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# Introduction

The British Isles lie off the north-west coast of continental Europe. They are made up of Great Britain, Ireland and some 5 500 smaller islands.

Great Britain is washed by the Atlantic Ocean in the northeast, north and north-west.

It is separated from Europe by the North Sea, the Straits of Dover and the English Channel. In the west Great Britain is separated from Ireland by the Irish Sea, North Channel and St. George's Channel. The seas surrounding Great Britain are shallow and rich in fish.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has the total area of about 242 000 sq. km. It is nearly 500 km. across at the widest point, and almost 1 000 km. long.

It is divided into 4 historically developed regions: England consisting of 46 administrative counties, Wales - of 13 counties, Scotland - of 33 counties, including the Hebrides, the Orkney Islands and the Shetland Islands, and North Ireland (or Ulster), consisting of 6 counties.

There are two small parts of the British Isles which have special political arrangement. They are the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Each has complete internal self-government, including Its own Parliament and its own tax system. Both are ruled by a Lieutenant Governor appointed by the British government.

# 1. The United Kingdom

**Nature**

Great Britain is situated in the temperate zone of Europe. The nature of Great Britain is greatly affected by the sea: there is no place situated more than 100-120 km from the seashore, in the northern parts only 40-60 km. The territory of Great Britain can be divided into three natural regions:

1) Scotland with highland and upland relief and coniferous and mixed forests;

2) Wales and mountainous England with upland considerably cut by ravines and valleys and covered with meadows, moorland1 and cultivated farmland, with patches of broadleaf forest;

3) South-east England with plain landscape, fertile soils, the predominance of cultivated farmland, with patches of broadleaf forest.

#### Coasts

The coastline of Great Britain is greatly indented, especially in the west and north-west where the moun-, tains come close to the coast. The coasts of Scotland, as well as the coasts of the Hebrides, the Orkney Islands and the Shetland Islands, are cut by numerous fiords. In the south and east the land gradually slopes down towards the sea, and the coasts are sandy and gentle, here and there interrupted by the ends of hill-ranges, which form low cliffs.

#### Relief

The general slope of the land is from north-west to south-east. The mountains cover the greater part of northern, western and middle Great Britain. They can be divided into the following groups:

1) The Highlands of Scotland occupy most of the land to the north-west of a line drawn from Glasgow to Aberdeen. Two parts of the Highlands — the North-western Highlands and the Grampians — are separated by a narrow valley, through which runs the Caledonian Canal. At the south-western end of the Highlands rises Ben Nevis, 1343 m, the highest mountain of the British Isles.

2) The Central Plain of Scotland8 separates the Highlands from the Southern Uplands of Scotland. The Southern Uplands and the Pennines, which stretch in the north-south direction across the northern and middle parts of England, form a practically continuous group.

3) Nearly the whole of Wales is occupied by the Cumbrians. The highest peak of the Cumbrians is Snowdon, 1085 m. The south-eastern part of England is lowland, interrupted in places by low chalk ridges.

#### Climate

Great Britain enjoys the humid and mild marine West-Coast climate with warm winters and cool summers and a lot of rainfall throughout the year.

The prevailing winds blow from the south-west. As these winds blow from the ocean, they are mild in winter and cool in summer, and are heavily charged with moisture at all times. As they approach the mountainous areas near the west coasts, they rise up the mountain slopes. Their temperature drops, which causes condensation of moisture in the form of rain. Therefore tlie wettest parts of Britain are those areas where high mountains lie near the west coast: the western Higlil. uids of Scotland, the Lake District and North Wales. The eastern part of Britain is said to be in the rain-shadow, as the winds lose most of their moisture in their passage over the highlands of the west.

All parts of the British Isles receive rain at any time of the year. Still autumn and winter are the wettest seasons, except in the Thames district, where most rain falls in the summer half of the year. Oxford3, for example, has 29 per cent of its rain in summer and only 22 per cent in winter.

# 2. Tourism Industry

**Transport**

The British are enthusiastic about mobility. They regard the opportunity to travel far and frequently as a right. Some commuters spend up to two or three hours each day getting to work in London or some other big city and back home to their suburban or country homes in the evening. Most people do not spend quite so long each day travelling, but it is taken for granted that few people live near enough to their work or secondary school to get there on foot.

As elsewhere in Europe, transport in modern Britain is dominated by the motor car and here are the attendant problems of traffic congestion and pollution. These problems are, in fact, more acute than there are in many other countries both because Britain is densely populated and also because a very high proportion of goods are transported by road.

There is an additional reason for congestion in Britain. While the British want the freedom to move around easily, they do not like living near big roads or railways. Any proposed new road or rail project leads to 'housing blight'. The value of houses along or near the proposed route goes down. Every such project is attended by an energetic campaign to stop construction. Partly for this reason, Britain has, in proportion to its population, fewer kilometres of main road and railway than any other country in northern Europe.

Transport policy is a matter of continual debate. During the 1980s the government's attitude was that public transport should pay for itself (and should not be given subsidies) and road building was given priority. However, the opposite point of view, whicli argues in favour of public transport, has become stronger during the 1990s, partly as a result of pressure from environmental groups. It is now generally accepted that transport policy should attempt to more than merely accommodate the predicted doubling in the number of cars in the next thirty years, but should consider wider issues.

#### On the road

Nearly three-quarters of households in Britain have regular use of a car and about a quarter have more than one car. The widespread enthusiasm for cars is, as elsewhere, partly a result of people using them to project an image of themselves. Apart from the obvious status indicators such as size and speed, the British system of vehicle regis tration introduces another. Registration plates, known as 'number plates', give a clear indication of the age of cars. Up to 2007 there was a different letter of the alphabet for each year and in summer there were a lot of advertisements for cars on television and in the newspapers because the new registration 'year' began in August.

Another possible reason for the British being so attached to their cars is the opportunity which they provide to indulge the national passion for privacy. Being in a car is like taking your 'castle' with you wherever you go. Perhaps this is why the occasional attempts to persuade people to 'car pool' (to share the use of a car to and from work) have met with little success.

The privacy factor may also be the reason why British drivers are less 'communicative' than the drivers of many other countries. They use their horns very little, are not in the habit of signalling their displeasure at the behaviour of other road users with their hands and are a little more tolerant of both other drivers and pedestrians. They are also a little more safety conscious. Britain has the best road safety record in Europe. The speed limit on motorways is a little lower than in most other countries (70 mph = 112 kph) and people go over this limit to a somewhat lesser extent. The addition there are frequent and costly government campaigns to encourage road safety. Before Christmas 1992, for instance, £2.3 million was spent on such a campaign.

The British are not very keen on mopeds or motorcycles. They exist, of course, but they are not private enough for British tastes. Every year twenty limes as many new cars as two-wheeled motor vehicles are registered. Millions of bicycles are used, especially by younger people, but except in certain university towns such as Oxford and Cambridge, they are no; as common as they are in other parts of north-western Europe. Britain has been rather slow to organize special cycle lanes. The comparative safety of the roads means that parents are net too worried about their children cycling on the road along with cars and lorries.

## 3. Promoting British tourism

#### How important is the tourist industry for Britain's economy?

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the UK, worth approximately £74 billion in 2001 and supporting around 2.1 million jobs. Tourism accounts for 4.5% of the UK economy.

#### How many people visit Britain every year?

There were 22. 8 million overseas visits to the UK in 2001. Also in 2001, there were 163 million domestic trips and the expenditure for these trips was £26.1 billion.

Britain's most popular visitor attractions in 2001:

British Airways London Eye 3,850,000

Tower of London 2,019,210

Eden Project, Cornwall 1,700,000

Natural History Museum, London 1,696,176

Legoland, Windsor 1,632,000

Victoria & Albert Museum, London 1,446,344

Science Museum, London 1,352,649

Flamingo Land Theme Park & Zoo, North Yorkshire 1,322,000

Windermere Lake Cruises, Lake District 1,241,918

Canterbury Cathedral, Kent 1,151,099

Since the abolition of museum charging in December 2001 museum and gallery attendance has gone by 64%.

**How is British Tourism being promoted?**

The United Kingdom has four national tourist boards:

the English Tourism Council (formerly the English Tourist Board),

VisitScotland (formerly the Scottish Tourist Board),

Northern Ireland Tourist Board

Wales Tourist Board.

The British Tourist Authority is responsible for promoting the whole of Britain to overseas visitors. "Only in Britain, Only in 2002" is a large scale overseas BTA campaign with television advertising (including an appearance by the Prime Minister) funded by £20 million from Government which was matched by the UK's tourism industry in cash and in collateral support.

#### English Tourism

The government has announced its intention to ensure English Tourism is marketed domestically. This will aim to grow the UK market and develop a sustainable English Tourism industry.

#### Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing

The government is committed to the reform and modernisation of alcohol, public entertainment and late night refreshment licensing. It will introduce a Bill to achieve the reforms at the earliest legislative opportunity.

The hospitality and leisure industry is a major part of the tourism sector and reform of the existing archaic system would be a major boost for tourism.

It would save the industry £1.97 billion in the first ten years of operation.

It will also contribute to a change in drinking culture, making licensed premises more family-friendly, and less bewildering to foreign visitors accustomed to a more flexible approach to licensing.

Reform will also contribute to the Government's strategy for combating alcohol-related crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour, and would reduce the problems associated with fixed artificially early closing times.

#### Fitness for Purpose

Fitness for Purpose is one of the key strands of the modernising agenda for tourism. The initiative aims to provide customers with a firmer assurance that hotels, and restaurants will be fit for trading. It is one part of the drive for better overall quality in the tourism and hospitality industry, following the events of last year.

#### EnglandNet

With a grant of £3.6 million from the Government's Invest to Save budget the ETC is developing EnglandNet, a world class network for English tourism. It aims to give the public access to comprehensive and quality assured holiday information via the internet and other linked services, and to allow online booking with a wide range of different UK tourism businesses.

#### Tourism in Britain

From the peace of the countryside to the bustle of vibrant cities, from sport to shopping, from heritage to music, fashion and film, tourism in Britain is nothing if not diverse. With something to offer everyone, it's hardly surprising that Britain is one of the world's leading tourist destinations. Britain's tourism industry is big business - £53 billion each year - and it's growing all the time. Tourism has accounted for one in six of all new jobs created in the last 10 years.

Britain boasts a huge range of places to stay - from the simplest cottage to the five star luxury of its top hotels. Guest houses, inns, bed and breakfasts, and holiday centres help ensure that Britain can offer accommodation to suit every taste and every pocket. When it comes to eating and drinking the choice is, if anything, even wider. Britain's restaurants are now considered to be among the best in the world, and you can enjoy a drink anywhere from the most traditional of pubs to the most sophisticated of bars.

With its international airports and seaports, getting to Britain couldn't be easier. The country is situated within a couple of hours' flight of most European cities, and there are frequent, reliable links to a huge range of destinations further afield. Since the Channel Tunnel opened it has been even easier for drivers and rail passengers - travelling on Eurostar trains - to get to and from mainland Europe.

Millions of visitors from around the world come to Britain each year to enjoy its scenic countryside and coastlines and its wealth of historic towns, cities and buildings. Britain also plays host to a wide range of cultural, artistic and sporting events many of which, like the Edinburgh Festival and the Five Nations rugby tournament, are internationally renowned.

Britain has a great deal to offer visitors, and the tourism industry is a major asset to the country. The Government is keen to create an economic climate in which the industry can flourish. An important part of this is making sure that tourism in Britain has the high public profile it deserves. The Government-supported British Tourist Authority (BTA) promotes Britain overseas as a tourist destination, while the tourist boards for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland encourage the development of tourist facilities in Britain.

Visitors can place a great strain on an area's infrastructure. At the height of the season, places like the Lade District attract many cars and coaches filled with visitors. Problems of visitor numbers are by no means restricted to the natural environment. Historic towns such as Bath and Cambridge have also suffered as a direct result of the number of tourists.

Visitors are the lifeblood of Britain's tourism industry. It is crucial, though, to keep in mind the need to protect the very attractions that those visitors come to see. Environmental issues are at the top of the Government's agenda. And bodies like the Countryside Agency are building partnerships with farmers, landowners and local authorities to make sure that the countryside is there to be enjoyed not only now but in the future.

**Conclusion**

The British Isles consist of two large islands — Great Britain and Ireland — separated by the Irish Sea, and s a lot of small islands, the main of which are the Isle of Wight in the English Channel, Anglesea and the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea, the Hebrides — a group of islands off the north-western coast of Scotland, and two groups of islands lying to the north of Scotland: the Orkney Islands and the Shetland Islands.

Historically the territory of the United Kingdom is divided into four parts: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The total area of the United Kingdom is 244 square kilometres.

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