

ENGLISH PEOPLE WAY OF LIFE

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English character. It is no secret that in order to learn how to communicate with the people of a country and, most importantly, to get some sort of pleasure out of doing so, you need to understand the peculiarities of their national character.

The English character is, on the one hand, probably the most contradictory and paradoxical of all the European nations, and almost any element has an opposite facet. On the other hand it is very integrated and well defined, traceable back over many centuries. Much of the English character is put down to the fact that the country is an island, and there is even the term “island psychology”. But there are many island nations around the world, and only one England. Obviously, there is a combination of various factors, the mixture into one melting pot of various peoples, the Celts, the Brits, the Picts, the Anglo-Saxons and many others, the fertilizing contribution of the Roman and Norman invaders, and the spice of close contacts with their continental neighbours seasoned with their own victories and conquests. All of this, when put into a certain climate and a specific geographic location has led to the appearance of the race that is so different from the other Europeans.

English queues. Never try to slip past the queue in England. It is an unforgivable crime. It would be better to get drunk and smash the window of a local shop: everybody would simply come to the conclusion that your football team had just lost, and then you will find out what real English sympathy is.

Law-abiding nation. The law is another matter. Here the English seems to invest much more common sense and composure. On the whole, the English are a law-abiding race. In Russia and Finland, as everybody knows, in order to prevent accidents on the roads you would have to ban the consumption of alcohol almost completely. In Italy, the hotel system is tightly controlled; they fill out mounds of papers, ask the guests for their passports, sign endless receipts, which you have to take from them, as a special police officer has the right to check them. In England, the fuss with the papers at hotels has largely been done away with. Being law-abiding is their natural state.

English humor. The serious English are also comics. It is common to hear foreigners use the phrase: “typical English humor”, but what exactly does it mean? As a nation, the English are proud of their particular sense of humor and believe that it is unique. English people say that foreigners, in particular the French and Americans, don't understand their jokes. This statement is, of course, a bit unfair, but it does reflect some differences in what people in different countries and cultures find funny. The strange thing is that British humour is based on two rather contradictory foundations. On the one hand, there is a typically dry, almost sarcastic understatement. On the other, there is a national obsession with something called “toilet humor”. The secret of “typical English humor” is in its simplicity. There is no hidden sub-text, and the physiological or toilet humor is precisely that. It's ideal is the ability to laugh at oneself – at one's own faults. “He is a man of humor” or “He has no sense of humor” is often heard in Britain, where humor is so highly praised and appreciated. “The ideal man must have a sense of humor; otherwise he is far from perfect”.

Cockney. “Come on darlin'... amazin' bargain ... you ain't seen nuffink like it!”

Traditionally someone born in the East End is known as a cockney although this name is given nowadays to anyone who speaks like a Londoner. Typically they change certain vowel sounds so that the sound in “late” becomes more like that in “light”. In addition they do

not use usual “t” sound of Standard English but stop the air in their throat. Like some foreign learners of English they seem to have problems with “th” and use an “f” instead!

English habits of politeness. Some greetings in English are very informal: a simple “good morning” or a wave of the hand across the street is quite enough. Handshakes are only exchanged on a first introduction or as a token of agreement in business situations or congratulation. However, the British are supposed to be very polite, with apologetic manners. “Oh, I’m so sorry!” can be heard everywhere every time.

Cricket “English national Game”. Cricket is played since the 1500s. The scoring of this team game is a mystery even to many British people. Each team takes it in turn to bat. The bat is held in both hands, the bottom of the bat resting on the ground. The other team bowls and gets the ball back. Players usually wear white clothes.

Bodyguards of the Sovereign. Queen Elisabeth II is Colonel-in-Chief of the Household Division. The Household Division is made up of seven Guards Regiments, comprising the two Regiments of Mounted Guards (or Household Cavalry Regiment): The Life Guards – who are the senior, though not the oldest; and The Blues and Royals – the Royal Horse Guards (The Blues) amalgamated with the Royal Dragoons (1st Dragoons) to form a new Regiment in the Household Cavalry), and five Regiments of Foot Guards:

Grenadier, Coldstream, Scots, Irish, and Welsh Soldiers of the Household Division are renowned for the unique proficiency with which they carry out ceremonial and operational duties.

Uniforms. The Guards can be recognized by their Service Dress: by the color of the tunics (red, blue, khaki), by the colour of tunic collars, epaulettes and belts, by the collar badges or regimental emblems (comprising traditional emblems of the Guards, i.e. the rose, the garter star, the leek, the shamrock or the thistle), bearskin caps or helmets, by the red or white helmet plums made from horsehair or the plumes which can be worn on the right-hand side or on the left-hand side of the bearskin cap, by the buttons which can be worn (spaced) on the tunics and tunic cuffs either in pairs or in threes. The Guards can also be recognized by the four and five-button groupings on their tunics, cuffs or skirts.

Musicians. Today the seven Regiments of the Household Division all have bands of musicians, each directed by an Officer. The trumpets and drums can be heard at Horse Guards Parade or at Sovereign's Birthday Parade. The Scots Guards are led by their pipers. The Piper in Full Dress wears a plaid and kilt in royal tartan. His feather bonnet bears a blue and red hackle.

On State occasions the Drum Majors of the Foot Guards wear State Dress. The livery is similar to that of the Household Cavalry, but with white gaiters and a gold-fringed crimson apron.

Active Service. Men from the Regiments of the Household Division have taken part in nearly every war or internal security operation in which the British Army has been involved during the past 330 years. They display their fighting qualities, skills and courage in jungle, desert and mountain in freezing cold and steaming heat. Those men whom you see in their smart uniforms, Trooping the Colour or mountain guards are the same men who in combat clothing, discharge operational duties worldwide.

The seven Guards Regiments are renowned and respected around the world for their self-discipline, smartness and reliability. Today the Regiments are manned by thoroughly modern soldiers. They can be seen at home at Horse Guards Parade or at Sovereign's Birthday Parade (her Majesty the Queen rides the horse in an ivory-mounted phaeton made for Queen Victoria), at which the Trooping the Colour ceremony takes place and which is held annually in June by the Household Division and on operational duty.

The British save their customs and traditions carefully because they want to preserve the nation.