

## Indian Students at Home in New Zealand

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The compact city of Dunedin in New Zealand (population 122,000) is a long way from the crowded streets of Mumbai, but for PhD student Payal Diwadkar it now feels like home.

"People here are friendlier than they are back home. Back home its so busy all of the time that people don't care about you. When I came here, just walking on the road people would say hi, how are you, are you having a good day? It was really nice," she says. "In three years here I haven't experienced a day where I encountered racism."

Payal came to New Zealand to complete a doctorate in genetics at the University of Otago. The top student received a New Zealand International Doctoral Research Scholarship which financed her studies for three years. Now that her doctorate is complete, she plans to stay on in New Zealand to pursue a career in genetic research.

"I wasn't planning on staying here when I came. I was thinking of going back (to India). But the research here is quite good compared to back home," she says.

Payal was impressed with the balance she could achieve between her studies and the rest of her life while in New Zealand.

"Back home, there's no room to develop yourself anywhere outside the study area. Over here, all the things go hand in hand. People are adventurous, they love sports. And when it comes to school, they give you practical experience – how you work in a lab – plus a theory based approach. Back home it's not like that. They don't do anything practical," she says.

While her life in New Zealand may sound idyllic, Payal admits there is one area where she has had difficulty in adjusting to her new Kiwi culture. "Food is the most important thing that I miss! The happiest day of my life was when I discovered that there was this little Indian store in Dunedin that sold all of the spices!" she says.

Computer studies also attract large numbers of students from India to New Zealand. Siddharth Patel arrived in 2003 from Gujarat to pursue his studies. He earned a degree from Otago Polytechnic, and then ended up finding a job working for the institution's IT department.

For him, the decision to come to New Zealand for his studies was an easy one.

"New Zealand had a good reputation back in India – it's safe, it's peaceful, it's small and beautiful, (it has) good people," he says.

Once he arrived, the country lived up to its reputation. "Meeting people was very easy because everybody's friendly. You can make friends very easily," he says.

Siddharth found that living in the halls of residence at the Polytechnic was a great way to meet Kiwis. "When I was in halls we had a lot of activities like playing soccer, joining clubs, I travelled around all of New Zealand with friends. I got a season pass for snowboarding, I got into snowboarding after I came to NZ," he says.

According to the latest figures, almost 8,000 Indian students are currently studying in New Zealand – a number that has grown dramatically over the past few years.

Immigration New Zealand is planning to open a new office in Mumbai later this year to help deal with the increased demand for student visas.

New Zealand has eight universities, which are all state owned. There are also 20 institutes of technology and polytechnics which are state owned, and a large number of private tertiary institutions offering all levels of study from certificates through to degrees.

Information about studying in New Zealand can be found on the **New Zealand Educated** website: [www.newzealandeducated.com](http://www.newzealandeducated.com). Contact information New Zealand Specialist Agents in India can be found at [www.nzeducated.com/in/en/blog/agents](http://www.nzeducated.com/in/en/blog/agents).

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Attached Photos: Payal Kiwadkar at the University of Otago  
Siddharth Patel at Otago Polytechnic

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