

Kia Oara from New Zealand

Living and Learning in a Country Down Under

Ah, New Zealand... a tiny island country known around the world for its rugged beauty. With its inhabitants fondly referred to as “Kiwis” and its countryside as familiar as our own backyard, thanks to the filming of *The Lord of the Rings*, New Zealand holds a special place in many of our hearts.



But how much do you actually know about this country called New Zealand? Have you ever learned about its history, terrain, location, government or culture? What would it be like to live there... to homeschool there? Let's explore this island nation and find out.

The Location

New Zealand lies in the South Pacific Ocean nearly 2000 kilometers (or 1,243 miles) to the east of Australia, and consists of two main islands – the North Island and the South Island. It also encompasses many smaller islands, such as Stewart Island and the Chatham Islands. Its closest neighbors to the north are New Caledonia, Fiji and Tonga.

The capital city of Wellington and the largest city of Auckland are both located on the North Island, which has the more temperate climate. The South Island is the largest land mass and is divided along its length by the Southern Alps, the highest point of which is Mt. Cook at 12,316 feet above sea level. In general, the country experiences high rainfall, particularly in winter, which lasts from June 21 – September 22. Remember, New Zealand is in the southern hemisphere!

The People

What's a Kiwi?

The kiwi is a nocturnal flightless bird native to New Zealand. The kiwifruit (all one word) is a fuzzy fruit, also called the chinese gooseberry. To call the fruit a kiwi is offensive to a growing number of New Zealanders as the kiwi is their national bird and a strong symbol of this country. New Zealanders are also affectionately known as Kiwis.

Approximately 80% of the population is of European descent. The indigenous people group, called the Maori, makes up 15% of the population. Polynesian settlers arrived sometime between the 13th and 15th centuries. New Zealand's Maori name, Aotearoa, is usually translated as "Land of the Long White Cloud." The first Europeans known to have reached New Zealand were led by Abel Tasman in 1642. He named the

islands Staten Landt, but Dutch cartographers changed the name to Nova Zeelandia. In the 1760's, Captain James Cook mistakenly pronounced it New Zealand and the name held fast. Cook's extensive surveys of the islands led to European whaling expeditions and eventually significant European colonization.

New Zealand has declared its independence in many shapes and forms over the years and now considers itself to be a sovereign constitutional monarchy within the Commonwealth of Nations. Basically, this means that they recognize Elizabeth II as their Queen and head of state, but she has no active role in the running of their government. The Governor-General, usually a native New Zealander, represents the Queen by carrying out her various responsibilities.

In 1893, New Zealand became the first nation to grant women the right to vote on the same basis as men. Today, New Zealand is the only country in the



world in which all of the highest offices in the land have been occupied simultaneously by women.

All around the world, the residents of New Zealand are nicknamed “Kiwis” and you may be wondering why. Although New Zealand exports 80 million trays of kiwifruit across the globe as one of its major exports, the name has no connection with the fruit. It derives the nickname from the country’s national bird, the kiwi, a flightless bird about the size of a domestic chicken. They have tiny two-inch wings which are essentially useless, and no tail. Despite its awkward appearance, a kiwi can actually outrun a human being. During the First World War, New Zealand soldiers carved a likeness of their national bird in the chalk hill above Sling Camp in England. From that time forward, the New Zealand Servicemen were referred to by this nickname. Today, New Zealanders overseas and at home are still invariably called “Kiwis.” Many sport teams from the islands carry the name proudly as well.



Homeschooling

The total population of New Zealand has now surpassed the four million mark. With over 6,428 homeschooling students from 3,415 families recorded by the Ministry of Education, this educational choice is embraced by approximately 1% of the school-aged population. In order for the MOE (Ministry of Education) to grant an exemption to a child between the ages of 6-16 from attending a registered school, they must be satisfied that the child will be “taught at least as regularly and as well as in a registered school”.



Cynthia, who lives in the small town of Foxton situated on the southwest coast of the North Island, states, “What this means exactly is open to a certain amount of interpretation. There is no required curriculum that homeschoolers must follow, but we do have to submit a plan to the MOE that indicates our intentions for the education of our children; that we

have an idea of where they are currently, where they need to go, and how we’re going to get them there.”

Once the MOE approves the plan, homeschooling families have the option of receiving government funding for their educational endeavors. The amounts allotted to home educating families are \$371.50 for the first child, \$316 for the second child, \$270.50 for the third child, and \$186 for each subsequent child. These amounts are paid every 6 months and have no strings attached, apart from submitting the signed and witnessed Statute of Declaration promising to carry out the mission stated above. The Ministry of Education believes that there are probably few unregistered homeschooled students because of these monetary incentives.

“In general, homeschooling in New Zealand is a very positive experience. We have greater freedom to educate our children without interference than just about any other country,” Cynthia reports.

So, are you ready to move to New Zealand? Or at least take a vacation there? Well, slow down... there is some vocabulary you must learn if you intend to visit the country. Yes, New Zealanders do speak English, but here are some of the slang words, or expressions that are commonly used, that you should know before stepping foot in the land of the kiwis:

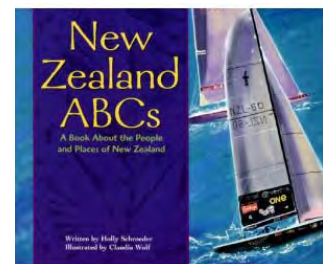
New Zealand Slang	
banger: sausage	jumper: woollen sweater
biscuit: cookie	lift: elevator
bonnet: car hood	lolly: candy
boot: car trunk	motorway: freeway
box of budgies: cheerful, happy, very good	Mum: Mom
buggered: exhausted	nappy: diaper
cackhanded: left handed	nought: zero
chips: french fries	petrol: gasoline pram: baby carriage, stroller
chippy: builder, carpenter	prang: minor vehicle accident
choc-a-block: full to overflowing	puckeroo: Something that is broken
chook: chicken	rubber: eraser
crikey dick!: gosh! wow!	skint: short of money
crisps: potato chips	sprog: a child
crook: sick, unwell	sticking plaster: band-aid
cuppa: cuppa tea, cuppa coffee	sunnies: sunglasses
dodgy: bad, unreliable, spoiled	take-aways: "take-out" or food "to go"
drinking gown: bathrobe	tramping: hiking
dummy: pacifier	togs: swimsuit, bathing suit
dunny: toilet, bathroom, lavatory	torch: flashlight
flannel: wash cloth	wellies: gumboots, rubber boots
going bush: become reclusive	whinge: complain
jandal: flip-flops	yonks: forever, a long time ago
jersey: sweater	zed: Z; the last letter of the alphabet
judder bar: speed bump	

Well, you have now had a crash course on New Zealand's history, geography and vibrant culture. Want to learn more? Turn the page for a fun unit study on life in New Zealand.

It is time to dive in for some hands-on learning to cement your student's growing knowledge of this small but fascinating island country.

Unit Study

1. READING SELECTIONS - Let's start with some extra reading. Listed below are some great books about New Zealand, or set in New Zealand, that will provide many hours of enjoyable reading. The links below will take you to Amazon.com for more information, but you can find these at your local library. Read for pleasure, or have your kids write a book report on one of these selections.



- [The New Zealand Shake-Up](#) by Stacy Towle Morgan
- [Australia and New Zealand](#) by Elaine Landau
- [The Maori of New Zealand \(First Peoples\)](#) by Steve Theunissen
- [New Zealand ABC \(Country ABCs\)](#) by Schroeder, et. al

2. HISTORY & TIMELINES - Learn more about New Zealand by compiling historical facts and events from New Zealand's exciting history and adding them to your timeline. If you do not have a timeline already started, you can construct one by following these directions - [How to Make a Timeline Easily](#). Here is a link to a wonderful resource for timeline entries about New Zealand - <http://www.history-nz.org/timeline.html>.

3. MAPWORK - A unit study would not be complete without taking a good look at the lay of the land. Pages 15 and 16 include both a labeled and unlabeled map of New Zealand. Have your students mark some of the major cities, the southern mountain range and the seas, at the least. For older students, have them use your teacher's map and fill in the rest!



4. RECIPES - This is my favorite part - the food from the land! If you do the above activities on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, then take some time on either Thursday or Friday to whip up some authentic New Zealand cuisine in the kitchen.

New Zealand cuisine is characterized by its freshness and diversity and has been described as Pacific Rim, drawing inspiration from Europe, Asia, Polynesia and its indigenous people, the Maori. Freshness is owed to its surrounding ocean and fertile lands. Its distinctiveness is more in the way New Zealanders eat - generally preferring to be as relaxed and unaffected as possible.



A Maori specialty is the hangi (pronounced hung-ee), a pit in which meats or fish are cooked with vegetables. A deep hole is dug in the ground, lined with red-hot stones and covered with vegetation. The food is then placed on top. The whole oven is sprinkled with water and sealed with more vegetation. The hole is then filled with earth and left to steam for several hours. Traditionally, men dig and prepare the hole, and women prepare the food to go in it. All members of an extended family (whanau) help out for such a feast. The occasion is relaxed, friendly and fun, with people often eating the meal under a tent-like shelter.

It may be difficult to pull off the above, but here are three more recipes of local New Zealand food that can be attempted in your own kitchen. Enjoy!

Anzac Biscuits

ANZAC BISCUITS are a snack food most commonly made primarily from rolled oats, coconut, and golden syrup.

Many myths have grown around the Anzac biscuit. It has been reported that they were made by Australian and New Zealand women for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) soldiers of World War I and were reputedly first called "Soldiers' Biscuits" and then "Anzac Biscuits" after the Gallipoli landing. The recipe was reportedly created to ensure the biscuits would keep well during naval transportation to loved ones who were fighting abroad.

- 1 cup desiccated coconut
- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 level teaspoon baking soda
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons golden syrup
- 2 tablespoons boiling water

Mix dry ingredients, melt butter & syrup together in small saucepan. Dissolve soda in boiling water, add to dry ingredients. Cook until golden brown at 350 degrees.



Fairy Bread

Fairy bread is white bread lightly spread with margarine or butter, and then sprinkled with either sugar or more commonly Hundreds and Thousands (also known as sprinkles or nonpareils, a Masterfoods product consisting of small balls of coloured sugar intended to decorate cakes).

Fairy bread is served almost exclusively at children's parties in Australia and New Zealand. Slices of the bread are typically cut into triangles and stacked tastefully on the host's paper plate.

It was originally made using finely chopped rose petals for colour and scent instead of the sugary lollies that are used today.

Pavlova

(New Zealand's National Dessert)

Pavlova is a light and fluffy meringue dessert named after the ballet dancer, Anna Pavlova. Both Wellington, New Zealand and Perth, Australia claim to be the home of the dish. The earliest record of the recipe is a cook book published in New Zealand in 1933, two years before claims made in Perth.

Pavlova is traditionally decorated with fresh fruit and whipped cream, and is especially popular in Australia and New Zealand. Factory-made pavlovas can be purchased at supermarkets in those countries and decorated as desired but rarely achieve home-baked quality.

Leftover pavlova can be stored in the fridge overnight, but will absorb moisture from the air and lose its crispness. Undecorated pavlova can safely be left overnight in the oven in which it was baked, to be decorated in the morning.

- * 3 Egg whites
- * 250g (9 oz.) superfine sugar
- * pinch of Salt
- * 5 ml or 1 tsp Vinegar
- * 5 ml or 1 tsp. Vanilla extract

1. Beat the egg whites and salt to a very stiff consistency before folding in sugar, vanilla and vinegar. Beat until the mixture holds its shape and stands in sharp peaks.
2. Slow-bake the mixture at 150 degrees Celsius (300 degrees Fahrenheit) to dry all the moisture and create the meringue, approximately 45 minutes. This leaves the outside of the pavlova a crisp crunchy shell, while the interior remains soft and moist.
3. A top tip (but not traditional) is to turn the pavlova upside down before decorating with cream and fruit because the bottom is less crispy than the top after cooking and unless you serve it immediately after decorating the "top" absorbs moisture from the cream. Another tip is to leave the pavlova in the oven after turning off the heat - this helps to prevent the middle of the pavlova from collapsing (although if it does collapse, generous application of cream can hide any mistakes!)



5. CRAFTS - Finally, it is craft time! This craft was chosen as a quick and simple one that represents New Zealand, its people and environment. The felt kiwi can be used as brooches or even fridge magnets.

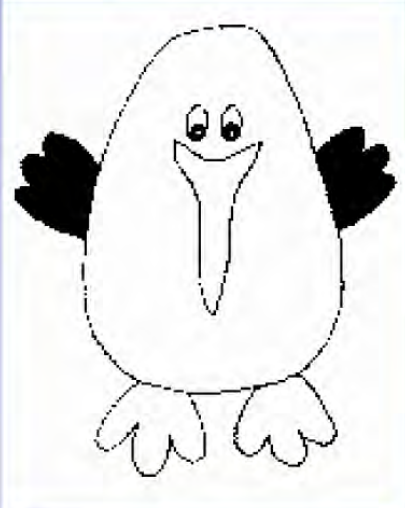
(Used with permission from Anne's Guiding Pages - more NZ crafts can be found here - <http://www.azmetro.com/nzcrafter.html>)

Print off your kiwi pattern pieces here - <http://www.azmetro.com/nzcrafter1.html>.

Felt Kiwi

Materials: craft pics

- * brown fur fabric (body - fig 1)
- * dark brown felt (wings - fig 2)
- * yellow vinyl (beak, feet - fig 3 & 4)
- * one pair wobbly eyes per kiwi
- * stuffing
- * needle and thread
- * glue



Method:

1. Cut 2 body pieces out of fur fabric, 2 wings from brown felt, 1 feet piece and one beak from yellow vinyl.
2. Body and wings - with right sides together and wings tucked to the inside sew from base around top to base - leaving a space for turning the right way out. (fig 1)
3. Turn right side out and stuff the body, gathering in the base slightly to make it round before sewing it up.
4. Feet - position rounded base of body onto round area of feet piece and glue carefully.
5. Beak - glue only the top of the beak into fur, not the whole length of beak.
6. Eyes - add wobbly eyes just above top of beak. (White plastic with black pupils can be used as a good alternative to bought eyes).





NEW ZEALAND