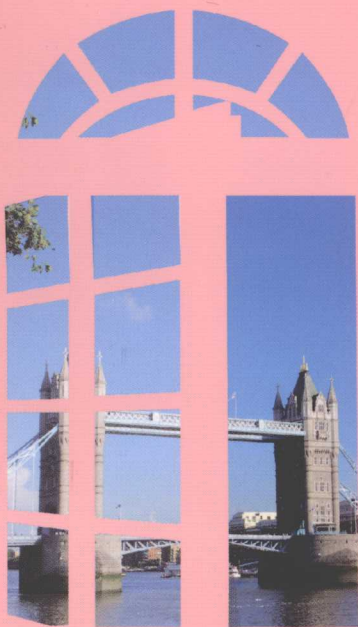


读懂英国，

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Wanna Know Britain,
Just Read It!



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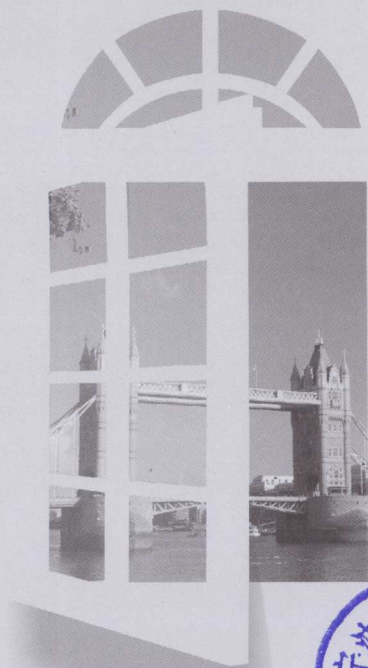


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I . General Introduction

1.1 Geography and People

To the west and off the European Continent, there are several thousands of islands on the Continental Shelf. They are generally called the British Isles. Of all these isles, the largest one is called Great Britain. Still to the west of Great Britain is the second largest island known as Ireland. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) is made up of Great Britain, Northern Ireland and a number of smaller islands around them. The total area of the country is some 240,000 square kilometers with a population of about 36.23 million (2012).

The most notable geographical facts about the UK are: it is small; it is an island state and its dimensions are moderate in almost every way—there are no extremes of distance, size, height,

length, climate, or variety of animal life and vegetation. It has no great mountain chains, no great rivers, no large lakes, and no sweeping forests. Its highest mountain, Ben Nevis in Scotland, is less than one-third the height of Mont Blanc, Europe's highest mountain, and its longest river (the River Severn in England) is barely one-twentieth the length of the Nile, and barely one-eighth the length of the Danube, Europe's second longest river. It has just 420 animal species and 1,400 flowering plant species, few of which are unique to the British Isles.

At the same time, though, Britain is notable for the variety of its landscapes, which are the product of a combination of geological and climate change over time, and of centuries of human activity. Its geological history has been the British landmass pushed from the southern hemisphere to the northern, and its landscape types have included tropical rain forests, deserts, freezing ice caps, high mountains and mudflats. The last great natural influence on its geology came with the Ice Age, which ended 375,000 years ago, and during which ice sheets and glaciers covered all but what are now the most extreme southern reaches of England. The result is that Britain today has—for its size—one of the richest and most diverse sets of geological features of any country in the world: examples of most of the different types of rocks, soils, minerals, and land forms found elsewhere in the world can be found somewhere in the British Isles.



Physical Features of the British Isles

Britain does not share land border with any other countries except the Republic of Ireland. To the north of the islands the seaway is open between the coasts of Iceland and Norway to the Arctic Ocean. Britain faces Holland, Germany, Denmark, and Norway across the North Sea. To the southeast and across the

English Channel is France and the Channel, at the narrowest part, is only 33 kilometers in width. Today England is linked with France by the Channel Tunnel that runs underground beneath the English Channel. The tunnel, finished in 1994, was built by British and French private investors and it cost more than \$16 billion to complete, twice its estimated budget.

Britain today can be broadly divided into highland and lowland regions. The highest land is found in the south west (Dartmoor and Exmoor), and the Pennine Mountains of north-central England; the Cambrian Mountains of Wales; the central areas of Northern Ireland; and the southern uplands, Grampians, and north-west highlands of Scotland. The rest of Britain consists of plains and lowlands interspersed with moorland and the gently undulating chalk downs of the south east.

The most telling influences on Britain's climate are surrounding seas, the intersection between cool air moving down from the North Pole and warm air moving up from the tropics, and the Gulf Stream, which carries warmer water from the tropics to the Arctic, and has a moderating effect on Britain's weather, making it much warmer than areas at similar latitudes in Asia or North America. January temperatures are generally in the range of 3–5 °C(37–41 °F) and July temperatures are in the range of 11–16 °C(52–61 °F). Rainfall is usually well distributed throughout the year, and tends to be soft and steady sharp and heavy, with few major storms. One of the

results is the characteristic lush greenery of the British landscape, which usually lasts throughout the summer and the winter. Another result is that the British are often caught wrong-footed by more extreme weather, such as hot summers or heavy snow in winter. Whatever the conditions, weather is one of the standard topics of conversation among Britons.

1.2 The Environment

The state of the British environment has been determined by three major forces: Britain's long history of human settlement, the density of its human population, and the long-term effects of the industrial revolution. These have combined to make sure that every part of the country has been directly or indirectly impacted by human development, and that there is no true wilderness left in Britain. In many ways, the British countryside is nothing more than a large man-made park, most of which is actively farmed and remodeled. Nature and agriculture have long had to coexist, with nature usually coming off worst. Industry and population growth have also combined to produce a society heavily impacted by the fallout from the use of fossil fuels, the growth of road vehicle traffic, and the spread of housing. Britain was once notorious for its urban smogs, and indeed the term "smog" was coined to describe the combination of smoke and fog that once polluted the

air over major cities, notably London. Air and water in Britain are cleaner today than at any time since the rise of industry, but most of Britain's major environmental problems—like those of all post-industrial societies—still stem from the use of fossil fuels (petrol, oil, coal, and natural gas).

The natural vegetation of the British Isles is deciduous



woodland. Except for heaths and moors, most of Britain was once covered by forests dominated by oak, ash, beech, elm and—along the banks of rivers—water-loving species such as alder and willow. The first forest clearances were carried out by Neolithic man beginning about 6,000 years ago, since when there has been an almost continuous process of change. In the Middle Ages, forests still occupied about one third of the land area, but today

only about 7% of land is covered by forest, and less than one third of what remains consists of ancient woodlands and broadleaf forests. Visitors to Sherwood Forest, the New Forest and the Forest of Dean will find only the vestiges of once great natural forests. Postwar government policies have allowed landowners to make more money from converting woodland to cornfields or to commercial conifer plantations, and an outbreak of Dutch elm disease in the 1960s and 1970s brought more change; by the 1990s there were few mature elms left in Britain (or in most of northern Europe). The result is that Britain today has less forest cover per square kilometer than any other country in Europe except Ireland. It has only been during the last 20–30 years that there has been broader public awareness and concern about the loss of forests.

Wildlife and natural habitat in Britain is now found only in those areas not immediately impacted by human activity, or in isolated pockets surrounded by farmland or in the heart of



cities. Agricultural intensification during and after the Second World War combined with the spread of cities and the creation of new towns to bring marked changes to the landscape. Wetland, moorland, heathland and downland were “reclaimed”, hedgerows and woodland were cleared to make way for bigger fields that were easier to plough and to crop, and increasing quantities of chemical fertilizer were applied to the land. The resulting increase in agricultural yields has been remarkable, but the natural environment has suffered proportionately:

- While the population size of Britain’s major urban areas has fallen, the number and size of towns have grown, as has the population of rural areas. One result has been the steady conversion of agricultural land (or greenfield sites) to new development. Meanwhile, much old industrial land in cities (or brownfield sites) has been left derelict. Brownfield sites are more difficult to develop because they may be contaminated, and because the owners of these sites often have inflated ideas about the value of the land.

- Nearly one-fifth of Britain’s plant species and many of its animal species are threatened, mainly by loss of habitat: the draining of wetlands, the removal of hedgerows and forests, the expansion of development, and the use of chemicals in agriculture.

On the positive side of the ledger, the area of protected land has increased substantially since the Second World War. Britain has a network of 14 national parks, including the Lake District and the