain for long, except in the Scottish mountains. Average temperatures in England and Wales vary from +4C in January to +16C in July and August. In Scotland averages are one or two degrees cooler. The wind brings rain from the Atlantic to the hills of the west. This means that western parts of Britain are wetter than the east, which is fairly sheltered. London is drier than continental cities such as Hamburg.

The UK population in mid-2000 was estimated at 59.8 mln, the second largest in the European Union. England accounts for about 84%, Scotland – 9%, Wales – 5%, Northern Ireland – 3%. The UK population is projected to rise to nearly 61.8 mln by 2011. The number of **households** in GB rose by almost half between 1961 and 2001, from 16.3 mln to 24.1 mln. Over the same period the average household size fell from 3.3 to 2.4 people per household. Although most people still live in a couple household, an increasing proportion of people are living on their own. In spring 2000 almost three in ten households in GB comprised one person living alone. During 1970s and 1980s there was emphasis on the provision of first public and then private housing which enabled households to occupy separate accommodation. Households containing a lone parent family living on their own formed one in seventeen out of all households in 1961, but one in eleven in 2000.

Analysis of the Labour Force Survey found the following patterns of population by ethnic groups. On average between spring 2000 and winter 2000/01 over 4 mln people (7.1%) in GB described themselves as belonging to a non-White ethnic group, about one person in fourteen. The Indian group forms the largest non-White ethnic group, representing about 1.7% of all groups in the UK. Ethnic minorities are concentrated in the cities. The percentage of members of ethnic minorities who are unemployed, or in low-grade jobs, is higher than in the population as a whole. Racial discrimination and poor living conditions have contributed to racial violence especially in day-to-day form of relations between young blacks and the police, or in the more extreme form of inner-city riots. This is despite the Race Relations Act (1976) designed to promote equality of opportunity for people of all races.

The 2001 Census included, for the first time in GB since 1851, a question of religion. Although many people say they are Christians, this is not reflected in church membership, which is only 13% of the population of England; it is much higher in Northern Ireland (80%).

Christianity is the predominant religious tradition in the UK in size of its followers. There are two churches legally recognized as the official churches of the state, or established churches: in England, **the Anglican Church of England**, and in Scotland, **the Presbyterian Church of Scotland**. There is no longer an established Church of Wales or Northern Ireland.

The **Hindu community** in the UK numbers between 400,000 and 550,000 although some community members suggest 1,000,000. The UK now has over 140 Hindu temples. The *Jewish community* in the UK numbers about 300,000 and around 30% are affiliated to synagogues. There are about 1.5 mln *Muslims* in the UK. There are about 1,000 mosques and numerous community Muslim centres. There are between 400,000 and 500,000 members of the *Sikh community* in the UK. Other faiths represented in GB include *Buddhism* (with some 50 monasteries and temples), the *Zoroastrian religion*, the *Baha'i* etc.

Every British region has its own way of pronouncing words and sentences of English that identifies the speaker with a particular geographical area. After 1500 the language of London gradually emerges as the most dominant form, and today the London or Southern accent is usually accepted as Standard English. This is sometimes referred to as “**BBC English**” since at one time all announcers on BBC radio and television were required to speak it. Standard correct English as traditionally spoken by an educated southerner is also called **Queen’s English**, while a simplified form of the language intended as an international means of communication with a basic vocabulary of 850 words is called **Basic English**. **RP (Received Pronunciation)** is a non-regional accent of Standard English, often regarded as a prestige form. Its informal name is **Oxford accent**.

Except English, there are numerous native languages spoken in the UK. According to the 1991 census, 527,510 people spoke *Welsh*. It is increasingly used in schools and by some local authorities. A Welsh TV channel, S4C, began broadcasting in 1983 and there are radio stations and newspapers. The most common Welsh family names were all originally Christian names in some sort, (e.g. Geoffrey Jones – from John). Many other names come from the tradition of calling a child “son of” his father using the Welsh word *ap/ab*. This *p* can be found at the beginning of many common Welsh names, such as *Pritchard* (the same as the English Richardson). Welshmen are often nicknamed “*Taffy*”. This may come from the river Taff, which runs through the capital Cardiff, or may come from *Dafydd*, the Welsh form of David.

In some areas, the Use of English in schools and in the media has contributed to the decline of minority languages. There were about 69,000 speakers of *Gaelic* in Scotland in 1991, according to that year’s census. The language, especially strong in the Outer Hebrides [‘hebridi:z], is used in some schools but speakers have limited legal rights. It is not used in courts, and it plays no part in the national government. The *Scots language*, different from Gaelic, is so close a relative of English that it is often regarded simply as a northern dialect, spoken in central Scotland and the Lowlands. It was the everyday language from the 14th century until the 17th century. The upper classes slowly turned to English, influenced by the Union of England and Scotland. Most Scots speak a mixture of Scots and English, but English is the language of education and government. There has been the Scots revival in recent years: the New Testament in Scots was published in 1985, and Scots is used in parts of the Scottish press. There are speakers of the *Irish Gaelic*, but it has no official status there. The influence of Irish Gaelic is found in the names of people: Sean (John), Seamus (James), Liam (William), Seanna (Joanna). Paddy (short for Patrick) and Micky (short for Michael) are not Gaelic names but they are found so often in Ireland that these two names are sometimes used jokingly to mean an “Irishman”. Many Irish surnames begin with O’ (O’Brien; O’Niel) meaning “from the family of”; Fitz (Fitzgerald) meaning “son of”; Mac (MacHugh) meaning “son of”; Kil (Kilmartin) meaning “son of”; Gil (Gilmurray) meaning “son of”.

Other native languages in GB include *Cornish* in Cornwall and *Manx Gaelic* on the Isle of Man. The last native speaker of Cornish died in 1777 and the last speaker of Manx in 1974. There have been recent revivals, although the languages have no legal status.

ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY 1

Basic English	Спрощена форма англійської мови	Упрощенная форма английского языка
BBC English	Мова дикторів Бі-Бі-Сі	Язык дикторов Би-Би-Си
Belfast	Белфаст	Белфаст
Ben Nevis	г. Бен Невіс	г. Бен Невис
Caledonia	Каледонія	Каледония
Cardiff	Кардіфф	Кардифф
Channel Islands	Нормандські острови	Нормандские острова
Cornish	Корнська мова	Корнский язык
Cymru	Уельс	Уэльс
Cymry	валійці	валлийцы
Dublin	Дублін	Дублин
Edinburgh	Единбург	Эдинбург
Eire	Ейре	Эйре
England	Англія	Англия
English Channel	Протока Ла-Манш	Пролив Ла-Манш
Gaelic	Гельська мова	Гэльский язык
Highland Britain	Гориста частина Великобританії	Гористая часть Великобритании
Hindu community	індуїстська громада	Индуистская община
Ireland	Ірландія	Ирландия
Irish Gaelic	Ірландський варіант гельської мови	Ирландский вариант гэльского языка
Isle of Man	о. Мен	о. Мэн
Lake District	Озерний край	Озерный край
Lough Neagh	Озеро Лох Ней	Озеро Лох Ней
Lowland Britain	Низинна частина Великобританії	Низменная часть Великобритании
Manx Gaelic	Менкська мова	Мэнкский язык
Oxford accent	Оксфордський акцент	Оксфордский акцент
Queen's English	Королівська/нормативна англійська мова	Королевский/нормативный английский язык
RP (Received Pronunciation)	Нормативна вимова	Нормативное произношение
Scotland	Шотландія	Шотландия
Scots language	Шотландський діалект англійської мови	Шотландский диалект английского языка
the Anglican Church of England	Англіканська церква	Англиканская церковь
The British Isles	Британські острови	Британские острова
the Irish Sea.	Ірландське море	Ирландское море
the North Sea	Північне море	Северное море
the Pennines	Пеннінські гори	Пеннинские горы
the Presbyterian Church of Scotland	Пресвітеріанська церква Шотландії	Пресвитерианская церковь Шотландии
the Republic of Ireland	Республіка Ірландія	Республика Ирландия
the Severn	р. Северн	р. Северн
the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)	Сполучене королівство Великої Британії та Північної Ірландії	Соединенное королевство Великобритании и Северной Ирландии
Union Jack	Державний прапор	Государственный флаг
Wales	Уельс	Уэльс
Welsh	Валійська мова	Валлийский язык