



Stuttford Van Lines Country Guide for

United Kingdom



Country Guides: Courtesy of Overseas Moving Network International (OMNI)

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1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: Northwest Europe.

Time: GMT (GMT + 1 from last Sunday in March to last Sunday in October).

VisitBritain

Thames Tower, Blacks Road, Hammersmith, London W6 9EL, UK Tel: (020) 8846 9000.
Website: www.visitbritain.com or www.visitbritain.com/ukindustry (trade).

Britain and London Visitor Centre

1 Regent Street, London SW1Y 4XT, UK Personal callers only. For more information, see the regional sections.

UK Visas

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH, UK Tel: (020) 7008 8438. Website: www.ukvisas.gov.uk
Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 0930-1330

British Embassy in the USA

3100 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Tel: (202) 588 7800. Website: www.britainusa.com

British Consulate in the USA

845 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022, USA Tel: (212) 745 0200. Website: www.britainusa.com

VisitBritain in the USA

551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 701, New York, NY 10176, USA Tel: (800) 462 2748 (general information line, toll-free in the USA) or (212) 986 2266 (executive offices). Website: www.visitbritain.com/usa

2 OVERVIEW

Country Overview:

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland consists of England (including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man), Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The British landscape can be divided roughly into two kinds of terrain highland and lowland. The highland area comprises the mountainous regions of Scotland, Northern Ireland, northern England and north Wales. Sandstone and limestone hills, long valleys and basins such as the Wash break up the lowland area on the east coast. Despite its small size, England is a country of much diversity. London, the capital, draws increasing numbers of visitors, not only to the well-documented attractions of the West End with its theatres, cinemas, shopping streets, restaurants, hotels and nightclubs, but to its historic treasures such as Westminster Abbey, Big Ben, the Houses of Parliament and Buckingham Palace. In addition, London has the vast green spaces of Hampstead Heath, Hyde and Richmond parks; vibrant street markets in Camden, Brick Lane or Portobello Road and many distinctive old pubs. A short drive away from London are the elegant southern



coast resorts of Eastbourne and Brighton; the beautiful villages of the New Forest; historic religious centres such as Winchester, Canterbury or Salisbury. Cornwall and Devon continue to draw visitors with their rolling hills, beautiful stretches of coastline and picturesque fishing villages. Similarly, the honey-stoned cottages of Moreton-in-Marsh or Bourton-on-the-Water are picture-postcard material. Cumbria, more popularly known as 'The Lake District', has the stunning lakes of Windermere or Derwent Water and the cathedral city of Carlisle, close to Hadrian's Wall. Scotland is a beautiful and sparsely populated country with rolling lowland, dramatic mountains, lochs and many offshore islands. Edinburgh is the capital and its Castle is not only Scotland's number one tourist attraction but also home to the Scottish Crown Jewels. Its vast profile sits at the head of the Royal Mile which stretches down to the Palace of Holyrood House, the Queen's official residence in Scotland. Edinburgh's cultural life, with its Festival as the highpoint of the year, features much theatre, music and dance unrivalled outside London. The Scottish highlands the towns of Oban and Fort William and the islands of Skye and Mull are a stunning wilderness of mountains and moorlands, lochs and rivers. Wales is a country of great geographical variation with many long stretches of attractive and often rugged coastline. Cardiff is the principality's capital and principal seaport. The castle, much of which dates back to the Middle Ages, was extensively added to during the 19th century, thus creating a strongly Victorian Gothic result. Much of Wales has a strong non-conformist 'chapel' tradition. Llandudno, Rhyl, Pembrokeshire and Porthmadog are among the better-known resort areas. Northern Ireland contains some beautiful scenery, from the rugged coastline in the north and northeast to the gentle fruit-growing regions of Armagh. To the southeast of the province, Belfast provides shopping and city entertainment in the shape of theatres, cinema, a wide range of restaurants, the Grand Opera House and all the other attractions of any capital city. The rest of the British Isles comprises the Channel Islands of Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney (lying off the coast of Normandy).

3 GENERAL INFORMATION

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland consists of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Although they form one administrative unit (with regional exceptions), they have had separate cultures, languages and political histories. Within this section is also the Isle of Man which, although only a dependency of the British Crown, is included for convenience of reference. The United Kingdom section consists of a general introduction (covering the aspects that the four countries have in common), sections devoted to the four constituent countries, and sections dealing with the Isle of Man.

Area: 242,514 sq km (93,788 sq miles).

Population: 59.8 million (official estimate 2004).

Population Density: 244.2 per sq km.

Capital: London. Population: 7.43 million (official estimate 2004).

GEOGRAPHY: The British landscape can be divided roughly into two kinds of terrain highland and lowland. The highland area comprises the mountainous regions of Scotland, Northern Ireland, northern England and North Wales. The English Lake District in the northwest contains lakes and fells. The lowland area is broken up by sandstone and limestone hills, long valleys and basins such as the Wash on the east coast. In the southeast, the North and South Downs culminate in the White Cliffs of Dover. The coastline includes fjord-like inlets in the northwest of



Scotland, spectacular cliffs and wild sandy beaches on the east coast and, further south, beaches of rock, shale and sand sometimes backed by dunes, and large areas of fenland in East Anglia.

More detailed geographical descriptions of the various countries may be found under the respective entries.

Government: Constitutional Monarchy. The United Kingdom is an hereditary Monarchy, with real power being held by the Prime Minister, who is the leader of the largest Parliamentary party and the head of the Cabinet. The two main political parties are the Conservatives (Tories) and Labour, although a centre party (the Liberal-SDP Alliance, later merged as the Liberal Democrats) threatened to disturb this old balance in the mid-1980s. The absence of proportional representation in Parliamentary elections does not encourage the prosperity of smaller parties in Britain. Elections must be held every five years, though the timing is at the discretion of the Prime Minister. The legislature is bicameral; the House of Commons is elected, while the House of Lords is a peculiar mixture of appointed members, judges, bishops and hereditary peers. Britain is almost unique in the world in having no written constitution, and the political and administrative machine is powered by a mixture of common and statute law, judicial decisions and archaic convention; the royal assent to an Act of Parliament, for instance, is still proclaimed in Norman French. Head of State: HM Queen Elizabeth II since 1953. Head of Government: Prime Minister Tony Blair since 1997. Recent history: Since his instalment as Prime Minister in 1997, Tony Blair has become the longest-serving Labour Premier of all time, but his tenure has been characterised by a number of controversies as well as what he would claim as achievements. Blair has enjoyed huge Parliamentary majorities for his party in the face of largely ineffective opposition from the Conservatives, who have undergone a number of leadership changes since the resignation of Margaret Thatcher in 1990, and have failed to regain power since the election defeat of 1997. It remains to be seen how the latest incumbent, David Cameron, will fare since becoming leader in December 2005. One of the principal problems facing Blair at present is the ongoing Iraq situation. His decision to support the US invasion of the Middle Eastern country deeply divided the UK, and opinion as to the wisdom of the action remains polarised. Related to events in the Middle East, terrorist attacks in July 2005 brought London to a standstill, and security continues to be tight: immigration controls are rigorous, and certain sections of both sides of the political divide are eager to introduce a system of compulsory identity cards for UK citizens, something that rubs against the grain for many people. The debate continues, and is likely to do so for some time. On the positive side, the Blair Government would claim some credit for Northern Ireland's current more or less peaceful environment, which has prevailed since the 'Good Friday Agreement' of 1998, which established the conditions for the ongoing cease-fire between the Republican and Loyalist factions. The two sides are still unable to agree on a basis for governing the Province, though, and direct rule from London is still in force. Another achievement of the Blair Government was the 1999 introduction of devolved power for Scotland and Wales, giving the two nations a far greater say in matters directly affecting their parts of the UK. Controversy has dogged even this, though, with the much feted new Scottish Parliament building in Edinburgh running vastly over budget, to the consternation of many north of the Border. Europe, and the UK's place within the EU, continues to be another source of headaches for politicians, who are deeply divided on how far the country should commit itself to the institution, and indeed the Euro. It is also uncertain whether Blair will remain as Prime Minister for the full five-year term of this Government, and speculation is rife as to when he will hand over the reins to Chancellor and Labour Party rival, Gordon Brown.

Language: English. Some Welsh is spoken in parts of Wales, Gaelic in parts of Scotland and Northern Ireland, and French and Norman French in the Channel Islands. The many ethnic minorities within the UK also speak their own languages (eg Cantonese, Greek, Hindi, Mandarin, Turkish, Urdu, etc).



Religion: Predominantly Protestant (Church of England), but many other Christian denominations also: Roman Catholic, Church of Scotland, Baptist, Methodist and other free churches. There are sizeable Hindu, Jewish and Muslim minorities.

Electricity: 240 volts AC, 50Hz. Square three-pin plugs are standard and the visitor is unlikely to come across the older round three-pin type.

SOCIAL CONVENTIONS: The Monarchy, though now only symbolic, is a powerful and often subconscious unifying force. Members of the Royal family are the subject of unceasing fascination, with their every move avidly followed and reported by the popular press, both in Britain and abroad. Handshaking is customary when introduced to someone for the first time. Normal social courtesies should be observed when visiting someone's home and a small present such as flowers or chocolates is appreciated. It is polite to wait until everyone has been served before eating. Clothing: A tie, trousers and shoes (as opposed to jeans and trainers) are necessary for entry to some nightclubs and restaurants, otherwise casual wear is widely acceptable. Use of public places: Topless sunbathing is allowed on certain beaches and tolerated in some parks. Smoking or non-smoking areas will usually be clearly marked. A complete ban on smoking in bars, restaurants, clubs, pubs and offices came into force in Scotland on 26 March 2006 and a ban is being implemented in Northern Ireland from April 2007. MPs have also voted by a huge margin to ban smoking from all pubs and private members' clubs in England. The change is expected to take effect in summer 2007. Cigarettes should not legally be sold to children under 16 years of age.

Passport/Visa

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	N/A	N/A	N/A
Australian	Yes	No	No
Canadian	Yes	No	No
USA	Yes	No	No
OtherEU	1	No	No
Japanese	Yes	No	No

PASSPORTS: Passport valid for at least three months beyond length of stay required by all except: 1. EU/EEA nationals (EU + Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway) and Swiss nationals holding a valid national ID card. Note: EU and EEA nationals are only required to produce evidence of their EU/EEA nationality and identity in order to be admitted to any EU/EEA Member State. This evidence can take the form of a valid national passport or national identity card. Either is acceptable. Possession of a return ticket, any length of validity on their document, sufficient funds for the length of their proposed visit should not be imposed.

Note: (a) A passport is not required for travel between Great Britain and Ireland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man. (b) Passengers transiting the UK destined for the Republic of Ireland are advised to hold return tickets to avoid delay and interrogation.

VISAS: Required by all except the following: (a) nationals listed in the chart above; (b) nationals of Commonwealth countries (except nationals of Bangladesh, Cameroon, Fiji, The Gambia,



Ghana, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia who do need a visa); (c) nationals of American Samoa, Andorra, Argentina, Aruba, Bolivia, Bonaire, Brazil, Chile, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Croatia, Curacao, East Timor, El Salvador, Federated States of Micronesia, French Guiana, Greenland, Guadeloupe, Guam, Guatemala, Honduras, Hong Kong (SAR), Iceland, Israel, Korea (Rep), Liechtenstein, Macau (SAR), Marshall Islands, Martinique, Mexico, Monaco, New Caledonia, Nicaragua, Niue, Norway, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Reunion, Saba, St Eustatius, St Maarten, San Marino, Switzerland, Tahiti and her Islands, Uruguay, US Virgin Islands, Vatican City (not with service and emergency passports) and Venezuela; (d) those in transit, provided arriving and departing by air within 24 hours and holding all necessary onward documentation. Important Note: Direct Airside Transit visas are required by nationals of the following countries, even if not entering the UK or changing airports during transit: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Bangladesh, Belarus, Burundi, Cameroon, China (PR), Colombia, Congo (Dem Rep), Congo (Rep), Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, India, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia & Montenegro (including documents issued by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo), Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Turkey, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Uganda, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

Note: (a) Entry clearance in the form of a passport sticker is required for all non-visa nationals and British nationals and nationals of non-EEA member states who intend to stay in the UK for more than six months. This must be obtained from a diplomatic mission before travelling. (b) Nationals not requiring visas are advised to be in possession of either a return ticket or, if arriving on a one-way ticket, proof of sufficient funds to accommodate and support themselves for the duration of stay. (c) Applicants in Bangkok (including applicants from Cambodia or Laos) applying for a visa valid for longer than six months must provide with their visa application a certificate confirming they are free from infectious tuberculosis (TB).

Types of visa and cost: Direct Airside Transit and Visitors In Transit Visa: £30. Single, Double and Multiple Visit Visa: £50. Longer Term Validity Visit Visa: £85. Handling applications on behalf of Commonwealth countries costs £30.

Validity: Direct Airside Transit: 24 hours. In Transit Visa: 48 hours. Single, Double and Multiple Visit Visa: Up to six months. Longer Term Validity Visit Visa: Anything over six months.

Application to: Nearest British Consulate (or consular section at Embassy or High Commission); see Passport/Visa Information.

Application requirements: (a) Passport valid for entire visit. (b) Passport-size photo (some nationals may require additional photos). (c) Completed application form (some nationals may be required to fill out an additional form). (d) Fee (postal applications must be accompanied by bank draft, postal or money order only). The supplementary documentation required will vary depending on the type of application, but in all cases it is advisable to also provide: (e) Evidence of funds (bank statements or pay slips) and projected food and accommodation expenses whilst in the UK. (f) Letter of invitation (if applicable). (g) Evidence of sponsor's funds (if applicable). (h) Proof of intention to leave the UK following end of allocated visit.

Working days required: Dependent on nationality of applicant. Applications usually take between one and 10 working days. Applications that are referred to the Home Office may take up to 13 weeks. Nationals should apply with plenty of time but no more than three months in advance of travel.



Note: It is possible that nationals may be asked to attend an interview in order to process their application.

Temporary residence: Enquiries can be made at nearest British Consulate, Embassy or High Commission (see Passport/Visa Information section of your country).

Passport/Visa Information: UK Visas Foreign and Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH, UK Tel: (020) 7008 8438. Website: www.ukvisas.gov.uk Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 0930-1330 British Embassy in the USA 3100 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Tel: (202) 588 7800. Website: www.britainusa.com British Consulate in the USA 845 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022, USA Tel: (212) 745 0200. Website: www.britainusa.com

4 MONEY

Note: See the individual Money sections within the Jersey, Guernsey, Isle of Man and Northern Ireland sections for information on currency specific to these regions.

Currency: Pound (GBP; symbol £) = 100 pence. Notes are in denominations of £50, 20, 10 and 5. Additional bank notes issued by Scottish banks (including £1 notes) are legal tender in all parts of the UK. Coins are in denominations of £2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 pence.

Currency exchange: Money can be exchanged in banks, exchange bureaux and many hotels. The exchange bureaux are often open outside banking hours but charge higher commission rates. All major currencies can be exchanged. Cash can be obtained from a multitude of ATMs available across the country.

Credit & debit cards: American Express, MasterCard and Visa are all widely accepted. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Traveller's cheques: Widely accepted. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in Pounds Sterling.

Currency restrictions: There are no restrictions on the import or export of either local or foreign currency.

Exchange rate indicators

Date At time of publishing \$1.00 = £0.57

Banking hours: Mon-Fri 0930-1630 (there may be some variations in closing times). Some branches of certain banks are open Saturday morning; some all-day Saturday.

5 DUTY FREE

Note: The Channel Islands are treated as being outside of the EU for the Duty Free section. The following items may be imported into the UK without incurring customs duty by travellers aged 17 years and over arriving from non-EU countries: 200 cigarettes or 100 cigarillos or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco; 2l of table wine; 1l of alcoholic beverages stronger than 22 per cent or 2l of



fortified or sparkling wine or other liqueurs; 60ml of perfume and 250ml of eau de toilette; other goods including souvenirs up to the value of £145. Goods obtained duty and tax paid in the EU are unlimited.

Prohibited/restricted items: Prohibited items include unlicensed drugs, offensive weapons, indecent and obscene material featuring children, counterfeit and pirated goods, meat, dairy and other animal products and pornography. Restricted items include firearms, explosives and ammunition, live animals, endangered species, certain plants and their produce and radio transmitters. The UK is one of the few regions of the world completely free of rabies and, until recently, all cats and dogs imported into the country had to spend six months in quarantine. To bring animals and birds into the UK, an import licence must be obtained at least six months in advance. Some animals may now qualify for the PET Travel Scheme (PETS) and can be brought into the UK without being put into quarantine. At present, this is limited to certain travel carriers and animals. Severe penalties are imposed on persons attempting to smuggle domestic animals into the country. An illegally imported animal is liable to be destroyed. For further information about importing animals, contact the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Area 207, 1A Page Street, London SW1P 4PQ (website: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine/index.htm); or the PETS helpline (tel: (0870) 241 1710; e-mail: pets.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk) or the nearest British mission abroad.

Abolition of duty free goods within the EU: On June 30 1999, the sale of duty-free alcohol and tobacco at airports and at sea was abolished in all of the original 15 EU member states. Of the 10 new member states that joined the EU on May 1 2004, these rules already apply to Cyprus and Malta. There are transitional rules in place for visitors returning to one of the original 15 EU countries from one of the other new EU countries. But for the original 15, plus Cyprus and Malta, there are now no limits imposed on importing tobacco and alcohol products from one EU country to another (with the exceptions of Denmark, Finland and Sweden, where limits are imposed). Travellers should note that they may be required to prove at customs that the goods purchased are for personal use only.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Below are listed Public Holidays for the January 2006-June 2007 period. Jan 1-2 2006 New Year's Day. Apr 14 Good Friday. Apr 17 Easter Monday (except Scotland). May 1 Early May Bank Holiday. May 29 Spring Bank Holiday. Aug 28 Summer Bank Holiday (except Scotland). Dec 25 Christmas Day. Dec 26 Boxing Day. Jan 1 2007 New Year's Day. Apr 6 Good Friday. Apr 9 Easter Monday (except Scotland). May 7 Early May Bank Holiday. May 28 Spring Bank Holiday.

Note: Public holidays are usually referred to as 'bank holidays' in the UK.

Note: Please see the individual Public Holiday sections for details of additional holidays in each country.

7 HEALTH

	Special Precautions	Certificate Required
Yellow Fever	No	No



Cholera	No	No
Typhoid and Polio	No	N/A
Malaria	No	N/A

Health care: European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland: If you or any of your dependants are suddenly taken ill or have an accident during a visit to an EEA country or Switzerland, free or reduced-cost necessary treatment is available in most cases on production of a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Each country has different rules about state medical provision. In some, treatment is free. In many countries you will have to pay part or all of the cost, and then claim a full or partial refund. The EHIC gives access to state-provided medical treatment only and the scheme gives no entitlement to medical repatriation costs, nor does it cover ongoing illnesses of a non-urgent nature, so comprehensive travel insurance is advised. Note that the EHIC replaces the Form E111, which will no longer be valid after 31 December 2005. Some restrictions apply, depending on your nationality. The National Health Service provides free medical treatment (at hospitals and general surgeries) to all who are ordinarily resident in the UK, but requires payment for dental treatment, prescriptions and spectacles. Immediate first aid/emergency treatment is free for all visitors, after which charges are made unless the visitor's country has a reciprocal health agreement with the UK. The following have signed such agreements: all EU countries (but Danish residents of the Faroe Islands are not covered), Anguilla, Australia, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Bulgaria, Channel Islands (applies only if the visitor is staying less than three months), CIS countries, Falkland Islands, Iceland, Isle of Man, Montserrat, New Zealand, Norway, Romania, Russian Federation, St Helena, Serbia & Montenegro, and Turks & Caicos Islands. The agreements provide differing degrees of exemption for different nationalities; full details of individual agreements are available from the Department of Health (website: www.dh.gov.uk).

Travel - International

AIR: The principal national airline is British Airways (BA) (tel: (0870) 850 9850; website: www.britishairways.com).

Approximate flight times: From London to Paris is one hour 15 minutes; to New York is seven hours 45 minutes; to Los Angeles is 11 hours; to Singapore is 12 hours 35 minutes; to Sydney is 21 hours 45 minutes. For approximate durations of other international flights from London, see the Travel International section of the destination country. For flights from regional airports in the United Kingdom, see Travel-International in each country section.

Main airports: See Travel International in the relevant country sections for information on UK airports.

Departure tax: None.

SEA: There are many ports offering ferry connections between the UK and mainland Europe, Ireland, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Wight, the Scilly Isles and the Isle of Man. Main ports: Dover, Harwich, Holyhead and Portsmouth. UK ferry operators include: Brittany Ferries (tel: (08703) 665 333; website: www.brittany-ferries.co.uk); Caledonian MacBrayne (tel: (0870) 650 000; website: www.calmac.co.uk); Condor Ferries (tel: (0845) 243 5140; website: www.condorferries.co.uk); DFDS Seaways (tel: (08702) 520 524; website: www.dfdsseaways.co.uk); Fjord Line (tel: (0870) 143 9669; website: www.fjordline.co.uk); Irish Ferries (tel: (08705) 171 717; website: www.irishferries.com); Isle of Man Steam Packet Co (tel:



(08705) 523 523; website: www.steam-packet.com); Isles of Scilly Travel (tel: (0845) 710 5555; website: www.islesofscilly-travel.co.uk); Norse Merchant Ferries (tel: (0870) 600 4321; website: www.norsemerchant.com); P&O Ferries (tel: (08705) 980 333; website: www.poferries.com); Red Funnel (tel: (0870) 444 8898; website: www.redfunnel.co.uk); Superfast (tel: (0870) 234 0870 or 2211 (travel agents); website: www.superfast.com); Stena Line (tel: (08705) 707 070; website: www.stenaline.com); SwanseaCork Ferries (tel: (01792) 456 116; website: www.swanseacorkferries.com); and Wightlink (tel: (0870) 582 7744; website: www.wightlink.co.uk). A map of ferry routes is available on VisitBritain's website: www.visitbritain.com.

RAIL: Trains meet connecting ferries at Dover, Newhaven, Portsmouth and Weymouth, sailing for Belgium, France, Germany and Spain (board at Victoria Station or Waterloo (for Portsmouth and Weymouth) in London); and at Harwich, sailing for Germany, The Netherlands and Scandinavia (board at Liverpool Street). See also the Channel Tunnel and Eurostar sections below.

The Channel Tunnel: Eurotunnel runs shuttle trains for cars, bicycles, motorcycles, coaches, minibuses, caravans, campervans and other vehicles over 1.85m (6.07ft) between Folkestone in Kent, with direct road access from the M20, and Calais, with links to the A16/A26 motorway (Exit 13). All road vehicles are carried through the tunnel in shuttle trains running between the two terminals. Terminals and shuttles are well-equipped for disabled passengers. Passenger Terminal buildings contain a variety of shops, restaurants, bureaux de change and other amenities. The journey takes about 35 minutes from platform to platform and around one hour from motorway to motorway. There are up to four passenger shuttles per hour at peak times, 24 hours per day and services run every day of the year. Motorists pass through customs and immigration before they board, with no further checks on arrival. Fares are charged according to length of stay and time of year and whether or not you have a reservation. The price applies to the car, regardless of the number of passengers or size of the car. Promotional deals are frequently available, especially outside the peak holiday seasons. Tickets may be purchased in advance from travel agents, or from Eurotunnel Customer Services in France or the UK with a credit card. For further information, brochures and reservations, contact Eurotunnel Customer Services UK, Customer Relations Department, Saint Martin's Plain, Cheriton, Folkestone, Kent CT19 4QD (tel: (08705) 353 535; website: www.eurotunnel.com). For further information about departure times of shuttles at the French terminal, contact Eurotunnel Customer Information in Coquelles (tel: France +33 (3) 2100 6543).

Eurostar: Eurostar is a service provided by the railways of Belgium, the UK and France, operating direct high-speed trains from London (Waterloo International) to Paris (Gare du Nord) and to Brussels (Midi/Zuid). It takes two hours 40 minutes from London to Paris (via Lille) and two hours 20 minutes to Brussels. For further information and reservations, contact Eurostar (tel: (0870) 600 0792 (travel agents) or (08705) 186 186 (public; within the UK) or +44 (1233) 617 575 (public; outside the UK); a £5 booking fee applies to all telephone bookings; website: www.eurostar.com); or Rail Europe (tel: (08705) 848 848; website: www.raileurope.co.uk). Work on the UK section of the high-speed rail line is being done in two stages. Stage 1 (from the Channel Tunnel through Kent to the outskirts of London) has been completed. Stage 2, to be completed in January 2007, will take the route to a new terminal at St Pancras. When it is completed, the transit times between London St Pancras and Brussels will be just two hours and between London St Pancras and Paris just two hours 15 minutes.

ROAD: There are numerous and excellent road links with all neighbouring countries. Eurolines (52 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0AU; tel: (08705) 143 219; website: www.eurolines.com) and National Express (Ensign Court, 4 Vicarage Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3ES; tel:



08705 808 080; website: www.nationalexpress.com) run regular coach services from the UK to numerous European cities. Passes: Travellers can either choose Mini-Pass breaks or book a 15-, 30- or 60-day pass. The six Mini-Passes give travellers the freedom to visit three cities, with prices starting from £55. Travellers can stay as long as they like in each city. Few formalities are encountered when driving between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Travel - Internal

Note: This section is a general introduction to transport within the UK. Further information is given in the individual Travel sections for England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

AIR: British Airways operates a shuttle service from London to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester and Newcastle amongst other cities. Other internal operators include: bmi (BD) (website: www.flybmi.com), flybe (BE) (website: www.flybe.com), easyJet (EZY) (website: www.easyjet.com), and Ryanair (FR) (website: www.ryanair.com). Approximate flight times: From London to Aberdeen is one hour 30 minutes; to Belfast is one hour 15 minutes; to Edinburgh is one hour 20 minutes; to Glasgow is one hour 20 minutes; to Jersey is one hour; to Manchester is 55 minutes; and to Newcastle is one hour and 10 minutes.

SEA: Information on travel to the Channel Islands, Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Scottish islands are given in the relevant Travel sections for those countries.

RAIL: The UK is served by an excellent network of railways. Intercity lines provide fast services between London and major cities, and there are services to the southeast and to major cities in the Midlands, the north and south Wales and between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Some rural areas are less well served (eg the north coast of the west country, parts of East Anglia, Northern Ireland, Northumberland and North Yorkshire, parts of inland Wales, and southern and northern Scotland), although local rail services are generally fairly comprehensive. Rail passes: There are many discretionary fares, and visitors using trains may like to consider one of the all-line BritRail range of passes giving unlimited travel. This is available to visitors from overseas and is not available in the UK; tickets must be purchased in their home country, although tickets can be collected in the UK. Further details can be obtained from BritRail (website: www.britrail.com). The Inter-Rail pass offers unlimited second-class train travel in up to 29 European countries (includes Morocco and Turkey) split into eight zones (A-H). Three different tickets are available: a ticket covering one zone (two to six countries, 16 days' validity), a ticket covering two zones (six to 10 countries, 22 days' validity) and an All Zone Pass (29 countries, one month's validity). Ferry services between Italy and Greece are included. Passengers must be resident in Europe for at least six months before the pass is used. Travel is not allowed in the passenger's country of residence. Travellers under 26 years receive a reduction of about 30 per cent. Children's tickets are reduced by about 50 per cent. Supplements are required for some high-speed services, seat reservations and couchettes. Discounts are offered on Eurostar and some ferry routes. Available from Inter Rail (website: www.interrailnet.com). For information about UK train services and fares, contact National Rail Enquiries (tel: (08457) 484 950; website: www.nationalrail.co.uk). It can be much cheaper to purchase rail tickets in advance. Disabled travellers are also entitled to discounted train fares; see the Disabled Traveller appendix.

ROAD: There are trunk roads ('A' roads) linking all major towns and cities in the UK. Roads in rural areas ('B' roads) can be slow and winding, and in upland areas may become impassable in winter. Motorways radiate from London and there is also a good eastwest and northsouth network in the north and the Midlands. The M25 motorway circles London and connects at various junctions with the M1, M3, M4, M10, M11 and M40. The only motorway that leaves



England is the M4 from London to South Wales. Access to Scotland is by the A1/A1(M) or the A68 to Edinburgh, or the M6 to Carlisle followed by the A74 to Glasgow. Within Scotland, motorways link Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth. In Northern Ireland, motorways run from Belfast to Dungannon and from Belfast to Antrim. For further information on roads within each country, see the respective Travel sections. Coach: Every major city has a coach terminus: in London, it is Victoria Coach station, about 1km (0.7 miles) from the train station. There are coach services to all parts of the country. Many coaches have onboard toilets and refreshments. Private coaches may be hired by groups wishing to tour the UK; these can be booked in advance and will visit most major tourist attractions. Many of these destinations now have coach parks nearby. The main carrier is National Express (website: www.nationalexpress.com). Traffic regulations: Traffic drives on the left. Speed limits are 30mph (48kph) in urban areas, 70mph (113kph) on motorways and dual carriageways, elsewhere 50mph (80kph) or 60mph (97kph) as marked. Unleaded petrol and diesel are sold at all petrol stations. LPG (liquified petroleum gas) is increasingly available. Seatbelts must be worn by the driver and front seat passenger. Where rear seat belts have been fitted, they must also be worn. It is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone while driving. The minimum driving age is 17. Documentation: National driving licences are valid for one year. Drivers must have Third Party insurance and vehicle registration documents. Automobile associations: The AA (website: www.theaa.com) and RAC (website: www.rac.co.uk) are able to provide a full range of services to UK members touring the UK. These organisations can also assist people who are travelling from abroad with maps, tourist information and specially marked routes to major events or places of interest.

URBAN: All cities and towns have bus services of varying efficiency and cost. Glasgow, Liverpool, London and Newcastle have underground railways. London and Glasgow's date back to the 19th century. The urban areas of Birmingham, Cardiff, Glasgow, Liverpool and Manchester are also well served by local railway trains. Manchester has an efficient modern tram service. Licensed taxi operators are generally metered; small supplements may be charged for weekends, bank holidays, excess baggage and late-night travel. In the larger cities, unlicensed operators offer a cheaper (but less efficient and knowledgeable) unmetered service with fares based loosely on elapsed clock mileage; these taxis are called mini-cabs and can be summoned by telephone.

8 ACCOMMODATION

HOTELS: These range from budget chain hotels to boutique city hotels to luxurious country house manors. Hotels tend to be more expensive in large cities, especially London. From 2006, a new common grading system comes into effect, replacing the different classification schemes formerly used by each country. This will be phased in completely by 2008.

GUEST HOUSES: There are guest houses and bed & breakfast facilities throughout the country.

SELF-CATERING: Cottages can be rented in many areas and self-catering apartments are available in cities. For information, contact the local tourist board, or consult the relevant section in local and national papers.

EDITOR'S CHOICE: The Landmark Trust (see Accommodation Information) is a charity which restores historic buildings and lets them for holidays. Among the more unusual properties are Fort Clonque, a 19th-century coastal fort on Alderney in the Channel Islands, and The Pineapple, near Falkirk in Scotland, which was built in 1761 and features a pineapple-shaped roof.



CAMPING AND CARAVANNING: There are camping and caravan sites throughout the UK, for short and long stays. Some sites hire out tents or caravans to those without their own equipment. Most sites offer basic facilities, while some have playgrounds, clubs, shops, phones and sports areas.

HOLIDAY CAMPS: These offer accommodation, food and a full range of leisure activities generally at an all-inclusive price. They provide good holidays for families, and some run babysitting and children's clubs.

YOUTH HOSTELS: There are over 300 youth hostels in the UK. Standards vary greatly, from very basic night-time accommodation for hikers and cyclists, to modern hostels and motels which are often used by families and groups. Prices are very reasonable.

ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION: VisitBritain Thames Tower, Blacks Road, Hammersmith, London W6 9EL, UK Website: www.visitbritain.com/VB3-en-gb/default.aspxThe VisitBritain's website has a comprehensive accommodation search facility.The Landmark TrustShottesbrooke, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 3SW, UKTel: (01628) 825 925.Website: www.landmarktrust.org.uk

Introduction

Details of resorts and places of interest throughout the UK may be found by consulting the respective sections for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. There are also separate sections for the individual Channel Islands (Alderney, Guernsey, Jersey and Sark & Herm) and for the Isle of Man.

9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

The United Kingdom has a wealth of sports and activities to offer visitors from classic sporting events for spectators, to opportunities for numerous outdoor pursuits. It is well known that many popular sports originated in the UK. Football, cricket, rugby, golf and tennis, to name but a few, were invented here. These sports are still avidly followed and played by many enthusiasts. For more specific information on sport in the different areas of the UK, see the individual country sections.

Spectator sports: Football is the UK's most popular spectator sport. The season lasts from August to May, and matches are played mainly at weekends. Most football clubs sell tickets in advance, though for some clubs (eg Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester United), games will be sold out months in advance. The main cricket (played strictly between April and September) and tennis tournaments are held in England, while rugby is particularly popular in Wales. Horse racing and motor racing are very popular throughout the UK, with the chance of making a fortune through the bookmakers being a major attraction. The best-known rowing and sailing regattas take place in England, and are regarded as important social events.

Golf: There are courses in every corner of the UK, from famous courses to more modest ones. A round at one of the more popular courses, such as the Old Course at St Andrews, needs to be booked well in advance.

Outdoor pursuits: Walking, mountaineering, caving, climbing and cycling are all easy to arrange. With the UK's countryside ranging from rolling fields and pleasant farmland to austere mountains, all kinds of walks are possible. There are 14 national parks and numerous other



protected natural areas in England and Wales. Further information on national parks and specific paths can be found in the individual country sections. Although nearly all land (including land in national parks) in the UK is privately owned, walkers have access to it along rights of way that are marked on maps and usually signposted. There are also areas where it is permissible to go beyond the rights of way, and these are known as 'open country'. An excellent series of maps is published by the Ordnance Survey, a government agency. Widely available and covering the whole of the UK except Northern Ireland (maps of which are published by the Ordnance Survey of Ireland), these come in different scales (1:50,000 and 1:25,000). There are many outdoor pursuits centres which offer tuition in mountaineering and watersports and organise trips. Moreover, walking is a very popular activity in the UK, and there are several influential organisations that exist to promote the interests of walkers. The Youth Hostels Association (see Accommodation section) provides a network of cheap hostels, and runs courses; The Ramblers' Association, Camelford House, 2nd Floor, 87-90 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TW (tel: (020) 7339 8500; website: www.ramblers.org.uk) produces leaflets and a very useful walk Britain annual directory (£5.99 plus postage) and organises trips and group walks.

English courses: There are many language schools where foreign students can learn English. More than 370 of these schools are inspected and approved (accredited) by the British Council under their accreditation scheme. A wide variety of courses are available, from business English to courses designed especially for young people and those studying for specific examinations. Many schools organise social programmes and accommodation with local families. Further information and advice about choosing a language course can be obtained from the British Council, Education Information Scheme, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BN (tel: (0161) 957 7755; website: www.britishcouncil.org). The British Council's overseas offices can also provide information and advice.

Entertainment

Each of the countries of the United Kingdom has its own particular national dishes and drinks, festivals and other events of interest, its own attractions for shoppers and its own nightlife and other entertainments. Details may be found by consulting the individual country sections.

Tipping: In hotels, a service charge of 10 to 12 per cent is usual, which may be added to the bill. 10 to 15 per cent is usual for restaurants and it too is often added to the bill, in which case, a further tip is not required. 10 to 15 per cent is also usual for taxi drivers and hairdressers but this is not included in the bill. There is no legal requirement to pay service charges that have been added to bills and if the service has been unsatisfactory, it may be deducted by the customer. Travellers should remember, however, that, in the UK, wage levels for catering staff are set at a deliberately low level in the expectation that tips will make up the difference.

Business

GDP: US\$2.213 trillion. Main exports: Manufactured goods, machinery and transport, chemicals, and services. Main imports: Finished manufactured goods, food, beverages, tobacco, machinery and transport equipment, chemicals, fuels, clothing and footwear. Main trading partners: Germany, USA and France.

Economy: The UK is a member of the G7 group of the world's leading industrial nations. Since the end of World War II, the UK has followed the trend among all major economies away from industrial production towards service industries, that now account for three-quarters of national income. The transition has often been painful, and although the UK is not unique in this respect most Western European economies have undergone a similar process during the past 20 years a worse situation might have occurred without the cushion of revenues from North Sea oil. The



UK's traditionally strong agricultural sector has suffered a number of serious setbacks, including two major outbreaks of disease (BSE and foot-and-mouth) which caused havoc in the industry and the loss of billions of pounds in export income. Engineering (especially of military products), chemicals, electronics, construction and textiles are the main components of the industrial sector. Among service industries, tourism, media, retail, financial services, telecommunications and computer services are the most important and have undergone rapid growth, while heavy industries have suffered relative decline. The Conservative administration of the 1980s and early 1990s was the first in Western Europe to dismantle the mixed economy of private and state-owned industries that had become the standard model for members of the EU. Many former state-owned industries including oil, telecommunications, gas and electricity, were sold to private shareholders, while the Government imposed tight fiscal controls and enacted pro-business legislation. Controls on trade and on the movement of capital were removed. The model has since been adopted throughout both the industrialised and developing worlds; it has been maintained and then extended by the Labour administration, which took office in 1997. Britain's economic performance in the last few years has been reasonable, although some cracks are beginning to show as the Government has been forced to plan for a much higher level of borrowing than anticipated. Unemployment remained stable and among the lowest in the EU at 1.43 million in 2005 (4.7 per cent of the workforce). GDP growth dropped to 1.5 per cent during 2005, rising to 1.7 per cent in the third quarter. Inflation reached 1.9 per cent, the highest in seven years. The UK's external economic relations are now dominated by the EU (which accounts for 70 per cent of all UK trade), although there are other important trade links with the USA, the Far East and with members of the Commonwealth. Nonetheless, Europe dominates the economic agenda and the overriding issue facing present and future Governments is the extent to which they are willing to integrate into the European economy. The argument is now focused on whether Britain should adopt the single European currency, the Euro. Although the economy met the necessary criteria, the Government chose not to join up when the currency was introduced in 1999. The Government has since remained firmly on the fence; while many political and business leaders favour membership, there is huge opposition in the country at large. The conclusion of the debate may be decisive to Britain's economic future.

Business Etiquette: Businesspeople are generally expected to dress smartly (suits are the norm). Appointments should be made and the exchange of business cards is customary. A knowledge of English is essential. Office hours: Mon-Fri 0900/0930-1700/1730.

Conferences/Conventions: The UK conference scene is well organised with several publications comprehensively listing every possible kind of venue (including dedicated centres, hotels, universities, football grounds, race courses, manor houses, castles and theatres). In addition, regional and local tourist boards promote their own areas vigorously. Birmingham and London have an international reputation; there are several excellent conference venues. There are other towns with facilities of near comparable size, and comprehensive back-up services are available everywhere. Bristol, Glasgow, Manchester and Newcastle are among the cities offering a variety of venues, whilst smaller towns such as Chester, Inverness, Llandudno, Salisbury and York offer uniquely attractive environments without sacrificing efficiency. The large political parties of the UK traditionally hold their conferences in seaside towns during the winter; locations include Blackpool (the famous Winter Gardens), Bournemouth and Brighton. Those looking for conventional venues will find the maximum seating capacity (19,000 persons) in London; however, if organisers wished to book Wembley Stadium they could probably do it, so, effectively, there is no upper limit. All parts of the UK are easily accessible by rail and air from London. The British Conference Destinations Directory gives brief regional details and is published by the British Association of Conference Destinations, 6th Floor, Charles House, 148-149 Great Charles Street, Birmingham B3 3HT (tel: (0121) 212 1400; website:



www.bacd.org.uk). VisitBritain has a venue search facility on its website www.visitbritain.com/business.

Commercial Information: The British Chambers of Commerce 65 Petty France, St James's Park, London SW1H 9EU, UK Tel: (020) 7654 5800. Website: www.chamberonline.co.uk

10 CLIMATE

Owing to it being an island, the UK is subject to very changeable weather. Extremes of temperature are rare but snow, hail, heavy rain and heatwaves can occur. For detailed descriptions, see Climate in the respective country sections.

Required clothing: Waterproofing throughout the year. Warm clothing is advisable at all times, and is essential for any visits to upland areas.

11 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: The Romans conquered and settled the major part of the British mainland between the first and fifth centuries AD, although their influence was limited in the northern and western regions. After their withdrawal (410-442), the island was invaded by Jutes, Saxons and Angles, who established seven kingdoms in the area south of Hadrian's Wall. Scotland and Wales remained Pictish/Celtic. By the early ninth century, Wessex had emerged as the dominant kingdom and was the spearhead of resistance to the Danish invasions, particularly during the reign of Alfred the Great. By the time of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066), England was the most highly organised state in Europe and this position was consolidated when Norman military feudal organisation was imposed by William I and his successors (notably Henry I and Henry II) after 1066. Inheritance and dynastic marriage had given England control of most of France by the 12th century, and the territorial disputes were not settled until the end of the Hundred Years' War in 1453. The 12th century also saw the conquest of Ireland, although it was never fully integrated into the political life of the mainland (see Ireland section). The constitutional history of England between the 11th and 15th centuries can be viewed in terms of the gradual expansion of the powers of the crown and the increasing efficiency and sophistication of the monarch's administration. This was a policy that often ran contrary to the interests of the aristocracy and, on many occasions, notably during the reigns of Stephen, John, Henry III, Edward II and Richard II, constitutional conflicts developed which checked or reversed the trend; indeed the last two of these were deposed to make way for a ruler whom the barons felt would be more amenable to their wishes. The deposition of Richard II and the accession of his cousin Henry IV of Lancaster ushered in 60 years of weak central government and low royal prestige (notwithstanding Henry V's outstanding victory at Agincourt in 1415 and his subsequent conquest of most of France), which culminated in the dynastic conflict known as the Wars of the Roses. The throne changed hands on six occasions between 1461 and 1485, when the Tudor Henry VII defeated the Yorkist Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth. One of the most able of English monarchs, Henry VII, managed to revive the power and prestige of the crown considerably. In 1509, his son, Henry VIII, succeeded to a state in many ways stronger and wealthier than it had ever been before. Scotland's political development during this period was dominated by largely unsuccessful royal attempts at centralisation; nevertheless, the kingdom did manage to protect its independence in the face of constant English aggression, largely as a result of the talents of the members of the House of Stuart who managed to preserve some semblance of royal authority, despite the fact



that every ruler between 1437 and 1625 came to the throne whilst a minor. Their reward came in 1603 when James VI succeeded Elizabeth I of England (see below). Wales remained as a Principality during this time, occasionally united and usually very much at the mercy of English political ambitions. The Tudor period in England (1485-1603) witnessed several important developments: the re-establishment of central power, the break with Rome under Henry VIII, the beginnings of overseas expansion, the union of England and Wales and the flowering of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. In retrospect, possibly the most important development was the remarkable growth of the power of Parliament. Accustomed since its slightly hazy beginnings in the baronial revolts of the 1260s to representing grievances and particularly as a consequence of Edward III's urgent need for money to fight the French granting taxation, the institution acquired a new purpose in the 1530s. Henry VIII used it as a vehicle for passing the Act of Supremacy and other legislation pertaining to the break with Rome, thus giving Parliament the prestige and self-confidence to interfere in and influence the affairs of state, which it never lost. Elizabeth I was succeeded by her cousin James VI of Scotland, although the formal union of the countries was not effected until 1707. The increasing power of Parliament (see above) was to prove a more effective force in curtailing the power of the crown than the medieval barons had been, and the English Civil War in the 1640s proved how real and effective this power had become: the conflict finally ended with the dramatic and, to most contemporaries, horrific spectacle of the execution of Charles I in 1649 and the establishment of a confused series of republics and protectorates during the English Revolution (1649-1660). Despite the prodigious wealth of political ideas which surfaced in this period ranging from the re-establishment of the monarchy under Oliver Cromwell to the creation of an Evangelical Republic to prepare for the imminently expected Second Coming by 1660, the Revolution had run out of viable ideas and Charles II was invited back almost on his own terms. Amazingly, within 20 years he almost managed to assert absolutism, although this opportunity finally disappeared with the abdication and flight of the unpopular (and Catholic) successor, his brother James II. On this occasion, Parliament made no mistake, inviting (this time on their terms) the Protestant William III of Orange to take the crown in 1689. From this date on, the powers of the crown became severely curtailed: his successor, Queen Anne, was the last monarch to refuse the royal assent to an Act of Parliament. The 18th century saw Great Britain's (so-called after 1707) emergence as a major colonial and industrial power, mainly at the expense of France, in such conflicts as the Seven Years' War. The American colonies were lost in 1776, but eventual victory in the Napoleonic Wars confirmed British naval supremacy. By this time, Great Britain was one of the world's leading military and industrial powers, having spearheaded techniques in almost every field of production during the Industrial Revolution. While the growth of the colonies provided markets and sources of raw materials, the demographic increase gave the new industries a ready supply of cheap labour, and the explosion of urban wealth and population was probably the most dramatic social change since the introduction of feudalism. Great Britain and Ireland were formally united in 1801 under the name of the United Kingdom. The long reign of Victoria (1837-1901) is associated with the period of greatest British involvement, conquest, evangelisation and overseas settlement, as well as further domestic economic and demographic growth. At the height of empire, Britain ruled vast tracts of the globe. The legacy of empire still continues today with problems and conflicts worldwide that can be directly attributed to the drawing of national borders, not on national or ethnic lines, but as a result of colonial expansion at the dictate of commercial gain. World War I, in which Britain suffered heavy losses, marked the end of the old system of European and colonial empires and was followed in Britain by a depression, the first signs of a relative economic decline that is still evident to this day. Relations between Britain and Ireland, never good, flared into civil war in 1916, and all but the six, largely Protestant, northeastern counties became independent in 1921. The colonial possessions were given up after the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II and, since then, the outlook of the UK has been dominated by European concerns, although British influence (often covert) in the ex-colonies remains strong. Certain vestiges of the empire, such as the Falkland Islands, Hong Kong and



Gibraltar, have caused varying degrees of friction with other states. After World War II, the empire was effectively finished: the opposition of the USA, which had now assumed the mantle of the world's principal power, saw to that. At home, the Liberal Party was challenged, and quickly overtaken, as the main opposition to the Conservative Party by the Labour Party, which had its roots in the organised labour movement which grew up around the turn of the century. Labour formed its first government under Ramsay MacDonald in 1924. After a wartime coalition government of national unity with both Labour and Conservative represented under Winston Churchill between 1940 and 1945 Labour and Conservative have exerted a two-party stranglehold on the government of the UK. The Labour government of 1945-51 was significant for major reforms of the health, education, housing and social service systems. The consensus started to break down in the 1970s as economic stagnation, endemic inflation and a growing trade deficit made it clear to many that the post-war prescriptions were no longer valid or relevant. It was against this background, and the decline of traditional manufacturing industries, that Margaret Thatcher came to power at the head of a government in 1979. The 1980s were a decade characterised by radical domestic policies of privatisation and deregulation of state-owned industries and public bodies. (These have since become standard features of economic reforms across the globe.) Thatcher went on to win general elections in 1983 and 1987. Her finest hour was the military victory over the Argentinians in the South Atlantic War of 1982. However, Thatcher always courted controversy in her policies and her years in government are either seen as triumphant or troubling, depending on the Briton. As Prime Minister, she abolished free milk for schoolchildren under seven years old; employment figures rose (almost doubling in her first term); she advocated Poll Tax; refused full economic integration with Europe; and actively reduced the power of trade unions. Her eventual political demise in November 1990 came not from a decision of the electorate, however, but from worries within her own Conservative Party about the electoral consequences of her policies. The immediate inheritance of her successor, former Chancellor of the Exchequer John Major, was Thatcher's agreement to participate in the US-led UN coalition formed to oust the Iraqis from their military occupation of Kuwait. Approximately 30,000 British service personnel eventually took part in this successful operation in early 1991. Iraq has been a continuous foreign policy migraine for successive British governments (see below). However, so has been the evolution of Britain's position in the European Union. The Maastricht agreement of 1992 took European integration far beyond the original conception of a common market, introducing major policies to harmonise legislation in the areas of social policy, immigration, policing and finance. The British were highly sceptical of some elements of the Maastricht package and negotiated exemptions from its provisions. The Conservatives unexpectedly won another general election victory in April 1992, albeit with a reduced majority. The opposition Labour Party, despairing at the prospect of more than 15 years out of office, embarked on a major overhaul of its policies and public image under the leadership of a new leader Tony Blair. By 1997, 'New Labour' was ready. The Conservatives were stale, bereft of ideas and dogged by 'sleaze' a seemingly endless series of financial and personal scandals. The Labour victory in May 1997 was no surprise, (although the size of their majority, over 100, was). The Conservative party has since experienced a taste of the political wilderness. Wracked by in-fighting and seemingly unable to produce a coherent strategy, it was in little better shape after another crushing defeat at 2001 poll, though it did manage to reduce Labour's majority in 2005. The party's future now lies with new leader David Cameron, who was elected in late 2005 following the third leadership battle in four years. Party members and Conservative MPs hope the relatively inexperienced and youthful leader (he was elected to Parliament in 2001 and was chosen as leader before his 40th birthday) will reinvigorate the party and appeal to a wider spectrum of voters. Although the Blair government has run into some difficulties, it has been sustained by a steady economic performance. Progress on the main domestic policies emphasised by the leadership, health and education, has been patchy. The Government's failure to tackle the historic legacy of neglect and under-investment in public services (especially transport) is now becoming a serious problem. And, in an ironic reflection of its Conservative



predecessor, the Blair government has been dogged by a series of financial and personal scandals. The most important economic decision facing the government whether or not to join the 'eurozone', which has now been in operation throughout most of the EU for 4 years has been consistently ducked. By early 2004, having espoused its support for entry when conditions were appropriate, the government pulled away from any prospect of entry in the near future. If Britain does ever join, it is now likely to be at least a decade from now. Among its principal achievements has been the introduction of a working system of devolution for Wales and Scotland, which now have their own assemblies for a wide range of domestic powers. The government has also invested much time and effort in the Northern Ireland peace process but the mutual hostility between loyalists and nationalists has proved exceptionally difficult to overcome. At present, the process is in abeyance after local elections in the autumn of 2003 returned the Democratic Unionist Party as the main representative of the protestant/loyalist population and Sinn Fein as the main catholic/nationalist party. For the time being, the province is being ruled directly from London. What is reasonably certain, however, is that there will be no return to violence which scarred the province for over a quarter of a century. By the beginning of 2004, it was the foreign policy arena that was causing the greatest problems for the government. The British allied themselves firmly to the US strategy of seeking a means to dispose - once and for all - the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. In the largest troop deployment since the Second World War, the British invaded and occupied the southern region of Iraq, centred on the city of Basra. The nation was deeply divided: the strength of opposition was evident from the largest demonstrations ever seen in Britain, and many people felt that the government deliberately over-exaggerated the threat posed by Saddam and his 'weapons of mass destruction', plus Hussein's supposed connections with Al-Qaeda, now widely disputed. Moreover, many Labour Party members were, and are, unhappy at the close critics say 'fawning' relationship between Blair and US president Bush. The British-controlled zone of Iraq has proved more manageable than the American regions in the centre of the country, and British troops have not, by and large, suffered the level of attacks experienced by their allies. There were fears of an escalation in death and violence for Britons involved in the Iraqi region when the Black Watch troops were deployed in Camp Dogwood, near Baghdad, where five soldiers died. Many breathed a collective sigh of relief when 200 troops were returned home in time for Christmas. However, there is still a long way to go before British troops can be pulled out of Iraq completely. The debate surrounding this issue - whether or not to pull British troops out of Iraq - only escalates. A recent event in London will probably prove pivotal in underscoring the urgency in which the issue must be addressed, even if the event has done nothing to unify opinion. On July 7 2005, London was the scene of a horrific terrorist attack, the worst on its soil for roughly 60 years. At the height of rush-hour, when commuters rush to work in their hordes, ever-reliant upon London's public transport system, three explosions on London's Underground network and one explosion on a London double-decker bus injured hundreds and killed 52. Three co-ordinated and simultaneous bombs detonated on London's 'tube' trains at Edgware Road, King's Cross and Liverpool Street. An hour later, a bomb exploded on a bus whilst it was travelling through Tavistock Square, near Russell Square. Scenes of carnage were broadcast worldwide and initiated a wave of panic and fear, with jittery Londoners choosing to travel by taxi instead. The whole of Central London was forced into an eerie standstill: with the Underground system suspended, people ordered off buses, and many mainline train services cancelled or heavily delayed, surreal footage showed huge crowds of people being forced to make their own way back home, walking defiantly along motorways, A Roads and busy London thoroughfares. However, within 24 hours, Londoners were bravely facing the commute once again, defying the terror that the terrorists sought to inflict. Although clearly shaken up, it had been a week of much pride for London and the UK: on the previous Sunday, Bob Geldof and co staged a huge concert in Hyde Park, watched by billions worldwide, as part of Make Poverty History, a campaign to highlight global destitution and starvation, particularly in Africa; meanwhile, and deliberately timed so, Gleaneagles in Scotland had been the host of the G8 summit; and London also won the Olympics bid, all set to stage the



huge sporting event in 2012, despite an overall assumption that the city would lose out to Paris at the final hurdle. Such triumphs and victories seemingly helped to imbue the British population with a determination to carry on as usual, and keep both calm and a sense of humour - this was shown by UK and European shares quickly recovering within a few hours upon onset of attack. Meanwhile, investigation into the explosions began to get underway. An Al-Qaeda splinter group immediately claimed responsibility on their website but such claims are still being validated. Evidence pinpointed to the attacks being the work of suicide bombers - the UK's first - with four suspects confirmed, three from West Yorkshire, of Pakistani Muslim origin, one from Aylesbury, of Jamaican origin (he had grown up in West Yorkshire). Police investigation is still underway. However, enough time now seems to have passed for people to begin questioning the 'War on Terrorism', what it involves and what it shall involve. For some, this event on British soil will have strengthened the resolve to fight against those who threaten democratic society, however disparate and diffuse such an 'enemy' may be. For others, the London explosions will have only highlighted for them how ineffectual the War on Iraq has been, and how those who perpetuate such wars only serve to create new, second-generation terrorists through devastating 'collateral damage' and poorly handled sanctions. In November 2005, Blair suffered his first defeat in the Commons over a proposal to allow police to hold terrorist suspects without charge for 90 days instead of the current 14. Instead, MPs (including 49 Labour rebels) voted for a 28-day limit. Many now doubt Blair's authority and question his ability to push his proposed public service reforms through Parliament. Although he plans to stand down no earlier than 2008, there are calls among party members and some MPs for him to step aside sooner and allow Gordon Brown (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) to establish himself as leader well before the next election.

Government: The United Kingdom is an hereditary monarchy, with real power being held by the Prime Minister, who is the leader of the largest parliamentary party and the head of the Cabinet. The two main political parties are the Conservatives (Tories) and Labour, although a centre party (the Liberal-SDP Alliance, later merged as the Liberal Democrats) threatened to disturb this old balance in the mid-1980s. None of the major British parties holds seats in Northern Ireland, where the political map is carved up between Unionist and Nationalist parties. Scotland and Wales return a handful of Nationalist MPs. The absence of proportional representation in parliamentary elections does not encourage the prosperity of smaller parties in Britain. Elections must be held every five years, though the timing is at the discretion of the Prime Minister. The legislature is bicameral; the House of Commons is elected, while the House of Lords is a peculiar mixture of appointed members, judges, bishops and hereditary peers. Britain is almost unique in the world in having no written constitution, and the political and administrative machine is powered by a mixture of common and statute law, judicial decisions and archaic convention; the royal assent to an Act of Parliament, for instance, is still proclaimed in Norman French.

Travel Advice

Most visits to the UK are trouble-free but you should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate international terrorist attacks, which could be against civilian targets, including places frequented by foreigners. This advice is correct at time of publishing. As the situation can change rapidly, **visitors are advised to contact the following organisations for the latest travel advice:** US Department of State Website: <http://travel.state.gov/travel> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in your home country.

Top Things To See & Do

Details of resorts and places of interest throughout the UK may be found by consulting the respective sections for England, the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. There is



also a separate section for the individual Channel Islands (Alderney, Guernsey, Jersey and Sark & Herm).

OverviewII

Despite its relatively small size, the United Kingdom is one of the most culturally diverse countries on Earth, peopled by four main 'native' nationalities, plus later arrivals from all over the world. The United Kingdom consists of Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales), plus the six counties of Northern Ireland. The Isle of Man and the Channel Islands (principally Jersey and Guernsey) are also parts of the British Isles, but somewhat confusingly not officially part of **the UK. Topographically, the British mainland is broadly divisible into two main regions:** the relatively low-lying south and the highland regions of the north and west. Scotland, Wales, and the northern areas of England occupy the latter, which are in general much more sparsely populated than the more prosperous south east of England. London is perennially the principal British attraction for overseas visitors, with its historic landmarks such as Parliament, Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral and the Tower of London. They also flock to the many West End theatres and the shopping areas of Knightsbridge, Oxford Street and Regent Street. Within easy day-trip distance of London are the university cities of Oxford and Cambridge, the picturesque Cotswolds with their many pretty villages, Stratford-upon-Avon (home of William Shakespeare), the cathedral at Canterbury and the seaside attractions of Brighton. Further afield lie delights like Cornwall (to the southwest), Yorkshire, Durham, Northumberland and Cumbria (a large part of which constitutes the Lake District). Wales adjoins England to the west, and offers, in addition to its populous southern cities, a diverse range of historic castles, spectacular coastline and impressive mountain landscapes. The majority of Scotland's population lives in the busy central belt, a lowland region in which the main centres of Glasgow, Stirling, and Scottish capital Edinburgh, lie. But equally as popular as the cities is the dramatic scenery of the Highlands to the north and west, location of Britain's highest mountains and a bewildering array of offshore islands, notably Skye, Orkney and Shetland. Halfway to Ireland in the Irish Sea sits the Isle of Man, a scenic island with Norse traditions. And west again is Northern Ireland, whose vibrant capital Belfast is a lively option for the visitor. North of the city are the spectacular Antrim Glens, while to the west is the lush 'lakeland' of Fermanagh. The Channel Islands are closer to France than England, situated a short distance off the Normandy coastline.

Communications

Telephone: Country code: 44. There are numerous public call boxes. Some boxes take coins, others phonecards or credit cards.

Mobile telephone: Roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone operators. Coverage is mostly good, but can be patchy in rural areas.

Internet: There are Internet cafes and centres in most urban areas. Some multimedia phone booths, often located at main railway stations and airports, offer touch-screen access.

Post: Stamps are available from post offices and many shops and stores. There are stamp machines outside some post offices. Post boxes are red. First-class internal mail normally reaches its destination the day after posting (except in remote areas of Scotland), and most second-class mail the day after that. International postal connections are good. Post office hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1730 and Sat 0900-1230, although some post offices are open much longer hours.

MEDIA: The UK has a strong tradition of public-service broadcasting and an international reputation for creative programme-making. The BBC began daily radio broadcasts in 1922 and

