

The UK



The United Kingdom (UK) is a state located on the British Isles in the Atlantic Ocean, northwest of continental Europe. It is part of Europe but separated from France by the English Channel. The UK consists of four countries, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Great Britain is the largest of the British Isles (1,000 km long, 480 km wide). Apart from it, the UK occupies part of the island of Ireland and numerous other small islands. The north and north-west of the country are more mountainous, while the south and east have softer rolling hills and flat lands. The longest river is the River Severn, flowing through Wales and England, followed by the River Thames. The mild climate means that there are no real weather extremes. The UK is a very populated country with over 60 million people. The main language spoken is English, but there are lots of regional dialects (accents) across the country. Gaelic is spoken in some areas of Scotland, and Welsh is the second language spoken in Wales.

The British flag known as the Union Jack represents the three kingdoms of the UK: England and Wales (the red cross of St George), Scotland (the diagonal white cross of St. Andrew) and Northern Ireland (the diagonal red cross of St Patrick). The crosses are on a blue background. The flag in its present form first appeared in 1801.

The UK is a constitutional monarchy and has a parliamentary democracy. The Parliament consists of the elected House of Commons and the un-elected House of Lords. King Charles III, whose coronation is scheduled to take place on May 6, 2023, is head of the constitutional monarchy and the government is responsible to him for its decisions. Charles became king on September 8, 2022, following his mother's, Queen Elizabeth II's death. British monarch is also Head of the Protestant Church of England. The major political parties are the Conservative Party (right wing) and the Labour Party (left wing). The current Prime Minister is Rishi Sunak, leader of the Conservative Party.

London is the capital and the biggest city. Other main cities are Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle, Cardiff, and Liverpool. The UK has a lot of history. One of its oldest monuments is Stonehenge, a circle of stones which is 5,000 years old. The oldest human remains, found in Cheddar Gorge, are 9,000 years old. Other famous places include the Scottish Highlands with Ben Nevis, the UK's highest mountain (1,344 m), and Loch Ness in Scotland, the basalt columns of the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland, the university towns of Oxford and Cambridge, Stratford-upon-Avon, where Shakespeare was born, and of course London.