

● What basic facts do you know about the United Kingdom?

The United Kingdom is located / situated in north-west Europe on the island of Great Britain and the northern part of the island of Ireland. It is made up of / consists of / is comprised of four countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The country's political system is a constitutional monarchy, which means it has a parliament and a monarch. At the moment the monarch is Queen Elizabeth II. The country has a temperate climate and is famous for its wet weather. Informally, the national flag of the United Kingdom is called the Union Jack.

● Can you tell me something more specific about each of the four countries?

England is the largest of the countries and it is the seat of political power. The Houses of Parliament and Buckingham Palace are found here. England also has many other famous places such as Liverpool, where the Beatles started, Manchester, home to Manchester United football team, Oxford, where one of the oldest universities in the world was established; the mysterious stone formation, Stonehenge, can be found near Salisbury. Scotland was an independent state until 1707 when it joined a union with the Kingdom of England. In 1999 the Scottish Parliament was reopened. The capital is Edinburgh. Scotland is quite mountainous and the United Kingdom's highest peak, Ben Nevis, is found here. Apart from English, Scottish Gaelic is spoken here. Wales' official language is Welsh but English is more widely spoken. Cardiff is the capital. Rugby is a popular sport in Wales. Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom when Ireland gained independence. The country also has its own government. The capital and largest city is Belfast.

● Could you describe some of the United Kingdom's geographical features?

The landscape / terrain of England is mostly hilly, though many of the hills are quite small. The countryside / landscape is very green. There are many fields and pastures. The north is more mountainous, especially in Scotland where you will find the Highlands. The longest river in the United Kingdom is the Severn. It rises in Wales. The Thames, which flows through London, is the second longest. Loch Ness in Scotland is the largest lake by volume. The largest lake by area is Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland.

● What are some of the famous places to visit in London?

In London, you will find... Westminster, which has the Houses of Parliament and the clock tower which contains Big Ben, a large bell... Buckingham Palace, where the Queen lives... Hyde Park, one of the largest

parks in London, where they have Speakers' Corner, a place people gather to express / air their opinions / views on many topics... the London Eye, the largest ferris wheel in Europe... Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, a popular tourist destination where people can see life-like wax sculptures of famous people. You can go to... the West End to see a play or musical... the National Gallery to see many famous paintings... the British Museum to see many historical exhibits.

● Who are some famous people from the United Kingdom?

Famous people from the United Kingdom include... William Shakespeare, a playwright and poet from the 16th and 17th century... Isaac Newton, who developed among other things the theory of gravity... the Beatles, who are one of the most popular pop groups of all time... Charles Dickens, a novelist from the 19th century... Monty Python, a very influential comedy group. The United Kingdom is also famous for many fictitious characters such as the spy James Bond, the detective Sherlock Holmes and the boy wizard Harry Potter.

● What are some foods which you associate with the United Kingdom?

Foods associated with / typical for the United Kingdom are... brown sauce, a savoury sauce eaten with chips and ham... haggis, sheep stomach stuffed with offal, oatmeal and spices... marmite, a salty spread made from yeast... the sandwich, cold meat and vegetables placed between two pieces of bread... pies, pastry filled with beef, onions and vegetables... Yorkshire pudding, small savoury puddings made from flour, milk and eggs and baked in oil.

● Could you describe some sports and pastimes popular in the United Kingdom?

British people like / enjoy... playing football, with matches on most weekends... cricket in the summer... rugby, which is associated with public school students... polo, if they are very rich... going rambling, which is to go for a hike... watching horse-racing... seeing pantomimes at Christmas time... going to the local pub for a pint... doing DIY.

● Would you like to go to the United Kingdom? Why?

I would like to go / I want to go... to improve / practise my English... to get a job... because I'm curious / I've heard a lot about this country... because I'm interested in British culture... because it is a modern cosmopolitan country. I have already been to London / Scotland. It was a great opportunity to... practise my English / actually see places I have been learning about. I am not really interested in going to England because I think the culture is very similar to ours. I would rather go to the USA or Australia.