

Country study. Great Britain



The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the UK) is the official name of the state, which is situated on the British Isles. This state is also called Great Britain after the main island with the same name. The UK consists of four countries, which are England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Their capitals are London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast.

Geographical position of the UK.

The UK is an **island state**. The two main islands are Great Britain (where England, Scotland and Wales are situated) and Ireland (where Northern Ireland and the independent Irish Republic are situated). The two islands are separated by **the Irish Sea**. **The UK** is washed by **the Atlantic Ocean** in the north and **the North Sea** in the east.

The UK is separated from the continent by **the English Channel** and **the Strait of Dover**. The Strait of Dover is the narrowest part of English Channel. The nearest point to Europe is **Dover** which is only thirty-two miles from France. Dover is one of the most ancient ports. If

you cross the English Channel by ferry you can see **the white chalk cliffs of Dover** and **Dover Castle**.



Dover Castle

Nationalities.

Everyone who was born in Britain is British. People from England are English. People from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not English. They are Scottish or the Scots, Welsh and Irish.

Languages. Языки

Everyone in Britain speaks English. But in some parts of Scotland and Wales people speak different languages as well. The Welsh are especially proud of their language. They like to speak Welsh, to sing songs in Welsh and when you travel you can see road signs in Welsh all over Wales. Everyone in the UK speaks English but they all speak it differently. A Scottish person has to listen carefully if he wants to understand a Londoner or a Welsh person.

Population.

More than 56 million people live in Britain. Many of them live in big industrial cities like London. The biggest cities of England are Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool (England); Edinburgh, Glasgow, (Scotland).

Nature. Природа

Foreigners are often surprised by the fact that much of land in Britain is open country. There are many lonely hills, quiet rivers, deep lakes and just farmlands especially in the south of the

country. The open country is named Lowlands but it changes for hills called Highlands in the north of the country.

Climate.

The climate in Great Britain is very mild. The winter temperature is between +3° and +7°. Snow does not cover the ground very long, except on the mountains. The summer temperature is between +15° and +18°. It often rains.

The English weather is very changeable. So when English people make plans for holidays they usually begin, "If the weather..."

State Symbol.

The flag of the United Kingdom is known as the Union Jack. It is made up of three crosses: the cross of St. George (the patron saint of England), the cross of St. Andrew (the patron saint of Scotland) and the cross of St. Patrick (the patron saint of Ireland).

Traditions.

Just like families have their own traditions so do countries. It's common knowledge that the British are lovers of traditions. In a whole year, each season in Britain is connected with various colourful traditions, customs and festivals.

Spring

St David's Day. March 1st is a very important day for Welsh people. It's St David's Day. He is the "patron" or national saint of Wales. On March 1st the Welsh celebrate St David's Day and wear daffodils in the buttonholes of their coats or jackets.

May Day. May 1st was an important day in the Middle Ages, the celebration of summer's beginning. For that day people decorated houses and streets with branches of trees and flowers. In the very early morning young girls went to the fields and washed their faces with dew. They believed this made them beautiful for a year after that. Also on May Day the young men of each village tried to win prizes with their bows and arrows. People put a striped maypole decorated with flowers and danced round it. Some English villages still have maypole dancing on May 1st.

Summer

The Trooping of the Colour. The Queen is the only person in Britain with two birthdays. Her real birthday is on April 21st, but she has an "official" birthday too. That's on the second Saturday in June. And on the Queen's official birthday, there is a traditional ceremony called the Trooping of the Colour. It's a big parade with brass bands and hundreds of soldiers at Horse Guards' Parade in London. The Queen's soldiers, the Guards, accompany her. At the front of the parade is the flag or "colour". The Guards are trooping the colour. Thousands of Londoners and visitors watch Horse Guards' Parade. And millions of people at home watch it on television.

Swan Upping. Here's a very different royal tradition. On the River Thames there are hundreds of swans. A lot of these beautiful white birds belong, traditionally, to the King or Queen. In July the young swans on the Thames are about two months old. Then the Queen's swan keeper goes in a boat from London Bridge to Henley.¹ He looks at all the young swans and marks the royal ones. The name of this custom is Swan Upping.

Highland Games. In summer Scottish people traditionally meet together for competitions called Highland Games. After Queen Victoria visited the games at Braemar in 1848, the Braemar games became the most famous tradition in Scotland. Today thousands of visitors come to see sports like tossing the caber (when a tall pole is thrown into the air as a test of strength) or throwing the hammer. The games always include Scottish dancing and bagpipe music.

Autumn

The State Opening of Parliament. Parliament controls modern Britain. But traditionally the Queen opens Parliament every autumn. She travels from Buckingham Palace to the Houses of Parliament in a gold carriage - the Irish State Coach. At the Houses of Parliament the Queen sits on a throne in the House of Lords. Then she reads the Queen's Speech. At the State Opening of Parliament the Queen wears a crown and the crown jewels.

Guy Fawkes Day. November 5th is Guy Fawkes Day (Night) in Britain. All over the country people build wood fires, or "bonfires", in their gardens. On top of each bonfire is a guy. That is a figure of Guy Fawkes. He was one of a band of conspirators who wanted to blow up the Houses of Parliament and kill King James I and his ministers. However, the plot failed, Fawkes was caught on the 5th of November 1605. The conspirators were executed and Britain has celebrated Guy Fawkes Night since then. Before November 5th, children use their guys to make money. They stand in the street and shout "Penny for the guy". Then they spend the money on fireworks.

Winter

Up-Helly-Aa. The Shetland Islands are north of Scotland. In the ninth century the Vikings ['varkIIJZ] from Norway came to the Shetlands. They came to Britain in ships and took away gold, animals and sometimes people.

Now, 1000 years later, people in the Shetlands remember the Vikings with the festival which they call "Up-Helly-Aa". Every winter people of Lerwick, the capital of the Shetland Islands, make a model of a Viking longship with the head of a dragon at the front. Then, on Up-Helly-Aa night in January, the Shetlanders dress in Viking costumes and carry the ship through the town to the sea and burn it there. The festival is a party for the people of the Shetland Islands.

British food.

Grub's Up: Sampling Britain's underrated traditional cuisine

British food has a bad reputation and British eating habits are regularly lambasted by other nations, especially those nearby on the European continent. "You can't trust people whose cuisine is so bad," was French president Jacques Chirac's famous Gallic put-down in 2005. Fish & Chips - an iconic British dish.

Yet those who actually pay a visit to Britain today find that cuisine has come on leaps and bounds over the last two decades. Those who dine out are now faced with a diverse smorgasbord of traditional, cosmopolitan, locally sourced and healthy dishes that frequently titillate the taste buds and don't pile on the pounds.

Until the 1970's much of British food was admittedly vile. This can be explained as the legacy of World War II and the years of rationing that followed. Eating out was not a common experience outside the upper classes and foreign food influences were despised.

The increase in wealth and foreign travel from the 1980's onwards saw a corresponding improvement in food in the UK at a time when Indian and Chinese food in the UK became more appreciated.

The 1990's saw the rise of the celebrity chef and emphasis on organic produce. Nowadays Britain, focused on the food-scene in [London](#), can be considered one of the best places to eat out.

History of British Food

The history of Britain has played an important role in its food culture. The Romans introduced cherries, cabbages, peas, stinging nettles (as a salad vegetable) and of course, wine, which they tried to produce in southern England and certainly imported from home. The road network built by the Romans also allowed for the movement of produce around the country. The Vikings brought techniques for smoking fish still seen in the cuisines of the [Hebrides](#) and [Orkney Islands](#).

The increase in overseas trade from Tudor times onwards saw the arrival and adoption of new kinds of foods in Britain: spices from the Far East, potatoes, peppers and sugar from the Americas and Caribbean. Coffee and cocoa arrived from South America and later tea from India. Eccles Cakes are said to have started in Puritan times when rich cakes and biscuits were prohibited.

Cornish Pastry

The British Empire introduced new tastes and flavours to the Home Country. Kedgeree, for instance, derives from the Indian *Khichri* introduced to Britain by members of the East India Company.

Contemporary Britain enables visitors to enjoy [cuisines from all around the world](#) including Chinese, Indian, French, Italian, Japanese, American, Mexican,

Spanish, Thai and Turkish, reflecting the melting pot that is now the United Kingdom.

Typical British Cuisine

So what exactly is typical British cuisine? The cliché of British food is meat and two veg and traditionally British cuisine has a base of meat or fish - beef, lamb, pork, chicken and fish - served with potatoes and other vegetables. Many traditional British meals have historic origins: bread and cheese, meat and game pies, roasted and stewed meats, boiled vegetables and soups, and freshwater and saltwater fish.

Roast Beef and Yorkshire Pudding, Steak and Kidney Pie, Trifle - these are the dishes that everyone associates with Britain. But like the country of Britain which is constantly changing and evolving, so is British food, and whilst today these dishes are 'traditionally British', they are constantly being reinterpreted using different ingredients.

Here are some quintessential British dishes that are served up in restaurants and cafes across the land.

Fish & Chips

[Fish and chips](#) are an icon of British food and recognised as such around the world.

The origins of fish and chips the mid-19th century are associated with the industrial revolution and the dish remains a nutritious and cheap takeaway enjoyed throughout the country.

Although the number of fish and chip shops has dropped from the levels of 1920's and 30's, the demand for the dish has remained the same. Today over 10,000 fish and chip shops provide Britain with a similar volume of fish and chips to those of the post war years.

Sunday Roast

The [Sunday roast](#) is still traditionally eaten every Sunday in many English households. It includes roast potatoes accompanying a roasted joint of meat such as beef, lamb, pork, duck or chicken and assorted other vegetables, themselves generally boiled and served with a gravy or roasted with the meat in its juices, which are then used as or added to the gravy.

Sauces and jellies are chosen to complement the type of meat; mint sauce or red currant jelly for lamb; apple sauce for pork; horseradish or various mustards for beef; and cranberry sauce for turkey. Yorkshire pudding normally accompanies beef (although traditionally served in Yorkshire as a starter, from the days when meat was scarce so it was served first as a "stomach filler"); sage and onion stuffing for pork and usually parsley stuffing for chicken.

Cornish Pasties

A pasty is a baked pastry, made by placing a filling of meat and vegetables on a flat pastry circle and folding it to wrap the filling, crimping the edge to form a seal and then placing it in the oven.

The traditional [Cornish pasty](#), by far the most famous in England, is filled with beef, sliced or diced potato and onion, seasoned with salt and pepper, and is baked.

Afternoon tea with scones, jam and cream.

Scones

Nothing says English tea time more than a scone. An English scone is a cake made of flour, butter and milk. A scone is halved, and eaten spread with butter and jam (or jam and clotted cream as a cream tea). Scones often contain raisin and are lightly sweetened.

Lancashire Hotpot

One of the most famous dishes from northwest England, Lancashire hotpot is a traditional dish made from lamb or mutton and onion, topped with sliced potatoes. It is then left to bake in the oven all day in a heavy pot and on a low heat. The perfect meal for a wet winter's day.

Steak & Kidney Pie

Another British stalwart, this is a savoury pie filled principally with a mixture of diced beef, diced kidney (often of ox, lamb or pork), fried onion, and brown gravy. The gravy typically consists of salted beef broth flavoured with Worcestershire sauce and black pepper, and thickened with flour. The gravy may also contain ale or stout.

Cheese

According to the English Cheese Board states there are over 700 varieties of English cheese. English cheese is generally hard, and made from cows' milk. Cheddar cheese, originally made in the village of Cheddar, is by far the most common type, with many variations. Tangy Cheshire, Sage Derby, Lancashire Cheese, Red Leicester, creamy Double Gloucester and sweet Wensleydale are some traditional regional varieties. Cheddar and the rich, blue-veined Stilton have both been called the king of English cheeses.

The top 10 favorite foods (and drinks) of Britain

- 1) Bacon sandwiches
- 2) Roast dinners
- 3) A cup of tea
- 4) Fish and chips

- 5) Yorkshire pudding
- 6) [Full English breakfast](#)
- 7) Cornish pasties
- 8) Strawberries and cream
- 9) Crumpets
- 10) Beer