

## Great Britain

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the UK) is the official name of the British Kingdom. It occupies most of the territory of the British Isles and consists of four countries. They are England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Their capitals are London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast.

The UK is situated off the west coast of Europe between the Atlantic Ocean on the northwest and the North Sea on the east. It is separated from the European continent by the English Channel. The narrowest part of the English Channel is called the Strait of Dover. The total area of Great Britain is over 244,000 square kilometres.

The UK is an island state: it is made up of two large islands and several much smaller ones. The two main islands are Great Britain to the east and Ireland to the west. They are separated by the Irish Sea. Geographically, the island of Great Britain is subdivided into two main regions — Lowland Britain and Highland Britain. Lowland Britain comprises southern and eastern England. Highland Britain consists of Scotland, most of Wales, the Pennines, and the Lake District. Mountains are not very high. The highest mountain is Ben Nevis in Scotland (1,343 m). England is separated from Scotland by the Cheviot Hills, running from east to west.

There are a lot of rivers in Great Britain, but they are not very long. The Severn is the longest river, while the Thames is the deepest and the most important one. The chief river in Scotland is the Clyde. Great Britain has many beautiful lakes. The best known of them is long narrow Loch Ness, legendary home of the famous monster. On the northwest side of the Pennine system lies the Lake District, containing beautiful lakes.

The largest cities of Great Britain are London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Cardiff and Belfast.

The population of the United Kingdom is over 57 million people. English is the official language. But some people speak Gaelic in western Scotland, and Welsh in parts of northern and central Wales.

The different parts of Britain have their own emblems. The red rose is the national emblem of England. The thistle is the national emblem of Scotland. The daffodils and the leek are the emblems of Wales. And the shamrock is the national emblem of Ireland.

The flag of the United Kingdom is known as the Union Jack. It is made up of three crosses: the cross of St. George (the patron saint of England), the cross of St. Andrew (the patron saint of Scotland) and the cross of St. Patrick (the patron saint of Ireland).

### Vocabulary

**to occupy** — занимать

**to consist of** — состоять из

**capital** — столица

**to be situated** — располагаться

**to be separated** — отделяться

**narrow** — узкий

**the Strait of Dover** — Дуврский пролив, пролив Па-де-Кале

**total area** — общая площадь

**to be made up of** — состоять из

**several** — несколько

**to be subdivided** — подразделяться

**Lowland Britain** — низменная часть Великобритании

**Highland Britain** — гористая часть Великобритании

**to comprise** — включать (*в себя*)

**southern** — южный

**eastern** — восточный

**mountain** — гора

**important** — важный

**famous** — знаменитый

**the Lake District** — Озерный край

**contain** — содержать

**population** — население

**western** — западный

**northern** — северный

**different** — различный

**part** — часть

**thistle** — чертополох

**daffodil** — нарцисс

**leek** — лук-порей

**shamrock** — трилистник

**cross** — крест

**patron saint** — святой покровитель

## British Climate

The climate of Great Britain is more or less the same as that of the northwestern part of the European mainland. The popular belief that it rains all the time in Britain is simply not true. In fact, London gets no more rain in a year than most other European cities. The amount of rain that falls on a town in Britain depends on where it is. Generally speaking, the further west you go, the more rain you get.

The climate of Great Britain is mild and temperate due to the influence of the Gulf Stream. That means that it is never too hot or too cold. Snow is a regular feature of the higher areas only. Occasionally, in lower-lying parts winter can be without snow at all.

Usually the temperature is between 5 below zero and 23 above zero. The driest period is from March to June and the wettest months are from October to January. It seldom snows heavily in winter, frost is rare. January and February are usually the coldest months; July and August are the warmest ones. Sometimes the wind brings whirlwinds or hurricanes. Droughts are rare.

The lack of extremes is the reason why, on the few occasions when it gets very hot or very frosty, the country seems to be totally unprepared for it. A bit of snow and a few days of frost and the trains stop working and the roads are blocked. If the temperature goes above 27°C, people behave as if they were in Sahara and the temperature makes front-page-headlines. But these things happen so rarely that it is not worth organizing life to be ready for them.

The bad reputation of Britain's climate is due to its changeability. There is a saying that Britain doesn't have a climate, it only has weather. But English weather is never the same two days

running. One day it rains, the next day it may be sunny and then it may be cold again. It may not rain very much altogether, but you can never be sure of a dry day. There can be cool days in July and some quite warm days in January.

So, we may say that the British climate has three main features: it is mild, humid, and changeable. This humid and mild climate is good for plants and flowers. That's why Great Britain is such a green country, with long rich grass for the cattle and sheep, and beautiful lawns in the gardens.

### Vocabulary

**mainland** — материк

**belief** — убеждение

**amount** — количество

**to depend on** — зависеть от

**further** — далее, дальше

**mild** — мягкий

**temperate** — умеренный

**due to** — благодаря, из-за

**influence** — влияние

**regular feature** — постоянная характеристика, черта

**occasionally** — иногда, время от времени

**dry** — сухой

**wet** — влажный

**seldom** — редко

**frost** — мороз

**rare** — редкий

**wind** — ветер

**whirlwind** — вихрь, смерч

**hurricane** — ураган

**drought** — засуха

**lack** — отсутствие

**reason** — причина

**occasion** — случай

**unprepared** — неподготовленный

**to behave** — вести себя

**headline** — заголовок

**changeability** — изменчивость

**two days running** — два дня подряд

**humid** — влажный

**cattle** — скот

**lawn** — лужайка, газон

## What to See in the UK?

There are a lot of interesting places in Great Britain, which are worth visiting. One of the most famous and mysterious archaeological sites of Great Britain is Stonehenge. The huge stones of Stonehenge were transported from Wales and set up in a circle on Salisbury Plain. One of the mysteries is how it was ever built with the technology of that time. Another is its purpose. It appears to function as a kind of astronomical clock and we know it was used by the Druids for ceremonies marking the passing of the seasons. Nowadays every year thousands of young people go to Stonehenge to take part in the midsummer Druid festival, but only a small number of people are allowed near the circle of stones. Stonehenge is fenced off to protect it from damage.

Another mysterious place is Loch Ness, one of the lakes in Scotland, where some people think a large monster lives. The first recorded sighting of Nessie was in the sixth century. But despite scientific expeditions, underwater exploration and millions of tourist photographs, the monster has resisted all attempts to prove — or disprove — her existence. The monster has made Loch Ness the most famous lake in the world. Others are longer, wider and deeper, few are more beautiful, but none has monster to rival Nessie.

The Lake District is the largest National Park in England. It is situated on the northwest side of the Pennine system and contains plenty of beautiful lakes which gave it its name. More picturesque and diverse scenery can be found here than in any other area of Britain. For the lover of outdoor life the Lake District has almost everything. Make your own memories, on foot if you can, when the June days are long, the clouds are high and the hills are free. Perhaps then you may say that the Lake District is the loveliest spot that man has ever found.

Britain is known to be the garden kingdom. There are a lot of extraordinary gardens and parks. Britain's first Safari Park in Longleat is famous for its exotic animals and the world's largest Maze. The Maze was planted in 1975. It consists of over 1,5 miles pathways flanked by yew hedges.

### Vocabulary

**worth visiting** — достойный посещения

**mysterious** — таинственный

**archeological** — археологический

**site** — место

**huge** — огромный

**to set up in a circle** — устанавливать в круг

**mystery** — тайна

**purpose** — цель, назначение

**It appears to function as ...** — Он, по-видимому, может функционировать как...

**Druids** — друиды, жрецы у древних кельтов

**to mark** — отмечать

**passing of the seasons** — смена времен года

**to allow** — разрешать

**to fence off** — ограждать забором

**to protect** — защищать

**damage** — повреждение, разрушение

**to record** — записывать

**sighting** — обнаружение

**despite** — несмотря на

**scientific** — научный

**exploration** — исследование

**to resist** — сопротивляться, противостоять

**attempt** — попытка

**to prove** — доказывать

**to disprove** — опровергать

**existence** — существование

**to rival** — соперничать, конкурировать

**picturesque** — живописный

**diverse** — разнообразный

**scenery** — пейзаж

**hills** — горы

**perhaps** — возможно

**spot** — место

**extraordinary** — необычный

**maze** — лабиринт

**to plant** — сажать

**pathway** — тропинка, дорожка

**flanked** — обсаженный, обрамленный

**yew** — тис

**hedge** — изгородь

### Questions

1. Do you know any mysterious places in Great Britain?
2. Would you like to visit them? Why?
3. Are there any mysterious places in Russia?
4. What was Stonehenge used for?
5. Do people believe that a huge monster lives in Loch Ness? What about you?
6. What is the most famous National Park in Great Britain?
7. Why is the Lake District considered to be the loveliest spot in Great Britain?
8. When is the best time to visit the Lake District?
9. Why is Britain said to be the garden kingdom?
10. What is Longleat Safari Park famous for?

## British Character

The British are said to be polite and well-mannered people. Polite words or phrases such as "Please", "Thank you" and "Excuse me" are used very often in Britain. Queuing is a national habit. At bus stops and cinemas, in shops, banks and post offices and in lots of other places you'll have to join the queue and wait for your turn. "An Englishman, even if he is alone, forms an orderly queue of one," said George Mikes.

The British are said to be reserved. They don't like displaying their emotions even in dangerous and tragic situations. But they are not unemotional. They control their emotions because they are taught that it is best not to show their feelings. The English hardly ever lie, but they don't tell you the truth either. English people take everything with a sense of humour. You can easily offend them if you tell them they have no sense of humour.

Englishmen tend to be rather conservative, they love familiar things. They are proud of their traditions and carefully keep them up. Britain has more living symbols of its past than many other countries. Traditional uniforms are still preserved in Great Britain. There are also a lot of traditional ceremonies such as the "Changing of the Guard" at Buckingham Palace, "Trooping the Colour", which is performed on the Queen's official birthday, or the "Ceremony of the Keys", that takes place every night at the Tower of London.

The English are practical and realistic, prudent and careful about almost everything. Everything is orderly: the lawns and the

trees are neatly trimmed. Every Englishman is said to be a countryman at heart. The English countryside is many things to many people. It means peace and quiet, beauty, good health and no crime. Most Englishmen love gardens. Gardening is one of the most popular hobbies among Englishmen. They usually prefer a house with a garden to an apartment in a modern block of flats.

The British people are considered to be the world's greatest tea drinkers. They drink it at meals and between meals. The English tea is usually strong and with milk.

The British love animals very much. Millions of families have "bird-tables" in their gardens. Nearly half of the households in Britain keep at least one pet. The English take good care of their pets. They are pet lovers.

### Vocabulary

well-mannered — воспитанный

queue — очередь

to queue — стоять в очереди

habit — привычка

reserved — сдержанный

hardly ever lie — почти никогда

не лгут

truth — правда

to offend — обижать

familiar — знакомый

to preserve — сохранять

prudent — благоразумный

Changing of the Guard — смена

караула королевских гвардей-

цев (торжественная церемо-

ния, которая проводится

каждое утро во дворе перед

Букингемским дворцом)

Trooping the Colour — вынос знамени (торжественная церемония развода караулов с выносом знамени, которая проводится в официальный день рождения монарха)

Ceremony of the Keys — церемония передачи ключей (проходит в лондонском Тауэре в 10 часов вечера)

lawn — лужайка

neatly — аккуратно

to trim — подстригать

crime — преступность

block of flats — многоквартирный дом

household — семья

to take care of — заботиться о

## National Stereotypes

There are certain stereotypes of national character which are well known in Britain. For instance, the Irish are supposed to be great talkers, the Scots have a reputation for being careful with money, the Welsh are renowned for their singing abilities, and the English are considered to be reserved. These characteristics are, of course, only caricatures and are not reliable description of individual people from these countries.

British people give a relatively high value to the everyday personal contacts. Some writers on Britain have talked about the British desire "to belong", and it is certainly true that the pub, or the working man's club, or the numerous other clubs devoted to various sports and pastimes play a very important part in many people's lives. Many people make their social contacts through work and, partly as a result of this, the profession is also important aspect of their sense of identity. British people try to appear as if they belong to as high class as possible, though nobody wants to be thought of as "snobbish".

The British have few living traditions and are too individualistic to have the same everyday habits as each other. They are rather proud of being different. However, this does not mean that they like change. They don't. They may not behave in traditional ways, but they like symbols of tradition and stability. The British are rather conservative and their conservatism can combine with their individualism. Why should they change just to be like everyone else? Indeed, as far as they are concerned, not being like everyone else is a good reason not to change. Their driving on the left-hand side of the road is a good example to this. Systems of measurement are another example. The British government has been trying for many years to get British people

to use the same scales that are used nearly everywhere else in the world. But everybody in Britain still shops in pounds and ounces.

The modern British are not really chauvinistic. Open hostility to people from other countries is very rare. If there is any chauvinism at all, it expresses itself through ignorance. Most British people know remarkably little about Europe and who lives there. The popular image of Europe seems to be that it is something to do with the French.

It is probably true that the British, especially the English, are more reserved than the people of many other countries. They find it comparatively difficult to indicate friendship by open displays of affection. For example, it is not the convention to kiss when meeting a friend. Instead, friendship is symbolized by behaving as casually as possible.

The British are comparatively uninterested in clothes. They spend a lower proportion of their income on clothing than people in most European countries do. Many people buy second-hand clothes and are not at all embarrassed to admit this. Of course, when people are "on duty", they have to obey some quite rigid rules. A male bank employee, for example, is expected to wear a suit with a tie at work. But on Sundays the British like to "dress down". They can't wait to take off their respectable working clothes and slip into something really scruffy. In fact, the British are probably more tolerant of "strange" clothing than people in most other countries.

The English people are great pet lovers. Practically every family has a dog or a cat, or both. They have special dog shops selling food, clothes and other things for dogs. There are dog hairdressing saloons and dog cemeteries. Millions of families have "bird-tables" in their gardens. Perhaps, this overall concern for animals is part of the British love for nature.

The British are always talking about the weather. Unlike many others, this stereotype is actually true to life. But constant remarks about the weather at chance meetings are not the result of polite conventions. They are not obligatory. Rather, they are the result of the fact that, on the one hand, to ask personal questions would be rude while, at the same time, silence would also be rude. The weather is a very convenient topic to "fill the gap".

## Vocabulary

- for instance** — например  
**to be renowned** — быть знаменитым, славиться  
**reliable** — надежный  
**relatively** — относительно  
**to give a high value** — высоко ценить  
**desire** — желание  
**numerous** — многочисленный  
**identity** — индивидуальность, самобытность  
**snobbish** — спесивый, высокомерный  
**to behave** — вести себя  
**to combine** — сочетать, совмещать  
**indeed** — в самом деле  
**measurement** — измерение  
**government** — правительство  
**scale** — шкала, единица измерения  
**pound** — фунт  
**ounce** — унция  
**chauvinistic** — шовинистический, высокомерный, подчеркивающий свое превосходство
- hostility** — враждебность  
**comparatively** — сравнительно  
**affection** — привязанность  
**convention** — норма, обычай  
**casually** — обычно, небрежно  
**income** — доход  
**to be embarrassed** — смущаться, стесняться  
**to admit** — признавать  
**to obey** — подчиняться  
**rigid** — жесткий  
**a male bank employee** — служащий банка мужского пола  
**to slip into** — накидывать, влезать в  
**scruffy** — неряшливый  
**tolerant** — терпимый  
**cemetery** — кладбище  
**overall concern** — всеобщая забота  
**unlike** — в отличие  
**remark** — замечание  
**obligatory** — обязательный  
**rather** — скорее  
**rude** — грубый  
**convenient** — удобный  
**to fill the gap** — заполнять паузу