

New Zealand is a small, but up-and-coming nation

# Land of the long white cloud

Volcanoes, rainforests, high mountains, deserts, glaciers and thousands of kilometers of coastline. Hardly any other country on Earth offers more scenic variety than New Zealand. With its breathtaking landscape and unique fauna and flora, the island nation situated in the South Pacific attracts around two and a half million tourists a year. It is also top of the list as a new home for many people wishing to emigrate. Thinly populated, but with a European character and economically successful, the country offers potential for GfK's Retail and Technology sector, which set up a branch in New Zealand's biggest city, Auckland, two years ago.

The filming of the classic "Lord of the Rings" by J. R. R. Tolkien has focused the world's attention on the beauty of New Zealand. The director Peter Jackson found the ideal conditions in his home country to set the stage for the fantasy continent Middle-earth with all its different landscapes. Thanks to a North to South expanse of over 1,600 kilometers and extreme differences in height with mountains rising up to 3,700 meters, New Zealand offers a large number of climatically and scenically different zones. Virtually the whole globe can be found in miniature on its two main islands, the North and South Island, and the more than 700 smaller islands.

The plant and animal world, on the other hand, is unique. The New Zealand islands split from other land masses early on in the Earth's history. Today almost 2,000 kilometers separate New Zealand from Australia, the nearest continent. This isolation led to a highly individual type of flora and fauna development. The fact that no mammals evolved on the islands had a particularly strong impact. Many of the

ecological niches that became free as a result were occupied by birds. Without the threat from natural enemies, such as cats, some species of birds lost their ability to fly in the course of evolution. The most famous example is the kiwi. Not only does the small ostrich-like species decorate the country's coat of arms, but New Zealanders colloquially refer to themselves as Kiwis.

## **Predators conquer the peaceful paradise**

When they settled in the late 13th century the Māori, who were the first, Polynesian immigrants, and the Europeans who landed in the 18th century, some intentionally and some as stowaways, brought a large number of mammals to New Zealand, mainly rats, but also dogs, cats, hedgehogs and possums. These predatory species quickly conquered their new habitat and forced out many of the species of flightless birds. Even the national symbol, the kiwi, is threatened by extinction and can now mainly be seen only in zoos and special kiwi houses. The New Zealand government is trying to regenerate the →



New Zealand is home to 4.3 million people and around 32 million sheep

indigenous fauna with protection programs. On Kapiti Island, the most important bird sanctuary in the country, the state-decreed protection of species already began in 1897. The government purchased the ten kilometer-long and two kilometer-wide island and started to “liberate” it from mammals in a process lasting decades. Resettlement of the original species of birds is now also planned on the two main islands. At least on one count New Zealand is still a peaceful paradise even now, in that to date there are no snakes, in contrast to its neighbor Australia.

**The country is economically successful. The standard of living of most island inhabitants is correspondingly high.**

#### **Land of the long white cloud**

New Zealand is considered the youngest country on Earth. According to a legend of the Polynesian Māori, the tribal leader Kupe discovered the islands more than 1,000 years ago during an expedition which he and his team undertook with two canoes in the South Pacific. When looking at them from a distance the Māori saw a long white cloud over the land mass. From then on the islands were called “Aotearoa – land of the long white cloud”. It has been scientifically proven that the islands were settled by Polynesian immigrants towards the end of the 13th century. In 1642, the Dutch seafarer Abel Janszoon Tasman was the first European to discover the islands. However, an attempt to go ashore failed due to the resistance of the Māori. More than 100 years went by before the next European launched an attempt to explore New Zealand. In the search of a supposed southern continent, the British explorer James Cook set foot on the New Zealand islands in 1769. Contact with the Māori was characterized by hostility in some cases, but the first approaches and bartering also took place. To European eyes the Māori were a terrifying sight. Tall in stature, strong and covered in tattoos all their bodies and faces, they often welcomed newcomers with the “haka”, a war dance which was intended to drive off the supposed enemy and involved them showing wide open, crazy eyes

and sticking out their tongues. Captain Cook’s crew did not allow themselves to be intimidated. They mapped the country’s interior and explored the exotic fauna and flora.

As a result of the subsequent drastic increase in the numbers of European immigrants, conflicts with the Māori intensified. In some cases there were nationwide bloody disputes. In return for surrendering their country the Māori officially received civil rights, but in reality they were marginalized from society for a long time. The Māori language was not recognized as an official language, alongside English, until 1987. Since then a great deal has been done. The identity of the Māori is promoted through their own radio stations, newspapers and TV channels. Their traditional culture is a permanent part of the islands’ tourist attractions, although immigrants of European origin clearly predominate in the population today. More than two thirds of New Zealanders have European forefathers. The Māori are the second-largest population group with a share of around 15%, followed by Asians and Polynesians.

#### **New citizens sought**

New Zealand is still a country of immigration today: almost a quarter of its inhabitants were not born in the island state. The thinly populated country, with its around 4.3 million inhabitants, lacks skilled personnel in many sectors. Lists with the required occupational profiles are published for potential immigrants. Based on a points system, which particularly takes into account training and work experience, around 45,000 immigrants are selected each year. The country still has a great deal of space for newcomers. Whilst more than three million people live on the smaller North Island, the larger South Island is still very thinly populated.

Tourists are mostly drawn to the country’s rural landscape when they visit, whereas New Zealanders prefer living in the city. Around a third of the total population lives in the conurbation of Auckland alone. At 87%, the level of urbanization is one of the highest in the world. However, New Zealand’s cities are not comparable to their European or Asian counterparts, as the island inhabitants have far more space at their disposal. The conurbation of Auckland →



Around a third of the total population of New Zealand lives in its biggest town, Auckland

New Zealand	
Capital city	Wellington
Official languages	English, Māori, sign language
Surface area	267,710 km <sup>2</sup> Comparison – Germany: 357,022 km <sup>2</sup> ; USA: 9,826,675 km <sup>2</sup>
Population	4.3 million Comparison – Germany: 82 million; USA: 310 million
Per capita GDP	USD 27,300 Comparison – Germany: USD 34,100; USA: USD 46,400
GDP growth in real terms (2009)	-1.4% (estimated)
Average age	36.8 years Comparison – Germany: 44.3 years; USA: 36.8 years
Major industries	Agriculture (dairy products, wool, fruit, vegetables), forestry, tourism, mining
Market research market	With sales totaling USD 103 million in 2008, ranked 34th in the world
<b>Did you know...</b>	
... that New Zealand is the only country on Earth to declare sign language an official language? Since 2006, "New Zealand Sign Language" officially ranks alongside English and Māori, but not even 1% of the population know how to use it.	
... that New Zealand was the first country on Earth to introduce voting for women? Since 1893 both sexes have had equal rights on political issues.	
... that plastic money is used in New Zealand? Besides the very popular credit cards, New Zealand dollar notes made from plastic, or to be more precise polypropylene, have been used since 1999.	
... that despite the formally sealed independence from Great Britain in 1947, the British Queen Elizabeth II is New Zealand's official Head of State? The country has a parliamentary monarchy as its form of government and is represented in the Commonwealth of Nations.	
Sources: CIA World Factbook 2010, ESOMAR Industry Report 2009	

with its around 1.2 million inhabitants covers an area similar to the size of London, where more than seven million people live. Two thirds of New Zealanders own their own house, usually with a garden. This type of accommodation also dominates in the towns, and multi-storey blocks of flats are generally the exception.

### Sheep, cows, climate killers

What guidebooks often hide is that although New Zealand has listed around 30% of its land as areas of nature con-

servation, just under half of the country's surface area is used for farming. The plains of the South Island are witness to one of the most important branches of the country's economy, namely cattle breeding. Large areas are fenced off grazing land and as far as the eye can see there is nothing but sheep. New Zealand is currently home to around 32 million wool and meat suppliers. For a long time, sheep breeding was the key industry and in the 1980s, stocks were still at 70 million. However, following national economic crises due to collapsing wool prices their numbers gradually reduced. On the other hand, cattle breeding has increased. With just under six million dairy cows and four million beef cattle, New Zealand is now the world's biggest producer of dairy products and one of the key beef producers.

The huge number of ruminant animals has caused New Zealand a very specific environmental problem. Virtually half of all polluting greenhouse gases produced by the country originate from agriculture. This is an extremely large proportion by international comparison: the figure in developed countries is just under 10% on average. The main problem is methane gases, which sheep and cows produce during digestion and naturally excrete. To control this, the government tried to introduce an emission tax per animal, but failed due to resistance from farmers. A system for emissions trading is now planned, similar to the ones set up in other countries for industry and energy providers. The root of the problem is also being tackled. Scientists are carrying out research into special drugs and feed alternatives to reduce these methane emissions. Should no solution be found, there is a risk that New Zealand will fail to reach the climate targets agreed in the Kyoto Protocol.

The four-legged climate killers are also helping to increase the size of the hole in the ozone layer. The excretions of the cattle stocks are converted into nitrous oxide in the ground, which damages the ozone layer in the atmosphere. Between September and December the new ozone hole created each year over the Antarctic spreads as far as New Zealand. Without the protecting ozone layer a large amount of skin-damaging ultraviolet rays penetrate through the at-



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mosphere, posing a serious risk for the islands' inhabitants who, along with the Australians, share the sad record for the world's highest rates of skin cancer. Nevertheless, outdoor activities are especially popular with New Zealanders. Fishing, hunting, hiking, swimming, sailing and surfing – a real Kiwi loves nature and enjoys being active outdoors. Immigrants from heavily populated countries especially enjoy the vastness and naturalness of their new home.

#### **New Zealand: economic nation**

The isolated location of the island state has strongly influenced the mentality of New Zealanders. Making the best of what is available is their motto for life. Far away from the rest of the world, ingenuity has often been in demand. The New Zealanders call this mentality "No. 8 wire". Most problems can be remedied with a standard piece of No. 8 wire, and wire is always available in the land of many fences. Nowadays New Zealanders can no longer complain about the lack of goods on offer. The country is economically successful. Although New Zealand suffered a slight fall in its gross domestic product during the current economic crisis and the unemployment rate is at a ten-year high at 7%, the small state with just 4.3 million inhabitants ranks in 53rd place in the list of the largest economic nations worldwide. The standard of living of most island inhabitants is correspondingly high, which is also reflected in the well-developed retail landscape.

More and more companies are seeing New Zealand as a lucrative sales market and are interested in the consumer habits of the inhabitants. In the latest rankings of the international market research association ESOMAR, New Zealand occupied 34th place among the largest market research markets, with sales of 65 million Euros. GfK has been represented in New Zealand for two years now, with its own local branch of the Retail and Technology sector. The office was set up by Johan Lagerholm, who previously held various management posts at GfK companies in Sweden and Great Britain. As a New Zealand Country Manager, the Business Management graduate is in charge of a small team of three employees who look after customers in the consumer electronics, household appliances, photography, IT and telecommunications markets. All large retail companies in these sectors supply their scanner till data to GfK, therefore providing a very precise and detailed analysis of goods sales. The still young GfK branch has set itself big targets. The weekly supply of data is to be further extended to many product segments, and an extension of the panel to home improvement and DIY stores is also in the pipeline. Market researchers see special potential in this area, as New Zealanders love nothing better than working on their own four walls.



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