

# United Kingdom

*advanced version*

## Basic Facts

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a country in Western Europe. It has a population of 66 million. The capital and the largest city is London. The currency is the pound. It is divided into 100 pence. The local languages are English, Scottish and Welsh.

## History

The first inhabitants of the British Isles were the Iberians in about 3000 BC. They were followed by the Celtic tribes, the Romans and the Anglo-Saxons. Alfred the Great captured London in 886 from the invading Danes. In 1066 King Harold was defeated and killed at the Battle of Hastings. William the Conqueror became King of England. French became the official language of the country. In 1215 King John was forced to sign the Magna Carta. It was a charter of rights which recognized the rights of barons and restricted the power of the ruler. The Magna Carta influenced the formation of many legal documents, for example the United States Constitution. In 1337 the Hundred Years' War with France began. England lost most of its possessions on the continent. In 1349 the Black Death hit England. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Wars of the Roses were fought between two rival families who both laid claim to the throne of England: the House of Lancaster and the House of York. Lancastrian Henry Tudor's army defeated the Yorkist Richard III. Henry married the Yorkist princess Elizabeth and brought peace to the country. Henry VIII was the second Tudor monarch. He is best known for his six marriages. He wanted to have his first marriage, to Catherine of Aragon, annulled. The Pope disagreed. Henry VIII founded the Church of England and initiated the English Reformation. After the Civil War between the king's army and the parliamentary forces led by Oliver Cromwell the monarchy was restored in 1660. In the 1770s the Industrial Revolution began in England. In 1914 World War I began. The United Kingdom fought with Allies against the Central Powers led by Germany. In 1940 the United Kingdom was bombed by the Germans during the Battle of Britain. In 1952 Elizabeth II became the Queen.

## Geography

The United Kingdom consists of four countries: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It includes the island of Great Britain, the north-eastern part of the island of Ireland and many smaller islands. It is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, with the North Sea to the east, the English Channel to the south and the Celtic Sea to the west. The Irish Sea is situated between Great Britain and Ireland. The longest rivers are the Severn and the Thames.

## England

England makes up the southern part of Great Britain. The capital city is London. The patron saint is St George. The national symbols are the Tudor rose and the St George's cross.

## Wales

Wales is situated on the western side of Great Britain. The capital city is Cardiff. The patron saint is St. David. The national symbols are the daffodil and the leek.

## Scotland

Scotland is located in the north of Great Britain. The capital city is Edinburgh. The patron saint is St Andrew. The national symbol is the thistle.

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## **Northern Ireland**

Northern Ireland is situated in the northeast of the island of Ireland. The capital city is Belfast. The patron saint is St Patrick. The national symbol is the shamrock.

## **Government and Politics**

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy. The head of state is Queen Elizabeth II, who has reigned since 1952. She is also the head of state of 15 other independent countries. These 16 countries are called Commonwealth realms. The head of the government is the Prime Minister. The Parliament consists of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats are the UK's three major political parties.

## **Economy**

The United Kingdom has the fifth largest economy in the world. London is the world's largest financial centre alongside New York and it has the largest city GDP in Europe. The Industrial Revolution started in the United Kingdom and many of the technological innovations were of British origin. The automotive, aerospace and pharmaceutical industries play the most important role today.

## **Places of Interest**

### **Stonehenge**

Stonehenge is a circle of huge standing stones, which is situated 13 km north of Salisbury. Archaeologists date the monument back to 3000-2000 BC. According to a legend, it was built by the magician Merlin and a giant. It used to serve as a burial ground and a place of worship.

### **Stratford-upon-Avon**

Stratford-upon-Avon is the second most visited city in England. It is the birthplace and the burial place of the playwright William Shakespeare.

### **Hadrian's Wall**

This popular tourist attraction is situated in Northern England. It was built as a defensive fortification during the reign of Emperor Hadrian.

### **The Giant's Causeway**

It is situated on the northern coast of Northern Ireland. It is an area of over 40,000 massive black columns. They were created during an ancient volcanic eruption.

### **Cornwall**

It is a county of England and one of the most popular holiday destinations in Britain. It is suitable for sailing, surfing and rowing. Cornwall is known for its pasties, a savoury dish made with pastry.

### **Loch Ness**

It is a lake in the Scottish Highlands. According to legends, it is the home of the Loch Ness Monster.

## **Doplňující otázky**

1. What does the flag of the UK look like?

The national flag of the United Kingdom is the Union Jack. It is blue, red and white. It consists of the cross of Saint George, the cross of Saint Patrick and St. Andrew's Cross.

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2. What is the national anthem of the UK?

The national anthem of the United Kingdom is "God Save the Queen". When there is a king instead of a queen it becomes "God Save the King".

3. What are the biggest cities in the UK?

London, Birmingham, Glasgow, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield and Edinburgh.

4. What is the highest point of the UK?

The highest point of the UK is Ben Nevis (1,345 m). It is located in the Grampian Mountains in the Scottish Highlands.

5. What do you know about British cuisine?

Well-known traditional British dishes are full breakfast, fish and chips and the Christmas dinner. Full breakfast includes bacon, sausages, eggs and baked beans. The Christmas dinner consists of turkey, cranberry sauce, potatoes and Christmas pudding.

6. What do you know about sport in the UK?

The most popular sports are football, rugby, cricket, horseracing, swimming and tennis.

7. What do you know about William Shakespeare?

He was an English playwright, poet, and actor. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon. He wrote for example Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear and A Midsummer Night's Dream.

8. Which British scientists and inventors do you know?

Charles Darwin is famous for the theory of evolution. Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web.

9. Do you know any famous British singers or bands?

The Beatles were a rock band. The members of the band were John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr. They were from Liverpool. Their most famous songs are Yesterday, Yellow Submarine, Let It Be and She Loves You.

11. What do you know about Elizabeth II?

Elizabeth II is Queen of the United Kingdom and the other Commonwealth countries. Her father was King George VI. Her husband is Prince Phillip. She has four children: Charles, Anne, Andrew and Edward. She lives in Buckingham Palace in London.

### **Důležitá slovíčka**

currency	(karnsi)	měna
inhabitants	(inhebitents)	obyvatelé
tribe	(trajb)	kmen, rod
capture	(kepčr)	dobýt
defeat	(dyfít)	porazit
conqueror	(konkr'r)	dobyvatel
charter	(čártr)	listina
constitution	(konstit'ušn)	ústava
Black Death	(blek def)	Černá smrt (morová epidemie)
daffodil	(def'dil)	narcis
leek	(lík)	pórek
thistle	(fisl)	bodlák

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shamrock	(šemrok)	trojlístek
burial	(berijl)	pohřební
worship	(wršip)	uctívání
fortification	(fortifikejšn)	opevnění
causeway	(kóswejj)	násep
column	(kol'm)	sloup
savoury	(sejv'ry)	slaný, lahodný
pastry	(pejstry)	pečivo
county	(kaunty)	hrabství
highlands	(hajlends)	vysočina, vrchovina