



Independent travel in New Zealand

Transcript 017

June 2007

Craig: Haere mai, I'm Craig

Linda: Kia-ora, I'm Linda

Craig: The New Zealand All Blacks have just trounced France at Rugby, we're in Glasgow, Scotland, and this is the Indie Travel Podcast episode 17 at www.indietravelpodcast.com. Today's episode's a bit unusual for us – it's location-specific: advice for independent travel in New Zealand.

Linda: So you might be wondering what sparked this off. Well, we received our first itunes review on the UK itunes store. Yorkshire Prince wrote that he's heading to the US, and then on to NZ, then hiring a campervan, then heading south to north. We thought we'd show a bit of listener-love, and give some hints for travelling through our home country.

Craig: We don't want to make this into a travelogue, but we'll have some links to various sites, including our own travels, on www.indietravelpodcast.com. All New Zealanders, or Kiwis as they're known, speak English. Don't spend months learning Maori, the first language of New Zealand's people, and I have heard of some travellers doing that.

Linda: Yeah, it's crazy.

Craig: Good on you for cultural awareness, but it's unnecessary. A few words might come in handy though. You should definitely be aware that Aotearoa is the Maori name for New Zealand.

Linda: Aotearoa means “land of the long white cloud.” Also, toilets may be labelled “tane” for men and “wahine” for women. And greetings include “kia-ora” and “haere mai.”

Craig: There's a trick to pronouncing New Zealand place names that might come in

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handy. Maori words are pronounced phonetically, as they're written, with the vowel sounds:

Linda: A, e, i, o, u.

Craig: Being pronounced:

Linda: A, e, i, o, u.

Craig: So, the place south of Auckland, spelt m, a, n, u, r, e, w, a, isn't pronounced manure-wa, it's pronounced Ma-nu-re-wa. More New Zealand language tips are at Wikipedia. We'll link it.

Linda: Most people fly into New Zealand. It's about a three-hour flight from the nearest Australian cities, about 12 hours from LA or 11 from Hong Kong. You'll arrive at Auckland International Airport in the North Island, or Christchurch International Airport in the middle of the South Island.

Craig: And it's very tourist-friendly. You won't find customs too challenging at all but there are some things you might not expect. It's illegal to bring almost all organic material into New Zealand. If your food isn't prepackaged, it shouldn't go through. You don't want to start your time there with a big fine, so leave your apples, your fish, your mushrooms on board the plane!

Linda: Yeah, because everyone's carrying mushrooms.

Craig: Yeah, delicious!

Linda: Likewise you can't bring natural wood products in without inspection. This doesn't mean you can't bring them in, but they might be delayed for a couple of weeks or months while they're sprayed and treated. In fact, on some inbound flights the passenger area of the plane is sprayed with an insecticide to stop unwanted nasties entering.

Craig: Do you remember when you came back from Kenya?

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Linda: Oh, yeah, I had a little drum for my brother, and I had to leave it at customs so that they could spray it. Now, there's a charge for this service, and it actually ended up costing me more to get it sprayed than it did for me to buy the product in the first place.

Craig: Crazy.

Linda: So most of them won't get checked, especially if they're pre-treated, which is most wood products, but just be aware that some of them might be taken away. Also, don't panic, the customs officers are much more friendly than in most countries. Everything's well-signposted, so you can drop unwanted stuff into the red bins at the airport or ask someone if you're unsure.

Craig: I can't quite remember Christchurch Airport, but when you fly into Auckland there's a bit of a trip into town, probably half an hour, 45 minutes. There's no train or tube option: you're on the road. The shuttle bus works well if you're an individual but if there's two or more of you, it's cheaper to jump in a taxi. People from most countries will not find New Zealand's taxis or buses cheap – however, the exchange rate can work in your favour.

Linda: Yeah, the public transport network in New Zealand is completely useless, so Yorkshire Prince has got the right idea: hire a vehicle if you want to see anything. Backpackers might want to consider buying a car or a van at Auckland's Backpacker Car Fair.

Craig: And, one thing people constantly underestimate is the size of New Zealand. It's bigger than the UK, it's actually about the same size as mainland Italy. So give it enough time. I'd recommend about two weeks for the North Island and two weeks for the South Island. Saying that, in February last year, we spent a month in a car heading around the South Island, we had a fantastic time, but we only covered two thirds of it.

Linda: Also, if you're going to be staying in hostels while you're travelling around New Zealand, be aware that hostel culture is definitely different from what we've experienced in Europe. Don't expect breakfast to be provided, but you will find that most hostels have a free-to-use, self-catering kitchen. Label your food, clean

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up after yourself and you'll do fine.

Craig: It's slowly changing, but you'll need a sleeping bag for most New Zealand hostels. If you haven't brought one with you you can pick up a cheap one at The Warehouse – NZ's ubiquitous shopping mall, or if you have time check out the ebay equivalent www.trademe.co.nz. High-quality gear can also be bought at several great specialist shops. Kathmandu, one of these stores, often have sales with gear up to fifty percent off. But I don't recommend you buy their full-price stuff.

Linda: An alternative accommodation option is camping, and that's what we usually do when we're travelling around New Zealand. The Department of Conservation, which is known as DOC, run hundreds of campsites around the country in our huge national parks. Some of them are near access roads, others require a hike, which we call a tramp in New Zealand. And there are several types of campsites, ranging from very basic, with just a long-drop toilet and a tap, right up to holiday park-type accommodation.

Craig: You get a tap?

Linda: Yeah, you usually get a tap. Or a river. Always some sort of water facility.

Craig: Yeah, regional councils also operate camping facilities, so have a look around. The DOC website is www.doc.govt.nz (for government). So they've got full lists of the facilities there. In terms of entry, tourist visas are readily available for most people. But the serious indie traveller will be looking for a work and travel visa, or a working holiday visa, which is available for people from 23 countries. The lucky candidates are: Argentina.

Linda: Belgium.

Craig: Canada.

Linda: Chile.

Craig: The Czech Republic.

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Linda: Denmark.

Craig: Estonia.

Linda: Finland.

Craig: France.

Linda: Germany

Craig: Hong Kong.

Linda: Ireland.

Craig: Italy.

Linda: Japan.

Craig: Korea.

Linda: Malaysia.

Craig: Malta.

Linda: The Netherlands.

Craig: Norway.

Linda: Singapore.

Craig: Sweden.

Linda: Taiwan.

Craig: Thailand.

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Linda: The UK.

Craig: The USA.

Linda: And Uruguay.

Craig: Congratulations, come on in.

Linda: You're so funny. www.backpackerboard.co.nz has a great write-up on how to apply, along with heaps of other great tips about getting around the country, and for making the most of your time there. If you have any questions about travelling in New Zealand, drop us a line at mail@indietravelpodcast.com - or leave a comment under this episode and we, or another of our well-travelled listeners will get back to you.

Craig: I want to give a shout-out to Andy and John from <http://andyandjohnsgreatadventures.blogspot.com> who have been so kind as to give us a link from their site. Cheers guys. A transcript for this show will be up in the next few days and, as Linda said, feel free to get in touch.

Linda: So, until next week, travel well.

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