Scotland: Geography and Topography

Scotland forms the northern half of Great Britain and is two-thirds the size of England and Wales. The Scottish area is 78,772 sq which is about the size of Bavaria with 70,547 sq.

1) Climate

Scotland has an oceanic climate: cool summers and warm winters with slight changes of temperature through the year.

end of May until end of June: brightest season
end of May until end of June: few rain
mid June until beginning of August: comparatively seldom stormy weather

highest temperature
  on the mainland: about 20 degrees
  on the islands: about 17 degrees

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2) Political Map

Politically, Scotland is divided into several areas:
3) Geographical Map

Geographically, it can be divided into three areas which are than further subdivided into the Highlands and the Lowlands:

3.1) The Southern Uplands

"The Southern Uplands are the most beautiful but least visited area of Scotland. " (Taylor 1996)

The region is a fertile landscape with historical castles and abbeys. Features of the Southern Uplands are rock bays on the coastline and soft hills, vast forestland and numerous rivers on the heartland. The southern area is very
good for walking, mountain biking or climbing.
- **mountains**: Eildon Hills (Scott’s View), Galloway Hills (Range of the Awful Hand, Merrick is the forefinger)
- highest **peak**: Merrick with 843 meters (2,766 feet)
- long **rivers**: River Tweed
- **lochs**: Loch Ken, Loch Dee
- **forests**: Galloway Forest, Forest of Ae, Mabie Forest
- **cities**: Melrose, Peebles, Kelso
- home of famous **Scots**: Robert Burns (*Alloway)

### 3.2) The Central Lowlands

"**The Central Lowlands are full of contrasts: picturesque landscapes face big, modern industrial cities.**" (Clough 2000)

The Central Lowlands contain Scotland's main industrial belt allocating natural resources like coal. Most of the population lives in this area, mainly in the two largest national cities Edinburgh and Glasgow. A more rural area is the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park only 30 km from Glasgow. Especially the Trossachs are a real tourist hot spot. The natural geological dividing line between the Central Lowlands and Highlands is the Highland Boundary Fault from Arran continuing through Loch Lomond to Stonehaven.
- **mountains**: Ochil Hills, Sidlaws, Campsie Fells
- highest **peak**: Ben Cleuch with 721m (Ochil Hills)
- **rivers**: River Clyde, River Forth, Firth of Forth
- **longest national river**: River Tay with 193 km
- **area of costal water**: Firth of Clyde
- Britain’s largest **loch**: Loch Lomond with 71,1 sq
- famous **cities**: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, Dundee, Stirling
- islands: Arran, Isle of Bute
- islands in Loch Lomond: Inchcailloch, Torrinch/ Inchtore, Creinch, Inchmurrin

3.3) The Highlands and Islands

"For many people around the world, the Highlands ‘are’ Scotland."
(visitscotland.com)
The Highland mountains “tell of an incredible history, of piece of continent that has travelled the globe, been pummelled into mountains, rocked by volcanic eruptions and pulled apart along rifts.”
(visitscotland.com)

The Highlands comprise mountains of sandstone, granite and moor. The region accounts more than half the total area of the country but apart from the cities Aberdeen, Inverness and Dundee few of the major population lives there. The Road to the Isles from Fort William to the fishing harbour Mallaig can be taken either by car or by train. The West Highland Way is by far the most popular footpath in Scotland stretching from Loch Lomond to Ben Nevis.

Scotland has 790 different islands of which 130 are inhabited. The major groups are the Inner and Outer Hebrides, the Orkney Islands and the Shetland Isles. Ferries to the Inner and Outer Hebrides leave from Oban or Ullapool.
- mountains: The Cairngorms, Grampian Mountains, Ben Rinnes
- Britain’s highest peak: Ben Nevis with 1343 m (4406 feet)
- glens: Glen Coe, Glen Shiel, Great Glen
- rivers: Sandwood River, River Dee, River Don
- **lochs**: Loch Awe, Loch Ness, Loch Leven, Loch Linnhe
- **islands**: Orkney Islands, Inner and Outer Hebrides (Lewis, Harris, Skye, Mull), Shetland Isles
- famous **cities**: Oban, Aberdeen, Inverness, Fort William, Ullapool, Dundee
- home of famous **Scots**: Sir James Matthew Barrie (*Kirriemuir), Neil Miller Gunn (*Dunbeath)

### 3.3.1) Ben Rinnes

Ben Rinnes is 840 m high and southwest of small town Keith. From the summit 8 counties can be seen: Aberdeenshire, Banffshire, Moray, Nairnshire, Inverness-shire, Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland, and Caithness, on a clear day even the Moray coast. The summit is comprised of granite tors. According to legend Benn Rinnes was once the haunt of whisky smugglers and other outlaws.

### 4) The Four Scottish “Capitals”

**Edinburgh**
The historic city is of course Scotland’s capital. 'Edinburgh,' said writer Robert Louis Stevenson, 'is what Paris ought to be'.

**Glasgow**
Glasgow is a place which accommodates internationally acclaimed museums and galleries and is famous for its diverse architecture, especially for the Art Nouveau ‘Glasgow Style’.

Over 200 arts organisations, including Scottish Ballet and Scottish Opera, are based there creating the cutting-edge productions and attracting high-profile exhibitions that led to the city being crowned as a European City of Culture. Glasgow is a ‘cultural capital’ and the largest city in Scotland.
Inverness
Inverness is well known as the ‘Capital of the Highlands’, a hub. It is a base for exploring the Highland area.

Stirling
Sterling used to be the Scottish capital. Nowadays is the national ‘heritage capital’, for most significant events in the history of Scotland took place there.

5) Plant and Animal Life
70 % of the Scottish surface was covered with natural forests which have all been cleared mainly in the 18th century due to a need of wood for the shipbuilding industry and a need of space for the sheep husbandry. Today about 15 % of the surface are forested. Most of the forestland can be found in the southern and eastern Highlands. Oak and mountain ash are the most frequent deciduous trees and fir, pine tree and larches the most frequent conifers. Other plant species are mosses or fern. An important landmark is the national emblem, the thistle.

Whale watching has turned into a popular sport. Places to do that are for example Lerwick, Stornoway, Mull, Oban or Sumburgh Head. There is also Highland cattle, sheep, Shetland and Eriskay ponys, Scottish sheepdogs, birds which can be watched in several national bird observatories, midges and sometimes even lamas.
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