

Polo passion

Having spotted an unusual business opportunity in New Zealand, the Pitts family lost no time in investigating the possibility of emigrating, despite the obstacles posed by age restrictions

For the Pitts family from Nomansland in Hampshire, leaving the UK to start a new life running a business in New Zealand's North Island was an opportunity not to be missed.

Ken, who used to work as a client executive for Hitachi, says: "I'd been considering emigration for a number of years. I wanted to get out of the rat race and couldn't see an end to it in England. While, at 57, I'm not that far from retirement, I realised I would have to keep working longer than I had originally wanted, to carry on enjoying the lifestyle I had in the UK."

"We began to seriously think about New Zealand as a place to emigrate after visiting my son Matt, who was working out there on a polo ranch in Matira," he adds.

"The cost of living was so much cheaper than home, and the area was really beautiful, in rolling countryside, but still close enough to the big cities like Auckland and stunning stretches of coastline."

While visiting his son, the Amberwood homestead, a luxury farmhouse, came up for sale, and Ken spotted a real business opportunity. "The polo ranch for which my son was working was a thriving business run by two New Zealand international polo players," he says. "People from all over the world were visiting it for training in horse polo - however, the ranch had no accommodation to offer visitors.

"When the Amberwood homestead came up for sale close by, we realised we could use it to offer first-class accommodation for visitors to the ranch."



Living on a polo ranch brings many opportunities to indulge in the sport



Ken spotted an opportunity when a luxury farmhouse came up for sale

The first thing Ken did was to investigate the complications of getting a visa for New Zealand. He was past the age to be granted a normal working visa, but with the help of the family's migration advisors, he successfully gained a business visa, on which there is no age restriction.

"Getting a business visa was a daunting process," says Ken, "and



there were a lot of hoops to jump through. The advice we had from our migration agent was vital to navigating through all the various complications.”

TAKING SHAPE

Once the visa had come through Ken finalised the purchase on the Amberwood Homestead, where he encountered further complications.

The land and home he was buying was on a coastal plain, which meant they had to satisfy further regulations set by the Overseas Investment Office. Ken says: “Starting a business abroad isn’t for the faint-hearted and there can be a lot of red tape. I would advise anyone thinking of starting a new venture overseas to get expert advice, because it can take a lot of hassle out of the process.”

Audrey and Matt went over to New Zealand last year, in order to open up Amberwood (www.newzealandpoloholidays.co.nz), for its first week in business, with Ken joining them later, after his youngest son Toby had completed his A-levels.

Ken says: “Moving to NZ has been a radical change for us. I didn’t have any illusions when I started; I

There was a lot of red-tape to cut through before they could secure their property



always knew it would be hard work starting a new business. However, I really enjoy the challenges it offers, and love the New Zealand lifestyle.”

Audrey Pitts, who is Cordon Bleu trained, also enjoys the creative side of cooking meals for the guests, while the couple’s sons, Matt and Toby, adore the open-air lifestyle – and the chance to play polo as often as they want! 🇳🇿



Ken and his family enjoy the outdoor lifestyle in NZ

■ www.emigrationgroup.co.uk

Amberwood is surrounded by lots of rolling countryside



Visitors come from all over the world to play polo here



A fresh start in Auckland

The Barrett family decided to head to New Zealand in the hope that it would offer a better way of life and better schooling for their two children...

Alison Barrett and her husband Damian are emigrating to New Zealand later this year.

They currently live in Bolton-le-Sands village, Lancaster, where they live with their two children, Holly and Joseph. The couple have decided to move to Auckland, in the North Island following a 10-day fact finding trip there in May last year.

Alison is a teaching assistant and her husband Damian is a plasterer. They both hope to continue these professions in New Zealand.

Alison says, "There were a number of places that we loved in the North Island but Auckland was a natural choice. It's a vibrant and lively city with lots going on, but it's close to some of New Zealand's best beaches and countryside, so we can enjoy the great outdoors. It also helps that we already have friends living there; so we can become part of the local community more easily."

"Both Damian and I are tired of Britain, with its unfair tax system and live-to-work ethic," says Alison. "We want to bring our kids up in a safe and healthy environment where we can spend quality time with each other and get to enjoy the beaches and countryside around us".

"I've been interested in emigrating for a while now," says Damian, and with all the stories in the media about tradesman being in demand in New Zealand, I realised that I had a good chance of satisfying the immigration criteria. I attended seminars on emigration, which I found on the internet, then had



Above The Barrett family are looking forward to spending quality time together; Alison and Damian want to continue their professions in NZ

several meetings with our migration agents, who have helped us through the entire visa process.

"The application procedures are somewhat laborious, especially when it comes to

educational certificates, but as we won a competition to win free visa advice from our migration agent, it hasn't cost us a thing.


CHILD'S PLAY

"Our biggest concern is how our children will handle living in a new country," says Alison. At ages eight and six, they are still young, which should make the move easier.

"I think if they had been older, or at a key stage in their education, we might have reconsidered our decision to emigrate, but at this age, they should quickly get to grips with life in New Zealand.

"We have put a lot of research into finding a good school for the children. During our fact-finding visit, we went around six state schools and have done further research on the internet looking at websites such as www.ero.govt.nz, www.minedu.govt.nz and www.tki.org.nz. These give helpful listings of schools in New Zealand and information about how the education system works there.

"My impression is that the schools are actually better in New Zealand than in the UK, with excellent recreational facilities and activities on offer for the children, in addition to a good curriculum."

"Too many people just let life pass them by," says Damien. "We're looking forward to a new adventure and new opportunities. As for the kids, they're really looking forward to the outdoors lifestyle." 

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