

# THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Official name	<b>United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</b>
Population	<b>over 60 million</b>
Total area	<b>244,820 sq km</b>
Capital	<b>London</b>
Form of government	<b>Constitutional monarchy</b>
Head of state	<b>Sovereign</b>
Head of government	<b>Prime Minister</b>
Official language	<b>English</b>
Date of independence	<b>October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1066</b>
Monetary unit	<b>Pound sterling</b>
National anthem	<b>God Save The Queen</b>

**The United Kingdom** consists of four countries: **England, Scotland, Wales** and **Northern Ireland**. **The British Isles** is the geographic term for the group of islands that also includes the Republic of Ireland.

The area of the United Kingdom is around 245,000 square kilometres. The capital is **London**, situated on the River Thames in the south-eastern part of England.

The names United Kingdom, Great Britain, and England are often confused, even by United Kingdom inhabitants. Great Britain consists of England, Wales, and Scotland, while the United Kingdom also includes Northern Ireland.

The political system of the United Kingdom has provided stability since the 19th century. It is a unitary system centred on London, with some responsibilities devolved to local governments. The United Kingdom is a parliamentary democracy dominated by the monarchy. Although almost all responsibility is deferred to the government and both Houses of Parliament, the monarch and the royal family symbolize unit and power. In Parliament the House of Lords still consists mainly of hereditary or appointed peers, while members of the House of Commons are elected.

The United Kingdom is a part of the European Union and a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

# GEOGRAPHY



The United Kingdom consists of two large **islands** and about 5,000 smaller ones. To the southwest of England there are the **Isles of Scilly**, and to the south there is the **Isle of Wight**. The **Orkney and Shetland Islands** lie to the north of Scotland, and the **Hebrides** lie to the west. Off north-western Wales are the island of **Anglesey** and the **Isle of Man**. The neighbours of the United Kingdom are the Irish Republic to west and France to southeast.

The only land border is between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic because the United Kingdom is surrounded by sea. To the south of **England**, and between the United Kingdom and France, are the **English Channel** and the **Strait of Dover**. The **North Sea** lies to the east. To the west of Wales and northern England is the **Irish Sea**, while western Scotland and the north-western coast of Northern Ireland face the **Atlantic Ocean**. The coast is heavily indented, especially on west.

The land area of the United Kingdom is divided between lowlands and uplands. England is mostly rolling land. It has three **mountainous regions** in the north, west, and southwest and two **lowland regions** in the southeast

and east. The northern mountain region includes the north-south **Pennine Range**, which peaks at Cross Fell (893m). This mountain range is also called "the Backbone of England". The **Cheviot Hills** are on the border between England and Scotland. England's highest point, Scafell Pike (978m), is in the **Cumbrian Mountains** of the Lake District. The **Cornish Heights** can be found in southwest England. The countryside connecting these five regions is composed mainly of rich agricultural plains. The principal **rivers** in England are the **Thames** (336 km) and the **Severn** (354 km).

**Scotland** has three distinct areas: the **Northern Highlands**, with **Ben Nevis** (1,343 m), the highest mountain in the United Kingdom, then the **Central Lowlands** and the **Southern Uplands**. The main rivers in Scotland are the **Clyde**, **Spey**, and **Tweed**. There are many lakes in Scotland - they are called "lochs", e.g. **Loch Lomond**, **Loch Ness**, etc.

Most of **Wales** is occupied by the **Cambrian Mountains**, and much of the land is suitable only for pasture. The highest point of Wales is found in **Snowdonia**. The important rivers are the **Dee**, **Tywi**, and **Teifi**.

**Northern Ireland** consists mainly of low flats and hills. The largest freshwater lake of the United Kingdom is **Lough Neagh**, situated in the centre of Northern Ireland. The main rivers are the **Bann**, **Erne**, and **Foyle**.

# CLIMATE

The climate of the United Kingdom is **temperate**, warmed by the North Atlantic Current and by southwest winds. Average temperatures range from 4°C to 6°C in winter in the north and from 12°C to 17°C in summer in the south. Forests cover less than one tenth of the total area of the United Kingdom and are concentrated chiefly in north-eastern Scotland and south-eastern England. The most common trees are oak, elm, beech, pine, and birch. Fauna include red deer, fox, otter, squirrel, and rabbit.

# POPULATION

People have settled in the British Isles from many parts of the world and for various reasons: some of them want to avoid political or religious persecution; others look for a better life. The **Irish** have long made their homes in Britain, as have **Jews**. They arrived toward the end of the 19th century and in the 1930s. After 1945 large numbers of other European refugees settled in the country. The large communities from certain parts of India or Asia arrived in the 1950s and 1960s. There are also large groups of **Americans**, **Australians**, and **Chinese**, as well as various other Europeans, such as **Greeks**, **Russians**, **Poles**, **Serbs**, **Estonians**, **Latvians**, **Armenians**, **Turkish**, **Cypriots**, **Italians**, and **Spaniards**. Since the early 1970s, immigrants from **Latin America**, **Southeast Asia**, and **Sri Lanka** have looked for asylum in Britain.

The United Kingdom has nearly **60 million inhabitants**. The density is one of the highest in the world - 232 people to one square kilometre. About 92.5 per cent inhabitants live in urban areas. The **English** make up the majority of the population (81.5 per cent), **Scots** (9.6 per cent), **Irish** (2.4 per cent), and **Welsh** (1.9 per cent) also make up significant proportions. Life expectancy is 72 years for males and 78 years for females.

# LANGUAGES

**English** is the major language throughout the United Kingdom. There are also minority languages which are of Celtic origin - **Welsh**, **Scottish** and **Irish Gaelic**. These languages are still spoken by some people in Western Wales, in the West Highlands and in the Irish Republic.

**Welsh:** Wales = Cymru [kimru], Good morning = Bore da [bore da], Good night = Nos da [nos da], Thank you = Diolch [diolch].

**Irish Gaelic:** Dublin = Baile Atha Cliath, Good morning = Dia duit [dia uit], Thank you = Go Raibh Maith Agat [ga ra mah agat], Please = Le Do thoil [led hoil].

# RELIGIONS

Almost three-fifths of the population belong to the **Church of England**, **Roman Catholics** constitute one-eighth of the population. There are some **Presbyterians**, **Methodists**, and **Baptists**. The remainders are mostly other **Protestants**, **Muslims**, **Jews**, **Hindus**, and **Sikhs**.

The various Christian denominations in the United Kingdom have arisen from the schisms that divided the church. The greatest of these occurred in England in the 16th century, when Henry VIII rejected the absolute rule of the pope. This break with Rome helped the adoption of some Protestant principles and became the foundation of the Church of England. In the 17th century further schisms divided the Church of England; these were associated with the rise of the Puritan movement, which, with its desire for simpler forms of worship and government, led to a proliferation of nonconformist churches, such as those of the Baptists and the Congregationalists. The **Society of Friends (Quakers)** also originated at that time. The 19th century also saw the introduction of sects from the United States as well as a marked increase in the number of Jews in Britain. The first Jewish community in Britain after their expulsion in 1290 was that established in London during the 17th century, and in the 19th century Jews also settled in many of the large provincial cities. More than half of all British Jews live in London, and the rest are essentially members of urban communities. Jewish congregations in Britain now form the second largest Jewish community in Europe.

# HISTORY

Britain was part of the continent of Europe until about 6,000 BC. The early inhabitants of Britain were **Celts** who settled in Ireland 2,500 to 3,000 years ago.

Julius Caesar invaded Britain in 55 and 54 BC but the island was not subdued by Rome until the 1st century AD. England was added to the Roman Empire in 43 AD. The **Romans** built camps, forts and roads throughout the land and also Hadrian's Wall as the protection against the invasion of the Celtic tribes from the north. The Roman towns and forts were connected by the network of roads which was used by the British for many centuries. The names of Roman towns in Britain often end with "-chester" or "-caster" or "-cestre" (in Latin meaning "an army camp"). Trade flourished and the Christianity was brought to Britain.

After the withdrawal of Roman legions in **410** the waves of **Nordic tribes of the Jutes, the Angles and the Saxons** invaded Britain and forced many Celtic inhabitants into Cornwall, Wales and Scotland ("Welsh" means "foreign"). The Nordic tribes fought with the **Vikings** and the **Danes** from the 8th to the 11th centuries. In the late 9th century **Alfred the Great** (reigned 871-899), ruler of Wessex, repelled a Danish invasion, which helped bring about the unification of England under Athelstan (924-939). About that time, the **Scots** won dominance in Scotland, and Malcolm (1005-34) completed the unification of Scotland. In the 11th century the **Danish King Canute** made Britain part of his Scandinavian Empire. The names of Saxon towns often end with "-ing", "-ham", and "-ton".

The last successful invasion was by **French speaking Normans** led by **William, the Duke of Normandy**, who became **William the Conqueror** after defeating the Saxon King **Harold** in the **Battle of Hastings** in **1066**. He became the King of England (1066-1087). William the Conqueror and other Norman kings established a strong central government and state. Norman noblemen were appointed to high positions. In this period the French language of the Norman rulers merged with the Anglo-Saxon of the common people to form the English language. From the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Scotland came under the influence of the English throne.



**Henry II** (reigned 1154-1189) fought Ireland in the late 12th century. His son **Richard I** (the Lion heart, 1189-1199) and **John** (1199-1216) had conflicts with the clergy and nobles, and John was forced to a compromise in the **Magna Carta** (1215). The result was the establishment of the constitutional principle that the king must rule according to law. During the 13th century, the parliamentary system slowly developed.

During the reign of **Edward I** (1272-1307), the first Parliament was convened. Edward conquered Wales and made it a principality of England (1284). He also attempted to dominate the affairs of Scotland. In 1314 **Robert the Bruce** won independence for Scotland by defeating the English forces at Bannockburn, and in 1328 English monarchs recognized the independence of Scotland. The **House of Stewart** (Stuart after 1603) ascended to the Scottish throne in 1371 with the coronation of Robert II.

English dynastic claims to large parts of France led to the **Hundred Years' War** (1338-1453) and the defeat of England. A long civil war, the **War of Roses**, between the **House of Lancaster** (whose emblem was a white rose) and the **House of York** (whose emblem was a red rose), lasted 1455-1485 and ended with the establishment of the powerful Tudor House.

The **Tudors** became the ruling family of England following the War of Roses. The first Tudor king was Henry VII. **Religious independence** from Rome was secured when the **Church of England and Wales** was separated from the authority of the Pope in 1534 by King **Henry VIII**. This church was fused with England. Under **Queen Elizabeth I** (1558-1603) Britain became a major sea power, leading to the founding of colonies in the new world and the expansion of trade with Europe and the Orient. In 1588 England defeated the Spanish Armada and this, together with the explorations carried out by Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh, helped establish British supremacy on the seas.

Scotland was united with England when James VI of Scotland was crowned **James I** of England in **1603**. Elizabeth I had no children so her closest relative James VI of Scotland, the son of Elizabeth's old rival, Mary Queen of Scots, became King James I of England and the **Stuart dynasty** began. For the next 100 years England and Scotland remained separated but were ruled by one monarch - it was a personal union of the two kingdoms. A struggle between Parliament and the Stuart kings led to a bloody **Civil War (1642-1649)**. The country was divided between the supporters of **Charles I**, who wanted to rule absolutely (Royalists) and the supporters of Parliament, who wanted to limit the King's powers (Parliamentarians). Finally **Oliver Cromwell**, the Puritan Army leader, established a **republic** and King Charles I was beheaded. After eleven years of Puritan rule under Oliver Cromwell and his

son (1649-1660), the monarchy was restored with **Charles II**, but the "**Glorious Revolution**" in 1688 confirmed the sovereignty of Parliament.

The **Act of Union in 1707** united Scotland and England and formed the kingdom of Great Britain. The **Hanoverians** ascended to the English throne in 1714, when George Louis, elector of Hanover, became **George I** of Great Britain. During the reign of **George III**, 13 Great Britain's American colonies won independence in 1783. This was followed by a period of war with revolutionary France and later the empire of Napoleon Bonaparte (1789-1815). Britain's role in the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 strengthened its position as the leading world power. In **1801** legislation united Great Britain with Ireland to create **the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland**.

In the late 18th century **the Industrial Revolution** found its birthplace in Britain, and it remained the world's foremost economic power until the late 19th century. The greatest British technological innovations are e.g. James Watts' steam engine - 1769, a steam locomotive developed in 1814 by George Stephenson, first public railway in 1825, a loom in textile industry from 1767.

During the reign of **Queen Victoria** (1837-1901), Britain's colonial expansion reached its zenith, though the older dominions, such as Canada and Australia, were gradually granted independence (1867 and 1901). Large parts of Asia and Africa were added to the United Kingdom in this period. The growth of parliamentary government during the 19th century was enhanced by the leadership of prime ministers such as Sir Robert Peel, Benjamin Disraeli, and William Gladstone. The extension of franchise in 1832 and 1867, the formation of trade unions, the development of universal public education were among the social changes which came with industrialization and urbanization in the 19th century.

The United Kingdom entered **World War I** allied with France and Russia in 1914. Britain suffered huge casualties and economic losses. Following the war, revolutionary disorder erupted in Ireland, and in **1921 the Irish Free State** was granted dominion status. The six counties of Ulster remained in the United Kingdom as Northern Ireland. Independence movement became active also in India and other colonies.

The United Kingdom entered **World War II** in 1939 and battled German and Japanese forces in Europe, Africa, and Asia. The country suffered major bombing damage. **Winston Churchill**, with his famous V-victory sign, offered the nation: "*Nothing but blood, toil, tears and sweat.*" Following the war the Irish Free State became **the Irish Republic** and left the Commonwealth. India also gained independence from the United Kingdom after the war. Throughout the post-war period and into the 1970s, the United Kingdom continued to grant independence to its overseas colonies and dependencies. The status of Northern Ireland became controversial as British troops were brought in to maintain order from the 1970s on. Violence and terrorist acts increased between Roman Catholics seeking union with the Republic of Ireland and Protestants wishing to remain part of the United Kingdom.

Domestically, during the 20th century, the United Kingdom underwent a quiet revolution with the advent of the Labour Party and the creation of a welfare state. The first Labour ministry was established in 1924 under Ramsay MacDonald, and in the 1945 elections, the party, espousing a socialism platform, won an overwhelming majority in Parliament and started a nationalization programme. The state bought out the shareholders of the Bank of England, the coal social insurance plan and also set up a National Health Service to provide free medical care. Subsequent Conservative governments denationalized such sectors as iron and steel and trucking, but the basic welfare state remained. In 1973 the United Kingdom joined the European Economic Community.



# GOVERNMENT TYPE AND ADMINISTRATION



Great Britain is a **constitutional monarchy** with the King or the Queen as the head of state. Britain is divided into four parts: **England** (London capital), **Wales** (Cardiff), **Scotland** (Edinburgh) and **Northern Ireland** (Belfast).

Wales was politically linked in 1536. The English and Scottish crowns were united in 1603 and their parliaments in 1707. Ireland became the part of this union in 1801 but in 1921 the most of Ireland (Roman Catholic) became a separate state. Now it is the Irish Republic (Dublin capital). The problems between majority Protestant and minority Roman Catholic people are one of the causes of lasting civil disturbances in Northern Ireland. Terrorism and fights between the troops of British and IRA (Irish Republican Army) Armies continue and Northern Ireland is the region of political and social unrest.

Locally Britain is divided into **counties**. The capital of the whole Britain is London. Other big cities according to population are Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Sheffield, Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh, Bradford and Bristol.

## BRITISH POLITICAL SYSTEM

### THE HEAD OF STATE AND THE CONSTITUTION

The United Kingdom is a **constitutional monarchy** and a **parliamentary democracy**. Its constitution is partly unwritten and is flexible. It is also based on customs and traditions. The constitution's basic sources are legislative acts of Parliament and decisions made by courts of law. The head of state is a reigning monarch. But he/she can act only on the advice of his/her ministers. At present, the head of the United Kingdom is **Queen Elizabeth II**. She was born on April 21st 1926, but the official birthday celebration takes place during June. She got married on November 20<sup>th</sup> 1947 and ascended to the throne on February 6th 1952. The coronation took place on June 2nd 1953.

### PARLIAMENT

The Parliament is **the supreme law-making** body in the country. It consists of **the monarch**, **the House of Commons** and **the House of Lords**. British parliamentary system is one of the oldest in the world, it developed slowly during 13th century after King John's signature of **Magna Carta** in 1215.

**The House of Commons** has 651 elected and paid Members of Parliament (MPs) - 524 from England, 72 from Scotland, 38 from Wales and 17 from Northern Ireland. They are elected for 5 years but the Prime Minister can call general elections at any time. **The House of Lords** is made up of the hereditary and appointed peers (Lords Temporal), 2 archbishops and 24 bishops of the Church of England (Lords Spiritual). The major part of Parliament's work is revising the Government's work. On the first day when the Parliament session is opened the Queen reads a speech that outlines the Government's policy. This opening ceremony takes place in the House of Lords. From Monday to Thursday all ministers must answer MPs' questions for one hour (questioning time). Two days a week the Prime Minister must answer MPs' questions. Another important parliamentary task is law-making. A proposal of a new law - a bill - must pass through both Houses and then is sent to the Queen for Royal Assent. The royal right of veto has not been exercised since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the legislative

power of the House of Lords was reduced in 1911. The main function of the House of Lords is to revise legislation but it has just the right to delay legislation.

## ELECTIONS

The right to vote is given to all citizens at the age of 18. Citizens vote in parliamentary and local elections and also in elections to the European Parliament. Each member of the House of Commons represents one parliamentary constituency. Registration of electors is compulsory but voting itself isn't. Candidates for election to Parliament or a council are normally chosen by the local parties. The House of Commons is elected for a maximum term of five years, reduced in 1911 from seven. At any time during these five years, the Prime Minister has the right to request the monarch to dissolve Parliament and call a general election.

## GOVERNMENT

The Government is **the supreme executive power** and is formed by the party which has the majority in the House of Commons. The Queen appoints its leader as the **Prime Minister**. The Prime Minister appoints his/her **Cabinet** (a group of main ministers) and also about 25 ministers outside the cabinet, as well as 50 junior ministers. The Cabinet takes decisions on major policy, plans and lays before Parliament all important bills. The second largest party forms the official **Opposition** with its leader and a "shadow cabinet"- an alternative government, ready to take office at any time. The leader of the Opposition is paid an official salary.

## POLITICAL PARTIES

A two-party system has existed in the United Kingdom since the late 17th century. From the mid-1920s the dominant groupings have been the **Conservative Party** and the **Labour Party**, despite the existence of smaller parties such as the Liberal Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party.

# NATIONAL SYMBOLS

British national flag is sometimes called "**Union Jack**". It symbolizes the Union of England, Scotland, and Ireland. It dates back from 1801. The origin of the name is uncertain. "Jack" was first used in the British Navy as the name of the flag at the main masthead. Each country has its cross in the flag:

- England** has **St. George Cross** (white oblong and red cross)
- Scotland** has **St. Andrew Cross** (blue with white diagonal)
- Ireland** has **St. Patrick Cross** (white with the red diagonal).



Each part has also its own symbol: England has the red rose, Wales has the leek and the daffodil, Scotland has the thistle and Ireland has the shamrock. National **anthem** is "**God Save The Queen!**":

God save our gracious Queen  
Long live our noble Queen!  
Send her victorious,  
Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us,  
God save the Queen!

# ECONOMY

The United Kingdom belongs among the top industrial countries. It is economically connected with the Commonwealth countries. It is also a member of G-7.

The range of **mineral resources** in the United Kingdom is limited. Metals of great importance are **tin** and **zinc**. Other adequate supplies of non-metallic minerals are **sand** and **gravel, limestone, dolomite, chalk, slate, barite, talc, clay, kaolin** and **gypsum**. Sand, gravel, and limestone are used in construction. The United Kingdom has larger **energy resources** than any other European country, including **oil, natural gas, and coal**. Power stations are the major customers for coal.

The **agricultural system** is very well developed. The main products are **oats, hay, wheat, barley, sugar beet, fruit and vegetables**. **Cattle, sheep, pigs** and **poultry** are the most important farm animals in the United Kingdom.

The country's role as a **major world financial centre** and its discovery of natural gas in 1965 and oil in 1969 in the North Sea and their commercial exploitation reduced the dependence on more traditional sources of energy and were major influences on the health of the internal economy and on national economic policies.

Because of the limitations of its natural resources, The United Kingdom has been forced to export more. **Products** that the country sells abroad are **machinery, automobiles** and other **transport equipment, computers, aerospace equipment, electrical and electronics goods, and oil**. **The main industries are steel, metals, vehicles, shipbuilding, shipping, banking, insurance, textiles, chemicals, electronics, aircraft, machinery, distilling.**

In the 1980s the United Kingdom accelerated privatization of publicly owned corporations. The general improvement of the British economy has also meant better standard of living. Unemployment and inflation rates were gradually reduced but remained high.

The highest proportions of employees (more than two-thirds) are in the service sectors, with financial services and distribution the largest. Manufacturing, although it has declined, employs more than one-fifth of all workers. Smaller numbers are in construction, energy, agriculture, forestry, and fishing. The number of part-time workers has increased considerably.

# TRANSPORT

The United Kingdom, which is quite small but of a high population density, has changed. Nearly two-thirds of all households have one car, and some have two or more. The decline in the use of local buses has caused the importance to maintain and develop **road networks**. **Intercity rail services** have been improved. Also **air traffic** has grown, particularly international flights. Seven airports (Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Prestwick, and Aberdeen) are owned and managed by the British Airports Authority, and together they handle about three-quarters of the passenger air traffic in the country. The majority of overseas trade is transferred by sea. Oil and natural gas, which each share a national bulk distribution pipeline system, are independent of the road and rail networks.

One of the oldest means of transportation is the **underground** system.

# INTERESTING PLACES

## ENGLAND

Besides London, which is in the centre of each tourist's attention, there are many other fascinating places:

**Oxford** and **Cambridge** are the old university towns.

**Stratford-upon-Avon** is the birthplace of William Shakespeare and the place where his plays are performed at the Shakespeare Memorial (or Swan) Theatre.

The English countryside is full of peaceful harbour-towns with fishing boats, yachts, cottages and the English like to spend their holidays there. Resorts such as **Brighton**, **Bournemouth**, **Portsmouth**, **Blackpool**, **Sunderland** or **Scarborough** have fine sandy beaches and a nice atmosphere.

Southern part of England is full of historical monuments and romantic sceneries. **Canterbury** is an ancient city with a majestic cathedral. The other old cathedral town is **Winchester** - once it was the capital of England.

**Salisbury** is in Salisbury Plain where we can see a beautiful historic monument of **Stonehenge** with its giant stone circles which are more than 3,000 years old. The purpose of this construction is unknown - probably religious and astronomical reasons.



**The West Country** has its own character, different from the North and the South. The country is still unspoiled by industry. The only larger towns here are **Bristol**, **Plymouth**, **Bath** and **Exeter**. Plymouth has a proud maritime heritage. From this place in 1588 Sir Francis Drake set out to beat the Spanish Armada and in 1620 a group of 102 Puritans who wanted to escape from religious persecution sailed from here in a ship called the Mayflower to settle the American continent. Bath is worth seeing for the remains of its Roman bath built 2,000 years ago. Exeter is the starting point for **Dartmoor** - the moorland. It is the country of many national parks (**Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks**).

Going north we can go through **Birmingham** which is at the geographical heart of England and is the second largest city in Britain. We can see interesting Victorian architecture here and a network of canals which is the evidence of rich industrial heritage. Northwest is mainly an industrial area. In the past these are the places where the industrial revolution mainly developed - especially textile and coal-mining industries. It is sometimes called the "**Black Country**". In **Manchester** we can visit The Museum of Science and Industry, The Air and Space Museum. The other big cities here are **Liverpool**, **Leeds**, **Sheffield** and **York** with a beautiful cathedral.

**Northern England - Cumbria and Northumbria** - is the country of beautiful nature, many national parks and cultural traditions, e.g. in the city of **Durham** we can find a massive 11th century castle and a beautiful cathedral, both situated on cliffs high above the river Wear. **The Lake District National Park** with beautiful **Windermere Lake** is the region where romantic poets Coleridge and Wordsworth wrote their poetry. Now this area is popular with mountaineers, painters and tourists. The lakes are good for water sports (sailing, canoeing, windsurfing). The other national parks here are e.g. **Northumberland Park** and **Yorkshire Dales National Park**.

## WALES

Saxon invaders attacked Wales and this English conquest of Wales was completed in 1282 by the English King Edward I. He started the tradition of giving the title "Prince of Wales" to the oldest son of the English King.

Wales is sometimes called the land of castles. Among the best known are **Caernarfon**, where Prince Charles was invested as Prince of Wales in 1969, **Conwy** and **Harlech** which stand on rocky cliffs overlooking the mountains of **Snowdonia National Park**.

The land is full of mystery and beauty. There are snow-capped mountains, green valleys, sea resorts, big cities and little seaside towns. **Cardiff**, **Newport** and **Swansea** are the biggest cities here.

## SCOTLAND

Scotland is a historically and culturally separate country from England. It has its own legal and educational systems and currency (the value is the same but banknotes have different design).

Scotland is the country of many **special traditions** which cannot be found elsewhere in the world - playing the bagpipes, quality tweeds, woollen knitwear, wearing kilts made of tartan, Scotch whisky (it derives its name from the Gaelic word "uisge beatha" meaning "the water of life").

The biggest city is **Glasgow**, an old Victorian town, the cultural centre and the heart of the arts in Scotland (festivals the Mayfest and the International Jazz Festival). The city has also some of the finest museums and galleries in Europe.

**Edinburgh** is dominated by its imposing 12th century castle - Holyroodhouse. Through the heart of the city the cobbled Royal Mile runs. The city is full of attractive squares, tree-lined avenues and elegant shopping centres like Princess Street.

**The North** of the country is a large and magnificent lake and mountain area. The biggest lake is Loch Lomond (lakes are called lochs in Scotland) and Loch Ness is famous for its "Loch Ness Monster".

