# The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

### Basic facts

Location: north-western coast of continental Europe

Capitol: London -> 13 mil. ppl

Population: 60,3 mil. Ppl

Political system: Constitutional monarchy / Queen Elizabeth II

Four countries: England (London), Scotland (Edinburgh), Wales (Cardiff), Northern Ireland (Belfast)

Crown dependencies: Jersey, Isle of Man, Guernsey

### History

The islands have been invaded from Scandinavia and the continent. The Romans had a big influence and build many towns including London/Londinium. In 1066 William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, beat English king Harold at Hastings and invaded Britain. As consequence the French influence is still seen today in the English language. The following centuries were characterized by the growing power of crown and disputes with France.

In 1485, a new dynasty Tudors, gained the throne. Many things changed Henry the VIII founded Anglican Church and his daughter Elizabeth I was marked by overseas expansion and cultural development.

In 1536, Wales was joined to England by Act of Union. During the English Revolution (1649 - 1660) power of parliament grew and finally the monarchy was replaced by republics and protectorates, led by Oliver Cromwell.

In 1707, Scotland was joined to England and the unit was called Great Britain.

The 18th century Great Britain was a major colonial and industrial power; especially the reign of Queen Victoria.

Northern Ireland was merged with GB in 1801. In the 19th century Britain form the Commonwealth (countries that used to be or still, are part of UK). As a result, this small country still have a political and financial influence in the world.

The UK is founding member of NATO and since 1973 member of EU, but British people aren’t keen to change pounds to Euro.

### Geography

The UK is consisted of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Islands of UK lies NW of Europe surrounded by the North Atlantic o. to west and North Sea to the east. France is only 35 km to the southeast across the English Chanel.

The UK is about three times larger than Czech Republic. West coast of the island is hilly, there is the highest point of UK, Ben Nevis (1,343m).

### Climate

The UK is a rainy country with moderate climate. Winters are mild due to the North Atlantic drift (The Gulf Stream). Summers are occasionally hot but average day is mostly cloudy or overcast.

### Places of interest

Stonehange – an ancient sight, probably a calendar.

Hadiran’s wall – wall built by Romans in order to protect them against Scotch savages.

Bristol – formerly a wealthy port built on foreign trade and slavery in the 19th century.

Stratford upon Avon – birthplace of W. Shakespeare most famous writer in 16th century.

Cambridge – a university city dating back to the 13th cent.

Oxford- also university city; called the City of Spires as there is so many churches.

York – typical Roman town, well known for its Gothic cathedral York Minster and the Jorvik Viking center uncovering what the live in 10th cent. look like.

### Political system

Queen Elizabeth II is head of the constitutional monarchy, but in fact she has nearly no power. All the power is in the hands of Prime minister (David Cameron), head of the government. Britain has parliament consisted of two chambers both are situated in Palace of Westminster in London. One house, is the House of commons which members are elected. To be a member of The House of Lords is a kind of heritage.

### Holidays

The UK doesn’t have special holidays apart of Christmas, New Year and Easter. There are single day ‘bank holidays’ in May and August, that’s all.