

Imagine being able to walk to Australia! No planes or boats, just a short stroll. Well, millions of years ago you could do just that! Of course, both Australia and New Zealand were very different back then...

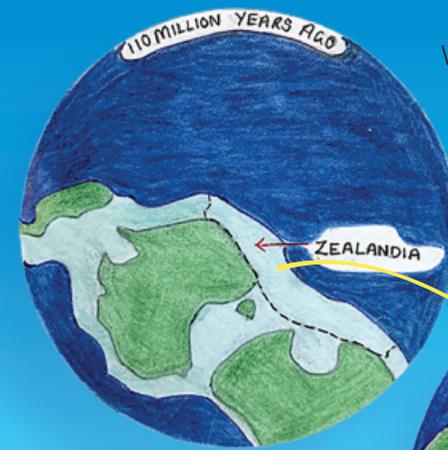
# ZEALANDIA – A SUNKEN CONTINENT!



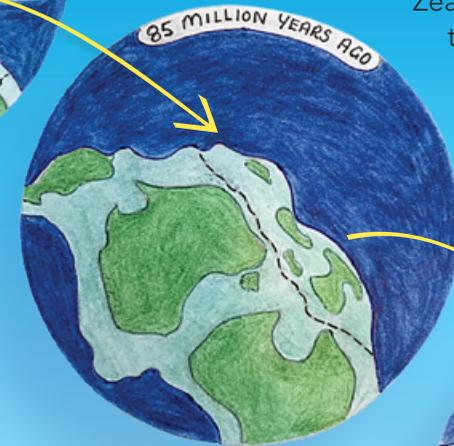
New Zealand as we know it today is part of a much larger continent called Te Riu-a-Māui | Zealandia. Almost 93% of Zealandia remains underwater. New Zealand, New Caledonia, Norfolk Island, and Lord Howe Island are the only land mass of Zealandia to rise up above the waves.



Two hundred million years ago, Zealandia was joined to what is now the east coast of Australia and Antarctica, and formed part of the supercontinent called Te Uri Māroa | Gondwanaland. Gondwanaland was huge. It also including the land of modern-day South America, Africa, India, and the Arabian Peninsula.



When Gondwanaland began to break up 180 million years ago, Zealandia and Australia stayed stuck together until Zealandia began to break away 83 million years ago. Slowly, the Tasman Sea opened as Zealandia drifted east for 30 million years.



Zealandia stayed in place at this point, but the land continued to change shape as the continent slowly sank into the sea until 25 million years ago, when almost all of Zealandia was submerged. All that remained were some very small islands that would later become part of New Zealand.



For the last 25 million years, the shape of Aotearoa continued to change as Zealandia rose up and pushed more land out of the sea. The boundary between the Pacific and Australian tectonic plates also played a part – pushing, pulling, twisting, and squeezing the land to produce what we now call New Zealand.

## LIFE ABOARD TE RIU-A-MĀUI



For millions of years after leaving Gondwanaland, Zealandia was a quiet and stable land, unaffected by tectonic plate boundary movements. It was relatively flat, much like modern Australia, and had no mountain ranges. It was also home to dinosaurs! Fossils from eight different species of dinosaur have been found in New Zealand. It is likely many more types of dinosaurs lived on Zealandia, but the geological conditions were not ideal for fossilisation, making finding them very rare. Most of New Zealand's dinosaur fossils were found by amateur paleontologist Joan Wiffen, at the remote Mangahouanga Stream in the Hawke's Bay.

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