



A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Volume V



EXPLORE VIKING REALMS

WRITTEN BY
TERRI JOHNSON

A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Praise for *A Child's Geography*:

My eleven year old daughter and I were delighted to read through A Child's Geography. We both learned so very much! Reading these books really ignites the imagination and helps you feel like you are THERE, walking through the streets of the country being studied, tasting the local foods, and meeting new friends. My daughter was so interested in what we were reading that she begged to finish the book in one day! I am a trained classroom teacher that has been homeschooling for the past 18 years, and I would definitely place the Child's Geography books up there with the very best resources—ones you and your child will return to over and over again. ~ Susan Menzmer

This was my first time reading any books in the A Child's Geography series and it will now be our new curriculum for geography as well as history. Beautifully written. The story pulls you in and allows you to fully immerse yourself in the places, sights, sounds, and scents of our world. The photographs are wonderful; beautiful, bright, and full of color. The book title says geography, but it is so much more. There is history—and not boring text book history either. It's edge of your seat history that you, as well as your children, will enjoy. I have learned so much and I am excited to get the whole collection to begin our journey around the world! ~ Stephanie Sanchez

I really enjoyed getting some more in-depth research about several areas that I have visited in person, either as a child or an adult. As always, Terri's knowledge is accessible to children and their parents alike so we can all learn together! ~ Meredith Boone

This book allows kids to not only learn geography and history, but to see where it is happening. History and geography should not be separate. They make sense placed together. ~ Laura Strombaugh

A Child's Geography is so vivid, it is the next best thing to being there! What a wonderful way to experience geography! Cuddle on the sofa with children at your feet traveling to foreign lands and times gone by. ~ Cindy Morgan

I love the content and the conversational tone. Great information. You have a nice balance of history, geography, food, and just what it is like to travel. I can't wait to see the book with the pictures and maps! ~ Cheri Stamile

I absolutely LOVE it! The style of writing is so exciting, and really gives life to history...not just a stack of facts and dates. ~ Marilyn Brasuell

Published in the United States of America by:

Bramley Books

A division of Knowledge Quest, Inc.

P.O. Box 789

Boring, OR 97009

www.KnowledgeQuestMaps.com

Copyright 2019 by Terri Johnson

First Edition, Published 2019

All rights reserved.

ISBN # 978-1-932786-66-8

Special thanks to...

Cover design by Greg Joens of Joens Graphics

Photographs by Rachel Johnson, Lydia Johnson, Terri Johnson, and Public Domain contributors

Maps were created by Terri Johnson using Map Studio Pro - app.knowledgequesthq.com

Extra downloadable activities were assembled by Ellie Killgore

Edited by Ash Virdell of Ink Drop Editing Services

A big thank you to each one of you!

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without expressed written permission of the publisher. We appreciate your respectful understanding and compliance.

Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication data

Johnson, Teresa Lynn.

A child's geography : explore viking realms / Terri Johnson.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-932786-66-8

Series : A Child's Geography, Vol. 5

Summary : Readers will see and understand the viking expansion and Northern European empires through the exploration of architecture, original manuscripts, and the modern landscape. Hear the stories of vikings, monks, kings, peasants, inventors, revolutionaries, and other world-changers.

1. Geography--Juvenile literature. 2. Geography. 3. Geography--Religious aspects--Christianity. I. Title. II. Series.

G133 V67 2019

910.20--dc22

2013921557

TERRI JOHNSON

A Child's Geography

Explore Viking Realms

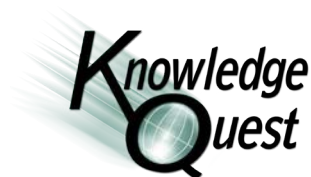
“Go into all the world...”

~ Mark 16:15

“Circle... take her measure... gaze long... climb ...

Then you can tell the next generation, detail by detail, the story of God.”

~Psalm 48:12



A Child's Geography: Explore Viking Realms





Table of Contents

Map of Viking Realms.....	4
Introduction	7
Before Embarking	8
Chapter 1, Lithuania.....	11
Chapter 2, Latvia	20
Chapter 3, Estonia.....	28
Chapter 4, Finland	40
Chapter 5, Sweden	46
Chapter 6, Norway.....	61
Chapter 7, Denmark.....	71
Chapter 8, England: London	83
Chapter 9, Southern England.....	99
Chapter 10, Central England.....	116
Chapter 11, Northern England	133
Chapter 12, Scotland.....	145
Chapter 13, Wales	160
Chapter 14, Northern Ireland	169
Chapter 15, Republic of Ireland	178
Chapter 16, Iceland.....	198
Glossary	209

Timelines, Map Work, Activities, Recipes, and more can be found on the download page listed in the Introduction.

Books in this Series:

A Child's Geography: Explore His Earth

A Child's Geography: Explore the Holy Land

A Child's Geography: Explore the Classical World

A Child's Geography: Explore Medieval Kingdoms

A Child's Geography: Explore Viking Realms

In loving memory...

Of my dear friend, April Fisher. April was like family to us. Her absence has left a big hole in our hearts. I miss her exuberant laugh, her sound advice, and her zest for life. Every single day. She lived life to the fullest and checked off every box but one on her bucket list, including visiting and photographing every continent.

April's footprints can be found all throughout this book. Her tagline has been etched upon my heart, because I am "dying to change the world" and striving to make a difference in the lives of people on planet Earth, just like April did.

Introduction

After the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 AD, much of Europe plunged into darkness. Although the sun did not literally disappear from the sky, nor the stars fade from view, the world did change in ways that historians would describe as “dark”.

The time of leisure and the pursuit of recreational activities so enjoyed during the Classical era had come to a screeching halt. No longer did the people of Europe have time to pursue education and scholarship, architectural advancements, or political debate. More pressing matters needed their attention... like survival.

The Vikings of Northern Europe were masters at survival as they were well adapted to living in harsh conditions, particularly the exceedingly cold, dark winters that lasted for months on end. They were forced to build sturdy homes, sew thick, insulated clothing, and prepare food in advance in order to survive the frigid arctic extremes.

For these reasons, the Vikings thrived during the period known as the “dark ages”, emerging as a powerhouse. Not content to settle and populate the most northernmost region of the continent alone, they began to explore and raid other nations to expand their territory, wealth, and influence.

While other countries were weakening, the Nordic Vikings were gaining strength and momentum, soon to rule one of the largest realms the world has ever known. The countries to the east, south, and west would feel their fury. Rumors of fur-clad warriors in sleek ships invading peaceful settlements spread like wildfire throughout Europe. Could they be stopped?

In many regions, the Vikings encountered loosely organized barbarian hordes. Complete conquest for more territory was their ultimate goal, but that wasn't

always possible. So if they couldn't raid, they would trade. The Vikings traded luxurious furs and sparkling amber in exchange for useful goods and valuables all the way down to the Black Sea.

But they encountered a different kind of valuable when they reached the British Isles. These people were different. Even though the dark pressed in around every other corner, here there shone a light that burned ever so brightly.

When the Roman soldiers abandoned England to fend for herself, missionaries stepped into the void to shine the light of the gospel. They built monasteries where students could pour over the word of God and other great works of literature. Common people learned to read, churches were filled with eager worshippers, and more missionaries were trained to take the light of the gospel to the far reaches of the world. There was light indeed!

You'll have to read on to find out what happened. Would the Vikings stamp out this light? Or would the light increase and spread and influence the invaders who came motivated by greed not religion?

And so, it is time to continue our explorations around God's glorious globe. Are you ready to go? I am!

Let's don our fur capes and lace up our tall leather boots as we venture into new territory: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Ireland, and Iceland. I cannot wait to see what we will find there, and whom we will meet!

Come! Let's explore the Viking realms and the modern-day countries of Northern Europe. This journey is going to be quite an adventure!

Before Embarking

This book is a stand-alone book and can be read straight through without any additional resources. We have provided maps, photos, definitions, and more to help you get everything you need out of this volume. However, there are a few things that you should know...

First of all, this is Volume V of *A Child's Geography*. Four volumes precede it—*Explore His Earth*, *Explore the Holy Land*, *Explore the Classical World*, and *Explore Medieval Kingdoms*. These books do not need to be read in order.

Ann Voskamp, best-selling author of *One Thousand Gifts*, wrote the first two volumes. She set the stage for a great series of books that teach history and geography using a “living book” approach that engages the reader while bringing greater understanding and appreciation for distant corners of our globe.

The first volume lays a foundation for geography by covering earth science topics such as components of our planet, layers of the atmosphere, continents and seas, tectonic plates, earthquakes, volcanoes, latitude, longitude and so much more. The other volumes dive straight down into a specific region of the world, exploring the beautiful countryside and bringing greater understanding for the cultures and people who live there.

Volumes II and III perfectly complement your study of ancient history. Volumes IV and V make ideal companions for a study of medieval history. *A Child's Geography* series is a wonderful way to study history and geography together in a seamless way.

A single volume of *A Child's Geography* can be studied over the course of a semester or an entire year. If you plan to use only one book this year, then aim to cover one chapter every two weeks. The first week, you can read the chapter and discuss the narration questions. The second week, you and your students can work on additional projects, such as writing in your journals,

keeping a timeline, labeling maps, doing extra reading and tackling some fun projects, especially (I hope!) cooking up some of the recipes provided. If you would prefer to finish the book in half the time—one semester—then plan on spending one week on each chapter, reading the content and choosing one or two additional activities per country.

Words in **bold** type indicate vocabulary words, which are defined in the glossary in the back of the book. If your student is unfamiliar with the word, use your reading time in this book to expand his/her vocabulary.

The extra activities are located on a special download page on our website—knowledgequestmaps.com/acg5-dnld-page/. There, you will find timelines, map work, hands-on activities, reading suggestions, and more.

This volume of the *Child's Geography* series is intended for students in 3rd through 8th grade, but it can work equally well with older or younger students by adjusting the activities, reading selections, and assignments according to your student's grade level and/or maturity level.

This book is your book and you are the teacher. Please use this book, along with its many optional activities, as you see fit. We hoped to provide you with MORE than you need or want to do. That way, you can pick and choose what works best for your family or group of students. Our goal is to equip you with resources, not shackle you to a pile of extra work.

I hope that you enjoy this fascinating journey around the countries of Northern Europe. I cannot wait to explore these places with you. Together, we will embrace new cultures and appreciate people different from ourselves. It will be an adventure we will not soon forget. Do you have your map ready, your bag packed, and your shoes laced? Great. Let's go!



The Baltic States



Timeline for the Baltic States

- 1800 BC** Maarahvas build fort settlements
- 1500 BC** Five meteorites crash into the island of Saaremaa in Estonia
- 1000** A Viking named Gunnar Hámundarson of Iceland raids the island of Saaremaa in Estonia
- 1061** Estonians prevails against barbarian invaders from Russia
- 1199** Pope Innocent III orders a crusade to Estonia to establish Christian church in the north
- 1201** Bishop Albert claimed Riga, Latvia as the new capital for the Christian church
- 1208** Crusade is dispatched to subdue the Vikings in Estonia
- 1227** Crusaders defeated the Estonian Vikings
- 1248** The capital city of Estonia, Tallinn, is established by the Danes
- 1253** King Mindaugus of Lithuania crowned
- 1291** Lithuanian Crusade begins
- 1385** Jogalia crowned King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania
- 1390** Welsh raiders storm Vilnius Castle (AKA Crooked Castle)
- 1410** Battle of Grunwald takes place in Lithuania
- 1625** St. Olaf's Church in Tallinn is the tallest building in the world.
- 1655** Sweden attacks Poland and Lithuania
- 1710** Russian occupation of Latvia
- 1917** The end of Russian occupation of Latvia
- 1918** Latvia declares her independence from Russia
- 1918** Estonia declares her independence from Russia
- 1941** Germany conquers Latvia
- 1990** Lithuania declares her independence
- 1991** Latvia regains her independence
- 2014** Riga, Latvia recognized as a European Capital of Culture

1

Lithuania

Of Knights and Crooked Castles

Icy wind stung the faces of the black-hooded knights as they urged their horses northward across the barren plain. Their next mission field was the vast and mighty empire of Lithuania. The Knights of the Teutonic Order had recently received their new assignment: Convert the last pagan nation of Europe to Christianity or die trying. This religious mission was a daunting

one—Lithuania was the largest and fastest growing kingdom in Europe during the thirteenth century. Her pagan roots ran deep out of old tribal customs, Viking terrorism, and barbarian beliefs.

The irony of the knights' mission was not lost on these black and white clad knights carrying the emblem of the cross on their tunics, flags, and shields. The Teutonic Order was established



Crooked Castle rises above the capital city of Vilnius. Photo courtesy of Pixabay.



The Battle of Grunwald painted by Артур Орлюнов. License CC BY-SA 3.0.

to save life, not destroy it. These knights were originally sent to ravaged Israel to build hospitals and attend to the wounded, nursing Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike back to health. Yet their new marching orders were clear: Convert the pagans to Christianity or destroy the nation of Lithuania. With the recent death of the fierce King Mindaugas of Lithuania, leaving the empire leaderless, the knights hoped their takeover would be swift and the Christianization process easy.

The Teutonic knights of Germany, along with cavalries from several other European kingdoms, congregated and planned their attack from the medieval fortress of Malbork in the neighboring country of Poland. The plan was simple: The horde of knights would swoop down *en mass* across the Polish plain into Lithuania using the “shock and awe” tactic of complete and utter surprise.

They were wrong. The knights’ surprise attack against Lithuania turned into an all-out war, lasting over 200 years. In 1410 after the Battle of Grunwald—one of the largest and bloodiest



Teutonic Knight at the Carpathian Reenactment Festival taken by Silar. License CC BY-SA 3.0.

battles in medieval history—Lithuania emerged victorious, spelling the end of the Lithuanian Crusades. Lithuania came out of the war stronger and more confident than ever before. She continued her dominance in the north, conquering the surrounding nations until ultimately, she became one of the largest countries in Europe.

In the 600 years since the Battle of Grunwald, Lithuania is no longer the largest country in Europe. In fact, she is one of the smallest. Nestled alongside the chilly Baltic Sea between Poland and Latvia, Lithuania is one of only three Baltic States. But while her land may be small, her history and culture are immense.

This great nation is where we begin our journey around the countries of the northern realm of Europe. Each of these places once served as a Viking stronghold during the Middle Ages.

So, lace up your hiking boots, strap on your backpack, and grab your camera. We have much to see and do in the beautiful, historic land of Lithuania. Let's go!



Take a peek out your airplane window. Do you see all those blue lakes? The small country of Lithuania contains over 3,000 lakes, located mostly in the east and southeast regions of the country. The capital city, Vilnius, is located in the southeast corner where the Vilnia and Neris Rivers merge and is within easy walking or driving distance of many of these lakes.

From this high altitude, you might also notice the many forests stretching beyond the horizon, covering over one-third of the countryside. The forested landscape gently rises and falls along the low rolling hillsides. Most of the country is comprised of low rolling hills, none of which are very high in elevation. In fact, the tallest mountain in the “highlands” region of Lithuania is a hill at just 965 feet. It is called the Aukštojas Hill. At less than 1000 feet, Lithuania’s tallest peak is shorter than most city skyscrapers and about 100 feet shorter than the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France.



Walkway up to the top of the sand dunes at the Curonian Spit. Photo by Wojsyl. License CC BY-SA 3.0.

A Child's Geography

However, none of this compares to Lithuania's arguably most unique geographical feature. You can't see it from here, but soon you will have the chance to see it up close. Lithuania borders the Baltic Sea and half of its coastline sits along the Curonian Spit. A **spit** is a narrow finger of land that projects out into the water. However, this particular spit stretches from the northern coast of Kaliningrad, the Russian **enclave** that is Lithuania's southern neighbor, to the northern coast of Lithuania, forming a **lagoon**. The long spit is covered in white sand dunes—dunes high enough to slide down on sleds. Sandboarding (AKA sand sledding) is a favorite pastime for Lithuanian children and is something you might enjoy as well.

Time to buckle up and prepare for landing. We'll be arriving in Vilnius in just a few short minutes.



Our adventure starts in the Old Town of Vilnius. This old medieval center inside the capital

city is preserved as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. This means that the cultural and architectural elements are protected from destruction or misuse so that current and future generations can appreciate what medieval Lithuania was like.

We'll enter through the Gate of Dawn, the only gate remaining of the nine original gates located along the medieval stone wall that once encircled this fine city. Most of the buildings inside the wall are considered new by Lithuanian standards, having been built in the last 500 years. Before that, the town's buildings were made of wood, which meant the buildings were vulnerable to fire. The entire city center burned to the ground twice during the Middle Ages. Now the buildings are constructed with stone to better withstand natural disasters.

Interestingly enough, most of the original buildings had basements or cellars, so while the re-built structure above ground may only be a few hundred years old, the basement below is



Vilnius Town Hall Square at dusk. Public domain image.



Vilnius castle tower at night. Photo taken by Mantas Volungevicius. License CC BY-SA 2.0.

often much older. Many of these cellars have been converted into hip restaurants and pubs.

Let's walk to the top of Bleak Hill—also known as the Three Crosses Hill—where Crooked Castle stands overlooking the Vilnia River. Remember, all the hills are gentle here, so it isn't too strenuous of a hike. The castle is called "crooked" because its layout is awkward and misshapen. Back in 1390, Welsh raiders stormed the castle using a demolition weapon known as the **Welsh Cat**. According to surviving documents, this wooden weapon was pushed close to a defensive wall and then, with its movable arm, the "cat" clawed away at the castle wall, hence the name.

Not far from here is the surprisingly beautiful Church of St. Peter and St. Paul. While it is pretty on the outside, the exterior doesn't hold a candle to what you will see inside. If you've come along on our travels in earlier volumes of *A Child's Geography*, then you've seen many cathedrals. After a while, they may all start to look the same.

But this one is unique. There is no other church in Europe that looks like this. Let's go inside!

What is perhaps most surprising about the interior of this church is its near blinding whiteness. It almost feels as if you have ascended into the clouds when you enter the **nave**. Most of the decorative elements in the church are white, punctuated by the occasional brightly colored painting. In fact, there are thousands upon thousands of pure-white stucco figures and ornamental finishes decorating the entire interior of the church. The masters who created this incredible artwork were Italian renaissance artists, both named Giovanni. Although designed by Italians, the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul is considered a Polish-Lithuanian masterpiece of the Baroque period.



I don't know about you, but I'm famished. The only thing we've eaten today is a little package



The Gate of Dawn taken by David Iloff. License CC BY-SA 3.0.

of cookies on the airplane. Let's step into this sidewalk cafe and order something to eat. The name alone is worth the stop. We should take a photo of ourselves outside the Little Bakery of the Fairies and then see what fanciful creations they have inside. I've heard they serve the best cappuccino in town, but maybe they'll also offer something more substantial for lunch.

The menu board reads that they serve the traditional menu of Lithuanian fairies—puff pastries, yeasty buns, **kybyns**, crepes, soups, salads, and pizza. I'll have the pizza. How about you? The seating is limited, so we'll have to share a table with an older couple who are waiting for their meal. In many cultures, it is not unusual to share a table with people you do not know, especially if the seating is tight.

"You look like a happy lot of adventure-seekers! What's the most interesting thing you've seen today?" asks the woman in a clear British accent.

Surprised that she speaks English, we rattle on about the Crooked Castle and the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul.

She and her husband smile at the excitement we share with them.

"What brings you here to Lithuania?" I ask.

"Oh, our daughter and son-in-law live here, and we have been visiting with them and our grandchildren this past week and a half. We head home to London tomorrow."

After mentioning that we have just arrived, Mr. Scott, a European history professor, asks us if we'd like a little history lesson about the country of Lithuania.

"Yes, please!" we answer in unison as our food arrives at the table. The pizza is piping hot, so it looks like we've got plenty of time.

"Lithuania is a very old country with an exciting past." He smiles and continues animatedly, "Not much is known about Lithuania from the Dark Ages, except that it was inhabited by barbarian Baltic tribes. At that time, a powerful warlord named Mindaugas united the fragmented tribes into one country and was crowned the first King of Lithuania on July 6, 1253. He ruled for only 10 years before he was **assassinated**. This was a tragic blow to the Lithuanians who now found themselves without a leader.

"Remarkably, things got worse. After the fall of Jerusalem in 1291, the crusaders set their sights on Lithuania, the last pagan territory in Europe, and now vulnerable without a strong leader. The goal of the crusade was to subdue Lithuania and convert her subjects to Christianity. That didn't turn out to be easy. Then, in 1385, almost a hundred years later, Jogalia, a Christian, was crowned King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. Now allied with Poland, Lithuania was finally able to defeat the Teutonic Knights at the Battle of Grunwald.

"Unfortunately, Lithuania's victory did not lead to peace. Surrounding countries, like Norway



The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul. Photo taken by David Iliff. License CC BY-SA 3.0.

and Sweden, felt threatened by the Polish-Lithuanian alliance and attacked in 1655. This series of battles became known as the Northern Wars. Less than 150 years later, there was another war—the Great North War—involving many of the same neighboring countries. And this time, Lithuania did not win. The Swedish army destroyed the land and destroyed the economy. A famine followed these two wars, then the **plague**, and then another war. Lithuania’s population was reduced by 40%. Nearly half of her citizens died from battle, sickness, or starvation. Lithuania was left weak and vulnerable.

“Foreign powers swooped in, divided the territory into thirds, and doled it out to Russia,

Prussia, and Habsburg Austria. Most of Lithuania was swallowed up by Russia to the east. Unhappy with their lot, the Lithuanians protested and revolted against the Russian government. Russia fought back by closing Lithuanian schools and banning Lithuanian newspapers. The Russians believed that if they could keep Lithuania ignorant and isolated, they stood a chance at keeping her down. But their attempts to subdue the Lithuanian people failed. An underground network of book smugglers was formed, and Lithuanians began homeschooling their children in secret. How cool is that?”

We smile, because homeschooling is a topic we are familiar with.

A Child's Geography

“That’s really cool! You know, some of us homeschool as well,” I pipe in. “It’s great to have the freedom to choose how we learn rather than being forced to keep it secret.”

“Really? Good for you. Then pay attention, because this is when the ping pong match starts.” Mr. Scott smiles, knowing he has captured our attention again. “Lithuania was passed back and forth between Russian and German control for the next two hundred years. Yes, that is a long time. It continued right up through the 20th century, the two world wars, and the **communism** of Eastern Europe. This was perhaps the darkest season of Lithuanian history.

“The ping pong match continued until 1990 when East Germany declared an end to communism in their country and the people of Lithuania were encouraged to do the same. After decades—even

centuries—of oppression, Lithuania declared her independence on March 11, 1990. The Soviets tried to squelch the succession but failed. Iceland was the first nation to recognize Lithuania’s independence, but the United Nations recognized the newly independent nation of Lithuania the following year.”

“That’s quite a history, now, isn’t it?” Mr. Scott sighs, but in a satisfied history professor sort of way. He and his wife begin to stack their dishes.

As they stand and prepare to leave, Mrs. Scott smiles. “I hope you weren’t too bored by a couple of old fuddy-duddies like us! We’ve certainly got the gift of gab.”

We wave goodbye and decide that it’s time we, too, get on our way. We’ve got tickets to a basketball game tonight. The Lithuanians are world renowned for their basketball teams,



Lithuanian basketball team wins the World Championship game in 2010. Photo by Christopher Johnson. License CC BY-SA 2.0.

having won several medals in recent years at world events, including four silvers in the summer Olympic Games. After the game, we'll spend the night in a small historic hotel in the town square. Tomorrow, we'll take a train west to the coast so we can see those pristine, sparkling sand dunes of the Curonian Spit for ourselves.



Chasing away dreams of knights in crooked castles and pastries with fairy wings, the sun peeks its cheery face over the horizon. We are ready for another exciting day in Lithuania. Within an hour, our packs are on, maps are handy, and tummies are full of the delicious complimentary breakfast served downstairs. Let's ask for directions from the hotel host so we can make the most of our day.

Before stepping through the door, our host kindly tells us which train to board, which station to get off, and the best place to rent sandboards and sand sleds. Then he wags his finger at us and warns us sternly, "Now keep your eyes and your mouth closed tightly when you sled down the dunes. Otherwise you will spit sand at the sand spit." He chuckles at his English-language pun, points us in the direction of the train station, and we are off on our next adventure.

Lithuania is a fascinating country of contradictions—old and new, somber and friendly, fiercely independent and yet blending well with the surrounding nations. Lithuania is still actively creating her own identity as a small but free country, with a unique culture and language all her own.

"*Sudie*, goodbye, Lithuania! It has been a pleasure getting to know you!" ■



Tell me what you remember about Lithuania:

- ◇ *Why did the Teutonic Knights invade Lithuania? Was their mission successful? Who won the Battle of Grunwald?*
- ◇ *What is one of the most remarkable geographical features of Lithuania? What is a popular pastime that people enjoy there?*
- ◇ *What makes the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in the city of Vilnius so different from the "average" cathedral?*
- ◇ *Lithuania is world famous for which sport?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *Kids at the Crossroads: Crusades* by Laura Scandiffio
- ◇ *The Boy Knight: A Tale of the Crusades* by G.A. Henty
- ◇ *Usborne Young Reader Series: Crusades* by Rob Lloyd Jones
- ◇ *Taste Lithuania* by Beata Nicholson (cookbook)
- ◇ *The Baltic* by Michael North (for high school and up)

2

Latvia

The Great Amber Way

A short bus ride north along the Baltic Sea whisks us out of Lithuania and into Latvia. We are tired from sandboarding, but have very little time to rest before we arrive in Liepaja, a seaside resort town on the Baltic Sea. Latvia is similar to Lithuania in some ways, but very different in others. I can't wait to explore it with you.

The park-like landscape of Latvia is very flat and dotted with clear blue lakes, much like Lithuania. Over half of its vast, unspoiled countryside is blanketed in dense forests of birch, oak, and pine. Latvia may be a small country in the northern Baltic region of Europe and often overlooked by her big neighbors, but the natural beauty of this land is grand indeed. This is hiking and cycling



Latvian pine forest. Image in Public Domain, courtesy of Pixabay.



Driftwood washed up on a Latvian beach from the Baltic Sea. Image is in the Public Domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

territory with only one real cosmopolitan city, Latvia's capital city of Riga.

Latvia is well known for its pristine white beaches, which are desolate in the winter and over-crowded during the summer. Like clockwork, Rigans and other Baltic city dwellers escape to the seashore for their summer holiday retreats.

Liepaja is our first stop in Latvia. At this time of year, the desolate beach is hauntingly beautiful as the churning waves crash upon the glistening white sand and the mournful cries of seabirds echo overhead. We are meeting new friends here today. Levi and Grace, members of my parents' church, will join us at the beach before taking us on a scenic hike and later, a grand tour of their beautiful city of Riga. There they are now!

"Hello, hello!" Levi and Grace call, waving their hands to draw our attention to them sitting on a large blanket high upon the sand dunes. They jump up to meet us halfway and give us hugs even though we have never met. "It's so good to

see faces from home and hear you speak native English. We have been a bit homesick lately."

The Russells are Christian missionaries in Latvia, serving the Lutheran church, which has long been established here. They both teach English in local high schools during the day and lead Bible studies at the church a couple evenings per week. Grace is expecting their first baby.

"How are your parents? Please tell them hello from us. But please, come, sit down and tell us all about your travels. Where have you been so far and where are you going?" Levi asks enthusiastically.

We tell them that Latvia is our second stop and that we will be traveling all around the northern Scandinavian countries on the mainland of Europe and then the island nations of the United Kingdom and beyond. Suddenly, Grace squeals in delight. At first, we think her enthusiasm is in response to our travel plans, but we quickly discover it has nothing to do with our adventure, but with something she discovered in the sand.



Several pieces of unpolished amber. Photo by Lanzi and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 3.0.

While listening to us speak, she was moving sand with her bare feet when suddenly she hit something hard and very smooth. She lifts the yellow stone-like object from the fine white sand and polishes it on her sweater.

“It’s **amber!**” she cries.

We all crowd close to appreciate her beautiful find and then pass it around to inspect for natural **inclusions**, such as an insect of some sort. No, this piece of amber is crystal clear. In fact, its honey color is translucent in the brilliant Baltic sunshine.

Grace asks us, “Do you know how amber is formed?”

“No,” we answer, hoping we may get a mini-science lesson right here on the beach.

Grace holds the smooth, organic gem out toward the sun and explains, “Amber is created by trees, such as those pine trees on the far side of the beach. When a tree is cut or scratched, by a woodpecker or a beaver for instance, the

tree releases **resin** to protect itself, much like our bodies produce a scab when we are injured. Sometimes insects or small animals ambling by get trapped in the sticky resin. Over the course of a long period of time, that resin turns into a fossil, which we call amber.”

“If amber comes from trees, then why did you find this piece in the sand?”

“Strange, huh?” Levi chimes in. “But this is the most fascinating part to me. A long time ago, large glaciers moved through this region knocking down whole forests and dragging them into the sea. Over the years, the resin fossilized and became amber. Amber floats, so once fossilized, the pieces drift to the top of the sea and eventually wash ashore. The perfect combination of vast forests and massive glaciers in the Baltic region is the reason why more amber is found here than in any other region in the world.

“In fact, amber has always played a critical role in Latvia’s culture and history. During ancient

and medieval times, amber found along the Baltic coast was so prized that the Vikings who lived here in the north used it to barter for riches found further south in Greece, Egypt, and even Rome. Because of the lively and active trade of amber, the Amber Road, a major trade route in ancient times, was built.”

“But you’re starting to look sunburnt,” Grace notices. “Let’s put on our hiking boots and see some of the beautiful landscape of Latvia.”

With cameras in our pockets and water bottles in hand, we set out on a trail that leads up from the beach and into the lush coastal woodlands. Under the shade of the trees, it feels cooler than on the beach, even though the temperature rarely rises above 70 degrees Fahrenheit even during the warmest months of the summer. In the wintertime, the temperature is usually below freezing, but today is a lovely day to hike through the forests of Latvia.

Grace tells us to keep our eyes open for wildlife that, although common here, is endangered throughout the rest of Europe, such as the Eurasian beaver and the European wolf or lynx. She also tells us about some of the rare birds which live only in these Latvian woods, such as the corncrake, black stork, white-backed woodpecker, and spotted eagle. Hollow tapping sounds echo through the forest and we look up to find woodpeckers busy at work. We also see several white wagtails, the national bird of Latvia, and daisies, her national flower.

After about an hour of hiking along wooded trails, over lazy creeks, and behind cascading waterfalls, our trail circles back around to the parking lot. And just before reaching the Russells’ car, a spotted eagle soars over our heads. Its majesty is awe-inspiring. Imagine the lofty view of the dense forest, the sparkling beach, and the deep blue waters of the Baltic Sea this king of birds beholds every day!



Lesser spotted eagle. Photo in the public domain.



The road to Riga is short, flat, and straight as an arrow. The capital city lies a little more than a meter above **sea level** on a flat and sandy plain. Riga is not only the largest city in Latvia, it is also the largest city in all the Baltic States combined, with approximately 700,000 inhabitants. About a third of all Latvians live in this historic city situated on the southern shore of the Gulf of Riga.

The city of Riga is well over 800 years old. It began as a Viking fishing village but grew into an important trading center. Situated at the mouth of the Daugava River, the Vikings traded amber and other valuables up and down the Daugava-Dvina-Dneiper river system all the way to Greece and the Byzantine Empire thousands of miles to the south.

During the 12th century, crusaders were dispatched to Christianize the pagans, and in 1200, Bishop Albert arrived with 23 ships and



House of Blackheads at Dusk in Riga, Latvia. Photo by Diliff used with permission under license CC BY-SA 3.0.

500 crusaders to establish Riga as the new seat of the Livonian bishopric by force. In plain language, the leaders of the church invaded the town of Riga and made it a new capital for the Christian church. This declaration was made in the year 1201, and that year is now considered Riga's founding date, even though it existed and thrived for many, many years prior to that event.

"How do you like our city?" Grace asks from the front seat.

"First stop is the city center!" Levi announces. "It is so well preserved that the entire center is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's truly beautiful. In fact, Riga was officially recognized as a European Capital of Culture in 2014. We are proud to call it our 'home away from home'."

After parking the car, we wander through the old quarter, admiring the historic buildings, some dating back to the 13th century when Riga joined the **Hanseatic League**, a community of merchant guilds that formed their own set

of laws to ensure free trade among the cities of northern Europe. Riga provides a striking contrast of old and new architecture laced with lush green public parks filled with people and their pets enjoying this bright spring day. It's a perfect day for a picnic. At the outdoor market, we buy Latvian black bread, smoked fish, smoked gouda, strawberries, and a paper sack filled with *biezpiena sierins*, a sweetened cheese curd snack. Now we have all the essentials for the perfect Latvian picnic!

Out on the green lawn, soaking up the warmth of the waning sun, our gracious hosts tell us more about the Latvia we are learning to love.

Latvia's past has not been a peaceful one. After the crusades, the "pagans" of Latvia were Christianized and modernized. Fortifications such as ramparts and town walls were built to protect Riga and the nearby communities, after which peace and prosperity abounded for a few hundred years, until the Reformation; the

majority of Latvians protested the Catholic Church and embraced Protestantism. However, this left the country divided and therefore weak. And so began the invasions. First, Poland invaded, followed by Sweden, and finally Russia.

The first Russian occupation of Latvia lasted just over 200 years from 1710 to 1917. During the first few years under Russian control, over 40% of all Latvians died from either famine or plague. At the end of the 200 years, the territory of western Russia, which included the state of Latvia, had been devastated by World War I. With a weakened Russian Empire and the general chaos of the war's aftermath, Latvia declared its independence from Russia in 1918. However, her independence didn't last long.

In 1939, the Germans and Russians made a secret agreement to divide the countries of northern and eastern Europe into two "spheres of influence". Latvia, along with the other Baltic States, was assigned to Russian control. Two years of misery and devastation passed under the dictatorship of Russia. Not surprisingly, neither Germany nor Russia kept their end of the bargain and were soon duking it out for countries previously assigned to the other party. First, they fought over Poland, then, in 1941, fought over Latvia. Germany prevailed, placing Latvia under equally miserable domination, as Germany's goal for Latvia was to reduce her population by 50%.

Under both countries' regimes, over 200,000 Latvians were either deported or killed, including 75,000 Jews who were murdered in Nazi **concentration camps**. The end of the Second



The Tower of Riga Cathedral. Photo by Olga1969 under license CC BY-SA 4.0.

World War brought no less hardship. Once again under the control of Russia, hundreds of thousands of terror-stricken Latvians fled to Sweden and Germany for **refuge**.

Thankfully, this story is coming to a happy ending. Fifty years after Russia's second occupation and sovietization, Latvia regained her independence in 1991. Latvia was finally free to rule herself once again! Today, many Russians still live in Latvia, but the Latvian language is the national tongue and the old Latvian culture is being slowly restored. The last hundred years have been extremely difficult and tragic for this small country, but Latvians are a strong and resilient people, rising from the ashes of domination and despair to become a beautiful,



Turaida Castle. Photo by Modris Putns and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 3.0.



Cesis. Photo taken by Graham under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

welcoming country, with Riga serving as her crowning capital of culture.

“That’s a depressing history, isn’t it?” asks Levi. “It may seem so very different from your own country’s history if yours has experienced freedom for many hundreds of years. But it is a history that we must learn so that we, as world citizens, do not repeat such mistakes or commit such atrocities going forward. How about we walk back to the square and get some ice cream before we drive to our apartment?”

Oh yes, we are happy to jump up from the grass and get some exercise after our delicious picnic. After topping off the meal with some refreshing ice cream and additional sightseeing through Riga’s old town, including St. Peter’s Church and the Riga Cathedral, we hop back into their car and drive to the Russells’ third-floor apartment not far from the city center.

We talk late into the night about their work here in Latvia and their future plans to return to

the States sometime in the next year or two. Grace and Levi have classes to teach tomorrow, so they give us their best tips for what else to see before we leave Latvia to drive north to Estonia.

There are some lovely medieval castles they insist we see. One is Turaida Castle, which is not far from Riga. The other place they insist we visit is the town of Cesis, one of Latvia's oldest townships. Running through its charming city center are cobbled lanes lined with historic wooden buildings and a few impressive castles.

As we drift off to sleep on mattresses laid out on the Russells' living room floor, we are thankful for new friends, the beautiful countryside, an exciting city in which to spend the night, and delightful plans to continue our explorations tomorrow.

Dear Latvia, neither tragedy nor triumph can hold you down, fade your inner beauty, or destroy your tenacious spirit. May your hard-fought and well-earned independence last for many centuries to come! ■



Traditional Latvian dress. Photo in public domain by Pxhere.

Field Notes

Tell me what you remember about Latvia:

- ◇ *What rare gem can be found along the coast of Latvia? How is it formed? Which civilization used it as a central component in their trading empire?*
- ◇ *Which endangered animals and birds are common in Latvia?*
- ◇ *Name some of the countries that have invaded Latvia over the years. When did Latvia finally regain her independence?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *Latvia (Countries of the World)* by Claire Throp
- ◇ *Amber* by Andrew Ross
- ◇ *The Food of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania* by Silvena Johen
- ◇ *The Edge of the World* by Michael Pye (for High School and up)

3

Estonia

The People of the Land

After a spine-tingling day exploring several dark and drafty castles around the Latvian countryside, we scoot across the northern border of Latvia and arrive in Parnü, a seaport city in Estonia. It's been a long day; I suggest we grab some dinner so we can turn in early. Over dinner, I can bring you up to speed on

Estonia's history before we drift off to sleep and begin our adventures anew tomorrow.

The word "Estonia" comes from an ancient Scandinavian saga, and it means "east land." But the ancient Estonians did not use this word to describe themselves or their land. They referred to themselves as *maarahvas* which means "country



Vanamõisa Lake in Estonia. Photo by Visit Estonia and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.



A panoramic view of Estonia's capital city of Tallinn. Photo by Olga Itenberg used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

people” or “people of the land” and they called this region Maavald, meaning “Country Parish”. The maarahvas were not a Baltic Tribe, like the ancient peoples of Lithuania and Latvia; they were a people of finno-ulgric descent, which means they were more closely related to the Finnish people and other northern tribes who lived west of the Ural Mountains.

The ancient maarahva people fished in the deep blue waters off the coast and along the icy glacial streams flowing off the mountains for their survival. They also hunted bear, beaver, and wolf for their meat and ultra-warm fur.

At the dawn of the Bronze Age, around 1800 BC, the maarahvas began to build fort settlements for their tribes upon the higher hills, which were surrounded by single and multi-family farms. The hill forts, led by a group of elders, were called “parishes”. Artifacts have been discovered that tell a small piece of their story—that they lived in harmony and traded frequently with their western neighbors across the Baltic Sea and with their southern neighbors in Germany.

Eventually, relations with their neighbors turned sour as the once peaceful tribes around the Baltic Sea prepared for battle. Several Scandinavian sagas tell tales of war—especially the one about how the Estonians defeated and killed King Ingvar of Sweden.

A few years later, barbarian hordes from Russia poured in and defeated the Estonians,

establishing a Russian foothold in the region now known as Tarfu. This foothold in Estonia lasted about 30 years, until the Estonians counter-attacked in 1061 and sent the invaders running back to Russia. The era of the mighty Baltic Vikings had officially begun.

The fearsome Vikings ruled the land and sea of the north. Tales of their might and destruction swept through medieval Europe like a plague. The Danes tried to stamp out the Estonians but were unsuccessful. In 1199, Pope Innocent III ordered a crusade from faraway Rome to establish Christianity as the dominant religion way up here on the northern fringe of Europe. The German Livonian Brothers of the Sword were dispatched from nearby Poland and Lithuania in 1208 to tame the wild Vikings of Estonia. After ten years of raiding and counter-raiding, the Estonians suffered defeat at the Battle of St. Matthew’s Day and their leader of the resistance, Lembitu, was killed. The surrounding countries jumped into the fray, and with the help of the Danes and Swedes, the Vikings of Estonia were subdued in 1227 by the crusaders.

Following the crusade, the territories of present-day Estonia and Latvia were merged and named Terra Mariana, later renamed Livonia, until Estonia reclaimed her original name back in the 18th century. The king of Denmark would now rule Northern Estonia, while the remaining regions were divided up between the Knights of



Windmill on the island of Saaremaa. Photo in the public domain courtesy of Pixabay.

the Teutonic Order, simultaneously receiving their new identity as the Sword Brothers of the Livonian Order.

The crusade was unsuccessful in bringing about peace, as wars against foreign powers continued for generations. However, it did bring about the founding of Reval, now named Tallinn, the capital city of Estonia. Reval joined the Hanseatic League that controlled trade on the Baltic Sea and became a powerful ally with the other towns in the league further south, bringing some organization out of the chaos of the Baltic region during the Middle Ages.

You look sleepy. Let's get some rest and we'll see what adventures tomorrow holds for us. Close your window and pull down the shade. The sea breeze smells nice, but it is getting chilly outside. We are very far north here in Estonia. That's why it's still light outside at such a late hour. But even in summer, the nights can get quite cold. Grab an extra blanket from the closet so that you can stay

nice and toasty warm throughout the night. See you in the morning.



And a good morning it is! Pulling back the heavy curtains, we welcome the bright sunlight into the room. With the window now cracked, we can hear boat horns off in the distance and the screech of seagulls overhead. What an exciting day we have ahead! Let's pack up our things quickly so we can catch the morning ferry that will take us out to the island of Saaremaa.

Estonia has over 1,500 islands, but Saaremaa is the largest of them all. The islands have a culture all their own. Let's begin our Estonian explorations there.

Driving aboard a ferry can take some time. For the crew, it is like putting together a giant jigsaw puzzle. They must make sure all the cars, trucks, and trailers fit perfectly on the car decks and that the cargo load is correctly balanced. Hot chocolate



One of the meteorite craters at Kaali on Saaremaa island in Estonia. Photo by Bernst Rostad used under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

and coffee are available for passengers in the cabin. Grab a cup and let's climb the stairs to find seats near a window so we can see the island as we approach. Hot drinks in hand, we find a perfect spot at the bow of the ship to enjoy the 60-mile journey from Parnü to Kuressaare, the only city on the island.

Saaremaa in Estonian means "island land" or "the land on the island". From the way the Estonian people refer to themselves and their land, they are either extremely matter of fact or have a very dry sense of humor. We may uncover the answer by the end of today's journey.

According to archaeological finds, people have been living on this island for 8,000 years. In fact, pre-Viking era ships have been found on Sörve Peninsula. This particular ferry will not head out into the Baltic Sea at all for this leg of the journey but will stay within the more placid Gulf of Riga. The island of Saaremaa with its long Sörve Peninsula provides a protective barrier between

the gulf and the sea, which created an ideal location for a network of busy fishing villages to emerge during ancient and medieval times.

Hands down, the most exciting event that occurred on the island during ancient history was the fiery collision of nine meteorites into the earth near the town of Kaali. Imagine going about your everyday business, when the sky explodes overhead with the entry of several meteorites from outer space, violently slamming against our planet just outside your town. It must have been a frightening experience. Those meteorites that crashed into the ground left nine large craters on the island. Scientists estimate that this event occurred sometime around 1500 BC.

There's Saaremaa ahead! We'll be there soon. As we pull into port, notice the working windmills on our left. Those windmills have been in operation for hundreds of years. Aren't they both rustic and magnificent at the same time?



Illustration of Gunner's Atgeir by Andreas Bloch.

Because of Saaremaa's unique location and isolation from the mainland, the island has retained a great deal of medieval charm. The closer we get to shore, the more clearly you will see the stone fences separating individual homesteads and the thick thatched roofs capping the centuries-old stone cottages that dot the coastline. The islanders' lives have been bound to the sea for as long as people have lived here. Much of what you see here is the result of hardworking families whose womenfolk toiled the land while their men were out to sea, fishing and fighting.

Tribal sagas retell stories of ancient battles between the islanders and other Viking tribes around the Baltic Sea, unfolding the details that led to either glorious victory or agonizing defeat. The island of Saaremaa was the wealthiest region of ancient Estonia because it was the home of the notorious Estonian Pirates, sometimes referred to as the Eastern Vikings. One such tale recounts a landmark event when a fleet of sixteen ships

carrying 500 Estonian Pirates landed on the shores of southern Sweden, which belonged to Denmark at the time, who then pillaged and plundered the area carrying even more wealth back to Saaremaa.

These Vikings, like all Vikings, were an adventurous people who not only thoroughly explored the northern region of Europe but also discovered many new lands to the west, such as Iceland, Greenland, and parts of North America. Around the year 1000 AD, a notorious Viking named Gunnar Hámundarson of Iceland journeyed back to Europe and participated in a grand-scale raid on tiny but rich Saaremaa. It was on this island that he obtained his favorite weapon, the **atgeir**, by taking it from a man who was defending his home, as you can see represented in the illustration below.

From the 14th to 16th centuries, the people of Saaremaa began to move away from the island to escape frequent pirating raids and find more peaceful habitation on the mainland. However, the entire country of Estonia has been fought over for centuries as Denmark, Sweden, and Russia fought to claim it. For a long time, there truly was no peaceful region of Estonia to retreat to. Even recently, the people of Saaremaa fled their island, crossed the gulf, and established villages along the western and northern coasts of mainland Estonia.

After wandering through the old city center of Kuressaare and meandering through its medieval castle, we'll drive east on Highway 10 to witness the meteorite craters for ourselves. The sheer size and magnitude of the craters are evidence of the catastrophic crash and violent shaking of the earth that must have happened upon impact. It's rather mind-blowing to see evidence of this rare and frightening phenomenon.

On the far side of this island is a smaller island called Hiiumaa, which is also accessible by ferry. While Saaremaa is famous for its windmills and craters, Hiiumaa is known for its lighthouses. Both islands are sparsely populated which allows



Hill of Crosses on the island of Hiiumaa. Photo by Diego Delso and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 3.0.

us to enjoy the unspoiled nature found in this part of the world.

Besides the towering lighthouses, there is another unique site on the island of Hiiumaa called the Hill of Crosses. However, it's not much of a hill. The Hill of Crosses is more like a small rise of earth with rustic, homemade crosses set in the ground. It also happens to be located right along the road we are traveling! The first crosses date back to 1781 when Tsarina Catherine II forced the Swedes living on this island to resettle in the Ukraine. This site marks the place where the Swedish residents spent their last evening, making crosses and worshipping the Lord. Since then, every visitor is encouraged to build a crude cross and stake it into the ground here on this "hill".

Would you like to make a cross to stake into the ground as proof that you too have been here?

We have one more day in Estonia and we'll spend it in the capital city of Tallinn. Both

islands—Saaremaa and Hiiumaa—have airports with quick hopper flights to the capital. Once we board, we'll be there in no time at all.



That was a quick flight with little time to rest! The weather is perfect today in the capital city of Estonia—warm enough to be outdoors most of the day but cool enough to wear a sweater. Let's explore.

Tallinn is a new name for an old city. It was established in 1248 by the Danes and originally given the name Lyndenisse, then later, Reval. As with the rest of the Baltic States, Estonia was at one time under Danish, then Swedish rule, but after the Great Northern War, the Russians gained control and kept it for 200 years. In 1918, Estonia declared her independence from Russia and renamed her capital Tallinn, which means "Danish town", possibly in honor of her roots.



Tallinn's Old Town. Photo in the public domain courtesy of Pixabay.

Interestingly, the word *Tallinn* in Estonian can also be translated to mean, “snow fortress”.

Tallinn is the oldest capital city in Northern Europe and, despite the political upheaval this region has experienced over the centuries, has never been attacked, pillaged, or bombed. For this reason, her old town, encased within a thick medieval wall, is perfectly preserved.

Let's walk across the ramparts and through the wide gates of Old Tallinn. See there? That is St. Olaf's church with its skyscraping spire stretching toward the heavens. St. Olaf's was possibly the tallest building in the world from 1549 to 1625. According to legend, the steeple has been hit by lightning at least ten times and it may have been even taller before it was reconstructed. Shall we go inside?

This church reflects Estonia's religious history. It was named for King Olaf II of Norway, who lived during the tenth century; after his death, he was honored as a saint. St. Olaf's was originally a Roman Catholic Church. But when the



St. Olaf's Church. Photo by Olga Itenberg license CC BY-SA 2.0.



Tallinn's Old Town. Photo taken by Guillaume Speurt and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

Reformation swept through Europe in the 1500's, Estonia protested against the Catholic Church along with many other European countries and this church became Lutheran. In 1950, it became a Baptist church.

Since it's a beautiful sunny day here in Tallinn, let's not hide inside. Even though there are many museums we could visit and old buildings we could wander through, I suggest we get some lunch at an outdoor cafe to experience something one can only experience in Estonia. Would you like to try an Estonian delicacy known locally as vürtsikilud, or spicy sprats? Sprats are a small silvery fish found in the Baltic Sea, marinated in a mixture of black pepper, allspice, cloves, nutmeg, coriander seeds, bay leaves, salt, and sugar.

The best way to enjoy vürtsikilud is to order kiluvõileib, an open-faced sandwich on dark rye bread layered with butter, sprats, hardboiled eggs, red and green onions. Trust me, it's delicious! The

world's largest kiluvõileib, created here in Tallinn's Town Hall Square in 2014, was 20 meters in length.

Tallinn has also created some of the largest **marzipan** structures in the world. Marzipan is a sweet confection made from two basic ingredients—sugar or honey, and almond meal made from ground almonds. The Marzipan industry in Tallinn began long ago during the



Kiluvõileib. Photo by Ave Maria Mõistlik license CC BY-SA 2.0.

A Child's Geography



Marzipan Fruit Market by Gabriele. License CC BY-SA 2.0.

Middle Ages, but it was originally sold as a medicine. Eventually, it became popular to mold the putty-like dough into an edible decoration to adorn a dessert or rolled thin to top a celebration cake for royalty and commoners alike. Medieval marzipan crafters typically molded miniature imitations of fruits and vegetables, but today's artisans create larger and more unique creations, such as a 26-pound (12 kilogram) model of the Estonian Theatre.

This afternoon, we are going to do something you've likely never done before. Our destination is about an eight-mile drive outside of town—the Kõnnu Suusoo bogs of Estonia. A **bog** is a stretch of wet, spongy ground with soil that is composed mainly of decayed vegetable matter. Wooden pathways have been built so that visitors can walk through the bogs without getting wet and dirty. But that sounds tame, doesn't it? Let's try something a little more invigorating—**bog-shoeing**. We'll get to strap on shoes that resemble snowshoes, but, created from rubber, are especially suited for getting soaked in the bogs. With bog-shoes on, we won't have to follow the path.

After trekking a short distance into the forest along the two-plank-wide narrow path, we come to a perfect place for strapping our bog shoes over our rubber boots and gingerly lowering ourselves down into the marshy bog. As we wobble and mush our way through the bog, our guide, Urmas, tells us that without bog shoes, we would surely sink right down into the muck. Yuck! Urmas is an enthusiastic guide as he tells us about the mosses



Sunrise at Viru Bog in Estonia. Photo by Abrget47j and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 3.0.

and lichen found in the bog that Estonians use to make a tea to soothe sore throats, and about the wild tart cranberries that can be found growing in the muddy swamp.

Urmas points to a tower with a flag waving in the distance and tells us that is our destination. Then he tells us this story:

“Two bog rangers were staring up the flag pole, scratching their heads. A really old farmer in his really old truck pulled up and asked them, ‘What’s the problem, boys?’ One of them answered, ‘Our boss wants us to measure the height of the flag pole, but we cannot climb up this skinny pole.’ The farmer walked back to his truck to fetch a monkey wrench and a tape measure. He loosened a couple bolts, lowered the pole to the ground, and then measured it. ‘Seven and a half meters, my friends.’ Then he picked up his tools and drove away. The bog rangers looked at one another and laughed. ‘What an idiot, if I ever saw one! We wanted the height and he gave us the length.’”

Urmas looks at us intently, his eyes twinkling, but he doesn’t smile. We do though, because Americans, like Estonians, enjoy a good joke.

After our strenuous hike sloshing through the murky bog, we find another plank trail, which leads us back to the Kõnnu Watchtower. A climb up several flights of stairs to the top of the tower provides us with an incredible view of the vast wetlands as the sun dips low in the western sky. The bog lands stretch as far as the eye can see. One can literally bog-shoe for days before coming out the other side, as you can see here: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com/bog-shoeing-in-estonia/>

Estonia is a curious country of contrasts. Her people are straightforward, yet funny. Her land is untamed and wild, yet has experienced bondage for all but twenty years of the past millennium at the hands of the Danes, Swedes, Russians, and Germans. Her history, similar to Latvia’s, could have crushed her culture yet it has not diminished the Estonian spirit. The spirit of Estonia is lovely,

full of light, laughter, and song. She is as beautiful as a delicate snowflake, yet as strong as a glacier. She is beauty indeed. ■



Tell me what you remember about Estonia:

- ◇ *What does *maarahvas* mean? What does *Saaremaa* mean?*
- ◇ *What catastrophic event happened on the island of *Saaremaa* approximately 3500 years ago? What was left behind?*
- ◇ *The tallest building in the capital city of Tallinn was once the tallest building in the world between 1549 and 1625. What is it?*
- ◇ *What is a bog? Instead of walking on the wooden planks, we can walk through it wearing what type of shoes?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *National Geographic Readers: Meteors*
- ◇ *Solar System, Space Rocks, and Beyond: Exploring the Wonders of Space Particles and Meteorites (Geology Lab for Kids) by Garret Romaine*

Timeline for Scandinavia

- 283** Lucia, Sweden's patron saint, is born into wealthy Italian family
- 820** The Oseberg Ship built by the Vikings
- 980** Erik the Red discovers Greenland
- 988** The city of Odense in Denmark is founded
- 1000** Leif Erikson discovers Newfoundland in North America
- 1049** The city of Oslo, Norway is established
- 1070** Bergen, Norway is established by King Olav Kyrre, son of Harald Hadrada
- 1150** Hopperstad Stave Church built along the Sognefjord in Norway
- 1219** The oldest flag in the world - Denmark's - is designed
- 1252** Birger Jarl founded Stockholm, Sweden
- 1349** The Black Death arrives in Norway
- 1429** Pirates, the Victual Brothers, burns down much of Bergen, Norway
- 1500** Denmark rules all of Norway and much of Sweden
- 1523** Stockholm liberated from the Danes
- 1621** Galileo Galilei witnesses and names the Aurora Borealis
- 1665** The Battle of Vågen waged between the Dutch and English in Bergen Harbor, Norway
- 1714** Greater Wrath battle between Russia and Sweden
- 1742** Lesser Wrath battle between Russian and Sweden
- 1805** Hans Christian Anderson is born in Odense, Denmark
- 1888** Alfred Nobel reads his obituary in the newspaper
- 1901** The first Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to Jean Henri Dunant for his role in founding the International Red Cross
- 1903** The Oseberg Ship uncovered in Norway
- 1932** Lego company is founded in Denmark
- 1947** The Kon-Tiki raft built to prove the Polynesian Islands may have been settled by peoples from South America
- 1971** A large group of homeless people storms a military base, taking possession of it for their new home, now called Christiania
- 1972** Margrethe II, Queen of Denmark, begins her reign
- 2018** A 66-foot Viking longship is discovered in southern Norway

Scandinavia



4

Finland

King of the Wood

Having boarded another ferry, this one from Tallinn to Helsinki, we are now crossing the Gulf of Finland to the great northern country it was named after. This is the same journey that thousands of Jewish Estonians traveled during World War II, when they fled German-occupied Estonia to escape the horrors of

the Holocaust. Thankfully, many Jewish families found refuge and safety in their neighboring country of Finland.

If we were flying in an airplane at a 30,000-foot altitude, we would be able to see that Finland is a land of thousands and thousands of lakes—188,000 lakes to be exact. It has 179,000



Winter in Lapland, Finland's northernmost region. Photo is in the public domain.



Winter in the Baltic Sea. Photo by Bengt Nyman used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

islands offshore with the greatest concentration of rocky outcroppings, large and small, located between southern Finland and Åland in the Archipelago Sea off the southwest coast of Finland.

When you think of Finland, what comes to mind? Ice caverns and palaces, glaciers and frozen lakes, long nights and dark days. Finland has all these things, but this is just the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. Finland is cold, yes, but it is so much more than a frozen landscape. In fact, you will be surprised to learn that Finnish summers can be quite hot because of an intriguing phenomenon happening deep down in the ocean by a gigantic current. Finland is close enough to the Atlantic Ocean to be warmed by the **Trans-Atlantic Gulf Stream**.

The Gulf Stream current carries warm water up from the equator, which then cools while it is up north before its return to the southern hemisphere. With warm water swirling out at sea, Finnish summers are more than pleasant. They can

be unusually hot, even if they are short compared with other regions that share the same latitude on the globe, such as Alaska, Siberia, and Greenland.

Finland, one of the world's most northern countries, lies between latitudes 60° and 70° north. In fact, Finland's capital of Helsinki is the second northernmost capital in the world, lying south of Reykjavik, Iceland, alone.

The ferryboat is pulling into the massive harbor of Helsinki now. It is dwarfed by the huge cruise ships that look like floating cities and the gigantic cargo ships loading and offloading their goods. Finland is the largest producer and exporter of wood in Europe as well as one of the largest in the world. That means that shiploads of pine, spruce, and birch logs are being transported across the world from this port. Of the total land area of Finland, 10% is covered by lakes, rivers, and ponds and nearly 80% is blanketed by **taiga** forests. That leaves just 10% of the total area that isn't water, **fen**, or forest.



Photo of Helsinki taken by Miguel Virkkunen Carvalho. Used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.



Finnish cardamom rolls by W. Carter, license CC 1.0.

A friend of a friend lives in Finland. Her name is Anya and she's going to show us around her beautiful country. Anya trained in the United States to become a world-class pole-vaulter. She has won many international competitions, but she no longer competes in her sport. Today, she runs her own business, which manufactures and sells natural cosmetics. She is the face and model for her own company's product line.

"Hei," Anya waves from the dock as we alight from the ferry. "Shall we drive in your car or mine?" she asks.

We agree to follow her in her car to the city center and then begin our tour from there.

We park in a parking garage and then come out into the daylight alongside a beautiful city park dotted with large evergreen and deciduous trees. Anya opens her arms wide and says, "Welcome to Finland and my hometown of Helsinki! Let me show you around."

As we stroll through the park and along the chic waterfront streets of downtown Helsinki, Anya proudly shares a little history and Finnish culture with us.

"One out of five Finns lives here in the capital city, which is actually built on a network of 316 islands. That's why there are so many bridges! Finland is the least populated country in Europe, yet one of the largest by land area.



The Helsinki waterfront. Photo is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

“According to archaeological evidence, the history of Finland dates back thousands of years. It was settled during the Stone Age when the last sheet of ice receded after an ice age. Various stone tools and pottery have been found in and around Helsinki, like the artifacts found in neighboring Russia and Sweden.

“But we Finns are nothing like the Russians or the Swedes, just so you know. In fact, we have a saying, ‘We are not Swedes and we do not want to become Russians, let us therefore be Finns.’ Yes, we are a very proud and independent people.”

Anya tells us that the name *Finland* comes from *finlandi*. This word was carved into three ancient rune stones discovered in the area. The name refers to an old northern tribe known as the Finns, pre-dating the Vikings. The Finns dwelt here two thousand year ago, around the same time Christ walked upon the earth.

“Later, Swedish kings gained more power in the north and Swedish-speaking settlers colonized this entire region during the Middle Ages. Most Finns began to speak Swedish, the dominant language of the nobility, and Finnish was cast out to be spoken only by peasants. Thankfully, the Finnish language has been revived and 90% of all Finns now speak their native tongue once again. Finnish is completely unrelated to Swedish and the other Scandinavian languages. It is more

like Hungarian and considered to be as difficult to learn as Chinese.

“Over the centuries, the people of Finland have worked hard to create their identity as separate and unique from our closest neighbor, Sweden. However, Finland has many times been caught in the middle of skirmishes between Sweden and our other next-door neighbor, Russia, twice falling into the hands of Russia during the 18th century. Finns refer to these times as the Greater Wrath (1714-1721) and the Lesser Wrath (1742-1743). It is estimated that an entire generation of young men was lost during the Greater Wrath, due to the mass destruction of homes and farms, as the Russians razed Helsinki and the surrounding countryside to the ground.

“Finnish nobility and peasants alike had had enough of being caught in the middle. Due to Sweden and Russia’s repeated use—or shall I say, abuse—of Finland as a battlefield, Finland declared her independence from both.”

Anya stops walking suddenly and spins around to look at us. “All this talk of wars and arguments is making me hungry. Let’s grab a bite to eat before I show you the *real* Finland. The ‘behind-the-scenes’ Finland,” Anya says with a wink.

“This is one of my favorite places to take my cosmetic buyers to lunch. They have a good beef dish that is served with a creamy mushroom



A Finnish sauna. Photo taken by Miika Silfverberg, used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

sauce. It's delicious. There are several types of fish to choose from as well. But I think the reason why I like this restaurant so much is because they serve the best coffee and Finnish pastries. They make a yummy cardamom coffee bread. I also really like the cloudberry tart; it's heavenly and tastes great with their coffee! Did you know that Finns drink more coffee per capita than any other country in the world?

"After we finish our meal, I have the rest of the day planned out for us," Anya smiles. "I would like to take you up to my house to meet my family. It is about an hour drive north of here. Most days I work from home, which I love, but our house is close enough to Helsinki for the days when I do need to drive into the office for work. My husband, Jan, and two teens, Aava and Mattic, would love to meet you. Plus, I have a Finnish tradition to show you!

"Where you live, in the United States, it seems that nearly every backyard contains a swimming pool. That is not the case here. Finns only like to

swim in heated indoor pools. As you can imagine, most families can't afford one or don't have the space needed to build one inside their home, but most Finnish homes have a built-in sauna.

"The sauna is a Finnish invention. In case you have never seen one, it is a small room or outbuilding designed to warm you up quickly. Saunas can deliver wet or dry heat, but the purpose of the high heat and steam is to cause you to sweat. Finns believe that perspiration leads to better health and longer life.

"Health-wise, saunas are used for cleansing the body of toxins and relieving symptoms of the common cold or reducing other pain and discomfort in the body. Saunas are also used for social gatherings. Families gather in the sauna to spend time together several times a week. Friends congregate at one another's homes and enjoy conversation in the sauna.

"Would you like to experience a Finnish sauna?"



Cloudberry. Photo in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

“Oh, yes!” we reply. “That sounds like a perfect thing to do while we are in Finland.”

“Perfect, we’ll drive to my home after we finish eating. We have a guest room and I would love it if you could stay the night. Tomorrow my family will be going berry picking. It is a favorite activity of ours. There is a farm near our home where we can pick our own berries—lingonberries, bilberries, cloudberry. Then, perhaps we can make a cloudberry tart from the berries we pick! My daughter, Aava, is an excellent baker. I’m sure we can talk her into a little Finnish baking lesson for you before you leave.”

What an incredible opportunity! Make note of this: Whenever you are offered the gift of spending time in someone’s home in another country, always take it. While our world can feel awfully big sometimes, and Finland can feel awfully far away when we look it up on the globe, spending time in a new friend’s home allows us to notice the uniqueness of their culture while enjoying the similarities of our hearts.

God bless you, Anya, for giving us a unique, inside glimpse at Finland. ■

Field Notes

Tell me what you remember about Finland:

- ◇ *Does Finland have more lakes or more islands?*
- ◇ *The weather in Finland is affected by the Trans-Atlantic Gulf Stream. Explain how the Gulf Stream warms the air in Finland.*
- ◇ *Which two countries used Finland as their battleground? Why does Finland not like to be associated with either of them?*
- ◇ *Which drink do Finns drink more of per capita than any other people group in the world?*
- ◇ *Why was the sauna invented in Finland?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *Tales from a Finnish Tupa* by James Cloyd Bowman
- ◇ *Xenophobe’s Guide to the Finns* by Tarja Moles (for High School and up)

5

Sweden

The City Between the Bridges

The beautiful land of my ancestors is our next destination on this Northern European adventure. Can you guess where that is? It's Sweden! There are a few different ways we can travel from Helsinki, Finland to Stockholm, Sweden.

We could take the long way, which would involve driving through northern Finland beyond

the **Arctic Circle**, around the Bay of Bothnia, across the Finland-Sweden border and then back down through northern Sweden, known as Lapland. This route would take us at least three or four full days of driving! However, we would see some spectacular sights along the way that you can't see anywhere else. Did you know there is a place on earth quite similar to Elsa's glittering



Nordic Ice Hotel. Photo in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

ice castle from the Disney movie, *Frozen*? Only Sweden’s glittering palace isn’t a castle—it is a hotel.

Ice Hotel is an actual hotel where you can sleep overnight in frosty sub-zero rooms carved from real ice. The fanciful rooms and sparkling ice sculptures captivate guests from all over the world. Only these jaw-dropping carvings were not created by magical hands like Elsa’s, but by skilled, artistic hands that have brought the ice to life. In fact, the artists who create this wintry palace will watch it all melt come late spring, but they look forward to creating a new fanciful frozen hotel each year when Sweden returns to its wintry paradise.

Let’s take a look inside the Ice Hotel in Jukkasjärvi, Sweden: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com/ice-hotel-in-sweden/>

Northern Sweden, like all land located above the Arctic Circle, is home to a spectacular phenomenon I want to share with you. The Arctic Circle is an imaginary line of latitude that marks the southernmost point on the planet where the sun never dips below the horizon for a full 24 hours on at least one day of the year, known as the **summer solstice**. This also means that the lands above the Arctic Circle experience at least one full day of darkness six months later in the year, known as the **winter solstice**, a dark day when the sun never peeks over the horizon. A day with no sun! Sounds a little dreary, doesn’t it? But there is a trade-off for the people who live in northern Sweden as well as many of the other countries above the Arctic Circle, and that is the northern lights.

On cold, wintry nights above the Arctic Circle, a natural light show of green, blue, and purple swirls may appear in the night sky. This phenomenon is called **Aurora Borealis**, meaning “northern dawn”, named by Galileo Galilei, who witnessed the incredible light display on September 12, 1621. It was so named because Gregory of Tours, who lived a thousand years before the famous



Ice Hotel photo by Momo, used with permission CC BY-SA 2.0.

scientist, wrote, “The lights are so bright that you might have thought the day was about to dawn.”

The light show displays can be difficult to predict, so you may end up losing some sleep waiting for one to appear. But if you ever do catch a glimpse of this wondrous shimmering curtain of light in the night sky, you will never forget it.

An aurora happens when solar flares from the sun’s surface fling out into space at speeds of over a million miles per hour and crash into our earth’s atmosphere. The incredible part is that a layer of our atmosphere—the ionosphere—has been set in place to shield our earth from this explosive electrical charge from the sun. When these sun particles, called ions, smash into the ionosphere, the collision creates a glorious display of glowing lights.



Aurora Borealis by Beverly and Pack. Photo used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

Let's take a look here: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com/aurora-borealis-in-sweden/>

Another faster way to travel from Helsinki to Stockholm is to island hop, skip, and jump our way across the Bay of Bothnia. This route would require that we take a ferry to the islands of Åland, drive across those beautiful islands by way of an interconnected series of bridges, then take a second ferry to Stockholm, the capital city of Sweden. This would be a different kind of scenic drive than the more northerly route and would take us about 12 hours to complete. That's better than four days, but still a long journey.

Our third option is to fly from capital city to capital city across the waters where the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Bothnia meet. If we go this route, we'll be in Sweden in less than an hour. Which option would you prefer? Since it's not wintertime, we'd miss much of what makes northern Sweden so spectacular anyway, so maybe we'll skip the long way this time around. Flying it is!

Now that we have settled into our airplane seats, let's pull out our maps again and become acquainted with our next country. Sweden is the fourth largest country on the European continent and has one of the longest coastlines. Sweden is bordered by Finland to the east, connected to Denmark by the Öresund Bridge to the south, and shares the longest uninterrupted border in Europe with Norway, her neighbor to the west.

Now that we are in the air, you can see some of the islands that belong to Sweden. As we approach the airport in Stockholm, you'll also catch a glimpse of some of the forest groves which blanket the land. While most of the land in southern Sweden is agricultural—used to grow crops—the forests grow thicker and thicker the further north you travel. In fact, 65% of Sweden's total land area is covered with dense forests of birch, maple, alder, larch, beech, and oak trees.



Sunset over Lake Vänern by Leonhard Lenz. Photo used with permission under license CC BY-SA 4.0.

Sweden is also home to two of Europe’s largest lakes, Vänern and Vättern, outsized only by two massive lakes in Russia. In fact, these lakes are laced together by canals, much like the Great Lakes in the United States. Besides these two mammoth lakes, however, Sweden is home to more than 101,000 additional lakes that dot the landscape, and over 24,000 islands sprinkled along the coast.

That was a quick flight! We are coming in for a landing in the capital city of Stockholm. The city stretches across 14 islands, all connected by bridges and subway tunnels. Over two million people call Stockholm home (say that 5 times fast!), making it the most populated city in the entire Nordic region. In fact, one in five Swedish citizens live in or around their capital city. Stockholm is located on Sweden’s third largest freshwater lake, Lake Mälaren, where it flows out and mingles with the briny Baltic Sea.

Stockholm is a city drenched in sunshine during the daylight hours. The rainiest months

occur in late summer—August and September. Like Helsinki in Finland, Stockholm enjoys a very moderate climate. Summers can become quite warm despite its northern latitude, and winters are cold but not unbearable. Stockholm’s temperate climate is in part due to the warm Gulf Stream that flows up from the southern hemisphere, but also because Stockholm is one of the sunniest cities in Northern Europe, receiving more than 1,800 hours of sunshine per year.

The city of Stockholm is both beautiful and historic. It was founded all the way back in 1252 by the Swedish ruler Birger **Jarl**. It is interesting to note that “Jarl” wasn’t his last name but his title, and is similar in rank to an earl or count in other parts of Europe. Immediately after its founding, Stockholm joined the **Hanseatic League**, a union which regulated trade throughout Northern Europe, allowing the city to grow rapidly. Known as the Queen of the North, she was fought over by the Danes and the Swedes for the next 300 years,



Stockholm waterfront taken by Julian Herzog, used with permission under license CC BY-SA 4.0.

but after liberation from Denmark in 1523 and from that time forward, Stockholm was widely regarded as the capital city of Sweden.

The old center of town is known as Gamla Stan, which means “the city between the bridges”. Let’s stroll through this old capital and see some of her sights up close. We’ll definitely want to walk through a handful of Stockholm’s most beautiful and historic buildings, such as the Royal Palace, the House of Lords, and the Storkyrkan, the Cathedral of St. Nicolas.

Oh, and there’s the famous Stock Exchange painted in the classic yellow color that we associate with Sweden. Stockholm is a colorful city with buildings in all shades of yellow, blue, orange, and green. Copper rooftops gleam bright green when the sun pokes out between the gathering clouds. The Swedish flag waves proudly from many government and non-government buildings alike. This truly is a cheery and beautiful city.



Gamla Stan by Bengt Nyman under license CC BY-SA 4.0.



Gamla Stan in Stockholm by Mike Norton, used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

Without warning, the clouds above us collide and large drops of water begin falling from the sky and splattering the sidewalk, drenching the city and attempting to wash away her vibrant color. Quick! Let's duck inside this building. Oh look, it's a grocery market and it's crowded with people. Step out of the way over here by the window and we can wait out the rain shower. I wonder why there are so many people in the store shopping for groceries.

We don't have to wait long to find out. Everyone is friendly and talking with each other and saying the word *midsommar*. The English translation is "midsummer" and it's a very important holiday in Sweden, second only to Christmas. Turns out that **Midsummer** will be celebrated tomorrow. All the stores and businesses are closing early so that families and friends can begin their celebration of Midsummer's Eve tonight. How animated and festive everyone is acting!

A young couple stops to talk with us before leaving the market with their two full bags of groceries.

"You look a little lost. Can we help?" the young man asks.

"We are not lost, just waiting out the rain." I reply quickly. "We are travelers who are exploring your beautiful city."

"Yes, our city is beautiful indeed, but it will be closing down soon. You see, tomorrow is Midsummer, and everyone takes to the countryside to celebrate this joyful holiday. The celebration of Midsummer revolves around nature, so there will be no one left in the city by morning. It will seem like a ghost town."

"Oh, that is a shame. We planned to do some sightseeing." I respond.

"You can still do some sightseeing, but perhaps of a different kind," the young woman chimes in. "On Midsummer in Sweden, everyone is family. And we celebrate together as a family—friends

A Child's Geography

and strangers alike. The entire population of Sweden will be gathering around the great lakes, and the smaller ones too, to join in the festive celebration. You are welcome to come. Everyone is welcome to come! This is all you will need to do: Buy some picnic food and meat for the grill and drive out to the lake tomorrow. Or even better, buy or borrow some camping gear and come a day early. Join our group at the Kristinehamn Beach on Lake Vänern. But remember this, even if you cannot find us, it will be all right. Another group will surely welcome you to their gathering. You are family when it is Midsummer in Sweden.”

“*Glad Midsommar*,” they call in unison as they wave goodbye and stroll out the sliding glass doors to the shiny wet streets of Stockholm.

Glad in Swedish means *happy*, so they just wished us a “Happy Midsummer!” We’ll have to give that phrase a try in the upcoming festivities.

Should we join our new friends at the lake to celebrate Midsummer? There’s not too much to consider. The city will be closing down soon and all the city dwellers will be escaping to the countryside in a matter of hours. Let’s purchase some food and be on our way! Pickled herring, a small briny fish, is a popular Swedish delicacy. Let’s buy a jar along with some sour cream to make a simple side dish. We can also buy some rye bread, fruit, and sausages for the grill.

There’s a sporting equipment store on the way back to the car. We might as well pick up a tent and a few sleeping bags so we can head for the lake tonight rather than waiting for tomorrow.

Back in the car, we are pretty excited to be driving out to the biggest lake in Sweden, Lake Vänern. Fortunately for us, we’ll be passing by an archaeological dig where hundreds of **rune stones** have been excavated. Thousands of such stones have been found strewn across Scandinavia. Carved with runic inscriptions and serpentine illustrations, rune stones date as far back as the Bronze Age, the majority dating



Rune stone in Sweden, photo by Berig license CC BY-SA 3.0.

around the 11th century, otherwise known as the Viking Age.

Rune stones were primarily carved to commemorate the dead, but they did not serve as grave markers. They were placed along roadsides and pathways where they could be seen and appreciated by passersby. Over time, these memorials were knocked over, buried, and lost to civilization until there was a resurgence of interest in Swedish history about a hundred years ago.

In the early 20th century, many Swedish historical societies excavated the earth to restore these **monoliths**. Over 2,500 rune stones have been recovered in just Sweden alone, and we’ll be able to see some of them up close, along with



Lake front in Sweden taken by Bengt Nyman and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

photos from the excavation sites. As you can see, the Swedes are proud of their Viking heritage: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com/rune-stones-in-sweden/>

Aren't the rune stones and the photos from the excavations incredible? We've received a glimpse into two different cultures at the same time—the runic communication of the Vikings and the exuberant discovery by the Swedes in the early 1900's.

It's getting late. We'd better hurry to Kristinehamn on the lake. We still need to set up camp and we won't want to do that in the dark. The Swedish people love being outdoors and especially enjoy easy access to nature. For this reason, the Swedish tradition of freely walking wherever one likes has become law. It is called the "right to public access" and means that you can essentially walk anywhere in Sweden, even if that means crossing someone's private property, to arrive at your destination.

Still, I'd rather arrive early enough to know that I'm not wandering around or pitching a tent in someone's backyard. Let's get going!

Field Notes

Tell me what you remember about Sweden:

- ◇ *This type of hotel can only be found in the coldest countries of the world. Would you like to stay overnight in one?*
- ◇ *What is an Aurora Borealis? Why does this happen?*
- ◇ *Name the three countries that border Sweden. Name the two biggest lakes in Sweden.*
- ◇ *Why is Stockholm's city center called "the city between the bridges?" How many islands does the city stretch across?*



Lake Vänern taken by Vanerpaddel used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

GLAD MIDSOMMAR!

It's a glorious morning on the shore of Lake Vänern. This lake is so vast that you cannot see the other side. It almost looks like the ocean. Crawling out of our tent, we see that others have woken up early too and are busy with preparations for the festive day ahead. There is a buzz in the air as toddlers run and squeal in the gathering sunlight, parents enjoy their first sips of strong black coffee, teens reluctantly rise and gaze out on the sparkling lake, and amateur fishermen shove their boats out from shore to see what treasures can be pulled out of the cool water with their fishing lines.

Today is Midsummer in Sweden, one of the most anticipated holidays of the year. We have heard that it is similar to our 4th of July in the United States, only Sweden celebrated their national birthday a couple weeks ago. Instead of a national birthday party, this celebration is

for the welcoming of summer, a favorite season for Swedes after the long, cold winter they have endured.

The children have begun to gather wildflowers for the wreaths that will be woven and worn upon each person's head. Wild blackberry and lingonberry bushes cluster in fields not far from the lakeshore and pickers are now arriving wearing buckets tied around their waists with twine. Let's go join the berry pickers.

Look! There's the couple we met in the market in Stockholm! We wave and walk their way, meeting them at the wall of prickly blackberry vines where they are picking.

"Hey, you made it!" the young man shouts. "*Valkommen!* Welcome! My name is Anders and this is my wife, Ingrid. Our baby's name is Astrid. We are glad to meet you and even more glad that you have joined us on this special day."

"Thank you for inviting us and making us feel so welcome," we reply.



Blackberries. Photo is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

Ingrid is carrying baby Astrid on her back, who smiles at us under her sunbonnet. Anders hands us extra containers so that we can pick berries too.

“We’ll make beautiful berry tarts from these berries when we get back to the cabin,” Ingrid tells us. “The more berries, the more tarts!”

Ingrid’s parents own a cabin by the lake where their friends and family gather every Midsummer. We have been invited to join them. How fortunate we are!

“Why is Midsummer such an important holiday in Sweden?” I ask.

Anders puts his hands on his hips and considers his answer. “Well, Midsommar is an ancient holiday and has been celebrated for as long as people have been living in these northern parts. The Vikings celebrated Midsommar and so did the barbarian tribes that lived here before them. In other words, this holiday has been celebrated for thousands of years.

“Seasons are fairly extreme in Sweden. The winters are very long, very dark, and very cold. Snow stays on the ground until April or May. Then springtime arrives and the ground and trees are awakened with new life. The birds sing for joy and animals return in droves to graze and raise their families. While the Swedish people love their northern wintry climate and the frosty snow and ice that glitter during the winter months, they also rejoice when summer arrives bringing with it long, warm days full of sunshine and promise. The people of Sweden embrace summer and squeeze as much recreation and relaxation out of it as possible. We have perfected the idea of outdoor living.”

“Oh yes, you will see outdoor living at its finest when you are at my parents’ cabin today!” smiles Ingrid.

After filling our buckets to the brim with berries, we stroll back toward the lakeshore and the cabin. Ingrid’s parents’ home is small but quaint,



Swedish lake house. Photo is in the public domain.

painted bright yellow with a deck facing the lake. It's modest but very homey—and bustling with activity. Children are laughing and running across the deck, through the cabin, and back out to the pebbly beach. Adults are swinging peacefully in hammocks or talking quietly in groups on the lawn, by the water, and in the doorway of the cabin. A silvery blond-haired woman wiping her hands on a colorful apron rushes out the kitchen door to greet us.

“Ingrid, Anders, who are your friends? I am Inge Holmgren. Welcome to our home away from home! Thank you for the beautiful berries,” she coos, collecting as many containers as she can hold. “Please, please make yourselves at home. There are drinks in the cooler on the deck, hammocks strung among the trees in the yard, lawn chairs along the lakeshore, and coffee brewing in the coffeepot.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Holmgren, for opening up your home to us,” I reply. “You are so generous

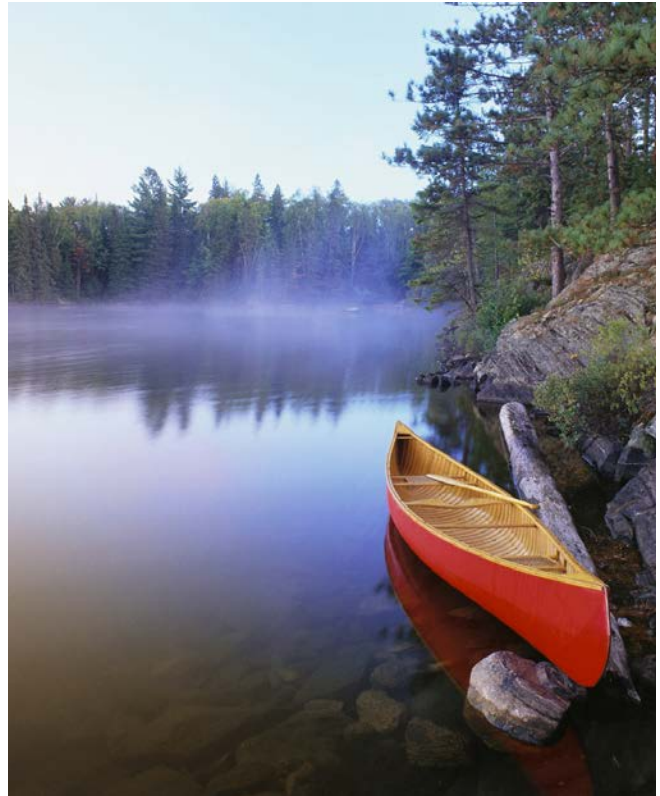


Photo by Edwin Poon used with license CC BY-SA 2.0.

and kind. I'll definitely take you up on a nap in a hammock later, but for now, we'd like to be put to work. What can we do to help you?”

“Well then, come, come. Let's go in the kitchen so you can help me bake the berry tarts!”

We follow her past the **kaffee-klatsch** groups on the deck and in the doorway to her small but bright and super tidy kitchen. “You two can sit at the counter and help with mixing the dough. But first let's start washing the berries,” Inge says as she calmly and expertly puts everyone to work.

“You know, Midsummer is my favorite holiday outside of Christmas and Santa Lucia Day.”

“Santa Lucia Day? What's that?”

“Oh, you don't know who Santa Lucia was? Oh my, you are in for a great story. Lucia was a young Italian woman who was born into a very wealthy and noble family in Syracuse in the year 283. As Lucy grew, she became very burdened in her soul for people less fortunate than herself. When she became a teenager, she declared to her mother



Santa Lucia wreath. Photo is in the public domain.

that she would remain single and give her dowry to help feed the poor. Her family became enraged; so much so, that they killed sweet Lucy for her faith in God and her devotion to the poor. She has been honored as a saint ever since!”

“Excuse my confusion, but why do people in Sweden celebrate an Italian saint?”

“Why, it’s because the Italians have so many saints that they cannot remember them all, let alone celebrate them! And so, during the Middle Ages, the people of Sweden adopted Lucia as our patron saint. Legend has it that she appeared in Sweden during a famine and carried food to the farmers around this very lake, Lake Vänern, to sustain their families during the long ordeal. She has been our dear Santa Lucia ever since. She represents light and goodwill to all the people of Sweden during the darkest days of winter. That’s why we celebrate her life in December.

“On the morning of the 13th, the oldest daughter of each family dresses in a special long

white gown with a red ribbon sash tied around her waist. She wears white socks, but no shoes, or she is barefoot. A wreath made from evergreen boughs with 6-8 candles on it is placed upon her head. These days, the candles are usually battery powered light bulbs instead of real candles so that no one’s hair catches on fire!

“Goodness, that would be a disaster!” Inge laughs and brushes a stray hair away from her face, leaving a swash of flour across her cheek. “The daughter carries a tray with coffee and special saffron bread, known as Santa Lucia Bread, which she serves to the family. It’s such a beautiful day and Santa Lucia Bread is to die for! But the food we’ll be having today is nearly as good,” Inge winks.



The sun is high in the sky. The tables are covered with brightly checked tablecloths, big bunches of wildflowers, and small wooden horses. The food is laid out on the sideboard and the smells



Children dancing around the Maypole. Photo by allispossible.org.uk, used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

are luring nearby loungers and talkers toward the banquet. It's nearly time to enjoy a classic Swedish **smorgasbord**. Mr. Holmgren whistles and calls everyone within earshot to gather on the lawn for the blessing. Young and old alike clasp hands, forming a large circle, while the patriarch of the family booms out a loud prayer of thanksgiving and blessing.

"Our Lord, we thank you this day for friends, old and new, for food that nourishes us, and for faith that sustains us. And together, we pray..."

At this point in the prayer, everyone chants in unison, "I Jesu namn till bords vi gå, välsigna Gud den mat vi få. Gud till ära, oss till gagn, så få vi mat i Jesu namn. Amen."

Everyone releases hands and moves in the direction of the buffet line. Seeing our curiosity, Ingrid kindly translates for us. "My father said, 'In Jesus' name to the table we go, God bless the food we receive. To God the honor, us the gain, so we have food in Jesus' name'."

Young and old, groups and individuals, all make their way toward the food and load their plates with delicious main courses and side dishes, such as Swedish meatballs with lingonberry jam, garlic beet salad, sliced ham, gravlax (dried salmon) on rye crackers, and a rich gratin of potatoes, onions, cream, and anchovies. And there's our pickled herring! Pickled herring is an acquired taste, which has most certainly been acquired here as we watch children scoop heaping piles of it onto their plates. What will you try?

Let's pull up a chair at one of the tables on the deck. From here, we have a sweeping view of the lake where children are splashing further down the shore and adults are peacefully floating by on rafts, air mattresses, and boats. Swedes have perfected the outdoor summer lifestyle. It doesn't get much better than this. The food is delicious, the mood is light, and everyone is looking forward to even more festivities as the day continues. Tonight, all the young people will adorn their

heads with flowery wreaths and dance around the maypole as summer is officially welcomed in Sweden. Secretly, every heart wishes for as long and as warm a summer as possible.

Dessert is served. The tarts we helped make turned out perfectly—sweet yet tart berry jam is surrounded by a golden crust topped with fluffy whipped cream. Heaven. Mr. Holmgren carries his dessert bowl over to our table and sits down. He asks about our adventure and where we have been so far. We tell him about the beautiful and resilient people we met in the Baltic countries—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—and about the interesting things we learned while in Finland.

Then I ask, “Why do you have little painted horses on each table?”

“Ah, the **dala horses**,” he exclaims. “The dala horse has become the iconic symbol of Sweden. But they may be even more popular in the United States. Did you know that during the 19th century, there were more Swedes living in the U.S. than in the mother country?”

“No, we didn’t know!”

“A group of Swedish families moved to the United States looking for adventure, good jobs, and a fresh start. After a few years, more families moved across the ocean to join them. And then more and more went in order to be reunited with their extended families. Over the course of a few decades, more Swedish families lived in your country than mine. But I digress; I haven’t answered your question about the dala.

“Since Viking times, the horse has been considered a holy animal. In many cultures throughout history, wooden horses have been carved as children’s toys. In central Sweden, wood scraps from the local furniture-making trade, paint-pigment from nearby copper mines, and long winter evenings bred the development of the dala horse.

“The dala horse made its first appearance in a small log cabin deep in the forest of Dalarna in



Dala horses. Photo by Nick Sieger under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

central Sweden. During the long winter nights a furniture maker whittled in front of a log fire, carving out toys for his children using the simplest of tools, a carving knife. It was only natural that many of these toys were horses, because the horse was invaluable in those days, both as a trusty friend and as a co-worker who could pull great loads of timber from the forests during the winter months. In the summer, a family horse was invaluable on the farm.

“The little wooden toys became quite popular and other woodcarvers began making the horses for their children and to sell in the marketplace. The toy trade began to flourish and the dala were even used to barter for other household goods. Over time, the iconic Swedish horses were brought across the ocean to Swedish families in the U.S. who loved them and wanted more. The art of carving and painting the small horses blossomed into a full-fledged cottage industry. In fact, the rural families of Dalarna depended on toy horse production to help keep food on the table. The skills of horse carving and painting were passed on from generation to generation.

A Child's Geography

“Many early dala horses were not painted at all, but in the beginning of the 19th century painting them in a single color, white or red, became common practice. The decoration of the dala horse has its roots in furniture painting and was perfected over the years. According to a local tale, a wandering painter came across one of these dala horses at a farmhouse he was painting. One of the children asked if he would paint the horse while he was there. ‘Of course,’ answered the delighted painter, who added some colorful flourishes across the back and sides of the horse, which pleased the children greatly. This tradition is now firmly rooted in our culture. Although you can see slight variations in the toys, most of the horses look generally the same.

“Dala horses are still handcrafted in central Sweden, but there are just as many created in Kansas too.”

We all laugh at the thought.

The afternoon proceeds just as planned. With no real schedule for the afternoon, we have time to splash in the lake, relax in the hammock, and play card games with new friends, while sipping on more coffee and snacking on rich, buttery cookies.

The evening festivities are magical. Like faeries that have come out to play, the young people dance around the maypole, decorating it with colorful ribbons and wildflowers. Soon little ones are whisked off to bed. The old ones follow shortly after. Then more dancing and music continue late into the night.

Glad Midsommer! We welcome summer to Sweden. May you experience many warm and happy days to follow this one.

As for us, we must say farewell to this beautiful nation with the big, generous heart. What a delight it has been to get acquainted with you, Sweden. Your people are like family now and your country has become like our second home.

“Hejdå!” we say goodbye to our friends in Swedish and then pile back into our car for the next adventure awaiting us. ■



Field Notes

Tell me what you remember about Sweden:

- ◇ *What is Midsummer and why do the Swedish people celebrate it?*
- ◇ *Who was Santa Lucia? Why is she celebrated in Sweden?*
- ◇ *What are some traditional Swedish dishes? Have you eaten any of these foods? Which ones would you be willing to try?*
- ◇ *What is a dala horse?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *The Northern Lights: Celestial Performances of the Aurora Borealis* by Daryl Pederson and Calvin Hall
- ◇ *Chapter 3 of A Child's Geography: Explore His Earth* by Ann Voskamp (Aurora Borealis)
- ◇ *Chapter 13 of A Child's Geography: Explore Medieval Kingdoms* by Terri Johnson (Hanseatic League)
- ◇ *Lagom: Not Too Little, Not Too Much: The Swedish Art of Living a Balanced, Happy Life* by Niki Brantmark (for high school and up)
- ◇ *Fika: The Art of the Swedish Coffee Break* by Anna Brones

6

Norway

Viking Pride

Here's a riddle for you: Which country is further east, further west, and further north of Sweden? How can that be possible? Take a glance at the map and it will suddenly make sense. Yes, it is Norway, the third Scandinavian country we get to explore! It's less than an hour's drive from Lake Vanern to the border of Sweden and Norway. In fact, the

Norway-Sweden border is Europe's longest at just over 1,000 miles.

The nation of Norway also includes the islands of Svalbard, which are halfway between the mainland and the North Pole. No one lives further north in the world than the residents of the tiny community of Ny-Ålesund (population of only 35 people) and the slightly larger town



Photo of Norwegian town and fjord is in the public domain, courtesy of Pxhere.



The Skidbladner is a replica of 9th century Gokstad longship discovered in Vestfold, Norway. Photo by David Dixon CC BY-SA 2.0.

of Longyearbyen (population 2,000) who live in Svalbard, Norway.

Northernmost Scandinavian country... longest European border... northernmost city in the world... These are not the only extremes when it comes to Norway. Norway is packed full of features unparalleled anywhere else in the world. It is the most mountainous, most picturesque, and most prosperous of all the Scandinavian countries. The days stay lighter longer, get darker earlier, and are sunnier yet rainier than every other European country. Some people would argue that Norway's natural beauty is the most dramatic and breathtaking in all of Europe and perhaps even the world. The length of its western coast is bejeweled by a long necklace of stunning deep fjords, or narrow inlets, artistically shaped and carved out by glacial ice.

Norway was once Viking land and its Viking heritage can still be seen and enjoyed today. Viking remnants dot the region in the form of ruins, runes, ships, churches, and artifacts. Fortunately for us, we'll get to see some of them today.

The Vikings were great traders, shipbuilders, and explorers. They were also fierce warriors who were infamous for terrorizing much of Europe. The thought of a Viking invasion struck fear into the hearts of people as far west as Ireland, as far south as Spain, and as far east as the Black Sea.

The Viking name comes from the Norse word *vik*, which means "fjord" or "inlet" because the Norwegian fjords provided the ideal conditions for building and testing their ships before taking them out into the open sea. Once confirmed to be seaworthy, the Vikings would sail their sleek dragon-headed vessels on extensive voyages to trade their unique wares, such as furs and amber,

along river routes deep into France, Russia, and Turkey. Or they would prepare for even longer voyages and set out across the Atlantic Ocean for Iceland, Greenland, and Canada, which they called Vinland.

These tormentors of the seas were in search of riches of all kinds, but specifically wealth in the form of gold, land, and slaves. If they came across land they wanted but was already settled, the Vikings would kill or enslave the inhabitants so they could take the territory they wanted. The Vikings were led by fierce leaders with names such as Erik Bloodaxe, Sven Forkbeard, and Erik the Red—named both for his red hair and his fiery hot temper. These weren't the types of men you wanted to sit down and bargain with over a tankard of ale. No, when folks heard that Vikings were coming, they abandoned their homes, ran for the hills, and quietly looked for new places to settle safely out of harm's way.

But the Vikings had a gentle, homely side as well. Many were farmers, fishermen, and skilled artisans who loved their livelihood and quiet lifestyle. Throughout Norway, archeologists have uncovered sophisticated tools and intricate works of art handcrafted from wood, metal, shell, and stone. However, faced with a limited amount of farmable land and a thriving population, the Vikings traveled south and west driven by more than a thirst for wealth or warfare; they needed more useable land to support their people.

It was their search for greener pastures that compelled them to descend en masse upon unsuspecting communities in northern England, France, and Ireland. Although their methods were swift and destructive, they came with the sole purpose of taking care of their own by settling in warmer climates that contained more abundant resources.

While the Vikings were fierce, determined, and swift, as an empire they were not structured well enough to function on such a large-scale,



Detail on Oseberg ship. Photo by Karamell CC BY-SA 2.5.



Statue of Viking warrior. Photo courtesy of Pixabay.

spread across multiple continents, separated by oceans and thousands of miles. More organized adversaries and armies rose up to defeat them and,

A Child's Geography



Oslo City Hall. Photo is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

over time, the Vikings assimilated into pockets of European society, particularly in France, England, Ireland, and Iceland. By the late 12th century, the once mighty Vikings had become meek and mild subjects spread throughout foreign kingdoms in a highly Christianized Europe.

But Norwegians never forget their mighty Viking roots. They embrace their vibrant, if violent, heritage. Here in the Land of the Midnight Sun, the Viking spirit lives on.

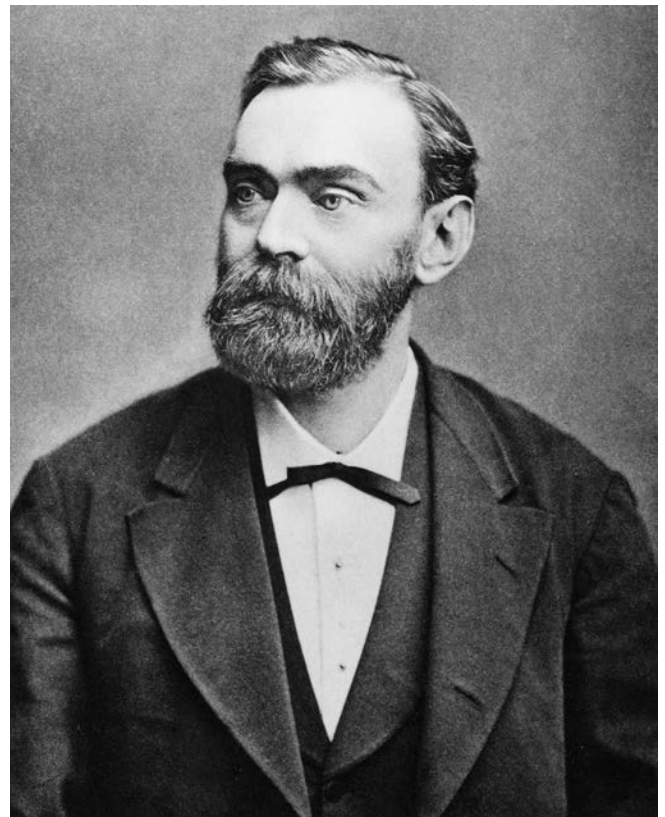
<https://knowledgequestmaps.com/vikings-in-norway/>

Norway's capital city of Oslo is a short distance beyond the border. It is located at the end of a 60-mile fjord that juts up from the southern end of the country. Oslo is a beautiful and clean city with plenty of sites to see and good food to enjoy.

The city of Oslo dates back nearly one thousand years to 1049 when Harald Hardrada was King of Norway. This particular Norwegian king attempted to bring both Denmark and England under his control but in the end was unsuccessful.

Nearly six hundred years later, Oslo burned to the ground during the reign of King Christian IV. Now Christian IV was Danish, but at this time

in history he was the ruling monarch over both Denmark and Norway. He ordered a new city built on the site, which included a grand palace for himself, and vainly named the newly built city



Photograph of Alfred Nobel from 1883. Public Domain.



The Osberg Ship at the Viking Ship Museum in Oslo. Photo taken by Vassia Atanassova under license CC BY-SA 3.0.

Christiania. Another three hundred years would pass before the people of Norway would reclaim the original name for their capital city, Oslo, thereby disconnecting themselves from their Danish past.

The large brick City Hall building dominates the Oslo waterfront. After World War II, the residents of Oslo agreed to allow their government to tear down an old slum neighborhood that was a disgrace to their pristine downtown and build this massive modern building. While not particularly beautiful on the outside, the interior is an artist's dream with each wall brilliantly displaying a mural telling some portion of Norway's history.

City Hall is where the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded each December to someone who has changed the world for the better. The award is given out in honor of Alfred Nobel, a 19th century chemist, engineer, inventor, businessman, and philanthropist from Sweden. Nobel is most

famous for his invention of dynamite, which he intended for the beneficial use of boring out tunnels for trains, etc.

However, Nobel received a huge wake-up call in 1888 when he saw his own obituary with the headline that read, *The Merchant of Death is Dead*. It was actually Alfred's brother Ludvig who had died, but the obituary caused Alfred to reconsider the purpose of his life. Now even more horrified by how his invention was being used for destruction, Nobel instituted the Peace Prize to reward peaceful scientists and humanitarians who were making a positive difference in the world.

The first Nobel peace prize was awarded in 1901 to Swiss Jean Henri Dunant for his role in founding the International Red Cross. Other notable Peace Prize winners are Mother Teresa for her work with the poorest of the poor in India; Martin Luther King for his peaceful opposition to racial discrimination; Nelson Mandela for his

A Child's Geography



Photo of Kon-Tiki boat is in the public domain.

work in ending Apartheid in South Africa; and Woodrow Wilson for his role in establishing the League of Nations, the forerunner to the United Nations, to initiate world peace after the horrors of the Great War, which later became known as World War I.

From the waterfront, we can take a ferry over to Bygdøy, a peninsula jutting south on the west side of Oslo. There we can wander through three ship museums, displaying ships from various eras of Norwegian history—old Norse Viking longships from the height of the Viking era; the *Fram*, which was the first ship to navigate the northern passage; and the *Kon-Tiki*, a raft built in 1947 that sailed on a bold and precarious expedition to prove that the Polynesian islands may have been settled by people living in South America thousands of years ago.

Two of the Viking ships on display are mostly complete and provide great insight into life on the seas as a Viking warrior. The beautiful oak Oseberg ship built around the year 820 and uncovered in 1903 could be sailed or rowed. Fully manned, it had room for 30 oarsmen. The prow and stern were ornately carved with animal figures, which began below the waterline and led up to the spiraling serpent's head proudly displayed at the very top. Such a decorated ship must have been owned by a wealthy aristocratic family.

Only a handful of complete longships have been discovered in Norway over the years. Once a ship was no longer seaworthy, they were used as burial chambers for important kings. When a longship is found underground instead of at the bottom of the ocean, it is usually well stocked with valuables and well-preserved artifacts.

An incredible find was made in a Norwegian farmer's field in the south of Norway about a month ago as of this writing (October 2018). New technology has been invented that uses ground-penetrating radar to locate hidden artifacts without having to dig. A complete 66-foot Viking longship has been discovered less than two feet underground, but work has not yet been started to uncover this amazing find.

But Viking ships and artifacts are not all Bygdøy has to offer—far from it. There are plenty of restaurants and cafeterias nearby. Let's duck into one and try some traditional Norwegian cuisine. A number of the dishes may seem very strange and off-putting to your taste buds. Some quirky Norwegian specialties include lutefisk (soaked and salted fish), smalahove (sheep's head), pinnekiøtt (literally "stick meat" made from lamb), and rakefisk (fermented trout). But other specialties on the menu may sound more appealing, such as raspeball (potato dumplings), lefse (flat potato bread used to wrap up meat and vegetables), fårikål (a casserole made with cabbage, potatoes, and lamb), and vaffel (similar



Photograph of Bryggen on the waterfront of Bergen is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

to waffles, topped with butter, strawberry jam, and sour cream). What would you like to try?



Our next stop is Bergen, Norway's second largest city at 250,000 residents (half the size of Oslo) and a popular gateway to the fjords. The city is a collection of islands surrounded by steep mountains. Founded in 1070 by King Olav Kyrre, son of Harald Hardrada, Bergen was originally named Bjørgvin, which means "the green meadow among the mountains". It served as Norway's capital until the 13th century and participated in the trading union known as the Hanseatic League. Bryggen, the row of colorful and historic commercial buildings that line the harbor and were once used for exporting cod and importing foreign valuables, is on UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites.

Bergen's ideal location on the west coast of Norway has brought the city both fortune and affliction. In 1349, the Black Death was brought to Norway by an infected crew on an English ship arriving at Bergen to deliver goods. Soon after, the city was attacked multiple times by a pirate band known as the Victual Brothers. In 1429, they succeeded in burning down the royal castle and much of the city. In 1665, Bergen's harbor became the ill-fated site of the Battle of Vågen, a skirmish that had nothing to do with the Norwegians. It was a battle between an English naval flotilla that had been attacked by a fleet of Dutch merchant ships just outside their little protected bay.

While Oslo and Bergen, along with many other Norwegian cities, are modern, bright, and friendly, they are not usually what draw people here. Norway is first and foremost a country of unforgettable natural beauty. Bergen is perfectly



Trolltunga, the Troll's Tongue, is a spectacular rock formation rising 1100m above Hardangerfjord. Asgeir Helgestad CC BY-SA 3.0.

situated as a starting point for gallivanting through the majestic fjords of Norway.

Fjords are unique geological phenomena that only occur on western coasts of cold northern countries, such as Norway, Iceland, the Faeroe Islands, British Columbia in Canada, and Alaska in the United States. These deep inlets were gouged out by glaciers as they advanced from the mountains and cut their way down to the sea. When the glaciers receded, they left behind towering canyons, misty waterfalls, and deep blue seawater. A few miles north of Bergen is the gateway to the longest, deepest, and most stunning fjord of them all—Sognefjord.

Sognefjord is 120 miles long and a mile deep. It is dotted with quaint harbors, postcard villages, and remote farms. Vessels of all sizes, from cruise ships to tiny fishing boats, troll up and down the fjord to enjoy the jaw-dropping scenery and stop in at the brightly painted shiplap hamlets along

the shore. And yet, Norway offers even more treasures to behold. Over 28 medieval stave churches where Vikings worshipped have been preserved or restored in Norway, and several of them are nestled in and amongst the steep mountainsides along the western fjords. Let's stop in to see one up close and personal.

One of the oldest, best preserved, and scenically situated stave churches in Norway is located 15 miles up the Sognefjord in the little town of Vik. Hopperstad Stave Church is rustically beautiful on the outside with its multi-tiered roof punctuated by dragonheads looking out over the rolling hills and dramatic fjord cliffs. But the interior is even more breathtaking—and surprisingly empty. Many other stave churches throughout the region have been subjected to multiple revisions and additions over the centuries. This one has not. It is blissfully uncluttered just as it was when it was built back in



Photo of Stave Church on Sognefjord is in the public domain, courtesy of Plixabay.

the mid-12th century. Its very emptiness is what draws your eyes upward to the light that filters gently down from the high windows far above. And that is when you notice that the underside of the roof looks like an inverted Viking ship.

Artists, poets, and photographers are drawn to Norway's fjords for the beauty they find in the lofty canyons, on the glistening glaciers, beside the cascading waterfalls, within the brightly painted towns, and on the deep crystal bays. It's easy to spend days here, fighting the realization that at some point we will have to leave.

And on that note, we are off to Stavanger, a city half the size of Bergen at 125,000 residents. The waterfront city on the southwestern corner of Norway is a great place to learn about the oil industry that is booming here. Norway has struck a goldmine in oil offshore. In fact, it is their possession of this valuable natural resource that has prevented the nation from joining the

European Union. If she were to join the EU, she would have to share the oil. As it stands, Norway is one of the wealthiest countries on the planet and she would like to keep it that way.

Norwegian citizens do not worry about whether their government will take good care of them. They know she will. Norway is a peace-loving neighbor and a generous parent to her citizens. Norwegians are among the happiest, healthiest, and wealthiest people in the world.

There is another more controversial reason why Norway has not joined the European Union, a union which unifies the majority of European countries, and the reason may surprise you. If Norway joined the EU, they would have to discontinue their whaling industry. Norway is one of three remaining countries in the world that still hunt whale for its commercial products, such as meat, oil, and blubber, the thick fatty skin that covers a whale's entire body. Whalers in

A Child's Geography

Norway are only permitted to hunt and catch the Minke whales, which is a smaller breed of whale that thrives in the cold northern Atlantic Ocean.

Stavanger, besides a whaling town, is also a ferry hub connecting Norway to other countries in Scandinavia and the British Isles. In fact, in just a few short hours, we will be gliding south across the North Sea and arriving in the last Scandinavian country we have yet to explore—Denmark.

Goodbye Norway. You are beautiful, vibrant, and historically rich. Your scenery and landmarks have been imprinted on our memories forever. Your stunning fjords and towering stave churches will haunt our dreams in the very best way. Farewell, beautiful. ■



Dwarf Minke Whale by Wade Lehmann. License CC BY-SA 2.0.

Field Notes

Tell me what you remember about Norway:

- ◇ *How is it that Norway is further west, further east, and further north of Sweden? Explain by drawing a simple blob map.*
- ◇ *Where did the Vikings get their name? Why are Norwegians so proud of their Viking heritage?*
- ◇ *Why did the Vikings invade other countries? How did they travel to other parts of the world?*
- ◇ *Why did Alfred Nobel institute the Nobel Peace Prize?*
- ◇ *What is a fjord? What is a stave church?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *d'Aulaires' Book of Norwegian Folktales* by Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire
- ◇ *DK Eyewitness Books: Viking: Discover the Story of the Vikings Their Ships, Weapons, Legends, and Saga of War* by Susan Margeson
- ◇ *National Geographic Kids Everything Vikings: All the Incredible Facts and Fierce Fun You Can Plunder* by Nadia Higgins
- ◇ *Guts and Glory: The Vikings* by Ben Thompson
- ◇ *Wild North Kitchen: Home Cooking from the Heart of Norway (cookbook)* by Nevada Berg

7

Denmark

The Fairytale Islands

After a half-day boat ride, we arrive in our final and most southern Scandinavian country—the beautiful land of Denmark. Denmark is by far the smallest of the Scandinavian countries, but that hasn't always been the case. During the 16th century, Denmark was the largest when it ruled all of Norway and the three southern

provinces of Sweden in addition to its modern-day territory. Danes are proud of their mighty heritage as a northern superpower, rulers of the northern seas, and explorers of the vast western frontier. They are also proud of their flag—the oldest flag in the world, unchanged since its inception in the



Photo of canals in Copenhagen is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.



This photo of Miniland has been released by Legoland Billund Resort under license CC BY 3.0.

year 1219, with its offset white cross atop a bold red background.

Along with Sweden and Norway, Denmark too was home to the Vikings, the mighty warriors who were known far and wide for their superb strength and superior shipbuilding skills. While the Swedish Vikings ventured primarily east and the Norwegians primarily south, the Danish Vikings journeyed west to Great Britain and Ireland, founding Dublin and other great cities in the British Isles. In fact, it was the Danes that brought Christianity back to Denmark from the devout monks and missionaries they encountered on those islands.

Denmark is composed of a peninsula that juts up from northern Germany along with 443 islands that cluster around it and a handful of islands located much further away—Greenland and the Faroe Islands. The capital city of Copenhagen is

located on the largest island, sandwiched between the jutting peninsula and Sweden.

We are leaving our boat at the port town of Hirtshals, located on the northern tip of the main peninsula known as Jutland. Unlike the landscape of Sweden which is punctuated by millions of lakes or of Norway dotted with jagged mountains, Denmark is flat. This landscape is composed of vast farmland interspersed with fairytale beech forests and decorated with whitewashed churches like diamonds in settings of red brick towns.

The Danes who greet us are mostly blonde with blue eyes. While many Danish have moved to other parts of the world, particularly the United States, not many people have **immigrated** here to mix up the gene pool. In fact, two out of every three Danes have last names ending in “-sen”, such as Hansen or Andersen. The most famous of all Danes was named Hans Christian Andersen. Andersen, or HC as he is fondly referred to here,

was the beloved author of famous children's works such as *The Ugly Duckling*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *Thumbelina*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *Frozen*.

The Kingdom of Denmark's popular and talented queen, Margrethe II, has been the country's monarch since 1972. Similar to the situation with Elizabeth II, the Queen of England, it is the prime minister who leads the country and makes executive decisions on her behalf. The first Queen Margrethe was very popular as well. She lived during the 14th century and married Håkon IV, the King of Norway and great grandson of Harald Hardrada, AKA Harald Bluetooth, the great Viking king. Margrethe cleverly and peacefully took control of Norway during her lifetime and Norway remained under Danish control for over 400 years after that.

We'll drive down through the scenic peninsula and then hop from island to island on the modern Danish bridge system that connects the larger islands in a long consecutive chain. The main attraction on Jutland is Legoland. In 1932, Lego began here in Denmark when a local carpenter named his wooden toy blocks after the Danish phrase *leg godt*, which means, "play well". In 1949, his company started making the iconic interlocking plastic bricks that have become famous the world over. When the company's revenue began to decline in the 1980's, executives decided to create themed sets, which included even smaller and more specialized pieces. Today's kids have grown up assembling kits based on *Star Wars*, *Ninjago*, and the *Harry Potter* movies to name a few. And it all began right here!

Legoland Denmark is filled with incredible larger-than-life spaceships, castles, and wild west towns, but perhaps the highlight for young and old alike is Miniland where carefully replicated landscapes and cityscapes from the real world have been constructed out of Lego bricks. Here visitors can enjoy world-famous sites such as the



Painting of Hans Christian Andersen is in the public domain.

Eiffel Tower and Big Ben, situated just around the corner from Dutch windmills, German castles, and even the harbor of Bergen that is so fresh in our memories from our time spent in Norway.

From Jutland, we'll take the bridge from Snoghøj to Staurby on the island of Funen. This is the island home of Hans Christian Andersen. HC was born in Odense, the largest city on the island and third largest city in Denmark. Odense was founded in AD 988 and named for the Viking god, Odin. Andersen was born here in 1805. His childhood home has been converted and expanded into a grand museum. As a child, he was known to say, "Perhaps one day Odense will become famous because of me." Indeed it has, HC.

Hans was an only child who received a basic education from a poor school. At the age of eleven after his father's death, he was expected to support himself, so he became an apprentice to



Old House on Ærø island. Photo taken by Erik Christensen and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 3.0.

a weaver and then a tailor. However, he wanted to do something more with his life. He had an incredible soprano voice and was encouraged to pursue theater in Copenhagen. Unfortunately, his voice had changed by the time he arrived in the capital city and his sweet silvery boyish voice became discordant and jarring. His new theater friends commented on his talent for poetry and convinced him to pursue a career in writing instead. And as they say, the rest is history.

Andersen's captivating writing style reflected the pain and heartbreak he often felt as a child, and these tales of loneliness, ugliness, and social awkwardness with true happy endings struck a chord in his readers. Andersen and his stories were practically an overnight success. He began to run in circles that included very famous published authors and performers, such as Charles Dickens, Viktor Hugo, and Jenny Lind, the "Swedish

Nightingale" opera sensation with whom he fell in love but whose love was never returned.

Just off the coast of Funen is the sleepy and salty island of Ærø. This old fishing and farming village is truly frozen in time from the 1600's, because the Danish government will not allow any new buildings to be built on Ærø. Here the several-hundred-year-old houses practically lean upon one another along the old cobbled lanes. Residents set out baskets of berries on their front porches for passersby to buy using the honor system. To visit here feels like going back to a simpler time.

However, the government has agreed to allow the construction of structures that provide green energy to its residents. On the island you can see several modern windmills dotting the landscape and one of the world's largest solar power plants. Ærø is going green. The townspeople hope to become completely wind and solar powered within a few years of this writing.

Ærø looks like the type of tiny town you might find assembled in miniature form inside a bottle. In fact, this is where the ships-in-a-bottle were once made, and you can see hundreds of them for yourself in the Bottle Peter Museum: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com/bottle-ships-in-denmark/>

Beyond Ærø, we come to the island of Zealand, where the capital city of Copenhagen is situated on its eastern coast. But before we get there, we have some incredible sights to see. Our first stop is the Viking Ship Museum. I know we already visited one in Norway, but this one tells a deeper story, giving us further insight into how the Vikings were able to discover North America 500 years before Columbus ever set sail for the New World.

The Danish Viking ship museum is in Roskilde, a town strategically located at the far end of a shallow inlet, or *vik*, which is the Norse word for “inlet” and the root for the word Viking, named so because they built their great ships inside these protected coves. This ship museum holds five partially completed Viking ships, not nearly as well-preserved as the three on display in Oslo, Norway, but the experience of seeing them is set up differently here. This is a hands-on museum. As we wander through the museum, we can don Viking clothing, talk with modern-day Vikings who are building replica ships using authentic tools and methods from the Viking age, and even get a chance to row one of the replica ships out of the harbor and set sail around the large bay.

Karl, one of the modern ship-builders, catches our eye, sets down his chisel, and asks us if we’d like to hear more about how the Vikings were able to sail and settle over such a vast territory thousands of miles in diameter.

“Absolutely!”

“The Vikings were an amazingly efficient people group, but not the most content. They were always looking for greener pastures, so to speak.” Karl pauses significantly and then continues, “Scandinavia, their homeland, is a harshly frigid



A ship in a bottle by Bin im Garten. License CC BY-SA 3.0.



Roskilde Viking Museum by Tanya Dedyukhina CC BY-SA 3.0.

region of the world and there isn’t a great amount of farmable land. Denmark has always had the best farmland of the Nordic countries, but size-wise, the amount of land on this collection of islands was not enough to support the growing Viking population. It was time to look for more arable land on distant shores.



Photo of Greenland is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

“That is precisely the reason why the Danish and Norwegian Vikings sailed mostly south. But they also went west, believing that there was more land to the west that wasn’t populated like the countries that they invaded to the south. And they were right! They eventually discovered the Faeroa Islands, Iceland, Greenland, and Canada.

“The Vikings were master shipbuilders. They built two types of ships primarily—the warship and the cargo ship. The warship, known as a longboat, was sleek and slender, the perfect shape for gliding through the waters quickly while still carrying upwards of a hundred or more warriors. These narrow ships did not have a large capacity for cargo, which meant that they could only remain at sea for about a week before landing somewhere and taking on more supplies, either through raiding or trading.

“How then did the Vikings sail out and find such distant lands as Iceland and Greenland?

Well, they built larger, sturdier cargo vessels that could carry more provisions and people for further explorations. But they didn’t have compasses, telescopes, sextants, or other navigational equipment. Yet, living close to the land, they knew how to navigate the seas by observing the sun, stars, and other visible landmarks. They trusted their naked eyes and their collective wits to determine their location at sea. Once Iceland was discovered, returning Vikings would guide sea captains to the large island by the location of the sun on the horizon, keeping the Faeroa Islands to their left, and by their powers of observation of the birds above and the sea life below.

“Iceland was a wonderful place for the Vikings to settle. It was green and farmable and they settled right in, eager to make themselves at home. However, it wasn’t long before it became overpopulated, so adventurous Icelandic Vikings

began to venture even further afield and found Greenland.

“The name Greenland was just a sneaky marketing ploy by the Viking explorers to convince more families to sail west and settle the massive island. Greenland was anything but green. Three quarters of Greenland, the largest island in the world and the least populated territory on the planet, is covered in a solid sheet of ice that never melts.

Today, Greenland is owned by Denmark, along with the Faeroa Islands, but less than 50,000 people live there because of its inhospitable conditions. About the same number of people live on the Faeroa Islands, even though the island chain is exceedingly beautiful with stunning fjords and cascading waterfalls, because the cold and unwelcome weather conditions can make life extremely difficult for residents. Only the heartiest of Danish citizens inhabit these outposts today.”

Take a peek at the remote and icy landscape of Denmark’s vast territory of Greenland here: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com/flying-over-greenland/>

We thank Karl for the wealth of information he has shared so generously with us. He thanks us too for listening and resumes his work on the hull of the craft he is building.

Just a short drive north along the Roskilde Fjord, we arrive at the finest castle in Denmark—Frederiksborg Castle. This grand palace sits on an island in the middle of a lake in the small town of Hillerød. Built in the early 1600’s by King Christian IV, Frederiksborg is often called the “Danish Versailles”. Christian IV, who also built the palace in Oslo, became King of Denmark during the height of its power when it ruled over all of Norway and vast sections of Sweden too. As far as monarchs go, Christian IV during his 50-year reign ordered more expansion, reform, and building than any other Scandinavian ruler before or since. You will see his logo, a C encircling



Frederiksborg Castle by Er.gagansharma. CC BY-SA 3.0.

the number 4 topped by a crown, adorning many buildings and castles throughout Denmark and Norway.

The castle and gardens are as lovely as they come. We could spend hours here imagining what life must have been like ruling the entire northern capstone of Europe. Spectacular. Dazzling. Magnificent.

Driving back down south, we reach Copenhagen, Denmark’s beautiful capital city. Copenhagen is an oasis of scrumptious food, cutting-edge architecture, and the quirkiest counterculture community in Europe.

Copenhagen is home to the 5-time winner of “best restaurant in the world”. Noma is not a place you can book a reservation on the same day. You would need to plan ahead about three months to get a table reserved. Nor is this a restaurant where you can order prime rib or chicken parmesan. Noma boasts a New Nordic menu, featuring such Scandinavian delicacies as Icelandic seaweed,

A Child's Geography



Apple Danish pastries. Photo is in the public domain.

Faroese deep-sea fish, Greenlandic musk ox, and sorrel from Danish forests. The chefs at 2-michelin-star Noma do all their own smoking, curing, and pickling to astound their guests with the most memorable culinary experience of their lives.

A single meal may cost \$800 or more, so I suggest we fill up on some less expensive fare. Denmark is the land of danish pastries and some of my favorites can be ordered just around the corner from Noma in a quaint little cafe and bakery that serves coffee and pastry inside as well as packing up crisp, white boxes of their specialty treats to go.

A danish is a multilayered sweet pastry which was brought to Denmark by Austrian bakers but has developed into a Danish specialty named for them. Similar to a croissant, a danish is made from laminated yeast-leavened dough that creates a layered texture like puff pastry.

Inside the bakery, we can choose one or two from a list of a dozen varieties. Here are some of your choices:

- ◇ *Strawberry Lime Almond Braid*
- ◇ *Chocolate, Berry, and Cream Cheese*
- ◇ *Cranberry Orange Danish Braid*
- ◇ *Raspberry and Cream Cheese*
- ◇ *Blueberries and Cream*
- ◇ *Danish Kringle*

What will you order? I will order the Kringle! This simple almond-flavored puff pastry danish drizzled with white frosting makes my mouth water just thinking about it. In our family, it is tradition to make Danish Kringle once a year on Christmas morning. It is my favorite.

We have one last stop before we say goodbye to Denmark and the entire region of Scandinavia. This place will surprise you, shock you, delight you, and cause you to contemplate how a community functions and how everyone can contribute to make their neighborhood a better place.

In 1971, a large group of homeless people stormed a closed military base and took possession of it for their new home. The officials of Copenhagen were not sure how to deal with the problem. To drive them out would mean that the homeless individuals and families would be back on the streets. In many ways, it was convenient for Copenhagen to have a secure place for their homeless to live that wasn't being used otherwise. So, city officials ignored the incident and pretended it didn't happen. Yet the issue plagued the leaders of Copenhagen and Denmark because this band of homeless people had broken down the fence, assaulted a guard, and stolen government property.

The new residents of the former military base officially named their community Christiania, after the 17th century king, Christian IV, but also gave it the nickname of Freetown. Everyone is welcome in Freetown, but strict rules must be followed for the good of the community. No guns. No stealing. No violence. No hard drugs. And clean



Entering Christiania photo by Kieran Lynam, used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

up after yourself. If a resident does not follow these rules, he or she is kicked out.

Pre-existing buildings have been renovated into living quarters, but residents of the community are allowed to build their own homes if they prefer. Christiania has become an eclectic mix of unregulated construction. Even businesses have cropped up inside the neighborhood.

After four decades of indecision, the government finally decided what to do about the seized military property. They sold it to the community for \$1 million dollars. Now, residents pay rent to live in Christiania. It is no longer a free town, but the rent is affordable, and the community is happy to pay to retain control of their unique living arrangements. About two-thirds of the residents now have jobs in order to pay their rent. Even some of the original invaders, who hadn't worked for decades, are now gainfully employed. The townsfolk of Christiania are no



Christiania glass house taken by seier+seier. CC BY-SA 2.0.

A Child's Geography

longer homeless, nor are they unemployed. They have purpose. They have also converted their strange quirky neighborhood into a major tourist attraction. New restaurants and shops are popping up on every corner and tourists are coming to witness this strange phenomenon and marvel at the unique hippy commune that got away with assault, grand theft, and ultimately, treason.

Just across the way to the east, we can see the beautiful bridge that connects Denmark to Sweden. We have come full circle and have experienced Scandinavia almost like a local. What a great adventure we have had so far through the northern realms of Europe. These Nordic nations are friendly, clean, and colorful. But now, we must say farewell to Scandinavia and enter a different part of Europe—the British Isles, located not too far from here. Far enough, though, that we'll take a plane.

And with that, we are off! England, here we come! ■



Field Notes

Tell me what you remember about Denmark:

- ◇ *Sweden is known for its lakes and Norway for its fjords and mountains. What is Denmark known for?*

- ◇ *Who was the most famous of all Danes? What did he do to achieve such worldwide fame?*
- ◇ *Would you rather visit Legoland in Denmark or the Danish Viking Ship Museum and why? (There is no wrong answer.)*
- ◇ *How were the Vikings able to travel such long distances without navigational equipment?*
- ◇ *What do you think about Christiania, the community that lives in the old military base? Do you like the way the government settled the situation?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *LEGO: Absolutely Everything You Need to Know* by DK
- ◇ *An Illustrated Treasury of Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales* by Hans Christian Andersen – or – *Hans Christian Andersen's Complete Fairy Tales* by Hans Christian Andersen (for Junior High and up)
- ◇ *Shipwreck in a Bottle* by Daniel Berg
- ◇ *Viking Ships at Sunrise (Magic Tree House)* by Mary Pope Osborne
- ◇ *Vikings: A Nonfiction Companion to Viking Ships at Sunrise (Magic Tree House)* by Mary Pope Osborne
- ◇ *The Little Book of Hygge: Danish Secrets to Happy Living* by Meik Wiking (for High School and up)
- ◇ *Beowulf* by unknown (for High School and up)

The British Isles



Timeline for the British Isles

- 3200 BC** The stone circle of Castlerigg is erected
- 3000 BC** Stonehenge is built in England and Brú na Bóinne passage tombs are constructed in Ireland
- 43** Roman Empire invades Britain
- 60** The Romans build a bath house in Bath
- 71** The wall around York is built by the Romans
- 122** Hadrian's Wall is built by the Romans
- 460** St. Patrick returns to Ireland as a missionary
- 563** Columba establishes an abbey on the island of Iona in Scotland
- 627** The first version of York Minster is built; the final version is completed 850 years later
- 793** Viking attack on Lindisfarne in northern England
- 795** The Vikings invade Ireland
- 1066** William the Conqueror builds Dover Castle
- 1068** William the Conqueror orders the construction of Nottingham Castle
- 1078** William the Conqueror begins the construction of the Tower of London
- 1096** Oxford University is established
- 1170** Thomas Becket is murdered in Canterbury Cathedral
- 1185** Ireland is "given" to Prince John from his father, Henry II
- 1194** Battle between King Richard and Prince John occurs at Nottingham Castle
- 1200** King John's Castle is built at the mouth of the River Shannon in Limerick, Ireland
- 1209** Cambridge University is established
- 1244** King Henry III orders the construction of Clifford's Tower for his daughter's wedding
- 1282** Edward I invades Wales and builds Caernarfon Castle
- 1295** The Tower of London is completed under the rule of Edward I
- 1535** Wales is officially incorporated into England by the Laws in Wales Acts
- 1666** The Great Fire of London devastates the City of London
- 1707** The Treaty of Union - England and Scotland are united
- 1730** Dr. Richard Russell prescribes seawater as a cure for a variety of illnesses
- 1745** Prince Charlie incites a rebellion among the highlanders to reclaim the Scottish throne
- 1819** Cleopatra's Needle is given as a gift from the King of Egypt
- 1831** Like the song, London Bridge is falling down; so it is replaced by a stone bridge
- 1837** Buckingham Palace becomes the official residence of the British monarchy
- 1846** The great potato famine in Ireland begins
- 1880** The largest recorded earthquake along the Great Glen Fault in Scotland
- 1901** Beatrix Potter self-publishes The Tale of Peter Rabbit
- 1921** Ireland declares her independence from Britain to become the Irish Free State
- 1921** Northern Ireland secedes from the Irish Free State one day after it is formed
- 1922** The Troubles begin in Northern Ireland
- 1936** George VI becomes King of England after his brother, Edward, abdicates the throne
- 1952** Elizabeth II is crowned Queen of England
- 1967** The second London Bridge is sinking, so it too is replaced.
- 2011** Prince William and Catherine Middleton are married at Westminster Abbey

England

Raiders from the Sea

Early morning light filtering into the dim candlelit room revealed woolen-clad monks hunched over **vellum** sheets, carefully copying the manuscript set before them. Silence hung heavy in the air, etched only by the scratching of quill on paper. The monks had risen

long before the sun, having already committed the previous two hours to prayer.

Shoulders tense, fingers gripping quills tightly, the men of God braced themselves for a storm they felt brewing out at sea. They couldn't see dark clouds, but they could feel a chill in their



Lindesfarne Castle by Matthew Hunt. Photo is used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.



Main entrance of the Tower of London by dynamosquito. Photo is used by permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

bones as they worked tirelessly to finish the pages of scripture assigned to them that day. Glances at the window brought no comfort even as the sun rose gloriously over the horizon. *Stay focused*, the men reminded themselves. *There is no room for error. The scriptures must be transcribed perfectly.* One beautifully scripted letter at a time.

Birds screeched overhead. Waves crashed upon the rocks outside the window. A terror was brewing out there. They could feel it, but the holy men could only watch, wait, and write. Keep working. Remain faithful. Trust in the Lord.

And then the terror manifested itself. Shouts from the sea floated into the quiet room. The men lifted their gaze to the window and they beheld a horror they couldn't have imagined. Great ships as they had never seen before were crammed with fur-clan warriors, storming onto the beach. Ruthlessly, the invaders attacked the defenseless monastery, desecrating the sacred heart of

the Northumbrian Kingdom. On June 8, 793, Lindesfarne was plundered of its spiritual and physical riches and then burned to the ground, very few men escaping with their lives.

Survivors spread the message of the Viking raid far and wide, warning everyone they could of the terrors of the northern invaders. News quickly reached Alcuin, the Northumbrian scholar who was working in far-away France as scribe to Charlemagne, the most powerful king in all of Europe. Alcuin was aghast and heartbroken by this news from home when he penned these words, "Never before has such terror appeared in Britain as we have now suffered from a pagan race ... The heathens poured out the blood of saints around the altar and trampled on the bodies of saints in the temple of God, like dung in the streets."

The Vikings were certainly not the first warring tribe to arrive in Britain. From antiquity, the British Isles had been invaded by legions of armies

and barbarians from all directions—the Scots from Ireland, the Picts from Scotland, the Romans from Italy, and the Saxons from Germany, to name a few. But the Vikings changed the face of Britain as their raids increased in both frequency and number around the coasts of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, plunging the Isles into the dark ages on the heels of the prosperous Roman occupation and the age of Christian missions and conversion that followed. Whole libraries filled with books of great literature and scripture were burned or destroyed. Seemingly indestructible Roman architecture was razed to the ground, entire towns were leveled, and close-knit communities were devastated. Yet a glimmer of light remained for the people of Britain. Despite the ferocity of the attack at Lindesfarne and other unsuspecting locations around the isles, the light of the gospel continued to burn and the Christian community flourished through the time we now call the Dark Ages.



End of Roman rule in Britain by nonuncurious. License CC BY-SA 3.0.

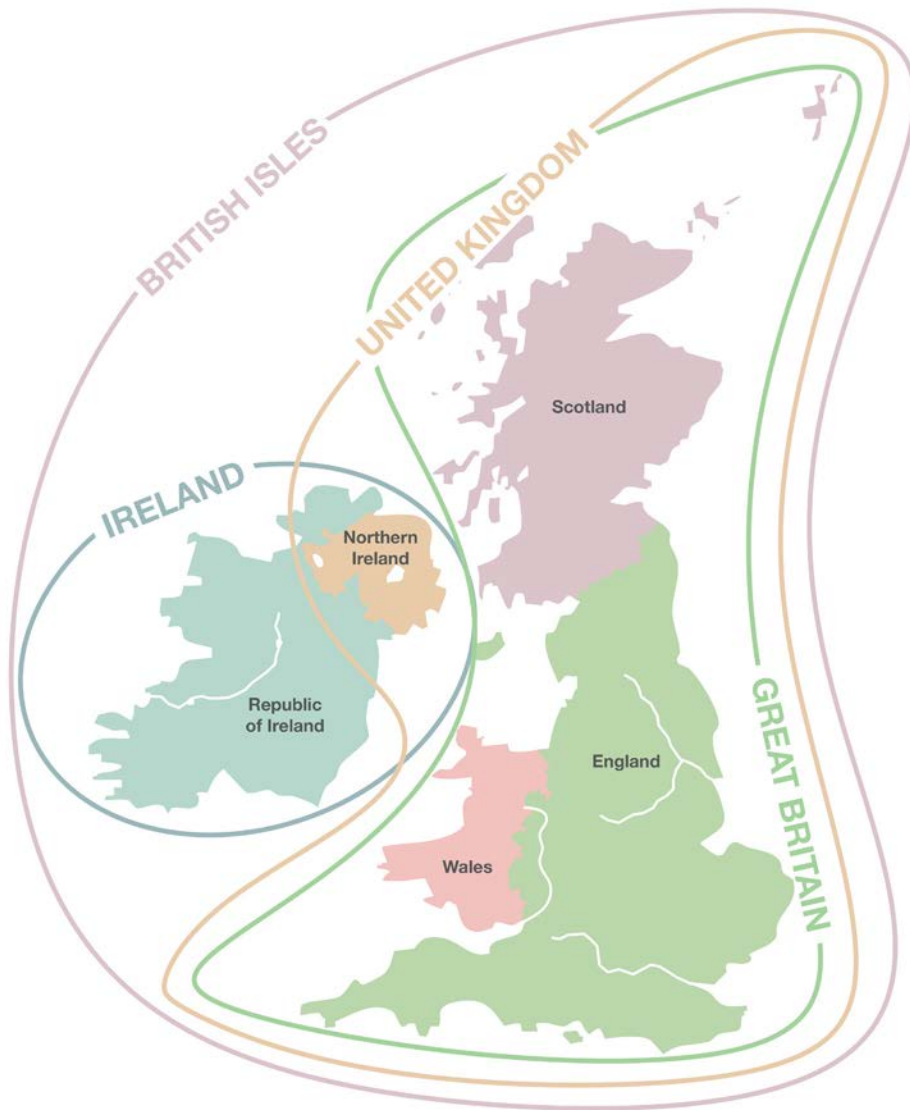
TALES FROM THE TOWER

When the Viking raids of Britain began, the north men did not arrive to find this island a place of chaos, controlled by warring barbarian tribes, as was the case in much of the rest of Europe during the Dark Ages. In fact, in AD 793, the people they found in the British Isles were organized, studious, and wealthy compared to other civilizations they had previously conquered. Let's wind the clock back 750 years from the Viking assaults on Britain to find out why...

AD 43 marks the year that the Roman Empire began their massive invasion of Britain, conquering

nearly all of modern-day England and naming their newly claimed land, *Britannia Province*. The Romans brought structure to the formerly tribal society, including roads, architecture, literacy, and centralized government. In fact, as we journey through the British Isles during this portion of our grand adventure, we will drive on highways built atop ancient roman roads and wander through roman buildings, baths, and bastions that still stand strong thousands of years later.

However, the mighty Roman Empire and their occupation of Britain didn't last forever. By 410, the empire was in rapid decline as barbarians sacked faraway Rome from every direction. This same year, the Romans withdrew



Map of the British Isles, which includes the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland created by Terri Johnson using Map Studio Pro—app.knowledgequesthq.com.

their armies from the British islands to reinforce their borders on the main European continent, leaving Britannia to fend for herself. Wars did ensue as the Scots and Picts descended from the north and the Celts arrived from the west (see map on previous page), but a different and more curious movement happened during this turnover of power. The Christian religion flourished as missionaries poured in and out of the country and monasteries like Lindesfarne were built all over Britannia for the study of God's word and the

accurate transcription of scripture and other great works of literature.

The British people were on a fast track to becoming the most educated and prosperous people in Europe. Since those early Dark Ages, Britain rose to become one of the world's greatest super powers during the middle ages, renaissance, and industrial time periods, colonizing regions all over the globe, before shrinking back to her original size within the last 50 years.

Are you ready to explore this island nation that has made such a profound mark on every corner of the world throughout the span of history? I am, but before we go, we need to clear up a little confusion. There are

many names that need to be sorted out, so we know what we are talking about. Some of the names referring to this area of the world are Great Britain, the UK or United Kingdom, the British Isles, England, Wales, Scotland, etc. Do all these names refer to the same country or region? Good question! Let's get this confusion straightened out once and for all.

Let's work our way from the largest to the smallest grouping. The British Isles encompass



View of Big Ben and Westminster in London, England. Photo is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

several islands and countries, including the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man, the Hebrides, Scotland, Wales, and England. Next down in size is the United Kingdom, which includes only Northern Ireland from the smaller island of Ireland, plus the entire larger island, which includes Scotland, England, and Wales. The United Kingdom also possesses three self-governing entities, known as crown dependencies, which are the Isle of Man, located in the Irish Sea, and the Bailiwicks of Guernsey and Jersey, islands located off the coast of France. The largest island in the map above is called Great Britain and the smaller island to its left is known simply as Ireland, of which only a quarter is included in the UK. Make sense? If you're confused, don't worry, most non-British citizens are.

The good news is that our plane is coming in for a landing at Heathrow Airport outside London, the capital and largest city in England, which is the largest country in Great Britain, which is the largest island in both the United Kingdom and the British Isles. All in all, London seems like a good place to start our adventure through this stunningly beautiful region of the world.



Prince Harry and Meghan Markle by Mark Jones, CC BY-SA 2.0

As we wait for our rental car, we overhear some locals chatting about Harry and Meghan, the newest member of the royal family. The majority of British citizens adore “the royals”, a fond nickname they use for the royal family of the United Kingdom. Let me bring you up to speed on this highly celebrated and world-famous family.



Elizabeth II greets NASA employees, photo courtesy of NASA.



Prince Charles and Princess Diana by Joe Haupt. CC BY-SA 2.0

The reigning monarch is Elizabeth II, Queen of England. She was the first of two daughters born to her father, King George VI, called Albert

or “Bertie” by his family, and her mother, also named Elizabeth. Albert never expected to inherit the throne since he was the second born son of George V and lived most of his life in the shadow of his older brother, Edward.

When George V died in 1936, Edward became king. Later that year, he announced his decision to marry an American woman, who had previously been married and divorced. The prime minister advised Edward that for political and religious reasons—for the King of England is also head of the Church of England—he could not marry a divorced woman and remain king. Edward chose love over power and **abdicated** the throne to his brother.

Albert, crowned George VI, became king that same year and his eldest daughter, 10-year-old Elizabeth, became the new heir. She grew up, married, and had two children: Charles and Anne. Upon the death of her father in 1952, Elizabeth became queen. She then had two more children: Andrew and Edward.

Elizabeth’s oldest son, Charles, the Prince of Wales, is the **heir apparent** to the British throne. In 1981, he married Lady Diana Spencer and they had two sons—Prince William and Prince Harry. Princess Diana died in a car accident when the boys were teenagers. Today, they are grown with families of their own.

The succession to the throne goes like this:

When Queen Elizabeth II passes away, Prince Charles will become the next king, unless he too has passed, then the throne will go to Prince William, his son. William and his wife, Kate, have a young son named George, who is also expected to be king one day.

But oh! It’s getting late. Let’s jump into our rental car and drive into London, one of the world’s great cities.

The challenge for most people who are new to the United Kingdom, or just visiting like we are, is getting used to the driving. British cars are



Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese photo taken by Simon James and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

outfitted with the steering wheel on the right side of the car. And drivers in Britain must remain on the left side of the road so that oncoming traffic passes you on the right. This is opposite from more than 90% of the world's countries and it takes a little getting used to.

London is an old city. The Romans established it after their invasion in AD 43 and named it Londinium. While the official City of London is only one square mile—the same size it was during Roman times—greater London is the largest city in Europe. In fact, it was the largest city in the world until 1925.

There is so much to see and do in London because of its depth of history and strategic location on the globe. London is the official home of Queen Elizabeth II, who lives most of the year at Buckingham Palace. London is also home to many other world-famous landmarks, such as the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, the Royal Observatory, Trafalgar Square, Piccadilly Circus, and the London Eye. We'd better get busy! We'll start in the oldest

quarter of London, where we can almost imagine life as it was during medieval times.

The original City of London covers the one square mile section of town located right in the heart of greater London. Locals refer to this square mile simply as The City. The City lies on the north bank of the Thames (pronounced *Tems*) River. Its streets are narrow and still retain their names from long ago, such as Fish Street, Milk Street, Bread Street, Wood Street, Candlewick, and Pudding Lane. Streets were named for the products the local merchants sold there. The shops and taverns are narrow yet tall, as Londoners built to maximize their space and squeeze as much square footage into their square mile as possible. Food and drink establishments here have curious names, such as “Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese” and “Hung, Drawn, and Quartered”, reflecting their medieval past.

Numerous fires have broken out within the old city walls of London over the past two thousand years. The most notable and devastating fire happened in 1666, leveling 80% of the buildings

A Child's Geography



Photo of St. Paul's Cathedral taken by Terri Johnson.

that used to be there. For this reason, tall, glossy, high-rises are sandwiched between old buildings, creating a unique combination of old and new. And yet, The City retains its old-world charm with the Tower of London guarding its rear flank and the re-built St. Paul's Cathedral adding a glorious touch of character to the modern-day skyline.

We'll begin our exploration of this great city at the Tower of London, the castle that served as a fortress, prison, armory, treasury, menagerie, and royal residence over the past one thousand years. Construction of the innermost keep, known as the White Tower, began in 1078 under the command of William the Conqueror, who built it to serve primarily as his royal residence. Later, King Richard the Lionhearted built three additions to encircle the inner keep, known as wards, during his reign from 1189 to 1199. The impressive fortress was finally completed in 1295 under the rule of Edward I when the outer wall was constructed, encircling both the inner keep and the outer wards.

Besides the White Tower that rises prominently from the center of the fortress, 13 additional towers stud the outer curtain wall, their names reflecting the activities that occurred there or the individuals who dwelled within them. For example, the bow-maker lived in the Bowyer Tower; the belfry in the Bell Tower; and the Lanthorn (old English for "lantern") Tower was used as a beacon for travelers approaching the castle by night. The Bloody Tower didn't receive its name until much later in the 16th century, because



Aerial view of the Tower of London. Photo by Dun.can and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.



Photo of one of the towers on the inner curtain wall in the Tower of London was taken by Terri Johnson. All rights reserved.

it was believed that two young princes who went missing were murdered there.

The Tower of London is a fascinating castle because it has been used for so many different functions over the centuries, but it is known primarily for serving as a prison for royalty and has held captive within its walls some of the most infamous characters of world history, such as Queen Elizabeth I, King James I, Henry VI, Lady Jane Grey, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Anne Boleyn to name just a few.

While the Tower was the most important royal prison in the country, it wasn't very secure. Royal inmates throughout history were known to bribe and cajole the guards to help them escape. While many regal captives were aided in their escape by guards who smashed holes through cell walls and ushered them to boats waiting outside the walls on the Thames River, others were not so fortunate. Only a handful of prisoners were actually executed within the castle walls, but counted among them were Lady Jane (the Nine Days Queen), Anne Boleyn (one of the six wives of Henry VIII), and Sir Walter Raleigh (famous explorer to the New World), each of whom were considered to be extremely dangerous to the crown.

Ironically, besides housing royal prisoners, the tower has also long housed the royal crown jewels—the literal jewel-encrusted crowns and scepters—of the English monarchy. In fact, it was once the custom of kings and queens of England dressed from head to toe in full regalia to begin their coronation procession from the Tower of London, which held their crowns safe and secure when they weren't wearing them.

The Tower of London is the most popular tourist attraction in England, but that is nothing new. The Tower has been a tourist attraction since Elizabethan times in the early 1600's, when travelers to London would visit the imposing fortress to view the crown jewels, spectacular armory, and Royal Menagerie. The animals that lived in the tower were gifts from other European monarchs to the British crown, intended to promote peace and goodwill. Since as early as the reign of Henry III in the 13th century, the tower has housed leopards, wolves, bears, elephants, lions, monkeys, and more. At one time, the fee for admission to this royal zoo was three halfpence. However, if you did not have three halfpence to spare, you could still get in to see these magnificent animals with a donation of an ally cat or stray dog as food for the lions.

To this day, the Tower of London, officially Her Majesty's Royal Palace and Fortress of the Tower of London, is guarded by a unit of the Queen's Guard from Buckingham Palace, along with the Yeoman Warders who live inside the tower, guarding by night and leading tours by day. Each morning, the Queen's Guard and the Yeoman Warders take part in the ceremony of the keys as the Tower of London is opened for the public who swarm in to learn about its fascinating history and gaze upon England's glorious jewels. But beware if you don't leave before closing and find yourself locked up inside the tower for the night. The Queen herself is the only one who has the password to let you out.



Field Notes

Tell me what you remember about London:

- ◇ *When did the Roman Empire invade England? What year did they withdraw their troops?*
- ◇ *Which country is part of the British Isles but not part of the United Kingdom? Check the map on page 86.*
- ◇ *How is it that Elizabeth became the Queen of England? Who was her father and how did he become king?*
- ◇ *How big is the original city of London? What is it called today?*
- ◇ *What has the Tower of London been used for over the years?*

THE QUEEN'S PLACE

Just outside the Tower of London is the majestic Tower Bridge. This bridge looks medieval, but it is one of the newer bridges to span the River Thames. Still, it is worth snapping a photo of the impressive structure before we board the riverboat that will transport us west to the other end of downtown London. Had we boarded the eastbound cruiser instead, we would have been heading in the direction of a little borough, or neighborhood, of London known as Greenwich. Greenwich is pronounced *gren-ich* and this exact location is referenced all over the world every single second of every single day. You may be wondering why.

This is because the Royal Observatory in Greenwich marks the location of the **prime meridian**, the 0-degree line of longitude. This imaginary geographical line that circumscribes the earth determines the local time here, the time at your house, and the time in every other time zone around the world. The imaginary line that is the prime meridian is displayed physically by a bold yellow line in the pavement that runs right through the observatory building and by a laser beaming from the building. The laser is spectacular at night.

However, we are not heading east, we are cruising west to see more of the heart of London town.

On the way, we will glide past the medieval boundary that separates the City of London from the City of Westminster. Keep your cameras handy, as there are many famous landmarks to marvel at on our way up the river.

We pass under several bridges on our journey west to Westminster. The first bridge we pass is the famous London Bridge, which in reality is not very impressive to behold. Historically, there have been three London Bridges that have spanned the Thames River. The first London



Tower Bridge in London. Photo is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

Bridge was quite spectacular. The old timber bridge of medieval times was a marketplace as well as a roadway. Little shops were built along the sides of the bridge, some several stories tall. But this bridge was falling down, just like the lyrics of the song, so a stone bridge replaced it in 1831.

Like the old bridge, the new London Bridge was the busiest river crossing in the city. With the enormous amount of foot traffic and vehicle congestion, it became apparent that the heavy bridge was sinking! So, in 1967, London Bridge was again replaced; this time with a modern concrete one. Are you wondering what happened to the old stone bridge? An American oil tycoon bought it, disassembled it, and shipped it in pieces to his hometown of Lake Havasu, Arizona where you can walk or drive across it today. Imagine that! London Bridge in the American southwest!

We pass under several more bridges on our boat tour, many of them with fascinating names and nicknames too. There's the Blackfriar's Bridge, which is used by the railroad; the Waterloo Bridge, also known as the Ladies' Bridge because it was built primarily by women during World War II; and the Millenium Bridge, fondly nicknamed the Wibbly-Wobbly Bridge by Londoners.



Millenium Bridge, AKA Wibbly-Wobbly Bridge. Public Domain.



Cleopatra's Needle. Photo taken by Rachel Johnson. All rights reserved.

Check out this video to learn how the Millennium Bridge received its unusual nickname—<https://knowledgequestmaps.com/millennium-bridge-in-London/>

To our right is St. Paul's Cathedral. Although the original cathedral was burnt to the ground during the Great Fire of London in 1666, the Anglican cathedral was rebuilt in all its glory and dominated the skyline for over 300 years until modern London skyscrapers were built on every square inch of real estate. Londoners love nicknames, so all of the skyscrapers in the city have them. There you see the Cheese Grater, the Shard, the Walkie-Talkie, and other fondly named ultra-modern buildings, which have been sandwiched between old medieval structures but stretch way beyond them, up into the sky.

Off to the left is the Globe Theatre. This is not the exact Globe Theatre where William Shakespeare directed his plays, as that structure also burned down during the great

fire. However, this Globe was re-built shortly thereafter and is a perfect replica from bottom to top with its beautifully thick thatched roof. The Globe Theatre is the only building approved by London officials to sport a thatched roof within the city limits.

To our right is Cleopatra's Needle, a 3500-year-old Egyptian obelisk given to England by Egypt after Admiral Lord Nelson's victory at the Battle of the Nile. Lord Nelson was one of Britain's greatest naval commanders, celebrated for his inspirational leadership, grasp of strategy, unconventional military tactics, and especially the large number of naval victories he won for Great Britain. Nelson's naval strategies were instrumental in stopping Napoleon from conquering much of Europe and northern Africa.

The gift of the obelisk cost Egypt over \$10,000 to transport from Heliopolis, where Pharaoh Thutmose III first erected it in 1450 BC. Just



The London Eye at twilight taken by David Iliff, used with permission under license CC BY-SA 3.0.

a block from where the obelisk rises in all her glory is Trafalgar Square, named in honor of Lord Nelson for his hard-fought victories at sea during the Napoleonic Wars. A statue of Admiral Lord Nelson looking out to sea rises high above the square on a column as tall as his ship's main mast.

Finally, you can't miss the London Eye to our left. This giant Ferris wheel is London's biggest tourist attraction and moneymaker for the city. With 32 oval-shaped capsules (one for each of London's 32 neighborhoods) holding 25 passengers each, the London Eye generates more than a million dollars per day. The wheel never stops, but it does move slowly enough that you can easily board from the platform while it is rotating. Once you reach the top, you have one of the best views of London anyone has ever seen.

Finally, we have reached the Westminster Pier where we are getting off the boat. Rising directly above us is Big Ben, the British nickname for the



Big Ben taken by Terri Johnson. All rights reserved.



Photo of Westminster Abbey was taken by Better Than Bacon and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

great bell in the clock tower at the north end of the Palace of Westminster. There are five bells in the tower, but Big Ben is the largest of them all, weighing 13 1/2 tons (27,000 pounds). No one knows for sure how it received its nickname, but Big Ben could be named for Sir Benjamin Hall who installed the bell. A British cultural icon, Big Ben is one of the most prominent structures in London and is recognized all over the world. The tower, officially named the Elizabeth Tower, is part of the Palace of Westminster, the meeting place for the two houses of the British Parliament, the House of Commons and the House of Lords. In other words, this is where the members of Great Britain's government meet to make laws and executive decisions.

On the other side of the Palace—the southwest side—is Westminster Abbey. Once a church for Benedictine monks, this building is no longer considered a church, an abbey, or a cathedral. It

is a “Royal Peculiar” of the Church of England. In other words, this is the queen's chapel. It is reserved for the sovereign monarch's use only. Since the coronation of William the Conqueror in 1066, all coronations of British monarchs have been held in Westminster Abbey. This is also where those same kings and queens have been buried. The abbey is lined with the tombs of recognized and forgotten monarchs alike.

The history of this cathedral-like chapel stretches back over a thousand years. Meandering through the building is like walking through history. Besides coronations and funerals, the Westminster Abbey is famous for its royal weddings. There have been at least 16 royal weddings at the abbey since the year 1100. Perhaps you watched the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton that took place here when you were very young.



Buckingham Palace. Photo taken by David Iliff is used with permission under license CC BY-SA 3.0.

Speaking of royalty, it is time to visit Buckingham Palace. The queen is away, which means that the palace is open for visitors. The palace is only a block or two from here and the walk through St. James's Park is lovely. Let's stroll there on foot. On the way, we'll pass the queen's horse stables known as the royal mews, and Winston Churchill's War Rooms. We may spot some lovely horses out for a stroll or find we have time to wander in and see the headquarters for the British army during World War II.

At the far end of the park and at the end of the long driveway, known as the Mall, stands the impressive residence of her majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. This is one of three residences for the queen and where she lives ten months out of the year. Since she is at one of her other two castles this month, we are allowed to go in and see how a modern-day queen lives in such a massive home.

The Duke of Buckingham built the house that forms the architectural core of the palace in 1703. King George III purchased the mansion for his wife, Queen Charlotte, and it became known as the Queen's House. After some extensive remodeling, Londoners began referring to the place as Buckingham Palace. However, it didn't become the official royal residence for the British monarch until 1837, when Queen Victoria moved in. Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert, felt the house was too small for court life and their growing family, so they added a new wing, the east wing, which faces the Mall and is now the public face of Buckingham Palace.

The palace has a total of 775 rooms. These include 19 state rooms, 52 royal and guest bedrooms, 188 staff bedrooms, 92 offices, and 78 bathrooms. There is also a post office in the palace, along with a theater, a swimming pool, an operating room, and a jeweler. We won't see most of these rooms today, but when we enter through the Grand Entrance and

A Child's Geography

descend the Grand Staircase to the Marble Hall, we can marvel at the life-size head-to-toe portraits of past kings, queens, princes, and princesses. The lavish gold and cream color scheme lends to the overall impression of extravagant wealth and unapproachable royalty. We tour the stately Music Room, the Blue and White Drawing rooms, and—the pride of the kingdom—the Picture Gallery, which features art masterpieces by Rembrandt, van Dyck, Rubens, and Vermeer. At the end of the gallery is the Throne Room, the destination of the ceremonial route from the Guard Room at the top of the Grand Staircase. The Throne Room is draped from ceiling to floor in red tapestries and the only furniture in the room are two large red-velvet upholstered thrones.

Our tour of the palace is over, but we have been given permission to wander through the garden before leaving the grounds. The royal garden includes a lake, a tennis court, and a **helipad**. It feels more like a large park than a backyard. In fact, at 40 acres, this is the largest private garden in London. Every summer, the Queen hosts her annual garden parties here, inviting up to 8,000 guests to a single event.

It's getting late. As the sun begins to sink below the western boundary of the garden, we realize that it is time to get some rest. Our quaint little hotel is just around the corner from the Queen's palace, in the borough of Belgravia. In fact, we can walk there! Tomorrow is another big day, but we'll be taking a step back from city life to explore the seaside. British people love the seaside both for the scenery and the healing properties in the water.

Here's a tasty place to stop and eat on the way to our hotel. It's called The Bag O' Nails. Let's duck into this 600-year-old historic pub for England's most iconic dish—fish and **chips**!

With full bellies and a great night's sleep, we'll be ready to enjoy everything we discover along the southern coast of England tomorrow. Night-night! ■



Tell me what you remember about London:

- ◇ *What is so special about Greenwich, England and why is it referenced every single second of every single day?*
- ◇ *Why is Admiral Lord Nelson commemorated with a tall statue in Trafalgar Square in the center of London?*
- ◇ *What is the London Eye? Would you like to step aboard one day?*
- ◇ *Big Ben is not a tower. What is it?*
- ◇ *How many rooms are there in Buckingham Palace? Is this the only residence of Queen Elizabeth?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *Our Island Story* by H.E. Marshall
- ◇ *The Royal Family for Kids* by Colin Banks
- ◇ *This is London* by Miroslav Sasek
- ◇ *Where is the Tower of London* by Janet B. Pascal and David Malan
- ◇ *What Really Happened in Colonial Times (short story about Lord Admiral Nelson)* by Andrew Boynton

Southern England

The Seaside Cure

Now that we have explored the great city of London, it's time to head south to England's southern shore. When you think about the coast, you may imagine sandy beaches, noisy boardwalks, and flocks of seagulls boldly snatching food scraps from complaisant

children. While England's south coast has a smattering of those things, it boasts so much more. Surprises await you, my young explorer! Dramatic landscapes, underground passageways, and heart-stopping stories of events that occurred on England's southern shore are soon to be revealed.



Photo of Beachy Head in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

A Child's Geography

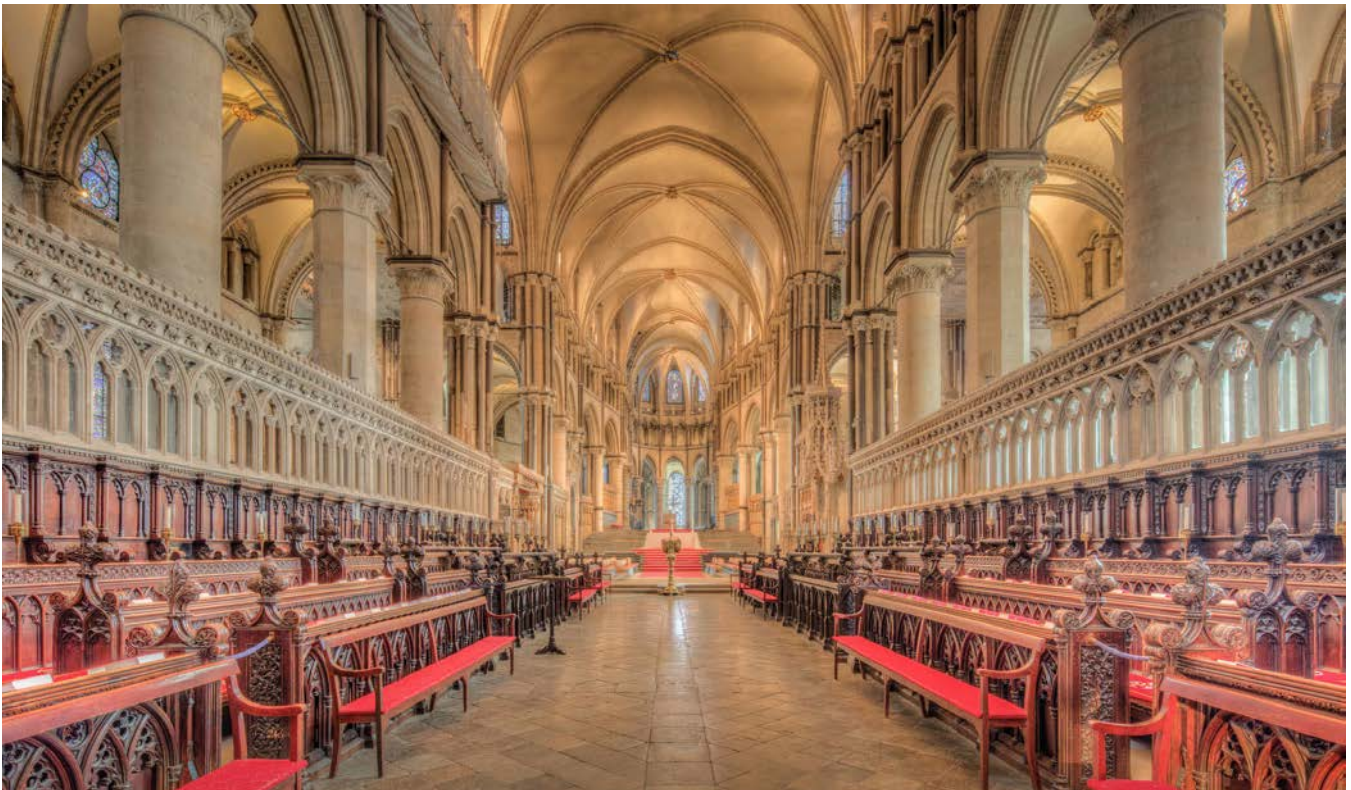


Painting from Canterbury Tales is in the public domain.

But first, we need to make a quick stop in Canterbury before continuing to the seaside. It takes about an hour to drive from London to the medieval town of Canterbury, made famous

by Geoffrey Chaucer's well-known book, *The Canterbury Tales*, which he wrote during the 14th century. The book is about a group of pilgrims who meet one another in London and decide to travel together to Canterbury to visit the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket. They traveled together both for companionship and for safety, because it was not uncommon in those days for a lone traveler to be attacked by gangs of robbers. The individual "tales" that Chaucer pens in the book are the stories the pilgrims tell one another while traveling together along the road. If you like tales of intrigue and suspense, then you should definitely read *The Canterbury Tales*.

Canterbury is located in the center of the county of Kent, once the Kingdom of Kent. This town dates back to the 1st century, when the Romans still occupied England. Not far from the center of town is St. Augustine's Abbey, which symbolizes the return of Christianity to this corner of England. After the Roman troops were



Canterbury Cathedral. Photo taken by Michael D Beckwith and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

ordered to retreat from England after the fall of Rome, barbarian tribes poured into this region of Kent from the north and west.

After the initial chaos, a barbarian king came to power and his name was King Æthelberht. When Æthelberht married a Christian princess from France, Pope Gregory the Great saw an opportunity to re-Christianize England. He sent Augustine from Rome to Kent in 597 AD to share the message of Christ's love and sacrifice with the new king. Æthelberht immediately converted to Christianity along with 600 of his subjects. The pope was so pleased with the success of the mission that he appointed Augustine as Archbishop of Canterbury. St. Augustine's Abbey was soon built in the center of town. This church is the 3rd abbey to exist on this site; Danish Vikings burned the first one to the ground in the year 842 and the second one in 1011.

Just around the corner from the abbey is the most dominant structure in this old town, the towering gothic cathedral rising from the center of Canterbury. This glorious church—the Canterbury Cathedral—is the setting of one of the most infamous and tragic murders in world history: the murder of Thomas Becket. Thomas was born in 1118 in Cheapside, a merchant quarter of London to middle-class parents. He had the good fortune of becoming acquainted with Theobald, the Archbishop of Bec, who essentially made him a member of the family when he was in his early 20's following the death of his parents. Theobald sent him to study civil and religious law in Italy, then France. The Archbishop, who loved and respected Thomas greatly, appointed him to the position of archdeacon of Canterbury and, less than three months later, recommended him to King Henry II as chancellor, an important government position.

King Henry and Thomas worked well together and the people of England regarded Thomas as a brilliant chancellor. Trusted completely by the king, many historians have compared their



Thomas Becket Church by Tim Green. License CC BY-SA 2.0.

relationship to Joseph and the Pharaoh of Egypt. However, when Theobald died, it made sense to the king to appoint Thomas Becket as the new Archbishop. Thomas assumed his new role with fervor and quit his job as chancellor, much to the dismay of the king.

No longer a civil leader, but a religious leader, Thomas began to make decisions that were contrary to the king's wishes. Henry became furious. Thomas was no longer his right-hand man, but his adversary. They began to fight against one another on issues of church versus state. Who had more say in the matters of the church—Henry II or Archbishop Thomas Becket? Over the next decade, Henry's and Thomas's close friendship disintegrated and they became mortal enemies.

Their disagreements over church politics became heated and Henry spat out violent words against Thomas in the presence of his four head knights of the court, who unfortunately took his words literally. They galloped swiftly to Canterbury on December 29, 1170, and forced themselves into the cathedral to resolve the most pressing argument between King Henry and Thomas. Unwilling to set aside his religious views and condescend to the king's wishes, Thomas turned



White chalk cliffs on England's southern coast. Photo is in the public domain, courtesy of Pxhere.

to walk away from the furious knights. There upon the altar, with the last rays of twilight filtering through the stained glass, each of the four knights stabbed Thomas in the back.

The people of England, along with the king, were shocked and horrified by the murder of Thomas Becket. The Pope in Rome canonized him as a saint three years later and his tomb became a site for Christians from all over Europe to visit and pay their respects for this brave martyr.

Now that we have made our pilgrimage to St. Thomas' tomb and honored his memory, let's continue our journey southward to the White Cliffs of Dover. The 350 foot White Cliffs face the southeast coast of England and can be seen from France across the English Channel on a clear day, making them a national landmark. The sight of these cliffs from air or sea is like a comforting embrace felt by returning soldiers and any wandering English man or woman coming home.

The White Cliffs stretch for eight miles in this location, but over 260 miles in total across the whole southern shoreline. Centrally located along these cliffs is Dover Castle, whose curtain walls extend to the very edge of the majestic cliff face. William the Conqueror founded Dover, the largest castle in England, in 1066. It is fondly referred to as the "Key to England" because it has stood as England's first line of defense for nearly a millennium.

The pinnacle of Dover's landscape is the Great Tower of Dover, which rises from the center of the formidable castle. While the tower is certainly a site to behold with its thick walls and imposing height, it is the network of secret wartime tunnels underground that make this castle so unique. The passageways hewn from the chalky earth were first excavated in order to surprise attack invaders from the sea when Napoleon threatened to invade England. Later, these chalky claustrophobic corridors were converted into a command post during World War II and even



Photo of Dover Castle by Jake Keup and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

housed a hospital for wounded soldiers evacuated from Dunkirk, France across the English Channel. Imagine the stories these hallowed halls would tell if these walls could speak.

Besides their historical significance, these unusual cliffs have been designated an ecological conservation site and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In and among the chalky cliffs and the grassland that stands like hair atop them live a wide variety of wildflowers, butterflies, and birds—and ponies! **Exmoor ponies** graze on the grasses above the cliffs and peregrine falcons swoop and dive along the chalky white faces, preying on rodents and fish along the shore. There is also an edible plant here that grows along the cliffs called rock samphire. Because it was collected by foragers who hung from ropes down the side of the cliff, Shakespeare wrote in his play, *King Lear*, “Half-way down hangs one who gathers samphire, dreadful trade!” Indeed it was!

However, the abundance of wildflowers provides a perfect home for more than thirty species of butterfly. The butterfly that truly stands out is the Chalk Hill Blue as it flutters about the samphire and other flowers growing along the cliffs.



Exmoor Ponies. Photo by Wsupermain2, license CC BY-SA 3.0.



Chalk Hill Blue butterfly. Photo by Dun.can and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

There, at the foot of Shakespeare Cliff (named for the quote above) is a cave-like shelter built into the earth mound that was left behind when the Channel Tunnel was dug out under the English Channel connecting England to the mainland by train. Inside this great dirt mound is a classroom and exhibition area where students such as us can learn all about the flora and fauna of this amazing region of the world.

About 75 miles east is the cliff face known as Beachy Head. Like the White Cliffs of Dover, the sight of Beachy Head is breathtaking (see photo on page 99). In fact, it may be even more spectacular because Beachy Head is the highest chalk sea cliff in Britain, rising to 531 feet above sea level. You may be wondering why this beautiful cliff wall is named Beachy Head. That was not always its name! During the Middle Ages, it was called *Beauchef*, which means “beautiful headland” in French. But over time, the sound of the name was distorted

by British accents and replaced by a more English sounding name, even if there is no beach to be seen for miles. Twenty miles to be precise!

So, let's continue twenty miles east to visit the popular seaside resort town of Brighton. Here we see a classic Georgian pier with rickety rides, carnival games, and sticky sweet candy. Modern day beachgoers flock to Brighton for their seaside holidays every summer, but it wasn't the carnival atmosphere that originally drew tourists to Brighton.

A young doctor became famous when he began to encourage his patients to “take the cure” in the sea at Brighton. In the 1730's, Dr. Richard Russell enthusiastically prescribed seawater both for drinking and for bathing as a cure for a variety of illnesses. Suddenly, Brighton found itself on the map as royalty and wealthy nobles flocked to the Brighton beach like starving seagulls on their way to a picnic. It's no wonder that Mrs. Bennett



Brighton Pier at dusk. Photo by Eric Hossinger and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

in Jane Austen’s novel *Pride and Prejudice* declared emphatically, “If one could but go to Brighton! A little sea bathing would set me up forever.” Indeed it would, but perhaps more for recreational reasons than for medical results, as seawater has not been proven to cure illness of any kind.

A new addition to the Brighton Beach is the i360 Tower. Shall we go up? The i360, the tallest observation tower in England at 531 feet, was designed by British Airways to be a “vertical pier” for visitors to enjoy. While it is certainly impressive in stature with its sleek modern design, the glass observation bulb rises to the exact same height as the cliff at Beachy Head. What do you think of that? Does this fun fact make the i360 seem a little shorter now or Beachy Head taller?

About halfway between Brighton and our next stop is a curious geological gem—a door to the sea. It is called Durdle Door. Eroded over time by nature’s forces, Durdle Door is one of

the most photographed landmarks on England’s southern coast. The magnificent limestone arch was formed by the power of waves, eroding the rock and forging a hole through the middle. The name Durdle is derived from the old English word ‘thirl’, which means to pierce, bore, or drill, which is exactly what happened here.



Durdle Door. Photo is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.



Palm trees along the promenade in Torquay, England. Photo by Torquay Palms and licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

About 200 miles east of Brighton is another seaside resort town named Torquay, which has been nicknamed the *English Riviera* because the weather can get so warm here. In fact, it is so warm and balmy that palm trees flourish in this little corner of England. The reason why palm trees flourish and people flock to Torquay is because of something mysterious happening out at sea in the big wide-open Atlantic Ocean. Let's find out what is causing this curious weather phenomenon!

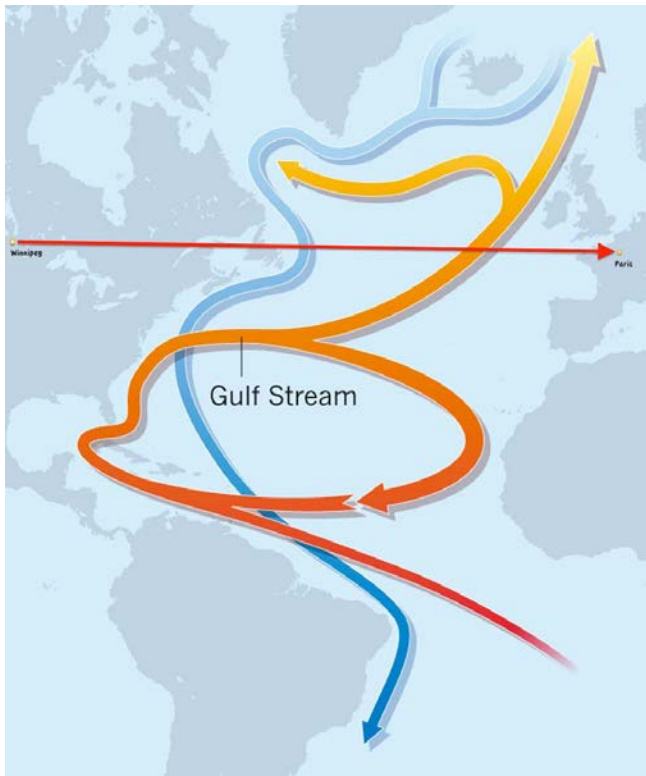
An oceanographer that lives here in Torquay has agreed to give us a quick little science lesson to help us understand the unusual weather pattern. We meet Robert out on the pier and find that it is warm here indeed. We remove our sweaters that certainly came in handy a couple hours ago when we stood on the precipice of the wind-whipped chalk cliffs.

"Hello, young travelers!" greets Robert. "Isn't it a beautiful day to learn about ocean currents, particularly the Gulf Stream?"

We nod our heads enthusiastically and Robert continues. "People who visit the southern coast

of England think it is warm because we are at the southern end of the country. That is not true. Even at its most southern point, England is still very far north. The southern coast of England is located at the latitude of 50 degrees north, which is the same latitude as British Columbia in Canada and northern Mongolia in Asia. These are pretty chilly places on our globe. But it's not chilly here! The reason why this region is so warm is because of huge swirling currents out in the ocean.

"You see, out in the dark depths of the ocean are wide currents, like enormous rivers, that carry cold water from the frigid north down south and warm water from the tropics back up north. It's almost like a mighty conveyor belt moving water, oxygen, and marine life around the vast oceans of the earth. These currents have names that usually indicate where they are located, such as the North Atlantic Current or the East Australian Current. Did you notice how the EAC acts as a convenient highway for the sea turtles in the Disney film, *Finding Nemo*? Some currents are wider than others, but today, I'm going to



Gulf Stream illustration by Thomas Brueckner, CC BY-SA 2.0.

tell you about one of the grandest of all, the Gulf Stream. The Gulf Stream is anything but a small stream or trickle; it is an immense current that moves 100 times more water than all the rivers in the whole world combined. And this stream is hurrying along at 60 miles per hour!

“The Gulf Stream moves food and oxygen around the ocean, which keeps marine animals alive and well—but it also carries temperature change. When the ocean water warms, so does the air. The Gulf Stream current originates in the Gulf of Mexico and brings warm water up to Iceland and the British Isles. The rush of warm water in the ocean translates into mild weather in the winter and warm weather in the summer. And that is why palm trees flourish in Torquay!”

Now, isn't that fascinating! Who knew that water deep in the ocean could make such an impact on the temperature of the air?

We have one final stop before we call it a night. Tonight, we'll arrive in Plymouth,



Photo of Mayflower II by Kunal Mukherjee, CC BY-SA 2.0.

England, the port town where the Pilgrims set sail to find religious freedom in the New World. When their boat landed on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean miles and worlds away from their homeland, in the state of Massachusetts, the pilgrims named their new colony Plymouth to remind them of home.

In the 17th century, Plymouth was an important shipping center, shipping goods and people all over the world. In fact, Sir Francis Drake, the famous explorer, set sail from this port city when he circumnavigated the globe. But when Plymouth shoved the pilgrims out to sea in the cramped Mayflower, she played a small but crucial role in the birth of a new nation forever changing the course of world history.

And on that note, let's turn in for the night. Tomorrow, we will discover ruins that may help us separate fact from fiction. We'll visit an ancient Roman bath town and gaze upon the oldest human megalith on the face of the earth. Maybe we'll be able to uncover some prehistoric secrets while we are there. Have a good rest! I'll see you bright and early tomorrow morning.

Field Notes

Tell me what you remember about England's Southern coast:

- ◇ *Who did Thomas Becket work for before becoming the archbishop of Canterbury? What happened to their good relationship?*
- ◇ *What country can see the White Cliffs of Dover across the English Channel on a clear day? Who built Dover castle? What surprise lays hidden below the castle?*
- ◇ *Tell me about some of the exotic animals, birds, and butterflies that lived along the White Cliffs.*
- ◇ *Which famous ship set sail from Plymouth, England in 1620?*

BATH TIME!

It's a glorious morning! The sun is peeking its head over the eastern hills and bathing the port town of Plymouth in swaths of golden light. Today, we will drive along the rugged southwestern coast to Land's End, the westernmost point on the whole island of Great Britain.

As soon as we leave Plymouth, which is located in the county of Devon, we enter Cornwall, a jutting peninsula of wild moorland laced with hundreds of sandy beaches. Cornwall, home to

the Cornish people, is recognized as one of the six Celtic nations of Europe, along with Brittany, Ireland, the Isle of Man, Scotland, and Wales. Their native language, Cornish, is more closely related to Welsh (spoken in Wales) and Breton (spoken in Brittany, across the English Channel in France) than it is to English.

The southern coast of the Cornwall peninsula is fairly well sheltered from Atlantic storms. We drive past several natural, secluded harbors that offer safe anchorage for ships and boats. Alongside these harbors are quaint old maritime villages, such as Fowey and Falmouth. Let's stop and take some photos to send home.

Before we reach the end of the long peninsula, we arrive at Lizard Point. The geology, or make-up, of the land at Lizard's Point is very unusual. It is the only place in Britain where you can see oceanic crust pushed up from the earth's mantle, which has now been exposed on land. It is called ophiolite, which means "snake stone" in Greek.



Photo of ophiolite by James St. John, license CC BY-SA 2.0.

It likely received its exotic name because of the highly prized green and red serpentine stone found within the cliff. Chunks of the stone that fall away from the cliffs are collected by local artisans, carved and polished into ornaments and figurines, and then sold in gift shops along the Cornish coast.

As we continue around a few more bends in the road, we skirt the bay of Penzance and soon arrive at Land's End. You can't go any further west in Great Britain than this spot right here. This point, along with most of the Cornish coastline, has been designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty by the nation of Great Britain. In fact, Cornwall has been the backdrop for many great books and plays because of its dramatic and rugged windswept beauty. As you inhale the salty sea air and feel the wind whip about you, perhaps you can imagine the Pirates of Penzance preying upon ships passing by this rocky coastline, or the miners of Poldark chipping their living out of these granite cliffs. If you have never seen the play, the *Pirates of Penzance*, or read *Poldark*, a novel by Winston Graham, you should check them out.

This area has long been known for mining. As far back as Roman times, the Cornish people made their living by mining for tin. Soon copper was discovered on the cliffs and the metal became the lifeblood for miners here during the Middle Ages. Over time, the mines shut down as the prices of tin and copper dropped and the Cornish



Tin mine on the coast of Cornwall. Photo by Jill Champion, License CC BY-SA 2.0.

people focused on farming and fishing for their livelihood.

Eventually, china clay was uncovered in pockets alongside the granite and this substance is still mined on the peninsula today. China clay is the substance used to create exquisite and delicate porcelain teacups, saucers, and plates. The best china clay is found in China and Cornwall.

It's time to set out for our next destination... Bath!



Photo of Porth Mear near Newquay, Cornwall taken by Thomas Tolkien and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

No, we are not going to take a bath—Bath is the name of the town where we'll stay tonight. It's a curious name for a town, isn't it? I'll show you why the town has such an unusual name, but before we get there, let's stop in Newquay, a popular beach town on the northern coast of the Cornwall peninsula.

Cornwall is the sunniest place in all of England. The wilder northern coast of the peninsula is battered by mighty waves from the Celtic Sea, a branch of the Atlantic Ocean. These two things—sun and waves—mean just one thing here... surfing! Many visitors to Newquay like to try their hand at surfing. Or maybe I should say foot! Would you like to give it a try?

The other popular past time here in Newquay, along with all the towns in Cornwall and neighboring Devon, is the enjoyment of cream tea in the mid-afternoon. Cream tea, also known as Devonshire tea or Cornish cream tea, is a light afternoon meal that includes hot tea served with scones, jam, and clotted cream. Clotted cream—cream thickened by steam or water bath then cooled to a soft buttery-like consistency—was first made here in Cornwall. It is a beloved local delicacy served all over England.

Let's pop into this teahouse situated along the cliff's edge and take cream tea while we watch the surfers catch the waves below. While Cornish pasties are not typically included in a traditional cream tea, let's break with tradition and order

some of those as well. The warm meat pies wrapped in flaky pastry are a local specialty. It would be a shame to leave Cornwall without tasting one!

Next stop, the city of Bath. Let's go!



As we begin our journey east to Bath, we pass by another fascinating town called Tintagel. The town was named for the tin mines that operated here over the centuries, yet it is most famous for its castle ruins. There, situated on a peninsula connected to the mainland by a narrow land bridge, are the ruins of Tintagel Castle, which have stood here for nearly a thousand years.

The legend of the castle is that this was once the home of Igraine, the mother of King Arthur, and the place of his birth. There is a carving of the wizard, Merlin, in the cliff wall opposite the castle to add to the mystical nature of the site. No one knows for sure whether King Arthur actually existed, let alone was born here, but the legend of the great king and his round table and band of knights is a great story celebrated especially in this region of Cornwall.

We have quite a drive before we reach Bath, so go ahead and rest your eyes for a while if you are tired. I'll let you know when we arrive.

Three hours later, we arrive in the beautiful town of Bath. Let me tell you how Bath got its name.



Photo of the Royal Crescent in Bath was taken by Velvet and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 3.0.

This city was built long ago atop thermal hot springs, which are springs of warm, sometimes even boiling hot, water that has been heated by the earth’s piping hot mantle and then pushed up through the earth’s crust. The ancient Romans loved hot springs and built public bathhouses around them so that people could bathe in warm water. Remember, warm bath water was a luxury for ancient civilizations because water heated by electricity wouldn’t be invented for a couple thousand years.

When the Romans occupied Britain nearly two thousand years ago, around 60AD, they built bathhouses in this region to take advantage of the hot springs and later built the town around them. At that time, they named the city *Aquae Sulis*, which in Latin means “The Waters of Sulis” named for Sulis, goddess of water. After the Romans left, the Christians arrived. The new townspeople didn’t like the pagan name for the town, so they changed it to Bath. There is one Roman bathhouse still standing here in Bath. Shall we take a look?

The original Roman bath is sandwiched between structures that were built much later. In fact, the only parts of this bathhouse that have been here since Roman times are the columns, the tile floor, and the water itself. Yes, the water is green and no one bathes in it anymore. Apparently, there are parasites in the water that can make you very sick, so we’ll just observe from the poolside portico.



Roman Bath by Diego Delso, used under license CC BY-SA 4.0.



Curse tablet. Photo by Becks, used under license CC BY-SA 2.0.



Photo of the Roman Baths in Bath at dusk by David Skinner and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

The ancient Romans had an unusual tradition of etching curses into metal tablets when they had been offended or wronged by someone else. In and around the perimeter of this spa house, over 130 curse tablets have been found. Most of the curses that have been found here were written by people whose clothes were stolen while bathing in the spa. No wonder they were mad! That is an awkward situation for sure.

The thermal spring water was believed to be good for you in more ways than one. The minerals in the water were supposed to be good for your skin, but also good for your overall well-being. The Romans, along with all the other people who have arrived here since, strongly believed that “taking the waters” internally would keep you healthy.

Next door to the Roman Bath is the Grand Pump Room, where thermal mineral water is served by the glass. Or you can take a drink straight from the indoor fountain. That water is pumped up through a new borehole, which provides a clean and safe supply of spa water for drinking.

During medieval times, bathing was discouraged, Bath was abandoned, and she became a ghost town for a few hundred years. Later, in the 18th century when it became fashionable once again to “take the waters” at the seaside or at a thermal hot spring, Bath bubbled back to life.

During the Georgian period, from 1714 to 1837, Bath became a boomtown and buildings began popping up everywhere. The Georgian period was named for the succession of kings from George I through George IV. Georgian architecture



The Grand Pump Room photo is in the public domain.

is symmetrical yet whimsical, as you can see in the housing developments known as The Circus and the Royal Crescent, separated by only a couple of city blocks.

Bath is once again a popular spa town. While you cannot dip your toe into the green waters of the original Roman bath, you can stroll a block

down the street to the new Thermae Bath Spa, a pricy public bath house that boasts crystal clear, blue, mineral-rich water, naturally warmed by the earth's mantle, perfect for a swim or a soak any time of year. Shall we go? Relaxing in an ultra-warm and super clean pool sounds like a great way to finish our busy day of driving and exploring.



We are up before the sun and ready for a quick day-trip out of Bath before we head north into central England. Today, we are visiting the most curious of all monuments in the entire world... Stonehenge!

On our way out of Bath, we cross the beautiful, historic Pulteney Bridge before the sun even reaches the horizon. The Pulteney Bridge, built in 1774, crosses over the River Avon, once connecting the city of Bath to the land owned by the Pulteney family. What makes this bridge exceptional is that it is one of the only bridges in the world with shops



Pulteney Bridge in Bath, England. Photo by Diego Delso and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 4.0.



Stonehenge at sunrise. Photo by Momentum Dash and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

built atop it spanning both sides of the bridge. It is one of the most photographed bridges in the whole world. Go ahead and snap some pictures!

With our favorite photos of the bridge uploaded to Instagram, we continue our drive to Stonehenge. Once we park, there is a bit of a hike over the hill before the ancient stone circle comes into full view. Ah... there she is with the sun shining through the stones, casting long eerie shadows on the grassy plain. Come closer. Let's take a moment to marvel along with scholars and everyone else in the world as to why an ancient people would transport such large stone pillars weighing up to 25 tons all the way from faraway Wales to a virtually rockless landscape in southern England. Why would any group of people do such a thing and how exactly did they pull it off?

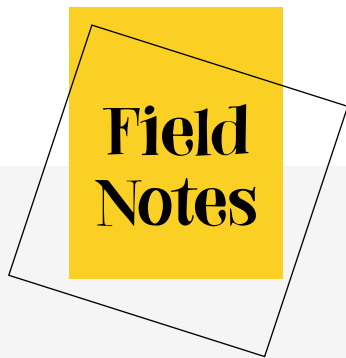
What could possibly motivate a group of people to push, drag, pull, or carry such massive stone pillars more than a hundred miles and erect this large circle we see here? No one knows for sure, but archeologists speculate that Stonehenge could have been used as a burial site, or for religious ceremonies, or as an astronomical timepiece to help predict the occurrences of lunar and solar eclipses.

Just as their motivations are unclear to us, so are their methods. Because Stonehenge was constructed about 5,000 years ago around the year 3,000 BC in an era known as pre-history, there are no written records to provide us with this insight. Its construction may have occurred before the invention of the wheel, which further complicates how these 13 foot stone towers were transported across such a great distance.

And that is why people come here; to marvel and wonder how a remote community in pre-historic England accomplished such a remarkable task, and how they used the stone circle once it was completed. Stonehenge is an incredible accomplishment that modern-day engineers estimate could have required more than a million man-hours to complete.

Let's snap some photos for our friends back home. Perhaps there is some connection between Stonehenge and the heavenly bodies of the sun and moon, as the best shots of this massive stone circle are when the sun is low on the horizon and filtering through the spaces between the pillars.

But oh! I'm starting to get hungry. How about you? I've got some pastries waiting for us back in the car. It's time to drive north to one of the most picturesque regions of the world. We are bound for sheep country and a quaint little region of England known as the Cotswolds. Let's go! ■



Tell me what you remember about southern England:

- ◇ *Cornwall is one of six Celtic nations. Name the other five.*
- ◇ *What prized stone from Cornwall do local artisans use to craft jewelry, ornaments, and figurines? What color is it?*

- ◇ *What is a thermal hot spring? How did the Romans take advantage of the warm water? What did they build?*
- ◇ *What might have been some possible uses for Stonehenge? Where did the stones come from? How were they transported to southern England?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer retold by Geraldine McCaughrean*
- ◇ *If All the Swords in England by Barbara Willard*
- ◇ *The Boy Who Fell Off the Mayflower by P.J. Lynch*
- ◇ *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table by Roger Lancelyn Green*
- ◇ *Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen (for High School students and up)*
- ◇ *Poldark by Winston Graham (for High School students and up)*
- ◇ *Northanger Abbey by Jane Austen (for High School students and up)*

Central England

The Ancient Universities

Today, we are meeting up with a tour guide in the region known as the Cotswolds. The word “cotswold” is generally understood to mean “sheep enclosure on rolling hillsides”. *Wold* is an old English word that can be translated to mean either “hill” or “forest”. However, modern linguists are questioning the interpretation of the word and believe that it could come from an even

older language still and could refer to someone’s property boundaries, such as “Cod’s woods” or “Cod’s property”. Well, if Cod owned the area now referred to as the Cotswolds, he owned a very large piece of property indeed. This Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) encompasses 800 square miles of beautiful rolling hills. We get to appreciate it by foot thanks to a footpath crossing right



The village of Bibury in the Cotswolds. Photo by Igor Krivokon and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.



Broadway Tower on the Cotswold Way, license CC BY-SA 2.5.



Cotswold sheep taken by Terri Johnson. All rights reserved.

through it from Bath to Chipping Camden for a total of 102 miles. Don't worry; we won't walk the whole distance! That would take days!

Look! There's Jane, our rambler guide to the Cotswold Way. She is dressed like an everyday hiker. She makes her living by giving tours of this countryside, by foot on dry days and by van on rainy days. Today is a beautiful day with lots of billowy clouds and the sun shining brightly between them. It's the perfect day for an easy hike.

"Hello young explorers!" Jane calls out. "Are you ready for an adventure?"

"Yes!" we respond with anticipation of what the day will bring.

"Then, let's get started here at Bourton-on-the-Water. We'll pass through the public garden, then cross the highway before we reach the access point to the trail. The best part about this hike is that the landowners along the Cotswolds Way are obligated to give us 'right of access' through their property. That means that we'll be going through many private gates to stay on the trail, like this one.

Always make sure you close the gate tightly behind you. We wouldn't want to let the cows or sheep out of their enclosures. That's right! We will

be walking right through herds of cattle and sheep during our walk today!"

The trail we're walking feels like a private path as we pass through field upon field of sheep pasture, dotted with humble barns, storybook cottages, and grand mansions. This area is outstanding in its natural beauty—rolling hills, quaint farms, and picture-perfect fields of English sheep. We can even see a rock quarry from the trail.

"Local quarries are harvesting the limestone that runs throughout and beneath the Cotswold region," says Jane. "All of the houses and buildings in the Cotswolds are built from blocks of this honey-colored stone that is chipped from the quarry."

The path begins to widen out and we find ourselves walking on what appears to be a cobblestone road.

"We are walking on Fosse Way," Jane tells us. "Fosse Way is an old Roman Road that runs all the way through the Cotswolds. It is incredible to me that we can walk along a road that has existed for nearly 2000 years. It will take us through the tiny towns of Lower Slaughter and Upper Slaughter." Jane explains that this area has historically been



Photo of Stow-on-the-Wold taken by Terri Johnson. All rights reserved.

sheep country. The people here made their living from sheep's wool and the products that they made from it, such as blankets, scarves, and sweaters. Wool made the people and towns in the Cotswolds wealthy. That is, until cotton came along and was cheaper to buy than wool. At that point, this area sank into a financial depression and the residents moved away. The towns became frozen in time and now they look very much like they did hundreds of years ago. While you might guess that these towns were the places where animals were slaughtered, the word "slaughter" actually comes from the word "slough" or "wet land" because Upper and Lower Slaughter are built along both banks of the River Eye. In fact, we'll walk over an old stone bridge to cross the river and continue our hike.

Our destination is Stow-on-the-Wold, a quaint little town where we can enjoy some lunch in one of the cafes on the green. These towns no longer make their money from wool. Tourism is

what brings in the cashflow these days. From our window seat, we can watch couples and families meander through the town and pose for photos around the medieval stocks in the town square.

Many traditional English specialties are listed on the menu, such as fish and chips, bangers (sausage) and mash, roast beef with Yorkshire pudding, and an assortment of meat pies. What will you try? Personally, I love a flaky English meat pie!



Jane has arranged a ride for us back to our car so that we can continue our journey through the beautiful central portion of England to the famous old college towns of Oxford and Cambridge. On our way there, we must stop at Blenheim Palace, one of the largest private homes in England and the only non-royal residence to bear the title "palace".



Blenheim Palace, home to the Churchill family. Photo taken by DeFacto and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 4.0.

The palace belongs to the Churchill family, also known as the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough. It came into the family's possession in 1702 as a gift from the king to John Churchill, a military general who fought and won many battles during a war with Spain and France, including the Battle of Blenheim. Churchill was also granted the title of duke when he was given the land along with a large budget to build his home on said land. Curiously, the crown asked for rent to be paid for the land that the palace sits on—but only a **peppercorn rent**. A peppercorn rent is a rent so small, it is hardly worth mentioning. But still the rent must be paid once a year, even now three hundred years later. And what is the rent? A flag! Each year, the Duke of Marlborough delivers a French royal flag to Windsor Castle where it sits on one of the queen's writing desks until the next one arrives.



Winston Churchill. Photograph is in the public domain.

Twelve dukes have lived in this palace, some better than others, but none you have probably heard of before, except one—Sir Winston



Oxford University. Photo taken by Tejvan Pettinger and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

Churchill. Winston was born and raised here in his family's immense estate before serving as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during the dark days of World War II, leading Britain to victory.

Over the course of his long life as a soldier, journalist, author, politician, and statesmen during the 20th century, Winston Churchill used his wit, wisdom, and dramatic way with language to inspire and influence world events. To this day, he is one of the most quotable people of all time. Here's one:

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."—Winston Churchill

Today, the Churchills graciously open their home to the public for many months of the year, giving tours, displaying their vast collection of rare and antique automobiles, and entertaining the crowd with sword duels, music concerts, nature studies, good food, and a hedge maze. They even have a playground for the kids. Doesn't that sound like a fun afternoon?



Next stop, Oxford! Remember how the word "Cotswold" meant "sheep enclosure on rolling hillsides"? Well, Oxford means "ford for the oxen." The ox part makes sense, but what is a ford? A ford is a place in the river that is ideal for crossing, at least most of the time. It is a shallow area where the current is not too strong. In medieval times, it was much more common to cross the river with your herd of oxen at a ford than over a bridge. From as far back as AD 900, Oxford was an ideal place to ford the River Thames with oxen.

Nowadays, Oxford is a university town, home to the oldest university in the English-speaking world. The University of Oxford was founded nearly a thousand years ago, but the actual date of its beginning is unknown. We do know that there were classes taught in 1096, but it was a small and scrappy establishment in those years. But in 1167, when King Henry II decreed that English students

could no longer study abroad at the University of Paris, the college grew rapidly. Oxford is now one of the most prestigious universities on the planet. It has the largest academic library system in the world along with the oldest university museum and the largest printing press in the world. Its motto is *Dominus Illuminatio Mea*, which means, “The Lord is my Light”.

Oxford is one of seven “ancient universities” established in the British Isles before the year 1600. Four of these are located in Scotland, one in Ireland, and two in England—Oxford and Cambridge. These two English medieval universities are frequently referred to jointly as “Oxbridge”.

Just down the street from Oxford University is a little ramshackle pub hardly worth a second glance, but it’s a place where some of the best stories were born. The pub is called The Eagle and Child, but it is fondly nicknamed The Bird and Baby by its most frequent customers. Some of those frequent customers called themselves The Inklings and were all members of a literary club who met regularly on Tuesday afternoons in the Rabbit Room between 1933 and 1950 to share their imaginative stories. Among the writers in this club were J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*, and C.S. Lewis, author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Other authors that joined in on the readings and lively discussion were Charles Williams, Hugo Dyson, and Roger Lancelyn Green, author of *The Legend of Robin Hood* and other retold stories for children.

Imagine that you are part of this literary club and one summer day in June, you are handed a copy of the rough draft for *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*! Or maybe you get a chance to listen to the author read portions from *The Lord*



The Eagle and Child Pub. Photo taken by Rachel Johnson. All rights reserved.

of the Rings before it was ever a movie or even a published book for that matter. Oh boy, if these walls could speak, the stories they would tell!

Let’s order dinner and soak in the atmosphere of this quaint old pub. Sitting on the rough-hewn benches and seeing the medieval history of this place in every detail, you can almost imagine hearing these words read by the author himself:

“Aslan a man!’ said Mr. Beaver sternly. ‘Certainly not. I tell you He is the King of the wood and the Son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea. Don’t you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion—the Lion, the Great Lion!’” (Excerpt from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis)

Or maybe these beautiful words spoken when it was believed that all hope was lost:

“PIPPIN: I didn’t think it would end this way.

GANDALF: End? No, the journey doesn’t end here. Death is just another path, one that we all must take. The grey rain-curtain of this world rolls back, and all turns to silver glass, and then you see it.

PIPPIN: What? Gandalf? See what?

GANDALF: White shores, and beyond, a far green country under a swift sunrise.

PIPPIN: Well, that isn’t so bad.

GANDALF: No. No, it isn’t.”

(Excerpt from *The Return of the King* by J.R.R. Tolkien)



Cambridge is a city on the River Cam in eastern England, home to the prestigious University of Cambridge, dating to 1209.

Enough to give you shivers, I suspect. Time to finish up that scrumptious pie and drive north to Cambridge, Oxford's sister university town.



Cambridge is a bit newer than Oxford, as it was established in 1209. It is the second-oldest university in the English-speaking world, second only to Oxford. Strangely, Cambridge grew out of a dispute and eventually a battle that happened in the town of Oxford. It was not uncommon in medieval university towns for arguments to erupt between scholars and townspeople as they shared the same space but expected different treatment. Students wanted stimulating discussions, deep discounts, and high esteem. Townsfolk wanted peaceful public places, fair prices, and common courtesy. Arguments would often occur in public establishments over policies,

privileges, and professions. Some of these quarrels became so violent that in 1209 many scholars from Oxford had to flee to the nearby town of Cambridge where they set up their new college.

Oxford shut down for a short time to seek protection from the king, but even though it reestablished itself a few years later, enough scholars had become attached to their new location in Cambridge that they didn't want to return. So the new college began to thrive and develop its own campus and culture.

However, the town didn't form around the university. It was already there. In fact, the remains of a 3,500-year-old farm have been discovered beneath the university. Later, the Romans occupied this town for a time and so did a tribe of Belgae people who sailed across the English Channel from what is now the country



St. John's Bridge crossing next to St. John's College is located on the grounds of Cambridge University. Public Domain photo.

Field Notes

of Belgium. Later still, the Vikings came through and Cambridge became an important trading center for the Vikings due to its central location. Cambridge was granted township status in the 12th century prior to the opening of the university, but it didn't officially become a city until 1951.

If you want to study history, literature, or philosophy, go to Oxford. But if you want to study science or technology, go to Cambridge. Cambridge is the heartbeat of England's high-tech industry. Many modern software and science start-up companies are born out of this ancient university every year.

Or, if you would rather set the books aside and try your hand at punting, a popular pastime in Cambridge is punting down the Cam River. Learn how here: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com/punting-on-the-river-cam/>.

Tell me what you remember about central England:

- ◇ *What does "right of access" mean in England? How should travelers be courteous when passing through someone's property?*
- ◇ *What is a peppercorn rent? What is the "price" that the Churchill family must pay in rent each year for Blenheim Palace?*
- ◇ *What does "Oxford" mean? When was the university established there? What makes Oxford University special today?*
- ◇ *What events caused Cambridge to form its own university?*



Statue of Robin Hood, the mysterious outlaw hero, located in Sherwood Forest. Photo by Richard Croft, CC BY-SA 2.0.

SHERWOOD AND THE SHAMBLES

As we drive north away from southern England and into the heart of the country, this is a good time to get the lay of the land. England shares the island of Great Britain with Wales to the east and Scotland to the north. England covers five-eighths of Great Britain and because it is shaped somewhat like a triangle, it becomes narrower the further north we go. England's terrain is mostly low hills and plains, especially in the south and central regions. However, there are uplands in the north and in the west. We'll see some of those higher mountains when we get to the Lake District in the next chapter. For now, we can enjoy the beautiful green rolling hills outside our car windows.

We are driving along A1 Great North Road, which is one of the largest freeways in England. A1 was built atop an old Roman road, which

connected London with the outlying Roman fortifications in the north all the way up to Hadrian's Wall at the Scottish border. We won't be driving that far today, though. In a couple hours, we'll arrive at Nottingham Castle, and just beyond that, Sherwood Forest, the home of Robin Hood and his band of merry men.

England receives a great deal of rain nine months out of the year, but today, it is beautiful outside with a sapphire sky and billowy clouds floating lazily overhead. It is a perfect day to wander through a drafty medieval castle and an old growth forest, imagining what life must have been like during those tumultuous years when King Richard was out of the country and his brother, Prince John, was at the helm.

Nottingham Castle was constructed in the year 1068 on a massive outcropping that looms over the River Leen. The Normans of France built the castle on the orders of William the Conqueror after the Norman Conquest of England. For



Nottingham Castle Gatehouse. Photo by Arran Bee and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

centuries, this was one of the most important castles in the country, visited often by nobles and royalty alike. Not only was this castle centrally located in a strategic position along the river, but it was also a perfect place for some royal rest and relaxation. The castle is situated very close to several royal hunting grounds, which were known as the “King’s Larder”. Only the king and the people whom the king approved were allowed to hunt for deer or hare in the royal forests.

During the 12th century, Prince John seized Nottingham Castle along with his **sycophants**, including the Sheriff of Nottingham, while King Richard I of England—also known as Richard the Lionhearted—was away on the Third Crusade. In the legend of Robin Hood, this castle was the scene of many a showdown between the sheriff and the outlaw hero.

Historically speaking, a significant battle took place here at Nottingham Castle in March 1194 after King Richard returned and squashed the

rebellion of his dastardly brother, Prince John. Using siege machines he had used on the crusade, King Richard besieged the castle. The castle and its inhabitants surrendered a few days into the attack.

A quick drive in the car brings us to the edge of Sherwood Forest, steeped in legend and imagination. You may be wondering why Robin Hood would choose to live in this forest instead of an actual home? Well, the story goes that a nobleman named Robert of Loxley, indignant over the amount of taxes and fees that Prince John was extracting from the people of Nottingham, became an outlaw by stealing from the rich and giving that money to the poor. Taking on a new name and a new camouflaged suit of Lincoln green, Robert, or Robin as he was known to his friends, had to hide his whereabouts otherwise he would be arrested by the sheriff and possibly executed for being a thief and an enemy to the prince. So, this beautiful old growth forest became his home, along with his merry band of men who joined



Major Oak, the oldest and largest tree in Sherwood Forest, taken by Immanuel Giel. Photo is in the public domain.

him on his adventures. These men included Little John, Will Scarlet, and Much the miller's son.

In the heart of Sherwood Forest stands a huge oak tree, known as Major Oak, which is believed to be over 800 years old. This massive oak has long been thought to be the actual hideout of Robin Hood and his men. However, if the dating of the tree is correct, it would have been a mere sapling during the years when Prince John set himself up to rule in King Richard's absence. However, there were certainly older trees than this one here at those times that are no longer living. I'm sure the tree he did hide in was as big and glorious as this one is now.

The legend of Robin Hood has been told for more than 600 years, but historians still debate whether Robin Hood actually existed. While the story may have evolved over the years, most history scholars do believe that there was a man, excellent with the bow, who lived in these woods and robbed wealthy travelers passing through.

There is a grave not far from here that is agreed to be his, for the stone reads:

***Here underneath this little stone
Lies Robert, earl of Huntingdon
No other archer was as good
And people called him Robin Hood
Such outlaws as he and his men
Will England never see again.***

December 24, 1247 (Kirklees)

Whether Robin Hood lived among these trees or not, Sherwood Forest was and is a royal forest that has been here for thousands of years and encompasses over one thousand acres. Every August, a week-long Robin Hood Festival is held at Sherwood Forest and this wood is transformed to another time when jousting and jesting were the entertainment of the day. The forest comes alive with music, games, and legendary characters



Photo of York Minster from the Lendal Bridge was taken by Andy and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

dressed in period clothing. A complete medieval encampment is set up and knights, jesters, rat-catchers, and fire-eaters entertain visitors.

However, long before King Richard, Prince John, or Robin Hood ever lived, this forest was the location of another, still older, historical event. Sherwood was once the site of a **Thynghowe**, an official open-air meeting place for Viking tribes who lived in this region. A “thing” was where Vikings came to resolve their arguments and settle their disputes, similar to a courtroom today.

No matter how you slice it, this forest has stories to tell. If you listen carefully, you can hear them told in the whispering of the majestic trees overhead and in the soft crunch of leaves underfoot. Sherwood Forest holds her secrets close but may reveal them to those who take the time to look and listen.



A little more than an hour’s drive north of Sherwood Forest is an old English town that has made a significant impact on our world. The Roman Emperor Constantine was crowned here. Later, Alcuin, Charlemagne the Great’s leading advisor, studied at its university. Much later, one of the largest cities on earth was named after it. It is sung about in a popular nursery rhyme and it was here that the Kit Kat chocolate bar was concocted. What is the name of this remarkable town? Can you guess?

You’ve got it! We are bound for the beautiful old town of York on the eastern side of central England. We have much to see and learn about in York. Make sure your camera’s batteries are charged, because there are some amazing sights to see in this old town.

The first thing we notice about York is the thick walls set on high ramparts surrounding the city. This city’s outer wall is the most complete medieval defense enclosure in England and retains

A Child's Geography



York town wall taken by Terri Johnson. All rights reserved.

all its original gateways. Portions of the wall date back to the Roman fortress that was built on this site in the year 71 AD, but most of the stone wall that we see here was erected between the 12th and 14th centuries. The walls were built thick enough to allow watchmen to walk along its parapet. Today, it is a popular walk about the city for tourists.

Dominating the skyline of York is the great York Minster cathedral. In the year 627, the first

wooden minster church was hurriedly built in York for the purpose of baptizing Edwin, the King of Northumbria. The name “minster” was reserved for churches built during the dark ages that were to be used for teaching and preparing missionaries for the field. A stone church replaced the original wooden structure a few years later. Over the years, decades, and centuries, the humble minster church was built upon and refined into a great cathedral, complete with lofty transepts, a glorious nave, and the largest expanse of medieval stained glass found anywhere in the world. More than 850 years later, the great cathedral was declared complete. York Minster, officially named the Cathedral and Metropolitan Church of Saint Peter in York, is considered one of the most beautiful churches on earth. It is glorious!

Our destination this afternoon is The Shambles, a narrow, and crooked street in the heart of York that dates back nearly one thousand years. What makes this cobbled lane so unique is that it has remained virtually unchanged,



York Minster Cathedral. Photo by Richard Croft and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.



Intersection of Shambles and Little Shambles streets, York. Photo by Peter K. Burien, used with permission, CC BY-SA 4.0.

architecturally speaking, since the fourteenth century. Its winding way is punctuated by low, overhanging, half-timbered buildings, which housed butcher shops at street level, displaying their meats proudly for passers-by, and provided apartments above for the shop owners to live.

We are meeting up with a tour guide on one of the **snickleways**, a term used for the narrow pedestrian tangle of lanes that branch off from The Shambles, the main boulevard through the old marketplace. Get ready for some gripping and slightly grim tales about old York!

“Welcome, young explorers,” calls the tour guide as we approach him. “Are you ready to explore my great city of York? Let’s get cracking!”

“York is a very old city, as you can see from the medieval buildings leaning over the cobblestone lanes about us. However, what you may not know and what you cannot see is that under the very streets we are walking now, there is a network of even older streets, dating back to the Roman fortress that once stood on this site. York—then

known as Eboracum—was a central trading hub for the Romans and then later, the Vikings.

“You see, once the Romans pulled out of Britain after the Fall of Rome in 476 AD, the Saxons swooped in for a while and then a few hundred years after that, the Vikings captured York in 866. Because of its perfect location on the Great North Road, now our modern A1 freeway, where it crosses the River Ouse, this city became a major river port, part of the extensive Viking trading network that crisscrossed northern Europe during their heyday.

“The Vikings renamed their newly conquered city, Jórviik, which means ‘the place of the yew trees’. The name York comes from this Scandinavian word. Eventually, the Vikings were driven out, but York continued to be a central trading port for England well into the Middle Ages. York merchants exported grain and wool to the mainland in exchange for wine from France, cloth and wax from Belgium, and fur and timber from countries further north, such as Denmark and Sweden.



Clifford's Tower in York. Photo by Lydia Johnson. All rights reserved.

“This road is known as The Shambles, which is short for The Fleshammels, or the Great Flesh Shambles. *Shambles* is an old-English word for ‘shelves’ so this road was named for the shelves that the local butchers used to display their meat. In fact, you can see outside many of the shop doors large meat hooks where the meat would hang to entice passersby to step in and make a purchase. There are no longer any butcher shops located on this street, but back in medieval times, there were at least 25 butchers here competing for local sales. It was a butcher’s pride to serve his loyal customers well, and a sale to a traveler wandering through The Shambles would make him feel mighty **chuffed** indeed.

“Let’s wander through and then make our way up to York Castle there ahead. We are passing the cufflinks shop at the address of No. 10 Shambles. This was once the home of Saint Margaret Clitherow, wife to a humble butcher and later saint to the Catholic Church. She lived in the 16th century during the Protestant Reformation, when Catholicism was forbidden in England, Catholics

were persecuted, and Roman Catholic priests were ordered to leave the country. Risking her life, Margaret hid priests in her home though a ‘priest hole’—literally a trapdoor constructed from an old fireplace, which then opened into a secret hideout. Her home became one of the most important hideouts for fugitive priests in northern England. When a frightened boy under interrogation revealed the location of the priest hole, Margaret was imprisoned in York Castle and then sentenced to death. To this very day she is fondly referred to as ‘the pearl of York’. She was a pearl, indeed.”

A hike up the steep hillside brings us to Clifford’s Tower, the best-preserved portion of York Castle. From up here, high in the keep, we can see portions of the old castle wall below, which now surrounds newer buildings. Andrew, our tour guide, continues to regale us with fascinating stories from the past.

“The first castle built on this site was a hasty wooden affair, supposedly built in just 8 days by William the Conqueror. It didn’t last long. The original structure, as well as the next couple

attempts, was burnt down. When King Henry III came for a visit in 1244 to find the keep burnt to the ground, he ordered this tower built from white limestone, a longer lasting material assuredly, for here it still stands.

“This castle has been used for multiple purposes, including a military base, a debtor’s prison, and a refuge for those needing protection. But King Henry III used it for diplomatic purposes, as a place to meet with the neighboring King of Scotland and as a venue for their children’s upcoming wedding. Alexander and Margaret were still babies when the two kings met to arrange their future marriage to one another. When Alexander’s father died unexpectedly, Alexander became the new King of Scots at the tender age of seven. Determined to ensure his daughter’s position as Queen of Scotland, Henry moved up the wedding. It was held two years later when Margaret was eleven and Alexander nine.

“The National Archives holds all sorts of documents from the reign of Henry III and several of them detail the huge amount of planning that went into that royal wedding, which took place nearly 800 years ago. King Henry placed over 130 orders to supply the royal wedding. Game was hunted in the king’s forests and ponds were dug so that fish could be caught but kept alive to serve fresh at the wedding feast. His order from the Sheriff of York alone included one thousand hens, three hundred partridges, thirty swan, twenty cranes, twenty-five peacocks, fifty rabbits, and three hundred hares.

“Then, there was the vast quantity of bread that needed to be baked and the wine that needed to be imported from France and shipped to London. The wine bill came to 200 pounds, which would be well over 100,000 pounds in today’s money. Despite the careful planning, there were still hitches. Because so many invited guests were arriving for the wedding, along with thousands more uninvited but curious onlookers, the town lacked the space to hold them all and the narrow streets became dangerously



William the Conqueror was painted c. 1618 by unknown artist.

crowded. Fights broke out while English and Scottish marshals alike worked hard to maintain peace and find suitable accommodation for the invited lords and ladies.

“What the official documents do not reveal is how young Margaret felt about her grand wedding or even about the prospect of becoming the queen of Scotland at so young an age. What we do know is that Henry III kept a close eye on his oldest daughter by visiting her and her husband regularly in Scotland while they grew up together as a royal couple.”

Our tour of York has come to an end. Let’s grab a bite to eat and call it a night. I’ll bet you are a bit knackered after our long walk around York. We passed an old inn back in the Shambles that has roast beef with Yorkshire pudding on the menu and comfy rooms for rent upstairs. Sounds like a perfect end to a wonderful day!

A Child's Geography

Oh, that's right—I have left some mysteries unresolved. Let's clear those up now...

A small town on the east coast of America was built back in the 17th century and the residents decided to name their new city after this great city of York. The colonists named it New York. Meanwhile, back in York, a chocolate factory was built and had become one of the main employers in town. By the 1800's, most of the townsfolk worked either for the railroad or Terry's Chocolate Factory, which produced the Kit Kat and other delectable treats. Let's have a Kit Kat after dinner with our cuppa tea! And here are the words to an old nursery rhyme about the Duke of York...

***The grand old Duke of York
He had ten thousand men
He marched them up to the top
of the hill (Clifford's Tower?)
And he marched them down again.***

***When you're up, you're up
And when you're down, you're down
And when you're only halfway up
You're neither up nor down***

Have you heard that song before? Perhaps the Duke of York was the original "Captain Obvious". Goodnight, friends. Tomorrow, we explore the charming Lake District in northern England. ■



Tell me what you remember about Nottingham and York:

- ◇ *Who ordered the construction of Nottingham Castle? What famous characters, both real and fictional, have lived there?*
- ◇ *Why did Robin Hood supposedly live in Sherwood Forest? Sherwood Forest is a royal forest. What does that mean? Explain why the great tree, Major Oak, was probably not his hideout.*
- ◇ *What is The Shambles? What type of market did it used to be?*
- ◇ *York was named for the Viking trading Center – Jorvik – that the city was built atop. What other city was named after this one?*
- ◇ *Who ordered York Castle to be built? Which famous wedding took place here? Would you like to have attended?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *Who was Winston Churchill* by Ellen Labrecque
- ◇ *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis
- ◇ *The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- ◇ *The Legend of Robin Hood* by Roger Lancelyn Green
- ◇ *Reformation ABCs* by Stephen J. Nichols and R.C. Sproul
- ◇ *What Really Happened in Ancient Times (Constantine biography* by Jocelyn James)
- ◇ *What Really Happened in Medieval Times (Alcuin biography* by Francelle Somervell)

Northern England

Tales from Miss Potter's Farm

Crisscrossing England once again, we are driving northwest to the Cumbrian Lake District. The distance isn't far, but we'll be winding our way around gently curving mountain roads through a purple infused, heather soaked countryside. People have been flocking to the Lake District for hundreds of years as a peaceful getaway from the hustle and bustle of city life. The Lake District gets its name from the more than

200 lakes nestled amongst the green and mulberry mountains in this region.

We'll enter from the south side of the national park. Our first stop is Hill Top Farm, the home of writer and illustrator, Beatrix Potter. You have probably heard of her. Her most famous book is, of course, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, which she self-published in 1901 after it had been rejected by multiple book publishers. The tale follows the antics



Hamlet in the Lake District. Photo by Henry Hemming and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

A Child's Geography



The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter. Public Domain.

of the mischievous and disobedient Peter Rabbit as he is chased around the garden by Mr. McGregor. He narrowly escapes, but loses his cherished blue coat in the scuffle, which McGregor hangs defiantly on a post to scare away the crows and intimidate young Peter. The book was a smashing success. With over 45 million copies sold, it is one of the best selling books of all time.

Beatrix went on to write dozens more stories, such as *The Tale of Jemima Puddle Duck* and *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse*, all featuring charming farm and woodland creatures. Publishers who initially rejected her, now clawed for the rights to print her captivating tales. She granted that privilege to Frederick Warne & Co, who became famous for producing the delightful children's books of Beatrix Potter.

Miss Potter was more than a famous author and illustrator. She was a farmer, a prize-winning sheep breeder, a natural scientist, and botanical illustrator. She was also a conservationist who not

only lived in the Lake District but worked tirelessly her whole life to preserve it for future generations.

When we drive through these verdant hills and valleys, appearing almost untouched by human hands, we have Beatrix Potter to thank for this. Yet, people have been living in this region for thousands of years. We'll see proof of that when we finish our tour of the Cumbrian Lake District and drive back out the northern side. But that adventure will come later.

Right now, we are pulling up to Hill Top Farm. The first thing we notice is the iconic Herdwick sheep grazing on the property, marked by low, slate stone walls. Sheep meander everywhere in this part of England, and a person can instantly be recognized as a tourist when he or she stops to photograph the sheep. I don't mind being recognized as a tourist. Let's snap some shots to send home! There is nothing more tranquil to behold than sheep grazing through lush green grass on a billowy cloudy day.



Hill Top Farm. Photo by Marion Dutcher, geography.org.uk.



View of Scafell Massif. Photo taken by Doug Sim and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 4.0.

While wandering around the perfectly preserved Hill Top Farm, one can imagine Jemima Puddle Duck waddling aimlessly along the drive, Mr. Jeremy Fisher casting his line from a lily pad on the pond, or Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail scurrying quickly around the slate wall in front of the old stone house. Inside, it is just as easy to envision Mrs. Tittlemouse scolding her children in the little mouse hole in the corner, or Tom Kitten strutting around the place, making it known who's really in charge here at Hill Top.

It's not too hard to imagine what life must have been like here at the turn of the 20th century, thanks to the National Trust who inherited Potter's country home and preserved it for thousands of visitors to wander through each year.

It is time to be off! We are meeting up with the son and daughter-in-law of some dear friends a little later today. They run a bed and breakfast in the charming town of Keswick, a short drive to the

north. On the way, we'll drive along the shores of the largest lake in the Lake District, Windermere. However, the locals don't refer to this body of water as Lake Windermere. Since "mere" means "lake", that would be redundant—like saying, "Lake Winder Lake".

Thanks to the Norse Vikings who lived here well over a thousand years ago and left their mark on the English language of this region, you will hear many unusual words spoken in this corner of Great Britain. You may hear the words "tarn" and "mere" used instead of lake; "beck" instead of stream; "gill" instead of gorge; "fell" instead of mountain; "dale" instead of valley; "force" instead of waterfall; and "thwaite" to refer to a clearing in the woods. All these words refer to outdoor terrain because the people who live here live for the outdoors.

The Lake District is made for hiking and biking. The highest mountain in England is located here, but Scafell Pike at less than one thousand meters

A Child's Geography



Charlotte Mason painted by Frederic Yates in 1902.

(3,209 ft.) is not much more than a large rolling hill and is fairly easy to climb. The mountains, or fells, in these northern parts often look more purple than green. That is not because they are massive or distant, but because they are covered in heather, a low-growing perennial shrub covered in lavender-colored blooms.

As you take in the magnificent scenery, it is not hard to believe that other creative geniuses often sought refuge here among the colorful fells and serene tarns. One of the most famous poets of all time, William Wordsworth, often came to the Lake District to reignite his creative juices and draw more poetry out of his mind and onto the page. Wordsworth was known for wandering through these mountains and valleys “as lonely as a cloud” but preferring it that way.

Charlotte Mason, a brilliant 19th century thought leader on education, also enjoyed this place. So much so, that she settled down in Ambleside, the small town we are driving through now. In fact, it was this countryside that spurred her belief that all students should carry a nature journal with them. Thus equipped, they can record



William Wordsworth painted by Samuel Crossthwaite in 1844.

or illustrate what they observe in nature and appreciate the lavish creation of the Almighty God to gain wisdom from it.

While the primary industry in this region since Roman times has been sheep farming, there have been other industries that provided a living for the families who settled here throughout the years. Long ago, the Lake District was a major source of stone axes, sometimes nicknamed the “stone axe factory”, as many ancient axes have been found along the fellsides.



Herdwick Sheep taken by Maigheach-gheal, CC BY-SA 2.0.



Graphite pencils from Keswick. Photo is in the public domain, courtesy of Pexels.

Later, during medieval times, mining became the major source of income for lake residents. Mines were dug deep into the earth to retrieve copper, silver, lead, graphite, and slate. While many of these mines have been abandoned, some mines still operate today, mostly for slate and graphite. This locally mined graphite led to the development of the pencil industry, with more pencils coming out of Keswick than any other place on earth. In other words, we are on our way to the pencil capital of the world!

Another industry that has thrived here and kept the local economy going is the bobbin industry. Yes, the little metal thread holders that are inserted into sewing machines are called bobbins and were manufactured here. During the 19th century, over half of the world's bobbin supply came from the Lake District. Now, in the 21st century, bobbins are all but forgotten and

tourism is the main industry in the district and the primary source of income for the region.

Here we are in Keswick, a quaint tourist town located on the north shore of Derwent Water—oh yes, “water” is yet another word used here to refer to lakes. Steven and Ruby have taken over the family home and business, a world-renowned bed and breakfast located on the emerald green hillside above the lake. Steven's family has been hosting guests in their grand victorian home for nearly a hundred years.

As we motor up to the four-star B&B, we are surprised by the stately mansion we'll be staying in. The slate-built victorian home is enormous, with high peaked turrets, grand bay windows, graceful gables, and a meticulously manicured garden out front. The oversized front door is open wide on this mostly sunny day and we gratefully step inside. Ruby calls for Steven to park our car

A Child's Geography

for us around the back of the house, then rushes down the stairs to greet us.

“Welcome, friends! Welcome to our home and the northern lakes!” Ruby beams.

Steven, pink cheeked from parking the car and hauling our entire collection of luggage up to our rooms, returns briskly to further welcome us to his home.

“I am so thrilled that you are here! My folks send their love and greetings to you and your families. I have planned our day; I hope that is alright with you. If we head out to the jetty just there, we can board one of the lake steamers that will carry us around the lake. Should we board the clockwise vessel, we can stop halfway to hike up the highest fell on our lake and enjoy the incredible view. On our way back down the fell, we can stop in for tea and scones at the Lingholm Estate, a favorite haunt of Beatrix Potter when she stayed at the northern lakes. Then we’ll board the boat back here to Keswick.”

Steven’s thick northern accent can be initially hard to understand, but his smiles and gestures certainly are not.

“We’re game! Let’s go!” we cry.

“Excellent! Then tomorrow, we will rustle up a fine English breakfast of local Cumbrian sausage, black pudding, tomatoes, baked beans, and soft-



Traditional English breakfast with black pudding, cumbrian sausage, bacon, beans, toast, egg, and tomato.

boiled eggs before we head out to take in the wonder of Castlerigg.”

“Castlerigg? What is Castlerigg?” you ask.

“Oh yes, Castlerigg! I won’t spoil it for you by trying to describe it. You’ll just have to see it for yourself,” Steven says with a wink as Ruby smiles knowingly. “Well, let’s snap to it then and make haste! We have quite a bit of adventuring to do before the sun goes down this evening. Grab your cameras and coats and let’s be off!”

With rain jackets and umbrellas in hand, just in case, we step back into the afternoon sun and scurry down to the pier to board the next boat circling the lake, full of happy, wide-eyed passengers.



Tell me what you remember about the Lake District:

- ◇ *Name some books that Beatrix Potter wrote. What is so special about *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*? What else did Beatrix do with her life besides write books?*
- ◇ *Who are some other authors that spent a great deal of time in the Lake District and why?*
- ◇ *What substance is mined in the Lake District?*
- ◇ *What are some of the foods that are served for a traditional English breakfast?*



Photo of the Castlerigg stone circle taken by Terri Johnson. All rights reserved.

MEGALITHS AND MILECASTLES

After our invigorating hike, delicious lakeside tea, late night dinner, and restful sleep in our sumptuous room in Steven and Ruby’s bed and breakfast, we are ready for a new day of adventures.

Down in the cozy dining room, Steven and Ruby are busy serving their guests a scrumptious breakfast spread. The menu consists of two appealing choices—the traditional English breakfast or a hearty bowl of Scottish oatmeal, served with honey and thick cream. A traditional English breakfast is quite different from a typical American breakfast. A large plate is filled with items we don’t generally associate with breakfast, such as tomatoes and baked beans. But I think the most curious of all the side dishes is the disc of steamed black pudding.

Black pudding for breakfast has a long history in England and Ireland and can be found in recipe

books dating as far back as 1450 when it was spelled “blak podyngs”. Black pudding was then made, and is still made, from pork blood, pork or beef fat, and some type of grain, usually oatmeal or barley. It sounds terrible, I know, but it tastes better than it sounds.

So, which breakfast will you have—the traditional or the oatmeal? Good choice!

With our stomachs pleasantly full and the dishes cleaned and drying on the rack, it is time to drive out to nearby Castlerigg. Steven and Ruby have insisted that they want to surprise us with what we will discover there. So, on our winding drive up the hill to our destination, we talk of other things, such as why heather grows everywhere here and why the cows are quite large with unusually thick and curly hair. Ruby explains that both heather and highland cows thrive exceedingly well in the north. Each is a hearty breed of their species that can gracefully



A kissing gate allows only one person through at a time. Photo by Richard Croft and used with permission, CC BY-SA 2.0.

withstand the wet and cold temperatures of this highland climate.

We have arrived at Castlerigg! Time to discover what mystery awaits us here.

Just across the road, we see a small **kissing gate**, which we can only pass through one at a time. Let's see what is on the other side. Will it be a castle? Or a pile of ruins? I cannot imagine what else it might be. From this distance, it looks like an ordinary sheep pasture with an extraordinary view.

As we draw near, we can see large stones erected on end, forming a large circle. Castlerigg is an ancient stone circle! It is slightly reminiscent of Stonehenge—though not quite as colossal in shape and size. Its backdrop of lilac-hued fells above and cascading chartreuse valley below sets this stone circle apart as perhaps one of the most dramatic ancient megaliths in the United Kingdom—so vast, so wild, and so strikingly beautiful.



Diagram of Castlerigg layout. Photo by Rachel Johnson.

While there are over 1,300 ancient stone megaliths located in the British Isles, none are as breathtaking and few are as ancient as this one. Archaeologists believe this circle of stones was erected around 3200 BC. Several ancient stone



Hadrian's Wall at Housesteads. Photo by Rachel Johnson. All rights reserved.

axes have been found within and around the stones. Scientists speculate that this circle on the plateau with the astounding view was formerly used for one or more of these purposes: 1) a trading center for axes and other objects of value; 2) a calendar to mark the days and seasons of the year; or 3) an astronomical instrument to track and predict events in the night sky.

There is an obvious entrance into the circle on the north end and a smaller inner circle located on the eastern side. Whatever its previous use, this place appears to have been forgotten in time. Grazing sheep wander through and take shelter in the shadow of the upright rocks (see page 139).

Whatever the reason this stone circle was constructed initially, it is clear the ancient people who lived in the northern Cumbrian Lake District chose to go about their business in this jaw-dropping setting, conducting their most important meetings and rituals here among the circle of stones.



Leaving Castlerigg and the scenic Lake District behind, it's time to drive north to our final stop in England. We are heading to Hadrian's Wall, the furthest outpost of the Roman Empire, which was built all the way back in the year 122 AD. This landmark is less than a mile from the border with Scotland here on England's western coast. But the wall stretches from the western coast over 70 miles to the eastern coast and as it does, it veers away from the modern boundary line the further east you go.

Hadrian's Wall was built by and for the Emperor Hadrian shortly after he rose to power. The wall, which stretched across England's northern territory from coast to coast, complete with **milecastles**, or mini-forts, spaced at every Roman mile, was meant to intimidate the barbarians to the north and send a strong



Beacons lit along Hadrian's Wall to celebrate the 1600th anniversary of the end of Roman rule in Britain.

message that England was a force to be reckoned with. It took six years to complete. Besides the 75 milecastles, each including a lookout tower and accommodations for a small armed troop, the Romans also built full-sized fortresses every five miles or so that could house between 500 and 1,000 soldiers.

Hadrian's Wall is the largest Roman artifact in the world. It was declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1987, which means that it is intended to be preserved and protected for generations to come by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. However, as of this writing, it is still legal to walk alongside or even on top of the ancient stone wall. In fact, a pathway—Hadrian's Wall Path—has been created so that hikers can walk beside the wall along its full length from coast to coast.

We drive east a short distance and then get out of the car to walk a while beside the incredibly old historical wall to see the remains of the ancient fortifications. Most of the wall was built along a

ridge with a ditch, either natural or man-made, swooping down on its northern side. The Romans always preferred to hold the higher ground. This gave them the advantage of time, preparedness, and position should the warring barbarian tribes of the north attempt to storm the wall.

A couple miles to the east, we arrive at Vercovicium, one of the oldest and largest fortifications built along the wall. Vercovicium was the Roman name for the fortress, but today it is known as Housesteads, the name of the 16th century farm whose lands included the ruins of the fort. The Armstrong family, who were famously known to be Border Reivers—thieves who lived along the English-Scottish border between the 13th and 17th centuries—owned the farm. Their band of thieves included both English and Scottish people, who pillaged and stole from one end of the entire frontier to the other, caring little whether the victims were of their own nationality or not.

Housesteads, or Vicovicium, gives us a very distinct glimpse into the lifestyle of the ancient Roman soldiers stationed in this most remote



Housteads 16th century farm on the site of Hadrian's Wall. Photo by Terri Johnson. All rights reserved.

outpost of the Roman Empire. Large rooms were built for the soldiers over crawlspaces used for storing their provisions and supplies. Smaller rooms with private entrances were reserved for the officers and their families. The Romans dug wells to access fresh, clean drinking water, and kitchens were built to provide the soldiers with hot meals.

“An army marches on its stomach” was a common motto of the Romans. For this reason, Roman soldiers were well-supplied with rations—both prepared meals and basic ingredients to cook their own hearty dishes. When a soldier was on the march, he would often be supplied with **hardtack** (dry bread), hard cheeses, and beef jerky. But for the soldiers stationed along Hadrian’s Wall, the food was often much better. The **garrisons** were supplied with grain, beef, beans, root vegetables, soft cheese, oil, wine, and salt.

The fortress at Housesteads, along with the other 15 fortifications along the wall, was outfitted with brick ovens for baking loaves of bread and roasting



Roman Soldier reenactment. Public domain image, MaxPixel.

root vegetables. However, a popular dish among the soldiers was *puls*, and did not require an oven.

Puls was a dish that could be cooked fairly quickly over an open fire. Grain (usually wheat or barley) would be mixed with water and boiled in

A Child's Geography

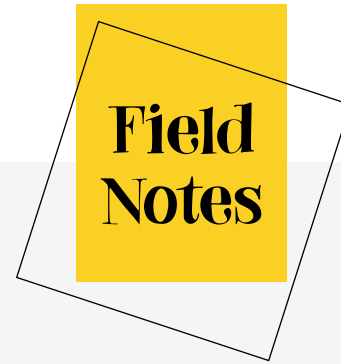
a large kettle along with some salt for seasoning. Chopped meat could be added to the mixture, along with garlic, vegetables, milk, oil, and spices. This porridge was a quick, easy, and satisfying meal when there wasn't enough time to bake bread or roast their supply of vegetables and meat.

After the death of Hadrian, a new emperor came to power who wanted to construct a new wall approximately 100 miles to the north. The Antonine Wall, named for Emperor Antoninus Pius, was about half the length of Hadrian's at 40 Roman miles in width but equipped with just as many fortifications. However, Antoninus was unable to conquer the northern tribes after several attempts and eventually abandoned the new wall, pulled back his troops, and reoccupied Hadrian's Wall as the main defense barrier of the northern frontier.

This Roman ruin from antiquity tells its story at every mile post and inside every bulwark, but we are still left to imagine what daily life must have been like here in the rugged wilds of the northern empire. However, in March of 2010, on the 1,600th anniversary of the end of Roman rule in Britain, a public event took place here to help modern visitors envision what a highly fortified Roman presence along the English-Scottish border was really like back in its heyday. To celebrate, the wall was lit with 500 fiery beacons along its full length, illuminating the wall and its place in both British and world history.

England, both rugged and refined, tells a complex story of deep roots and a constantly developing civilization. Wild England, graceful England, burly England, noble England, it has been a pleasure exploring your varied landscape and riveting history. We shall miss you! You are a significant part of our past and a beautiful part of our present. Thank you for this delightful tour of your country, from shore to stunning shore.

Next up, we hop over the wall and within a few miles enter the spectacular land of the Scots. Scotland, here we come! ■



Tell me what you remember about northern England:

- ◇ *Tell me what you remember about northern England:*
- ◇ *What is black pudding? Why you try it?*
- ◇ *How is Castlerigg similar to Stonehenge? How is it different?*
- ◇ *Why was Hadrian's Wall built? What is a milecastle? Why did the Roman's prefer to build on higher ground?*
- ◇ *What did a typical Roman soldier stationed out on the frontier eat? Can you describe how "puls" was made?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter
- ◇ *Any and all books* by Beatrix Potter
- ◇ *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* (poem) by William Wordsworth
- ◇ *Home Education* by Charlotte Mason (for High School and up)
- ◇ *The Eagle of the Ninth* by Rosemary Sutcliff (for High School and up)

12

Scotland

The End of the World

Before we know it, we see a large blue and white flag waving proudly on a high hill, welcoming us to Scotland, the second country on our tour of the United Kingdom and the ninth since we began this journey. Scotland is located on the northern third of the island of Great Britain and is home to over 5 million people. In addition to the mainland, Scotland includes more than 790 islands! Most of the

islands belong to four large **archipelagos** or island chains known as the Inner and Outer Hebrides to the west and Orkney and Shetland to the north.

You may know quite a few people of Scottish descent back home. In truth, more Scots live outside of Scotland than those that live here in the homeland of their ancestors. We'll learn why very soon.



World's End Pub on High Street in Edinburgh. Photo by Kim Traynor, used with permission under license CC BY-SA 3.0.



Edinburgh skyline. Photo is in the public domain.

We are driving north to Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland. If you don't want to draw undue attention to yourself as a foreign visitor, it's a good idea to learn how to pronounce the name of the capital city. It's not pronounced the way you probably think. The "g" sound is replaced by an "a" sound, like this: "ed-in-burr-a". Say that a few times out loud so you can get used to the pronunciation.

Before we get to Edinburgh, we'll ramble through the southern uplands then through the sparsely inhabited lowlands before we reach the capital city. Later, after we have spent some time in Edinburgh and have passed through to the other side of the city, the landscape will get even more striking as we cross over two major fault lines and head into the famous Scottish Highlands. In fact, you can see the coast-to-coast fault lines from space. Take a look at the satellite photo here:



Satellite photo of Scotland, courtesy of NASA.



Edinburgh Castle. Photo by Terri Johnson. All rights reserved.

It's almost as if Scotland were scored like a delicate Scottish shortbread cookie and ready to split into three equal thirds to share with friends. But don't worry; while Scotland does experience occasional earthquakes, the tremors are usually quite mild and unfelt by most residents. The largest recorded earthquake in Scotland occurred just north of the Great Glen Fault in 1880 and registered a 5.2 on the Richter scale.

Edinburgh is a fascinating city with its Old Town in the center, the New Town right next to it on the north side, and still newer parts of town radiating out from both of these.

We are meeting up with an old childhood friend outside Edinburgh Castle, the imposing fortress that dominates the city's skyline built atop a dormant volcano known as Castle Rock. I see her! She's waiting in the courtyard just outside the large front entrance.

"Stephanie!" I call to her as we come within hearing distance.

She hastens toward us with arms outstretched. "Oh, my dear old friend! How good it is to see you! Please introduce me to your other friends." We share introductions all around and Stephanie hugs us all, so glad to see faces from home.

"Let me be the first to welcome you to Scotland, and especially to her capital city of Edinburgh, my new home," Stephanie beams. "I can't wait to show you around. This is Edinburgh Castle, which was built in the 12th century. Over the past 850 years, this castle has been used as a royal residence and a military prison. Today, the castle continues to function as an army base and is where the nation's crown jewels are kept safe and secure. Shall we go inside and see them? They are the oldest crown jewels in all of Great Britain!"



Holyrood Castle, one of the three residences of Elizabeth II. Photo taken by XtoF and used with permission, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Inside, we see the great hall, the weapons room, the dungeon, the new barracks, and so much more. We hear stories of past kings and queens, of battles and mutinies, of loyalty, patriotism, and devotion to God and country. The Scottish people are fiercely patriotic and work hard to preserve their culture and tell their history—the good, the bad, and even the ugly sides of it.

Back outside, Stephanie points to the road running downhill away from the castle through the old medieval part of town, ending at the Queen's house—her home away from home here in Scotland—the Palace at Holyroodhouse.

“That’s where we are going next. This road is called the Royal Mile, because it is a full mile from the castle to the palace and this used to be all there was to the city of Edinburgh, back in the Middle Ages. In fact, most people who lived within the city’s medieval walls never left them, or at least didn’t leave them too far behind. This was the only place they knew. They didn’t travel to other parts of the world or even the country like we do today. There is an old pub where the original city gate once stood, which we’ll pass by on our way to the palace. It is named ‘The World’s End’. They named it so because that is what the

medieval city dwellers thought it was—the end of the world, as they knew it. Can world travelers such as yourselves even imagine such a thing?”

Together, we’ve wandered through several well-preserved medieval streets on this exploration, but there’s something about this particular street with its Scottish charm that makes us want to slow down and enjoy the old-world feel of the tall, narrow buildings with the low doorways and curious names. At the far end of the Royal Mile, stands the Holyrood Palace in all her grandeur. The queen, Elizabeth II, and her husband Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh, are not currently in town—they have gone back home to Buckingham Palace in London—so Holyrood is open for visitors. Let’s go inside and have a look around.

You may be wondering why the English monarch is also the reigning queen here. You may also be wondering why the queen’s husband does not have the title of king, but rather Duke of Edinburgh. These are curious things, aren’t they?

First of all, in 1707 under the Treaty of Union, England and Scotland were “United into One Kingdom by the Name of Great Britain” and are still united to this day. For this reason, they share the same kings and queens of Great Britain, but

they also run their own limited self-government within Scotland as well as participate in the leadership of the larger government of the United Kingdom.

Now, about the queen and her husband, Phillip... Queen Elizabeth inherited the throne from her father, King George VI, when he died because she was his next of kin—in other words, his closest blood relative. In 1947, Elizabeth became engaged to Philip, Prince of both Denmark and Greece. While Philip was born a prince to both the Greek and Danish royal families, he gave up his right to those thrones and titles to marry Elizabeth. In exchange, he was given the title of His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh on the evening before the wedding, even though he isn't from Scotland or of Scottish heritage. He has retained that title to this day and he and Elizabeth travel to Edinburgh to visit this home away from home for at least one week out of every year.



*Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh.
Photo by BiblioArchives and used under license CC BY-SA 2.0.*

The Palace of Holyrood dates back to the 16th century and has been the royal residence of the kings and queens of Scotland since that time. The palace sits adjacent to the abbey that shares her name—Holyrood—which means “holy wood”, as it was believed that a splinter from Jesus’s cross was salvaged and kept here as a relic.

Visitors can wander through the grand banquet hall, the throne room, and other chambers that are still used to this day, as well as peek into the historic apartments of past monarchs, including the very ones that were used by Mary, Queen of Scots, the youngest child to become the ruler of Scotland when she was but one week of age.

Stephanie is happy to show us around other parts of Edinburgh that are of great historical importance, such as the sophisticated New Town, the University of Edinburgh, and the Grassmarket. She tells us about many of the famous men and women who have lived and died in this city and who have made a significant mark on our world.

“You’d probably be surprised by how many world-famous Scots there have been over the years, many of whom were educated at the University of Edinburgh, one of the oldest universities in the world. By the way, tuition is free for Scottish residents who are considered ‘young students’. By definition, a young student is one under the age of 25 years, unmarried, without children, who has not taken a break from full-time education for more than three years.

“First of all, you need to know about Bonnie Prince Charlie. That was Prince Edward Charles’s nickname. Believing he had a right to the throne, he incited a rebellion among the highlanders, which was called the Jacobite Uprising of ’45—that is, 1745—in an effort to reclaim Scotland for his family, the House of Stuart. He’s a very popular legendary figure here as he represents everything that is true and right and noble about Scotland to this day. He was not a perfect man by



The house of John Knox on the Royal Mile in Old Edinburgh. Photo by Stu Smith and used with license CC BY-SA 2.0.

any means, but he is remembered as much nobler than he probably was.

“I’ll bet you’ve also heard of James Watt, the scientist who was fascinated by his mother’s kettle and the power of steam to push the lid right off the top. He invented the steam engine in 1781, which was soon used to power steamboats, trains, and factories, essentially powering the Industrial Revolution that began in Great Britain. However, Watt didn’t study at this university, but rather the University of Glasgow, about 45 miles west of here.

“Other notable Scots include John Knox, the leader of the Scottish Reformation and founder of the Presbyterian church; John Witherspoon, his great grandson, who became an American pastor and signer of the Declaration of Independence; and of course, Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone.

“And if that isn’t enough, you have these literary giants, all of whom hail from our beloved Scotland: Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of *Sherlock Holmes*, Robert Louis Stevenson, author of *Treasure Island*, J.M. Barrie who wrote *Peter Pan*, George MacDonald who wrote *The Princess and the Goblin*—the father of fantasy fiction and the main inspiration for other literary greats, such as C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and even Mark Twain—and finally, Sir Walter Scott, author of *Ivanhoe* and *Waverley*, perhaps celebrated and adored more than all the rest here in Edinburgh, where we have erected a monument in his name and named our train station for him.

“Enough talk of history and famous Scots,” says Stephanie. “Let’s duck into my favorite restaurant and grab a bite to eat. I think you’ll love the atmosphere in this old 16th century pub—but even more importantly, you’ll love the food!”



Haggis, neeps, and tatties. Photo by HLron, CC BY-SA 4.0.

We squeeze through the smaller than average front door of the Tolbooth Tavern. Little has changed in this old-world pub, including the old worn door and stone facade. Stephanie says we should order the “haggis, neeps, and tatties” which is short for haggis, turnips, and potatoes. **Haggis** is a savory pudding made from sheep offals (or *pluck*, meaning the heart, liver, and lung) minced and combined with onion, oats, spices, salt, fat, and stock, cooked down and served encased in the sheep’s stomach lining. It is a wonder that anyone would eat such a concoction, but it is Scotland’s national dish and well loved by locals and visitors alike. Like black pudding, it tastes better than it sounds. Will you try some?

If you aren’t feeling that adventurous, there are some other wonderful dishes on the menu that you might want to try. How about fish and chips or Warlock’s Pie? Or, if you are in the mood for something lighter, I understand the goat cheese salad with fresh greens, apple, and beetroot is to die for.

Whatever you choose, I’m sure you’ll enjoy it. We’ll chase our dinner down with some Scottish ice cream and then drive 20 minutes west of town to sleep at Stephanie’s house tonight. We’ve got a big day tomorrow, exploring the Scottish Highlands and some of the nearby islands. I can’t wait! How about you?

Field Notes

Tell me what you remember about southern Scotland and Edinburgh:

- ◇ *Can you name the four large archipelagos that belong to Scotland?*
- ◇ *What is the name of Scotland’s largest fault line? How big was the largest earthquake along it and when did it happen?*
- ◇ *Why is the Queen of England also the queen in Scotland? In what year were England and Scotland united under the Treaty of Union? How does Scotland keep some autonomy (self-rule)?*
- ◇ *Name some notable Scots – authors, inventors, and/or pastors.*
- ◇ *A pub located where the old city wall once stood is called “The World’s End”. Can you explain why?*



Loch Morlich with the Cairngorm Mountains beyond. Photo taken by Graham Norrie and used with license CC BY-SA 2.0.

RAMBLING THROUGH THE HIGHLANDS

Time to lace up our hiking boots again! Today, we are heading north into the Cairngorms, the mountain range located in the middle third of Scotland. About 45 miles west is Glasgow (pronounced [glass-go]), the largest city in Scotland and the third largest in the United Kingdom.

Glasgow was once a small rural settlement on the River Clyde, but since medieval times, it has grown to become the largest seaport in Great Britain. With the establishment of the University of Glasgow and later, the onset of the Industrial Revolution, the people of Glasgow refined their knowledge of modern shipbuilding and engineering to become the world's preeminent hub for the marine engineering industry. Since the 18th century and onwards, the city is one of

the main ports for transatlantic trade between the UK, Europe, and North America.

But today, we are leaving Scotland's big cities behind and plunging into her glorious natural landscape. The Cairngorms are the highest, coldest, and snowiest plateaux in Great Britain and experience the most extreme temperature fluctuations. Domed summits dot the high plateaux, many of them with *tors*, free-standing rock outcroppings that rise abruptly from the surrounding smooth granite slopes. While there are no glaciers in the Cairngorms, snow can fall any month of the year and snow patches may remain frozen all summer long.

This alpine-arctic environment with tundra-like groundcover is home to some rare animal species, such as the pine marten, capercaillie, mountain hare, and Britain's only herd of reindeer. The steep granite cliffs draw out the outdoorsy



Urquhart Castle on Loch Ness. Photo by Giuseppe Milo used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

types who enjoy winter sports such as extreme skiing, mountaineering, and ice climbing.

The Cairngorms boast five of the six highest mountains in Scotland. However, the tallest mountain in Scotland is not here. We'll visit that peak a little later today.

Just north of the Cairngorms is the Great Glen fault, the fracture in the earth's crust that you can see from space. Loch Ness, world-famous for its supposed monster that dwells in the dark depths of the lake, is located right along this fault line. Loch Ness is neither the largest nor the deepest lake in Scotland. It comes in second in both categories. The network of lakes, locks, and canals along the fault line make it possible for boats to cross from the east coast to the west coast of Scotland without having to navigate the open sea.

The legend of the Loch Ness monster—fondly nicknamed Nessie by the locals—began long ago,

back in the dark ages. The first recorded sighting of the beast was by Columba, first missionary to Scotland from Ireland across the Irish Sea. He founded an abbey on the island of Iona in 563. His life and work as a missionary was recorded in a book by Adomnán, who included the tale about his encounter with a “water beast” in Loch Ness.

The story goes that Columba was visiting the land of the Picts when he learned of a man attacked by a monster living in the depths of the great lake. Columba with one of his followers crossed to the other side of the lake when they spotted the beast. The sea monster advanced toward his companion, but Columba made the sign of the cross and shouted, “Come no closer; go back! Do not touch this man.” The creature pulled up abruptly as if reined back by a harness, then disappeared into the deep blackness of the lake. Columba's men and the Picts gave thanks to God for miraculously saving their lives.



Photo of old, abandoned stone croft taken by sammydavisdog and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

Columba was not the only one to report a sighting of the Loch Ness monster. Within the last hundred years or so, several individuals have captured strange images on film that they believe to be the prehistoric water creature. Most have been proven to be elaborate hoaxes. The locals don't believe the monster exists, but they do enjoy telling tales and teasing tourists who come to catch a glimpse of the water beast for themselves.

Beyond Loch Ness, we scramble up into the northern and more rugged half of the Scottish Highlands. This windswept landscape is breathtaking and yet bare, almost forlorn. Old stone **crofts**, abandoned and crumbling with age, stand humbly at the foot of each farm, a testament to the heartbreaking reality that locals abandoned these mountains in droves a couple hundred years ago. After the 1707 treaty, merging England and Scotland into one country, the British government feared uprisings by the Scottish people and began to

consolidate smaller properties into larger farms to be run by wealthy aristocrats. The land was converted from crop farming to sheep herding, which required fewer people to maintain. This resulted in mass evacuations of tenants who lost the only homes they ever knew and had nowhere else to go.

Some farmers moved south into the lowlands, but many fled Scotland entirely and arrived on the shores of North America and Australia during the 18th and 19th centuries. This tragic event is known as the Highland Clearances and is the reason why more people of Scottish heritage live outside of Scotland than inside her borders. And it is clear to see that more sheep live in the highlands than do people.

When we think about the Scottish Highlands, several images may pop into mind, such as bagpipes, kilts, sporran (fur pockets), tartan (plaid fabric), and clan brooches. Traditional Scottish dress and highland music compose an arrangement that is both beautiful and deeply cultural. Each Scottish



Photo of bagpipe player is in the public domain from Pexels.

clan, or extended family group, had their own custom tartan fabric woven to be worn exclusively by them to proudly display their heritage. Yards and yards of this warm woolen fabric would be used to create wraps, cloaks, knee-length kilts for men, and ankle-length skirts for women.

Scottish music has long been and still is a significant aspect of the nation's culture. The great highland bagpipe, a wind instrument with three pipes and an airbag, is symbolic of the beautiful highland culture it represents as it warbles out its heart-wrenching tune carried aloft by the wind.

Medieval castles, tower houses, and ancestral estates dot the Scottish countryside. Many were once the ancestral homes of powerful clan chiefs, heads of the kinship groups known as Scottish clans, and were sometimes used for clan gatherings, giving members a sense of shared familial identity.

We are passing one of the most photographed castles in all of Scotland—Eilean Donan—which rises from a small tidal island where three sea lochs meet in the western highlands. This well-preserved ancestral stronghold was built in the 13th century and belonged jointly to the allied clans of MacKenzie and Macrae.

Just past Eilean Donan, we cross over a bridge and leave the mainland altogether. We have reached the Isle of Skye, famed for its dramatic windswept natural beauty. Skye is the largest and most northern island of the Inner Hebrides archipelago. Humans have dwelled on the island for thousands of years, including a season of Viking rule and then a long period of domination



Photo of Eilean Donan at Dusk was taken by Syxaxis Photography and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 4.0.



The Man of Storr rock formation in the distance on the Isle of Skye. Photo taken by Terri Johnson. All rights reserved.

by the clans MacLeod and MacDonald. Both of their beautiful ancestral castles are open for the public to visit.

The Isle of Skye is rugged with rocky crags, steep cliffs, barren plateaux, and heather-covered hills. In fact, the lush heather and spiny thistle—the national emblem of Scotland—give the island countryside a lilac hue. This is a photographer's paradise; sometimes the landscape looks green, other times blue, purple, or even fiery orange, depending on the light and the flora that thrive on the hills and dales. Skye is also covered in **peat**, a dark brown soil-like material found in bogs, mires, moors, and peatlands. Peat forms when plant or vegetable matter does not fully decay. Over long periods of time, when this partially decayed substance is exposed to very wet conditions, it compresses into a dense soil-like material that can be cut like bricks from the earth and dried for use as fuel.



Harvesting peat. Photo taken by Alexander Eric Hasse in 1905.

Farmers in Scotland, both on the mainland and throughout the islands, used peat fires for cooking and for heating their stone houses, called crofts, all winter long. Although it would seem otherwise, peat is not considered a renewable resource. The peat that is chunked out of the



Photo of Skara Brae was taken by John Lord and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

ground today has been slowly forming over thousands of years. Peat accumulates slowly at a rate of about one millimeter per year.

In the Hebrides islands of Scotland, peat is still harvested, but not for cooking or for heating homes. It is considered too smelly and too special for that. However, it is used to create Scotland's famous liquor, Scotch whisky. A whiskey cannot be named Scotch unless it is made here in this region of Scotland. Peat fires are used to dry the malted barley, the main ingredient of the drink, giving it a very distinctive smoky taste, which is then captured in the final bottled product that will eventually be sold. All whisky tastes like liquid fire, but Scotch whisky brewed here in the islands tastes like liquid smoke. Connoisseurs boast that it is high in "peatiness". I'll take their word for it.

Skye is as far north as we'll travel on this exploration of Scotland. However, should you ever return here in person, you may want to go

further north still. Up at the tippy top of Scotland, on the Orkney islands, is an archaeological dig site known as Skara Brae. Eight prehistoric stone houses have been uncovered after having been buried for millennia that give us a peek into what life in the Scottish Northern Isles may have been like as far back as 5,000 years ago.

But for now, we travel back south past the Great Glen fault to Ben Nevis, the highest peak in not only Scotland but all of the United Kingdom, reaching an altitude of 4,410 feet. The collapsed dome of an ancient volcano, Ben Nevis means "venomous mountain" in Gaelic, one of the languages still spoken by many Scots today. However, the name doesn't scare away the mountaineers who refer to the peak simply as "Ben". An estimated 100,000 people make the climb to the top every year. An abandoned observatory awaits those who reach the summit, its ruins attesting to the fact that it hasn't been used since 1904.



Fingal's Cave on the island of Staffa. Photo by Gerry Zambonini and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

What a time in Scotland we've had! And yet I have saved one of the best corners of the country for last. Our final stop on land in Scotland is Oban, a quaint Victorian sea town situated on a protected bay on the Firth of Lorne. A **firth** in Scottish English is a long estuary, where the river meets the ocean tide, similar to a **fjord** in Norway. The modern town of Oban grew up around the whisky distillery founded here in 1794. Oban is also a great jumping-off-point to visit the lower islands of the Inner Hebrides archipelago.

Let's board the Caledonian McBrayne ferry that is leaving now for the Isle of Mull. At the port of Fionnphort, we will transfer to a trawler boat that will whisk us out to a very small island just beyond. A surprise lies in wait for us there.

We are passing the island of Iona, which is where Columba, the first missionary to Scotland, built his abbey and set up his base for ministry. Our final destination in Scotland is Staffa, an island located north of Iona and west of Mull.

The name comes from the Old Norse language and it means "stave or pillar". The Vikings gave Staffa this name because the columnar structure reminded them of their houses, which were built from vertically stacked tree-logs.

There it is now! As we approach, I think you will be amazed by what you see. The island consists of **basalt**, an igneous rock structure that forms in prismatic columns due to the rapid cooling of mineral-rich lava. When the thick lava cools quickly, it forms an extraordinary pattern of hexagonal columns that typically have anywhere from three to eight sides, six being the most common. There are three layers of basalt on this amazing little island. First, there is a basement of **tuff**, which is volcanic ash that has been compressed into rock. Then, you see the crystalline basalt structure, topped by a layer of flood basalt which is runnier in nature and cools into a more random pattern or no pattern at all and sits like a crust atop the other two layers. The

island of Staffa is like a house after all, having a foundation, columnar walls, and a roof.

One of the most incredible aspects of this surprising island is the caves. Our trawler boat has rafts, which we will use to explore the inside of some of these caves. There's the Goat Cave, the Clamshell Cave, the Boat Cave, Mackinnon's Cave, and the Cormorant Cave. But Staffa's most famous feature is Fingal's Cave, a large sea cave located near the southern tip of the island formed by long hexagonal basalt columns.

The cliff face at the entrance to the cave is called the Colonnade and it was this great cliff face along with Fingal's Cave that inspired Felix Mendelssohn to write his **magnum opus**, Hebrides Overture. The original Gaelic name for this cave is *An Uamh Bhin*, which means "the melodious cave". You'll understand why as soon as we enter its mouth. The crystalline columns provide great acoustics. This is a singer's cave! Go ahead and sing a few lines of your favorite song. You will love the way you sound in here. It's better than the shower.

And on that glorious melodious note, it is time to say goodbye to dear Scotland. Scotland, you have been a delight to explore and discover. Your people are ambitious, brilliant, and kind. Our minds are expanded, and our hearts are softened by our visit to your great nation. May you continue to bless our world through your amazing contributions.

"*Tiaraidh an dràsda*, Scotland!" we shout, which in Scottish Gaelic means "Goodbye for now, until we meet again!" ■



Tell me what you remember about northern Scotland:

- ◇ *What is the name of the lake located along the Great Glen Fault? Retell the story of the first sighting of the fabled lake monster.*
- ◇ *What is a croft? Why did the highlanders move away from their homes? Where did many of them move?*
- ◇ *Describe traditional highland dress and music.*
- ◇ *What is peat? Is peat considered a renewable energy source?*
- ◇ *How was Staffa Island formed? What is so unusual about Fingal's Cave? Would you like to see it for yourself someday?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *The Story of Scotland* by Richard Brasseay and Stewart Ross
- ◇ *B is for Bagpipes* by Eve Begley Kiehm
- ◇ *History of Scotland for Children* by Flora MacDonald
- ◇ *Bonnie Prince Charlie* by G.A. Henty (for Junior High and up)
- ◇ *Ivanhoe and Waverly* by Sir Walter Scott (for Junior High and up)
- ◇ *The Princess and the Goblin* by George MacDonald
- ◇ *The Loch Ness Punster* by Kate Klise and M. Sarah Klise

Wales

The Hammer and the Dragon

Our last stop on the isle of Great Britain is Wales, but this is not the final country we'll visit in the United Kingdom. There is one more, but it is not located on this large island. While we could drive back down through Scotland and England to reach Wales, it would be much more interesting to take a ship, don't you think?

We'll take the local Caledonia McBayne ferry down to the seaport town of Cairnryan on the

southwest coast of Scotland, just north of the English border, then we'll board the great Stena Line ferry, the largest ferry in Europe serving Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland, and France. Our destination is Holyhead, Wales.

As we glide through the Irish Sea, we can faintly see the coast of Northern Ireland off in the distance to our right, and the Isle of Man more clearly to the left before we arrive in northern



Photo of the Caledonia MacBrayne Ferry leaving Oban, Scotland was taken by Terri Johnson. All rights reserved.



Caernarfon Castle and harbor. Photo taken by Hefin Owen and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

Wales. Wales has been politically connected to England since the 16th century, but she has a distinct cultural identity all her own.

Geographically speaking, Wales is stunning. From the craggy cliffs above the shoreline to the verdant green hills further afield, Wales is like a surreal photograph come to life. Culturally speaking, Wales is charming. Formidable castles spike the coastline. Fleecy sheep speckle the countryside and children laugh and play on every corner.

The Welsh are more expressive and perhaps more exuberant than their English cousins. They are warm and winsome. The majority of people living in Wales speak English, but many speak Welsh at home and with their fellow countrymen. Officially, Wales is a bilingual nation. Welsh is an old Celtic language closely related to Cornish, which is spoken further south on the English coast, and to Breton spoken even further south across the English Channel on the northern

coast of France. It is one of Europe's oldest living languages, spoken since the 6th century.

Listen to the locals as they speak of their beloved Wales in their own tongue: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com/the-welsh-language/>

In Welsh, the name of this country is Cymru (pronounced Camry). Their language is called Cymraeg. This melodic language is poetic, descriptive, and considered one of the great treasures of Wales. It defines the nation and its people. It's what makes Wales, Wales.

Wales is littered with impressive castles. Let's visit one nearby at Caernarfon, which is the current seat of English government in North Wales. Caernarfon Castle is also the site where Prince Charles, son of Queen Elizabeth II, was crowned Prince of Wales in 1969. Just like his father's title—the Duke of Edinburgh—the Prince of Wales is a title of honor only. Prince Charles is not involved in the running of the Welsh government.



Photo of Beaumaris Castle and surrounding moat was taken by Steve Collis. Used with permission, license CC BY-SA 2.0.

Caernarfon Castle was built by Edward I after his invasion of North Wales in 1282. After defeating the local Welsh princes, he began a concentrated crusade to colonize the entire region. He built fortified towns in the shadows of the mighty fortresses he constructed, towns where English citizens could settle safely in the newly conquered territory. Edward's massive building project was extremely expensive and nearly bankrupted the English Crown.

The fact that the coastline of Wales is dotted with English strongholds proves that the feisty Welsh were not easily subdued by their neighbor to the east. King Edward I, the fiery monarch of England during the late 13th century, was determined to claim the entire island for England. He was known as the Hammer because of his brutish treatment toward both the Welsh and the Scots.

Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the ruler of Gwynedd in Wales at that time, refused to pay homage to the great and terrible Edward I, prompting the English

invasion of Gwynedd and the surrounding region. King Edward desperately wanted to control this region, so he built mighty castles throughout Wales to both flaunt the power of England and squelch any possible future uprisings.

This castle along with several others located in the nearby towns of Conwy, Beaumaris, and Harlech are among the finest examples of medieval military architecture in all of Europe. The last time this castle was stormed was in 1415, when the Welsh, led by Owain Glyndwr, revolted against English rule in the Last War of Independence. Roughly a hundred years later, Wales was officially incorporated into England by the Laws in Wales Acts of 1535 and 1542.

Just a short ways inland is Snowdonia, the first and largest national park in Wales, which is named after Snowdon, its highest peak at 3,560 feet. "Snowdon" in Welsh does not translate to mean snow. It means "the land of eagles" because eagles prefer to live at higher elevations and they love living here.



Crib Goch, the “red ridge”. Photo was taken by Taavi Randmaa and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

Most visitors to the park either hike to the summit of the mountain or ride the train to the top to enjoy the spectacular view. From there, you can see Crib Goch, with its distinctive knife-edge crest. Curiously, *Crib Goch* means “the red ridge” in Welsh. This rugged ridge sits under a permanent rain cloud. It is the wettest spot in the entire United Kingdom, receiving nearly 180 inches of rain each year.

While others are going up Snowdonia, we are going down—down into the slate mining caves to have an even more extraordinary adventure. Outside the small town of Betws-y-Coed is an old slate mine that has been turned into a thrilling adventure challenge. We descend to the deepest point in the United Kingdom to test our skills and our nerve. After we **rappel** to the center of the mountain, we spend the afternoon zip-lining through hollow caverns, boating across an underground lake, scaling up vertical shafts, traversing the abyss, scrambling up a hidden waterfall, and then doing it all over again. Isn’t this a great adventure?

After that cave adventure we are downright exhausted! Let’s grab a quick dinner of Welsh **rarebit** and **cawl** and then settle into a countryside bed and breakfast for the night. The word rarebit is a corrupted form of “rabbit”, but there is no rabbit in rarebit. Welsh rarebit is essentially melted cheese on toast, and cawl is a broth-based soup with vegetables and bacon. Doesn’t that sound like a good way to finish off this great day? I think so too.



Cawl, a Welsh stew. Photo is in the public domain.



Illustration of ruins of Camelot and King Arthur statue is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.



It's a new day! And today, we are driving to south Wales. Two-thirds of the population of Wales lives in or around Cardiff, the capital city, located on the southern coast of Wales. While most visitors to Wales spend some time in the capital, our destination is just east of Cardiff. We are on our way to Caerleon, an old Roman villa and the supposed location of King Arthur's Camelot.

Are you familiar with the tales of King Arthur? Arthur was a legendary warrior king who led Britain to defeat the Saxon invaders at the close of the 5th century. Whether King Arthur was fact or fiction has long been debated by historians.

Arthur's name occurs in old English poetry and in such texts as Geoffrey of Monmouth's 12th century *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*A History of the Kings of Britain*). But are any of them true?

Many tales have been handed down through the tradition of oral storytelling in the regions of southern Wales and Brittany in northern France. Celtic folklore depicts King Arthur as a mighty and moral hero of the realm, surrounded by trusted friends and mortal enemies possessing supernatural powers, such as Merlin, Mordred, and Morgana. He was the Red Dragon of Wales. His family's royal crest is proudly represented on the Welsh flag even to this day.



Wales flag depicts the red dragon of King Arthur. CC BY-SA 2.0.

Stories of King Arthur, his captivating wife Guinevere, and his most trusted knight Lancelot have been told and retold for over a thousand years. Arthurian literature thrived during the Middle Ages and then died away in the centuries that followed. However, there was a major resurgence in fascination with this British king and his company of extraordinary companions during the 19th century. Even today, in the 21st century, the legend lives on not only in literature but also in film, theater, and other media.

Key figures in the Arthurian tales are the gallant Knights of the Round Table. The famous circular table was supposedly constructed especially for this imposing group of men to signify that all were of equal rank in Arthur's kingdom. It was located in Camelot, King Arthur's primary fortress and the place he held court. Most scholars place the location of Camelot here in Caerleon, and local businesses are proud to promote this myth by selling an assortment of King Arthur souvenirs. While no ruins have been found of Arthur's castle, other fascinating ruins certainly do exist here.

In Caerleon, we find the remains of Ista Augusta, a Roman legionary fortress dating back to 43 AD, and an even older hilltop fortification dating back to the Iron Age, likely built more than 3,000 years ago. Camelot or no Camelot, this place gives us a glimpse into some very ancient history.

Driving back north, we have one more place to visit in Wales before we leave the island of Great Britain. The town names here seem awfully difficult to pronounce, don't they? On the highway, we see signs for Llanvihangel



The captivating beauty of the Wales landscape. Photo is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.



Photo of Black Welsh cattle was taken by Darren Wyn Rees and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 3.0.

Crucorney, Cwmystwyth, Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant, and Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog. Can you pronounce any of these words? Here's a little bit of help. The “w” is actually a long vowel, which sounds like an English double-o as in “pool”, but the double-L is unlike any sound we use in the English language. In the field of linguistics—the study of language—this is called a voiceless alveolar lateral fricative and it is pronounced like a silent L or a forward S, which you can learn to say here: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com/the-welsh-language/>

Now that you have had one short language lesson in Welsh, you may feel more prepared to pronounce the longest name in the entire world. The town that holds this record is in north Wales. Its name is Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrob-wlllantysiliogogoch.

Wow, what a name! It means, “Saint Mary’s church in the hollow of the white hazel near to the

fierce whirlpool of Saint Tysilio of the red cave.” Let’s hear how the people of Wales pronounce it: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com/the-longest-name/>.

While the name of this town is intriguing, this is not our final stop in Wales. But don’t worry! We are almost there! However, as we drive through the Welsh countryside reading the various signs in both languages, we are suddenly struck by the view. It is almost like we stepped into an animated fairytale as the scenery is so picture perfect. The curving hillsides slope gently down to meet each other in a lush green valley, meticulously manicured and divided into lots by low stone walls enclosing fluffy white Welsh Mountain sheep and curly haired Welsh Black cattle. This postcard perfect scene is too good to miss. Let’s stop to take some photos.

Look there! On the ground moving along at quite a rapid pace is a rainbow beetle, unique to the Welsh habitat. Snap a photo of that beautiful bug to show your friends at home. With some stunning



Photo of the Castell Coch in Ruthin was taken by Rachel Johnson. All rights reserved.

photos stored on our phones and camera cards, let's pile back into the car and finish our journey.

We are now pulling into the quaint Welsh town of Ruthin. This much simpler name comes from the Welsh words *rhudd*, which means "red", and *din*, which means "fort". "Red fort" refers to the color of the red sandstone used to build the castle here in 1277. The original name for the castle was Castell Coch yng Ngwern-fôr, meaning "Red Castle in the Sea Swamps". Ruthin has had its fair share of flooding over the years as it is situated in a low valley where the water flows during heavy rains. Castell Coch, which was originally the residence of Edward I's brother, was the first castle to be stormed by Owain Glyndwr during the Last War of Independence. Now the castle is a hotel. This is where we'll spend our final night in Great Britain!

Before we turn in for the night, let's stroll around the charming town center. After the Last War, Ruthin was rebuilt into a fine medieval marketplace town. There is a lovely old church

here that is still used as a church today, but the old courthouse building with its original **gibbet** (gallows) still visible just below the eaves has been converted into a bank.

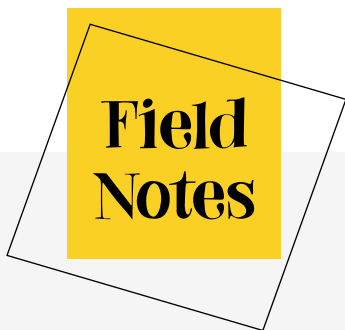
The last time the gibbet was used was in the year 1679. Father Charles Mahoney, an Irish Franciscan monk, was shipwrecked off the coast near Pembrokeshire in South Wales yet somehow managed to survive and swim ashore. He traveled north in hopes of completing his homeward journey to Ireland, but was arrested because he was wearing a **habit**, the traditional garb of monks. He was tried and convicted of the crime of being a Catholic priest in an era when Catholicism was against the law in Britain. He was sentenced to death by hanging here at the old courthouse.

That is some gruesome history for you and you can learn quite a lot more about past criminals (or supposed criminals) and their punishments down at the Ruthin Gaol, which is the Old English

A Child's Geography

spelling of “jail”. Or, if you would rather, we can pop into the corner bakery instead and enjoy some Welsh baked goods, such as Welsh cakes or bara brith, which means “speckled bread”. Welsh cakes are a bit like biscuits with a sprinkling of sugar over the top and bara brith is a fruit loaf made with chopped dried fruit bits and sweet spices, similar to a Christmas fruit cake. Usually, bara brith is served sliced with butter alongside a cup of hot tea in the afternoon. It sounds like that will hit the spot.

With full tummies and the anticipation of staying overnight in an 800-year-old castle, we practically skip up the hill to reach our hotel. What a beautiful country Wales is! And such a fascinating if complicated history it shares with her neighbor, England. It has been such a delight to tramp around this huge island nation exploring all Great Britain has to offer. Where will we go next? Well, you will have to turn the page to find out! ■



Tell me what you remember about Wales:

- ◇ *Wales is a bilingual nation. The two national languages are English and Welsh. Is Welsh similar to English?*

Which languages is it more closely related to?

- ◇ *Why is the coast of Wales dotted by massive English castles? Who was intent on conquering the country of Wales for England?*
- ◇ *The people of Cornwall mined for tin; the people of the Lake District mined for graphite. What do they mine for in Wales?*
- ◇ *Can you name some of the animals that live in Wales?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *Cut & Assemble a Medieval Castle: A Full-Color Model of Caernarvon Castle in Wales* by A.G. Smith
- ◇ *Christmas in Camelot (Magic Tree House)* by Mary Pope Osborne
- ◇ *Cavall in Camelot: A Dog in King Arthur's Court* by Audrey McKaman
- ◇ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* by J.R.R. Tolkien (for High School and up)
- ◇ *Sir Cumference and the First Round Table* by Cindy Neuschwander and Wayne Geehan
- ◇ *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table* by Roger Lancelyn Green
- ◇ *A Child's Christmas in Wales* by Dylan Thomas

Northern Ireland

The Giant's Narrow Escape

When is a country not really a country? When is a people not sure where they belong? After a short drive up to Liverpool in England, we'll hop on the ferry and cross the Irish Sea to visit our next country. Only this country isn't considered a country in its own right by some people. This "country" is in many ways more like a province—a province of the United Kingdom. Yes, we are on our way west to Northern Ireland!

The history, culture, and political landscape of Ireland are complicated. Let's learn a bit of Irish history so that it all makes sense.

England began ruling over the island of Ireland way back in the 12th century. For almost 900 years, England has controlled all or part of Ireland. Before this time, the island was occupied by multiple Celtic tribes, each ruled by its own chieftain, who submitted to one central High King. Then when



Photo of the Giant's Causeway was taken by Giuseppe Milo and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.



The crystal clear waters off the Antrim Coast in Northern Ireland. Photo is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

revolutions began cropping up in various parts of the world, such as the United States and France, toward the end of the 18th century, Ireland wanted to join the movement for independence and fight for her own freedom. England worked furiously to stamp out the uprisings that were springing up all over the island.

In an effort to put a final stop to the rebellion and to claim Ireland officially as her own, England reorganized the nation to include herself and Ireland in the name. Great Britain would now be called the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Ireland wasn't happy with this new, yet more official, arrangement. Nothing had actually changed but the name. Ireland didn't feel like equal partners with Great Britain, so for the next 120 years, Ireland revolted. To make the island feel more British, England encouraged her citizens to **emigrate** to Northern Ireland, to a region known as Ulster. Over time, the British outnumbered the Irish in the northern part

of the island. Life in Ireland was getting more complex.

The native Irish in the south wanted a free Ireland, free from British rule. The British in the north wanted to remain part of Great Britain. Then, in 1921, Ireland declared her independence from Britain to become the Irish Free State. The next day, Northern Ireland seceded from the Irish Free State and requested to remain a province of Great Britain. England agreed and changed her name once again. Now she would be known as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The countries that are included in the United Kingdom are England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Besides Northern Ireland, the other three countries govern themselves with British oversight. Northern Ireland has never governed herself and does not to this day. That is why people argue whether Northern Ireland is a country at all. She acts more like a province of Great Britain.



Argyle Street, Belfast in 1970 during the time known as “The Troubles”. Photo provided by Kaspar C (driver). CC BY-SA 2.0.

Unfortunately, peace did not settle over the land after the 1922 agreement. Next came The Troubles, a time in Irish history when the people of Northern Ireland fought against each other. The native Irish, who were also primarily catholic and members of the Nationalist political party, fought for a united Ireland, a free Ireland where England had no business, authority, or control. But the British citizens, who were mostly protestant and members of the Unionist political party, fought to remain under British rule, preserving their more English way of life.

The Troubles continued for more than 75 years. Finally, in 1998, the two halves of Ireland resolved to make peace and let bygones be bygones. That doesn't mean that everyone in Ireland today is happy with the arrangement, but they have chosen to live with it and live with one another in peace and harmony. It is now safe to walk the streets of Northern Ireland without fear of violence. However, local businesses and individual

homes and neighborhoods continue to identify themselves by which side of the issue they land on by waving British or Irish flags outside their doors and displaying them inside their buildings. In this way, everyone knows what topics to avoid in order to keep the peace.

Here is how it can still be complicated today: When you meet people from Northern Ireland, they may identify themselves as Irish or British, but never both. When it comes to sports, the island of Ireland may form a single team; or athletes from Northern Ireland may compete for Great Britain. At the Olympic games, you will see both scenarios take place. Cultural links in Northern Ireland are shared with both the Republic of Ireland to the south and Great Britain to the east to form one big complicated community.

The ferry pulls into Belfast, the capital city of Northern Ireland, and cars emerge from below deck in single file. We are eager to explore this Irish city even if it is a bit brisk outside. Today is a



The entrance to Queen's University in Belfast. Photo taken by Romeparis and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 3.0.

day for hats and scarves, but leave your umbrella in your backpack. It would turn inside out for sure in this windy weather.

Now that you grasp a little about the thorny history of Ireland, and Northern Ireland in particular, you can understand why you see either Irish (orange, white, and green) or Union Jack (red, white, and blue) flags displayed on every corner and stretched as banners across every street. You will also be able to comprehend why large concrete walls were once built to separate neighborhoods and why partisan parades, both scheduled and spontaneous, are frequent even today, especially here in Belfast. You can probably also understand some of the emotion behind the graffiti painted on once bare concrete walls, the signifier indicating on which side of the issue he stands.

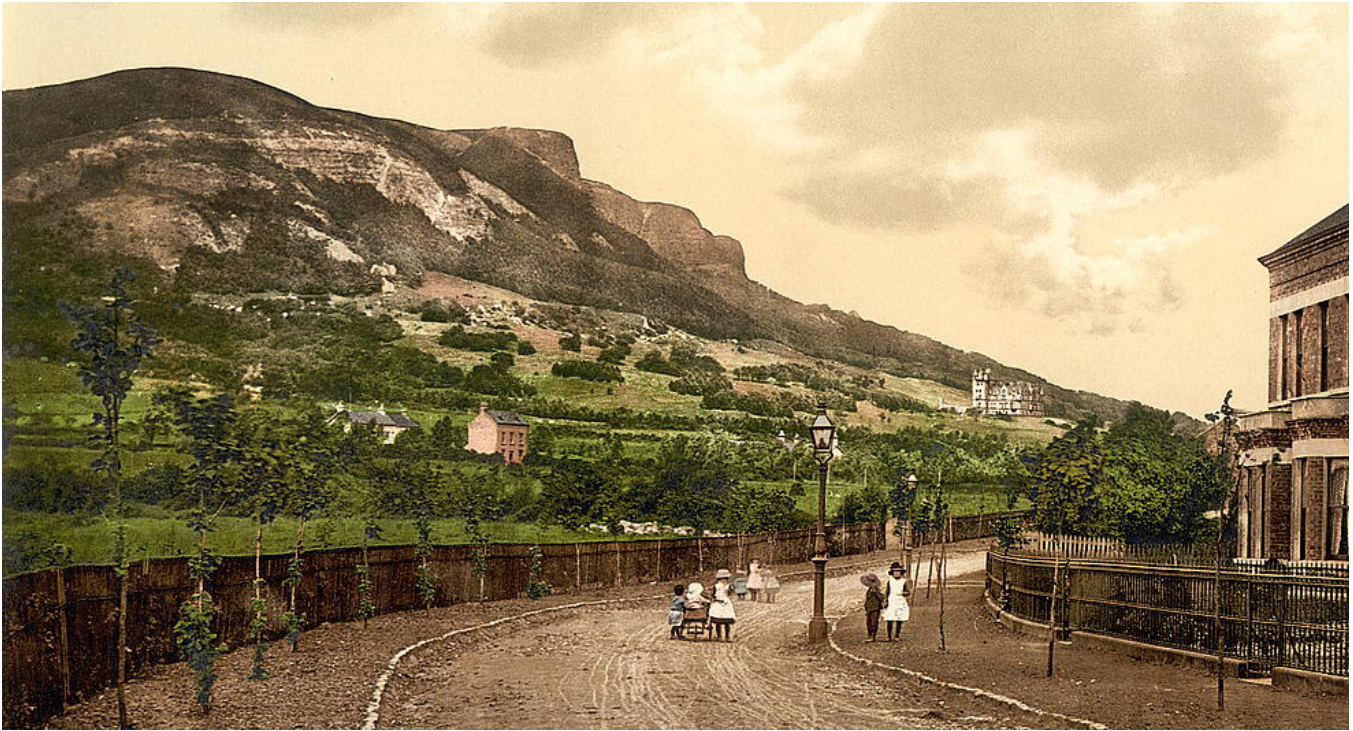
Finally, you know why there are so many British government buildings here and fine examples of Victorian and Georgian architecture, including Queen's University, named for Queen Victoria of England. Northern Ireland is both strongly British

and fiercely Irish. This combination doesn't always mix well, like oil and water.

Belfast is both the capital city and the largest city in Northern Ireland. By the early 1800s, Belfast was a major shipping port and played a key role in the Industrial Revolution. Flax grows incredibly well in the north of Ireland and it is from this tiny humble plant that fine linen is spun. Belfast quickly became the leading linen producer in the world, earning the nickname "Linenopolis".



The Maria at the Belfast Docks, by Rossographer CC BY-SA 2.0.



Can you see Napoleon's Nose in this photo? This photo was taken circa 1890 and provided by the Library of Congress.

Other industries thrived here as well, such as tobacco processing, rope making, and shipbuilding. In fact, the RMS Titanic was built right here at the Harland and Wolff shipyard, the biggest shipyard in the world. You can still see the berth where she was built and launched before the “unsinkable” ship sank to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean during her maiden voyage to New York.

Belfast suffered greatly during the time known as “The Troubles”. During the 1970’s and 1980’s, Belfast was considered one of the most dangerous cities in the world because of all the fighting. However, the city is now rated one of the safest cities, if not *the* safest city, in the United Kingdom. She has come a long way and her citizens are a happy, welcoming community who love to host visitors and neighbors alike.

If you look up, you can see that the city is flanked on the north and west by a series of rocky cliffs. These crags are believed to be the inspiration for Jonathan Swift’s tales of *Gulliver’s Travels*. When Swift was living at Lilliput Cottage near the

bottom of Belfast’s Limestone Road, he imagined that the shape of the rocky hillside resembled the profile of a sleeping giant safeguarding the city. The pointy bluff, in particular, he thought looked like a giant nose. This point is known locally as Napoleon’s Nose, as it does resemble the shape of the French emperor’s well-defined snout.

And speaking of snouts, I smell something zesty and comforting all at the same time. The smells are wafting from the restaurant on the corner—Spuds. Let’s check it out.

Ireland is famous for its potatoes. Potatoes have both blessed and cursed the people who live here on this island, so it seems only fitting that we stop in for lunch at Spuds and enjoy some Irish grown potatoes. Spuds’s specialty is baked potatoes and they serve them with every topping you could ever imagine and then some. I think I’ll order the Buffalo Spud that’s loaded with chicken, Buffalo sauce, Gorgonzola cheese, sour cream, and chives. What will you have? Perhaps the Mac



Moonlit aurora at Lough Neagh. Photo taken by Eskling and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

& Cheese Spud, the Bacon 'n Eggs Spud, or maybe you'd like to go all out with the Kitchen Sink Spud?

An hour later with tummies full of potato goodness, we're back on the road. Our next stop is Derry, also known as Londonderry. I'll explain why it has two names in a minute. But first, we are passing the massive **Lough** Neagh on our left. It almost looks like another ocean, but it is in fact a freshwater lake. It is the largest freshwater lake in the British Isles. The shore is home to a variety of flora and fauna, but the lake itself is known for its prized Lough Neagh Eel. Fishermen cannot catch enough to keep up with the demand from high-end chefs that serve them on their menu.

There are a handful of old Irish folktales that tell how the lake came to be here. One is that the legendary giant Fionn mac Cumhail scooped up a chunk of earth and tossed it at the giant Benandonner, his archrival in Scotland. The chunk of land fell into the Irish Sea and formed the Isle of Man and the crater left behind filled with water to form Lough Neagh.



Finn McCool illustration (1932) by Stephen Reid. Public domain.

No matter how it got here, one thing is certain today and that is who owns it. The lake belongs to the Earl of Shaftesbury, who lives in East Dorset in England. This thirty-something-year-old earl is contemplating the idea of selling it to the people of Northern Ireland but hasn't yet. Imagine owning the biggest lake in the British Isles!

Onward to Londonderry! Or Derry! Or whatever you want to call the quaint medieval city on the River Foyle.



This photo of Derry (Londonderry) was taken circa 1890 and provided by the Library of Congress to the public domain.

People do not call Londonderry Derry because it is shorter or easier to say. No, this city has two names because Irish Catholic Nationalists will not associate their town with London, England. The original name of the Irish settlement here was Derry, dating back to the 6th century. On the other hand, British Protestant Unionists are proud to refer to their medieval walled town as “Londonderry”, the name given by the British who renamed it in 1613 when it was properly built up by the London **Guilds** and surrounded by a fine city wall.

Derry is the only remaining walled city in Ireland. Not only is its wall completely intact, but it is one of the most spectacular examples of a walled city in all of Europe. The walls were built in 1613 as a defense for the early British settlers from England and Scotland. The walls are approximately a mile in circumference and form a walkway around the inner city. This unique promenade provides a unique

view of the original layout of the town and its preserved Renaissance-style street plan. There are seven gates that lead into the old city and many historic buildings are preserved within, including the old gothic Cathedral of St. Columba. The monastery next to the cathedral was founded here by Columba, the famous Irish missionary who later set out to convert the people of Scotland across the sea.

If we set off north from Derry, we’ll find ourselves driving along the Antrim Coast, one of the most beautiful areas in all of Ireland and unsurprisingly designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This is a photographer’s paradise. Get your cameras ready because we are about to see some spectacular scenery and you might just take a stunning photograph.

Along the Antrim Coast is another natural phenomenon that you have to see to believe. Known as the Giant’s Causeway, it is an expanse of



This photo of the basalt hexagons of the Giant's Causeway was taken by Chris Morgan and used under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

approximately 40,000 interlocking basalt columns lining the coast and plunging into the swirling ocean tide. The tops of the columns form natural stepping-stones that lead from the tops of the cliffs to the depths of the sea. An ancient volcanic eruption caused the hexagonal basalt patterns to form what residents and visitors alike consider the fourth greatest natural wonder in the United Kingdom.

A couple of grade-school boys are hopping joyfully from column to column, trying not to step on any cracks. Their mother, who is standing quite close to us, begins to wave and shout to get their attention. Her calls and gestures cannot compete with the roar of the ocean, so she puts two fingers in her mouth and pierces the air with a loud shrill whistle. The boys immediately look up and run toward her.

"Boys, do not stray so far from me," she scolds. "You never know when a large wave might rise up and sweep you out to sea."

She turns to us and smiles. "Hello, there. I heard you talking just now and you don't sound like you are from around these parts. My name is Bronagh. I was just about to tell my wee lads here a story. This is Emmet and Fergus, my six-year-old twins. I wonder

if you would like to hear it as well. It is a story about how this incredible landscape came into being."

"We'd love to hear the story," we nod enthusiastically.

"Well then... While we know scientifically that it was volcanic activity that formed these amazing interlocking columns, the Irish still love to tell an old, old tale that explains its unusual existence," Bronagh begins.

"According to legend, the columns are the remains of a great causeway built by the Irish giant, Fionn mac Cumhaill."

"Is this the same giant that scooped out the earth to form the Isle of Man out at sea leaving behind a big hole that is now the great lake, Lough Neagh?" we ask.

"Indeed it is, my young friends!" Bronagh exclaims, impressed. "Most visitors to Northern Ireland are not as well versed in our folklore as you are. The story goes like this," she continues. "Fionn was challenged to a fight by his great nemesis, the Scottish giant Benandonner, and he accepted. So that the two giants could meet halfway between their countries, Fionn built an expansive causeway across the channel with his own two hands. When

he had finished, Fionn looked up and caught a glimpse of the Scottish giant off in the distance. He realized that his foe was much larger than he and he became afraid, so he tried to find a place to hide from the approaching giant. Unsure where to hide, he asked his wife for help.

“Fionn’s wife, Oonagh, disguised Fionn as a wee baby and tucked him into a cradle. When Benandonner crossed the channel and beheld the size of Fionn’s “baby”, he reckoned his father must be a giant among giants. He fled back to Scotland in fright, frantically destroying the causeway behind him so that Fionn wouldn’t be able to chase him there. And that is why the columns seem to fall away into the ocean.”

Her young sons, realizing the story is over, stand and begin to run in circles around the group of us marveling at the size and symmetry of this geological phenomenon.

Bronagh goes on to explain that this story has been told and retold over the years to explain why identical basalt columns, all part of the same ancient lava flow, can be found on the Scottish side of the sea at Fingal’s Cave on the Isle of Staffa.

Now we have seen both sides of the incredible Giant’s Causeway!



And on that great note, it is time to leave Northern Ireland and indeed the entire realm of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. What a beautiful and hospitable kingdom it is! We have loved your landscape, your architecture, your pathways, and your people. We will never be the same now that we have spent time on your shores, learning your legends, enjoying your food, and getting to know your people. Cheerio! Perhaps we’ll come back soon! ■



Tell me what you remember about Northern Ireland:

- ◇ *Why do some people not consider Northern Ireland a country in her own right? Why do some citizens consider themselves Irish and other citizens consider themselves British?*
- ◇ *What were The Troubles? Are they still ongoing?*
- ◇ *Why was Belfast nicknamed “Linenopolis”? What are some other industries that have thrived in Belfast?*
- ◇ *Can you retell the tale of how the Giant’s Causeway came to be? Stories aside, how was it actually formed?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *The Lost Celt* by A. E. Conran
- ◇ *Explore! Celts* by Sonya Newland
- ◇ *The Celts (See Through History)* by Hazel Mary Martell
- ◇ *All About Northern Ireland* by Susan Harrison
- ◇ *The Troubles in Northern Ireland* by Tony Allen (for Junior High and up)
- ◇ *Finn MacCool and the Giant’s Causeway: An Irish Folk Tale* by Charlotte Guillain and Steve Dorado

15

Ireland

The Cliffs of Insanity

Chugging along south just a wee bit past the city of Londonderry, we cross the swift River Foyle and find ourselves in a new country, one that is not part of the United Kingdom but still located in the British Isles. We are now in Ireland—the Republic of Ireland to be exact.

The southern portion of the island of Ireland, which makes up about five-sixths of the island,

broke away from the United Kingdom in 1922 to become an independent country. This is why the official name of the UK is now the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, instead of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, as it once was before 1922.

Ireland is known as the “garden island” because of its breathtaking scenery and lovely landscapes. But Ireland is not all rainbows and roses. It has



Ireland is known as the Garden Island. This photo is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.



Photo of Brú-na-Bóinne Newgrange was taken by Dave Keeshan and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

a deep and complicated past, which is part of what makes it so beautiful today. The Irish are fiercely independent, resilient, passionate, and sentimental. The people of Ireland have carved out their island way of life through hard work and hard-fought determination. We'll learn all about it as we travel around this stunningly gorgeous isle of green.

Let's start at the beginning.

Who lived here before the British arrived on the island, or before the Vikings, or even before the Celts, or the missionaries from abroad? Who was here first? We'll find out at Brú na Bóinne, an ancient megalithic ceremonial site that was constructed before the pyramids were built in Egypt, located just outside the town of Drogheda on the eastern coast of Ireland. There are over a thousand such megaliths strewn about Ireland, but we'll visit the biggest and best preserved one of all.

Along the River Boyne, where it begins to bend and form an **oxbow**, a series of earth mounds were raised more than 5,000 years ago, creating one of the most significant prehistoric landscapes in the world. These mounds are mostly tombs, many of them **passage tombs**, while others are believed to be gathering places for ceremonies and festivals. A combination of cut stone, timber, mud, and grass were used to create these staggeringly massive mounds that have hardly changed over thousands of years.

The three largest megalithic mounds were structured to align with the skies in order to keep track of days and times. At Newgrange—the largest megalith covering over an acre of earth—the sun only shines down the narrow passageway on the winter **solstice** one day a year, setting aglow the interior with golden light for 17 full minutes on the darkest day of all.

Brú na Bóinne means “Mansion of the Boyne”, possibly because there are hundreds of little satellite mounds encircling the larger ones, creating a massive network of underground rooms.

While we do not know a great deal about the ancient people that built these impressive earth mounds, we do know some things. Keeping a calendar was important to them and they measured days and time by the movement of the earth, moon, sun, and stars. They had a good understanding of mathematics, especially geometry, and they were artistic. Many beautiful carved stones have been left behind, which influenced the artistic pursuits of the Celtic tribes who would arrive centuries later. They made useful tools and built sound structures that have stood strong for thousands of years.

This is just about all we know of that time, yet even this information is significant because it indicates that an intelligent society dwelt on this island long before other people groups arrived to



This photo of the Cliffs of Moher was taken by ilaria and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

alter and influence the Irish culture. It helps us to understand what makes Ireland so resilient. Resilience, strength, and determination have been woven into the very fabric of the island.

While Ireland can boast of some amazing man-made monuments that have stood the test of time, she also possesses more than her fair share of incredible landscape features created by nature. We'll crisscross the island to reach the Cliffs of Moher before nightfall, so we can watch the sun set over the Atlantic Ocean. That's right! It only takes about three hours to cross all of Ireland from East to West!

The twisty country road we take passes green pastures, quaint villages, and desolate ruins scattered about the countryside. Over time, the native ancient Irish were joined by waves of Celtic tribes who sailed across the seas and heaved their boats up on Ireland's shores.

The Celts brought folklore, poetry, artwork, more efficient farming methods, and advanced weapons and warfare strategies. They didn't



Celtic Cross tombstone. This photo is in the public domain.

overrun the people who lived here before them, but rather peacefully fused their different ways of life into one.

While the Celts were fearsome warriors, it would be many years before another group would storm Ireland's coast to put their mettle to the test, especially since the Romans never made it this far north or west. In fact, the next newcomers would be messengers of peace not war.

After the Celts came the missionaries, the first and most famous being St. Patrick. Patrick was born in the northern part of Britain around the end of the fourth century. When he was 16 years old, Patrick was kidnapped by pirates and taken to Ireland as a slave. For six long years, Patrick toiled as a shepherd in northern Ireland. He slept in the cold and went days without food. In his agony, he called out to God and asked to be saved from his plight. Previously an unreligious man, Patrick turned to prayer for relief and continued to ask for an end to his tragedy. One night, he heard the voice of God telling him that a ship waited to take him home to England. Patrick escaped from his master and traveled 200 miles to reach the ship.

After his escape, Patrick journeyed to Gaul (now modern-day France) to study in a monastery. While there, he heard the voice of the Lord once more, telling Patrick to return to Ireland to spread the good news of the gospel. Obeying the voice, he did the unthinkable and returned to the land where he had been enslaved. He travelled all around Ireland preaching the word of God, converting peasants and kings alike to Christianity.

He set up his own monastery for teaching missionaries and began the important Irish monastic tradition of studiously learning the word of God and applying its principles to one's personal life. At a time when most of Europe was plunging into the Dark Ages, filled with chaos and ignorance, Ireland was exploding with profound thought and higher education.



Stained glass illustration of St. Patrick. Public Domain.

Today, St. Patrick is celebrated every year on March 17th for bringing the light of the gospel to Ireland. Traditional Irish music keeps the beat for festive parades and dancing that may continue for several days. The Irish love to celebrate their heritage. If only we could be here on St. Patrick's Day to celebrate with them!

Back to St. Patrick and his missionary training school; St. Patrick started the tradition of building monasteries in Ireland for Christians who wanted to share the gospel like he did. This is why we see so many monastic ruins strewn about the Irish countryside. The monasteries of Ireland became a breeding ground for monks and missionaries to study and learn their faith before taking it further afield to the wide world beyond. Columba, the first missionary to Scotland, hailed from Ireland. And the Book of Kells, the most famous and possibly the most beautiful illuminated medieval book which contains the four Gospels of the New Testament,



Ruins of an old monastery abbey. This photo is in the public domain.

was carefully hand-copied and illustrated by monks at the Abbey of Kells, which we are passing on our right. The Book of Kells is now on display at Trinity College in Dublin—perhaps we'll be able to see it during our Ireland adventure!

Our short road trip across the country is almost complete! The rather small city of Galway is the largest on the western side of the island with just 80,000 people who call it home. Galway is known as one of the most quintessentially “Irish” places in Ireland. In other words, you get a good dose of “Irishness” when you spend time in Galway.

One of the reasons for this is that most of the people that live on the west coast speak Irish as either their first or second language. Irish is an old Celtic language that has been spoken for thousands of years, but less than 20% of the people of Ireland speak it fluently today. Everyone in Ireland speaks English, but Galway is a truly bilingual city.

Every other door in Galway seems to lead to a pub overflowing with smiling people and joyous music. Traditional Irish dance and music, known



Galway is a true bi-lingual city. Image in the public domain.

as *trad*, is kept alive in Galway and other parts of Ireland, enjoying a resurgence among the young and old alike. You can't help but smile when you hear the unmistakably Irish melodies floating through the air.

Listen in here: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com/the-music-of-ireland/>

Just south of Galway are the magnificent Cliffs of Moher. Over a million people travel from all over the world to belly crawl to the edge and hang their



King John's Castle in Limerick. Photo taken by William Murphy and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

heads over these grand cliffs to boast that they have been past the edge of the world—or at least past the western edge of Europe. But don't forget your raincoat! The mist and rain which frequents this area can quickly soak unprepared travelers. Kara and Nate, American travelers who host a popular YouTube show, have invited us along to hike the Cliffs of Moher with them and their drone. The scenery is spectacular, and their cheerful company is delightful. Let's join them here: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com/cliffs-of-moher/>

Because of the enormous scale and sheer rock faces on these cliffs, the Cliffs of Moher have been featured in several films, including the 1987 classic *The Princess Bride* (yes, these are the Cliffs of Insanity), and a more recent blockbuster, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. (See photo of Cliffs of Moher on page 180.)

If you find leaning over steep drop-offs exhilarating, I have good news for you! We'll get to do just that again before we leave Ireland. But that will have to wait until tomorrow. Now that it

is dark, it's time to drive to our charming B&B in nearby Limerick, located directly across the bridge from King John's Castle. After a good night's sleep, we'll drive a short ways to Ireland's southern shore and explore the famous Ring of Kerry!



The early morning sunshine spills across the towers and turrets of King John's Castle, washing the medieval citadel in a splash of golden light. The massive stone fortress was built on the orders of King John of England in the year 1200 on an island in the middle of the River Shannon to protect the town of Limerick as well as the entire island of Ireland from invaders from the sea.

Centuries before the castle existed, a Viking stronghold was founded on this same piece of ground. In the year 812, a fleet of Danish Vikings sailed up the river, razed the peaceful monastery that flourished here, and established a bustling trading center in its stead. The Vikings had begun



Viking longship “The Stallion” arrives in Dublin. Photo is in the public domain.

their descent upon Ireland in earnest a few years prior in the year 795 AD, changing the Irish landscape and ushering in a new era for the island country.

Crossing the seas in their dragon-headed longships, the Scandinavian pirates attacked monasteries and isolated villages, burning, looting, and pillaging in search of gold and treasure. For nearly 35 years, they launched amphibious assaults all around the coast of Ireland, but the worst was yet to come. During the 9th century, small Viking raids were replaced by complete onslaughts. Fleets of 50 ships or more appeared at the mouths of Ireland’s great rivers. The shallow hulls of their ships allowed the Vikings to row into the interior of Ireland, sacking quiet monastic communities and establishing permanent bases for themselves.

These fortified harbors became known as **longphorts**, which the Vikings used to overwinter their ships when dangerous weather made sailing

perilous. Over time, the longphorts became the first true towns in Ireland. While the monasteries had created a culture of higher learning and beautiful art, the Vikings added a new element by establishing towns and important centers of trade. The Vikings were master sailors and traders, and it wasn’t long until goods from all over Europe made their way into the Viking towns of Limerick, Cork, and Dublin.

The Vikings retained their power and control over Ireland for about 300 years when the era of the Vikings came to a close all over Europe. At this time in Ireland, local Irish chieftains began to rise to power and take back control of their regional areas. One powerful lord—his name was Brian Boru—used his influence and strength to unite Ireland for the first and last time. He became the great High King of Ireland for the better part of his lifetime. After his death, however, regional chieftains began fighting for control and the political unity of Ireland crumbled.



A view along the Ring of Kerry. Photo is in the public domain, courtesy of Pxhere.

Into this power struggle came Diarmait Mac Murchada. It was the middle of the 12th century when Dairmait became the King of Leinster, a largish kingdom in the middle eastern part of the country. He had a falling out with a neighboring warlord and requested aid from King Henry II of England. Henry, consumed by his own conflict with France, recruited some Norman allies led by Richard Fitzgerald de Clare (nicknamed Richard Strongbow) to help this Irish king in return for his loyalty to the English crown.

This alliance marked the beginning of England's involvement in Ireland. Dairmait and Richard conquered Ireland in small waves. Dairmait had set his sights on becoming the next High King of Ireland. To secure his alliance with England, he gave his daughter in marriage to his Norman ally, Richard Strongbow. When Dairmait died, it was unlawful for his title and lands to pass through his daughter's line, but Strongbow

overcame opposition and took control of the kingdom of Ireland anyway.

Henry II approved of Richard Strongbow's success, but wanted Ireland for himself. He granted the lordship of all of Ireland to his son, Prince John. When John's brother, King Richard the Lionhearted, died in 1199, John became the King of England and the Lord of Ireland—the first to bear this title. Ireland had officially become lost to the Irish. King John built this great castle at the mouth of the River Shannon to symbolize his victory and to stamp out any threats to his lordship from both within Ireland and without.

Here we are! It's time to explore the Ring of Kerry, the most visited region of Ireland outside of her capital city of Dublin. The Ring of Kerry is not a destination but a journey, an opportunity to inhale the beauty of Ireland not as one single snapshot, but as a photo album of lavish green and wildly remote grandeur. The Ring of Kerry consists of a circular driving route, during which



The Ring of Kerry. Photo by Tony Webster, CC BY-SA 2.0.

we'll pass through quaint seaside villages, explore Viking ruins, and marvel at stunning views of the Atlantic Ocean.

Because so many locals and visitors to Ireland enjoy this drive around the southern horn of Ireland so much, the traffic congestion on the road can become unbearable. In addition, the road in places is so narrow and the drop-off to the sea so steep that drivers and passengers alike can feel claustrophobic and even frightened. Giant coaches transport tourists along this route, but they all drive one single direction to aid in traffic flow—counter-clockwise. For this reason, most cars drive in the opposite direction because who wants to get stuck behind a long line of tour busses? Not us, thank you very much. Let's be off!

Field Notes

Tell me what you remember about western Ireland:

- ◇ *Who came to Ireland first – the Celts, the Viking, the missionaries, or the British? Who was here before any of them arrived? What purpose did the mounds at Brú na Bóinne serve?*
- ◇ *Retell the story of St. Patrick in your own words.*
- ◇ *Besides English, what other language is spoken in Ireland?*
- ◇ *Who was the first and only king of a united Ireland?*
- ◇ *What was located in Limerick before King John's castle was built? What is a longphort?*



Photo of Cork by William Murphy, used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

THE GREAT POTATO DISASTER

The gorgeous Ring of Kerry behind us, we are on our way to Cork. Cork is the third largest city in Ireland, after Dublin and Belfast. This thousand-year-old city is a lively place where nearly all its residents believe in the same central idea—one which they have held onto tightly for hundreds of years—Ireland should be one country, not two. Politically speaking, this is the “nationalist” viewpoint: Ireland deserves to be united under self-rule (or **Home Rule**, as it is called here).

As you remember, Ireland was “given” to Prince John by his father, Henry II, the King of England in 1185. When John became king after the death of his brother, Richard the Lionhearted, he was the first British ruler to claim the entire island of Ireland for his own. Since that time, Ireland has been either fully or partially ruled by England, a situation the majority of Irish people have despised ever since.

While Corkians, and the Irish people in general, are content to live peacefully in a divided Ireland at this time in history, they still dream of a united Ireland in the future where the government of the United Kingdom has no part. A mindset of peace despite the division has been carefully nurtured and has slowly grown over the past two decades, so this serenity is a relatively new phenomenon in Ireland.

Since the beginning of English involvement in Irish affairs more than 800 years ago, the Irish have struggled and fought for their independence. Countless wars, risings, riots, and causes have raged through Ireland to gain that independence and for three-quarters of the country, those efforts have paid off.

The Republic of Ireland broke away from the United Kingdom in 1922 and the Irish finally achieved their hard-won independence. But for many Irish, five-sixth of the island is not enough. They want it all to fall under Irish rule. However,



Photo of Blarney Castle is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

with the majority of the residents in Northern Ireland of British or Scottish descent, it's not that simple. Most citizens of Northern Ireland prefer to identify themselves as British, not Irish. So, it's complicated.

But not here in Cork! In Cork, the belief of the people is simple; one day, Ireland will be united—and for the first time in centuries, they are willing to wait patiently for that day.

Just outside Cork is the most famous and most visited of all Irish castles. Blarney Castle is the medieval fortress that houses the Blarney Stone, a limestone block enclosing one of the **machicolations** of the castle. A machicolation is an opening in the floor between the **corbels** of the **battlement**, through which stones or other material, such as boiling hot water or cooking oil, could be dropped on attackers at the base of a defensive wall. According to legend, kissing the stone blesses the kisser with the “gift of gab”, meaning great eloquence of speech or flattery.

The story surrounding the legend explains how the stone came to possess such magical powers. Apparently, the builder of the castle, Cormac McCarthy, was involved in a lawsuit, and he appealed to the pagan goddess Cliodhna for her assistance with the case. She told McCarthy to kiss the first stone he found in the morning on his way to court. He did so and then plead his case before the judge with such eloquence that he won. This is why the Blarney Stone is said to impart the speaker with the ability to flatter and please the listener. McCarthy decided to incorporate this stone into the structure of the castle.

Since the 15th century, millions of people have kissed the stone. The kiss, however, is not casually achieved. In order to touch one's lips to the stone, the aspiring kisser must climb the castle's tower, then lean backward over the edge of the parapet, dangling a deadly distance above the ground below. Today's participant in the ritual receives the help of an assistant, wrought iron handrails, and protective crossbars to prevent a deadly fall.



Reginald's Tower in Waterford. Photo was taken by Vadrefjord and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 4.0.

Before such safeguards were installed, to kiss the stone meant dangling by the ankles—literally risking life and limb in pursuit of the gift of gab.

Will you kiss the stone?

Further up the eastern coast of Ireland is the town of Waterford. Like Cork and Limerick, Waterford was a humble monastic settlement until the Vikings came along and greatly expanded the community, turning it into a bustling town in the 9th century. Here too, as in the other towns, Vikings established their longphort trading center at the mouth of the river.

Reginald's Tower still stands as a proud reminder of that once powerful society, the only landmark in Ireland to retain its Viking name. Over the years, it has been used as a mint, a prison, and a military storehouse. It is also famous for being the location of the wedding between Richard de Clare (Richard Strongbow) and Aoife (pronounced Eefa), the daughter of the King of Leinster, the one who gave his daughter in marriage to strengthen his alliance between Ireland and England.

Today, Waterford is best known for Waterford Crystal, which has been manufactured in the city since 1783. The crystal company has employed thousands of Waterford residents who have taken great pride in their work and the products they



Waterford crystal. Photo by Jonathan Billinger, CC BY-SA 2.0.



Photo of an abandoned potato farm is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

produced. For centuries, young couples all over the world have bought Waterford crystal to grace their dining tables in their new homes after they were married. The name “Waterford” is equated with the highest quality crystal in the world.

It’s about a 2-hour drive from Waterford to Dublin, the capital city of the Republic of Ireland and our last stop on our exploration around the island of Ireland. Along the way, we can enjoy the beautiful green rolling countryside that is abloom with flowers, fruit trees, and rows of healthy-looking crops. Some of these fields are growing potatoes, but you may be surprised to discover that most of the fields do not.

The single greatest tragedy in modern Irish history was the potato famine that struck during the 1840’s. The British government conducted a study in 1843 to investigate the effect of the ballooning Irish population on Irish land and its farming operations. The commission wrote up its findings in a report, noting that as many as three

million Irish residents (over one-third of the population) were wholly dependent on the potato crop for food.

A couple years later, in 1846, the unthinkable happened. A potato blight struck Ireland and most of the potato crop failed before harvest. The Prime Minister of Great Britain, Robert Peel, responded quickly to the crisis. He spent one million pounds on American corn and had it shipped and distributed to the hungry in Ireland. Later that year, a political party who opposed his actions removed Peel from power. As wretched luck would have it, the potato blight returned with a fury the following year. This time, all the potato crops across the island were destroyed.

When the second blight struck the island, the British didn’t step in to help and the Irish people felt abandoned to their disaster. Hunger and sickness killed poor Irish families by the thousands. Yet all the while, the grain crops harvested that year in Ireland were still exported



Potato Famine Memorial located in Dublin, Ireland. Photo was taken by Ron Cogswell and used with permission, CC BY-SA 2.0.

to Britain. The government refused to stop the exports and use this alternate food source to feed the hungry in Ireland.

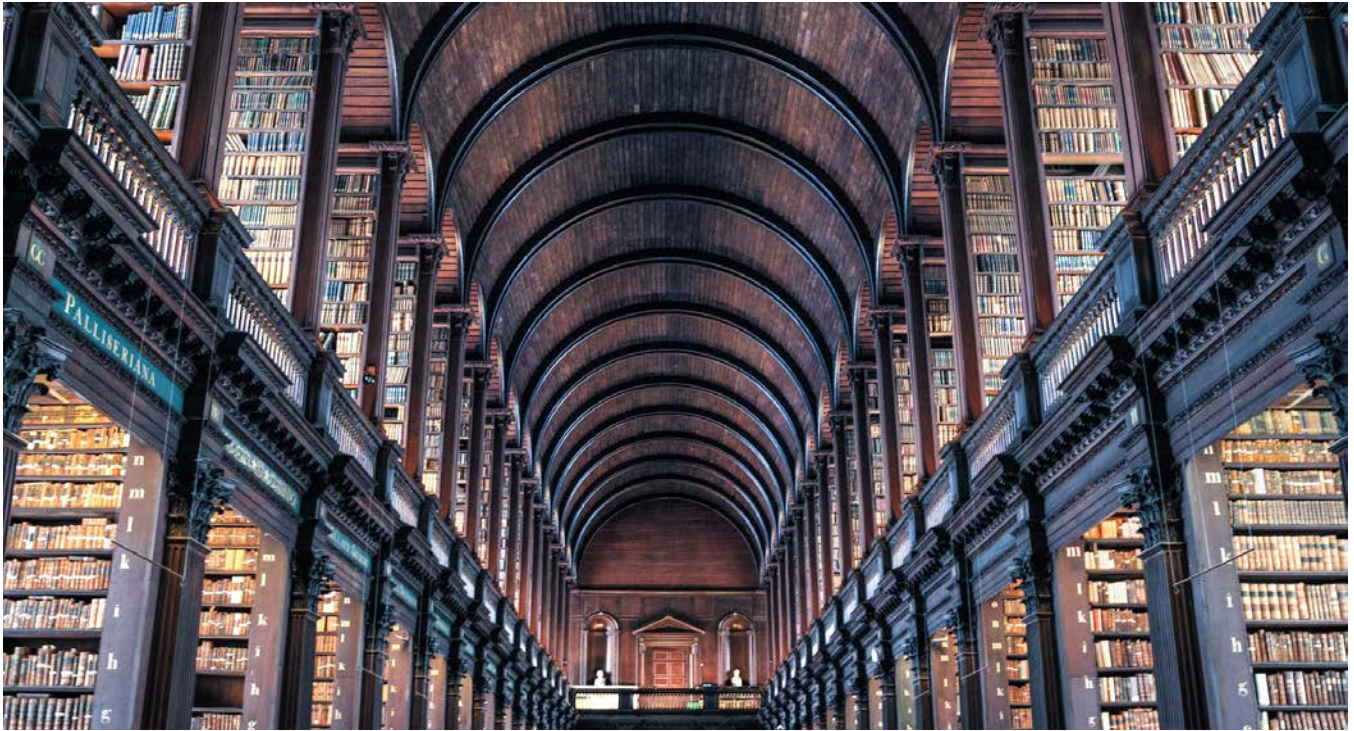
Where the British government failed to avert the crises, others stepped in to help. The Quakers set up food kitchens and many compassionate people from America and other parts of the world sent food and money to Ireland. But these efforts weren't enough to avert disaster. The number of fatalities continued to climb, and the Irish became desperate for an escape from the deadly island, beginning a mass emigration to other countries.

The poor and hungry people of Ireland crowded onto any ship that would take them away from the island in search of a better life. Corrupt sea captains took advantage of their desperate plight, cramming more people than was healthy into the tiny holds of their ships. Thousands died during the trans-Atlantic voyages to the United States in what became known as "coffin ships".

By the year 1850, a quarter of the population had been wiped from the face of Ireland as the population dropped from 8 million to 6 million; one million were dead and a million more fled. With the blight finally gone, the Irish who remained behind began to rebuild their island way of life, but many did so with an even greater hatred for the British who ruled them.

The Irish continued to protest, boycott, and strike against the British government throughout the second half of the 19th century, but it wasn't until World War I when the people of Ireland began to gain some serious ground for their cause. While the British were preoccupied fighting alongside their allies against the Central Powers in Europe, the Irish began to fight against the powers-that-be within their own country. Uprising after uprising, the Irish began to frighten and weaken the British government on their own soil, little by little.

The British government retaliated and after many bloody and unscrupulous battles, both sides



Trinity College Library in Dublin, Ireland. Photo is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

were weary from the fight. King George V made a bold and brave move when he decided to travel to Belfast to talk with the people of Ireland. He said, “I appeal to all Irishmen to pause and join in the making for a land which they love a new era of peace, contentment, and good will.” The king’s speech was echoed across the land and printed in newspapers from coast to coast.

A few weeks later, a truce was called and a delegation from Ireland went to London to work out the details for lasting peace. By 1921, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was no more. The new Irish Free State had been born.

However, as you know from our visit to Northern Ireland, that corner of the country decided to remain loyal to Great Britain and not join the Irish Free State in 1922. The Troubles soon followed, but now, since 1998, a true and lasting peace has settled over the land. Ireland, once a troubled country filled with violence and hatred, is now one of the safest and most hospitable places in the world.

We have arrived in Dublin, the capital and largest city in Ireland. It is 60 degrees outside with clear blue skies overhead. This is a beautiful day to stroll through downtown and inhale all this city has to offer. Plus, today we get to meet up with an American friend who is visiting family here in Dublin. April agreed to meet us at Dublin Castle and accompany us on a little sightseeing tour around the city.

April has traveled to every continent on the planet, which was a life-long goal of hers, but this is her first visit to Ireland.

“April!” I shout as I spot her at the entrance to the enormous Norman fortress.

“My favorite people!” she replies and laughs her unmistakable laugh, hugging each one of us. “Have you seen this castle yet? It’s humongous. I guess it was built here shortly after the Norman invasion on the orders of King John of England. Yes, I’m talking about the same evil Prince John from the Robin Hood stories. He was actually a real villain in history who treated the Irish miserably.”

“Well, he definitely wanted to make his presence known here in Ireland,” I reply. “This isn’t the first castle we have come across that he had built here.”

“Apparently, this is the oldest structure standing in Dublin. It was built in 1204. There was a town here before the castle existed that was established by the Celts in the 7th century. Then there was a monastic settlement, then a Viking trading port, and then this Norman stronghold. Now Dublin is known as the beer capital of the world because Arthur Guinness started the largest brewery on the planet here—Guinness Brewery—back in 1759. See, I have my Dublin history down.” April trills out her musical laugh. “Better take notes for that book you’re writing,” she says with a wink.

It seems that most of the cities we have visited in Ireland share a similar story—native Irish were here first, then Celts, then monks, then Vikings, then Normans. As least we are getting the Irish timeline cemented into our brains.



Photo of Dublin Castle by Vmenkov, license CC BY-SA 3.0.

April continues, “I think the most impressive part of this castle is the gardens. There is a lake in the rear garden, which is actually a tidal pool that refills when the ocean tide pours in. In fact, my friends who live here told me that the name Dublin means ‘the



Ha'penny Bridge over the River Liffy. Photo by Crash Test Mike and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 2.0.

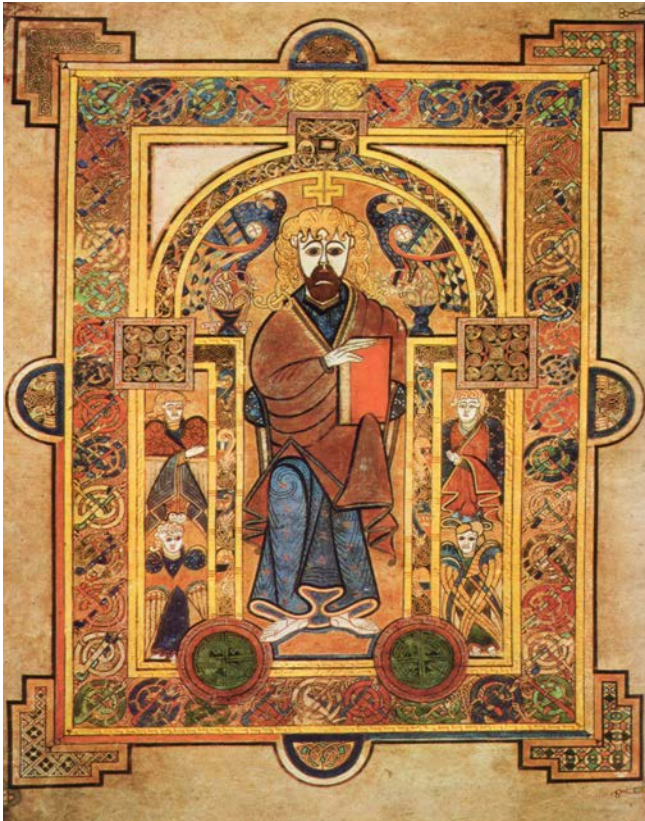


Illustration from Book of Kells is in the public domain.

black pool', referring to this very tidal pool behind Dublin Castle that once defended the mouth of the River Liffy. Pretty fascinating, don't you think?"

"Yes, it certainly is," we respond. "You know, something we really want to see while we are here in Dublin is the Book of Kells, located inside the library at Trinity College. I noticed on my map that it is just over Ha'penny Bridge, that iron footbridge there that crosses the River Liffey."

Let's take a selfie on the bridge, because it is one of Dublin's most iconic landmarks and is supposedly the most photographed sight in the city. A photo with all of us together will help us remember the amazing day we spent with our friend in this historic city.

The Book of Kells does not disappoint. It is the most spectacular book we have ever seen. Its glimmering illuminated pages lined with Celtic embellishments and extraordinary illustrations

give us an idea of just how much work the monks put into the creation of this masterpiece.

I'm starting to get hungry! What about you? There's a food court outside the museum. Let's grab a bite to eat at Leo Burdock Fish and Chips. They say many famous people have eaten here and signed their names on the walls of the popular eatery. We can top it off with a sweet treat from the Lemon Crepe Company down the way. How does that sound?

April looks at her watch and her eyes grow big. "Oh my! I don't have time! I have to go! I have tickets to see U2 in concert in their own hometown. I have wanted to see U2 in concert for as long as I can remember. It really is the last thing I haven't crossed off my bucket list. U2 started their enormously popular band here in Dublin when they were just teenagers in 1976. Their expressive music tells about the political struggles of Ireland over the centuries mixed with the personal struggles of the human heart seeking to connect with God during the highs and lows of a person's life on earth. I really relate to their music. It connects with my soul.

"I hear there are standing-room-only tickets still available. Come if you can! I have a seat toward the front. This is the dream of a lifetime for me. I'm their biggest fan. I am absolutely dying to see them live! I hope I see you there!"



U2 on tour 2017. Photo by Remy, license CC BY-SA 4.0.

Before April scurries off down the street, she pauses just long enough to say, “I hope you know that I’m your biggest fan too. I’m so glad you spent the day with me today. It was so good to spend time with friends from home. See you later!”

We say goodbye to dear, exuberant April. We must also say goodbye to dear, passionate Ireland. What an amazing visit we have had here in the Republic of Ireland these last few days. We learned some complicated history, explored some beautiful cities, traipsed through some old dusty castles, and enjoyed some delicious food and drink. See you later, Ireland! I hope we’ll be back one day. ■



Tell me what you remember about eastern Ireland:

- ◇ *Which English king became the first king of both England and Ireland? What did he build to show his presence in Ireland?*
- ◇ *In what year did the Republic of Ireland (5/6 of the island) break away from England? Are the Irish content to be divided?*

- ◇ *Why do millions of people visit Blarney Castle? What gift is bestowed to the one who ventures to kiss the Blarney stone?*
- ◇ *What was the single greatest tragedy to strike Ireland? What have the Irish done to make sure that never happens again?*
- ◇ *What is the oldest structure in Dublin still standing? When was it built and who built it? What is the Book of Kells and where is it located?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *Newgrange and Brú na Bóinne* by Paul Francis
- ◇ *What Really Happened in Medieval Times (biography of St. Patrick)* by Jennaya Dunlap
- ◇ *Flame Over Tara* by Madeleine Polland and Omar Davis
- ◇ *History VIPs: King John* by Paul Harrison
- ◇ *The Magna Carta* by James Daugherty
- ◇ *This is Ireland* by Miraslav Sasek
- ◇ *Historopedia: The History of Ireland from Then Until Now* by Fatti Burke and John Burke
- ◇ *Color Your Own Book of Kells (Dover)* by Marty Noble

Timeline for Iceland and the North Atlantic

- 874** Norwegian Viking chieftain Ingólfr Arnarson built his homestead on the island at the site of modern-day Reykjavik
- 986** Vikings begin leaving Iceland in hopes of finding more farmable land in Greenland
- 1000** Leif Erikson discovers Newfoundland in North America
- 1262** Iceland and Norway are united under the Old Covenant
- 1814** Iceland becomes a Danish dependency
- 1874** Denmark agrees to allow Iceland the opportunity of limited home rule
- 1918** Denmark signs an agreement that recognizes Iceland as a fully sovereign and independent state
- 1944** Iceland officially becomes a free country and appoints its first president
- 2011** Grimsvötn volcano erupts and hurls ash 12 miles into the atmosphere

North Atlantic



Iceland

Fire and Ice

The pain and fatigue were beginning to feel like lightning bolts shooting down his thighs as he crawled up the steep incline, hoping it would be the last one. The grueling discomfort in his muscles kept his mind on conquering the great mountain, pushing aside his grief for a brief moment. A few more agonizing steps and Flóki, gasping for oxygen, pulled himself over a rocky ledge to find himself

at the summit. Exhausted, he sat down to catch his breath.

Once his breath was coming in even drafts, he surveyed his surroundings. In wonder, he stood again and gazed out toward the sea. The sea... the monster that took his little girl from him. *The sea is nothing more than a watery grave*, he thought to himself, as he wiped an escaped tear away from his fur-lined face.



Grimsvötn volcano eruption in Iceland. Photo taken by Boaworm and used with permission under license CC BY-SA 3.0.



Photo of Seljalandsfoss Falls is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

Images pounded through his brain as Flóki recalled the day his family decided to make the dangerous voyage. The four of them sat down together over a meal of steamed fish and vegetables in the longhouse and Flóki announced, “I think we should join the next expedition to Snæland. They say the fishing there is just as good as it is here in Norway and that the farming opportunities are even better because there is more land to go around. But the voyage will be long and possibly treacherous. I want this to be a family decision, not just mine.”

The beautiful faces of his wife and two teenaged daughters smiled back at him with confident reassurance. Those faces. He promised not to forget a single line or detail of them. Instead of four family members pulling up on the shore of their new country, there were only two—he and his wife, Skara. Their eldest daughter stayed behind in the Shetland Islands to marry a fine man with a large farm. And his baby... oh his

baby! The sea snatched her away from him when the tempests rose. She was tossed by a great wave from the ship and drowned within sight of the Faeroa Islands.

His hot tears came in earnest now. He and Skara would be starting over. Their livestock died shortly after making landfall on Snæland. They had nothing but a few seeds and a wild hope that their fortunes would turn.

After wiping the salty tears from his face and blinking to clear the blurriness from his eyes, Flóki scanned his surroundings once more. To his right, he could see steam rising from a nearby mountain peak and black lava fields spreading out below. *Fire*. To his left, he saw steep fjords, such a dear reminder of home. But these fjords were packed with giant glistening icebergs. *Ice*. *Fire and ice*. He thought to himself, *This country should not be named ‘snow land’ for it is so much more than that. This country is Iceland.*



Geysir erupting in Iceland. Photo taken by Drew Collins is in the public domain.

Then he prayed to the gods above, “May the coming spring melt both the ice in the fjords and the ice in my heart.”



When the first Norwegian Viking reached this remote island in the North Atlantic Ocean, it was snowing. He named it Snæland or “snow land”. Shortly thereafter, another Viking arrived, the one who had lost his daughter at sea. He renamed the island Iceland and the name stuck.

Iceland is considered a European country even though it is located closer to North America than Europe. The island sits atop the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a ridge that runs along the bottom of the ocean floor. The Mid-Atlantic Ridge is the longest mountain range in the world as well as a **divergent tectonic plate**, which means these huge continental plates in the earth’s crust are moving apart and creating rifts along the mountain tops way down in the deep blue sea.

All this tectonic activity in the ocean below turns Iceland into a geological hot bed of activity with many burbling volcanoes, gushing geysers, and thermal hot springs. Geysers, which are springs of water pushed turbulently into the air at regular intervals, are a rare phenomenon that occur only in a few places on earth and generally near active volcanic sites. Iceland has many geysers, one named Geysir, from which our English word is derived. Iceland’s most famous geyser is Strokkur, which erupts like clockwork every 8-10 minutes and has been doing so for thousands of years, as you can see here: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com/geyser-in-iceland/>

Iceland experienced another eruption recently, but this time of a volcanic nature. Grimsvötn volcano, located under the thick ice of Europe’s largest glacier, is Iceland’s most active volcano. It erupted in May of 2011 and hurled lava and ash 12 miles into the atmosphere, creating a huge mushroom cloud of volcanic ash and causing a



Photo of Iceland's dramatic landscape is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

major disruption to air travel across Europe and the Atlantic Ocean.

The Nordic nation of Iceland is the world's 18th largest island at 40,000 square miles and Europe's second largest after Great Britain. Thirty smaller surrounding islands belong to Iceland. Still, it is the most sparsely populated country in Europe. Two-thirds of the population live in the capital city of Reykjavik on the southwest coast. While the main island is located completely below the Arctic Circle, its most northern island of Grimsey with a population of 87 straddles the arctic line of latitude.

Iceland is known for its dramatic landscape. Jagged mountain ridges, gushing waterfalls, and chiseled fjords lend a majestic air to the topography. Lava fields and glaciers flow in patchwork across the flatter ground. Iceland is very literary made from fire and ice.

It's pretty much always chilly in Iceland, even with the aid of the warm North Atlantic Current

(NAC) that passes right by its southern shore—the NAC is an offshoot of the Gulf Stream that we learned about when we were visiting England in Chapter 9. However, it would be colder still if the NAC didn't flow by the island.

Still, the cold is not unbearable. In fact, it is not nearly as cold as Greenland, which is located less than 200 miles west and is almost completely covered by an ice sheet. Average temperatures in the capital city of Reykjavik during the winter are in the 20's and reach up into the 60's during the summer. But extremes are possible here. The coldest temperature recorded on the island was -36 degrees Fahrenheit in January of 1918 and the highest temperature was 87 degrees Fahrenheit in June of 1939.

There are several distinctive animals who live in Iceland. If we're lucky we may see some, so let's keep our eyes peeled! Of the unique animals that make Iceland home, the only native land animal is the Arctic fox. The rest have either been



Photo of Icelandic horses is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.



Photo of the Arctic Fox is in the public domain.

intentionally brought here by humans or arrived accidentally by iceberg. Polar bears are known to “visit” Iceland, but they do not generally stay.

They come to Iceland by traveling on icebergs from neighboring but distant Greenland.

Other wild mammals you may spot are the majestic reindeer, silky mink, and Arctic hare. Domesticated animals include Icelandic sheep, the Icelandic Sheepdog to herd those Icelandic sheep, and the sturdy Icelandic horse. Birds—mostly seabirds—are abundant in Iceland; particularly puffins, skuas, and kittiwakes that nest along the sea cliff walls.

Out at sea, there lives an abundance of sea creatures, such as seals, whales, and countless varieties of fish. The fishing industry is a major contributor to Iceland’s economy, accounting for roughly half of the country’s total exports to other countries. Commercial whaling is practiced intermittently, but less and less as the years go on.

The reason why Icelanders whale less is because that industry is in conflict with the other huge moneymaker for the island—tourism. Iceland receives three times as many tourists



Photo of this polar bear arriving in Iceland via iceberg is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

to the country as residents who live here. The tourists come to see the incredible scenery, to climb icebergs, to fly by helicopter over active volcanoes, and to whale-watch. For this reason, Icelanders are inclined to leave as many whales as possible in the sea for visitors to enjoy.



According to ancient Icelandic literature, the permanent settlement of Iceland began in 874 AD when the Norwegian Viking chieftain Ingólfr Arnarson built his homestead on the island at the site of modern-day Reykjavik. Multitudes of Viking families looking for suitable farmland soon followed. But this same saga, as well as others, mention an earlier people who came to inhabit the land but didn't stay. These were Papar monks who traveled from distant Ireland and Scotland only to find the island utterly desolate and uninhabited. Archaeologists have discovered the ruins of a cabin

in Hafnir that was abandoned approximately one hundred years before the Vikings appeared.

Around that same time, however, Swedish Viking explorer Garöar Svavarsson circumnavigated Iceland to establish that it was indeed an island. He built a longhouse and overwintered in Húsavik then departed the following summer, leaving a few of his men behind.

Over the course of the next few centuries, more Norwegians and some Danes followed, bringing with them their **thralls** (slaves) from the British Isles. They also brought their form of government with them, known as the **Althing**, a ruling assembly body that is still in place today, making it the oldest parliament in the world. Within fifty years of the first Viking landing, most of the arable land on the island had been claimed. By 986, Viking families were sailing further west to Greenland in hopes of finding suitable living conditions.



Oil painting of Erik the Red's adventure to Greenland was painted by Carl Rasmussen. Public domain image.

There once was a Viking named Erik. His father, Thorvald, killed a man in Norway and so he was banished from the land. Thorvald and his 10-year-old son, Erik, left for Iceland and found a new life there. Erik grew up, married, and began a family of his own.

One day, his thralls were mixed up in a fight with the neighbors and one of them was killed. Erik, angry and bent on revenge, killed the man who murdered his slave. Now Erik, like his father before him, was banished from his homeland. But Erik's banishment from Iceland was only for a duration of three years. With his 10-year-old son Leif, Erik the Red, nicknamed for his fiery hot temper as well as his fiery red hair, sailed west with his family to a land he would name Greenland. Like father, like son, repeat.

According to the Saga of Erik the Red, he spent his three years of exile exploring this new land. When Erik returned to Iceland, he told everyone tall tales about "Greenland", hoping to lure more settlers to the desolate island. Less than a year later, Erik returned to Greenland with his family and a large number of colonists.

Erik's son Leif grew up in the harsh conditions of Greenland, but when he came of age, he sailed back to Norway to work as a companion to Olaf, the King of Norway. There, he became a Christian and felt led to return to Greenland to share the good news of the gospel with his kinsfolk.

On his return voyage, he was blown off course and arrived at a land where wheat and grapevines grew wild. Leif Erikson had landed on the North American continent in the region of Newfoundland, Canada. He named the place Vinland because of the wild vines and then, as his father before him, returned to Greenland with a cargo of grapes and timber to lure more settlers to this bountiful land.

In the end, Vinland was never permanently colonized by Vikings, but a Norse settlement was uncovered by archaeologists in the 1960's confirming that Vikings did indeed discover North America 500 years before Christopher Columbus sailed the oceans blue.





Photo of the city of Reykjavik is in the public domain, courtesy of Pixabay.

Reykjavik is a city built for strolling, so let's get walking! The streets are wide and flat, named after Viking gods and warriors, and the buildings are colorful and inviting, giving it a bright Nordic vibe. Here the air is cool and fresh even though Reykjavik translates to mean “smoky bay”. Icelanders, like the Finnish, love a warm swimming pool, but Iceland pools are typically located outside and heated by geysers and thermal hot springs. Sounds like fun, doesn't it?

I suggest we take a soak in the pool then grab a bite to eat at one of Iceland's world-famous restaurants. We are nearing the end of our tour of northern Europe, so I think we can splurge a little before we travel back home. Reykjavik boasts some truly outstanding local and international cuisine. Local cuisine focuses on seafood and lamb, and you can never go wrong by ordering the fish of the day in one of Reykjavik's restaurants.

Icelandic chefs like to surprise you when your food is brought to the table. If you order cod, you may get the whole cod's head. Other unusual dishes you might want to try are boiled sheep's head or

fermented shark. If these Icelandic classics sound a little too daring for you, you can always order an Icelandic hot dog. Apparently, they serve up some of the best in the world.

Let's order and then I'll finish telling you about the history of Iceland.

After a few hundred years, the original Iceland Commonwealth was crumbling as powerful Icelandic chieftains fought with each other, creating a civil war on their island home. With the disintegration of their native leadership, the Norwegian crown stepped in to help and formed a union between Iceland and Norway in 1262 when they signed the Old Covenant, making Iceland a Norwegian dependency.

During the centuries which followed, Iceland became one of the poorest countries in Europe. With its harsh weather, volcanic eruptions, and infertile soil, Icelandic society barely subsisted on their own agricultural crops. Then, the **Black Death** swept through—not once, but twice—leaving the island devastated with two-thirds of the population wiped out.



Viking remains have been found in Newfoundland, Canada, known as Vinland to the Vikings. Image is in the public domain.

By the 16th century, at the height of the Protestant Reformation, Denmark ruled Norway, which meant they ruled Iceland too. Denmark's King, Christian III, imposed Lutheranism on all his subjects, including those in faraway Iceland. The country officially became Lutheran and Lutheranism has been the dominant religion ever since.

Hardships continued for the poor island nation. Within a hundred years of occupation, Denmark began imposing harsh trade restrictions on Iceland. Along with these harsh new laws, Iceland was suffering through multiple natural disasters, including volcanic eruptions and disease. They were also the target of pirates from several countries, who began raiding the coastal cities and abducting people into slavery. The final straw fell upon the heels of the Laki volcanic eruption of 1783, which caused devastating effects across the country. Over half of all the livestock in Iceland died from the ash fallout causing a famine from which a quarter of the population died.

With the climate becoming increasingly cold, less food available to eat, pirates raiding the coast, and volcanoes erupting in the interior, Icelanders

began to flee. A mass emigration to the New World ensued, particularly to the region of Gimli, Manitoba in Canada, which is sometimes referred to as "New Iceland".

Then, finally, something good happened.

Denmark-Norway split into two separate kingdoms following the Napoleonic Wars in 1814. Iceland remained a Danish dependency at this time, but something was brewing. National pride was resurfacing after the ash settled from the clash of the two Scandinavian superpowers. By 1874, Denmark agreed to allow Iceland the opportunity of limited home rule. Then, in 1918, Denmark signed an agreement that recognized Iceland as a fully sovereign and independent state, although still united with Denmark as her overseer and protector for the next 25 years.

When Denmark was invaded by Germany during World War II, Iceland declared itself independent, claiming she would take care of her own affairs. Within a month, British armed forces invaded Iceland against her wishes to keep the Germans out.

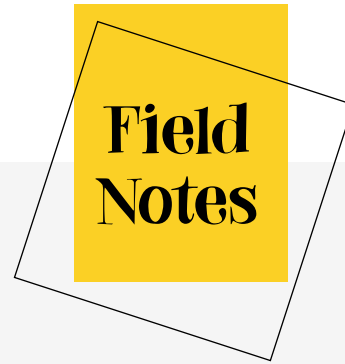
Two years later, the 25-year provision set by Denmark expired and Icelanders voted on whether to remain in a personal union with Denmark or absolve it. The vote was 97% in favor of abolishing the union and setting up a new republican constitution. On the 17th of June in the year 1944, Iceland officially became a free country and appointed its first president.

Today, Iceland is a free and prosperous nation. She is an oasis of light and warmth in the midst of the cold Atlantic separating the Old World from the New World. Her long history gives her perspective and her newfound freedom gives her exuberance. Hurrah for Iceland, the crown jewel of the North Atlantic Sea!

Our tour of the Viking Realms of Northern Europe has come to an end, and it is time to travel home. Are you ready? I hope you have enjoyed our adventure together. I loved having you along!

We can explore more regions of our glorious globe together through previous and future volumes of *A Child's Geography*. Our next adventure together is only a book away! In the meantime, keep asking questions, recording notes, and taking photographs, storing all these wonderful memories in your heart and mind. Having the heart of a geographer means having a heart for the world.

Come! Let's go into all the world together! ■



Tell me what you remember about Iceland:

- ◇ *How did Iceland get its name? Retell the story in your own words.*
- ◇ *Iceland is located on what mountain range? This longest mountain range in the world is located where? How does tectonic activity below the ocean's surface affect Iceland?*
- ◇ *How do polar bears "visit" Iceland? What other animals live here on the island?*
- ◇ *Why is whaling controversial in Iceland? Which two industries are affected by the presence of whales?*
- ◇ *Explain how Erik happened to discover Greenland and his son, Leif, to discover Canada. When did Iceland become independent?*

Further Explorations:

- ◇ *The Guardians of Iceland and Other Icelandic Folktales* by Heidi Herman
- ◇ *The Legends of the Icelandic Yule Lads* by Heidi Herman
- ◇ *Erik the Red and Leif the Lucky* by Barbara Schiller
- ◇ *The Saga of Erik the Viking* by Terry Jones
- ◇ *Voyage with the Vikings* by Paul McCusker and Marianne Hering
- ◇ *Leif the Lucky* by Ingri d'Aulaire and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire
- ◇ *The Saga of Gudrid the Far Traveler* by Nancy Marie Brown
- ◇ *O Canada: Her Story (Bjorn the Lunderhund)* by Karla Akins

Glossary

A	Abdication	To renounce or give up the right to the throne.
	Althing	The legislative assembly of Iceland.
	Amber	Hard translucent fossilized resin produced by coniferous trees, typically yellowish in color. Amber has been used in jewelry since antiquity. It is found chiefly along the southern shores of the Baltic Sea; pieces often contain the bodies of trapped insects. When rubbed, amber becomes charged with static electricity: the word electric is derived from the Greek word for amber.
	Archipeligos	A group of islands.
	Arctic Circle	The parallel of latitude 66° 33' north of the equator. It marks the northernmost point at which the sun is visible on the northern winter solstice and the southernmost point at which the midnight sun can be seen on the northern summer solstice.
	Artifact	A man-made object, especially one of cultural or archaeological significance.
	Assassinate	To murder an important person in a surprise attack for political or religious reasons.
	Atgeir	A type of polearm, or spear-like weapon, used during the Viking Age in Scandinavia and Norse colonies in the British Isles and Iceland.
	Aurora Borealis	A natural electrical phenomenon characterized by the appearance of streamers of reddish or greenish light in the sky seen near the north pole. The effect is caused by the collision of charged particles from the sun with atoms in the ionosphere, the upper atmosphere.
	Autonomy	To self-govern; freedom from external control or influence; to be independent.

A Child's Geography

B Basalt	A dark, fine-grained volcanic rock that sometimes displays a columnar structure.
Battlement	A parapet at the top of a wall, usually of a fort or castle, that has regularly spaced, squared openings for shooting through.
Black Death	Also known as the Bubonic Plague, the Black Death was an epidemic spread by rats. This disease killed about one third of the European population between 1348 and 1352 AD.
Bog	Wet muddy ground too soft to support a heavy object or body. It is a wetland that accumulates peat, a deposit of dead plant material. Other names for bogs include mire, quagmire, muskeg, and fen.
Bog-shoeing	To wear special footwear so as to walk along the top of the bog without sinking into it.
C Cathedral	A large church that is run by a bishop.
Catholic	Relating to the Roman Catholic Church.
Cawl	In the Welsh language, the word is used to refer to any broth-based soup.
Chips	French fries.
Chuffed	Very pleased.
Circumnavigate	To go all the way around something.
Communism	A state in which all property is publicly owned and shared equally.
Concentration camps	A type of prison where many people are held, often under terrible conditions.
Corbels	A projection jutting out from a wall to support a structure above it.
Coronation	A ceremony for crowning a new king or queen.
Croft	A small rented farm, especially one in Scotland, comprising a plot of arable land attached to a house and with a right of pasturage held in common with other such farms.
D Dala horses	A traditional carved, painted wooden statue of a horse originating in the Swedish province of Dalarna.
Divergent tectonic plate	A linear geographical feature that exists between two tectonic plates causing them to move away from each other.

E	Emigrate	To leave one's own country in order to settle permanently in another.
	Enclave	An enclave is a country, or portion of a country, that is entirely surrounded by another country.
	Exmoor ponies	A horse breed that has roamed the bleak, open moors of southwestern England, known as Exmoor, for centuries.
F	Fen	A low and marshy or frequently flooded area of land.
	Firth	A narrow inlet of the sea; an estuary.
	Fjord	A narrow channel of the sea between high cliffs or hills.
G	Garrison	The troops stationed in a fortress to defend it. The term also refers to the building occupied by the troops stationed in a town to defend it.
	Geyser	A hot spring in which water intermittently boils, sending a tall column of water and steam into the air.
	Gibbet	A gallows or an upright post with an arm on which to hang criminals.
	Glaciers	A large body of continuously accumulating ice and compacted snow, formed in mountain valleys or at the poles, that deforms under its own weight and slowly moves.
	Guild	An organization of people in the same occupation.
H	Habit	A long, loose garment worn by a member of a religious order.
	Haggis	A Scottish dish consisting of a sheep's or calf's offal mixed with suet, oatmeal, and seasoning, then boiled in a bag, traditionally one made from the animal's stomach.
	Hanseatic League	A medieval association formed in 1241 and surviving until the 19 th century. In the later Middle Ages it included over 100 towns and functioned as an independent political power.
	Hardtack	A hard dry bread or biscuit, especially used as rations for sailors.
	Heir apparent	An heir whose claim cannot be set aside by the birth of another heir; a person likely to succeed to the throne.
	Helipad	A landing and takeoff area for helicopters.
	Hot springs	A place where hot water comes up out of the ground.
	Home Rule	The government of a colony, country, or region by its own citizens.

A Child's Geography

I	Immigration	The action of coming to live permanently in a foreign country.
	Inclusions	A body or particle recognizably distinct from the substance in which it is embedded.
	Inlet	A narrow bay off of a lake or the sea.
J	Jarl	A Norse or Danish chief.
K	Kaffee-klatsch	An informal social gathering at which coffee is served.
	Kissing gate	A small gate hung in a U- or V-shaped enclosure, letting one person through at a time.
	Kybyns	A Lithuanian pastry, often stuffed with chopped mutton or beef. However, this versatile pastry can also be filled with mushrooms, vegetables, curd, nuts, or even chocolate.
L	Lagoon	A pool of water that is separated from the main body of water by a reef, sandbar, or other barrier.
	Loch	A lake.
	Longphorts	A ship harbor or Viking base camp in Ireland.
	Lough	A lake.
M	Machicolations	An opening between the supporting corbels of a projecting parapet or the vault of a gate, through which stones or burning objects could be dropped on attackers.
	Magnum Opus	A large and important work of art, music, or literature, especially one regarded as the most important work of an artist or writer.
	Marzipan	A sweet, yellowish paste of ground almonds, sugar, and egg whites, often colored and used to make small cakes or confections.
	Megalith	A large, rough-hewn rock used as a monument or as part of a building.
	Midsummer	The middle part of summer; a Scandinavian holiday.
	Milecastle	A small fort or rectangular fortification built during the period of the Roman Empire placed at intervals of approximately one Roman mile along several major frontiers, such as Hadrian's Wall.
	Monarchy	A country ruled by a king or queen.
	Monoliths	A large single upright block of stone serving as a pillar or monument.

N	Nave	The long central part of a church.
O	Oxbow	A section of a river that forms a “U” shape.
P	Pagan	A person holding religious beliefs other than those of the main world religions.
	Passage tombs	A grave consisting of a narrow passage made of large stones and one or multiple burial chambers covered in earth or stone.
	Peat	A brown, soil-like material characteristic of boggy, acidic ground, consisting of partly decomposed vegetable matter. It is widely cut and dried for use in gardening and as fuel.
	Peninsula	A piece of land that is bordered by water on three sides but connected to mainland.
	Peppercorn rent	A very small payment or a nominal rent used to satisfy the requirements for the creation of a legal contract.
	Pilgrimage	A journey taken for religious purposes.
	Plague	A contagious disease that spreads rapidly and kills many people.
	Prime Meridian	The earth's zero of longitude, which by convention passes through Greenwich, England.
	Protestant	A member of any Christian church that is not part of the Roman Catholic Church.
Q	Quarry	A place from which rock and stone is extracted.
R	Ramparts	Tall, thick walls built for protection.
	Rappel	Descend a rock face or other near-vertical surface by using a doubled rope coiled around the body and fixed at a higher point.
	Rarebit	A dish of melted and seasoned cheese on toast, sometimes with other ingredients.
	Refuge	A condition of being safe or sheltered from pursuit, danger, or trouble.
	Resin	A sticky flammable organic substance, insoluble in water, exuded by some trees and other plants.
	Rune stones	A large stone carved with runes by ancient Scandinavians or Anglo-Saxons.

A Child's Geography

S	Sea level	The average height of the sea's surface. Often used as the baseline for measuring elevation.
	Smorgasbord	A buffet offering a variety of hot and cold meats, salads, hors d'oeuvres, etc.
	Snickleways	A collection of small streets and footpaths in the city of York, England.
	Solstice	Either of the two times in the year, the summer solstice or the winter solstice, when the sun reaches its highest or lowest point in the sky at noon, marked by the longest and shortest days.
	Spit	A narrow point of land projecting into the sea.
	Summer solstice	Also known as midsummer, the summer solstice occurs when one of Earth's poles has its maximum tilt toward the sun.
	Sycophants	A person who acts obedient or loyal toward someone important in order to gain advantage.
T	Taiga	The sometimes swampy coniferous forest of high northern latitudes.
	Thrall	The state of being in someone's power or having great power over someone; a slave.
	Thynghowe	An important Viking Era open-air assembly place or thing, located at Sherwood Forest, in Nottinghamshire, England.
	Trans-Atlantic Gulf Stream	A warm and swift Atlantic ocean current that originates in the Gulf of Mexico and stretches to the tip of Florida, and follows the eastern coastlines of the United States and Newfoundland before crossing the Atlantic Ocean.
	Tuff	A light, porous rock formed by consolidation of volcanic ash.
U	UNESCO World Heritage Site	A place designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as a place of historical or cultural significance.
V	Vellum	A smooth material made from animal skin used for making books.
W	Welsh Cat	Similar to a battering ram, only a Welsh cat clawed away at a defensive wall rather than ramming it.
	Winter solstice	Also known as midwinter, the winter solstice occurs when one of Earth's poles has its maximum tilt away from the sun.



About the author..

Terri has been married to Todd for 30 years and is mom to six delightful children, whom she has taught at home for 21 years. She is the author of *Map Trek*, *Wonders of Old*, *What Really Happened*, and three volumes of *A Child's Geography* series. She is a self-professed homebody, except when she is traveling. She hopes to visit all seven continents one day. Some of the things that Terri loves are her family, friends, coffee, photography, coconut, Jesus, the Word, church, chocolate, writing, reading, walking, smoothies, marketing, country living, and running two businesses (not in that order). You can learn more about her and Knowledge Quest here: <https://knowledgequestmaps.com>.

Colophon: The fonts used in this book are Chaparral Pro, Helvetical Neue, Abeille, and MeathFLF. The paper is 70lb stock glossy finish and the binding has been smyth-sewn.