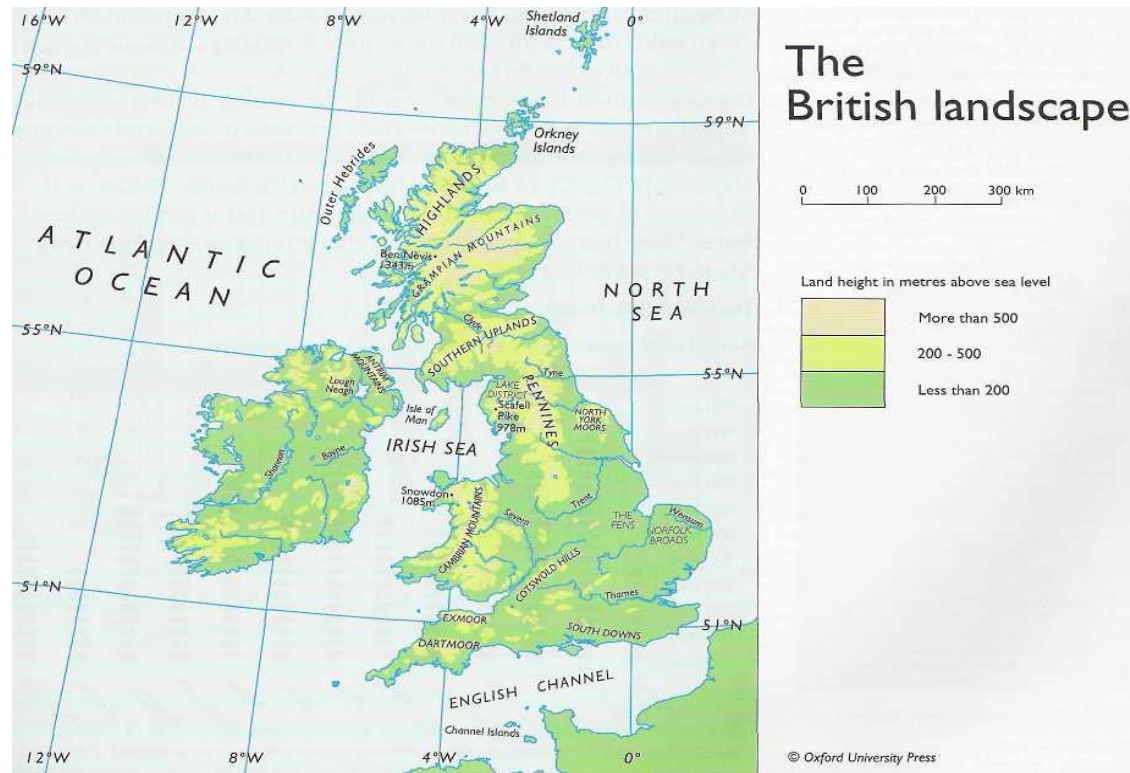


GEOGRAPHY OF UK



(O'Driscoll, James. 2003)

- A group of about 5,000 islands off the north-coast of mainland Europe
- Between the latitude 50°N and 61°N
- UK consists of four countries;
 - * England,
 - * Wales,
 - * Scotland, and
 - * Northern Ireland.

Weather/Climate

- Changeable though not necessarily unpredictable
- Few extremes in temperature, rarely above 32°C or below -10°C.

Land and settlement

- Much of the land is used for human habitation. This is not just because Britain is densely populated. Partly because of their desire for privacy and their love of the countryside,
- There are areas of completely open countryside everywhere and some of the mountainous areas remain virtually untouched.

England - London

- London (the largest city in Europe) dominates Britain.
- It is about seven times larger than any other city in the country.
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- It is home for the headquarters of all government departments, Parliament, the major legal institutions and the monarch.
- It is the country's business and banking centre and the centre of its transport network.
- It contains the headquarters of the national television networks and of all the national newspapers.
- About a fifth of the total population of the UK lives in the Greater London area.
- The original walled city of London was quite small. (It is known colloquially today as 'the square mile'.)
- The square mile is home to the country's main financial organizations, the territory of the stereotypical English 'city gent'.
- Two other well-known areas of London are and the West End: known for its many theatres, cinemas and expensive shops.
- The East End: known as the poorer residential area of central London. It is the home of the Cockney and in the twentieth century large numbers of immigrants settled there.
- London is in some ways untypical of the rest of the country.
- The cultural and racial variety is by far the greatest in London.
- A survey carried out in the 1980s found that 137 different languages were spoken in the homes of just one district.

Southern England

- Known as 'commuter land'.
- This is the most densely populated area in the UK which does not include a large city, and millions of its inhabitants travel into London to work every day.
- The county of Kent is known as 'the garden of England' because of the many kinds of fruit and vegetables grown there.
- The Downs, a series of hills in a horseshoe shape to the south of London, are used for sheep farming (though not as intensively as they used to be).

The Midlands

- Birmingham is Britain's second largest city.
- Factories in this area still convert iron and steel into a vast variety of goods.
- There are other industrial areas in the Midlands: The Potteries (famous for producing china such as that made at the factories of Wedgwood, Spode and Minton), Derby, Leicester and Nottingham (several towns in the East Midlands).
- On the east coast, Grimsby, although a comparatively small town, is one of Britain's most important fishing ports.
- Tourism has flourished in 'Shakespeare country' (centred on Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare's birthplace), and Nottingham has successfully capitalized on the legend of Robin Hood.

Scotland

- Scotland has three fairly clearly-marked regions.
- Just north of the border with England are the southern uplands, an area of small towns, quite far apart from each other, whose economy depends to a large extent on sheep farming.
- Further north, there is the central plain.
- Finally the highlands consist of mountains and deep valleys and including numerous small islands off the west coast. This area of spectacular natural beauty occupies the same land area as southern England but fewer than a million people live there. Tourism is important in the local economy, and so is the production of whisky.
- Glasgow is the third largest city in Britain.
- It is associated with heavy industry and some of the worst housing conditions in Britain (the district called the Gorbals, although now rebuilt, was famous in this respect). However, this image is one-sided. Glasgow has a strong artistic heritage.
- Over the centuries, Glasgow has received many immigrants from Ireland and in some ways it reflects the divisions in the community that exist in Northern Ireland. For example, of its two rival football teams, one is Catholic (Celtic) and the other is Protestant (Rangers).
- Edinburgh, which is half the size of Glasgow, has a comparatively middle-class image.
- It is the capital of Scotland and is associated with scholarship, the law and administration.
- This reputation, together with its many fine historic buildings, and also perhaps its topography (there is a rock in the middle of the city on which stands the castle) has led to its being called 'the Athens of the north'.

Wales

- The south-east of the country is most heavily populated.
- Coal has been mined in many parts of Britain, but just as British people would locate the prototype factory of the industrial revolution in the north of England, so they would locate its prototype coalmine in south Wales.
- Cardiff, the capital of Wales, has a population of about a quarter of a million.
- Most of the rest of Wales is mountainous. It makes the communication between south and north difficult. As a result, each part of Wales has closer contact with its neighbouring part of England than it does with other parts of Wales: the north with Liverpool, and mid-Wales with the English west midlands.
- The area around Mount Snowdon in the north-west of the country is very beautiful and is the largest National Park in Britain.

Northern Ireland

- Belfast, which is famous for the manufacture of linen (and which is still a shipbuilding city),
- This region is, like the rest of Ireland, largely agricultural.
- It has several areas of spectacular natural beauty. The Giant's Causeway on its north coast, is an example with the rocks in the area that form what look like enormous stepping stones.