

# The nations within Britain



▼ Viking helmet.

▼ Hadrian's Wall.



## The UK

The 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland' is the union of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. These were four separate nations\* (most of Ireland is now once again independent).

People in the UK are officially called British but most people born in Great Britain state their national identity as English, Scottish, Irish or Welsh.

## Discovering the past

About 2,000 years ago the British Isles were inhabited by the Celts, who originally came from central Europe. The Romans came from Italy in AD 43 and gave Britain its name (Britannia). Starting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, missionaries from Rome brought Christianity into the British Isles. The Angles and Saxons came from Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, and England gets its name from them (Angle-land or the 'Land of the Angles'). The Vikings arrived from Denmark and Norway during the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and in 1066 the Normans invaded from France. These invasions drove the Celts into what is now Wales (*Gymru* in Welsh) and Scotland (*Alba* in Gaelic), and they remained, of course, in Ireland (*Eire* in Irish). The English, on the other hand, are the descendants of all the invaders, but are more Anglo-Saxon than anything else.

For centuries Roman Catholicism has been Ireland's principal religion. After the Reformation, while the English, the Welsh and, later, the Scots accepted Protestantism, the Irish remained Catholic, and Catholicism became closely associated with Irish nationalism and resistance to British rule.

These various origins explain many of the differences between England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, such as differences in education, religion, legal systems and, obviously, in language.

## Language

The language of the Celts survives today in the form of Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic. About 20% of all Welsh people speak Welsh – or *Gymraeg*. Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic are still spoken, and are now officially encouraged and taught in schools. English developed from Anglo-Saxon and is a Germanic language. However, due to the Norman French influence, there are many words of French origin in English. Nowadays English is the official language in the UK but all the countries have their own special accents and dialects, and their people are easily recognizable as soon as they speak.

## Devolution

Devolution is the setting up of an elected regional assembly whose powers are carefully and clearly defined by national government. These powers do

## Eleven icons of four nations: England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland



1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....

5. ....
6. ....
7. ....
8. ....

9. ....
10. ....
11. ....

not usually include tax collection, the control of the armed forces or foreign policy decisions. Such issues are controlled by a central government. Scotland and Wales decided in favour of devolution in referendums which were held in 1997. This led to the creation of a Parliament and Executive for Scotland and an Assembly for Wales. The Northern Ireland Assembly was established as part of the Belfast Agreement\* (1998). Scotland has a wide range of powers including health, education, justice, rural affairs and transport. Wales can only make 'secondary legislation' relating to local matters. In Northern Ireland, the local Assembly and Executive have full legislative and executive power over finance and personnel, agriculture, education, health and social services, economic development and environment.

\* Adapted from <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/devolution.htm>

### ACTIVITIES

#### 1. WARMING UP

How much do you know about the UK today? Work in groups. Choose two of the topic areas below and using geography books and an atlas or the Internet write a text of approximately 200 words about them (100 words for each topic). Report back orally to your class.

- The history of the country's name
- The capital and other major cities
- Politics
- Geography
- Economy
- People and population
- Climate
- Religion

#### 2. EP READ AND FIND

Read the texts on these pages and find the following information.

1. Where the Celts originally came from.
2. The origin of the name 'Britain'.
3. Who brought Christianity into the British Isles and when.

4. The meaning of 'England'.
5. Where the language of the Celts still survives today.
6. The reason why there are many words of French origin in English.
7. The differences between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
8. One way the different peoples of the UK can be recognized.
9. What was decided through the 1997 referendums.
10. The date of the Belfast Agreement.

#### 3. GUESSING GAME

Play with a partner. Look at the 11 icons. What are they? Which of the four nations of the UK does each icon represent? Why? Write down your guesses. Then check with your teacher. You receive 1 point for each correct answer.

Example: Number 1 is ..... I think it is an icon for ..... because .....

# The world in one city



## ▲ Boating on the Thames.

London Eye Pier with Westminster Palace and Big Ben in the background.

## Eyewitness: ARIANNA



### Arianna Lissoni

is a South African young woman who has been working and studying in London for 10 years. She has a PhD\* from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. Here are some of her personal tips on what to see and do in London.

## Places to go, things to do

**A.** London's great cathedral to international modern art was formerly a power station. Tate Modern may seem an imposing structure from the outside but it is beautiful, comfortable and hospitable on the inside. All the well-known modern artists can be found here as well as those who are up-and-coming. The exhibitions are both impressive and innovative and often exciting events take place, such as the all night showing of Andy Warhol's films. If you get tired of looking at the art, you can have something to eat, go for a coffee, browse in the bookshop or simply sit and enjoy the fabulous views across the Thames. It is a wonderfully relaxing place to be.

**B.** Just about everything and anything you could conceivably want can be found amongst the craft workshops, stalls, shops, cafes, restaurants and bars at Camden Lock Market next to Regent's Canal. Lose yourself in the buzzing atmosphere of the stalls selling vintage clothes, Middle Eastern textiles, hand carved sculptures or Indian jewellery. For more exclusive items including antiques and hand-made one-offs, head indoors to the Market Hall. Or for cheap and cheerful clothing and bric-a-brac, visit the Stables Market next door. After the visit treat yourself to a boat trip to Little Venice along the picturesque Regent's Canal that passes by parks, a zoo, Victorian warehouses and celebrity hangouts.



**C.** The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew is the world's leading botanical centre, with more than 30,000 different plant types housed in six magnificent glass houses. Kew is a World Heritage Site set in a beautiful landscape beside the River Thames in south-west London. Only here can you 'travel' to arid deserts and see huge cacti and venture through the steamy rain forest with giant palm trees, all under one roof.

**D.** See the sights on London's riverside as you travel from Westminster to Greenwich on one of the frequent London River Services boats. Greenwich hosts the famous *Cutty Sark* tea clipper\*, the National Maritime Museum and the Royal Observatory. (Listen for more information in exercise 4).

Camden Lock ►  
and Regent's Canal.





▲ **Tate Modern.**  
The Turbine Hall.



▲ **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.**  
The Palm House in spring.

▼ **Greenwich.**  
The view from the Observatory, Canary Wharf, beyond the river, is the tallest building in London.



## ACTIVITIES

### 1. WARMING UP

Work in pairs. Read and complete the following information about London.

1. London is the ..... of England and the UK.
2. London is the ..... city in the UK and in Europe.
3. About 12 ..... of Britain's overall population live in London.
4. In London one can dine on food from more than 70 different ..... and then buy the ingredients to make it all again at home.
5. 300 different ..... are currently spoken in London.
6. Buckingham Palace is the official London residence of the .....
7. London was the first city in the world to have an ..... railway, known as the 'Tube'.
8. The City of London, known simply as 'the City', is the ..... heart of the UK.

### 2. EP READ AND MATCH

Read the texts on these pages quickly and match a title to each one.

1. The whole natural world in one place
2. Boating on the river
3. Shopping on a Sunday morning
4. Taking it easy

### 3. WORDS

Read the texts again, find the following words and match them with the appropriate definition. Then write 8 of your own sentences containing each of the words.

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| a. buzzing       | 1. representing the best of something from the past           |
| b. hangout       | 2. to give or to buy something pleasurable                    |
| c. one-off       | 3. something that has an impressive appearance                |
| d. up-and-coming | 4. something that is not repeated, unique                     |
| e. to browse     | 5. exciting and lively  |
| f. imposing      | 6. to look around in a shop and not always buy                |
| g. to treat      | 7. a frequently visited place                                 |
| h. vintage       | 8. a person/people likely to be very successful in the future |

### 4. LISTEN AND TAKE NOTES

Listen to the guide on a boat tour of Greenwich giving information about: Greenwich, the *Cutty Sark*, Greenwich Park, the National Maritime Museum and the Royal Observatory and specify for each of the items:

- |               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| • what it is  | • what to see and do |
| • where it is | • other info         |

