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## THE GREAT BRITAIN BEFORE THE ANGLO-SAXON INVASION

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**Annotation.** Before the Anglo-Saxon invasion, Great Britain had already witnessed thousands of years of human development and cultural transformation. From the earliest prehistoric settlers to the powerful Celtic tribes, the island's history was rich with change and innovation. Stone monuments like Stonehenge and ancient hillforts reflect complex religious and social structures.

**Keywords:** Prehistoric Britain, Paleolithic period, Mesolithic era, Neolithic settlements, Stonehenge, Avebury, Bronze Age tools, Iron Age societies, Celtic tribes, druids, tribal chieftains, Insular Celtic languages, oral tradition, hillforts, warrior culture, Roman invasion, Emperor Claudius, Roman Britain, Londinium, Eboracum, Verulamium, Roman roads, Hadrian's Wall, Romanization, Latin language, Roman cities, Boudicca's revolt, spread of Christianity, Roman military withdrawal, Picts, Scots, Saxon raids, Germanic mercenaries, collapse of Roman rule, cultural transformation

The history of Great Britain before the Anglo-Saxon invasion includes several major cultural and political phases, from prehistoric settlements to Roman rule. The earliest humans arrived in Britain during the Paleolithic period, around 800,000 years ago, living as hunter-gatherers and using stone tools. In the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, people developed agriculture, settled in permanent communities, and built large stone monuments like Stonehenge and Avebury, which show the spiritual and ceremonial practices of the time. During the Bronze Age, from around 2500 BCE, metal tools were introduced, trade networks expanded, and social hierarchies developed, as seen in burial mounds and decorated artifacts. The Iron Age, beginning around 800 BCE, saw the arrival and rise of the Celts, who brought with them advanced metalwork, tribal social structures, and the use of Insular Celtic languages. Celtic society was led by chieftains and priests known as druids, who played key roles in religion, law, and education. Their culture was oral, relying heavily on storytelling, memory, and ritual rather than writing. In 43 CE, Britain was invaded by the Roman Empire under Emperor Claudius. The Romans established major towns such as Londinium (London), Eboracum (York), and Verulamium (St Albans), introduced roads, centralized administration, and the Latin language, and began the Romanization of local elites.







Hadrian's Wall was constructed in the second century CE to defend against northern tribes like the Picts. Despite resistance from figures like Boudicca, queen of the Iceni, Roman rule remained for nearly four centuries. During this time, Christianity was introduced and gradually spread across the island. Roman influence transformed urban life, architecture, economy, and religion, though many rural areas remained culturally Celtic. By around 410 CE, Roman Britain began to collapse due to internal problems in the Roman Empire, including military overreach and barbarian invasions in continental Europe. Roman troops withdrew, leaving Britain vulnerable to attacks from the Picts, Scots (from Ireland), and Germanic tribes such as the Saxons.

Native British leaders began hiring Germanic mercenaries to help defend their territories, but these groups eventually turned against their hosts. This shift marked the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon invasions, which would reshape British culture, language, and politics for centuries to come.

**Conclusion:** The history of Great Britain before the Anglo-Saxon invasion was marked by rich cultural and social development. From the early hunter-gatherers of the Stone Age to the advanced tribal societies of the Celts, the island was never isolated from change. Monumental sites like Stonehenge and Avebury reflect a deep spiritual life and skilled craftsmanship. The Celts introduced oral traditions, warrior culture, and a religious system led by druids. Roman conquest brought significant changes, including urbanization, roads, trade, and the spread of Latin and Christianity. Roman Britain remained part of the wider Roman Empire for nearly four centuries. However, by the early 5th century, Roman withdrawal left Britain vulnerable and politically unstable. The power vacuum created by Rome's departure opened the door for new invaders, including the Anglo-Saxons. This transition marked the end of ancient Britain and the beginning of early medieval English history.

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