

ONE WAY AMERICA

Your Guide to New Zealand

TELEPHONE: Country code (+64). Area codes vary by region. Mobile numbers generally begin with 02.

STANDARD TIME: New Zealand Standard Time is GMT +12 hours. During daylight saving, New Zealand is GMT +13 hours. The Chatham Islands have a separate time zone.

WEIGHTS & MEASURES: Metric.

ELECTRICITY: 230/240v AC, 50Hz. New Zealand uses Type I electrical sockets, the same general configuration used in Australia. U.S. appliances designed only for 110–120v will require a suitable transformer or voltage converter. Dual-voltage appliances marked 100–240v can generally be used with an appropriate plug adapter.

INOCULATIONS/VACCINATIONS: No routine vaccinations are generally required for travellers arriving from the United States. Health requirements may vary according to travel history and destination. Travellers should ensure routine vaccinations are up to date and check current New Zealand health requirements before departure.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS: New Year's Day, Day after New Year's Day, Waitangi Day 6 February, Good Friday, Easter Monday, ANZAC Day 25 April, King's Birthday, Matariki, Labour Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Each region also has its own anniversary day. Dates for some holidays vary each year. For 2026, Matariki falls on 10 July and Labour Day on 26 October. Employment New Zealand

OFFICE HOURS: Traditionally Monday to Friday, approximately 8.30am to 5.00pm, although working hours vary between businesses and organisations. Flexible and hybrid working arrangements are increasingly common.

BANK HOURS: Generally Monday to Friday, approximately 9.00am to 4.30pm, although hours vary between banks and individual branches. Some branches in shopping centres may have extended hours.

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS: 111 – Police, Fire and Ambulance.

U.S. EMBASSY IN NEW ZEALAND:

U.S. Embassy Wellington
29 Fitzherbert Terrace
Thorndon

Wellington 6011
New Zealand
Telephone: +64 4 462 6000

The U.S. Embassy in Wellington provides consular services and assistance to U.S. citizens living or travelling in New Zealand, as well as U.S. visa and other U.S. government services.

The United States also maintains a Consulate General in Auckland.

NEW ZEALAND EMBASSY IN THE UNITED STATES:

New Zealand Embassy
37 Observatory Circle NW
Washington, D.C. 20008
USA

The Embassy provides consular and diplomatic services and assistance to New Zealand citizens in the United States. New Zealand also maintains Consulates-General in Los Angeles, Honolulu and New York. NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Part 1 – Background

Information on New Zealand

Background

New Zealand, known in Māori as Aotearoa, is an island country in the southwestern Pacific Ocean.

The country consists principally of two large islands, the North Island and South Island, together with numerous smaller islands.

New Zealand was originally settled by Māori, who arrived from Polynesia several centuries before European exploration. European settlement increased significantly during the nineteenth century.

New Zealand became a self-governing British colony in 1856 and gradually developed its own political and legal institutions. It became a dominion in 1907 and is now an independent parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy.

New Zealand has maintained close historical, cultural and economic links with the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States.

Today, New Zealand is a highly developed country with a strong service economy, advanced infrastructure, a high standard of living and a substantial agricultural and tourism sector.

Geography

New Zealand is situated in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, approximately 2,000 kilometres southeast of Australia.

The North Island contains the country's largest city, Auckland, as well as the capital, Wellington.

The South Island is larger in land area and is characterised by the Southern Alps, extensive agricultural areas, lakes and dramatic mountain scenery.

New Zealand also includes numerous smaller islands and territories.

The country has extensive coastlines and a varied landscape consisting of mountains, forests, farmland, beaches, lakes, rivers and volcanic areas.

New Zealand is located on the Pacific Ring of Fire and experiences earthquakes and volcanic activity.

Population

New Zealand has a population of approximately 5.3 million people.

The population is concentrated mainly in urban areas, particularly Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Hamilton.

Auckland is New Zealand's largest city and the country's principal commercial and economic centre.

Wellington is the capital and the centre of national government.

Christchurch is the largest city in the South Island and an important centre for business, agriculture and tourism.

Climate

New Zealand has a temperate maritime climate.

The climate varies considerably between regions. The North Island generally has warmer and more humid conditions, while the South Island experiences cooler temperatures, particularly in mountainous areas.

Rainfall is generally well distributed throughout the year, although some areas of the South Island are considerably drier than others.

Seasons are opposite to those in the Northern Hemisphere:

- Summer: December to February.
- Autumn: March to May.
- Winter: June to August.
- Spring: September to November.

Weather can change quickly, particularly in mountainous and exposed areas.

New Zealand can experience earthquakes, volcanic activity, flooding, landslides and severe weather.

Economy

New Zealand has a developed, market-oriented economy.

Important sectors include agriculture, food processing, tourism, financial services, manufacturing, technology, construction, forestry, fishing and international education.

Agriculture and food production remain particularly important, with New Zealand being a major exporter of dairy products, meat, wool, wine and other agricultural commodities.

Tourism is also a major contributor to the economy.

The country's close economic relationship with Australia is supplemented by extensive trade with China, the United States, Japan and other Asia-Pacific economies.

New Zealand has a highly educated workforce and a strong reputation for innovation, environmental management and agricultural technology.

Language

English is the predominant language of New Zealand.

Māori is an official language and is widely recognised throughout the country.

New Zealand Sign Language is also an official language.

English is used throughout government, business, education and everyday life, making New Zealand relatively straightforward for U.S. citizens to relocate to from a language perspective.

Religion

New Zealand is a religiously diverse and increasingly secular country.

Christianity remains an important religious tradition, although a significant proportion of the population identifies as having no religion.

Other religious communities include Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, Judaism and various other faiths.

Education

New Zealand provides publicly funded primary and secondary education.

Schooling is generally compulsory from age 6 to 16, although children can normally begin school at age 5.

There are state schools, state-integrated schools and private schools.

New Zealand also has universities, institutes of technology and other tertiary education providers.

International and private schools are available in the main cities.

Families relocating from the United States should check school enrolment zones, admission requirements and school terms well in advance of their move.

Healthcare

New Zealand operates a publicly funded healthcare system supplemented by private healthcare.

Eligibility for publicly funded healthcare depends on immigration and residency status.

Private medical insurance is available and may provide access to private hospitals and shorter waiting times for some services.

U.S. citizens relocating to New Zealand should check their eligibility for publicly funded healthcare and consider appropriate international or New Zealand-based private medical insurance.

Currency

The currency is the New Zealand dollar (NZD or NZ\$).

The dollar is divided into 100 cents.

Banknotes are issued in denominations of NZ\$5, NZ\$10, NZ\$20, NZ\$50 and NZ\$100.

Coins include 10 cents, 20 cents, 50 cents, NZ\$1 and NZ\$2.

Credit and debit cards are widely accepted throughout the country, although cash can still be useful in smaller businesses and rural areas.

Utilities

New Zealand uses a 230/240v, 50Hz electrical supply.

This differs from the 120v supply normally used in the United States.

U.S. appliances designed solely for 110–120v should not be connected directly to a New Zealand power supply.

Appliances marked 100–240v, 50/60Hz are generally dual voltage and can be used with the appropriate plug adapter.

Particular care should be taken with large appliances such as refrigerators, washing machines, dryers and kitchen equipment.

Television and Electronics

U.S. television equipment may not operate correctly with New Zealand television standards and electrical supply.

Modern computers, tablets, phones, cameras and chargers are frequently dual voltage, but the manufacturer's specifications should always be checked.

Streaming services, television providers and broadcasting arrangements may also differ from those in the United States.

Driving

New Zealand drives on the left-hand side of the road, unlike the United States.

Drivers from the United States should take particular care when adjusting to left-side driving.

Distances and speed limits are measured in kilometres.

A U.S. driver's licence may be usable for a limited period after arrival, subject to New Zealand rules, but residents should check current requirements concerning licence conversion and overseas licences.

Part 2 – New Zealand Import Customs Regulations

To the best of our knowledge, the following information applies to the importation of household goods and personal effects from the United States into New Zealand.

New Zealand Customs and the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) apply strict customs and biosecurity controls.

Regulations can change, and individual items may require additional permits, treatment, inspection or certification.

Household Goods

People moving to New Zealand may qualify for a household effects concession allowing most used household goods to enter without Customs duty and GST.

New Zealand Customs states that the concession may apply where a person is moving to New Zealand for the first time or is returning after being outside New Zealand for 21 months or more.

To qualify, the importer generally needs an appropriate document authorising residence in New Zealand and must have personally owned and used the household effects before departing for New Zealand.

Student visa holders generally do not qualify for the household effects concession, although certain goods needed for their studies may be eligible for separate treatment. Customs New Zealand

The household effects concession does not cover:

- New and unused items.
- Cars.
- Scooters.
- Motorcycles.
- Boats.
- Aircraft.
- Commercial goods.
- Other motor vehicles or craft. Customs New Zealand

If the concession does not apply, Customs duty and GST may be payable.

Documentation

Customs may require:

- Passport or other identification.
- Evidence of the right to reside in New Zealand.
- Detailed packing inventory.
- Bill of Lading for sea freight.
- Air Waybill for air freight.
- Arrival notice.
- NZCS 218 – Bring Personal Household Items into New Zealand.
- MPI Supplementary Biosecurity Declaration where applicable.
- Import permits for restricted items.
- Receipts or supporting documents for new items.

New Zealand Customs states that a complete packing list and relevant residence documentation must be provided for household goods clearance. Customs New Zealand

Personal Effects

Personal effects can include clothing, shoes, jewellery, toiletries, personal electronics, medical devices and other items intended for the importer's personal use.

The items must generally have been personally owned overseas and intended for the owner's own use rather than for gift, sale or exchange.

Certain personal effects may qualify for concession even where the household effects concession does not apply.

Customs and MPI goods levies can apply to imported personal effects. Customs New Zealand

New and Unused Goods

New and unused household items may not qualify for the household effects concession.

New Zealand Customs states that duty and GST may apply to new or unused items.

Receipts should therefore be retained for recently purchased furniture, appliances, electronics and other goods.

Large quantities of identical new goods may also raise questions about whether the shipment is commercial rather than personal.

Food

New Zealand has extremely strict biosecurity controls concerning food.

Food may be considered a biosecurity risk whether it is fresh, cooked, preserved, packaged or dried.

Examples include:

- Meat.
- Dairy products.
- Honey.
- Eggs.
- Fish.
- Fruit.
- Vegetables.
- Seeds.
- Nuts.
- Herbs.
- Dried food.
- Animal products.

All applicable biosecurity risk items must be declared.

MPI advises travellers to declare risk items such as food, plants, animal products, wooden products, soil and outdoor equipment. Ministry for Primary Industries

It is strongly recommended that food is not packed into a household shipment unless its import eligibility has been confirmed.

Alcohol

Alcohol may be imported into New Zealand, but Customs duty and GST requirements can apply.

Travellers may receive specific duty-free allowances for alcohol. Current allowances include up to 4.5 litres of wine or beer and three bottles or containers of spirits or liqueur, with each spirits container limited to 1.125 litres. Customs New Zealand

Larger quantities or alcohol imported as part of a household shipment should be checked with Customs before shipping.

Tobacco

Tobacco products are subject to strict Customs controls and duties.

Tobacco should not be included in a household goods shipment without first confirming the current New Zealand Customs requirements.

Plants and Seeds

Plants, seeds, soil, untreated wood and other plant material are biosecurity risk goods.

New Zealand has strict import health standards designed to prevent pests and diseases entering the country.

Plants and plant products may require permits, phytosanitary certification, inspection or treatment.

Do not include plants, seeds or soil in household goods without confirming that they are eligible for import. Ministry for Primary Industries+1

Outdoor and Sporting Equipment

New Zealand's biosecurity controls also apply to equipment that may have been exposed to soil, water, plants or animals.

This can include:

- Camping equipment.
- Hiking boots.
- Golf clubs.
- Bicycles.
- Gardening equipment.
- Fishing equipment.
- Hunting equipment.
- Equestrian equipment.
- Diving and water-sports equipment.
- Agricultural equipment.

All such items should be thoroughly cleaned before packing.

MPI specifically identifies footwear, tents, camping, hunting, hiking, golf and sports equipment as potential biosecurity risk items. Ministry for Primary Industries

Motor Vehicles

Vehicles are subject to separate New Zealand Customs, MPI and NZTA requirements.

Cars are not included in the normal household effects concession. Customs New Zealand

Before shipping a vehicle from the United States, the importer should confirm:

- Whether the vehicle is eligible for import.
- Vehicle safety standards.
- Emissions requirements.
- Clean Car Programme requirements.
- Biosecurity requirements.
- Border inspection.
- Entry certification.
- Registration and licensing requirements.

New Zealand Transport Agency recommends researching the vehicle's eligibility and standards before purchasing or shipping an overseas vehicle. [NZ Transport Agency](#)¹

U.S.-specification vehicles should therefore be assessed individually before shipment.

Firearms and Weapons

Firearms, ammunition and weapons are highly regulated in New Zealand.

They should not be included with household goods unless the importer has confirmed eligibility and obtained all required permits and licences before shipping.

New Zealand has significantly different firearms laws from those of the United States.

Prescription Medicines

Personal medicines may be imported subject to New Zealand requirements.

New Zealand Customs states that personal medications can include prescription medicines, generally up to a three-month supply where permitted under Ministry of Health requirements.

Controlled drugs are subject to additional restrictions and should not normally be sent as unaccompanied baggage. [Customs New Zealand](#)

Medication should remain in its original packaging and be accompanied by appropriate prescriptions or medical documentation.

Pets

New Zealand has strict requirements for importing animals.

Cats and dogs may only be imported from approved countries and must meet the applicable MPI Import Health Standard.

The requirements changed in 2026. A revised Import Health Standard for cats and dogs came into force on 1 July 2026, with a nine-month transition period between the previous and new

requirements. Ministry for Primary Industries

For cats and dogs imported from countries other than Australia, quarantine requirements generally apply.

Under the 2026 requirements, cats and dogs from eligible countries other than Australia generally require a minimum of 10 days in an MPI-approved quarantine facility. An import permit is also required in applicable cases. Ministry for Primary Industries

Pet owners should begin preparations several months before relocation.

The United States falls within New Zealand's approved country framework, but the exact requirements depend on the applicable country category and the current MPI rules.

Because the pet import requirements are detailed and subject to change, professional pet relocation assistance is recommended.

Other Pets

New Zealand permits only certain other types of pets.

MPI currently states that, apart from cats and dogs, rabbits can be imported from Australia, chinchillas from Great Britain and guinea pigs from Australia, subject to the applicable requirements. Ministry for Primary Industries

Other animals may be prohibited or subject to completely different import procedures.

Endangered Species and CITES

New Zealand regulates the import of endangered species and products derived from protected animals and plants.

Items such as ivory, certain animal skins, feathers, shells, coral and other wildlife products may require CITES documentation or may be prohibited.

Old pianos and antiques should be checked carefully because some older items can contain ivory.

Wooden Packing Materials

Wooden packaging can present a significant biosecurity risk.

Wooden crates, pallets, packing materials and other wood products may need to comply with applicable international and New Zealand biosecurity requirements.

New Zealand's MPI applies Import Health Standards to commodities that can carry pests or diseases, including shipping containers and other risk goods. [Ground Rules+1](#)

Your packing company should ensure that all wooden packing materials used for an international shipment comply with the relevant requirements before loading.

Shipping Containers

Sea containers are subject to New Zealand biosecurity controls.

MPI states that sea container inspections are mandatory, with inspections carried out by MPI or an accredited person. [Ministry for Primary Industries](#)

The container and its contents should therefore be clean and free from soil, plant material, insects, seeds and other biosecurity risks.

Prohibited and Restricted Items

Items that may be prohibited, restricted or subject to additional requirements include:

- Firearms and ammunition.
- Explosives.
- Controlled drugs.
- Certain medicines.
- Plants and seeds.
- Soil.
- Certain food products.
- Animal products.
- Wildlife products.
- Certain chemicals.
- Hazardous substances.
- Some agricultural equipment.
- Certain vehicles and machinery.
- Items made from protected or endangered species.

New Zealand's biosecurity system is particularly strict because of the country's unique environment and agricultural economy.

If there is any doubt about an item, it should be declared and checked before shipment.

Customs and Biosecurity Inspection

Household shipments can be inspected by New Zealand Customs and MPI.

MPI may assess household goods against relevant Import Health Standards and determine whether inspection or treatment is required.

MPI states that, while many consignments do not require physical inspection, inspection of sea containers is mandatory. Ministry for Primary Industries

Incorrect or incomplete inventories can cause delays and additional costs.

A detailed inventory should therefore be prepared before packing begins.

Disclaimer

Although every care is taken to ensure that all information in this Relocation Guide is accurate and up to date, One Way America cannot accept liability for any inaccuracies, omissions or changes in New Zealand, U.S. or international regulations.

Customs, immigration, tax, biosecurity, health, vehicle and pet-import requirements can change without notice.

Anyone relocating from the United States to New Zealand should confirm current requirements with New Zealand Customs, the Ministry for Primary Industries, New Zealand Transport Agency and the relevant New Zealand authorities before shipping household goods.

Guide updated: Oct. 2026

© One Way America – Relocation Services.

More info on our website: <https://onewayamerica.com>.