GALLIPOLI UNCOVERED

39 Amazing Facts

Why New Zealand went to war

1. The war began with a murder. On 28 June 1914 Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary and his wife Sophie were shot in Sarajevo. Within five weeks Europe's big powers were at war.

   Source: NZHistory: First World War timeline; NZHistory: New Zealand and the First World War

2. Germany invaded Belgium, a small country Britain had promised to protect. So Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914.

   Source: NZHistory: New Zealand enters the First World War

3. New Zealand did not vote to go to war. As part of the British Empire it was at war the moment Britain was. Most New Zealanders then called Britain "home". The news reached Wellington on 5 August 1914 (NZ time).

   Source: NZHistory: New Zealand enters the First World War; NZHistory: First World War timeline

4. About 15,000 people crowded outside Parliament to hear the Governor, Lord Liverpool, read the news.

   Source: NZ Parliament: War announced on the steps of Parliament; NZHistory: First World War timeline

5. On 16 October 1914 ten troopships left Wellington with about 8,500 men and nearly 4,000 horses. It is still the biggest group ever to leave New Zealand at one time.

   Source: NZHistory: Main Body of NZEF sails to war

6. They thought they were going to Europe. After 48 days at sea, by way of Hobart, Albany and Colombo, they landed in Egypt instead, because the Ottoman Empire had joined the war on Germany's side.

   Source: NZHistory: Main Body of NZEF sails to war; NZHistory: Gallipoli in brief

Why Gallipoli, and why it failed

7. The plan: get warships through the Dardanelles strait, capture Constantinople (now Istanbul), knock the Ottoman Empire out of the war and open a sea route to Russia.

   Source: NZHistory: Gallipoli in brief

8 The ships tried first. On 18 March 1915 three Allied battleships were sunk by mines. The navy never tried again, so the army was sent instead.

Source: NZHistory: Invasion; DVA Anzac Portal: Dardanelles naval operations

9 On 25 April 1915 the Anzacs landed about 2 km north of the planned spot. Instead of flat land they faced a narrow beach under steep hills and ridges.

Source: NZHistory: Gallipoli in brief

10 The Ottoman soldiers were defending their own homeland, and they fought hard. One of their commanders, Mustafa Kemal, later became Atatürk, the founding president of the Republic of Türkiye.

Source: NZHistory: The Gallipoli campaign; NZHistory: Gallipoli in brief

11 The tiny beach the Anzacs landed on, Anzac Cove, is about 600 metres long. That is about six rugby fields end to end. Worked out

Source: Gallipoli Historic Site Directorate (Türkiye): Anzac Cove; World Rugby Laws: Law 1, The ground

12 At its deepest point the front line was only just over 900 metres from the beach. That is about an 11-minute walk on flat ground. At Anzac it was up and down cliffs. Worked out

Source: NZHistory: Soldiers' experience

13 The first area the Anzacs held ("Old Anzac") was about 2 km long and less than 1 km wide. That is roughly the size of Hagley Park in Christchurch, or about 2 to 3 Auckland Domains. Worked out Check

Sources give different sizes. NZHistory says the whole Anzac area was "less than six square kilometres". See the working.

Source: DVA Anzac Portal: The Anzac Walk; Christchurch City Council: Hagley Park; Auckland Council: Pukekawa / Auckland Domain

14 In August the New Zealanders captured the hilltop of Chunuk Bair. It was the furthest the Allies got. Two days later Ottoman troops took it back from the British soldiers who had relieved them.

Source: NZHistory: Gallipoli in brief; NZHistory: Wellington Battalion captures Chunuk Bair

Life at Gallipoli

15 Up to 25,000 men were packed into the Anzac area, with no natural water source.

Source: NZHistory: Soldiers' experience

16 A soldier's water ration was often about 2 quarts (1.9 litres) a day, for drinking, washing and cooking. That is less than a 2-litre bottle. Check

From university research on the rations; the amount varied over the campaign.

Source: Massey University research: Bully beef, biscuits and scurvy

17 Meals were mostly tinned bully beef, hard biscuits and jam. One soldier said the biscuits were "like chewing rock". Fresh fruit and vegetables were non-existent.

Source: NZHistory: Soldiers' experience

18 Flies swarmed over everything, including food, and spread disease. Many more men got sick with dysentery and typhoid.

Source: NZHistory: Soldiers' experience

19 Summer was scorching. By November there was rain, icy wind and snow, and some men got frostbite.

Source: NZHistory: Soldiers' experience; NZHistory: Evacuation

20 Each infantryman landed with a pack of over 30 kg, as heavy as three big bags of potatoes. Worked out

Source: NZHistory: Soldiers' experience

21 On 24 May 1915 both sides agreed a truce so they could bury the dead lying between the trenches.

Source: NZHistory: Gallipoli armistice

Who served

22 Between 16,000 and 18,000 New Zealanders served at Gallipoli. For almost 100 years the number was wrongly given as 8,556. Check

An estimate from 2016 research; the best guess is about 17,000.

Source: WW100: How many New Zealanders served on Gallipoli

23 The Native Contingent of Māori volunteers sailed in February 1915 and landed at Anzac Cove on 3 July 1915. Their motto was *Te Hokowhitu a Tū*.

Source: NZHistory: Māori Contingent at Gallipoli

24 About 477 men of the Native Contingent landed. By the evacuation only 134 were left on the peninsula. 50 Māori died in the campaign. Worked out

Source: NZHistory: Māori Contingent at Gallipoli

25 Niue and the Cook Islands offered men as soon as war began. In 1915 150 Niuean and 45 Cook Island men joined the NZEF. They served in Egypt and France, and Cook Islanders later in Sinai and Palestine.

Source: NZHistory: Niueans and Cook Islanders; NZHistory: Pacific Islanders in the NZEF

26 550 New Zealand nurses served overseas in the war. Ten died when the ship *Marquette* was torpedoed on 23 October 1915.

Source: NZHistory: New Zealand and the First World War; NZHistory: NZ nurses lost in the Marquette sinking

27 Corporal Cyril Bassett won the only Victoria Cross given to a New Zealander in a NZ unit at Gallipoli, for laying and mending telephone wire under fire on Chunuk Bair. He said: "It was just that I was so short that the bullets passed over me."

Source: Te Ara: Cyril Bassett, Dictionary of NZ Biography

Leaving, and the cost

28 The leaving went far better than the landing. Between 15 and 20 December 1915, 36,000 troops slipped away from Anzac at night. The last men left at 4.10 a.m. on 20 December.

Source: NZHistory: Evacuation; NZHistory: Evacuation of Gallipoli begins

29 Drip rifles helped fool the enemy: water dripped from one tin into another until its weight pulled the trigger, so rifles kept firing after the men had gone.

Source: NZHistory: Drip rifle at Gallipoli; Australian War Memorial: Drip rifle

30 2,779 New Zealanders died at Gallipoli, about one in six of those who served there.

Source: NZHistory: The Gallipoli campaign; NZHistory: Gallipoli in brief

31 More than 44,000 Allied soldiers and at least 87,000 Ottoman soldiers died in the campaign.

Source: NZHistory: The Gallipoli campaign

32 At Chunuk Bair, the Chunuk Bair (New Zealand) Memorial lists 849 New Zealanders who have no known grave.

Source: CWGC: Chunuk Bair (New Zealand) Memorial

33 Gallipoli was not the end. About 18,000 New Zealanders died in the whole war, more than 12,000 of them on the Western Front in France and Belgium.

Source: NZHistory: New Zealand and the First World War; NZHistory: First World War by the numbers

34 New Zealand had about 1.1 million people in 1914. About 9 in every 100 served overseas.

Source: NZHistory: New Zealand and the First World War; NZHistory: First World War by the numbers

How we remember

35 The first Anzac Day was on 25 April 1916, a half-day holiday. 8,000 people went to a ceremony at Petone.

Source: NZHistory: First Anzac Day; NZHistory: Anzac Day

36 The Anzac Day Act 1920 made it a public holiday. The first full holiday was in 1921.

Source: NZHistory: A sacred holiday; NZHistory: Anzac Day

37 The Dawn Service was an Australian idea. It was widely held in New Zealand from 1939, remembering both the dawn landing and the dawn "stand-to" in the trenches.

Source: NZHistory: A sacred holiday; NZHistory: Anzac Day

38 New Zealand's first Poppy Day was on 24 April 1922. Over 245,000 small poppies were sold, and some of the money helped children in war-torn France.

Source: NZHistory: New Zealand's first poppy day; NZHistory: The red poppy

39 About 500 civic war memorials around New Zealand carry the names of those who died. There is probably one near your school.

Source: NZHistory: New Zealand and the First World War

Teacher notes: the working

How big was Anzac?

Figures: "Old Anzac" was "a strip … about 2 km long and less than 1 km wide" (DVA Anzac Portal: The Anzac Walk). The DVA landing page says "about 1 km deep and 2 km long" (DVA Anzac Portal: Landing at Anzac Cove). NZHistory says the whole area was "less than six square kilometres" (NZHistory: Soldiers' experience).

Working: 2 km × 1 km = 2 km² = 200 hectares (1 km² = 100 ha). This is an upper figure for Old Anzac, because it was less than 1 km wide.

- Hagley Park, Christchurch: 165 ha (Christchurch City Council: Hagley Park). 200 ÷ 165 = 1.2. **About one Hagley Park.**
- Auckland Domain: 75 ha (Auckland Council: Pukekawa / Auckland Domain). 200 ÷ 75 = 2.7. **About 2 to 3 Auckland Domains.**
- Using NZHistory's upper figure of 6 km² (600 ha): 600 ÷ 165 = 3.6 Hagley Parks, or 600 ÷ 75 = 8 Domains. Treat this as the most it could have been, including the land taken in August.

Check The sources measure different things (the first area, or the whole area later), so we say "roughly the size of Hagley Park" and show the range.

Other comparisons

- **Anzac Cove, 600 m:** a rugby field of play is no more than 100 m long between the try lines (World Rugby Laws: Law 1, The ground). 600 ÷ 100 = **about 6 fields**. Cove length: Gallipoli Historic Site Directorate (Türkiye): Anzac Cove.
- **Front line just over 900 m from the beach** (NZHistory: Soldiers' experience): at a normal walking pace of about 5 km/h, 0.9 ÷ 5 × 60 = **about 11 minutes** on flat ground.
- **Pack over 30 kg** (NZHistory: Soldiers' experience): three 10 kg bags of potatoes.
- **Native Contingent:** 16 officers + 461 other ranks = 477 arrived; 2 officers + 132 men = 134 left at the evacuation (NZHistory: Māori Contingent at Gallipoli).
- **One in six:** NZHistory gives 2,779 dead, "about a sixth" of those who served (NZHistory: The Gallipoli campaign). Check: 17,000 ÷ 2,779 = 6.1.
- **How far from home?** Wellington to Anzac Cove in a straight line over the globe is about **17,400 km**. Worked out with the great-circle formula from Wellington (41.29° S, 174.78° E) to Anzac Cove (40.25° N, 26.28° E). The ships went much further, by way of Hobart, Albany, Colombo and Egypt, taking 48 days to reach Egypt (NZHistory: Main Body of NZEF sails to war).
- **Gallipoli Peninsula Historical National Park:** 33,000 ha (NZHistory: Gallipoli in brief). 33,000 ÷ 165 = about **200 Hagley Parks**.

What we could not pin down

- The exact size of the Anzac area: sources differ (see above).
- The exact number of New Zealanders at Gallipoli: 16,000 to 18,000 is the 2016 estimate (WW100: How many New Zealanders served on Gallipoli).
- Pacific Islanders who served overseas: NZHistory gives "around 500" on one page and "1000 came from the Pacific Islands" on another (NZHistory: New Zealand and the First World War; NZHistory: First World War by the numbers). We leave this number out of the lessons.

- Whether anyone at all was lost in the final evacuation: NZHistory's radio documentary says it was done "without a casualty"; the AWM says "only about half a dozen casualties" across Anzac and Suvla (Australian War Memorial: Drip rifle). We say "very few, if any".