

## UNITED KINGDOM

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**Abstract:** United Kingdom, island country located off the northwestern coast of mainland Europe. The United Kingdom comprises the whole of the island of Great Britain—which contains England, Wales, and Scotland—as well as the northern portion of the island of Ireland. The name Britain is sometimes used to refer to the United Kingdom as a whole. The capital is London, which is among the world's leading commercial, financial, and cultural centres. Other major cities include Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester in England, Belfast and Londonderry in Northern Ireland, Edinburgh and Glasgow in Scotland, and Swansea and Cardiff in Wales.

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Since 1922, the United Kingdom comprises four constituent countries: England, Scotland, and Wales (which collectively make up Great Britain), as well as Northern Ireland (variously described as a country, province, jurisdiction or region). The UK Prime Minister's website has used the phrase “countries within a country” to describe the United Kingdom. Some statistical summaries, such as those for the twelve NUTS 1 regions of the UK, refer to Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales as “regions”. With regard to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales particularly, the descriptive name one uses “can be controversial, with the choice often revealing one's political preferences”.

Although the United Kingdom is a unitary sovereign country, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales have gained a degree of autonomy through the process of devolution. The United Kingdom Parliament and British Government deal with all reserved matters for Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, but not in general matters that have been devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly, Scottish Parliament, and the Welsh Senedd. Additionally, devolution in Northern Ireland is conditional on co-operation between the Northern Ireland Executive and the Government of Ireland (see North/South Ministerial Council) and the British Government consults with the Government of Ireland to reach agreement on some non-devolved matters for Northern Ireland (see British–Irish Intergovernmental

Conference). England, comprising the majority of the population and area of the United Kingdom, remains fully the responsibility of the United Kingdom Parliament centralised in London.

### Capital

London is the capital city of England and the United Kingdom. It is the most populous city in the United Kingdom, with a metropolitan area of over 13 million inhabitants. Standing on the River Thames, London has been a major settlement for two millennia, its history going back to its founding by the Romans, who named it Londinium. London's ancient core, the City of London, largely retains its 1.12-square-mile (2.9 km<sup>2</sup>) mediaeval boundaries and in 2011 had a resident population of 7,375, making it the smallest city in England. Since at least the 19th century, the term London has also referred to the metropolis developed around this core. The bulk of this conurbation forms the Greater London administrative area (coterminous with the London region), governed by the Mayor of London and the London Assembly.

London is a leading global city, with strengths in the arts, commerce, education, entertainment, fashion, finance, healthcare, media, professional services, research and development, tourism, and transport all contributing to its preeminence. It is one of the world's leading financial centres and has the fifth-or sixth-largest metropolitan area GDP in the world depending on measurement. London is a world cultural capital. It is the world's most-visited city as measured by international arrivals and has the world's largest city airport system measured by passenger traffic. London's 43 universities form the largest concentration of higher education institutes in Europe. In 2012, London became the first city to host the modern Summer Olympic Games three times.

### Flag

The design of the Union Jack dates back to the Act of Union 1801, which united the Kingdom of Great Britain and the Kingdom of Ireland (previously in personal union) to create the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The flag consists of the red cross of Saint George (patron saint of England, which also represents Wales), edged in white, superimposed on the saltire of St Patrick (patron saint of Ireland), also edged in white, which are superimposed on the saltire of Saint Andrew (patron saint of Scotland). Wales is not represented in the Union Flag by Wales's patron saint, Saint David, because the flag was designed whilst Wales was part of the Kingdom of England.

The flag proportions on land and the war flag used by the British Army have the proportions 3:5. The flag's height-to-length proportions at sea are 1:2.

The earlier flag of Great Britain was established in 1606 by a proclamation of King James VI and I of Scotland and England. The new flag of the United Kingdom was officially created by an Order in Council of 1801, with its blazon reading as follows:

The Union Flag shall be azure, the Crosses saltire of Saint Andrew and Saint Patrick quarterly per saltire, counter-changed, argent and gules, the latter fimbriated of the second, surmounted by the Cross of Saint George of the third fimbriated as the saltire.

No official standardised colours were specified, although the Flag Institute defines the red and royal blue colours as Pantone 186 C and Pantone 280 C, respectively.

#### Constitution

The constitution of the United Kingdom is the set of laws and principles under which the United Kingdom is governed.

The UK has no single constitutional document comparable to the Constitution of the United States. It is therefore often said that the country has an “unwritten” or de facto constitution. However, the majority of the British constitution does exist in the written form of statutes, court judgments and European treaties. The constitution has other unwritten sources, including parliamentary constitutional conventions (more than most countries except New Zealand and Israel) and the royal prerogatives.

The bedrock of the British constitution has traditionally been the doctrine of Parliamentary sovereignty, according to which the statutes passed by Parliament are the UK’s supreme and final source of law. It follows that Parliament can change the constitution simply by passing new Acts of Parliament. However, the UK’s membership of the European Union has arguably complicated this principle. The European Communities Act 1972 means the UK applies all EU law (and disapplies any provisions of its own which conflict) that it passes in common with other member states.

Changing attitudes may also be seen among the judiciary: for example, the judgments of the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords in the Jackson litigation arising out of the Hunting Act 2004 indicate that senior judges may no longer necessarily be prepared to view Acts of Parliament as sacrosanct. The former Lord Chief Justice, Lord Woolf, has made comments to the same effect outside the courtroom.

#### British National Day

British National Day is a proposed official national day for the United Kingdom and a celebration of Britishness. Currently the UK has no single official national day, although the King’s Official Birthday is used for this purpose in some contexts.

Britain has no unique national day. It has a number of days of celebration which go largely uncelebrated, and others which are associated with the constituent countries of the United Kingdom. The latter category includes St George’s Day in England, St



Andrew's Day in Scotland, St David's Day in Wales and St Patrick's Day in Northern Ireland.

At present, the King's Official Birthday is marked as a de facto national day by British diplomatic missions overseas but not in the UK itself.

#### 5 interesting facts about UK

##### 1. We do love to be beside the seaside

The UK's coasts are famous around the world, from stunning winding walks and clifftop landscapes to golden sandy beaches. Indeed, England alone boasts more than 70 beaches with the coveted 'blue flag' status, the global gold standard of beaches. While the weather in the UK isn't always great, if you do find a sunny day you'll never be far from a great day out – nowhere in England is more than 113 kilometers from the sea.

##### 2. The English might have invented champagne

The United Kingdom is probably better known for its beer than its wine. But while champagne itself comes from the famous French region of the same name, the well-known Dom Pierre Perignon might not have been the inventor of this bubbly beverage. In fact, thirty years earlier, the English scientist Christopher Merret documented how winemakers in the country were adding sugar to their wines to make them fizz. So, no, the English didn't invent champagne, but they do have a surprisingly long history of making sparkling wine.

##### 3. London's transport system is huge

London's transportation system is one of the oldest in the world – and also one of the largest. Impress your friends with these facts and stats about the United Kingdom's largest transport network: the 272 functioning stations of the London Underground boast over 450 escalators (the longest is at Angel in north London), but there are another 40 stations that aren't even used anymore. That's before we even mention the 9,300 famous red buses and their 19,000 bus stops

##### 4. One Welsh town has the longest name in Europe

Road signs in Wales tend to be written in both Welsh and English, but some of the more complicated spellings might still flummox you when you're in Wales. Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllllandysiliogogoch is one of the longest town names in the world – but don't worry – most people choose to shorten it to the more manageable Llanfairpwll.

##### 5. Stonehenge is older than the Pyramids

We often think of the Pyramids of Giza as being one of the oldest monuments in the world. And it is, but there are even older constructions in the UK. Located in the southwest of England and one of the UK's most famous tourist attractions, Stonehenge was believed to be created in around 3000 BCE, meaning it's older than Egypt's pyramids

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