

23. GREAT BRITAIN

Základní otázky

1. What does Great Britain consist of?
2. How large is its area?
3. Which are the main mountain ranges and which is the highest mountain?
4. Which are the largest rivers?
5. How large is the population of Great Britain?
6. What is the climate like?
7. Which are the main industries of the economy of Great Britain?
8. What kind of government is there?

Great Britain is an insular state. It lies north-west of Europe, across the Channel La Manche. The western coast of Britain is washed by the Atlantic Ocean and the Irish Sea. On the eastern coast there is the North Sea. Great Britain borders Ireland on the west and France on the south. The shortest connection to Europe is by ferryboat from Dover in southern England to Calais in France. Or there is the Channel Tunnel.

Great Britain and Northern Ireland cover an area of nearly 250,000 square kilometers. In addition to the two main islands Great Britain includes thousands of small islands. The largest islands are the Isle of Man, Anglesey, Wight and the Channel Islands (Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, Sark and others). There are also the archipelagos Hebrides, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands.

The landscape of England is mostly rolling hillsides. The main mountain regions here are the Cornish Heights (south-west), the Cambrians (Wales), the Pennines and the Cumbrian Mountains. The highest mountain is Ben Nevis in the Highlands of Scotland – it is 1 342 m high.

The British rivers aren't very long but some important ports are situated on them. There is London on the Thames, Liverpool on the Mersey, Glasgow on the Clyde, and Belfast on the Lagan. The longest rivers are the Severn and the Thames. There is also a system of canals in Britain.

There is an important difference between the terms Great Britain and United Kingdom. Great Britain includes England; its capital is London; Wales with Cardiff and Scotland with Edinburgh. United Kingdom includes all of Great Britain and Northern Ireland with the capital Belfast.

Great Britain has a population of about 57 million people. Britain is a relatively densely populated country. England has the highest density; Scotland has the lowest.

The official language is English. It has many dialects throughout the country. It is very difficult to understand Scottish or Welsh accents even for many English native speakers and people from other countries have real problems with it. British English differs from American English in some ways, such as pronunciation, spelling or vocabulary.

Although Britain is predominantly Christian, there are also Hindu, Muslim, Jewish and Sikh communities in the country. The (Anglican) Church of England and the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland are the official state churches.

In Great Britain the climate is temperate and humid due to the Gulf Stream. Winters are mild and summers are not very hot. It rains a lot and the grass is greener than in Central Europe. The average temperature ranges from 4 degrees centigrade in winter to 16 degrees in summer, extremes are rare.

Thanks to mild climate agriculture is quite widespread in Great Britain. About 30 per cent of the land is arable but only 2% of the labor force work in agriculture. The main agricultural products are grain, sugar beet, fruit and vegetables. Cattle and sheep breeding are also profitable. British natural resources are rich in coal, tin, oil, gas, iron and salt. The main industries are steel, metals, vehicles, shipping, banking, insurance, textiles and electronics. The main trading partners of Britain are Germany, the USA and France.

Great Britain was first settled by the Celts about 3000 years ago. In the year 43 the Romans invaded it and they stayed there for 400 years. They built villages, roads and forts throughout the country. They have been used for centuries. Then Germanic people arrived and drove Celtic people to the mountains.

The last successful invasion was by the French speaking Normans led by William, Duke of Normandy, who became William the Conqueror after defeating the Saxon King Harold in the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

In 1215 the Magna Charta was signed as a guarantee of rights and the rule of law. In the years 1338–1453 there was the Hundred Year's War and in the 15th century there was the civil War of Roses. In 1688, after a Glorious revolution, the monarchy was established but the sovereignty of the Parliament was confirmed. Great Britain is a constitutional monarchy. The head of the country is a king (or queen) but his power is limited by the Parliament. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has been the official title of the British state ever since 1922.

The British national flag is called 'Union Jack'. It symbolizes the Union of England, Scotland and Ireland and dates back to 1801. The flag is made up of the crosses of the patron saints of England (St. George's Red Cross on a white field), Ireland (St. Patrick's red diagonals on a white field) and Scotland (St. Andrew's white diagonals on a blue field). Wales is not represented because when the flag first appeared it was already united with England. The design and colours (especially the Blue Ensign) have been the basis for flags of other Commonwealth countries and British colonies.

The national anthem is 'God Save The Queen'. Each part of the United Kingdom has its own symbol: England – red rose, Ireland – shamrock, Wales – leek, daffodil, Scotland – thistle.

Doplňující otázky

Is Ireland a part of Great Britain? • Is Scotland an independent state? • Which currencies are valid in Great Britain? • Who is the Queen of Great Britain? • What are her powers? • What does the British national flag symbolize and how is it called? • What is the British national anthem? • What are the capitals of England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland? • What was Magna Charta and when was it signed? • When was the Hundred Year's War? • Have you ever been to Great Britain? • Do you know any famous English actors, scientists, politicians, sportsmen? • What are the main political parties? • Is Great Britain a member of the European Union? • Who were the enemies in the War of Roses? • Who were the first settlers of Great Britain? • When did the Romans come? • Which are the main agricultural products?

Slovní zásoba

anthem hymna
arable orný
archipelago souostroví
average průměrný
basis základ
battle bitva
cattle skot, dobytek
conqueror dobyvatel
daffodil narcis
defeat porazit
densely hustě
duke vévoda
earn vydělat
ferryboat trajekt
flag vlajka
fort pevnost
grain obilí
humid vlhký

insular ostrovní
insurance pojištění
Jewish židovský
labour force pracovní síla
lead vést, stát v čele
leek pórek
port přístav
predominantly převážně
pronunciation výslovnost
rare vzácný, výjimečný
rolling zvlněný
shamrock jetel
Sikh indická náboženská sekta
sugar beet cukrová řepa
temperate mírný
thistle bodlák
tin cín
wrappings obal

Poznámky