

Episode 121: New Zealand

Summary

Our guest Jovanka talks about her home country of New Zealand. In particular, she talks about the differences between the north and south islands, the indigenous Māori culture, the All Blacks, and New Zealand's rivalry with Australia.

Transcript

Nick: Today I'm talking to my friend Jovanka about her home country, which is New Zealand. And, Jovanka, New Zealand is a small country, it's on the other side of the world from where a lot of people live. So how would you describe it to somebody who didn't know much about it?

Jovanka: So, uhh, what I would probably say first is that it's a really beautiful country. So, because it's not that heavily populated - we only have a population of approximately 4.5 million people - umm, there's lots of space and there's lots of greenery, lots of trees, umm, beautiful, beautiful beaches. And, so, yeah, the natural landscape, I think, is one of the No. 1, umm, features that I would tell people about. Uhh, the people, we have, uhh, so, the indigenous culture in New Zealand are called Māori. We have three official languages there, so we have, uhh, Te Reo Māori, uhh, English and also sign language is recognised as an official language in New Zealand.

Nick: Wow, I didn't know that.

Jovanka: Yeah.

Nick: OK, so there's a lot to unpack there. But, so firstly, New Zealand is made up of¹ two islands or two main islands, I guess: the north island and the south island. Are they very different, do people identify with their island, or is it more just two parts of one whole?

Jovanka: Good question. Uhh, so I think if you're from ... I think people do identify with either being a north islander or a south islander. Uhh, the main difference is that the south island is very sparsely populated², so there's under a million people living there. So most of the population lives in the north island, which means that a lot of the south island is made up of small towns, apart from ... we have

¹ is made up of: consists of, contains

² sparsely populated: not many people live there. The opposite is *densely populated*.

Christchurch, which is our biggest city, which is only about half a million people, and Dunedin, which has about 30,000 people. Those are the two biggest cities in the south island of New Zealand. And I think southerners ... I'm from the north island, umm, but when I do meet people from the south island, they are very, uhh, passionate about the fact that they are from the south island, so, yeah, there's definitely some regional pride there.

Nick: And the south island, if I'm not mistaken³, is considered the more beautiful of the two islands?

Jovanka: Wooh! Umm, there's different landscape, I don't quite know if ... there's a lot more rainforest in the south island. There are different parts of the north island of New Zealand. Uhh, in the far north, there are amazing, umm, beaches. So I think there's probably more diverse landscape in the south island, umm, probably more to see. Umm, some might say it's more beautiful, but, umm, yeah, I would say that there's more to see there, so, yeah, beautiful natural landscape, but I don't think I could go as far as saying it's more beautiful.

Nick: Fair enough. And so you can see some of this, umm, island patriotism coming up here. Umm, so you did mention the Māori culture, and so this is a very distinct and unique culture. What can you say about it?

Jovanka: Right, so, umm, if I were describe Māori, the Māori culture to people that have never, uhh, seen anything from it before, uhh, so Māori are very, uhh, so they identify with the land a lot. So when they talk about their ancestry, mountains and rivers are part of their heritage, are part of their, umm, genealogy, when they talk about, uhh, when they introduce themselves to other people. So place is really important to them. Umm, they have traditional ... so they set up, umm, traditionally they live in villages, so they have their traditional meeting houses which are called *maraes*, and there are still many, many *maraes*, umm, around the country. And that's, uhh, where, uhh, people from different tribes - if they're, they, so their tribe is from a specific region, if they have an occasion or if there's a funeral or a wedding or something, they'll all go to that meeting house, the *marae*, to meet up. So there are ... they have traditional, uhh, *waita*, which are songs. Probably lots of people know the haka from - or have seen the haka - which is like a Māori war dance that the New Zealand rugby team do before a rugby game. So there's, yeah, there's quite a lot of traditional parts to it but it's probably a bit of a big discussion to get into, unless you, yeah, unless there's anything specific.

Nick: Umm, so if you look at the other British post-settler colonial societies (this should be post-colonial settler societies!), and I'm thinking about Australia, the United States and Canada, compared with New Zealand, it seems like New Zealand has done a better job of integrating or incorporating its indigenous culture with its European settlers than those other three countries. Do think that's fair, or do you think, you know, do you think there's good harmony between the indigenous people and the European settlers?

³ if I'm not mistaken (polite phrase): unless I'm wrong, I think I'm correct in saying

Jovanka: So, umm, I think we've done a better job than a lot of countries. One of the big reasons for that is that the indigenous Māori signed a treaty with the British colonisers in 1847, which is called the Treaty of Waitangi, where, uhh, the indigenous people, umm, were ... got equal rights to land and so on and so forth⁴. There are, obviously, umm, there are issues with that because, umm, Britain didn't honour a lot of that treaty, so we still have a lot of issues. And there's also institutional, like, racism, from having, like, a British monarchy, so I don't ... there are a lot of issues with, so, indigenous people still having equality. But compared to other countries like Canada and Australia and, yeah, other countries, the indigenous people have, uhh, have, yeah ... we've done a better job of having a more harmonious relationship. But a big part of that is something that I mentioned before, so that Māori people still have their *maraes*, they still have their places, and whereas in other countries like Australia and Canada, they've put indigenous people on reservations, which doesn't, like, incorporate you into society in any way, you lose all of your land rights, yeah, so I think that's a really big, umm, distinguishing factor, yeah, between how things have been done differently, yeah.

Nick: OK, and you mentioned the New Zealand rugby team, which is a very famous team called the All Blacks. Beyond the sport, even if you're not interested in rugby, do you feel that New Zealanders are very proud of the All Blacks, because you're a small country, they're the best team in the world and have been for many years - umm, is that really part of even the identity of New Zealanders that they have this amazing rugby team?

Jovanka: I think so, yes, so when, so for example when we got knocked out⁵ of the World Cup in two thousand and, I think, 2004 was it? There was kind of like, they talked about a national depression, like everyone was, you know, really quite dumbfounded⁶ because we never get knocked out that early on. So I think even if you don't like rugby, and there's lots of people that don't, uhh, you still, that's still something that's quite, I think, a massive accomplishment that we did, like, that they're so formidable⁷, and we're from a population of four million people, that's pretty cool.

Nick: And that - getting knocked out of the World Cup, uhh, if it's the one I'm thinking of, it was at the hands of Australia - which leads quite neatly into the next point. So, from the Australian point of view, Australia has a friendly rivalry with New Zealand. Umm, obviously we're friends and allies⁸, but on the sporting field, we're rivals. How do you see it from the New Zealand perspective?

⁴ and so on and so forth: et cetera (etc)

⁵ knocked out: eliminated (from a tournament or competition)

⁶ dumbfounded: shocked, astonished

⁷ formidable: strong, intimidating

⁸ allies: countries that are aligned by a treaty

Jovanka: So, I think, uhh, I think it's like the big brother - little brother or inferiority complex syndrome. 'Cause I don't ... so I know that when I talk to lots of Australians, they don't really care about, yeah, New Zealanders. But we definitely have a rivalry so we don't, yeah, like to be mistaken for Australians or compared to, yeah, Australians. So I think for New Zealanders, there's a bit more of, umm, yeah, we definitely, I think, umm, yeah, have a little - I wouldn't go as far as saying ill-feeling, but there's a little bit of, you know, uhh, national rivalry there between the countries. We definitely, yeah, have some issues.

Nick: When I went to New Zealand, which was many years ago, umm, they were referring to Australia as the west island of New Zealand, just as a kind of a joke, because you have the north island and the south island and then you have this huge island to the west, umm, which is Australia. So, uhh, just quickly, if someone was going to go to New Zealand, umm, for tourism, what are some of the places they should really hit?

Jovanka: OK, so you need to go to, so, Northland. There are some beautiful, beautiful beaches. So there's a place called the Bay of Islands, which is really lovely. Uhh, Coromandel is another peninsula on the north island. There's a lot of secluded⁹ beaches and it's super gorgeous. Uhh, if you're interested in Māori culture, there's a couple, like there's a really touristy place called Rotarua, which is in the middle of the north island. And that's got, umm, thermal bubbling mud pools and a whole heap - and hot pools - and a whole heap of, uhh, interesting geographic features as well. South island, uhh, Queenstown is pretty spectacular with mountains. Wanaka, west coast of the south island, there's fjord land, there's, yeah, amazing, amazing national parks. If you're into tramping¹⁰, you should definitely go there, there's some amazing multi-day hikes and things you should do.

Nick: Alright.

Jovanka: Yeah.

Nick: Well, thank you very much for telling us about New Zealand.

⁹ secluded: sheltered, quiet, far from large population centres

¹⁰ tramping: multi-day hiking

Comprehension Questions

1. What's the main difference between the two islands of New Zealand, according to Jovanka?
2. Which island does Jovanka think is more beautiful - the north or south island?
3. What two reasons does Jovanka give for New Zealand's indigenous people and European settlers having a better relationship than in some other countries?

Exercises

Use the words and expressions in the footnotes of the transcript to fill in the gaps.

1. During the cold war, the term 'first world' referred to the United States and its _____, the second world was the Soviet Union and its _____ and the third world was non-aligned countries.
2. She has tickets for the semifinals of Wimbledon so she hopes Roger Federer hasn't been _____ by then so she can watch him play.
3. Australia has five cities (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth) where about half the population lives. The rest of the country is _____.
4. She decided to run for the Senate but the incumbent who she will run against is a _____ opponent who is a very experienced politician.
5. He's going travelling again this year but it will be the first time he'll have gone to Africa, _____. No, wait, I think he went to Kenya once before.
6. After all the stress and excitement of their wedding, for their honeymoon they went to a very quiet and _____ spot where they could relax.
7. The continent of Asia _____ lots of diverse countries, ranging from China to India to Iran and many more.
8. They wanted to go _____ for several days in a national park while in New Zealand but in the end they ran out of time.
9. When he told his mother he had signed up for the army, she was _____. He had never mentioned it before and she thought it came out of the blue.
10. Organising a birthday party is more work than it sounds. You have to think about invitations, decorations, presents, food, _____.

Discussion Questions

Discuss these questions with a partner or in the [English in 10 Minutes Listeners group on Facebook](#):

1. Have you ever been to New Zealand? If so, what did you think of it? If not, would you like to go? Why or why not?
2. What do you think of the haka? (If you've never seen it, [watch it here](#)).
3. Does your country have a 'friendly rivalry' with another country like New Zealand and Australia? If so, which country, and what is the nature of the rivalry?

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. That the south island is much less populated.
2. She doesn't say (trick question!). Nick suggests the south island is more beautiful but Jovanka, who comes from the north island, says they are both beautiful.
3. That the Māori signed a treaty with the British colonial government in the 19th century, and that the Māori have retained their traditional meeting houses (*maraes*) rather than being on reservations as in some other countries.

Exercises

1. allies
2. knocked out
3. sparsely populated
4. formidable
5. if I'm not mistaken
6. secluded
7. is made up of
8. tramping
9. dumbfounded
10. and so on and so forth