



# Aotearoa

## TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

When you think seaweed, you might think sushi – or maybe compost – but the ‘weed’ (actually an algae) is good for much more than that. In the following pages, you’ll discover that New Zealand’s 900 seaweed species help provide us with oxygen, have dozens of commercial uses and provide a crucial link in our coastal ecosystem; some are even pretty enough to put in a vase. Seaweed’s also a building block for the nests of our threatened mainland seabirds, from the soaring albatross to the diminutive fairy tern. Find out what the Department of Conservation is doing to bring these species back from the brink of extinction.

Tourists flock to New Zealand not just to see our flora and fauna, but the country that doubles as Middle-Earth. Welcome to rural centre of Matamata, the unlikely home for the Shire of the *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* films – or, at least the recreated set that is Hobbiton. Down in Lower Hutt, let’s hear it for an initiative that’s getting school-children growing, cooking and eating vegetables while also bringing the community together through projects that improve their quality of life.







# Culture

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Odds are New Zealand won't become a republic any time soon. Though the weather didn't play its part, young royals Kate and William radiated natural warmth and charm on their 2014 tour of New Zealand with baby George. Relive their trip, from the fun of jet boating and yacht races to the gravity of memorials to Christchurch and fallen soldiers. Kate also got her first taste of the hongi and the haka.

Our country's unique cultural identity has long meshed British and Māori traditions. Discover how English missionary Samuel Marsden sowed the seeds of Christianity by forging friendships with Māori, even holding the country's first Christmas Day service with upturned waka as pews. And as celebrations of Matariki - the Māori New Year - become part of our cultural calendar, find out how charitable trust Toi Māori is providing a voice for Māori artists, and promoting Māori arts and culture to the world.

New Zealand also embraces the traditions of other cultures, including the Chinese lunar calendar, which marks 2014 as the Year of the Horse. That's worth celebrating in this country of equestrian excellence, where horses are much more than just a hobby and a sport.





# History

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A hundred years ago, no one could predict that two world wars would dominate the first half of the 20th century. It might just surprise you to learn how New Zealanders reacted to the outbreak of World War One – and that our World War Two government plastered war posters in public places not just to recruit men, but to communicate with civilians and boost the country's morale. This bold, emotionally-charged graphic art deserves to be seen again.

As everyone who's shivered through winter in a villa knows, our history has shaped our housing, from unsanitary colonial cottages through to state houses, Californian-style bungalows to today's architecturally-designed homes. And in a country of small towns that have lost people to the cities, sculptures of town icons – from carrots to a corrugated iron sheep and shearers to sheepdogs – are giving our smaller settlements an identity and drivers a reason to stop. We just had to capture these landmarks on stamps.



Stamps aren't just legal tender for our mail – they're also a way to capture the people, images and stories that matter to New Zealanders, and we think they're worth a double **TAKE**. That's why, in 1984, New Zealand Post issued **A** volume of collector-edition stamps from that year. Three decades later, the annual New Zealand Collection continues to pay tribute to standout designs and to Aotearoa, its culture and its history. These 2014 stamps capture everything from the quirky sculptures serving as small-town landmarks through to the emotive art of World War Two posters; from *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies* through to the stallions and mares we hold so dear in this the Year of the Horse.

But what's an image without the tale behind it? In these pages, writers and experts in their fields share stories that bring us **CLOSER** to our country and its secrets. Who knew that upturned waka served as pews at the country's first-ever Christmas Day service in 1814? That emotionally-charged, morale-boosting war posters were everywhere you turned during World War Two? That New Zealand's Horse of the Year Show attracts 2,600 horses and is the biggest event of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere? Or that endangered seabird the shag blushes (its face turns red and purple) during breeding season? We promise you'll never **LOOK** at seaweed the same way again – and, by the final page, you might just see Aotearoa in a new light, too. 🐾