

Night-time Entertainment In Wellington

Whether it's drama, dance or concerts, live rock music, Wellington is lively all year around. Tickets are easy to get, venues are comfortable and all within a walking distance. For listings, see the daily **Dominion Post** the weekly **Capital Times** Package and Groove Guide, and individual websites as detailed below.

Live Music Venues & Night Clubs

Wellington has a thriving live music scene. While it has always been active, recent industry initiatives and growing support by the public has seen a boom in local music, video production and artists on tour. It's exciting and we're loving every minute of it – and so can you!

Bar Bodega

101 Ghuzhnee Street, ph 384-8212, www.bodega.co.nz
Wellington's best mid-size live music venue, almost all of New Zealand's top bands and a many a foreign star have played 'The Bodge' at some stage. There's live music nearly every night of the week, so this will be your best bet for finding some local action. Bodega's enthusiastic support of micro-breweries, including local Tuatara, makes it a bar equally beloved of beer drinkers.

Sandwiches

8 Kent Terrace, ph 385-7698, www.sandwiches.co.nz
A relative newcomer, Sandwiches has quickly found favour for its commitment to the dance music scene and its brilliant sound system – easily the best in town. Expect to see the cream of local and national bands and DJs, with some big-name international performers joining in on occasion. Door sales always available.

Blondini's Jazz Bar

Inside the Embassy Theatre, 10 Kent Terrace, ph 384-7657
A classy jazz bar located in the gorgeously restored Embassy Theatre. Live Jazz every Friday and Saturday night, with special events and

performances during the week. A good place to meet for movies or music, Blondini's will have you relaxing on a leather sofa enjoying tapas, fine NZ wines, quality beers including the fabulous Founders brews from Nelson.

Matterhorn

106 Cuba Street, ph 384-3359, www.matterhorn.co.nz
A Cuba Street institution, the Matterhorn leads the charge of Wellington's 'lounges', setting the standard for the many that have followed. Live music remains key to the Matterhorn experience, with bands on Wed/Sun (mainly funk/soul/jazz), and DJs Thurs–Sat. The kitchen is open from brunch till late; the food is good and genuinely innovative. Exemplary wine list. Open fire in winter.

Good Luck

Basement, 126 Cuba Street, ph 801-9950
Wellington's Chinese opium den, without the opium, and not in China. Nevertheless, it's one of the best for a close dance or kissing in a corner. Good Luck's interior has won praise from all over the show – we think it's verrrrry sultry! Full Thai menu, with table service in the lounge section, with dancing at the other end – DJs kick off after 10pm. There's no signage for Good Luck, so ask any groovy-looking Cubaphile where to find it.

Molly Malones

Corner Courtenay Place & Taranaki Street, ph 384-2896
Molly Malones is Wellington's original Irish pub with live music every night. Downstairs offers the pick of Wellington's Celtic bands and a lively session on Monday nights. The Dubliner bar upstairs has music in the weekends and 110 whiskies. A good place for foot-stomping fun or hair-raising jigs and reels. Guinness and Kilkenny on tap; bar and restaurant dining.

Pound

Level 1, Oaks Complex, Dixon Street, ph 384-6024, www.pound.co.nz
The perennial all-nighter, Pound welcomes all but caters specifically for the gay-lesbian-transgender-bi-alternative scene. Proudly run by Mal & Scotty, Pound is known as the base for the gay community, and famous for its friendly atmosphere and fun personalities. There's a big dance floor and a crew of DJs. Karaoke on Thursday, and regular Saturday-night show at 2am. Pool tables, dartboard and pinball.

Indigo

171 Cuba Street, ph 801-6797, www.indigobar.co.nz
A mainstay of the local music scene, in various guises, for over 40 years,

Indigo is dedicated to local, national and international music acts. Live entertainment Tues–Sat, normally springing to life around 11pm. The balcony, though, is a good spot at any time – overlooking, as it does, the bustle of Cuba Street. Pool table.

Valve

154 Vivian Street, ph 385-1630

A late night starter, good for spotting up-and-coming talent. Valve is a small rock venue with a big history (check out the drumsticks over the bar), and can certainly throw up the odd surprise, be it rock, punk, metal, reggae, drum ‘n’ bass, hip-hop and trance. ‘True underground spirit.’

Stunionine

Level 1, 9 Edward Street, ph 384-9976, www.stunionine.co.nz

Underground dance music venue presenting regular local, New Zealand and international artists – ‘the old faithful’ says Phil, ‘keeping it real’ Jason chips in.

Cinema & Performing Arts Venues

There are numerous **cinemas** in town, the most memorable of which will be the **Embassy** (10 Kent Terrace, ph 384-7657, www.deluxe.co.nz). Recently made-over for the world premiere of **The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King**, the Embassy’s lavish 1920’s decor, along with giant cinemascope screen and state-of-the-art digital sound, makes it a very special cinema experience – something you won’t get in the modern multiplexes. Just down the road, the **Paramount** (25 Courtenay Place, ph 384-4080, www.deluxe.co.nz) is Wellington’s oldest surviving cinema (opened 1917) refurbished in a distinctly European style. It offers a varied programme of quality films, and is the host of several fantastic film festivals. A lovely theatre with quality coffee, beer and ice cream, the Paramount deserves its loyal local following. For a family cinema excursion, the **Reading** complex (100 Courtenay Place, ph 801-4600) screens a huge range of films in its many cinemas. Turn up at any time – you won’t wait long to see something you fancy.

If it’s **drama, dance and concerts** you’re after, you’re in luck, as Wellington is home to the national orchestra, ballet and opera as well as many other professional and amateur performance groups. It’s also a magnet for first-class international acts, so expect to be spoilt for choice.

Tickets are available at most venues. The **Visitor Information Centre** sells reduced price tickets for Circa, Downstage and Bats after 12pm on the day of performance on a first-come-first-served basis. **Ticketek** booths are located at the **Michael Fowler Centre** and the **St James Theatre** – they ticket many, but not all events.

Circa Theatre (next to Te Papa, 1 Taranaki Street, ph 801-7992, www.circa.co.nz) is considered one of New Zealand’s liveliest and most innovative professional theatres, spectacularly located

on the waterfront. Showcasing international and New Zealand drama, comedies and musicals, Circa has helped foster the careers of some of New Zealand's best-known theatre professionals. Performances are held Tues–Sun, and door sales are available one hour before performance. The **café & bar** is open at show times.

Downstage Theatre (12 Cambridge Terrace, ph 801-6946, www.downstage.co.nz) is New Zealand's longest-running professional theatre, entertaining audiences for 40 years. An intimate 250-seat venue, Downstage delivers top quality, dynamic live theatre. Many landmark New Zealand plays have been premiered at Downstage, and it has 'long been an important part of Wellington's, and New Zealand's, cultural fabric', according to Prime Minister Helen Clark. Performances Mon–Tues 6.30pm, Wed–Sat 8pm.

Bats Theatre (1 Kent Terrace, ph 802-4175, www.bats.co.nz), now over 15 years old, offers a truly Wellington theatre experience. Its founding philosophy was to rekindle the popularity and accessibility of theatre for young people, and to provide a 'way in' for young artists. That means you get a varied programme of a consistently high standard, very reasonably priced. Door sales available.

The splendid **Westpac St James Theatre** (77–87 Courtenay Place, www.stjames.co.nz) boasts opera, dance and major musical shows, and is home to the **Royal New Zealand Ballet**. New Zealand's finest Edwardian lyric theatre, the St James was nearly demolished in the mid 1980s, thankfully rescued by the people of Wellington. Its restoration was completed in 1998. The atmospheric foyer houses the **Jimmy Café & Bar** serving light meals and coffee during the day, as well as full dining facilities pre-show. **Ticketek** box office located inside.

Wellington's grand old lady is **The Opera House** (111–113 Manners Street, www.stjames.co.nz), a wonderful example of early 1900s architecture. A venue for contemporary dance, comedy, community shows and smaller touring productions, the theatre has been progressively refurbished inside and out over the last three years. The **Opera House Espresso Bar** serves coffee and light refreshments at show time.

Useful Listings

NBR New Zealand Opera, www.nzopera.com

Royal New Zealand Ballet, www.nzballet.org.nz

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, www.nzso.co.nz

New Zealand String Quartet, www.nzsq.co.nz

Chamber Music New Zealand, www.chambermusic.co.nz

Wellington Sinfonia, www.wellingtonsinfonia.co.nz