



SETTLING INTO NEW ZEALAND A CALIBER GUIDE



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WELCOME TO NEW ZEALAND

We are thrilled that you are considering a move to New Zealand. We have helped engineers relocate from all over the world. We know it's a big life change and we're here to support you every step of the way.

This guide covers the essentials: what to organise first, how everyday life works here, and where to find help. It also includes advice from Caliber engineers who've done this before and are thriving in their new lives.

Whether you are days away from arriving or just starting to explore the idea, we hope this guide helps you feel informed, prepared, and supported.

WE'LL HELP YOU WITH...

At Caliber, we don't just hand you a contract and wish you luck. We offer real support to help you get set up and feel confident in your new life.

We'll assist with:

- Bank account & IRD setup
- Finding a rental
- Local advice on suburbs and schools
- Proof-of-address documents
- Doctor and health registration
- Connecting you with others in your area
- Ongoing check-ins and support



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This document is designed for digital use. It contains lots of clickable links that will take you directly to more information.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Relocating is exciting, but it can also be overwhelming. You're navigating housing, schools, shopping, healthcare, and a new job, all at once.

Most engineers say the first few months are the hardest. But every week, things get easier. You settle into a routine, discover your favourite café, and start to feel at home.

We'll help you get there! We offer practical support, local knowledge, and a network of Caliber teammates who understand what you're going through.



OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT

Most major New Zealand banks allow you to begin setting up a 'deposit-only' account before you arrive. The process starts online, and you can even transfer money into the account while you're still overseas.

When you land in New Zealand, you'll need to book an appointment with a bank representative and present identification such as your passport, entry visa, and proof of address. Proof of address can be a utility bill in your name (electricity, gas, water, fixed-line phone, or internet) or, if you're in temporary accommodation, a letter from Caliber confirming your employment and local address.

Once your identification and address are verified, your account will be fully activated. At that point, you'll be able to withdraw the funds you've already transferred and manage your money in New Zealand dollars.

Use these links to open accounts from overseas with the five major banks:



REAL EXPERIENCES FROM CALIBER

"We love the work-life balance here. There's more time for family, and the outdoor lifestyle is amazing."

"The Caliber team were supportive, practical, and really kind. I felt like I had someone in my corner the whole time."

"Kiwis are incredibly friendly and welcoming. It's not just about work, it's about living well."

"The first three months were the hardest, then it all started to fall into place. Now it feels like home."

"Having a job sorted before the move took a huge weight off. The support from Caliber made everything easier."

“I had no idea how to get an IRD number. Caliber walked me through it. That saved me hours of confusion.”

GETTING AN IRD NUMBER

Once your bank account is fully functional, the next step is to apply for your **IRD number**.

An IRD number is your unique identifier with Inland Revenue. It's equivalent to a National Insurance number in the UK, a Social Security number in the US, or a Tax Reference Number in South Africa. Your IRD number tracks the tax you pay, ensures you're taxed at the correct rate, and makes sure you receive the right entitlements.

It's best to have your IRD number before you start work. Without it, we're required to tax you at a higher non-declaration rate.

You can apply online using the myIR link. It typically takes only a few days to be issued.

IRD number
application:



You will need:

- Your passport details
- Immigration NZ Application Number (on your visa)
- Your most recent overseas tax number (not required for those on a resident visa)
- Proof of your fully functional bank account (bank statement showing deposits & withdrawals)

Once you have your IRD number, it's a good idea to register with **myIR**.

myIR gives you faster, easier, and more transparent control over your taxes and entitlements, all in one place.

MOBILE PHONE & INTERNET

When you arrive in New Zealand, you'll likely want to get a local SIM card for your mobile phone. Most people start with a prepaid SIM (quick and easy) and move to a monthly plan later (usually cheaper but takes a little more to set up).

Once you've got a local number, please share it with us so we can stay in easy contact.

You can purchase a SIM card from:

Airports Kiosks and stores in the arrivals area offer SIM cards from Spark, One NZ, and 2degrees.

Mobile carrier stores Official outlets for Spark, One NZ, and 2degrees are located in cities and towns nationwide, with staff who can help with activation.

Convenience stores and supermarkets Many dairies, petrol stations, and supermarkets sell prepaid SIM cards.

Online You can order SIM cards for delivery to your accommodation—handy if you want one ready on arrival.

Remember to bring your passport when purchasing a SIM card, as it's required for registration.

Summary of common providers:

Spark Strong nationwide coverage (4G/5G), eSIM support, and a wide range of prepaid plans.

OneNZ (formerly Vodafone) Excellent urban coverage (4G/5G), eSIM support, international calling add-ons, and flexible prepaid options.

2degrees Competitive pricing, good rural coverage, 4G with expanding 5G, and flexible prepaid plans.

Skinny Mobile Budget-friendly, using Spark's network, with simple prepaid plans and eSIM support.

Kiwi Mobile Flexible, low-cost plans designed to save money.

Compare providers
and plans:





TRANSPORT & VEHICLES

If you're moving to Auckland, having a car is essential. The city's public transport system won't reliably get you to client sites at the times you'll need to be there. In Christchurch, many of our team commute by bike, but depending on the location of your secondment that may not always be practical.

Buying a car in New Zealand is straightforward, but there are a few things that may be different from what you're used to.

Where People Buy Cars

Dealerships More expensive, but cars are usually serviced, cleaned, and come with some warranty.

Private sales Common on Trade Me (NZ's version of eBay), Facebook Marketplace, or through word of mouth. Usually cheaper but higher risk.

Car fairs/auctions Potential bargains, but with less protection.

Key Legal Checks

WOF (Warrant of Fitness) A roadworthiness check. Cars registered before 2000 require a WOF every 6 months; newer cars every 12 months.

Rego (vehicle registration) Paid every 3, 6, or 12 months to legally keep your car on the road.

RUC (Road User Charges) Applies to diesel, heavy, and electric vehicles. Pre-paid in 1,000 km blocks.

Car history check Use sites like CarJam or MotorWeb to check if a car has money owing, has been written off, or was imported.

The Dog & Lemon Guide A paid service that provides honest reviews of specific makes and models.



Practical Considerations

Diesel vs petrol Diesels are often cheaper for long-distance travel but incur RUC. Petrol cars are usually simpler for city use.

Japanese imports Very common in NZ and often reliable but always check the service history.

Insurance Not legally required, but third-party insurance is strongly recommended. Comprehensive cover is advisable if your car is worth more than NZD \$5,000.

The main car insurers in NZ include AMI, AA Insurance, State, Tower, and Trade Me Insurance. Watch an impartial review:



Costs Expect to pay NZD \$3,000–\$6,000 for a decent used runaround, and NZD \$8,000–\$15,000 for something newer and more reliable.

Buying Process

- 1 Inspect the car (take it for a test drive)
- 2 Check WOF, REGO, and history
- 3 If happy, pay the seller
- 4 Change ownership online via the NZTA website (cost ~\$9)
- 5 Sort insurance



Purchasing a Vehicle—Tips for Newcomers

- Stick with popular, reliable brands (Toyota, Honda, Mazda, Nissan, Hyundai)
- Be wary of cars without a current WOF
- Use AA Pre-Purchase Inspection (~\$150) if you're unsure mechanically
- Cars hold their value well in NZ, so don't expect rock-bottom bargains

DRIVER'S LICENSE

If your licence is in English You can drive in New Zealand on your overseas licence for up to 12 months from the date you arrive. If your licence expires or if you stay longer than one year, you'll need to apply for a New Zealand driver licence.

If your licence is not in English You'll need either a certified English translation or an International Driving Permit (IDP). An IDP is essentially a translation of your current licence into multiple languages and is recognised worldwide. You can arrange this before you leave home or apply through the AA (Automobile Association) once you arrive in New Zealand. You must carry your IDP together with your valid overseas licence when driving.

Converting your overseas licence to a New Zealand licence
The process depends on the country your licence was issued in:

Exempt countries Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, South Africa.

Conversion is generally straightforward, often without the need for a practical test. Usually only documentation, and sometimes a theory test, is required.

Non-exempt countries You'll usually need to sit both the theory test (the Road Code) and a practical driving test before your licence can be converted.





HEALTHCARE

New Zealand's healthcare system is publicly funded (with the exception of dental care for adults), meaning the government covers most of the cost for medical services. Here are some key things to know:

Public healthcare system Public hospitals and clinics are funded through taxes. Anyone entitled to remain in New Zealand for two years or longer can access these services at no cost, or for a low subsidised fee. Non-urgent services may involve waiting times.

General Practitioners (GPs) GPs are the first point of contact for non-emergency health issues. Consultations are subsidised but usually involve a fee. To enrol with a GP you'll need proof of identity and address. You can find local GPs at **HealthPoint**.

Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) A unique no-fault system covering injuries sustained anywhere—at work, at home, or on the road. ACC provides medical treatment, rehabilitation, and wage compensation if you're injured.

Prescription costs Most medications are subsidised, but usually involve a small co-payment.

Private healthcare Private providers offer faster access to specialists and elective procedures, but these come at an additional cost.

Maternity and child healthcare The public system provides excellent maternity and child health services, including prenatal care, childbirth, and postnatal care—fully covered for those eligible.

Dental care Dental treatment (check-ups, cleaning, fillings, extractions) is free for children under 18. To enrol your child in call 0800 TALK TEETH (0800 825 583) or for more information view the Ministry of Health Lets Talk Teeth website. For adults, dental care is not subsidised and is paid for privately. Find a dentist at **NZDA**.

Health insurance After six months of employment with Caliber, you'll be eligible for Southern Cross Medical Insurance (Wellbeing One), fully covered by Caliber. This provides comprehensive cover, including surgery, cancer care, specialist consultations, and diagnostic tests, as well as free mental health support and online GP visits. You may also add partners/dependents or upgrade your plan (e.g. to include dental) at your own cost.

Healthline Free 24/7 access to health professionals. Call 0800 611 116 for advice on your own health, someone else's, medications, or if you're unsure what to do next.

Emergency number Dial 111 for Police, Fire, or Ambulance. Calls are free, even from a mobile phone without credit.

ACCOMMODATION ESSENTIAL STEPS IN THE RENTING PROCESS

1 Budget Wisely Don't forget to factor in additional costs like utilities (electricity, gas, water) and internet.

2 Search Smartly There are several platforms that you can search when looking for rental properties in NZ:

Trade Me Property This is one of the most popular sites for finding rental properties. It has a wide range of listings, from apartments to houses, and allows you to filter by location, price, and other preferences.

Realestate.co.nz Another well-established property site in New Zealand that features rental listings. It includes options for both short-term and long-term rentals.

Rent.co.nz A site dedicated entirely to rental properties in New Zealand. It provides an easy-to-use interface and allows for a broad range of searches.

Facebook Marketplace Many landlords and property managers post rental listings here. It can be especially useful for finding private rentals or shared accommodations.

Local Community Facebook Groups Depending on your area, you may find community-specific rental listings or flatmate search groups that can give you access to private rentals and flats.

Property Managers Many property managers also list available rentals on their websites. Some examples are Barfoot & Thompson and Ray White.

www.NZFlatmates.co.nz This is a good resource if you are looking for share accommodation.

3 Attend Viewings Schedule and attend property viewings. Prepare questions about rent, bond, move-in dates, furnishings, and neighbourhood amenities.

4 Application Process Submit a rental application, which may include personal details, references, and consent for a credit check. If you're new to renting, consider including a cover letter to introduce yourself.

5 Review the Tenancy Agreement Ensure the agreement includes all necessary details: rent amount, bond, tenancy duration, included chattels, and compliance with Healthy Homes Standards. Both parties should sign the agreement.

Financial Considerations

Bond A refundable deposit, usually up to four weeks' rent, lodged with Tenancy Services. It covers potential damages or unpaid rent and gets paid back at the end of the tenancy (assuming all is in order).

Advance Rent Landlords often require one or two weeks' rent upfront.

Additional Costs Be prepared for utility bills (electricity, water, internet) and possible maintenance fees.

Property Standards & Inspections

Healthy Homes Standards Ensure the property complies with regulations on heating, insulation, ventilation, and moisture control. Landlords must provide a compliance statement.

Property Inspection Conduct a thorough inspection before moving in. Document any existing damages to avoid disputes later.

Tenant Rights & Responsibilities

Legal Protections: Tenants have rights under the Residential Tenancies Act, including protection against unlawful rent increases and eviction.

Maintenance: Landlords are responsible for maintaining the property, while tenants should keep the property clean and report any issues promptly.

Notice Periods: Tenants must provide 28 days' notice before moving out. Landlords must give 90 days' notice for ending a tenancy, with valid reasons.

Tips to Avoid Scams

Never Pay Before Viewing: Avoid sending money before seeing the property in person.

Verify Listings: Be cautious of listings that seem too good to be true. Cross-check information and report suspicious ads.

We don't know Maddie, but she has put together a comprehensive guide to Renting in NZ, take a look:



Choosing Where to Live

Consider commute times, local schools, and nearby amenities when choosing where to live. With Caliber's secondment model, commute times can vary by client and project.

Auckland A good chunk of our clients are fairly close to our office in East Tamaki, however we span the whole of Auckland.

Close to the Office

- Flat Bush
- Botany
- Howick
- Half Moon Bay
- Farm Cove Pakuranga

More Central

- Onehunga
- Royal Oak
- One Tree Hill
- Greenlane
- Stonefields

- Remuera
- Ellerslie
- New Market
- Epsom
- Mount Eden
- Auckland CBD

REGIONAL SNAP SHOTS

AUCKLAND

Multicultural, fast-paced, and full of opportunity. Our East Tāmaki office is near family-friendly suburbs like Botany, Flat Bush, and Howick—with great shopping, beaches, and schools.

CHRISTCHURCH

A relaxed city with easy access to beaches and mountains. Our Sydenham office is close to the CBD and surrounded by parks, cycleways, and schools.

HAMILTON

A growing regional centre in the Waikato. Close to Auckland and Tauranga, with great schools and a friendly, community feel. Popular suburbs include Rototuna and Flagstaff.

TAURANGA

Known for its laid-back pace, surf beaches, and sunny climate. Mount Maunganui is a favourite spot to live, work, and unwind.

SOUTHLAND

Quiet, welcoming, and surrounded by natural beauty. With a lower cost of living and strong engineering demand, this region offers a rewarding professional and personal life.

If you'd like a second opinion on a property or you're unsure about an area, we're happy to help.

The Tenancy Services website is helpful:

Tenancy Services

Christchurch There's a common saying that "everything is a 20-minute drive in Christchurch," so you can't go too far wrong. We chose our Sydenham office for its proximity to the city and main arterial routes. Many of our team live in South Christchurch (Somerfield, Waltham, St Martins, Beckenham, Cashmere) close to the office, town, and the Port Hills.

SETTING UP YOUR ACCOMMODATION

Setting up your accommodation in New Zealand is an exciting adventure, and finding the right furniture and essentials can make all the difference.

Here are some good places to go to if you need to furnish or need stuff for your new place of residence!

Briscoes Specialises in homeware essentials, including kitchen gadgets, bedding, and storage solutions. They often have sales and promotions, making it a great place to pick up flat essentials.

Farmers A New Zealand department store chain offering a range of homewares, including kitchenware, tableware, and bedding. They have over 50 stores across the country.

Kmart New Zealand Kmart is another popular destination for affordable home furnishings. They offer a diverse range of furniture for every room, including bedroom, living room, and dining pieces, all at "low prices for life."

Mocka An online retailer known for quality modern furniture at affordable prices. Ideal for those looking to furnish their space without breaking the bank.

Panda Mart Panda Mart is a one-stop shop for furnishing and setting up your flat.

The Warehouse The Warehouse is a well-known Kiwi retailer offering a broad selection of furniture and home essentials at budget-friendly prices.

IKEA IKEA Auckland is opening in late 2025, much to the delight of many Kiwis.

There are a huge number of second-hand shops where you can pick up quality good at thrifty prices. Look for **Salvation Army, SPCA, St John, Habitat for Humanity**.

BRINGING YOUR FAMILY

Many Caliber engineers relocate with their partner and children, and we're here to support your whole household.

We can help with:

- Choosing family-friendly neighbourhoods
- Understanding school zones
- Connecting with other families

Overview of New Zealand's Schooling System

School Types & Structure

New Zealand follows a three-tier education system:

- Primary and Intermediate (Years 0–6 or 0–8)
- Secondary (Years 9–13)
- Followed by tertiary education (polytechnics, universities)

Academic Year

- Primary schools run from early February to mid-December.
- Secondary and polytechnics typically span late January to late November or early December.

When Children Start School

- Children usually start school when they turn 5, or at any point before they turn 6.
- Schooling is compulsory from ages 6 to 16, but many begin earlier for Year 0 or Year 1 intake.
- If your child turns 5 mid-year (e.g. July), they might start as Year 0 (New Entrant) and move into Year 1 the following January.

Enrolment Process & Requirements

Choosing a School

Decide on the type—state, state-integrated, designated special character, or even private/charter schools.

Zoning & Automatic Enrolment

Many state schools operate enrolment zones. If you live within the zone, your child is guaranteed a place. If you're out of zone, you can still apply but there's no guarantee. If space exists, schools advertise out-of-zone applications (with a ballot where necessary). Ballot details are listed on the school and/ or Ministry of Education website.



Typical Enrollment Documents

- Child's birth certificate or proof of age
- Proof of residence/address
- Immunisation/health records
- Visa or residency documentation (for international families)

Costs & Fees

For Domestic students, NZ citizens or residence class visa holders, education at state schools (ages 5–19) is free (no tuition fees).

Schools may ask for voluntary donations or activity fees, but these are optional and cannot be enforced. These donations are tax-deductible.

Activity fees (e.g. for camps/trips) must be optional and equitable. Curriculum-based events cannot be charged.

State-integrated schools may charge attendance dues (compulsory), for upkeep of buildings owned by the school's proprietors.

Supporting Your Child

Many schools offer ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programmes or learning support to help international students settle in.



If you'd like to talk this through with someone who has already made the move, just email us and we'll connect you.

COST OF LIVING

New Zealand offers a high quality of life. Food, housing, and dining out can be expensive compared to some countries, but the trade-off is lifestyle, safety, and time.

Here are some helpful websites to help compare living costs:

www.expatisitan.com

www.numbeo.com

In addition, it may be helpful to do some of your own research:

Price compare your usual grocery shop using our major supermarkets websites (Countdown, New World, and PaknSave).

Do a Google search to see how much petrol/diesel and car running costs are compared to what you are used to.

Have a look at Houses & Properties for Rent in New Zealand | Trade Me Property for an idea into how much rent will be.

Factor in the fact that a lot of our health care is publicly funded.

Remember that every employee is eligible for 4 weeks paid annual leave, 10 days sick leave and 12 paid public holidays per annum.

“My partner was nervous but Caliber involved her in the conversation and that helped.”

“The most helpful thing was getting advice on schools and suburbs—especially from other engineers who’d done it already.”

“It’s more expensive in some areas than I expected, but there’s so much more time to enjoy life, and a real sense of safety.”



NZ WORKPLACE CULTURE

We asked some of our engineers who have joined us from South Africa about some of the main differences in workplace culture they have noticed while working in NZ, here is what they said:

Relaxed, People-Centred Workplaces

Nearly every engineer mentioned that New Zealand workplaces are more relaxed than those in South Africa. There is a stronger focus on people and balance, and less emphasis on hierarchy or pressure.

“Work-life balance is more important here than back home.”

“I think there’s a good balance here between performance and compassion. People care about doing a good job and about each other.”

“Workplace culture in NZ is far more supportive, engaging, fair, exciting, compassionate, and innovative.”

“In SA I felt like a number, whereas here I feel like part of the team.”

Trust & Collaboration

Engineers noted a genuine sense of trust within Kiwi teams. Managers expect professionalism but do not micromanage, and communication tends to be measured rather than forceful.

“It’s a much more trusting society, you don’t have to explain as much, which is refreshing.”

“Sometimes it will feel like no one wants to talk to you, but that’s just how it is. Don’t take it personally.”

Communication Style

Kiwis are generally friendly yet reserved. You will notice more small talk, especially at the start of meetings or during breaks. Conversations are informal, and direct confrontation is rare.

“People are more relaxed and want to make idle chit chat a lot more than in SA.”

“In SA people are a bit more forward and to the point, where here people use a lot more words to say the same thing.”

Pace & Patience

Things can move more slowly than you might be used to. Email responses and decisions may take longer, and processes can feel less urgent.

“I had to learn to be patient and wait for email replies, quotes, answers.”

“People here can take a day or three to reply, whereas in SA it felt like things moved a lot faster.”

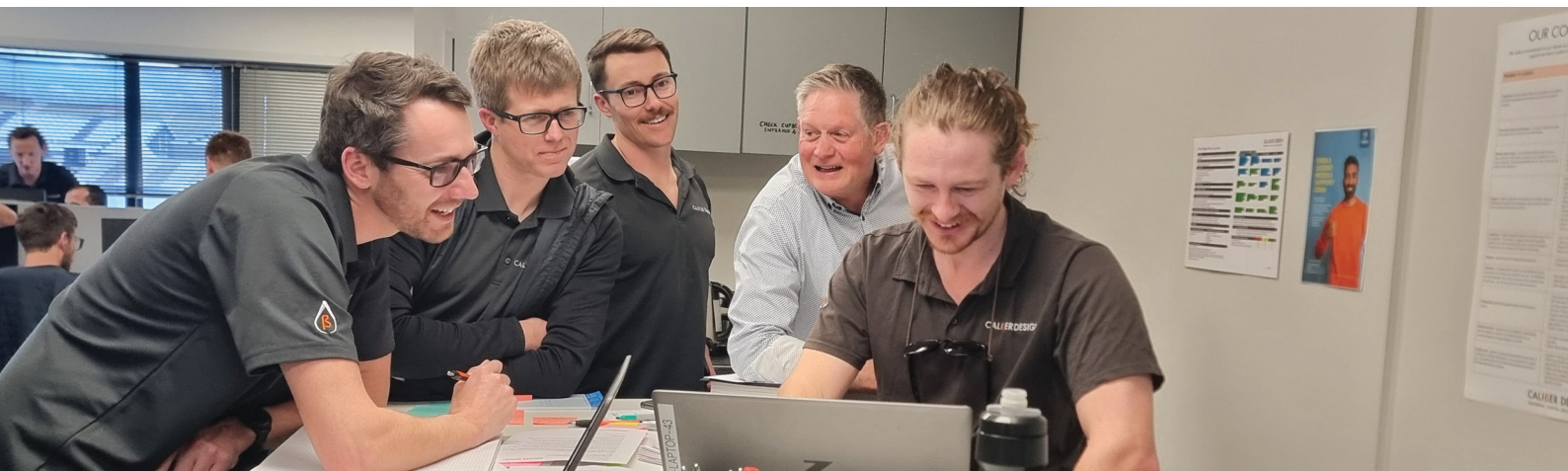
Everyday Norms

A few local customs might take some getting used to.

“In an eight-hour workday we get two paid ten minute tea breaks and a 30-minute unpaid meal break.”

“Learning that it’s okay to take leave if you’re sick.”

“Here it’s called smoko. In SA we called it tea time, I thought I didn’t get smoko because I didn’t smoke!”



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Moving countries is a big step. We'll make sure you're supported from day one, helping you get set up, stay connected, and feel confident in your new role and life in New Zealand.

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