

What basic facts do you know about New Zealand?

What do you think makes New Zealand unique? What makes it different from Australia?

What can you tell me about New Zealand's history?

What do you know about places to visit in New Zealand?

Could you describe some of New Zealand's geographical features?

Could you name some famous New Zealanders?

Do you know anything about popular sports and pastimes in New Zealand?

Would you like to go to New Zealand? Why?

















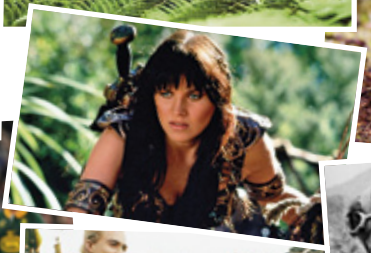



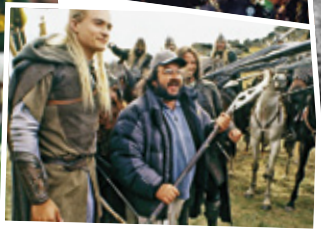



MATURITA CARD NEW ZEALAND

Overview

New Zealand is an island nation in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, some 2,000 km from Australia and with a population of about 5 million. About 70% of New Zealanders are wholly or partly of European descent, 16% are wholly or partly Maori, 15% Asian and 8% Pacific Islander. The Maori name for New Zealand is Aotearoa, which is commonly translated as "land of the long white cloud". English, Maori and New Zealand Sign Language are the official languages.

History of New Zealand

New Zealand was the last major island on earth to be inhabited. Polynesians first settled there in the 13th century and developed the Maori tribal culture. The first European arrival was the Dutch navigator Abel Tasman in 1642, though he was unable to land due to Maori attacks. The first European to land and map the country was James Cook in 1769. The late 18th century saw increasing visits by whalers and sealers from Britain, France and the USA. New Zealand became a British colony in 1840 after Maori chiefs and British officials signed an agreement called the Treaty of Waitangi. This guaranteed Maori rights, and though it was often broken, it is still seen as New Zealand's founding document. In 1907, New Zealand gained dominion status, so it was no longer a colony of Britain, and in 1947 it gained full independence. New Zealand was the first country in the world to give women the right to vote, in 1893.

New Zealand's government

New Zealand is a part of the British Commonwealth. It is a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. The symbolic head of state is the monarch of the United Kingdom, represented by the governor general. The head of government is the prime minister. The New Zealand parliament has only one house, the House of Representatives.

Geography of New Zealand

New Zealand consists of two main islands and several small islands. It has a wide variety of landscapes, from mountains to beaches to farmland, and gets a lot of earthquakes. The North Island has a sub-tropical climate, which means that there are warm to hot summers and mild winters. The island has a lot of volcanic activity: there are volcanoes, hot mud springs and hot water springs. The South Island is much more mountainous. The Southern Alps run through the middle. This mountain range includes New Zealand's highest peak, Aoraki / Mount Cook, which is 3,754 metres high. The South Island is much colder than the North Island and snow and glaciers are found in the mountain ranges. Although it is larger than the North Island, it has only one quarter of the country's population. Nowhere in New Zealand is more than 128km from the ocean.

New Zealand's fauna

Because of New Zealand's geographical isolation, unique species have developed there. The most widely known are flightless birds such as the kiwi, which is the symbol of the country, and the kakapo, the world's only flightless parrot. There are also a lot of sheep: about 25 million. Unlike Australia, New Zealand does not have dangerous and venomous animals.

Major cities & places to visit

The North Island has two of the country's most important cities: Auckland in the north and Wellington in the south. Wellington is the country's capital, and the parliament of New Zealand is located here. Auckland is New Zealand's largest city. It has about 1.6 million people, almost 30% of the country's population. It is the economic centre of New Zealand and is called "the City of Sails" because so many people have sailing boats there. Christchurch is the largest city on the South Island. Other famous places include Milford Sound, a beautiful fiord surrounded by mountains, and Rotorua, where you can see volcanic activity, mud pools and steam lakes.

Famous people

The Flight of the Conchords is a musical comedy duo; Lorde is a pop singer. Actors Russell Crowe, Sam Neill and Lucy Lawless (the actress who played Xena) come from New Zealand. Peter Jackson is a famous director who made *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy; Jane Campion is a critically acclaimed director of films like *The Piano* and *Bright Star*. Edmund Hillary was a mountaineer and (with Tenzing Norgay) the first to climb Mount Everest.

Sports and pastimes

Rugby is the most popular sport. New Zealand is one of the top rugby nations, and the All Blacks team is known around the world. The players perform a traditional Maori dance, called the haka, before every game. Other popular sports include cricket, netball, basketball, tennis and sailing. New Zealand is well-known for its relaxed, outdoor lifestyle.