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Your Complete Relocation Checklist

Moving to New Zealand is one of the biggest decisions you'll ever make - and one of the most rewarding. This checklist will help you think through every dimension of your move: practical, logistical, financial, and emotional. You won't have every answer today, and that's fine. Keep returning to it as your plans take shape.

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Before You Leave

Employment, housing, pets, financial planning

2

Planning Your Move

Shipping, flights, housing, education, employment, healthcare

3

Heart & Mind

Culture, connections, children, your partner

4

Ready to Go

Closing accounts, final appointments, travel logistics

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1 BEFORE YOU LEAVE

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

- [ ] What notice period applies to your current role?
- [ ] When does your contract end?
- [ ] How long can you sustain yourself financially if there is a gap between roles?
- [ ] If you run a business, how will you wind it up or transfer it to NZ?

CURRENT HOUSING

- [ ] When does your rental lease end - or can you break it early?
- [ ] If you own property, how long will it take to sell and what are the associated costs?
- [ ] Have you accounted for agent fees, legal costs, and any early-exit penalties?

PETS

- [ ] Have you researched the cost and process of bringing pets to New Zealand?
- [ ] What is the vaccination and veterinary certification timeline? NZ biosecurity rules are strict.
- [ ] What should you expect during the mandatory quarantine period on arrival?
- [ ] If you cannot bring pets, what are your re-homing options?

FINANCIAL PLANNING

- [ ] Have you compiled a full budget - immigration fees, medicals, flights, shipping, and setup costs?
- [ ] How will you stay tax-compliant in both your home country and NZ during the transition?
- [ ] What is the most cost-efficient way to transfer foreign currency to NZ?
- [ ] Have you opened or researched a NZ bank account? Some banks allow pre-arrival account opening.
- [ ] Have you noted your current tax number? You may need it for your NZ IRD number application.
- [ ] Do you have an emergency fund set aside specifically for unexpected costs on arrival?

> **Cost of living calculator**
>
> Use the NZ government's free calculator to plan your budget before you arrive:
> live-work.immigration.govt.nz/costs

2 PLANNING YOUR MOVE

SHIPPING & WHAT TO BRING

- [ ] Have you researched what is and isn't permitted into NZ? Biosecurity rules are strict.
- [ ] Have you compared the cost of shipping items vs buying new on arrival?
- [ ] Have you sorted belongings into what to take, sell, gift, or discard?
- [ ] Will you pack yourself or hire a professional company to pack and inventory?
- [ ] Air or sea freight - have you weighed up timeline vs cost?

> **Important: visa required before shipping**
>
> Shipping companies will not despatch your container until you hold a valid work or resident visa. Most offer storage in the interim - factor this into your timeline.

FLIGHTS & TRAVEL

- [ ] Have you booked flights and confirmed baggage allowances for migration? Airlines often permit extras.
- [ ] If travelling with children separately from a partner, do you have a letter of permission?
- [ ] Have you arranged comprehensive international travel insurance?
- [ ] What is your contingency plan if flights are disrupted?

HOUSING IN NEW ZEALAND

- [ ] Have you decided which city or region you want to live in?
- [ ] Do you understand NZ's school zoning system? Your home address determines your local school.
- [ ] Will you rent initially or aim to buy? Renting first is strongly recommended while you settle.
- [ ] Have you considered a short-term rental or serviced apartment for the first few weeks?
- [ ] Do you understand that NZ landlords typically require a bond of up to 4 weeks' rent upfront?
- [ ] Have you researched neighbourhoods relative to work commute, schools, and lifestyle?
- [ ] Do you know what to look for in a NZ rental - insulation, heating, weathertightness?
- [ ] Have you prepared rental reference documents: bank statements, landlord references, credit history?
- [ ] Are you across the main rental platforms: Trade Me Property, realestate.co.nz, Facebook groups?

> **Rental competition is fierce**
>
> Having a well-prepared reference pack - bank statements, landlord references, and a cover letter - can make the difference. Lemonaide can help you put this together before you arrive.

2 PLANNING YOUR MOVE

EDUCATION

- [ ] Have you researched how your child's academic level and school year will translate to the NZ system?
- [ ] Do you understand the difference between state, state-integrated, and private school options?
- [ ] Have you checked school zoning? your address directly determines which schools are available
- [ ] Have you read ERO (Education Review Office) reports for schools you are considering?
- [ ] Do you have copies of your child's vaccination records ready for enrolment forms?
- [ ] Have you notified your child's current school of the planned move?

EMPLOYMENT IN NEW ZEALAND

- [ ] Do you have a job offer, or have you begun researching the NZ job market in your field?
- [ ] Is your CV adapted for NZ employers? Format and conventions differ from many countries.
- [ ] Have you researched typical salary ranges in your field in NZ? Pay scales may differ significantly.
- [ ] Do you know NZ's minimum leave entitlements - 4 weeks annual leave, sick leave, and public holidays?
- [ ] Have you checked whether your professional qualifications are recognised in NZ?
- [ ] If your partner needs to work, have they researched their own registration or qualification pathway?
- [ ] Have you connected with professional networks or sector associations in NZ?

> **Professional credential recognition**
>
> This can be a significant hurdle - particularly for nurses, engineers, teachers, and tradespeople. Lemonaide's migrant career services can help your whole family navigate this.

IRD NUMBER (TAX)

- [ ] Do you know you must obtain an IRD number before you start work in NZ?
- [ ] Have you noted your current country's tax number? You may need it for the IRD application.
- [ ] Have you applied at ird.govt.nz? It's free and straightforward - no need to do this before arrival.
- [ ] Have you stored your IRD number safely once issued? You will need it frequently.

> **Apply for your IRD number on arrival**
>
> Apply online at ird.govt.nz/ird-numbers as soon as you arrive. It's free and quick. You'll need it to start work and open certain bank accounts.

HEALTHCARE & ENROLLING WITH A GP

- [ ] If carrying prescription medication, have you obtained a doctor's letter to travel with it?
- [ ] Have you stocked 2–3 months of any chronic medications to cover you until you register with a NZ GP?

- [ ] Have you checked your eligibility for publicly funded healthcare in NZ?
- [ ] Do you plan to register with a GP close to home or work as soon as you arrive?
- [ ] Do you know your GP practice can apply for your NHI (National Health Index) number on your behalf?
- [ ] Have you considered private health insurance to supplement the public system?
- [ ] Do you know that ACC covers treatment costs if you are injured in an accident, regardless of visa status?

> **Register with a GP early**
>
> GP practices in popular areas fill up quickly. You'll need your passport and visa. Your GP can then apply for your NHI number on your behalf.

DRIVER LICENCE

- [ ] Do you know you can drive in NZ on your overseas licence for up to 12 months after arrival?
- [ ] Have you checked whether your licence needs translation or an International Driving Permit?
- [ ] Have you researched the conversion process for your country? Some require a theory or practical test.

> **Check your licence conversion process**
>
> See the NZTA guide before arrival:
> nzta.govt.nz/driver-licences/new-residents-and-visitors/converting-to-nz-driver-licence

VEHICLE

- [ ] Will you need to buy a car on arrival? Have you researched NZ's used car market?
- [ ] Do you understand NZ's Warrant of Fitness (WOF) requirements for vehicles?
- [ ] Have you looked into the cost and availability of car insurance in NZ?

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3 HEART & MIND

NAVIGATING KIWI CULTURE

- [ ] Have you read about NZ's bicultural identity and the role of Maori culture and Te Tiriti o Waitangi?
- [ ] Are you prepared for a more informal, egalitarian workplace culture than you may be used to?
- [ ] What aspects of your own culture do you want to actively retain and celebrate?
- [ ] Have you spoken to others who have made a similar move? First-hand accounts help set realistic expectations.
- [ ] Have you researched expat or migrant community groups in your destination city?
- [ ] If you are religious, have you found a local place of worship or faith community?

LEAVING YOUR CURRENT HOME

- [ ] Is this move permanent, or are you open to returning? Being clear on this helps with decision-making.
- [ ] Have you thought about how you will maintain meaningful connections with family and friends?
- [ ] Do you have a plan for staying connected - time zones, regular calls, future visits?
- [ ] Have you given yourself permission to grieve what you are leaving behind?

MANAGING DECISION FATIGUE

- [ ] Have you broken the move into phases so you are not making every decision at once?
- [ ] Do you have a trusted person to sense-check big decisions?
- [ ] Have you built rest and recovery time into your moving timeline?

CHILDREN & THE TRANSITION

- [ ] Have you talked honestly with your children about the move and given them space to react?
- [ ] Have you involved them in age-appropriate decisions to give them a sense of ownership?
- [ ] Do you have a plan for helping them connect with peers quickly once you arrive?
- [ ] Have you considered any additional needs - learning support, counselling, social anxiety?

> **Pack comfort items for children**
>
> The gap between arriving and your container reaching NZ can be several weeks. Pack familiar toys, books, and comfort items in your carry luggage - they matter more than you'd think.

SUPPORTING YOUR PARTNER

- [ ] Have you honestly discussed both partners' expectations, fears, and non-negotiables?
- [ ] If your partner is giving up a career, is there a concrete plan for rebuilding it in NZ?
- [ ] Is there a plan to help an accompanying partner build social connections independently?
- [ ] Have you discussed what 'success' looks like for both of you - not just the primary visa holder?

4 READY TO GO

CLOSING ACCOUNTS & CANCELLING SERVICES

- [ ] Phone and internet contracts - cancelled or transferred?
- [ ] TV licence, streaming services, and subscriptions - cancelled?
- [ ] Gym, club, and association memberships - cancelled?
- [ ] Household, vehicle, and medical insurance - cancelled or transitioned?
- [ ] Recurring direct debits and standing orders - reviewed and stopped?
- [ ] Mail forwarding - arranged?
- [ ] Have you updated your address with banks, insurance providers, and government agencies?
- [ ] Have you arranged for someone to handle mail and unexpected correspondence after you leave?
- [ ] Have you arranged Power of Attorney for a trusted person to handle remaining matters after departure?

> **Switch bank authorisations before you leave**
>
> If your bank uses SMS authorisation for transactions, switch to email-based authorisation now - your NZ phone number will be different and you could be locked out of your account.

FINAL APPOINTMENTS

- [ ] Doctor - final check-up, prescriptions, and referral letters completed?
- [ ] Dentist - treatment completed before you lose access to your current provider?
- [ ] Optometrist - prescription updated?
- [ ] Any specialist treatment plans - documented and transferred to your NZ GP?

TRAVEL & FINAL LOGISTICS

- [ ] Flights booked and confirmed?
- [ ] Additional baggage allowance requested from your airline for migration?
- [ ] International travel insurance in place?
- [ ] Have you made certified copies of all critical documents - birth certificates, marriage certificates, qualifications?
- [ ] Essentials for first 4–8 weeks accessible in luggage - not in the shipping container?
- [ ] Important documents - passports, visas, birth certificates, qualifications - in your carry-on?
- [ ] Farewell plans with family and friends - time set aside to say goodbye properly?

You're nearly there!

This checklist is just the beginning. Before you can start your new life, you need to know you're eligible to live it - and navigating immigration rules, visa options and eligibility criteria alone is overwhelming.

The Lemonaide team can walk you through your options, assess your eligibility, and give you the clarity you need to take your next step with confidence. Don't guess your way through one of the biggest decisions of your life.

Book an initial consultation with our Licensed Immigration Adviser to turn your immigration questions into a clear path forward.

www.lemonaide.nz | info@lemonaide.nz

This checklist is a general guide only. It is not exhaustive and does not constitute legal or immigration advice. Always seek professional advice for your individual circumstances.