

Is Great Britain so British ?

Today in the Britain'news we are going to explain how the different origins of the population have influenced British identity.

People around the world think of British people as tea drinkers. We'll easily admit that drinking a cup of tea is indeed very British. But is tea really British? The tea first comes from China. People were drinking it for its medicinal effects. Since the 16th century, the East Indian Company exported tea all over the world. Thanks to this fact the tea became a common drink. It is a known drink that all British drink.

Your favorite food : fish & chips ? stir fry ? curry ? A recent study by Food Network UK has shown that the British favourite food is Chinese stir-fry. It's a Cantonese creation which is served with fresh vegetables or with noodles. British people love this dish because it's easy to cook and it takes few minutes. Tourists may think that British people always eat cottage pie, sausages and mash or fish and chips, but it's a stereotype because to most British people, these dishes are too boring. British people usually eat sweet and sour chicken, Thai green and red curry, King prawns and Szechuan noodles for example because they really love Asian food. Sushi and noodles are now cooked as regularly as spaghetti and potatoes. They like curry food too which is from India. British people eat curry food as often as fish and chips. Finally, exotic tastes from all around the world like Thailand and Japan are appreciated by the Britons.

Being British also means you need to be prepared for rainy days and keep your umbrella by. Let's see how British the umbrella is generally black with the wooden handle. The umbrella has been invented in 11th century before Jesus Christ by an emperor (Wang Mang 王莽) of China. The umbrella, was first used as decoration on wagons, in China for religious parades. Asian women used umbrellas against the sun because in their culture it is best to have white skin. At first the umbrella was made of sheets or feathers, it couldn't be used to protect oneself from the rain. It was necessary to wait for 18th century for the umbrella to arrive in the UK.

What about our favorite hobbies or sports? Whether you are a fan of football, polo or snooker, you might be surprised to discover they all have one thing in common: they are not originally British ! Football was created in the Middle Ages in Italy. The rules were different. There were 27 players in each team and the game lasted 50 minutes. It was in reality a mix of rugby, football and wrestling. Snooker was created by Neville Francis Fitzgerald Chamberlain in 1875 in India. Then introduced in Britain in 1885. It's a variation of billiards. Polo was discovered in central Asia. It's a sport team on a horse. So these favourite sports have oriental origins.

Let's have a look at some of our most talented celebrities: singers, models, sportsmen and artists who represent Great Britain. To what extent are they British? Ishiguro Kazuo was born in Nawazaki, in Japan but he is British. His family moved to England when he was 6. He is a famous British writer. He wrote "Never let me go". Many of his books were adapted to movies, "Never let me go", with Andrew Garfield (who also played Spider-Man). Mika was born in Beirut, in Lebanon. His birth name is Michael Holbrook Penniman, Jr. His father is American and his mother is Lebanese. He left Lebanon because of the war when he was one year old, in order to go to Paris. Then at 8 he moved to London. He became English by naturalization. Mika is a British singer and songwriter. Naomi Campbell is a British singer, actress and model. Her mother comes from Jamaica, but Naomi always lived in England and she grew up here. She studied here and she speak in english. So we can say that she is British with Jamaicans origins. Raheem Sterling is a British football player. He comes from Jamaica. He come in England when he was 7. He plays in Manchester City, in England. He is famous in the world. All these celebrities come from different countries but they live in England and are British.



Carnival celebrating multiculturalism in London: the Notting Hill Festival.

There's no better way to celebrate our diversity as a British people than going to the Notting Hill Festival. The Notting Hill Festival is the 2nd biggest festival of the world. It takes place the last week of August in the street of London. This festival was created in the 60s by Trinidadian and Jamaican immigrants. They celebrate multiculturalism. During the parade, people dance mostly on traditional and reggae music, they eat food from different cultures and they wear traditional.

So, in the end... If our favourite food and drink, hobbies and sports, celebrities and festivals come from abroad, what makes us British ? Being British means that your culture is made from many others. Our food comes from Asia, our clothes from Europe, our TV programs from America... When we look at the diagram below, we can see that there is a majority of white people but Asian and Black people also represent a big part of the British population.

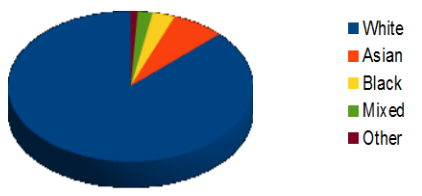


Diagram of the different ethnic groups who live in the UK.

We'll quote Benjamin Zephaniah to conclude. In his famous poem "The British", he refers to the different nationalities present in Great Britain as ingredients. Zephaniah wrote his poem like a recipe. The recipe will be a success when all ingredients – "*Jamaicans, Dominicans, Trinidadians and Bajans, Ethiopians, Chinese, Vietnamese and Sudanese (...)* Afghans, Spanish, Turkish, Kurdish, Japanese" - are given equal importance and respect:

*As they mix and blend allow their languages to flourish
Binding them together with English.*