**The United Kingdom**

**GEOGRAPHY:**

Britain lies off the north-west coast of Europe across the English Channel, the Strait of Dover and the North Sea. It consists of two large islands (Great Britain and Ireland) and about 5,000 smaller ones. Its neighbours are Ireland to west and France to south-east. It covers the area of 250 thousand square kilometres. England is a rolling land, rising to the Uplands of southern Scotland. Mountains: the Cambrians, the Cumbrian Mountains, the Pennines, the Highlands of Scotland are the highest mountains in Britain. The longest rivers are the Severn and the Thames. There are beautiful lake areas in Cumbria and the Highlands of Scotland. British Isles have milder climate due to the Gulf Stream. The highest pick of England is Scafell Pike.

**PEOPLE:**

Population is 59 mil. people. The density is one of the highest in the world. People live mostly in urban areas. In Britain we can find the following ethnic groups: English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh and others. The majority of people speaks English. There are minority languages that are of Celtic origin – Welsh, Scottish and Irish Gaelic.

**NATIONAL ECONOMY:**

The main industries are steel, metals, vehicles, shipbuilding, shipping, banking, insurance, textiles, chemicals, electronics, aircraft, machinery, distilling. The main agricultural products are grain, sugar, beet, fruit and vegetables. Worldknown is British sheep and cattle breeding. Britain’s natural riches are coal, tin, oil, gas, limestone, iron, salt, clay, chalk and lead.

**GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION:**

Great Britain is a constitutional monarchy with the Queen as the head of state. Britain is divided into four parts: England (London), Wales (Cardiff), Scotland (Edinburgh) and Northern Ireland (Belfast). Locally is Britain divided into counties. The capital of the whole Britain is London. Other big cities according to population are Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Sheffield, Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh and Bristol.

Besides London, which is in the centre of each tourist’s atten­tion, there are many other fascinating places:

**Oxford** and **Cambridge** are the old university towns.

**Stratford upon Avon** is the birthplace of William Shakespeare.

Towns of Brighton, Bournemouth, Portsmouth, Blackpool, Sunderland or Scarborough have fine sandy beaches and a nice atmosphere.

**Canterbury** is an ancient city with a majestic cathedral. The other old cathedral town is **Winchester.**

**Salisbury in Salisbury Plain**, there we can see a beautiful historic monument of Stonehenge.

**Plymouth** has a proud maritime heritage. Both is worth seeing for the remains of its Roman bath built 2000 years ago. Exeter is country of many national parks (Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks).

**Birmingham** is the second largest city in Britain. We can see Victorian architecture here and the network of canals, which is evidence of industrial heritage.

In **Manchester** we can visit the Museum of Science and Industry, the Air and Space Museum. The other big cities are Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield and York.

In **Durham** we can find a massive 11th century castle and a beautiful cathedral.

In the **Lake District National Park** is beautiful Windermere Lake. This is area popular with mountaineers, painters and tourists. The lakes are good for water sports.

**WALES**

Beautiful country with many highlands and castles (Caernarfon, Conwy, Harlech). There aren’t many industrial towns, the biggest are Cardiff, Newport and Swansea.

**SCOTLAND**

Scotland is a historically and culturally separate country from England. Scotland is the land of many special traditions, which cannot be found elsewhere in the world – playing the pipes, wearing kilts made of tartan, Scotch whisky.

The biggest city is Glasgow. It is culture centre and heart of the arts in Scotland. Edinburgh is dominated by its imposing 12th century castle – Holyroodhouse. The city is full of attractive squares, three-lined avenues and elegant shopping centres. In the North of the country there are many lakes as Loch Lomond and Loch Ness, which is famous for its “Loch Ness Monster”.