

Great Britain

is in fact the name of the largest island of the British Isles, on which England, Wales and Scotland are situated

How big is the UK?

The UK is among the largest countries in Europe, almost same as Italy. The UK's population is almost 65 million residents.

The United Kingdom

is the official name of the country, which comprises of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Here are some basic facts about the UK...

Where is it situated?

Great Britain is located in the north-west of Europe. It lies on the British Isles - separated from the European mainland. It's surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea and the English Channel, which is between Southern England and Northern France.

What is the capital city?

The capital city of the United Kingdom is London, one of the most populous cities in Europe, with a population of about 8,5 million residents.

London is located in the south-east of England and stands on the river Thames.

It's also the official residence of the British Queen, Elizabeth II.

Do you know any other important cities?

Other populous cities are Birmingham and Leeds. The 4th most populous city is Glasgow, the largest city of Scotland.

Liverpool and Manchester are still quite big cities with almost half a million residents, but the capital cities of Wales (Cardiff), Scotland (Edinburgh) and Northern Ireland (Belfast) are also very important.

Some of the state symbols of the United Kingdom are...

"God Save the Queen"

is the official British national anthem. Its title and lyrics are adapted to the current monarch. If it's a king, they change to "God Save the King"



The Union Jack

is the British national flag, consisting of the red cross of St. George (the patron saint of England), the Cross of St. Patrick (the patron saint of Ireland) and the white cross of St. Andrew (the patron saint of Scotland).

And what about politics and administration?

The Queen

The UK is a constitutional monarchy. The Queen (currently Elizabeth II) is the head of the UK and the other 15 independent Commonwealth countries and resides in Buckingham Palace in London. According to tradition, on some occasions she's called Her Majesty.

Parliament

British Parliament meets in the Palace of Westminster and consists of a Lower House - The House of Commons - and an Upper House - The House of Lords. It's the most powerful legislative body in the UK, so it has the political power to make laws or change the existing ones. The public elects 650 Members of Parliament (members of the House of Commons) every 5 years.

The House of Lords has 783 members who are not elected by public but appointed.

The Government

Her Majesty's Government (cabinet) has executive power, so it controls the daily administration of the country. The head of the government is the Prime Minister (currently David Cameron), who is answerable to both the Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament.

The most important facts about its geography

Most of the England (the southern part of Great Britain) consists of lowlands. Although mountainous terrain covers almost the whole of Scotland, the highest peak in the UK is only 1344 metres high. There are three main rivers: the Thames, which crosses London, the Severn and the Humber..

As the British Isles are naturally separated from the European continent, it's connected with France by the Channel Tunnel, which crosses the English Channel between southern England and northern France.

Can you recommend some exceptional places in the UK?

Tower Bridge, built in the late 19th century, is London's best known bridge over the River Thames. It's located very close to the Tower of London, the famous prison and home of the Crown Jewels of England.



Buckingham Palace in London, situated next to the famous Hyde Park, is the official residence and workplace of the British Queen.



The Laphroaig Distillery is one of the most famous producers of scotch whisky, situated on the island Islay. It is the centre of whisky tourism and lies near the west coast of Scotland.



Westminster Abbey is one of the oldest religious buildings in London. Since the 10th century, it's been a traditional place of coronation of British and English monarchs.



The All England Club is a place in London, where the oldest tennis tournament in the world, Wimbledon, is held every year. It's definitely worthwhile to visit because it's probably the most prestigious tennis event on the planet.



Administrative system

The UK consists of 4 countries - England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

It also has 14 Overseas Territories.

Former British colonies like Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, South Africa and many smaller countries are associated in a political community called the Commonwealth.

Which currently famous Britons do you know?

Celebrities

The United Kingdom has many famous singers, for example Sir Elton John, known for his friendship with princess Diana, or Phil Collins. One of the most famous singers is Paul McCartney, one of two still living former members of the Beatles, a legendary pop music band of the 1960s.

Athletes

One of the most popular celebrities is David Beckham, former Manchester United and Real Madrid football player. In 2013, he was the highest paid football player in the world.

After decades of waiting, Great Britain has again a Wimbledon winner. In 2013, this win was accomplished by Andy Murray - currently No.3 in the world.

The Royal Family Prince William

is the eldest son of lady Diana and Charles, Prince of Wales, and the second in line to succeed his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II., to the British throne.

Queen Elizabeth II



is the 89 year-old current British monarch, mother of Charles, Prince of Wales. Her coronation was in 1953 and soon, in September this year, she will be the head of the United Kingdom for the longest period in the history of the UK.

Lets look back at history...

In British history, there are some special events and people.

The Great Fire of London

was a tragic moment in the history London, which occurred in 1666. It destroyed more than 13 000 houses, almost a hundred churches and even the St. Paul's Cathedral.

The American War of Independence

was a conflict between the United Kingdom and the British colonies in North America. It led to the loss of British power over these colonies and to the formation of the United States of America.

The Battle of Waterloo

in this battle, which was fought in 1815, the United Kingdom along with a coalition of other countries beat the French army and finally ended the Napoleonic Wars.

The Battle of Britain

was an air campaign fought during the Second World War in 1940. The British Royal Air Forces beat the German Air Forces (Luftwaffe) and diverted the German invasion of the British Islands.

The 2012 Summer Olympics

The Summer Olympic Games in 2012 were held in London, which became the first city that has hosted the Olympic Games three times.

Queen Victoria

reigned for 63 years between 1837 and 1901. Her era was marked by the great rise of the British Empire and its expansion to India, Hong Kong and many other territories.

Charles Darwin

was a British scientist who studied at the University of Cambridge. He was most famous for creating and publishing the evolutionary theory of all species.

Admiral Horatio Nelson

was a legendary British naval officer during the Napoleonic wars known for his leadership and tactical skills. In 1805 he notably beat the Spanish and French armies in the famous Battle of Trafalgar.

Winston Churchill



was a prominent member of the British Parliament and the Prime Minister of the UK during the Second World War. He was a symbol of the British peoples struggle and the final victory against Nazi Germany.

John Lennon

was a founding member of the Beatles, a legendary pop music band. He was assassinated in New York in 1980.

Princess (Lady) Diana



was probably the most popular member of the Royal family. She was the wife of Charles, Prince of Wales, son of Queen Elizabeth II. She died in a car crash in Paris in 1997. She was widely known for her great engagement in charity campaigns around the world.



William Shakespeare

was one of the greatest writers and playwrights of all time. He was the author of famous plays like "Hamlet", "Romeo and Juliet" and "Othello". He's often called England's national poet. He lived during the Elizabethan era - the height of English Renaissance - and died in 1616.

Isaac Newton

was a famous scientist and one of the most influential physicists, known for the formulation of the revolutionary laws of motion and gravity.