

BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The British Isles are situated in the north - west of Europe between the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.
The biggest islands are Great Britain and Ireland, the smaller islands are the Hebrides, the Orkney Islands, the Shetland Islands, the Isle of Man, the Isle of Wight and others.

Geographically there are two islands:

- **Great Britain (Scotland, England, Wales)**
- **Ireland (Northern Ireland and Eire)**

Politically there are two states:

- **the United Kingdom (Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and**
- **the Republic of Ireland (an independent republic from the UK since 1921)**

Great Britain

In Great Britain there are very old mountains and they are not very high. The highest mountains are Ben Nevis in Scotland, which is 1350 metres high, and Mount Snowdon in Wales, which is only 1100 metres high.

What is the weather like in Great Britain? It is changeable (variable). Winters are not very cold thanks to the Gulf Stream (Corrente del Golfo) and summers are cool.

Britain is a multicultural and multiethnic society.

Scotland is a fascinating place where you can visit a lot of castles and where you can see a lot of lakes that Scottish people call lochs (=lake). The most famous is Loch Ness. The capital city is **Edinburgh**. During summer there are the **Scottish Olympics or Highland Games**: they are traditional dance, music and sport competitions. Here competitors wear kilt, play bagpipes and play traditional games such as tossing the caber (lancio del tronco), tug – o’ – war (tiro alla fune) and many more (e molti altri).

Scotland is famous (also = anche) for golf, whisky and delicious salmon.

London is the capital of **England** and it is rich in museums and interesting places, but there are other important cities, too (anche). **Oxford and Cambridge** are famous for their universities; **Stratford – upon –Avon is Shakespeare’s birthplace** (luogo di nascita), Brighton is a nice seaside resort (località di mare) where you can go swimming! If (se) you like football, you can’t miss (non puoi perderti) **Manchester and Liverpool**. The most fascinating place is **Stonehenge**.

In England you can also visit ancient castles and royal residences. There are a lot of parks and gardens if you want (se vuoi) relax. But if you like busy streets and pubs go to London!

Wales is the smallest of the three regions but it is very nice. There you can go practising a lot of **sports**: horse riding, rafting, trekking, pony trekking and surfing. But you can also go visiting **castles and national parks** (Snowdonia National Park and Brecon Beacons). Wales is famous for its coal mines (miniére di carbone). **Cardiff is the capital city**. It is a small city with a lot of green parks. The most popular sport is rugby. In 1999 (nineteen ninety-nine) Millennium Stadium was built for the rugby world championship (i mondiali di rugby).

In Wales during summer there is an interesting event (avvenimento): a festival for traditional music and poetry (Eisteddfod is the name of the festival). In Wales there is the town with the longest name:

LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLLGOGERYCHWYMDROBWLLLLLANT!!! That means

Ireland has got plains (pianure), hills (colline) and small lakes, called loughs. The most important river is the Shannon. The Atlantic coast is famous for its cliffs (falesie, scogliere a strapiombo sul mare) **the Cliffs of Moher**.

What is the weather like in Ireland? It is changeable (variabile). Winters are not very cold thanks to the Gulf Stream and summers are cool.

Ireland is called **the Emerald Island** (isola di smeraldo), because it rains a lot and its land is very green. 92% of the population is Catholic. The official language is Gaelic (Celtic origin) but everybody speaks English.

Eire has been (=è) an independent republic from the UK since 1921 (nineteen twenty – one). Its capital city of Eire is **Dublin**. It is on the river Liffey. It is the only big city on the island and it is the biggest cultural centre in Ireland. It is **the seat (sede) of two important universities**. One of the most famous part of the city is Temple Bar, where you can find the typical pubs. In Dublin you can visit St Patrick's Cathedral. St Patrick is the saint patron and it is celebrated on 17th March with a big parade where everybody (tutti) wears green clothes. The shamrock (trifoglio) is the emblem of Ireland.

Northern Ireland is part of the UK with Great Britain. Its capital city is **Belfast**. In the past there were a lot of problems, called **the Troubles**. Ireland fought (ha combattuto) a lot for its independence. Now only 6 of the Irish provinces are under the British crown and the others form Eire, an independent republic. Another important city is Londonderry which Irish people prefer to call Derry! An interesting place to visit is the Giant's Causeway.