

The First People: Māori Arrival in Aotearoa — Knowledge Organiser

Free from LessonKind · lessonkind.com · Qualified primary teacher

Key facts

- Māori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Their ancestors sailed thousands of kilometres across the Pacific Ocean from Polynesia, arriving around 700–800 years ago.
- They travelled in large ocean-going canoes called waka, navigating by the stars, waves and birds.
- Aotearoa is the Māori name for New Zealand, often translated as 'land of the long white cloud'.

Key vocabulary

- Māori — the indigenous people of New Zealand.
- Aotearoa — the Māori name for New Zealand.
- Waka — a Māori canoe.
- Iwi — a Māori tribe or people.

A great voyage

The journey to Aotearoa was one of the greatest feats of navigation in history. Without maps or instruments, Polynesian voyagers read the stars, ocean swells and the flight of birds to find new land across the vast Pacific.

Connection to the land

Māori developed a deep connection to the land, sea and sky, with rich traditions, language (te reo Māori) and stories passed down through generations. Different iwi (tribes) settled across both main islands.