

TIMELINE: HISTORY OF NEW ZEALAND

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~130M YRS AGO: Australia and Zealandia break off from the southern paleo-supercontinent of Gondwana and become isolated in the South Pacific.

~85M YRS AGO: Zealandia breaks off from Australia, creating the 1000-mile-wide Tasman Sea, and almost completely submerges. Only a few isolated islands (mountaintops) remain above water.

~35M YRS AGO: Tectonic compression begins uplifting mountainous parts of the submerged continent.

~5M YRS AGO: Subduction of the Pacific Plate under the Australian Plate drives volcanism. Sea levels rise and fall with varying degrees of land above sea level over the ensuing millions of years.

~25,000 YRS AGO: The North and South Islands (and Stewart Island) are connected by land bridges during the peak glaciation of the most recent Ice Age.

~10,000 YRS AGO: Glacial melt raises sea levels enough to flood the Cook Strait, separating the North and South Islands (and the Foveaux Strait between the South Island and Stewart Island.)

~1200 AD: First Polynesian voyagers, likely from the Society or Cook Islands, reach New Zealand in *waka* (ocean-going canoes). New Zealand, the southwestern vertex of the Polynesian Triangle, is the last part of Polynesia to be settled and one of the very last places on Earth to be settled by *Homo sapiens*.

~1300–1500: Main period of proto-Maori settlement and cultural development. Hunting of moa (large flightless birds endemic to NZ) leads to extinction c. 1450 AD. Extinction of the moa food source and a climate change cold period precipitates major societal changes.

1500: The Classic Māori period begins and will last over 2 centuries. Population surges. Fortified, terraced *pā* sites proliferate. Inter-tribal warfare becomes common.

1642: Dutch explorer **Abel Tasman** sights the South Island, without ever landing, and names it "Staaten Landt" in reference to the Dutch name for South America, which he thought it was a part of. There is a hostile encounter offshore at what Tasman named 'Murderers' Bay' (now called Golden Bay, since 1854) with the death of at least 4 Dutch sailors and an unknown number of Maori deaths (no written records). The encounter remains controversial today in terms of whether the Maori initiated hostilities or simply made ritualistic expressions of their stewardship of nearby valuable agricultural lands where *kumara* (sweet potato staple crop) was cultivated. No European visits New Zealand again until Cook in 1769.

1645: Staaten Landt undergoes a name change to Nieuw Zeeland, after the Dutch province of Zeeland.

1769–77: **James Cook** visits New Zealand 3 times - once on each of his 3 voyages. On the 1st voyage his Tahitian guide Tupaia was able to converse with the Maori as their languages share Austronesian roots. Cook circumnavigated and mapped the coastlines, confirmed the North and South Islands were separate (with the strait between them soon named after him by cartographers at the urging of Joseph Banks). He claimed possession for Britain, and introduced pigs, potatoes, and European diseases which would kill over 2/3 of the Maori population. Unfortunately Cook had several violent encounters with Māori, including a disastrous first encounter in 1769 and another violent skirmish on his 2nd voyage in 1773 with all 10 members of a landing party killed in what is known as the Grass Cove Massacre. Overall, at least 45 indigenous people were killed by Cook's crew, including 2 killed by Cook himself. On his next and final visit on his 3rd voyage, Cook was cautious, restrained and even conciliatory rather than vindictive (which did not sit well with all his crew), and there was no violence on the 3rd voyage. [If only Cook had shown such restraint on the beach at Kealakekua Bay on the Big Island of Hawaii where he would lose his life in a failed attempt to kidnap a Chief on February 14, 1779.]

Note: French explorer **Jean-François Marie de Surville** visited New Zealand in **1769**, at the same time Cook was there on his 1st voyage. The two explorers never knew of or encountered each other, though they were within 31 miles of each other at one point. de Surville's visit was initially cordial but relations deteriorated after an alleged theft, culminating in the burning of a Maori storehouse and the kidnapping of a Maori Chief who later died of scurvy - another sore point to this day. In 1772, a second French

expedition headed by **Marion Dufresne** initially enjoyed cordial relations under Dufresne's benign guidance as he had been heavily influenced by Louis de Bougainville's Tahiti-based concept of *le bon sauvage* (the noble savage). However, relations severely deteriorated, due to cultural misunderstandings and economic tensions over sacred (*tapu*) land and fishing rights. The catastrophic result was 26 French crew killed by Maori warriors, followed swiftly by 250 Maori villagers killed in French reprisals. Before the French left they wrote a statement (buried in a bottle) taking French possession of all of New Zealand! The death of Dufresne challenged the 'noble savage' concept prevalent in Europe and also gave New Zealand a (well-earned) reputation for being a dangerous place to colonize.

1790s: Sealing and whaling boom. European, American and Australian sealers, whalers, and traders establish shore stations. As in Tahiti and the Marquesas this would catalyze European immigration and play a significant role in the development of colonization. The first permanent European settlement was established at Russell in the Bay of Islands, which soon became New Zealand's first 'capital'. In **1793**, French mariner **Antoine d'Entrecasteaux** sailed past New Zealand while famously albeit unsuccessfully searching for French explorer Comte de LaPérouse who had mysteriously disappeared after leaving Botany Bay in Sydney in 1788 (later discovered to have been shipwrecked and killed with his crew in the Solomon Islands). D'Entrecasteaux never landed but had brief and uneventful offshore contact with Māori in far northern New Zealand before heading off to Tonga. (His most significant work occurred elsewhere - particularly in Tasmania where he explored and charted several areas and gave his name to the D'Entrecasteaux Channel.) This would not be the end of French contact (see D'Urville below)

1814: Samuel Marsden establishes the first Christian mission at Rangihoua Bay in the Bay of Islands.

1818-36 - 'The Musket Wars' rage with longstanding Maori intertribal conflicts greatly intensified by the introduction of firearms. Although driven by ancient traditional concepts of *utu* (revenge or reciprocity, depending on one's viewpoint) and *mana* (power and prestige), the inter-tribal wars escalated dramatically due to the introduction of European firearms, making warfare far more lethal. Over 3000 battles occurred in these protracted and widespread 'Musket Wars' with a staggering 30,000 deaths out of a total Māori population of about 100,000.

During this same period, French mariner/explorer/anthropologist **Jules Dumont d'Urville** (who coined the ethnogeographic terms Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia which are still useful in a general way to this day) visited New Zealand 3 times, in **1824, 1827, and 1840**. D'Urville extensively charted the South Island and East Coast of the North Island. By his 3rd visit in 1840 New Zealand was fully under British control, though D'Urville was still assessing sites for a French colony, which he ultimately deemed impractical. D'Urville's name lives on in D'Urville Island, French Pass, and various native species he named or others named after him. Also during this period: Growing lawlessness in the Bay of Islands and the need to consolidate British claims in the wake of French incursions resulted in James Busby being appointed Resident Governor in **1830**. Busby allied with Māori chiefs and they increasingly bet on the British for protection from potential French incursions.

In **1835** a 'Declaration of Independence of New Zealand' was signed by 34 northern Māori chiefs declaring Maori sovereignty and hereditary rights. This pre-dates the more famous Treaty of Waitangi and is often cited by historians today in Maori rights litigation and policy-making debates. Busby endorsed the Declaration in a bid to keep New Zealand out of French hands but also had designs on working around the agreement to promote British influence and control.

1840: The Treaty of Waitangi is signed on February 6 between 40 Māori chiefs and the British Crown (represented by Lt. Gov. Hobson). More than 500 chiefs will eventually sign various copies. Very importantly to this day, the Māori version (*Te Tiriti*) and English version differ significantly on sovereignty and governance, and much is also debatable due to interpretations of language:

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	English version	Māori version (<i>Te Tiriti</i>)	Key difference / controversy
Article 1	Māori cede sovereignty of New Zealand to the British Crown completely and without reservation.	Māori give the British Crown 'kāwanatanga' the right to govern.	Māori argue they never ceded sovereignty, only granted the British the right to govern their own people.
Article 2	Crown guarantees Māori full and undisturbed possession of their lands, estates, forests, fisheries, and other properties; Māori give the Crown pre-emptive right of purchase.	Crown guarantees Māori <i>tino rangatiratanga</i> (chiefly authority) over their lands, villages, and all <i>taonga</i> (assets – interpreted broadly). Crown gets pre-emptive purchase right.	<i>Tino rangatiratanga</i> is much stronger than “possession” in the Maori view and many Māori see this as guaranteeing their ongoing sovereignty and autonomy
Article 3	Māori are granted all the rights and privileges of British subjects (later interpreted as citizenship).	Māori are given the same rights and protection as British people.	Largely agreed, though implementation has been uneven.

1841–42: New Zealand briefly becomes a dependency of the Colony of New South Wales (Australia) and the capital is moved from Russell to Auckland.

1845–72: 'The New Zealand Wars' (formerly called and still better known as 'The Māori Wars') rage between British forces and the indigenous Maori *iwi* (tribes) , although some Maori Chiefs allied with the British. Major conflicts: Northern War (1845–6), First Taranaki War (1860–61), Waikato War (1863–4), and Te Kooti's War (1868–72). 2,000 Māori fighting against the Crown died, as did 250 British-allied Māori and 560 British and colonial troops. The wars resulted in confiscation of more than 3 million acres of Māori land.

1852: The New Zealand Constitution Act grants a considerable degree of self-government. Six provincial governments are created.

1860s–70s: Gold rush! (Otago 1861, West Coast 1864, Thames 1867) This would drive rapid European population growth and economic development.

1867 : Māori are granted representation in Parliament with 4 dedicated seats (out of a total of 76)

1893: New Zealand becomes the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote. Notably this included ALL women (i.e., it included Maori women).

1897: An independent Maori Parliament is formed to advise on legislation

1907: New Zealand becomes a Dominion within the British Empire, further augmenting self-government.

1914–18: World War I – 18,000 New Zealanders killed (out of 100,000 who served) in the Gallipoli campaign and other battles. ANZAC (Australia New Zealand Army Corps) reputation and pride emerge.

1931: Statute of Westminster passed by the U.K. Parliament formalizing complete self-government - but New Zealand chose to delay full implementation due to: conservatives preferring to retain the status quo, loyalty to the British Empire, and favorable economic and political links that might be potentially disrupted. (see 1947 full implementation)

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1935–49: First Labor Government (Michael Joseph Savage, Peter Fraser). Introduces comprehensive welfare state, public health system, state housing.

1939–45: WWII – 11,600 Kiwis killed fighting in Greece, Crete, North Africa, Italy and the Pacific (primarily the Solomons). Along with Australians they distinguish themselves as brave & resilient fighters.

1947: Complete adoption of The Statute of Westminster with full legal independence granted, though New Zealand has chosen to remain a Dominion with the British monarch as ceremonial head of state.

1951: ANZUS Treaty defense pact signed with Australia and USA. (see suspension 1987)

1953: Edmund Hillary, a New Zealander, and Nepalese Tenzing Norgay, summit Mount Everest.

1973: Britain joins the European Economic Community – loss of preferential market status devastates agricultural exports and overall economy.

1975: The Waitangi Tribunal is set up to investigate claims of Treaty of Waitangi breaches.

1975–84: Robert Muldoon's 'Think Big' projects invest heavily in major industrial projects.

1984–90: Labor Government's 'Rogernomics' (named after Finance Minister Roger Douglas) introduces major neoliberal free market reforms that transform and invigorate New Zealand's economy.

1985: *Rainbow Warrior* (Greenpeace's anti-nuclear protest ship) is bombed in Auckland Harbor by French government agents, creating a diplomatic row.

1987: New Zealand officially becomes a nuclear-free zone (NZ Nuclear Free Zone Act). This leads to the suspension and effective end of the ANZUS defense pact and military cooperation with the USA. Maori becomes an official language of New Zealand.

1996: Shift to Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system to provide more proportionate representation in Parliament.

1999 - Helen Clark becomes New Zealand's first elected female Prime Minister

2004: The 'Foreshore and Seabed Act' designating coastal areas as belonging to the British Crown sparks major Māori protest and politicization, with birth of the Māori Party.

2010–11: Christchurch earthquakes kill 185 people and destroy much of the city center. The Foreshore and Seabed Act is repealed amidst backlash and replaced with the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act which supports access to beaches & fishing areas and acknowledges Maori customary rights.

2013: Same-sex marriage legalized.

2017 - Progressive Labor-led government takes over under Jacinda Ardern.

2019: Christchurch mosque attacks by an Australian white supremacist result in 51 killed and lead to stringent gun control reforms. 22 tourists die in the White Island (Whakaari) volcano eruption.

2020: Ardern implements a "go hard, go early" COVID-19 elimination strategy with a robust vaccination campaign and lockdown. She also champions initiatives to enhance Maori co-governance. The Abortion Legalization Act of 2020 fully decriminalizes abortion and provides for public funding in medical settings.

2023 - Ardern resigns, citing "exhaustion." National-led coalition government led by PM Christopher Luxon implements policy reversals backpedaling on previous momentum toward Māori co-governance. Cyclone Gabrielle causes widespread flooding and damage across the North Island, killing 11 people.

2024–25: The proposed Treaty Principles Bill limiting Maori co-governance (intended to reverse the trend in the previous Adern administration) is defeated in Parliament after considerable controversy with major Maori-led opposition including a *hīkoi* (long-distance protest march) to Parliament. Colossal Biosciences Inc. announces plans to resurrect the moa via genetic engineering.

2026: New Zealand has a population of 5.3M and is ranked as one of the world's least corrupt and most peaceful nations while grappling with: Maori rights and governance/Treaty of Waitangi settlement controversies, housing affordability and other cost of living issues, strains on the national public health care system, and economic challenges including productivity deficits and rising unemployment (currently at about 5.3 %).