

United kingdom of britain and northern ireland

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Great Britain is made up of three countries, England, Scotland and Wales. It is an island off the coast of north-west of Europe. Britain is part of the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland. The capital is London.

There are many different landscapes in Britain, from high mountains to rolling hill sand valleys. Places like Wales, the Lake District and northwest Scotland have high mountains and steep slopes made out of solid rocks.

This landscape was made millions of years ago during the ice ages, when moving glaciers of ice made deep valleys, steep mountain slopes and long lakes. The southern and eastern parts of Britain are made up of smaller rocks that have weathered and become fertile farmland.

The highest point is Ben Nevis - 1343 metres above sea level and the lowest point is Holme Fen - 3 metres below sea level. The population is 57, 970, 200 people, the population density at 239 people per square km.

92% of British people live in urban areas while only 8% live in rural areas.

Great Britain is completely surrounded by sea, isolating it from the rest of Europe. No part of Britain is far from the sea, which is an important resource for fishing, tourism and ports.

Britain" s rivers provide drinking water for towns, and irrigate farmers" crops. However rivers can cause floods.

The northern and western portions are mountainous. The highlands - the Pennine Chain, forms the backbone of northern England. Rolling plains occupy most of central and eastern England. The western part of the central

region is known as the Midlands. To the east lies The Fens, a marsh area. To the south, an elevated plateau slopes upward.

The terrain of Scotland is mountainous but is divided into three regions, from north to south: the Highlands, the Central Lowlands, and the Southern Uplands. The Highlands occupy more than a half of Scotland, the most rugged region on the island of Great Britain.

Wales has an irregular coastline and many bays; the biggest is Cardigan Bay. Except for narrow and low coastal areas, mainly in the south and west, Wales is mostly mountainous.

Great Britain has quite cool summers and mild winters. The weather changes from day to day. The climate is temperate - the country does not have long periods when it is hot or cold.

Western parts of Britain receive more rain and snow during the year than south and east. This is because southwesterly winds bring water from the Atlantic Ocean to the west, which falls as rain where it meets the mountains on land. There are large amounts of water in this area and a shortage in the south and the east.

Britain's climate is getting warmer. Average temperatures have risen 0.5°C since 1850. This is enough to start the polar ice caps melting. If the ice caps continue to melt, large areas of southern and eastern England will be permanently flooded.

The mean annual temperature ranges between 11. 1°C in the south and 8. 9°C in the northeast.

Fogs, mists, and overcast skies are frequent, particularly in the inland regions.

Like the climate of the rest of Great Britain, Scotland is influenced by the surrounding seas. As a result, extreme changes are rare and temperate winters and cool summers are the major climate features. Low temperatures are common in the winter season. Precipitation ranges from about 3810mm annually in the western Highlands to about 635mm annually in eastern areas.

The climate of Wales, is a lot like England" s, it is mild and moist. Annual rainfall changes with elevation, ranging from about 762 mm in coastal regions to more than 2540 mm in the Snowdon massif.

As a result of the relative warmth of the nearby seas, England has a moderate climate. Precipitation is heaviest during October, it averages about 760 mm annually in most of England.

England has some agricultural and mineral resources but must rely on imports of both. Approximately two-fifths of the land area is arable, and the richest soils are found in the east.

The soil is generally rocky and infertile, except for that of the Central Lowlands.

Much of the soil of Wales is of infertile rocky or leached types. The most fertile soils are in the southeast and in a few coastal areas.

Only about 8.5% of Britain land is forested, and half of this was planted forty years ago. Britain's natural forest cover has been cut down over hundreds of years, especially in the 18th and 19th century.

The most common species of trees indigenous to Scotland are oak and conifers mainly fir, pine, and larch. Large forested areas are rare, and woodlands are in the southern and eastern Highlands. Vegetation in the elevated regions consists largely of heather, ferns, mosses, and grasses. Practically all of the cultivated plants of Scotland were imported from America and Europe.

More than 3/4 of the land is used for agriculture; farming and grazing occupy the same amount of land. The most important crops are wheat, oats, and potatoes. Other crops include barley, turnips, and fruit.

Wales has ferns and mosses in low-lying, wet areas. Grasslands are mainly at higher elevations. Crops include barley, oats, potatoes, and hay. Less than 10% of the land is under cultivation, and about 40% are in grazing land. Forests cover only about 4% of the land, but government reforestation programs are increasing in the area.

England used to be heavily forested, mainly oak and beech in the lowlands and pine and birch in the mountains. Woodlands now make-up less than 4% of the total land area. Many types of fruit trees grow in England, including

the cherry, apple, and plum trees. Gorse is a common shrub. Many varieties of wildflowers also grow here.

During the eighteenth century, Britain gained an empire by colonising parts of North America, Africa and Asia. By the nineteenth century, England was bringing back much wealth from these colonies. The trade in slaves and other goods from the colonies supplied the money to build the factories and the machines of Britain's Industrial Revolution. The country developed heavy industries like coal mining, iron and steel manufacturing, engineering and shipbuilding. However in the twentieth century other countries revolutionised and began to compete with Britain in the overseas markets - so British exports declined.

From the 1950's on, many former Britain colonies in Africa and Asia became independent and made their own industries, this affecting Britain's imports and exports. All over Britain factories, mills etc closed.

By the 1990's the worst of the decline had finished and Britain began to concentrate on new hi-tech and service industries.

In the last 25 years, microelectronics has become one of the fastest growing sectors of Britain industry. It is a new phase of industrial growth which scientists call re-industrialisation. The future for Britain as a manufacturing nation looks good and it depends on whether it can develop and specialise in hi-tech industries such as aerospace, computers, electronics, telecommunications and biotechnology.

The private car is the most popular form of transport for most British people. The British rail company is becoming more modernised - with new high-speed rail services. Air transport in Britain is also important and very popular. The British industry is now more efficient and competitive in the world markets because of the government's actions of new industrial growth in depressed areas and growth of service industries - in financial, shopping and transport.

Telecommunications are administered by British Telecom. 29.5 million telephones were in use in the mid-1980s, giving Britain one of the world's largest telecommunications systems.

In the 1980s 15 commercial program companies gave the television on a basis; satellite-broadcasting services have also been introduced. Four television channels are broadcasted at the moment and soon a fifth. 50 commercial firms in the main cities run local radio stations.

124 daily and Sunday newspapers and more than 1000 weekly newspapers are published in Great Britain. 15 London newspapers circulate nationwide, and 6 of them have daily circulations of more than 1 million.

Britain is a constitutional monarchy - the queen is the head of the state but politics is controlled by their parliament. There are two houses of Parliament - The House of Commons - who are elected by the public and The House of Lords - made up of peers.

The main British political parties are Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat. There are also Welsh and Scottish parties who want to be separate from England.

The political party system has existed since the 17th century. Several parties win seats in Commons, but Great Britain has worked as a two-party system for more than a century. The majority party forms His or Her Majesty's Government, and the second party is officially known as His or Her Majesty's Own Loyal Opposition. The opposition leader is paid a salary from public funds for that role.

Britain has a long history as a great political and powerful country. Britain is trying to rebuild its economy by regaining its political importance.

Great Britain is primarily an industrial and commercial nation. It has major industries like transportation, communications, steel, petroleum, coal, gas and electricity. It is a world leader in international trade, it imports foodstuffs and materialism, and exports finished and manufactured goods.

Gross Domestic Product - \$1, 018, 000, 000, 000 (US)

Gross Domestic Product per capita - \$17, 690 (US)

Money - pound sterling. One pound = 100 pence.

Chief Economic Products - agriculture, fishing, mining, manufacturing.

Employment Breakdown - 58% Trades and Services

2% Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing

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Education is very important to everyone in Britain. All children have to go to school once they turn five, and must attend till they turn sixteen. Two education systems exist - one is free and funded by the government and the other is private where parents pay school fees for children's education. Students can continue their education at colleges at higher levels or universities - there are 46 universities. The government is trying to encourage more students to go into higher education.

Religion - The Church of England has the most members, 54%, in Great Britain. Most members, however, live in England. The second biggest religion, is the Roman Catholic Church (13%). Catholics are spread throughout the country. Other religions include Protestantism (which includes the religions of Wales and Scotland), Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Sikhism.

Health- General physicians in Great Britain are part of the National Health Service, although some also have private patients. The service provides full, free medical care to all people.

FamilyLife - Most British people live in houses and 15% live in flats. In the last five years many people have been moving out of towns and cities to live in the countryside because of the urban problems like crime, traffic and air pollution.