

British Culture: List of the Great Traditions and Celebrations in the UK

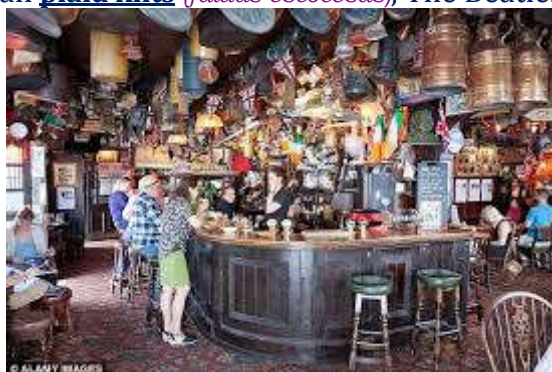


British culture, customs and traditions vary from the weird to the wonderful, from the traditional to the popular, and from the simple to the grand.

The formation of the ideas, celebrations and notions that comprise today's **quintessential** (*por excelencia*) British lifestyle started centuries ago, giving importance and meaning to the people's existence. These customs and traditions stood the test of time, **albeit** (*sin embargo*) not without some changes to accommodate the modernizing world.

Despite the inevitable transformation in British values and norms, the roots can still be easily traced back to the earlier English civilization; it was a big help that the nation's history is widely and **proficiently** (*correctamente*) **recorded** (*grabada, registrada*).

Knowing and understanding one country's customs and traditions allows us to have a deeper understanding as to why people live such lives, say such things or do such actions. Read on and realize that there is more to Britain than **plaid kilts** (*faldas escocesas*), The Beatles and fish and chips.



Pub Culture

The term pub is a short term for "public house." True to its word origin, a British pub is a place in the neighbourhood where people gather for drinks and discussions after the **daily grind** (*rutina diaria. Grind: trabajo pesado*).

The culture prevalent in British pubs is observed to be different from American bars. A member's only social club is also very common in British towns and villages.

Here are some of the unwritten laws in a British pub:

- Order from the bar and not from your table. The pubs do not usually have table service.
- When seated with a group, one should get the order of everybody so as not to crowd the bar.
- When ordering beer, be specific: ale (dark beer), lager (light beer), bitter (light ale) or stout (very dark beer)
- Most pubs only take cash for payment. Be ready as you order, but it **is frowned upon** (*está mal visto*) to wave your bill to call the bartender's attention. To give tip to your server, offer him or her a drink. It will be added to your **tab** (*cuenta*). If a tip jar is existent, monetary tips are welcome as well.
- If someone **buys** you or your table **a round**, it is customary for the next round to be on you.
- One bell from the bar means last order. Two means the bar is closed.

Afternoon Tea



Afternoon Tea is probably one of the **quintessentially** (*por excelencia*) British things to **partake** (*participar, compartir*), afternoon tea has become a socially-acceptable and rather a delightful excuse to meet people for “some **grub**” (*picoteo*) from 2 until 4 o’clock in the afternoon.

The common afternoon tea comprises of select teas, traditional scones, simple sandwiches and petite cakes. Complementing the pastries is **clotted cream** (*nata*) and fruit jams, amongst others.

The birth of the afternoon tea happened in the year 1840 when Anna Russell, the seventh Duchess of Bedford, would request for snacks in between lunch and dinner. It became a repeated occurrence, and she began inviting friends over to **relish** (*disfrutar*) the treats with her. Now, afternoon tea is served regularly around the globe, mostly as special offers in fancy hotels and English restaurants.

For £550 per couple, the Cliveden House in Berkshire easily bags the title of one of the priciest afternoon teas to be offered in England. It included expensive teas, exclusive chocolates and fancy ingredients.

Regatta



The regatta is a boat race between the rowing teams of Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

The **contest** (*competición*) dates back to 1829 as a result of a challenge between two friends, Charles Wordsworth (Oxford) and Charles Merrivale (Cambridge.) Now, the race is held annually sometime during the Easter vacation on the River Thames in southwest London.

The racecourse is known as the Championship Course. It is almost 7 kilometres long and is located between Putney and Mortlake.

Wondering whoever won between the two? It was Wordsworth for Oxford. Their crew’s winning boat is showcased at the River and Rowing Museum in Henley-on-Thames..

The Queen’s Speech



The Queen’s Speech, or in a lengthier title the Speech from the Throne, is a speech made by the reigning monarch at the state opening of the Parliament. Here, the queen addresses the legislature and speaks about the government agenda.

The speech is usually **penned** (*escrito con pluma*) by the monarch’s advisors, with the queen having the final decision on its contents. There have been instances that the queen will not be able to deliver her speech for some reason. In the United Kingdom, the reigning monarch can freely choose a delegate to represent her through the speech.

One of the British Christmas traditions is the Queen’s Speech on Christmas Day around 3 pm. This is when the reigning monarch will send her/his festive wishes and message to the public from the comfort of her own British palace or castle.

Boxing Day

Boxing Day is the day after Christmas, December 26th. It is counted as an official bank holiday in the UK and Ireland.

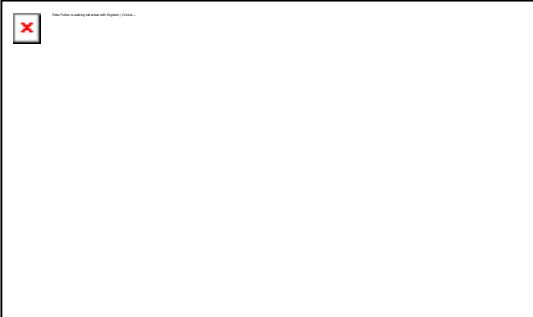
A lot has been thought of to have birthed such unusual British tradition and celebration, one of which is the idea that this day is **allotted** (*asignado*) for gift-giving to the less fortunate or – simply put – people not of equal ranking.

What really happens during this day nowadays, though, is that people gather to **relish** (*saborear*) the **leftovers** from yesterday's festivities. It is also said to be the time to relax and rest from the holiday **prances** and parties.

What's in the "box?" Surely, it's not about the sport. Some say the name of this British Christmas tradition came from another term for presents – the Christmas box.

Others say it was from those boxes found in churches, filled with charitable goods and opened the day after Christmas.

Sports



A lot of famous sports that are now widely enjoyed actually have British roots. Cricket, football, **lawn tennis**, rugby and golf... to name but a few.

The most popular sport in the UK is football. Each country has its own national team. They compete with other teams from around the globe in different world tournaments such as the well-known FIFA World Cup. As people take the **utmost** (*extremo*) pride in their countries being represented, fans tend to get all **worked up** (*alterados*) with the competitions.

Aside from the international **arena** (*estadio*), football (*soccer US*) is also celebrated in local areas, with people playing in their local parks all across the land.

Football may be famous in England, but it isn't its national sport: cricket is.

Red Phone Box



Probably one of the most recognizable British icons out there is the red telephone box. It was designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1924 and was launched by the post office as the K2 two years after.

It was later on redesigned to the K6 in honour of King George V. This version is probably the most identifiable of all the models.

Due to the rise in the ownership of mobile phones among the population, the usage of the red telephone box has greatly declined over the past years. With the desire to preserve British heritage in mind, the K6 has now welcomed more diverse purposes for its space. From being a **salad stop** to housing a library of books, ingenious ways are **sprouting up** (*brotando*) to save this icon from total extinction.

Around 2000 red telephone boxes have been listed as proper buildings.

British Transport



Bus. Quick, cheap and iconic – if you are looking to find those three adjectives in one mode of transport, the British double-decker bus is for you. It offers efficient travel, a cheap sightseeing deal and a classic way of doing so.

Cab. They say a trip to the UK isn't complete without **hailing** (*hacer señas*) a black taxi. It may be significantly more expensive than buses, though.

Train. UK's railway system is the oldest in the world. Almost every town is connected or accessible by train. Different companies manage the networks. Riding the train is probably the most scenic mode of travel to go.

Tube. The tube, or the London Underground Railway System, connects all the main areas in London. Though it tends to be very crowded during rush hour, it still is the most efficient way of **roaming** (*desplazarte*) around London.

British Food



Fish and chips is a very common takeaway food in the UK. As the name implies, it consists of fish that is fried in batter and accompanied by potato chips. Fresh **cod** (*bacalao*) is the most common fish used for this dish.

English Roast Dinner

These were conventionally served wrapped in old newspaper, until a more hygienic paper counterpart replaced the wrap. A lot of restaurants offer fish and chips as Friday specials in regards to the traditional no-meat **fast** (*ayuno*) of Roman Catholics during Fridays.

Roast dinner. Roast dinner (or classically known as Sunday roast) has become one of the **staple** (*esencial*) British food.

It consists of roast meat, vegetables and a variety of accompaniments such as Yorkshire pudding and English mustard. The term Sunday roast came from the said origin of this dish, wherein it is believed to be the traditional meal of British families after attending church on Sundays. The day starts by **popping** (*asar*) the meat in the oven, adding the veggies and then coming to attend **mass**.

Doing so, they come home to the smell of a perfectly-roasted **feast** waiting to be devoured.

Excess Politeness

It is quintessentially British to **scatter** (*dispersar*) excessive pardon me's and thank you's to one's speech, they say. It may be seen in two opposing views: that of **utter** (*complete*) politeness or of complete nonsense.

Whichever of these two are true; there is no denying that this mannerism has made its way to the daily lives of the British people.

Sarcasm

The British people are said to use sarcasm on a daily basis. As they find humour in almost everything, they tend to use sarcastic remarks to make fun of the situation.

Often, hyperboles are the way to go. If someone is hearing such brand of comedy for the first time, it might be a bit difficult to keep up.

Apart from sarcasm, the Brits also use **self-deprecation** (*auto-crítica*), irony and understatements to joke around.



A Good Cuppa Tea

The British population is one of the largest tea consumers in the world.

Before, it was a drink only enjoyed by the upper-class. However, as the eighteenth century entered, every social class has made drinking tea a part of their daily habit.

The perfect way to **brew** (*elaborar, tb infusión: a good cup of tea*) is debatable up to this day. Even scientists released their own take of 'a good cuppa tea.' The methods vary from the type of pot used to the proper steeping time. Adding milk to one's tea is also a huge subject being discussed upon.

The British Empire Tea Bureau released an instructional film about the proper serving of tea in the late 1940s. The instructions are as follows:

- Always use good-quality tea.
- Use freshly-drawn water.
- Warm the pot.
- Measure tea carefully in the correct proportion to the water.
- Use just-boiled water.
- Let the tea infuse properly before serving.
- Adding milk is a must for a good brew!

Horse Racing

Because horse breeding has long been part of the British legacy, it is only natural to have horse racing as an **esteemed** part of the society. In fact, it is the second-largest spectator sport in Britain. Horse racing events include the Royal Ascot, Grand National and the Cheltenham Festival.

The history of racing horses dates back to the 12th century when the English knights carried Arab horses on their way back from the Crusades. These horses, crossbred with the English horses, gave birth to the **Thoroughbred horse** (*caballo pura sangre*) which is the **breed** (*raza*) being used in racing in the UK.

Betting on horses is a popular and legal activity in the UK. The **Grand National** is one of the most awaited horse-racing events every year.

