



PROGRAM COUNTRY: UNITED KINGDOM

STS – more than 50 years of experience in student exchange programs all over the world



Great Britain reflects the influence of many countries, arising from its history as a world power and colonial empire. The British are very protective of their traditions, but at the same time they are open to all that is new. The country is known for its prominence in music, fashion and media. Britons' special sense of humor is also well-known. But perhaps the country is most known for its royal family, whose members' lives are enthusiastically followed in tabloids all around the world.

COUNTRY INFORMATION

Area: 244 820 square kilometres

Population: approximately 61 million

Capital: London

Language: English

National holiday: The UK does not celebrate one particular national holiday

The variety of Britain is almost endless. There is fine mountain scenery here, from the Cairngorms in Scotland to the Lake District in the north of England and Snowdonia in Wales. There are prehistoric and Roman sites, frowning medieval castles and glamorous stately residences. There are places connected with famous people from the Brontës to the Beatles. There are cathedrals, churches and ruined monasteries. Historic cities include Canterbury and Cardiff, Edinburgh and Exeter, Gloucester and Glasgow. There are picturesque fishing harbours, lovingly tended gardens, museums and galleries stocked with the beautiful and the unusual. There are rare breeds farms, zoos, safari parks and white-knuckle rides in amusement parks, alongside steam railways, and collections of bygones that bring past into the present.

The British Isles is the name for a collection of about 4,000 islands, including Great Britain and Ireland. The name, the British Isles, is usually only seen on maps. Great Britain, known as Britain, is the name for the largest of the islands. It includes England, Scotland and Wales, but it does not include Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland. You can see the abbreviation GB on driving licences of people who live in England, Scotland and Wales.

The United Kingdom, or the UK, is a political term, which includes England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. All of these countries are represented in Parliament in London, and the abbreviation UK is used on most official documents produced by

Parliament. Now Scotland and Wales have their own local parliaments, with power to make decisions about their own countries. Everybody from the UK is British, but be careful: only people from England are English. People from Wales think of themselves as Welsh; people from Scotland as Scottish; people from Northern Ireland as either British or Irish.

Britain has some excellent traditional food: lamb from Wales, shellfish and fresh salmon from Northern Ireland, fresh or smoked fish from Scotland, cheeses from England and Wales. Unfortunately, good British food can be difficult to find. Only a few restaurants in London serve British food. There are many more Italian, Chinese and Indian restaurants. British food tends to be either very expensive and found in luxury hotels or restaurants, or mainly fried food served in cheaper cafes. Most pubs now serve good value hot and cold meals. They often have family areas where people under 16 can sit and eat. Most British people, if they go out for a meal or buy a takeaway, go to their local Indian or Chinese restaurant.

Britain does not often produce sportsmen or sportswomen who are successful in world sporting championships, but it has been good at inventing sports and writing rules of games. Golf was first played in Scotland in the fifteenth century, and the most famous golf club, Saint Andrews in Scotland, is still the most respected authority on golf in the world. Cricket was first played in England in the sixteenth century, and its rules were written in the eighteenth century. Football, rugby and hockey were first played in British public schools in the nineteenth century. The rules for all of these games were written between 1870 and 1890.

The official religion of Britain is Christianity. Schools in Britain must teach pupils about Christianity and Christian festivals, but Britain is a country in which many faiths are important. Although, 65% of British people are Christian, very few of them go to church. More and more traditional churches are closing. Other religions in Britain are Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism. Altogether about 5% of the population follow these faiths, and except for Judaism, they are all growing religions in Britain. There are 1.4 million Muslims, about 400,000 Hindus and about 600,000 Sikhs. Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, in contrast to Christians, are more likely to practice their religion.



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SCHOOL LIFE

The student will attend the local high school in the area where they will be living. They will attend the school in exactly the same way as the British students. Schools usually only accept students from EU countries. Other nationalities may be accepted, and will be decided on a case-by-case basis. Due to new visa regulations, non-EU applicants to the UK can currently only be accepted by Scottish schools. Non-EU applicants wishing to attend school in England or Wales will be placed in private fee-paying schools only and will be liable for these costs.

There are three terms in the school year: Autumn, Spring and Summer. The school year starts at the beginning of September (mid-August in Scotland). There is a two-week holiday at Christmas, and usually two weeks at Easter. There is a one week holiday halfway through each term. The school year ends between the end of June and the middle of July. Students who do not enter end of year exams will go home when the exams start as normal lessons cease for this period. This can mean returning home in May rather than June or July. The school day at most British schools starts at 9.00 am and finishes around 3.45 pm. Lessons are on Monday to Friday only.

School uniform is recommended in most schools and compulsory in others. Packed lunch is provided by the host family on school days. Books, other learning material, uniform, hot school lunches, general pocket money and transportation costs are at the student's expense.

Each student has an area representative allocated to them for the duration of their stay. The area representative will arrange an individual meeting with each student on a regular basis and an orientation meeting at the start of the programme for all high school students in the area. The student should turn to the area representative as the first point of contact in the case of any problems with the host family.

HOST FAMILY LIFE

Our host families receive payment for board and lodgings. Our area representatives carefully select the host families. Host families are accepted on the basis of a careful procedure which, among other things, include an interview and a home visit. The student will be a new member of the host family and is therefore required to participate fully in family life. The student may have to share a room with a host sibling or another high school student. The student will have a quiet place in the house where he or she can study.

Students must remember that staying with a British host family means being part of a family; it not like staying in a hotel. The family will welcome the student into their home, but they will not rearrange their lives completely around the student's needs; they need to fit in with the host family's lifestyle. In many cases both parents work, and will have other commitments at the weekend as well. The student will need to be independent and outgoing, so that they can build up a network of friends and make arrangements to fill their spare time – this is very much their responsibility, and will be a key factor in making the time in Britain a success.

PROGRAM EXTRAS

London weekend

Students will have the chance to spend an exciting weekend with other high school students in London. The weekend includes three nights' accommodation in central London with breakfast included, dinner at Planet Hollywood, sightseeing cruise on River Thames and entrance to Madame Tussauds. In addition, an optional visit to a famous musical can be arranged. The weekend is accompanied by an LSC coordinator, who also provides a walking tour of the city centre of London.

EUROPEAN TOUR

In the end of June, STS Head Office offers an amazing three-week bus tour around Europe. You get to visit 10 countries together with students from all over the world. The price includes accommodation, half board, sightseeing, most entrances and activities, Disneyland in Paris etc. Please see separate sheet for more detailed information regarding this tour.



All information is subject to change.

