



United
Kingdom



SCOTLAND

NORTH
IRELAND

IRELAND

ENGLAND

WALES

What's the difference between Great Britain and the United Kingdom? What's the best English music festival? And do English people really drink a lot of tea? Read about England and find out!

England is the biggest of the four countries in the United Kingdom. Together with Scotland and Wales, these three countries are the island of Great Britain. The English Channel is in the south between England and France. People travel to France by ferry across the English Channel or by train through the Channel Tunnel which goes under the sea.

Over 50 million people live in England and that's around 80 per cent of the total UK population. It is a multicultural country where more than 250 languages are spoken in the capital city, London. The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy, which means that there is a queen or king but they don't make the laws of the country. Laws and political decisions in England are made by the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The Houses of Parliament are in central London next to the River Thames and the most famous part is the clock tower, Big Ben.

Other large cities in England are Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Bristol. Outside cities, England is a very green country and has many rural areas of natural beauty such as the Lake District, an area with lots of lakes in the north, and the New Forest, a big area of forest in the south of the country.

Language

The official language of England is English, which is spoken today by millions of people all over the world. Many students go to England from other countries to study the language and learn about the culture. Although everyone speaks English, there are many different accents around the country. French was the official language in England between 1066 and 1362, which is why there are many French words and expressions in English such as 'bon voyage' for 'have a good trip' or 'bouquet' for 'a bunch of flowers'.

Music

English people love music. In the summer you can go to music festivals all over the country like those at Glastonbury, Leeds or Reading. Glastonbury is a five-day festival of music, dance, comedy, theatre and circus and around 175,000 people go. Many people stay at the festivals for a few days and camp in tents. People listen to all types of music, especially pop and rock. England has produced many international groups and singers like the Beatles, Amy Winehouse, Coldplay, Ed Sheeran and Adele.

Sport

The most popular sports in England are football, rugby and cricket and most towns have a sports ground where teams can play. English football teams like Manchester United, Chelsea and Liverpool are world-famous and English football players include David Beckham, Wayne Rooney and Harry Kane. Women's football is also popular and teams play in leagues and competitions all over the country. Every year, the English rugby union team play in the Six Nations Championship against Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France and Italy. Cricket is a traditional sport played with a bat and ball which began in England and is now played all over the world. People like to watch all these sports on television, as well as other sports like horse racing, tennis, snooker (a type of billiards) and motor racing.

Food

England is a very multicultural country and this has a big influence on the food people eat. Indian, Chinese and Italian cuisines are popular alternatives to traditional English food like fish and chips, roast beef or

sausage and mash (mashed potatoes). Many English people drink several cups of tea every day, usually with milk. However, coffee and herbal teas are also popular.

Symbols

The national flag of England is white with a red cross. It is called the St George's Cross and Saint George is the patron saint of England. St George's Day is on 23 April, but it's not a public holiday. The rose is the national flower of England and the lion is the national animal. The lion is a symbol of many English sports teams.

Is Northern Ireland beautiful? Do Irish people speak Irish? And what exactly is Gaelic football? Read about Northern Ireland and find out!

Northern Ireland is one of the four countries in the United Kingdom, with England, Scotland and Wales. It is to the north of the Republic of Ireland, on an island next to Great Britain. Around 1.8 million people live in Northern Ireland, which is about three per cent of the population of the UK. The capital city is Belfast. Another name for Northern Ireland is 'Ulster' or 'The Six Counties' because it is made up of six regions or counties.

In Northern Ireland you can find beautiful beaches, forests and mountains. You can visit the Giant's Causeway, a UNESCO World Heritage Site: here, about 40,000 columns were formed after a volcanic eruption. Most of them are hexagonal and some of them are 12m tall. Films and TV series such as *Dracula Untold* and *Game of Thrones* are filmed in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland was a place of conflict between people who wanted to be part of the Republic of Ireland, people who wanted to be part of the UK and people who wanted Northern Ireland to be a separate country. In the 1990s there was an important peace process and the violence and conflict stopped. The Northern Ireland Assembly and the UK Parliament decide on the laws in Northern Ireland.

Language

Nearly everyone in Northern Ireland speaks English. A small number of people speak Irish Gaelic, an old Celtic language which is very different from English. The other regional language is Ulster Scots, a variation of English which is spoken in Northern Ireland and is similar to Scots spoken in Scotland.

Music

You can hear all types of music in Northern Ireland including traditional Irish music, jazz, rock or pop. In summer Belfast has music festivals like Belsonic and Belfast Vital. Many international artists play at these festivals, including bands from Northern Ireland like Snow Patrol, Ash and Two Door Cinema Club.

Sport

Northern Ireland is a popular place to go walking or do outdoor activities such as mountain biking, coasteering (climbing up rocks and jumping into the sea) or zorbing (rolling down a hill in a giant PVC ball). Football, rugby, cricket, hurling (a sport similar to hockey) and Gaelic football are all popular. Gaelic football is similar to rugby because players can touch and kick the ball. For most sports, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland join together in the same team when they play in international competitions. However, football is different and Northern Ireland has its own national team and football league. Some players from Northern Ireland play for teams in the English or Scottish leagues.

Food

The best-known dish from Northern Ireland is the Ulster Fry, which is bacon, eggs, sausages and soda bread. Some versions include tomatoes, mushrooms or baked beans. It's called the Ulster Fry because everything is fried in a pan. It is also eaten with Irish potato bread.

Symbols

St Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland and Northern Ireland. St Patrick's Day, on 17 March, is a very important celebration in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland with parades, concerts, music and dancing. Another important symbol is the shamrock, a green plant with three leaves. It is the symbol of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

**What does Scotland look like? What languages do they speak? And what can you do in Scotland?
Read and find out!**

Scotland is a country in Great Britain, to the north of England. Scotland has nearly 800 islands, but people only live on some of them.

Scotland is a very beautiful country with many mountains, forests, beaches, rivers and lochs (the Scots word for lakes). In the north of Scotland it is light until 11.30 p.m. in summer and in winter you can sometimes see the Northern Lights, or Aurora Borealis, which are spectacular lights in the sky. Energy from the sun turns the Earth's sky green, red and other colours.

Scotland has its own parliament which makes laws for Scottish people. The Scottish parliament is in the capital city, Edinburgh. About five million people live in Scotland, which is 8.5 per cent of the UK population. Most people live in the south of the country in and around the cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth and Dundee.

Language

There are three languages in Scotland. Most people speak English and Scots. Scots is spoken by young and old people in cities and rural areas and sometimes people mix Scots and English. Some words in Scots are the same as in English and some are different. Look at these sentences. Can you see the difference?

- Scotland is ane o the fower kintras that maks the Unitit Kinrick. (Scots)
- Scotland is one of the four countries that make the United Kingdom. (English)

A minority (around one percent of the Scottish population) speak Scottish Gaelic, an old Celtic language which is very different from English. For example, the Gaelic word for Scotland is 'Alba', 'What is your name?' is 'Dè an t-ainm a tha ort?' and 'Goodbye' is 'Slàn leat'.

Music

At public and cultural events you can often hear traditional music and see traditional dancing. Pipers play music on bagpipes, a Celtic wind instrument with pipes and a bag. Pipers and dancers usually wear kilts. A kilt is a traditional skirt with a tartan design which is worn by men and women. Scots enjoy all types of music from folk to rock and pop, and festivals like the Edinburgh Festival or concerts like 'T in the Park' are very popular. Famous Scottish singers and groups include Paolo Nutini, Franz Ferdinand and The Fratellis.

Sport

The most popular sport in Scotland is football and famous teams include Celtic and Rangers, from Glasgow, Scotland's biggest city. Another popular game, golf, was invented in Scotland in the Middle Ages. You can go skiing or snowboarding in winter at Scotland's five mountain ski resorts and any time of the year at snowsports centres around the country. In rural, Gaelic-speaking regions people play shinty, a traditional sport similar to hockey that is played in Scotland and Ireland.

The famous Scottish Highland Games are a combination of culture and sport. Competitors do heavy sports like 'caber tossing', where they throw big tree trunks, and there is traditional Scottish music and dancing.

Highland Games are celebrated all over the world. The first Highland Games in New York were in 1836, the most northern games are in Norway and the most southern ones are in New Zealand.

Food

When people think of Scottish food they often think of haggis, a type of sausage made from parts of a sheep. However, Scotland is also known for its variety of seafood such as lobster and oysters, fish such as salmon and trout, and beef.

Symbols

Blue is a colour which is often associated with Scotland. The Scottish flag is blue with a white X-shaped cross called the St Andrew's cross. St Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland and his day is celebrated on 30 November. On this day, everywhere you go in Scotland you will see tartan, kilts and bagpipes. Also, look out for the national animal, the unicorn, and the thistle, the purple flower of Scotland.

Where's Wales? Is Welsh similar to English? And is Wales a good place to visit? Read and find out!

Wales is one of the countries in Britain and the United Kingdom. It's a small country with England to the east. Wales has got a continuous coastline, around 1,300km long, which means there are a lot of beaches! It has some of the most beautiful beaches in the UK and is a popular destination for holidaymakers and water sports fans. As well as beaches, there are a lot of mountains and also three national parks, including Snowdonia. It is in north Wales and its highest mountain, Snowdon, is 1,085m.

The population of Wales is just over three million people, around five per cent of the total UK population. Most Welsh people live in south Wales in the capital city, Cardiff, and two other big cities: Swansea and Newport. In Cardiff you can go shopping, visit the castle, go to the museum or go to a concert or sports match at the famous Millennium Stadium.

Language

The official languages of Wales are English and Welsh and 'Wenglish' is a Welsh-English dialect. Everyone speaks English, but if you go to school in Wales you have to learn Welsh until you are 16. Street signs are written in Welsh and English, and villages, towns and cities have an English name and a Welsh name. For example, the capital city is Cardiff or Caerdydd. One of the longest place names in the world is a village in Wales called Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllandysiliogogoch.

The Welsh language is an old, Celtic language which is very different from English. For example, the Welsh name for 'Wales' is 'Cymru', 'Good morning' is 'Bore da' and 'How are you?' is 'Sut mae?'. It is one of the oldest languages in Europe and around 20 per cent of people in Wales speak Welsh.

Music

The Welsh people love music and there are a lot of singing festivals and competitions in Wales. One of the largest cultural festivals in Europe is the National Eisteddfod of Wales, which is in a different town or city every year. All the events are in Welsh and include literature, singing, art, exhibitions, dance and theatre. Famous singers and groups from Wales include Duffy, Stereophonics and Catatonia.

Sport

The Welsh enjoy watching and playing sport, especially rugby union and football. Wales has its own football league and famous Welsh footballers include Ryan Giggs and Gareth Bale. The modern Millennium Stadium in Cardiff can hold 74,500 spectators and is where you go if you want to watch a football or rugby match or even a pop concert. In 2014 Cardiff was the European Capital of Sport.

Water sports are popular in Wales. You can go surfing, wakeboarding (a combination of waterskiing, snowboarding and surfing) or coasteering (climbing up rocks and jumping into the sea).

If you like unusual sports, visit the small town of Llanwrtyd Wells. Every year in this town there is a man versus horse marathon and a bog snorkelling competition. Bog snorkelling is similar to swimming in extremely dirty water.

Food

There are lots of sheep in Wales, so people eat a lot of lamb. Typical Welsh dishes include 'cawl' which is lamb stew, Glamorgan sausages and 'rarebit' which is a type of cheese on toast. There are also Welsh cakes, which are small, sweet, round cakes with dried raisins inside.

Symbols

If you ever go to Wales, you will see dragons everywhere! Not real ones, of course, but a red dragon appears on the national flag of Wales. The patron saint of Wales is St David, who is celebrated on 1 March. Other symbols of Wales include the leek (a long, green vegetable) and the daffodil (a white or yellow flower).