NEW ZEALAND CULTURAL NOTES

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GOVERNMENT

New Zealand is a parliamentary democracy (similar to the UK and Australia and Canada). The prime minister is determined by who leads the political party or group of parties (coalition) with the majority of seats in the House. The prime minister is the most important in day to day national government, but above them is the Head of State. Currently, that is Queen Elizabeth II, the British Queen.

There are two tiers of government in New Zealand, Central and Local. Central makes decisions that affect New Zealand as a whole. Local looks after the interests and needs of specific communities through regional, city and district councils. People decide on the central government by democratic vote, every three years.

More about the intricacies of the government can be found here:

SOCIAL CHANGE

New Zealand was the first country in the world to grant all women the right to vote (1893). New Zealand is becoming known for its advanced viewpoints on women’s rights. Current prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, has been making waves. Presently, employees are entitled to take maternity leave for up to 26 weeks and they will still receive a government funded parental leave salary. Employers must also keep their job open so that the person can return to it after their leave

BRIEF HISTORY

New Zealand has a rich history for being such a small country at the bottom of the South Pacific. The following information is from the New Zealand Now.
First Settlers: The first ancestors of New Zealand are the Maori people who are said to have arrived between 1200-1300 AD. They discovered New Zealand as they explored the Pacific Ocean, navigating by the ocean currents and wind and stars. The term Maori didn’t exist until the Europeans arrived.

It wasn’t until 1642 when the first Europeans (the Dutch) started to arrive. Then it was 127 years before another European came to New Zealand, in 1769. This was James Cook. After that, European whalers and sealers visited regularly and then traders became to come. In 1830, the British felt pressured to end the lawlessness of the country and stop France from making New Zealand a colony.

Treaty of Waitangi: “On February 6, 1840, William Hobson, New Zealand’s first governor, invited Maori chiefs to sign a treaty with the British crown. The treaty was taken all around the country and more than 500 chiefs signed the treaty.

The treaty governs that the relationship between the Maori and everyone is protected. This is done by:

- Accepting that Maori iwi (tribes) have the right to organize themselves, protect their way of life and to control the resources they own
- Requiring the government to act reasonably and in good faith towards Maori
- Making the government responsible for helping to address grievances
- Establishing equality and the principle that all New Zealanders are equal under the law.”

Applying the treaty influences life in New Zealand in many ways:

- Parliament: Maori representation is guaranteed with reserved seats
- Waitangi Tribunal: researches and makes legal decisions on cases where Maori land and other resources were taken illegally or unfairly in the past
- Fisheries: Maori have significant control and rights to these
- Language (te reo): is an official language along with English and New Zealand sign language. You will see and hear te reo all around you.

Wars & Growth: There was increasing pressure for the Maori people to sell their land for European settlement. This led to a conflict in the 1860’s and war broke out on the North Island. During the 20 years of war, a lot of Maori land was confiscated or bought.

The South Island, at this time, was seeing a lot of settlement growth. Gold was found in Otago in 1861. In the 1870s the government helped thousands of British come to New Zealand and start a new life.

The economy was dependent on agriculture and because of this, much of the forest that originally covered New Zealand was cleared.
During the two world wars, New Zealand sent thousands of men over to fight. The 1915 landing at Gallipoli in Turkey is seen as a coming of age for New Zealand. It established ANZAC (Australia and New Zealand Army Corp) and the special relationship with Australia. ANZAC day is now celebrated on April 25th to commemorate the Gallipoli landing.

New Zealand did side with America in Korea in the 1950s and again in Vietnam in the 1960s.

MAORI CULTURE

The Hongi – Maori Greeting: This is a traditional Maori greeting. When meeting Maori people, you press your noses and foreheads together and share in “the breath of life.” While this can be uncomfortable for many people, it is a sign of respect when meeting Maori people.

Marae: Maori Meeting Grounds: A marae is a Maori meeting grounds. It is a fenced in complex that will have carved building and ground that belong to a certain iwi (tribe) or whanau (family). The Marae is used for meetings, celebrations, funerals, workshops, etc. As a visitor, you are encouraged to participate in a powhiri, a formal welcoming ceremony before you can enter the Marae. If you have the chance to participate in a powhiri, it can be a great cultural experience.

Ta Moko: Maori Tattoo: Traditionally, Maori men received moko on their faces, buttocks and thighs. Women usually wore moko on their lips and chin. It will reflect the individual's ancestry and history. In the past, it was a sign of social rank, knowledge, skill or eligibility to marry. You will most likely see someone, at some point, that has facial moko as some people still participate in that practice.

Maori tattoos hold a lot of special meaning and if you are a non-Maori person, you should do a lot of research as to why you shouldn’t (or should) obtain a moko. It can be offensive for non-Maori people to obtain certain tattoos out of ignorance of the significance it holds to the Maori people. You are encouraged to not get a moko.

Haka: Maori War Dance: The haka is the dance you will see if you ever watch an All Blacks match. The players do it before each match.

The haka is an ancient Maori war dance and was used on the battlefield but as well as when people came together in peace. It is meant to exhibit the tribe’s pride, strength and unity. There will be strong foot stomping, tongue protrusions and body slapping while chanting. The words being said relate back to the tribe’s ancestors and history. Today the haka is done at important ceremonies and celebrations. If you are invited to attend a haka, you should definitely do it, as it is a cultural experience that New Zealand is known for.

Tiaki Promise: New Zealand prides itself on the strong connection it has to the land and the responsibility to care for it. From a young age, children are taught to care for the land. They believe that if you look after the land, it will look after you and future generations.
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Zealand, you should respect all rules for the land and culture. If you decide to go camping or hiking, be sure to take out everything you bring in. Do not leave a trace. Also respect the trails and stay on the designated trails.

KIWIS

New Zealanders are also known as kiwis. This comes from the little, flightless bird that is only found in New Zealand, the kiwi bird. The Maori held the kiwi bird in high regard. During World War I, New Zealand soldiers were given the nickname of “kiwis” and it stuck. Don’t be surprised when you see a lot of kiwi references while exploring New Zealand (and keep an eye out for the kiwi bird!).

NEW ZEALAND SLANG

Even though New Zealand is an English-speaking country, there will be differences. The slang they use can be confusing, but here are some common words you may hear:

- **Kiwi**: referring the New Zealander or the bird. For the fruit, they say kiwi fruit
- **Sweet as**: an expression meaning it was really good – “my day was sweet as”
- **Jandals**: flip flops
- **Dairy**: convenience store, corner store
- **Macca’s**: McDonalds
- **Togs**: swimsuit
- **Bonnet & boot**: hood & trunk of a car
- **Buggered**: very tired
- **Fizzy drink**: soda
- **Hot chips**: French fries
- **Chocka Block**: crowded/busy
- **Jumper**: sweatshirt
- **Not even**: no way/that’s not true
- **A feed**: a meal
- **Heaps**: a lot/very
- **Zed**: the letter Z (in the US we say “zee”; in New Zealand it is “Zed” like “Ted”
- **Tramping**: hiking
- **Whittakers**: New Zealand for all chocolate, however Whittakers is a brand you must try!
- **L&P**: Lemon & Paeroa, a popular soft drink
- **Pineapple lumps**: chocolate coated lumps of pineapple flavored confection (a must try)

Maori words:

- **Aotearoa**: New Zealand (literally means long white cloud)
- **Kia ora**: hello
- **Ke te pai**: I’m good
- **Waka**: canoe but commonly used to describe any moving vehicle
- **Aroha**: love
- **Haka**: war dance with actions
- **Iwi**: tribe
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- Pounamu: greenstone

THE USE OF “AS”

New Zealanders are known for adding “as” to many expressions. “Sweet as” is the most common but any adjective can be added before the “as.” Sometimes people will say “dark as” meaning it is dark in here. “Sweet as” can be a response for almost anything – it can mean, okay, awesome, etc. Awesome is another word that will be overused by Kiwis. Here is a great blog that talks about phrases and what Kiwis are actually saying:


SPORT

The All Blacks are the only rugby team you will want to care about when in New Zealand. Rugby is a way of life in New Zealand. You will have many opportunities to watch or play it. You might want to brush up on your rugby knowledge before heading to New Zealand. Currently, Amazon Prime has a series called “All or Nothing: All Blacks” that follows the team around for a year. It is worth the watch.

NEW ZEALAND ACADEMIC SYSTEM

The New Zealand education system is modeled after the British system, which means that there is a very strong emphasis on individual, self-directed study. You may notice that the amount of classroom contact time is less than what you are used to in the U.S. There is also a greater emphasis on academic specialization rather than devoting your studies to general studies.

In order to be successful, you will need to take initiative to learn the material and participate in class. For example, you are expected to read and print the syllabus BEFORE the first-class meeting. There may even be some expected reading before the first day. If you notice yourself struggling in this learning environment, there is a tutoring center on each campus and they can provide support and review your work. Again, it will be your responsibility to seek out assistance.

Your classes will be comprised of lectures and tutorials. Lectures are usually held with a larger number of students and your tutorials will consist of fewer students and allow you a chance to ask more in-depth questions. Lectures will have very little interaction between the student and professor, so you will want to be sure you attend the tutorials. Your classes will have various assignments, essays, labs, etc. throughout the semester, as well as a three-hour final exam. Your final exam is usually 40-60% of your final grade.

Also, in the New Zealand system, the lecturer, who teaches the class, is not the person who evaluates your exams. In order to avoid any kind of personal bias, there is a separate group of professors who do the formal evaluation of exams.