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Explore New Zealand's Diverse Culture

By L. LaGuardia

The diverse culture of New Zealand carries much tradition and history built on the customs of the indigenous people known as the Maori. Legend holds that the Maori traveled by canoe from their mythical ancestral island of Hawaiki over 1,000 years ago. These Polynesian settlers traveled in open boats (or in canoes) that are not too different from the traditional crafts found in Polynesia today.

New Zealand is a country comprised of two large islands and many smaller islands in the southwestern Pacific Ocean and is noted for its geographic isolation. The Tasman Sea separates Australia to the northwest; to north are Fiji and Tonga. The total area of New Zealand is 268670 sq. km, which is slightly less than Japan but a little more than the United Kingdom. The country has extensive marine resources and the fifth largest Exclusive Economic Zone in the world. Meaning New Zealand can claim over four million km² or more than 15 times its land area for exploration and use of marine resources.

The climate is mild, mostly cool temperate to warm temperate, with temperatures rarely falling below 0°C (32°F) or rising above 30°C (86°F). The South Island is the largest mass, mountainous, wet and cold. It is divided length-wise by the Southern Alps. The North Island, dry and continental, is marked by volcanism. The tallest mountain on the North Island Mount Ruapehu (9,176-ft) is an active cone volcano. Although the island landscapes are impressive, they became a lot more popular when the production the Lord of the Rings trilogy called them home.

New Zealand has a population of about 4.1 million people mostly of European descent with Maori being the largest minority. Non-Maori Polynesian and Asian peoples are also significant minorities, especially in the nation's cities. Officially, Elizabeth II is the Queen of New Zealand and is represented in the country by a non-political governor-general; however, the Queen has no real political influence. Political power is held by the Prime Minister (currently Helen Clark) who is leader of the Government in the democratically elected Parliament of New Zealand.

Since 1984 the government has been restructuring the economy to lean more towards an industrialized free market and less of an agrarian economy that was dependant on the British market. Leading agricultural exports include meat, dairy products, forest products, fruit and vegetables, fish, and wool.

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The culture, contemporary and diverse, has influences from British, Irish, and Maori cultures. New Zealand is one of the most recently settled major landmasses. Polynesian settlers arrived in their waka some time between 800 and 600 years ago to establish the indigenous Maori culture. Among the British settlers, many people were from Scotland giving New Zealand more bagpipe bands than in Scotland!

What exactly is a Kiwi? A Kiwi to a New Zealander is not the green fuzzy fruit most Americans relate to. It is in truth a flightless nocturnal native bird with a long beak with nostrils on the end. Most important however, it is the national bird of New Zealand. Over the years, Kiwi has been applied to and adopted by New Zealanders as a nickname for themselves and as an adjective for their culture.

For more information on New Zealand please visit the site at i

<http://www.new-zealand-vacations.info/>

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Are You Sabotaging Your Site's Visibility?

By Kalena Jordan

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A recent study of New Zealand's Top 100 Companies by us here at Web Rank Ltd has revealed that every single one of New Zealand's leading companies have web sites that sabotage their ability to be found by Internet users.

How did this happen? The study reveals that each site belonging to the Top 100 contains design elements that in some way negatively impact their compatibility with and visibility in search engines. As a result, many of New Zealand's leading companies are not found listed in the search results of the most popular U.S. and New Zealand search engines, impacting their potential online revenue.

Most Internet users rely on search engines to find product and service providers. Unless they know the exact website address or search by the company or brand name, they will try to find what they are looking for by using keywords that describe a product or service's features, benefits or attributes. By ignoring the most important method used by people browsing the Internet, these companies are sacrificing an enormous opportunity to attract more traffic to their sites.

Websites are often a very large expense for these companies, ranging from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands of dollars. To invest such a massive amount of time, money and effort into an online presence and not ensuring it can be found is like constructing a storefront without any doors. After all, what is the point of paying so much money for a web site that will never be found?

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Does your web site contain any of the same self– defeating elements? Let's take a look:

~ 25 percent of the Top 100 New Zealand Companies could not be found for their chosen search terms in either U.S. or New Zealand search engines. Are you targeting the most appropriate search terms for your site?

~ 62 percent of the Top 100 New Zealand Companies fail to utilise their site TITLE tags effectively. Are you including keywords in your web page TITLE tags instead of just your company name?

~ 13 percent of New Zealand's Top 100 Companies are using techniques that could get them penalised on search engines for "spamming". Are you avoiding techniques considered as "spam" by the search engines?

~ The majority (59 percent) of New Zealand's Top 100 Companies use little or no body text on their home page. Are you using plenty of text on your pages for search engines to index?

~ 42 percent of the web sites belonging to New Zealand's Top 100 Companies are inaccessible to the visually impaired. Are you using ALT IMG attributes for your graphics and image files?

~ 5 percent of the Top 100 New Zealand Companies are not listed in any of the most popular U.S. or New Zealand search engines examined. Have you submitted your site to the major international and

local search engines and directories?

~ 63 percent of New Zealand's Top 100 Companies do not include a META Description Tag on their home page and 70 percent of the Top 100 New Zealand Companies do not include a META Keywords Tag on their home page. Have you included relevant META Tags in your site's HTML code?

~ 78 percent of the Top 100 New Zealand Companies do not use target search terms within their home page text. Do you?

Addressing all these elements will ensure your web site has the best chance possible of being visible in search engines and easily found by your target audience.

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