NEW ZEALAND

What is the name of the country which has volcanoes and rivers of ice, deer and sea-elephants?

It is New Zealand, called the Land of the Long White Cloud by the Maoris.

New Zealand is an island country. It is made up of three islands: the North and South Islands and Steward Island, a small land mass just to the south of (he South Island. Most of its people live in North Island, and that is where you find big volcanoes like Egmont and Tongariro and the boiling pools and geysers and lakes of bubbling mud. Auckland, Christ church and Wellington are the biggest cities. Wellington is the capital.

South Island is larger than North Island and has the highest mountains. There you can find the snow-capped Southern Alps, rising 3.764 metres to the tip of Mount Cook (named after Captain Cook, of course, because he visited the islands before sailing on westwards and discovering the eastern coast of Australia).

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South Island is very beautiful with its Alps and lakes, its glaciers and fiords. Have you ever heard of Milford Sound? That is one of the most picturesque of the fiords, with cliffs rising straight up out of the water, the whole scene reflected in the water. Down there, too, are the Sunderland Falls, where water drops six hundred metres, making these falls one of the highest waterfalls in the whole world.

So you can see there is plenty to look at in New Zealand. Plenty of things to do for tourists, because New Zealand is also famous for its fishing, snow sports, mountaineering, sailing and hiking.

The climate is pleasant at all seasons, without much difference between winter and summer. New Zealand does not have the terrible heat of Australian summers; the oceans temper its climate and the mountains bring down quite a lot of rain.

What do the people do? Farm mostly. Dairy products, meat and wool are the main exports. New Zealand ranks second only to Australia as an exporter of wool. There are many factories there too, with hydro-electric stations to produce the power for them.

North Island is where you find the Maoris, the fine people who lived in these islands hundreds of years before the white man came. Most of them live near Auckland.

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The Maoris, a Polynesian people, are the aborigines of New Zealand. After long stays in Indonesia and the South Pacific, which they explored for many years, they made their great journey to New Zealand about the middle of the 14th century. They sailed in double canoes open to all weathers. They knew the winds, the ocean currents and the stars, and this earned them the name of Vikings of the Sunrise.

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The capital of New Zealand since 1865, and one of its busiest ports, Wellington is at southern end of North Island, lying among hills on the western side of a natural harbour.

It is the third largest city in New Zealand.

Auckland (the former capital) is the first largest city, and Christchurch is the second.

The Maori name for Wellington Harbour means the great bay of Tara. According to Maori legend, Tara was the first Polynesian settler in this place. But Nicholson (after a Royal Navy captain) was the name given to it by the first British settlers, and it is still sometimes called by this name.

In 1839 a British officer bought the site of Wellington from the Maoris; he got it in exchange for blankets and some other unimportant things. In 1840 the first settlers arrived and called their settlement Britannia. By 1842 there were 3.700 colonists in the settlement and Britannia had become Wellington.

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The kiwi is rather an unusual bird found only in New Zealand. It has no tail, almost no wings, and its nostrils are situated near the end of its bill. No other bird lays an egg so large in proportion to its size. Its egg is about one fifth of its own weight. This is a tremendous size.

In many countries. New Zealander. too, are known as Kiwis, for the bird is also the symbol of people of the two islands.

Forests of exotic pines near the centre of New Zealand's North Island, cover an area of more than 160000 hectares. This is the largest single continuous area of planted forest in the world. New Zealand has more than four hundred thousand hectares of planted forests.

The most important wood is pine, which grows five times faster in New Zealand than in its native habitat in California, USA.

QUESTIONS

1. What is New Zealand called by the Maoris?

2. How many islands is New Zealand made up of?

3. Are there many geysers in New Zealand?

4. What climate has New Zealand? Is it pleasant?

5. What do the people do?

6. What does New Zealand export?

7. What is the capital of the country? What other big cities of New Zealand do you know?

8. Who are the aborigines of New Zealand?

9. Who was Tara according to Maori legend?

10. What unusual bird is found in New Zealand? What are New Zealanders sometimes called in other countries?