

Batna2 University
Department of English

Course: CCL

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II. Geography of Britain: Land and Climate

Introduction

Although Britain's landscape lacks impressive nature like towering mountain ranges, large rivers, plains, or forests, this does not mean that the scene is boring. Variety of the scenery over short distance makes it attractive. A journey of 100 miles might seem twice as far.

1. Terrain of the UK

In general, the low-lying regions in Britain are the south and east of the country. They consist of either flat plains or gently rolling hills. Mountainous areas are found only in the north and west, although these regions also have flat areas. To the north of the United Kingdom lies Scotland making up the third of Northern Great Britain. It shares a southern border with England. The mountainous north of Scotland is called the Highlands. The Lowlands on the other hand present a beautifully district of valleys and plains.

Most of England, with few exceptions, is characterized with flat land. Abundant valleys and small rolling hills are drawing a nice picture of the southeast. Cotswold Hills, the Chilterns, are among the significant elevations of the region. The East and Midlands of England are predominantly flat and low lying which makes of them great agricultural regions. A mixture of valleys, rugged hills, and moorland characterize The West Midlands. Fertile plains in the west and the Pennine Hills in the east are making up the Northwest terrain of England. Cambria's Lake District contains 15 large lakes, including the biggest, lake Windermere.

Landscape in Wales is predominantly mountainous. Northern Ireland is largely flat except such mountainous regions as the Mourne Mountains, Glens of Antrim, and Sperrin Mountains.

2. Natural Resources of Britain

Coal, petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, tin, limestone, chalk, sandstone, gypsum, salt, clay, lead, silica are the main natural resources found in the UK. Britain's most valuable mineral is petroleum. Oil wells provide the country with all the petroleum needed and supply petroleum for export. From deposits below the North Sea, Natural Gas is obtained, and it is satisfying most of the country's needs.

The richest soils are found in the Eastern regions of England. Important reserves of iron ore are found in Cumbria, Staffordshire, and Lancashire. Waterpower resources are small and mostly concentrated in the highlands of Cumbria, in Northern England. Scotland's main natural resources are coal and zinc (found in the South of the country). Fertile lands are concentrated mainly in the Central Lowlands. Northern Scotland boasts great hydroelectric power potential and offshore oil deposits that are found in the North Sea, near Aberdeen.

In Wales the chief natural resources are: Coal, slate, limestone, and limited amounts of manganese, zinc, copper, gold, lead, uranium, and fireclays. Soil in Wales is infertile and rocky, yet the most fertile lands are found in the southeast and in several coastal areas. Natural resources of Northern Ireland include small-scale coal, peat, limestone, and gravel.

4. The Weather in Britain

Britain's climate can be often cited as unpredictable, rain and sun come in quick succession. It is difficult to predict it within a rather predictable range. Existing variety of microclimates within the UK is caused by such factors as elevation, proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, and, to a lesser extent, latitude. Furthermore, Britain enjoys long days in the height of summer, and a very short period of sunlight in wintertime. Southwesterly winds, blowing from the North Atlantic Drift makes weather patterns subject to change. Without any extremes in temperatures all year round, it never gets very cold, nor does it become truly hot.

In general, the south is warmer and drier than the north. The east of Britain is considerably cold, while the west is wetter and milder in winter and cooler in summer than the east. Winter temperatures rarely fall below 5°C while summer highs do not normally exceed 35°C. July and August are the hottest as well as the wettest months of the year. January and February are the coldest months and there's often much snow in mountainous parts of Britain. Upland areas are colder and wetter: the very tops of the Scottish Highlands may retain snow throughout the year, although this is unusual. Snow can fall anywhere in winter but rarely remains for more than two

days at lower levels where it evokes media hysteria and transport chaos. But even while the weather isn't biblical, the British talent for talking about it surely is it's the default icebreaker in conversation with friends or strangers.

5. The Environment and Pollution

Being the world's first industrialized country, Britain's cities were the first to suffer an atmospheric condition called smog (a mixture of smoke and fog). The thick fogs have become a famous theme in the works of Charles Dickens and in the Sherlock Holmes stories. The situation in London reached its worst point in 1952 when a bad smog, which lasted for several days, was estimated to have caused between 4,000 and 8,000 deaths. Water pollution was also a problem. "In the nineteenth century it was once suggested that the Houses of Parliament should be wrapped in enormous wet sheets to protect those inside from the awful smell of the River Thames." And "The first thing that happened to people who fell into the Thames in London was that they were rushed to hospital to have their stomachs pumped!". The situation required the passage of laws in the 1960's and 1970's which forbade the heating of homes with open coal fires and which stopped much of the pollution from factories. A scene of fog which once a symbol of the atmosphere in London in a Hollywood film is now out of date.

However, eliminating the sources of pollution requires providing for Britain's energy needs, and especially as the country's oil reserves in the North Sea will not last much longer. Thus, there has been various attempts at using 'green' energy sources. Solar power is one of them, but its implementation in Britain is limited due to several reasons. Other sources of energy are tidal power and wave power. The one which has really developed is wind power.