

Clockwise from top left:  
enjoy a fruity dessert alfresco;  
top local produce meets  
global influence on the  
Auckland dining scene;  
New Zealand wine; Indian  
flavours at Cassia; the  
waterfront CBD; Ponsonby  
Road's The Blue Breeze Inn;  
a Ponsonby sign; the  
sparkling waters around  
Waiheke Island

# AUCKLAND

With a spectacular natural setting and a booming culinary scene celebrating fine local produce, New Zealand's largest city is much more than a stopover. Sarah Reid tucks in

**Why go?** Most visitors to New Zealand will fly into Auckland – often mistaken for the capital – before connecting through to Queenstown or hiring a camper to explore the North Island, but neglecting to build in time to soak up the 'City of Sails' would be a mistake. The city is New Zealand's most ethnically diverse city, a fact which has blessed the buzzy metropolis with a dynamic food scene. It's also beautiful. The city straddles two glistening harbours, and enjoys easy access to beaches, thermal springs, wineries and *Lord of the Rings* landscapes. It's no wonder Auckland is regularly rated one of the world's most livable cities. November's dry, warm weather suits the food festivals that pop up this month – food truck extravaganza Dinner at French Bay (17 November) and Victoria Park's Night Noodle Markets (23 November – 2 December).

**What to do** With around 50 volcanoes surrounding the city, a visit wouldn't be complete without climbing at least one. At 196m, Mount Eden offers superb city views from the summit. Better yet, the walk up only takes around 10 minutes. The city's premier arts institutions – the neoclassical Auckland Museum [aucklandmuseum.com](http://aucklandmuseum.com) (which hosts Maori cultural performances) and the Auckland Art Gallery [aucklandartgallery.com](http://aucklandartgallery.com) are worth devoting a morning to browse. For contemporary Kiwi art, head to the Wallace Arts Centre [wallaceartstrust.org.nz](http://wallaceartstrust.org.nz) in Hillsborough. Two kilometres west of the city centre, Ponsonby is the place to find unique boutiques, cafés, bars and restaurants, including Ponsonby Road Bistro [ponsonbyroadbistro.co.nz](http://ponsonbyroadbistro.co.nz) – an award-winning spot. Waiheke Island is only a 35-minute ferry ride from downtown and is home to super beaches and more than a dozen wineries. Combine both at Man O' War [manowar.co.nz](http://manowar.co.nz) – the island's only beachfront tasting room. Even closer is Rangitoto Island. From the ferry wharf, it's a scenic one-hour walk through the world's largest pohutukawa forest to the peak (259m) of the dormant volcano.

**Where to stay** Auckland is in the midst of a luxury accommodation boom, with top new sleeps including the central Hotel Grand

Windsor 00 64 9 309 9979, [hotelgrandwindsor.com](http://hotelgrandwindsor.com), named the world's best new hotel at the 2018 Boutique Hotel Awards. The SO/ Auckland 00 64 9 379 1860, [so-auckland.com](http://so-auckland.com) is decidedly more avant garde; factor in a sunset cocktail in the 16th-floor HI-SO bar. Just across Viaduct Harbour, the Park Hyatt Auckland 00 64 9 366 1234, [hyatt.com](http://hyatt.com) is taking bookings from March 2020, and the quirky, native tui bird-inspired Naumi Auckland Airport 00 64 9 912 3333, [naumihotels.com](http://naumihotels.com) makes a strong case for spending your last night an easy hop from the runway. Set in a beautifully converted 1898 home, The Great Ponsonby Arthotel 00 64 9 376 5989, [greatpons.co.nz](http://greatpons.co.nz) is a bright, homely B&B.

**Where to eat and drink** You can find everything from top-notch modern Indian – at Cassia 00 64 9 379 9702, [cassiarestaurant.co.nz](http://cassiarestaurant.co.nz) – to no-nonsense Italian – at Coco's Cantina 00 84 9 300 7582, [cocoscantina.co.nz](http://cocoscantina.co.nz) – but the city particularly excels at showcasing local produce in modern New Zealand dishes. For NZ fusion fine dining with a view, book at chef Peter Gordon's The Sugar Club 00 64 9 363 6365, [skycityauckland.co.nz](http://skycityauckland.co.nz) on the 53rd floor of the Sky Tower. Pasture 00 64 9 300 5077, [pastureakl.com](http://pastureakl.com) serves a set menu at the chef's counter (book ahead for one of just six seats), while Cazador 00 64 9 620 8730, [cazador.co.nz](http://cazador.co.nz) is famed for its focus on sustainable New Zealand meat. For a quick bite, follow your nose to The Maori Kitchen [themaorikitchen.co.nz](http://themaorikitchen.co.nz) – Auckland's first in-ground *hangi* (food cooked in an underground oven) café. The Elliott Stables dining complex [elliottstables.co.nz](http://elliottstables.co.nz) in the city centre is another top pick for a casual meal, from bao to Cajun ribs, while waterfront Saint Alice [saintalice.co.nz](http://saintalice.co.nz) is the place to while away a sunny afternoon sipping quality NZ wine.

**Time running out?** Taste the bounty of the region's top artisan producers – from cheesemakers to local coffee roasters – on a four-hour tour with The Big Foody (£96pp). [thebigfoody.com](http://thebigfoody.com)

**Trip tip** Pick up an At Hop day pass (£9.35pp) for unlimited use of trains, buses and inner harbour ferries until midnight. [at.govt.nz](http://at.govt.nz)

## Travel information

Currency is the New Zealand dollar (NZD). Time is 12 hours ahead of GMT. Flight time from the UK is around 24 hours.

### Getting there

**Air New Zealand** runs flights from London Heathrow to Auckland with one stop in Los Angeles. [airnewzealand.co.uk](http://airnewzealand.co.uk)

**Singapore Airlines** flies from London Heathrow to Auckland in the other direction, with one stop in Singapore. [singaporeair.com](http://singaporeair.com)

### Resources

**Visit Auckland** is the official tourist board and its website is a fantastic resource for trip planning. [aucklandnz.com](http://aucklandnz.com)

### Further reading

**Rangatira** by Paula Morris (Penguin, £19.99), is an intriguing historical novel that brings to life colonial New Zealand and Victorian England through the eyes of a Maori elder.

### AVERAGE DAILY TEMPERATURES AND RAINFALL

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Min C	16	17	15	13	11	8	8	8	10	11	13	15
Max C	24	24	23	20	17	15	14	15	16	18	20	22
mm	2	3	2	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	2

Photos by Ewen Bell and Josh Giggs