



Home again:

Why Kiwis are returning
to New Zealand



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What goes up to the UK on an OE must come down again, or at least, that’s what the numbers are saying.

Heading overseas to work has been something of a rite of passage for many Kiwis, but now the tides are turning and more are abandoning their foreign endeavours in favour of returning home.

This shift has only occurred very recently. In 2012, for example, 22,400 Kiwis came home, but 61,800 went overseas for a year or longer, so the total loss of Kiwis was 39,400. In 2016, there was a net loss of only 3,500 New Zealand citizens, Statistics New Zealand states.

The last time the difference between the number of Kiwis arriving and departing from New Zealand was this small was 25 years ago. These figures show a clear trend - more Kiwis are bungee-ing home.

/ What's bringing Kiwis home?

One of the biggest reversals in migration has been the trend of Kiwis jumping the ditch to Australia. For the first time in decades, more people are moving back to New Zealand from Australia instead of the other way round.

The number of Kiwis going to Australia is also hitting a new low - only 20,200 Kiwis left in 2016, compared with 48,600 in 2012, the year Australia's mining boom peaked. In 2017, the pendulum has swung the other way and many of the jobs that lured people over are no longer in existence, with Kiwis being enticed home instead by a buoyant economy, a strong labour market and significant skills shortages.

"The New Zealand economy has been doing well, our dollar has been strengthening against our competitors around the globe and Kiwis are seeing more opportunity back here in New Zealand," JacksonStone & Partners Director David Hollander explains. "We've got good job growth and low unemployment, as well as strong economies in the main centres such as Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch."

What's happening on the world stage has also influenced the trend of coming home. Australia's weakening economy, as well as political upsets in the UK and US have made the grass seem greener in New Zealand.

"We're seeing a lot of Kiwis returning from England as a direct result of Brexit and a lot of Kiwis coming back from Australia. We're also getting a lot more enquiries from people leaving the United States which has coincided with the US election outcome," says David.

The relaxed, cheerful atmosphere of New Zealand is also a drawcard for many people. "I think people coming home generally still find New Zealand a much easier place to live than where they've been overseas. It's a friendly environment," David comments.

Then there is the quality of education and leisure to be enjoyed, factoring into many parents' decisions to raise their kids at home. "You can live in the big city but still be close to a beach and be able to enjoy the outdoors. It's a good environment to bring kids up in. We get a number of comments from people returning home who've said they went overseas to work, got married, had children, and now they're bringing them home for schooling."

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Back on home turf: What can Kiwis expect when they arrive home?

Kiwis returning to New Zealand will certainly spot a few differences.

In David's words, New Zealand has "grown up a lot" since many Kiwis went overseas. Those returning after a long stint overseas will be welcomed with new growth and opportunities. Once upon a time, people left to seek out good roles overseas - now, the narrative is changing and there are more jobs available at home.

Returning New Zealanders can look forward to a wider range of roles that they can slot into and take ownership of, bringing the weight of experience garnered overseas.

The skills they bring with them hold returnees in good stead as they step into good positions demanding high levels of expertise.



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"People typically leave when they're young, go on their OE then come home and bring lots of skills from their work offshore with them back into the country," David points out.

On the flip side of that, the number of people returning home, combined with higher net migration, does mean more people vying for these roles. Often, and particularly at the senior level, people need to adjust their salary expectation to reflect the domestic market if they have been working in major overseas markets.

"There is still a lot of competition from a candidate perspective for roles, so although the job vacancies are higher, the number of people looking for them is higher as well," David cautions.

Getting back into the swing of things: What are the main issues Kiwis face as they re-integrate?

Slipping back into a life of jandals, barbecues and beers by the beach seems like it would be easy enough.

It's not all sunny skies though - as all Kiwis know, there are bound to be a few rainy spells as well. Returning New Zealanders may run into a few roadbumps as they readjust to life at home.

David notes that one of the common problems people face when coming home is the pace of life. "Sometimes people take a while to adjust to the pace of things here, because we don't operate at breakneck speed. You can live in Auckland or Wellington, and sometimes the pace of life is still a bit slower to what people might have been used to overseas, which takes a bit of getting used to."

Another hurdle can be introducing family acquired overseas to life in New Zealand. David's advice when hiring someone from overseas is to ensure the whole family of a candidate is well looked after, so they can settle comfortably into the local community.

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/ Looking ahead

In an era of global uncertainty, New Zealand remains a haven of security and stability. Consistently ranking as one of the most peaceful and least corrupt countries in the world, the values and lifestyle that New Zealand represents are becoming increasingly attractive to Kiwis at home and abroad.

"I think we will continue to see people coming back to New Zealand and I also think at the moment overall the economy is going well and it's got signs of continuing that for some time to come," David concludes.

Returning home and settling back into the Kiwi lifestyle is easier when you have an experienced executive search and recruitment consultancy to ease the transition.

JacksonStone & Partners has the know-how needed to assist Kiwis in finding their feet back on home ground.

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