

**What does Scotland look like? What languages do they speak? And what can you do in Scotland?
Read and find out!**

Scotland is a country in Great Britain, to the north of England. Scotland has nearly 800 islands, but people only live on some of them.

Scotland is a very beautiful country with many mountains, forests, beaches, rivers and lochs (the Scots word for lakes). In the north of Scotland it is light until 11.30 p.m. in summer and in winter you can sometimes see the Northern Lights, or Aurora Borealis, which are spectacular lights in the sky. Energy from the sun turns the Earth's sky green, red and other colours.

Scotland has its own parliament which makes laws for Scottish people. The Scottish parliament is in the capital city, Edinburgh. About five million people live in Scotland, which is 8.5 per cent of the UK population. Most people live in the south of the country in and around the cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth and Dundee.

Language

There are three languages in Scotland. Most people speak English and Scots. Scots is spoken by young and old people in cities and rural areas and sometimes people mix Scots and English. Some words in Scots are the same as in English and some are different. Look at these sentences. Can you see the difference?

- Scotland is ane o the fower kintras that maks the Unitit Kinrick. (Scots)
- Scotland is one of the four countries that make the United Kingdom. (English)

A minority (around one percent of the Scottish population) speak Scottish Gaelic, an old Celtic language which is very different from English. For example, the Gaelic word for Scotland is 'Alba', 'What is your name?' is 'Dè an t-ainm a tha ort?' and 'Goodbye' is 'Slàn leat'.

Music

At public and cultural events you can often hear traditional music and see traditional dancing. Pipers play music on bagpipes, a Celtic wind instrument with pipes and a bag. Pipers and dancers usually wear kilts. A kilt is a traditional skirt with a tartan design which is worn by men and women. Scots enjoy all types of music from folk to rock and pop, and festivals like the Edinburgh Festival or concerts like 'T in the Park' are very popular. Famous Scottish singers and groups include Paolo Nutini, Franz Ferdinand and The Fratellis.

Sport

The most popular sport in Scotland is football and famous teams include Celtic and Rangers, from Glasgow, Scotland's biggest city. Another popular game, golf, was invented in Scotland in the Middle Ages. You can go skiing or snowboarding in winter at Scotland's five mountain ski resorts and any time of the year at snowsports centres around the country. In rural, Gaelic-speaking regions people play shinty, a traditional sport similar to hockey that is played in Scotland and Ireland.

The famous Scottish Highland Games are a combination of culture and sport. Competitors do heavy sports like 'caber tossing', where they throw big tree trunks, and there is traditional Scottish music and dancing.

Highland Games are celebrated all over the world. The first Highland Games in New York were in 1836, the most northern games are in Norway and the most southern ones are in New Zealand.

Food

When people think of Scottish food they often think of haggis, a type of sausage made from parts of a sheep. However, Scotland is also known for its variety of seafood such as lobster and oysters, fish such as salmon and trout, and beef.

Symbols

Blue is a colour which is often associated with Scotland. The Scottish flag is blue with a white X-shaped cross called the St Andrew's cross. St Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland and his day is celebrated on 30 November. On this day, everywhere you go in Scotland you will see tartan, kilts and bagpipes. Also, look out for the national animal, the unicorn, and the thistle, the purple flower of Scotland.