

Museum of New Zealand - Te Papa Tongarewa

Wellington, New Zealand

Role: Museum Planner for New Museum

Program: Permanent and changing exhibits (90,000 sf), immersive experiences, lobby, cafe, gift shop, function space, archives, collections, classrooms, exhibit support, and offices

Building Area: 450,000 sf

Description: Our Comprehensive Master Plan for Te Papa Tongarewa, the National Museum of New Zealand, was designed to address their goal of creating a museum that better represented the diversity of New Zealand's bicultural society. The planning process resulted in one of the most innovative and most successful national museums in the world.

Our work for Te Papa ("Our Place" in Maori) began at its conception. We assisted and facilitated the process of conceiving, developing, and clearly defining the Museum's identity, mission, and programs. We then recommended appropriate staffing levels and organizational structure needed to carry out the planned activity programs, and prepared a Detailed Architectural Facility Program that served as a basis for the architectural design.

At the end of our planning work, we helped the Museum set up an nationwide design competition to select the architect for the new building. The 450,000 SF new building is a dramatic icon on the Wellington waterfront

Te Papa is a multi-disciplinary museum with strong collections in fine art, natural history, photography, and ethnography, including 16,000 Maori artifacts. The completed Museum houses 90,000 SF of long term and temporary exhibition space with exhibits related to fine arts (both national and international); New Zealand's natural environment; New Zealand's cultural and social history; and Maori arts and culture.

The Museum also incorporates many non-traditional activities, including Te Marae, an active, traditional Maori gathering space (image at right) that welcomes all of the cultures that make up New Zealand. The Museum complex also includes "Dark rides," virtual reality entertainments, and an outdoor park complete with caving adventures.

Within five years of its opening, the Museum had welcomed over 8 million visitors—nearly double New Zealand's population. In 1999, the Museum won the Culture and Heritage award for excellence in historical representation. At the 2000 New Zealand Tourism Awards, it won awards for tourism innovation and visitor experience. It was also voted the People's Choice Art and Design attraction.

