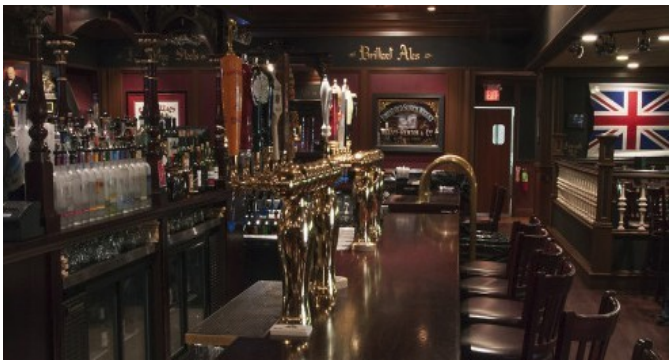
British Public Houses (Pubs)

There are over 60,000 pubs in the UK and they date back to the eleventh century. British people drink an average of 70 litres of beer every year. More than 80% of this beer is drunk in pubs and clubs. Most British pubs are open from 11am to 11pm. Some pubs are open 24 hours.



Pubs are popular social meeting places and are an important part of British culture. In pubs, people talk, eat, drink, meet their friends and relax. Pubs often have two bars, one noisy and one quiet, and many have a garden where people can sit in the summer. Children can go in a pub, with an adult, only where they serve food. If a bar does not serve food, only adults (18 years old) can enter. Groups of friends normally buy 'rounds' of drinks, where one person buys drinks for all the members of the group. Many pubs offer games such as darts, pool and gambling machines (for adults only). The legal age to buy alcohol is 18. It is illegal to sell alcohol to someone who already appears drunk. Pub workers can ask for ID if the person looks under 18. It is illegal to buy alcohol for a minor (under 18 years old).

The Bar

In most pubs, you must go to the bar to order drinks and you pay for them immediately. People who work on the bar are called "barmen" and "barmaids" and they do not expect tips. Pubs which serve food sometimes offer table service. In these cases, you pay later, as in restaurants. It is usual to tip your waiter/waitress at the end of the meal (10%). Sometimes this is included in the bill. It is sometimes difficult to get served at the bar when pubs are busy, because people do not make queues. The bar staff usually try to serve the people in the order that they arrive but sometimes it can be confusing. If you accidentally spill someone's drink, it is expected that you offer to buy another drink for him/her.

British Beer/Ale

Most pubs belong to a brewery (a company which makes beer) and can sell only beer that the brewery makes. However, "*Free Houses*" are independent and can sell many different types of beer. Beer is sold on tap (from a barrel under the bar) or in bottles or cans.

Bitter – a dark brown beer, served at room temperature
Lager – a light, golden beer, served cold
Stout – a very dark (sometimes black) beer, served cool (e.g. Guinness).

Beer is served in quantities of "**One Pint**" and "**Half Pint**". Beers are usually between 3.5% and 6% alcohol.

Cider (made from apples) is also a very popular drink served in pubs. It is also served in beer glasses, but be careful – it is often stronger than beer! Most pubs also offer a range of international beers, such as German, Belgian, American and French. They are usually served in bottles or cans. Pubs also sell wine, spirits (whisky, vodka, etc.) and soft drinks (juice, fizzy drinks, etc.).

Pub Food

Most pubs serve lunch, and many also serve dinner. A popular lunch is "*Ploughman's Lunch*" which consists of bread, cheese and pickles. Other typical pub food includes:

a) scampi (a type of shellfish) and chips (fried potatoes)
b) pie and chips
c) chicken and chips
d) fish and chips

Names

Pubs have traditional names which date back to over 600 years. Some typical names are:

- The White Swan
- The Crown
- The King's Arms
- The Red Lion
- The White Horse

There is usually a sign outside the pub showing the pub's name with a picture.