

Auckland Region



Paris may be the city of love, but Auckland is the city of many lovers, according to its Maori name, Tamaki Makaurau. In fact, her lovers so desired this beautiful place that they fought over her for centuries.

It's hard to imagine a more geographically blessed city. Its two magnificent harbours frame a narrow isthmus punctuated by volcanic cones and surrounded by fertile farmland. From any of its numerous vantage points you'll be astounded at how close the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean come to kissing and forming a new island.

As a result, water's never far away – whether it's the ruggedly beautiful west-coast surf beaches or the glistening Hauraki Gulf with its myriad islands. The 135,000 pleasure crafts filling Auckland's marinas have lent the city its most durable nickname: the 'City of Sails'.

Within an hour's drive from the high-rise heart of the city are dense tracts of rainforest, thermal springs, deserted beaches, wineries and wildlife reserves. Yet big-city comforts have spread to all corners of the Auckland Region: a decent coffee or chardonnay is usually close at hand.

Yet the rest of the country loves to hate it, tut-tutting about its traffic snarls and the supposed self-obsession of the quarter of the country's population that call it home. With its many riches, Auckland can justifiably respond to its detractors, 'Don't hate me because I'm beautiful'.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Going with the flows, exploring Auckland's fascinating **volcanic field** (p102)
- Getting back to nature on the island sanctuaries of the beautiful **Hauraki Gulf** (p133)
- Being awed by the Maori *taonga* (treasures) of the **Auckland Museum** (p102)
- Going west to the mystical and treacherous black sands of **Karekare** (p146) and **Piha** (p146)
- Swimming with the fishes at **Goat Island Marine Reserve** (p153)
- Schlepping around world-class wineries and beaches on **Waiheke Island** (p135)
- Buzzing around the cafés and bars of **Kingsland** (p124) and **Ponsonby** (p124)
- Soaking up the 'Nesian vibe at **Pasifika Festival** (p116), held in March at Western Springs Park





MAORI NZ: AUCKLAND REGION

Evidence of Maori occupation is literally carved into Auckland's volcanic cones (p102). The dominant *iwi* (tribe) of the isthmus was Ngati Whatua, but these days there are Maori from almost all NZ's *iwi* living here, sometimes collectively known as Ngati Akarana, or the Auckland Tribe.

For a first taste of Maori culture, start at Auckland Museum (p102), where there's a wonderful Maori collection and a culture show. For a more personalised experience, take either Potiki Adventures' Urban Maori tour (p116) or Ngati Whatua's Tamaki Hikoi (p116).

Climate

Auckland has a mild climate, with the occasional frost in winter and high humidity in summer. Summer months have an average of eight days of rain, but the weather is famously fickle, with 'four seasons in a day' possible at any time of the year.

AUCKLAND

pop 1.2 million

Auckland's a city of volcanoes, with the ridges of lava flows forming its main thoroughfares and its many cones providing islands of green within the sea of suburbs. As well as being by far the largest, it's the most multicultural of

NZ's cities. A sizable Asian community rubs shoulders with the biggest Polynesian population of any city in the world.

The traditional Kiwi aspiration for a free-standing house on a quarter-acre section has resulted in a vast, sprawling city. The CBD was long ago abandoned to commerce, and inner-city apartment living has only just started to catch on. While geography has been kind, city planning has been less so. Unbridled and ill-conceived development has left the centre of the city with some architectural embarrassments. To get under Auckland's skin you're best to head for the rows of Victorian and Edwardian villas in its hip inner-city suburbs.

HISTORY

Maori occupation in the Auckland area dates back around 800 years. Initial settlements were concentrated on the coastal regions of the Hauraki Gulf islands, but gradually the fertile isthmus beckoned and land was cleared for growing food.

Over hundreds of years Tamaki's many different tribes wrestled for control of the area, building *pa* (fortified villages) on the numerous volcanic cones. The Ngati Whatua *iwi* (tribe) from the Kaipara Harbour took the upper hand in 1741, occupying the major *pa* sites. During the Musket Wars of the 1820s they were decimated by the northern tribe Ngapuhi, leaving the land all but abandoned.

At the time of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, Governor Hobson had his base at Okiato, near Russell in the Bay of Islands. When Ngati Whatua chief Te Kawau offered 3000 acres of land for sale on the northern edge of the Waitemata Harbour, Hobson decided to create a new capital, naming it after one of his patrons, George Eden (Earl of Auckland).

Beginning with just a few tents on a beach, the settlement quickly grew, and soon the port was kept busy exporting the region's produce, including kauri timber. However, it lost its capital status to Wellington after just 25 years.

Since the beginning of the 20th century Auckland has been NZ's fastest-growing city and its main industrial centre. Political deals may be done in Wellington, but Auckland is the big smoke in the land of the long white cloud.

AUCKLAND REGION FACTS

- Eat** Multiculturally, at one of the city's numerous food halls (p122)
- Drink** Waiheke Island rosé on a hot summer's day
- Read** *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* (1995), where acclaimed author Witi Ihimaera shifts his attention from East Coast Maoridom to Auckland's gay scene
- Listen** to 'A Brief Reflection' (2002) by Nesian Mystik
- Watch** *Sione's Wedding* (2006), Chris Graham's comedy set in Grey Lynn and central Auckland
- Swim** at Onetangi (p135)
- Festival** Pasifika Festival (p116)
- Tackiest tourist attraction** Sky City (p107)
- Go green** Encounter endangered birds amongst the regenerated forest of Tiritiri Matangi Island (p139)

ORIENTATION

Auckland is a conurbation formed from four main urban municipalities. Auckland City proper includes the central isthmus and Gulf islands. The others are Waitakere City (west), North Shore City and Manukau (south).

The Auckland isthmus runs roughly west-east, with Waitemata Harbour lying to the north (feeding into the Hauraki Gulf) and Manukau Harbour to the south (feeding into the Tasman Sea). The Harbour Bridge links the city to the North Shore, with the CBD to its east.

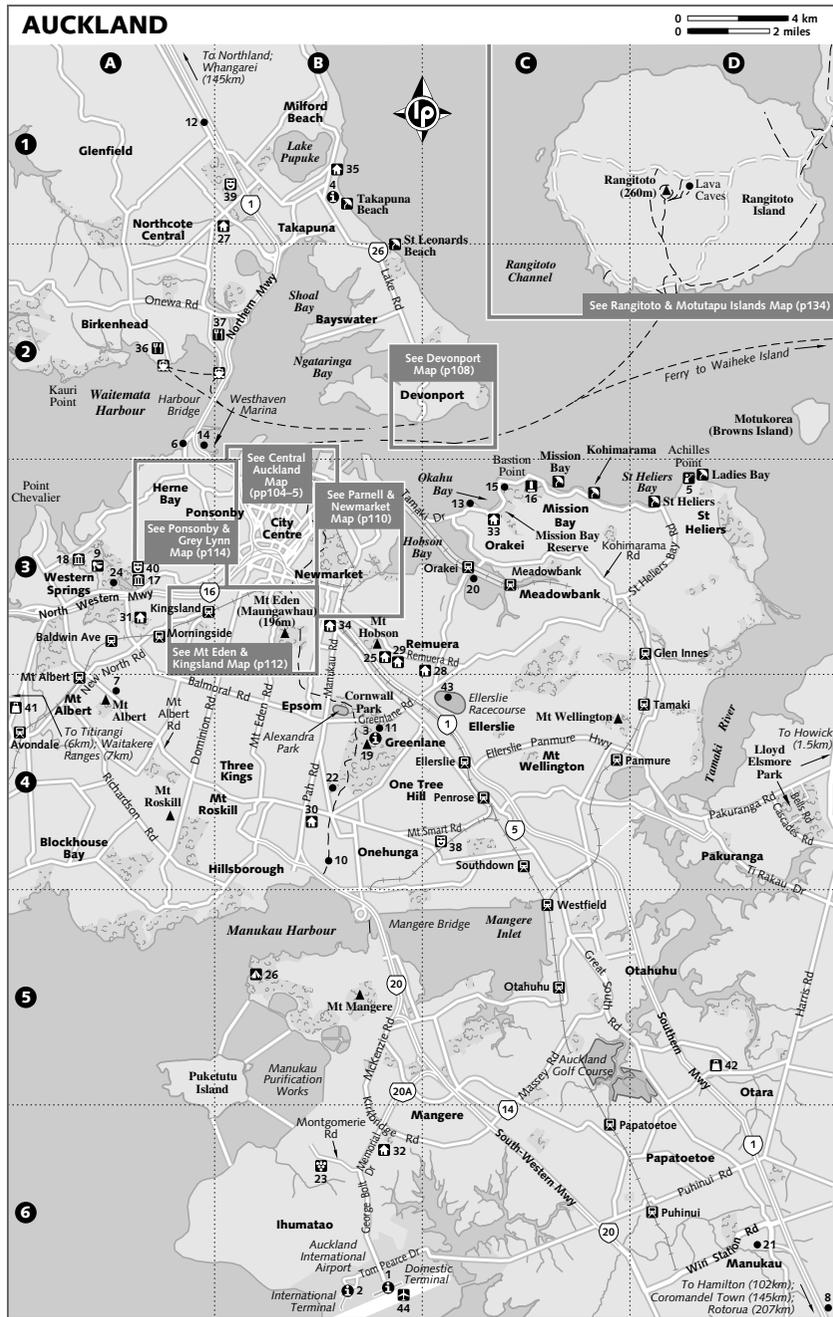
The commercial heart of the city is Queen St, which runs from the waterfront up to Newton's Karangahape Rd (K Rd), a lively, bohemian, sometimes gritty strip of inexpensive restaurants and boisterous bars.

In the early days, the area immediately east of the city tended to be upmarket and Anglican, while the west was more Catholic and working-class. While they're all rather pricey neighbourhoods nowadays, Parnell and Remuera retain vestiges of old-money snobbery while Ponsonby and Grey Lynn are slightly more alternative. Mt Eden sits somewhere between the two, both physically and sociologically.

The airport is 23km south of the city centre.

Maps

Auckland Map Centre (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-309 7725; www.aucklandmapcentre.co.nz; 209 Queen St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun)



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INFORMATION

Bookshops

Unity Books (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-307 0731; 19 High St; 🕒 8.30am-7pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-9pm Fri, 9.30am-6pm Sat, 11am-6pm Sun) Excellent independent bookshop.

Whitcoulls (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-356 5400; 210 Queen St; 🕒 8am-7pm Mon-Thu, 8am-9pm Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) Chain with good travel and fiction sections.

Women's Bookshop (Map p114; ☎ 09-376 4399; 105 Ponsonby Rd; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) A community resource as well as a good independent bookshop.

Emergency

Ambulance, fire service & police (☎ 111)

Auckland Central Police Station (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-302 6400; cnr Vincent & Cook Sts)

Internet Access

Expect to pay from \$2 to \$4 an hour at internet cafés; a few are open 24 hours.

Internet Resources

Auckland NZ (www.aucklandnz.com) Official tourist site.

Auckland Regional Council (ARC; www.arc.govt.nz) Information about regional parks and events.

Dine Out (www.dineout.co.nz) Locals' comments on restaurants.

MAXX Regional Transport (www.maxx.co.nz) Public transport timetables and route planner.

Medical Services

Auckland City Hospital (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-379 7440; Park Rd, Grafton; 🕒 24hr) The city's main hospital; has an accident and emergency (A&E) section.

Auckland Metro Doctors & Travelcare (Map pp104-5;

☎ 0508 306 306; Level 1, 125 Queen St; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) Specialises in health care for travellers, such as vaccinations and travel consultations.

Starship Children's Hospital (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-367 0000; Park Rd, Grafton; 🕒 24hr) Has its own A&E department.

Media

Metro Glossy monthly magazine covering Auckland issues in depth.

New Zealand Herald (www.nzherald.co.nz) The country's biggest daily newspaper, with a comprehensive entertainment magazine, *Time Out*, on Thursdays.

Money

There are plenty of moneychangers, banks and ATMs, especially on Queen St. For weekend banking visit the **ASB** (Map pp104-5; Lower Albert St; 🕒 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) in the Downtown Shopping Centre.

Post

Wellesley St Post Office (Map pp104-5; 24 Wellesley St; 🕒 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) The place to pick up poste restante mail (ID is required).

Tourist Information

Auckland Domestic Airport i-SITE (Map p100; ☎ 09-256 8480; 🕒 7am-5pm) In the Air New Zealand section of the domestic airport.

Auckland International Airport i-SITE (Map p100; ☎ 09-275 6467; 🕒 first-last flight) Located on your left as you exit the customs hall. You can make free calls to Auckland accommodation providers from here.

AUCKLAND IN...

Two Days

Book ahead for tomorrow night's dinner. Breakfast in **Ponsonby** (p125) and take the Link Bus to **Auckland Museum** (below) for the Maori gallery and culture show. Wander through the Domain towards **K Rd** (p123), where you can grab lunch. Follow the walking tour on p115, stopping along the way for at least a quick whiz around the NZ section of the **Auckland Art Gallery** (p107). End with a relaxing drink or meal at the **Viaduct Harbour** (p111).

On day two, grab breakfast in the city before catching the 9.15am ferry to **Rangitoto** (p133). This will give you time to explore the volcanic island before it starts to bake. Catch the 12.45pm ferry to **Devonport** (p108) for lunch. If you've still got energy, check out **North Head** (p109) and then cool off at **Cheltenham Beach** (p109), if the weather and tide permit. Stay on the North Shore for a memorable dinner at the **Engine Room** (p125) or **Eight.Two** (p125).

Four Days

On the third day, head west. Grab breakfast in **Titirangi** (p144) before exploring the **Waitakere Ranges Regional Park** (p145), **Karekare** (p146) and **Piha** (p146). If you don't have a car, book in a day trip with **Potiki Adventures** (p116). On the way back, stop in at **Elevation** (p146) for a glass of wine and breathtaking views of the city. Freshen up for a night eating and drinking your way around **Kingsland** (p124).

On day four, breakfast in **Mt Eden** (p124) and then climb **Maungawhau** (opposite). Catch the 10.33am train back to Britomart for the 11am ferry to **Waiheke Island** (p135). Have lunch and dinner at a winery, and spend the afternoon at the beach (or more wineries if the weather's bad). Don't miss the last ferry back.

Auckland i-SITE (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-363 7182; www.aucklandnz.com; Sky Tower Atrium, cnr Victoria & Federal Sts; ☎ 8am-8pm)

Automobile Association (AA; Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-966 8918; 99 Albert St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) Maps and accommodation directories.

Cornwall Park Information Centre (Map p100; ☎ 09-630 8485; Huia Lodge; ☎ 10am-4pm)

Devonport i-SITE (Map p108; ☎ 09-446 0677; www.tourismnorthshore.org.nz; 3 Victoria Rd; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) Internet access and information.

DOC Information Centre (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-379 6476; www.doc.govt.nz; Ferry Bldg, 99 Quay St; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri)

New Zealand i-SITE (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-307 0612; 137 Quay St; ☎ 9am-5pm)

Takapuna i-SITE (Map p100; ☎ 09-486 8670; www.tourismnorthshore.org.nz; 49 Hurstmere Rd; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun)

SIGHTS

Auckland Volcanic Field

Some cities think they're tough by living in the shadow of a volcano. Auckland's built on 50 of them and, no, they're not all extinct. The last one to erupt was Rangitoto (p133) about 600 years ago and no-one can predict when the next eruption will occur. Auckland's quite

literally a hot spot – with a reservoir of magma 100km below waiting to bubble to the surface. But relax: this has only happened 19 times in the last 20,000 years.

Some of Auckland's volcanoes are cones, some are filled with water and some have been completely quarried away. Moves are afoot to register the field as a World Heritage Site and protect what remains. Most of the surviving cones show evidence of terracing from when they formed a formidable series of Maori *pa*.

Apart from those mentioned separately in this section, these sites are also worth a visit:

Mt Wellington (Maungarei; Map p100)

Mt Albert (Owairaka; Map p100)

Mt Roskill (Map p100)

Lake Pupuke (Map p100)

Mt Mangere (Map p100)

Mt Hobson (Map p100)

Auckland Museum & Domain

Covering about 80 hectares, the green swathe of the **Auckland Domain** (Map p110) contains sports fields, interesting sculpture, formal gardens, wild corners and the **Wintergarden** (Map p110; admission free; ☎ 9am-4.30pm), with its fernery, tropical house, cool house, cute cat statue and neighbouring café. The mound in the centre

of the park is all that remains of **Pukekaroa** (Map p110), one of Auckland's volcanoes. At its humble peak, a totara surrounded by a palisade honours the first Maori king (see the boxed text, p219).

Dominating it all is the magnificent **Auckland Museum** (Map p110; ☎ 09-309 0443; www.aucklandmuseum.com; adult/child \$5/free; ☎ 10am-5pm), an imposing Greek temple with an impressive modern dome. Its comprehensive display of Pacific Island and Maori artefacts on the ground floor deserves to be on your 'must see' list. Highlights include a 25m war canoe and an extant carved meeting house from the Thames area (see p197) that you can enter (remove your shoes first).

Bookings are required for the **museum highlights guided tour** (☎ 09-306 7048; tour \$10; ☎ 10.30am & 2pm). Daily **Maori cultural performances** (adult/child \$20/10; ☎ 11am, noon & 1.30pm) provide a good (and good-humoured) introduction to things Maori. The 30-minute show is followed by a tour of the Maori Court.

Admirers of the male form should check out the Domain's **Grafton Gate** (Map pp104-5; Park Rd), a wonderful Art Deco sandstone construction topped with a larger-than-life bronze nude.

Walking here from the city will take about 30 minutes, or you can catch the Link Bus (p132) to the neighbouring hospital.

One Tree Hill (Maungakiekie)

This hill (Map p100) was the isthmus' *key pa* and the greatest fortress in the country. It's easy to see why: a drive or walk to the top (182m) offers amazing 360-degree views. At the summit is the grave of John Logan Campbell, who gifted the land to the city in 1901, requesting that a memorial (the imposing obelisk and statue above the grave) be built to the Maori people. Nearby is the stump of the last 'one tree' (see the boxed text, below).

ONE TREE TO RULE THEM ALL

Looking at One Tree Hill, your first thought will probably be 'Where's the bloody tree?'. Good question. Up until 2000 a Monterey pine stood at the top of the hill. This was a replacement for a sacred totara that was chopped down by British settlers in 1852. Maori activists first attacked the foreign usurper in 1994, finishing the job in 2000. It's unlikely that another tree will be planted until local land claims have moved closer to resolution, but you can bet your boots that this time around it'll be a native.

Auckland's most beloved landmark achieved international recognition in 1987 when U2 released the song 'One Tree Hill' on their acclaimed *The Joshua Tree* album. It was only released as a single in NZ, where it went to number one.

Allow a few hours to explore the three craters and surrounding **Cornwall Park** (Map p100), with its impressive mature trees and historic cottage. The information centre (opposite) has fascinating interactive displays illustrating what the *pa* would have looked like when 5000 people lived here.

Near the excellent **children's playground**, the **Stardome Observatory** (Map p100; ☎ 09-624 1246; www.stardome.org.nz; adult/child \$14/7) offers regular stargazing and planetarium shows that aren't dependent on Auckland's fickle weather (usually 8pm Wednesday to Saturday; phone ahead).

To get here from the city, take bus 328 from Customs St to Manukau Rd (adult/child \$4.30/2.40, 20 minutes). By car, take the Greenlane exit of the Southern Motorway and turn right into Green Lane West Rd.

Mt Eden (Maungawhau)

The view from Mt Eden (Map p112), Auckland's highest cone (196m), is superb. The symmetrical crater (50m deep) is known as Te Ipu Kai a Mataaho (the Food Bowl of Mataaho, the god of things hidden in the ground) and is highly *tapu* (sacred); don't enter it, but feel free to explore the remainder of the mountain. The remains of *pa* terraces and storage pits are clearly visible.

On its eastern slopes, **Eden Gardens** (Map p112; ☎ 09-638 8395; 24 Omana Ave, Epsom; adult/child \$5/free; ☎ 9am-4.30pm) is a wonderful showpiece noted for camellias, rhododendrons and azaleas.

Western Springs

Auckland Zoo (Map p100; ☎ 09-360 3800; www.aucklandzoo.co.nz; Motions Rd; adult/child \$18/9; ☎ 9.30am-5pm) is an excellent modern zoo with spacious, natural compounds. The infrared lighting of the nocturnal house offers a rare chance to see kiwi fossicking about. The big foreigners tend

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to steal the attention from the timid natives, but if you can wrestle the kids away from the tigers and elephants you'll find tuataras and a large selection of native birds.

Neighbouring **Western Springs Park** (Map p100) centres on a lake formed by a confluence of lava flows. Until 1902 this was Auckland's main water supply; more than 4-million litres bubble up daily. Kids come here to be traumatised by pushy, bread-fattened geese and partake of the popular adventure playground. It's a great spot for a picnic and to get acquainted with playful pukeko (swamp hens).

Nothing makes you feel quite as old as seeing your childhood appliances in a museum. That sobering experience is offered at **MOTAT** (Museum of Transport & Technology; Map p100; ☎ 0800 668 286; www.motat.org.nz; 805 Great North Rd; adult/child \$14/7; 🕒 10am-5pm), a 19-hectare trainspotter's paradise spreading over two sites. In MOTAT 1 look out for Helen Clark's Honda 50 motorbike and the cutesy pioneer village. MOTAT 2 is an aircraft graveyard, featuring rare military and commercial planes. The two sites are linked by a vintage tram (adult/child \$2/1, every 30 minutes, 10am to 5pm), which passes the

park and zoo. It's a fun kids' ride whether you visit MOTAT or not.

From the city, catch any bus (adult/child \$3.20/1.80, 15 minutes) heading west via Great North Rd. By car, take the Western Springs exit from the North Western Motorway.

Auckland Art Gallery

The **Auckland Art Gallery** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-379 1349; www.aucklandartgallery.govt.nz; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm) spreads over two neighbouring buildings. The **Main Gallery** (cnr Wellesley & Kitchener Sts), built in French chateau style, isn't terribly big, but it houses important works by Pieter Bruegel the Younger and Guido Reni in the European collection, and an extensive permanent collection of NZ art. It's worth calling in for the intimate 19th-century portraits of tattooed Maori subjects by Charles Goldie and Gottfried Lindauer alone. The **New Gallery** (cnr Wellesley & Lome Sts) concentrates on contemporary art and temporary exhibitions (with varying admission charges). Ten commercial galleries can be found in the immediate vicinity.

Sky Tower

The impossible-to-miss **Sky Tower** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-363 6000; www.skycity.co.nz; cnr Federal & Victoria Sts; adult/child \$25/8; 🕒 8.30am-11pm Sun-Thu, 8.30am-midnight Fri & Sat) looks like a giant hypodermic giving a fix to the heavens. Spectacular lighting renders it even more space-age at night. The colours change for special events and shooting fireworks make it even more phallic on New Year's Eve.

The tower is the best part of the Sky City complex, a tacky 24-hour casino with restaurants, cafés, bars and a hotel. At 328m it is the tallest structure in the southern hemisphere. A lift takes you up to the observation decks in 40 stomach-lurching seconds; look down through the glass floor panels if you're after an extra kick. It costs \$3 extra to catch the skyway lift to the ultimate viewing level. Late afternoon is a good time to go up: you can sip a beverage in the Sky Lounge as the sun sets. See p111 for crazy stuff you can do while you're up here.

Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounter & Underwater World

Housed in old stormwater and sewage holding tanks is this unique and beguiling **aquarium** (Map p100; ☎ 0800 805 050, 09-528 0603; www.kellytarlton.co.nz; 23 Tamaki Dr; adult/child \$30/14; 🕒 9am-6pm). A

transparent tunnel runs along the centre of the tank, through which you travel on a conveyor belt, with the fish, including sharks and sting-rays, swimming around you. You can step off at any time to take a closer look.

The big attraction, however, is the permanent winter wonderland known as **Antarctic Encounter**. It includes a walk through a replica of Scott's 1911 Antarctic hut, and a ride aboard a heated Snow Cat through a frozen environment where a colony of king and gentoo penguins lives at sub-zero temperatures. Displays include an Antarctic scientific base of the future and exhibits on the history of Antarctica. Needless to say, this whole experience is a fantastic adventure for adults travelling with children.

Bus numbers 745 to 769 head here from Britomart. There's also a shuttle (adult/child \$2/1) on the hour between 9am and 4pm from Sky City's atrium (departing Kelly Tarlton's 45 minutes later).

Tamaki Drive

This scenic, pohutukawa-lined road heads east from the city, hugging the waterfront. In summer it's a jogging/cycling/rollerblading blur offering plenty of eye candy.

Just past Kelly Tarlton's, Hapimana St heads up to Bastion Point (see the boxed text, p109) and the **Michael Joseph Savage Memorial** (Map p100). Savage (1872-1940) was the country's first Labour prime minister and widely considered one of its best. His socialist reforms left him adored by the populace, as this elaborate cliff-top garden mausoleum demonstrates. Follow the lawn to a WWII gun embankment - one of many that line the harbour.

Below the headland is **Mission Bay** (Map p100), a popular beach with an iconic fountain, historic mission house, restaurants and bars. Safe swimming beaches **Kohimarama** (Map p100) and **St Heliers** (Map p100) follow. Further east along Cliff Rd, the **Achilles Point lookout** (Map p100) offers panoramic views. At its base is **Ladies Bay**, where nudists put up with mud and shells for the sake of seclusion.

Bus numbers 745 to 769 from Britomart follow this route.

Albert Park & Auckland University

Hugging the hill on the city's eastern flank, **Albert Park** (Map pp104-5) is a charming Victorian formal garden overrun by

students during term time, the more radical of whom periodically deface the statues of Governor Grey and Queen Victoria. Auckland University campus stretches over several streets and incorporates a row of stately **Victorian merchant houses** (Map pp104-5; Princes St) and **Old Government House** (Map pp104-5; Waterloo Quadrant). The latter was the colony's seat of power from 1856 until 1865, when Wellington became the capital.

The **University Clock Tower** (Map pp104-5; 22 Princes St) is Auckland's architectural triumph. The stately 'ivory' tower (1926) tips its hat towards Art Nouveau (the incorporation of NZ flora and fauna into the decoration) and the Chicago School (the way it's rooted into the earth). It's usually open, so wander inside.

At the centre of the campus is a wall of the **Albert Barracks** (1847; Map pp104-5), a fortification that enclosed nine hectares, including Albert Park, during the New Zealand Wars.

Devonport

Located at the bottom of the North Shore, Devonport makes a pleasant day trip by ferry from the city. Quaint without being sickeningly twee, it retains a village atmosphere, with many well-preserved Victorian and Edwardian buildings and loads of cafés. If your interests are less genteel, there are two volcanic cones and easy access to the first of the North Shore's beaches.

The navy is based here, its history on display at the **Navy Museum** (Map p108; ☎ 09-445 5186;

WHAT BECAME OF NGATI WHATUA?

By the end of the 1840s Maori were already a minority in the Auckland area, and eventually the Ngati Whatua o Orakei *hapu* (subtribe) was reduced to a small block of land in the vicinity of Okahu Bay and Bastion Point. In 1886 Bastion Point was confiscated by the government for military use, and then in 1908 more land was taken to build a sewage pipe that pumped raw effluent into the water in front of the *hapu's* last remaining village at Okahu Bay. All but the cemetery was confiscated in 1951, with the people dragged out of their homes and the village destroyed to 'clean up' the area before the royal visit of Queen Elizabeth II.

When the government decided to sell the prime real estate on Bastion Point in 1977, the *hapu* staged a peaceful occupation that lasted for 507 days before they were once again dragged into custody. It was a seminal moment in the Maori protest movement. During the next decade the government apologised and returned the land where the *marae* now stands. At the time of research, further negotiations between the government and *hapu* were progressing, with several of the volcanic cones likely to be part of the final settlement. The former railway land on which the Vector Arena now sits has already been returned.



Spring St; admission by donation; ☎ 10am-4.30pm). Its civilian neighbours have theirs preserved in the **Devonport Museum** (Map p108; ☎ 09-445 2661; www.devonportmuseum.org.nz; 31a Vauxhall Rd; admission free; ☎ 2-4pm Sat & Sun).

Mt Victoria (Takarunga; Map p108; Victoria Rd) and **North Head** (Takapuna; Map p108; Takarunga Rd; ☎ 6am-10pm) were Maori *pa* and are both still fortresses of sorts, with the navy maintaining a presence. Both have gun emplacements and North Head is riddled with tunnels. Started at the end of the 19th century in response to the Russian threat, they were extended during WWI and WWII. The gates are locked at night, but that's never stopped teenagers from jumping the fence and terrifying themselves in the tunnels. Devonport Museum stands on the remains of a third cone that was largely quarried away.

For a self-guided tour of historic buildings, pick up the *Old Devonport Walk* pamphlet from the i-SITE (p102).

Ferries to Devonport (adult/child \$9/4.40 return, 12 minutes) depart from the Auckland Ferry Building every 30 minutes from 6.15am to 11pm (until 1am Friday and Saturday), and from 7.15am to 10pm on Sundays and public holidays. Some Waiheke Island and Rangitoto ferries also stop here.

North Shore Beaches

A succession of fine swimming beaches stretches from North Head to Long Bay. The gulf islands provide a picturesque backdrop and shelter them from strong surf, making them safe for supervised children. Aim for high tide unless you fancy a lengthy walk to

waist-deep water. **Cheltenham Beach** (Map p108) is a short walk from Devonport. **Takapuna Beach** (Map p100), closest to the Harbour Bridge, is Auckland's answer to Bondi and the most built up. Nearby **St Leonards Beach** (Map p100), popular with gay men, requires clambering over rocks at high tide.

Parnell & Newmarket

Parnell likes to think of itself as a village, although if its snootier denizens were to lower their noses to perpendicular they might notice a distinct lack of tractors. Inexplicably, it has an excellent selection of budget accommodation, although it's doubtful that backpackers will be frequenting the pricey eateries of the main strip. Neighbouring Newmarket is a busy shopping precinct, known for its boutiques.

This is one of Auckland's oldest areas and has retained several heritage buildings. **Highwic** (Map p110; ☎ 09-524 5729; www.historic.org.nz; 40 Gillies Ave; adult/child \$7.50/free; ☎ 10.30am-noon & 1-4.30pm Wed-Sun) is a marvellous example of a Carpenter Gothic house (1862), sitting amid lush, landscaped grounds. **Ewelme Cottage** (Map p110; ☎ 09-379 0202; www.historic.org.nz; 14 Ayr St; adult/child \$7.50/free; ☎ 10.30am-noon & 1-4.30pm Fri-Sun) is a storybook affair that was built for a clergyman in 1864 and has been left in startlingly good condition.

Close to Ewelme Cottage is the simply restored **Kinder House** (Map p110; ☎ 09-379 4008; 2 Ayr St; adult/child \$4/1; ☎ 11am-3pm Tue-Sun), built of volcanic stone (1857). Designed by Frederick Thatcher, it displays the subtle but skilful watercolours and memorabilia of the Reverend Dr John Kinder (1819-1903), who

PARNELL & NEWMARKET

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

- Auckland Domain..... 1 A4
- Auckland Museum..... 2 B4
- Ewelme Cottage..... 3 C4
- Highwic..... 4 A6
- Holy Trinity Cathedral..... 5 C3
- Kinder House..... 6 B4
- Olympic Pools & Fitness Centre... 7 B5
- Parnell Baths..... 8 D1
- Parnell Rose Gardens..... 9 C1
- Pukekaroa..... 10 A4
- St Mary's Church..... 11 C3
- St Stephen's Chapel..... 12 D1
- Wintergarden..... 13 A4

SLEEPING

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- Barrycourt Motor Inn..... 15 C3
- Chalet Chevron B&B..... 16 C3
- City Garden Lodge..... 17 C3
- Kingsgate Hotel..... 18 C1
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EATING

- Baci Lounge..... (see 28)
- Gion..... 22 B2
- Himalaya..... 23 B2
- Kokako..... 24 B4
- Rosehip Café..... 25 C2
- Zarbo..... 26 A6

DRINKING

- Nuffield Street Brew Bar..... 27 B6

ENTERTAINMENT

- Rialto Cinemas..... 28 B5

SHOPPING

- Karen Walker..... 29 B6
- Zambesi..... 30 B6

TRANSPORT

- Adventure Cycles..... 31 C4

Parnell Inn..... 20 B3

Parnell's Village Motor Lodge... 21 C3

See Central Auckland Map (pp104-5)

was the headmaster of the Church of England Grammar School. Enthusiastic and informative guided tours are provided.

St Mary's (Map p110; ☎ 09-303 9500; Parnell Rd; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun) is a wonderful wooden Gothic Revival church (1886), with a burnished wooden interior and lovely stained-glass windows. Next door is **Holy Trinity Cathedral** (Map p110; ☎ 09-303 9500; Parnell Rd; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun), which is worth visiting for its modern stained-glass windows. Its blue-coloured rose window, designed by English artist Carl Edwards, is particularly striking above the simple kauri altar.

The **Parnell Rose Gardens** (Map p110; Gladstone Rd) are blooming excellent from November to March. A pleasant stroll leads to peaceful **Judges Bay** and tiny **St Stephen's Chapel** (Map p110; Judge St), built for the signing of the constitution of NZ's Anglican Church (1857).

Auckland Botanical Gardens

The 65-hectare **Auckland Botanical Gardens** (Map p100; ☎ 09-267 1457; Hill Rd, Manurewa; admission free; ☎ 8am-6pm) has dozens of themed gardens, threatened plants, and a hell of a lot of brides and grooms. By car, take the Southern Motorway, exit at Manurewa and follow the signs. Otherwise take the train to Manurewa (\$6.50, 50 minutes) and then walk along Hill Rd (1.5km) or catch bus 66 (\$1.60, five minutes).

Civic Theatre

Opening its doors in 1929, the mighty **Civic** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-309 2677; www.civictheatre.co.nz; cnr Queen & Wellesley Sts) is one of seven 'atmospheric theatres' remaining in the world and a fine survivor from cinema's Golden Age. The auditorium has lavish Moorish decoration and a starlit southern-hemisphere sky in the ceiling, complete with cloud projections. The foyer is an Indian indulgence, with elephants and monkeys hanging from every conceivable fixture. Buddhas were planned to decorate the street frontage but were considered too risqué at the time – they chose neoclassical naked boys instead!

If at all possible, try to attend a performance here. It's mainly used for touring musicals, big premieres and Film Festival screenings (see p117).

Viaduct Harbour

Once a busy commercial port, the Viaduct Harbour was given a major makeover lead-

ing up to the 1999/2000 and 2003 America's Cup tournaments. It's now a fancy dining and boozing precinct for the boat-shoes brigade, and guaranteed to have at least a slight buzz any night of the week. Historical plaques, interesting sculpture and the chance to gawk at millionaires' yachts make it a pleasant place for a stroll.

Having an interest in boats is a prerequisite for the well-presented **National Maritime Museum** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-373 0800; www.nzmaritime.org; cnr Quay & Hobson Sts; adult/child \$16/7; ☎ 9am-5pm), which traces NZ's seafaring history from Maori voyaging canoes to the America's Cup. Re-creations include a tilting 19th-century steerage-class cabin and a fab '50s-era bach (holiday home). Check the website for details of semiregular historic steamboat and sailing-ship cruises.

St Patrick's Cathedral

Auckland's Catholic **cathedral** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-303 4059; www.stpatricks.org.nz; 43 Wyndham St; ☎ 7am-6pm) is one of its loveliest buildings. Polished wood and Belgian stained glass lend warmth to the interior of this majestic, recently restored Gothic Revival church (1907). There's a historical display in the old confessional on the left-hand side.

Alberton

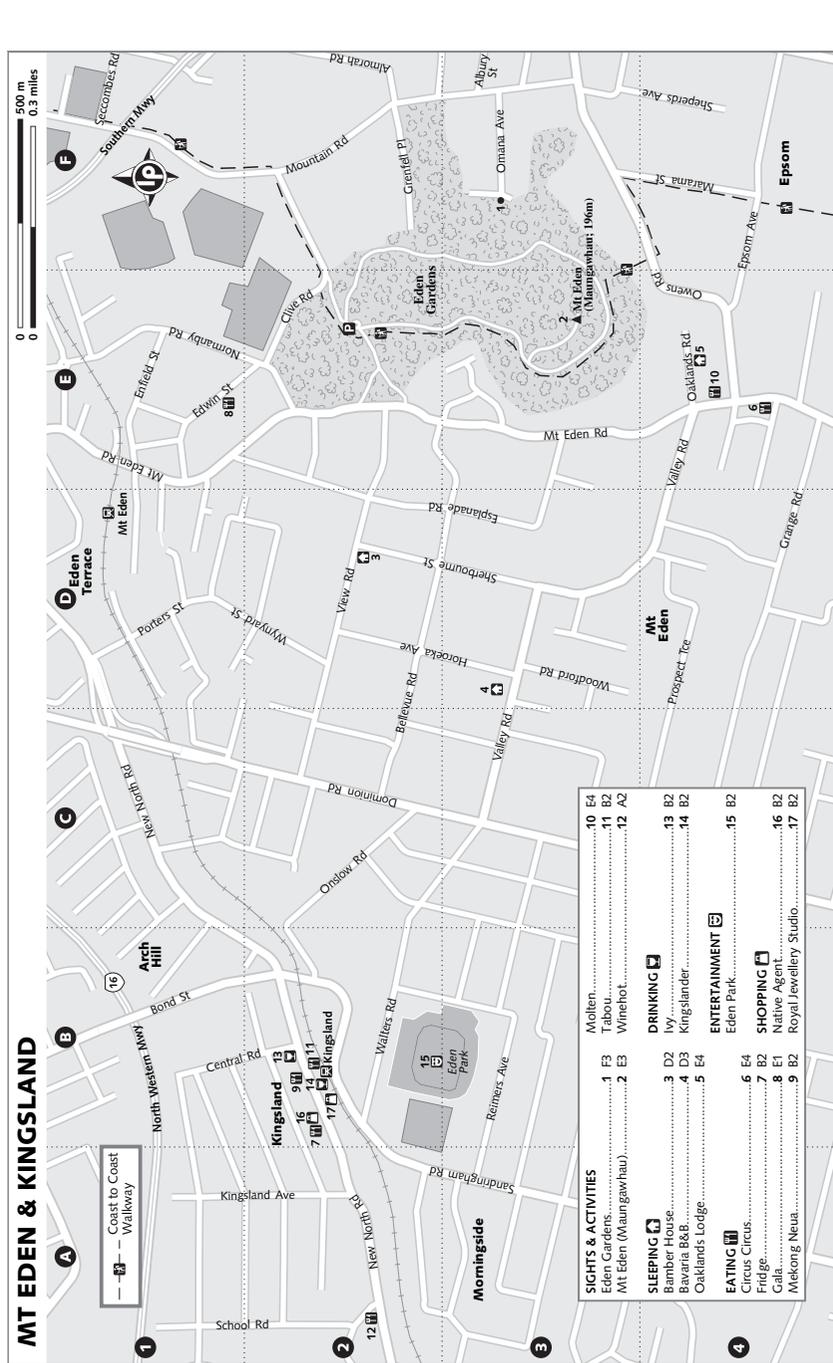
A classic colonial mansion (1863), **Alberton** (Map p100; ☎ 09-846 7367; www.historic.org.nz; 100 Mt Albert Rd; adult/child \$7.50/free; ☎ 10.30am-4pm Wed-Sun) offers tours and was used as a location for some scenes in *The Piano*. Bring a picnic lunch and enjoy the grounds.

ACTIVITIES

Trading on the country's action-packed reputation, Auckland has sprouted its own set of insanely frightening activities. Look around for backpacker reductions or special offers before booking anything.

Spiderman Activities

The wise men of bungy, **AJ Hackett Bungy & Bridge Climb** (Map p100; ☎ 09-361 2000; www.ajhackett.com/nz; Westhaven Reserve, Curran St) offer the chance to climb up or jump off the Auckland Harbour Bridge. Both the 40m bungy leap and the 1½-hour guided tour along the arch (with a harness attached to a static line) cost a cool \$100. A 50-minute version of the climb costs \$80.



Not to be outdone, the Sky Tower (p107) offers an ever-expanding selection of pant-wetting activities. If you thought the observation deck was for pussies, **Sky Walk** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 0800 759 586; www.skywalk.co.nz; adult/child 1115/85) involves circling the 192m-high, 1.2m-wide outside halo of the tower without rails or a balcony – but with a safety harness (they're not completely crazy). **Sky Jump** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 0800 759 586; adult/student/child \$195/175/145; ☎ 10am-6pm) is a 16-second, 75km/h base wire jump from the observation deck. It's more like a parachute jump than a bungie and it's a rush and a half.

Sky Screamer (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 1328; www.reversebungy.com; cnr Albert St & Victoria Sts; ride \$40; ☎ 10.30am-10pm Sun-Thu, 10am-2am Fri & Sat) involves being strapped into a seat and reverse-bungied 60m up in the air. Should you hurl, rest assured – you can get a video of it.

Cruises

Getting out on the water is an intrinsic part of the Auckland experience. If you can't afford a cruise or yacht, take a ferry instead; details are listed in each destination section.

Fullers (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-367 9111; www.fullers.co.nz; Ferry Bldg, 99 Quay St) operates ferry services (Birkenhead, Devonport, Rangitoto, Waiheke Island, Great Barrier Island) and daily harbour cruises (adult/child \$30/15, 1½ hours, 10.30am and 1.30pm), which include a complimentary cuppa and a free return ticket to Devonport.

360 Discovery (Map pp104-5; ☎ 0800 888 006; www.360discovery.co.nz; Pier 3 kiosk, Quay St) also runs ferries (Gulf Harbour, Motuihe, Tiritiri Matangi, Coromandel Town) along with the Harbour Discovery cruise (adult/child \$39/19, 1½ hours), departing at 10.45am, 12.30pm and 3pm.

Sailing

Hey, this is the 'City of Sails' and nothing gets you closer to the heart and soul of Auckland than sailing on the gulf.

Sail NZ (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-359 5987; www.sailnewzealand.co.nz; Viaduct Harbour) heads out on genuine America's Cup yachts (adult/child \$140/110, two hours). This experienced and highly regarded outfit also offers daily Whale & Dolphin Safaris (adult/child \$140/100); dolphins are spotted 90% of the time and whales 75%.

Pride of Auckland (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 4557; www.prideofauckland.com; cnr Quay & Hobson Sts) offers a range of trips on glamorous 50ft yachts, from

the 45-minute Sailing Experience (adult/child \$48/26) to full-day tours (one to 12 people, \$911 to \$2520). Includes free entry to the National Maritime Museum (p111).

Gulfwind Sailing Academy (Map p100; ☎ 09-521 1564; www.gulfwind.co.nz; Westhaven Marina) provides day cruises (\$495 for up to six people), as well as personalised tuition and flexible small-group sailing courses; a two-day RYA Start Yachting course costs \$545.

Penny Whiting Sailing School (Map p100; ☎ 09-376 1322; www.pennywhiting.com; Westhaven Marina) runs courses that consist of five three-hour practical sailing lessons (\$650).

Walking

Visitors centres, DOC offices and public libraries have pamphlets on walks in and around Auckland. The city council's *Auckland City's Walkways* pamphlet has a good selection of urban walks, including the **Coast to Coast Walkway** (Map p100; 16km, four hours). Heading clear across the country, from Waitemata Harbour to Manukau Harbour, the walk encompasses Albert Park, the University, the Domain, Mt Eden (Maungawhau) and One Tree Hill (Maungakiekie), keeping as much as possible to reserves rather than city streets. Starting from the Viaduct Basin and heading south, it's marked by yellow markers and milestones; heading north from Onehunga there are blue markers. To get back to the city, take bus 334 from Church St to Newmarket (\$3.20, 27 minutes) and then change to a train (\$1.40, eight minutes).

Hang Gliding & Skydiving

Active Sky Hang Gliding (☎ 021 170 3646; www.activeskyhanggliding.co.nz) lets you fly like a kahu (native hawk) in a tandem flight (\$175) off the cliffs at Kariotahi beach, southwest of Auckland.

Skydive Auckland (☎ 0800 865 867; www.skydiveauckland.co.nz) offers a tandem skydive from 12,000ft (including a 7000ft free fall) for \$295; capture your excitement/terror on DVD for \$165. It all takes place at Mercer airfield, 55km south of Auckland.

Swimming

When the weather conspires to keep you off the beaches, Auckland offers excellent alternatives:

Tepid Baths (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-379 4745; 100 Customs St; adult/child \$5.50/3.50; ☎ 6am-9pm Mon-Fri,

TOURS

Three-hour bus tours will typically take you around the city centre, over the Harbour Bridge and out along Tamaki Dr, including stops at Mt Eden, the Auckland Museum and Parnell, for about \$63. **Scenic Tours** (☎ 09-307 7880; www.scenic-tours.co.nz) and **Great Sights** (☎ 09-306 7633; www.greatsights.co.nz) both offer this service.

Potiki Adventures (☎ 09-845 5932; www.potikiadventures.com) runs an excellent Urban Maori day tour (adult/child \$145/75) for small groups. They leave Mt Eden to the buses and head to One Tree Hill (Maungakiekie) instead, pointing out features of the mountain *pa* site. After a quick lunch it's off to the west-coast beaches, where bush and beach walks are peppered with Maori creation stories, *karakia* (incantations) and explanations of the traditional uses of plants. More personalised tours can be tailored to your interests, such as visits with local artists. Potiki also runs Goat Island kayaking trips (above).

Another recommended Maori-led tour is Ngati Whatua's **Tamaki Hikoi** (☎ 09-979 7070; adult/child \$80/30), which includes transfers up Mt Eden (Maungawhau) and a three-hour guided walk pointing out features of significance, from the mountain down to the harbour.

The hop-on, hop-off **Explorer Bus** (☎ 0800 439 756; www.explorerbus.co.nz; adult/child \$30/15) departs from the Ferry Building every hour from 10am to 4pm (more frequently in summer), heading to nine tourist sites around the central city.

Other options:

Auckland Adventures (☎ 09-379 4545; www.aucklandadventures.co.nz; afternoon/day tours \$85/120) The afternoon tour (12.45pm to 5pm) includes Muriwai gannet colony, an orchard, wineries and Mt Eden; day tours (9am to 5pm) can include a hike or mountain-biking experience.

Bush & Beach (☎ 09-837 4130; www.bushandbeach.co.nz; 5/7hr walks \$125/185) Guided walks in the Waitakere Ranges and along Karekare beach.

Fine Wine Tours (☎ 09-849 4519; www.insidertouring.co.nz) Tours the West Auckland wineries (\$139, four hours) and also has a luxury harbour-cruise wine tour (\$400).

Ports of Auckland Tours (☎ 09-367 9111; Ferry Bldg; ☒) tours 11am Wed Feb-Nov) Free 50-minute boat tours around the ports; bookings essential.

Wine Trail Tours (☎ 09-630 1540; www.winetrailtours.co.nz) Small-group tours around West Auckland wineries and the Waitakere Ranges (half-/full day \$95/185), or further afield to Matakana (\$220).

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Check www.aucklandnz.com for full details of what's on in the city.

January

ASB Classic (www.asbclassic.co.nz) Watch some leading women tennis players warm up for the Aussie Open; held early January in Stanley St.

Heineken Open (www.heinekenopen.co.nz) The men's equivalent; held mid-January.

Big Day Out (www.bigdayout.com) Australasia's biggest music festival, attracting big-name alternative bands to Mt Smart Stadium in mid-January.

Auckland Anniversary Day Regatta The 'City of Sails' lives up to its name; last Monday in January.

February

Devonport Food & Wine Festival (www.devonportwinefestival.co.nz) Sip and sup with the smart set at this two-day festival in mid-February.

Mission Bay Jazz & Blues Streetfest (www.jazzandbluesstreetfest.com) New Orleans comes to the Bay as jazz and blues bands line both sides of the street as the sun sets; held mid-February.

Lantern Festival (www.asianz.org.nz) Three days of Asian food and culture in Albert Park to welcome the lunar New Year.

Starlight Symphony The Auckland Philharmonic entertains picnickers in the Domain; late February.

Hero Festival Gay-fest with events such as the Chocolate Fish Swim Meet at the Tepid Baths and the Big Gay Out; held late February.

March

Teddy Bears Picnic Held in the Auckland Domain in early March, with all sorts of free entertainment aimed at children.

Auckland Cup Week (www.aucklandcupweek.co.nz) Try to spot the winner at the biggest horse race of the year; early March.

Auckland Festival (www.aucklandfestival.co.nz) Held in odd-numbered years, this is Auckland's biggest celebration of the arts.

Pasifika Festival Western Springs Park hosts this excellent (and giant) Polynesian party with music, dancing and food, held in early to mid-March.

Polyfest (www.asbpolyfest.co.nz) Auckland secondary schools Maori and Pacific Islands cultural festival – the biggest PI cultural festival in the world!

Royal Easter Show (www.royaleastershow.co.nz) Fun for all the family with an agricultural flavour.

April/May

NZ International Comedy Festival (www.comedyfestival.co.nz) Three-week laughfest with local and international comedians; held mid-April to early May.

Savour NZ (www.savournz.co.nz) Three days of delicious food; held at the Langham Hotel in early May.

NZ Boat Show (www.boatshow.co.nz) One of the world's best yachting nations shows off its wares – find something to float your boat. Held mid-May.

Auckland Art Fair (www.aucklandartfair.co.nz) Held in May in odd-numbered years at the Viaduct Harbour.

July

New Zealand International Film Festival (www.nzff.telecom.co.nz) Auckland goes crazy for art-house films from mid- to late July.

September

Air New Zealand Fashion Week (www.nzfashionweek.com) Is any country better qualified to show what you can do with merino wool and a sense of imagination? Find the next Karen Walker or Kate Sylvester here. Held in mid- to late September.

Heritage Festival Two weeks of fabulous (mainly free) tours of Auckland's neighbourhoods and historic buildings.

November

Queen of the Whole Universe (www.queenwholeuniverse.com) A fundraising drag-fest (queens not cars) held at the Aotea Centre in mid-November.

December

Christmas in the Park A party so big it has to be held in the Auckland Domain.

First Night A free and alcohol-free music party in Aotea Sq and Aotea Centre on 31 December.

SLEEPING

Our accommodation listings for Auckland fall into the following categories:

- budget – doubles under \$100
- midrange – doubles from \$100 to \$200
- top end – doubles more than \$200

Budget

Invariably the backpackers who leave with a bad impression of Auckland have stayed in crummy, noisy hostels in the city centre. Not all of the cheap city accommodation is bad – the ones we've listed are all perfectly acceptable – but you're better off grabbing a bed in the surrounding suburbs. Parnell's relatively pricey but it has some excellent hostels. Mt Eden and Ponsonby have some good options, but the otherwise backpacker-friendly

suburbs of Kingsland and Grey Lynn are poorly served.

CENTRAL AUCKLAND

Nomads Fat Camel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-307 0181; www.fatcamel.co.nz; 38 Fort St; dm \$19-29, d & tw \$59-69; ☒) The Fat Camel rather optimistically promises 'two humps, guaranteed', and while this may prove impossible to provide, the keen young staff certainly give the impression that they'll try as hard as they can to make sure you're happy. While you'll often feel as though you're trapped in a windowless box, you'll also relish the relatively clean kitchens and bathrooms.

Base ACB (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-358 4877; www.stayatbase.com; 229 Queen St; dm \$26-28, d & tw \$70-90, q \$130) With more than 500 beds and a network of sightseeing and job-seeking contacts, this place is where many young visitors to Auckland get their bearings. If you don't like a hive of activity, then you'll need to go elsewhere, as this place hums with questions about where the cheapest places to eat can be found, who's got work where, whether bungy jumping's worth it and where the cute guys/girls are. There's a bar downstairs to aid this last search.

Base Auckland (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-300 9999; www.stayatbase.com; 16 Fort St; dm \$26-28, d \$80, tw, tr & q \$90; ☒) This large backpackers has a café, bar, reading room, travel agency, female-only floor and a roof deck with sauna and spa. All the rooms have TVs and lockers, but not necessarily windows. Everything is well designed, with bright colours and big mirrors.

YWCA (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 8763; www.ywca.org.nz; 103 Vincent St; s \$50, d \$65-75; ☐ ☒) It's so popular, there's often a list waiting to get into this secure central hostel. Despite its size there's a social vibe and, no, you don't have to be a young woman to score a bed.

City Lodge (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-379 6183; www.citylodge.co.nz; 150 Vincent St; s \$60-69, d/tr \$85/100) City Lodge is a very well-run, purpose-built tower for the budget market. The bright, tiny rooms and stamp-sized bathrooms may be plain, but they make a perfectly comfortable, clean and secure resting place. There are five rooms for disabled travellers, a fantastic industrial-style kitchen cleaned daily by housekeepers, and a comfy, modern lounge and TV room.

Freemans B&B (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-376 5046; www.freemansbandb.co.nz; 65 Wellington St; s/d \$65/95, apt \$110-150) Freemans is for those who can't stand to pay top dollar for the privilege of

falling asleep somewhere that's not their home. Its location is eminently central, its prices firmly entrenched in the bargain basement and its standards solid. It's not flash or particularly attractive, but it is clean, well maintained and comfortable. There's a good quiet garden too.

Aspen House (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-379 6633; www.aspenhouse.co.nz; 62 Emily Pl; s \$69, d & tw \$89-129, tr \$99-149, q \$219; (P) (Q)) Located on a sweet, steep street a stone's throw from one of Auckland's most intriguing old parks, the Aspen is split into a newly renovated wing (very smart, high ceilings, en suites) and an older wing (lumpy beds, two toilets between 12 rooms). It's worth paying more for the former. The excellent communal spaces, friendly staff and tucked-away location make this the best of the city's hostels.

Hotel Formule 1 (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-308 9140; www.formule1.co.nz; 20 Wyndham St; r \$75; (Q)) You'll feel like a giant in the minirooms with teensy TVs, stereos, ironing boards and kitchenettes, but they're clean, stylish in their own way and stocked with everything you need. The building itself is spectacularly skinny.

NEWTON & GRAFTON

Georgia Parkside (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-309 8999; www.georgia.co.nz; 189 Park Rd; dm/s/d/tw/tr/q \$20/44/50/54/74/84; (P) (Q)) It's a grand name for a grand house: a two-storey Victorian villa with a sweeping staircase, lead-light windows and balconies overlooking the Domain. The facilities are less imposing, but you can forgive a few cobwebs when the ceilings are this high and the location so perfect.

Auckland City YHA (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-309 2802; www.yha.co.nz; cnr City Rd & Liverpool St; dm \$20-36, s/d/tw \$64/74/74; (Q)) Struggle up one of the city's steepest streets to this big, impersonal tower block near the K Rd party strip. The rooms are clean and well kept, and some have views and terraces.

Auckland International YHA (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-302 8200; www.yha.co.nz; 5 Turner St; dm \$23-29, d/tw/tr \$74/102/113; (P) (Q)) Clean and brightly painted, this 170-bed YHA has a friendly vibe, good security, a games room and lots of lockers. In short, it's your typical, well-run YHA.

BK Hostel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-307 0052; www.bkhostel.co.nz; 3 Mercury Lane; s \$40-45, d & tw \$50-58, tr \$81; (Q)) Prices are cheaper for windowless rooms, but if you're planning to be partying in the neighbourhood's all-night clubs, that

might be an advantage. The hostel's housed in a cool 1910 building with high ceilings and decent security.

PARNELL

Auckland International Backpackers (Map p110; ☎ 09-358 4584; www.alansinternational.co.nz; 2 Churton St; dm \$20-22, d & tw \$52; (Q)) Eat in the sunroom, in the easy-going dining room or out in the small garden at this comfortable and friendly backpackers in a quiet backstreet. Linen and towels cost extra.

City Garden Lodge (Map p110; ☎ 09-302 0880; www.citygardenlodge.co.nz; 25 St Georges Bay Rd; dm \$22-24, s/d \$48/60, tw \$50-60; (P) (Q)) Housed within a character-filled, two-storey house built for Tongan royalty, this friendly and well-run backpackers has a lovely garden, a hammock-strung veranda and high-ceilinged rooms with solid period features. If you need privacy a cute double room will do the trick, and if you need to unwind, indulge in some yoga on the front lawn. Delightful!

Lantana Lodge (Map p110; ☎ 09-373 4546; www.lantanalodge.co.nz; 60 St Georges Bay Rd; dm \$23-28, s/tw \$48/62, d \$62-66; (P) (Q)) There are only eight rooms available in this cosy villa, on a quiet street with an instantly welcoming, social vibe. It's not flash by any means, but it's clean enough to be homely.

Parnell Inn (Map p110; ☎ 09-358 0642; www.parnellinn.co.nz; 320 Parnell Rd; units \$95-160; (P) (Q)) You'll get a chipper welcome at this revamped and good-looking motel, with new-look furniture and local photography on the walls. Smaller studios are on your right as you walk down the hall from reception; larger, sunnier rooms are on your left. Rooms 3 and 4 have great harbour views.

MT EDEN

Bamber House (Map p112; ☎ 09-623 4267; www.hos.telbackpacker.com; 22 View Rd; dm \$23-25, d & tw \$56-60; (P) (Q) (R)) The original house here is a mansion of sorts, with an impressive main staircase and some nicely maintained period trimmings. There's plenty of space for its 60-odd guests to stretch out on the lawns, with a playground for the kids and a swimming pool. All in all, an excellent and welcoming choice.

Oaklands Lodge (Map p112; ☎ 09-638 6545; www.oaklands.co.nz; 5a Oaklands Rd; dm \$23-25, s \$43, d & tw \$60-66; (Q)) Situated in one of Mt Eden's loveliest quiet suburban streets, this bright, well-kept hostel is close to Mt Eden village and city

buses. The communal facilities are in good nick and clean.

PONSONBY & HERNE BAY

Brown Kiwi (Map p114; ☎ 09-378 0191; www.browniwi.co.nz; 7 Prosdorf St; dm \$22-25, d/tw/tr \$58/58/66; (P) (Q)) Like so many hostels, the outside of this old villa appeals more than the inside, although this place will certainly do as a cheap head-resting option, and an effort is made to keep it reasonably clean. Dorms have four or eight beds, and the triple rooms are set in the small, verdant garden courtyard.

Verandahs (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 4180; www.verandahs.co.nz; 6 Hopetoun St; dm/s/d/tr \$24/48/66/84; (Q)) Ponsonby Rd, K Rd and the city are an easy walk from this attractive and clean hostel, overlooking the mature trees of Western Park. The bunkless dorms sleep only five people.

Uenuku Lodge (Map p114; ☎ 09-378 8990; www.uenukulodge.co.nz; 217 Ponsonby Rd; dm \$25-29, s \$47, d & tw \$62-82, tr/q \$105/125; (P) (Q)) This gay-friendly hostel looks flasher on the outside than on the inside, but it's well located and some of the rooms afford city views. There's a decent lounge, a large kitchen, good security and an attractive outdoor area.

ourpick Red Monkey (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 7977; www.theredmonkey.co.nz; 49 Richmond Rd; weekly s/d/apt \$175/225/250; (P) (Q)) If you're planning to stay for a week or longer, make this recently renovated villa your home away from home. There are lamps, bedside tables and built-in wardrobes in all the smartly decorated rooms, including three in the quiet back garden. It's well worth booking ahead.

Herne Bay B&B (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 0309; www.herne-bay.co.nz; 4 Shelly Beach Rd; r \$95-150, apt \$180-200; (P)) This turreted wooden villa is one of the area's most notable heritage buildings. Give it some new carpet and it would be downright flash. Some rooms share bathrooms but it's great value, well looked after and gay-friendly too.

TAKAPUNA

Takapuna Beach Holiday Park (Map p100; ☎ 09-489 7909; www.takapunabeach.kiwiholidayparks.com; 22 The Promenade; campsites \$28, cabins \$59, caravans \$57-73, units \$99; (P) (Q)) Superbly positioned looking onto one of Auckland's most popular beaches, this little park is a smart proposition. The clean, new cabins have decks.

Auckland Top 1 Holiday Park (Map p100; ☎ 09-418 2578; www.nsmotels.co.nz; 52 Northcote Rd; campsites \$35, dm \$38, units \$48-145; (P) (Q) (R)) An indoor pool,

spa and 24-hour check-in are all available at this oddly located holiday park and motel complex near the motorway, 4km north of the Harbour Bridge. Despite the position it's surprisingly peaceful.

OTHER AREAS

Ambury Regional Park campsite (Map p100; ☎ 09-366 2000; www.arc.govt.nz; Ambury Rd, Mangere; sites per adult/child \$10/5) A slice of country in the middle of suburbia, this regional park is also a working farm. Facilities are limited (a vault toilet, running water and not much shade) but it's handy to the airport, right on the water and dirt cheap.

Dukes Midway Lodge (Map p100; ☎ 09-625 4399; www.dukes.co.nz; 4 Vagus Pl, Royal Oak; d & tw \$85-100, tr \$115; (P) (Q)) Dukes brings a touch of Las Vegas to suburban Auckland's Vagus Pl, thanks to its rather eye-catching swimming pool, which takes the shape of a guitar. There's no reason for it to exist either, as Dukes is, in every other respect, a run-of-the-mill motor lodge. Rooms are comfortable, with OK beds, cable TV and decent bathrooms, while the quiet location (off busy Pah Rd) means you'll sleep soundly.

Midrange

Most motels (of which there are plenty) and B&Bs fall into this category. There are few options in the city centre, where accommodation swings from hostels to luxury hotels. Devonport has masses of beautiful Edwardian B&Bs within a relaxing ferry ride of the CBD.

CENTRAL AUCKLAND

Quadrant (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-984 6000; www.thequadrant.com; 10 Waterloo Quadrant; apt \$148-218; (P) (Q)) Slick, central and full of all the whiz-bang gadgets, this apartment-style complex in the nicest part of the city is an excellent option. The only catch is that the apartments are tiny and the bathrooms beyond small.

Elliott St Hotel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-308 9334; www.esapts.co.nz; cnr Elliott & Wellesley Sts; apt \$149-229; (P) (Q)) Housed in one of the city's grandest historic buildings (1880s), this apartment-style hotel is much plusher than the price implies. Rooms may not be huge but the high ceilings will let your spirits rise.

PARNELL & NEWMARKET

Chalet Chevron B&B (Map p110; ☎ 09-309 0290; www.chaletchevron.com; 14 Brighton Rd; s \$99-135, d/tr/q \$195/235/265; (P)) This charming B&B is in a

homey building, with a mock-Tudor touches giving it an English feel. Old-fashioned rooms have lovely floral wallpaper and fabrics. The best spots are Room 3 (with spiffy new bathroom) and the ground-floor twin rooms with great water views. The downstairs single rooms are comfortable but small.

Barrycourt Motor Inn (Map p110; ☎ 09-303 3789; www.barrycourt.co.nz; 10 Gladstone Rd; d & tw \$100-135, units \$108-279; (P) (Q)) A mixed bag of more than 100 motel rooms and units are available in this large, well-maintained complex with friendly multilingual staff. The older south wing is spacious but dated, while the modern (north) wing has some fantastic harbour views. Simple, cheaper rooms with kitchenette in the south wing are a good deal. It has a restaurant-bar-café and spa pools.

Off Broadway Motel (Map p100; ☎ 09-529 3550; www.offbroadway.co.nz; 11 Alpers Ave; units \$115-250; (P)) The Off Broadway is a dandy little performer in Auckland's accommodation scene and deserves a few stage-door Johnnies singing its praises. There are three small studios that will appeal to people seeking a decent room for less than three figures, but the larger studios are a great deal as they have a balcony and bathtub. Executive suites have separate bedrooms and represent very good value.

Kingsgate Hotel (Map p110; ☎ 0800 782 548, 09-377 3619; www.millenniumhotels.co.nz; 92 Gladstone Rd; r \$120-145; (P) (Q) (R)) Opposite the Parnell Rose Gardens, this large hotel has smart rooms clustered in landscaped 'Tudor' or 'Colonial' blocks (although they look the same to us), together with a restaurant, bar, pool, spa and plenty of parking. It's popular with tour groups.

Parnell's Village Motor Lodge (Map p110; ☎ 09-377 1463; www.parnellmotorlodge.co.nz; 2 St Stephens Ave; apt \$135-150; (P)) Old and newer sections are available in this motel, where every unit is different, some have a bit of character and all have a kitchenette. It's on a busy intersection though, so traffic noise might be a nuisance if you're a light sleeper.

MT EDEN

Bavaria B&B (Map p112; ☎ 09-638 9641; www.bavaria.bandbhotel.co.nz; 83 Valley Rd; s/d/tr \$95/139/179; (P) (Q)) This clean, long-running B&B in a spacious villa has recently been freshened up with new carpets and a coat of paint. The rooms are big and airy, and there's a decent TV lounge, dining room and deck where guests can mix and mingle.

PONSONBY & GREY LYNN

ourpick Henry's (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 2700; www.henrysonpeel.co.nz; 33 Peel St; r/apt \$180/220; (P) (Q)) These beautiful wooden villas are what Auckland's inner suburbs are all about. Henry's has been stylishly renovated, adding en suites to the downstairs rooms and a self-contained harbour-view apartment above.

Amitee's (Map p114; ☎ 09-378 6325; www.amitees.com; 237 Ponsonby Rd; d \$180-275, tw/ste \$195/400; (P) (Q)) Pretty Amitee's has smart modern rooms in a Ponsonby Rd villa, with all the fabric trimmings and feature walls your heart desires. The penthouse suite is an attic-style apartment, with a loo with the best views in the building.

HERNE BAY

Moana Vista (Map p114; ☎ 09-376 5028; www.moanavista.co.nz; 60 Hamilton Rd; s \$140-180, d \$180-240; (P) (Q)) Choose between verandas and views upstairs and French doors opening to the garden below at this gay-friendly B&B in a wonderfully restored 1890s villa. It's close to cafés, harbour beaches and the bridge.

Abaco on Jervois (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 6850; www.abaco.co.nz; 57 Jervois Rd; units \$175-235; (P)) The natty Abaco has received a re-vamp-and-a-half and is a stylish, neutral-toned escape, a stone's throw from all the good shopping and grazing opportunities. Furnishings in the studios and suites are modern and comfortable, with plenty of fluffy white towels for spa lovers, and slick stainless-steel kitchenettes (which include dish drawers and proper ovens). Room 81, on the 1st floor and down the back, is the best, affording good views from its balcony.

DEVONPORT & TAKAPUNA

Devonport Sea Cottage (Map p108; ☎ 09-445 7117; lethabys@ihug.co.nz; 3a Cambridge Tce; s/d \$100/130) Head up the path to your own self-contained cottage, which holds everything you'll need for a relaxing stay near the sea (including a set of French doors opening onto a garden). Excellent weekly rates are on offer in winter.

Jasmine Cottage (Map p108; ☎ 09-445 8825; www.photoalbum.co.nz/jasmine; 20 Buchanan St; cottage/apt \$120/130) The friendly owners pamper guests who stay in the cute little courtyard hut with spotless kitchenette and lovely garden. There's also a self-contained apartment above the main house. Scrupulously maintained and cute as a button.

Parituhu (Map p108; ☎ 09-445 6559; www.parituhu.co.nz; 3 King Edward Pde; s/d \$120/150) This gay-friendly accommodation consists of one double bedroom with a private bathroom, and both are in delightful shape. It's not a flash Edwardian-era villa that you're staying in, but it is a very homey, relaxing and welcoming place.

Devonport Motel (Map p108; ☎ 09-445 1010; www.devonportmotel.co.nz; 11 Buchanan St; units \$130) This minimotel has just two simple, self-contained units in the back garden, but they're modern, clean and in a nice quiet location that's still close to Devonport's action (such as it may be).

Number Nine B&B (Map p108; ☎ 09-445 3059; tainui@xtra.co.nz; 9 Tainui Rd; r \$160) You'll get a warm welcome from Christine and Pari at this cosy home that has two attractive rooms for guests. One is wildly feminine, the other a little more low-key (but with a claw-foot tub), and both are very comfortable. If you fancy a game of golf at the nearby club, you can borrow clubs here and have a round organised.

Emerald Inn (Map p100; ☎ 09-488 3500; www.emerald-inn.co.nz; 16 The Promenade; units \$165-285, villa/cottage \$450/675; (P) (Q)) No, it's not an Irish pub. This leafy complex has lush gardens, smart furnishings and the beach at the end of the road. The luxury self-contained holiday homes have views to Rangitoto.

OTHER AREAS

Nautical Nook (Map p100; ☎ 09-521 2544; www.nauticalnook.com; 23b Watene Cres, Orakei; s \$90-120, d \$110-150) If you're a sailing buff you'll find a kindred spirit in Keith, who runs this cosy homestay with his wife Trish. The lounge and terrace have views over the harbour, and Okahu Bay is close at hand.

Jet Park (Map p100; ☎ 09-275 4100; www.jetpark.co.nz; 63 Westney Rd, Mangere; r \$160-215, ste \$265-325; (P) (Q)) Friendly Jet Park has a decent vibe, even though many of its rooms follow the 'could be anywhere' design ethos that seems to be compulsory if you want to sleep near an airport. There are arrival/departure screens in the lobby and free airport shuttles. Kick back by the pool, which resembles something from an episode of *Hawaii 5-0*.

Hastings Hall (Map p100; ☎ 09-845 8550; www.hastingshall.co.nz; 99 Western Springs Rd; s/tw \$165/195, d \$195-245, ste \$375; (P) (Q)) Assume your role in the Victorian gentry in this plushly furnished 1876 stately home close to Western Springs Park. Relax by the pool, help your-

self to a drink from the bar or just soak up the ambience.

Devereux (Map p100; ☎ 09-524 5044; www.devoreux.co.nz; 267 Remuera Rd; r \$190-275, ste \$340; (P)) The rooms in this large 1890s villa are uncluttered and elegant, with select knick-knacks matching the themes (Orient, Cairo, Rangitoto). The pleasant garden is shared with the ugly flats in front.

Top End

Auckland has plenty of luxury hotels, with many of the big chains taking up inner-city real estate.

CENTRAL AUCKLAND

Braemar on Parliament (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 5463; www.aucklandbedandbreakfast.com; 7 Parliament St; r \$205-250, ste \$295) Braemar is a beautiful place to stay in the city centre, with some of the most glorious historical details to have survived the city's inevitable development craze. There's a choice of three rooms and one suite, and sunny verandas to relax on.

Westin (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-909 9000; www.westin.com/auckland; 21 Viaduct Harbour Ave; r \$260-510; (P) (Q) (R)) Auckland's newest luxury hotel has outdone itself with simple, exquisite design, Maori art and sumptuous furnishings (we love the 250-thread-count sheets and goose-down pillows). There's water everywhere you look – in the form of the harbour or tinkling water features – which is very restful, as long as it doesn't induce a constant need to pee.

PONSONBY

Great Ponsonby Arthotel (Map p114; ☎ 09-376 5989; www.greatpons.co.nz; 30 Ponsonby Tce; r \$220-380; (P) (Q)) Located a stone's throw from cool Ponsonby Rd in a quiet cul-de-sac, this deceptively spacious Victorian villa has lovingly maintained period features, gregarious hosts, impressive sustainability practices, loads of NZ art and great breakfasts. Studio apartments open onto an attractive rear courtyard.

DEVONPORT

Hampton Beach House (Map p108; ☎ 09-445 1358; www.hamptonbeachhouse.co.nz; 4 King Edward Pde; r \$205-280) One of a fine strip of waterside mansions, this upmarket Edwardian B&B has rooms with views and others opening onto the rear garden. It's all very tastefully done; expect quality linen and gourmet breakfasts.

Esplanade Hotel (Map p108; ☎ 09-445 1291; www.esplanadehotel.co.nz; 1 Victoria Rd; r \$230, ste \$325-610) This very beautiful boutique hotel takes pride of place on the corner in a 1903 heritage building. It features lovingly tended period details such as supremely high ceilings, and has much more style than many of the luxury hotels in the city centre. It's perfectly located and achingly romantic, with sumptuous rooms that steadfastly refuse to fall into cookie-cutter territory when it comes to décor.

our pick **Peace & Plenty Inn** (Map p108; ☎ 09-445 2925; www.peaceandplenty.co.nz; 6 Flagstaff Tce; d & tw \$325; P ☑) This perfectly located, wonderful five-star period house is stocked with antique furnishings and a thousand conversation pieces – the charming Judith can tell you the provenance of each and every one of them. The romantic, luxurious rooms have en suite, TV, flowers, free sherry/port and local chocolates. A delight, and truly exceptional.

OTHER AREAS

Aachen House (Map p100; ☎ 09-520 2329; www.aachenhouse.com; 39 Market Rd, Remuera; r \$350-595; P) An exceptional boutique B&B, Aachen House celebrated its 100th birthday in 2005 – we suspect she's had some work, as the old girl's looking mighty fine. The attention to painstaking detail is impressive: fresh flowers, hair turbans, shell-shaped soap and complementary port. Come breakfast time, the chef cooks up a gourmet storm.

Cotter House (Map p100; ☎ 09-529 5156; www.cotterhouse.com; 4 St Vincent Ave, Remuera; r/ste \$475/620; P ☑) Chock-full of wonderful art, this Regency-style mansion (1847) is the epitome of luxury. You can entertain guests in the grand ballroom or indulge in free yoga, pilates and kickboxing classes with the fabulously eccentric hostess.

EATING

Because of its size and ethnic diversity, Auckland tops the country when it comes to dining options and quality. Lively eateries have sprung up to cater to the numerous Asian students, offering inexpensive Japanese, Chinese and Korean staples. If you're on a budget, you'll fall in love with the city's food halls.

Aucklanders love a good coffee, so you never have to walk too far to find a decent café. Suburbs such as Ponsonby, Grey Lynn, Kingsland, Mt Eden, Parnell and Devonport

are teeming with them. Some double as wine bars or have gourmet aspirations, while others are content to fill their counters with fresh, reasonably priced snacks.

Ponsonby attracts a hip, young crowd who come to drink and dine before heading out to party. The upmarket Princes Wharf and Viaduct Basin waterfront area is where some of the buzziest and busiest restaurants have sprung up. This area is popular with suits and tourists, and can be especially heaving on Friday and Saturday evenings. Two petite enclaves that have recently established themselves as foodie favourites are Kingsland and the West Lynn shops on Richmond Rd, Grey Lynn.

As well as the places listed here, self-caterers should go to the Otara Market and Avondale Sunday Market for cheap, fresh vegetables; see p130.

Central Auckland RESTAURANTS

Tanuki's Cave (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-379 5353; 319 Queen St; dishes \$4-10; ☎ lunch Wed-Fri, dinner daily) Tucked away below a more formal restaurant, this hip sake bar serves delicious grilled skewers and other Japanese snacks.

Sunshine (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-302 3322; 39 Market Pl; meals \$20; ☎ lunch & dinner) More upmarket than most of the city's Chinese eateries, this one buzzes with yum cha diners at weekend lunchtimes. Grab your grub as the trollies come around.

Grove (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-368 4129; St Patrick's Sq, Wyndham St; mains \$29-35; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) Romantic fine dining at its best: the room is cosy and moodily lit, the menu encourages sensual experimentation and the service is effortless. If you can't find anything to break the ice from the extensive wine list, give it up mate – it's never going to happen.

O'Connell St Bistro (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 1884; 3 O'Connell St; mains \$33-36; ☎ lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) Delightful O'Connell St is a grown-up treat, with elegant décor and truly wonderful food and wine satisfying lunchtime powerbrokers and dinnertime daters. The menu leans heavily on the duck, salmon and lamb side of things.

Euro (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-309 9866; Shed 22, Princes Wharf; mains \$32-39; ☎ lunch & dinner) Euro is a thoroughly slick package of imaginative Mod-NZ cuisine, good-looking wait staff and sexy surroundings. The harbour views aren't the greatest,

but the dishes are always pretty as a picture. The Clevedon oysters with balsamic vinegar are superbly fresh and plump, and perfect with a glass of local fizz.

CAFÉS

Barabra (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-966 0444; Princes Wharf; snacks \$4-12; ☎ 7.30am-sundown Mon-Fri, 10am-sundown Sat & Sun; V) A pleasant harbourside spot to munch on a muffin or brioche while polishing off an excellent coffee.

MacGregor Brothers (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-309 9924; 17 Wellesley St; snacks \$5-7; ☎ 6.30am-3.30pm) The wonderful internal features of this petite Art Deco shopfront have survived, making this a great spot for a quality coffee and cake served on fine china.

Reslau (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-309 5039; 39 Elliott St; snacks \$5-10; ☎ 7am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) Spilling into the laneway, this tiny café-wine bar literally has a trolley-load of delicious snacks and light meals.

Raw Power (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-303 3724; Level 1, 10 Vulcan Lane; mains \$7-17; ☎ 7am-4pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat; V) Vegetable-shaped salt-and-pepper shakers, superbright walls and the freshest ingredients entice punters to this upstairs eatery, popular with visiting vegetarian/vegan rock royalty. Grab a window seat if you can.

Reuben (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-302 0226; Level 1, 18/26 Wellesley St; mains \$7-19; ☎ 7am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) Looking over leafy Khartoum Pl from the New Gallery, this friendly and stylish café has one of the nicest aspects in the city. Breakfast is served all day, with more substantial salad, fish or pasta meals for lunch.

QUICK EATS

Food Alley (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-373 4917; 9 Albert St; meals \$5-17; ☎ 10.30am-10pm; V) For authentic Asian fare, you can't beat this large, no-frills food court, where nearly every meal comes in under \$10. Choose between Chinese, Indian, Thai, Vietnamese, Turkish, Malaysian, Korean, Japanese and Indonesian.

C'est Fromage (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-375 1517; 35 High St; mains \$3-15; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri) Head down the arcade to this tiny French deli, where you can munch into delicious baguettes at one of the handful of tables or stock up on cheese and charcuterie.

Revive (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-307 1586; 16 Fort St; mains \$8-14; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Thu; V) Vegetarian heaven, this hugely popular little place has an enticing salad bar and extremely

economical daily meal deals. Fast food that's healthy? Healthy food that's cheap and tasty? How can this be?

SELF-CATERING

City Farmers' Market (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-232 7933; cnr Gore & Galway Sts; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm Sat; V) If you're planning to cook up a storm, this is a fine place to stock up on fresh seasonal produce and fancy treats.

Auckland Fish Market (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-379 1490; www.aucklandfishmarket.co.nz; cnr Jellicoe & Daldy Sts; ☎ 7am-7pm) No self-respecting city with a position like this should be without a fish market. This one not only has a boisterous early-morning auction, but also a market, eateries and a seafood-cooking school.

Newton

K Rd is known for its late-night clubs, but cafés and plenty of inexpensive ethnic restaurants are mixed in with the fashion boutiques, tattooists and adult shops.

Alleluya (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 8424; St Kevin's Arcade, K Rd; meals \$5-15; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat, 8am-3pm Sun; V) Alleluya is a very cool little café-cum-bar in the city's hippest arcade. It has more-ish snacks, wines by the glass and the odd live gig.

Rasoi (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 7780; 211 K Rd; meals \$6-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Lip-smackingly good (and delightfully cheap) vegetarian thali and South Indian food can be found here, together with lassi and Indian sweets.

Satya (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 0007; 271 K Rd; mains \$10-25; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner daily; V) Hugely popular, this humble-looking and humbly priced eatery has the best *dahi puri* (an entrée of chickpea, potato and yoghurt on a poppadom cracker) and *masala dosa* (a crepe filled with potato-and-onion curry) in town.

O'Sarracino (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-309 3740; 3 Mt Eden Rd; mains \$16-38; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun) A delicious reminder that Neapolitan cuisine offers so much more than pizza, this excellent restaurant serves generous *antipasti*, light and simple pasta, and delectable seafood *secondi*. The somewhat grand surroundings were once the chapel of a funeral parlour.

French Café (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 1911; 210 Symonds St; mains \$36-42; ☎ lunch Fri, dinner Tue-Sat) The legendary French Café has been rated as one of Auckland's top restaurants for around 20 years now and it still continues to excel. The cuisine is unsurprisingly French, but

chef Simon Wright manages to sneak in some Pacific Rim touches. Book well ahead if you want to snag a table.

Parnell

Kokako (Map p110; ☎ 09-379 2868; 492 Parnell Rd; mains \$5-15; ☎ 7am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-3.30pm Sat & Sun; V) Kokako offers vegetarian and organic delights in a smart café atmosphere that won't unduly strain the bank balance – a feat nearly as rare as the native bird it's named after. There's a good selection of counter food as well as delicious cooked breakfasts.

Rosehip Café (Map p110; ☎ 09-369 1182; 82 Gladstone Rd; mains \$5-23; ☎ breakfast & lunch; V) The name fits: it's near the Rose Gardens and it's pretty hip. It's a tad pricey but the food's delicious, particularly the butter-milk pancakes and the Vietnamese-style squid.

Himalaya (Map p110; ☎ 09-362 0215; 123 Parnell Rd; mains \$16-21; ☎ dinner; V) Climb every mountain, ford every cuisine. This Nepalese joint offers subtly flavoured curries with plenty of vegetarian choices. Try the *bara* – a flour-and-lentil dish that sits somewhere between a pizza and a pancake.

Gion (Map p110; ☎ 09-379 3344; 197 Parnell Rd; mains \$28-33; ☎ lunch & dinner) The charming staff glide by in kimonos in this swish orange-and-purple room festooned with silk hangings. Auckland has excellent Japanese restaurants and this is one of the best.

Newmarket

Zarbo (Map p110; ☎ 09-520 2721; 24 Morrow St; mains \$4-14; ☎ breakfast & lunch) This very sophisticated and capacious version of the local deli stocks gourmet provisions and has fantastic salad selections. There's plenty of seating for in-house feasting.

Baci Lounge (Map p110; ☎ 09-529 4360; Level 1, Rialto Centre, Broadway; mains \$6-8; ☎ 10am-10pm) Round padded booths are nestled among the shelves at this very appealing bookshop-café. Devour delicious counter food (salads, *paninis*, fancy pies, gluten-free slices) and literary greats all at the same time.

Mt Eden

Circus Circus (Map p112; ☎ 09-623 3833; 447 Mt Eden Rd; lunch \$7-18, dinner \$12-28; ☎ 7am-11pm) There's a lot of red-and-gold paint and life-sized circus figures at this eccentric café, making it a great place to bring the kids. There's a changing daily roster of soup and pasta.

Gala (Map p112; ☎ 09-623 1572; Zone 23, Edwin St; mains \$8-19; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Mixing modern architecture and antique silver tea services, this bright café brings sophistication to the prison precinct. The whiteboard menu is crammed with interesting options: try My Mother-in-law's North Indian Eggs for a fragrant version of eggs on toast.

Molten (Map p112; ☎ 09-638 7236; 422 Mt Eden Rd; lunch \$25-30, dinner \$30-32; ☎ lunch Tue-Sat, dinner Mon-Sat) Under the volcano's shadow, Molten oozes neighbourhood charm. The consistently excellent seasonal menu fuses Pacific Rim tastes into a delicious whole.

Kingsland

Fridge (Map p112; ☎ 09-845 5321; 507 New North Rd; mains \$5-16; ☎ breakfast & lunch; V) Kingsland's best café serves excellent coffee, gourmet pies, healthy salads and wraps, and drool-inducing cakes.

Mekong Neua (Map p112; ☎ 09-846 0323; 483 New North Rd; mains \$12-23; ☎ 5.30pm-1am; V) Plundering the cuisine of Northeast Thailand and Laos, this welcoming restaurant will fill your head with delicious fragrances and dreams of rice paddies.

Winehot (Map p112; ☎ 09-815 9463; 605 New North Rd; mains \$16-19; ☎ 5pm-1am Tue-Sat) Behind an unlikely-looking doorway, this tiny black-painted and chandelier-festooned hideaway serves up hearty, reasonably priced French cuisine and an extensive wine list.

Tabou (Map p112; ☎ 09-846 3473; 462 New North Rd; mains \$27-32; ☎ 11am-late Tue-Fri, 3pm-late Sat & Sun) Elegant and refined but informal and friendly, Tabou is the French restaurant you wish was in your neighbourhood. It doubles as a bar later in the evening.

Ponsonby

Auckland's busiest restaurant-café-bar strip is so damn cool it has its own website (www.ponsonbyroad.co.nz).

RESTAURANTS

Magnum Dining Bar (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 1611; 165 Ponsonby Rd; mains \$15-28; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily) Portions are massive at this modern, up-market restaurant-bar with a vaguely Italian sensibility. If you like offal you get a whole section of the menu to yourself: crumbed lamb's brains, anyone?

Prego (Map p114; ☎ 09-376 3095; 226 Ponsonby Rd; pizzas \$20-23, mains \$25-31; ☎ noon-late) This friendly and stylish Italian restaurant covers all the

bases, with a fireplace in winter and a courtyard in summer. And on the subject of bases, the pizza is pretty damn fine, as are inventive Italian dishes such as *cinghiale* (boar) in chocolate stew on creamed polenta with sautéed silverbeet and roasted red capsicum.

SPQR (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 1710; 150 Ponsonby Rd; mains \$25-36; ☎ noon-2am Mon-Fri, 10am-2am Sat & Sun; V) This ivy-covered Ponsonby Rd hot spot is well known for good Roman-style, thin, crusty pizzas and excellent Italian-influenced mains. The surrounds are a stylish blend of the industrial and the chic, the lights *low* (bring your reading glasses!), the buzz constant and the staff smooth and camp all at the same time.

CAFÉS & QUICK EATS

Rivet (Map p114; ☎ 09-378 6040; 145 Ponsonby Rd; mains \$4-14; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Come here for excellent Cuban fair-trade coffee, appetising counter food and a welcome quirky aesthetic.

Ponsonby Village Food Court (Map p114; 106 Ponsonby Rd; mains \$7-16; ☎ 10am-10pm; V) The city's best food hall. Choose between Italian, Japanese, Malaysian, Chinese, Turkish, Thai, Lao, Indian, Mexican and the best Vietnamese in the central city.

Landreth & Co (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 7440; 272 Ponsonby Rd; mains \$9-25; ☎ 7am-5pm) A popular brunch spot with a slightly grungy old-Ponsonby feel. Homesick Brits will find solace in the jugs of Pimm's and cucumber sandwiches.

Dizengoff (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 0108; 256 Ponsonby Rd; breakfast \$15; ☎ breakfast & lunch daily) Great breakfasts are an essential experience in Auckland and no-one excels quite like Dizengoff. This superstylish shoebox is blindingly white and crams in a mixed crowd of corporate and fashion types, gay guys, people keeping Kosher, Ponsonby denizens and visitors. Mouthwatering scrambled eggs, heart-starting coffee and mind-reading service, plus the best stack of reading material in the city if you tire of eavesdropping and people-watching.

Grey Lynn

Harvest Wholefoods (Map p114; ☎ 09-376 3107; 405 Richmond Rd; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun; V) Auckland's legendary organics store, stocking planet-friendly fresh produce, grocery items and cosmetics. It's a meat-free zone, but there's an organic butchery across the road.

Ripe (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 6159; 172 Richmond Rd; mains \$7-10; ☎ 7am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-3.30pm Sat,

8am-3pm Sun) With all manner of healthy deli goodies ripe for the taking, the only problem is choosing. There are tables on the pavement but you'll be eating from plastic plates and cutlery.

Richmond Road Café (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 5559; 318 Richmond Rd; mains \$10-20; ☎ 7am-4pm) Auckland's current 'it' café, and with good reason. The service is impeccable and the menu is full of well-priced and interesting café fare. If it doesn't have a cardamom-cream or lavender-syrup twist it's too boring for this place. Try the spiced banana and rum porridge with fresh coconut.

Delicious (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 7590; 472 Richmond Rd; mains \$22-26; ☎ lunch Thu & Fri, dinner Tue-Sat) The name doesn't lie. Foodies flock to this neighbourhood eatery for simple but first-rate pasta at reasonable prices. They don't take bookings so expect to wait – it's always busy.

North Shore

Stone Oven (Map p108; ☎ 09-445 3185; 5 Clarence St, Devonport; meals \$4-16; ☎ breakfast & lunch) So damn good that on weekends you'll want to get in early or get ready to queue for the breads, pastries, cakes and baked goods. Perfect for scoffing *in situ*, or away from the madding crowd.

Ice It (Map p108; ☎ 09-446 3333; 29 Church St, Devonport; meals \$5-16; ☎ 8am-3pm; V) Away from the hordes on the main street, this café isn't all about sweet treats. There are healthy wraps and cooked meals to choose from too.

Eight.Two (Map p100; ☎ 09-419 9082; 82 Hinemoa St, Birkenhead; meals \$21-28; ☎ dinner Tue-Sat) HOLLOWED out of an old villa, this dazzlingly white dining room offers a similarly modern menu and a great wine list. Catch the Birkenhead ferry from the city for a memorable night out.

our pick Engine Room (Map p100; ☎ 09-480 9502; 115 Queen St, Northcote; meals \$29-33; ☎ dinner Tue-Sat) A strong contender for Auckland's best restaurant, this informal eatery serves up lighter-than-air goat's cheese soufflés and oh-my-God pork belly with a Vietnamese green papaya salad. It's worth booking ahead and catching the ferry.

DRINKING

Auckland's nightlife tends to be quiet during the week and positively funereal on Sunday, but wakes up late on Friday and Saturday, when most pubs and bars are open until 1am or later.

PASIFIKA

There are nearly 180,000 Pacific Islanders (PI) living in Auckland, making it the world's principal Polynesian city. Samoans are by far the largest group, followed by Cook Islanders, Tongans, Niueans, Fijians, Tokelauans and Tuvaluans. The biggest PI communities can be found in South Auckland and pockets of West and Central Auckland.

Like the Maori renaissance of recent decades, Pasifika has become a hot commodity for Auckland hipsters. You'll find PI motifs everywhere: in art, architecture, fashion, homewares and especially in music. Recent movies *Sione's Wedding* and *No. 2* have put PI Auckland on the big screen, while *broTown* is NZ's answer to *South Park*. Ironically, as Pakeha Aucklanders look to the Pacific, PI teenagers turn to Black America for inspiration. Hip-hop culture is massive in Auckland, with homegrown rap at an all-time high.

The annual Pasifika Festival (p116) is one of the city's best events. Thousands descend on Western Springs Park to load up on island food, hang out in the sun and catch cultural performances. If you miss it, you can get a taste of the Pacific vibe at the Otara and Avondale markets (p130) or at any hip-hop night in the city's clubs. Check out Pauanesia (p130) for interesting gifts and art.

Central Auckland

Bluestone Room (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-302 0930; 9 Durham Lane; ☎ 11am-late Mon-Fri, 3pm-late Sat) There's no shortage of character in this 1861 stone building, secreted down a dingy alley in the old part of town (a glassed-over well in the floor dates to 1841). The Rolling Stones played here in the '60s and live blues and rock are still a feature on the weekends.

Occidental Belgian Beer Café (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-300 6226; 6 Vulcan Lane; ☎ 4pm-late Mon-Fri, 7pm-late Sat) Belgian beer, Belgian food (plenty of *moules* and *frites* – mussels and chips) and live music are on offer at this historic (1870) pub.

Wine Loft (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-379 5070; 67 Shortland St; ☎ 4pm-late Mon-Thu, 2pm-late Fri, 6pm-late Sat) Head up the stairs for a chocolate-hued, sofa-filled loft that's perfect for wine quaffing and platter sharing by an open fire (or window come summer). An eclectic list takes in wine from NZ, Australia, South America and Europe.

Honey (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-369 5639; 5 O'Connell St; ☎ 4pm-late Mon-Fri, 7pm-late Sat) This flash-looking bar in a heritage bank building has a page full of honey-themed cocktails and often a room full of honeys.

Northern Steamship Brew Bar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-374 3952; 122 Quay St; ☎ 11am-late) Standard lamps hang upside-down from the ceiling while the bar mural dreams of NZ summer holidays in this cool big pub by the train station.

Lenin Bar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 0040; Princes Wharf; ☎ 3pm-late) This Russian-themed affair boasts lots of vodkas and DJs from Thursday to Saturday, but can seem oddly quiet on other nights. If you can't be bothered getting cold

for the subzero climes of the Minus 5° Bar, then you might like to know that you can see into it from Lenin.

Minus 5° Bar (Map pp104-5; Princes Wharf; adult/child \$25/12; ☎ 2-10pm) This is an extraordinary ice bar where everything from the seats to your glass is made of ice, much like its famous counterparts in Sweden. Put on special clothing (including gloves and shoes) and sip a vodka-based drink or a juice from an edible ice glass. You can only stay inside the shimmering ice world for 30 minutes. It's more popular with out-of-towners than with locals.

Pasha (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-355 0077; Princes Wharf; ☎ 4pm-late) Awesome cocktails and Moorish exoticism combine in this impressive Viaduct bar.

Shanghai Lil's (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-358 0868; 133 Franklin Rd; ☎ 5pm-late Tue-Fri, 8pm-late Sat) Older couples shuffle to the swing band while staff dressed in Chinese silk deliver cocktails to curious characters reclining on sofas. It's like walking into a David Lynch movie set in an opium den: really surreally cool.

Wine Cellar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-337 8293; St Kevin's Arcade, K Rd; ☎ 5pm-midnight Mon-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat) Secreted down some stairs in an arcade, this is the kind of bar that Buffy the Vampire Slayer would have hung out in on Auckland-based assignments. It's dark, grungy and very cool, with regular live music in the neighbouring Whammy Bar.

Newmarket

Nuffield Street Brew Bar (Map p110; ☎ 09-523 4554; 23 Nuffield St; ☎ 11am-late) Serving the beloved

products of Mac's Breweries, this stylish modern bar has DJs and live music on the weekends.

Kingsland

Kingslander (Map p112; ☎ 09-849 5777; 470 New North Rd; ☎ noon-late) This big complex in a historic warehouse can be raucous when there's a big game on, but usually there's a pleasant pub vibe. It's home to the most competitive trivia nights in the city.

Ivy (Map p112; ☎ 09-815 1535; 463 New North Rd; ☎ 11am-late Tue-Fri, 10am-late Sat & Sun) The wine list is almost too long at this excellent wine bar with exemplary food and occasional live music.

Ponsonby & Grey Lynn

Along Ponsonby Rd, the line between café, restaurant, bar and club gets blurred. A lot of food places also have live music or become clubs later on.

Whiskey (Map p114; ☎ 09-361 2666; 210 Ponsonby Rd; ☎ 5pm-3am) The stylish, dimly lit Whiskey is a quintessential bolthole for music-industry types. There's a long list of cocktails and spir-its, and a decent 'classic rock' soundtrack.

Gypsy Tea Room (Map p114; ☎ 09-361 6970; 455 Richmond Rd; ☎ 4-11.30pm Sun-Thu, 3pm-2am Fri & Sat) No-one comes here for tea. This cute wine/cocktail bar has dishevelled charm in bucketloads.

Devonport

Masonic Tavern (Map p108; ☎ 09-445 0485; 29 King Edward Pde; ☎ 11am-10pm Mon-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri & Sat, noon-8pm Sun) A hefty array of beers on tap and an authentic 'sit outside and watch the world go by' vibe make this the pick of the bunch for those after an old-fashioned pub atmosphere.

ENTERTAINMENT

The *NZ Herald* has 'The Guide' section from Monday to Friday, with local what's-on and entertainment features, and a larger *Time Out* magazine on Thursday. *Backpacker Xpress* (free every Thursday) has what's on at some of Auckland's pubs and bars. *The Fix* is a weekly brochure (also free every Thursday) with live-music listings. If you're planning on a big night along K Rd, then visit www.kroad.co.nz for a detailed list of bars and clubs.

Tickets for major events can be bought from **Ticketek** (☎ 09-307 5000; www.ticketek.co.nz), which has outlets at Aotea Centre and Sky City Atrium (among others).

Live Music

Dogs Bollix (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-376 4600; cnr K & Newton Rds) This Irish pub is a live-music venue from 9pm Tuesday to Sunday but doesn't only play Irish music. Spot local musos here when they're off-duty.

Thirsty Dog (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 9190; 469 K Rd; ☎ 11am-late) This dog's both thirsty and noisy, with a decent sound system and a regular roster of local bands.

Kings Arms Tavern (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-373 3240; 59 France St; ☎ 11am-late) This is one of Auckland's leading small venues for live (and local) rock bands, which play most nights. A rite of passage if you want to get into the local scene.

Galatos (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-303 1928; 17 Galatos St; ☎ 9pm-late Wed-Sat) Three birds with one stone: DJs, live local bands, and hip-hop in the basement.

For big international and major local bands, the main venues in Auckland include the following:

Mt Smart Stadium (Map p100; ☎ 09-571 1699; www.mtsmartstadium.co.nz; Beasley Ave, Penrose)

North Shore Events Centre (Map p100; ☎ 09-443 8199; Porana Rd, Glenfield)

Supertop (Map p100; ☎ 09-525 0680; Maurice Rd, Penrose)

Vector Arena (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-358 1250; 40 Mahuhu Cres)

Western Springs Stadium (Map p100; ☎ 09-849 3807; Great North Rd, Western Springs)

AN AUCKLAND PLAYLIST

Download these Auckland songs to your MP3 player for cruising the city's streets:

- Chains – Che Fu
- Kare Kare – Crowded House
- Hopetoun Bridge – Dave Dobbyn
- Andy – The Front Lawn
- Bathe in the River – Mt Raskill Preservation Society
- Dominion Rd – The Mutton Birds
- A Brief Reflection – Nesian Mystik
- We Are the OMC – Otara Millionaires Club
- Haul Away – Split Enz
- One Tree Hill – U2

Nightclubs

The Viaduct and K Rd are the main places to find late-night clubs, but there are also a few around Vulcan Lane and Ponsonby Rd. Some clubs have a cover charge, depending on the night and the event.

Fu Bar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-309 3079; 166 Queen St; 🕒 10pm-late Tue-Sat) This long-running basement music club has bands (such as popular local rockers Die! Die! Die!) and DJs, plus pool tables and a solid reputation for hip-hop.

Rising Sun & 4:20 (Map pp104-5; ☎ 027 559 7876; 373 K Rd) Downstairs is a straight-out nightclub hosting different nights (hip-hop, house, gay electro), while upstairs is a large room with a view and another small dancefloor.

Khuja Lounge (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 3711; 536 Queen St; cover \$10; 🕒 8pm-3am Wed-Sat) Above the Westpac building, this laid-back venue offers DJs and jazz/soul/hip-hop bands.

Ibiza (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-302 3354; 253 K Rd; 🕒 24hr Fri & Sat) This is a nonstop hard-house and trance venue with a go-hard-or-go-home ethos that's not to everyone's taste.

Float (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-307 1344; Shed 19, Princes Wharf) This is a populist, mainstream nightspot choice with DJs on weekends and big screens for sports broadcasts.

Carpark (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-358 5155; 1 Lower Hobson St; 🕒 3pm-late) This bar is in an actual carpark, with DJs on weekend nights.

Boogie Wonderland (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-361 6093; cnr Customs & Queen Sts; 🕒 9pm-late Thu-Sat) As trashy and fun as it sounds, the disco never ended in this basement club that's popular with women of a certain age.

Sport

Eden Park (Map p112; ☎ 09-815 5551; www.edenpark.co.nz; Reimers Ave) This is the stadium for top rugby (winter) and cricket (summer) matches. The All Blacks, the Black Caps and the Auckland Blues all play here. To get there, take the train from Britomart to Kingsland station.

Mt Smart Stadium (Map p100; ☎ 09-571 1699; www.mtsmartstadium.co.nz; Beasley Ave, Penrose) This stadium hosts soccer, rugby league (Warriors) and really big-name concerts.

Stanley St Tennis Courts (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-373 3623; 72 Stanley St) In January the women's ASB Classic is followed by the men's Heineken Open. Some famous tennis names show up to battle it out at this venue.

Theatre & Musicals

Most theatrical and major musical events can be booked through **Ticketek** (☎ 09-307 5000; www.ticketek.co.nz). Aotea Sq and the buildings that surround it comprise Auckland's main arts and entertainment complex. The **Edge** (www.the-edge.co.nz) is the collective name given to the other venues – the Town Hall, Civic Theatre and Aotea Centre.

Auckland Town Hall (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-309 2677; 305 Queen St) This venue hosts concert performances and is home to the NZ Symphony Orchestra and Auckland Philharmonia (www.aucklandphil.co.nz).

Aotea Centre (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-307 5060; 50 Mayor Dr) This is Auckland's main venue for theatre, dance, ballet and opera. The highly regarded Auckland Theatre Company puts on a regular programme here.

Civic Theatre (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-309 2677; cnr Queen & Wellesley Sts) This restored grand dame of a theatre (see p111) is used by major touring productions, including opera, musicals and live theatre, as well as by the Auckland International Film Festival (p117).

Classic Comedy Club (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-373 4321; www.comedy.co.nz; 321 Queen St; tickets \$5-16) Auckland's top venue for comedy, with shows (some 'fresh', some improvised, some professional) running Wednesday to Saturday from around 8pm. There are late shows on Friday and Saturday.

Other theatres:

Maidment Theatre (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-308 2383; www.maidment.auckland.ac.nz; Auckland University, 8 Alfred St)

Silo Theatre (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-366 0339; www.silotheatre.co.nz; Lower Greys Ave) Specialises in youth and fringe drama.

Sky City Theatre (Map pp104-5; ☎ 0800 759 2489; 09-363 6000; www.skycity.co.nz; cnr Victoria & Federal Sts)

Cinemas

Most cinemas offer cheaper rates on weekdays before 5pm; bargain day is all day Tuesday.

Sky City Village Megascreeen (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-979 2401; www.villageskycity.co.nz; Level 3, 291 Queen St; adult \$10-15.50, child \$7.50-9.50) Part of Sky City Metro, a modernistic mall that includes

Borders bookshop, Starbucks, bars and a food court.

Academy Cinemas (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-373 2761; www.academycinemas.co.nz; 44 Lorne St; adult \$11-14, child \$8-11) In the basement of the Central City Library is the Academy, which shows independent foreign and art-house films.

Rialto Cinemas (Map p110; ☎ 09-529 2218; www.rialtoco.nz; 167 Broadway; adult \$10-15.50, child \$7.50-10) In Newmarket, and showing a bit of art-house and international, plus some mainstream fare.

NZ Film Archives (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-379 0688; www.filmarchive.org.nz; 300 K Rd; 🕒 11am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat) This is a wonderful resource of more than 1000 Kiwi feature films and documentaries dating from 1905, which you can watch for free on a TV screen. See p22 for some recommended Kiwi feature films.

SHOPPING

Followers of fashion should head to High St, Chancery Lane, Newmarket, Ponsonby Rd and K Rd. An official All Black rugby shirt costs around \$150. The central city area (especially Queen St) has lots of stores selling outdoor clothes and equipment.

Clothing & Accessories

Mala Brajkovic (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 9001; 31 Vulcan Lane) This quirky local designer stocks interesting women's clothes that might feature silk, leather or the odd bit of ironic stonewash denim.

Zambesi City (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-303 1701; cnr Vulcan Lane & O'Connell St); **Newmarket** (Map p110; ☎ 09-523 1000; 2 Teed St); **Ponsonby** (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 7391; 169 Ponsonby Rd) Hands-down, the most interesting and influential fashion label to come out of the country, and much sought after by local and international celebs.

Karen Walker City (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-309 6299; 15 O'Connell St); **Newmarket** (Map p110; ☎ 09-522 4286; 6 Balm St) Join Madonna and Bjork in wearing Walker's cool (but pricey) threads.

Royal Jewellery Studio (Map p112; ☎ 09-846 0200; 486 New North Rd) Displaying interesting work by local artisans, including some beautiful Maori designs, this is a great place to pick up authentic *pounamu* (greenstone) jewellery.

Little Brother City (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 6536; 5 High St); **Grey Lynn** (Map p114; ☎ 09-378 8565; 428 Richmond Rd) Hip local menswear, with an excellent range of vintage Flying Nun T-shirts.

GAY & LESBIAN AUCKLAND

One of Auckland's nicknames is the Queen City, so it's fitting that it has the country's biggest gay population. While the bright lights attract gays and lesbians from all over the country, the even brighter lights of Sydney eventually steal many of the 30- to 40-somethings, leaving a gap in the demographic. There are a handful of gay venues, but they're not as buzzy as you might expect.

To find out what's going on, grab a copy of the fortnightly newspaper *Express* (available from gay venues) or log on to www.gaynz.com. The big events on the calendar are the Hero Festival (p116) and Queen of the Whole Universe (p117).

Venues change with alarming regularity, but these ones, along with straight-friendly SPQR (p125), are the stayers:

- **Family** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-309 0213; 270 K Rd; 🕒 9am-5am) Trashy, brash and young, but this bar can be a lot of fun.
- **Supermarket** (Map pp104-5; 270 K Rd; 🕒 11pm-5am Fri & Sat) DJs hit the decks in Family's basement on the weekends.
- **Urge** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-307 2155; 490 K Rd; 🕒 9pm-late Thu-Sat) Older and hairier than Family, this is the city's longest-running gay bar and club, with DJs Friday and Saturday nights, raunchy parties and lots of cruising.
- **Dorothy's Sister** (Map p114; ☎ 09-376 2433; 265 Ponsonby Rd; 🕒 4pm-late Mon-Fri, 9.30am-late Sat & Sun) Camp and cosy, this café-bar has a cute garden, weekend drag shows and a fabulous owner.
- **Sohomo** (Map pp104-5; Rising Sun, 373 K Rd; admission \$5; 🕒 9.30pm-3am Thu) It's only held fortnightly but this indie queer night is the scene's coolest party.
- **Centurian** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-377 5571; 18 Beresford St; admission before/after 3pm \$19/24; 🕒 noon-2am Sun-Thu, 11am-6am Fri & Sat) Gay men's sauna.

Marvel (Map p114; ☎ 09-376 4204; 143 Ponsonby Rd) Smart, tailored shirts and trousers in interesting fabrics and quirky partywear are the mainstays of this excellent local menswear designer.

Gifts & Souvenirs

Pauanesia (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-366 7782; 35 High St) A colourful treasure-trove of Polynesian craft and gifts.

Native Agent (Map p112; ☎ 09-845 3289; 507b New North Rd) There's a strong Maori bent to the jewellery, clothing and knick-knacks on offer here, and it's all NZ-made.

O'Kai Oceanikart (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-379 9051; cnr K Rd & Symonds St) Pan-Pacific art, from well-known artists like Fatu Feu'u to exciting up-and-comers.

Markets

Aotea Square Market (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-307 5377; Aotea Sq; ☎ 10am-6pm Fri & Sat) It has ethnic food stalls, arts and crafts, and entertainment. There's live music on Saturday from noon to 3pm.

Otara Market (Map p100; ☎ 09-274 0830; Newbury St; ☎ 6am-noon Sat) Held in the car park between the Manukau Polytech and the Otara town centre, this market has a real Polynesian atmosphere, and you can buy South Pacific food, music and fashions. Take bus 497 from Britomart.

Avondale Sunday Market (Map p100; ☎ 09-818 4931; Avondale Racecourse, Ash St; ☎ 6am-noon Sun) A similar vibe to the Otara Market; take the train to Avondale station.

Music

Real Groovy Records (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-302 3940; 438 Queen St) A music-lovers' nirvana, this huge store has masses of new, second-hand and rare releases, as well as concert tickets, giant posters, DVDs, books, magazines and clothing.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Auckland International Airport (Map p100; ☎ 09-275 0789; www.auckland-airport.co.nz) is 21km south of the city centre. It has an international terminal and a domestic terminal, each with a tourist information centre. A free shuttle service operates every 20 minutes (6am to 10.30pm) between the terminals and there's also a signposted footpath (about a 1km walk).

PLANE DELAYED? TIME FOR A TIPPLE!

Clearly the roar of jets doesn't bother grapes, as NZ's most awarded winery is just 4km from the airport. The parklike grounds of **Villa Maria Estate** (Map p100; ☎ 09-255 0660; 118 Montgomerie Rd; tastings \$6-15; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) are a green oasis in the encircling industrial zone. Short tours (\$5) take place at 11am and 3pm. There's a charge for tastings, but lingering over wine and antipasto on the terrace sure beats hanging around the departure lounge.

At the international terminal there's a free phone for accommodation bookings. Both terminals have left-luggage facilities, ATMs and car-rental desks, although you get better rates from companies in town.

Auckland is the major gateway to NZ, and a hub for domestic flights. See p710 for information on international flights.

Domestic airlines operating to and from Auckland and the destinations they serve:

Air New Zealand (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-336 2424; www.airnewzealand.co.nz; cnr Customs & Queen Sts;

☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) Kaitiāia, Kerikeri, Whangarei, Hamilton, Tauranga, Whakatane, Rotorua, Taupo, New Plymouth, Napier, Wanganui, Palmerston North, Wellington, Nelson, Blenheim, Christchurch, Queenstown and Dunedin.

Great Barrier Airlines (☎ 0800 900 600; www.greatbarrierairlines.co.nz) Great Barrier Island and Whitianga.

Mountain Air (☎ 09-256 7025; www.mountainair.co.nz) Great Barrier Island.

Pacific Blue (☎ 0800 670 000; www.pacificblue.co.nz) Wellington and Christchurch.

Qantas (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-357 8900; www.qantas.com.au; 191 Queen St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Wellington, Christchurch and Queenstown.

Bus

The main long-distance bus company in Auckland, as for the rest of NZ, is **InterCity** (☎ 09-623 1503; www.intercity.co.nz) and its travel and sightseeing arm **Newmans Coach Lines** (www.newmanscoach.co.nz). Its buses go to almost all bigger towns and the main tourist areas. Services leave from the **Sky City Coach Terminal** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-623 1504; 102 Hobson St).

Naked Bus (www.nakedbus.com) buses travel along SH1 as far as Whangarei (three hours) and Wellington (12 hours), as well as heading

to Waitomo Caves (3¼ hours) Whitianga (3¼ hours), Tauranga (3½ hours), Gisborne (nine hours) and Napier (12 hours). Fares start from \$1. **Dalroy Express** (☎ 0508 465 622; www.dalroytours.co.nz) operates a daily service between Auckland and New Plymouth (\$54, 5½ hours). **Main Coachline** (☎ 09-278 8070; www.maincoachline.co.nz) runs six buses per week between Auckland and Dargaville (\$45, three hours). All of these buses stop on Quay St, opposite the Ferry Building (Map pp104-5).

Go Kiwi (☎ 0800 446 549; www.go-kiwi.co.nz) has daily door-to-door shuttle services to/from Auckland, Rotorua, Tauranga, Hamilton, Waitomo and the Coromandel Peninsula.

Car

HIRING A CAR

Auckland has countless car-hire operators and is the best city in which to hire (or buy) a vehicle for touring NZ or the city itself. Some good deals can be had for long-term hire, but be warned that cheapest is not necessarily the best.

A swag of car-rental companies (Map pp104-5) can be found conveniently grouped together along Beach Rd opposite the old train station. The major companies (Avis, Budget, Hertz and Thrifty) are reliable, offer full insurance and have offices at the airport and all over the country. They are more expensive, but rates are often negotiable for longer hires or off-season.

If you are prepared to take limited insurance and risk losing an excess of around \$750, then the cheaper operators offer some pretty good deals. Prices vary with the season, the age of the car and length of hire. Ignore prices quoted in brochures and shop around by phone. Always read the hire agreement thoroughly before you sign.

Some of the more reputable car-hire companies (which may also hire out sleeper vans and campervans):

A2B (☎ 0800 222 929, 09-377 0824; www.a2b-car-rental.co.nz)

Britz NZ (☎ 0800 831 900, 09-275 9090; www.britz.co.nz)

Budget (☎ 0800 283 438, 09-529 7788; www.budget.co.nz)

Explore More (☎ 0800 447 363, 09-302 4156; www.exploremore.co.nz)

Hertz (☎ 0800 654 321, 09-367 6350; www.hertz.co.nz)

Maui (☎ 0800 651 080, 09-275 3013; www.maui.co.nz)

Omega (☎ 0800 525 210, 09-377 5573; www.omegarentals.com)

Thrifty (☎ 0800 737 070, 09-309 0111; www.thrifty.co.nz)

BUYING A CAR

For stays of two months or more, many people look at buying a car. You can buy through dealers on the buy-back scheme, at car fairs or auctions, or through ads at backpacker hostels. Before buying a car you must check that it is mechanically sound, has not been stolen, and does not have money owing on it to a finance company or bank.

Buy-backs, where the dealer agrees to buy back your car for an agreed price (often 50% of what you pay), are not a good deal, but offer a safety net if you have trouble selling the car.

A popular way to buy a car is at the car fairs where people bring their own cars to sell them. Arrive between 8.30am and 9.30am for the best choice; car fairs are over by about noon. For a credit check quote chassis and licence-plate numbers. Mechanical inspection services, credit agencies and Auto Check details are on hand at the following car fairs:

Auckland Car Fair (Map p100; ☎ 09-529 2233; www.carfair.co.nz; Ellerslie Racecourse, Green Lane East; ☎ 9am-noon Sun) It's the largest car fair and it costs \$30 to display your vehicle.

City Car Fair (Map pp104-5; ☎ 09-837 7817; cnr Halsey & Gaunt Sts; ☎ 9am-1pm Sat) It costs \$20 to display your car.

Motorcycle

NZ Motorcycle Rentals (Map p114; ☎ 09-360 7940; www.nzbike.com; 35 Crummer Rd; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) offers motorbike hire for \$105 to \$375 a day (insurance excess is \$1500 and upwards). Guided tours are also available.

Train

Trains arrive at and depart from **Britomart station** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 0800 872 467; www.transzencic.co.nz; Queen St), the largest underground diesel train station in the world. You can book online, or else the booking office is open from 8am to 8.30pm daily.

The **Overlander** (☎ 0800 872 467; www.transzencic.co.nz) departs from Auckland at 7.25am (daily December to April, Friday to Sunday May to November) and arrives in Wellington at 7.20pm (the return train from Wellington departs and arrives at the same time). Short trips are expensive, but slightly longer journeys within the same zone can be very reasonable. Fares from Auckland are \$49 as far as Te

Kuiti then shoot up to \$89 from Taumarunui. The standard Auckland–Wellington adult fare is \$106. Various discounts and travel passes are available.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

The **Air Bus** (☎ 0508 247 287; www.airbus.co.nz; one way/return adult \$15/22, backpacker \$13/20, child \$6/12) runs every 20 or 30 minutes (6am to 10pm) between the terminals and the city, stopping outside major hotels and backpacker hostels. Reservations are not required and you buy a ticket from the driver. The trip takes about one hour each way (longer during rush hour).

The convenient door-to-door **Super Shuttle** (☎ 0800 748 885; www.supershuttle.co.nz) will charge about \$26 for one person heading between the airport and a city hotel. You'll save money per head if there's a group of you. The price increases if you want to go to an outlying suburb.

A taxi to the airport from the city costs between \$50 and \$65.

Bicycle

Adventure Cycles (Map p110; ☎ 0800 245 386; 1 Laurie Ave; hire per day \$20-35; ☎ 7.30am-7pm Mon-Tue & Thu-Fri) hires out road, mountain and long-term touring bikes, runs a buy-back scheme and does repairs.

Maxx Regional Transport (☎ 09-366 6400; www.maxx.co.nz) publishes an excellent free *Cycle Map*, available from public buildings such as stations, libraries and i-SITEs. Bikes can be taken on ferries (free) and trains (\$1), but only folding bikes are allowed on buses.

Boat

Fullers and 360 Discovery both run ferries from Quay St in the city. See p113 for destinations.

Car & Motorcycle

Auckland's motorways jam up badly at peak times, particularly the Northern and Southern. It's best to avoid them between 7am and 9am, and from 5pm to 7pm. Things also get tight around 3pm during term time, which is the end of the school day.

Parking is a problem in central Auckland, but there are plenty of car parks off Beach Rd, which is at the eastern end of Customs St. They cost around \$8 for 12 hours. Most on-street parking meters (from \$1 an hour) do not have to be fed money between 6pm

and 8am or on Sunday – check the meters and parking signs carefully.

Public Transport

Due to rampant privatisation during the 1980s, Auckland's public transport system is run by a hodgepodge of different operators, none of which seem to co-operate. As a result there are few integrated public transport passes. The Auckland Regional Council is trying to sort out the mess and runs the excellent **Maxx** (☎ 09-366 6400; www.maxx.co.nz) information service, covering buses, trains and ferries. The website has an excellent trip-planning feature.

BUS

Bus routes spread their tentacles throughout the city. Many services terminate around Britomart station (Map pp104–5). Bus stops often have electronic displays, giving an estimate of waiting times. Be warned: they lie.

Single-ride fares in the inner city are 50c for an adult and 30c for a child (you pay the driver when you board), but if you're travelling further afield there are fare stages from \$1.60/1 (adult/child) to \$9.70/5.80. A one-day pass (which includes the North Shore ferries) costs \$11, while a three-day pass costs \$25 – there's no reduction for children.

The environmentally friendly Link Bus (\$1.60, every 10 to 15 minutes, 6am to 11.30pm) is a very handy service that travels clockwise and anticlockwise around a loop that includes Queen St, Sky City, Victoria Park Market, Ponsonby Rd, K Rd, Newmarket, Parnell and Britomart station.

The red City Circuit bus (every 10 minutes, 8am to 6pm) provides free transport around the inner city from Britomart station, up Queen St, past Albert Park to Auckland University, across to the Sky Tower and back to Britomart.

TRAIN

Auckland's train service is excellent but limited. Trains are generally clean, cheap and (usually) on time – although any hiccup on the lines can bring down the entire network. You will need to refer to a timetable, as they aren't particularly frequent.

Impressive Britomart station (Map pp104–5) has food retailers, foreign-exchange facilities and even an artist-in-residence 'booth' that is frequently mistaken for a ticket office! Downstairs are plush toilets and left-luggage lockers.

There are just three train routes: one runs west to Waitakere, while two run south to Pukekohe. Services are at least hourly and run from around 6am to 8pm (later on the weekends). A \$14 Discovery Pass allows a day's travel on most bus, train and North Shore ferry services. Otherwise, pay the conductor on the train. All train carriages have wheelchair ramps.

Taxi

Auckland's many taxis usually operate from ranks, but they also cruise popular areas. **Auckland Co-op Taxis** (☎ 09-300 3000) is one of the biggest companies. Flagfall is \$3, then it's \$2.40 to \$2.60 per kilometre. There's a surcharge for transport to and from the airport and cruise ships.

HAURAKI GULF ISLANDS

The Hauraki Gulf, stretching between Auckland and the Coromandel Peninsula, is dotted with *motu* (islands) and gives the Bay of Islands stiff competition in the beauty stakes. Some are only minutes from the city and make excellent day trips: wine-soaked Waiheke and volcanic Rangitoto really shouldn't be missed. Great Barrier requires more effort (and cash) to get to, but provides an idyllic escape from modern life.

There are 47 islands in the Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park, administered by DOC. Some are good-sized islands, others are no more than rocks jutting out of the sea. They're loosely put into two categories: recreation and conservation. The recreation islands can easily be visited and their harbours are dotted with yachts in summer. The conservation islands,

however, have restricted access. Permits are required to visit some, while others are closed refuges for the preservation of rare plants and animals, especially birds.

The gulf is a busy highway for marine mammals. Sei, minke and Bryde's whales are regularly seen in its outer reaches, along with orcas and bottlenose dolphins. You might even spy a passing humpback.

Information

The DOC information centre (p102) and the New Zealand i-SITE (p102), both on the Auckland waterfront, are good sources of information, maps and walking pamphlets.

Getting There & Around

Most island ferries leave from the Auckland waterfront, but some depart from Devonport, Half Moon Bay (East Auckland), Gulf Harbour (Whangaparaoa Peninsula) and Sandspit (near Warkworth). If you miss the last ferry, **Reubens** (☎ 0800 111 616; www.reubens.co.nz) operates a 24-hour water-taxi service (Auckland to Waiheke has a minimum charge of \$167; to Rangitoto, \$96). See also p113 for cruises and p113 for sailing trips.

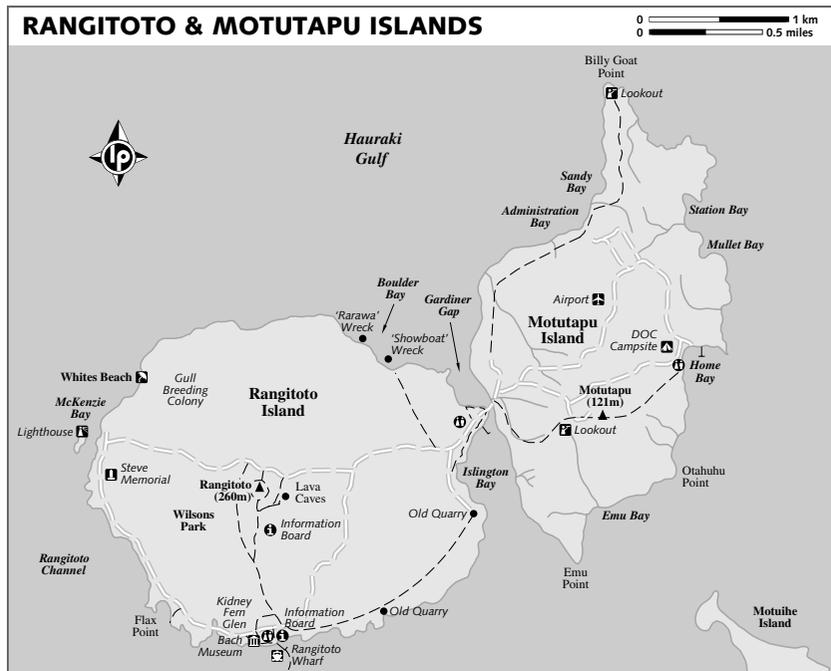
RANGITOTO & MOTUTAPU ISLANDS pop 105

Sloping elegantly from the waters of the gulf, **Rangitoto** (260m), the largest and youngest of Auckland's volcanic cones, provides a picturesque backdrop to all of the city's activities. As recently as 600 years ago it erupted from the sea and was probably active for several years before settling down. Maori living on Motutapu (Sacred Island), to which Rangitoto is now joined by a causeway, certainly witnessed the eruptions, as footprints have been

BATTLE OF THE BACHES

During the 1920s a dinky set of simple baches started to sprout on Rangitoto on land leased from the council, forming a thriving community of holiday-makers. In the 1930s prison labour was used to construct roads, public toilets, tennis courts and a swimming pool out of the scoria. It was back-breaking work, but the men weren't locked up and by all accounts enjoyed island life. The threat of fire was, and is, a constant danger for the bach-holders – the baching scoria keeping the leaf litter tinder-dry.

During the 1970s and '80s the bach community itself came under threat – a significant number of houses were removed when their leases expired, with the plan to remove them all. Following a public outcry, the remaining communities were listed as Historic Areas by the Historic Places Trust in 1997. Just left of the wharf, a 1929 bach has been fully restored and opened as a **Bach Museum** (admission by donation; ☎ 9.30am-3.30pm Sat & Sun summer only).



found embedded in ash and oral history details several generations living here before the eruption.

The island makes for a great day trip. Its harsh scoria slopes hold a surprising amount of flora and there are excellent walks, but you'll need sturdy shoes and plenty of water. Although it looks steep, up close it's more like an egg sizzling in a pan. The walk to the summit only takes an hour and is rewarded with sublime views. At the top a loop walk goes around the crater's rim. A walk to lava caves branches off the summit walk and takes 30 minutes return. There's an information board with walk maps at the wharf.

Motutapu (www.motutapu.org.nz), in contrast to Rangitoto, is mainly covered in grassland, which is grazed by sheep and cattle. Archaeologically, this is a very significant island, with the traces of centuries of continuous human habitation etched into its landscape.

A **DOC campsite** (☎ 09-372 7348; Home Bay; adult/child \$5/2.50) has basic facilities, with only a water tap and flush toilet provided. Bring cooking equipment, as open fires are forbidden. It's a three-hour walk from Rangitoto wharf.

Fullers (☎ 09-367 9111; www.fullers.co.nz; adult/child return \$20/11) has 20-minute ferry services to Rangitoto, leaving Auckland's Ferry Building at 9.15am, 12.15pm and 3pm daily (departing Devonport 10 minutes later), and departing Rangitoto at 9.45am, 12.45pm and 3.45pm. Fullers also offers the **Volcanic Explorer** (adult/child \$50/26; ☎ tours 9.15am & 12.15pm), a guided tour around the island in a canopied trailer, towed by a 4WD tractor, to a 900m boardwalk leading to the summit. Prices include the ferry.

Reubens (☎ 0800 111 616; www.reubens.co.nz; return \$39) operates a shuttle service to Islington Bay from Friday to Sunday.

MOTUIHE ISLAND

Between Waiheke and Rangitoto Islands, 176-hectare Motuihe Island has a lovely white-sand beach and a fascinating history. There are three *pa* sites, last occupied by the Ngati Paoa tribe. The island was sold in 1840 (for a heifer, blankets, frocks, garden tools, pots and pans) and from 1872 to 1941 served as a quarantine station. During WWI the dashing swashbuckler Count von Luckner launched a daring escape from the island (where he was

interned with other German and Austrian nationals), making it 1000km to the Kermadec Islands before being recaptured.

Motuihe has been rendered pest-free and is now subject to a vigorous reforestation project by enthusiastic volunteers. As a result, endangered birds have started to return, including the loquacious tieke (saddleback). Contact the **Motuihe Trust** (☎ 0800 668 844; www.motuihue.co.nz) if you want to get involved.

Apart from the trust's headquarters, the only accommodation on the island is a basic **DOC campsite** (☎ 09-534 5419; adult/child \$5/2.50); only toilets and water are provided. There are no shops or permanent residents.

On Saturdays only, **360 Discovery** (☎ 0800 888 006; www.360discovery.co.nz; return \$23) runs three ferries to/from Auckland. **Reubens** (☎ 0800 111 616; www.reubens.co.nz; return \$39) operates a shuttle service from Friday to Sunday.

WAIHEKE ISLAND

pop 8500

Waiheke is 93 sq km of island bliss only a 35-minute ferry ride from the CBD. Once they could hardly give land away here; nowadays multimillionaires rub shoulders with the old-time hippies and bohemian artists who gave the island its green repute. Auckland office workers fantasise about swapping the daily motorway crawl for a watery commute and a warm, dry microclimate.

On Waiheke's city side, emerald waters lap at rocky bays, while its ocean flank has some of the region's best sandy beaches. While beaches are the big drawcard, wine is a close second. There are 26 boutique wineries to visit, many with swanky restaurants and breathtaking city views. On top of that, the Waiheke Arts Trail encompasses 26 galleries and craft stores.

Waiheke has been inhabited since at least the 14th century, most recently by Ngati Paoa, and there are more than 40 *pa* sites scattered around the island. Europeans arrived with the missionary Samuel Marsden in the early 1800s and the island was soon stripped of its kauri forest.

Orientation & Information

Nearly 2km from Matiatia wharf is Oneroa, the main village, with a sandy beach. The eastern half of the island (locals call it the bottom end) is lightly populated and well worth exploring. There are petrol stations in Oneroa,

Ostend and Onetangi, ATMs in Oneroa and a supermarket in Ostend.

The **Waiheke Island i-SITE** (☎ 09-372 1234; 2 Kororoa Rd; www.waihekenz.com; ☎ 9am-5pm) and library (with free internet access) are in the Artworks complex.

Sights

ART & CULTURE

The **Artworks complex** (☎ 09-379 2020; 2 Kororoa Rd) houses a **community theatre** (☎ 09-372 2941), an arthouse **cinema** (☎ 09-372 4240; www.wicc.co.nz) and an attention-grabbing **art gallery** (☎ 09-372 9907; www.waihekeartgallery.org.nz; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm). Also part of the complex is **Whittakers Musical Experience** (☎ 09-372 5573; www.musical-museum.org; admission by donation; ☎ 1-4pm Wed-Thu & Sat-Mon), an endearingly run collection of antique concert instruments.

The **Waiheke Island Historic Village** (☎ 09-372 2970; Onetangi Rd; admission by donation; ☎ noon-4pm Wed & Sat-Mon) displays Islander artefacts in five restored buildings.

Connells Bay (☎ 09-372 8957; www.connellsbay.co.nz; Cowes Bay Rd; adult/child \$30/15; ☎ by appointment) is a pricey but excellent private sculpture park featuring a stellar roster of NZ artists. Admission is by way of guided tour.

Another jealousy-inducing private property open to visitors is **Te Whau Garden** (☎ 09-372 6748; www.tewhaugarden.co.nz; 31 Vintage Lane; admission \$7; ☎ 10am-5pm), giving you the opportunity to wander around lovely rainforest, wetlands and gardens scattered with sculpture.

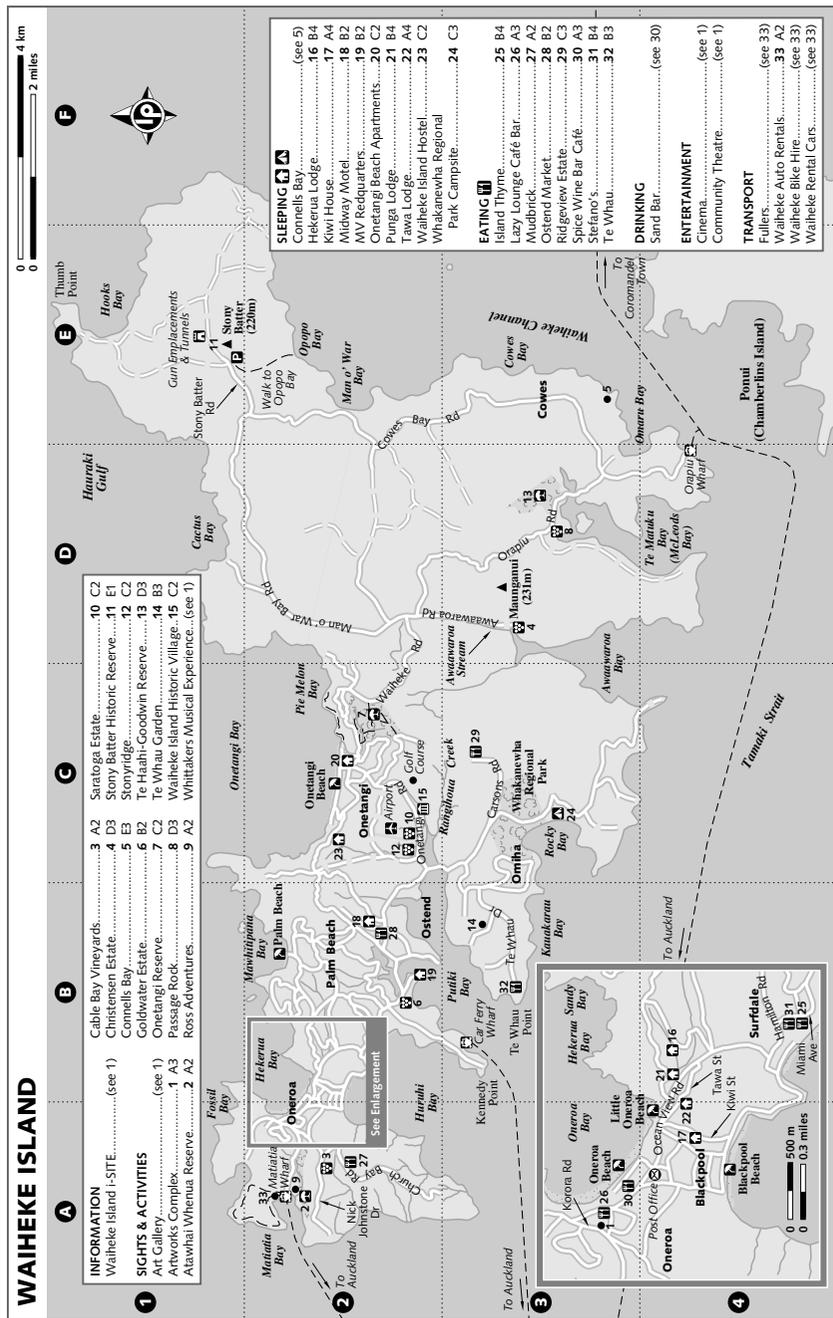
The **Waiheke Arts Trail** brochure, free from the i-SITE, lists 26 galleries and craft stores.

BEACHES

Waiheke's two best beaches are **Onetangi**, a long stretch of white sand at the centre of the island, and **Palm Beach**, a pretty little horseshoe bay between Oneroa and Onetangi. Both have nudist sections; head west just past some rocks in both cases. **Oneroa** and neighbouring **Little Oneroa** are also excellent.

WINERIES

Waiheke's hot, dry microclimate has proved excellent for Bordeaux reds, Syrah and some superb rosés. Because of an emphasis on quality rather than quantity, the premium wine produced here is relatively expensive. It's also NZ's only wine region where nearly all the wineries charge for tastings (around \$10). Some are spectacularly located and worth



a visit for that reason alone. Over summer many extend their hours, some even sprouting temporary restaurants.

Cable Bay Vineyards (☎ 09-372 5889; www.cablebayvineyards.co.nz; 12 Nick Johnstone Dr; ☞ 11am-5pm) Impressive ubermodern architecture, beautiful views and an acclaimed restaurant.

Christensen Estate (☎ 09-377 7648; www.christensenestate.co.nz; 205 Aawaawaroa Rd; ☞ 11am-4pm Sat & Sun) Hidden at the bottom end, offering free tastings.

Goldwater Estate (☎ 09-372 7493; www.goldwaterwine.com; 18 Causeway Rd; ☞ noon-2pm Wed-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun) Big ups to Waiheke's oldest vineyard for its commitment to sustainability and free tastings.

Passage Rock (☎ 09-372 7257; www.passagerockwines.co.nz; 438 Orapiu Rd; ☞ noon-4pm) Excellent pizza among the vines.

Saratoga Estate (☎ 09-372 6450; www.saratogaestate.com; 72 Onetangi Rd; ☞ 11am-4pm) With a café and brewery onsite.

Stonyridge (☎ 09-372 8822; www.stonyridge.co.nz; 80 Onetangi Rd; ☞ 11.30am-5pm) Famous organic reds, an atmospheric café, tours (\$10, 35 minutes, 11.30am Saturday and Sunday) and the occasional dance party (see right).

See also Te Whau (p138), Ridgeview Estate (p138) and Mudbrick (p139). Pick up the *Waiheke Island of Wine* map for a complete list.

Activities

The *Waiheke Island Walkways* pamphlet has detailed maps and descriptions of eight excellent coastal hikes that take from one to three hours. Some head to the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society's three reserves: **Onetangi** (Waiheke Rd), **Te Haahi-Goodwin** (Orapiu Rd) and **Atawhai Whenua** (Ocean View Rd). Other tracks traverse the **Whakanewha Regional Park**, a haven for rare coastal birds.

At the bottom end of the island, the **Stony Batter Historic Reserve** (☎ 027 305 2772; Stony Batter Rd; admission/tour \$8/15; ☞ 10am-3.30pm) has WWII tunnels and gun emplacements that were built in 1941 to defend Auckland's harbour. The walk leads through private farmland, and derives its name from the boulder-strewn fields. Bring a torch.

Ross Adventures (☎ 09-372 5550; www.kayakwaiheke.co.nz; Matiatia; 2hr/4hr/day trips \$50/70/135) runs guided kayak trips and offers kayak hire (from \$15 per hour).

Flying Carpet (☎ 09-372 5621; www.flyingcarpet.co.nz; 2hr/dinner/day cruises \$65/110/140) offers sailing

outings and ritzy dinners on an ocean-going catamaran.

Windsurfing Waiheke (☎ 09-372 6275; www.windsurfing-waiheke.co.nz; hire per hr \$25-45, tuition per hr \$40-50) operates from different beaches depending on conditions.

Tours

Fullers (☎ 09-367 9111; www.fullers.co.nz; Matiatia Wharf) runs a Vineyard Tour (adult \$90, 5½ hours, departs Auckland 11am) that visits three of the island's top wineries and includes a light lunch at Stonyridge (left). There's also a 1½-hour Explorer Tour of the island (adult/child \$44/22, departs Auckland 10am and noon).

Waiheke Island Adventures (☎ 09-372 6127; www.waihekeislandadventures.com) runs customised tours such as one-hour scenic tours (\$25), two-hour vineyard tours (\$50), or Stony Batter tours (\$35) in a 15-seater bus. Art and beach tours are also available.

With **Ananda Tours** (☎ 09-372 7530; www.ananda.co.nz) you can do a full-day wine tour (\$95) or a guided walk on the eco tour (\$75, minimum four people). Small-group, informal tours can be customised to suit your needs, including visits to artists' studios.

Festivals & Events

Sculpture on the Gulf (www.sculptureonthegulf.co.nz) A wacky 2km cliff-top sculpture walk, held every second January (odd-numbered years).

Waiheke Jazz Festival (www.waihekejazz.co.nz) Draws up to 30,000 people over Easter weekend.

Stonyridge New Year's Eve (www.stonyridge.co.nz; advance sale/door \$85/300) Waiheke morphs into Ibiza for a massive dance-party night.

Sleeping

Waiheke is so popular in the summer holidays that many locals rent out their houses for exorbitant rates and bugger off elsewhere. You'll need to book ahead and even then there are very few bargains. Prices drop considerably in winter, especially midweek.

BUDGET

Whakanewha Regional Park campsite (☎ 09-366 2000; www.arc.govt.nz; Gordons Rd; sites per adult/child \$10/5; ☐) A picturesque but basic campsite with toilets, cold showers and drinking water. Phone ahead for the code to unlock the gate.

Hekerua Lodge (☎ 09-372 8990; www.hekerualodge.co.nz; 11 Hekerua Rd, Oneroa; sites per person \$16, dm \$26-35, s/tw/tr \$48/75/105, d \$75-110, cabins \$240; ☐ ☞) This

secluded hostel is surrounded by native bush and has a barbecue, stone-tiled pool, sunny deck, casual lounge area and its own walking track. It's far from luxurious (a bit more attention to the cleaning wouldn't go astray), but it has a lovely, laid-back feel, no doubt assisted by the serene images of Buddha and the Tibetan prayer flags flapping about.

Waiheke Island Hostel (☎ 09-372 8971; www.waiheke.cjb.net; 419 Seaview Rd, Onetangi; dm/s \$24/36, d \$54-64; P) This colourful hostel has a large garden overlooking Onetangi Beach. The dorms are a little cell-like but have only two bunk beds, and linen is provided. Mountain bikes can be hired and other activities can be booked commission-free.

MV Redquarters (☎ 027 272 9617; www.redquarters.co.nz; 47 Shelly Beach Rd, Ostend; dm/d \$30/60; P) For something a bit different, this floating hostel certainly fits the bill. It's not the *QEII* – accommodation is basic and the dorm huge – but you do get to wake up on the water. Overnight trips around the island (from \$100) allow for kayaking, snorkelling and dolphin spotting.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Kiwi House (☎ 09-372 9123; kiwihouse@clear.net.nz; 23 Kiwi St, Oneroa; s \$50, d & tw \$90-95; P) This friendly guesthouse offers pleasant decks, a shared kitchen and reasonable prices, plus a dog whose bark is worse than its bite.

Tawa Lodge (☎ 09-372 9434; www.pungalodge.co.nz; 15 Tawa St, Oneroa; r \$110, apt \$165-200; P) Between the self-contained cottage at the front and the apartment at the rear are three reasonably priced loft rooms sharing a small kitchen and bathroom. On a hot day there's a wonderfully languid vibe as guests spill out onto the deck.

Midway Motel (☎ 09-372 8023; www.waihekemotel.co.nz; 1 Whakarite Rd, Ostend; apt \$125-300; P) The reasonably sized units at this clean, comfortable and centrally located motel have Sky TV and kitchens, but the main attraction is the heated, covered pool and spa.

our pick Punga Lodge (☎ 09-372 6675; www.punga.lodge.co.nz; 223 Ocean View Rd, Oneroa; r \$140-160, apt \$135-200; P) Both the colourful en-suite rooms in the house and the self-contained garden units have access to decks looking onto a lush tropical garden. There's a spa, and prices include homemade breakfast, afternoon tea and wharf transfers.

Onetangi Beach Apartments (☎ 09-372 0003; www.onetangi.co.nz; 27 The Strand, Onetangi; apt \$150-320; P)

The price variations are seasonal and quite dramatic for this smart, perfectly located, well-managed accommodation with a spa and sauna.

Connells Bay (☎ 09-372 8957; www.connellsbay.co.nz; Cowes Bay Rd; cottage \$350-450) Fancy your own private art-filled retreat that combines the best of the country and the seaside and is luxurious without being glitzy? Descend to this extraordinary property via a perilously steep driveway to the sculpture garden (p135). The century-old weatherboard two-bedroom cottage is comfortable and chic, with kauri floors, a smart kitchen, veranda, garden and absolute water frontage.

Eating & Drinking

Priding itself on the finer things in life, Waiheke has some excellent eateries, and if you're lucky the views will be enough to distract from the hole being bored into your hip pocket. The island's isolation is an excuse for overcharging yet simultaneously limits the capacity to find good staff. Consequently you may find yourself paying exorbitantly for meals served by clueless local teenagers.

Spice Wine Bar Café (☎ 09-372 7659; 153 Ocean View Rd, Oneroa; mains \$6-10; ☎ 8am-4pm; V) A snappy little place with tables on the street, excellent coffee and delectable lemon tarts.

Lazy Lounge Café Bar (☎ 09-372 5132; 139 Ocean View Rd, Oneroa; breakfast \$6-17, lunch \$14-19; ☎ 8am-4pm Sun-Thu, 8am-9pm Fri & Sat) This laid-back place has indoor/outdoor areas with worn sofas, good music, art on the walls, sea views and a great range of food from deli items to pizzas.

Stefano's (☎ 09-372 5309; 18 Hamilton Rd, Surfdale; mains \$15-24; ☎ 5.30-9.30pm; V) Stefano's is the best-smelling joint on Waiheke, serving lovely pasta staples and wonderful pizzas in the presence of a dodgy mural.

Ridgeview Estate (☎ 09-372 3223; 129 Carsons Rd; mains \$25-32; ☎ lunch & dinner) Perched on one of the highest parts of the island, this vineyard restaurant offers sublime views and hearty meals with Pacific Rim flavours.

Te Whau (☎ 09-372 7191; 218 Te Whau Dr; mains \$30-36; ☎ lunch Fri-Sun, dinner Sat) Perched on the end of Te Whau peninsula, this winery restaurant has exceptional views, food and service, and one of the finest wine lists you'll see in the country (1984 Chateau Mouton Rothschild, \$3000). Try their own impressive Bordeaux blends, Merlot and rosé for \$3 per taste (11am to 5pm daily).

Mudbrick (☎ 09-372 9050; 126 Church Bay Rd; mains \$36-40; ☎ lunch & dinner) Auckland and the gulf are at their glistening best when viewed from Mudbrick's picturesque veranda. The adventurous menu is crammed with quality ingredients, well put together. They also offer tours and wine tasting (\$5, 10.30am to 5pm).

Sand Bar (☎ 09-372 9458; 153 Ocean View Rd, Oneroa; ☎ 2pm-late Mon-Sat) The island's swankiest bar has lethal cocktails and decks overlooking the ocean.

For fresh local produce head to the bustling **Ostend market** (Ostend Hall, Belgium St; ☎ 8am-1pm Sat), or for prepackaged gourmet meals, deli goodies, tempting pastries and excellent coffee, clock in on **Island Thyme** (☎ 09-372 3400; 8a Miami Ave, Surfdale; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat).

Getting There & Away

Fullers (☎ 09-367 9111; www.fullers.co.nz; adult/child return \$29/15; ☎ 5.20am-11.45pm Mon-Fri, 6.30am-11.45pm Sat, 7am-9.30pm Sun) has frequent ferries from Auckland to Matiatia Wharf (on the hour from 9am to 5pm), some via Devonport.

Sealink (☎ 09-300 5900; www.subritzky.co.nz; adult/child/car/motorcycle return \$29/16/125/45; ☎ 4.30am-6.30pm Mon-Thu, 4.30am-8pm Fri, 6am-6.30pm Sat, 7am-6.30pm Sun) runs car ferries from Half Moon Bay (East Auckland) to Kennedy Point on Waiheke. The ferry runs at least every two hours and takes 45 minutes; bookings are essential.

You can pick up the **360 Discovery** (☎ 0800 888 006; www.360discovery.co.nz) tourist ferry at Orapiu on its journey between Auckland and Coromandel Town (see p203).

Getting Around BUS

The island has regular bus services, starting from Matiatia Wharf and heading through Oneroa (adult/child \$1.40/80c, 2 minutes) on their way to all the main settlements, as far west as Onetangi (adult/child \$4.10/2.20, 32 minutes). Enquire through **MAXX** (☎ 09-366 6400; www.maxx.co.nz). A day pass (adult/child \$8/5) is available from the Fullers counter at Matiatia Wharf.

CAR & BICYCLE

The island has 12km-, 25km- and 70km-loop bicycle routes, but prepare for a lot of hills. Mountain bikes (half-/full day \$20/30) can be hired at **Waiheke Bike Hire** (☎ 09-372 7937;

Matiatia Wharf; ☎ 9am-5pm), or you can cheat on the inclines with electric bikes.

Waiheke Auto Rentals (☎ 09-372 8998; www.waiheke.rentals.co.nz; Matiatia Wharf; car/4WD from \$55/80) and **Waiheke Rental Cars** (☎ 09-372 8635; www.waihekereentalcars.co.nz; Matiatia Wharf; scooter/car/motorbike/4WD from \$55/55/75/80) offer rentals, but you must be over 21 and pay 60c a kilometre for cars or 4WDs. The insurance excess (deposit) is \$1000.

TAXI

Try **Waiheke Taxi Co-op** (☎ 09-372 8038), **Waiheke Taxis** (☎ 09-372 3000) or **Waiheke Independent Taxis** (☎ 0800 300 372).

TIRITIRI MATANGI ISLAND

This magical, 210-hectare, predator-free island (www.tiritirimatangi.co.nz) is home to the tuatara (NZ's pint-sized dinosaur) and lots of endangered native birds, including the very rare and colourful takahe. Other birds that can be seen here are the bell bird, stitch bird, saddleback, whitehead, kakariki, kokako, little spotted kiwi, brown teal, NZ robin, fernbird and penguins. The saddleback was once close to extinction with just 150 left, but now there are more than 200 on Tiritiri alone.

Ngati Paoa were the last tribe to live here. The land was sold to the Crown in 1841, deforested and farmed until the 1970s. Since 1984 hundreds of volunteers have planted 250,000 native trees and the forest cover has regenerated. An 1864 lighthouse stands on the eastern end of the island.

From Wednesday to Sunday, **360 Discovery** (☎ 0800 888 006; www.360discovery.co.nz; return Auckland/Gulf Harbour \$59/35) has ferries to the island, leaving Whangaparaoa Peninsula at 9.50am. They arrive back in Gulf Harbour at 4pm and Auckland at 4.50pm. A guided walk on the island is a good deal at \$5/2.50 per adult/child.

KAWAU ISLAND pop 300

Kawau Island lies 50km north of Auckland off the Mahurangi peninsula. There are no roads through the island, the residents relying totally on boats. The main attraction is **Mansion House** (☎ 09-422 8882; adult/child \$4/2; ☎ 10am-4pm), an impressive wooden manor extended from an 1845 structure by Governor George Grey, who purchased the island in 1862. It houses a fine collection of Victoriana, including some of Grey's effects.

OTHER ISLANDS

Little Barrier Island, located 25km northeast of Kawau Island, is NZ's ark: a predator-free refuge for endangered birds, reptiles and plants. Access to the island is highly restricted, and a DOC permit is required for landing on this closely guarded sanctuary. The steep volcanic cliffs help keep out intruders.

Motuora Island, halfway between Kawau and Tiritiri Matangi, has 80 predator-free hectares and is used as a kiwi 'crèche'. There's a wharf on the west coast of the island, but you'll need your own boat to get here. The **DOC campsite** (☎ 027 492 8586; adult/child \$6/3) requires bookings and provides toilets, cold showers and water. It also rents a **bach** (\$50) that sleeps five; bring your own linen and food.

Kawau has some beautiful walks, starting from Mansion House and leading to beaches, the old copper mine and a lookout; pick up DOC's *Kawau Island Historic Reserve* pamphlet (\$1).

Kawau Lodge (☎ 09-422 8831; www.sailingholiday.co.nz; North Cove; s/d \$150/175) is a lovely boutique hotel with delightful views and fine furnishings. Excellent meals (\$30) can be arranged, as can excursions on its 42ft yacht.

In the north of the island, on Kawau's only sandy beach, the upmarket **Beach House Resort** (☎ 09-422 8850; www.kawauresort.co.nz; Vivian Bay; ste \$320-480) has suites and self-contained chalets with private decks. Breakfast and dinner are included in the rate.

If you haven't packed a picnic, the idyllically situated **Mansion House Restaurant** (☎ 09-422 8903; lunch \$10-18, dinner \$24-26; ☎ 10am-late) will be a welcome relief, serving all-day breakfasts, sandwiches and hearty evening meals.

Reubens (☎ 0800 111 616; www.reubens.co.nz) is based at Sandspit (p153) and operates at least four shuttles per day to Kawau (adult/child return \$38/20). The Royal Mail Run Cruise (adult/child \$52/20, barbecue lunch \$18/10) departs Sandspit at 10.30am and circles the island, delivering the post to 75 different wharves.

GREAT BARRIER ISLAND

pop 1000

Great Barrier (Aotea) is the largest island in the gulf (285 sq km) and NZ's fourth-largest behind North, South and Stewart Islands. It's rugged and scenic, resembling the Coromandel Peninsula to which it was once joined. Named by Captain James Cook, Great Barrier Island later became a whaling, mining and logging centre, but all these industries have had their day. Most of the island is publicly owned and managed by DOC.

Great Barrier has unspoilt beaches, hot springs, old kauri dams, a forest sanctuary and a network of tramping tracks. Because there are no possums on the island, the native bush is lush. The west coast has safe sandy beaches, while the east coast beaches are good for surfing. Mountain biking, swimming, fishing, diving, boating, kayaking and just relaxing are other popular activities.

Although only 88km from Auckland, Great Barrier seems a world – and a good many years – away. The island has no supermarket, no electricity supply (only private generators) and no main drainage (only septic tanks); most roads are unsealed; and petrol costs are high. Mobile-phone reception is very limited and there are no banks, ATMs or street lights. It's a wild, untamed and very special place with its own rules, and is a definite breath of fresh air.

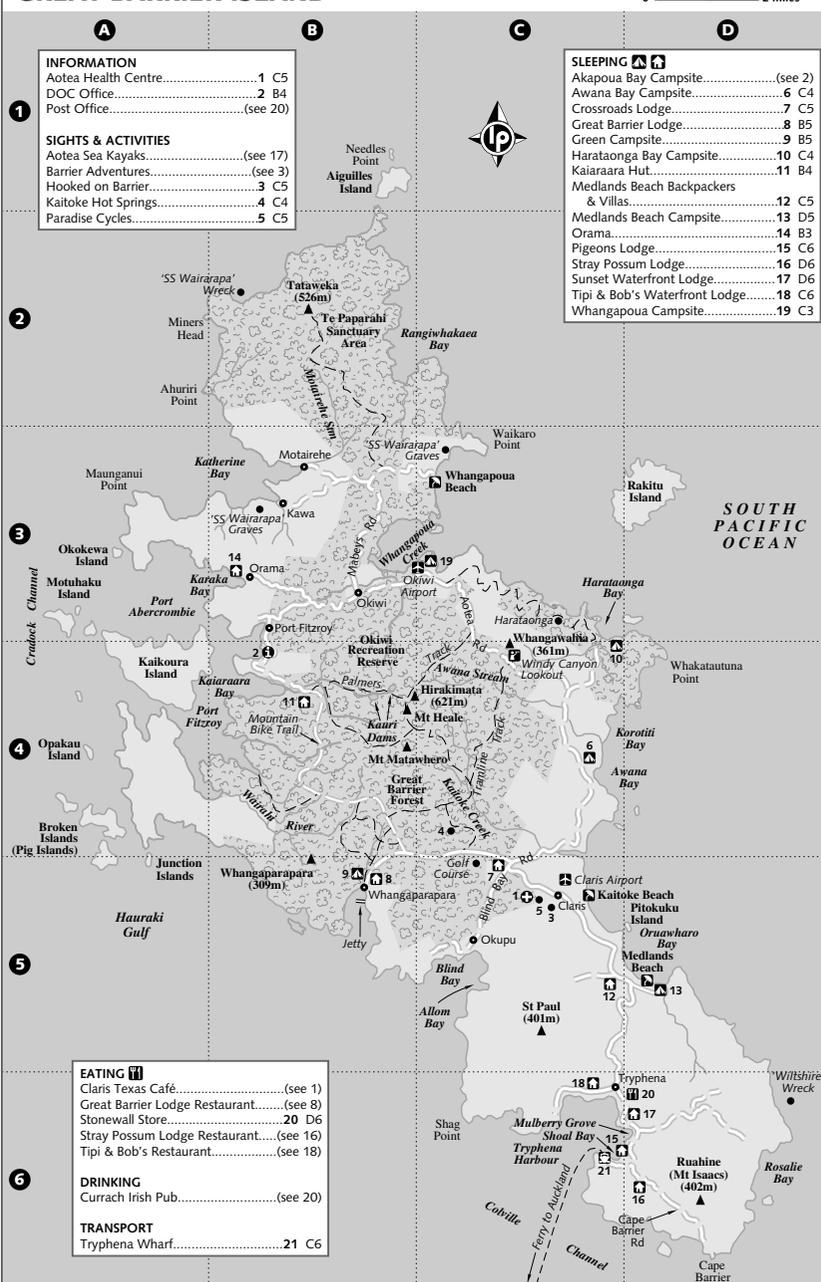
From around mid-December to mid-January is the peak season, so make sure you book transport, accommodation and activities well in advance.

Orientation

Tryphena is the main settlement, 4km from the ferry wharf at Shoal Bay. Strung out along several kilometres of coastal road, it consists of a few dozen houses, a primary school and a handful of shops and accommodation places. From the wharf it's 3km to Mulberry Grove, and then another 1km over the headland to Pa Beach and the Stonewall Store.

The airport is at Claris, a small settlement with a general store, bottle shop, laundrette, vehicle-repair garage, pharmacy, adventure centre and café, 10km north of Tryphena. Whangaparapara is an old timber town and the site of the island's 19th-century whaling activities. Port Fitzroy is the other main harbour on the west coast, a one-hour drive from

GREAT BARRIER ISLAND



Tryphena. Only these four main settlements have petrol and diesel available.

Information

The free *Great Barrier Island* booklet is full of useful and up-to-date information; it's online at www.greatbarrierisland.com.

Aotea Health Centre (☎ 09-429 0356; Hector Sanderson Rd, Claris) Has a full-time doctor, dentist and nurses. A nurse is also stationed at Port Fitzroy.

DOC office (☎ 09-429 0044; www.doc.govt.nz; Port Fitzroy; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

Post Office (Blackwell Dr, Tryphena) Located in the Outpost gift shop.

Activities

SWIMMING & SURFING

Beaches on the west coast are safe, but care needs to be taken on the surf-pounded eastern beaches. **Medlands Beach**, with its wide sweep of white sand, is one of the best beaches on the island and is easily accessible from Tryphena. Remote **Whangapoua** in the northeast requires more effort to get to, while **Kaitoke**, **Awana Bay** and **Harataonga** on the east coast are also worth a visit.

Okiwi Bar has an excellent right-hand break, while Awana has both left- and right-hand breaks. Tryphena's bay, lined with pohutukawa, has sheltered beaches.

OTHER WATER SPORTS

There's pinnacle diving, shipwreck diving, lots of fish and more than 33m visibility at some times of the year.

Hooked on Barrier (☎ 09-429 0740; 89 Hector Sanderson Rd, Claris) sells and hires out diving, snorkelling, fishing, surfing and kayak (both from \$35 per hour) gear. You can dive from a beach or charter a boat.

Aotea Sea Kayaks (☎ 09-429 0664; www.greatbarrierkayaks.co.nz; Mulberry Grove, Tryphena) runs harbour (\$40, two hours), sunset (\$50, two hours), snorkelling (\$80, four hours) and phosphorescent night paddles (\$80). Kayaks (\$40 to \$60 per day) and snorkelling equipment (\$25 per day) can be hired.

Surfcasting Safaris (☎ 09-429 0995; www.islandaccommodation.co.nz; per person \$85-150) offers rock-fishing trips that have all the safety gear and the local knowledge of Big John.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

With rugged scenery and little traffic on the unsealed roads, mountain biking is a popular

activity here. A good ride is from Tryphena to Whangaparapara: cycle about an hour to Medlands Beach, then cycle another hour to the hot springs, from where it's another half-hour to accommodation in Whangaparapara. Spend another day cycling through the forest up to Port Fitzroy, stopping on the way for a hike up to the kauri dams on a good, well-marked 4WD track.

Paradise Cycles (☎ 09-429 0303; 111 Hector-Sanderson Rd, Claris) hires out mountain bikes and organises cycling tours.

Barrier Adventures (☎ 09-429 0699; www.barrieradventures.co.nz; Claris; admission \$3; ☎ sunrise-sunset Nov-Mar) operates 10km of tracks, ranging from grade two (easy) to five (very difficult), between Claris and Blind Bay.

WALKING

Many people come here for the walks, but be aware that trails are not always well signposted, although they are regularly upgraded. Be properly equipped with water and food, and be prepared for bad weather. The best tramping trails are in the Great Barrier Forest north of Whangaparapara, where there has been a great deal of reforestation.

The most spectacular short walk is from Windy Canyon to Hirakimata (Mt Hobson). **Windy Canyon**, which is only a 15-minute walk from the main Port Fitzroy-Harataonga (Aotea) road, has spectacular rock outcrops and affords great views of the island. From Windy Canyon, an excellent trail continues for another 1½ hours through scrubby forest to **Hirakimata** (621m), the highest point on the island, with views across to the Coromandel and Auckland on a fine day. Near the top of the mountain are lush forests and a few mature kauri trees that survived the logging days. From Hirakimata it's two hours through forest to the hut closest to Port Fitzroy and then 45 minutes to Port Fitzroy itself.

Another very popular walk is the **Kaitoke Hot Springs Track**. The natural hot pools in a bush stream can be reached from Whangaparapara Rd (45 minutes).

A more challenging tramp is the **Tramline Track** (five hours), which starts on Aotea Rd and follows old logging tramlines to Whangaparapara Harbour. The track is hilly and in some parts the clay becomes slippery after rain.

Many other trails traverse the forest, taking between 30 minutes and five hours. Pick

up a copy of DOC's fold-out *Great Barrier Island* hiking brochure (\$2 donation), which has a detailed map and short descriptions of 23 hikes. It's available from the DOC office and the various accommodation places.

There is a good trampers' bus service that will drop you at the start of a trail and pick you up at the other end; see *Getting Around*, p144 for details.

Sleeping

There are half a dozen campsites and backpacker hostels, and more than 50 lodges, cottages and B&Bs spread around the island. Some places cater for a range of visitors, from backpackers and campers to luxury-seeking honeymooners, and also run restaurants and bars that are open to nonguests. Prices can be steep in summer, but rates can drop dramatically outside the peak period. Summer prices are quoted here.

BUDGET

DOC campsites (adult/child \$9/4.50) There are campsites at Harataonga Bay, Medlands Beach, Akapoua Bay, Whangapoua, The Green (Whangaparapara) and Awana Bay. All have basic facilities, including water, cold showers (none at The Green) and chemical toilets. You need to bring your own gas cooking stove. Bookings are essential in December and January; contact the DOC office (opposite).

Kaiaraara Hut (per person \$10) This DOC hut in the Great Barrier Forest is a 45-minute walk from Port Fitzroy wharf. The hut sleeps up to 28 in two bunk-rooms, and facilities include cold water, chemical toilets and a kitchen with a wood stove. Bring your own sleeping bag and cooking equipment. It operates on a first-come, first-served basis, but is never full.

Orama (☎ 09-429 0063; www.orama.org.nz; Karaka Bay Rd; sites per adult/child \$10/7, dm/d/tw \$20/60/60, units \$60-150; 🚰) Surrounded by hectares of bush, plenty of diverse accommodation is available at this Christian community just north of Port Fitzroy. There's a small shop, and kayaks, rowing dinghies, fishing and snorkelling gear are available. Environmental projects pursued here include protecting the endangered brown teal and kaka parrot.

Stray Possum Lodge (☎ 09-429 0109; www.straypossum.co.nz; 64 Cape Barrier Rd; sites per person \$12, dm/d/tw/tr/q \$23/70/70/85/100, chalets \$135-195) Nestled in the bush south of Tryphena is this popular place with its own bar and restaurant (see p144).

Good dorms have six or eight beds; the chalets are self-contained and sleep up to six.

Crossroads Lodge (☎ 09-429 0889; www.xroadslodge.com; 1 Blind Bay Rd, Claris; dm/s/tw \$25/40/60; 🚰) This comfy, low-key backpackers is 2km from the airfield and close to the forest walks and hot springs. Mountain bikes can be hired, and golf clubs can be borrowed to play on the nearby nine-hole golf course.

Medlands Beach Backpackers & Villas (☎ 09-429 0320; www.medlandsbeach.com; 9 Mason Rd; dm/d \$25/70, villas \$120-220, q \$215-245) Basic accommodation is provided at the cheaper rates. It's a five-minute walk to a beautiful beach and there's usually some water-sport equipment. The villas sleep up to six.

MIDRANGE

Great Barrier Lodge (☎ 09-429 0488; www.greatbarrierlodge.com; Whangaparapara Harbour; dm \$40, d & tw \$165-185, tr \$190-220, q \$215-245) This large modern place on the water's edge enjoys a glorious outlook over the inlet and is near the tramping tracks. There's a small shop, a restaurant and bar (see p144), and free use of mountain bikes and kayaks.

Pigeons Lodge (☎ 09-429 0437; www.pigeonslodge.co.nz; 179 Shoal Bay Rd; apt/d/tw \$135/165/165) On the beachfront south of Tryphena, this lovely lodge has a 2.5-acre bush setting, friendly management and good breakfasts (free for B&B guests, \$15 for apartment dwellers).

TOP END

Tipi & Bob's Waterfront Lodge (☎ 09-429 0550; www.waterfrontlodge.co.nz; Puriri Bay Rd, Tryphena; units \$185-250) West of Tryphena, these modern units have some wonderful sea views. The complex includes a restaurant and bar (see below), taking care of almost everything.

Sunset Waterfront Lodge (☎ 09-429 0051; www.sunsetlodge.co.nz; Mulberry Grove, Tryphena; apt \$189-234) The airy, attractive units have decks and views, and facilities include a games room and a three-hole pitch-and-putt on the lawn, plus a helipad. A small shop and café is next door.

Eating & Drinking

Tipi & Bob's Restaurant (☎ 09-429 0550; www.waterfrontlodge.co.nz; Puriri Bay Rd, Tryphena; bar menu \$5-25; 🍷 breakfast & dinner) This popular haunt has a very inviting deck overlooking the harbour, with fresh fish, seafood and steaks on the menu. There's a bistro menu in the bar, which has good fish and chips, and a nicer licensed restaurant on the premises.

Claris Texas Café (☎ 09-429 0811; 129 Hector-Sanderson Rd, Claris; mains \$6-20; ☺ breakfast & lunch; ▼) Excellent name and excellent coffee. This café is licensed, has internet access and does pretty good nachos, salads and *paninis*.

Stray Possum Lodge Restaurant (☎ 09-429 0109; 64 Cape Barrier Rd; mains \$12-29; ☺ dinner) Offers pizzas and a varied menu in a very convivial atmosphere (especially in summer) that's fully licensed. Ring ahead as opening hours aren't set in stone.

Great Barrier Lodge Restaurant (☎ 09-429 0488; Whangaparapara Harbour; mains \$18-30; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The menu here is based around lamb, steak and fresh fish, and it's handled very well too. The tranquil setting and beautiful view are added bonuses.

Currach Irish Pub (☎ 09-429 0211; Blackwell Dr, Tryphena; mains \$11-24) This lively and child-friendly pub has a changing menu of seafood, steak and burgers, and is the island's social centre. There's also live music; Thursday night is jam night.

The **Stonewall Store** (☎ 09-429 0451; Shoal Bay Rd, Tryphena) sells groceries, juice, coffee and bait.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Great Barrier Airlines (☎ 0800 900 600; www.greatbarrierairlines.co.nz; one way/return \$109/218, fly/boat deal \$149) flies to the island from Auckland Airport (at least three daily), North Shore Aerodrome (Map p98, south of Orewa, at least two daily), Whangarei and Whitianga (both twice weekly). All flights take about 30 minutes and stop at both Claris and Okiwa. The fly/boat deal is a cheaper return option, with one leg by ferry to/from Auckland.

Mountain Air (☎ 09-256 7026; www.mountainair.co.nz; one way \$95, fly/boat deal adult/child \$150/100) flies at least three times a day from Auckland. Advance bookings are considerably cheaper (adult/child return \$155/115).

BOAT

Sealink (☎ 09-300 5900; www.sealink.co.nz; return adult/child/car/motorcycle \$110/75/330/89) is the main provider, running car ferries four days a week (daily in peak season) from Wynyard Wharf in Auckland to Tryphena's Shoal Bay (4½ hours).

Fullers (☎ 09-367 9111; www.fullers.co.nz; adult/child return \$130/60) runs services from Auckland's Ferry Building to Tryphena's Shoal Bay from mid-December to the end of January,

as well as on the Labour Day and Easter long weekends.

Getting Around

The main road is sealed from Tryphena to Okiwi and even small hire cars can handle the unsealed section to Port Fitzroy. Most other roads are unsealed, narrow and windy.

Great Barrier Travel (☎ 0800 426 832; www.greatbarriertravel.co.nz) runs five buses a day from Stray Possum Lodge to Claris (\$30), via Tryphena and Medlands Beach, with at least one service continuing on to Port Fitzroy via Okiwi (\$40). It also offers an excellent trampers' transport service, which can drop you off at any of the main trail heads and pick you up at the other end. Passes are available that include trampers' transport and scheduled services (one day/weekend/three days \$50/75/99). It also hires out cars (from \$55) and 4WDs (from \$75).

GBI Rent-A-Car (☎ 09-429 0062; www.greatbarrierisland.co.nz; 67 Hector-Sanderson Rd, Claris) hires out a wide range of hardy vehicles, including Fun Tops starting at \$55 and 4WDs from \$75.

Many of the accommodation places will pick you up from the airport or wharf if notified in advance.

WEST OF AUCKLAND

West Auckland epitomises rugged: wild black-sand beaches, bush-shrouded ranges, and mullet-haired and black-T-shirt-wearing 'Westies'. The latter is just one of several stereotypes of the area's denizens. Others include the back-to-nature hippie, the eccentric bohemian artist and the dope-smoking surfer dude, all attracted to a simple life at the edge of the bush.

Add to the mix Croatian immigrants, earning the fertile fields at the base of the Waitakere Ranges the nickname 'Dally Valley' after the Dalmatian coast where many hailed from (see the boxed text, p186). These pioneering families planted grapes and made wine, unwittingly founding one of NZ's major industries.

TITIRANGI

pop 3237

This little village marks the end of Auckland's suburban sprawl and is a good place to spot all of the stereotypes mentioned above over a café latte, fine wine or

cold beer. Once home to NZ's greatest modern painter, Colin McCahon, there remains an artsy feel to the place. Titirangi means 'Fringe of Heaven' – an apt name for the gateway to the Waitakere Ranges, or indeed a hair salon. This is the last stop for petrol and ATMs on your way west.

Sights

Lopdell House Gallery (☎ 09-817 8087; www.lopdell.org.nz; 418 Titirangi Rd; admission free; ☺ 10am-4.30pm) is an excellent modern art gallery housed in the former Hotel Titirangi (1930) at the edge of the village.

It's a mark of the esteem in which Colin McCahon is held that the house he lived and painted in during the 1950s has been opened to the public as a minimuseum, **McCahon House** (www.mccahonhouse.org.nz; 67 Otitori Bay Rd, French Bay; admission Sat & Sun/Wed \$5/free; ☺ 10am-2pm Wed, Sat & Sun). The swish pad next door is home to the artist lucky enough to win the McCahon Arts Residency. Look for the signposts pointing down Park Rd, just before you reach Titirangi Village.

Sleeping & Eating

Fringe of Heaven (☎ 09-817 8682; www.fringeofheaven.com; 4 Otitori Bay Rd; s \$160-170, d & tw \$180-190; (P)) Surrounded by native bush, this Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired house offers glorious views over Manukau Harbour, an outdoor bath, glowworms in the garden and a songbird choir – all within 20 minutes of the city centre. The 'bed' and 'breakfast' parts of the equation are pretty special too.

Hardware Café (☎ 09-817 5059; 404 Titirangi Rd; mains \$4-31; ☺ 6.30am-5pm Mon & Tue, 6.30am-10pm Wed-Sat, 7am-10pm Sun) Great for Westie watching, this popular licensed café serves delicious and reasonably priced cooked breakfasts and lunches along with a tempting array of counter food. More substantial evening meals start from \$22.

Takahe (☎ 09-817 5057; 421 Titirangi Rd; brunch \$10-16, lunch \$14-22, dinner \$22-31; ☺ 5pm-late Tue & Wed, 11am-late Thu & Fri, 9am-late Sat & Sun) A more upmarket alternative, Takahe has a large selection of grills and seafood on offer. Try the mussel laksa.

WAITAKERE RANGES

This 16,000-hectare wilderness was covered in kauri until the mid-19th century, when logging claimed most of the giant trees. A few stands of ancient kauri and other mature

natives survive amid the dense bush of the regenerating rainforest, which is now protected inside the **Waitakere Ranges Regional Park**. Bordered to the west by the wildly beautiful beaches on the Tasman Sea, the park's rugged terrain makes an excellent day trip from Auckland.

Scenic Drive winds its way 28km from Titirangi to Swanson, passing numerous waterfalls and lookouts. The **Arataki Visitors Centre** (☎ 09-817 0077; www.arc.govt.nz; Scenic Dr; ☺ 9am-5pm daily Sep-Apr, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun May-Aug) is 6km west of Titirangi and is a brilliant starting point for exploring the ranges. As well as providing information on the 250km of trails in the area, this impressive, child-friendly centre, with its Maori carvings (some prodigiously well-hung) and spectacular views, is an attraction in its own right. The giant carving that greets visitors at the entrance depicts the ancestors of the Kawerau *iwi*. You can also book here for several basic **campsites** (☎ 09-366 2000; adult/child \$5/3) within the park – toilets are provided but there's nothing much else.

A 1.6km nature trail opposite the centre leads visitors past labelled native species, including mature kauri. Other noted walks, all taking in impressive waterfalls, include the Kitekite Track (1.8km, 45 minutes one way), the Fairy Falls Track (5.7km, three hours loop) and the Auckland City Walk (1.5km, one hour loop).

AWOL Canyoning (☎ 09-834 0501; www.awoladventures.co.nz; half/full day \$125/155) offers plenty of slippery, slidey, wet fun in Piha Canyon. Pick-up from Auckland (if required), lunch and snacks are included in the price. Night trips (\$145) provide plenty of glowworm action. **CanyonZ** (☎ 0800 422 696; www.canyonz.co.nz; trips \$175) runs canyoning trips from Auckland to the Blue Canyon, which has a series of 12 waterfalls ranging from 2m to 25m in height.

There are a couple of miniature train rides through the ranges; both must be booked in advance. The **Rain Forest Express** (☎ 09-302 8028; www.watercare.co.nz; 2½hr trips adult/child \$25/12) departs from Jacobsons' Depot (off Scenic Dr) at 2pm on Sunday and follows an old logging track through several tunnels deep into the bush. Check the website schedule for 3½-hour brunch or twilight trips (adult/child \$28/14), the latter offering glimpses of glowworms and cave weta. On the other side of the park the **Waitakere Tramline Society** (☎ 09-818 4946; www.waitakeretramline.org.nz; adult/child \$10/5)

runs four scenic trips every Sunday that pass through a glowworm tunnel en route to the Waitakere Falls and Dam. Trips start from the end of Christian Rd, which runs south of Swanson station.

In a city not short on great views, **Elevation** (☎ 09-814 1919; 473 Scenic Dr; mains \$9-27; 🍷 noon-3pm Wed & Thu, noon-late Fri, 10am-late Sat & Sun) has the best of them. Perched on a slope 350m above Auckland, this restaurant even looks down on the Sky Tower. Apart from being the only half-decent eatery west of Titirangi, it has excellent pizzas.

KAREKARE

Few stretches of sand have more personality than Karekare. Those prone to metaphysical musings inevitably settle on descriptions such as 'spiritual' and 'brooding'. Perhaps history has left its imprint: in 1825 it was the site of a ruthless massacre of the local Kawerau *iwi* by Ngapuhi invaders. Wild and gorgeously undeveloped, this famous beach has been the setting for onscreen moments both high- and lowbrow, from Oscar-winner *The Piano* to *Xena, Warrior Princess*.

From the car park the quickest route to the black-sand beach involves wading through an ankle-deep stream. Karekare rates as one of the most dangerous beaches in the country, with strong surf and ever-present rips, so don't even think about swimming unless the beach is being patrolled by lifeguards (usually only in summer). Pearl Jam singer Eddie Vedder nearly drowned here while visiting Neil Finn's Karekare pad.

Follow the road over the bridge and uphill along Lone Kauri Rd for 100m. A short track begins on the left, leading to the impressive **Karekare Falls**. This is a great leafy picnic spot and the start of several walking tracks.

Perched high above Karekare with sublime views over the beach, the Art Deco-inspired **Equinox Lodge** (☎ 09-812 8078; www.equinoxlodge.com; 130 Lone Kauri Rd; r self-catering/B&B \$200/275; 🍷 🍷) offers a tranquillity only broken by birdsong and distant crashing surf. The Deco theme carries through to the comfortable rooms with French doors opening onto a 15m lap pool and that extraordinary view. Romantics will love the discreetly positioned outdoor spa pool.

Karekare has no shops of any description and no public transport. To get here take Scenic Dr and Piha Rd until you reach the well-signposted turn-off to Karekare Rd.

PIHA

If you notice an Auckland surfer dude with a faraway look, chances are they're daydreaming about Piha...or just stoned. This beautifully rugged, iron-sand beach has long been a favourite for refugees from the city's stresses – whether for day trips, weekend teenage parties or holidays.

Although Piha is popular, it's also incredibly dangerous, with wild surf and strong undercurrents; so much so that it's spawned its own popular reality TV show, *Piha Rescue*. If you don't want to inadvertently star in it, always swim between the flags, where lifeguards can provide help if you get into trouble.

Piha may be bigger and more populated than Karekare, but there's still no supermarket, liquor shop, bank or petrol station, although there is a small general store that doubles as a café, takeaway shop and post office.

There's no public transport, but **NZ Surf Tours** (☎ 09-828 0426; www.newzealandsurftours.com) provides daily shuttles (\$25 one way).

Sights & Activities

The view of the coast as you drive down Piha Rd is spectacular. Perched on its haunches near the centre of the beach is **Lion Rock** (101m), whose 'mane' glows golden in the evening light. It's actually the eroded core of an ancient volcano and a Maori *pa* site. A path at the south end of the beach takes you to some great lookouts. At low tide you can walk south along the beach and watch the surf shooting through a ravine in another large rock known as the **Camel**. A little further along, the waves crash through the **Gap** and form a safe swimming hole. A small colony of blue penguins nests at the beach's north end.

Surfboards (three hours/day \$25/35), wet suits (\$8/15) and body boards (\$15/25) can be hired from Piha Surf Shop & Crafts (opposite). Private surfing lessons can also be arranged.

Sleeping & Eating

Piha Domain Camp (☎ 09-812 8815; pihacamp@xtra.co.nz; 21 Seaview Rd; sites per adult/child \$10/6, cabins s/d/tr \$50/60/85; 🍷) Smack-bang on the beach, this well-kept campsite doesn't have a lot of shelter from the elements but it's cheap as chips. The cabins are tiny but clean.

Piha Surf Accommodation (☎ 09-812 8723; www.pihasurf.co.nz; 122 Seaview Rd; caravans per person \$25-40, cabins s/d \$50/70; 🍷) Each basic but charmingly

tatty caravan has its own linen, TV, fridge, cooker and long-drop toilet, and all caravans share a very simple shower. The private cabins are a more comfortable option.

Piha Beachstay (☎ 09-812 8381; www.pihabeachstay.co.nz; 38 Glenesk Rd; dm/s/tw \$30/70/120, d \$80-140; 🍷 🍷) Attractive and ecofriendly, just like the surf lifesaver that runs it, this wood-and-glass lodge has extremely smart facilities. It's a kilometre from the beach but there's a little stream at the bottom of the property and bushwalks nearby. In winter an open fire warms the wonderful large communal lounge.

Piha Lodge (☎ 09-812 8595; www.pihalodge.co.nz; 117 Piha Rd; apt \$80-200; 🍷 🍷) This home-style lodge has self-contained units with a deck and splendid views. DVD players, Sky TV, a hot spa and complimentary breakfast are supplied by chatty Shirley. If you fancy getting married, Shirley can do that too – she's a celebrant.

Black Sands Lodge (☎ 021 969 924; www.piha.beach.co.nz; Beach Valley Rd; cabin \$120, apt \$260-310; 🍷) With said sands only steps away, these two modern apartments with private decks match their prime location with attractive touches such as stereos, DVD players, good firm beds with natty bed linen and polished floorboards. The cabin is kitted out in a 1950s Kiwiana bach style and shares a bathroom with the main house. Bikes and wi-fi are free for guests, and in-room massage and lavish catered dinners can be arranged on request. It's gay-friendly too.

Piha Store (☎ 09-812 8844; Seaview Rd; 🍷 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5.30pm Sat & Sun) has groceries, ice cream, excellent home baking and decent coffee.

Shopping

West Coast Gallery (☎ 09-812 8029; www.westcoastgallery.co.nz; Seaview Rd; 🍷 10am-5pm Thu & Fri, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun) The work of more than 180 local artists is sold from this small not-for-profit gallery next to the Piha fire station.

Piha Surf Shop & Crafts (☎ 09-812 8723; www.pihasurf.co.nz; 122 Seaview Rd; 🍷 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5.30pm Sat & Sun) A family-run venture, with well-known surfboard designer Mike Jolly selling his wares downstairs and wife Pam selling crafts and coffee upstairs.

TE HENGA (BETHELLS BEACH)

Bethells Beach is reached by taking Te Henga Rd at the northern end of Scenic Dr. It's another raw, black-sand beach with surf,

windswept dunes and bush walks, such as the popular one to Lake Wainamu and on to the Cascades.

Bethells Beach Cottages (☎ 09-810 9581; www.bethellsbeach.com; 267 Bethells Rd; cottages \$250-410) has two charming, self-contained cottages and an apartment, all in a bush setting with sea and sunset views. Lovely meals can be arranged and generate as much admiration as the accommodation.

KUMEU & AROUND

West Auckland's main wine-producing area still has some vineyards that are owned by the original Croatian families who kick-started NZ's wine industry. The free *Winemakers of Auckland* brochure gives full details and is available from information centres. Unlike on Waiheke Island, most cellars here offer free tastings. It's only about 30km from central Auckland; take the Northwestern Motorway (SH16) and follow the signs. For internet access, try **Kumeu Library** (298 Main Rd).

Still owned by the Brajkovich family, **Kumeu River** (☎ 09-412 8415; 550 SH16, Kumeu; 🍷 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat) produces wonderful Chardonnay and Pinot Gris. **Soljans Estate** (☎ 09-412 2680; 366 SH16, Kumeu; 🍷 9am-5.30pm) is a Croat-Kiwi family vineyard, with a decent café attached to the attractive cellar-door shop. At **Coopers Creek** (☎ 09-412 8560; 601 SH16, Huapai; 🍷 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-5.30pm Sat & Sun) you can buy a bottle and then spread out a picnic in the attractive gardens.

The former country house (1868) of the Kerr-Taylor family (who also owned Alberton in Auckland) makes a grand setting for the **Hunting Lodge restaurant** (☎ 09-411 8248; Waikoukou Valley Rd, Waimauku; mains \$30-34; 🍷 lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) on the Matua Valley Wines estate (tastings 10am to 5pm). The food lives up to the promise – innovative country fare using quality local ingredients.

Architecturally impressive, **Bees Online** (☎ 09-411 7953; 791 SH16, Waimauku; mains \$19-25; 🍷 9am-5pm) allows you to watch the busy bees at work from safely behind glass, and then taste the results in the store. The wonderful café showcases not only honey but also native bush ingredients. Mum and Dad might even get a coffee in peace while the kids play spot-the-queen in the hive.

KIWIS OR GANNETS?

After honing their flying skills, young gannets get the ultimate chance to test them – a 2000km journey to Australia. They usually hang out there for several years before returning home, never to attempt the journey again. Once back in the homeland they spend a few years waiting for a piece of waterfront property to become available in the colony, before settling down with a regular partner to nest – returning to the same patch of dirt every year.

Perhaps the gannet's a more fitting symbol for many young Aucklanders than the kiwi. The lure of the bright lights across the ditch attracts many, until they too tire of them. Then it's home again, hopefully with a nest egg with which to stake a claim in Auckland's overheated property market.

MURIWAI BEACH

Yet another rugged black-sand surf beach, stretching 50km, Muriwai Beach's main claim to fame is the **Takapu Refuge gannet colony**, spread over the southern headland and outlying rock stacks. Viewing platforms get you close enough to watch (and smell) these fascinating seabirds. Every August hundreds of adult birds return to this spot to hook up with their regular partners and get busy – expect lots of outrageously cute neck-rubbing, bill-touching and general snuggling. The net result is a single chick per season; December and January are the best times to see the little fellas testing their wings before embarking on an impressive odyssey (see the boxed text, above).

Nearby, a couple of short tracks will take you through beautiful native bush to a lookout that offers views along the length of the beach. Wild surf and treacherous rips mean that swimming is safe only when the beach is patrolled (swim between the flags). Apart from surfing, Muriwai Beach is a popular spot for hang gliding, paraputing, kiteboarding and horse riding. There are also tennis courts, a golf course and a café that doubles as a takeaway chippie.

Muriwai Beach Motor Camp (☎ 09-411 9262; www.muriwaimotorcamp.co.nz; Muriwai Beach; sites per adult/child \$12/6) is a tidy, sheltered campsite under the shade of Norfolk pines right by the beach, with a communal kitchen and coin-operated laundry.

HELENSVILLE

pop 2200

A smattering of historical buildings, antique shops and cafés makes villagelike Helensville a good whistle-stop for those taking SH16 north. The **visitor information centre** (☎ 09-420 8060; www.helensville.co.nz; 27 Commercial Rd; ☎ 10am-4.30pm) has details on the area. **Helensville Library** (Commercial Rd) has internet access.

Aquatic Park Parakai Springs (☎ 09-420 8998; 150 Parkhurst Rd; adult/child \$15/8; ☎ 10am-10pm), 2km northwest of Helensville, has large hot-spring swimming pools, private spas (\$6 per hour) and a couple of hydrosides. Aucklanders bring their bored children here on wet wintry days as a cheaper, shabbier alternative to Waiwera (p150). If you stay at the **camping ground** (sites per adult/child \$12/8), next door, you can enter the hot pools for \$5.

Woodhill Mountain Bike Park (☎ 09-479 9194; www.bikepark.co.nz; adult/child \$6/4, bike hire per hr \$15-20; ☎ 7am-6pm Thu-Tue, 7am-10pm Wed) has many challenging tracks around Woodhill Forest, 14km south of Helensville. It's only staffed on weekends and Wednesday evenings. Also heading through the forest is **4 Track Adventures** (☎ 09-420 8104; www.4trackadventures.co.nz; 1/2/3hr tours \$135/195/235), this time on quad bikes. A beach ride is included on the two- and three-hour tours. Pick-up from Auckland is \$40 per person.

Extreme 4WD Adventures (☎ 0800 493 238; www.extreme4wd.co.nz; 606 Peak Rd; 1-2 people \$150) offers the chance to charge around a special two-hour adventure trail in a 4WD.

Malolo House B&B (☎ 09-420 7262; www.helensville.co.nz/malolo.htm; 110 Commercial Rd; dm \$30-35, d \$65-120) is a wonderful kauri villa that served for a time as the town's hospital. Beautifully refurbished, it offers a range of restful accommodation, including two luxury en-suite doubles, cheaper ones with shared bathrooms and a small dorm. There's also a spa and a guest lounge with views.

Kaipara House B&B (☎ 09-420 7462; www.kaiparahouse.co.nz; cnr SH16 & Parkhurst Rd; s/d \$65/120; ☎) offers period-feature-heavy rooms in the pink-hued villa; the self-contained garden units are less flouncy. There's a spa pool, and breakfast is included for the inside rooms.

NORTH OF AUCKLAND

The Auckland region sprawls 90km north of the CBD to just past the point where SH16 and SH1 converge at Wellsford. Beaches, regional parks, quaint villages, kayaking and snorkelling are the main drawcards. The multilane Northern Motorway currently takes you as far as Orewa on the Hibiscus Coast. During the lifetime of this book an extension to Puhoi should be completed, hopefully easing the Christmas period gridlock. Until then, SH16 through Kumeu and Helensville is a sensible alternative during peak season; ask a local.

LONG BAY REGIONAL PARK

The northernmost of Auckland's East Coast Bays, Long Bay is a popular family picnic and swimming spot, attracting over a million visitors a year. A three-hour-return coastal walk heads north from the sandy beach to the Okura River, taking in secluded Grannys Bay and Pohutukawa Bay (which attracts nude bathers).

Regular buses head to Long Bay (adult/child \$6.50/3.80, one hour) from Albert St in the city. The \$11 day pass is the best option; enquire through **Maxx** (☎ 09-366 6400; www.maxx.co.nz). If you're driving, leave the Northern Motorway at the Oteha Valley Rd exit, heading towards Browns Bay, and follow the signs.

SHAKESPEAR REGIONAL PARK

Shooting out eastward just before Orewa, the Whangaparaoa Peninsula is a heavily developed spit of land with a sizable South African expat community. At its tip is the gorgeous 376-hectare **Shakespeare Regional Park**. Sheep, cows, peacocks and pukeko ramble over the grassy headland, while Pohutukawalined **Te Haruhi Bay** provides great views of the gulf islands and the city. Walking tracks take between 40 minutes and two hours, exploring native forest, WWII gun embankments, Maori sites and lookouts. If you can't bear to leave, there's an idyllic beachfront **campsite** (☎ 09-366 2000; www.arc.govt.nz; adult/child \$10/5) with flush toilets and cold showers.

It's possible to get here via a torturous bus trip (about two hours; routes 896, 898 and 899) from Auckland's Britomart station; enquire via **Maxx** (☎ 09-366 6400; www.maxx.co.nz). The one-way fare is \$9.70 so it's best to buy

an \$11 day pass. An alternative is to take the **360 Discovery** (☎ 09-424 5510; www.360discovery.co.nz) ferry service to Gulf Harbour (adult/child \$13.40/8, three daily), a Noddy-town development of matching townhouses, a marina, country club and golf course. Enquire at the ferry office about picking up a bus or taxi from here. Alternatively, walk or cycle the remaining 3km to the park. The ferry is a good option for cyclists wanting to skip the boring road trip out of Auckland; carry-on bikes are free.

OREWA

pop 4900

Locals have fears that Orewa is turning into NZ's equivalent of Queensland's Gold Coast, but until they start exporting retirees and replacing them with bikini-clad parking wardens that's unlikely to happen. It is, however, very built-up and high-rise apartment towers have begun to sprout.

Information

Hibiscus Coast i-SITE (☎ 09-426 0076; 214a Hibiscus Coast Hwy; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun)

Information and internet access.

Post Office (Hillary Sq)

Sights & Activities

The 3km-long sheltered and sandy beach is patrolled by lifeguards in the peak season.

The **Alice Eaves Scenic Reserve** (Old North Rd), to the north of the town, is 10 hectares of native bush with labelled trees, a *pa* site, a lookout and easy short walks. The 8km **Millennium Walkway** starts from South Bridge, looping through this and other parks before returning along the beach; follow the blue route markers.

Snowplanet (☎ 09-427 0044; www.snowplanet.co.nz; 91 Small Rd, Silverdale; day pass adult/child from \$49/44; ☎ noon-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun) is a winter wonderland that allows every day to be a snowy one, with indoor skiing, tobogganing and snowboarding. It's just off SH1, 8km south of Orewa.

Sleeping**BUDGET**

Orewa Beach Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0800 673 921; obhpark@rodney.govt.nz; 265 Hibiscus Coast Hwy; sites per person \$15-18, cabins \$50-70, flats \$85; ☎) Taking up a large chunk of the beach's south end, this well-kept park has excellent facilities. The prefab

'tourist flats' are slick and new, and even have art on the walls and bedside lamps. Road noise can be a problem.

Marco Polo Backpackers Lodge (☎ 09-426 8455; www.marcopolo.co.nz; 2d Hammond Ave, Hatfields Beach; sites per person \$19, dm \$26-28, s/d/tw \$48/66/66) The lush garden lends a tropical vibe to this hillside complex, a few kilometres north of Orewa. The rooms are smart and well kept, and there's no TV to spoil the peace.

Pillows Travellers Lodge (☎ 09-426 6338; www.pillows.co.nz; 412 Hibiscus Coast Hwy; dm \$20, r \$49-65; (P)) Eleven rooms open onto a pleasant garden at this well-located backpackers. There are separate male and female dorms, a spa pool, free tea and coffee, a piano and TVs in the private rooms.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Orewa Motor Lodge (☎ 09-426 4027; www.orewamotorlodge.co.nz; 290 Hibiscus Coast Hwy; units \$130-210; (P)) One of a string of motels that line Orewa's main road, this complex has scrupulously clean wooden units that are prettied up with hanging flower baskets. There's also a spa pool.

Waves (☎ 09-427 0888; www.waves.co.nz; cnr Hibiscus Coast Hwy & Kohu St; units \$176-293; (P)) Like a motel only much flashier, this complex offers spacious, self-contained, modern units with double glazing, wall-mounted CD players and smart furnishings. The downstairs units have gardens and most have spa baths. Best of all, it's only a few metres from the beach.

Eating

Plantation (☎ 09-426 5083; 226 Hibiscus Coast Hwy; meals \$4-20; ☎ 7am-8pm) Any Auckland kid who's ever headed north has pestered their parents to stop here for an ice cream. It also has pies, takeaways, cooked meals and a nice selection of counter food.

Arts Café (☎ 09-426 0873; Estuary Arts Centre, Hibiscus Coast Hwy; snacks \$5-8; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Tue-Sun) Tucked into a corner of an interesting gallery at the south end of the beach, this little café has a counter crammed with delicious quiches, fillos, pies and cakes.

Asahi (☎ 09-426 0065; 6 Bakehouse Lane; lunch \$10-16, dinner \$14-20; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon, 9am-9pm Tue-Sat) Asahi is a handy little option for a Japanese fix. The *bento* boxes are recommended.

There's a big branch of the **New World** (11 Moana Ave; ☎ 7am-10pm) supermarket chain.

Getting There & Away

Direct buses run between Orewa and Albert St in the city (adult/child \$9.70/5.80, one hour), as well as Shakespear Regional Park (adult/child \$3.20/1.80, 40 minutes) and Waiwera (adult/child \$1.60/1, 10 minutes). **Maxx** (☎ 09-366 6400; www.maxx.co.nz) handles all bus enquiries.

WAIWERA

This pleasant river-mouth village has a great beach, but it's the *wai wera* (hot waters) that people come here for. Warm mineral water bubbles up from 1500m below the surface to fill the 19 pools of the **Waiwera Infinity Thermal Spa Resort** (☎ 09-427 8800; www.waiwera.co.nz; 21 Main Rd; adult/child \$22/11; ☎ 9am-10pm Sun-Thu, 9am-10.30pm Fri & Sat). There's a movie pool, 10 big slides, barbecues, private tubs (\$30) and a health spa offering a whole lotta pampering. If you can't face driving afterwards, luxuriously appointed modern houses have been built nearby (doubles \$215 to \$245); enquire about indulgence packages.

For those with simpler needs, the **Holiday Park** (☎ 09-426 5270; www.waiweraholidaypark.co.nz; 37 Waiwera Pl; sites per adult/child \$16/9, cabins \$60; (P) (Q)) has a great possie, right by the water, and friendly, efficient management.

Squeezed between the Waiwera and Puhoi Rivers, the exquisite 134-hectare **Wenderholm Regional Park** has a diverse ecology, abundant bird life, beaches and walks (one to two hours). **Couldrey House** (☎ 09-528 3713; adult/child \$2/50c; ☎ 1-4pm Sat & Sun), the original homestead (1860s), is now a museum. A **campsite** (☎ 09-366 2000; adult/child \$10/5) provides tap water and long-drop toilets only.

Bus 895 from Auckland's Albert St heads to Waiwera (adult/child \$9.70/5.80, one hour) via Orewa; enquire through **Maxx** (☎ 09-366 6400; www.maxx.co.nz).

PUHOI

pop 450

Forget dingy cafés and earnest poets – this quaint village is a slice of the real Bohemia. In 1863 around 200 immigrants from the present-day Czech Republic settled in what was then dense bush. The **Bohemian Museum** (☎ 09-422 0816; Puhoi Rd; admission by \$2 donation; ☎ 1-4pm Sat & Sun) tells their story of hardship and perseverance. Next door is the village's pretty **Catholic Church** (1881), with an interesting tabernacle painting, stained glass and statues.

Puhoi River Canoe Hire (☎ 09-422 0891; www.puhoirivercanoes.co.nz; 84 Puhoi Rd) hires kayaks and Canadian canoes, either by the hour (single/double kayak \$20/40) or for an excellent 8km downstream journey from the village to Wenderholm Regional Park (single/double kayak \$40/80, including return transport). Bookings are essential.

In the 1879 **Puhoi Hotel** (☎ 09-422 0812; cnr Saleyards & Puhoi Rds; ☎ 10am-10pm) there's character and then some, with bar walls completely covered in old photos, animal heads and vintage household goods – an amazing sight.

Puhoi Cottage Tea Rooms (☎ 09-422 0604; 50 Ahuroa Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Thu-Tue), 500m beyond the village, is well known for its Devonshire teas (\$8.50). Just 3km further on is the **Art of Cheese Café** (☎ 09-422 0670; 275 Ahuroa Rd; platters \$17-20; ☎ 9am-5pm), where the people understand that any balanced diet consists of about 90% cheese. Watch cheese being made, buy a big hunk of yellow happiness or dine on very good platters in the licensed café. There's also a kids' menu and playground.

A little way out of the village but well signposted, **Kauri Glen** (☎ 09-422 0598; www.kauriglen.co.nz; 35 Fiddlers Hill Rd; dt/tr/q \$129/144/159; (P)) offers self-contained, middle-of-nowhere accommodation that's clean and comfortable. There's a hot tub under the stars and a glowworm grotto nearby.

Puhoi is a kilometre west of SH1, 6km past Waiwera. There are no buses but there is a semiregular drinkers' **shuttle** (☎ 027 274 8855; trips \$10) between Orewa and the pub.

MAHURANGI & SCANDRETT REGIONAL PARKS

Straddling the head of Mahurangi Harbour, this boaters' paradise has three distinct 'finers': Mahurangi West, accessed from a turn-off 3km north of Puhoi; Scott Point on the eastern side, with road access 16km southeast of Warkworth; and isolated Mahurangi East, which can only be reached by boat. The park incorporates areas of coastal forest, *pa* sites and a historic homestead and cemetery. Its sheltered beaches offer prime sandy spots for a dip or picnic and there are loop walks ranging from 1½ to 2½ hours. **Accommodation** (☎ 09-366 2000; www.arc.govt.nz; sites per person \$5-10, baches \$200-240) is available in four basic campsites and four baches sleeping six to eight.

On the way to Mahurangi West you'll pass **Zealandia Sculpture Garden** (☎ 09-422 0099;

www.zealandiasculpturegarden.co.nz; 138 Mahurangi West Rd; admission \$10; ☎ 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Dec & Feb-Mar, 10am-4pm daily Jan), where the work of Terry Stringer is showcased within impressive architecture and grounds. There are guided tours at 11am and 2pm.

On the ocean side of the Mahurangi peninsula, **Scandrett Regional Park** has a sandy beach, walking tracks, patches of regenerating forest, another historic homestead, more *pa* sites and great views towards Kawau Island.

WARKWORTH

pop 2800

River-hugging Warkworth makes for a pleasant pit stop, its dinky main street retaining a village atmosphere. Grab a free *Heritage Trail* brochure from the **Warkworth i-SITE** (☎ 09-425 9081; www.warkworthnz.com; 1 Baxter St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-3pm Sat, 8.30am-noon Sun) if you've got some time to kill.

Just south of town, the 8.5-hectare **Parry Kauri Park** has short walks and a couple of giant kauri trees, including the 800-year-old McKinney kauri (girth 7.6m). Also at the park, the small **Warkworth & District Museum** (☎ 09-425 7093; www.wmusem.orcon.net.nz; Tudor Collins Dr; adult/child \$6/1; ☎ 9am-3pm) features pioneer-era exhibits.

About 5km south of Warkworth, the **Honey Centre** (☎ 09-425 8003; www.honeycentre.co.nz; SH1; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) has a café, free honey tasting and glass-fronted hives. The shop sells all sorts of bee-related products, from candles to mead.

Nearby, **Ransom Wines** (☎ 09-425 8862; www.ransomwines.co.nz; Valerie Close; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) produces great food wines and showcases them with matching tapas (\$14 for five) and tasting platters (\$18).

Sheepworld (☎ 09-425 7444; www.sheepworldfarm.co.nz; SH1; adult/child \$9/5, incl sheep & dog show \$18/8; ☎ 9am-5pm), 4km north of Warkworth, offers farm experiences for city slickers (kids' pony rides, lamb feeding) and the ubiquitous sheep and dog show, including a shearing demonstration (showtimes 11am and 2pm). If you're considering a woolly souvenir in the gift shop, check the label to make sure it's actually made in NZ. The **Black Sheep Café** (mains \$7-16) serves delicious home baking and a mean coffee. In late September Sheepworld hosts the eccentric two-week **Warkworth Scarecrow Festival**, raising money for charity.

Two kilometres further north, a walkway leads from SH1 through the regenerating **Dome**

Forest to the Dome summit (336m). On a fine day you can see the Sky Tower from a lookout near the top. The summit walk takes about 1½ hours return, or you can continue for a gruelling five-hour one-way tramp through the **Totoro Peak Scenic Reserve**, exiting on Govan Wilson Rd.

Bridge House Lodge & Shark Bar (☎ 09-425 8351; www.bridgehouse.co.nz; 16 Elizabeth St; tw \$75, d \$85-100, tr \$100-125) has a riverside location and a mixed bag of rooms – some newer and nicer than others but all clean enough. The refurbished bar (open 11am to 1am) is downright swanky, dishing up fancy pub grub including chorizo burgers and pizzas (mains \$14 to \$28).

Getting There & Away

InterCity (☎ 09-623 1503; www.intercity.co.nz) and associated daily buses stop here en route between Auckland (\$25, one hour) and Whangarei (\$29, 1½ hours), via Orewa (\$17, 25 minutes) and Waipu (\$22, 1½ hours). **Naked Bus** (www.nakedbus.com) runs the same route, with limited advance fares starting from \$1.

MATAKANA & AROUND

Matakana suffers from reverse alcoholism – the more wine gets poured into it, the more genteel it becomes. A few years ago it was a nondescript rural village with a handful of heritage buildings and an old-fashioned country pub. Now the locals watch bemused as Auckland's chattering classes idle away the hours in stylish wine bars and cafés. The most striking symbol of the transition is the fantastical **Matakana Cinemas** (☎ 09-422 9833; www.makanacinemas.co.nz; 2 Matakana Valley Rd; adult/child \$10/8; ☎ 10am-8.30pm) complex, its domed roof reminiscent of an Ottoman bathhouse. The humble **Farmers Market** (☎ 8am-1pm Sat) is held in its shadow – or should that be Farmers Upmarket?

The reason for this epicurean ecstasy is the success of the area's boutique wineries. They're developing a name for Pinot Gris, Merlot, Syrah and a host of obscure varietals. Local vineyards are detailed in the free *Matakana Coast Wine Country* brochure, available from the **Matakana Information Centre** (☎ 09-422 7433; www.makanacoast.com; ☎ 10am-1pm Tue-Sun) in the foyer of the cinema. In the same building, the **Vintry** (☎ 09-423 0251; tastings from \$8.50; ☎ 10am-10pm) is a wine bar that serves as a one-stop cellar door for all the producers.

Hyperion Wines (☎ 09-422 9375; www.hyperion-wines.co.nz; 188 Tongue Farm Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) were Matakana's trailblazers, established in 1994. **Omaha Bay Vineyard** (☎ 09-423 0022; www.omahabay.co.nz; 189 Takatu Rd; tastings \$5, refundable on purchase; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm Wed-Sun) is a newcomer, committed to sustainable practices. **Heron's Flight** (☎ 09-422 7915; www.heronflight.co.nz; 49 Sharp Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm) specialises in Italian varietals and has a large restaurant, as does **Ascension Vineyard** (☎ 09-422 9601; www.ascensionvineyard.co.nz; 480 Matakana Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm).

Brick Bay Wines is the home of the **Brick Bay Sculpture Trail** (☎ 09-425 4690; www.brickbaysculpture.co.nz; Arabella Lane; adult/child \$10/8; ☎ 10am-5pm), an hour-long artistic ramble through the wonderfully sculpted grounds. Tastings and snacks are available at the chic café.

Morris & James Tileworks (☎ 09-422 7116; www.morrisandjames.co.nz; 48 Tongue Farm Rd; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) has a lovely courtyard restaurant and colourful ceramics for sale. There are free weekend tours at 11.30am.

The nearest swimming beach is **Omaha**, 7km east, with a long stretch of white sand, good surf and holiday homes. Shortly after the Omaha turn-off, the partly unsealed Takatu Rd leads to the 588-hectare **Tawharanui Regional Park** at the end of the peninsula. This special place is an open sanctuary for native birds, protected by a pest-proof fence, while the northern coast is a marine park (bring a snorkel). There are plenty of walking tracks (1½ to four hours) but the main attraction is Anchor Bay, one of the region's finest white-sand beaches. **Camping** (☎ 09-366 2000; www.arc.govt.nz; sites per adult/child \$10/5) is allowed at a basic site near the beach.

Sleeping

Sandspit Holiday Park (☎ 09-425 8610; sandspit@extra.co.nz; 1334 Sandspit Rd, Sandspit; sites per adult/child \$15/8, cabins \$50-120; ☎) A campsite masquerading as a pioneer village, this wonderful place incorporates historic buildings and faux shopfronts into its facilities. The self-contained waterside cottages are excellent. It's right by the water at Sandspit, 8km from Matakana village.

Matakana House Motel (☎ 09-422 7497; www.makanahouse.co.nz; 975 Matakana Rd; units \$100-160; ☎) Right in the middle of the village but far enough back from the pub to avoid the noise, this motel is more like a set of terraced townhouses. The units range from studios to two bedrooms, and aside

from some ugly patterned duvets they're a smart proposition.

Eating & Drinking

Brookview Teahouse (☎ 09-423 0390; 1335 Leigh Rd; Devonshire tea \$10; ☎ 9am-4pm Wed-Mon) Devoted to the pursuit of the perfect cuppa, this delightful bungalow surrounded by boxed gardens serves traditional morning and afternoon teas (scones, lamingtons and club sandwiches), and light lunches.

Matakana Village Brasserie (☎ 09-423 0383; mains \$25-32; ☎ lunch Sun, dinner daily) Snagging the stream frontage of the cinema complex (opposite), this flash brasserie serves hearty country food with fancy twists. The large portions are accompanied by plenty of veggies, but vegetarians will find slim pickings.

Matakana House (☎ 09-422 9770; 11 Matakana Valley Rd; ☎ 3pm-close Mon-Fri, noon-late Sat & Sun) A real local pub, this 1903 wooden hotel has taxidermied animals everywhere, a beer garden out front and occasional live music and DJs. It's an affectation-free zone.

Getting There & Away

Matakana village is a 10km drive northeast of Warkworth along Matakana Rd; there's no public transport. Ferries for Kawau Island (see p140) leave from Sandspit, 8km east of Warkworth along Sandspit Rd.

LEIGH

pop 450

Appealing little Leigh (www.leighbythesea.co.nz) has a picturesque harbour dotted with fishing boats, and a decent swimming beach at Matheson Bay. Its two main drawcards are its proximity to Goat Island (right) and the legendary Leigh Sawmill live-music venue.

Goat Island Dive (☎ 0800 348 369, 09-422 6925; www.goatlanddive.co.nz; 142a Pakiri Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm) has a shop in Leigh and a boat that can take you diving anywhere in the Hauraki Gulf, including wreck dives, at any time of year. Snorkel, fin and mask hire is \$15. Gear for a two-tank dive costs \$95, dive trips are \$70 to \$125, and a shore dive with instruction is \$150. PADI courses (\$500), including Advanced and Rescue, are offered.

Leigh Sawmill Café, Micro Brewery & Accommodation (☎ 09-422 6019; www.sawmillcafe.co.nz; 142 Pakiri Rd; brunch \$6-20, dinner \$23-29; ☎ 10am-late daily summer, 10am-1am Fri-Sun rest of year) is a spunky little venue that's a regular stop on the summer

rock circuit, sometimes attracting surprisingly big names. The pizzas are thin and crunchy like they should be, and best enjoyed in the garden on a lazy summer's evening. If you imbibe too much at the onsite microbrewery, there's excellent accommodation inside an old sawmill shed, including backpacker rooms (\$25) and massive modern doubles with en suites (\$125).

Leigh Rd heads northeast from Matakana village; there's no public transport.

GOAT ISLAND MARINE RESERVE

Quick, grab the highlighter for this one. Only 3km from Leigh, this 547-hectare area was established in 1978 as the country's first marine reserve. In a scant 30 years the sea has reverted to a giant aquarium, giving an impression of what it was like before humans arrived. You only need step knee-deep into the water to see snapper (the big fish with blue dots and fins), blue maomao and stripy parore swimming around. You can snorkel or scuba dive from the beach, and there are dive areas all round Goat Island, just offshore. You can see colourful sponges, forests of brown seaweed, boarfish, crayfish, stingrays and, if you're very lucky, orcas and bottle-nosed dolphins. Visibility is claimed to be at least 10m, 75% of the time.

Excellent interpretive panels explain the area's Maori significance (it was the landing place of one of the ancestral canoes) and provide pictures of the species you're likely to encounter.

A **glass-bottomed boat** (☎ 09-422 6334; www.glassbottomboat.co.nz; adult/child \$20/12) provides a great all-year on-the-hour trip around Goat Island to see the underwater life. Trips last 45 minutes and run from the beach. When the sea is too rough the boat doesn't operate; ring to check.

Snorkelling gear (\$20), wetsuits (\$9 to \$15) and underwater cameras (\$35) can be hired at **Seafriends** (☎ 09-422 6212; www.seafriends.org.nz; 7 Goat Island Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm), 1km before Goat Island beach. You can hire a mask with a lens if you are short-sighted or a buoyant wetsuit if you are a poor swimmer. Seafriends also runs a saltwater aquarium, marine education centre and café. Call ahead to see if it's open.

Potiki Adventures (☎ 09-845 5932; www.potikiadventures.com) showcases Maori culture during an excellent day of kayaking and snorkelling

(adult/child \$185/95 including equipment and pick-up/drop-off in central Auckland, November to February only).

If one day's snorkelling isn't enough, **Goat Island Camping** (☎ 09-422 6185; www.goatiscamping.co.nz; Goat Island Rd; sites per adult/child \$16/8, caravans & cabins \$55-100, unit \$150; 📍) occupies view-greedy farmland above the beach. Pitch a tent, snaffle a hippy caravan or splash out on the self-contained unit with spa.

PAKIRI

Stunning Pakiri Beach, 12km past Goat Island (4km of the road is unsealed), is an unspoilt expanse of white sand and rolling surf. In 2005 the Auckland Regional Council purchased a 52-hectare chunk from champion

boxer David Tua, creating Auckland's 25th regional park. No doubt the ARC will in time develop walking tracks and campsites to its usual high standards, preserving this magical location for future generations.

Pakiri Beach Holiday Park (☎ 09-422 6199; www.pakiriholidaypark.co.nz; 261 Pakiri River Rd; sites per adult/child \$20/8, cabins \$25-125, units \$120-250) has a shop and good units in a secure beachfront setting.

Just 6km on from Pakiri is **Pakiri Horse Riding** (☎ 09-422 6275; www.horseride-nz.co.nz; Rahuikiri Rd), which has more than 100 horses for superb bush-and-beach rides ranging from one hour (\$50) to all day (\$220) or longer 'safaris'. **Accommodation** (dm/cabin/4-bedroom house \$25/150/500) is provided in basic but spectacularly situated beach cabins.