

# NEW ZEALAND

## BASIC INFORMATION

Official names	<b>New Zealand, Aotearoa</b>
Population	<b>3.9 million</b>
Total area	<b>104,454 sq mi (274,534 sq km)</b>
Capital	<b>Wellington</b>
Form of government	<b>Constitutional monarchy</b>
Head of state and government	<b>Prime Minister</b>
Official languages	<b>English, Maori</b>
Date of independence	<b>September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1907</b>
Monetary unit	<b>New Zealand dollar</b>
National anthem	<b>God defend New Zealand</b>

## GEOGRAPHY

New Zealand (called AOTEAROA in the Maori language) is in the Southern Hemisphere, in the South-west Pacific Ocean, south-east of Australia. It is 1,600 km long from the north to the south. Wellington is approximately the antipodes of Saragossa in Northern Spain. New Zealand's area is almost the same as that of Italy - 270,534 sq. km. The nearest neighbours are Australia on west, Fiji and Tonga on north.

The main islands, the North Island (111,000 sq. km) and the South Island (151,000 sq. km) are separated by narrow Cook Strait. Stewart Island, south of the South Island, and many small islands, both populated and unpopulated, lie around the coast. The four main cities (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin) are even spaced down the length of the country. Each has a good port and is an industrial centre.

Although there are several fertile lowland areas around the New Zealand coast (e.g. the large Canterbury Plains in South Island), the country is mainly rolling and hilly with a chain of high mountains rather like the Apennines, more or less down the centre of both islands. South Island has glaciers and 15 peaks over 3,000 m. In the mountains of the South Island the highest peak is Mt. Cook (3,764 m high). Its opposite in the North Island is Ruapehu (2,795 metres) which is one of several volcanoes still mildly active in the centre of the island. Almost all the rivers are short and most of them run to the sea. The largest lake Taupo (618 sq. km) is in the North Island.



# HISTORY

The great explorer Kupe, who discovered New Zealand first, named the new land Aotearoa – “land of the long white cloud”. When Abel Tasman, the Dutch navigator, discovered New Zealand in 1642 after sailing from Batavia (Indonesia), it was inhabited by the Maoris, a Polynesian nation who migrated from the Asiatic mainland through the islands of the eastern and south Pacific. Most Maori tribes arrived in New Zealand from the Society Islands in the middle of the fourteenth century. The Maoris call their legendary original homeland “Hawaiki”. The Maoris refused Tasman to land.



Many years later, in 1769, the next recorded voyage to New Zealand was made by a European, Captain James Cook of the Royal Navy. On the first of three visits, he mapped the two main islands and discovered the passage between the two islands - Cook Strait - named after him.

Early in the nineteenth century, sealers and whalers were active around New Zealand and some of them settled in various parts of the country. Christian missionary work among the Maoris was begun in 1814 by the Rev. Samuel Marsden of the Church Missionary Society. But European interchanges with the Maoris did not always lead to good will or justice.

The British Government was obliged to establish sovereignty over the islands of New Zealand. In February 1840, Captain William Hobson and leading Maori chiefs signed the Treaty of Waitangi, by which they acknowledged British rule and received for the Maori people full British citizenship. In return, the Maoris were guaranteed protection of their lands, forests, fisheries, and other territorial rights. An annual commemoration ceremony, on 6<sup>th</sup> February, is held in Waitangi (in the north of the North Island).

The first ship bringing colonists arrived in the year when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed. Ever since there has been a steady stream of settlers from the British Isles and other European countries.

In 1852, Britain granted self-government to New Zealand. The central New Zealand Government was initially at Russell, in the Bay of Islands, then at Auckland, and finally at Wellington. In addition, Provincial Governments had wide powers until 1876, when they were abolished.

For several decades after the start of organized European settlement there was friction between Maori and European people. Most of the trouble arose over the sale of land, and sometimes developed into conflict (mainly in the years 1845-47 and 1860-72). Fighting took place predominantly in the North Island. In some battles the settlers had the support of Maori tribes who remained loyal to the Crown. The last conflict took place more than 100 years ago.

In 1867 four seats in the New Zealand House of Representatives were specifically set-aside for Maori members of parliament to represent their own race. This is still the case, while in addition, Maoris may also contest European seats.

New Zealand became a dominion in the British Empire in 1907 and was granted full independence in 1931. New Zealand troops had served in the Boer War in South Africa and more than 100,000 fought in World War I and II. Independence was formally accepted by the New Zealand legislature in 1947. In 1872 two Maori chiefs entered the Legislative Council or Upper House (a chamber which ceased to exist in 1950 when New Zealand adopted unicameral government). Maori and Europeans have long since resolved major differences and live in harmony. Today the equality of the two peoples is considered an example in racial tolerance and co-operation. The Maori, like the European, takes his place in society according to his tastes, interests, religion, level of culture and education, and the standard of living he can afford. Although different customs cause variations in administration of the two peoples, there are no distinctions in basic legal, educational, economic, or political rights.

# POPULATION

Population of New Zealand is about 3.6 million people, approximately one-third of whom live in the greater Auckland area. Density is much higher than in Australia – 12.3 people to one sq. km. 83 per cent of the whole population live in urban areas. Life expectancy is 72 for male and 78 for female.

85 per cent people are of European - above all British and Irish origin. Dutch, Italian, Greek, French, Dalmatian, Scandinavian and German influences are also noticeable.

The largest non-European group are the Maori, who migrated from Polynesia around one thousand years ago and comprise around 14% of the population. More recently a large number of Pacific Islanders from countries such as Samoa and Fiji have come to live in New Zealand.

Officially English is spoken here but some people still speak Maori.

As a nation New Zealand was the first self-governing country to give the women the vote, in 1892, the first to institute the eight-hour working day, the first to introduce the old-age pension, the first to operate a tourist office and the first to start a national rainforest reforestation project.

Among the many famous New Zealanders are Sir Edmund Hillary, the first climber to ascend Mt Everest; Lord Rutherford, the first to split the atom; and Jean Batten, the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia.



# POLITICAL SYSTEM

New Zealand is an independent member of the Commonwealth. The head of state is the reigning British monarch who is represented by the Governor-General, appointed for a term of 5 years.

The New Zealand government has three branches – the Legislature (Parliament), the Executive (the branch of government which performs tasks) and the Judiciary (Judges). Power is divided between these branches thus preventing any single branch from acting against the basic constitutional principles of the country. Although each branch has a different role, they are not totally separate from each other. Like other states using the Westminster system, New Zealand has no written constitution. Two important documents are The Treaty of Waitangi and the Bill of Rights Act.

The political system is democratic and was modelled on that of Britain. The parliament had two chambers until the non-elective Legislative Council was abolished in 1950. At present parliament consists of a single house. The members of the House of Representatives are elected by universal adult suffrage for terms of 3 years. At least 4 of them are representatives of the Maori people.

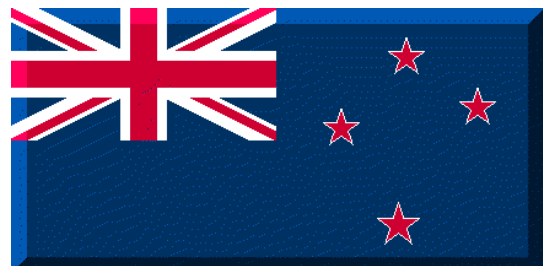
The government is formed after an election by the party coalition which commands a majority of the votes in the House of Representatives. The head of government is the Prime Minister – the leader of the winning party. The Cabinet consists of 20 Ministers including the Prime Minister. In addition to Central Government there are over 900 local authorities - that is local administrations directed by elected private citizens as in Britain. They have wide powers, and are elected by residents over 21.

# ADMINISTRATION

New Zealand is divided into counties. The capital is Wellington. Other big cities are Manukau, Christchurch, Hamilton, and Auckland.

# NATIONAL FLAG

The flag of New Zealand consists of the British Union Jack in the left upper corner and four red stars in the constellation of the Southern Cross.



# NATIONAL ECONOMY

New Zealand belongs among the highly developed countries of the world. The living standard of all the people is considered to be one of the highest in the world. Food processing, machinery and forest industry are the main industries here.

New Zealand's prosperity is founded on dairy farming. The pleasant climate allows cattle and sheep to stay outside even in winter. Grass grows faster in New Zealand than in most countries and is called "the green gold" there. Only 2 per cent of land is arable and the main crops are grains. Over nine-tenths of export earnings come from the sale of pastoral products (meat, wool, butter and cheese).

The country has good mineral resources, it is rich in oil, gas, iron ore and coal.

10.3 per cent people work in agriculture, 34 per cent in industry and commerce and about 55 per cent in services and administration.

The main trading partners of New Zealand are the USA, Australia, Japan, and Great Britain. The currency valid here is New Zealand Dollar.

# EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Education in New Zealand is secular, compulsory to the age of 15 and free to the age of 19.

**PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION** Children 3 to 5 years old may attend play centres and free kindergartens. On the fifth birthday they may be enrolled at elementary school. At the age of six enrolment is compulsory.

**PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION** After Primary and Intermediate School (Form I, Form II) the children attend Secondary or High School for three years (Form III, IV, V) and after passing an exam in English and three or four other subjects they get the School Certificate. After one more year (Form VI) they get Sixth Form Certificate, which is required for the entrance exam to a university. One more year (Form VII or Upper Sixth Form) finished by Higher School Certificate entitles them to enter the university without entrance exams.

**CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL** A distinctive feature is the correspondence school with teachers providing full education for pupils in isolated areas, in the Pacific Islands, in hospitals, and prisons.

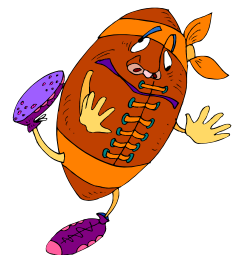
**TERTIARY EDUCATION** There are many colleges providing higher - specialized - education. The four main cities (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin) and also Hamilton and Palmerstone North, have universities.

**SCHOOL YEAR** The school year is divided into two parts. The first semester starts at the beginning of February. During the school year there are several shorter holidays. The main holidays last approximately one month and a half during the second half of December and in January.

# SPORTS

New Zealanders love the great outdoors and love playing sports – any and all. The country has current Olympic swimming and equestrian champions and Team New Zealand is the holder of yachting's prestigious America's Cup. Kiwis also play tennis, netball, basketball, hockey and golf on the world stage, and just about every other sport on beaches, parks, and clubs across the country.

Rugby - New Zealand's national sport – has been played passionately in New Zealand for 100 years and is somewhat of a national obsession. Lovers of fast, physical, rough-and-tumble sporting events should not miss the opportunity to see a Rugby match when visiting New Zealand. The national team, known as the "All Blacks", play international matches in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin from April through to September.



## LIFESTYLE

New Zealanders are keen on sports and the great outdoors. They love going to the beach, swimming with dolphins and whale watching in the Pacific Ocean. Many New Zealanders spend time sailing and windsurfing in coastal areas and inland lakes, and, in 1995, this country of just 3.6 million people produced the team which won the America's Cup against formidable opposition.

Of course not everybody takes to the water. "Kiwis" also love tramping in the many forests and mountains, fishing, skiing and snowboarding amongst giant glaciers or simply enjoying the clean fresh air and breathtaking scenery.

New Zealanders also spend a lot of time enjoying the abundance of fresh food available and like eating out in restaurants and cafes. An appreciation of fine wine and perfect wine growing conditions has led to New Zealand producing world renowned kinds of wine. Many of the wineries have restaurants and pleasant gardens for picnics and barbecues. After a good meal, they browse at the arts and crafts markets, malls and designers stores at all the main centres. New Zealanders also have a longstanding love of literature. Bookshops and libraries are scattered throughout the country, even in the smallest towns.

## FAUNA AND FLORA

New Zealand has been separated from other landmasses for over 100 million years enabling many ancient plants and animals to survive and evolve in isolation. Animals and plants that exist nowhere else in the world can be seen here.

Native species of flower such as the bright red Pohutukawa, the yellow kowhai and the delicate Mount Cook "lily" can be seen in numerous parts of the country. About a quarter of New Zealand is forested in areas which are largely protected from commercialisation in national and forest parks. The characteristic of the New Zealand forest is warm-temperate, evergreen rain forest or podocarps (rimu, totara, matai, miro and kahikatea) with associated broad-leaved evergreen tree species. Evergreen beach forest tends to dominate in the high country and the cooler southern regions of the South Island. Giant Kauri trees appear in forest pockets in Northland and the Coromandel Peninsula.

New Zealand is a land of unique birds. In the wildlife of New Zealand one can find many creatures which are not found anywhere else in the world, the most peculiar of which is perhaps a roundish, flightless bird known as the kiwi. It is New Zealand's national bird as well as its symbol. New Zealand's rugby team takes the bird's name and also New Zealanders themselves are sometimes known as kiwis. The kiwi is one of a number of flightless birds which are believed to have been able to survive in New Zealand because there are no animals native to the country, so the bird's nests were safe. The kiwi is now in great danger of becoming extinct (nebezpečí vyhynutí) because of the thread posed by animals brought to the islands by humans.



Other species include the inquisitive Kea and Weka which have little fear of humans, and the endangered Kakapo, the world's largest parrot. New Zealand's long coastline makes in an ideal home for numerous species of sea bird including the majestic royal albatross, gannets and many varieties of penguin. The waters off the coastline teem with fish and plant life and are also the home to whales, seals and dolphins. Virtually all of New Zealand's native insects and reptiles are not found anywhere else in the world. The world's largest insect – the giant weta – and the tuatara – a reptile with lineage extending back to the age of the dinosaurs – can both be found only in New Zealand.