



Pure Vibrant New Zealand

Beckons Visitors with an Abundance of Eco Treasures

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It's more than just a catchy slogan. Aotearoa, "the land of the long white cloud" and the Maori name for New Zealand, conjures images of green, rolling hills under a sparkling blue sky. The youngest country on the planet may well be the closest an eco-tourist can get to heaven on earth.

In New Zealand, breathtaking vistas are seemingly visible at every turn, with white snow-capped mountain peaks to the south, green forests to the north, golden sandy beaches to the east, and

blue ocean waters to the west. New Zealanders are deeply connected to their environment and feel a profound responsibility to care for their magnificent land.

There is a compelling history behind the spirit of New Zealanders. The Maori ancestors, who arrived less than 1,000 years ago, were one with the land. They call the land Papatuanuku, or Earth Mother – one who gives many blessings to all her children. They believe Papatuanuku gives birth to all things and provides the physical and spiritual basis

for life. These beliefs have been passed down through the generations and are still held today.

What is New Zealand all about?

New Zealand is composed of two main islands, the North Island and the South Island.

The North Island is home to Auckland, which was once New Zealand's capital and is still its largest city. While Auckland

is sprawling by New Zealand standards – a third of the population lives here – it maintains a small-city vibe. Imagine being dropped into a world-class city with charming boutiques, cafés with alfresco patrons sipping some of the world's best coffee, art galleries, sushi bars and eclectic five-star restaurants. Auckland is known as the "City of Sails," due to its harbor of crystal-clear blue water dotted with sailing vessels that glisten in the southern sun.

Auckland's volcanic history is apparent as you scan the landscape. The city is built on a volcanic field, adorned with around 50 volcanic cones. Mt. Victoria

overlooks Devonport on the North Shore. Rangitoto is the volcanic island that rises from Auckland's harbor. Mount Eden is the highest natural point in the city. One Tree Hill, made famous by U2's song of the same name, features the beautiful suburb of One Tree Hill around its base.

A walk down Queen Street will treat you to the commercial heart of the city. You will pass world-class shopping and restaurants offering cuisines from across the world. In downtown Auckland, you will see the ferry terminal, constructed in 1912 from local sandstone and Coromandel granite.

Aboard the Waiheke Island Hopper,

WHAT MAKES AN ECO-TOURIST?



An interest in the local flora and fauna goes without saying, as does the intent to have a minimal environmental impact. Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and helps to improve the well-being of local people. Providing positive experiences for both visitors and hosts. What it doesn't have to mean is roughing it, camping out, or getting dirty, although all of those things can be a part of eco-tourism. The best thing to do is to travel with good intentions wherever you go!

you will leave behind Auckland, and in the distance the Sky Tower, the Harbor Bridge, and the naval base at Devonport on the North Shore. As you pass the volcanic cone of Rangitoto, you will realize that you are somewhere special, and your eco-tourist adventure begins.

Waiheke Island is just a 40-minute ferry ride from downtown Auckland. The ferry will take you to an island paradise of beautiful beaches, vineyards, olive groves, native bush and laid-back seaside villages.

If you are feeling a bit more adventurous, a great way to explore Waiheke is by kayak. This will get you in touch with its natives such as the delightful blue penguin and beautiful heron, black shags, oyster catchers, wrybills and dotterels. Dotterels are an endangered species found only in New Zealand.

New Zealanders are zealous about green awareness in their everyday lives. Even in the cities, vegetable gardens are the rule, not the exception, and chooks laying the freshest of free-range eggs are a common sight.

Rainwater tanks are a way of life for New Zealand's large rural population. Like many eco-minded Kiwis, the folks at Owhanake Bay Estate allow you to experience life at its eco-conscious and eco-friendly best. All plastic, glass and tins are recycled, and all food waste is put into the compost and later used in the gardens.



The Remarkables mountain range overlooking Lake Wakatipu in Queenstown



A view of Auckland City

New Zealand is a country defined as much by its land as by its people. At 103,000 square miles, it is almost exactly the same size as Colorado. The entire country has only four and a half million people, with sheep outnumbering them 20 to 1.



Sheep grazing in Queenstown

The South Island, about a third larger than the North Island, has only a quarter of the country's total population. Much of the South Island is as wild and untamed as it was before the Maori and the Pakeha – the Maori name for the British settlers – arrived there. The South Island, or the "Mainland" as the locals call it, is the New Zealand of tourism books and picture-postcards. Deep sounds cut through snow-capped mountains like Aoraki/Mt. Cook and steep-sided fiords (the Kiwis don't spell it fjord like the rest of the world).

New Zealand has two official languages, English and Maori. The Maori culture plays a big part in the New Zealand way of life.

It is one of the country's great qualities that both the native Maori culture

and that of their British settlers are both valued equally. Throughout the country, you can see examples of this. Although 98 percent of the population speaks English compared to less than five percent fluently speaking Maori, the two languages are often seen and heard side by side. Along with the country's highest mountain (Mt. Cook/Aoraki), New Zealand's town and city names range from the very British (Christchurch, Dunedin) to the Maori names (Whangarei or Kohimarama), including the Guinness Book of World Records' longest place name – Taumatawhakatangihangakoauauotamateapokaiwhenuakitanatahu.

Although it's only a small country, New Zealand is most definitely not a nation of followers. It was the first country that gave women the right to vote. It was also the birthplace of Ernest Rutherford, first person to split the atom, and to Sir Edmund Hillary, the first man to scale Mt. Everest.

Kiwis seem to have a sense of adventure built into their DNA, and this can be seen all over the country as both locals and tourists test their courage and bravery at any number of extreme sports. Bungee jumping, canyon swinging, jet boating, white-water rafting, zorbing, caving and luging, are just a few examples of the fun you can have.

New Zealand is also a country full of contrasts. You can go to Auckland city and be in a modern metropolis with skyscrapers, then drive 25 minutes to the Waitakere ranges, a chain of hills covered in native forest and inhabited by

snails, glow worms and long-eared bats. You can swim at the world-famous Mt. Maunganui beach and then take a two-and-a-half-hour drive to Mt. Ruapehu and the Whakapapa ski field amid one of New Zealand's winter wonderlands.

Most of New Zealand's west coast beaches have black sand, due to its high metal content, while the east coast beaches have traditional white sand.

It's with good reason that Sir Peter Jackson, a Kiwi himself, chose New Zealand as the home of the hobbits in the Lord of the Rings movies. Hobbiton has been lovingly created in Matamata, in the bucolic heart of the North Island, while Mount Doom was played by Ruapehu and Ngaruhoe, a pair of active volcanoes in the North Island's Central Plateau.

Back in Auckland, there is much to do for the eco-tourist on Waiheke Island. Those interested in gardening might find themselves at Giverny Gardens. Here you'll find organic seasonal produce and heirloom variety vegetables, with a focus on permaculture and the preservation of species that are often neglected in mainstream commercial agriculture.

Giverny, like much of New Zealand, benefits from the country's commitment to clean power. There is a coal-fired power station in Huntly, half an hour north of Hamilton in the North Island. Increasingly, New Zealand is realizing that coal-fired power stations need additional coal, and this means traumatic scarring of the land.

In the meantime, the natural resources of Aotearoa are being put to work. Already New Zealand generates more than half its power through hydroelectric stations. Much of the remaining need is met by geothermal power. Drive from Rotorua, with its bubbling mud pools and geysers, to Taupo, on the shores of New Zealand's largest lake, and you'll see plumes of steam billowing up from pipelines along the side of the road, feeding the generating stations that tap into the volcanic heat that lies very close to the surface in New Zealand.

For the foodie eco-tourist, a trip to Kennedy Point Organic Vineyard is certainly in order. Using no chemical fertilizers or sprays, the vineyards are tended using only organic and biody-

namic methods. It's a fantastic place to sample local wines, olive oil and honey. Their seasonal lunch menus include local oysters, vegetarian selections, New Zealand cheeses and the Kennedy Point olive oil. The manuka honey is also a New Zealand specialty, endowed with healing properties, and infused with

pollen from the manuka tree to create a honey that is deliciously sweet to eat.

Perhaps the most eco-friendly thing you can do is just relax on the beach and watch the sunset. New Zealand's beautiful summertime weather and burgeoning flora are an intense reminder that you don't need to leave the comforts of the

city behind to find the beauty of nature.

You don't need to look very far to find that New Zealand offers a lifestyle that is at once very modern and very in tune with the natural environment. It is a haven for residents and tourists alike, and one that is not likely to disappoint regardless of your length of stay.



MAORI CULTURE

The "eco" tag is easily tossed around, but in New Zealand it is a fact of life rather than simply a label. The Maori, the original settlers of New Zealand who now share the land with the Pakeha, the white New Zealanders of British descent who form the majority of New Zealand's tiny population, associate their various tribes with the regions they traditionally inhabit. When visiting New Zealand, you may find yourself at a marae, the traditional Maori meeting house. There you will meet members of the local iwi, or tribe, on Waiheke Island. As a visitor, you will be invited to share your whakapapa, the story of your heritage. A whakapapa locates you in your land, and so it is customary to tell the name of your mountain, your river and your waka – the ancestral canoe on which your people came to Aotearoa. It's okay just to say it was an Air New Zealand Boeing! Be sure to have a waiata, a song about your home, ready.

While only about a fifth of New Zealand's 4-million-strong population are Maori, their culture is an important part

of the life of New Zealand. Since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, a document considered by many to be the founding document, New Zealand has been a bicultural country, and this embracing of Maori culture has been enshrined in law, with Te Reo Maori having protection under law as an official language. Maori culture is much more than a historical curiosity to be kept in a museum and trotted out for parades and ceremonies; it is a rich, vibrant strand in the tapestry of life in New Zealand.

A visitor to New Zealand will be welcomed with the hospitality that is a hallmark of all Kiwis, whether they are Maori or Pakeha. If you visit Mt. Eden, for example, the views of Auckland, known to the Maori as Tamaki Makaurau, are astonishing from the 600-foot summit of the highest volcano, also known as Maungawhau, "the hill of the whau tree." Don't climb down into the volcanic crater. It is Te Ipu Kai a Mataaho (the Food Bowl of Mataaho, the god of things hidden in the ground) and is highly tapu, or sacred.



Top: On top of a glacier in Milford Sound
The world renowned Lady Bowen Falls in Milford Sound
Bottom: Sunset over Lake Wakatipu Queenstown