

● What basic facts do you know about New Zealand?

New Zealand is an island nation located / found in the South Pacific. The country / island is quite isolated. It lies / is situated 2,000 km from Australia. About 4 million people live there. The Maori name for New Zealand is Aotearoa, which is commonly translated as "land of the long white cloud". English and Maori are both the official languages of New Zealand.

● What do you know about the country's geography?

New Zealand is comprised / made up / consists of two main islands and several small islands. The North Island has a sub-tropical climate, which means that there are warm to hot summers and cool mild winters. Summer lasts from December to February and winter from June to August. Most of the rain falls in winter. The North 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 / mountain Mount Cook (Aoraki), which is 3,754 m high. The South Island is larger than the North Island but has only one quarter of the country's population. / Most of New Zealand's population live on the North Island. The South Island is much colder and snow and glaciers are found in the mountain ranges. The country suffers a lot from earthquakes.

● What do you know about New Zealand's cities?

The North Island boasts two of the country's most important cities: Auckland in the north and Wellington in the south. Wellington is the country's political capital and the third largest city by population. The parliament of New Zealand is found / located here. Auckland is New Zealand's largest city. It has about 1.4 million people, almost 30% of the country's population. It is the economic centre of New Zealand. Christchurch is the second largest city in New Zealand and the largest on the South Island. Dunedin is the second largest city on the South Island. It is a university town, with almost a fifth of people being students or staff.

● What do you know about New Zealand politics?

New Zealand is a part of the British Commonwealth. It is a constitutional monarchy and the head of state is the monarch of the United Kingdom. His / her representative is the Governor General. The head of government is the prime minister. The New Zealand parliament is unicameral / single-chambered.

● What do you know about New Zealand's history?

Maori first settled in New Zealand in the 13th century. Before that, there was no human settlement. The Maori came by canoes and soon established their

own civilization based around tribal communities. The Dutchman Abel Tasman was the first European to reach the island. The British explorer James Cook visited the island in the second half of the 18th century. In the late 18th century whalers and sealers from Britain, France and the USA would visit the island and trade with the Maoris. In the early 19th century a series of inter-tribal conflicts left many Maori dead. These battles were called the Musket Wars because the Maori went to war with newly acquired muskets. In 1840, Maori chiefs and British officials signed the Treaty of Waitangi. From the British point of view it gave sovereignty to the British Crown. This is still disputed by Maori people today. New Zealand became the first country in the world to give women the vote, in 1893. In 1907, New Zealand gained dominion status, so it was no longer a colony of Britain. New Zealand participated in both World Wars.

● What do you know about New Zealand's wildlife?

New Zealand has many species that are unique to the islands. / For millions of years New Zealand has been isolated and unique birds, animals and plants have developed there. The most well-known are flightless birds such as the kiwi. This bird is the symbol of the country. The kakapo is another unique flightless bird. It is the only type of parrot which is unable to fly. The tuatara lives only in New Zealand. It looks like a lizard but is actually separate type of reptile. This animal is born with a partial third eye which is covered over by scales after about six months after birth.

● Who are famous people connected with New Zealand?

The Flight of the Conchords is a musical comedy duo. Actors Russell Crowe and Sam Neill come from New Zealand. Lucy Lawless is the actress who played Xena. 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 who was the first to climb Mount Everest.

● What are popular sports and pastimes in New Zealand?

Rugby Union is the most popular sport. New Zealand is one of the top rugby nations in the world. Cricket is a popular summer sport. New Zealanders also play netball, basketball and tennis. The country is also a very strong sailing nation and has won the America's Cup twice.

● Why would you like to visit New Zealand?

I'd like to visit / go to New Zealand because... it has very beautiful nature / wilderness areas... the people are very friendly... it is a great place for extreme sports... it is said to be the "Adventure Capital of the World"... I'm interested in Maori culture.