

The DFK bluffer's guide to London and the United Kingdom

Quirky facts on a quirky country

Introduction

Through its geographic location, unique history, and distinctive governance, the United Kingdom is quite unlike any other country. It is made up of 4 separate nations (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), and encompasses several dependent and overseas territories. People often conflate the UK with Great Britain (GB), Britain or even England, which is quite understandable as many of its residents don't know the difference between these entities! Among other things, this guide should clear that up for you.

Although the nations that make up the country have ancient origins, the UK didn't exist in its current form until 1922, when the Republic of Ireland separated from the Kingdom, leaving the 6 counties of Northern Ireland within the Union. Its head of state is also the head of state of 14 other countries, while its Prime Minister leads the Government that has only very limited powers over much of the country, with each of the nations (apart from England) having its own government responsible for most domestic matters.

It's a dog's breakfast¹, but somehow, we muddle along, and this small group of Islands has had, and continues to have, enormous influence on world affairs and has been a birth place for world-changing innovations (from the steam engine to the world-wide-web) and its scientific, literary and cultural influence is unparalleled for a country of its size.

This guide is intended for delegates and their accompanying persons attending the DFK 60th Anniversary conference being held in London in July 2022 to give some background and context to the sites you will see and places you will experience. Much of the information is drawn from sources on the internet, and is brought together here in a format that is intended to be easily accessible for 'dipping in and out' rather than reading at a single stretch. It is probably best read while trying to fill time at an airport enroute, or during the flight to aid sleep on a long transit.

I do not claim absolute accuracy of every fact and detail, and while it has been comprehensively researched, any errors are entirely my own doing. I hope that you enjoy it and find at least some of it interesting, and that even those very familiar with the subject will discover something new. It covers the following:

1. Location and climate
2. The make-up of the UK, including the monarchy and government
3. A little history
4. London and its landmarks
5. Sites further afield
6. Useful website links
7. A brief guide to etiquette

I hope that you find it useful and I look forward to seeing you soon.

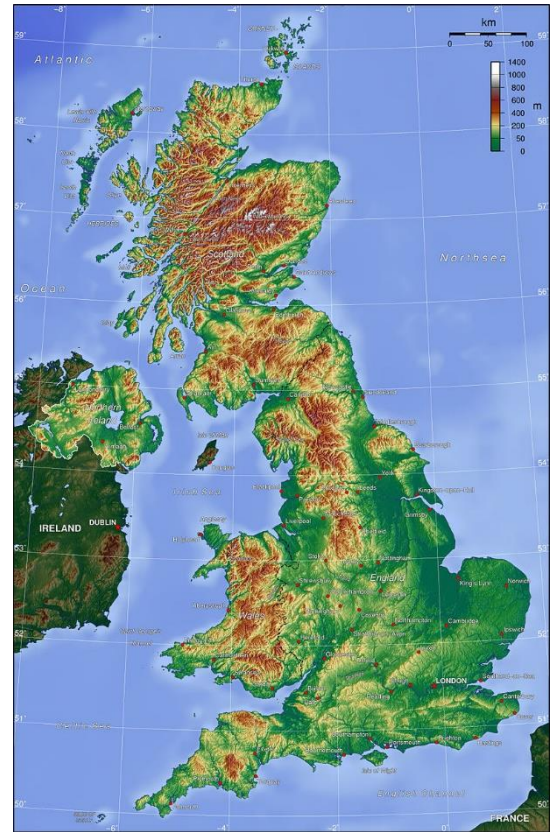
Martin Sharp

¹ Dog's breakfast is a British idiom meaning a complete mess

Location and climate

Located off the north--western coast of the European mainland, the United Kingdom includes the island of Great Britain, the north--eastern part of the island of Ireland, and many smaller islands within the British Isles. It's northerly location provides for short hours of daylight in winter and conversely longer days in summer. Most of the country consists of lowland terrain, with more upland and some mountainous terrain in the north and west, particularly in Scotland and to a lesser extent in Wales and Ireland.

Surrounded by seas warmed by the Gulf Stream, the British Isles have a temperate maritime climate, with generally cool temperatures and plentiful rainfall all year round. That's what keeps it green and our skin so soft. The temperature varies with the seasons, seldom dropping below $-5\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ (23°F) or rising above $30\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($86\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$) and are typically in the low to mid-20s $^{\circ}\text{C}$ (70s $^{\circ}\text{F}$) during July. That's why so few properties have air conditioning – it's rarely needed. It is also rare to have long dry spells and showers can be expected any time of year.



Number one tip for visiting London in July: bring a light rain jacket and/or umbrella!



A typical summer's day in England

A dis-United Kingdom?

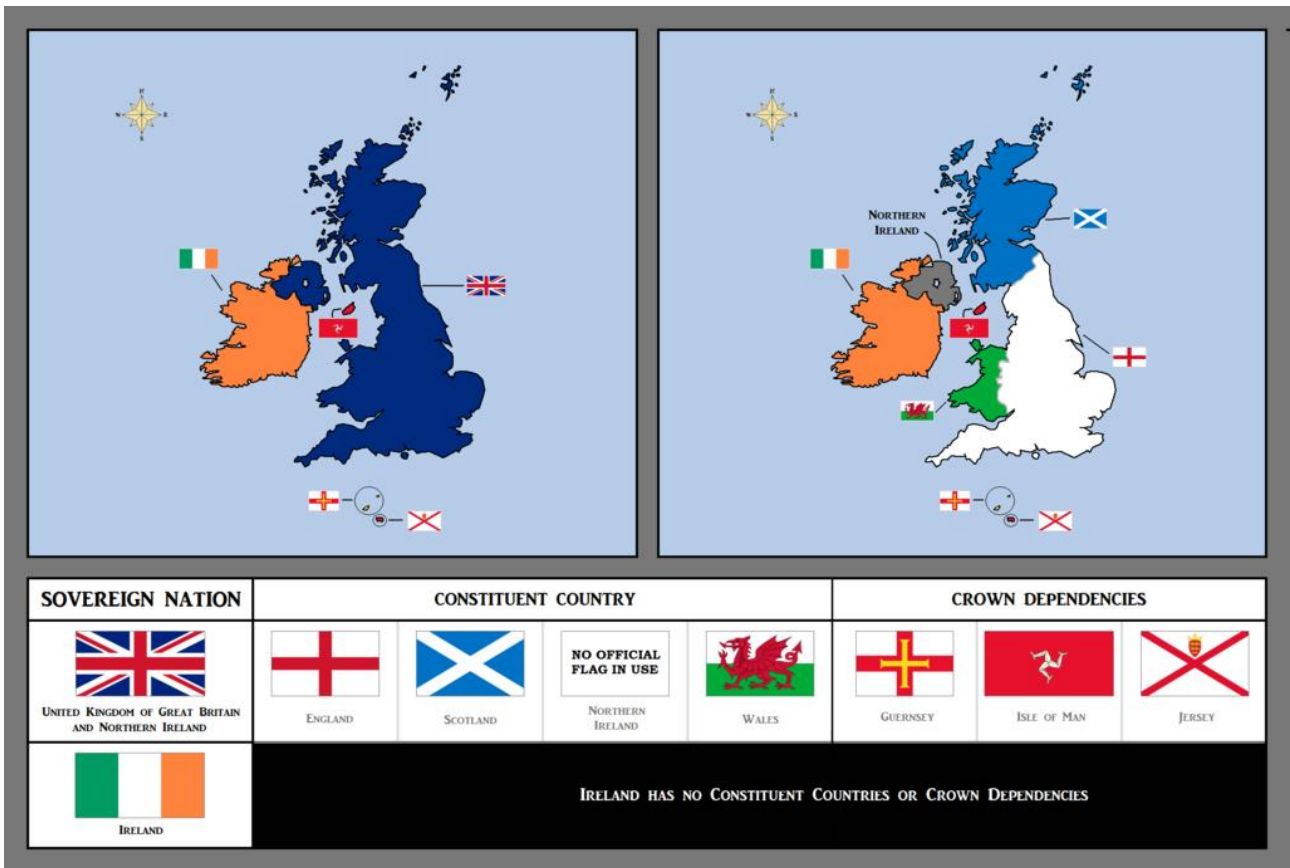
The United Kingdom (UK) has evolved from a series of annexations, unions and separations of constituent countries over several hundred years. The Treaty of Union between the Kingdom of England (which included Wales, annexed in 1542) and the Kingdom of Scotland in 1707 formed the Kingdom of Great Britain. Its union in 1801 with the Kingdom of Ireland created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Most of Ireland seceded from the UK in 1922, leaving the present United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which formally adopted that name in 1927.

Although its, tempting to do so, it would be wrong to equate UK set up to the federal systems that operate in countries such as Australia, Germany and the United States, or a provincial system such as that in Canada and Argentina. Nor is it a unitary state such as China, France or Italy, for while the United Kingdom has traditionally been governed as a unitary state by the Westminster Parliament in London, considerable political power has been devolved to each of the nations, although bizarrely, there is no separate government or assembly for the England, which is ruled by the UK government in Westminster.

The total population is 68 million, making it the 21st most populous country in the world. Today, and least for now, the United Kingdom comprise 4 four nations:

1. **England** – the largest by population (56.5 million), largest by area (130,00 km²) and most densely populated. London is the capital city of England and the United Kingdom.
2. **Scotland** – the second largest by population (5.4 million), second largest by area (78,000 km²) and least densely populated. Edinburgh is the capital city. Only a small minority speak Scottish Gaelic (less than 1%) and the majority speak varieties of English with regional dialect.
3. **Wales** – third largest by population (3.1 million) and by area (21,000 km²) and second most densely populated. Cardiff is the capital city. About 20% of the population speak Welsh, but English is universally understood.
4. **Northern Ireland** – the smallest by population (1.9 million) and by area (14,000 km²) and separated from Britain by the North Sea with a land border to the Republic of Ireland. Belfast is the capital city. English is spoken as the first language by almost all of the population of Northern Ireland; approximately 1% also speak Irish and a similar number claim to speak “Ulster Scots”, a dialect of English.

The nearby Isle of Man, Bailiwick of Guernsey and Jersey are not part of the UK, being Crown Dependencies with the British Government responsible for defence and international representation.



Countries and territories of the British Isles

There are also 14 British Overseas Territories, most of which are small island territories in the Caribbean, South Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South Pacific. These are the last remnants of the British Empire which, at its height in the 1920s, encompassed almost a quarter of the world's landmass and a third of the world's population, and was the largest empire in history.



British Overseas Territories

“Great Britain” usually refers to England, Scotland and Wales in combination and usually excludes Northern Ireland and the overseas dependencies. “Britain” is often used as shorthand for Great

Britain, but can also be used to mean the UK. British usually refers to matters relating to the UK and in law refers to citizenship of the UK.

Confusing isn't it? Most countries in the world consist of one country, usually made up of states or provinces. The UK, uniquely, comprises four countries within a country, as well as several overseas territories for which it has responsibility with varying degrees of autonomy and legislative powers.

But what about the football teams?

When it comes to sport, the UK is a completely mixed up box of frogs. Different sports are organised at various national levels:

1. **Football** (never soccer, which is an aberration of *Association* football): Played at national level by England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and with both men's and women's teams. It is seen by some as the national sport, and supporters can be fanatical. Football has been called a sport of gentlemen played by thugs and watched by hooligans. There is not much cross-border loyalty, and the Welsh, Scots and Northern Irish will often support whatever team are the English opponents.
2. **Cricket**: Cricket is a popular sport in England, but less so in the other nations. The England team also represents Wales. Cricket has a low profile in Scotland, and its team is not one of the leading cricketing nations. Cricket in Ireland is regulated on an all-Ireland basis (players from the Republic and from Northern Ireland play as one team), but it is not a major sport.
3. **Rugby**: There are two principle games: Rugby Union and Rugby League. Rugby Union is a very popular sport in all 4 nations and there are national teams in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland on an all-Ireland basis. There is also a British & Irish Lions rugby union team selected from players eligible for the national teams of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Rugby League (called "footy" in Australia) is played predominantly by teams located in the North of England (mainly Lancashire and Yorkshire) and played internationally predominantly by European, Australasian and Pacific Island teams.
4. **Olympics**: To add to the confusion, "Team GB" is the brand name used by the British Olympic Association for athletes from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (who may alternatively compete for Ireland if they wish) and from the Crown dependencies and overseas territories.

It's all baffling and most people in the UK have no idea what any of this means, and it gets even worse when it comes to politics and the constitution.

Constitutional matters

Technically, the United Kingdom is a unitary parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy. The monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, has reigned since 1952. Other than England, the constituent countries have their own devolved governments, each with varying powers.

The Parliament of the United Kingdom is sovereign. It is made up of the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Crown. The main business of Parliament takes place in the two houses, but royal assent is required for a bill to become an Act of Parliament (law). Both the House of Commons and House of Lords sit in the Palace of Westminster, which lies on the north bank of the river Thames on a site that has been used for the purpose since the 11th century.



The Palace of Westminster, seat of both houses of the Parliament of the United Kingdom

Fun Fact 1: Most people refer to the clock tower next to the Houses of Parliament as Big Ben. However, that is only the name of the 13-tonne bell inside. The actual tower was known as St. Stephen's Tower, but was renamed the Queen Elizabeth Tower in 2012.

Members of the House of Commons (MPs) (all 650 of them) are directly elected at a General or By-elections by eligible voters members in each of the 650 constituencies in the UK on a 'first past the post' system. General elections are held every 5 years, or sooner if the government cannot maintain a majority able to pass its legislation. Most MPs are

members of political parties, the largest of which in the current Parliament is the Conservative Party, followed by the Labour Party, then the Scottish Nationalists and then minor parties. Members of the Northern Ireland Irish republican party Sinn Féin, who campaign for a united Ireland, do not take their seats in the UK Parliament, as to do so would require them to swear allegiance to the Queen, which they refuse to do.

The House of Lords is the upper house of Parliament and its members are known as Peers. Of the 790 peers, 26 are Lords Spiritual (mostly bishops and archbishops of the Church of England), 92 are hereditary peers (those that have inherited a noble title), and the remainder are life peers who are appointed by the monarch on the advice of the Prime Minister of the day. Many life peers are appointed for their prominence in fields such as medicine, science, the Armed Forces, business, the arts and sport. As a non-elected chamber, the power of the House of Lords is highly constrained and its main function is to scrutinise bills that have been approved by the House of Commons. While it is unable to prevent Bills passing into law, except in certain limited circumstances, it can delay Bills and force the Commons to reconsider their decisions.

Unlike in most countries, no attempt has been made to codify the constitution of the United Kingdom into a single document, so there is no single written constitution. This enables the constitution to be easily changed as no provisions are formally entrenched. There are, however, broadly accepted constitutional principles, including parliamentary sovereignty, the rule of law, democracy and upholding international law.

Thus, although the monarch (King or Queen) reigns, their power can only be exercised if it is the will of Parliament. This principle was first established in the Magna Carta, which was a document written in 1215 and required the King to call a "common counsel" (now called Parliament) to represent people, to hold courts in a fixed place, to guarantee fair trials, to guarantee free movement of people, to free the church from the state, and to guarantee rights of "common" people to use the

land. Powers were further constrained through acts of parliament, including the Bill of Rights (1689) and the Treaty of Union between England and Scotland.

The Nobility - Do you know your Dukes from your Earls?

Members of the nobility are known collectively as lords, but within that term are ranks of nobility, which in the British system are as follows:

1. **Duke** is the highest-ranking hereditary title in all four peerages of the British Isles. The wife of a duke is known as a duchess, which is also the title of a woman who holds a dukedom in her own right; her husband, however, does not receive any title. Members of the British Royal Family that are also dukes are known as royal dukes, of which there are currently 7 holders (e.g. Prince William, Duke of Cambridge). There are 24 non-royal dukes. Should you chance to meet one, a royal duke is entitled to be styled "Your Royal Highness" and a non-royal duke or duchess as "Your Grace". The Duke of Norfolk is the senior duke in England.
2. **Marquess** is the second highest hereditary rank. A woman with the rank of a marquess or the wife of a marquess is a marchioness. There are currently 35 British marquesses.
3. **Earl**, is equivalent to a *Graf* in Germany, and is a member of the peerage, ranking below a marquess and above a viscount. A feminine form of earl never developed; instead, countess is used. An Earl is referred to as Lord [name], and his wife as Lady [name].
4. **Viscount** is the fourth rank in the British peerage system, standing directly below an earl and above a baron. There are approximately 270 viscountcies currently extant in the peerages of the British Isles, though most are secondary titles. A British viscount is addressed in speech as Lord [name], while his wife is Lady [name], and he is formally styled "The Right Honourable The Viscount [name]".
5. **Baron** is the lowest rank, placed immediately below viscounts. A woman of baronial rank has the title baroness. One refers to or addresses a baron as Lord [name] and his wife as Lady [name], and baronesses in their own right as Baroness [name]. In direct address, barons and baronesses can also be referred to as My Lord, Your Lordship, or Your Ladyship or My Lady. The husband of a baroness in her own right gains no title or style from his wife.

The prime minister is the head of government in the United Kingdom. In modern times, the prime minister is, by constitutional convention, an Member of Parliament. The prime minister is appointed by the monarch and they are normally the leader of the political party with the most seats in the House of Commons and hold office by virtue of their ability to command the confidence of the House of Commons. The post usually falls to the leader of the political party that wins the most seats at a general election. Although the monarch is the Head of State, they are often represented internationally by the prime minister.



[Elizabeth II](#), monarch since 1952



[Boris Johnson](#), prime minister since 2019

Devolution

Another dogs breakfast of arrangements in the UK is devolution. The term refers to the Parliament of the United Kingdom's statutory granting of a greater level of self-government to the Scottish Parliament, the Senedd (Welsh Assembly), the Northern Ireland Assembly and the London Assembly and to their associated executive bodies the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and in England, the Greater London Authority and combined authorities.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each have their own government or executive, led by a first minister (or, in the case of Northern Ireland, a first minister and deputy first minister), and a devolved legislature. England, the largest country of the United Kingdom, has no devolved executive or legislature and is administered and legislated for directly by the UK's government and parliament on all issues. This situation has given rise to the bizarre situation where that members of parliament from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can vote, sometimes decisively, on matters that affect only England.

The Brexit Question

Brexit, a dreadful word, is a blend of the words "British" and "exit". Britain's relations with her neighbouring states in continental Europe have been vexed for centuries. More recently, the question as to whether the UK should remain in the EU has been the most divisive political issue in British society for a generation. It all came to a head with the "United Kingdom European Union membership referendum", commonly referred to as the EU referendum or the *Brexit* referendum, which took place on 23 June 2016 when the electorate were asked to vote on whether the country should remain a member of, or leave, the European Union (EU).



Membership of the EU had long been a topic of debate in the United Kingdom. The country joined the European Communities (EC) in 1973. A referendum on continued membership of the Communities was held in 1975, with 67.2% of the population voting in favour of Britain remaining a member. The evolution of the EC into the EU, whereby increasing powers were transferred from member states to the central authority in Brussels with an ambition for “ever closer union”, was a highly contentious issue among UK voters, and tensions were heightened by high levels of immigration

predominantly from Eastern European countries following their accession to the EU in 2004. Between May 2004 and September 2009, 1.5 million workers migrated from the new EU member states to the UK, most of them Polish. By 2011, 13.4% of the population of the UK was born abroad.

The leave/remain campaign was fought and the most hotly contested political issues in a generation. The referendum resulted in 51.9% of the votes cast being in favour of leaving the EU. Although the referendum was legally non-binding, the government of the time promised to implement the result. Parliament gave legal effect to the referendum by passing the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act 2017 and on 29 March 2017, the United Kingdom gave formal notice of intent to withdraw from the EU, which it did on 31 January 2020. It remains a topic best avoided in polite conversation.

The Commonwealth

Not to be confused with term used by several States in the US, or god forbid the Commonwealth of Independent States formed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, The Commonwealth of Nations, simply referred to as the Commonwealth, is a political association of 54 member states, almost all of which are former territories of the British Empire. The head of the Commonwealth is currently Queen Elizabeth II; the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting appointed Charles, Prince of Wales, to be her designated successor, although the position is not hereditary.

The Commonwealth dates back to the first half of the 20th century with the decolonisation of the British Empire through increased self-governance of its territories. Member states have no legal obligations to one another but are connected through their use of the English language and historical ties. The Commonwealth Charter defines their shared values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as promoted by the quadrennial Commonwealth Games, which for many people of the most conspicuous manifestation of the organisation.

Watch out for traffic!

The UK, along with 75 other countries and territories around the world, famously follows the Left-hand traffic (LHT) rule of keeping to the left side of the road. But beware in London – many of the streets have one way traffic flow, so traffic may not be tied to the rule. Always look when crossing, and beware at junctions that turning traffic, and not pedestrians has priority.

A little history – the abbreviated story of the British People

Ancient Britons. Human settlement of the United Kingdom occurred in waves beginning by about 30,000 years ago. By the end of the region's prehistoric period, the population is thought to have belonged mainly to a culture termed Celtic, comprising Brittonic Britain and Gaelic Ireland. Prior to the Roman conquest, Britain was home to about 30 indigenous tribes. The region has numerous remains from the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age, such as Stonehenge and Avebury in southern England.



Stonehenge, located near modern-day Salisbury, consists of a ring of standing stones erected between 2400 BC and 2200 BC

What did the Romans do for us? The Roman conquest, beginning in 43 AD, and the 400-year rule of southern Britain, left a legacy of cities, roads, customs and beliefs that endure to the modern era. The Roman era was followed by an invasion by Germanic Anglo-Saxon settlers, reducing the Celtic area mainly to what was to become Wales, Cornwall, northern England and parts of southern Scotland). Most of the region settled by the Anglo-Saxons became unified as the Kingdom of England in the 10th century. Meanwhile, Gaelic-speakers in north-west Britain united with the Picts to create the Kingdom of Scotland in the 9th century. The English language is a West Germanic language that was brought by Anglo-Saxon migrants in the 5th to 7th centuries.

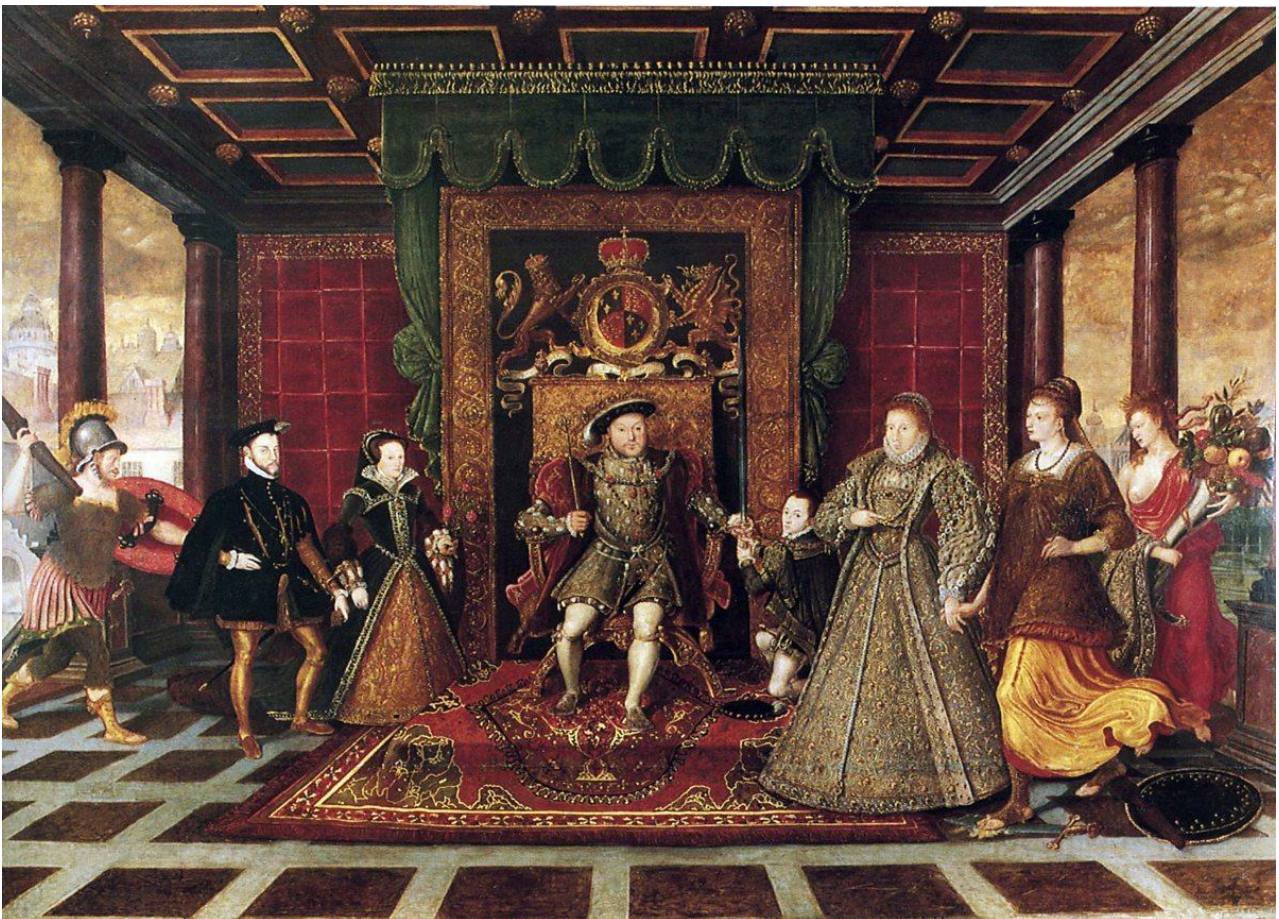
Enter the Normans. One of the most notable dates in British history is 1066, which was when the Normans and their Breton allies invaded England from northern France. After conquering England, they seized large parts of Wales, conquered much of Ireland and were invited to settle in Scotland, bringing to each country feudalism on the Northern French model and Norman-French culture. The Anglo-Norman ruling class greatly influenced, but eventually assimilated with, each of the local cultures.



Fun Tact 2: Golf was invented in Scotland, and can be traced back to 1457. However, it was outlawed for a while by King James II of Scotland, as it detracted from the army's training!

Wars of Religion and Divorce - the Middle Ages. The English monarchs, through inheritance of substantial territories in France and claims to the French crown, were also heavily involved in conflicts in France, most notably the Hundred Years War. Early modern Britain saw religious conflict resulting from the Reformation and the introduction of Protestant state churches in each country,

such as under the rule of Henry the VIII in England (he of the six wives). Wales was fully incorporated into the Kingdom of England, and Ireland was constituted as a kingdom in personal union with the English crown. In what was to become Northern Ireland, the lands of the independent Catholic Gaelic nobility were confiscated and given to Protestant settlers from England and Scotland.



The Court of Henry VIII, 1540s

Civil and not so civil wars – 1640s to 1660. In the mid-17th century, the kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland were involved in a series of connected wars (including the English Civil War) which led to the temporary overthrow of the monarchy, with the execution of King Charles I, and the establishment of the short-lived unitary republic of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland under Oliver Cromwell. Although the monarchy was restored a few years later, royal absolutism would not prevail in Britain, and a professed Catholic could never accede to the throne. The British constitution would develop on the basis of constitutional monarchy and the parliamentary system.

Plague, Fire and Planning. In 1665, London was swept by the plague, and in 1666 by the Great Fire for 5 days which destroyed about 15,000 buildings, leading to the rebuilding of St Paul's Cathedral, but plans for a wholesale development of the City of London and the creation of a grid road system never came to pass because by the time the plans were approved, many home and business owners had rebuild their properties around the ancient layout that still persist to this day.

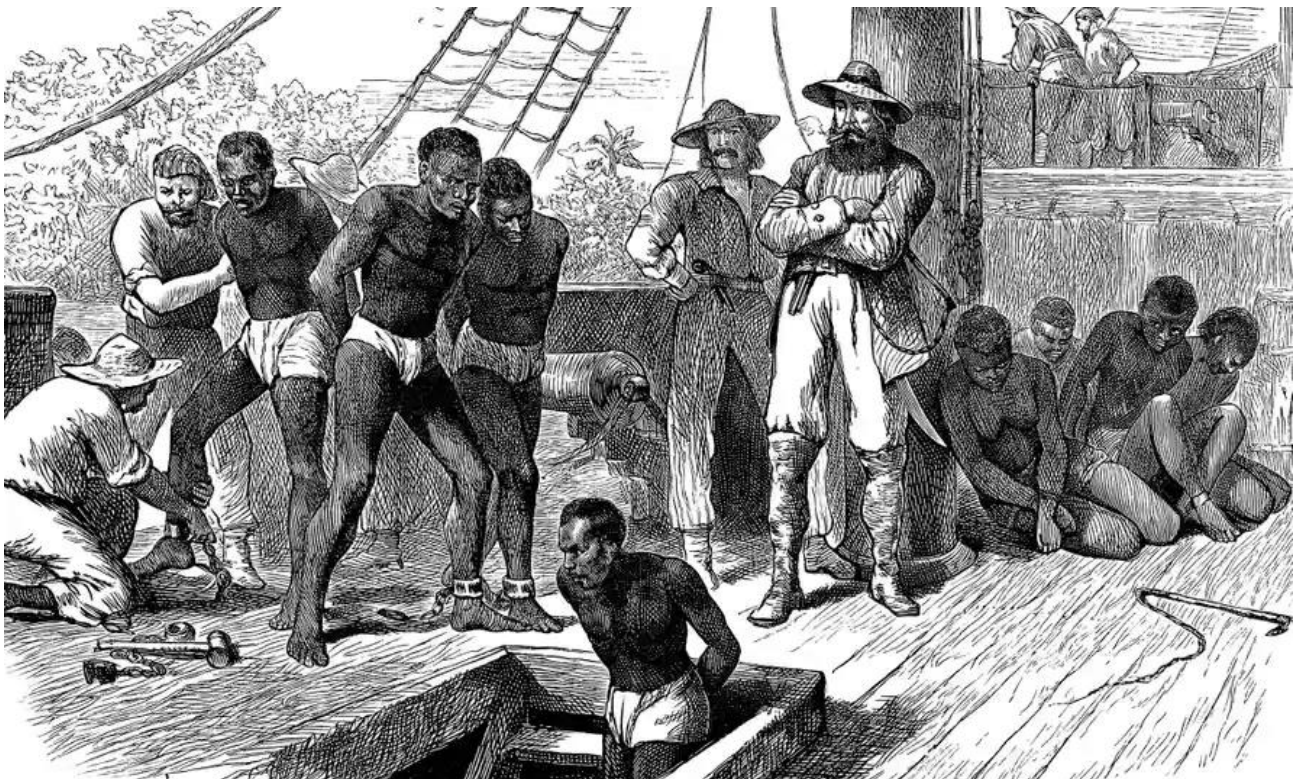


The Great Fire of London, 1666

Capitalism and colonialism – 1660 to 1800. With the founding of the Royal Society in 1660, science was greatly encouraged. During this period, particularly in England, the development of naval power and the interest in voyages of discovery led to the acquisition and settlement of overseas colonies, particularly in North America and the Caribbean. During the 17th and 18th centuries, British sailors were involved in acts of piracy (privateering), attacking and stealing from ships, many sailing from the Spanish territories of South America, off the coast of Europe and in the Caribbean, providing inspiration for a Disney theme park ride and eventually a series of films with bad pirate accents.



A shameful chapter. Britain played a leading part in the Atlantic slave trade, mainly between 1662 and 1807 when British or British-colonial Slave ships transported nearly 3.3 million slaves from Africa. The slaves were taken to work on plantations in British possessions, principally in the Caribbean but also North America. Slavery coupled with the Caribbean sugar industry had a significant role in strengthening and developing the British economy in the 18th century. However, Parliament banned the trade in 1807, banned slavery in the British Empire in 1833, and Britain took a leading role in the movement to abolish slavery worldwide through the blockade of Africa and pressing other nations to end their trade with a series of treaties. The world's oldest international human rights organisation, Anti-Slavery International, was formed in London in 1839.



Transportation of slaves from Africa to the Americas in the 1700s

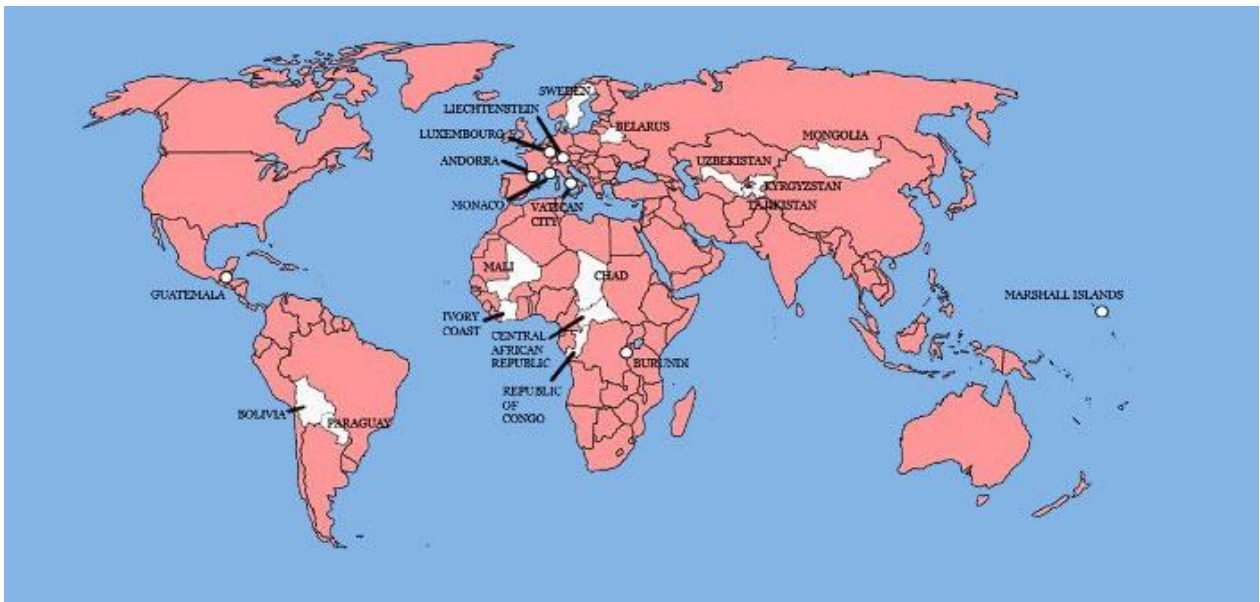
Revolutions at home and away. In period loosely dated from the 1770s to the 1820s, Britain experienced an accelerated process of economic change that transformed a largely agrarian

economy into the world's first industrial economy. This phenomenon is known as the "industrial revolution", since the changes were far-reaching and permanent throughout many areas of Britain, especially in the developing cities. Meanwhile, revolutions in France and in the British colonies in North America led to simultaneous continental wars that forced Britain to fight on two continents stretching her resources and the King's temperament to breaking point. Following defeat in the American War of Independence, British imperial ambition turned towards Asia, particularly to India.



Surrender at Saratoga, 1777

Pretensions of Pax Britannica. After the defeat of France at the end of the French Revolutionary Wars and Napoleonic Wars (1792–1815), the United Kingdom emerged as the principal naval and imperial power of the 19th century with London the largest city in the world from about 1830. Unchallenged at sea, British dominance was later described as Pax Britannica ("British Peace"), a period of relative peace among the Great Powers (1815–1914) during which the British Empire became the global hegemon and adopted the role of global policeman.



A map showing in white the 22 countries of the world that have not been invaded by Britain. The remainder, in pink, are all countries where the Brits have meddled actively in their affairs at some stage.

Imperial overstretch. The British Empire was expanded to include India, large parts of Africa and many other territories throughout the world. Alongside the formal control it exerted over its own colonies, British dominance of much of world trade meant that it effectively controlled the economies of many regions, such as Asia and Latin America. Domestically, political attitudes favoured free trade and laissez-faire policies and a gradual widening of the voting franchise. During the century, the population increased at a dramatic rate, accompanied by rapid urbanisation, causing significant social and economic stresses. To seek new markets and sources of raw materials, the Conservative Party under Disraeli launched a period of imperialist expansion in Egypt, South Africa, and elsewhere. Canada, Australia and New Zealand became self-governing dominions.



The promise of a new century. After the turn of the century, Britain's industrial dominance was challenged by Germany and the United States. Social reform and home rule for Ireland were important domestic issues after 1900 and suffragettes campaigned from before 1914 for women's right to vote.

Turns to mud and blood. Britain fought alongside France, Russia and (after 1917) the United States, against Germany and its allies in the First World War (1914–1918). British armed forces were engaged across much of the British Empire and in several regions of Europe, particularly on the Western front. The high fatalities of trench warfare caused the loss of much of a generation of men, with lasting social effects in the nation and a great disruption in the social order. After the war, Britain received the League of Nations mandate over a number of former German and Ottoman colonies. The British Empire reached its greatest extent, covering a fifth of the world's land surface and a quarter of its population. Britain had suffered 2.5 million casualties and finished the war with a huge national debt.



British troops 'going over the top' in World War One

Trouble at home – 1920s and 30s. The rise of Irish nationalism, and disputes within Ireland over the terms of Irish Home Rule, led eventually to the partition of the island in 1921. The Irish Free State became independent, initially with Dominion status in 1922, and unambiguously independent in 1931. Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom. A wave of strikes in the mid-1920s culminated in the General Strike of 1926. Women achieved the right to vote in 1928. Britain had still not recovered from the effects of the war when the Great Depression (1929–1932) occurred. This led to considerable unemployment and hardship in the old industrial areas, as well as political and social unrest in the 1930s.

Fighting for survival – 1939 to 1945. After Nazi Germany invaded Poland, Britain entered the Second World War by declaring war on Germany in 1939. Winston Churchill became prime minister and

head of a coalition government in 1940. Despite the defeat of its European allies in the first year of the war, Britain and its Empire continued the fight alone against Germany. In 1940, the Royal Air Force defeated the German Luftwaffe in a struggle for control of the skies in the Battle of Britain. Many cities across the UK suffered heavy bombing during the Blitz. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, the Grand Alliance of Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union formed in 1941 leading the Allies against the Axis powers. There were eventual hard-fought victories in the Battle of the Atlantic, the North Africa campaign and the Italian campaign. The fall of Singapore to Japan in 1942 marked a low point in Britain's power projection. British forces played an important role in the Normandy landings of 1944 and the liberation of Europe, achieved with its allies the United States, the Soviet Union and other Allied countries. British scientists contributed to the Manhattan Project which led to the development of the atomic bomb and the surrender of Japan in 1945.



St Paul's Cathedral amid the damaged buildings after the bombing of London during the Blitz

Post war decline and austerity the 1950s. After the war, the UK became one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and worked closely with the United States to establish the IMF, World Bank and NATO. The war left the UK severely weakened and financially dependent on the Marshall Plan, but it was spared the total war that devastated eastern Europe. In the immediate post-war years, the Labour government initiated a radical programme of reforms, which had a significant effect on British society in the following decades. Major industries and public utilities were nationalised, a welfare state was established, and a comprehensive, publicly funded healthcare system, the National Health Service, was created. The rise of nationalism in the colonies coincided with Britain's now much-diminished economic position, so that a policy of decolonisation was unavoidable. Independence was granted to India and Pakistan in 1947. Over the next three decades, most colonies of the British Empire gained their independence, with all those that sought independence supported by the UK, during both the transition period and afterwards.

The swinging 60s. The international spread of the English language ensured the continuing international influence of its literature and culture. The so called "British Invasion" of America led

by the Beatles from their arrival in April 1964 saw them, uniquely, hold the top 5 positions on the Billboard Hot 100 singles chart simultaneously. A mood of optimism swept the country when England won the football World Cup in 1966. As a result of a shortage of workers in the 1950s, the government encouraged immigration from Commonwealth countries. In the following decades, the UK became a more multi-ethnic society than before. Despite rising living standards in the late 1950s and 1960s, the UK's economic performance was less successful than many of its main competitors such as France, West Germany and Japan.



The Beatles arriving in New York in 1965

Troubles and strife 1970s and 80s. From the late 1960s, Northern Ireland suffered communal and paramilitary violence (sometimes affecting other parts of the UK) conventionally known as the Troubles. It is usually considered to have ended with the Belfast "Good Friday" Agreement of 1998. After years of painstaking negotiations, the UK joined the European Communities which later became the EU) in 1973, but its relationship with the EU was often fractious. Britain fought a brief war with Argentina in 1982 over sovereignty of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), deploying a naval force more than 8,000 miles to successfully retake the Islands. Following a period of widespread economic slowdown and industrial strife in the 1970s, the Conservative government of the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher initiated a radical policy of monetarism, deregulation, particularly of the financial sector (for example, the Big Bang in 1986) and labour markets, the sale of state-owned companies (privatisation), and the withdrawal of subsidies to others. From 1984, the economy was helped by the inflow of substantial North Sea oil revenues.

The 1990s and beyond. The 1990s saw a period of sustained economic growth as the country moved largely away from industrial production to the service sector, although both automotive and aerospace industries remain large employers. British culture continued to thrive during the period,

with British rock bands and pop stars, such as Queen, the Rolling Stones, Elton John, the Spice Girls and Adele enjoying international success. Around the end of the 20th century, there were major changes to the governance of the UK with the establishment of devolved administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Britain's armed forces supported the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. The global financial crisis of 2007-08 hit the UK economy hard and was followed by a long period of economic stagnation, but by the end of 2014, UK growth was the fastest in both the G7 and in Europe, and by September 2015, the unemployment rate was down to a seven-year low of 5.3 per cent. In 2016 the public voted narrowly in favour of exiting the European Union, and after years of painstaking negotiations and considerable political turmoil, the UK left on 31 January 2020.

Britain's response to the Global Pandemic. The UK government's response to the global pandemic in 2020 was slower and less stringent than in many countries around the world and the country had very high levels of infection and relatively high death rates, but take-up of the vaccine in 2021 was high and death rates were much lower by the summer of 2021. In 2020, coronavirus lockdown measures caused the UK economy to suffer its biggest slump on record, shrinking by 20.4 per cent between April and June compared to the first three months of the year, to push it officially into recession for the first time in 11 years, but the economy rebounded quickly in 2021 after most Covid restrictions were lifted.

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

The Platinum Jubilee of Elizabeth II was celebrated over 4 days in June 2022 in the UK and other nations of the Commonwealth to mark the 70th anniversary of the accession of Queen Elizabeth II on 6 February 1952.

In the United Kingdom, there was an extra bank holiday on 3 June, and the usual Spring bank holiday was moved from the end of May to 2 June, to create the four-day Platinum Jubilee Central Weekend from Thursday, 2 June, to Sunday, 5 June. It was the first time that any British monarch celebrated the 70th anniversary of their reign. Elizabeth II is the third-longest reigning verified sovereign monarch in history.

Events in the UK included The Queen's birthday parade, also known as Trooping the Colour, in which over 1,400 parading soldiers, 200 horses and 400 musicians came together in the traditional parade and a flypast of 70 aircraft from the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. There was also a service of thanksgiving for the Queen's reign was held at St Paul's Cathedral, a concert named 'Platinum Party at the Palace' took place at Buckingham Palace, and

A pageant featuring approximately 5,000 people from across the UK and the Commonwealth took place, with circus, carnival and costumed performers parading along The Mall with actors, singers, presenters and sports stars rode on open-top buses. Across the country, millions of people participated in street parties and other events, from the serious ceremonial, to silly and outright bazar, to mark the event.

Classic British Idioms

An idiom is common word or common phrase culturally understood – meaning that what is said differs from what is actually meant. Brits are really well known for this and the logic behind the majority of sayings are unknown but really useful to understand.

So here are our most favourite and some of the most well-known British idioms:

An arm and a leg

A phrase used to massively over exaggerate when something might be overly priced. For example: 'This pint cost me an arm and a leg!!' When in reality they're just paying an extortionate amount than what they're used to.

Barking up the wrong tree

You're looking in the wrong place – accusing the wrong person or pursuing a mistaken or misguided line of thought.

Beat around the bush

A typical British saying meaning you're purposely avoiding the topic in subject, not speaking directly about the issue.

Biting more than you can chew

A classic idiom meaning you're trying to accomplish something that is too difficult for you.

Best thing since sliced bread

Basically meaning a good invention or innovation – a good idea or a good plan. Because the best thing to happen to the Brits is sliced bread.

Don't give up your day job

A saying to imply you are not very good at something, so you shouldn't try it professionally, or at all.

Hit the nail on the head

A saying that simply means you have done or said something exactly right – matching someone's feelings/point.

Hit the sack

The sack would be your bed - and you hitting it would be you going to bed.

It takes two to tango

Meaning certain actions need more than one person to work successfully. A tango with one person is not as successful as one with two people involved so therefore, it takes two to tango.

Not playing with the full deck

A saying to suggest someone/something lacks intelligence or common sense.

Steal someone's thunder

To take credit for someone else's work or to take limelight where it's not deserved.

London – a global metropolis

Anyone coming to the UK capital may be confused to hear that the City of London and London are not the same thing. The City of London is London's ancient core and financial centre, an area of just 1.12 square miles (2.9 km²) and colloquially known as the Square Mile the City of London, otherwise known as the City or the Square Mile. To add to the confusion, London includes another city, the City of Westminster, which has for centuries been the location of much of the national government.

Greater London is the wider geographic area making up most of the area within the peripheral motorway, known as the M25. London is not only the capital city of the United Kingdom, it's also a county that covers a total area of 607 square miles and incorporates 32 boroughs, as well as the City of London – we'll come to that in a second.

Presiding over London and its eight and a half million strong population – including the City of London – is the Greater London Authority (GLA), which is based in City Hall and consists of the Greater London Assembly and the Mayor of London, currently Mr Sadiq Khan, who is a member of the Labour Party, which is currently the opposition party at the national level.



City Hall on the south bank of the River Thames near Tower Bridge

London is one of the world's most important global cities. It exerts considerable influence on the arts, commerce, education, entertainment, fashion, finance, healthcare, media, professional services, research and development, tourism, and transportation. It is one of the largest financial centres in the world and in 2019, London had the second highest number of ultra-high-net-worth individuals in Europe, after Paris. London's universities form the largest concentration of higher

education institutes in Europe. London has a diverse range of people and cultures, and more than 300 languages are spoken in the region.

London contains four World Heritage Sites: the Tower of London; Kew Gardens; the site comprising the Palace of Westminster, Westminster Abbey, and St Margaret's Church; and the historic settlement in Greenwich where the Royal Observatory, Greenwich defines the Prime Meridian (0° longitude) and Greenwich Mean Time. Other landmarks include Buckingham Palace, the London Eye, Piccadilly Circus, St Paul's Cathedral, Tower Bridge, Trafalgar Square and The Shard. London has numerous museums, galleries, libraries and sporting events. These include the British Museum, National Gallery, Natural History Museum, Tate Modern, British Library and West End theatres. The London Underground is the oldest rapid transit system in the world, and in places it shows, but the new Elizabeth Line provides a thoroughly modern experience.



Greenwich Naval College with the financial centre of Canary Wharf beyond

The City of London – an Historic oddity

Now that we've got that out of the way, let's move on to the City of London. It has its origins in the fortified Roman settlement of Londinium, which was erected roughly two thousand years ago on the northern bank of the River Thames and came to encompass one square mile within its walls. It is for this reason that despite the City of London actually covering an area of two square miles, Londoners still affectionately refer to it as 'the Square Mile'.



The City of London, one of the largest financial centres in the world

Marked with cast iron dragons in the street, the boundaries of the City of London stretch north from Temple and the Tower of London on the River Thames to Chancery Lane in the west and Liverpool Street in the east. While the City has fewer than 10,000 residents, up to 400,000 daily commuters – who work in buildings with weird nicknames like the Gherkin, the Cheesegrater and the Walkie-Talkie – and 10 million annual tourists help to keep the Square Mile alive and thriving.



Dragon marking the boundary of the City of London

Although it falls under the jurisdiction of Greater London and the GLA, the City of London has a special status: it has its own government and its own mayor, known as The Lord Mayor of London, who is the head of the City of London Corporation. The City has its own police force, the City of London Police, separate from the Metropolitan Police Service covering the majority of Greater London.

The City of London Corporation administers the City and operates from the Guildhall. In addition to the Lord Mayor, the Corporation is composed of the Court of Aldermen and the Court of Common Council. With such a small residential population, the City has a unique electoral system. Most of its voters are representatives of businesses and other bodies that occupy premises in the city.

While the Lord Mayor of London may have a fancier title – and outfit – the Mayor of London wields significantly more political power. There is an oft-repeated myth that the monarch has to ask the permission of the Lord Mayor to enter the City of London. The genesis of this myth is likely to be the Ceremony of the Pearl Sword which has, from time to time, been held at the former site of Temple Bar on Fleet Street. During the ceremony the Monarch's carriage procession draws up, the City Police pull a red cord across the street where Temple Bar once stood, the royal procession stops, the Lord Mayor approaches the carriage and presents the hilt of the City's Pearl Sword to the Monarch who touches it and symbolically returns the sword to the Lord Mayor. The ceremony is illustrative of the historic and complex relationship between the City and the Crown.



The Lord Mayor of London in his ceremonial carriage

One of the main functions of the City of London is representing the interests of Britain's financial services. The City is home to the Bank of England and has traditionally been considered the financial heart of the UK. However, it has lost its place as the biggest employer of bankers in Europe to East London's Canary Wharf in recent years. Despite Brexit and the threat it poses to the capital's financial pre-eminence, the financial crown of Europe still rests dubiously on London's head. The City remains a global centre for financial services, insurance and major international law firms.

London's Landmarks

During the DFK London conference, there will be an opportunity to see some of London's most important landmarks, including Buckingham Palace, The Palace of Westminster, St Paul's Cathedral, The Tower of London and the Globe Theatre.

Buckingham Palace is a London royal residence and the administrative headquarters of the monarch of the United Kingdom. Located in the City of Westminster, the palace is often at the centre of state occasions and royal hospitality. It has been a focal point for the British people at times of national rejoicing and mourning.

Originally known as Buckingham House, the building at the core of today's palace was a large townhouse built for the Duke of Buckingham in 1703 on a site that had been in private ownership for at least 150 years. It was acquired by King George III in 1761 as a private residence for Queen Charlotte and became known as The Queen's House. During the 19th century it was enlarged, principally by architects John Nash and Edward Blore, who constructed three wings around a central courtyard. Buckingham Palace became the London residence of the British monarch on the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837.



The last major structural additions were made in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including the East Front, which contains the well-known balcony on which the British royal family traditionally congregates to greet crowds. A German bomb destroyed the palace chapel during the Second World War; the Queen's Gallery was built on the site and opened to the public in 1962 to exhibit works of art from the Royal Collection. The palace has 775 rooms (surely enough for anyone?), and the garden is the largest private garden in London. The state rooms, used for official and state entertaining, are open to the public each year for most of August and September and on some days in winter and spring.

The Palace of Westminster, also known as the Houses of Parliament, serves as the meeting place for both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, the two houses of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The Palace lies on the north bank of the River Thames in the City of Westminster, in central London, England.

The first royal palace constructed on the site dated from the 11th century, and Westminster became the primary residence of the Kings of England until fire destroyed the royal apartments in 1512 (after which, the nearby Palace of Whitehall was established). The remainder of Westminster continued to serve as the home of the Parliament of England, which had met there since the 13th century, and also as the seat of the Royal Courts of Justice, based in and around Westminster Hall. In 1834 an even greater fire ravaged the heavily rebuilt Houses of Parliament, and the only significant medieval structures to survive were Westminster Hall, the Cloisters of St Stephen's, the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft, and the Jewel Tower.



The palace is owned by the Crown and although it looks ancient, most of the current building dates from the 1840s. It was designed in the Gothic Revival style by architect Charles Barry, who was assisted by Augustus Pugin, a leading authority on Gothic architecture and style at the time. Major conservation work has taken place over the years to reverse the effects of London's air pollution, and extensive repairs followed the Second World War, including the reconstruction of the Commons Chamber following its bombing in 1941.

The Elizabeth Tower, in particular, often referred to by the name of its main bell, Big Ben, has become an iconic landmark of London and of the United Kingdom in general, one of the most popular tourist attractions in the city, and an emblem of parliamentary democracy.

St Paul's Cathedral, the site of our welcome reception, is an Anglican cathedral in London that is the seat of the Bishop of London. The cathedral serves as the mother church of the Diocese of London. It is on Ludgate Hill at the highest point of the City of London and is a Grade I listed building. It's thought that the location was originally the site of a Roman temple and its dedication to Paul the Apostle dates back to the original church on this site, founded in AD 604.

The present structure, dating from the late 17th century, was designed in the English Baroque style by Sir Christopher Wren. Its construction, completed in Wren's lifetime, was part of a major rebuilding programme in the city after the Great Fire of London in 1666.



The cathedral is one of the most famous and most recognisable sights of London. Its dome, framed by the spires of Wren's City churches, has dominated the skyline for over 300 years. At 365 feet (111 m) high, it was the tallest building in London from 1710 to 1963. The dome remains among the highest in the world. St Paul's is the second-largest church building in area in the United Kingdom after Liverpool Cathedral.

Services held at St Paul's have included the funerals of Admiral Lord Nelson, the Duke of Wellington, Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher; jubilee celebrations for Queen Victoria; peace services marking the end of the First and Second World Wars; the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer; and the thanksgiving services for the Silver, Golden, Diamond, and Platinum Jubilees and the 80th and 90th birthdays of Queen Elizabeth II.

The cathedral is a working church with hourly prayer and daily services. The tourist entry fee at the door is £21 for adults, or £18 if booked in advance. no charge is made to worshippers attending advertised services.

The Tower of London, officially Her Majesty's Royal Palace and Fortress of the Tower of London, is a historic castle on the north bank of the River Thames in central London. It lies within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, which is separated from the eastern edge of the square mile of the City of London by the open space known as Tower Hill. It was founded towards the end of 1066 as part of the Norman Conquest. The White Tower, which gives the entire castle its name, was built by William the Conqueror in 1078 and was a resented symbol of oppression, inflicted upon London by the new ruling elite.

The Tower of London has played a prominent role in English history. It was besieged several times, and controlling it has been important to controlling the country. The Tower has served variously as an armoury, a treasury, a menagerie, the home of the Royal Mint, a public record office, and the home of the Crown Jewels of England.



In the First and Second World Wars, the Tower was again used as a prison and witnessed the executions of 12 men for espionage. After the Second World War, damage caused during the Blitz was repaired, and the castle reopened to the public. Today, the Tower of London is one of the country's most popular tourist attractions. Under the ceremonial charge of the Constable of the Tower, and operated by the Resident Governor of the Tower of London and Keeper of the Jewel House, the property is cared for by the charity Historic Royal Palaces and is protected as a World Heritage Site.

The nearby **Tower Bridge** is of much more recent origins, built between 1886 and 1894, and was constructed to give better access to the East End of London, which had expanded its commercial potential in the 19th century. The bridge is 800 feet (240 m) in length and consists of two 213-foot (65 m) bridge towers connected at the upper level by two horizontal walkways, and a central pair of bascules that can open to allow shipping. Tower Bridge has become a recognisable London landmark. It is sometimes confused with London Bridge, about 0.5 miles (0.80 km) upstream, which has led to a popular urban legend about an American purchasing the wrong bridge.

Shakespeare's Globe is a reconstruction of the **Globe Theatre**, an Elizabethan playhouse for which William Shakespeare wrote his plays, in the London Borough of Southwark, on the south bank of the River Thames. The original theatre was built in 1599, destroyed by the fire in 1613, rebuilt in 1614, and then demolished in 1644. The modern Globe Theatre is an academic approximation based on available evidence of the 1599 and 1614 buildings. It is considered quite realistic, though modern safety requirements mean that it accommodates only 1,400 spectators compared to the original theatre's 3,000.



We will be holding the Gala Dinner for the DFK London Conference at the Underglobe, a spectacular unique event space below Shakespeare's Globe, just a short walk across the Millennium Bridge from the conference hotel. Londoners nicknamed it the "Wobbly Bridge" after pedestrians experienced an alarming swaying motion on its opening day. Don't worry though, the bridge was closed later that day and, after two days of limited access, it was closed again for almost two years so that modifications and repairs could be made to keep the bridge stable and stop the swaying motion. It's now steady as a rock (unless one over-indulges at the Gala Dinner of course!).

Further afield

Those travelling out to Highclere Castle and Windsor Castle might be interested on some orientation for these sites before their visit.

Highclere Castle is a Grade I listed country house built in 1679 and largely renovated in the 1840s, with a park designed by the famous English gardener and landscape architect Capability Brown in the 18th century, Highclere is located in Hampshire, England, about 45 miles (72km) west of Central London. It is the country seat of the Earls of Carnarvon, who are part of the hereditary Peerage of the United Kingdom. Sir Charles Barry, who also designed the Houses of Parliament, transformed Highclere House into the present day Highclere Castle.



During the First World War, Highclere Castle was converted into a hospital for wounded soldiers run by the 5th Countess of Carnarvon. Then, in the Second World War, Highclere Castle was home to children evacuated from London.

Highclere Castle has been used as a filming location for several films and television series, including *Eyes Wide Shut*, starring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman - interiors at Highclere were used for the masked ball scene. The Castle achieved international fame as the main location for the ITV historical drama series *Downton Abbey* (2010–15) and the 2019 and 2022 films based on it.

There are between 250 and 300 rooms in the Castle Saloon and during your tour you will explore the main state rooms so familiar from "Downton Abbey". You will see some of the bedrooms after which you will follow the stairs down to the cellars and old staff quarters where you will find the Egyptian Exhibition, celebrating the 5th Earl of Carnarvon's discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun.

Windsor Castle is a royal residence at Windsor in the English county of Berkshire, located about 22 miles to the West of Central London .

The original castle was built in the 11th century after the Norman invasion of England by William the Conqueror. Since the time of Henry I (who reigned 1100–1135), it has been used by the reigning monarch and is the longest-occupied palace in Europe. The castle's lavish early 19th-century state apartments were described by early 20th century art historian Hugh Roberts as "a superb and unrivalled sequence of rooms widely regarded as the finest and most complete expression of later Georgian taste". Inside the castle walls is the 15th-century St George's Chapel, considered by the historian John Martin Robinson to be "one of the supreme achievements of English Perpendicular Gothic" design.



Windsor Castle survived the tumultuous period of the English Civil War, when it was used as a military headquarters by Parliamentary forces and a prison for Charles I. At the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Charles II rebuilt much of Windsor Castle, creating a set of extravagant Baroque interiors. After a period of neglect during the 18th century, George III and George IV renovated and rebuilt Charles II's palace at colossal expense, producing the current design of the state apartments, full of Rococo, Gothic and Baroque furnishings. Queen Victoria made a few minor changes to the castle, which became the centre for royal entertainment for much of her reign.

Windsor Castle was used as a refuge by the royal family during the Luftwaffe bombing campaigns of the Second World War and survived a fire in 1992. It is a popular tourist attraction, a venue for hosting state visits, and is the main residence of Queen Elizabeth II since 2011.

Useful links:

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What we say and what we mean:

Brits take etiquette seriously. They often don't say what they are thinking because they don't want to be rude. Instead, they say something which sounds a bit more positive. But don't be fooled! These common phrases mean the opposite of what you think they mean.

What Brits say	What you think they mean	What they actually mean
I hear what you say	They accept my point of view	I totally disagree and do not want to discuss this further
With the greatest respect	They're listening to me	This is stupid
I almost agree	They're not far from agreement	I do not agree at all
That's not bad	That's poor	That's good
Quite good	Very good	Not very good
Very interesting	Wow, they're impressed with what I'm saying	Boy, this person is boring and talking nonsense
Incidentally/by the way	That's not important	That's the main point
I'm sure it's my fault	They think it's their fault	This is your fault
I only have a few minor comments	There's no major issue	Please redo the whole thing
You must come to dinner	They want me to come	This is not an invitation; I'm just being polite
Sorry	They're sorry, but for what?	I simply want to ask a question
I might join you later	They might be coming later	There's no chance that I'm coming out
I'll bear it in mind	They'll consider my suggestion	There's no way I'm doing that
How are you?	They want to know how I'm doing	Please don't tell me your life story

British etiquette (yes, there is such a thing!)

Knowing how to act appropriately in social situations can be difficult at the best of times. It's made harder still when visiting a new country like the UK which is famous for its strict British etiquette rules. While much can be learnt from books and television, nothing helps one comprehend a culture quicker than interacting with local people and observing their customs. So, to get you started, here are a few quick tips in negotiating the minefield of British etiquette.

- 1) **Complaining:** Brits love to complain! They will happily moan to one another about bad weather and overpriced food. They're not, however, as accomplished at complaining when they have an actual problem with a product or receive poor service. When they do, they do it in an apologetic way. You'll find Brits are polite even when they are actually complaining!
- 2) **Queuing:** Brits across the UK will often be seen forming neat and tidy queues. Whether at the supermarket, train station or a concert, they will be awaiting their turn at the front. The worst mistake one can commit is queue-jumping – pushing ahead in the line. This will always be met with disapproval from those who have been waiting patiently.
- 3) **Being polite:** Saying "please" and "thank you" are two important things to always remember in British etiquette. It doesn't matter who you're speaking to, politeness and good manners are always welcome.
- 4) **Table manners:** Table manners vary all over the world. From slurping to burping, each country has different ideas about how one should act during a meal. Although formal occasions have their own rules, you should remember to eat at a relaxed pace, put your cutlery down between bites and never talk with your mouth full.
- 5) **Tipping:** Sometimes even Brits find it difficult to know how much to tip a server in cafes and restaurants, or if they should tip anything at all. Always check your bill after your meal. If it reads "service not included" then this means that you can leave a tip for the person that served you and the amount is at your discretion. If the service was good, it is customary to add an extra ten per cent on top of the bill total. Many Brits tip taxi drivers and hairdressers too, but the exact amount is the customer's preference
- 6) **Using mobile phones in public:** Mobile phones might be part of daily life but it's still important to observe some unwritten etiquette about handheld devices. Using a mobile phone at the dinner table is considered impolite, as is speaking loudly when making a call, especially on public transport.
- 7) **Good sportsmanship:** Nobody, the adage goes, likes a bad loser. Sulking, arguing or complaining if you have lost at any form of competition is considered poor manners. Whether you've been outdone on the sports pitch or exceeded in the classroom, congratulate your opponent with good grace, no matter how upset you feel underneath.
- 8) **Drunkness:** Depending on the situation, consuming alcohol is often fraught with dos and don'ts. Moderation is always advisable. And if you have consumed one drink too many – try to avoid aggression, over-emotion or impoliteness. Yes, that means no crying!
- 9) **Chivalry:** Chivalry and traditional etiquette guidelines still stand. For instance, holding a door open for a lady and standing up when one enters the room for the first time are still considered good manners for the men of Britain.
- 10) **Apologising:** Brits' love of apologising. Although one would expect to say sorry for stepping on a shopper's toe or bumping into a passer-by, many will be surprised to find that when two Brits engage in a stand-off, both will offer their apologies for being in the other's way. They don't care who is at fault. Apologising is a default reaction to many of life's little incidents. This is a quirk Brits are famed for!

Post-script: so you think that you can speak English?

I take it you already know
Of tough and bough and cough and dough
Others may stumble, but not you
On hiccough, thorough, laugh, and through.

And cork and work and card and ward
And font and front and word and sword
Well done! And now if you wish, perhaps
To learn of less familiar traps,

Beware of heard, a dreadful word
That looks like beard and sounds like bird.
And dead: it's said like bed, not bead—
For goodness sakes don't call it deed.

Watch out for meat and great and threat,
They rhyme with suite and straight and debt.
A moth is not a moth in mother,
Nor both in bother, broth in brother.

And here is not a match for there,
And dear and fear for bear and pear.
And then there's dose and rose and lose—
Just look them up—and goose and choose,

And do and go, then thwart and cart.
Come, come, I've hardly made a start!
A dreadful language? Man alive!
I'd mastered it when I was five.