





# BRITAIN: THREE COUNTRIES IN ONE

STORY BY THEODORE FISCHER

**BRITAIN, A 93,000-SQUARE-MILE ISLAND OFF THE NORTHWEST COAST OF EUROPE, CONSISTS OF THREE DISTINCTIVE REGIONS THAT USED TO BE SEPARATE COUNTRIES BUT NOW BELONG TO AN ALLIANCE KNOWN AS THE UNITED KINGDOM. ENGLAND, LAND OF SHAKESPEARE, DICKENS, CHURCHILL AND THE BEATLES, OCCUPIES OVER HALF THE ISLAND AND OFFERS THE COSMOPOLITAN APPEAL OF LONDON AND GENTLE LANDSCAPES LOADED WITH HISTORICAL TREASURES. FAMED FOR WHISKEY AND KILTS, SCOTLAND HAS PRESERVED WELL ITS MAGICAL CASTLES AND BREATHTAKING—REMEMBER *Braveheart*?—VISTAS. STILL FIERCELY INDEPENDENT AND BILINGUAL (WELSH AND ENGLISH), WALES IS DENSE WITH OLD FORTRESSES BUILT TO FEND OFF THE ENGLISH AND BRIMMING WITH VIBRANT EXPRESSIONS OF WELSH CULTURE.**

# MOST VISITS TO ENGLAND BEGIN IN LONDON,

a sprawling metropolis whose 9 million people make it the largest city in Europe. Although an influx of new citizens from around the globe has turned today's London into the least English of England's cities, all the great old sights remain and some great new ones have been added.

London's venerable A-list attractions begin with Buckingham Palace, which has been the monarchy's ceremonial residence since 1837 but open to visitors only since 1993. Both national museum and national church, Westminster Abbey is where monarchs come to be crowned and to be buried. A former residence and prison, the 1,000-year-old Tower of London displays the British crown jewels, and the United Kingdom enacts laws at the Houses of Parliament, featuring Big Ben. Covering over 80 acres, the British Museum displays more than 4 million items in 90 galleries. And as domed cathedrals go, the magnificent St. Paul's Cathedral is smaller than

only St. Paul's in the Vatican. London's newest must-see attraction is the London Eye, a 443-foot Ferris wheel—the world's largest—built alongside the Thames River to mark the Millennium.

London is equally renowned for its public parks and gardens, notably Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens where sports teams and soapbox orators gather. And, Kew Gardens is considered the world's most comprehensive collection of botanic specimens.

For more specialized interests, London has the Sherlock Holmes Museum honoring the fictional detective and a preserved 18th-century prison known as The Clink. The London Transport Museum displays everything from horse-drawn omnibuses to vehicles for subway-tunnel miners, and Vinopolis focuses exclusively on wine.

You can travel around London by taxi, by subway (or "tube"), by foot and, perhaps most enjoyably, on tours

using the classic red double-decker buses. Options for daytrips and half-day getaways include cruises down the Thames to Greenwich, to see the observatory where time begins; jaunts to Windsor, official royal residence for the last 900 years; and expeditions to the nearby university towns of Oxford and Cambridge.

While London restaurants serve virtually every cuisine on earth, its strongest suits are Cantonese, Indian, Italian and Greek. Over 7,000 pubs serve sandwiches and English-style meals, many of them a cut or two above typical "pub grub." The best places to enjoy a classic English afternoon tea—tea plus an assortment of sandwiches and pastries—are the better hotels and fashionable department stores.

For entertainment, the West End rivals Broadway with some 50 venues for musicals and plays. And a reconstruction of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre offers guided tours and matinee-only performances. Swinging

## WEATHER FORECAST

Britain's weather is quite changeable. Britain does not usually receive long periods of hot or cold weather, or long periods of prolonged drought or rainfall. Britain's climate is usually that of cool summers, steady rainfall and mild winters.

Temperatures in Britain reach an average of 7°C (45°F) in the winter months between December and March. During the summer months of June to August, temperatures average 22°C (72°F).



London still exists with rock, blues, jazz and world music in pubs and bars all over town, and dozens of dance clubs open from midnight to dawn.

But to savor the real Merry England, you have to get out of London. One highly recommended getaway is Cotswolds, a 50-mile range of limestone hills some 120 miles west of London where stone cottages fill story-book villages, and pastures are full of grazing sheep. The Cotswolds' preserved villages, are the happy unintended consequence of an Industrial Revolution migration that devastated the local wool industry and sent the capital that might have modernized the area to cities further north.

You can roam the Cotswolds by car, by bike or by foot—villages are seldom more than three miles apart. Cotswolds highlights include the market town of Chipping-Camden, home of wealthy wool merchants; windswept Stow-on-the-Wold, the Cotswold's highest point; and the spa town of Cheltenham.

## SCOTLAND

Edinburgh, Scotland's political and cultural capital, is split into two distinct sections. Old Town, to the south, consists of convoluted streets and twisting alleys of Edinburgh's medieval past. Looming over Old Town, astride a volcanic rock, stands Edinburgh Castle, a royal residence and impregnable fort since the 11th century and now repository of the Scottish crown jewels. Other Old Town sites are situated on or near the Royal Mile, a succession of four streets—Castlehill, Lawnmarket, High and Canongate—along a ridge connecting the castle and the Palace of

**(clockwise from top) Tower Bridge, London; The London Eye at night, South Bank; Black cabs and red double-decker buses on a busy London road; England's football is the country's national pastime; House of Parliament, Westminster, London.**





Holyroodhouse, home to the Royal Collection of art and the Queen herself when she's in town. Highlights of the Royal Mile include the massive Museum of Scotland, the Museum of Childhood (known as the world's noisiest museum) and the Scotch Whisky Heritage Center, where tours begin with a wee dram.

Attractions in New Town, laid out back in 1776, include a meticulously refurbished Georgian House that typifies this orderly neighborhood. The National Gallery of Scotland has over 20,000 pieces, with an emphasis on the European masters, and the Sir Walter Scott Monument honors the Edinburgh-born author (*Ivanhoe*, *Rob Roy*) dubbed father of the romantic historical novel.

In terms of live entertainment, the highlight of the Scots' year is the Edinburgh Festival, three weeks in August when specialized festivals collectively produce the world's largest celebration of the arts. But Edinburgh has plenty of nighttime entertainment the other 49 weeks, with jazz, folk and rock music in the pubs, Scottish folk evenings complete with kilts and bagpipes in hotels and a pair of reasonably frightening ghost walking tours.

Glasgow is a larger newer city known for its 19th-century industrial might—coal-fueled ironworks, cotton mills and shipbuilding—and upbeat friendly citizens. Top stops include the 13th-century Glasgow Cathedral, the Burrell Collection of art amassed by local ship owner Sir William Burrell and the Museum of Transport with its vintage cars, trolley buses, antique bicycles and model ships.

If you have a chance, head for the Highlands—it's hard to miss since this stunning landscape of mountains, glens



**(clockwise from top) Biking at St. Monance; Edinburgh Castle in Lothian, Scotland; Bottle of whisky on sale at the Museum of Scotland; Market street in Edinburgh.**

and lochs (lakes) enclosed on three sides by rugged coastline occupies the northern two thirds of Scotland. Use Inverness, the administrative capital and home of the Scottish Kiltmaker Visitor Centre, as point of departure for Highlands excursions. Check out Loch Ness, the deep, dark home (maybe) of the infamous monster known as “Nessie.” Head out to Glen Nevis, a glacial valley dotted with shaggy Highland, and scale Ben Nevis, Britain’s highest peak at 4,406 feet. Rail buffs can survey the territory from the classic coaches of the West Highland Railway, a steam train that portrays the Hogwarts Express in Harry Potter films.

## WALES

Cardiff, a progressive businesslike city on Wales’ south coast, evolved around the site of an old Roman fort, ranked as the world’s busiest coal-exporting port in 1913 and became the first capital of a semi-autonomous Wales in 1955. At the heart of town lies Cardiff Castle, a 12th-century, 12-sided stone fortress gussied up with exotic Arab, Gothic and Greek interiors. The nearby National Museum of Wales displays the great art of Wales and Continental masters, but sports fans might prefer a guided tour of Millennium Stadium, a 72,500-seat retractable-roof structure built in 1999 to host the Rugby World Cup which serves as an icon of Welsh nationalism.

The south, however, is the most “English” part of Wales, and the most characteristically Welsh historical, cultural and natural attractions are found in North Wales. Visit Caernarfon Castle, the massive harbor-side fortress where Prince Charles, who as heir to the U.K. throne rates the title Prince of Wales, received his investiture in 1969. Visit the soaring Snowdonia Mountains and either hike to the top of Mount Snowdon, Britain’s highest peak outside Scotland, or ascend via



*An English breakfast*

# PECULIARLY BRITISH FOOD AND DRINK

## English breakfast

A hearty meal that may include bacon and a fried egg, mushrooms, sausage, tomatoes, black pudding and fried bread.

## Ploughman’s lunch

A pub dish, usually bread, cheese (or ham or pâté), pickles and salad.

## Bangers and mash

Fried sausages and mashed potato.

## Shepherd’s pie

Minced lamb baked with potato crust; called “cottage pie” when beef replaces lamb.

## Kedgeree

Curry-flavored smoked haddock, hard-boiled eggs and rice.

## Scotch egg

Hard-boiled egg covered with sausage meat, eaten cold.

## Cockles and whelks

Inexpensive shellfish dish sold in outdoor stalls.

## Cornish pasties

Meat and vegetables baked into a pastry crust.

## Haggis

Scottish dish made from sheep’s heart, lungs and liver chopped with onions, suet and boiled in its stomach bag.

## Toad in the hole

Sausages baked in pancake batter.

## Bread and butter pudding

Buttered bread slices baked with dried fruit, milk and eggs.

## Treacle pudding

A steamed sponge pudding topped with syrup and custard.

## Fruit fool

Cooked soft fruit combined with cold custard or cream.

## Draught bitter

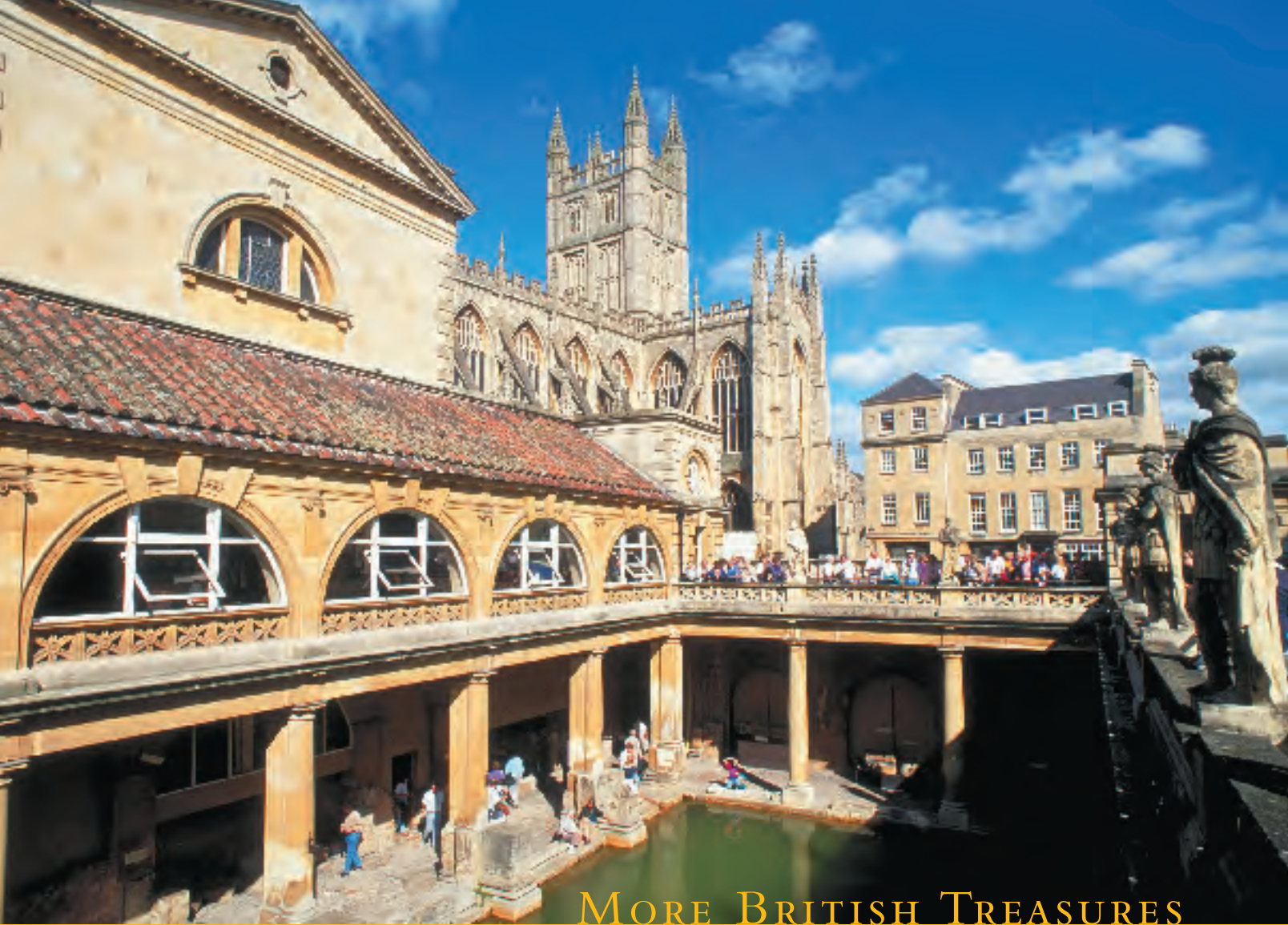
Most popular British beer, served at room temperature.

## Trifle

Layers of sponge cake, jelly, fruit, custard and cream.

## Shandy

A 50/50 mixture of beer and ginger beer, ginger ale or lemonade.



## MORE BRITISH TREASURES

*View of the Roman Baths, Bath, Avon*

### **Avebury**

A Stonehenge-like circle of ancient stones visitors can reach out and touch.

### **Bath**

English resort town with bathhouse in operation since Roman times plus state-of-the-art spa facilities.

### **Blackpool**

England's rollicking Irish Sea version of an amusement park.

### **Hadrian's Wall**

A Roman emperor's ambitious attempt to regulate trade – not deter invasions – between Scotland and England.

### **Harrods**

Vast 150-year-old London department store that stocks the best of everything.

### **Ironridge Gorge**

Severn River Valley hub of heavy industry with museums on bridge building, iron smelting, and other Industrial Revolution enterprises.

### **Isle of Skye**

Largest of west Scotland's Inner Hebrides Islands, with rugged volcanic landscape and legendary whisky – from uisge beatha, Gaelic for “water of life” – distillery.

### **Liverpool**

The Beatles' working-class hometown offering “Magical Mystery” tours and entry to Lennon's and McCartney's boyhood homes.

### **Lost Gardens of Heligan**

In Cornwall on England's southwestern tip, Europe's largest restored garden.

### **Stratford-upon-Avon**

Home of Shakespeare and the Royal Shakespeare Company as well as pleasant place to visit.

### **Wye Valley**

Scenic Welsh area that once supplied charcoal for local ironworks and later inspired Romantic poets.

### **York**

Well-preserved medieval city with largest Gothic church north of the Alps.

the Snowdon Mountain Railway. Ride the funky steam-hauled, narrow-gauge Ffestiniog Railway from Porthmadog Harbour to the slate-mining town of Blaenau Ffestiniog.

With no major cities, northern Wales accommodations consist mostly of small hotels and British-style B&Bs. Best places to find them are towns of

## BRITAIN—ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES—THREE DISTINCTIVE REGIONS FILLED WITH HISTORY AND CULTURE.

Conwy, Caernarfon, Betws-y-Coed (pronounced “betoos-ur-coyd”), Llanberis and Llandudno.

### BRITISH COAL FUELS INDUSTRY AND TOURISM

The phrase “carrying coal to Newcastle” became a metaphor for doing something utterly pointless because during the 19th century, Newcastle, in the northeast of England, was the hub of Britain’s thriving coal industry. Coal has long been Britain’s richest natural resource, serving as the principal fuel of the

**Below, A contestant at the Braemar Gathering. Right, Cardiff Castle.**



Industrial Revolution and still fulfilling a large proportion of United Kingdom’s (U.K.) energy requirements.

While Britons have mined coal since Roman times, the coal industry really began in the 16th-century Elizabethan era when forests that had provided heating fuel were depleted to supply timber for the English navy. In the

19th century, coal and coke from the great British coalmines—or collieries—fueled the steam engines and steel mills that built the Industrial Revolution.

Britain’s mainly bituminous coal reserves are concentrated in the northern England counties of Northumberland, Durham, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire; important deposits are also located in southern Scotland and southern Wales. Bituminous coal is a soft coal that is derived from petroleum and found in substances such as asphalt and tar. British coal production peaked in 1913, when the U.K. produced 287 million tons and employed about one million workers. In 1947, when the coal industry was national-

ized, it was producing only 197 million tons. Under private ownership again since 1995, Britain now produces less than 30 million tons a year.

While the British coal industry may have declined, a growing number of mining-related attractions in all three regions of Britain tell the story of coal mining and examine the lives of miners:

**National Coal Mining Museum for England**, Wakefield, England. Exhibits on mining life and equipment plus tours of one of Britain’s oldest working mines.

**Scottish Mining Museum**, Newtongrange, Scotland. Displays on the history of Scottish coal and tours of the 19th-century Lady Victoria Colliery.

**Big Pit: National Mining Museum of Wales**, Blaenafon, Wales. Guided tours of a modern colliery, audiovisual presentation on mining history, restored pithead baths and museum exhibits.

