

New Zealand

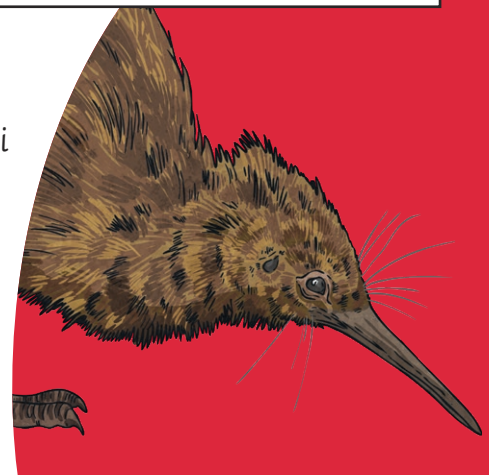


New Zealand is in the south Pacific Ocean and is a remote island country. It is made up of two main islands, the North Island and the South Island, and more than 700 smaller islands. New Zealand is one of the southernmost countries in the world and is south of Fiji and Tonga. It is part of the Australasian subregion of Oceania. New Zealand is known as Aotearoa to the Indigenous Māori, meaning land of the long white cloud.

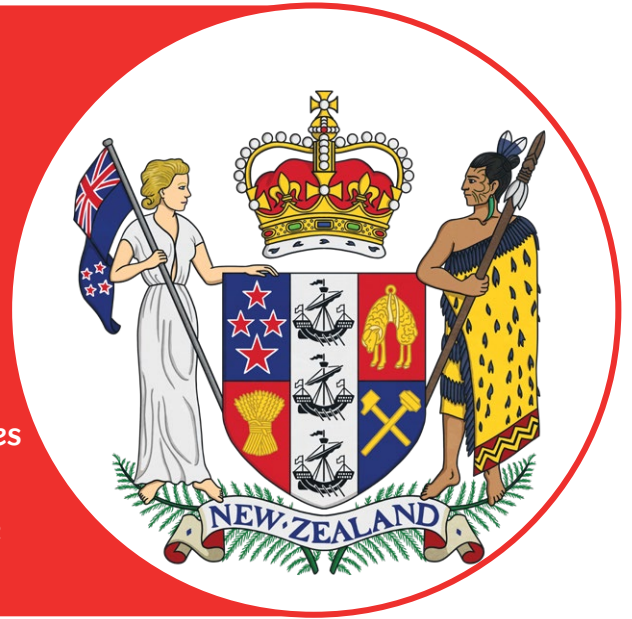
Being so far from the equator, New Zealand has a temperate climate, with four seasons. The snow season runs from June to October. Conditions vary from extremely wet in parts of the South Island to semi-arid and subtropical in the North. There are more than 50 volcanoes in New Zealand, many of which are active. Vegetation types include barren mountain peaks, alpine forests, volcanic calderas and kauri forests, rainforest and dune lands. New Zealand is a beautiful country known for its pristine natural landscapes. New Zealand has been cut off from other land masses for 80 million years, and as such, 80% of the country's trees, ferns and flowering plants are endemic; this means they are not found anywhere else in the world.

Being geographically isolated has resulted in New Zealand having only two native mammals, both of which are bat species. With so few predatory land mammals on the islands, many bird species lost their need for flight over time. Consequently, New Zealand has a large number of endemic flightless birds, including the kiwi, weka, takahe and kakapo.

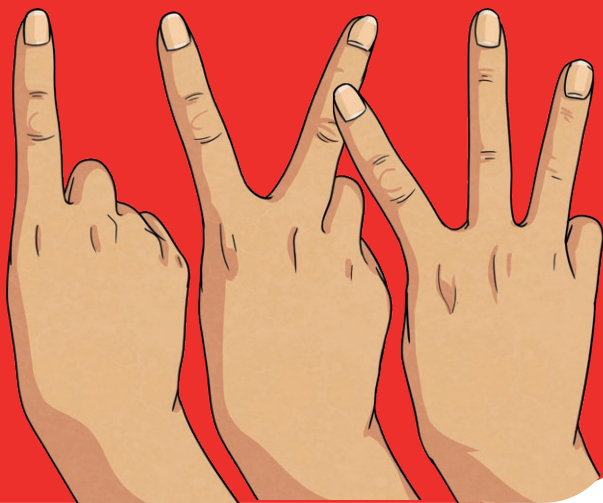
Polynesians first populated New Zealand around 750 years ago. The early settlers arrived by canoe and developed a distinct Māori culture over the next several hundred years. In 1642, the Dutch explorer, Abel Tasman, became the first European explorer to visit New Zealand. European explorers did not return to New Zealand until Captain Cook mapped the coastline in 1769. Missionaries arrived in New Zealand in the early 19th century, converting large numbers of Māori to Christianity.



In 1840, Māori chiefs and representatives of the British Crown signed the Treaty of Waitangi, recognising British sovereignty but maintaining Māori ownership of land. Over the following years, as large numbers of British settlers arrived in New Zealand, disagreements arose between the Māori and the British controlled New Zealand government. The New Zealand Wars ensued and continued from 1845 until 1872. Many Māori Peoples lost their land and their freedom during this period. New Zealand gained independence from the British in 1947.



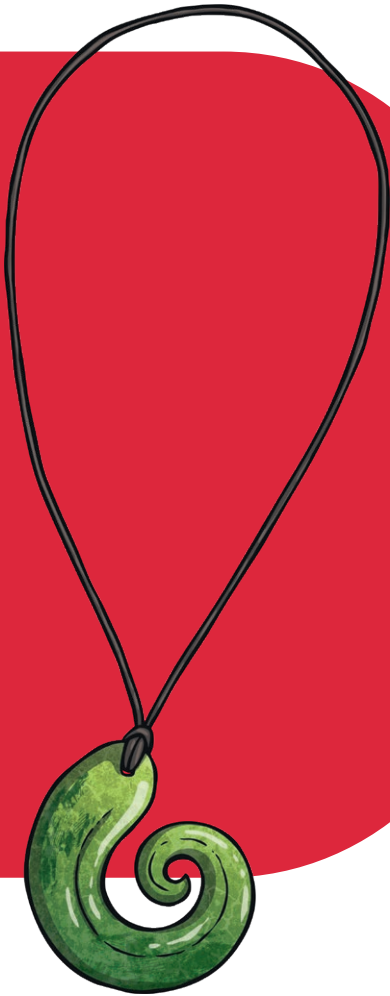
The population of New Zealand is 4.7 million, the majority of which have European ancestry (71%). Māori Peoples are the largest minority group (16%), followed by Asians and Pacific Islanders. New Zealand has an advanced economy. The currency of the country is the New Zealand Dollar (\$). Food products make up 55% of New Zealand's exports. China, Australia and the European Union are New Zealand's main trading partners.



The official languages used in New Zealand are English, Māori and New Zealand Sign Language. Māori is spoken by 4% of the population. New Zealanders are predominantly Christian, but around a third of the population do not follow a traditional religion. The capital of New Zealand is Wellington. The city has a population of around 436 000. The majority of New Zealander people live in urban areas.

New Zealand culture is heavily influenced by western values. New Zealanders with European heritage are known as Pākehā. Pākehā culture is the dominant culture of New Zealand with Māori, Pacific Islander, Polynesian and Asian influence. Māori culture and language have been promoted in recent years to facilitate a better understanding between Māori and Pākehā communities.

Māori culture has Polynesian roots with mythical gods, heroes and creation stories. Māori places significant value on their connection to land and sea and has a culture of communal living. Central to Māori culture is the marae, a meeting place where families and tribes gather for special occasions.



Māori food is adapted from Polynesian cuisine and includes food cooked in an underground oven called a hangi. A hangi uses heated rocks buried in a pit oven to cook meat, seafood and/or vegetables. A hangi is a shared meal.

Traditional Māori clothing is made from natural plant fibre and animal skins. It includes long capes and kilt-like skirts held together with a belt. Elaborate ear and neck pendants made from bone and shell are also worn. These days, traditional Māori clothing is usually only worn during special ceremonies and for tourism purposes.

Māori arts include the haka which is a ceremonial warrior dance, face and body tattoos known as tā moko, wood carving, weaving and poi. Poi is when a tethered weight is spun around the body to create geometric patterns. Some poi are lit to create patterns with fire.

