An aerial photograph of a volcanic island, likely Pitcairn Island, showing a large, dark, crater-like depression in the center. The island is surrounded by deep blue ocean water with white-capped waves breaking against the shore. The land is covered in green vegetation, with some rocky areas visible near the coast.

Legend says this land was hauled from the ocean like a giant fish. And then it waited. In fact these islands waited until every other country had been discovered. Before any human ever set foot here.

Welcome to the youngest country on earth.


Welcome to New Zealand

- Geography
- Climate
- Landscape
- Nature
- Government
- Largest Cities
- Places of Interest



New Zealand Aotearoa (Maori)

Anthem: «God Defend New Zealand»



Date of independence	26 September 1907 (from the United Kingdom)
Official language	English, Māori
Capital	Wellington
The largest city	Auckland
Government	Constitutional monarchy
Head of State	Queen Elizabeth II
Governor- General	Anand Satyanand
Prime Minister	Helen Elizabeth Clark
Area Total	75th in the world 268, 680 km²
Population Density	4,239,300 (122nd in the world) 15/km²
Currency	New Zealand dollar (NZD)

Geography



New Zealand is a South Pacific country located midway between the Equator and the South Pole, and approximately 1600 kilometers east of Australia. Its nearest neighbours to the north are New Caledonia, Fiji and Tonga, all about the same distance away as Australia.

With a land area of 268,680 square kilometers, New Zealand is similar in size to Japan, Britain or Italy, and extends over a similar range of latitudes to California. There are two main islands, the North and South Islands, separated by Cook Strait, some 32 kilometers across its narrowest point. The country is 1600 kilometers from northern tip to southern extremity, with no part more than 120 kilometers from the surrounding ocean.

Climate

The climate throughout the country is mild and temperate, mainly maritime, with temperatures rarely falling below 0 °C (32 °F) or rising above 30 °C (86 °F) in populated areas. Temperature maxima and minima throughout the historical record are 42.4 °C (108.3 °F) in Rangiora, Canterbury and -21.6 °C (-6.9 °F) in Ophir, Otago respectively. Conditions vary sharply across regions from extremely wet on the West Coast of the South Island to semi-arid in the Mackenzie Basin of inland Canterbury and subtropical in Northland. Of the main cities, Christchurch is the driest, receiving only some 640 mm of rain per year. Auckland, the wettest, receives almost twice that amount. Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch all receive on average in excess of 2000 hours of sunshine per year.

Landscape

The landscape is notable for its variety and particularly its mountainous nature. The spectacular Southern Alps of the South Island, which rise amid permanent snowfields and many glaciers, include 19 peaks exceeding 3000 meters. A special feature of the North Island is the central volcanic region with three still active volcanic peaks and thermal activity featuring hot spring, geysers and boiling mud pools. Both major islands contain fertile low-land areas of pastoral land, large forests (natural and man-made), many sandy beaches and short, swift flowing rivers. These provide a valuable source of hydro-electric power.

Numerous lakes exist in both islands, with the larger North Island lakes situated on the volcanic central plateau and the major South Island lakes set in beautiful mountain scenery. On the south-west coast of the South Island high mountain ranges meet the ocean in a series of dramatic fiords.



Nature

Because of its long isolation from the rest of the world and its island biogeography, New Zealand has extraordinary flora and fauna. About 80% of the flora in New Zealand occurs only in New Zealand, including more than 40 endemic genera.

.Fauna

.Flora



Kiwi and Silver Tree Fern are the national symbols of New Zealand

Fauna



Kakapo, or an owl parrot



Kaka



Takahe

New Zealand's forests were inhabited by a diverse range of megafauna, including the flightless birds moa (now extinct), and the kiwi, kakapo and takahē, all endangered by human actions. Unique birds capable of flight include the Haast's eagle, which was the world's largest bird of prey (now extinct), and the large kākā and kea parrots. Reptiles present in New Zealand include skinks, geckos and living fossil tuatara. There are four endemic species of primitive frogs. There are no snakes and there is only one venomous spider, the katipo, which is rare and restricted to coastal regions. However, there are many endemic species of insects, including the weta, one species of which may grow as large as a house mouse and is the heaviest insect in the world.



Tuatara



Moa attacked by a Haast's Eagle



Katipo

Flora

The two main types of forest are those dominated by podocarps and/or the giant kauri, and in cooler climates the southern beech. The remaining vegetation types in New Zealand are grasslands of tussock and other grasses, usually in sub-alpine areas, and the low shrublands between grasslands and forests.

Government

New Zealand is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy. Under the Royal Titles Act (1953), Queen Elizabeth II is Queen of New Zealand and is represented as head of state by the Governor-General. The New Zealand Parliament has only one chamber, the House of Representatives, which usually seats 120 Members of Parliament. Parliamentary general elections are held every three years. There is no written constitution; the *Constitution Act 1986* is the principal formal statement of New Zealand's constitutional structure. The Governor-General has the power to appoint and dismiss Prime Ministers and to dissolve Parliament. The Governor-General also chairs the Executive Council, which is a formal committee consisting of all ministers of the Crown. Members of the Executive Council are required to be Members of Parliament, and most are also in Cabinet. Cabinet is led by the Prime Minister, who is Parliamentary leader of the governing party or coalition.



Beehive, Parliament Buildings

Largest Cities

Wellington (unofficially *Te Whanganui-a-Tara* or *Poneke* in Māori) is the capital of New Zealand, the country's second largest city and the most populous national capital in Oceania. Wellington was named in honour of Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington and victor of the Battle of Waterloo. Wellington is New Zealand's political centre, housing Parliament and the head offices of all government ministries and departments, plus the bulk of the foreign diplomatic missions based in New Zealand.

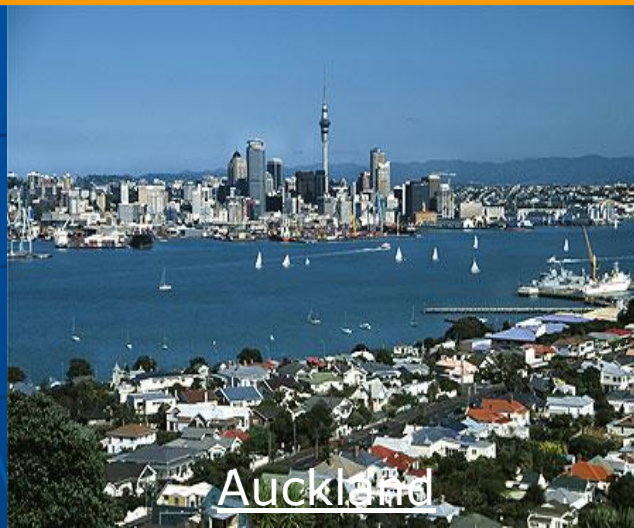
Auckland City is the largest city in New Zealand, with a population of 404,65. It lies in the Auckland Region, and the Auckland Regional Council is also based in Auckland City.

Christchurch (Māori: Ōtautahi) is the regional capital of Canterbury. The largest city in the South Island, it is also the second largest city of New Zealand. A coastal city, it is situated just north of Banks Peninsula, midway down the South Island's east coast.

... take a look around !



Wellington



Auckland



Christchurch

Places of Interest



Christchurch Cathedral



Art Deco Church in Napier



Christchurch Museum



Purakaunui Falls
in the Catlins District



Massey Memorial, the resting place of
William Massey, the Prime Minister
of NZ in the countrie's early history.



Wellington Cable Car



The Tudor towers
of Rotorua's Bath-House



The Stone Store – the oldest
stone building of NZ



Lake Wakatipu



Mount Cook National Park



The Clock Tower in Blenheim

New Zealand has known human habitation for less than a thousand years.
Before then, it was a land of forests, mountains and beaches.
The loudest sounds were birdsong, wind and wave.
The more you learn about this wonderful place the better you can
understand the heart and soul of a country that will never be totally tamed.

