

New Zealand

New Zealand is known worldwide for its outdoor activities and stunning natural scenery, but as the recent government-led marketing campaign emphasises, the country also boasts a first class education system.

Agent comments

"[We get] many enquiries for undergraduate as well as postgraduate programmes in New Zealand. We make sure that our team of educational counsellors believe in what they are selling. It's a wonderful country with very friendly people. Students are always amazed by the cleanliness and marvel over the unpolluted air."

Siang Chow, Selsat Enterprise, Malaysia

"We [get] some enquiries [asking for] further study in New Zealand. Students [want to go there because they] have friends or relatives in New Zealand. They [also] believe the tuition and living fees are cheaper than other countries. New Zealand is a beautiful place [and is also] quiet and peaceful."

Mandy Lee, PEC Overseas, Hong Kong

"The main reason for students wanting to study in New Zealand are lower tuition fees and living expenses – compared to the UK and the USA – internationally recognised education, safe and politically stable environment and the climate. [It is] a very friendly, culturally rich country, which has a lot to offer students."

Monika Lalji, Information and Advice Centre, Kenya

Although it has been overshadowed in the past by its larger Australian neighbour, New Zealand has been growing in popularity as a study destination in recent years and, with many attributes to recommend itself, it is not hard to see why. With a breathtaking natural landscape and a high quality education system, New Zealand has much to offer international students seeking all types of different educational opportunities.

"The University of Canterbury has it all," reports Farida Memon at the university, which is based in Christchurch. "An international reputation for academic excellence, a brilliant location deep in the South Pacific, a mild climate, close [proximity] to both the sea and the mountains with fantastic recreational opportunities, [and] internationally competitive fees and living costs approximately half what they would cost in the USA or UK."

Simon Calvert, from Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT) in New Plymouth, which offers bachelor degrees in visual arts, nursing and information systems, adds, "Students choose [our institution] when they are serious about a quality education and an outdoors lifestyle." He explains that a number of students choose to study English language prior to entering full-time degree programmes.

Many institutions in New Zealand offer different routes into higher education courses through foundation and language programmes. John Chemis, from Tairāwhiti Polytechnic, explains that their institution offers international students

courses that link into other institutions and university diploma and degree courses. "The pathways from our institution to larger ones are seen as very attractive [to international students]," he says.

At Northland Polytechnic in Whangarei, the small class sizes and academic pathways to "most New Zealand universities" are also popular with international students, according to Tracey Morris. She adds that the biggest demand is for business, IT and hospitality programmes and points out that international students can get credits for courses completed at the polytechnic that count towards their final qualification when they go on to university. "This makes us an ideal place for international students to start their studies before they move on to a university," she asserts.

As well as conventional education courses, New Zealand is also an ideal destination to undertake other types of training, such as flying. Linda Wilson, from International Aviation Academy NZ in Christchurch, says, "Low fees are an initial attraction – it's comparatively cheap to fly in New Zealand. According to the international students who started in January, they felt this was the best place in the world to come."

Aviation students get to see a lot of the country due to the nature of their training but there are plenty of opportunities for all international students to explore New Zealand's many natural treasures at ground level. At the University of Canterbury, international support staff coordinate trips for students. "[We organise visits to] historical sights or fun parks, ski trips, a boat cruise on Lyttleton Harbour and picnic on the outlying islands, trips to Akaroa – a French settlement – a boat cruise to view the dolphins and visits to the natural hot springs at Hanmer," says Memon. The student support also runs a programme called "Operation Friendship" that allows international students to "adopt a Kiwi family should they want that interaction", says Memon.

Students can take part in a wide variety of outdoor sporting pursuits throughout New Zealand, some of which are more unusual than others. Calvert claims, "Taranaki is the only place in New Zealand you can go tandem surfing or dam

Selection of higher education institutions in New Zealand

Name	Location	Pay agency commission	No. of students	% int. students
Aoraki Polytechnic	Timaru	✓	1,300	8
Int. Aviation Academy NZ	Christchurch	✓	70	26
Northland Polytechnic	Whangarei	✓	1,500	7
Tairāwhiti Polytechnic	Tairāwhiti	✓	1,000	12
University of Canterbury	Christchurch	✓	12,000	11
Waikato Inst. of Technology	Hamilton	✓	1,400	10
Wairariki Inst. of Technology	Rotorua	✓	6,500	5
Western Inst. of Tech. at Taranaki	New Plymouth	✓	5,000	5
Whitireia Community Polytechnic	Wellington	✓	6,000	6

dropping." He adds, "With 21 golf courses, 40 trout streams, five heritage trails, mountain climbing and walkways, Taranaki is overwhelmed with active options. There's no shortage of good surf, good fishing and breathtaking coastal walks."

Students at Taranaki may also notice a distinctive 45-metre-high kinetic sculpture called the Wind Wand on New Plymouth's foreshore and Calvert says that this is just one example of the unique talents of the local people. "Throughout Taranaki are incredibly talented artists who seem to create art and crafts from almost anything – wood, clay, bone, even possum skin," he says.

With a total population of just 3.8 million, many of New Zealand's cities and towns are fairly small by global standards. Chemis from Tairāwhiti believes this can help international students fit into the local community. "Being a small city, it is easy to get involved [in local community activities]," he says. "A good example is a local soccer team made up of 10 of our students from various countries plus other locals from different parts of the world."

Irene Robb, from Waikato Institute of Technology in Hamilton, emphasises New Zealand's unique friendly atmosphere. "We are seen as a relatively safe country and in Hamilton we are a small city and more friendly to international students than some larger cities," she asserts.

At Whitireia Polytechnic, near Wellington, international students also have the opportunity to take part in local cricket or rugby teams or even go sailing on a yacht, according to Gerda Yska. "Our community is keen to support our students in any way they can," she says.

Staying in a host family can be a good way for international students to integrate themselves into the local community and this is often a popular accommodation choice. Adrian Kerr, from Aoraki International College, says that 40 per cent of their international students stay with host families, with the remainder staying in hostels or student flats. "There are not so many international students in our area to have provoked any community resentments so students feel pretty relaxed about commuting widely in the community," he says.

○ PHOTOGRAPH: TOURISM NEW ZEALAND