**New Zealand**

**Basic information**

* Political system: Constitutional monarchy
* Area: 268 021 km
* Capital city: Wellington
* Official languages: English, Māori
* Population: 4,4 million inhabitants
* Currency: New Zealand dollar
* Religion: Christianity
* Member of Commonwealth

**Location**

* New Zealand is an island country located in the southwestern Pacific Ocean
* New Zealand is situated some 1,500 kilometres east of Australia
* It is part of Polynesia in Oceania.
* Comprised of two main islands – the South and the North Island
  + has also couple of dependent areas such as Cook Islands, Niue or Tokelau

**History**

* In 9. century the first Maors (original inhabitants) were settled
* In 1641 Dutch seafarer Abel Janszoon Tasman discovered these islands
* In 1840 british settlers came here and this territory was declared as a dependent territory of New South Wales under British protection
* In 1907 New Zaeland became independent, but there were still strong political bindings on GB
* In 1931 became totally independent as a member of Commonwealth
  + Commonwealth is an [intergovernmental organisation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intergovernmental_organization) of [54](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Member_states_of_the_Commonwealth_of_Nations) independent [member states](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Member_state). All members except [Mozambique](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozambique) and [Rwanda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwanda) were part of the [British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire), out of which the Commonwealth developed.

**Political system**

* New Zealand is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy
* Queen Elizabeth II is the Queen of New Zealand and the head of state. The Queen is represented by the Governor-General,whom she appoints on the advice of the Prime Minister.
* The powers of the Queen and the Governor-General are limited by constitutional constraints and they cannot normally be exercised without the advice of Cabinet
* The Parliament of New Zealand holds legislative power and consists of the Sovereign (represented by the Governor-General) and the House of Representatives.

**Cities and population**

* The biggest city is Auckland with 1,4 million inhabitants
* Other important cities are Christchurch and Hamilton
* Density of population is 14 inhabitants per km²
* Ethnic groups: 78% European  
   14.6% Māori  
   9.2% Asian  
   6.9% Pacific peoples

**Geography, Climate and Nature**

* Varied landscape – lowlands on the coast, mountains in inland
* Between the South and North island is 26km wide Cook Strait
* The highest mountain is Mount Cook – 3754 m
* New Zealand has mild oceanic climate
  + The northernmost part has subtropical climate
  + The Northern island has average temperature +18°C and on the Southern island it is +13°C
* The most famous animal living in New Zealand is Kiwi
  + big flightless bird