

KNOW

my Wellington.



Keren Smith
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Keren came to Wellington in 1996 to take up a position in French at Victoria. She continues to take great pleasure in all things French along with enjoying the ongoing caffeine-high that goes with living in New Zealand's most vibrant city. For someone who loves theatre, fashion, good food and the hum of elbow-to-elbow human activity; downtown Wellington is the perfect place. "It's right up there with Paris - one of the world's most beautiful cities - but Paris doesn't enjoy the sea-views and the coffee is not as good!" she says.

Keren's favourite haunts:

For brunch... Nikau in Civic Square can be relied on for a fab brunch with excellent coffee, friendly service and a great selection of national and international newspapers. Plus later in the day, try their in-house raspberry vodka for more creative thinking.

For a good coffee... It's a hard choice because downtown Wellington has so many places which serve great coffee, but for consistently reliable coffee, two top spots are Cuba Street's Olive Café and Vista on Oriental Parade. Olive Café has the added bonus of great food and a lovely outdoor seating area at the back, while Vista is open, airy, has great views and fabulous desserts to go with the superb coffee.

For dinner out... Rasa on Cuba Street. For about \$12 Rasa prepares "the best (and maybe the only)" Dosai in town. They taste and look like the real South Indian thing. Dosai are super-fine crêpes - gluten-free - individually and freshly made, filled variously with lamb, chicken or vegetarian alternative. The plain ones get twirled into a giant cone like a magician's hat. Mmmm.

For shopping... Ziggurat on Cuba Street - a second-hand clothes shop with a difference. It stocks real bargain pieces which are good quality and stylish, as well as near-new designer (Karen Walker, Zambesi etc) usually at a third, or less, of the original price. Adding a real edge to the browsing experience is the collection of vintage pieces. Cuba Street's special brand of street culture and wacky fashion shopping is completed with a pick-me-up of tarte aux fraises (strawberry tart) at Simply Paris, not far from the quarter's 'Left Bank'.

For indulgence... For a very special celebration or to treat someone to make them feel "above rubies", Willis Street's Citron Restaurant is the place. "The food, service and wine-list are without competition in Wellington that I know of". Citron compares more than favourably to Europe's finest.

For free... City Gallery in Civic Square. Take in an exhibition (some are free), then exit the gallery, not forgetting to look up at Neil Dawson's silver globe sculpture, a twin of which hangs outside the Pompidou centre in Paris; cross Para Matchett's bridge (walking across it is like being on a huge open-air theatre set) and do the Riviera walk along the waterfront to Te Papa where there is always something worth seeing.

With visitors... A walk along Oriental Parade with its golden sand, people-watching and dog-walking opportunities, a play-area for children and an obligatory stop for coffee and ice-cream at Kaffee Eis. On France's Riviera you would pay la peau des fesses (literally, the skin off your backside) for the privilege of sitting on such a beach. Here, barring the ice-cream and coffee, it's free. You cannot let summer go by without getting on down there and grabbing an ice-cream, whenever the sun threatens to split the rocks. If the sun can't be relied upon, the ice-cream can - try passionfruit and mango, or chocolate and tiramisu.

"Tempted? You should be. Very few cities offer so much in such a concentrated space. So - bon appétit and joyeuse fête!" Keren Smith.

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