

International Tour Escorts

What's changing?

From 22 May 2017, tour escorts accompanying tour groups no longer have to apply for a work visa to travel to New Zealand. Tour escorts can now travel on a visitor visa or by visa-waiver. Anyone coming to New Zealand as a tour guide must continue to get a work visa.

To be eligible, tour escorts **must** live offshore, arrive leave and travel with the tour group while and be employed by an employer outside New Zealand. Tour escorts must also have a letter from their employer confirming their role and duties as a tour escort.

When applying online, select the new Special Category Visitor Visa type called 'Tour Escort'.

What do tour escorts need to do

When you apply for a visitor visa you must include the letter from your employer. You must carry the letter on you when travelling to New Zealand, even if you are a visa waiver traveller. You may be required to present the letter to a Customs or Immigration officer if requested.

The letter must be no more than 12 months old from the date of arrival and must:

- include the name, passport number, nationality and expiry date of the passport the applicant will be travelling on; and
- include the activities, duties and responsibilities the applicant will undertake while in New Zealand; and
- include a copy of the tour itinerary; and
- be on the employer's letterhead; and
- include contact details of the employer, such as contact names, contact phone numbers, email and address; and
- be signed by the employer; and
- be written or translated in English.

Tour Escort vs Tour Guide

Only a tour escort may travel to New Zealand on a visitor visa. A tour escort has the primary role of providing pastoral care, facilitating arrival and departure formalities, translation, logistical support and organisation for the tour group rather than leading activities or providing in-depth local knowledge.

Tour guides will still require a work visa. Tour guides generally lead tours in New Zealand providing in-depth local knowledge of New Zealand culture, history, society, geography etc and are generally employed by New Zealand employers.

For more information see www.immigration.govt.nz.