

---

**TEXT 3: About England**

England perhaps differs from the other countries of the UK in that it is much harder to identify culture that is specifically English rather than British. This can be seen in some of the responses given which range from Morris Dancing (distinctly English) through to attitudes and activities that could relate to anywhere in the UK and probably many other countries – for example a love of eating out but an over reliance on junk food!

'Nostalgia, living in the past on previous successes, parochial.'

'Morris dancing, football, football hooligans, beer louts, pretty country.'

'Traditions, architecture, history, the Royal family, museums and galleries, sport, pop music, fashion, the BBC.'

'Annual 2 week holidays, small homes with small gardens, love of pets, openness and intimacy with partners...high percentage of single parent families. Families are very child focussed and children are given rights which in other countries would be accorded adults only.'

Love of eating out, clubbing and boozing. Little interest in (learning) other world languages but love of other cultures' food. English people it seems don't make for very good cooks and eat junk food a lot...Being young is perhaps seen as more desirable than being 35+.'

'Westminster, the English language, international power.'

'Very diverse in terms of values, living standards and interests...There is a wealth of activities to keep us busy. Surprised and delighted that reading seems to be getting a look in these days...We are more open to different culinary experiences, and this is a passive as well as an active interest – I love this. I feel that a lack of community has led to massive interest in reality shows as we don't often have local drama to push our noses in. We love to see dysfunctional behaviour in others and act as moralists. We are personality/celebrity obsessed and this brings out the judgmental in us.'

'English culture is generally quite anti-establishment – there's a big tradition in our arts that attempts to question and challenge authority. Even in the language, there's a playful attitude – puns, irony, sarcasm. We like one thing to mean a lot. Musically, it's where a lot of innovation happens – new forms, experiments. Social life is similar. There's an attitude to drinking etc. that isn't very healthy – going against common sense – binge drinking and talking about binge drinking.'

'Culture is all pervasive and almost impossibly diverse in England. There are thousands of forms of cultural pursuit, many of which we pursue to globally recognised levels. For me, the most important elements are film and television, music, sport and architecture.'

## **TEXT 4 – About Northern Ireland**

### **Where it is**

Northern Ireland is part of the UK but is physically separated from mainland England, Wales and Scotland by the wild and sometimes treacherous Irish Sea. Northern Ireland has sea to the north and east, and borders the Republic of Ireland on the west and south, making it the only UK country with a European border.

Unsurprisingly these physical characteristics affect the mindset of its population, and it is not unusual to find some people who feel simultaneously a UK citizen, and Irish citizen and a European citizen. Alternatively, others shun their UK identity and embrace their Irishness, and many others insist on being 'British' and ignore their Irish neighbours.

In a population of 1.5 million nearly 60% are under 40, making it a country with an influential youth culture.

### **Religion and identity**

Identity tends to be polarised according to the religious divide – Protestants tend to see themselves as 'British' and part of the UK (except when the Irish rugby team is in action and allegiance conveniently switches!), and Catholics tend to embrace the Irish identity and an all-Ireland ethos. As with any such sweeping statement there are many exceptions to the rule, and Northern Ireland is home to many people of other religions and cultural identities. There are also a huge number of people from both the Protestant and Catholic communities who value each other as friends and fellow citizens, and to whom religion takes a back seat.

### **Language**

In common with the UK, people in Northern Ireland speak English (with a distinctive, hard to mimic accent). There also exist the lesser-used languages of Irish and Ulster Scots and many associated cultural activities.

### **Political devolution**

Northern Ireland shares the Westminster government with the UK but has had its own devolved Assembly, currently suspended, with local control over various issues including education and arts. The population waits for local politicians to come to agreement so that the Assembly can be reinstated as independence from Westminster is valued.

### **Stereotypes**

Stereotypical images of Northern Ireland often centre on its troubled and violent past: bombs, shootings, brutality, along with the more positive: building the Titanic, the Giants Causeway World Heritage Site, linen industry and musicians such as Snow Patrol..

## **Text 5 – About Wales**

Wales is a land of rugby, singing and beautiful scenery situated on the western side of the UK. Its population is just under three million which is about 5% of the total UK population. The main cities are Cardiff, the capital city, Swansea, and Newport.

Wales was ruled directly from London until 1999 when the first elections to the Welsh National Assembly were held. The Assembly has some powers specific to people in Wales and can make decisions on areas such as education and health. Wales remains part of the UK and Members of Parliament (MPs) from Welsh constituencies continue to have seats in the UK Parliament at Westminster. Laws passed by Parliament in Westminster still apply to Wales.

### **Language**

The Welsh language is probably the most important thing that distinguishes Wales from the rest of the UK. Welsh (or Cymraeg) is one of Europe's oldest languages and is spoken by one in five Welsh people. This number doubles among children and teenagers which shows that the language is very much alive among the young.

Road signs and other signs are in both English and Welsh. The language is at its strongest along the Llyn Peninsula in North-West Wales, where 75 per cent of the population speak Welsh.

Towns, villages, and cities in Wales often have both a Welsh and an English name and Wales is home to one of the longest place names in the world –

Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch which means St Mary's (Church) by the white aspen over the whirlpool, and St Tysilio's (Church) by the red cave!

### **Sport and culture**

Wales is also known for its 'Eisteddfodau' which are festivals celebrating Welsh language, art, culture, and heritage and which include an eclectic mix of music, dance, drama, debate and cultural competitions. Most people know of the annual National Eisteddfod which is held alternately in North and South Wales and the International Eisteddfod, which is held in Llangollen, but there are Eisteddfodau of varying sizes held in towns and villages throughout the land.

The national sport is very much rugby union, and the national team are sometimes known as the Dragons as a red dragon appears on the national flag of Wales. The home ground is the Millennium Stadium at Cardiff Arms Park in Cardiff.

## **TEXT 6 - Living in Scotland**

### **Where it is**

Scotland is the UK's most northern country and has around 790 islands off its coasts – 130 of which have people living on them. Scotland is well known for its stunning landscapes, beautiful beaches and lochs, which are fresh water lakes. There are over 600 square miles of lochs in Scotland including the most famous one, Loch Ness.

It has a population of just over five million people which is about 8.5 per cent of the whole UK population. Over 2 million of these live in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and almost half of Scotland's population live in the Central Belt, where both the largest city (Glasgow) and the capital city (Edinburgh) are located.

### **Festivals and music**

Scotland also hosts one of the biggest arts festivals in the world. This is commonly known as the Edinburgh Festival but is actually made up of a number of different festivals which happen at different times of the year, though many do take place in August and September. Many people have heard of the Fringe Festival, but there are also the International Festival, the Film Festival, the Children's Festival and the Edinburgh Mela which is an intercultural festival.

Musically it has recently produced bands Travis and Franz Ferdinand and other famous Scots include Ewan McGregor, Sean Connery and JK Rowling.

### **Political devolution**

In July 1999 the Scottish Parliament was opened, the first for over 300 years as Scotland had been governed from London. Scottish Parliamentary responsibilities include health, education and local government.

### **Stereotypes**

Stereotypical images of Scotland often focus on things like tartan, kilts, heather and haggis as well as the scenery. These are all still a part of the country, but contemporary Scotland is building a name for itself in other areas, such as its thriving computer games industry.