

Great Britain

By Dónal Thompson



Great Britain is England, Scotland and Wales. Do not confuse it with the United Kingdom. The UK is England, Wales, Scotland and 6 of the 9 counties of the Irish province of Ulster.

The Northernmost part of Ireland is not in Northern Ireland but rather in Eire, or The Republic of Ireland - County Donegal to be precise. The languages used by the people who live in the United Kingdom are (in no special order):- Punjabi,

Bengali,
Urdu,
Gujarati,
Cantonese,
Polish,
Italian,
Greek,
English,
Scots Gaelic,
Irish Gaelic,
Manx Gaelic,
Welsh, Cornish ,
Scots,
Ulster Scots
British Sign Language
Irish Sign Language
Romany (spoken by gypsies)
and Shelta (spoken by travellers)

About 8% of the UK's population consider themselves to be part of an ethnic minority. The United Kingdom is slightly smaller than the North

American state of Oregon. It is only 35 kilometres away from France.

60% of the United Kingdom's food needs are satisfied by agriculture conducted by only 1% of the population - making the UK one of the most efficient farmers of Europe. There is often debate over whether the UK is closer to the USA than to its European neighbours. Will the UK give up the pound and take up the Euro? 58% of UK exports go to Europe. Only 13,2 % go to the USA. So, yes the UK will join the Euro.

Around the UK there are 803 islands. There are 63 cities in the UK. The official religion of the UK is Anglicanism. This religion was invented when King Henry VIII wanted to divorce and remarry and the Pope said it was not allowed. Recent research in 17 other countries by the British Council found that the UK is more familiar than France, Spain and Germany.

The Face magazine's research found that 63% of Britain's young people are ashamed to be British - drugs and violence being the principal causes.

In November 2002 an extensive BBC poll determined who were considered the most important Britons of all time. The results were:-

1. Churchill
2. Brunel (an engineer)
3. Diana
4. Darwin
5. Shakespeare

And what about the long criticised British food? ."Chicken Tikka Massala is now a true British national dish, not only because it is the most popular, but because it is a perfect illustration of the way Britain absorbs and adapts external influences. Chicken Tikka is an Indian dish. The Massala sauce was added to satisfy the desire of British people to have their meat served in gravy." - Robin Cook, ex-Foreign Minister of the UK Government The UK is a collection of pragmatists