

Outdoor life in NZ

An exhilarating country offering thrilling landscapes and adrenalin-fuelled fun for those in search of man-made adventure, New Zealand sounds like an inviting study destination with high quality, caring schools and welcoming cities too. AMY BAKER reports.

Students who choose New Zealand are often looking for something 'different' – a unique experience to treasure forever," says Currie Moore, Marketing Coordinator at Kaplan Aspect for New Zealand. And New Zealand certainly gives them that, with its dramatic scenery, wild and rugged south island and subtropical north island.

Gus Fahy, Manager of Language Schools New Zealand in Christchurch and Queenstown, testifies that indeed, students intent on study in New Zealand often have an expectation about what their study trip will be like. "Most students who come to New Zealand have an understanding about its natural beauty and reputation as a country where you can have a wide range of experiences without having to travel long distances," he says.



One of Languages International's historic buildings in Auckland

With compact, manageable cities and a relaxed lifestyle, New Zealand is of course more than its impressive landscape alone, but this single factor, made famous by the Lord of the Rings trilogy of films, is the country's best selling point. "We offer a beautiful environment to travel in before or after [students] study," declares Darren Conway of Languages International, which has schools in both Auckland and Christchurch. He adds that New Zealand's advantage "is in outdoor activities – sailing, swimming, diving, surfing, hiking, mountain biking, kayaking".

Students in New Zealand are pretty assured of doing some sort of sailing or sea travel, not least because they are likely to travel from one island to the other. The north island is the demographic hub of New Zealand, with around three-quarters of the population living up there, despite its smaller size. Home to the cities of Auckland and Wellington, the island is fringed with sparkling harbours and beaches and covered by rugged volcanic mountain ranges, vast forests and with a lake in the centre.

The south island, meanwhile, has a reputation for being the adventure destination, with Queenstown and Christchurch popular stops for students. With a backbone of the southern Alps running through the island, this part of New Zealand has many rocks and peaks, as well as fantastic fjords, and students can, as Fahy points out,

ski and sunbathe in the same day. "Where else in the world can you be in the mountains in the morning and at the beach in the afternoon?" he says.

Moore echoes this point. "In Christchurch, our students have the opportunity to enjoy skiing/snowboarding in the winter and fantastic surfing in the summer months," he says. "In general, students spend their free time participating in our great activities programme or studying in local parks." Other activities that are typical in this area include whale watching or relaxing in hot pools at the alpine retreat of Hanmer Spring. And while in the city of Christchurch itself, students can enjoy travelling on a tram and soaking up the English atmosphere, with cobbled streets and gardens adding to this ambience.

The Kaplan Aspect school in the city is just behind Christchurch Cathedral, says Moore, "in a beautiful art deco building". Meanwhile, Fahy at Language Schools New Zealand describes his school as being a small, friendly, "at home" style school. "All our classrooms open into a common area that links with the kitchen and games area," he says. "Students can play pool or table tennis with anyone who wants to."

In Auckland, the Languages International school was so appealing that it led Darren Conway to get his job in the organisation. He relates, "I started work here because I was walking past one day and looked up and decided it looked like a nice place to work, and so went in and asked about work." The school occupies four historic buildings in a park, right opposite a large university and close to the city centre and harbour.

Auckland is sandwiched between two harbours, in fact, and known as the City of Sails because it is said to have more boats per capita than anywhere else in the world. Its reputation for upmarket shopping, culture and Pacific Rim cuisine also means that Auckland is a city that most students want to spend some time in. The nightlife at Viaduct

Harbour, colourful Victoria Park Market or high-end shopping street, Chancery Lane, all appeal to students.

“Near Worldwide School, there are many restaurants, cafés, shops, bars, movie theatres, the central train station and many important companies and buildings as well as the beautiful harbour area,” says Cleve Brown at Worldwide School of English in the city. He explains, “We are inside the Strand Building, a four-storey classic Victorian 1900s building. We have classrooms, a prayer room, recreation area, a kitchen and bathrooms on the third floor and on the fourth floor, a teachers’ room, library/self study area, Internet room, movie theatre, outdoor deck area, student lounge/kitchen and more classrooms.”

Brown explains that the school organises many tours and trips to encourage students to make the most of their time in New Zealand. “The most common and popular weekend trips are Rotorua, Lake Taupo, Waitomo Caves, Bay of Islands, Mount Ruapehu (for skiing and snowboarding), Coromandel and Lakewood Lodge Farm,” he says, adding that activities such as wine tasting and horse riding are also arranged.



PHOTOGRAPH: TOURISM NEW ZEALAND

Lakewood Lodge is an “adventure farmstay” where students can enjoy kayaking, a water slide, raft building, a climbing wall, country cooking, horse trekking and grooming among other options. Rotorua is the heartland of Maori culture; it’s also home to many lakes, geothermal activity and thermal spas. Just minutes from the city centre there are geysers, boiling pools of mud, silica terraces, mud fumaroles and volcanoes, and everywhere, there is the distinctive smell of sulphur!

Meanwhile, the coastal Coromandel region offers golden and white beaches and nearby forest, many walking trails and marine reserves. Here, native New Zealanders are said to go on holiday. Julie Delaney, Principal of Kaplan Aspect in Christchurch on the south island, acknowledges, “The great outdoors is so accessible. Students have the opportunity to study during the week and experience the



Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland near Rotorua features geysers, bubbling mud, steaming ground and volcano craters

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At the world's best-loved bungee site, there are a number of options; topple over backwards, forwards, with another person, spin or somersault. Kawarau Bridge Bungee is also the only bungee in Queenstown where you can choose to bob above the water, touch it, or be fully immersed

natural beauty that New Zealand offers during the weekend." However, she adds that her students are more likely to go to Abel Tasman National Park and Queenstown from there.

Queenstown is another obvious choice for students, given its reputation as an adventure capital. On the shores of Lake Wakatipu, in the shadow of snowcapped mountains (the Remarkables), Queenstown offers a breathtaking backdrop for adrenalin-inducing activities, such as bungee jumping, jet boating, white water rafting and hang-gliding. Described as a "four season" resort, Queenstown offers easily accessible

snowboarding or skiing in winter and boating, horse trekking, mountain biking and golfing in other seasons. "There is something for everyone here," says Tricia Lund at ABC College of English in Queenstown, "whether students come in spring to see the blossom everywhere, summer - to enjoy hot sunny days and warm evenings, autumn, to see the changing colours of the leaves, or winter, for snow sports."

Fahy, who runs one of his schools in Queenstown, underlines that as well as enjoying New Zealand, students feel that the school is an inclusive community, while Lund points to an English-only rule. Fahy observes, "We offer an environment where our students, teachers and staff are able to get to know each other and learn about different cultures and values through the common medium of English. Seeing the culture exchanges and sharing students' experience of seeing their own culture from a new perspective is what makes this one of the most exciting jobs there is."

Agent viewpoint



"NZ is quite similar to Switzerland although it's a little bigger. Auckland offers a lot for students who like to be in a big town; there is always something going on. Christchurch is a nice and friendly middle-size town which offers a lot of activities. Queenstown is the place for very active students that like to do lots of sport activities. And Napier is a paradise for people who love nature."

Edith Staller, Sema Sprachreisen, Switzerland



"Brazilian students are looking for friendly and talkative people and New Zealanders are just that. NZ is a very beautiful place with different places to suit everyone, for example: if someone likes the beach, he/she will find plenty there; if someone likes mountains, he/she will find them there; if someone wants to explore nature, NZ is the place to be. For those who like sports, NZ is the right choice: bungee jumping, rafting, surfing, sailing, and all other radical sports. The food and the wine are very good too. And for Brazilians, the subject of food is so important!"

Kassiana Pozzatti, Friends in the World, Brazil



"NZ is a great country and an exciting destination for students. They get in contact easily with people from all over the world as well as Kiwis who are very friendly, open-minded and make you feel welcome right away. NZ is a very diverse country with different landscapes and climate zones, at the same time it's very modern too, especially big cities like Auckland. Most of our clients who go to NZ want to enjoy nature, spend time on sightseeing, meet new people and try new things."

Nina Westermann, Carpe Diem Sprachreisen, Germany

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