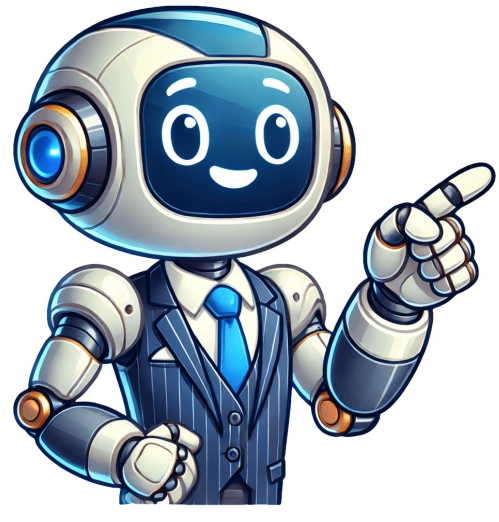


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**Introduction & Quick Facts**Prime ministers of Great Britain and the United Kingdom References & Edit History Facts & Stats Geography & Travel Countries of the World What is the United Kingdom? Which countries are part of the United Kingdom? How is the government of the United Kingdom structured? What is the role of the British Monarchy in the United Kingdom? How did the Westminster's history shape its current form? What are some famous cultural landmarks in the United Kingdom? How does the United Kingdom's economy function? What are some key traditions and holidays celebrated in the United Kingdom? How does the United Kingdom influence global politics and culture today? United Kingdom, island country located off the northwestern coast of mainland Europe. The United Kingdom comprises the whole of the island of Great Britain—which contains England, Wales, and Scotland—as well as the northern portion of the island of Ireland. The name Britain is sometimes used to refer to the political kingdom as a whole. The capital is London, which is among the world's leading commercial, financial, and cultural centres. Other major cities include Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester in England, Belfast and Londonderry in Northern Ireland, Edinburgh and Glasgow in Scotland, and Swansea and Cardiff in Wales. The origins of the United Kingdom can be traced to the time of the Anglo-Saxon king Aethelstan, who in the early 10th century secured the allegiance of neighboring Celtic kingdoms and became "the first to rule what previously many kings shared between them." In the words of a contemporary chronicle, Through subsequent conquest over the following centuries, kingdoms lying farther inland came under English domination, and thus, as the Anglo-Saxons called it, the Kingdom of Great Britain.

The Kingdom of Great Britain was formed by the union of three kingdoms—England, Wales, and Scotland—in 1706–1707. These kingdoms had been united since the mid-16th century through the personal union of the crowns of England and France. By the late 18th century, the Kingdom of Great Britain had become one of the most powerful nations in the world. Relations between these constituent states and England have been marked by controversy and, at times, open rebellion and even warfare. These tensions relaxed somewhat during the late 20th century, when devolved assemblies were introduced in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Nonetheless, even with the establishment of a power-sharing assembly after referendum in both Northern Ireland and the Irish republic, relations between Northern Ireland's unionists (who favour continued British sovereignty over Northern Ireland) and nationalists (who favour unification with the republic of Ireland) remained tense into the 21st century. Audio File:

Anthem of United Kingdom (see article) Head Of Government: Prime Minister: Keir Starmer Capital: London Population: (2025 est.) 69,414,000 Currency Exchange Rate: 1 USD equals 0.800 British pound Head Of State: Sovereign: King Charles III Form Of Government: constitutional monarchy with two legislative houses (House of Lords [7941]; House of Commons [650]) Official Languages: English; both English and Scots Gaelic in Scotland; both English and Welsh in Wales Official Religion: see footnote 2. Official Name: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Total Area (Sq Km): 242,500 Total Area (Sq Mi): 93,629 Monetary Unit: pound sterling (£) Population Rank: (2025)

2006 Population Profile: 70,738,000 Density: Persons Per Sq Km: (2025) 741 U.S. Density: Person Per Sq Km: (2025) 286.2 Urban-Rural Population: Urban: (2018) 83.4% Rural: (2018) 16.6% Life Expectancy At Birth: Male: (2020-2022) 78.6 years Female: (2020-2022) 82.6 years Literacy: Percentage Of Population Age 15 And Over Literate: Male: 99.9% Female: 99.9%

(2006) Sex Ratio: (2006) Nativity: (U.S.A.) Immigrants: (2006) 3,260,416 Net Emigrant: (U.S.A.): (2023) 47,700 The United Kingdom has made significant contributions to the world economy, especially in technology and industry. Since World War II, however, the United Kingdom's most prominent exports have been cultural, including literature, film, television, music, and popular culture. It also remains a member of several international organizations, such as the Commonwealth of Nations, NATO, G7, G20, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Commonweath. It also benefits from historical and cultural links with the United States and is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Moreover, the United Kingdom became a member of the European Union in 1973. Many Britons, however, were sometimes reluctant EU members, holding to the sentiments of the great wartime prime minister Winston Churchill, who sonorously remarked, "We see nothing but good and hope in a richer, freer, more contented European community. But we have our own dream and our own task. We are with Europe, but not of it. We are linked, but not comprised. We are interested and associated, but not absorbed." Indeed, in June 2016, in a referendum on whether the United Kingdom should remain in the EU, 52 percent of British voters chose to leave. After much negotiation, several deadline extensions, prolonged domestic political discord, and two changes of prime minister, an agreement on "Brexit" (British exit from the EU) was reached that satisfied both the EU and the majority of Parliament. Thus, on January 31, 2020, the United Kingdom would become the first country to withdraw from the EU. Ralph Charles Atkins The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica The United Kingdom comprises four geographic and historical parts—an England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom contains most of the area and population of the British Isles—the geographic term for the group of islands that includes Great Britain, Ireland, and many smaller islands. Together England, Wales, and Scotland constitute Great Britain, the larger of the two principal islands, while Northern Ireland and the republic of Ireland constitute the second largest island, Ireland. England, occupying most of southern Great Britain, includes the Isles of Scilly off the southwest coast and the Isle of Wight off the southern coast. Scotland, occupying northern Great Britain, includes the Orkney and Shetland islands off the northern coast and the Hebrides off the northwestern coast. Wales lies west of England and includes the island of Anglesey. To the south of England lie the Channel Islands, which are not politically part of the United Kingdom. To the southeast of Northern Ireland, the Irish Sea separates Great Britain from Ireland, while southwestern England, the northwestern coast of Northern Ireland, and western Scotland face the Atlantic Ocean. At its widest the United Kingdom is 300 miles (500 km) across. From the northern tip of Scotland to the southern coast of England, it is about 600 miles (1,000 km). No part is more than 75 miles (120 km) from the sea. The capital, London, is situated on the tidal River Thames in southeastern England. The archipelago formed by Great Britain and the numerous smaller islands is as irregular in shape as it is diverse in geology and landscape. This diversity stems largely from the nature and disposition of the underlying rocks, which are westward extensions of European strata, with the shallow waters of the Strait of Dover and the North Sea concealing former land links. Northern Ireland contains a westward extension of the rock structures of Scotland. These common rock structures are breached by the narrow North Channel. On a global scale, this natural endowment covers a small area—approximating that of the U.S. state of Oregon or the African country of Guinea—and its internal diversity, accompanied by rapid changes of often beautiful scenery, may convey to visitors from larger countries a striking sense of compactness and consolidation. The peoples who, over the centuries, have hewed an existence from this Atlantic extremity of Eurasia have put their own imprint on the environment, and the ancient and distinctive palimpsest of their field patterns and settlements complements the natural diversity. Great Britain is traditionally divided into a highland and a lowland zone. A line running from the mouth of the River Eire, in the southwest, to that of the Tees, in the northeast, is a crude expression of this division. The course of the 700-foot (213-metre) contour, or of the boundary separating the older rocks of the north and west from the younger southeastern strata, provides a more accurate indication of the extent of the highlands. Britain has been shaped by successive ice ages, and the resulting pattern of hills and valleys has been modified by wind and water erosion. The highest peaks, all below 9,000 feet (2,743 metres), are found in the Scottish Highlands. The highest point, Ben Nevis, rises to 9,509 feet (2,900 metres).

In the early 19th century, the British Empire began to expand, and by the mid-19th century, it had become the greatest empire in the world. The British Empire was a collection of territories around the world that were ruled by the United Kingdom. It was founded in 1701, when Queen Anne inherited the throne, and it grew rapidly throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. The empire was based on trade and commerce, and it played a major role in shaping the modern world. The empire was also responsible for spreading Christianity and Western civilization around the globe. The empire was finally dismantled in the mid-20th century, and the United Kingdom became a democracy. Today, the United Kingdom is a developed country with a strong economy and a rich cultural heritage.

The Norman Conquest of 1066 was a turning point in British history. The Normans brought with them new ideas and customs, and they helped to build a strong central government. They also introduced feudalism, which was a system of land ownership and military service. The Normans built castles and churches, and they established a network of roads and bridges. They also brought with them the French language, which became the official language of the court and the nobility. The Norman Conquest led to the formation of the Kingdom of England, which eventually merged with Scotland to form the United Kingdom.

The Tudor period (1485–1603) was a time of great change in British history. Henry VIII broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and established the Church of England. His reign was marked by religious conflict and political intrigue. Elizabeth I (1558–1603) was a successful ruler who strengthened the Protestant faith and expanded the British Empire. She sent ships to explore the Americas and Asia, and she fought wars against Spain and France. Her reign was known as the Golden Age of English Literature, and it produced some of the most famous writers of the era, including William Shakespeare.

The Stuart period (1603–1714) was a time of religious and political turmoil. James VI of Scotland became James I of England, and his reign was marked by conflict with Parliament and the Catholic Church. Charles I (1625–1649) was executed for treason, leading to the English Civil War (1642–1651). Oliver Cromwell led the Puritan revolution, and he established the Protectorate (1653–1659). After his death, the monarchy was restored, but the Stuarts lost their absolute power. William and Mary (1689–1702) accepted the Bill of Rights (1689), which limited the powers of the monarch and established the supremacy of Parliament.

The Hanoverian period (1714–1901) was a time of relative stability and growth. George I (1714–1727) and George II (1727–1760) were weak rulers, but they were succeeded by George III (1760–1820), who was a strong leader. During his reign, the British Empire expanded greatly, and the Industrial Revolution began. The Hanoverians were replaced by the Saxe-Coburg and Gotha dynasty in 1901, and the monarchy continued to play a role in British life until the present day.



British politics, as future monarchs were also to remain more passive figures, lending the reins of the government to the Prime Minister; George II (1683-1760) was also German born. He was a powerful ruler, and the last British monarch to personally lead his troops into battle. The British Empire expanded considerably during his reign; a reign that saw notable changes, including the replacement of the Julian Calendar by the Gregorian Calendar in 1752, and moving the date of the New Year from March 25 to January 1. George III was the first Hanoverian king to be born in England. He had one of the most troubled and interesting reigns in British history. He ascended to the throne during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) opposing almost all the major Western powers in two teams, chiefly British against French, and ended in a de facto victory for the UK, which acquired New France (Quebec), Florida, and most of French India in the process. Thirteen years later, the American War of Independence (1776-1782) broke out and in 1782 13 American colonies were finally granted their independence, forming the United States of America. Seven years later, the French Revolution broke out, and Louis XVI was guillotined. George III suffered from a hereditary disease known as porphyria, and his mental health seriously deteriorated from 1788. In 1800, the Act of Union merged the Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland. The United Kingdom during this time also had to face the ambitions of Napoleon, who desired to conquer the whole of Europe. Admiral Nelson's naval victory at Trafalgar in 1805, along with Wellington's decisive victory at Waterloo, saved the UK and further reinforced its international position. The 19th century would be dominated by the British Empire, spreading on all five continents, from Canada and the Caribbean to Australia and New Zealand, via Africa, India and South-East Asia. History of the United Kingdom: 19 Century In 1837, then king William IV died of liver disease and the throne passed to the next in line, his 18-year old niece Victoria (1819-1901), although she did not inherit the Kingdom of Hanover, where the Salic Law forbid women to rule. Victoria didn't expect to become queen, and being unmarried and inexperienced in politics she had to rely on her Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne (1779-1848). She finally got married to her first cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (1819-1861), and both were respectively niece and nephew of the first King of the Belgians, Leopold I (of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha). Britain asserted its domination on virtually every part of the globe during the 19 century, resulting in a number of wars, including the Opium Wars (1839-42 & 1856-60) with Qing China and the Boer Wars (1880-81 & 1899-1902) with the Dutch-speaking settlers of South Africa. In 1854, the United Kingdom was brought into the Crimean War (1854-56) on the side of the Ottoman Empire and against Russia. One of the best known figures of that war was Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), who fought for the improvement of women's conditions and pioneered modern nursing. The latter years of Victoria's reign were dominated by two influential Prime Ministers, Benjamin Disraeli (1808-1881) and his rival William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898). The former was the favorite of the Queen, while Gladstone, a liberal, was often at odds with both Victoria and Disraeli. However, the strong party support for Gladstone kept him in power for a total of 14 years between 1868 and 1894. He is credited with legalizing trade unions, and advocating for both universal education and suffrage. Queen Victoria was to have the longest reign of any British monarch (64 years), but also the most glorious, as she ruled over 40% of the globe and a quarter of the world's population. History of the United Kingdom: 20 Century (Two World Wars) Victoria's numerous children married into many different European Royal families, The alliances between these related monarchs escalated into the Great War -WWI—from 1914-1918. It began when Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated in Sarajevo, and Austria declared war on Serbia, which in turn was allied to France, Russia and the UK. The First World War left over 9 million dead (including nearly 1 million Britons) throughout Europe, and financially ruined most of the countries involved. The monarchies in Germany, Austria, Russia and the Ottoman Empire all fell, and the map of central and Eastern Europe was completely redesigned. After World War I, the Labor Party was created in Britain. The General Strike of 1926 and the worsening economy led to radical political changes, including one in which women were finally granted the same universal suffrage as men in 1928. In 1936, Edward VIII (1894-1972) succeeded to the throne, but abdicated the same year to marry Wallis Simpson, a twice divorced American woman. His brother then unexpectedly became George VI (1895-1952) after the scandal. Nazi Germany was becoming more menacing as Hitler grew more powerful and aggressive. Finally, Britain and France were forced to declare war on Germany after the invasion of Poland in September 1939, marking the beginning of World War II. The popular and charismatic Winston Churchill (1874-1965) became the war-time Prime Minister in 1940 and his speeches encouraged the British to fight off the attempted German invasion. In one of his most patriotic speeches before the Battle of Britain (1940), Churchill address the British people with "We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender." And indeed, Britain did not surrender. Following World War II, the United Kingdom was bankrupt and in ruins. The British Empire was dismantled little by little, first granting independence to India and Pakistan in 1947, then to the other Asian, African and Caribbean colonies in the 1950's and 60's. Most of these ex-colonies formed the British Commonwealth, now known as the Commonwealth of Nations. 53 states are now members of the Commonwealth, accounting for 1.8 billion people (about 30% of the global population) and about 25% of the world's land area. In 1952, the current queen of England, Elizabeth II, ascended to the throne at the age of 26. The 1960s saw the dawn of pop and rock music, with bands like the Beatles, Pink Floyd, and the Rolling Stones rising to prominence, and the Hippie subculture developing. The 1970's brought the oil crisis and the collapse of British industry. Conservative Prime minister Margaret Thatcher (b. 1925) was elected in 1979 and served until 1990. Among other accomplishments, she privatized the railways and shut down inefficient factories, but she also increased the gap between the rich and the poor by scaling back social security. Her methods were so harsh that she was nicknamed the "Iron Lady." Thatcher was succeeded in her party by the unpopular John Major, but in 1997, the "New Labor" party came back to power with the appointment of Tony Blair (b. 1953). Blair's liberal policies and unwavering support for neo-conservative US President George W. Bush (especially regarding the invasion of Iraq in 2003) disappointed many Leftists, who really saw in Blair but a Rightist in disguise. Regardless, Blair has impressed many dissenters with his intelligence and remarkable skills as an orator and negotiator. Today, the English economy relies heavily on services and, like the rest of the world, is in the process of beginning to rebuild after the global economic recession of 2008. The main industries in the country are travel, education, prestigious automobiles and tourism.