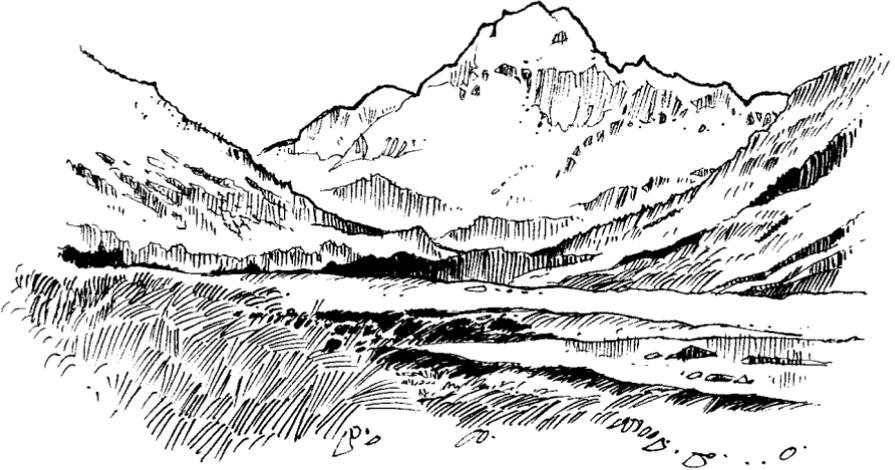


New Zealand



New Zealand is a long narrow country to the East of Australia between the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean. It has three main islands: the North Island, the South Island and Stewart Island.

It is a land of high mountains, mighty flowing rivers and thermal springs. Between the West and East Coasts of the South Island is a range of snow-capped mountains known as the Southern Alps or The Great Divide. The tallest mountain is Aoraki or Mount Cook which is 3,754 metres high. Many people will agree that the most beautiful is Mount Aspiring.

The highest mountains in the north island are on the central volcanic plateau: Mount Ruapehu is 2,797 metres, Mount Tongariro is 1,978 metres and Mount Ngauruhoe is 2,291 metres. These mountains are active and erupt from time to time.

Further west is a beautiful cone shaped mountain called Mount. Taranaki. Although it is a dormant volcano scientists believe it will erupt one day soon and the people living in the town below it, New Plymouth, are used to its regular rumbling.

New Zealand's many ski fields are popular with overseas visitors, but there are also many other opportunities for adventure: hikes through the rugged mountain areas, jet boating, fly fishing, and more. There is a group of young trampers who carry two or three extra Bibles in their packs and leave them in remote mountain huts. Often the minds of lonely hikers spending days waiting for wild weather to calm turn to the God who created the magnificent world they see around them. 'When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' it says in Psalm 8:3,4.

Of course you don't have to go to the mountains to see some of the wonders of God's creation. Even in a busy city you can look up at the night sky to see the countless stars that God has placed there. Or you can visit the city gardens and touch some of the wonderful trees or look at the flowers. What other things help you think about God and His creation? And how can you say thank you to God for these wonderful gifts?

Kiwi Adventures

New Zealand is the only country in the world where you can find flightless birds like the Kiwi, Pukeko, Weka and Takahe, as well as other fascinating birds, penguins and lizards. Fortunately for campers, there are no snakes!

New Zealanders are often called Kiwis because nowhere in the world is there an animal quite like the Kiwi! Unlike the bird, human kiwis fly everywhere to live and work in almost every country in the world, but dream of coming home one day. New Zealand is well-known across the world for many things - great scenery, wildlife, travel, and even film sets. New Zealand is also famous for its national rugby team called the All Blacks. This team has a distinctive black uniform with a silver fern motif. The team is also well known for performing the traditional Maori dance called the Haka before all their matches.



New Zealand

The first people to come to New Zealand were the Maori who arrived around the thirteenth century in large canoes from other countries in the Pacific. When they saw the long strip of cloud from the distance they called it Aotearoa, the land of the long white cloud. They settled all over the three islands and brought with them sweet potatoes, and the ability to hunt and make fire. They hunted the giant moa and other birds and fished for food.

They also brought rats and dogs. The country's flightless birds were easy prey for these animals and fire destroyed many of their habitats. Within a short time thirty-two bird species disappeared forever. Another nine disappeared after the first European settlers arrived with ferrets and cats.

European settlers didn't arrive until the seventeenth century, when a dutch sea captain, Abel Tasman, sailed round the three islands of New Zealand. At that time cartographers and geographers believed that there was an unknown Southern Continent known by the name 'Terra Australis Incognita'. Tasman's instructions were to find it and come back with a list of new places to trade in gold, silver, spices and fabrics.

Somehow, while sailing east from Mauritius, Tasman didn't even find Australia, except for its southern and eastern tip now known as Tasmania. Eight days later he sighted New Zealand.

Kiwi Adventures

He landed at the northern part of the south island and in the north island where he was scared away by the Maori. He named the country 'Zelandia Nova' which later became New Zealand. But he did not find 'Terra Australis Incognita'.

It was not till 126 years later that an English sea captain, James Cook, sailed from Tahiti to rediscover the land discovered by Tasman. His job was also to look for 'Terra Australis Incognita'. The Royal Society of England told him that any native people he might come across on his journeys had been created by the same God as his own people. He was to treat them with great respect and not to take over any part of their country without their permission. James Cook took these directions seriously.

It took Cook six months to sail round the country on his ship 'Endeavour'. In all, he visited New Zealand four times and made accurate and careful maps, some of which are still in use today.

Among the crew on Cook's ship was a naturalist, Joseph Banks. Joseph loved to get up early in the morning and listen to the birds singing. Once, when the Endeavour lay at anchor in Queen Charlotte Sound he commented that the singing of the birds had awoken him. He had no idea how many of them there were, but they made the most melodious wild music he had ever heard, with sounds like small silver bells. But what he heard

New Zealand was a mere echo of what he might have heard 400 years earlier, for by 1770 around half of the native bird species were already extinct.

In the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam and Eve charge over His wonderful creation, but when they disobeyed and sin came in they had to leave the Garden. Ever since, the purity of nature has been damaged or destroyed by the sinful actions of man.

Because sin came into the world even our best efforts can not make our world as perfect as what God created. Even though we may not mean to, the effects of what we do can harm our bodies, families, environment, even the future. But there is hope. On a mountain called Calvary, Jesus changed everything. Although the wages of sin are death, because of Calvary God gives those who repent and believe in his Son eternal life. You can read about this in Romans 6:23.

But let's start our adventure on the east coast from where we will travel south along the rugged coast to Dunedin, through the wilderness area of the Catlins Coast, down to Invercargill, and across Foveaux Strait to Stewart Island. Then we will travel along the south coast and head north to Lakes Te Anau, Manapouri, Whakatipu and Wanaka.