



JANUARY 2022: WHEN WILL NEW ZEALAND'S BORDERS REOPEN?

Happy New Year!

As we enter 2022, many businesses, migrants and holiday makers are wondering whether we will see a change to New Zealand's border settings. Will critical workers be able to travel to New Zealand? Will New Zealanders be able to return to overseas travel?

Unfortunately, the answers to these questions remain unknown at present, continuing a long period of uncertainty caused by the emergence of Covid-19 and subsequent variants.

The New Zealand government initially indicated a potential change to Managed Isolation and Quarantine for New Zealanders travelling from Australia in mid-January followed by a staged reopening of the border to migrants from the end of April. This was a plan referred to as 'Reconnecting New Zealand'. However, these plans were put on hold in December due to concerns around the Omicron variant.

In the interim, due to large numbers of Omicron cases being detected at the New Zealand border and in Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ), the government has also now postponed the MIQ room booking release scheduled for 20 January 2022. The release was expected to include rooms for March and April 2022.

When MIQ room booking releases will resume remains to be seen and will be dependent on the available capacity in MIQ. What this means is that for the immediate future, new MIQ bookings for travellers wishing to enter New Zealand before May are not possible.

Travellers without existing travel arrangements and an MIQ booking voucher are unable to enter New Zealand, frustrating many across the world. Note that this situation relates to the MIQ facilities only, and not immigration processing. However, it is clear that with no MIQ availability, we are expecting tighter scrutiny on an already well-scrutinised border exception process by Immigration New Zealand.

The next announcement from the government on their intentions for the New Zealand border is expected at the end of February. A further update will be released at that time, or earlier if an announcement is made ahead of the anticipated time frame.

If you have any questions on the updates provided, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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