

Hot property

If you're planning a move to New Zealand, do take into account your preferred lifestyle when searching for property, writes **Mary O'Brien**

For the second year running, the Global Peace Index has again ranked New Zealand as the world's most peaceful nation. Mercer 2010 Quality of Living Lifestyle also ranked Auckland as the fourth most liveable place in the world. It was even ranked the eighth 'Happiest Country in the World' in a recent Gallup Poll.

This is a country where British residents find a country that offers a similar way of life to the one that they are used to. It offers excellent food, education, outdoor sports, fantastic sightseeing and a moderate climate. It is also a country that offers an improved lifestyle for many Brits, who find it more relaxed, and are attracted by its financially less-stressed way of life.

WHERE TO LIVE

While you are still in the UK you need to do your homework, and where you are going to live will be the key decision. You will need to take into account your preferred lifestyle, the price of the property you wish to purchase, your job prospects and salary, good school zones for your kids and the type of climate you are after.

If you want a city lifestyle then Auckland has the largest population and the best job prospects, but bear in mind that the average house price in Auckland is the highest in New Zealand at NZ\$534,600 (£253,772) along with the average three-bedroom house rent of NZ\$350 (£166) to NZ\$600 (£284) per week. The climate tends to be moderate all-year-

round, with temperatures in the summer ranging from 22 to 30 degrees Centigrade.

If you want a less crowded city lifestyle then the main cities in the North Island like Tauranga or Wellington might appeal. In Tauranga the average house price is NZ\$409,000 (£194,170) and it offers a great climate, beaches and job prospects.

In the capital city of Wellington, the average house price is NZ\$454,600 (£263,489), and it offers good job prospects and beaches, although it isn't nicknamed the 'Windy City' for nothing!

In the South Island, the city of Christchurch is the closest to an English lifestyle that you'll get

If you want a city lifestyle, Auckland has the best job prospects

outside the UK. The average house price here is NZ\$359,000 (£170,463), and it has the benefits of being close to beaches, ski resorts and lakes. Dunedin may also appeal. More Scottish in feel, the average house price here is NZ\$269,000 (£170,433), and it has the benefits of being a small city located on the coast. But do take into account the colder South Island climate, lower cost of living and lower salaries that are likely to be experienced here.

The average price of a New Zealand home is NZ\$405,000

(£192,305) and statistics appear to show that property prices this year are 5.6 per cent higher than they were last year.

According to Quotable Value, consumer confidence has been returning after the recession and has flowed into the property market, but at the same time sales volumes are expected to remain static over the winter months.

GETTING A MORTGAGE

New immigrants to New Zealand may be able to obtain up to 80 per cent in finance from their mortgage provider. The first step before you leave UK or when you first arrive in New Zealand is to obtain 'financial confidence' by obtaining a bank pre-approval mortgage through a reputable and experienced New Zealand >>

USEFUL WEBSITES

- www.reinz.co.nz – Real Estate Institute of NZ (for property market facts)
- www.qv.co.nz – Quotable Value (for residential property reports)
- www.dbh.govt.nz/market-rent – Department of Building and Housing (for district rental averages)
- www.trademe.co.nz – TradeMe (for properties to rent or buy)
- www.taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz – Inland Revenue, New Zealand (for tax policy news)
- www.statistics.govt.nz – Government Statistic Department (for statistics-by-area)
- www.linz.govt.nz – Land Information NZ (for Government valuations, survey plans and maps)
- www.immigration.govt.nz – Immigration Department (for all immigration information)
- www.rbnz.govt.nz – Reserve Bank of NZ (for statistics on interest rates, housing, inflation etc)

Average Property Prices

Here is a city-by-city guide to average house prices in New Zealand, how they have grown and typical rental prices...

AUCKLAND REGION

Median Sales price:	NZ\$534,639
Quarterly growth:	0.60%
Annual value change:	8.80%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$350-595

HAMILTON

Median Sales price:	NZ\$350,722
Quarterly growth:	0.80%
Annual value change:	1.70%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$310

NEW PLYMOUTH

Median Sales price:	NZ\$346,852
Quarterly growth:	0.00%
Annual value change:	6.90%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$315

PALMERSTON NORTH

Median Sales price:	NZ\$295,685
Quarterly growth:	1.80%
Annual value change:	6.70%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$230

CHRISTCHURCH

Median Sales price:	NZ\$359,597
Quarterly growth:	-2.60%
Annual value change:	6.20%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$300

QUEENSTOWN

Median Sales price:	NZ\$574,636
Quarterly growth:	-4.10%
Annual value change:	0.80%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$420

INVERCARGILL

Median Sales price:	NZ\$216,938
Quarterly growth:	3.10%
Annual value change:	5.40%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$210

NELSON

Median Sales price:	NZ\$380,313
Quarterly growth:	7.50%
Annual value change:	6.30%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$340

DUNEDIN

Median Sales price:	NZ\$269,848
Quarterly growth:	-2.70%
Annual value change:	4.80%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$280

confidence as it advises how much you can borrow according to the salary you will earn and taking into

Bank pre-approval

will give you
financial confidence

account your personal savings or equity in existing UK property.

Applying to the right banks is extremely important. The

mortgage broker may be able to negotiate a special condition with a bank when the application is submitted, especially if you have a profession that is in demand.

INTEREST RATES

The Reserve Bank of New Zealand had not risen interest rates for nearly three years until June 2010 when the Reserve Bank increased the official cash rate by 0.25 per cent.

As of 1 July the average variable rate was between 5.9 per cent and

mortgage broker. This pre-approval will be valid from 90 to 150 days (depending on the bank).

If you have not purchased property in that time then the mortgage broker will update the bank with your information and roll it over for the same period again. You can also provide this bank pre-approval to your immigration consultant – this first step will give you financial

WHANGAREI

Median Sales price:	NZ\$339,999
Quarterly growth:	0.90%
Annual value change:	4.70%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$295

TAURANGA

Median Sales price:	NZ\$409,376
Quarterly growth:	-2.10%
Annual value change:	0.40%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$300

ROTORUA

Median Sales price:	NZ\$262,347
Quarterly growth:	7.00%
Annual value change:	-0.80%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$250

NAPIER

Median Sales price:	NZ\$344,934
Quarterly growth:	-0.90%
Annual value change:	6.50%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$300

HASTINGS

Median Sales price:	NZD\$320,672
Quarterly growth:	-6.80%
Annual value change:	6.00%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$300

WELLINGTON

Median Sales price:	NZD\$454,625
Quarterly growth:	-2.00%
Annual value change:	6.00%
Median weekly rent:	NZ\$390-580

6.2 per cent. Economists of the main banks, however, are writing about being cautious and splitting between fixed and variable rates. In other words don't leave everything on a variable rate!

■ **Mary O'Brien is a finance specialist for New Zealand Mortgage Solutions.**

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“We love the New Zealand lifestyle”

Nigel Cooksey describes moving with his family to Auckland last year...



Nigel moved with his wife Nancy and their 16-year-old daughter Louise from Manchester to Auckland in August 2009.

Nigel is a civil engineer and wanted a change of direction in his career to live in a warmer climate. He describes their move...

“I received an offer of employment before we left the UK and was issued with a five-year work permit by New Zealand Immigration. My wife also obtained a work permit for the same duration and Louise has a student permit.

“Before accepting the offer of employment I carried out research on the company and the country and made sure that it was the right choice for us.

“After arriving in Auckland we spent the first week looking for rental accommodation that would see us through the first six months. As we had decided only to bring personal and small household items with us, furnished accommodation was our preference. We found a house on the North Shore in a lovely location overlooking the coast.

“The area choice was governed by being in the catchment area of a good school for our daughter. In our case this was Rangitoto College. Louise took some time to settle in at school, but the following year she found her feet and made some good friends.

“During the first seven months we looked at 50 different properties with the idea of

purchasing. These ranged from timber frame homes to solid brick-built 60s-type houses of varying quality, from pristine to very poor. We also looked at the possibility of building, but the price of decent sections of land was prohibitive at the time.

“We contacted Mary at New Zealand Mortgage Solutions within a few months of arriving in New Zealand. She was very helpful and although based in Australia, being a Kiwi she had a good relationship with all the leading lending institutions in New Zealand. Having established how much we could afford as a deposit on a house, Mary contacted a number of lenders with proof of income and deposit, and within a few days had an application approved, which was an excellent result.

“We are still in rental property due to the depreciation of the UK pound against the Kiwi dollar, which has restricted us bringing in currency for the deposit. However we will keep in touch with Mary to extend our mortgage application pending an improvement in the exchange rates.

“New Zealand is a great place for families and we enjoy the lifestyle. The North Shore has fantastic beaches which do not get too crowded and are virtually on the doorstep wherever you live. Shopping centres here are modern and you can find virtually anything you need. Eating out is reasonably priced too and you get a good choice of cuisines.”

Get Approved Before You Leave



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