

# New Zealand Waitangi Day Special

## Nation boasts long history, beautiful vistas

The Treaty of Waitangi, signed on Feb. 6, 1840, and commemorated every year, is the founding document of New Zealand. First officially marked in 1934, Waitangi Day has been a public holiday since 1974. The legacy of this treaty is long-lasting and many sites relating to it and the early history of the relationship between the indigenous and colonizing peoples still remain.

Treaty House, in Waitangi itself, is where the treaty was signed. Visitors today can visit the property that was given as a gift to the nation in 1932 by Governor-General Lord Bledisloe. The grounds contain a carved *whare runanga* (meeting house) and a *waka taua* (war canoe). It has been the location of annual celebrations since 1947.

The culture of the Maori people is rooted deeply in the landscape of New Zealand, famed for its natural beauty and rugged features. The same land that attracted European settlers in the past inspired the indigenous folk culture, which adds another dimension to the story adventurers can encounter.

South Island is home to Aoraki, or Mount Cook, New Zealand's tallest mountain. Named for British explorer

Capt. James Cook, the Maori name comes from the local legend about four of the sons of Rakinui, the Sky Father. It is said they were traveling on a canoe that became stranded on a reef and overturned. The canoe became South Island, while the south wind froze the boys to stone and Aoraki, the tallest of them, became Mount Cook, and his brothers the Southern Alps. Today, the mountain is a challenging destination for climbers and hikers, as well as thrill-seekers and photographers. It is also a source of community and purpose to the native tribespeople who consider themselves descendants of Aoraki and a link between nature and the supernatural.

In the center of North Island stand Ruapehu, Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Pihanga. These active volcanoes are a focal point for both tourism and mythology. Brooding Taranaki stands alone further west, according to legend, after a titanic battle with Tongariro for the favor of the beautiful Pihanga. The craggy appearances of both volcanoes are supposed to be scars from the clash. Having lost the fight, Taranaki fled toward the setting sun and in doing so created the deep gorges of the Whanganui River.

Pausing to cry, the low-lying swamps at Te Ngaere came into existence. Blocked by the Pouakai Ranges, the rising sun in the morning petrified the mountain in its present location. Taranaki's spectacular sunsets are the mountain attempting to win back lost love, and frequent cloud cover is explained as bouts of sadness; while Tongariro's frequent eruptions are said to be the volcano warning against returning.

New Zealand's abundant volcanoes and seismic activity are both a boon and curse, with the geothermal activity at places like Rotorua providing the famous geysers and hot springs. Earthquakes and eruptions are a part of life and have been for a long time, as evidenced by Maori rock carvings intended to protect from seismic activity. A contemporary example can be seen at Mine Bay in Lake Taupo, carved in the 1970s by local artists Matahi Whakataka-Brightwell and John Randall.

"Kia ora Aotearoa" — welcome to New Zealand.

*This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.*




Left: Maori artwork can be seen on a rock wall at Lake Taupo. Right: Mount Taranaki is reflected in the Pouakai Tarns. GETTY IMAGES


### Congratulations on Waitangi Day



### Congratulations on the Anniversary of Waitangi Day



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