

Climate, flora and fauna



British weather is variable. However, it is temperate and there are four distinct seasons of fairly equivalent length, with colder and wetter days in winter. The regional differences can be summarised as follows:

- **North-west:** cool summers, mild winters, heavy rain all year
- **North-east:** cool summers, cold winters, steady rain all year
- **South-east:** warm summers, mild winters, light rain all year, especially in summer
- **South-west:** warm summers, mild winters, heavy rain all year, especially in winter.

It usually rains one in three days in the UK and the wettest place is Snowdonia in Wales, with more than 3,000 mm of rain a year, while East Anglia only receives less than 700 mm a year.

Average temperatures vary according to latitude and altitude, from 7°C in the Shetland islands to 11°C on the South-west coast of England, while the coldest place is Ben Nevis, with an average temperature of less than 0°C. The average daily temperature in July in Glasgow is 19°C compared with 22°C in London.

Scotland is more affected by severe weather than the rest of the country, with snow in the Highlands and strong winds.

The United Kingdom has different types of **vegetation**. Originally, oak forests covered the low lands, while pine forests and patches of moorland covered the higher or sandy ground. Today, fairly extensive forests remain in Scotland with pines and birches and in the South-east of England with oaks, elms, ashes and beeches.

The **fauna** is similar to North-west continental Europe, but with fewer species. Some of the larger mammals - such as the wolf, bear, reindeer - are extinct, while the red and roe deer are protected. Common smaller mammals are foxes, hares, hedgehogs, rabbits and weasels. 230 different species of birds reside in the UK and another 200 are migratory. Rivers and lakes are full of salmon, trout and pike.



The USA have six climate regions:

- **Northwest Pacific:** the wettest part of the country, with scattered rain showers all over the year, but with warm summers.
- **Mid-south Pacific Rockies:** dry and delightful summers. Excellent weather all year round with tolerable winters in California, but very cold winters in Montana and Colorado.
- **Midwest:** dry with rain in late spring and early summer. Summers are pleasant, but winters can be harsh, with snow and heavy chilly winds.
- **Northeast:** rainy with heavy snow and freezing rain in winter, and sunny and warm summers.
- **Southeast:** moderate rain throughout the year, some snow and freezing in winter, but the other seasons are very pleasant.
- **Southwest:** the hottest region, with heavy rains and storms, dangerous lightning and tornadoes. Winters are short, spring and autumn are long with pleasant temperatures, and summers are very hot.

There are at least 7,000 species of indigenous **flora**. The eastern forests include pine, oak, maple, beech, birch, and gum. The central forests are still an important source of timber, hickory, ash and walnut. Pine, tupelo, pecan, birch, and sycamore are found in the southern forest along the Gulf coast. The Pacific forest is the most spectacular for its enormous redwoods and Douglas firs. In the Southwest there are giant cactus, yucca, and the Joshua tree. The Western Cordillera is largely covered with desert shrubs, and the lower slopes on the coastline of Alaska are covered with coniferous forests.

As to the **fauna**, there are 432 species of mammals, such as the deer, moose, antelope, bighorn sheep, mountain goat and bear. Year-round and migratory birds abound: loons, wild ducks and geese in the lake countries, and gulls, sandpipers and herons along the coasts. Wrens, owls, sparrows and woodpeckers appear in large quantities. Lakes and rivers are rich of trout, catfish, sea bass and cod, while along the coast there are shellfish. Alligators appear in the southern rivers and four species of poisonous snakes live there.



- 1 Read the information on the weather in the UK, complete the table and, in pairs, choose the best period to visit each part of the country.

Climate region	Weather in winter	Weather in summer	Rain/snow/wind	Best season for a visit
North-west (England + Scotland and Northern Ireland)				
North-east (England + Scotland)				
South-east (+ Midlands and East Anglia)				
South-west (+ Wales)				



- 2 During your trip in the UK, you will certainly see some birds. Listen to an extract about birds and poetry, then say why birds are important for poets and complete the table.

Poet	Poem	Year	Bird	Italian translation
	<i>The Nightingale</i>			
		1820		
Percy Bysshe Shelley				
		1845		
Alfred Lord Tennyson				
			swallow	



- 3 Read the information on the weather in the USA, complete the table and, in pairs, choose the best period to visit each part of the country and what particular flora you can find in the area.

Climate region	Weather in winter	Weather in summer	Flora	Best season for a visit
Northwest Pacific				
Mid-south Pacific				
Rockies				
Midwest				
Northeast				
Southeast				
Southwest				



- 4 With the help of a dictionary find the Italian equivalent of these USA trees and animals.

Trees		Animals
Ash	Sycamore	Bass
Beech	Tupelo	Gull
Birch	Walnut	Heron
Hickory	Red wood	Loon
Maple	Douglas fir	Moose
Oak	Yucca	Sandpiper
Pecan	Shrub	Wren

