



Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

BACKGROUND

Land and Climate

Area (sq. mi.): 103,363

Area (sq. km.): 267,710

New Zealand is slightly smaller than Italy, or about the same size as the U.S. state of Colorado. The country's indigenous name is Aotearoa ("Land of the Long White Cloud"). This mountainous island nation lies in the South Pacific about 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) southeast of Australia. Its two principal landforms are the North Island and the South Island. The more populous North Island has fertile agricultural land, the largest man-made forest in the Southern Hemisphere, and a few isolated snowcapped volcanoes. It also boasts hot springs and geysers in the thermal region of the Central Plateau. On the South Island, the Southern Alps provide magnificent scenery and opportunities for sports such as skiing. There are many glaciers, lakes, and rivers. Southwest coastal fjords characterize an area called Fiordland. Coastal lowlands are used for agriculture. Other islands include Stewart Island, south of South Island, and the Chatham Islands, about 500 miles (805 kilometers) to the east. Numerous other small islands are mostly uninhabited.

The climate is temperate, with plenty of sunshine, adequate rainfall, and few extremes in weather. However, in

winter (June–August), particularly in the south, high humidity makes it seem colder, even though average winter temperatures rarely go below 40°F (4°C). Highs in summer (December–February) average about 73°F (23°C). Hot winds bring higher summer temperatures to the east coast.

History

Early Settlers

The first discovery of the islands is attributed to Kupe, a legendary Polynesian explorer. Maori migrations from Polynesian islands probably began before AD 900. These early Maori were warlike, highly organized, and skilled in many crafts. In 1642, Dutch explorer Abel Tasman sighted the islands and named them Staten Landt. After a skirmish with Maori off the coast of the South Island, Tasman chose not to go ashore, and the islands remained largely uncolonized until the early 1800s. Dutch geographers changed the islands' name to Nieuw Zeeland—after the Dutch province of Zeeland—but the Dutch were not directly involved in colonizing the islands. Instead, Britain's Captain James Cook, who first visited the Maori in 1769, opened the door to European (chiefly British) settlement. Western contact led to a decline in the Maori population due to the introduction of diseases and of modern weapons in tribal warfare.

Treaty of Waitangi and British Colonization

In 1840, the Maori and British signed the Treaty of Waitangi, which allowed *kawanatanga* (governance) by the British monarch but granted the Maori legal protection and rights to perpetual ownership of their lands and resources. Only the Crown was entitled to buy land from the Maori, but the law was not always observed, and improper purchases and illegal leases were made. Colonization and Western settlement proceeded rapidly after 1840. In 1852, Britain granted New Zealand internal self-government, and by 1907 the nation became an independent dominion within the British Empire (later, the Commonwealth). In the 20th century, the Maori population rebounded, and Maori people integrated with residents of European descent. However, Maori maintain many distinct aspects of their cultural heritage.

World Wars and Pacific Ties

New Zealand contributed heavily in terms of soldiers to both world wars. After World War II, New Zealand turned its focus from European ties to Pacific ties, developing trade links with growing Asian economies. Conversely, by the 1990s, Britain was focusing on European integration. This divergence has raised the question of whether New Zealand's status as a democratic monarchy, with the British queen as nominal head of state, reflects the country's independent outlook. Some New Zealanders favor a future (though not necessarily immediate) transition to a local head of state.

Recent Politics

The center-left Labour Party, led by Helen Clark, won elections in 1999. The nation's first elected female prime minister, Clark remained in power for the next nine years, but as the economy entered a recession in late 2008, New Zealanders voted for the center-right National Party, under John Key. In 2010, New Zealand reappointed its senior staff to their diplomatic missions to Fiji following a brief dispute with Fiji's military-led government.

Earthquakes

In recent years, New Zealand has suffered a series of earthquakes, beginning with a quake of 7.1 magnitude in September 2010. It was followed in February 2011 by a smaller (6.3 magnitude) but more lethal quake, which killed 182 people and significantly damaged Christchurch, including many historic buildings; major aftershocks followed in June. December 2011 and January 2012 brought additional quakes, with magnitudes ranging between 5 and 6, in which Christchurch sustained further damages.

Recent Events and Trends

- **Same-sex marriage:** In April 2013, New Zealand legalized same-sex marriage. The country was the first among Asia-Pacific countries to do so.
- **Elections:** In September 2014, prime minister John Key won a third term in office. Key and his center-right National Party have promised tax cuts and economic growth. Some critics accused the government of domestic spying and the National Party of smear campaigns against the opponents, but these accusations did not sway voters.

THE PEOPLE

Population

Population: 4,401,916

Population Growth Rate: 0.83%

Urban Population: 86%

The majority of New Zealand's population lives in urban areas. The principal metropolitan areas are Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Wellington (the capital). Auckland and its suburbs hold nearly one-third of the nation's people and constitute New Zealand's commercial and industrial center. Throughout the world, New Zealanders are commonly called "kiwis," a nickname derived from the country's indigenous national bird.

About two-thirds of the population is of European descent, and 15 percent is Maori. Asians and Pacific Islanders from neighboring islands make up another 16 percent of the population. Intermarriage between groups is common, and the question of ethnic identity is largely a matter of self-identification. Some people indicate in census data that they identify with more than one ethnic group, and some identify themselves with designations that have no reference to ethnicity, such as "New Zealander." The term *Pakeha* generally refers to people of European descent. Maori are Polynesians and the country's indigenous inhabitants. They live mainly on the North Island. Pacific Islanders (Tongans, Samoans, Cook Islanders, Fijians, and others) began migrating to New Zealand after 1946 and today comprise a significant minority. Although immigration from the Pacific Islands continues, it is now eclipsed by immigration from China, South Korea, India, and other Asian countries. Two-thirds of both the Pacific Islander and Asian populations live in Auckland, the nation's most multicultural city.

Language

English and Maori are official languages. English is the most common everyday language, while Maori is used in educational and cultural settings. Many Maori words are used in English conversations. Examples include the words *eg kiaora* (greetings), *tamariki* (children), *morena* (good morning), *kai* (food), and *ka kite ano* (see you later). Maori people also speak English, and some Pakeha speak a little Maori, which they may learn in school. Many New Zealand English words or phrases reflect British English. For example, a car's trunk is a *boot* and the hood is a *bonnet*. Others include *come around* (come over), *over the road* (across the street), and *go to the loo* (go to the bathroom). A *bathroom* is a place to take a bath or shower, a *lift* is an elevator, and *petrol* is gasoline.

Religion

About 53 percent of New Zealanders identify themselves as Christians, of which Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and Presbyterians comprise the largest denominations. The Ratana and Ringatu Christian churches have significant numbers of Maori adherents. Only a small minority of New Zealanders attend church on a regular basis; attendance is higher on religious holidays. The largest non-Christian religions are Hinduism (1.6 percent) and Buddhism (1.3 percent). About 32 percent of New Zealanders indicate in census data that they have no religious affiliation.

General Attitudes

New Zealanders are open, friendly, and hospitable. Compared to that of U.S. Americans, their lifestyle is more relaxed and informal. For example, while a U.S. American might discuss occupations, incomes, and career objectives with colleagues, a New Zealander is more apt to discuss leisure activities and family interests. New Zealanders are, on the whole, self-reliant, practical people. They enjoy working around their homes and gardens; they prefer to make small repairs and complete projects themselves, rather than hiring someone to do work for them. They believe their society should be caring and should help people through public programs. They are curious about the world around them: two-thirds of the population reads a newspaper daily and many travel overseas. They value home ownership and a good education. Maori heritage emphasizes the extended family (*whanau*), hospitality, friendship, and a strong sense of community.

In many parts of the country, especially the North Island, there is a multicultural society in which Pakeha, Maori, and others share many values and customs. Despite the general harmony between Pakeha and Maori, relations have been strained in recent years in disputes over land and resource rights. In a major settlement signed in 1997, the government apologized for past abuses, paid reparations, and returned large portions of land to a South Island Maori *iwi* (tribe). Many landmark names were changed, including New Zealand's highest peak, Mount Cook, which is now Aoraki. Other disputes are still being considered as the nation strives to achieve greater social justice.

Personal Appearance

Western-style clothing is standard. People wear casual clothing in public, although it is usually neat and clean. Business attire has become more casual, though some corporate settings continue to require business suits or a jacket and tie. At many companies, employees dress down on Fridays, wearing clothing like jeans. Employees of companies such as banks wear uniforms. European fashions are popular, but New Zealand also has its own fashion industry. Globally recognized designers such as Karen Walker are known for their informal but stylish looks. Because New Zealanders love spending time outside, there is a thriving outdoor clothing industry in the country. The weather can change quickly, so layered clothing is a popular option. It is common for New Zealanders to wear shorts (weather permitting) when playing sports, going shopping, and visiting friends.

Maori wear traditional clothing for ceremonies and cultural events. For men and women, this means a *piupiu* (woven flax skirt) over black shorts or a black skirt. Women pair this with a colorful woven top featuring a geometric pattern, usually in red, black, and white. A *korowai* (ornate cloak) is worn over the *piupiu*. It is made of flax and decorated with dog fur or feathers from native birds. A headband and feathers are worn in the hair. Carved jade pendants (*tiki*) are common accessories for women. Full-faced tattoos (*moko*) for men and chin tattoos for women were once common. In Maori culture, tattoos symbolized higher social rank. Today, similar designs are usually drawn on for

performances and special events.

CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

Greetings

New Zealanders generally greet with a handshake or, if they know each other well, a hug. In formal situations, men often wait for women to offer their hand before shaking. Pakeha greet formally with *Hello, how are you?* More informal greetings include *Hello* or *Hi*. Also common are *Gidday* (Good day); *Yeah, gidday*; or *Gidday, how's it going?* After an initial introduction, most people switch from addressing each other by title and surname to using first names.

Maori may greet with a hug or a traditional *hongi* (pressing noses together with eyes closed). The *hongi* is used with non-Maori on a *marae*, a sacred courtyard used for meetings that is located in front of a Maori *wharenui* (great house, and a place where guests stay). Maori greeting phrases include the ceremonial *Nau mai* (Welcome). *Tena koe*, *Tena korua*, and *Tena koutou* are polite ways to say "Hello" to one, two, or many people, respectively. *Kia ora* (Be well) is a more common and less formal hello in predominantly English-speaking environments; it can also mean "Thank you." Upon parting, Maori may say *Haere ra* (Farewell) and reply *E noho ra* (Stay well). An increasingly common and less formal good-bye is *Ka kite ano* (See you later).

Gestures

New Zealanders often supplement their conversation with hand gestures. If conversation is not possible or polite, a nod, wave, or raise of the eyebrows serves as a sign of recognition. Traditional social courtesy is valued but not necessarily practiced by all segments of the population. Most younger women do not expect traditional courtesies from men (and some may find them patronizing). However, it is still considered polite to give up bus seats or to open doors for the elderly. It is also considered polite to avoid chewing gum or using a toothpick in public and to cover yawns with the hand. Personal space usually is important during conversation; standing too close is uncomfortable for many people.

Visiting

New Zealanders entertain often in the home, no matter their social class. They like to have friends over for dinner. Garden barbecues are especially popular on weekends. Guests are expected to feel at home. They might remove their shoes unless told otherwise by the hosts. Dinner guests almost always take a gift, usually a small contribution to the meal, chocolates, or good wine if the hosts enjoy it. Houseguests always leave a gift with their host family. When welcomed on a *marae* (a sacred open space used for religious and social gatherings), one leaves a *koha* (gift of money). The *koha* is a donation toward the cost of hospitality; the larger the gift, the more important the giver.

Dropping by a friend's home unannounced is quite common, although such visits after 8 p.m. are not usually appropriate. Guests may be invited to a formal dinner at which the host provides all of the food. Also common is a

potluck dinner, to which guests are asked to bring food for everyone to share. Rather than prepare a meal, friends may simply enjoy chatting over cake and coffee or plan to meet at a café or coffee shop.

Even when not invited for a meal, guests are nearly always offered refreshments. It is considered rude not to at least offer a drink. Even a repairman who is staying only briefly would be offered a drink. Common refreshments include coffee, tea, soft drinks, finger sandwiches, cakes, and *biscuits* (cookies).

Eating

New Zealanders eat a light breakfast before work or school, typically by 8 a.m. Lunch is in the early afternoon, and dinner is around 6 or 7 p.m. The family generally eats dinner, the main meal, together. Dessert is often included, and coffee is nearly always served at the end, especially in restaurants. People eat in the continental style; the fork is in the left hand and the knife remains in the right. Hands and elbows are kept above the table. To indicate one is finished with a meal, one places the utensils parallel on the plate.

When people eat out, dinner is closer to 8 p.m. In a fine restaurant, staff members consider it their job to let diners take their time. They do not hurry with the check unless requested. At restaurants, people generally are quiet and do not speak too loudly. New Zealanders do not always practice tipping because wages are considered the duty of the employer, not the customers. However, tip jars are often found next to cash registers.

LIFESTYLE

Family

Structure

A traditional Pakeha family has two parents and two children. However, recent years have seen a sharp rise in the number of single parents, due to increasing numbers of divorces and out-of-wedlock births. The number of unmarried parents has also risen, as cohabitation is now widespread and socially acceptable.

Among Polynesians, extended family connections are important. In some cases, several generations live together in one house. The average couple has three children. Polynesian women traditionally play strong roles in their communities. For Maori, the *marae* (a sacred open space used for religious and social gatherings) is important in binding families together. Ceremonies, important meetings (*hui*), and recreational activities take place on the *marae* and in the *wharenui* (great house, and a place where guests stay).

Parents and Children

Around age seven or eight, children begin helping with chores such as setting and clearing the table, folding laundry, cleaning their rooms, and making their lunches for school. Most children receive a small allowance called "pocket money" in return for carrying out these tasks.

Family ties are looser than they once were, but people still believe in supporting one another. Parents often give financial help to their adult children until they finish their education (although it is becoming increasingly common for students to

finance their own education through part-time work and interest-free government loans). It is fairly common for young people to move out of the parental home upon graduation from secondary school; over half of all university students live on their own. Aging parents do not usually live with adult children; instead, most prefer to stay at home as long as possible and move into rest homes when necessary. They also receive support from New Zealand's comprehensive social welfare system.

Gender Roles

In the past, women carried out most household chores, while men were responsible for lawn, car, and house maintenance. Today couples tend to divide such tasks more equitably, though women continue to do more cooking and cleaning than men. Affluent couples who work full-time may hire a part-time housekeeper.

Women account for a large part of the work force. Whereas women used to take an extended break from their careers in order to stay home with young children, today many employed mothers return to work immediately following their maternity leave, taking advantage of affordable daycare centers and government childcare subsidies. Since the 1990s, the number of women holding managerial and leadership positions in business and government has increased significantly. New Zealand had consecutive female prime ministers from 1997 to 2008, and roughly a third of all legislators are women.

Housing

The typical family home is a detached single-storey home on a quarter-acre lot, with a yard in front and back. Yards often contain vegetable and flower gardens. A typical home is either wooden or brick. A separate dining area and a living room are typical, though modern homes may offer an open-plan combination kitchen, dining, and living area. Most families own their homes rather than rent. Many New Zealanders like to restore colonial-era villas, which have large verandas and ornate lattice work.

As city life becomes more popular, there is a trend away from detached housing and toward higher-density semi-detached and apartment-style living. Many city lots with old homes have been subdivided to accommodate an extra dwelling, and sometimes a single home is removed to make way for two or three new townhouses. All urban homes have access to plumbing and electricity, as do most rural houses. Many rural homes are equipped with septic tanks and get their water from an external storage tank that is filled with water from the roof.

Dating and Marriage

Dating and Courtship

Although most New Zealand parents restrict exclusive dating until their children are 15 or 16, group social activities usually begin around age 12. Youth enjoy going to movies, dancing, and having parties. Older teens may go with a group of friends to the local club for dancing and drinking. People generally date only one person at a time.

Marriage in Society

Couples often live together for a few years prior to marriage.

On average, women marry around age 30; men tend to marry around age 32. Many couples live together instead of marrying, and doing so is socially acceptable except to older generations and the religiously conservative. The Civil Union Act of 2004 guarantees the rights and obligations of marriage to couples who have lived together for at least two years and legalized civil unions for same-sex couples. In 2013, New Zealand made same-sex marriages legal.

Divorce is fairly common and does not usually carry with it a social stigma. Divorced individuals often get remarried, so many families are composed of step-parents and half-siblings.

Weddings

Weddings can be lavish. Tradition held that the bride's parents paid for weddings in the past, but today—since people generally marry at an older age—most couples take responsibility for the majority of costs themselves. Both sets of parents do, however, usually contribute to a portion of the expenses as a wedding gift. The details of a ceremony, the decorations, and the catering tend to reflect the individual tastes of each couple. Most ceremonies are held in the afternoon. Some couples get married in churches, but locations such as homes, gardens, wineries, beaches, and other outdoor locations are becoming increasingly common. Wedding parties generally consist of the bride and groom, their parents, bridesmaids, groomsmen, a flower girl, and a page boy.

A large celebration follows the wedding and may include speeches, a sit-down meal, and a dance. Since many couples already have established homes by the time they marry, some request gifts of cash rather than the household items traditionally given at weddings. Most couples take a 7- to 10-day honeymoon after their wedding. Popular destinations include nearby Pacific locations such as Fiji, New Caledonia, or the Cook Islands.

In Maori culture, the bride and groom receive a traditional welcome (*powhiri*) as soon as they enter the *marae* (a sacred courtyard). The *powhiri* consists of several steps, including songs, speeches, *koha* (gift of money), *hongi* (pressing noses together with eyes closed), and feasting. During the wedding ceremony, *pikorua* (pieces of jade or whale bone shaped like twisted infinity loops) are placed around the necks of the couple to symbolize eternal love. Jade or bone wedding rings may be exchanged in place of gold ones.

Life Cycle

Birth

Pregnant women have access to a range of healthcare providers, from midwives to general practitioners. The majority of maternity costs are covered by the government for New Zealand citizens and permanent residents. Many expectant parents take prenatal classes together. Family members and friends typically throw a pregnant woman a baby shower, where guests play games and give her useful items for the baby. Traditionally, babies born to Christian families were baptized soon after birth, but baptism is becoming less common. Many infants are named after a relative, such as a grandparent, uncle, or aunt.

Milestones

Several milestones occur during the teenage years of a young adult's life. New Zealanders may begin driving at age 16 and can buy alcohol and cigarettes and vote in elections at age 18. High school graduation at age 17 or 18 is another important event. The age of 21 is considered the beginning of adulthood. A twenty-first birthday celebration is significant. It typically includes a large party attended by relatives and friends held in the family home or at an event center. The party usually involves large amounts of alcohol, and partygoers may give speeches about the young person, often trying to embarrass him or her in front of the guests with anecdotes from the past. The host may be given birthday cards featuring images of keys, which represent the key to the door of adulthood.

Death

Pakeha funerals follow Western traditions, with a wake, memorial service, and burial in a cemetery or cremation. At a wake, friends and family share memories of the deceased and consume light refreshments.

Maori funerals (*tangis*) are held at a *marae* (a sacred open space used for religious and social gatherings) and often last several days, with guests staying for the duration, usually at the *wharenui* (great house near the *marae*). Maori believe that the spirit of the deceased remains nearby until burial, so they hold a vigil until then.

Diet

The New Zealand diet has become lighter and more diverse in recent years, with influences from the country's many ethnic groups. *Kaimoana* (seafood) and fresh vegetables play a greater role than in the past. Red meat is eaten less often and portions are smaller. Beef, pork, and roast lamb are still common, as is fish, but poultry is gaining popularity. Meat pies and *sausage rolls* (sausage wrapped in pastry) were popular, but now more people prefer hamburgers, pizza, fish and chips, and international cuisine. *Vegemite* (yeast extract), peanut butter, honey, and jam are used as bread spreads. Fruits are abundant and include apples, bananas, apricots, peaches, nectarines, plums, cherries, strawberries, and tomatoes. New Zealanders regard their cheeses and ice cream as among the best in the world. European and Asian foods are popular, especially in larger cities. A *hangi* is a traditional Maori meal, prepared by placing meat, seafood, potatoes, *kumara* (sweet potatoes), and vegetables together in wire racks lined with cabbage leaves. The wire racks are then steamed for hours in an *umu*, or underground oven.

Recreation

Sports

Many New Zealanders love sports. Rugby is the national sport. The national rugby team, the All Blacks (so named because of their uniform color), has achieved success in world competition. Soccer is popular in winter, while cricket is the favorite for summer. Field hockey and softball are popular with both men and women. Girls and women often play netball, a game similar to basketball. Tennis, *bowls* (lawn bowling), and *athletics* (track-and-field) are also enjoyed in the summer.

Around half of the population are members of sporting

clubs. These clubs offer coaching and competitions in a variety of sports, from rugby to *bowls*. On Saturdays, club teams often compete with each other and afterward enjoy a *barbie* (barbeque). Members range in age from senior citizens to primary school students. Some children also belong to dance groups. Most secondary schools close early one day a week to allow students to take part in inter-school sport competitions.

Since no area is far from the mountains, sea, or rivers, there are many opportunities for mountaineering, *tramping* (hiking), fishing (both deep-sea and freshwater), hunting (on a limited basis), swimming, walking, jogging, and sailing. Adventure sports are also popular, including bungee jumping—which was invented in New Zealand—whitewater rafting, caving, and rappelling. Various endurance events attract global competitors to the country; one example is the Coast to Coast, which features running, cycling, and kayaking across New Zealand's South Island.

Recreation

New Zealanders spend considerable time outdoors. In addition to playing sports, they garden and fix up their homes. Gardening is one of the most common leisure activities, and people take pride in growing produce to share at weekend *barbies*, which are typically potlucks.

Another popular pastime is cooking, with an emphasis on fresh, healthy food made from scratch using local produce. Throughout the year, people attend various wine and food festivals that showcase local products. Spending time at cafés and restaurants is a favorite way to relax. Many adults enjoy taking continuing education classes at local community centers or high schools. These classes teach a variety of subjects, such as foreign languages, yoga, woodworking, and art appreciation.

Vacation

Traveling is common. After graduating from high school or college, many young people go on an Overseas Experience (OE), during which they work abroad for a year or two; London is a popular destination. About a third of the population makes a visit abroad each year, often to places such as Australia and the Pacific Islands.

The Arts

Maori performing arts, or *kapa haka*, include songs, chants, and dances. These art forms may convey legends, love poems, tributes to ancestors, oral histories, and political statements. Performers often use face paint as an alternative to traditional *moko* (facial tattoos), which feature elaborate designs. A popular form of the *haka* (traditional dance) is a war dance performed by men, who make powerful moves, shout fierce chants, and display aggressive facial gestures, such as widening the eyes and sticking out the tongue. This type of *haka* has become an internationally-recognized symbol of New Zealand, due in part to the All Blacks's tradition of performing the dance prior to competition. A common dance performed by women includes the swinging of *poi* (percussive balls on the end of a string). Maori folk arts include wood and bone carvings, which record traditional beliefs and tribal affiliation, and *taaniko* weaving (plaiting flax to produce clothing with colorful geometric patterns).

Classical orchestras and theater and dance companies all enjoy success, and contemporary painters and sculptors exhibit in galleries throughout the country. New Zealand's domestic film industry has enjoyed significant growth in recent years, and New Zealand's pristine natural environment and topographical variation have made the nation a favorite location for filmmakers from around the globe.

Holidays

Public holidays include New Year's (1–2 Jan.), Waitangi Day (6 Feb.), Easter (including Good Friday and Easter Monday), Anzac Day (25 Apr.), Queen Elizabeth II's Birthday (first Monday in June), Labour Day (fourth Monday in October), Christmas, and Boxing Day (26 Dec.). Each province celebrates an Anniversary Day, which marks the day colonists first landed in the area.

Anzac Day

Anzac Day commemorates the service and sacrifice of the armed forces of New Zealand and Australia (ANZAC stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps). It began by marking the day that these forces landed at Gallipoli during World War I. Today, Anzac Day honors all members of the armed forces, and the holiday has become increasingly popular. Dawn services are held at war memorials throughout the country. Former and current members of the armed forces march in organized parades to these memorials, while members of the public line the streets to show their support. Wreaths are placed at the base of the memorial by service members, local dignitaries, and school children. Speeches, hymns, a minute of silence, and a trumpet rendition of the Last Post follow.

On this day, New Zealanders traditionally wear poppies purchased from the Returned Services' Association (RSA), with the profits going to returned service personnel. After the morning service, people visit their local RSA club to enjoy complimentary hot drinks and snacks. People also commonly eat Anzac *biscuits* (cookies) on this day. These long-lasting *biscuits* were made by relatives to send to the armed forces during World War I. Eggs, which were scarce at the time, are not included in the recipe.

Waitangi Day

Waitangi Day marks the anniversary of the 1840 signing of the Treaty of Waitangi between Maori and the British. Differences in interpretation over English and Maori versions of the treaty led to years of misunderstanding and conflict between the groups. As a result, this holiday has been controversial since its inception in 1974, at times leading to demonstrations, some of which are violent, carried out by Maori over contested claims to land. As past wrongs have been admitted to by the government and land claims settled, Waitangi Day has become more peaceful. Most people spend the day relaxing outside or have barbeques.

Christmas Day

Christmas Day is one of New Zealand's most popular holidays. Families gather in the morning to exchange gifts and then enjoy a special meal for lunch and dinner. Traditional foods include ham, turkey, and lamb, along with vegetables and *Christmas pudding* (steamed fruitcake drizzled with caramel or brandy sauce). Today, Christmas meals are

often adapted to better fit the summer weather and feature cold meats, salad, and a dessert of fresh berries, fruit salad, and *pavlova* (a meringue-like cake topped with cream and fresh fruit and served cold). In the afternoon, families usually play board games and go for a walk. Barbeques and vacations during Christmas are also popular. Boxing Day comes from a British tradition of giving small boxed gifts to service workers or the poor. It is now a day to visit and relax.

SOCIETY

Government

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

Head of Government: PM John Key

Capital: Wellington

Structure

New Zealand, a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, recognizes Queen Elizabeth II as head of state. She is represented in the country by a governor-general. The head of government is the prime minister, who is appointed by the queen and is the leader of the majority party or coalition in the nation's 120-seat unicameral parliament, the House of Representatives. Its members are elected to three-year terms; 70 constituencies elect one representative each through a majoritarian system (7 of these seats are reserved for Maoris) and 50 through proportional representation. Parties must earn at least 5 percent of the vote or win one constituency seat to be eligible to earn seats through proportional representation.

New Zealand is divided into 16 regions. The powers that the regional and local governments have in relation to the national government are relatively weak when compared with similar situations in many other developed countries.

Political Landscape

Because some seats in the House of Representatives are filled through proportional representation, several parties in New Zealand are able to gain representation in the legislature. This also has resulted in frequent coalition governments. Major political parties include the center-right New Zealand National Party and the center-left Labour Party. The leftist Green Party is the country's third largest political party. Immigration and economic policies are some of the major political issues in New Zealand.

Government and the People

Freedoms of speech, religion, press, and assembly are protected by law and respected by the government. Levels of corruption are among the lowest in the world. Elections are free, fair, and transparent. Voter turnout for national elections has decreased steadily since a post-World War II high of over 95 percent to an average of about 77 percent in the last decade. Voter registration is mandatory, but citizens are not required to actually vote. The voting age is 18.

Economy

GDP (PPP) in billions: \$136

GDP (PPP) per capita: \$30,400

New Zealand has a modern industrialized economy. While

only 7 percent of the population is employed in agriculture, New Zealand's international trade depends heavily on the sector. The most important exports include wool, lamb, beef, fruit, fish, cheese, wine, and timber products. New Zealand is one of the world's largest exporters of wool. Important industries include food and wood processing, forestry, textiles, and machinery. Tourism is another vital economic sector; the nation's diverse landscapes attract foreign visitors with interests in hiking, river rafting, skiing, wildlife watching, and other outdoor activities. Real gross domestic product per capita has doubled in the last generation—a reflection of growing prosperity and a strong middle class. Unemployment is relatively low but higher among Maori and Pacific Islanders. The currency is the New Zealand dollar (NZD).

Transportation and Communications

Internet Users (per 100 people): 83

Cellular Phone Subscriptions (per 100 people): 106

Paved Roads: 67%

Private cars are the preferred mode of transportation, although many urban residents ride a bus to work. All major cities have good bus systems. Trains and domestic airlines also operate between cities and industrial centers. Many New Zealanders use bicycles for short-distance transportation. Ferries regularly carry passengers and cars between the two main islands.

An excellent communications system provides efficient domestic and international service. Numerous radio and television stations and other media operate throughout New Zealand. Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Wellington have daily newspapers. Internet usage is common; however, broadband internet is not yet available in many areas of the country.

Education

Adult Literacy: 99%

Mean Years of Schooling: 12.5

Structure and Access

New Zealanders highly value education. Most children enter school at age five, but preschools are also available. Secondary education begins at age thirteen. Some high schools are segregated by sex. Over 85 percent of schools are public.

Education is free and compulsory between ages six and sixteen. Public and *state-integrated schools* (schools that teach religion in addition to the state curriculum) are government funded, while private schools receive a quarter of their funding from the state. Though public education is free, most schools request an annual voluntary donation, the amount of which ranges from the equivalent of US\$80 to \$700 per student, depending on the school's location and the parents' ability to pay. Parents must also pay for costs related to school trips, supplies, and uniforms. These costs may be waived in cases of financial hardship.

Maori and Pacific Island students sometimes struggle in English-language schools, and literacy rates among these

groups tend to be lower than among Pakeha. The government has addressed this problem by establishing (mostly secondary) schools in which some or all subjects are taught in Maori or Samoan, the language of the largest Pacific Islander group in the country.

School Life

Uniforms are obligatory at the majority of schools. Most primary school children are required to wear a sunhat while playing outside.

Teaching styles emphasize discussion, questions, and debate; both individual and group work is common. Materials include textbooks, photocopies, and audiovisual equipment. Nearly all schools have high-speed internet access, and many are equipped with laptops, interactive whiteboards, and other technological tools. Teachers are involved in coaching sports, directing music and art activities, and mentoring students outside of the classroom. Most high school students study for an hour or two daily. Cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated.

Parents are heavily involved in their children's educations. They often attend weekly meetings, called *whanau* (family) time, during which information related to school events is announced and students perform songs and skits. They also volunteer as classroom aids and in the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). Schools have strict attendance policies, and truancy officers make home visits to discuss unexcused student absences with parents. Under the Education Act, parents may be fined the equivalent of US\$250 for a student's first truancy and up to \$2,500 for a second or subsequent offense.

Higher Education

More than half of all students continue two years after the compulsory requirements to finish high school (also called *college*). A rigorous state exam given in the fifth year of secondary school is required for university admission. New Zealand women have higher qualification rates than men and have a larger enrollment in higher education. The government administers eight universities. Government loans are available to students to cover tuition costs, and stipends are paid to those with low incomes. Continuing, technical, and vocational education are available to those who do not pursue a university degree.

Health

A comprehensive social security program provides healthcare coverage for the aged, disabled, sick, and unemployed. The public healthcare system is maintained by taxes, although some elements of care are being privatized or simply left to an emerging private sector. While all New Zealanders are entitled to use the public system, many workers choose to carry private insurance to expand their healthcare options. Private hospitals receive some government subsidies. Medical facilities are generally good and readily available.

AT A GLANCE

Contact Information

Embassy of New Zealand, 37 Observatory Circle NW,

Washington, DC 20008; phone (202) 328-4800; web site www.nzembassy.com/usa. Tourism New Zealand, phone (310) 395-7480; web site www.purenz.com.

Country and Development Data

Capital	Wellington
Population	4,401,916 (rank=127)
Area (sq. mi.)	103,363 (rank=77)
Area (sq. km.)	267,710
Human Development Index	7 of 187 countries
Gender Inequality Index	34 of 148 countries
GDP (PPP) per capita	\$30,400
Adult Literacy	99% (male); 99% (female)
Infant Mortality	5 per 1,000 births
Life Expectancy	79 (male); 83 (female)
Currency	New Zealand dollar