

Did You Know?

- In 1893, New Zealand became the first country in the world to allow women to vote.
- New Zealand is also known as *Aotearoa*, which means "Land of the Long White Cloud."
- About 90 percent of the plants in New Zealand can't be found anywhere else in the world.
- A New Zealander, Sir Edmund Hillary, became the first person to climb the world's highest point, Mount Everest. He did it in 1953 with Tenzing Norgay, who was from Nepal.
- Forests cover about one-third of New Zealand.
- New Zealand is home to many strange animals, including the *tuatara*, one of the world's rarest reptiles. It looks like an iguana and is 2 feet (0.6 m) long.
- New Zealand's two main islands are the 13th and 15th largest islands in the world.
- The largest volcanic eruption in known history took place in AD 130 in Taupo, on the North Island.
- Hector's dolphins, the world's smallest dolphins, are found only in the coastal waters of New Zealand.
- New Zealand has over 4 million people and 40 million sheep, 10 for every person.
- New Zealand has two national anthems. The first is "God Save the Queen" (the British national anthem) and the other is "God Defend New Zealand."
- Wellington, the capital city of New Zealand, is the southernmost capital city in the world.
- Nuclear arms and power are illegal in New Zealand.
- New Zealanders call flip-flops *jandals*, a combination of the words *Japanese* and *sandals*.
- *The Lord of the Rings* films were shot entirely on location in New Zealand.
- Commercial bungee jumping began in New Zealand.
- New Zealand has one of the highest car ownership rates in the world, with around 2.5 million cars for the country's 4 million people.
- Because it is located near the international dateline, Chatham Island is one of the first places in the world to see the sunrise of a new day.
- Frying Pan Lake is the world's largest hot spring.

Flag

The flag shows a small British flag, known as a Union Jack, and the stars of the Southern Cross, a bright constellation that can be seen only from the southern hemisphere.



National Image

New Zealanders are nicknamed "kiwis" after the national bird. Found only in New Zealand, the kiwi, which is about the size of a chicken, cannot fly and moves only at night. It has nostrils on the end of its long beak and is the only bird with a sense of smell.



People and Places

Land and Climate

Area (sq. mi.): 103,363

Area (sq. km.): 267,710

New Zealand is made up of North and South islands as well as several smaller islands and is located about 1,250 miles (2,000 km) southeast of Australia. North and South islands are separated by the Cook Strait, which at its narrowest point is only 19 miles (30 km) wide. Other islands include Stewart Island, south of South Island, and the Chatham Islands, about 500 miles (805 km) to the east. New Zealand's islands have some of the most amazing scenery in the world—huge mountains, rolling green hills, giant waterfalls and glaciers, and narrow sea-filled canyons called *fjords*. You can also see geysers exploding with hot steam, mud pools plopping mud all day long, and, if you are very lucky, volcanoes blasting hot lava and ash into the air. New Zealand frequently has earthquakes, though most are so small you cannot feel them. The last large earthquake in the capital city, Wellington, was in 1855, when the land that is now the airport rose out of the ocean. New Zealand is just smaller than Ecuador and about the same size as the state of Colorado.

New Zealand's climate is generally mild. In the winter, average temperatures rarely go below 40°F (4°C). Summer highs average about 73°F (23°C). Because New Zealand is on the southern side of the equator, it has seasons opposite from North America. Summer is from December to March, and winter is from June to September!

Population

Population: 4,401,916

Most of New Zealand's population lives in one of the three big cities: Auckland, Christchurch, and Wellington. Nearly 68 percent of New Zealanders have European ancestors. The term *Pakeha* generally refers to these people. About 15 percent of New Zealanders are Maori, who were the first inhabitants of the country. Many European descendants and Maori have married one another, so the two groups are mixed. Pacific Islanders (Tongans, Samoans, Cook Islanders, and others) began migrating to New Zealand after 1946 and now make up a significant minority. While immigration from Pacific islands and Europe continues today, immigrants also come from Australia, China, South Korea, India, and other Asian countries.

Language

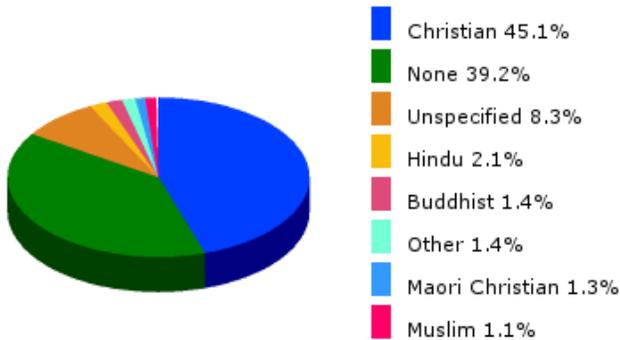
English, Maori, and New Zealand Sign Language are New Zealand's three official languages, but English is the most commonly spoken. Nearly all Maori people speak English, and an increasing number of them speak Maori as a first language. There is even a TV channel, Maori TV, that plays Maori programs, including Maori cartoons. Many Maori words are used in English conversations, including *Eg kiaora* (Greetings), *Morena* (Good morning), *kai* (food), and *Ka kite ano* (See you later). New Zealand English is similar to North American English, but New Zealanders speak with a different accent and use words like *Giddy* (Hello), *biscuits* (cookies), *loo* (bathroom), and *lift* (elevator).



Can You Say It in Maori?

Hello	<i>Kia ora</i>	(key-ah AW-rah)
Good-bye	<i>Ka kite ano</i>	(ka KEE-tay AH-no)
Please	<i>Koa</i>	(kwah)
Thank you	<i>Kia ora rawa atu</i>	(key-ah AW-rah RAH-wah AH-too)
Yes	<i>Ae</i>	(aae)
No	<i>Kao</i>	(kaao)

Religion



Source: *The World Factbook 2014. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2014.*

Many New Zealanders are Christians. They include Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, and Methodists. But only a small percentage of the population attends church on a regular basis. Attendance is higher on religious holidays. The largest non-Christian religions are Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. Roughly 40 percent of the population does not belong to any religion.

History

Time Line

AD 800	
Before AD 900	Maori migrations to Aotearoa begin
1600	
1642	Dutch explorer Abel Tasman sails near Aotearoa but does not go ashore; he names Aotearoa New Zealand
1769	English explorer James Cook is the first European to land in New Zealand
1792	The first European settlement is established at Russell, in the Bay of Islands
1800	
1815	The first British missionaries arrive

1820–40	Maori tribes fight against each other in the Musket Wars	
1840	British representatives and Maori chiefs sign the Treaty of Waitangi, pledging protection of Maori land and establishing British law in New Zealand	
1841	William Hobson is made the first governor-general	
1845–72	The Land Wars begin when British troops attack the Maori	
1858	The Maori tribes unite under one king, Te Wherowhero	
1893	New Zealand becomes the world's first country to allow women to vote	
1900		
1907	New Zealand becomes an independent nation within the British Commonwealth	
1914–1918	Thousands of soldiers are killed in fighting during World War I	
1939–45	More than 10,000 New Zealand soldiers are killed in World War II	
1947	New Zealand gains full independence from Britain	
1967	The New Zealand currency changes from pounds to NZ dollars	
1985	Nuclear weapons and nuclear ships are forbidden to enter New Zealand ports	

1997	Jenny Shipley becomes New Zealand's first female prime minister	
2000		
2006	Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu, queen of the native Maori population, dies after a reign of 40 years; Tuheitia Paki is named as the new Maori king	
2010	New Zealand and China sign a free trade agreement	
2011	Dozens of people are killed in a major earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand's second-largest city, on South Island	
2013	New Zealand becomes the first country in the Asia-Pacific region to legalize same-sex marriage	
PRESENT		

Land of the Long White Cloud

No one lived in New Zealand until Maori people sailed there about a thousand years ago from other islands in the Pacific. In search of a new home, they traveled by canoe and settled in the new land on what is now North Island. The Maori tell a legend about the very first person to see New Zealand, an explorer named Kupe. Kupe named New Zealand *Aotearoa*, or Land of the Long White Cloud. More Maori came after Kupe, and they formed many different tribes. Each tribe lived in a village centered on a *pa* (hill fort). The Maori passed their history down through the generations by word of mouth. They fished, hunted, and grew their own crops such as taro root and *kumara* (sweet potatoes). The Maori worshipped many different gods and spirits and believed in a force called *manu*, which they thought connected them to animals, objects, and spirits.



The Pakeha Arrive

The Maori lived on their own in New Zealand for many centuries. Then ships from Europe began sailing near their coasts. Dutch explorer Abel Tasman reached the west coast of New Zealand in 1642. Tasman's scouting party was attacked by Maoris, so he never landed on shore. The Dutch later named the land *Nieuw Zeeland* after a Dutch province (similar to a state). In 1769, a British captain named James Cook was the first European to go ashore. He drew maps of the area and developed a good relationship with the Maori. When he returned to Britain, he told people about this resource-rich land.



Soon, British and other European settlers were sailing to New Zealand to make their homes there. The Maori named the new arrivals *Pakeha*, which means "white stranger." Christian missionaries arrived from England in 1814 and founded a mission and a settlement. The Maori traded with the British settlers and began using modern weapons in their tribal warfare. Europeans also introduced diseases the Maori had not been exposed to before. Within just a few decades, the Maori population was reduced by half. In 1840, the Maori and the Pakeha signed an agreement that made New Zealand

a British colony.

The Land Wars

Some Maori did not want to live under British rule. The British settlers began taking more and more land for their farms, which upset Maori. Fighting broke out between the two groups in 1860 and lasted more than 10 years. The central Maori tribes on North Island united under one king. They became known for their impressive fighting skill as they fought off thousands of British troops. South Island did not suffer from as many land wars. Gold was discovered at Gabriel's Gully on South Island in 1861, kicking off a gold rush. New settlers poured into New Zealand hoping to get rich, and roads and railways were built to help transport wool and other goods in and out. Though the gold rush lasted only a short time, many miners stayed to farm or raise sheep. Today, New Zealanders are working through the events of the past, and Pakeha and Maori generally live peacefully together.



A New Nation

As time went by, many New Zealanders did not want to belong to Britain anymore. In 1907, New Zealand became an independent nation but stayed part of the British Commonwealth, with the British king or queen as head of state. Soon after, the government was able to pass laws protecting workers, improving health care, and setting the minimum wage. Unfortunately, the Maori population continued to decrease during this period, and the government discouraged the use of the Maori language and traditions. When World War I began a few years later, Pakeha and Maori fought together in the ANZACs (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps). It was the first time that New Zealanders had fought for their own country. Many thousands of New Zealand soldiers died while fighting in Turkey. In fact, New Zealand suffered more deaths per capita than any other nation.



New Zealand Today

After participating in two World Wars, New Zealanders looked forward to focusing on their own affairs at home. The government worked hard to revive the failing economy and develop better relationships with neighboring countries in Oceania and Southeast Asia. In 1985, the people voted to make New Zealand a nuclear-free country, refusing to allow foreign warships that might be carrying nuclear weapons into its ports. New Zealanders today are part of a multicultural society, and they believe their society should be caring and should help people through public programs. Together they are working to maintain equality.



Lifestyle

Games and Sports

Rugby is the most popular sport in New Zealand. It is similar to American football, but players don't wear helmets or pads. The national team, the All Blacks (named for their black jerseys), is one of the best teams in the world. New Zealanders also like to play soccer and *cricket*, a game like baseball with a flat-surfaced bat. Another well-known sport is *netball*, which is like basketball but without dribbling. Because New Zealand is so beautiful, people spend a lot of time outside *tramping* (hiking), biking, sailing, swimming, and skiing. Many kiwis also enjoy adventure sports like white-water rafting or bungee jumping.



Holidays

For many New Zealanders, Christmas is a favorite holiday. Because the seasons are reversed from those in North America, Christmas falls during the summer. Many people go to the beach or have a barbecue. However, many of their traditions are the same as ours, such as presents, carols, and *Father Christmas* (Santa Claus). Families eat traditional Christmas foods such as ham, turkey, and lamb, along with *Christmas pudding* (steamed fruitcake drizzled with caramel or brandy sauce) and *pavlova* (a meringue-like cake topped with cream and fresh fruit and served cold). In the afternoon, they usually play board games and go for a walk.



Anzac (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) Day, on 25 April, is an important national holiday. On this day, people remember the New Zealand war veterans and their sacrifices. At dawn, people all around the country hold services at war memorials. Members of the armed forces march in parades, while people line the streets to show their support. Schoolchildren place wreaths at the base of the memorials. On this day, New Zealanders traditionally wear poppies and eat Anzac *biscuits* (cookies). Family members made these long-lasting *biscuits* to send to relatives serving in the armed forces during World War I. They're made without eggs, which were hard to find during the war. New Zealanders also celebrate *Waitangi Day* on 6 February, the anniversary of the signing of the 1840 agreement between Maori and *Pakeha* (white settlers).

Food

New Zealanders love hamburgers, including McDonald's hamburgers, but a real New Zealand burger is often made with a fried egg and a beet slice. *Vegemite* is a salty-tasting sandwich spread made from yeast. It has a very unique flavor. *Hangi*, a traditional Maori meal, is made with meat, seafood, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and vegetables. It is cooked in the ground in moist green vegetable leaves for several hours. Because of the rich milk produced by New Zealand cows, kiwis make delicious ice cream. A favorite flavor is Hokey-Pokey, which is vanilla ice cream mixed with candy lumps.



Schools

Adult Literacy: 99%

Kids in New Zealand go to school from the age of five to sixteen. Their first eight years are in *primary* (elementary) school. Students can choose to be taught in English or at a *Kaupapa Maori* school, where they are taught in Maori. Later on, students can choose to go to high school, known as *college* (where boys and girls are taught separately) or



coed college (where boys and girls learn together). Most *college* students are required to wear uniforms, and the school day usually goes from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Most *colleges* close early one day a week for students to play in inter-school sports competitions. Students leave *college* at around age 18 to go to work or university. After graduating from *college*, many young people go on an Overseas Experience (OE), where they work abroad for a year or two. London is one of the most popular places to go on an OE. The government spends a large percentage of its budget on education, a sign of how important education is to New Zealanders.

Life as a Kid

New Zealand kids, known as kiwi kids, go to school most of the day and study subjects like spelling, math, and music. After school, kids like to hang out with their friends, play sports, watch television, surf the internet, and play video games. Some older children have part-time jobs. In the summer, lots of kids go swimming at the beach or at the local swimming pool. Many ride bicycles and love mountain biking. In New Zealand you have to wear a bike helmet to protect your head from falls. Kiwi kids usually eat dinner with their families in the evening, and they help with jobs around the house.



Society

Government

Capital: Wellington

Head of State: Queen Elizabeth II (U.K.)

Head of Government: PM John Key

Even though New Zealand is an independent country, it is still a part of the British Commonwealth. This means that the British queen, Elizabeth II, is the head of state. Her representative in New Zealand is called the governor-general. But the person who actually leads the government is the prime minister. The national parliament, which makes the laws, is made up of 120 members. The parliament meets in a building in Wellington called the Beehive because of its shape. New Zealand is divided up into 16 regions and one territory. The voting age is 18. All citizens are required to register to vote, but they are not actually required to vote.



Money and Economy

Currency: New Zealand dollar



New Zealanders enjoy a high standard of living. This means that most people live comfortably. Although only a small part of the population is employed in agriculture, it is one of the most important parts of the economy. New Zealand ships wool, milk, cheese, fruit, flowers, and meat to other parts of the world, like Asia, North America, and Europe. Tourism also brings a lot of money to the country, as people from around the world come to enjoy hiking, rafting, and skiing in New Zealand's beautiful outdoors. The kiwi, the national bird, is pictured on the one-dollar coin.

Getting Around

Most New Zealand families have a car, but people in cities often take the bus or the train. Trains are a good way to travel around the country. The most important rail line is between Auckland and Wellington. In order to cross between North Island and South Island, people take a ferry or fly by plane. Because the country is surrounded by water, New Zealanders have to take a plane to visit any foreign country. Many kiwis fly the two hours to their nearest neighbor, Australia, for holidays.



Culture Facts & Contacts

Maori Culture

The Maori people are proud of their traditions. When two Maori greet, they close their eyes and rub noses. This is called a *hongi*. Maori men sometimes perform a fierce warrior dance, or *haka*, in which they stamp their feet, swing clubs, and stick out their tongues. This type of *haka* has become an internationally-recognized symbol of New Zealand. Women perform a slower dance in which they swing *poi* balls (percussive balls made of tissue wrapped in plastic) on cords around their heads. Performers wear beautiful costumes and paint their faces with a *moko*. In the past, the *moko* was an elaborate tattoo that decorated the whole face of a man and the chin of a woman. Today, Maori usually just paint their faces with a temporary *moko* instead of getting a painful tattoo, though many have elaborate tattoos on other parts of their bodies. Maori folk arts include wood and bone carvings, which record traditional beliefs and tribal members, and *taaniko* weaving (braiding flax strands to make clothing with colorful geometric patterns).



Learn More

Contact the Embassy of New Zealand, 37 Observatory Circle NW, Washington, DC 20008; phone (202) 328-4800; web site www.nzembassy.com. Or contact Tourism New Zealand, phone (310) 395-7480; web site www.newzealand.com.

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ProQuest
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106 USA
Toll Free: 1.800.521.3042
Fax: 1.800.864.0019
www.culturegrams.com

New Zealand



Mount Cook in the Southern Alps is the highest point in the country, at 12,313 feet (3,753 m).

Lake Taupo is the country's largest lake.

Cook Strait separates the North and South islands. At one point, it is only 12 miles (20 km) wide.

New Zealand's area is 103,737 square miles (268,680 sq km), about the same size as Colorado.

