SUMMARY

Due to extreme weather conditions a Civil Defence Emergency was declared on New Zealand’s West Coast on 26 March 2019. State Highway 6 is down to one lane in many places between Hokitika and Makarora and is closed by a bridge washout between Fox and Franz Josef. Anyone considering travel to the West Coast should check the New Zealand Transport Agency website and the Civil Defence West Coast Facebook page.

If you’re visiting remote areas of New Zealand, make sure your journey details are known to local authorities or friends/relatives before setting out. Weather conditions can quickly become treacherous, especially in winter. See Local travel.

Terrorist attacks in New Zealand can’t be ruled out. See Terrorism.

Around 200,000 British nationals visit New Zealand every year. Most visits are trouble-free.

There’s no British representation on the Cook Islands, or the islands of Niue or Tokelau. You should contact the New Zealand High Commission if you need consular assistance on the Cook Islands or Niue. If you need consular assistance on Tokelau, contact the British High Commission in Wellington.

The Overseas Business Risk service offers information and advice for British companies operating overseas on how to manage political, economic, and business security-related risks.

Take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance before you travel. Make sure this covers you for all activities you plan to do while in New Zealand, including manual labour if you’re backpacking; and adventure sports like bungee jumping, diving and paragliding.

TERRORISM

Terrorist attacks in New Zealand can’t be ruled out. You should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate terrorist attacks, which could be in public places including those visited by foreigners.

On 15 March 2019, a series of shootings took place at the Al Noor and Linwood mosques in Christchurch. Fifty people have been killed and many more injured.
There’s a heightened threat of terrorist attack globally against UK interests and British nationals, from groups or individuals motivated by the conflict in Iraq and Syria. You should be vigilant at this time.

Find out more about the [global threat from terrorism](#), how to minimise your risk and what to do in the event of a terrorist attack.

**SAFETY AND SECURITY**

**Crime**

Crime levels are generally low, but street crime occurs in major towns and cities. Thefts from unattended vehicles, especially hire cars and camper vans in major tourist areas (the Coromandel Peninsula, Rotorua and Queenstown) have increased. There has also been an increase in the number of thefts from hotel rooms in some tourist areas. Don’t leave possessions in unattended vehicles even if out of sight in a locked boot. Don’t leave valuables in hotel rooms. Use the hotel safe if possible. Keep passports, travellers’ cheques, credit cards, etc separate.

**Local travel**

There have been a number of tragic accidents involving British visitors, including during extreme sports activities. If you are taking part in extreme sports check that the company is well established in the industry and that your insurance covers you. If you are visiting remote areas, check with local tourist authorities for advice before setting out. Make sure you register your details with a visitor information centre or leave details with family or friends. Weather conditions can quickly become treacherous in some areas. Keep yourself informed of regional weather forecasts.

**Road travel**

Due to extreme weather conditions a Civil Defence Emergency was declared on New Zealand’s West Coast on 26 March 2019. State Highway 6 is down to one lane in many places between Hokitika and Makarora and is closed by a bridge washout between Fox and Franz Josef. Anyone considering travel to the West Coast should check the [New Zealand Transport Agency website](#) and the [Civil Defence West Coast Facebook page](#).

The 14 November 2016 earthquake caused significant damage to roads and rail in the Canterbury region between Christchurch and Picton, making some areas inaccessible. For the latest information on road closures, see the [New Zealand Transport Agency website](#).

You can use a UK driving licence to drive in New Zealand for up to a maximum of 12 months.

Although road conditions are generally good in New Zealand, it takes a while to get used to local driving conditions. Even the main highways can be narrow, winding and hilly. Read a copy of the [Road Code](#) - the official guide to traffic rules and traffic safety - before driving. Car rental companies should provide you with information about [Whats Different About Driving in New Zealand](#).
In 2013 there were 254 road deaths in New Zealand (source: Department for Transport). This equates to 5.6 road deaths per 100,000 of population and compares to the UK average of 2.8 road deaths per 100,000 of population in 2013.

You should take out private motor vehicle insurance. Accident victims don’t have a legal right to sue a third party in the event of an accident in New Zealand. Instead the Accident Compensation Commission (ACC) helps pay for your care if you’re injured as a result of an accident. However, the ACC only covers the cost of treatment in New Zealand and delayed travel or loss of income in a third country isn’t covered. You should therefore make sure you have adequate travel and accident insurance.

Helmet laws are in force in the Cook Islands. Anyone using a bicycle, motorcycle or scooter must wear an approved helmet at all times.

**LOCAL LAWS AND CUSTOMS**

Importing illegal drugs is punishable by up to 8 - 12 years' imprisonment.

New Zealand has an established tradition of tolerance towards homosexuality, but there are still isolated incidents of homophobic related crimes. LGBT travellers should be aware of local sensitivities, particularly when visiting rural areas. See our [information and advice page](#) for the LGBT community before you travel.

If you travel to the Cook Islands or the Islands of Niue or Tokelau, check local customs and courtesies with local visitors’ offices.

**NATURAL DISASTERS**

New Zealand is located in a seismic zone and is subject to earthquakes. There are also a number of active volcanoes in New Zealand. Follow the advice of the local authorities and emergency services in the event of a natural disaster. To learn more about what to do before, during and after an earthquake, see the [New Zealand Earthquake Commission](https://www.earthquake.org.nz) and [Get Ready Get Thru](https://www.getready.gov.nz) websites.

To learn more about what to do before, during and after an earthquake, see the [New Zealand Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management](https://www.civildefence.govt.nz), [New Zealand Earthquake Commission](https://www.earthquake.org.nz) and [Get Ready Get Thru](https://www.getready.gov.nz) websites. If a major earthquake or landslide occurs close to shore, you should follow the instructions of local authorities, bearing in mind that a tsunami could arrive within minutes.

**ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**

The information on this page covers the most common types of travel and reflects the UK government’s understanding of the rules currently in place. Unless otherwise stated, this information is for travellers using a full ‘British Citizen’ passport.

The authorities in the country or territory you’re travelling to are responsible for setting and enforcing the rules for entry. If you’re unclear about any aspect of the entry requirements, or you need further reassurance, you’ll need to contact the [embassy, high commission or consulate](#) of the country or territory you’re travelling to.
You should also consider checking with your transport provider or travel company to make sure your passport and other travel documents meet their requirements.

**Passport validity**

Your passport should be valid for a minimum period of one month from the date of exit from New Zealand.

**Visas**

British passport holders can enter New Zealand as a visitor for up to 6 months on arrival without a visa, provided you can satisfy an Immigration Officer that you meet the requirements of the immigration rules. Visitors must have an onward ticket.

New Zealand’s immigration rules are strict, particularly regarding employment. Visitors cannot work in New Zealand.

For more information about visas, visit the [New Zealand Immigration](https://www.immigration.govt.nz) website or contact the nearest [New Zealand High Commission](https://www.nzhighcommission.gov.uk).

**UK Emergency Travel Documents**

UK [Emergency Travel Documents](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-emergency-travel-documents) (ETDs) are valid for entry into New Zealand when accompanied by a permanent residence, work or study visa. ETDs are accepted for holiday-makers as long as New Zealand is not the final destination. ETDs are also accepted for airside transit and exit from New Zealand.

**Quarantine and bio security**

New Zealand has very strict [bio-security regulations](https://www.agrodex.govt.nz). It is illegal to import most foodstuffs (meat and meat products, honey, fruit, dairy produce) and strict penalties are handed out to those breaking these rules. Take care when importing wood products, golf clubs, footwear, tents, fishing equipment and items made from animal skin. The immigration arrivals card has full details. If in doubt, declare items to a Ministry of Agriculture official or dump them in one of the bins available at the airport. Failure to comply with these regulations can result in a heavy fine of up to $100,000 or imprisonment.

**Medication**

There are some restrictions on bringing medication into New Zealand. Visit the [New Zealand Customs website](https://www.customs.govt.nz) for more information. If you arrive in New Zealand with any prescription medicines, you must declare it on your passenger arrival card.

**Yellow fever certificate requirements**

If you’re travelling to the island of Niue, check whether you need a yellow fever certificate by visiting the National Travel Health Network and Centre’s [TravellHealthPro website](https://www.travellhealthpro.ac.uk).
HEALTH

At least 8 weeks before your trip, check the latest country-specific health advice from the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) on the TravelHealthPro website. Each country-specific page has information on vaccine recommendations, any current health risks or outbreaks, and factsheets with information on staying healthy abroad. Guidance is also available from NHS (Scotland) on the FitForTravel website.

General information on travel vaccinations and a travel health checklist is available on the NHS website. You may then wish to contact your health adviser or pharmacy for advice on other preventive measures and managing any pre-existing medical conditions while you’re abroad.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in the UK can be different in other countries. If you’re travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you’ll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you’re travelling to.

Under a reciprocal health agreement, UK nationals who live in the UK and who are on a short-term visit to New Zealand are eligible for immediately necessary healthcare under the health system on the same terms as citizens of New Zealand. You should show your UK passport when requested.

Despite this reciprocal agreement and the Accident Compensation Commission you should make sure you have adequate travel health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment abroad and repatriation.

Medical facilities in the Cook Islands and the islands of Niue and Tokelau are limited. In the event of a medical emergency, evacuation to mainland New Zealand is likely to be the only option for treatment. Make sure your insurance policy covers this eventuality.

Mosquito borne viruses, including dengue, chikungunya and Zika, have been reported in the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau (although there have been no reported cases of Zika virus within the last 9 months). You should take suitable steps to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. The type of mosquito that is able to spread these viruses isn’t normally found on mainland New Zealand.

Research has shown that asthma sufferers may be more at risk of an attack in New Zealand and sufferers should be suitably prepared.

If you need emergency medical assistance during your trip, dial 111 and ask for an ambulance. You should contact your insurance/medical assistance company promptly if you are referred to a medical facility for treatment.