

[Travel](#)

posted: 1/3/2017 6:00 AM



Ride the red cable car up a hillside for a stunning view of Wellington, New Zealand's blue harbor and encircling green hills reminiscent of San Francisco. Before you head back down, pop into the Cable Car Museum.

Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier



Watch out for the splash from the Bucket Fountain on Cuba Street in Wellington, New Zealand. You won't want to be wet sitting in one of the trendy bars and restaurants in this newly gentrified neighborhood.

Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier

Six not to miss in New Zealand's 'cool' capital

By Katherine Rodeghier

Daily Herald Correspondent

Walk along its harbor and you might mistake New Zealand's capital city for San Francisco, with its waterfront ringed by hills studded with homes and high-rises. Spend a day poking around Cuba Street or a night barhopping at Courtney Place and you're sure to pick up a similar vibe: young, hip and just a little bit quirky.

Wellington long ago shed its staid, bureaucratic image, though you'll still find plenty of "the suits," as they are affectionately called, around the Parliament Building, corporate HQs and the New Zealand Stock Exchange. For many laid-back Wellingtonians, the dress code now leans more toward sandals and hiking shorts; backpacks, not briefcases. Lonely Planet has dubbed Wellington "Cool-with-a-capital-C." Nearly 60 percent of its 200,000 residents are age 18 to 49, and it shows in the city's festivals, film industry and active lifestyle.

A turning point came with the opening of the national museum of New Zealand, which blew the socks off conventional museums. An instant hit, it sparked a resurgence of arts and culture and made the capital city a popular weekend destination for Kiwis and a must-see for international visitors.

When in Wellington, don't miss:

Te Papa Tongarewa

The National Museum of New Zealand, an architectural showcase on the waterfront, takes an innovative, high-tech approach to the display of art and artifacts that tell the story of New Zealand's history, people and environment. Take your time, with five levels Te Papa is one of the world's largest national museums -- and admission is free, though you'll pay for special exhibits and tours. Check out Maori artifacts, a colossal squid and an exhibit on the migration of peoples to New Zealand. Walk onto a satellite map of the country and images light up on the wall. Don't pass the museum store without a look-see. It carries high-quality merchandise, not the usual tchotchkes. tepapa.govt.nz/



The National Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, launched a revitalization of downtown Wellington. Check out the colossal squid mixed among Maori artifacts and cultural exhibits in one of the world's largest national museums. - Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier

Cable Car

Board one of the bright red cars at Lambton Quay and enjoy the ride past the stop at Victoria University to the top where the view, on a clear day, is simply stunning. Peek inside the Cable Car Museum before deciding whether to ride back down or take a 45- to 60-minute walk, depending on how fit you feel. A one-way ticket costs about \$2.85

U.S. wellingtoncablecar.co.nz/English/Home.html



Joe Stoddart roasts a mean cup of coffee at Havana Coffee Works. Order a flat white for a cup topped with creamy foam etched with a coffee-brown design. - Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier

Coffee

Kiwis are serious about their joe. Wellington has more than a dozen coffee roasters and though there is Starbucks, it is frequented mostly by teens who haven't honed their palate for quality java. You'll need to learn the lingo. A "short black" is an espresso, a "long black" an espresso doubled in size with hot water, a "flat white" is one third espresso and two-thirds steamed milk, with froth and a swirl on top. Smell the fresh roast at Mojo Coffee Cartel's roaster and cafe on Customhouse Quay, mojocoffee.co.nz/, or Havana Coffee Works on Tory Street, havana.co.nz/.

Cuba Street

Once a gritty, grungy section of town, Cuba Street has gentrified into a hip, bohemian enclave with edgy boutiques and trendy cafes. Wellington has more restaurants and bars per capita than New York City, and you'll find some of the most popular here, including the Matterhorn Bar and Restaurant, matterhorn.co.nz/. Stop for a few minutes to watch the Bucket Fountain. Bright red, blue and yellow buckets slowly fill with water then splash down, surprising unsuspecting passers-by.



Something is always in bloom in the Botanic Garden in Wellington, New Zealand. Don't miss a walk through the Lady Norwood Rose Garden, full of fragrant red and orange blossoms from November to May. - Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier

Botanic Garden

Take a walk in the woods on paths winding through this 62-acre garden. In addition to native forest, you'll find seasonal floral plantings. November to May is the blooming season at 110-beds in the Lady Norwood Rose Garden. In spite of its name, the Begonia House displays a variety of plants, including orchids. At the Carter Observatory, you can explore the constellations of the Southern Sky in a domed planetarium. No admission charge, guided tours about \$2.85 U.S. wellington.govt.nz/recreation/enjoy-the-outdoors/gardens/botanic-garden

Zealandia

Some of New Zealand's rarest native animals thrive in this refuge located in a forested valley just 10 minutes from downtown Wellington. The long-range mission here is to return this corner of New Zealand to the way it was before humans arrived. Walk the 20 miles of paths and you might be lucky enough to spot a giant weta. General admission to the exhibition and sanctuary is about \$13.25 U.S. and includes a 45-minute guided tour. visitzealandia.com/

- Information for the article was gathered during a writers' conference sponsored by Tourism New Zealand.

Wellington, New Zealand

Tourist information: Tourism New Zealand, newzealand.com/us/; WEREA, wellingtonnz.com/

When to go: Seasons are reversed in the southern hemisphere, so our winter is their summer. That said, temperatures in Wellington are moderate year-round, ranging from an average high of 54 in June and July to 70 in February, which is also the driest month.

Where to stay:

- Amora Hotel, near Te Papa and the Michael Fowler Convention Center, from about \$140 U.S. in February.

wellington.amorahotels.com/

- Art Hotel, soon to be called the QT Museum Wellington Hotel, was originally located where Te Papa now stands. The building was moved across the street and renovated as a boutique property with both hotel rooms and apartments, from about \$178 U.S. in February. museumhotel.co.nz/

<http://www.dailyherald.com/article/20170103/entlife/170109893/>