

## **GREAT BRITAIN**

Great Britain (official name — the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) is situated on two large islands, the largest of which is Great Britain, the smaller is Ireland. In addition to these two islands Great Britain includes over five hundred small islands. The total area of Great Britain is 240,000 sq. kms, its population is over 63,000,000 people.

In the north-west and west the country is washed by the Atlantic Ocean and the Irish Sea, in the east by the North Sea. The island of Great Britain is separated from France by the English Channel. Northern Ireland, which is a part of Great Britain and which is situated on the island of Ireland, is separated from Great Britain by the North Channel.

The island of Great Britain is divided into two parts: mountainous (in the north and west of the island) and lowland (in the south and east) There are no very long rivers in Great Britain. The most important rivers are the Thames (the deepest) and the Severn (the longest). The rivers seldom freeze in winter. Due to the moderating influence of the sea Great Britain has an insular climate, rather humid and mild, without striking discrepancy between seasons.

Great Britain consists of four main parts: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Administratively Great Britain is divided into 55 counties. The biggest cities of Great Britain are London, Birmingham, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh, and Cardiff. England is the largest part of Great Britain (it occupies over 50% of the territory and its population amounts to 83 % of the total population of Great Britain). Wales is a peninsula in the south-west of the island of Great Britain. It occupies about 9 % of its territory with the population of 4.8 % of the total population. Scotland is the most northern part of Great Britain with a territory of 32 % of the total territory and with a population of 9 % of the total population of Great Britain. Northern Ireland occupies the north-east part of the island of Ireland. Its territory amounts to 5.2 % of the total territory of Great Britain. The main cities of Northern Ireland are Belfast and Londonderry.

The Welsh have their own language. However, many Welsh people do not know Welsh, and English is spoken by everyone in Wales. Scotland and Ireland also have their own languages, but these are rarely spoken and English is known by everyone there.

Great Britain is a parliamentary monarchy, officially the head of state is the Queen (or the King). However, the power of the Queen in Great Britain is not absolute. She acts only on the advice of the ministers and Parliament. There is no written constitution in Great Britain. The main principles of British legislation are expressed in other documents, like "Magna Charta", Habeas Corpus Act, "Bill of Rights", the Parliamentary Act which decided the position of the House of Lords, and the Judicature Act. British legislation does not provide written guarantees of individual political rights.

Parliament in Great Britain has existed since 1265 and is the eldest Parliament in the world. It consists of two Houses — the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The House of Lords consists of 1000 peers who are not elected by the

people. The House of Commons is a nation-wide representative body which is elected by the people at a general election, within 5 years of the last election. After the general election the Queen appoints the head of the government — the Prime Minister. As a rule the Prime Minister is the leader of the party that has won the election. The Prime Minister appoints the ministers to make up the government.

There are two main political parties in Great Britain: the Conservative party and the Labour party. The Conservative party came into being in the 19th century as a result of the evolution of the Tory party. The Labour party was founded in 1900 but since 1906 it has borne the name of the Labour Party. The Labour Party won the election for the first time in 1945.

Great Britain is a highly-developed industrial country. The main fields of British industry are machine-building, ship-building, metallurgy, and electronics.