

British Hills Knowledge Base: New Zealand Overview

New Zealand is an island nation in the south-west Pacific Ocean. It is made up of two large islands, named the North Island and the South Island, and about 600 smaller islands. The capital city of New Zealand is Wellington, **although** the largest city is Auckland. The country has a population of about 5 million. The currency of New Zealand is the New Zealand dollar.



New Zealand's geography is very **diverse**, with snow-capped mountains, sandy beaches, glaciers, forests, caves and natural hot springs. Over two thirds of the South Island is **mountainous**, and the North Island is famous for hot springs, geysers, and other features of geothermal activity.

New Zealand was one of the last regions of the world that humans reached. People from eastern Polynesia arrived on New Zealand only about 1000 years ago. These people became the Maori, with a **unique** culture. Europeans arrived several centuries later – the first European to discover New Zealand was Dutch, but it was the British who **settled** there. The 1840 Treaty of Waitangi between the British and the Maori is considered to mark the foundation of the modern nation of New Zealand. It became a British Dominion in 1907, though there is debate over when New Zealand became a fully independent country.

New Zealand is a constitutional monarchy, with Queen Elizabeth II as the **current** monarch. It has a mix of European, Maori, Asian and Polynesian cultures, and is a developed country with a strong economy. The biggest industries are **agriculture**, construction, and tourism, and it has generally a **wealthy**, stable and safe society.

The unofficial national flower of New Zealand is the silver birch, which you can see on both national army uniforms and national sports uniforms. The unofficial national bird is the Kiwi, a flightless bird. In fact, New Zealanders often **refer to** themselves as "Kiwis."



The Kiwi bird

The national languages are English and Maori, and with its unique environment and wildlife both on land and in the sea, New Zealand attracts tourists from all over the world.

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Read about New Zealand, and match the words in the text with their synonyms:

although	distinctive
diverse	colonise
mountainous	varied
unique	farming
settled	rich
current	call
agriculture	but
wealthy	highland
refer to	present

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