Geography

The Shire is described as a small but beautiful, idyllic and fruitful land, beloved by its hobbit inhabitants. They had agriculture but were not industrialized. The landscape included downland and woods like the English countryside. The Shire was fully inland; most hobbits feared the Sea. The Shire measured 40 leagues (193 km, 120 miles) east to west and 50 leagues (241 km, 150 miles) from north to south, with an area of some 18,000 square miles (47,000 km2). The main and oldest part of the Shire was bordered to the east by the Brandywine River, on the north by uplands rising to the Hills of Evendim, on the west by the Far Downs, and on the south by marshland. It expanded to the east into Buckland between the Brandywine and the Old Forest, and (much later) to the west into the Westmarch between the Far Downs and the Tower Hills.

The Shire was subdivided into four Farthings ("fourth-ings", "quarterings"), as Iceland once was; similarly, Yorkshire was historically divided into three "ridings". The Three-Farthing Stone marked the approximate centre of the Shire. It was inspired by the Four Shire Stone near Moreton-in-Marsh, where once four counties met, but since 1931 only three do. Within the Farthings there are unofficial clan homelands: the Tooks nearly all live in or near Tuckborough in Tookland's Green Hill Country.

Buckland, named for the Brandybuck family, across the Brandywine River to the east of the Shire, and the Westmarch, between the Far Downs and the Tower Hills to the west, were given to the hobbits as the East and West Marches of the Shire by King Elessar after the War of the Ring.