**Scotland** ([/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AIPA_for_English)[ˈskɒt.lənd](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AIPA_for_English#Key)[/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AIPA_for_English); [Scots](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scots_language): [[ˈskɔt.lənd]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AIPA); [Scottish Gaelic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Gaelic_language): [*Alba*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alba) [[ˈal̪ˠapə]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AIPA_for_Scottish_Gaelic) ( [listen](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4f/Alba-gd.ogg))) is a [country](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Country) that covers the northern third of the island of [Great Britain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Britain) and is [part](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Countries_of_the_United_Kingdom) of the [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom).[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-Stats_1-12)[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-Country-13)[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-14) It shares a border with [England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) to the south, and is otherwise surrounded by the [Atlantic Ocean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_Ocean), with the [North Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Sea) to the east and the [North Channel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Channel_%28British_Isles%29) and [Irish Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Sea) to the south-west. In addition to the mainland, the country is made up of more than 790 islands,[[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-Scottish_Executive-15) including the [Northern Isles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Isles) and the [Hebrides](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrides).

[Edinburgh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edinburgh), the country's capital and second-largest city, was the hub of the [Scottish Enlightenment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Enlightenment) of the 18th century, which transformed Scotland into one of the commercial, intellectual, and industrial powerhouses of [Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe). [Glasgow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasgow), Scotland's largest city,[[16]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-16) was once one of the world's leading industrial cities and now lies at the centre of the [Greater Glasgow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Glasgow) conurbation. Scottish waters consist of a large sector of the North Atlantic and the North Sea,[[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-17) containing the largest oil reserves in the [European Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Union). This has given [Aberdeen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aberdeen), the third-largest city in Scotland, the title of Europe's oil capital.[[18]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-18)

The [Kingdom of Scotland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Scotland) emerged as an independent sovereign state in the [Early Middle Ages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Middle_Ages) and continued to exist until 1707. Having entered into a [personal union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_union) with the kingdoms of [England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_England) and [Ireland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Ireland) following [James VI](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_VI_and_I)'s succession to the English and Irish thrones in 1603, Scotland subsequently entered into a [political union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_union) with England on 1 May 1707 to create a single [Kingdom of Great Britain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Great_Britain).[[19]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-Keay-19)[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-Mackie-20) This union resulted from the [Treaty of Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Union) agreed in 1706 and enacted by the twin [Acts of Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Union_1707) passed by the Parliaments of both countries, despite popular opposition and anti-union riots in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and elsewhere.[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-1707_protests-21)[[22]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-22) Great Britain itself subsequently entered into a political union with Ireland on 1 January 1801 to create the [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_of_Great_Britain_and_Ireland).

Scotland's legal system has remained separate from those of England and [Wales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wales) and [Northern Ireland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland), and Scotland constitutes a distinct jurisdiction in public and private law.[[23]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-23) The continued existence of legal, educational and religious institutions distinct from those in the remainder of the UK have all contributed to the continuation of Scottish culture and national identity since the 1707 union.[[24]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-administrative_control-24) In 1999, a devolved legislature, the [Scottish Parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Parliament), was reconvened with authority over many areas of home affairs following a referendum in 1997. In May 2011, the [Scottish National Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_National_Party) won an overall majority in the Scottish Parliament. As a result, a [referendum on independence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_independence_referendum%2C_2014) will take place on 18 September 2014.[[25]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-25)[[26]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-26)

Scotland is a member nation of the [British–Irish Council](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British%E2%80%93Irish_Council),[[27]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-27) and the [British–Irish Parliamentary Assembly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British%E2%80%93Irish_Parliamentary_Assembly). Scotland is represented in the European Union and the [European Parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Parliament) with six MEPs.[[2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-ScotMEPs-28)

Repeated glaciations, which covered the entire land mass of modern Scotland, destroyed any traces of human habitation that may have existed before the [Mesolithic period](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesolithic_period). It is believed the first post-glacial groups of [hunter-gatherers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hunter-gatherer) arrived in Scotland around 12,800 years ago, as the ice sheet retreated after the [last glaciation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_glacial_period).[[31]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-31)[[32]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-32)

Groups of settlers began building the first known permanent houses on Scottish soil around 9,500 years ago, and the first villages around 6,000 years ago. The well-preserved village of [Skara Brae](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skara_Brae) on the mainland of [Orkney](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orkney) dates from this period. [Neolithic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neolithic) habitation, burial and ritual sites are particularly common and well preserved in the [Northern Isles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Isles) and [Western Isles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Isles), where a lack of trees led to most structures being built of local stone.[[33]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-33)

The discovery in Scotland of a 4000-year-old tomb with burial treasures at [Forteviot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forteviot), near [Perth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perth%2C_Scotland), the capital of a [Pictish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Picts) Kingdom in the 8th and 9th centuries AD, is unrivalled anywhere in Britain. It contains the remains of an [early Bronze Age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric_Scotland) ruler laid out on white [quartz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quartz) pebbles and birch bark. It was also discovered for the first time early Bronze Age people placed flowers in their graves.[[34]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-34)[[35]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-TFDB-35)

Scotland may have been part of a Late Bronze Age maritime trading culture called the [Atlantic Bronze Age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_Bronze_Age), which included other [Celtic nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_nations), and the areas that became England, France, Spain, and Portugal.[[36]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-Koch-36)[[37]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-Koch2009-37)[[38]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-38)[[39]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-39)

In the winter of 1850, a severe storm hit Scotland, causing widespread damage and over 200 deaths.[[40]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-bryson2010-40) In the Bay of Skaill, the storm stripped the earth from a large irregular knoll, known as "Skerrabra". When the storm cleared, local villagers found the outline of a village, consisting of a number of small houses without roofs.[[40]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-bryson2010-40)[[41]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-OSB-41) William Watt of Skaill, the local [laird](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laird), began an amateur excavation of the site, but after uncovering four houses, the work was abandoned in 1868.[[41]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-OSB-41) The site remained undisturbed until 1913, when during a single weekend the site was plundered by a party with shovels who took away an unknown quantity of artefacts.[[40]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-bryson2010-40) In 1924, another storm swept away part of one of the houses and it was determined the site should b

The [Kingdom of the Picts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_the_Picts) (based in [Fortriu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortriu) by the 6th century) was the state that eventually became known as "Alba" or "Scotland". The development of "Pictland", according to the historical model developed by [Peter Heather](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Heather), was a natural response to Roman imperialism.[[49]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-49) Another view places emphasis on the [Battle of Dun Nechtain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Dun_Nechtain), and the reign of [Bridei m. Beli](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bridei_III_of_the_Picts) (671–693), with another period of consolidation in the reign of [Óengus mac Fergusa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%93engus_I_of_the_Picts) (732–761).[[50]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-50)

The Kingdom of the Picts as it was in the early 8th century, when [Bede](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bede) was writing, was largely the same as the kingdom of the Scots in the reign of [Alexander I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_I_of_Scotland) (1107–1124). However, by the tenth century, the Pictish kingdom was dominated by what we can recognise as Gaelic culture, and had developed a traditional story of an Irish conquest around the ancestor of the contemporary royal dynasty, [Cináed mac Ailpín](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_I_of_Scotland) (Kenneth MacAlpin).[[51]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-Lynch_359-51)[[52]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-52)[[53]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-53)

From a base of territory in eastern Scotland north of the [River Forth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Forth) and south of the [River Oykel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Oykel), the kingdom acquired control of the lands lying to the north and south. By the 12th century, the kings of Alba had added to their territories the [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English)-speaking land in the south-east and attained overlordship of [Gaelic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Gaelic)-speaking [Galloway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galloway) and [Norse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Norse)-speaking [Caithness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caithness); by the end of the 13th century, the kingdom had assumed approximately its modern borders. However, processes of cultural and economic change beginning in the 12th century ensured Scotland looked very different in the later Middle Ages.

The push for this change was the reign of [David I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_I_of_Scotland) and the [Davidian Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Davidian_Revolution). Feudalism, government reorganisation and the first legally recognised towns (called [burghs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burgh)) began in this period. These institutions and the immigration of French and Anglo-French knights and churchmen facilitated cultural osmosis, whereby the culture and language of the low-lying and coastal parts of the kingdom's original territory in the east became, like the newly acquired south-east, English-speaking, while the rest of the country retained the Gaelic language, apart from the Northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland, which remained under Norse rule until 1468.[[54]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-54)[[55]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-Barrow-55)[[56]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland#cite_note-56) The Scottish state entered a largely successful and stable period between the 12th and 14th centuries, there was relative peace with England, trade and educational links were well developed with the Continent and at the height of this cultural flowering [John Duns Scotus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Duns_Scotus) was one of Europe's most important and influential philosophers.



The [Wallace Monument](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wallace_Monument) commemorates [William Wallace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Wallace), the 13th-century Scottish hero.