

36 Hours

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

In this newly vibrant city, you can take a ferry ride, hike a volcano and immerse yourself in all things Kiwi: food, fashion and art.

By INGRID K. WILLIAMS

Admittedly, few fly all the way to New Zealand just to visit Auckland, the country's largest city. Most aim to explore the otherworldly landscapes with which, thanks to the silver screen, this remote nation has become associated. But before delving into the cinematic beauty of the North Island countryside, discover the San Francisco-steep streets and regenerated neighborhoods of newly vibrant Auckland. This multicultural city, home to a third of all Kiwis, has recently welcomed a raft of bars, boutiques and restaurants that highlight locally made products, from excellent craft beer and wine to fashion and art. And none of it has anything to do with orcs or rings.

Friday

1 3:30 P.M. > NATIONAL PORTRAITS

One highlight of the Auckland Art Gallery (free), which reopened in September 2011 after a three-year expansion, is the gallery of turn-of-the-century portraits depicting Maori leaders, many with exquisite tattoos. The museum's permanent collection, spread across four levels, also includes commissioned works from contemporary Kiwi artists. After a tour, stroll through the adjacent Albert Park or refuel with a Snickers cookie (3.50 New Zealand dollars, or \$3 at 1.18 New Zealand dollars to the U.S. dollar) at the new Moustache Milk & Cookie Bar, two blocks from the gallery.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK COOTE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

2 7 P.M. > SEAFOOD DEPOT

Seattle has its Space Needle, while on the opposite side of the Pacific, Auckland answers with the Sky Tower — over 1,000 feet tall. But the most noteworthy action happening near this imposing landmark is at its base, at Depot, a seafood-centric bistro. This new restaurant is invitingly rustic — ice-cold pewter water mugs, tall stools clustered around wood-plank tables — and the fresh seafood is top-notch. A recent meal started with some shucked-to-order oysters from Marlborough's Tio Point, followed by spicy mussels with chorizo and garlic; kingfish sashimi cubes atop dollops of oyster cream; and sliders stuffed with hapuka, lemon mayo and watercress. Dinner for two, about 70 New Zealand dollars.

3 10 P.M. > BRITOMART BARS

The once-derelict Britomart district near the port has recently transformed into a bubbling night-life hub with new bars and restaurants housed in handsomely renovated historic buildings. Start at Xuxu, an elegant French-Vietnamese-inspired hideaway serving inventive snacks and cocktails like the Chanh Bac Ha (rum, palm sugar and Vietnamese mint; 16 New Zealand dollars). Then stroll to the Japanese-themed bar Fukuko, which opened in December, for steamed pork buns (4.50 dollars) and shochu tonics flavored with spiced jasmine and green tea (9 dollars).

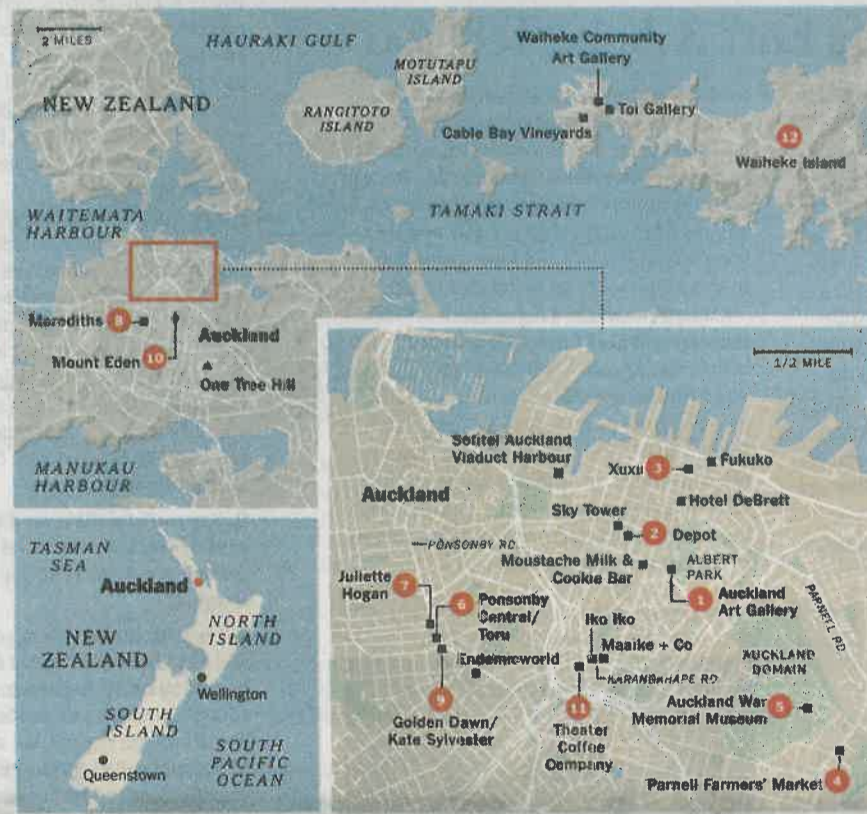
Saturday

4 9 A.M. > WALK TO THE MARKET

Wake up with a walk through the Auckland Domain, a sprawling 185-acre park southeast of the city center whose peaceful paths wind through wooded areas and around expansive swaths of grassy lawn. When hunger strikes, stray a block from the southern edge of the park to the Parnell Farmers' Market, where stalls overflow with local products. Bite into a bacon-and-egg bap (sandwich) with spicy tomato sauce (5 New Zealand dollars) while listening to a musician strum a guitar, and then sample the goods at the Hakanoa Ginger Beer stand and the mouthwatering varieties at the NZ Cheeseman stall.

5 10:30 A.M. > KIWI CULTURE

If you've ever wondered about Maori culture, what a kiwi bird actually looks like, or



why Auckland's streets are so hilly, visit the Auckland War Memorial Museum, steps from the market on the edge of the domain. Don't be fooled by the name: in addition to housing a war memorial, the museum features three floors of interactive exhibits that explain New Zealand's history, geography, ethnography and culture, from prehistoric volcanoes (hence all those hills) and Maori tribal traditions to the nation's uncommon flora and fauna.

6 1 P.M. > CENTRAL LUNCH

The inner-city suburb of Ponsonby is a charming neighborhood whose main drag, the mile-long Ponsonby Road, is lined with cafes, bars and boutiques. Late last year, Ponsonby Central, a new complex packed with small restaurants and shops, added to the area's appeal even more with, among other places, a bakery, an organic market, a butcher and pocket-size dining spots doing a decent impression of a United Nations food court — sushi, Neapolitan-style pizza, Argentine barbecue. Inside the main building, you'll find a fortuneteller, the booth of Ponsonby's radio station, and, for

lunch, the pleasant cafe Toru (toru.co.nz). Try the cafe's pressed sandwich of Serrano ham, melting Manchego and truffle butter, which comes with a pile of scrumptious crinkle fries (13.50 New Zealand dollars).

7 3 P.M. > DOMESTIC DESIGN

Explore the rest of Ponsonby Road by seeking out the talented domestic designers who have set up shop here, like Juliette Hogan, whose floral-print suits and ladylike separates are elegant with an edge. Nearby at Kate Sylvester's namesake boutique, eggshell-blue walls offset colorful fashions: red leopard-print pants, sheer emerald blouses, embroidered ink dresses. Find design of a different kind at the new pop-up poster and art-print shop Endemicworld, with works from up-and-coming graphic designers, artists and illustrators like the street artist Cinzah Merkens and Australian design studio Inaluxe.

8 7 P.M. > MADE BY MEREDITH

Modern New Zealand cuisine is what's for dinner at Merediths, a formal tasting-

menu-only restaurant run by the chef Michael Meredith. Finding inspiration in cutting-edge culinary techniques, seasonal local products and his Samoan background, Mr. Meredith turns out multicourse feasts matched with fine wines, many from small domestic producers. In the cozy establishment, frosted windows and simple black-and-white décor ensure that all attention is directed toward the parade of plates, which during a recent meal included an inventive venison tartare with horse-radish and smoked eel, and savory macarons made by stuffing duck and chicken liver pâté between beetroot-flavored meringues. Six-course tasting menu with matching wines, 160 New Zealand dollars.

9 11 P.M. > THE GOLDEN HOUR

After dinner, head to the Golden Dawn, a superb bar and music venue in Ponsonby where the vibe is a mix of laid-back surfer style and rockabilly glam. There's an indoor pub with exposed brick walls and dark corners for intimate conversations, but it's in the outdoor courtyard where the party really happens. There, amid hanging strings of colored lights and long pastel-blue picnic tables, local D.J.'s and rock 'n' roll bands provide the soundtrack for the New Zealand night. So grab a draft beer from the excellent local Hallertau microbrewery — the #2, a refreshing pale ale with flavors of citrus and honey, is delicious — and prepare to hop and shimmy along with the friendly crowd.

Sunday

10 7 A.M. > SUMMIT SUNRISE

A sunrise hike up Mount Eden, a dormant volcano that rises nearly 650 feet above sea level, will be rewarded with a priceless panorama. The view spans the entire isthmus that greater Auckland occupies, from Manukau Harbour to the south across to Waitemata Harbour and the Hauraki Gulf to the north. While savoring the solitude at the summit, peer into the vast, sloping crater at your feet or scan the landscape for landmarks like the Sky Tower and One Tree Hill, another substantial volcanic mound that is crowned with an obelisk.

11 11 A.M. > ON THE K ROAD

Compared with Ponsonby, the thoroughfare known as K Road — or Karangahape Road — has a quirkier, less polished atmosphere. The street's Queen Anne-style buildings and neo-Greek facades once made up a seedy red-light district, but today, upstanding businesses have moved in. At the Theater Coffee Company, have a gooey herb-and-cheese-stuffed omelet and thick slices of toast (16.50 New Zealand dollars) for breakfast beneath the narrow building's original vaulted ceiling. Afterward, visit Iko Iko, a cute nearby shop where shelves are stuffed with treasures, trinkets and Kiwi-kitsch — windup kiwi birds, kiwi-bird-shaped cookie cutters. Then swing by the new high-end clothing boutique Maaik + Co in a handsome shopping arcade to find stylish designs from the store's own label, Maaik, and other fashionable New Zealand brands like Nynne and Kowtow.

12 1:30 P.M. > VINEYARD VIEWS

For a glimpse of New Zealand's bountiful natural beauty, take a 40-minute ferry ride across the aquamarine waters of the Hauraki Gulf to Waiheke Island. This quiet 35-square-mile island, with its rolling hills and gorgeous coastline, is so visually inspiring that a growing number of artists have made Waiheke home. See their work at the Waiheke Community Art Gallery or the newer Toi Gallery. Then retire to the scenic estate of Cable Bay Vineyards overlooking the gulf for a glass of Waiheke Island viognier. The winery is one of many on the island, but the view from the backyard terrace — of the glittering water stretching toward Auckland in the hazy distance — is hard to top.

Above, flower chandelier by Choi Jeong Hwa at the Auckland Art Gallery. Left, from top, view of downtown, with the Sky Tower at left, seen from the ferry returning from Waiheke Island; at Toru Cafe, in the Ponsonby neighborhood.

IF YOU GO

- 1 Auckland Art Gallery**, Corner Kitchener and Wellesley Streets; aucklandartgallery.com. **Moustache Milk & Cookie Bar**, 12 Wellesley Street West; moustache.co.nz.
- 2 Depot**, 86 Federal Street; eatatdepot.co.nz.
- 3 Xuxu**, Corner Commerce and Galway Streets; britomart.org/xuxu. **Fukuko**, 48 Tyler Street; fukuko.co.nz.
- 4 Parnell Farmers' Market**, 545 Parnell Road; parnell.org.nz.
- 5 Auckland War Memorial Museum**, Museum Circuit; aucklandmuseum.com.
- 6 Ponsonby Central**, 136 Ponsonby Road; ponsonbycentral.co.nz.
- 7 Juliette Hogan**, 179 Ponsonby Road; juliettehogan.com. **Kate Sylvester**, No. 134; katesylvester.com. **Endemicworld**, No. 62; endemicworld.com.
- 8 Merediths**, 365 Dominion Road; merediths.co.nz.
- 9 The Golden Dawn**, 134 Ponsonby Road; www.goldendawn.co.nz.
- 10 Mount Eden**, Mount Eden Domain.
- 11 Theater Coffee Company**, 256 Karangahape Road; theatrecoffee.co.nz. **Iko Iko**, 195 Karangahape Road; ikoiko.co.nz. **Maaik + Co**, Shop 18, St Kevin's Arcade, 179-183 Karangahape Road; maaikandco.com.
- 12 Waiheke Community Art Gallery**, 2 Korora Road; waihekeartgallery.org.nz. **Toi Gallery**, 145 Ocean View Road; toigallery.com. **Cable Bay Vineyards**, 12 Nick Johnstone Drive; cablebayvineyards.co.nz.