

Welcome to New Zealand

Your essential guide to The Land of the Long White Cloud



New Zealand's wild terrain of soaring peaks, icy glaciers, glassy lakes, primeval forests, windswept beaches and bubbling volcanic mud is awe-inspiring. It also boasts laid-back, friendly people, a flourishing Maori culture, flawless international cuisine, great nightlife and arts and a colourful, multicultural populace.

NZ is divided into two very different islands. North Island is the focus of Maori culture, and boasts most of the country's remaining volcanic activity: perfect conical peaks, bubbling mud pools, spurting

geysers and crater lakes. It's also home to cosmopolitan Auckland – a bustling Pacific Rim metropolis in the sub-tropical north – as well as the nation's smaller, more artsy capital, Wellington.

Head down to the South Island and you'll find that the culture is more Caledonian, with a smaller population inhabiting remote villages and provincial cities such as Nelson and Dunedin, nestling among undulating glacial valleys, breathtaking fiords and deep, dark lakes that are just waiting to be explored by curious, thrill-seeking travellers.

New Zealand facts

■ **LAND AREA** 70,000 sq km; almost 10 per cent larger than the UK.

■ **POPULATION** 4.1 million.

■ **CAPITAL** Wellington, which is situated in the North Island.

■ **GOVERNMENT** The country is currently ruled by the elected National Party under Prime Minister John Key, a trained accountant and former currency trader in London.

■ **HEALTH** Travel insurance is recommended. UK citizens are entitled to limited medical cover for accidental injury, but you'll have to pay to see a doctor. Healthcare is excellent. Tap water is safe to drink unless otherwise specified.

■ **SAFETY** NZ is considered a safe country; the main hazards are likely to be sunburn or misadventure. There are no snakes and the only dangerous wildlife on land is the tiny katipo spider. NZ does, however, have occasional earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

■ **LAW** The legal drinking age is 18.

■ **DRIVING** Driving is on the left and a UK or international driver's licence is sufficient for driving for 12 months. Long-term residents can upgrade to a NZ licence by sitting a test.

■ **ELECTRICITY** Most UK appliances and mobile phones can be used in New Zealand, but the country uses Australian plug sockets so you will need an adaptor.

■ **TRANSPORT & TRAVEL** NZ is well set up for visitors, with a wide range of transport and accommodation options nationwide, from international hotels to wilderness campsites, from campervan hire to local bus services.

■ **COSTS** Budget travellers should allow £20-£30 per day for food, public transport and accommodation. A beer costs around £2, a bottle of local wine £5, a dinner for two from £12.

■ **MONEY** The New Zealand dollar (NZ\$) is worth around 44p. Bills are rounded to the nearest 5c. There are ATMs available in tourist and shopping areas.





Inhabited for only 1,000 years,
 NZ's culture is influenced by both
 Maori and Scottish settlers



North Island

MAJOR CITIES Auckland (population 1 million) is a bustling harbour metropolis, dotted with grassy extinct volcanoes, close to several islands and beaches. Wellington (population 205,000) is vibrant and bohemian, surrounded by hills and a sparkling harbour.

CLIMATE Sub-tropical Auckland ranges from 8-13°C in winter, to the mid 20s in summer. Wellington is about three degrees cooler on average, and famously windy.

TOP 5 MUST-SEE SPOTS

ROTORUA: A steamy, volcanic landscape meets a rich Maori heritage; this town offers hot springs, mud baths and Maori villages. **BAY OF ISLANDS:** Hundreds of pretty islands are dotted around this vast bay, offering whale, penguin and dolphin encounters, jetboating, sailing, seafood and more.

WAITOMO CAVES: A spectacular limestone system offering caving, potholing, glowworms, blackwater rafting, subterranean boat cruises, plus bushwalks. **WAIHEKE ISLAND:** This laid-back island community has plenty of bushwalks, sandy beaches, fishing villages, artists studios and plenty of great food.

TAUPO: You'll find boating, fishing, skydives, watersports and more, in the shadow of one of the world's mightiest volcanoes.



South Island

MAJOR CITIES A south-seas version of Oxbridge, Christchurch (population 359,900) is complete with lazy river punts, gothic architecture, willow trees and cloistered quadrangles. Further south, Dunedin (population 110,000) is a sturdy town founded by Scottish gold prospectors.

CLIMATE The South Island is mountainous, so temperatures drop below freezing in winter. A good summer's day would be in the low 20s.

TOP 5 MUST-SEE SPOTS

MILFORD ROAD: A journey through Fiordland: gushing chasms, mossy forests, mirror lakes, and endless mountain views, culminate in the awesome sight of Milford Sound. **THE GLACIERS:** Walk on mile-thick ice at Franz Josef and Fox glaciers on the west coast. Clamp on crampons and wander amid icy grottoes, potholes and crevasses.

KAIKOURA: With whales, seals, dolphins and penguins, Kaikoura is a wildlife-spotters dream. Watch the sunrise from a boat surrounded by dolphins.

QUEENSTOWN: Spectacular lakeside town set amid snow-capped mountains. In winter it's NZ's main ski resort. **STEWART ISLAND:** The last outpost of mainland NZ before Antarctica. One general store, one pub and a world of remote bush and beach.



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