# Traditions and customs

Almost every nation has a reputation of some kind. The English are reputed to be cold, reserved, rather haughty people. They are steady, easy-going and fond of sports. There are certain kinds of behavior, manners and customs which are peculiar to England.

The English are naturally polite and are never tired of saying « Thank you » and « I am sorry ». They are generally disciplined, you never hear loud talk in the street. They don’t rush for seats in buses and trains, but they take their seats in queues at bus stops. English people do not shake hands when meeting one another, they do not show their emotions even in tragic situations. They seem to remain good-tempered and cheerful under difficulties.

The English are a nation of stay-at-homes. There is no place like home. The Englishman says « My house is my castle » because he doesn’t wish his doings to be overlooked by his neighbours. It is true that English people prefer small houses, built for one family. The fire is the focus of the English Home. Other nations go out to cafes or cocktail bars. The fireplace is the natural centre of interest in the room. They like to sit round the fire and watch the dancing flames, exchanging the day’s experience. In many houses you will still see fireplaces, sometimes with columns on each side and a shelf above it on which there is often a clock or a mirror or photos.

The love of gardens is deep-rooted in the British people. Most men’s conversations are about gardens. It may be a discussion of the best methods of growing cucumbers, a talk about the plot which differs from all the others.

The British like growing plants in a window-box outside the kitchen or in the garden near the house. They love flowers very much.

Britain is a nation of animal lovers. They have about five million dogs, almost as many cats, 3 million parrots and other cage birds, aquarium fish - and 1 million exotic pets such as reptiles. In Britain they have special dog shops selling food, clothes and other things for dogs. There are dog hair-dressing saloons and dog cemetries. In Britain pets can send Christmas cards to their friends, birthday cards. Owners can buy for their pets jewelled nylon collars, lambswool coat for a dog, lace-trimmed panties, nightgowns, pyjamas, and so on. There are special animal hotels at the airports. The English people believe that they are the only nation on the earth that is really kind to its animals. How do they spend their week-ends.

Those who live in cities and towns like to go out of town. They may go to stay in the country. Every Englishman is fond of the countryside in a nice thatched cottage with roses round the porch and in the garden, the fresh air and bright sun. No crowds of people, silence and leisure.

Those who stay at home try to do all the jobs they, were too busy to do during the week. Some go shopping on Saturday mornings, some do the house - washing, cleaning. Some men do and watch sporting events.

Saturday evening is the best time for parties, dances, going to the cinema or theatre.

On Sunday after breakfast they may go to work in the garden take a dog for a walk, play a visit to a pub. Sunday is a day for inviting friends and relatives to afternoon tea.

There are some traditions concerning food. English cooking is heavy, substantial and plain. The Englishman likes a good breakfast. To him a good breakfast means porridge with, fish, bacon and eggs, toast and marmalade, tea or coffee. It is the same day to day. The English like their toast cold.

Tea is part of the prose of British life, as necessary as potatoes and bread. Seven cups of it wake you up in the morning, 9 cups will put you to sleep at night.

The midday meal is called lunch. This meal consists on week- days of stew, fried fish, chops, liver or sausages, vegetables. Rice and macaroni are seldom served. Then does an apple tart, or hot milk pudding. Sunday dinner is a special occasion, it is a joint of beef or lamb with vegetables. Then goes a large heavy pudding with custard. From 4 to 6 there is a very light meal called 5 o’clock tea. It is a snack of thin bread and butter and cups of tea with small cakes. This became a kind ritual. At this time everything stops for tea.

Dinner (usually at 6 p.m.) is much like lunch and is in many families the last meal of the day. Supper is a snack of bread and cheese and cocoa.

The English have a popular speciality known as fish and chips. They are bought at special fish and chips shops.

HOLIDAYS IN GREAT BRITAIN

Every country and every nation has own traditions and customs. It’s very important to know traditions and customs of other countries. It helps to know more about the history and line of different nations.

English are proud of their traditions and carefully keep them up as I know all English people celebrate Christmas on the 25th of December. It’s the season of good will. It’s the most beautiful time of the year - the time of love, joy and hopes. Christmas Day is a family holiday. All the people look forward to it, expecting something special. It is the time when all the family gets together round the Christmas tree decorated with toys and sweets. Little children believe that when they are asleep Santa Claus comes with a big bag of toys. They often hang up large stockings for the presents. All families have Christmas dinners. They eat traditional dishes - turkey, duck, pudding. On the New Year’s Day they watch the old year out and the new year in.

There are some traditions on New Year’s Day. One of them is the old First Footing. The first man to come into the house is very important. The Englishmen believe that he brings luck. This man (not a woman) must be healthy, young, pretty-looking. He brings presents - bread, a piece of coal or a coin. Another best-loved holiday is St.Valentine’s Day on the 14th of February - the holiday of love and affection, the day of sending «valentines» and giving presents to those you love «Be My Valentine» - Englishmen with these word ask to become friends or companion Valentines often are decorated with symbols of love - red hearts and roses, ribbons and laces . In England tradition of celebrating Easter is deep-rooted in the history of the nation . Easter is a church holiday . There is a popular belief that wearing 3 new things on Easter will bring good luck.

Traditionally Easter parades of people in bright new spring clothes are held on this day. Another custom is decorating eggs for children. Eggs are hidden in the yards little children believe that the Easter rabbit comes and leaves eggs for them. Easter candies are maid in the form of eggs, little chickens and rabbits. Halloween is the day or evening before all Saent’s Day. Children dress up in Halloween costumes and masks over their faces. They go out into the streets to beg. People give them sweets, cookies and apples. A favourite Halloween custom is to make a jack-o’-lantern (the children scrape our a pumpkin and cut the eyes, nose and mouth). They light a candle inside the pumpkin to scare their friends. A few words about superstitions in Britain. The people believe that if they put shoes on the table, they will have bad luck. The English won’t kill a spider, especially money spiders (small red ones). This is very unlucky Some animals are also lucky (black cats brihg good luck, white horses are also lucky. The most unlucky thing is to break a mirror. This brings 7 years of bad luck. The number 13 is the most unlucky number especially Combination Friday, the 13th.

According to the Act of Parliament of 1871 there are 4 bank holidays Easter Monday, whit-Monday, Des 26th - Boxing Day. Obher pablic holiday are Good Friday, May Day, Also there is a Pancake Day, April’s Fool Day, Mother’s Day.