UNUSUAL NEW ZEALAND PLACE NAMES

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New Zealand is a small Pacific country about the size of Colorado. A lot of places here bear their original Maori names, the most famous being the 85-letter TAUMATAWHAKATANGIHANGAKOAUAUOTAMATEATURIPUKAKAPIKIMAUNGAHORONUKUPOKAIWHENUAKITANATAHU, a hill about 40 miles south of where I live in Hawke’s Bay province.

A large number of Kiwi localities were given their names by the early European pioneers, many of whom were farmers, miners and whalers. There is MT BEAUTIFUL and MT HORBIBLE, THE KNOBBIES and the NOISIES (island clusters), a peak called THE SHIP AT ANCHOR and a lake named SILLYPOOL. We have a JOHN O’GROATS and a LANDS END, as well as mountains called BLACK COW and BROWN COW, and streams with the names CHATTERBOX, FIDGET, LITTLE MISERY, PASSION and RAVING TORRENT.

Here are some more interesting geographical names, all of which are listed in the Gazetteer of New Zealand Place Names, published by the New Zealand Department of Lands and Survey, 1968.

Mt Abrupt, Mt Alarm, Amazons Breasts [peak], Mt Awful, Mt Awkward
Bagshot, Bald Knob, Big Hellfire Beach, Black Rat [peak], Black Umbrella [peak], Blue Bottle Stream, Breakheart Peak, Breast Burn, Bungtown
Camelhead Hill, Carbuncle [peak], Coalsack Stream, Conspicuous Hill
Damfool Mountain, Darkest Africa Stream, Deaths Corner, Mt Difficulty, Dipso Glacier
Dismal Swamp, Mt Dreadful, Dukes Nose Rock
Eyetooth Hill, Faerie Queen [hill], Fiery Cross Goldmine, Fryingpan Point
Mt Gorgeous, Groin Pool, The Gut [strait]
Heavenly Twins [lake], The Hooligan [peak], Horehound Knob
Mt Intervention, Just In Time Goldmine
Little Lottery River, Little Moggy Island, Little Wart Hill, The Lizard [mountains], The Lump
Madman Stream, Maori Tongue [forest], Muzzle Stream
Nervous Knob, New Year Pass, Nigger Stream, Oddstone, Only Island
Mt Pecksniff, Peepoday, Peggoh, Mt Philistine, Philosophers Knob, Pigsty Flats,
The Pimple [hill], Pinchgut Spur. Policeman Peak, Possibility Col, Power Knob,
Psyches Bath [lake], Puzzle Peak
Rag and Famish Gully, Rat Castle [rock], Revolver Bay, Riskend, Rununder Point
Savage Burn, Scratchback Hill, Scuffle Island, Mt Skedaddle, Slug Stream, The Snout [point].
Snuffle Nose [point], The Snuggery [Bay], Mt Sodom, Spit Beach, Starvation Stream
Taylors Mistake [bay], Terrible Knob, The Great Unknown, Thistleb Stream, Three Duck Lake,
Three Legged Woodhen Bay, The Tits [hill]
Ugly River, Urchin Trig [peak], Useless Bay, Vampire Peak, Venison Top, Mt Vexation
The Wart [hill], Wet Jacket Arm [sound], Whalesback [peak], Widow Hill, Wild Cow Gully,
Wild Natives River, Womens Island, Wooden Peg [peak], Worlds End [channel]

The following collection contains the names of some New Zealand streams (just add ‘Creek’ after each entry).
New Zealand is only a small country, but it’s a great place for logophiles, thanks to the early settlers who gave us such a diversity of names for our geographical features.