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The Penguin History Of New Zealand



THE PENGUIN HISTORY OF NEW ZEALAND

MICHAEL KING



Synopsis

New Zealand was the last country in the world to be discovered and settled by humankind. It was also the first to introduce full democracy. Between those events, and in the century that followed the franchise, the movements and the conflicts of human history have been played out more intensively and more rapidly in New Zealand than anywhere else on Earth. The Penguin History of New Zealand, a new book for a new century, tells that story in all its colour and drama. The narrative that emerges is an inclusive one about men and women, Maori and Pakeha. It shows that British motives in colonising New Zealand were essentially humane; and that Maori, far from being passive victims of a 'fatal impact', coped heroically with colonisation and survived by selectively accepting and adapting what Western technology and culture had to offer. This book, a triumphant fruit of careful research, wide reading and judicious assessment, was an unprecedented best-seller from the time of its first publication in 2003.

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Customer Reviews

Before we travel to a foreign country, I try to learn as much as possible about that country. This is the book I chose to do that and I am writing this review in that light. The book is very comprehensive and offers an understandable chronological history of New Zealand. He makes it as interesting as possible for a history book. What I really appreciate is that the book is factual without any judgements or bias. He does not editorialize about, for example, the treatment of the Maori people or about the actions of the English. He has no agenda. The book was much too long for my purposes as a tourist historian. After page 250 I did some skimming. However, I suspect that a serious reader would find the length to be perfect. My only serious criticism is the lack of photos,

drawing or paintings. Other than a few maps in the back of the book, there are no visuals. For example, there is not a single photo or drawing of a Maori in the book. I also would have liked some maps showing the movement of the people and of the changes in land ownership. Overall, the book suited my purpose very well.

The author assures the reader that this book is not an encyclopedia, but it does seem encyclopedic in nature as it covers NZ from long before man first appeared in that land to the present (2006). Reading this book on my first visit, I was in a hurry to get through the many chapters on pre-European background but in the final chapters I came to realize how important all that is to modern NZ. The Maori culture was here before the Europeans were here, almost disappeared and has now become ubiquitous in everyday life. That's why the author's seemingly laborious treatment of the Maori in early chapters is so important. But the book also provides more contemporary history on current challenges: demographic issues especially regarding Asian and Pacific Island immigration --and growing cities; environmental issues, which were seriously neglected in the past; and the modern economy which requires a nimble economic strategy not required over the many decades of dealing primarily with the UK. Also of importance to understanding 21st century NZ are chapters on the government; for example, fascinating how the Labour Party switched almost overnight from what this U.S. reader would call liberal to conservative. Not a must read for the casual traveller-- but a must read for anyone who wants to better understand this beautiful country.

This is not an academic text with the depth of, say, Belich's two volume history but it is not a light weight fly by either. It is a very easy, though not short and fairly comprehensive telling of the story of New Zealand. Because of its general nature there are places where I would have rather it went into greater detail, especially in some aspects of political history, and it does contain some "teasing" moments, I for one would have liked to have read more about the shenanigans of the New Zealand First Party in the 1990s. However, it is by far the best storytelling that I have read by Michael King.

Really great book to read because it thoroughly reports the history of NZed -- which you can still see as you wander around New Zealand. It makes the countries' internal disputes coherent to a foreigner and also gives you the background for many current policies.

Well written and good very general background history of New Zealand. As a visitor it gives you an understanding of the challenges ahead for the diverse population.

Great read as I was traveling around New Zealand for the first time. I thought the author took a very fair and critical eye towards different periods of colonial and post-colonial eras of New Zealand. I also enjoyed the introductory history towards the beginning of the book about the Maori peoples prior to the arrival of Europeans. (though I'd like to find more information on this period) The book definitely generalizes in some parts, but that's to be expected when you cover a country's entire history in this size book.

Extremely detailed account of New Zealand. Highly recommended for anyone with a passion for NZ.

I am a sixth generation Kiwi, my family having first settled in New Zealand just 10 years after the Treaty of Waitangi. I consider myself educated and enlightened, having studied the Treaty at Varsity and I thought I had a thorough knowledge of my history, but I only knew a small fraction of it. I have always known about Dr King's work and reading his books was always on my 'one day must read' list, but it was actually a search for my own roots that lead me to this book. As I got older I have thought more and more about my brave ancestors, who in 1850 travelled 3 months by boat to a land where there was nothing, but there wasn't nothing. I wanted to know the real story so went to the source, which is Dr King. I bought this first in hard copy, expected to have it as a reference source and maybe I would pick it up and read or flick through from time to time. That was the plan, but I was hooked from the start and was absolutely shocked that a history book could be a page turner. In the end I had to buy another copy for my Kindle so that I could take it with me when I was out and about and had a spare moment to read a few more pages. I have lived in New Zealand all my life, as have 6 generations before me, but I feel that I am only now getting to know the real story. This should be mandatory reading for all Kiwis. I feel so proud to be a Kiwi and understand us as a whole now, knowing the Maori journey here and it's a living history. There is a huge amount of immigration continuing and when I pick my granddaughter up from school and see the ethnic diversity, especially from Asia I feel that this is a story that is still unfolding. The Maori came here by waka, my ancestors by sailing ship and now immigrants are coming by plane, but they are still coming and the country is still growing and evolving.

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