**Facts about Scotland**

Official name: Scotland, Alba

Form of government: Constitutional monarchy

Capital city: Edinburgh

Largest city: Glasgow

Population: Around 5.2 million

Monetary unit: Pound sterling (GBP)

Official languages: English/Gaelic/Scots

Area: 78,772 km² (30,414 sq mi)

Major mountain ranges: Southern Uplands, Central Lowlands

Major rivers: River Tay, River Spey

Scotland is a country in Europe and is part of the island of Great Britain (Europe’s largest island) alongside England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This lush, beautiful country is bursting with green spaces, lush forests, towering mountains and vast lochs (the Scottish word for lakes!).

The country can be roughly divided into three areas – lowlands, Highlands and islands. The lowlands are known for their fertile farmland and thick woodlands, the Highlands for their towering mountains, sweeping moorland and deep lochs, and the islands for their compact wild landscapes, beautiful beaches and far-reaching sea views.

Did you know?

Hundreds of millions of years ago Scotland’s landmass was once completely separate from England and Wales – it was actually joined to America and Greenland!

With so many habitats, there’s plenty of fascinating wildlife to see in Scotland. You’ll find river dwellers such as otters, salmon and trout and red squirrels and birds, such as capercaillies, find refuge in the thick forests. Out on the mountains and in the moorland you might spot majestic red deer or mountain hares while the islands are the perfect place to spot seals and seabirds, such as puffins.

Many animal species are protected in Scotland and there are two National Parks – the Cairngorms National Park and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park – as well as numerous beautiful nature reserves, that have been set up to protect the land and the wildlife that lives there.