

Escape to Wellington Where Life's a Breeze

Wellington is one of 10 cities to feature in *Monocle's* annual "journal of places less explored," *The Escapist*. The New Zealand capital is home to incomparable coffee, exceptional seafood and a strong cinematic pedigree that's enough to see even the most experienced travellers blown away, Fiona Wilson reports for the magazine.

Hemmed in by hills and the harbour, Wellington is a compact city whose setting throws its residents into close proximity.

"That's what I love about Wellington," says Anna Ronberg, a fashion buyer for the boutique [Scotties](#). "Bureaucrats, hippies, artists, the wealthy, immigrants, anarchists, students, diplomats and the downright weird are all forced to interact because of our geography. We can't avoid each other and that's quite unique in a capital city."

There is one area in which Wellington is the undisputed New Zealand champion: coffee. There are cafés and roasteries on every corner, and everyone is quite clear about the coffee they favour.

"Wellingtonians have a massive amount of choice when it comes to great coffee," says Joe Stoddart, master roaster at [Havana Coffee Works HQ](#). "We have more cafés per capita than most of the world so any coffee drinker can change their mind at any moment. You can drink a single origin Cuban espresso here and then 200 metres down the road you can order a pour-over v60 African blend."

The elements are closely felt in Wellington and the transition between urban sophistication and raw nature can be swift. Should you be so inclined, it would be perfectly viable to hike in the Town Belt in the morning, fuel up on a first-rate lunch in town at midday and go seal-spotting down at Red Rocks on the rugged south coast during the afternoon. The weather might not suit everyone, this year's long summer notwithstanding, but it's easy to see why people are so happy to live here.

As [art dealer](#) Hamish McKay puts it: "Wellington is a microcosmos: it might be postage stamp in size but it totally punches above its weight and has everything great about living in a city."

Original article by Fiona Wilson, *The Escapist*, July 2016.