



THE UNITED KINGDOM



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THE UNITED KINGDOM

A visit to our friends “across the pond” is a delightful study in the roots of American culture. Literary giants like Shakespeare, Dickens and Austen come to life on this storied island. Yes, England swings—from the double-decker buses of London to Stonehenge’s mystical circle to York’s medieval grandeur. Scotland’s green grasses give way to pristinely preserved cities and an unmatched commitment to hospitality. The world itself seems just a bit more civilized as you roam the land of tea, biscuits and royalty.

HISTORY

Not always a world powerhouse, Britain was riddled with invasions during the early stages of its history—from the Roman invasion in 55 B.C. to the pivotal incursions of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes in the fifth and sixth centuries, and on to the Norman conquest in 1066. Norman rule effectively ensured Britain’s safety from further intrusions and ushered in a unique culture, system of government, religion and educational system.

Initiated to support William the Conqueror’s holdings in France, Britain’s policy of active involvement and trade with continental Europe endured for several hundred years. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 firmly established England as a major sea power. Thereafter, its interests outside Europe grew steadily. In search of an alternate route to the Spice Islands, English explorer John Cabot reached North America in 1498. The first established English settlement didn’t occur until Jamestown in 1607. During the next two centuries, Britain extended its influence abroad, culminating with the long reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901. At this point, the mighty United Kingdom encompassed roughly one-fifth to one-quarter of the world’s area and population.

The twentieth century saw a Britain with resources heavily depleted by war and colonies that had developed a stronger sense of nationalism. Between WWI and WWII, Ireland gained independence from the United Kingdom—save six northern, predominantly Protestant counties. In 1926, Australia, New Zealand and Canada were granted autonomy within the empire, becoming members of the Commonwealth. India and Pakistan gained full independence in 1947, followed shortly thereafter by the majority of the United Kingdom’s holdings worldwide. But although the Great Britain of today is only a fraction of its former self, it still maintains a strong democratic voice in the modern world. As one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and a founding member of NATO, the UK pursues a global approach to foreign policy and enjoys the respect of nations worldwide.

THE UNITED KINGDOM CONTINUED

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FAST FACTS

<i>Capital</i>	<i>London</i>
<i>Population</i>	<i>60.5 million</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>English, Welsh</i>
<i>Currency</i>	<i>British pound (GBP)</i>
<i>Time Zone</i>	<i>EST plus 5 hours</i>
<i>Electricity</i>	<i>230V, 50Hz ⚡</i>

HOLIDAYS &

FESTIVALS

<i>January</i>	<i>Hogmanay Festival (Edinburgh)</i>
<i>January</i>	<i>Up-Helly-Aa (Scotland)</i>
<i>January 11</i>	<i>The Burning of the Clavie (Scotland)</i>
<i>January 25</i>	<i>Robert Burns Night (Scotland)</i>
<i>March</i>	<i>Crufts Dog Show (Birmingham)</i>
<i>March 17</i>	<i>St. Patrick's Day</i>
<i>March 29</i>	<i>Oxford/Cambridge University Boat Race (River Thames)</i>
<i>April</i>	<i>St. Andrew's Golf Week</i>
<i>April 23</i>	<i>St. George's Day</i>
<i>May</i>	<i>Chelsea Flower Show</i>
<i>May 1</i>	<i>May Day</i>
<i>June</i>	<i>Queen's Birthday Parade (London)</i>
<i>June</i>	<i>Wimbledon (England)</i>
<i>June</i>	<i>Trooping of the Colour (London)</i>
<i>June-July</i>	<i>Glasgow International Jazz Festival</i>
<i>July</i>	<i>Llangollen (Wales)</i>
<i>August</i>	<i>Notting Hill Carnival</i>
<i>August</i>	<i>Edinburgh International Festival</i>
<i>August</i>	<i>Eisteddfod (Wales)</i>
<i>October-November</i>	<i>Belfast Festival</i>
<i>November 5</i>	<i>Guy Fawkes Day (England)</i>
<i>November 30</i>	<i>St Andrew's Day (Scotland)</i>

THE UNITED KINGDOM CONTINUED

BOOKS

- *The Bride of Lammermoor*, by Sir Walter Scott
- *Notes from a Small Island*, by Bill Bryson
- *Outlander*, by Diana Gabaldon
- *The Road North: 300 Years of Classic Scottish Travel Writing*,
by June Skinner Sawyers
- *Robert Burns: Selected Poems and Songs*, by Robert Burn
- *William Wallace: Guardian of Scotland*, by A.F. Murison

VIDEOS

- *Brigadoon* (1954)
- *Braveheart* (1995)
- *Rob Roy* (1995)
- *Elizabeth* (1998)
- *Calendar Girls* (2003)

LOCAL TOURISM

WEB SITES

England.....	www.enjoyengland.com
Great Britain.....	www.visitbritain.com
Scotland.....	www.visitscotland.com
Wales.....	www.visitwales.com

BRITISH SLANG

FOR TRAVELERS

<i>Hello</i>	<i>Alright</i>
<i>Goodbye</i>	<i>Cheerio/Cheers/Ta-ta</i>
<i>Thank you</i>	<i>Cheers</i>
<i>I don't understand</i>	<i>I'm all at sea</i>
<i>Biscuit</i>	<i>Bicky</i>
<i>Crackers/cookies</i>	<i>Biscuits</i>
<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Blower</i>
<i>Watch your step</i>	<i>Mind the gap</i>

WEATHER

Great Britain's weather is wet year-round, with pleasant summers and cool winters. London fog goes beyond the city limits, as humidity creates many misty mornings across the whole island. The East Coast is the coldest in winter, while the West gets the most rain. Bring lightweight clothes in the summer and warmer layers in winter, especially in the North.

