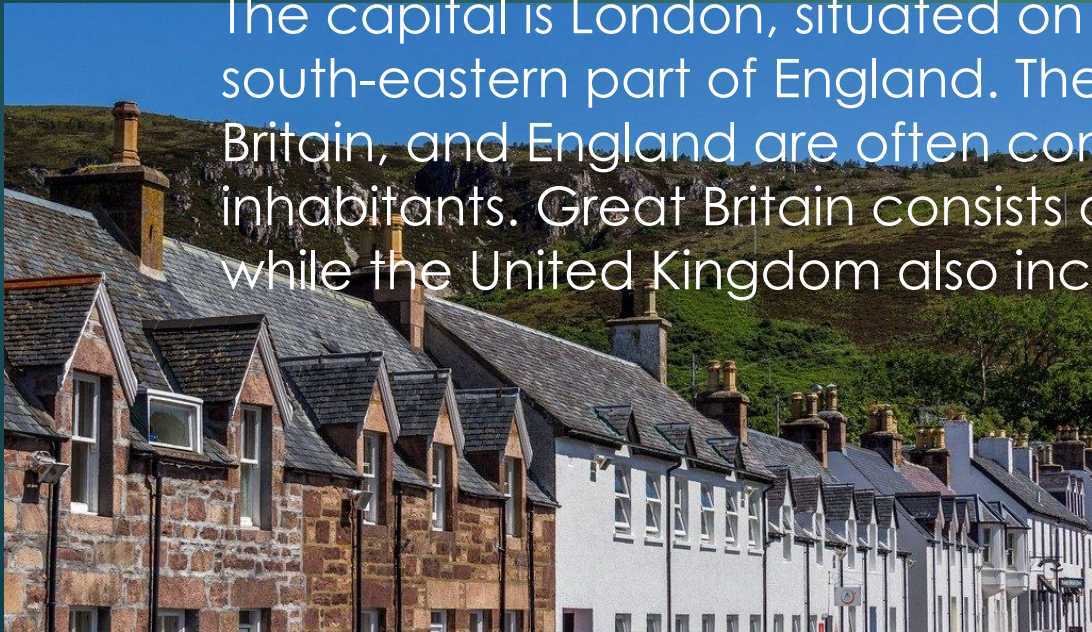


A vibrant, slightly blurred photograph of a busy London street. In the foreground, a red double-decker bus is moving from left to right. To its left, a statue of a man on a horse stands on a stone pedestal. In the background, the Elizabeth Tower (Big Ben) is visible through the trees. The sky is blue with some clouds. The overall scene is a classic representation of London's urban life.

THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

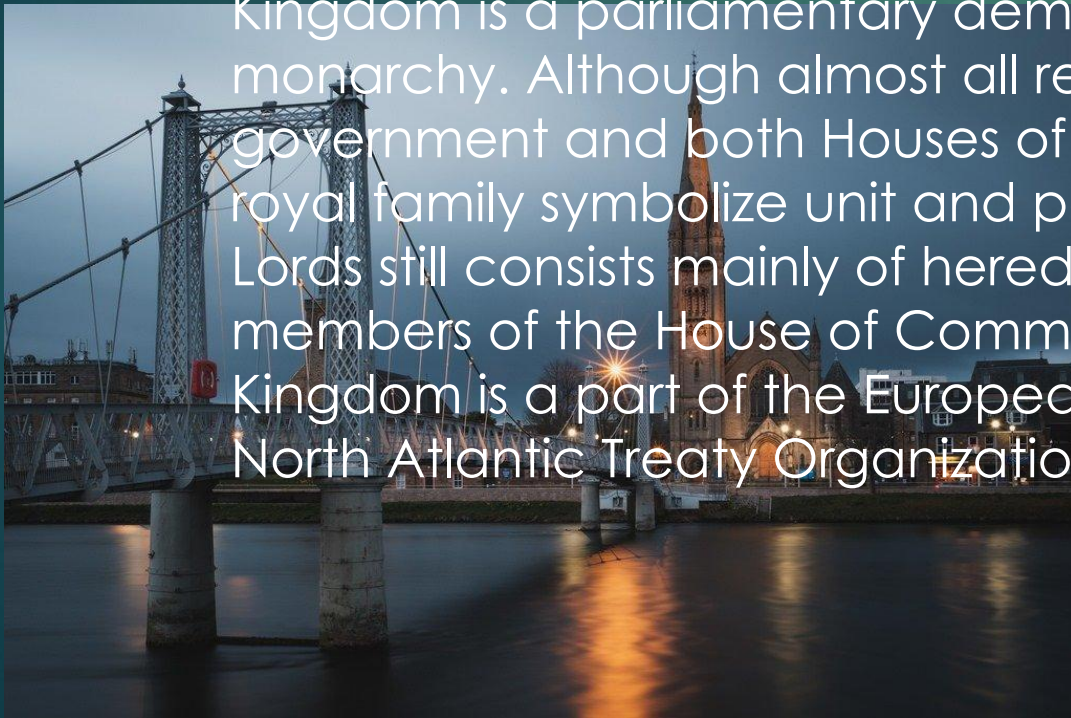


- ▶ The United Kingdom consists of four countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The British Isles is the geographic term for the group of islands that also includes the Republic of Ireland. The area of the United Kingdom is around 245,000 square kilometres. The capital is London, situated 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).



- ▶ 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.



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.

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.

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 is Britain 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

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.