

National holidays

Waitangi Day commemorates a significant day in the history of New Zealand. It is a public holiday held each year on 6 February to celebrate the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document, on that date in 1840. The Treaty made New Zealand a part of the British Empire, guaranteed Maori rights to their land and gave Maori the rights of British subjects. There are differences between the English version and the Maori translation of the Treaty, and since 1840 this has led to debate over exactly what was agreed to at Waitangi. Maori have generally seen the Treaty as a sacred pact, while for many years Pākehā (the Māori word for New Zealanders of predominantly European ancestry) ignored it. By the early twentieth century, however, some Pākehā were beginning to see the Treaty as their nation's founding document and a symbol of British humanitarianism. Unlike Maori, Pākehā have generally not seen the Treaty as a document with binding power over the country and its inhabitants. In 1877 Chief Justice James Prendergast declared it to be a 'legal nullity', a position it held until the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, when it regained significant legal standing.

Anzac Day is a national day of remembrance in Australia and New Zealand, originally commemorated by both countries on 25 April every year to honour the members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) who fought at Gallipoli in the Ottoman Empire during World War I. It now more broadly commemorates all those who served and died in military operations for their countries. Anzac Day is also observed in the Cook Islands, Niue, Pitcairn, and Tonga. It is no longer observed as a national holiday in Papua New Guinea or Samoa. Anzac Day marks the anniversary of the first campaign that led to major casualties for Australian and New Zealand forces during the First World War. The acronym ANZAC stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, whose soldiers were known as Anzacs. Anzac Day remains one of the most important national occasions of both Australia and New Zealand, a rare instance of two sovereign countries not only sharing the same remembrance day, but making reference to both countries in its name. When war broke out in 1914, Australia and New Zealand had been dominions of the British Empire for thirteen and seven years respectively.

The Queen's Official Birthday (King's Official Birthday in the reign of a male monarch) is the selected day on which the birthday of the monarch of the Commonwealth realms (currently Queen Elizabeth II) is officially celebrated in those countries. The date varies as adopted by each Commonwealth country, but is generally around the end of May to the start of June, to coincide with a high probability of fine weather in the Northern Hemisphere for outdoor ceremonies.

The sovereign's birthday was first officially marked in the United Kingdom in 1748. Since then, the date of the king or queen's birthday has been determined throughout the British Empire and later the Commonwealth according to either different royal proclamations issued by the sovereign or governor or by statute laws passed by the local parliament. The exact date of the celebration today varies from country to country and except by coincidence does not fall on the day of the monarch's actual birthday

(that of the present monarch being 21 April). In some cases, it is an official public holiday, sometimes coinciding with the celebration of other events. Most Commonwealth realms release a Birthday Honours List at this time. In New Zealand, the holiday is the first Monday in June. Celebrations are mainly official, including the Queen's Birthday Honours list and military ceremonies. There have been proposals, with some political support, to replace the holiday with Matariki (Māori New Year) as an official holiday. The idea of renaming the Queen's birthday weekend to Hillary weekend, after Sir Edmund Hillary, the first person to ascend Mount Everest, was raised in 2009.

The Labour Day

In New Zealand, Labour Day is a public holiday held on the fourth Monday in October. Its origins are traced back to the eight-hour working day movement that arose in the newly founded Wellington colony in 1840, primarily because of carpenter Samuel Parnell's refusal to work more than eight hours a day. He encouraged other tradesmen also to work for only eight hours a day and in October 1840, a workers' meeting passed a resolution supporting the idea. On October 28, 1890, the 50th anniversary of the eight-hour day was commemorated with a parade. The event was then celebrated annually in late October as either *Labour Day* or *Eight-Hour Demonstration Day*. In 1899 government legislated that the day be a public holiday from 1900. The day was celebrated on different days in different provinces. This led to ship owners complaining that seamen were taking excessive holidays by having one Labour Day in one port then another in their next port. In 1910 the government stipulated that the holiday would be observed on the same day throughout the nation.