

Title:

Explore New Zealand's Diverse Culture

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Summary:

The diverse culture of New Zealand carries much tradition and history built on the customs of the indigenous people known as the Maori. Legend holds that the Maori traveled by canoe from their mythical ancestral island of Hawaiki over 1,000 years ago. These Polynesian settlers traveled in open boats (or in canoes) that are not too different from the traditional crafts found in Polynesia today.

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Keywords:

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Article Body:

The diverse culture of New Zealand carries much tradition and history built on the customs of the indigenous people known as the Maori. Legend holds that the Maori traveled by canoe from their mythical ancestral island of Hawaiki over 1,000 years ago. These Polynesian settlers traveled in open boats (or in canoes) that are not too different from the traditional crafts found in Polynesia today.

New Zealand is a country comprised of two large islands and many smaller islands in the southwestern Pacific Ocean and is noted for its geographic isolation. The Tasman Sea separates Australia to the northwest; to north are Fiji and Tonga. The total area of New Zealand is 268670 sq. km, which is slightly less than Japan but a little more than the United Kingdom. The country has extensive marine resources and the fifth largest Exclusive Economic Zone in the world. Meaning New Zealand can claim over four million km² or more than 15 times its land area for exploration and use of marine resources.

The climate is mild, mostly cool temperate to warm temperate, with temperatures rarely falling below 0°C (32°F) or rising above 30°C (86°F). The South Island is the largest mass, mountainous, wet and cold. It is divided length-wise by the Southern Alps. The North Island, dry and continental, is marked by volcanism. The tallest mountain on the North Island Mount Ruapehu (9,176-ft) is an active cone volcano. Although the island landscapes are impressive, they became a lot

more popular when the production the Lord of the Rings trilogy called them home.

New Zealand has a population of about 4.1 million people mostly of European descent with Maori being the largest minority. Non-Maori Polynesian and Asian peoples are also significant minorities, especially in the nation's cities. Officially, Elizabeth II is the Queen of New Zealand and is represented in the country by a non-political governor-general; however, the Queen has no real political influence. Political power is held by the Prime Minister (currently Helen Clark) who is leader of the Government in the democratically elected Parliament of New Zealand.

Since 1984 the government has been restructuring the economy to lean more towards an industrialized free market and less of an agrarian economy that was dependant on the British market. Leading agricultural exports include meat, dairy products, forest products, fruit and vegetables, fish, and wool.

The culture, contemporary and diverse, has influences from British, Irish, and Maori cultures. New Zealand is one of the most recently settled major landmasses. Polynesian settlers arrived in their waka some time between 800 and 600 years ago to establish the indigenous Maori culture. Among the British settlers, many people were from Scotland giving New Zealand more bagpipe bands than in Scotland!

What exactly is a Kiwi?

A Kiwi to a New Zealander is not the green fuzzy fruit most Americans relate to. It is in truth a flightless nocturnal native bird with a long beak with nostrils on the end. Most important however, it is the national bird of New Zealand. Over the years, Kiwi has been applied to and adopted by New Zealanders as a nickname for themselves and as an adjective for their culture.