

Day and Night Out in Auckland

Auckland's two harbours, the Waitemata and the Manakau, dominate the landscape placing the city at the centre on a narrow isthmus, a relatively small strip of land surrounded by water. The sparkling waters of the Waitemata fringe the downtown city connecting out to the Hauraki Gulf with its myriad of islands. Water's edge locations are favoured for cafes and restaurants all day from breakfast through to late night revelry.

Multiculturalism is a feature of the heart of Auckland city; the historically Polynesian and European population are now mixed with an influential Asian contingent. This population influx, mainly international students here to study, has brought new life and variety to the city centre. This is especially reflected in the cuisines that are available, a huge selection of Korean, Japanese and Chinese fare adds excitement and different flavours to almost bewildering choices for dining out.

The recent influx of Asian population to Auckland has also lent more input to the movement of Fusion cuisine, a trend that already influences the food in many of the main cities and town scattered right around the Pacific Rim. Fusion cuisine unites traditional regional cooking styles and ingredients with new flavours, seasonings and methods of cooking. Auckland plays its part in this movement - many restaurants will be sure to surprise with unique taste combinations.

New Zealand cuisine is recognized for the freshest flavours and superb ingredients and Auckland showcases this excellent food and is a great place to eat out. Enjoy!

Theatre, Cinemas and Culture

The Aotea Square is the cultural hub called "the Edge" consisting of the Auckland Town Hall, Aotea Centre, Civic Theatre, St James Complex and the largest Cinema complex in the inner city. This area is about three-quarters of the way up Queen Street – about 15 minutes walk from the water's edge.

The Civic theatre, an 'A' listed heritage building and rightfully so, is located on the corner on the Corner of Wellesley and Queen St. The Civic reopened in 2000 after extensive restorations. The extra ordinary design in the lobbies, staircases and theatre are an original "atmospheric" theatre which opened in 1929 its inspired interior décor is inspired like an exotic dream forever in night time with dark skies, starry skies as the backdrop to golden turrets, gold painted elephants and extraordinary dream-like silhouettes.

The **Town Hall** opened in 1911 has also undergone relatively recent refurbishment, completed in 1997. Modeled on the "Gerwandhause" Concert Hall of Leipzig, Germany, it has highly regarded acoustics. The Auckland Philharmonic Orchestra is in concert regularly.

Bookings at 'The Edge' including the Town Hall, Aotea Centre, and the Civic: 09 309 2677 or for listings: 09 307 5060

The **St James Complex** consisting of three venues is used solely for musical events. These events are generally although not wholly the domain of the youth being rock concerts and "Dance Parties". Ticketek: 09 307 5000 (for city wide listings of events)

A few doors away from the Town Hall is Auckland's most active and dedicated comedy club '**The Classic**'. Regular comedy nights feature Wednesday to Saturday, although it is open Seven days, and often has an act or band of sorts on the other nights too. *Bookings:* 09 373 4321

Dominated by the **Sky Tower** it is not hard to find Sky City with its casino, restaurants and Theatre. Right at the top of the tower the fine dining restaurant has the best views of Auckland. It is popular for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Sky City Theatre has a year-round schedule of performances in dance, drama, theatre, rock, pop, jazz, and cabaret. For details on events *Telephone* 0800/759-2489.

Upper Queen Street

Wandering up from The Edge, Town Hall precinct, is an eclectic area alive with young people of all nationalities attracted by many small restaurants serving reasonably priced food from around the globe. It is possible to eat Turkish, Korean, Chinese, Japanese and many other cuisines. Frequenting by students and backpackers this is the place to enjoy good value for tasty food with a little bit of the global wandering spirit thrown in.

High Street and Vulcan Lane

Just off Queen Street the narrow lanes of High Street and Vulcan Lane is where you will find young trendy professionals and executives, plus followers of fashion. During the day there is a constant stream of coffee meetings and lunch dates, followed by after-work drinks. This a great rendezvous place for a great coffee and people watching. The Chancery area is upmarket and lined with designer boutiques with a couple of great coffee places to refresh and dine casually.

High Street is very trendy and has numerous eating places amongst a great section of designer boutiques, galleries and specialist shops. Walk the full length of the street all the way to the New Art Gallery.

Both the Auckland Art Gallery and New Art Gallery have excellent cafes with great coffee and good food that have a quiet atmosphere yet are so close to the city and all the action. Tour the art galleries then stop for coffee or lunch.

Central City

Close to the city are several world-class hotels all of which have excellent restaurants.

White restaurant at the Hilton Auckland is an award winning restaurant with world-class chef. The location overlooking the harbour is spectacular. It is clean and minimalist in design and the cuisine is up to the minute prepared for each order with the freshest ingredients.

Reservations: 09 978 2000

The Stamford Plaza on Albert Street has a coffee and bar area behind the lobby which is a recognized meeting place or to while away the time between activities.

Similarly the **Hyatt Regency** corner of Waterloo Quadrant and Princes Street, about five minutes walk from Queen Street, has an excellent bar and an adjacent coffee restaurant for all day dining or just a coffee.

Close to the The Edge and the cultural centre of the city The **Carlton Hotel** is an ideal venue before and after attending shows. Notable is the award winning Japanese Katsura restaurant.

Reservations: 09 366 5628.

Waterfront & Downtown

Geography also plays a part in the city centre where the main road Queen St follows the course of a river; long ago hidden, down to the water's edge, this once natural valley brings visitors inevitably to the water's edge. Many hotels and accommodation are clustered nearby or if staying further away buses often end their journey close to the downtown with the bus terminals at the base of Queen Street opposite the Ferry Buildings.

The Viaduct and Princes Wharf is to the left of Queen Street and about three minutes walk from the Ferry buildings. This harbourside downtown area is always a hive of activity. It has been rejuvenated from fish and produce markets. It was in this area that attention was focused for the 2003 America's Cup yachting regatta with all the international syndicates having their bases right on the water along the side of the Viaduct Basin.

The area is now bubbling over with trendy restaurants and bars surrounded by smart city apartments and up market hotels. For the walker this is a good base to start your adventure, as it is well paved and pedestrian friendly offering many places to sit and soak up the atmosphere of this city often called the City of Sails.

Marine craft from gleaming superyachts to bright yellow water taxis are constantly on the move around the waterfront. There are also a constant stream of ferries arriving to and fro the ferry piers linking the Downtown with the gulf islands and Devonport.

Eating Out at the Viaduct, Prince's Wharf and waterfront area.

Restaurants of the Viaduct and Prince's Wharf offer great ambience and outlook on to yachts and the Harbour Bridge beyond. The quality of service and food is high in these restaurants.

During the weekday this area is mostly calm and sedate for a quality meal of European flavour or an expensive cup of coffee, the location being built into the price. A brunch or full breakfast of good proportions is good value day and a great way to start the day whilst planning the next adventures.

Seafood and European food are the focus of the larger establishments, although good Northern Asian options also exist.

At night the focus of many of the restaurants becomes their bars and they turn up the music, bringing in the crowds of after-hours office workers. The Viaduct and Princes Wharf area can become very busy Thursday – Saturday. Reservations may be needed to eat at that place you spotted earlier in the day. The ambience has changed, but the outlook takes on a new element as the harbour bridge is lit up with lights and the glowing boats gently rock in the darkened waters.

Established Recommendations:

Cin Cin on Quay is a long established spot on the ground floor of the ferry building, its name suggests French influence, but the menu does include gourmet pizzas and Asian influences. Cin Cin is a good New Zealand example of fusion and Pacific Rim cuisine. The quality of food and service is extremely good, the bar is also open throughout the day and stocks excellent wines. Reservations recommended.

Kermadec is one of Auckland's most reputable restaurants,

specialising in fresh seafood, the quality has been consistently respected and it is very popular amongst the locals. Before the America's Cup competition in 2002/2003 demanded a recreation of the Viaduct the area was home to the local fishing fleet and Kermadec was the only renowned high quality restaurant. Located upstairs opposite the maritime museum, it has the best vista across the viaduct.

The Loaded Hog Bar is the old faithful where hearty meals with local produce, a good selection of beers, including their own brews can be sought. The bar is very popular and is commonly recognised as a reliable place for a good pint downtown. It will always be popular with the locals, but many tourists also find it a good reference or meeting point. Its rural theme and classic hits music make it a popular and safe option for the 30+ crowd. It will be busy on the weekends, so get in early to secure a place to watch the rugby!

The Portofino chain has popular restaurants in many of the local nightspots and their Viaduct restaurant is no exception, usually bursting at its seams. Quality Italian meals including antipasto, pizzas and pastas are available as well as full meals. The wine list includes above average Italian and local wines. A reservation is normally required on the weekend.

The Grand Harbour is an upmarket Chinese restaurant, and although it does not have the harbour-side location of the other restaurants it is extremely popular with the more well to do of local Chinese population and increasingly with Aucklanders of other backgrounds. "Yum char" is popular for a banquet style meal, where several dishes are ordered and shared between guests. This restaurant is very good for large groups, although reservations don't guarantee quick seating. Weekend lunchtimes are very busy, but service is fast. *Reservations: 09 357 6889*

Orbit, a la carte restaurant at the top of the Sky Tower is a revolving restaurant with delectable menu and stunning views. The Observatory restaurant also at the top of the Sky Tower has buffet and menu selections.

Reservations recommended: 09 363 6000

Irish pubs are always popular in Newmarket the Claddagh Pub is always humming with people, in Newton just off Karangahape Road is the Dog's Bolix, and underneath the Heritage Auckland is The Muddy Farmer.

On the other side of the Viaduct Basin away from the city life becomes very marine – like – and a number of bars and cafes are found along Halsey Street where both yachties and city workers mix amicably together. The atmosphere is relaxed and informal.

Victoria Park Markets, located on Victoria Street West, are about a ten minute walk from Queen Street the market was formed in an old brick works and the original chimney is still visible. The markets operate seven days a week with added stalls at the weekends. Casual dining, cafes and fast food outlets are ideal for a quick bite. An eclectic area immediately behind the markets has become very trendy with film production houses and photographic print houses. A couple of popular eateries cater to the designer set.

Ponsonby Road

A short bus trip on "The Link" or 20 minutes walk up-hill from downtown or along Karangahape Road (usually called "K" Road) will bring you to the suburb of Ponsonby.

Note: The Link bus travels frequently between downtown and Ponsonby, every 10 minutes during the day with a standard fare of \$1.20.

Ponsonby Road is trendy from lively "K" Road to historical 3 Lamps and is dotted from start to finish with a variety of eating and drinking choices. Being an early feature of the city the colonial architecture, makes a leisurely stroll encompassing shopping and eating an enjoyable option for the visitor. Ponsonby is now an area where real estate, mostly timber villas, is highly sought, although its past, historical and recent, has left an eclectic mix of fashion shops and a thriving scene of restaurants, cafes and bars.

Cafes are most prevalent all offering great coffee, some coffees being blended in-house and most places have a healthy selection of herbal teas and fresh juices. Food available in the cafes varies from the hearty and trusted to limited three course meals. Many will offer at least one health conscious choice such as organic, vegetarian or calorie restricted.

Fast food is available, but not of the international chain variety, Gourmet burgers, Kebabs and classic Fish and Chips as well as some New York style Chinese options. A Food Court at the southern end of Ponsonby Road also allows the indecisive to browse or pick and mix their meals. Some of the bars and pubs also have a limited menu of food and hot snacks, which can surprise in their quality. One Red Dog serves tasty food on a wooden platter - bar snacks to lunch.

There are also the renowned and locally loved bakeries with hot savoury pies and breads. Ponsonby Pies have a great reputation, being a New Zealand favourite for a pastry filled with great ingredients – filling for a meal or snack.

The restaurants available do offer the Asian options, Thai

and Malaysian close to the “K” Road end of Ponsonby Road. Gourmet Pizzas and pastas are the popular and reliable staples of some of the more established venues such as GPK although don’t be fooled by this as the menu is likely to extend far beyond this. Not to mention the wine list which is sure to include some world-class New Zealand and Australian reds and definitely Champagne up to hundreds of dollars a bottle, for a celebratory special occasion.

Friday night is Ponsonby at its most lively, many of the bars filling up throughout the afternoon for those locals escaping work early or on an extended Friday lunch. Be sure your attire is up to scrutiny, suits and heels are commonplace almost a uniform in some of the swanky restaurants and bars. Many places in Ponsonby and similarly at the Viaduct restaurants convert to become bars when the going gets good, with a massive selection of wines, beers and beverages.

The bars themselves will be sure to offer a good selection of imported beverages and most have competent bartenders, happy to whip up that special cocktail that makes others envious. The area is largely Gay friendly with a few of the Auckland’s more established Gay bars that marked the rebirth of Ponsonby’s now hip reputation.

There are a couple of clubs only open on the weekend and also some that have extended licenses on the weekend, so that if you know where to go the party can continue well into the night.

Established:

Chandelier restaurant is a relative new comer to the Ponsonby scene. Dine with Auckland’s extroverted professionals and be impressed by Chandelier’s ambience and cuisine. A European inspired menu with fine ingredients tempts the taste buds and an extensive wine list features more than 20 sparkling wines.

Reservations: 09 360 9315

SPQR is the best celebrity spotting venue in Auckland. It has a very lively and colourful atmosphere mostly due to the clientele and staff. The décor itself could almost belong to a motorcycle gang’s headquarters being stainless steel and black. The menu available is sufficient to appease the limelighters, but the late night thin crust pizzas are the most popular. Needless to say this is a restaurant and bar, a guaranteed half a dozen bottles of champagne on the go at any one time. This is not for the faint hearted or those seeking a sedate or romantic night out.

Reservations: 09 360 1710

The Turkish Café in Ponsonby has been around for ages, always a good sign, its Turkish Food is reasonable in value and served by platterful. The décor is reflective of Ponsonby’s past as a students, hippy and alternative hang-out. It ideal for casual and relaxed eating – small snacks to a full meal and those seeking something out of the ordinary where the portions are good and tasty.

Reservations: 09 360 0468

Mutiara is a little Malaysian restaurant at the K’ Road end of the Ponsonby strip. Great for authenticity and genuine service. It is small and intimate.

Reservation: 09 376 2759

Thai House has always been a favourite with dishes of freshly prepared Thai cuisine.

Reservation: 09 376 5912

Parnell

Parnell Village is a rewarding walk from downtown, although the steep hill can be seen as an obstacle. Parnell is also on the Link bus route – with frequent buses departing downtown with about a ten minute ride.

Parnell is an historic suburb, one of the first to be settled in the early days of Auckland. The main road, Parnell Road has long been referred to as a village and consists of designer boutiques, cafes and galleries and some very good restaurants and classy bars.

The bar scene is upmarket but not as colourful or potentially boisterous as Ponsonby can be and the level of service is more personalized.

Parnell does still have a student night so be aware that many of the bars and cafes will be catering to 18 -25 year olds on a Wednesday. Other than this the usual crowd is quite refined in their tastes, even the local Irish Bar is the most scrubbed up example in town.

The Link bus continues into Newmarket which is considered the most favoured shopping area of Auckland. Designer boutiques, small malls, stores selling specialist garments and shoes line the area of Broadway. Just off the main street are areas of eating and dining – with a strong Asian cuisine found on Khyber Pass close to Broadway. Cafes are popular for a between shopping break.

Established:

Antiones, set the style for Parnell's restaurants on the Map, a restaurant run by the same management since 1973 consistently serving classy meals originally with a French influence the menu has moved with the times and now offers a range of choices which satisfy the diverse palates of the modern diner. The service is of a very high level expect a world class experience. Reservations recommended.

Reservations: 379 8756

The George is a contemporary restaurant in an historic building, it has separate bar and restaurant areas so that it can be good for either a romantic night for two or alternatively a place to kick the night off. The menu has a focus on local produce using a combination of international concepts.

Reservations: 358 2600

Iguaçu is an icon of Parnell for popping in to meet friends, enjoying a nice glass of wine. It is easy to recognize on Parnell Road with its constant gas flames alight inviting patrons into the warmth. Iguaçu is a relaxed restaurant with a lively and popular bar. Sundays adds the flavour of Jazz musicians playing throughout lunch and dinner.

Reservations: 09 358 4804

Oh Calcutta is Indian cuisine served with style. This is a very good example of Indian restaurant with good service, usually no waiting and very tasty dishes. It is popular throughout the week and booking is recommended especially at the weekend.

Reservations: 09 377 9090

Cuba located at the very top of the hill, opposite the Auckland Cathedral is a cigar Emporium and cocktail lounge. Upmarket, but by no means stuffy, the crowd is mixed in age but mostly well behaved and the décor a combination of timber and minimalist. Often live Piano music completes the ambience.

Chocolate Boutique offers just chocolate and dessert with coffee open till 10.00PM in the evening.

Mission Bay

Less than five kilometres from downtown along the scenic Tamaki Drive to the popular harbour's edge Mission Bay café and restaurant precinct. Called the best urban beach the promenade is an apt description of the constant active people. Those who are keen for water's edge walk can join the walkers, joggers and roller skaters along the five kilometer stretch of walkway edging the water and road. Regular buses or a 15 minute taxi ride are the easy way to connect to Mission Bay from downtown.

The Mission Bay Reserve is a seaside park complete with golden sand beach, huge green lawns, mature trees with The Mission Bay fountain dominates the foreground. A stretch of bars and restaurants that both during the week and especially at weekends brings people from all over Auckland to this family and visitor friendly seaside location. Most cafes and restaurants have an outdoor area with café tables on the footpath or upstairs on the balconies - great places to sit and people watch.

The choices of food here covers nearly all bases, ranging from the reliable Fish and Chips, to be eaten in the park, to mid priced pastas and pizza to white tablecloths and fine wine.

Right beside the park is the historic stone building Mission House renowned for fine dining and the alfresco relaxed Mecca café. Across the road from the park are several Italian restaurants which are favourites for families and groups with genuine Italian chefs and waiters adding to the atmosphere. Gourmet hamburgers and original ice creams are also close by and great seaside treats to buy and eat at the park.

Devonport

A short ferry trip across the busy harbour from the downtown Ferry Building takes visitors across to the serene and quaint village of Devonport with its historical charm. The area is dominated by two volcanic cones, North Head and Mount Victoria, with both hill tops offering great views of Auckland for the energetic.

Devonport is known for friendly small village atmosphere. The main street, Victoria Road, has several cafes and small restaurants. Food and nightlife available is mostly in keeping with the heritage of English traditions such as Fish and Chips, Pub meals and European style food being the main choices. Prices are moderate and the ambience is more likely to be charming and warm than lively.

The old Victorian -style, Esplanade Hotel, right on the corner of Victoria Street opposite the Ferry Wharf has been restored and has a charming and graceful ambience.

King Edward Parade runs alongside the beach and foreshore and has a number of casual cafes great for lunches and relaxed meals. During the summer months people picnic along the water's edge and park areas fringing the beach as children splash in the sea or fish from the jetty. Buy your lunch and picnic for a relaxed outing.