

Free trips to New Zealand offered to 100 tech workers

10 March 2017, by Nick Perry



Tech developer Nick Piesco poses for a photo in Wellington, New Zealand Friday, March 10, 2017. Local authorities and businesses are offering free trips to New Zealand for 100 tech workers from around the globe as they seek to boost the city's growing tech hub. (AP Photo/Nick Perry)

It sounds almost too good to be true: A free trip to New Zealand to interview for a job in the tech sector.

But that's what local authorities and businesses in the capital, Wellington, are offering to 100 talented workers from around the globe as they seek to boost the city's growing tech hub. The idea has caught fire, with 12,000 people completing applications so far and thousands more registering interest ahead of the March 20 deadline.

Wellington Mayor Justin Lester said the city's [tech sector](#) has been growing at an annual rate of 14 percent over the past five years.

"The problem we need to solve is that we have a whole lot of businesses that are struggling to keep up with recruitment," he said.

The LookSee campaign was first promoted in tech hubs like San Francisco, which is more than 10,000 kilometers (6,000 miles) from Wellington.

About one-third of the applicants are from the U.S. but that mix is changing as more people from other parts of the world find out about the offer, said David Jones, who is helping oversee the campaign at the Wellington Regional Economic Development Agency.

"This is the first time a city has approached recruitment in this way," Jones said. "We've been absolutely amazed at the level of interest."



Tech developer Nick Piesco poses for a photo in Wellington, New Zealand Friday, March 10, 2017. Local authorities and businesses are offering free trips to New Zealand for 100 tech workers from around the globe as they seek to boost the city's growing tech hub. (AP Photo/Nick Perry)

Successful applicants get free flights to New Zealand and free accommodation during their four-day stay in Wellington. They also get to see some of the sights and meet tech leaders. They are expected to apply for three jobs each but aren't

obliged to accept any offers.

The 850,000 New Zealand dollar (\$588,000) cost of the campaign is paid for by a combination of taxpayer money and contributions from local businesses.

Nick Piesco, 40, moved to Wellington from Austin, Texas, two weeks ago to take a job as a developer at Xero, an online accounting software company. He said his wife Reneau Skinner had loved Wellington when she visited more than a decade ago for an eight-month working holiday and that they made the decision to move to the city before the LookSee offer.

He said people in New Zealand seemed to really value having a life outside of work and that he was making some life changes, including foregoing a car.

"I can walk to work, I can walk to the shops. I live between two breweries, so I think I'm pretty well situated," he said. "The fact that you live in such a beautiful city in such a beautiful country means that you are urged to get outside and enjoy it."

He said the timing of his move soon after President Donald Trump was elected was "coincidental but fortuitous."

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