



choice
TRAVEL

Destination Guide: New Zealand

What to know before you go
Essential preparation and planning tips
Accommodation and transport

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Who is CHOICE? Set up by consumers for consumers, **CHOICE** is the [consumer advocate](#) that provides Australians with information and advice, free from commercial bias.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

OVERVIEW

Best time to go, culture, language, health, safety, laws, watchouts, emergency contacts and more.

Travel-size tips

- [Australians can fly to New Zealand](#) in as little as three hours.
- Most Australians [don't need a visa](#) to visit New Zealand, just a valid passport.
- You can [drive in New Zealand](#) on your Australian licence.
- New Zealand uses the same type of [electrical plugs](#) as Australia, so you won't need an adapter.
- Australians can access New Zealand's public health care system in an emergency, but [travel insurance](#) is still essential.

Best time to go

There really is no wrong time to visit New Zealand. Despite what we thin-skinned Aussies consider 'cold', New Zealand's climate is for the most part quite mild. Check the [average temperature and rainfall](#) for the region you're travelling to.

- The weather varies throughout the country. The North Island has a sub-tropical climate with similar temperatures to southern areas of Australia, while the South Island can be much colder.
- Summer is the peak tourist season when temperatures are warm enough for beach days but not as uncomfortably hot as in many parts of Australia.
- New Zealand doesn't experience the summer downpours that we're used to in Australia. They get most of their rain during winter and spring.
- Central Otago, on the south island, experiences the greatest temperature extremes, ranging from -10°C in winter to 40°C in summer.
- It's possible to hike (or tramp, as the Kiwis call it) all year round in most areas, but you should always check the weather and advice for the specific region you're travelling to.
- The winter ski season runs from June to October.
- Outside of the ski resorts, winter is the low season, when you may find a cosy getaway for a good price.

- › Roads can sometimes be icy or even blocked by snow during winter, particularly in mountainous regions.
- › Australian and New Zealand school holidays fall at similar times, but the exact dates differ so it's worth comparing calendars. If you need to travel during the Australian school holidays, it can still be possible to (narrowly) avoid the NZ holiday crowds by choosing your dates well.
- › New Zealand and Australia share many of the same public holidays (Christmas, New Year, Easter, ANZAC Day) but some dates differ. Waitangi Day is a national holiday on February 6. The Queen's Birthday holiday falls on the first Monday in June (in most Australian states and territories it falls on the second Monday in June). Labour Day falls on the fourth Monday in October (in Australia it's either the first Monday in October, or various dates in March and May, depending on the state or territory).

Culture

Other than the 'fish and chips' vs 'fush and chups' debate, it would be easy to assume that New Zealand's culture is pretty much the same as Australia's, however there are a few differences worth noting.



- › Maori culture is integral to New Zealand's culture. Close to 15% of the population is Maori, and their customs and language are taught in schools and practised in parliament, business and day-to-day life.

- › Many Maori words have integrated with the New Zealand English language. For example, 'kia ora' is a standard way of saying hello. If you're interested in learning more, see this list of ["100 Maori words every New Zealander should know"](#).
- › Pronunciation of the Maori language, particularly place names, can be tricky. If you're asking for directions to Taumatawhakatangihangakoauauotamateaurehaeaturipukapihimaungahoronukupokaiwhenuaakitānara (yes, that [really is a place!](#)), follow this advice from [tourism.net.nz](#): "Maori consists of five vowel sounds: a e i o u ('a' as in 'car', 'e' as in 'egg', 'i' like the 'ee' in 'tee', 'u' like an 'o' in 'to'). There are eight consonants in Maori similar to those in English - 'h', 'k', 'm', 'n', 'p', 'r', 't', and 'w'. There are also two different consonants - 'wh' and 'ng'. Many Maori pronounce the 'wh' sound similar to our 'f'. The 'ng' is similar to our own 'ng' sound in a word like 'sing', except that in Maori, words can start with 'ng'."



- › There are a few expressions that differ between Australia and New Zealand, and although it's very unlikely you'll have trouble making yourself understood, it's worth knowing that a jandal is a thong, a chilly bin is an esky, and a dairy is a corner store.
- › Puns about sheep might not go down as well as you'd expect. Most New Zealanders are not amused by the age-old Aussie joke.
- › Tipping isn't expected, but it is appreciated. Tip at the same rate as you would in Australia.

Health and safety

New Zealand and Australia have a [reciprocal health care agreement](#), meaning that Australian travellers can access New Zealand's public health service in an emergency, and vice versa. You'll still have to pay some fees for treatment and medication (you'll be charged the same amount as a New Zealand resident) and it's important to remember the agreement isn't a replacement for [travel insurance](#) – which is always a necessity. Remember to take your Medicare card with you – you'll need it, along with your passport, to prove that you're eligible.

- Tap water is safe to drink in New Zealand and the standard of hygiene and food safety is high.
- If you're hiking or travelling to remote areas, make sure authorities and friends/relatives know of your plans. Be prepared for bad weather and make sure you have the appropriate equipment and knowledge of first aid.
- New Zealand has a higher road death toll than Australia. Certain roads can be particularly treacherous in wet or icy weather, and in mountainous areas. More about [driving in New Zealand > Page 16](#)
- New Zealand sometimes experiences severe seismic activity. The 2011 Christchurch earthquake claimed 185 lives and levelled much of the city centre. Safety campaigns in New Zealand advise you to 'drop, cover and hold' – drop to the ground, take cover and hold on – in the event of an earthquake. See [getthru.govt.nz](#) for more specific advice on what to do if you are indoors, outdoors, driving a car etc.

For the latest advice on risks including adverse weather, natural disasters and potential outbreaks of disease visit [smartraveller.gov.au](#).

Tip: Have you registered your travel plans with [smartraveller.gov.au](#) and checked the latest safety advice on the region you're travelling to?

[Do I need vaccinations to travel to New Zealand?](#)
[> Page 6](#)

Laws and watchouts

Laws

- 18 is the minimum drinking age in New Zealand.
- Drugs, including marijuana, are illegal. The punishment for importing drugs is up to 8 to 12 years in prison.
- Using physical force to discipline children, including smacking, is illegal.
- There are no laws against homosexuality. Same sex marriage was legalised in 2013.
- The blood alcohol limit for drivers under the age of 20 is zero. For drivers over the age of 20 it's 0.05%.



- Accident victims cannot sue a third party for compensation. Instead, the Accident Compensation Commission (ACC) covers the cost of medical care within New Zealand. This means it is essential that visitors to New Zealand are covered by [travel insurance](#) for the cost of ongoing treatment in their home country as well as loss of income and disruptions to travel plans.
- Motor vehicle insurance is not compulsory in New Zealand, because of the ACC compensation fund.

For road rules, see [Driving in New Zealand > Page 16](#).

Watchouts

- New Zealand's crime rate is similar to Australia's, so you should exercise the same degree of caution as you would at home when it comes to protecting your belongings and your personal safety.
- Certain areas of cities may be best avoided at night. Ask a local for advice.
- Bank card skimming and credit card fraud is a problem in New Zealand, as it is in Australia. Keep an eye on your statement and let the bank know if you see any unexplained transactions.
- Be careful using free Wi-Fi hotspots. Follow [these tips](#) to keep your device safe from hackers, and avoid doing internet banking on untrusted connections.

See our article about [tourist traps](#) for more advice on avoiding common scams while on holiday.

Making a complaint

New Zealand has consumer laws which protect foreign visitors, as well as citizens, from unfair treatment.

- If you have a dispute with an accommodation

provider, travel agent or tour operator, and you're unable to come to an agreement, raise the issue with Tourism New Zealand at [newzealand.com](#).

- If your gripe is with any other New Zealand business, product or service, seek advice from the government's Consumer Affairs department at [consumeraffairs.govt.nz](#) (eg. see their tips on [resolving disputes with car hire companies](#)).
- You can also seek advice from CHOICE's sister organisation, [consumer.org.nz](#).
- If your gripe is with an Australian or international tour operator, airline, or booking site, check [choice.com.au](#) and follow the [usual procedures](#) for making a complaint or seeking compensation.

Emergency contacts

New Zealand dialling code: +64

Fire/ambulance/police: 111

Healthline (medical emergency advice): 0800 611 116

Coast Guard: 09 489 1510

Australian High Commission (embassy) – Wellington

[www.newzealand.embassy.gov.au](#)

72 Hobson Street, Thorndon, Wellington
+64 (0)4 473 6411

Email: nzinbox@dfat.gov.au

Facebook: [Australia in New Zealand](#)

Twitter: [@AusHCNZ](#)

Australian Consulate-General – Auckland

Level 7, Price Waterhouse Coopers Tower, 186–194 Quay St, Auckland
Phone (64 9) 921 8800

24-hour Australian Consular Emergency Centre: +61 (0)2 6261 3305 or 1300 555 135 or SMS +61 421 269 080



WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Visas, vaccinations, phone roaming, SIM cards, internet, power adapters, money, travel insurance, handy apps and more.

Visas and passports

Most Australians don't need a visa to enter New Zealand, but you will need your passport (yes, some people really do forget that!). Make sure yours is up to date.

Australian citizens and permanent residents can visit, live, study and work in New Zealand indefinitely. You simply need to fill in a passenger arrival card at the airport and show a valid passport.

People with “[significant character issues](#)” (usually those who have been convicted of certain crimes) may be denied entry. If you have a criminal record or if you've ever been deported from a country, check your situation with the New Zealand Embassy before you fly. Entry rules may change. Check the latest advice and procedures at nzembassy.com/australia.

Vaccinations

The risk of contracting a dangerous disease in New Zealand is comparable to the risk in Australia, so

vaccinations are generally unnecessary.

traveldoctor.com.au recommends you make sure your routine vaccinations are up to date, and that you consider shots for flu and hepatitis B if you travel often. See their [New Zealand Travel Health](#) page for more information.

More about [health and safety in New Zealand](#).

Phone and internet

Global roaming and coverage

Everyone knows New Zealand is not another state of Australia, but many Aussies forget when it comes to using their phones. Plenty of visitors have been stuck with enormous global roaming charges after using their phones just the way they normally would at home.

Check with your telco for roaming prices:

➤ [Telstra](#)

➤ [Vodafone](#)

➤ [Optus](#)

› [Virgin](#)

Tip: Switch off data roaming on your phone before you leave Australia. Likewise, switch off your voicemail and ask friends and family to text you rather than calling (you'll be charged if you answer incoming calls).

Cheaper roaming

A Travel Pass from Telstra, a Travel Pack from Optus or a \$5-a-day roaming rate from Vodafone are all add-ons that you can use with your existing account while overseas. They're not particularly cheap, but they'll save you from any nasty bill surprises and can be a good option if you're only visiting New Zealand for a few days or weeks.

Local SIM

If you're planning to spend more than a few weeks in New Zealand, or if you just want cheaper rates and don't mind having a different phone number while you're on holidays, a local pre-paid SIM is easy enough to buy and set up, as long as your handset is unlocked. Spark (formerly Telecom), Vodafone and 2 Degrees are the three main telcos. Compare their pre-paid rates, and if you're travelling to remote areas, check coverage maps to make sure you'll get reception.

Tip: 2 Degrees has been named a 'Consumer Trusted' business by CHOICE's sister organisation consumer.org.nz.

Travel SIM

Pre-paid travel SIMs can be bought from some Australian travel stores, phone stores and post offices, or ordered

online before you leave the country. Rates won't be as cheap as a local SIM, but they can be a smart option if you're travelling to multiple countries and don't want to buy a local SIM every time.

Remember: Your phone will need to be unlocked to accept a SIM from another network.

[Beat global roaming bill shock](#) – our guide to unlocking your phone and changing your global roaming settings.

Wi-Fi

Free Wi-Fi isn't as common in New Zealand as it is in Australia, but it can be found in some cafes, hotels, libraries and in franchises like McDonald's and Starbucks. You'll find free hotspots in the city centres of [Auckland](#), [Rotorua](#), [Wellington](#) and [Dunedin](#).

In rural and remote areas, internet access is harder to come by. To search for free hotspots, try wificafespots.com or download an app such as [wefi](#) or Wi-Fi Finder ([Apple](#) or [Android](#)).

Tip: The mobile phone company [Spark](#) provides free



Wi-Fi hotspots for its customers in various locations throughout the country.

Power plugs

Standard voltage: 220–240V

Frequency: 50Hz

New Zealand's power runs at the same voltage and frequency as Australia's, so you can use your Australian appliances without worrying about frying them.

Power sockets:



type I

New Zealand and Australia use the same size power plugs and sockets, so there's no need to pack an adapter.

Money

Currency: New Zealand dollar (NZD)

Check [xe.com](https://www.xe.com) for the latest exchange rates.

Important: Tell your bank about your travel plans two weeks before you leave. Card activity in a foreign country could be mistaken for fraud and you could find your account frozen.

Credit cards

MasterCard, Visa and American Express are widely accepted in New Zealand. Remember you'll be charged

a foreign transaction fee by your bank, and the vendor may add a surcharge too. Talk to your bank about the best card to use overseas - some offer credit cards for travellers with no, or low, fees.

ATMs

ATMs are widely available in New Zealand, except in very remote areas. Your Australian bank card should work in most machines, but remember even if the bank looks familiar (a number of banks have branches in both Australia and New Zealand) you'll be charged foreign transaction fees and a withdrawal fee for each transaction.

Tip: Westpac customers can avoid withdrawal fees by using Westpac NZ ATMs (a 3% foreign transaction fee still applies).

EFTPOS

Most shops in New Zealand have EFTPOS machines however they aren't compatible with many foreign debit cards. It can't hurt to try, but chances are you'll need to pay with cash or credit instead.

Money changers

You'll find money exchange counters at airports and in tourist areas, hotels and banks. You're unlikely to get the best rate at the airport, but remember you'll need New Zealand dollars as soon as you arrive in the country. Very few retailers (including taxi drivers) will accept Australian currency.

Travellers' cheques

Travellers' cheques aren't so common these days, but some New Zealand banks and hotels will still cash them. If you're concerned about money security and



you're planning on doing a lot of spending, you could consider a pre-loaded [travel money card](#), which can be used like a debit or credit card, and cancelled if lost.

Tip: Carry at least two cards and more than one currency (Australian and New Zealand dollars). Split your money and cards between separate bags. That way if you lose one, you have a back-up.

GST (Goods and Services Tax) of 15% is applied to most goods and services. Unlike in some other countries, visitors cannot claim a refund when leaving New Zealand.

1c, 2c and 5c coins have been discontinued, so prices are generally rounded up (if the price ends with 6 to 9 cents) or down (if the price ends with 1 to 4 cents). If the price ends with 5c, it's at the retailer's discretion whether to round up or down.

For more advice on overseas spending, see our [travel money guide](#).

Travel insurance

Many Aussies may have a relaxed attitude towards travel insurance when planning a trip to New Zealand. After all, we're only popping next door, and if there's an emergency, we have the same level of access to the public health system as New Zealand residents do.

But that's no substitute for insurance. Here's a good reason why:

Under New Zealand law, accident victims cannot sue a third party for compensation.

Instead, the Accident

Compensation Commission (ACC) dips into a national compensation fund to cover the

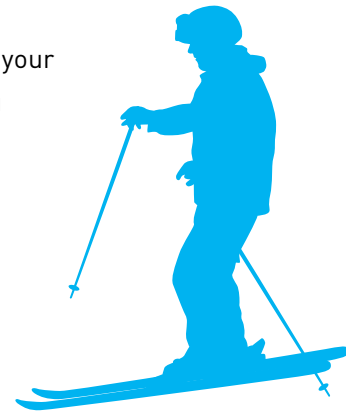
cost of medical care - but only within New Zealand. This means that if you were injured in an accident while on holidays, even if the other person was 100% at fault, you'd have no way of paying for your ongoing medical costs at home in Australia. Without travel insurance, you'd also be stuck with the cost of changes to travel plans and loss of income.

Travel insurance is essential. Buy your insurance at the same time as you book your trip, that way you'll be covered if you have to cancel for some reason before you go. The good news is that insurance for Australians travelling to New Zealand is likely to be cheaper than for many other destinations, thanks to the lower risks and the [reciprocal health care](#) agreement.

To choose the best cover, see CHOICE's travel insurance [reviews and comparisons](#).

Tips:

- If you're planning on skiing, bungee jumping or doing anything else potentially bone-breaking, make sure your insurance covers it. Most policies won't, so you'll probably need to purchase extra cover.
- If you're planning on driving, check what your travel insurance policy covers so you don't end up paying for the same insurance again with the car hire company.
- Remember, anything that happens to you while [under the influence](#) of drugs or alcohol is unlikely to be covered by insurance.
- Keep a print-out of your travel insurance details with you at all times while on your trip.
- Share your insurance details with family or friends before you leave.



Handy links and apps

Consider adding these links and apps to your phone, tablet or laptop before you go.

Tip: If possible, choose apps that work offline so they won't chew up your [mobile data](#) or stop working when you're in remote places.

- Travel apps can provide you with maps, booking services, itineraries, recommendations and more. Try [Essential New Zealand](#) or [itravelnz](#), or [search around](#) for other recommended apps based on your travel plans.
- [Currency conversion apps](#) help you work out costs in Australian dollars.
- Search for free Wi-Fi hotspots at [wificafespots.com](#), or download an app such as [wefi](#) (Android or PC) or Wi-Fi Finder ([Apple](#) or [Android](#)).
- [zoomy](#) and [cabchooze](#) are the main taxi-ordering apps, although the international service [Uber](#) has recently entered the market in Auckland and Wellington.

Tip: To save a map onto your mobile device for offline use, select the area on Google Maps then select 'Save offline map' from the menu and follow the directions on the screen. Your GPS positioning will still work on the saved map, even when you don't have access to the internet. Alternatively, go to 'Offline maps' in the menu and select a city.

Websites

- [newzealand.com](#) (New Zealand's official tourism website – includes a drive time [calculator](#))
- [smartraveller.gov.au](#) for the Australian government's latest advice on the safety of the region you're travelling in.
- [xe.com](#) for the latest currency exchange rates.
- [lonelyplanet.com](#)
- [tripadvisor.com](#)
- [virtualtourist.com](#)
- [expedia.com](#)
- [wikitravel.org/en/New_Zealand](#) for crowd-sourced information on culture, travel tips and more (may not always be accurate).



ACCOMMODATION AND TRANSPORT

GETTING THERE AND AROUND

Flights to New Zealand, airport guides, key destinations, transport, car hire, accommodation, tours and more.

Flights

Flight time from Australia: 3+ hours

- Regular [direct flights](#) connect major Australian airports with the New Zealand cities of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Queenstown and Dunedin.
- The main airlines that fly between Australia and New Zealand include Qantas, Jetstar, Virgin and Air New Zealand, but fares can also be found with international carriers that use New Zealand (particularly Auckland) as a stop-off point on long haul flights. These include American Airlines, US Airways, Singapore Airlines, Emirates and China Airlines.

At the airport

Most Australians don't need a [visa](#) to enter New Zealand. You'll simply need to fill in a [passenger arrival card](#) and show your Australian passport.

If you're carrying any of the restricted or prohibited items listed on the passenger arrival card, including prescription medication, you'll need to declare them to customs. You can take prescription medication into New Zealand as long as it's in its original packaging, you have the original prescription or a letter from your doctor, and you're carrying no more than three months' supply (a six month supply of oral contraceptives is the exception). For more information, see [customs.govt.nz](#).

Auckland Airport (AKL)

- 20km south of CBD.
- Taxis and shuttles leave from outside the arrivals area (see the [airport website](#) for average fares and to pre-book a vehicle if you have any special needs).
- The [Airbus Express](#) runs 24 hours a day to central Auckland via two different routes. The journey takes about 45 minutes, depending on traffic.
- The [380 Airporter](#) connects Manukau with Onehunga via Auckland Airport and the nearby Papatoetoe train station.

➤ [Car hire](#) desks are located in the arrivals area of the international terminal and on the ground floor of the multi-level carpark opposite the domestic terminal. Operators include Avis, Budget, Europcar, Hertz and Thrifty.

➤ [Campervans and motorhomes](#) can also be booked in advance and collected from the airport.

➤ A free shuttle bus runs between the international and domestic terminals every 15 minutes from 5.00am to 10.30pm. Otherwise it's about a 10 minute walk.

➤ Airport website: aucklandairport.co.nz

Wellington International Airport (WLG)

➤ 5km south-east of CBD.

➤ [Taxis and shuttles](#) leave from outside the baggage claim area on level 0 of the main terminal. You can pre-book a vehicle if you have any special needs.

➤ The [Airport Flyer](#) bus (route 91) runs to the Hutt Valley via central Wellington. The service leaves at

least once every 20 minutes from level 0 (exit from the baggage claim area and turn right).

➤ Car hire is available from Avis, Budget, Europcar, Hertz and Thrifty.

➤ Airport website: wellingtonairport.co.nz

Christchurch International Airport (CHC)

➤ 10km north-west of CBD.

➤ [Taxis](#) leave from outside the international arrivals hall and from outside the regional lounge, between the terminal and the car park.

➤ [Shuttle services](#) can be booked in advance, or through the i-SITE desk in the international arrivals hall.

➤ [Buses](#) to the city centre and to other destinations depart from outside the international arrivals hall.

➤ The [Airport Hopper](#) is a free shuttle bus that runs between the international terminal and the nearby EconoPark and International Antarctic Centre.



➤ [Car and campervan hire](#) desks are located in the arrivals hall. Companies include Avis, Budget, Europcar, Hertz, Thrifty and Ezi.

➤ Airport website: christchurchairport.co.nz

Key destinations and their airports

North Island	
Airport	Distance from city
Auckland Airport (AKL)	20km south of central Auckland
Wellington International Airport (WLG)	5km south-east of central Wellington
Rotorua Regional Airport (ROT)	240km drive from Auckland
Bay of Islands (Kaitiaia) Airport (KAT)	300km by road from Auckland
Coromandel Peninsula	200km by road from Auckland
Taupo Airport (TUO)	340km from Auckland / 330km from Wellington / 180km from Rotorua / Train from Auckland or Wellington (three services per week)
South Island	
Airport	Distance from city
Christchurch International Airport (CHC)	10km north-west of CBD
Queenstown Airport (ZQN)	8km east of CBD
Milford Sound	288km by road from Queenstown / Plane or helicopter from Queenstown or Te Ana
Dunedin International Airport (DUD)	28km west of CBD
Nelson Airport (NSN) – close to the Abel Tasman National Park	400km by road from Christchurch / Ferry from Wellington to Picton, then 200km by road
Stewart Island	Flight from Invercargill / Ferry or helicopter from Bluff

Getting around

Tip: Check if you need to pre-book any tickets

Trains

New Zealand has a limited long-distance train network which tends to be more popular with tourists than locals. It's a great way to relax and enjoy the scenery if you'd rather not drive.



On the North Island, the 681km long [Northern Explorer](#) route connects Auckland and Wellington, passing through Palmerston and Tongariro National Park and taking in plenty of stunning scenery along the way. The train, which was upgraded in 2012 to include reclining seats, panoramic windows, a café and an open-air viewing platform, has a journey time of about 12 hours and runs three times a week in each direction.

On the South Island, the [Coastal Pacific](#) connects Picton and Christchurch, stopping in the seaside town of Kaikoura, a popular spot for whale watching and swimming with dolphins. The journey takes about five hours, and trains run every day during summer, but the service closes between May and September. The train is fitted with comfortable seats, panoramic windows, skylights, a café and an open-air viewing platform.

The Northern Explorer and Coastal Pacific routes connect via the [Interisland ferry](#) (Wellington to Picton).

The [TranzAlpine](#) route is considered one of the most scenic train trips in the world. Running from Christchurch through the Southern Alps to Greymouth on the west coast of the South Island, the trip takes 4.5 hours and departs daily.

Tip: Tickets and rail passes can be purchased for the above routes at kiwirailscenic.co.nz but you'll pay more if you view the site from outside of New Zealand. To take advantage of the cheaper 'super-saver' fares and special offers available from within the country, phone KiwiRail to buy your tickets (+64 4 495 0775+64 4 495 0775) or use a VPN service such as hola.org to access the website with a New Zealand IP address.

Tip: If you book by phone (or book online and then call KiwiRail with your reference number) you can request a particular seat. For the best views on the Coastal Pacific you'll want a seat on the left if travelling south, or on the right if travelling north.

The [Taieri Gorge Railway](#) is another popular scenic route, running from Dunedin to Pukerangi with a bus connection to Queenstown.

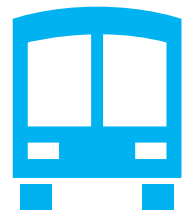
See seat61.com for more detailed advice on train travel in New Zealand.

Buses

Buses and coaches go where New Zealand's limited train network can't, travelling the country's highways, backroads and winding mountain passes to connect most towns, cities and national parks.

Main operators include the country-wide service [InterCity](#) and their luxury sightseeing fleet [Newmans Coach Lines](#), as well as budget operators [Naked Bus](#) and [ManaBus](#) (North Island only). Many services have free Wi-Fi, reclining seats, toilets and sale fares as cheap as \$1. Naked Bus even has flatbeds for overnight journeys with onesies available on-board!

Tip: If you're planning on doing a lot of bus travel, consider a [TravelPass](#) or [FlexiPass](#) from InterCity or a [Naked Passport](#) from Naked Bus.



Domestic flights

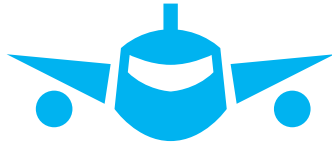
If you have limited time, a domestic flight is the easiest way to get from one end of the country to the other, with flights from Auckland in the north to Queenstown in the south taking less than two hours. Fares between the major cities are competitively priced, but you'll pay more if you're travelling to remote or regional areas.

The main domestic airlines are Air New Zealand and Jetstar New Zealand, with some smaller operators offering services off the beaten (flight) path. Search for fares at airnewzealand.com.au or jetstar.com/nz or look for special deals at grabaseat.co.nz.

See our tips on using [airline booking websites](#).

Ferries

Other than flying, the only way to travel between the north and south islands is by ferry. Multiple services a day carry



passengers and vehicles across the picturesque Cook Strait from Wellington to Picton, with a journey time of about three hours. Interislander (interislander.co.nz) and Bluebridge (bluebridge.co.nz) are the two main operators.

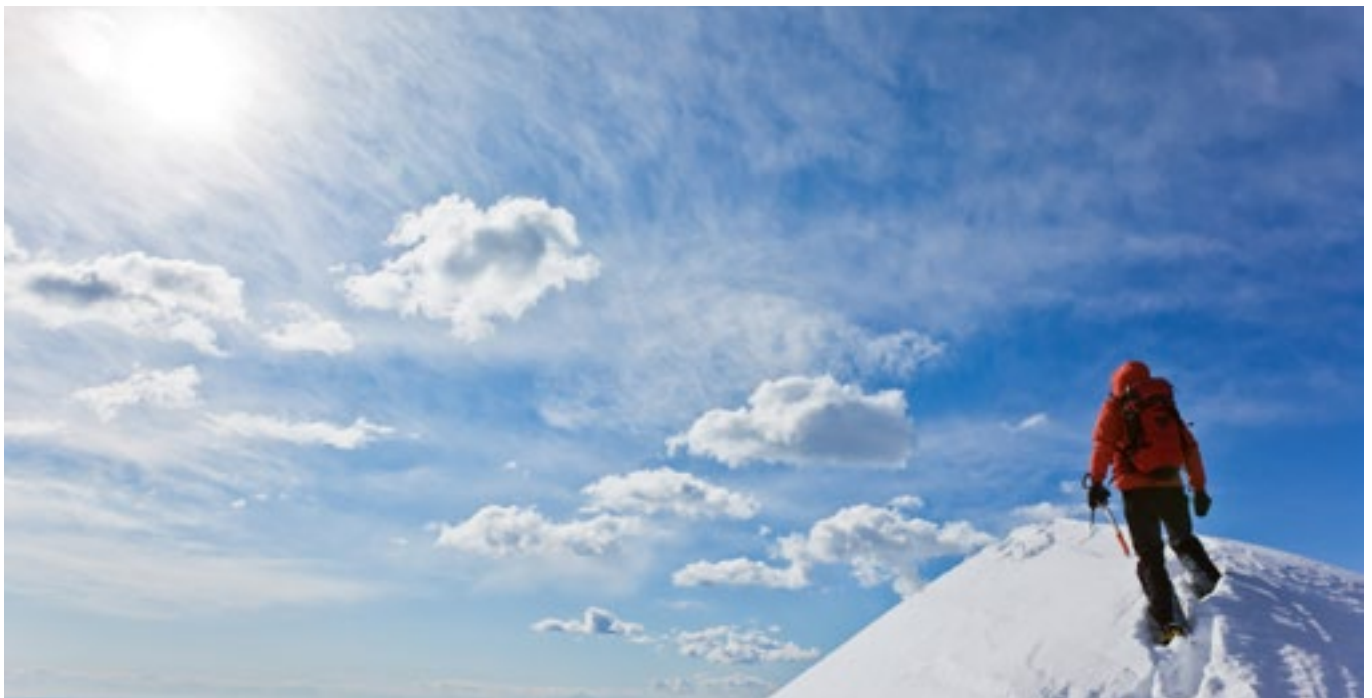
A [passenger ferry](#) runs several times a day between Bluff (near Invercargill on the southern tip of the South Island) and Stewart Island, with a journey time of one hour.

Transport tip: rome2rio.com is a great resource for working out how to get from A to B by any means of transport, anywhere in the world.

Local transport

Getting around towns and cities is easily done on public transport, by taxi or on foot.

[Zoomy](#) and [cabchooze](#) are the main taxi-ordering apps, although the international service [Uber](#) has recently entered the market in Auckland and Wellington.



Public transport trip-planners by city

- **Auckland:** at.govt.nz
- **Wellington:** metlink.org.nz
- **Christchurch:** metroinfo.co.nz
- **Dunedin:** orc.govt.nz/Information-and-Services/Buses/
- **Queenstown:** connectabus.com (local bus company)

Car hire

Hiring your own set of wheels is a great way to see New Zealand on your own schedule, particularly since many of the country's best parts are well off the beaten track and may not be accessible by public transport. You'll find the usual international car hire companies in New Zealand, including Avis, Budget, Europcar, Hertz, Thrifty and Jucy, as well as NZ companies such as Ezi and GO Rentals. On Stewart Island and Waiheke Island, local companies are the only option.



Tip: If you're planning to travel between the north and south islands, check first with the car hire company.

Many don't allow their vehicles to be taken on the inter-island ferry, so you'll need to drop off your car at one port and pick up another car once you've made the crossing.

Tip: Most car hire companies don't allow their vehicles to be taken on unsealed roads, so consider a 4WD rental if you're planning on going off-road.

Driving in New Zealand

- Vehicles drive on the left-hand side of the road.
- There's no need to get an international driving permit, you can drive on your Australian licence or any other licence printed in English.
- Mobile phones can only be used hands-free.
- Seat belts must be worn at all times in the front and back seats.
- Children under seven must be properly restrained in an approved car seat or booster seat. Check the rules [here](#).
- The blood alcohol limit for drivers aged over 20 is .05%. For drivers aged under 20 the limit is zero. (Tip: Most car hire companies won't lease vehicles to drivers aged under 21.)
- Many roads are narrow, winding or unsealed and can be particularly treacherous in wet or icy weather. Drive carefully, and do your research first on the roads you'll be using. Some (such as the road to Milford Sound)



are notoriously hair-raising, so if you aren't a confident driver, consider alternative transport.

- Driving times may be longer than you expect due to road conditions. Use the [newzealand.com](https://www.newzealand.com) calculator to estimate times and distances.

Tip: Have you booked accommodation for at least the first night?

Accommodation and tours

Accommodation options in New Zealand vary from five star wilderness lodges to cheap and crowded backpacker hostels. The rates are similar to here in Australia, if not a little cheaper, depending on the location and the exchange rate.

Campers and caravaners can stay at [holiday parks](https://www.holidayparks.co.nz) with power, water and other facilities, or at the basic [Department of Conservation](https://www.doc.govt.nz) campsites in more than 200 locations around the country. New Zealand is also known for its 'free camping', but it's a misconception that you can legally camp anywhere you like. There are designated free camping spots around the country - check [rankers.co.nz](https://www.rankers.co.nz) for a map, or find out more at [camping.org.nz](https://www.camping.org.nz).

Accommodation bookings can be made through the usual sites such as [expedia.com](https://www.expedia.com), [wotif.com](https://www.wotif.com) and [lastminute.com](https://www.lastminute.com), or through the hotel's own website where you may find a cheaper deal (see our tips on [booking accommodation](#)). Check [tripadvisor](https://www.tripadvisor.com) for customer reviews before you book. If you're looking for a homestay or holiday house rental, [airbnb.com](https://www.airbnb.com) is widely used in New Zealand.

Tours and self-drive holidays can be booked through a travel agent or online (try

[discovernewzealand.com](https://www.discovernewzealand.com), [relaxingjourneys.co.nz](https://www.relaxingjourneys.co.nz) or the well-known [contiki.com](https://www.contiki.com) or [intrepidtravel.com](https://www.intrepidtravel.com)).

Search for recommended tours on [tripadvisor.com](https://www.tripadvisor.com) or [viator.com](https://www.viator.com). For the easiest option of all, particularly for skiing holidays, consider a package deal from a travel agent such as [Flight Centre](https://www.flightcentre.co.nz), which includes flights, transport, accommodation and sometimes even meals.

Consider waiting until you're in New Zealand to book day trips. If your schedule is flexible, you may want to check the weather forecast a few days in advance before booking outdoor activities such as hiking, kayaking or sightseeing flights.

Tip: Look for the Qualmark symbol when booking accommodation or tours. [Qualmark](https://www.qualmark.co.nz) is New Zealand tourism's quality assurance organisation. Businesses must meet stringent quality standards and environmental criteria to earn Qualmark certification. ■

