

GEOGRAPHY OF GREAT BRITAIN

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Annotation: Great Britain is an island in the North Atlantic Ocean off the north-west coast of continental Europe. With an area of 209,331 km² (80,823 sq mi), it is the largest of the British Isles, the largest European island and the ninth-largest island in the world. It is dominated by a maritime climate with narrow temperature differences between seasons. The island of Ireland, with an area 40 per cent that of Great Britain, is to the west—these islands, along with over 1,000 smaller surrounding islands and named substantial rocks, form the British Isles archipelago.

Key words: Great Britain, tourism, world, environment, travelers.

History

Great Britain was probably first inhabited by those who crossed on the land bridge from the European mainland. Human footprints have been found from over 800,000 years ago in Norfolk and traces of early humans have been found (at Boxgrove Quarry, Sussex) from some 500,000 years ago and modern humans from about 30,000 years ago. Until about 16,000 years ago, it was connected to Ireland by only an ice bridge, prior to 9,000 years ago it retained a land connection to the continent, with an area of mostly low marshland joining it to what are now Denmark and the Netherlands. In Cheddar Gorge, near Bristol, the remains of animal species native to mainland Europe such as antelopes, brown bears, and wild horses have been found alongside a human skeleton, 'Cheddar Man', dated to about 7150 BC. Great Britain became an island at the end of the last glacial period when sea levels rose due to the combination of melting glaciers and the subsequent isostatic rebound of the crust. Great Britain's Iron Age inhabitants are known as Britons; they spoke Celtic languages.

Population

The population of the UK in the last recorded census in 2011 was 63 million, of whom 31 million were male and 32 million female. The 2011 census recorded the population of England as 53.0 million, Scotland as 5.3 million, Wales as 3.1 million, and Northern Ireland as 1.8 million. At the last recorded population estimate, it was estimated that the UK population was at a total of 67,081,234 people. There are 13 urban areas that exceed 500,000 inhabitants: they are centred on London, Birmingham,

Glasgow, Leeds and Bradford, Southampton and Portsmouth, Sheffield, Liverpool, Leicester, Manchester, Belfast, Bristol, Newcastle upon Tyne and Nottingham.

Geography

Great Britain lies on the European continental shelf, part of the Eurasian Plate and off the north-west coast of continental Europe, separated from this European mainland by the North Sea and by the English Channel, which narrows to 34 km (18 nmi; 21 mi) at the Straits of Dover. It stretches over about ten degrees of latitude on its longer, north–south axis and covers 209,331 km² (80,823 sq mi), excluding the much smaller surrounding islands. The North Channel, Irish Sea, St George's Channel and Celtic Sea separate the island from the island of Ireland to its west. The island is since 1993 joined, via one structure, with continental Europe: the Channel Tunnel, the longest undersea rail tunnel in the world. The island is marked by low, rolling countryside in the east and south, while hills and mountains predominate in the western and northern regions. It is surrounded by over 1,000 smaller islands and islets. The greatest distance between two points is 968.0 km (601+1/2 mi) (between Land's End, Cornwall and John o' Groats, Caithness), 838 miles (1,349 km) by road.

Language

In the Late Bronze Age, Britain was part of a culture called the Atlantic Bronze Age, held together by maritime trading, which also included Ireland, France, Spain and Portugal. In contrast to the generally accepted view that Celtic originated in the context of the Hallstatt culture, since 2009, John T. Koch and others have proposed that the origins of the Celtic languages are to be sought in Bronze Age Western Europe, especially the Iberian Peninsula. Koch et al.'s proposal has failed to find wide acceptance among experts on the Celtic languages. All the modern Brythonic languages (Breton, Cornish, Welsh) are generally considered to derive from a common ancestral language termed Brittonic, British, Common Brythonic, Old Brythonic or Proto-Brythonic, which is thought to have developed from Proto-Celtic or early Insular Celtic by the 6th century AD. Brythonic languages were probably spoken before the Roman invasion at least in the majority of Great Britain south of the rivers Forth and Clyde, though the Isle of Man later had a Goidelic language, Manx. British English is spoken in the present day across the island, and developed from the Old English brought to the island by Anglo-Saxon settlers from the mid 5th century. Some 1.5 million people speak Scots—which was indigenous language of Scotland and has become closer to English over centuries. An estimated 700,000 people speak Welsh, an official language in Wales. In parts of north west Scotland, Scottish Gaelic remains widely spoken. There are various regional dialects of English, and numerous languages spoken by some immigrant populations.

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