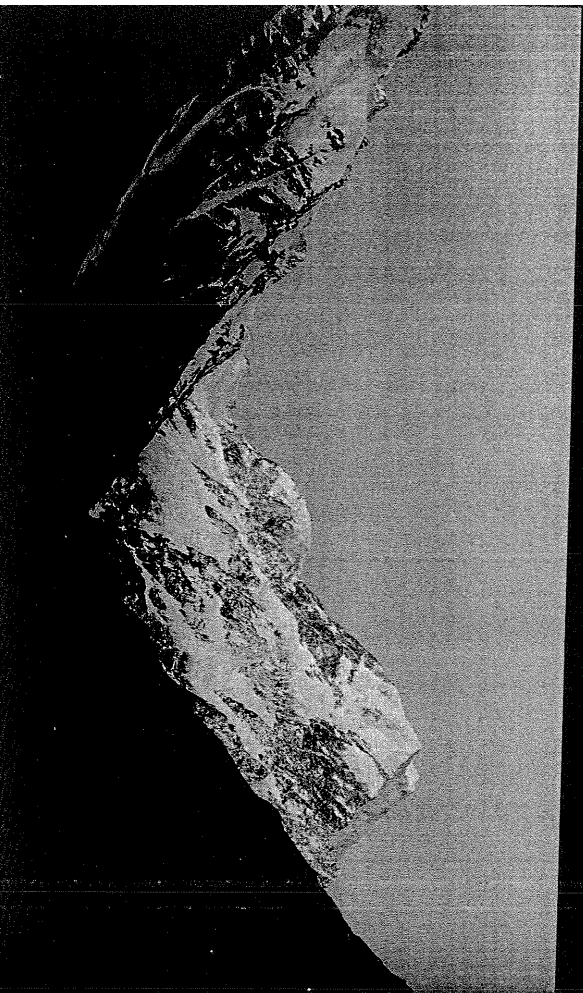


UNDERSTANDING NEW ZEALAND



New Zealand took its place on the tourist map in 1880, when modish travellers included it on their route around the world. Although facilities were distinctly basic, visitors managed to fill several letters with enthusiastic reports of the countryside and its varied populations. These days, tourists can opt out of 'tent hotels' for world-class luxury, but New Zealand's beauty remains sublime. There are dozens of ways to experience it, too, from the high-adrenalin of jet-boats and bungy jumps to the serenity of walks, drives or alfresco dining. It is an easy country to enjoy—attractions, transport and Kiwi attitudes welcome more than 2.5 million visitors a year.

THE LANDSCAPE

New Zealand consists of three main islands—the North Island, the South Island and Stewart Island—with a handful of small, far-flung islands completing the family. The total land area is approximately 270,500sq km (104,795 square miles).

Although compact in size, New Zealand's landscape is rich and varied, with glaciers, braided rivers, lakes, fiords, sounds (flooded riverbeds, found predominantly in the South Island), lowlands, alluvial plains, wetlands, large natural coastal harbours and a rash of offshore islands.

Because New Zealand is located at the meeting point of the Pacific and Indo-Australian tectonic plates, it also experiences frequent earthquakes. A string of volcanoes stretches from the currently active Wakaari/White Island in the Bay of Plenty to Mount Ruapehu in the east of the North Island. The area also has numerous thermal features, including geysers, mineral springs, lowholes and mud pools, most of which can be found round Rotorua and Taupo.

and more than 1 million in the South Island. Greater Auckland is home to more than 1 million people. New Zealand is essentially a bicultural society made up of Maori and Europeans, with many other nationalities also present. Maori make up about 14 per cent of New Zealand's total population, with the vast majority living in the North Island. There are around 266,000 Pacific Islanders, with many living in greater Auckland. Asians make up nine per cent of New Zealand's total population and are the fastest-growing minority group, again settled mainly in the greater Auckland area.

New Zealanders are famous for being the world's greatest travellers, and at any one time a large proportion of citizens are absent or living abroad. More than 450,000 live and work in Australia alone. Through their close trans-Tasman ties, Australian and New Zealand citizens are free to live and work in both countries.

MAORI CULTURE

A big draw for visitors is the vibrant culture of New Zealand's first inhabitants, the Maori. After their culture was suppressed throughout the 19th century, Maori society enjoyed a renaissance towards the end of the 1970s. Language, art and kapa haka (performance arts) are thriving. The most popular place for visitors to experience these is Rotorua.

POLITICS

Things change quickly in New Zealand. With its small population and triennial elections, it's sometimes seen as a social laboratory. Currently under the microscope is Mixed Member Proportional representation (MMP), an electoral system that has helped a wider range of MPs into parliament since it was introduced in 1996. As well as the two long-established parties, Labour and National, significant political stakes are held by the environmentally friendly Green Party, family-values oriented United Future and migrant-watching New Zealand First. A number of distinctive personalities have made it big in national and local politics—Georgina Beyer, the world's first transsexual MP, Nandor Tanczos, the Rastafarian Green with waist-length dreadlocks, Tim Shadbolt, the flowerpower activist turned mayor of Invercargill, and Dick Hubbard, breakfast cereal magnate and mayor of Auckland.

RELIGION

The dominant religion is Christianity, with Anglican, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic denominations being the most prominent. Minority religions include Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. The Maori developed two of their own minority Christian-based faiths, Rātana and Ringatu, both of which were formed in the late 19th to early 20th centuries. At least a quarter of the total population are atheists or have no religion, and this number is growing.



Opposite The towering snow-capped peak of Mount Cook
Above Natural steam clouds rise from mud pools at Waitō-Tapu

VISITING NEW ZEALAND

Many visitors from Asia experience New Zealand in three days flat—Auckland, Rotorua and Queenstown. These are great spots, but to get a feel for the country, its people and culture, you really need two weeks minimum. If your flight takes more than 12 hours, three weeks is a preferable time to allow, simply because jet lag can spoil the first few days.

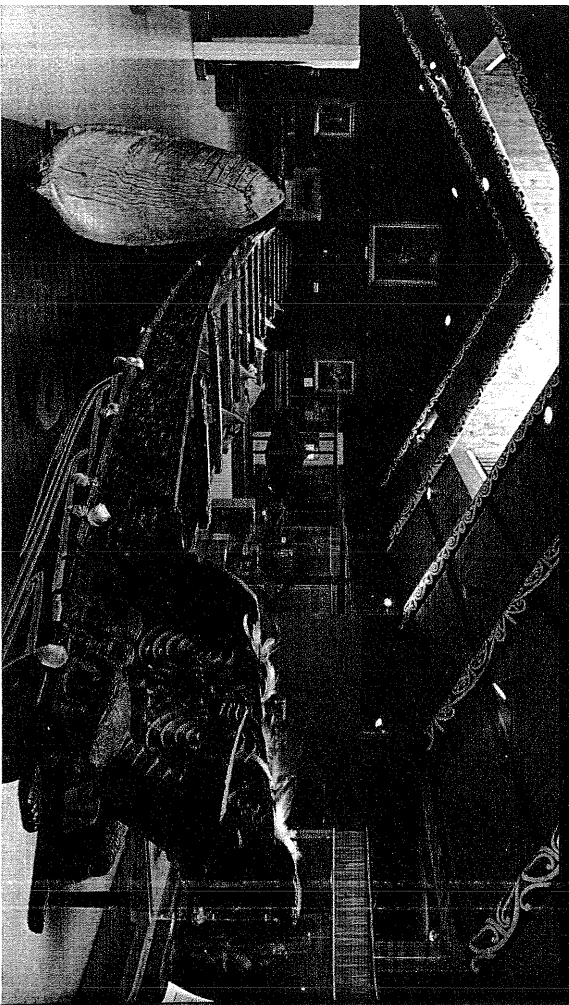
The easiest way to travel is by road. Coaches are inexpensive, reliable and connect most visitor areas, while campervans have become incredibly popular, providing flexible access to remote quarters with no worry of finding a bed for the night. Rail is limited, with some notable exceptions—the TransAlpine trip from Christchurch to Greymouth is an attraction in its own right. If time is limited, a good way to see the highlights of both islands is to fly. If you have a contact, it's less expensive to book from within the country, and the earlier the better.

There are ample opportunities to try outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, hunting and mountain biking. Just be aware that if you bring your own equipment, it must be scrupulously cleaned before you try to get it through customs. Most gear can be easily hired anyway, and the results are all but guaranteed if you use the services of an experienced guide.

LANGUAGE

▷ 293-294.

NEW LAND, NEW PEOPLE



New Zealand was 680 million years in the making. Humans arrived on its shores perhaps a thousand years ago—hardly a tick on the geological clock—but their effect was profound and irreversible. The first settlers from East Polynesia probably numbered between one and two hundred, but within a century several species of bird were extinct, seals and other seabirds were all but eradicated from the main islands and large tracts of land were destroyed by fire. The easy pickings from New Zealand's great natural store cupboard had gone and the settlers were forced into more considered methods of survival. This marked the transition from the 'archaic' era of Maori settlement to the 'classic'. Groups became more settled as they developed sustainable food production such as gardening. The tubers of their *kumara* (sweet potato) became more valuable and had to be protected, giving rise to *pa* (fortified villages). By the 16th century a tribal system had developed. Now fully adjusted to the challenges of their environment, settlers could keep warm, build appropriate shelters and grow food. The focus moved to building social and cultural systems based on the old ways, but suited to their new country. They were no longer immigrants from Polynesia, but Maori.

Above Te Mata O Hoturua, a carved Maori war canoe in the Wanganui Regional Museum

MAN BECOMES MYTH

Until recently, Maori arrival in New Zealand was neatly tied up: in AD950, a Polynesian navigator, Kupe, left Hawaiki (Tahiti) with his family and crew. Eventually, he sighted a white cloud (*aotae*), which revealed a bush-covered land. He called it Aotearoa—Land of the Long White Cloud. In 1350, a 'Great Fleet' of seven canoes followed in his wake.

However, 1970s research found these 'truths' were not authenticated by Maori sources but had been cobbled together by a European scholar.

What we do know for sure is the Maori came from East Polynesia, a race of seafarers with the sophisticated navigation needed to complete the 3,000km (1,860-mile) journey and return home. It seems likely that after voyages of discovery, men and women came in several canoes, equipped for settlement, during the 13th century.

HUNTED DOWN

Maori settlers walked into a teeming store cupboard in New Zealand. The moa was not the only ground-dwelling bird with little fear of predators in the country, but it remains by far the most distinctive.

The moa looked like a chunky ostrich, or an enormous kiwi with a long neck. At around 3m (10ft), the giant moa was the world's tallest bird, with drumsticks equivalent to a leg of beef. Even the smaller bush moa were as large as turkeys.

They were zealously rounded up and killed in their thousands by settlers until, in little more than 100 years, they were gone. Archaeologists have found traces of massive fires that destroyed forests, especially in Hawke's Bay and on the east coast of the South Island—these may have been started as a last-ditch effort to flush out the last of the species.

CODES OF CONDUCT

As Maori culture developed into the tribally organized 'classic' phase, common values emerged. Links between tribes were strong enough for these values to be shared by all, just like the language.

For example, it was accepted that people were either *rangatira* (aristocrats) or *tutu* (commoners). *Rangatira* had more *mana* (honour), but anyone could gain or lose *mana* according to their skills and achievements.

Another common concept was *utu*. This idea of reciprocity could be positive or destructive, in response to a favour or an insult. It could sweeten relationships between tribes or families—one could gift basalt while the other returned with fish, raising the *mana* of both parties. Or it could mean war, as one tribe rectified another tribe's misdeed, which could have occurred days or possibly decades before.

A RACE WRONGED

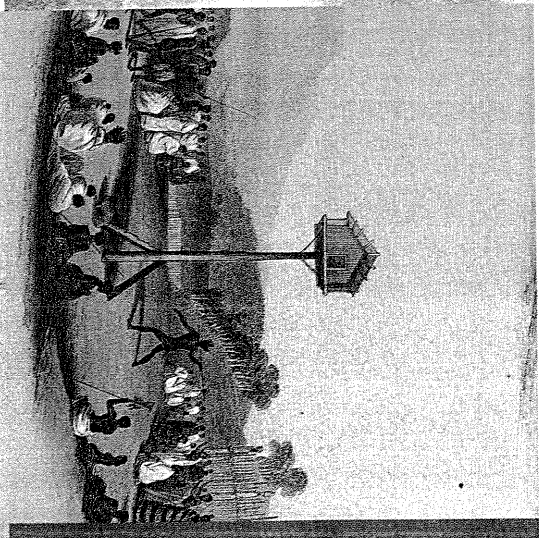
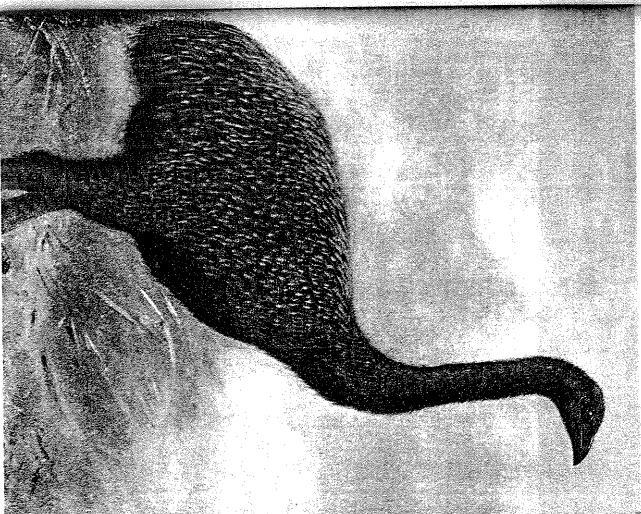
The Moriori came from East Polynesia and settled in the Chatham Islands (Rēkohi). They shared the same genes as the Maori and travelled at around the same time, but away from the mainland they developed cultural differences: a society without hierarchy, their own dialect and a covenant to settle disputes by one-on-one combat, rather than warfare. During the 20th century historians portrayed Moriori as an inferior race exterminated by the Maori—a useful justification for European colonization. Moriori numbers were indeed decimated by the 1835 invasion of two Maori tribes, but descendants survived. However, most kept their heritage quiet until these presumptions were challenged in the late 20th century. In 2004, three Moriori groups signed terms with the Government under the Treaty of Waitangi, and three more were expected to follow suit.

IN THE BEGINNING

There are two quite different Maori myths about New Zealand's origins. One concerns Maui, the heroic trickster, who hauled up the North Island while he was out fishing.

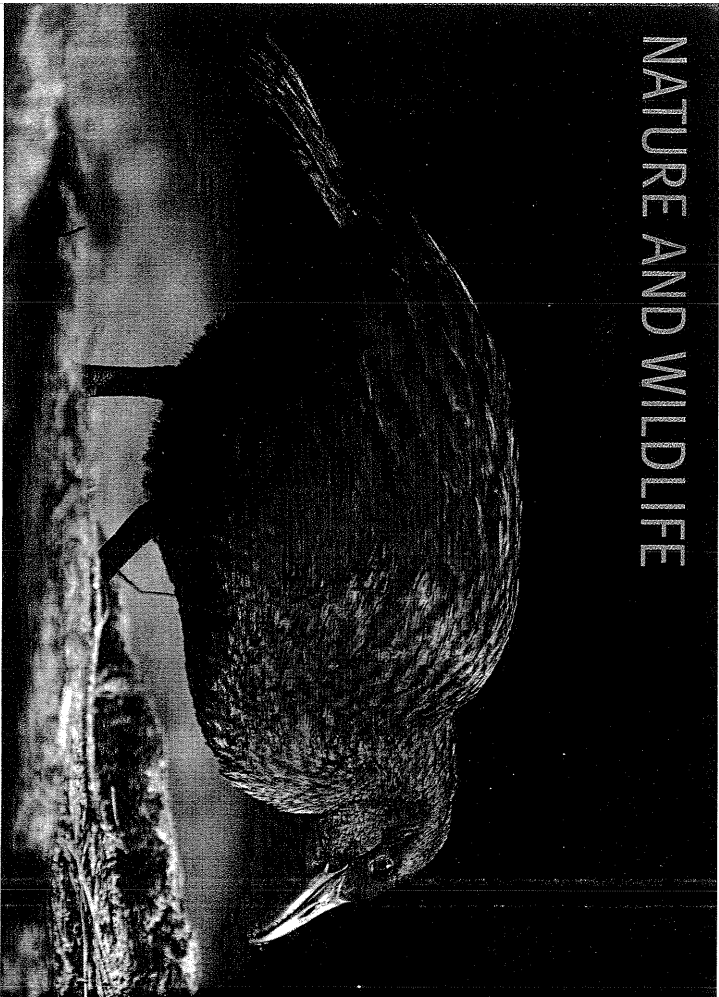
The other is of

Papuanuku (the Earth Mother) and Ranginui (the Sky Father), who embraced each other so tightly their 70 sons were squashed between them. After much discussion, all the sons except one agreed their parents should be prized apart. Tanemahuta stood on his shoulders and pushed up the sky with his feet. He then clothed Papa with the green of the forest and adorned Ranginui with the sun and stars, but still they wept for each other, creating rain and mist. Tawhiri-matea, the son who objected to his parents' separation, angrily followed Ranginui into the sky and created the wind and storms.



Left The first settlers soon hunted the flightless moa to extinction
Below Throwing a spear was a sign of welcome at a feast

NATURE AND WILDLIFE



Above The rare yellow-eyed penguin nests on the Otago Peninsula
Above right The kea, a species of alpine parrot, inhabits South Island



Even as they step off the plane, visitors discover how serious New Zealand is about protecting its environment. No foreign plant or animal matter slips easily across the border, and a forgotten apple earns a NZ\$250 spot fine. Vigilance has been learned the hard way. Before man's arrival the country's only land mammals were bats. The bush was thick with birds, many of which safely evolved as ground-dwellers—including the moa, kakapo and kiwi. The meaty moa was hunted to extinction by the Maori, and with the arrival of Europeans, many more species vanished as their habitats were destroyed. Introduced animals compounded the disaster. With no natural predators, possums, cats, dogs, stoats, ferrets and rats ran rampant and are still a severe menace to native birds. What's truly remarkable is that in spite of all the losses, wildlife remains one of New Zealand's greatest marvels. Native flora and fauna flourish in wilderness pockets all over the country, as well as a few inner-city areas such as Karori Wildlife Sanctuary in Wellington, where populations of rare kiwis, saddlebacks and kereru thrive. Much can be attributed to the expertise of local conservationists, who are in hot demand as far away as Indonesia and Madagascar.

SUPER BUGS

The giant weta is a heavyweight of the insect world. It can grow 9cm (3.5 inches) long, excluding antennae, and weigh up to 80g (3oz)—the same as four average mice. Even so, it is the sweetest-looking of New Zealand's five types of weta and by far the rarest. These nocturnal super-bugs evolved good defences

against their natural enemies—birds—but are poor jumpers and no match for hungry stoats, rats or weasels. However, weta breed well in captivity and their track record for survival is good—in evolutionary terms they are older than dinosaurs. The mountain rock weta of the Southern Alps is the largest insect known to tolerate being frozen solid in winter. Most weta eat foliage or animal remains, but will try a human finger if threatened.

KEEPING THE BALANCE

When Penguin Place on the Otago Peninsula opened to visitors in 1984, there were eight pairs of rare yellow-eyed penguins on the reserve. By 2004 that number had tripled. The attraction now runs programmes for scientific research, native reforestation, predator control and an ornithological hospital. Its cost thousands, but every project was funded with tourist dollars.

Eco-tourism creates a win-win situation—if the operators create the best environment possible, wildlife thrives, creating an even more attractive tourist destination. In exchange for their dollars, tourists access a unique, hands-on experience. Top eco-friendly activities include spotting endangered Hector's dolphins near Christchurch, the Waimangu valley near Taupo, and guided nature walks around Queenstown in the south of South Island.

THREATENED IDENTITY

Human Kiwis were shocked in the 1980s to realise their feathered namesake was in serious trouble. Despite urgent action, the numbers continued to decline by up to five per cent a year. The current total population across six varieties is estimated at between 50,000 and 60,000.

However, the Bank of New Zealand Kiwi Recovery Trust is striking back. Operation Nest Egg (ONE) increases chicks' chances of reaching adulthood from five per cent to forty, at which point they can defend themselves. The enormous egg is taken from the sitting adult, and the chick is hatched and reared in captivity. Kiwi chicks fend for themselves once hatched, so in some situations the parents can be left undisturbed and the newly hatched chick removed to a predator proof 'Kiwi cliche' within the birds' wild habitat.

THE PROBLEM WITH POSSUMS

One feature of every New Zealand highway is the squashed possum. Newer mind, there's plenty more. An estimated 70 million Australian brushtail possums (introduced in 1837) are stripping native forests in 98 per cent of the country, often decimating prized trees such as rata for miles around. Their main food is young tree foliage, but they tuck into flowers, fruit, berries and insects if available.

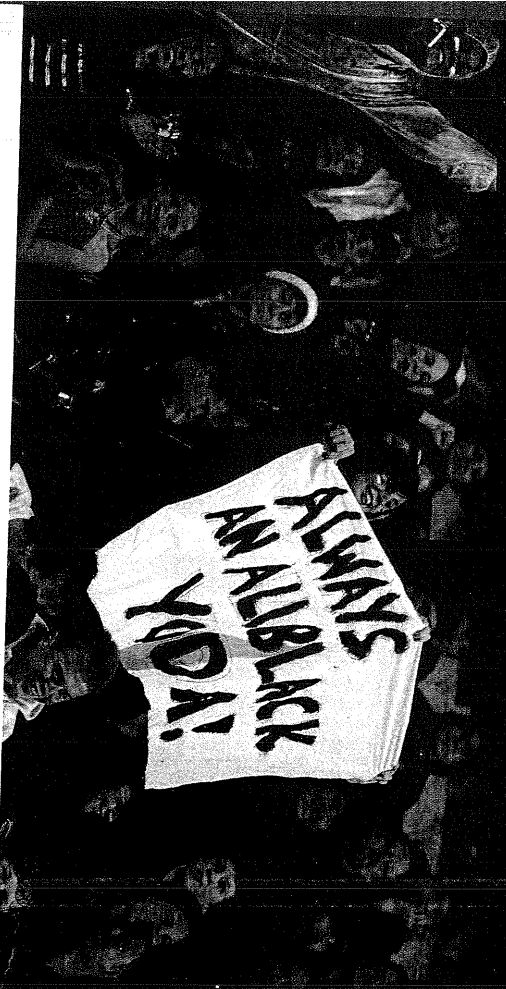
It was originally thought their impact on native birdlife was indirect, but time-lapse video has caught them eating eggs, chicks and adult birds. The NZ\$60 million spent each year on possum control is not working. Current hopes lie in a contraceptive vaccine. A fur trade makes a tiny dint in the population, with luxury products like Merinonik (possum/fine wool) clothing, bedspreads, gloves and... niple warmers.

TREASURE OR TRAITOR?

A unique conservation debate was highlighted in June 2004, when the Department of Conservation (DOC) dropped 55 tonnes of rat poison on Little Barrier Island in the Hauraki Gulf. It was the first stage of a NZ\$700,000 operation to wipe out the kore, or Polynesian rat, from what is New Zealand's oldest nature reserve.

The issue was sensitive because some Maori tribes consider the kore a *taonga*, or treasure. It has probably been in New Zealand as long as the Maori, having arrived with the early canoes, and was once important for food and cloak-making. However, it's a predatory rodent and considered a threat to native weta, frogs, skinks, birds and other wildlife. Although kore are common in the southwestern Pacific and on some of New Zealand's offshore islands, they are rare on the mainland.

NEW ZEALAND'S PEOPLE



It's barely been 200 years since European settlers moved into Aotearoa, the land they called New Zealand. In this short time, each city has developed an identity as distinctive as its new residents. Auckland's cosmopolitan citizens are known for their laptops, mobile phones and boating obsessions. Wellington is home to politicians, civil servants and cultured café society. Christchurch people, with their good manners and manicured gardens, are more English than the English. Dunedinites celebrate their Scottish heritage and the untamed freedoms of their wildlife and students. Beyond the cities, the farming folk are characterized by their bush-shirts, gumboots and staunch emotion. The Maori maintain their cultural stronghold in places such as Rotorua and Gisborne, but their influence touches all parts of the country. Against all odds, Maori culture survived colonization and continues to gain strength and standing. It is a highly regarded element of the national identity, for despite minor regional differences, the overriding belief is that New Zealanders—Kiwis—are one. They value a practical, down-to-earth approach, with nothing too frilly. They are great travellers who are unencumbered by tradition, and relish new ideas. They see themselves as 'laid back' but stand firm on issues they hold dear.

KIWI INGENUITY

New Zealanders reckon they can make just about anything with a good whack of No. 8 fencing wire. Their flair for lateral thinking has led to a disproportionate number of successful inventions—for example, the three-wheeled Mountain Buggy, developed by Allan Crood in his family garage from an old golf trundler bought for NZ\$5 at a school gala in 1992. The company now exports to 16 countries and makes blokes proud to push the pram.

Classic Kiwi inventions include the tranquilizer dart gun, now exported from Tamaru to zoologists, farmers and gamekeepers worldwide, and the electric fence, brainchild of a Waikato farmer. Then there's the Hamilton jet-boat—which thrills visitors by speeding through mere centimetres of water—eartags for livestock, the electronic petrol pump, childproof bottle tops, spring-free trampolines and spreadable butter...

SCRUFFY ICON

New Zealand's devotion to Oscar-winning film-maker Peter Jackson is absolute. Jackson has ticked every box on the Kiwi Hero scorecard. He was a DIY self-starter who made war films on his parents' back lawn, aged eight. His breakthrough movie, cult gem *Bad Taste*, was created with home-made equipment and a bunch of mates. He stuck by New Zealand when Hollywood offers flowed in, and insisted the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy should be made in his own backyard. New Zealanders love him just as he is... although there was a murmur of approval when, for a *King Kong* press launch, he was rumoured to have trimmed his hair.

Above This brightly painted rainbow kiwi is part of the kiwiana displays in Oturohanga. **Below** Oscar-winning film-maker Peter Jackson

THE NEW IMMIGRANTS

The New Zealand government has worked hard to attract migrants with investment capital or much-needed job skills—such as trades people and medical specialists. The impact showed clearly in the 2006 census. During the previous five years the Asian population increased by more than 100,000 to 354,000, 9 per cent of New Zealand's total.

Those of European ethnic origin declined by 13 per cent, to two-thirds of the total population. Just over 14 per cent were Maori. The melting-pot effect is particularly noticeable in Auckland, which is home to two-thirds of Asian and Pacific peoples.

The total population tipped 4 million for the first time in 2003. This figure is always slightly skewed as at any one time more than half a million Kiwis are overseas. The majority live in Australia, thanks to the absence of work restrictions.

WOMEN'S WORLD

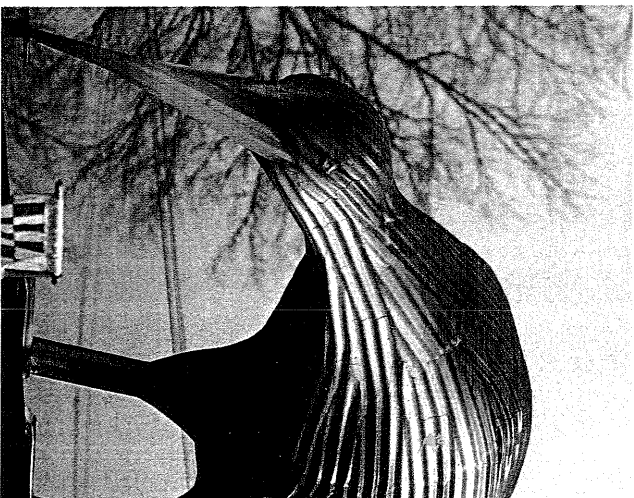
Despite New Zealand's macho history of farming and rugby, women have played a significant role in the nation's development. New Zealand was the first country in the world to give women the vote, in 1893. The first country where two women leaders fought in a general election, in 1999, and the first country to elect a transsexual MP.

In the early 21st century women occupied all the top roles in the government—Head of State (Queen Elizabeth II), the Governor-General (Dame Silvia Cartwright, whose term finished in 2006), the Prime Minister (Helen Clark), the Chief Justice (Dame Sian Elias) and the Speaker of the House of Representatives (Margaret Wilson). In Parliament, 39 of the 121 MPs are women, including another party leader—Jeanette Fitzsimons, co-leader of the Green Party.

LOCAL LINGO

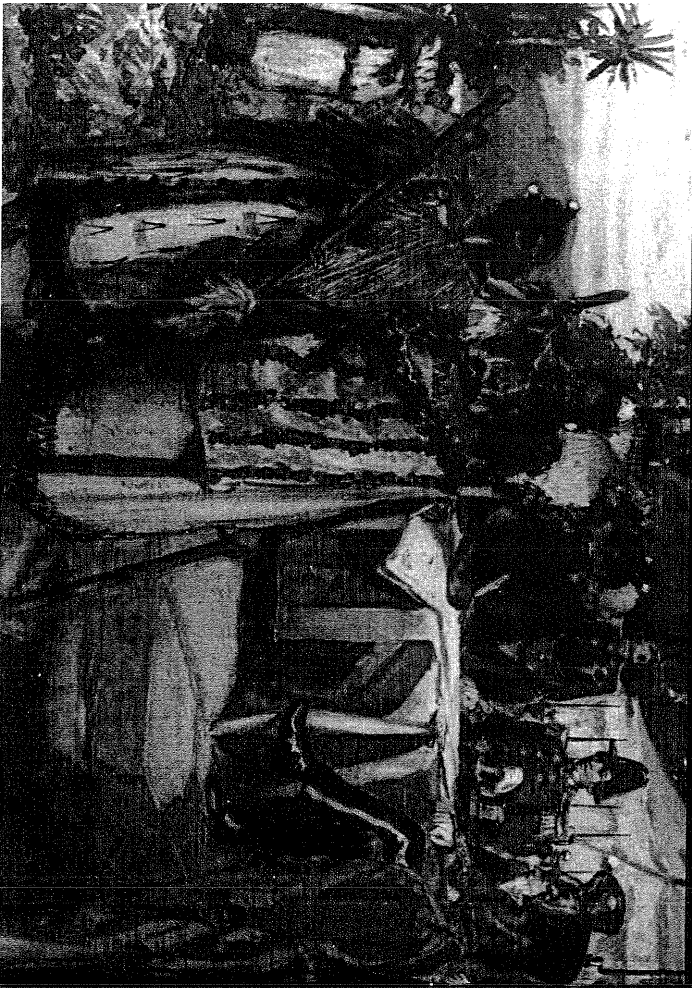
The *Dictionary of New Zealand English* (OUP, 1997) contains 6,000 main entries and 9,300 sub-entries, proving that although the country's official language is English, a visitor should not expect to understand it all. Phrases like 'rattle your dags' (hurry up) reflect a farming background, while 'half pie' (not great) stems from the Maori word *pai* (good). *Jandals* (flip flops), *jaifas* (chocolate balls with an orange coating) and *pikelets* (hotcakes) have become part of everyday life and language.

A strong New Zealand accent can be difficult to penetrate—it is similar to Australian, but the 'r' sound gives it away. Kiwis tend to turn it into a 'u' sound, as in 'tush and chups', while Australians say 'fesh and cheeps'. The accent is more-or-less consistent across the country except for Southland, where a rolled 'r' is common.



Above New Zealanders express their national identity strongly at sporting events, especially at All Blacks rugby test matches

TRADING GOODS AND LIVES



New Zealand's appearance on the world map did not suddenly change life for the Maori. English navigator Captain James Cook came and went in 1769, and the next 10 years brought an odd assortment of Europeans who settled around the edges of Maoridom. Many coastal tribes happily adopted individual missionaries or traders—it was a boost to *mana*, having one's own white man. Similarly, they adopted the goods that suited them best and discarded the rest. Maori bred pigs and grew flax, fruit and vegetables—especially the new white potatoes—specifically to barter with the Europeans. Europeans depended on this trade for survival; Maori came to depend on it for muskets. By the 1830s the entire country was consumed by a bloody carnage known as the Musket Wars. Traditional power balances were abolished as tribes such as Ngapuhi and Ngati Toa swept across the country, annihilating rival tribes. During 3,000 or so battles that took place from 1818 to 1840, an estimated 30,000 of the total 100,000 Maori population was killed by warfare, disease, starvation, slavery or in the cannibal feasts of victory.

Below: Maori chiefs recognized British sovereignty by signing the Treaty of Waitangi
Opposite top: Portrait of Te Pahi Kupe in western dress, c1856

A FLOATING LABORATORY

The first map of New Zealand represented disappointment. Captain James Cook's 1769 circumnavigation proved the country was not the hoped-for corner of a Southern Continent, as suggested by Dutch explorer Abel Tasman in 1642. But Cook's scientific expedition had many successes. He observed the transit of Venus across the sun from Tahiti as directed by London's Royal Society, providing vital data to map the solar system. He proved that regular doses of sauerkraut (rich in vitamin C) prevented sailors from dying of scurvy. And with naturalists headed by Joseph Banks, hundreds of plant and animal specimens were collected.



PAKEHA MAORI

New Zealand's early Europeans were a diverse group. Among the sealers, whalers and missionaries was a small group known as Pakeha Maori—people like Barnett Burns, a trader who came in 1830 and went native. He lived in Mahia, south of Gisborne, under the protection of a chief he called 'Awhawee'. He married the chief's daughter, Amotawa, with whom he had three children. Over three intensive years he was abducted by rival tribesmen, escaped, led two major battles and claimed to have been made chief of a tribe of 600. He sailed to England on business in 1835 and gave a series of lectures—resplendent in full Maori dress and *moko* (facial and body tattoos). He never returned to New Zealand, but numerous descendants still live on the East Coast.

Right: British naval commander William Hobson was appointed first governor of New Zealand

GOD AND GRAMMAR

Christianity came to the Maori in 1814. Anglican chaplain Samuel Marsden planted three lay workers at Rangihoua, in the Bay of Islands. One, Thomas Kendall, approached his task by immersing himself in Maori culture and language. To his dismay, he nearly converted himself to heathen ways long before any Maori turned Christian. Marsden dismissed him for misdemeanours including adultery, but not before Kendall could accompany his friend chief Hongi Hika and a younger chief, Waikato, to England in 1820. There, Hongi Hika (a fearsome figure of the Musket Wars) had an audience with George IV. The threesome worked with a Cambridge linguist to produce the foundations of written Maori. The conversion rate stayed on zero until the late 1820s, when Christian peace gave an alternative to the bloodshed of the Musket Wars.

THE TREATY OF WAITANGI

In 1839, naval officer William Hobson was sent from London to formally establish New Zealand as a British colony. He invited chiefs from the North Island to sign a treaty at Waitangi on 5 February 1840. The government provided no draft document, so, with no legal training, Hobson and his officials hurriedly prepared the treaty in the four days preceding. Most inter-racial communication occurred in Maori, so it was also translated the night before. Forty-five chiefs signed after extended deliberations on 6 February; by September more than 500 had signed. The question was—and still is—what did they agree to? Discrepancies between British and Maori understandings were quickly realized but not easily rectified. Despite good intentions, the Treaty of Waitangi became the most contentious issue in New Zealand's history.

NAMES FOR FACES

The word Maori means ordinary. It was widely used by Maori to describe themselves by the 1830s, although to most Europeans they were simply 'New Zealanders'. The Maori version of the Treaty of Waitangi uses the phrase *tangata maori*—ordinary people. As for Europeans, Maori had used the word *Pakeha* since at least 1814, when missionary William Hall recorded he had been referred to as a 'tūgātēda pakeha' (*tangaitira pakeha*), meaning a European gentleman. By the 1830s the word's usage among Maori was widespread. Europeans still described themselves according to their home countries, such as British. Pakeha probably originates from *pakepakeha*, an imaginary light-skinned being. The word's use was purely descriptive rather than derogatory, although it was also used for turnip (because of its white flesh) and flea.

