



# World Heritage areas – nature’s hall of fame



Aotearoa New Zealand currently has three sites that are internationally recognised by the World Heritage Convention as special for their natural and cultural values. These places are so special that protecting them is of concern to all people globally. As World Heritage Sites, they share the same status as the Taj Mahal, the ancient pyramids of Egypt and the Grand Canyon. They are ‘Nature’s Hall of Fame’.

## What does World Heritage mean?

Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritages are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. Places as unique and diverse as the wilds of East Africa’s Serengeti, the Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and the Baroque cathedrals of Latin America make up our world’s heritage.

World Heritage sites belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of where they are located. Only sites of outstanding universal value can make the World Heritage list. The World Heritage List currently includes 812 properties or places, forming part of the cultural and natural heritage considered to be of outstanding value to humanity.

The World Heritage Convention adopted by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) in 1972, unites more than 100 nations working together to identify, protect and promote the earth’s irreplaceable natural and cultural heritage.

The Department of Conservation is New Zealand’s representative for the World Heritage Convention and is the custodian of our three world heritage sites.

## World Heritage in New Zealand

Three areas of New Zealand are inscribed on the World Heritage list;

- Tongariro National Park was inscribed in 1988 for its natural landscape values and in 1993 was also recognised for its cultural values.

Southern royal albatross,  
Auckland Islands  
A. Maloney





Mega herbs,  
Campbell Island  
G. A. Taylor

- Te Wāhipounamu-South West New Zealand was inscribed in 1990 for its natural values. This comprises public conservation land including: Westland Tai Poutini National Park, Mount Aspiring National Park, Aoraki / Mount Cook National Park, Fiordland National Park.
- New Zealand's sub-Antarctic islands (Auckland, Campbell, Antipodes, and Bounty groups and the Snares islands) were inscribed in 1998 for their natural values.

### Tongariro National Park

*Ko Tongariro te maunga*  
*Ko Taupo te moana*  
*Ko Ngāti Tuwharetoa te tangata*  
*Ko Te Heuheu te tangata*  
*Tongariro is the mountain*  
*Taupo is the lake*  
*Ngāti Tuwharetoa are the people*  
*Te Heuheu is the man*

Tongariro is New Zealand's oldest national park and a dual World Heritage area. This status recognises the park's important Māori cultural and spiritual associations as well as its outstanding volcanic features. It is a place of extremes and surprises, a place to explore and remember. From herb fields to forests, from tranquil lakes to desert-like plateau and active volcanoes – Tongariro has them all.

This was the first national park to be established in New Zealand and the fourth in the world. In 1887 Te Heuheu Tukino IV (Horonuku), then the paramount chief of Ngāti Tuwharetoa, gifted the sacred peaks to the nation. To tangata whenua (people of the land) the mountains are a vital part of their history, their whakapapa (genealogy) and legends are venerated accordingly.

### Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand

Four national parks combine to create Te Wāhipounamu Southwest New Zealand World Heritage Area, encompassing 2.6 million hectares of south west New Zealand from Okarito to Waitutu Forest. Te Wāhipounamu is the Maori name for the area, meaning 'the place of the greenstone'.

Te Wāhipounamu is regarded as one of the world's best examples of a dynamic mountainous landscape. The awe-inspiring Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana mark the collision of the Pacific and Indo-Australian plates of the earth's crust, which has forced the Alps to rise sharply along the alpine fault. Regular earth tremors tell us the story is not yet over.

The area is also recognised as one of the world's most outstanding glacial landscapes. The last ice age carved out the fiords and deep U-shaped valleys and left behind shadows of their former glory in the Fox,

Franz Josef and Tasman glaciers.

The rugged coastline and fiords, large stands of lowland rainforests and wetland areas provide habitats for many rare and unusual plant and animals, which represent the close links between the World Heritage Area of today and Gondwanaland of 100 million years ago. All these combine to put Te Wāhipounamu on the world map of 'must-see' places.

### Sub-antarctic Islands

Isolated, windswept, beautiful and fragile, New Zealand's Sub-antarctic islands are unique and irreplaceable. All five island groups – the Bounty Islands, the Antipodes Islands, the Snares Islands, the Auckland Islands and Campbell Island are National Nature Reserves and entry is by permit only.

The Department of Conservation is charged with protecting and preserving these islands in perpetuity.

New Zealand's Sub-antarctic islands are among the most pristine islands in the world and are remarkable for their high level of biodiversity, sea-bird population densities, and for endemism in birds, plants and invertebrates. There are 126 bird species found on the islands, including 40 seabirds of which five breed nowhere else in the world.

There are 14 endemic types of land birds, including one of the world's rarest ducks. Ten of the world's 24 species of albatross breed in the islands and the bulk of the world population of the rare New Zealand sea lion/rāpoka breeds on Auckland Island.

Plant life is equally rich and diverse. The most southerly forests in the western Pacific and tree ferns are found here together with a spectacular flora of mega herbs. Several of the islands are unique in that their vegetation is essentially unmodified by introduced herbivores.

### What is happening with World Heritage?

New Zealand is currently compiling a tentative list of sites that could be added to the World Heritage listings in the future. The tentative list will be forwarded to the World Heritage Committee in 2006 and 1–2 sites from that list can be nominated for World Heritage listing each year.

### For more information

[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)  
<http://whc.unesco.org/> - World Heritage Centre  
[www.learnz.org.nz/2k](http://www.learnz.org.nz/2k) - Nga Taonga o Tongariro; an online educational programme