

PRESENTATION OF SCOTLAND



The Scottish flag

GEOGRAPHY OF SCOTLAND

Scotland is located in the Northwest part of Europe, in the Northern half of the island of Great Britain. It is one of the four countries that form the United Kingdom. Its population is about 5,254,800 inhabitants. The size of the land of Scotland is 78,772 square kilometres. The capital is Edinburgh, but the most populous city is Glasgow with about 600 000 inhabitants. Scotland has coasts on the North Sea to the East, the Atlantic Ocean to the West and the Irish Sea to the Southeast. Its only land border is with England in the South.



A map of Scotland



View of Edinburgh

Scotland also includes several islands ; the most famous are the Hebrides on the West coast and the archipelagoes of Orkney and Shetland in the North of the mainland. The North

of Scotland has many mountains, and few people live there : in this area there are the Highlands, a part of Northwest Scotland which crosses Scotland in a nearly straight line from Helensburgh to Stonehaven.



The Hebrides



Lowlands and Highlands

Most people live in the lowlands (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee) or around the coast. The South of the central belt is called « the Southern Uplands », a hilly place. On the West coast and in the North there are a lot of islands. The highest mountain in Scotland is Ben Nevis, which is also the highest mountain in the British Isles. Scotland is also famous for its freshwater lakes called « lochs » such as Loch Lomond, Loch Tay or Loch Ness with its famous legends.



The Loch Ness



View of the centre of Glasgow

The weather of Scotland doesn't differ very much from other areas in Great Britain but it is a bit cloudier, wetter, windier and the average temperatures are lower, especially in the North. So one can say that the weather in Scotland is very changeable and depending on the season, altitude and region, there can be big differences. In summer temperatures do not exceed 20 degrees.

The flag of Scotland is blue with a white diagonal cross. This is the cross of Saint Andrew, who is the patron saint of Scotland. Some other symbols used for Scotland are a thistle, and a rampant lion.



Royal Banner of Scotland

HISTORY OF SCOTLAND

The history of Scotland begins around 1,800 years ago, when humans first began to live in Scotland after the end of the last ice age. Then, in the first century, the Romans invaded what is now England and Wales, called "Britannia". In the North was "Caledonia", a land not owned by the Romans. Its people were the Picts. In the fifth and in the sixth centuries those Picts settled in Scotland, followed by the Anglo-Saxons, who arrived from England. In the eighth and in the ninth centuries the Vikings attacked the country and controlled the western shore of Scotland.

In 1296 Scotland was annexed by Edward I, the king of England. In 1314 Robert Bruce, who was the king of Scotland, won the battle of Bannockburn. As a consequence, Scotland became independent fourteen years later. In the fifteenth century, the Lowlanders dissociated themselves from the Highlanders.



Edward I



Robert Bruce

In 1603, thanks to King James VI of Scotland, who became James I of England, the two countries were united. The symbol of Scotland (the Thistle) and the symbol of England (the Rose) were combined during James' reign.



The Thistle and the Rose combined



James I

In 1707, the Act of Union was signed between England and Scotland.

In the 18th century, it was the Industrial Revolution and the Scottish Age of Enlightenment. But after, there was a famine and a lot of Scots were obliged to leave their country.

In 1930, Scotland was also affected by the economic crisis.

Due to the discovery of oil and natural gas in the North Sea, a lot of Scottish people would like to be independent. In 2011 the Scottish National Party, which wants the independence of Scotland, won the regional elections and promised a referendum on the independence of Scotland.

SCHOOL IN SCOTLAND

In Scotland, most schools are secular schools but there are also Catholic schools.

When they are five years old, children begin their schooling and go to primary school for seven years, starting in P1 (Primary 1) and going up to P7. In primary schools desks are organized in clusters. Scottish pupils study five and a half hours a day and 27 and a half hours a week. Pupils go to school from 9 a.m to 3:30 p.m. At school, they learn English, mathematics, biology, chemistry, history, physics, geography, technology, religious education, physical education, music, arts and a foreign language like French.

The school year begins in mid-August and ends at the end of June.



*Desks organized in clusters
in a primary Scottish school*

After primary school, pupils have six years of secondary school from S1 (Secondary 1) to S6. All the pupils are obliged to go for the first four years of secondary school ; the next two years are optional. After classes S3 and S4, which are called "Standard Grade", pupils must take an exam. Secondary schools in Scotland are also known as high schools or academies. Then, some pupils do two more years to take another exam. A class is about 45 minutes long.

Uniforms are required. However, students are allowed to come without uniforms once or twice a term. Pupils have a different uniform according to the school where they study.



Scottish uniforms

Pupils get percentage marks. When they have more than ninety percent, they have a very good mark ! When they have less than forty percent, they have a bad mark.

EVERYDAY LIFE

Scottish everyday life is quite similar to every-day life in England because it is a British country. Most Scots work from 9 a.m to 5 p.m. They eat early in the evening and like going to pubs. Some pubs do not serve meals after 8 p.m and it is difficult to find an open shop in the center of Glasgow after 6 p.m !



A Scottish pub in Glasgow

Scotland is well-known for several typical meals such as haggis, which is savoury pudding containing sheep's pluck (heart, liver, and lungs), minced with onion, oatmeal, suet, spices, and salt, mixed with stock, and cooked. There is also the famous beef called « Aberdeen Angus », stovies, which are a mixture of potatoes and meat, cullen skink, which is a thick soup made of smoked finnan haddock, milk, onions, and potatoes and to finish Cranachan, which is a lovely Scottish dessert with oats, raspberries, cream and whisky ! The national drink is, of course, whisky but the Scots like drinking beers such as Lager, ale or stout, which is a black beer, tea and coffee. In Scotland we can find a lot of tearooms or coffee shops.



Haggis on a platter



Labels of different Scottish whiskies

The weather is usually cold, so Scottish people don't mind the cold. Few houses are equipped with double glazing windows. Many festivities take place outside despite the weather and the rain ! For example, it is in Edinburgh that we can find the Fringe, which is the largest arts festival in the world. There are also street food festivals everywhere in the town, and shows in the Royal Mile, even if the weather is rainy !



The Fringe

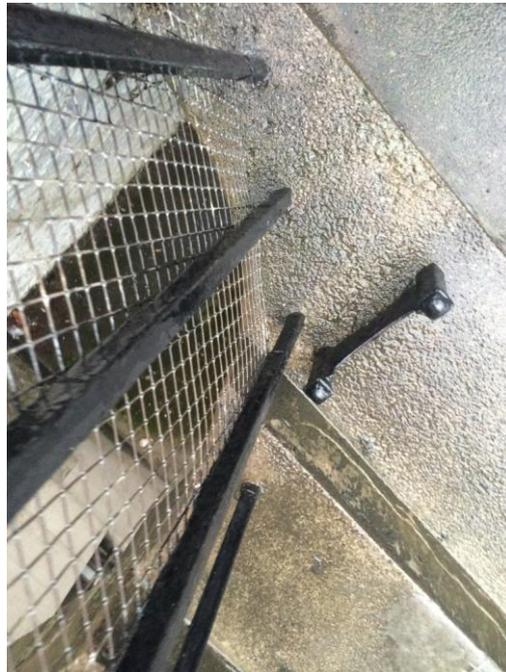


Scottish Street Food Festival

The Scots also have some strange habits ! For example, there aren't letterboxes. Pedestrians cross the crossroads diagonally. Pillows have a rectangular form. Scottish people use sorts of « scratch dropping » to clean the soles of their shoes !



a rectangular pillow



a "scratch dropping"

To finish, we can speak about the kilt, which is a traditional garment worn by Highlanders in the eighteenth century. Nowadays, the kilt is worn by Scottish men for special occasions like marriages. But some people wear it every day !



The kilt

SPORTS

Scotland is a wonderful country for people who like doing sports outside ! There are famous sports in Scotland like tennis, football, golf, rugby (seven or fifteen), cycling and two lesser-known sports, which are curling and shinty.

Football is the number one sport in Scotland.

Golf has been played in Scotland for more than six centuries. Indeed, golf was born in Scotland. The first courses, clubs and even rules of golf were established there. So it's hardly surprising that it's one of the favorite pastimes of the Scots.

Scotland is also a paradise for cyclists ! There's so much to explore : historic towns, idyllic villages, beautiful countryside and breath-taking coastline and some of the most spectacular scenery in the world. And this rugged landscape is perfect for mountain biking, too.

Curling is an exciting game that requires absolute precision. Players use continuous movement from a long-handled brush to slide stones across the ice. The object is to get closest to the circular target.

Shinty is a fast and physical game where players have to score using a small ball in leather and a caman which is a curved wooden stick. In men's shinty, there are 12 players on each team, including one goalkeeper. Each player uses the caman to hit the small ball. Ice hockey was born when the Scottish immigrant population of Nova Scotia in Canada adapted the game of shinty on ice !



Shinty



Cycling in Scotland

