

Where Shall John Go?

New Zealand

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Perhaps it was pre-membership depression which drove me away from the front articles into the realms of overseas fancy, or just the prospect of gloomy interviews and the possibility of buying another house we didn't really like (and could only just afford). Whatever the stimulus, fancy became fact and four months later we arrived with great relief in New Zealand. Five weeks in a wardrobe (hereinafter called a cabin) was not quite the sea cruise conjured up by the travel agent. But that is all water under the bridge and, being in the stern, we felt each ripple. This is an example of "whingeing" for which we British are infamous. One of the causes of this "English disease" is a pre-conception of "Britain in the South," which, in spite of the origins of a significant number of the three million population, New Zealand is not and has no desire to be. Of course there are similarities, but 12 000 miles and 100 years make this a very unreasonable expectation.

New Zealand offers a wide range of opportunities to all those prepared to go and look for them, whether these be recreational or in the field of medicine. The emphasis is go and look, not wait and see.

Hospital appointments

New Zealand still has a two-tier health system. General practice has a fee for service arrangement of which part is paid by the Government. In hospital practice, major hospitals are "public" hospitals employing both whole-time and part-time medical staff; private hospitals are usually structurally and financially separate. In addition to the two medical schools and two clinical schools in the four main centres, the country is served by base hospitals similar to the district general hospitals, providing a varied range of general and specialist experience.

Junior staff appointments begin in early November and are usually made to the hospital rather than to specific firms. At house surgeon level (a general term here) the rotation occurs every three months and the programme of "runs" is hopefully designed to provide a comprehensive one- or two-year course and most include anaesthetics and at least one minor specialty. Two-year schemes may include paediatrics and obstetrics. Casualty duties are usually covered by house surgeons for definite periods. Registrar appointments are mainly six-monthly rotating posts, but may be for fixed periods as part of advanced training programmes in specialised units. Fifth and final year students from New Zealand and Australia are encouraged to undertake elective periods in peripheral hospitals as part of their training.

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Large hospitals provide good clinical experience, and many, at basic or advanced level, are linked to college training schemes. In medicine the Australasian membership (MRACP) has been changed and now comprises a single two-part examination (a multiple-choice hurdle), with, one month later, a clinically orientated examination for the survivors. Successful candidates then undertake a minimum of three years' advanced training in supervised specialist posts locally or overseas and, on satisfactorily completing this course, are elected to fellowship of Royal Australasian College of Physicians. Members of the British colleges may apply for exemption from the examination part of the scheme and, provided they have fulfilled advanced training requirements, may be admitted to the fellowship after an interview.

General practice

General practice work is intriguing and well paid. Laboratory facilities are readily available free of charge to the patient, and many practices in smaller towns supervise the local hospital. All deliveries are in hospital, and obstetrics is, therefore, a requirement for general practice. Many hospitals incorporate general practice training schemes for residents. The Health Department's ideal figure of one doctor per two thousand population has not been met and numerous vacancies exist.

How to get there

An entry permit is necessary; three varieties exist, but only one is in anyway suitable. This is the permanent resident visa, which, although a little alarming to one's relatives, is the most adaptable. The one-year permit is tempting, but has limitations in that it is for only 12 months, and is not renewable while resident in New Zealand. An additional disadvantage is that a condition of entry on this visa is that return tickets are required or their financial equivalent. Processing of these applications may take several months and so early application is essential.

Further information is available from New Zealand House in the Haymarket (there is also a good bookshop in the arcade at the rear which sells most of the New Zealand books available, literary or scenic).

Travel

By air, the non-stop 22-hour flight ensures that you arrive several days ahead of your equilibrium in a country which is 12 hours out of phase, has summer over Christmas, and whose telephone dials are numbered clockwise. Also if you arrive in December or January it is virtually impossible to get a flight, car, or train unless you have booked several weeks in advance. This may be possible through your travel agent. The alternative flight, with a two-day stopover (included in the fare) is strongly advocated and a number of companies provide this facility.

Most overseas flights arrive in Auckland, but it is worth checking Wellington or Christchurch destinations, especially if stopovers are being arranged.

It takes five weeks by sea via South Africa, or through the Panama Canal, by cruise ship, and perhaps less than that on a passenger cargo vessel. As immigration schemes have now ceased, so may the overcrowding. A working passage has the problem of indefinite sailing dates, long waiting lists, and a distinct preference for round-trippers. The main advantage of sea travel is that the baggage allowance is much larger; excess baggage, if accompanied, is also cheaper and arrives with you rather than several months later (if at all). Some passenger vessels also carry cars. Baggage should be heavily insured, strongly crated, and metal-banded to protect against adverse sea and port conditions. There are few restrictions on importing personal goods and household effects, but all goods are subject to customs declaration and Department of Agriculture inspection. The latter department is concerned with all equipment which has been exposed to farms or the soil in general. It is advisable to put such items in accessible places. A helpful pamphlet may be obtained from New Zealand House.

Normal economy class sea or air fares for immediate accompanied family are refunded by employing authorities when you sign a two-year agreement (half the fare for one year), and part of excess baggage and transportation costs may also be refunded. This amount is related to status, professional and marital, and to length of contract. Specialists are usually contracted for three-year periods and up to \$1400 may be claimed. The maximum for junior staff is \$150.

Cost of living

The cost of living is high and salaries are adjusted automatically with each rise. Manufactured goods, including clothing, are expensive by British standards. Car prices are astounding and new cars must be paid for in cash. Even secondhand vehicles require 60% down payment, even for a bank loan. With these figures it is tempting to import your own car and, provided it has been in your possession for 15 months on arrival in New Zealand, it is exempt from import duties. Petrol is rapidly approaching UK prices and, in an attempt to save fuel, an 80 kph speed limit has been imposed on all roads. Food prices are similar to the United Kingdom with the exception of milk products and meat (which allows the move up from "mince" to fillet). New Zealand wines are generally good, some exceptionally so. Very reasonably priced they make a pleasant change from plonk ("appellation contrôlé," of course).

Accommodation

In hospital posts, married accommodation is provided for all newly arrived medical staff, at least on a temporary basis, at a nominal rent. Privately rented accommodation seems fairly expensive to one from the "provinces," beginning at about \$30 a week for a furnished house rising steeply in the main towns. Flats are slightly cheaper, but compete with the university for tenants (their term beginning in March).

Real estate prices are higher this year (as usual). A typical house is of wooden construction and single-storeyed, and is sold complete with cooker. Most are freehold with reasonably sized gardens—the traditional quarter-acre section is passing into legend. There is enormous regional fluctuation in prices and an average price would be \$30 000 for an "established property." Mortgages are becoming difficult to get, and second mortgages are usual.

Education

Both private and State schools are of a good standard. There is a free kindergarten at the age of 3. University education is

open to all, provided they have a sufficiently high academic standard at school and many are accredited without actually sitting examinations. Medical students are required to take a first MB year, and selection for further training depends on this. Bursaries are available to all New Zealand residents for first degree course.

Recreation

This is a paradise for outdoor pursuits. Huntin', shootin', and fishin' with introduced deer, pig, thar, and enormous rainbow and brown trout in lakes and rivers. There is salmon fishing in the South Island and game fishing from North-east coasts. New Zealand's major attraction is its scenery and most free time is spent "doing" the country. There is a very useful two-volume guide produced by one of the oil companies. Ski-ing, with good facilities, is found in both islands. There are many nature reserves and established tramping routes. The experience offered by the mountains of the Southern Alps has produced such climbers as Hillary, but for the less adventure-some there is a ski-plane service landing on the three major glaciers. Sporting facilities are abundant for both objective and subjective experience. Indoor entertainments are generally well-catered for by an excellent symphony orchestra, and most cities have good small theatre groups and various societies. But, as with all things, if you don't go and look for it, you won't find it.

Salaries

Salaries are related to cost of living by automatic "wage orders." The current scale is set out in the table below. "Overtime" is related to post held rather than individual extra hours worked and starts at 50 hours up to 84 hours in a week.

	Minimum	Increments	Maximum	Overtime %
House surgeon	\$7 968	1	\$8 820	7½-22½
Registrar	\$9 504	5	\$11 557	7½-22½
Registrar*	\$12 071	1	\$12 597	7½-22½
Specialist (whole-time)	\$14 256	9	\$18 365	up to 10

NZ\$1 = £0.56.

*With higher qualifications.

Taxation

There are less taxable allowances for full-time hospital staff than in Britain, the main omission being mortgage repayments. There is a maximum income tax of 57.2% for taxable earnings above \$22 000. Most hospital staff would fall in the 30-45% group.

Go and look

New Zealand offers a wide range of opportunities for whoever is prepared to go and look . . . I'm very pleased I did.

Does desensitisation in allergic asthma give some protection against lung carcinoma in particular and carcinoma in general?

I can find no published evidence that desensitisation procedures can in any way influence the incidence or behaviour of carcinoma of the lung, but this subject has not been adequately studied. Several retrospective studies have led to the conclusion that the presence of atopic disease can protect against the development of cancer, but subsequent careful prospective analyses have not confirmed such findings.