Regional News

Connecting Wellington

Issue 234
December 3, 2024

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News

Christmas in the Quarters

Christmas is back in Wellington with four free, fun-filled, whānau-friendly events in the four quarters of our city. Presented by Wellington City Council, Christmas in the Quarters is on from 11am to 5pm on Saturdays from the 23rd of November to the 14th of December.

Make Christmas crafts in Midland Park on Saturday the 23rd of November. There will be five craft activities to enjoy and face painting. Be entertained by Christmas music and performances in Glover Park on Saturday the 30th of November, with everything from choirs to hip-hop dance, ukulele, and more. Enjoy a Christmas Circus extravaganza and street busking at Queens Wharf Square on Saturday the 7th of December. There will be lots of laughs, a giant wreath, face painting, and a touch of fire. Post your letter to Santa in Santa's Letterbox at any of the above events.

Be at Waitangi Park on Saturday the 14th of December for Santa's arrival and an afternoon of Christmas activities, including ice skating, the snowball globe, foam pit, live music and entertainment, and face painting. Santa will arrive in a short walking parade at 11am and you can meet the jolly man in his grotto from 11:30am. Food trucks will also be onsite. Round the day off with a Christmas carols singalong – Carols in the Park starts at 5pm.

Crowds and queues are likely, but Wellington City Council is expecting everyone to enjoy the season's celebrations. Find out more at www.wellington.govt.nz/christmas

Sunshine on a cloudy day

We're not sure about you, but we can't quite believe it's nearly Christmas! It seems like only yesterday that we were wrapping up warm in our beanies, mittens, and scarves to brave Welly's notorious sideways rain. Now, it's officially summer, and we can almost smell the saussies sizzling in the air as BBQ season begins.

All of us here at *Regional News* are so thrilled to have spent another year supporting local creators, artists, innovators, businesses, charities, and the like. As we ourselves face cost increases left, right, and centre, we know that 2024 has not exactly been easy. We continue to storm through the challenges and sideways rain because we believe our beautiful city and surrounds are filled with amazing people who deserve to be celebrated. Whether it's a new band grinding it out on the underground scene, a playwright about to tour their work overseas, a hairdresser woven into the fabric of their neighbourhood, or the café that became a suburban institution, it brings us joy to feature the people who call and make Wellington home.

We know it's easy to get stuck doomscrolling, so we hope we've brought a bit of sparkle into your lives this year. Thank you in turn for reading and supporting *Regional News*, which helps us keep filling our pages with all the good stuff.

We're off on holiday for a month, with our office closing on the 13th of December. Then we jump right back into the thick of it, with our first issue of 2025 out on the 14th of January. Until then, enjoy the sunshine!

Cover: Sleeping Beauty: The Pantomime, Circa Theatre. Photos by Roc Torio.

All editorial pages are headed only in red, other colours are advertising features.

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News

Oh, yes they did! *by Madelaine Empson*

A sprinkle of pixie dust, a wrinkle in time. Sci-fi, fairytales, and theatre magic combine to take your imagination to the next dimension in *Sleeping Beauty: The Pantomime*, an annual Circa Theatre tradition that marks a very special milestone this year.

The 20th summer pantomime goes beyond space and time, with writers Gavin Rutherford and Simon Leary taking the classic story and making it even more – well, timeless. Now featuring time travel, dinosaurs, Chappell Roan, and way more, this is *Sleeping Beauty* as you've never seen it before.

Loads of the *Regional News* team have seen the panto so far and have loved every minute of it. In fact, Frances said it was the best pantomime she'd ever seen.

"The time just flew by", she chuckles.

She also praised the singing and dancing, calling both "extraordinary". With a dreamlist of pop anthems rearranged and played live by musical director Michael Nicholas Williams on keys, *Sleeping Beauty: The Pantomime* was choreographed by two of its stars: Jthan Morgan, who plays time-travelling Dame Anita Minute, and Natasha McAllister, who has steadily made the transition from heroine to villain over the course of eight pantomimes. Now, she takes a dizzying spin as a velociraptor! Directed by Gavin Rutherford, Kathleen Burns, Bronwyn Turei (Ngāti Porou), Jackson Burling, Rachel McSweeney, and Simon Leary complete the cast of triple-threat talents.

Our sales executive Tung describes the season – on now until the 22nd of December, then back for a timely return from the 2nd to the 11th of January – as "very uplifting".

"I felt very happy leaving the theatre", he says, giving special mention to Sheila Horton's zany, colourful costumes. "It made me feel like a kid again."

Meanwhile, our reviewer Tanya Piejus writes, "Ian Harman's set design, including a stunning painted cobblestone floor, and Marcus McShane's lighting create a lush and vibrant stage for yet another fabulous, funny, and flirty pantomime. Oh, no they didn't! Oh, yes they did!"

A tour de force

With her trademark cheeky wit in tow, South African Kiwi comedian Urzila Carlson is returning to Wellington to kick off the silly season. The *You Don't Say Tour* will jingle bell into The Opera House on the 7th of December, with most seats already snagged.

"*You Don't Say* is a show born out of sarcasm and storytelling from the mind of a woman who might be slightly out of her mind," Carlson beams. "I cannot wait to tour this show and bring it to your ears!"

Born and raised in South Africa, Carlson relocated to New Zealand in 2006 to make Aotearoa her forever home. The now multi-award-winning comedian first took to the stage in 2008, taking the comedy world by storm and becoming a true tour de force. She quickly became a household name in New Zealand and Australia, appearing on TVs across both nations as a guest and regular on shows the likes of *The Project*, *Have You Been Paying Attention?*, *7 Days*, *Guy Montgomery's Guy Mont-Spelling Bee*, *Taskmaster NZ*, *The Masked Singer*, and more.

Carlson has amassed a global fanbase with her signature deadpan style. In fact, she became the highest-selling comedian in the 33-year history of The Melbourne International Comedy Festival, one of the largest comedy festivals in the world. She was also handpicked to join just 46 other comedians in the Netflix comedy series *Comedians Around the World*.

Catch this powerhouse's Pōneke performance before she embarks on her biggest world tour yet.

SNIPS

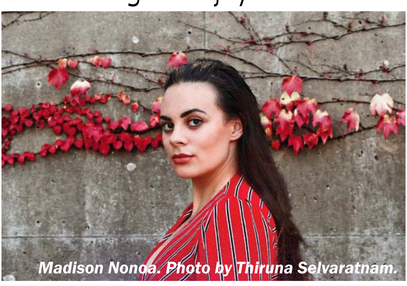
Holiday transport

From the 26th of December 2024 to the 12th of January 2025, buses will replace trains between Wellington Railway Station and Petone, Melling, Johnsonville, Paekākāriki, and Masterton as KiwiRail carries out key projects and critical track maintenance, including the installation of a new signalling system at Wellington Railway Station. Buses will replace trains on the Wairarapa line from the 26th of December to the 9th of February while KiwiRail replaces almost eight kilometres of track in the Remutaka Tunnel. Metlink passengers can enjoy free travel across the region this Christmas Day on bus and rail services, including between Masterton and Wellington. For more information and the summer timetable, visit www.metlink.org.nz/summer

Te Wāhi Āwhina

Te Wāhi Āwhina, a community support space on Manners Street, will close permanently on the 20th of December. Te Pokapū Hāpori on Manners and Te Tai Ohinga, the new youth hub on Willis, will remain open to support vulnerable groups in the city.

Good tidings and joy



Madison Nonoa. Photo by Thiruna Selvaratnam.

Holiday magic will settle over the capital on the 14th of December when the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (NZSO) presents seasonal favourite *Messiah* at the Michael Fowler Centre.

First performed in Dublin in 1742, George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* was composed with the intention of being accessible to everyone – whether they were nobility, landed gentry, or commoner. To this day it is one of the most performed and best-known oratorios in the world.

Renowned British conductor Thomas Blunt leads our national orchestra to deliver this beloved work to Te Whanganui-a-Tara audiences. "The magic of *Messiah* is that it is a moveable feast – no matter what forces you have at your disposal the performance is always valid... it will always inspire," maestro Blunt says. "I am absolutely thrilled to be performing it in Wellington. NZSO's excellent reputation precedes it, and I'm very much looking forward to collaborating with them, as well as The Tudor Consort choir and the soloists."

Joining the conductor are soprano Madison Nonoa, mezzo-soprano Anna Pierard, tenor Filipe Manu, and baritone Benson Wilson, all of whom are finalists or winners of the prestigious Lexus Song Quest and making strides in their international careers. Topped off with the harmonies and melodies of Wellington's beloved medieval and Renaissance choral ensemble The Tudor Consort, *Messiah* will all but guarantee joy for the holiday season and good tidings for the coming New Year.

We wish you a messy Christmas

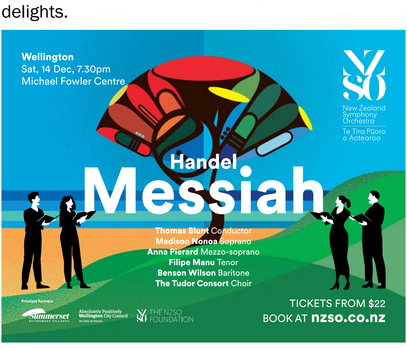
The Pantoloons are known for putting a dizzying spin on classic stories like *Cinderella* and *Rapunzel, Puss in Boots* and *Sherlock Holmes.* Bursting with song and dance, colourful costumes and sparkly sets, and giggles aplenty, these rollicking pantomimes have been enjoyed by little and big kids throughout the region for the past 11 years.

Now, the beloved children's theatre company is about to ho ho ho and he he he into Lower Hutt's Little Theatre for two Christmas shows at 11am and 1pm on the 21st of December and one at Southward Theatre in Paraparaumu at 1pm on the 22nd. This will be writer and director Amanda Stone's first panto dedicated entirely to the silly season – but it didn't start out that way!

"I thought, let's try a Christmas show – just a simple one with a few songs", she says. Not thinking any of her Pantoloons would want to be in it, she put the question out and all of a sudden "had too many people to choose from!"

In just four weeks, Amanda whipped up *A Very Messy Christmas,* which sees 10 actors playing everyone from Santa and Mrs Claus to sneaky elves Elfis and Freezle, who get their sticky hands on the Naughty or Nice list! Not to spoil too much, but keep an eye out for a giant gingerbread man and a vintage Polly Pocket from the 90s!

With loads of interest already pouring in from audiences, Amanda and The Pantoloons are just loving the show.
"It's got such a jolly, happy feeling to it", she delights.



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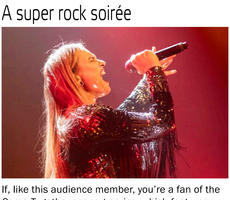
Music news

A super rock soirée

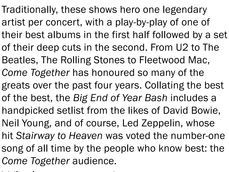


If, like this audience member, you're a fan of the *Come Together* concert series, which features "some of the best classic rock songs being played by New Zealand's best rockers", you're in for a whopper this summer. If you're not yet, consider this your official invitation to a super rock soirée that'll soon change that!

Come Together will wrap up the year with a riotous riff at St James Theatre on Friday the 13th of December. The *Big End of Year Bash* stars fan favourites Milan Borich (Pluto), Julia Deans (Fur Patrol), Dianne Swann (When the Cat's Away), Wellingtonian Seamus Johnson (Sea Mouse), and Devilskin's Jennie Skulander [pictured], who floored audiences with her powerful and compelling voice in the sold-out *Come Together – Led Zeppelin IV* tour. And speaking of Led Zep…

Traditionally, these shows hero one legendary artist per concert, with a play-by-play of one of their best albums in the first half followed by a set of their deep cuts in the second. From U2 to The Beatles, The Rolling Stones to Fleetwood Mac, *Come Together* has honoured so many of the greats over the past four years. Collating the best of the best, the *Big End of Year Bash* includes a handpicked setlist from the likes of David Bowie, Neil Young, and of course, Led Zeppelin, whose hit *Stairway to Heaven* was voted the number-one song of all time by the people who know best: the *Come Together* audience.

Whakarongo mai



Nikita 雅涵 Tu-Bryant.

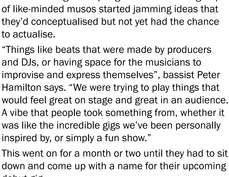
Listen up, KITA friends. The synth-pop dream of a Pōneke band want to shake off the year with you and pass on their gratitude for your love and support at Rogue & Vagabond on the 12th of December.

The gig comes a week after the release of the music video for *Chasing Summer*, a first-time collaboration between KITA's guitarist and storyteller Nikita 雅涵 Tu-Bryant and British artist An Ogre, Neil Crispin Aldridge's pop electronica output. While it's not one of their songs per se, the *Chasing Summer Music Video Release* party will be all KITA all night, with a classic set spanning their discography and their rendition of the new single – about chasing only the good times and denying winter – at the very place they first cut their teeth.

Fans might've noticed it's been a quiet year for the band, but that does *not* mean it hasn't been busy! Nikita's been finishing her film *Love Lives Here*, inspired by KITA's latest EP from 2023, Her and Ed 'Moog-Man' Zuccollo (synth, keys) have been scoring the feature-length film and ask fans to watch this space, because they've been "cooking up big". Cue "nervous laughter"!

Additionally, Nikita has been on the frontlines of the World of WearableArt Awards™, headlining the epic 2024 show *DREAM AWAKE*. The Moog-Man is in the thick of releasing his debut album, and drummer Rick Cranson was seen flitting his sticks about at the Wellington Jazz Festival. Come ring in the silly season with the talented trio!

Reach for the sun *by Madelaine Empson*



Solar Daze began in spring of 2022 when a group of like-minded musos started jamming ideas that they'd conceptualised but not yet had the chance to actualise.

"Things like beats that were made by producers and DJs, or having space for the musicians to improvise and express themselves", bassist Peter Hamilton says. "We were trying to play things that would feel great on stage and great in an audience. A vibe that people took something from, whether it was like the incredible gigs we've been personally inspired by, or simply a fun show."

This went on for a month or two until they had to sit down and come up with a name for their upcoming debut gig.

"We all liked the idea of something to do with the coming summer: fire and energy", Hamilton continues. Starting off as Flame – stylised as FLAM3 as a bit of a joke that stuck – the neo-soul group knew an upgrade was in order and "reached for the sun" with Solar Daze. The now-six-piece is happily anticipating the release of their new single *Don't Fall* on the 13th of December, the second from their upcoming EP.

"We're slowing down the pace to something a little more introspective. We've stripped back the instruments so that you can hear that it is a sentimental piece about family and life. We think the musicality meets the intentions we set and we hope the story speaks for itself", Hamilton says.

Come get a sneak peek of the new single and party with Solar Daze – sharing the stage with their mates from Fuzz.Fm and Yawner – at Meow on the 12th of December.

More pull than Pavarotti!

Peter Lilley.

New Zealand's premier sax quartet is about to deliver a symphony of sounds at St Andrew's on The Terrace at 3pm on Sunday the 15th of December. From swing to tango, classical to cutting-edge contemporary, audiences can expect the ensemble's usual eclectic mix of genres with even more kaleidoscopic surprises thrown into the mix, making for a tune-spanning, toe-tapping concert to delight music lovers of all ages.

Following the success of their 30th anniversary performance last year, Saxcess – founded and led by soprano sax player Debbie Rawson with Richar Marin (soprano/alto), Peter Liley (tenor), and Tim Workman (baritone) – are throwing this concert to farewell Peter, whose jaw-dropping improvs on a huge, battered, 100-year-old saxophone have gobsmacked audiences every time. Sadly, Peter is leaving the group, so this will be your last chance to witness this exceptional talent firsthand. In performing some of Peter's compositions, plus evocative music from Richar's native Colombia, Saxcess will welcome new player Franz Ombler (alto) into the fold.

Guest artists are saxophonists Mark Cookson, Patrick Hayes, and Alex Trask, and percussionists Anne Megget, Tim Donahue, and former Saxcess player Graham Hanify, who'll make a cameo appearance on cymbals. It all concludes with a percussive bang: a full saxophone octet, with percussion!

Expect to hear anything and everything from a solo to eight sax players, a Ukrainian Christmas song to a rousing march from "one of New Zealand's greatest musical exports" (*The Post*) – musicians who "blew up a storm" (*The Sydney Morning Herald)* and "have more pull than Pavarotti" (*The Post*).

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News

Unglamorous and glorious

Photo by Matt Crockett.

When Sarah Millican was a bairn, she wouldn't say boo to a goose. She describes herself as quiet at school, not many friends, no boobs until she was 16. Now? Well, now she says she is loud, with good friends, a cracking rack, and booing geese all over the shop!

Coming to Wellington's Michael Fowler Centre in the new year with three crack-up shows – two of which are sold out – Millican will leave you in stitches and in tears between the 11th and 13th of January with her new show *Late Bloomer*.

In her one-woman stand-up show, Millican takes audiences on a journey detailing how that shy girl came out of her shell and became the woman she is today. Who might that be, you may ask?

Only one of the world's most well-loved British comedians! Over the years, her world touring shows have been seen by 1.3 million people, with her previous tour coming face to face with 355,000 fans. More viewers still would have glimpsed her on the telly on shows like *Q*, *Live at the Apollo*, *Taskmaster*, or her own critically acclaimed BBC series *The Sarah Millican Television Programme*.

Millican is also a *Sunday Times* bestselling author and the creator of the *Standard Issue* podcast – a smart and funny magazine-style show made by women, for women.

Dubbed "the comic laureate of unglamourous-but-glorious womanhood" by *The Guardian*, Millican invites you along to *Late Bloomer* to laugh at her, with her, and beside her.

End-of-year antics

Shona Conacher.

Unabashed and olive-fuelled, the world's only surreal sketch circus trio Laser Kiwi is sleighing into the silly season with their annual mind-bending variety show *IDIOM*.

The beautiful and bizarre performance will unravel at Te Auaha on the 14th and 15th of December, bringing with it top-notch circus acts, comedy capers, musical mayhem, delectable dance numbers, and so much more.

Strange as it may seem, *IDIOM* will be star-studded with leading local and international talents at the top of their game. The wacky yet wonderful lineup includes two of New Zealand's best calisthenics athletes, virtuoso tap dancer from Timaru Caleb Cameron, and aerial acrobat and circus performer Nicole Maisey. Australian hula hoop and mini-tramp extraordinaire Shona Conacher jumps in alongside out-the-box, Billy T award-winning comedian David Correos as the stars shining bright at the top of the dazzling *IDIOM* offering.

Sprinkling their signature charm throughout the show will be organisers Laser Kiwi with their unique, award-winning performance style, something that has taken them around the world on several occasions. Back in Wellington to wrap up the year from their home base, the travelling troupe describes *IDIOM* as "a celebration of the bonkers things the performers have decided to dedicate their lives to".

Chocka with charm and decked out with left-field Laser Kiwi goodness, start your holiday season unwrapping the gift that keeps on giving at *IDIOM*.

Have yourself… *by Madelaine Empson*

Aurora Storm. Photo by Erik Norder Photography.

On the 7th of December, New Zealand's longest-running burlesque-meets-cabaret variety show will deck The Fringe Bar with boughs of holly and sequins strung on feather boas in *A Very Merry Caburlesque* – the only non-themed holiday show of the season.

But isn't that basically an oxymoron?

"*Caburlesque* is known for its themed show in which performers must adhere to a specific thing", producer Adrienne Lindsay explains, citing the animal-speckled *Zoolesque* as an example. "A non-themed holiday show means that it's a Christmas show but the performers can do absolutely anything they want."

So, with local and national artists like Ms.Behavin & Waterlily, Midnight Mistress, Johnny Pash, Pip E-Lysaah & The Red Queens, Billie Jean, Aurora Storm, and
Velma Cherry performing burlesque, pole, belly dance, and more in any theme they want, what might their acts look like?

While Lindsay doesn't want to give too much away, I'm treated to a tiny teaser:

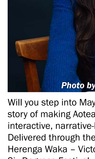
"We do have some Christmas-themed acts but also a construction worker may be making an appearance along with a horse."

With glittering goddess Constance Craving in the MC Hammer seat, the 11th *A Very Merry Caburlesque* will be a merry and bright seasonal delight.

"*Caburlesque* has been a driving force in the burlesque scene in Wellington for quite some time", Lindsay says, adding that reaching their 11th iteration is such an exciting time for the team. "We like to celebrate the end of each year with a bang and this year is no different!"

Saddle up for a Christmas party like no other!

Stories from the past



Shervonne Grierson.
Photo by Julie Zhu and Todd Karehana.

Will you step into May's red shoes, or follow Roy's story of making Aotearoa New Zealand home in the interactive, narrative-led audio walk *Encounter*? Delivered through the mobile app PickPath for Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington's Six Degrees Festival, which showcases its MFA students' projects, *Encounter* takes audiences on a journey around Te Whanganui-a-Tara through the lens of Chinese immigrants at the turn of the 20th century.

Encounter comes from the mind of Cadence Chung, a nationally bestselling poet, composer, and classical vocalist, recently seen in Wellington Opera's *Tosca*. It's woven together with her signature poetic language, offering a unique opportunity to rediscover Wellington from the perspective of those who helped shape its past and continue to influence its future.

Chung's delicate and deliberate words are brought to life by Shervonne Grierson (*Shortland Street*), who voices May, and Dennis Zhang (*Far North*, *Chef's Kiss*) as Roy. They are accompanied by Kassandra Wang's immersive soundscape, designed to transport audiences back to an earlier time and consider familiar urban surroundings.

The all-Chinese New Zealander creative team is rounded off by director and VUW honours student Jamie Yee and producer and MFA student Sharon Wang. From the union of these powerhouse Wellington-based creatives and their shared heritage and experiences comes an authenticity and emotional depth to the stories told.

Putting the power of choice in the hands of the audience, *Encounter* runs down the Wellington Waterfront, through Waitangi Park, along Cable and Tory Streets, and onto Haining Street from the 10th to the 14th of December.

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The year in review

Something to make you smile

by Madelaine Empson

Prick your ears up in any shop in town and the carols blaring over the loudspeakers will confirm what we both suspect, but can hardly believe: Christmas is just around the corner. If I was to compose my own holly-jolly festive song, it'd go a little something like this...

With 2024 nearly through, it's time to write my annual review: one where I can share with you, all the things I got to do, my favourite shows and moments too!

Just before I get started, though, I do have to pass on the silliest revelation I had this silly season. I saw the lyrics for *Deck the Halls* written out for the first time in my life and learned that we're not, in fact, supposed to decorate our homes with bells of holly. It's boughs. I was today years old when I discovered this. Anyone else make it 32 years? Also, what even is a bough?

Alright, onto the good stuff. I often have to stop and pinch myself when I think about my job. Writing for the last remaining free arts newspaper in Wellington means that I not only get to experience so many of the cool things happening in our coolest little capital – from theatre to concerts, festivals to comedy and back again – but I get to meet and talk to the artists behind them.

I write the music news page and have seen some wicked new bands making their mark on the local gig scene. To boot, I've interviewed some awesome musicians this year from Aotearoa and beyond. A definite highlight was getting to chat to Annie Crummer about the reunion of When the Cat's Away and her prolific career as one of our best-loved and most-travelled voices. We discussed one crazy week she had through October and November of 1996:

"After a performance with Sting, I got in the cab, went straight to Coogee Bay, and then sang *River Deep, Mountain High* with Jimmy Barnes. Then flew to New Zealand to sing with Michael Jackson, and then Sting, and then Michael Jackson again", she told me, almost as gobsmacked as I was. "That was remarkable."

I got a huge kick out of Zooming with frontman Johnny Stevens of acclaimed American rock band Highly Suspect, who cracked me up within the first minute of the interview when I asked him what the time was in his corner of the world and he said, quick as a flash with a glint in his eye, "I don't know! Don't ask me these questions, I live in dark rooms." As I write this piece, in four hours from now, I'll be rocking out to Highly Suspect at TSB Arena. Yes, I brought my mosh-pit boots!

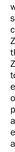
I've had many a late night out in the city getting amongst our theatre scene, which never ceases to amaze me. 2024's Aotearoa New Zealand Festival of the Arts was spectacular, and I've loved all the shows I've seen throughout the year for different reasons. Some have plastered a smile on my dial, like Ali Harper's *The Supper Club*. Others have made me cackle relentlessly, like Ruff as Gutz' *The MILKYVERSE*, where I threw water balloons at improv performers. At their request! Some have moved me, like *and the Lochburns*, a new play by William Dugnan about music and memory, and EBKM's *Heartbreak Hotel* by Karin McCracken. Others have exemplified stage magic, like Trick of the Light Theatre's *Suitcase Show*, on as part of this year's jam-packed New Zealand Fringe Festival. Funny, moving, and magic, Indian Ink's *Guru of Chai* did all of the above. And special mention to another of my favourites this year: *It Came From Beyond The Script*, a horror-comedy improv spectacular from and directed by Malcolm Morrison that was clever, electrifying, and funny as all hell!

Looking back over A Word from Maddi this year, it seems I've talked about all the important stuff – cushions and camping, pole and pinot noir, seafood linguine and Mozart – and then some. My personal favourite entry into what has essentially become my very public journal was titled *Taylor Swift for the umpteenth time*. It also appears I wrote about my birthday not once, but twice this year. Classic. While it sure spans some super silly subjects, my column has captured little moments in time that might've otherwise gone unnoticed, tracking anxiety, heartbreak, and chapters of my life that would've stayed in the inkwells of my mind had I not put them down on paper. Thank you to all our readers for meeting me in what has been a challenging and beautiful year.

We know that 2024 hasn't been the easiest on everybody, so we hope our words here at *Regional News* have brought you some small comfort or made you laugh. Reporting the good news – the sparkly stuff that makes us smile, the shows that express every facet of the human condition, the stories that see creatives pouring everything they have into a work of art – is an honour and a privilege. We'll continue to pour our hearts and souls into *Regional News* for as long as it brings you joy.

I'll cry if I want to

by Alessia Belsito-Riera



I used to cry every year the night before my birthday. I've done it for as long as I can remember, and though I typically don't break out the waterworks nowadays, I still feel the familiar tugging at the centre of my chest. It's what I define as pre-emptive nostalgia: a knowing feeling that a year of my life has been lived, and that I'll never get it back again. As I approach the end of my second year at *Regional News*, the feeling settling over me is remarkably similar. What's different this time is that I can relive this year again. Not only by looking back over the pages I have written, but right here, right now, with my year in review.

I never know what to expect when I arrive at the office each morning. I could be travelling the country from my computer, writing about hotspots and hidden gems. Perhaps I am learning about gardening, grouting, or grilling so I can pass on the best tips and tricks to our readers. Maybe I have advertorials to write, which can range from construction to skincare, fashion to fitness, or literally anything under the sun – it's truly an honour to work with so many Kiwi businesses on a daily basis. Sometimes I'll have an interview set up with local or visiting artists, theatre makers, or creatives. Most often I'll have events and performances to cover – it never ceases to amaze me how much talent we have here in Aotearoa. This year has been as busy as ever for our cool little capital. From big, world-class events that visit from faraway stages to homegrown creations bursting with unique Welly charm, the 2024 events calendar was chocka with festivals, plays, drag shows, concerts, exhibitions, and events. Though it would have been impossible to attend them all, we tried our best to provide our readers with a snapshot every fortnight. I have had the privilege of crafting stories for World of WearableArt™, the New Zealand International Fringe Festival, CubaDupa, the Royal New Zealand Ballet, Aotearoa New Zealand Festival of the Arts, and *The Art of Banksy* to name a few. Plus, all kinds of events from emerging creatives – seeing the next generation of art, theatre, performance, film, and music practitioners find their footing is inspiring. Being a part of their journey is an honour – their energy, enthusiasm, and innovative, harlequin creativity always brings a smile to my day.

The gallery news page, which I put together myself each issue, is still an important and constant part of our paper. The arts are essential for preservation and development. Artists hold knowledge and taonga from the past, depict the flaws and beauty of the present, and enact change in the hopes of shaping a brighter future. This staple in our paper provides them with a platform to showcase their work and a place for you to interact with them and engage in discourse. Film is still a big part of my life at *Regional* News. In 2024, alongside writing reviews, attending premieres, and covering the ever-rotating roster of film festivals coming to Te Whanganui-a-Tara, I had the opportunity to continue the series I began in 2023 called Wellington Silver Screeners. Here, I chatted with local and international filmmakers crafting movie magic in our UNESCO City of Film. I profiled acclaimed creatives like Rachel House, Ana Scotney, and Mark Andrews alongside indie and emerging talents who have broken into the industry with award-winning and trailblazing projects, ready to redefine what cinema can do. This has been one of the most enriching, inspiring, and fulfilling projects I've worked on. I hope you've enjoyed reading the series as much as I've enjoyed writing it!

When you spend your days in an office like ours, each one is special. Above all else I am grateful to the extraordinary team I work with. Every fortnight, time after time, we craft this beautiful newspaper together – we pour our hearts and souls into each issue, and we genuinely couldn't do it without a single member of the team. Passionate, hardworking, and positive, the beautiful people I work with are always supportive and kind, making even the hard days bright. As another year draws to a close, I look back on the 25 issues of *Regional* News we have brought to life to together and it makes me realise how fortunate we are to call this our job.

Something that has helped me feel less melancholy leading up to my birthday is writing things I've done throughout the year in a calendar so I can look back on each day – that way I'll never forget a special moment, however small. It helps to remind me that though the time has gone, and no I won't ever get it back, I am fortunate to have experienced it and to have enjoyed it enough to be consciously nostalgic about how fleeting life is. That's what *Regional News* does too: serves as a physical reminder of all the beautiful moments I've had, of all the life I have lived in 2024. How fortunate we all are to be here in this moment – hold onto it tightly.

Confessions of a poetry reviewer

by Margaret Austin

I have been reviewing poetry for three years now and I've had a lot to learn. My notion of poems having to rhyme was first to go out the window (yes, truly!) though I maintain a fondness for rhyme because it gives momentum. And I guess that's one thing I value in a poem.

But there are other ways to gain interest and attention. Both *Saga* by Hannah Mettner and *Middle Youth* by Morgan Bach offer tellingly bleak visions of the world and its possible fate.

My highest praise for young poets goes to Jake Arthur for his collection *Tarot*, named for the ancient card pack and consisting of advice to a male youth. The poems here are extraordinarily compelling in their preoccupation with matters spiritual, amorous, and prosaic. Arthur has a PhD in Renaissance literature, but despite the erudition this suggests, he avoids the inaccessibility that sometimes accompanies it.

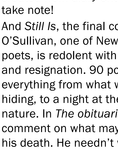
Anthologies have the advantage of covering a wide range of topics, and consequently providing a supremely balanced view of life and experiences. Such is the case with *First Things* by Harry Ricketts, a poetic memoir of his times, created from diary entries. Prospective writers, take note!

And *Still Is*, the final collection by Vincent O'Sullivan, one of New Zealand's most acclaimed poets, is redolent with recollection, nostalgia, and resignation. 90 poems range widely over everything from what washing lines might be hiding, to a night at the movies, to the glories of nature. In *The obituarist*, we have the poet's wry comment on what may be written about him after his death. He needn't worry.

Poetry may not make millions, but its beauty and insights make it invaluable.

Community service…

by Alan Knowsley, consultant, Rainey Collins Lawyers



Looking back at the year 2024, it has again been a very busy time serving the community through the various charities and not for profits I am involved in, as well as explaining legal issues for *Regional News* readers. Access to the law is a very important part of society and explaining the law in easy-to-follow terms helps in that process.

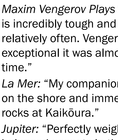
I am the chair of Camp Quality New Zealand, which looks after kids with cancer. Bringing some magic into the kids' lives through regular summer and winter camps and putting smiles on their faces is a wonderful experience. The camps rely on the support of volunteers and donations to run and fund them in five regions throughout New Zealand. I have volunteered at over 20 camps now and am looking forward to the next one in January. If you can offer support, please get in touch.

I am now in my 25th year as honourary legal counsel for Lions Clubs New Zealand, in addition to my 36th year as a member of a Lions Club serving our national and local communities. I am also involved as a committee member and director of the Australian New Zealand Education Law Association, which brings together people from all parts of the education sector to talk through legal issues for the benefit of all the kids and others involved in education.

I look forward to providing more helpful legal information each month. Have a great 2025, everyone.

NZSO 2024, more than interesting

by Tamsin Evans



One of the privileges of reviewing the arts is the opportunity to express what the experience made you think about, what you felt and why, your first impressions, and what you remembered the next day. It's about finding the right words and not falling back on 'interesting'. Here are some of the words I used this year.

Beyond Words: "Reza Vali's *Funèbre for Solo Violin and String Orchestra* was a standout, emotional, gut-wrenching experience."

A Hero's Life: "The music told the story but the performance filled out the picture."

Mozart The Great: "All the details you might miss listening casually were prominent and dominant when they should be and the magical combinations on the stage brought all the small details perfectly to the fore as well."

Maxim Vengerov Plays Sibelius: "Because it is incredibly tough and demanding we hear it relatively often. Vengerov's performance was so exceptional it was almost like hearing it for the first time."

La Mer: "My companion heard the wave crashing on the shore and immediately recognised it as the rocks at Kaikōura."

Jupiter: "Perfectly weighted, positioned, and balanced accents in the opening bars of the second movement were followed by a most delicate but lively third movement, and the delayed phrasing in the fourth felt like we were always on the brink of ending the evening only to be lifted up again by the next phrase."

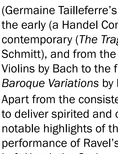
Arias: "Context… an understanding and additional pleasure that should not be underestimated."

Alexander Gavrylyuk Plays Rachmaninov: "My favourite, the violas, did a superb job of their solo passage."

The Planets: "Left us in no doubt there is a lot to listen to in that vacuum."

What a journey!

by Dawn Brook



Marc Taddei's programming for Orchestra Wellington in 2024 aimed to trace the journey of orchestral music from the Baroque era (1600-1750) to the music of today. So we travelled from the familiar (Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*) to the obscure (Germaine Tailleferre's Piano Concerto), from the early (a Handel Concerto Grosso) to the contemporary (*The Tragedy of Salome* by Florent Schmitt), and from the elegant Concerto for Two Violins by Bach to the frankly insane and wondrous *Baroque Variations* by Lukas Foss.

Apart from the consistent ability of the orchestra to deliver spirited and confident performances, notable highlights of the year were Jian Liu's performance of Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand, the Orpheus Choir's performance in the Beethoven symphony, and a gem of drama and pathos, Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess*.

Concertmaster Amalia Hall deserves special mention. She appears to go quietly but effectively about that role. But that is not all. As well as joining with Monique Lapins for the Bach concerto, she also delivered the considerably more flashy Korngold Violin Concerto in fine style.

One more concert to come this season, on December the 7th, and that looks to be a monumental one too, featuring Britten's *War Requiem* with the Orpheus Choir.

In sum, under its music director Taddei, Orchestra Wellington has continued to challenge and delight its 2024 audiences. Its programme for 2025, featuring Shostakovich's first five symphonies, promises to be another cracker. But my reviewing gig is over: I am retiring. Many thanks to *Regional News* and Orchestra Wellington for the musical education and huge pleasure. May both institutions flourish.

A year to savour, musically speaking! *by Graeme King*

Even though we've recently lost cherished local live-music venue Hashigo Zake, fortunately there was no shortage of quality overseas and local bands and artists touring Wellington in 2024.

In March, Queens of the Stone Age rocked out TSB Arena as part of *The End is Nero Tour*. Frontman Josh Homme was mesmerising – at times focusing on his vocal performance with his arms waving in the air, at others staggering around the stage playing searing guitar solos.

In April, we were treated to New Zealand female vocal supergroup When the Cat's Away. Annie Crummer, Debbie Harwood, Dianne Swann, and Kim Willoughby celebrated Kiwi songwriting and former member Margaret Urlich's memory over 30 songs and two and a half hours of non-stop partying!

In October, The Lady Killers – featuring Suzanne Lynch, Jackie Clarke, and Sharon Emirali – thrilled a near-capacity St James Theatre. With a mixture of medleys and solo performances of songs from divas as diverse as Nina Simone and Taylor Swift, this was a masterclass in top-notch, high-energy singing.

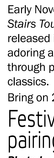
Marcus Miller was the top billing and opener for this year's Wellington Jazz Festival. The sublime, at times breathtaking thumb-slapping skills up and down the bass guitar neck from this multi-GRAMMY®-winning bassist, composer, arranger, and producer was a joy to behold. For the final night of the festival, we were privileged to have five-time GRAMMY-winning vocalist, bassist, and pianist Esperanza Spalding, whose music defies categorisation. Simply stunning.

Early November gave us the Crowded House *Gravity Stairs Tour*. This iconic NZ band, whose first LP was released in 1986, has longevity, but showed their adoring audience the meaning of being entertained through playing vital new music and much-loved classics.

Bring on 2025!

Festival favourites and perfect pairings *by Tanya Plejus*

Photo by Bryce Groves.



It's always exciting when the Aotearoa New Zealand Festival of the Arts comes to town. This year, I had the great pleasure of watching and reviewing eight theatre, music, and circus performances. Tusiata Avia's *The Savage Coloniser Show* was a creatively stunning and provocative highlight whose confronting political narrative seems even more prescient now. *Lost Lear* by Dan Colley was another festival favourite of mine, again for its visual and thematic courage in taking on the tough subject of dementia in a startlingly new way. A Slightly Isolated Dog always come up with something out of the box and their new show *Our Own Little Mess*, delivered entirely through headphones, was uniquely immersive.

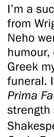
The subject of motherhood was tackled in two massively different but equally engaging ways on stage this year in *Femme Natale – The Queen Years* and *I Carried This*. The former by the comedy troupe of the same name was a riot of dancing vibrators, middle-aged angst, and shameful parenting, while the latter by Nicola Pauling drew from the lived experiences of teenage mothers whose babies were coercively removed from them for adoption in less enlightened times.

I'm a sucker for solo performances and *HELIOS* from Wright&Grainger and *Tangihanga* by Kristyl Neho were prime examples of that, tackling with humour, creativity, and stellar acting an ancient Greek myth and familial dramas precipitated by a funeral. It was also a delight to see Suzie Miller's *Prima Facie* again at Circa, which has grown in strength since its run at the theatre last year.

Shakespeare and Stagecraft's *Twelfth Night* and Gavin Rutherford and Simon Leary's *Sleeping Beauty: The Pantomime* were brilliantly fun-filled ways to end my theatre year, both sparkling with colour, laughs, and familiar music.

Stop and take stock *by Jo Lucre*

Photo by Dan Whitfield.



Another year bites at my heels and I am eager to look back on what was.

2024 brought some treasures. I was fortunate to again review a spectrum of books – those that encouraged unique ways to improve, learn, and ponder on life or those that provided welcome entertainment.

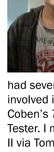
Energy by Lisa O'Neill made me stop and take stock – it offered much more than the title would suggest. What I took from *Energy* as the most important learning was to protect your emotional energy: find your people, "think about who you want in your life and where these types of people can be found". I liked the thinking behind intentionally seeking your people rather than hoping they may arrive. O'Neill's advice on conserving and protecting your mental energy refers to being very choosy about what platforms you let into your life. Knowing what your mind needs and responds to is important, she says.

In *Evolving: Finding health and happiness as we age*, Judy Bailey presented a refreshing look on ageing and her own learnings about the process shared by us all. It gave me a positive glimpse into Judy's journey from being a renowned news presenter to traversing the next stage of her life, and what we can do to evolve, accept, and enhance the multiple journeys we will all take over our lifespans.

For a touch of the fantastical and other worldly – Jessica Jayne Webb delivered with *The Secrets of Wilderfort Castle: The Waiting*. I can't wait to see what she writes next.

Armchair adventures *by Kerry Lee*

Photo by Karlum Lattimore.



2024 has been an exciting time for book lovers. Rather than disappearing as was predicted, books – tangible, real paper books – have instead made a comeback.

While by no means physically active, as a book reviewer for *Regional News*, I have had several adventures this year. Sometimes I'm involved in a murder mystery thanks to Harlan Coben's *Think Twice*, or *Kiss of Death* by Stephen Tester. I might go back in time to World War I or II via Tom McGrath's family bibliography *Wartime Secrets from the Family Home*. And if I'm feeling particularly adventurous, I will go and explore the wonders of my own backyard with Ray Salisbury's *Epic: Adventures Across Aotearoa*. Yes, it is safe to say I am heading into the festive season a very happy camper.

It is about this time I point out a favourite book or a particular highlight of the year, but this time, I'm afraid I am going to have to disappoint. There were no favourites! For me, 2024 was the highlight, as I had a bumper crop of books to choose from.

This is proof that the written word is as relevant today as it was 100 years ago – long before the rise of the internet, which was officially born on the 1st of January 1983! In our world of doomscrolling and get-rich-quick schemes, I think books have a promising future. So, the next time you walk past a library or a bookshop, maybe head on in – you might find a new hobby.

Many thanks to *Regional News*, and to the readers for supporting us. I hope you have a merry and joyous Christmas and a happy New Year.

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Close-up

by Alessia Belsito-Riera

Living the dream

For the first time in the show's history, *RuPaul's Drag Race Down Under* featured a Wellington-based drag queen. That certified star is none other than our high-energy pop diva Olivia Dreams! Originally from Te Tai Tokerau and of Te Rarawa descent, she has been calling Te Whanganui-a-Tara home for the last four years and has made it her mission to create a welcoming, accessible, and diverse space for Rainbow and disability communities. When she's not bopping around Pōneke stages or hosting bingo nights, she's touring the motu with her own drag shows – no wonder she holds the title as the biggest producer of drag in Wellington!

Though Olivia's *RuPaul's Drag Race Down Under* journey came to an end in episode two, she knows this is only the beginning for her. "Sometimes you have to give everyone a little taster before serving the whole meal," she beams.

Just because she's out doesn't mean she's not still hyped about the show. You can watch along with her as episodes are released every Monday night at Dirty Little Secret or every Friday at Ivy Bar and Cabaret, recapping each gag-worthy moment and behind-the-scenes exclusive along the way. In the meantime, Olivia spilled the tea with me!

What was your first thought when you heard the news?

I was at work, and I took the phone call in a meeting booth, which has clear walls, and I just started crying. I looked out of the room, and I locked eyes with this team that were having a meeting right outside and they all just turned to me like, 'Are you okay?' I was just so happy I started bawling my eyes out.

Before we jump into talking about the show, tell me about your drag journey.

I had just moved to Wellington from Whangārei and I was still new to the city. One of my friends said, 'Hey, let's go out and watch this drag show.' It was the first drag show I had ever seen, and it was at Hannah Playhouse, and after the show I just thought, 'Wow, that looked like so much fun, I think I could do that.' So I messaged the producer Kelly Fornia, saying I was really interested and excited to get into drag. The rest is history! Four years down the line and here I am.

Meant to be!

Exactly! I sort of fell into drag. I didn't really have any performance [background], I'm not a theatre kid, never did plays growing up. I was quite introverted actually. The thing that I like about drag is it's a way for people to escape from reality for a bit. My experience with drag – and I don't want to diminish anyone else's – is it's quite silly, it's fun, we're here to bring joy, create excitement, jazz things up a little bit. I go by the ethos, if I can get at least one person to smile or laugh, then I've done my job.

What were you most looking forward to about being on RuPaul's Drag Race Down Under?

This is going to sound really corny, but what I was most excited about was being the first queen from Wellington. It's been four seasons now and I know there had been rumblings throughout the community about why it kept getting missed. So, it was exciting to be the face of Wellington for the first time ever on the show. Being like 'Hey, Wellington does exist, we're here, we do drag too!'

How did you want to rep the city?

I wanted to showcase our style of drag. Every region or hub has a different style, and I think the best thing about Wellington drag is that it's quite a mixing pot. There's a little bit of everything. I wanted to put Te Whanganui-a-Tara firmly on the map and showcase the different facets of what Wellington drag is.

How would you define Welly drag?

I don't know how else to say it, but I like Wellington drag because it's a little bit rough around the edges. I think it gives performers a bit more personality rather than a cookie-cutter queen. It's nice to have that point of difference. That roughness means that it's not robotic or overrehearsed or disingenuous. We're there in the moment with the audience and that is the number one thing. We love what we do, we're passionate, and we're actually some of the kindest queens I've ever met. We're really nice and we look out for each other.

Was the experience everything you hoped it would be? Or did you try not to have expectations and just enjoy it?

I tried to go in with no expectations. In the week leading up to it and while I was there, I was like, 'You're going to be here and have fun, don't get in your head.' But as soon as it all started that went out the window and it was like, 'Oh my god what am I doing here? I've made a mistake.' Trying to fight that inner saboteur. As much as I had prepped and tried to think, 'Whatever happens, happens,' there was still that 'Oh my god' feeling.

What was your biggest takeaway?

The fact that I am good at what I do. Being around so many other talented, powerhouse performers in their own field, you can feel a little bit insecure about yourself, but my biggest takeaway from the experience was that I was included in that group – I was there for a reason, so I am on that level with them. Taking that and holding onto that thought that I am good at what I do. It's hard as a performer because you're always asking yourself if you're doing the right thing, if you're in the moment, and analysing everything, but it was a really nice confidence and ego boost to be a part of such an experience.

Growing up, everyone wants to be famous, and I did too, I just never thought this would be the way I'd achieve it. It's such a surreal experience and I have had friends and coworkers tell me they've seen me, that I'm filled with so much confidence and how great it is. It's heartwarming to hear that from friends and family and even people I don't speak to or that are acquaintances who have hopped in to say congratulations. I keep having to pinch myself because it still doesn't feel real. Even though my face is plastered all over everything now, it feels like some weird fever dream I'm going to wake up from.

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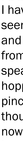
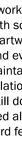


Artist Showcase
Occasional Gallery
Opening Day: 6 March 2026
Where: Occasional by Velvet Wellington
Artists: Occasional by Velvet Wellington is pleased to be entering into collaboration with the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts to provide a superb platform for contemporary artists to showcase their artistic talents to visitors, with rotating exhibitions during the year.
Featured artists: Cindy Pearson-Jones, Vanessa Jones, Discount art, Svetlana Kopeina, Mihai Agapie



Toi te Waru – Art in the heat of summer
Opening Day: 6 March 2026
Exhibition Dates: 20 December 2026 – 15 April 2026
Where: Te Papatuanuku art gallery
Artists: Toi te Waru is a collaboration with the New Zealand Parliament, invited artists from across the motu are invited to bring for exhibition in Te Papatuanuku art gallery, located in the grounds of Parliament Buildings, the exhibition will run from 20 December 2026 to the end of March 2027. Toi te Waru is a collaboration between gifted by Ngāi Kōtaka to Māori co-curator Ngāti Porou artist Ngāti Porou, warrioh and jay the summer months bring

Contemporary New Zealand art

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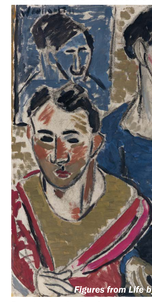
Gallery news

by Alessia Belsito-Riera

Radical and revolutionary



***Figures from Life* by Toss Woollaston.**

Drawing inspiration from masters such as Cézanne, Hofmann, Picasso, and Matisse, Kiwi artist Toss Woollaston forsook à la mode naturalistic portraiture to create works that would evoke his subjects through bold, spontaneous lines, stylised forms, and vibrant colours. In doing so, he revolutionised New Zealand portraiture, ushering it into the modernist era.

To honour the artist's life and legacy, New Zealand Portrait Gallery Te Pūkenga Whakaata presents *Toss Woollaston: Figures from Life* until the 9th of February.

"This exhibition repositions Woollaston as a modern portraitist of equal stature to his landscape work," New Zealand Portrait Gallery director Jaenine Parkinson says. "His radical experimentation and commitment to capturing the essence of his subjects, without flattery, laid the groundwork for a new approach to portraiture in Aotearoa."

Featuring nearly 60 artworks, the exhibition is the culmination of years of collaboration and dedication. It highlights Woollaston's journey from aspiring poet to pioneering creative, emphasising his early influences and relationships while reflecting on the human experience and different ways of seeing and being seen. Parkinson expands on Woollaston's legacy below.

What is particular about Woollaston's portraiture style?

Woollaston was the first New Zealand artist to fully embrace a modern approach to painting portraits. Rather than attempt to create a naturalistic likeness akin to a photograph, he spent hours really looking at people. He tried to capture their form, the unique geometries of their faces, but he also sought to communicate a sense of who they were. He did this initially using bold outlines and facets of colour, which are quickly dashed in. Over time, he developed his own unique style of painting using layered planes of patchwork colour, delighting in the viscosity of the paint. He wasn't concerned with flattering his subjects, instead he tried to capture aspects of their character.

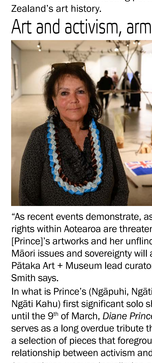
What is his lasting impact on the art world?

Woollaston is very well known in New Zealand as a landscape painter, but his portraits – despite making up half of his practice – have been largely overlooked and are of equal significance. Acknowledging his commitment to a modern approach to portraiture from the earliest years of his career, as this exhibition does, allows you to see just how radical and innovative his portraiture was.

What do you hope visitors take away from the exhibition?

I hope they take away a sense of an artist really grappling with his craft, constantly experimenting and refining his approach. The meditative discipline of hours spent looking, but also the joy he took in working with paint, ink, and pencil. The complete commitment of Toss and his wife Edith to his practice is also astounding: the sacrifices they made in their early married life – living in rudimentary circumstances – to enable him to paint, but also the community and fellowship they built around themselves, which made it possible. The works that resulted are some of the most intimate and affecting portraits within New Zealand's art history.

Art and activism, arm in arm



"As recent events demonstrate, as long as Māori rights within Aotearoa are threatened, Diane [Prince]'s artworks and her unflinching attention to Māori issues and sovereignty will also be relevant," Pātaka Art + Museum lead curator Ioana Gordon-Smith says.

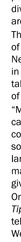
In what is Prince's (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Whatua, and Ngāti Kahu) first geometric solo show at Pātaka until the 9th of March, *Diane Prince: Activist Artist* serves as a long overdue tribute that brings together a selection of pieces that foreground the close relationship between activism and art in her practice.

As a painter, weaver, installation art practitioner, set designer, and educator, Prince's work is varied, but always walks arm in arm with social issues. "What draws her use of these different media together is a consistent interest in foregrounding Māori concerns, and in particular the need to remember Māori histories and practices and to examine and interrogate the systems that place those histories and practices under threat," Gordon-Smith says.

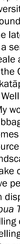
Contextualised by both landmark and current Māori activism, the exhibition presents Prince's work as deeply relevant and significant to understanding Māori and New Zealand (art) history.

Prince uses art to "extend grassroots activism already happening", Gordon-Smith continues. "But her works also make constant reference back to practices and whakapapa that ground Māori in who they are. You can see that in Diane's consistent use of weaving and in drawings and designs that celebrate Matariki. That constant return to Māori practices is more than just activism as critique, it's an activism that holds on to and fortifies the foundations for a strong sense of self".

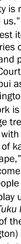
Visible authenticity



***Kōhatu* by Louie Zalk-Neale.**



***Karewa 2* by Louie Zalk-Neale.**



***Kirirua 2* by Louie Zalk-Neale.**

"My project *Mana Tipua Tuku Iho* has taken many forms over the past few years: performance, wānanga, video, photography, and sculpture," Te Whanganui-a-Tara-based artist Louie Zalk-Neale (Ngai Te Rāngi) says. "I explore whakapapa and belonging as takatāpui, queer, and transgender people; it's beautiful to see the ways that our diversity is reflected in te taiao – the environment around us."

The latest iteration of the project takes the shape of a series of photographic visualisations by Zalk-Neale and photographer Ted Whitaker installed in the Courtenay Place Light Boxes that depict takatāpui as Mana Tipua in and around the waters of Wellington.

"My work is based in mahi tī kōuka – using cabbage tree fibre and all the knowledge that comes with it as a durable weaving material, a source of kai, a healing rongoā, and a tohu in the landscape," Zalk-Neale continues. "The taonga I make come to life in performances that I create to give people a way to feel their mauri."

On display until the 9th of February 2025, *Mana Tipua Tuku Iho* is a re-imagining of Wiremu Grace's telling of the Ngake and Whātaitai (taniwha of Wellington) story.

"The taniwha go through all these transformations, growing bigger, dying, transforming into stone, and Whātaitai's wairua turns into a female bird, so within all of those changes there's this sort of gender fluidity and shapeshifting which is seen in many different pūrākau Māori," Zalk-Neale says. "Transformation is part of everyone's lives, not only trans people, but we are a visible example of it."

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Book reviews

Back On Track?

Edited by Stephen Levine
To Herenga Waka University Press
Reviewed by Kerry Lee

The 2023 New Zealand general election may go down in history as one of the more exciting and important ones in a very long time. The implications could be staggering for ordinary Kiwis, now and years down the line. Some people might still be asking themselves, are we truly back on track, or will issues like the ever-widening wealth gap and the cost of living get worse over time? The title *Back on Track? The New Zealand General Election of 2023* raises an interesting question, and if you take a survey, you would probably get several different answers depending on which side of the political fence people sit on.

Rather than concentrating on just the politics, editor Stephen Levine focuses on all facets of the election. This includes the media's involvement and its role in shaping the news. There is genuine concern/fear/anxiety/hope/wishful thinking that has lost some of the public's trust, and the obstacles they face to reclaim it. While it's a debate for another time, it needs to be had, especially now when people are relying so much on social media for news coverage.

Political leaders are interviewed, giving readers a chance to peer behind the curtain and see what was going through their minds at the time and why they did what they did. My favourite part of the book was the cartoons – those little political illustrations that poke fun at our politicians but tell a story that news articles never could. It was fun learning a little about the function of the cartoon in our media landscape and how much sway they hold over today's readers.

At first glance, *Back on Track?* might not interest those who are less interested in politics. However, for the political animals out there that eat this stuff up and want to know more about the election's inner workings? This is going to be magic from heaven.

The Secrets of Wilderfort Castle: The Waiting

Written by Jessica Jayne Webb
Jessica Jayne Webb
Reviewed by Jo Lucre

In the second installment of this fantasy series, author Jessica Jayne Webb builds on her first novel, *The Secrets of Wilderfort Castle* by expanding her otherworldly setting of mystery, intrigue, and a plot full of twists and turns.

In *The Waiting*, Agatha Wilderfort, now well versed in the many secrets her inherited Wilderfort Castle holds, is at first listless and disengaged – Charles (her love) is missing, or perhaps worse, in the daemon realm. Buoyed by those around her, Caelan, Vermeen, Nagla, Helgam, the girl witch Pollyanna, and the deadly but loyal Fey, all encourage her indomitable spirit. The possibility of being able to contact Charles to find his exact whereabouts by combining three dangerous spells is irresistible to a desperate Agatha, and so the journey begins.

The *Waiting* is Charles' story too, with the alliances and tradeoffs he must make to survive and return to Agatha unscathed. Lord Caspian is back in all his ugly glory and an uneasy suspense unfolds over Oxxy, the air daemon. Retrieved from Caspian's manor, Oxxy's subsequent behaviours beg the question whether he is in fact the threat of a stunning betrayal, or the victim of something more sinister. It's hard not to notice Webb's progress as a writer in this fantastical saga with daemons – both good and bad – and the parallel realms in which they reside. I enjoyed the carefully crafted characters, the water daemon, shape changer, forest daemon, witches, and girl-witch. These otherworldly beings, with their magic and nuanced powers complement the romance element of the story.

Whether thwarting an impending threat of a greater daemon entering the human realm or summoning her burgeoning powers as a choler, the race is on to open the door to where Charles lingers.

My only slight frustration with *The Waiting* was the trees printed on the pages, most probably intended to evoke a sense of a dark and foreboding realm. Instead, they were a little distracting. This aside, I look forward to reading the next installment from Webb: *The Changing*, where a new war is brewing.

Now and Then: Poems About Generations

Landing Press
Reviewed by Margaret Austin

"Eclectic" is an understatement as a descriptor for this collection. The latest Landing Edge anthology continues its tradition of social commentary – this time with contributions from 92 writers of all ages and from varying cultural and language backgrounds. In place of the erudite and the esoteric, we get a diversity of poetic reflections on the theme of generations that are appealing in their relatability.

Aaron Carey, aged seven, has a view on how generations start – you can say a lot in five lines! Vaughan Rapatahana writes his poem in te reo and English, and concludes with "I walk backwards into the future, with my eyes fixed on the past." And James Brown opens with "Ancestors are deceased people who bother you sometimes."

Life's worth by Maytal Noy, whose extended family lives in Israel, offers a sprinkling view of the conflict between Israel and Gaza: every line here is a challenge. It demonstrates that a poem can make a powerful statement every bit as effective as a political one.

Sure to rise by Susie MacGillivray is, perhaps predictably for some readers, a tribute to the *Edmonds Cookery Book*. Here is an affectionate look at a century-old recipe collection, recalled with images to make us smile: "from dog-eared, sticky and stained" to deluxe editions espousing tahini and cashew cream.

Naumatua by Ricky Masterman is the only poem here that rhymes! Rhyming gives momentum and that's what enhances a ballad-style account of a long and satisfying life. I loved "the kids came fast and grew like grass, we scattered the boggins in." Among the poems about women, *Do not go* by Jan Jordan is one of the most outstanding. Known for her writings about women as victims and survivors of sexual violence, Jordan's use of language powerfully recalls the times when the "nymphs of the pavé" were most vulnerable "to the blue sleeve of the law".

Now and Then is an accessible read, an encouragement to new writers, and a breath of nostalgia for us all.

Faces and Flowers: Poems to Patricia France

Written by Dinah Hawken
To Herenga Waka University Press
Reviewed by Margaret Austin

This slim volume comes to us by way of a poet and a painter. The poet is Dinah Hawken and the painter is Patricia France. They never met. But their collaboration gives us a unique blend of words and paintings that evokes a sense of beauty and reflective wisdom.

When she was in her fifties, France – in a remarkable act of self-responsibility – admitted herself to Ashburn Hall, a psychiatric hospital in Dunedin. And it was her psychiatrist who urging that she began to "paint out the past" as a path to rebirth. This she continued to do for the rest of her life, and we have this book as a record of her visual reflections.

The paintings feature women – especially their faces – and flowers. I can't imagine how subjects more suited to contemplation and peace of mind! Hawken references the "straight backs and Wesleyan beliefs" of their forebears and lo! the accompanying painting is of a backward-leaning woman looking straight ahead. The poems throughout comment similarly and sometimes subtly on France's work. That the writer can see guess the artist's intention adds to the intrigue of her poems.

Titles are sometimes borrowed from other works: often T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* which France listened to while painting. A boatshed below the Oaseberg house in Broad Bay is charmingly recalled: "It's as if each artist walks like an accurated boat / for their season and their ears." One of the more challenging paintings is matched by Hawken's title *What are they thinking?* She asks this of three female figures – a mother and on either side two daughters. They "look through the present, in which she is absent, into the future." *The unimaginable summer* is another less-than-optimistic poem, placed side by side with a painting redolent with fiery red – referencing in our poet's mind the Australian bushfires.

Faces and Flowers: Poems to Patricia France is a tribute to painting, to poetry, and to the colour they both celebrate.

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Celebrating success

Each year, the Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce celebrates businesses and individuals in the community with the 2degrees Wellington Regional Business Excellence Awards.

Taking home the Supreme Award was Sharesies Ltd, who also won Pertronic Industries Limited Excellence in Technology and Innovation.

Meanwhile, People's Choice Award sponsored by ANZ went to Jarvis Plumbing + Gasworks, who also won Excellence in Construction, Trades, and Infrastructure sponsored by Morden.

Excellence in Manufacturing sponsored by Woburn International was awarded to Whakatiki Engineering (1984) Ltd. Excellence in Hospitality, Tourism, and Retail sponsored by PKF Kendons went to Wellington Phoenix Football Club and Excellence in Service and Support sponsored by THE SEBEL to Queen Street Pharmacy.

The award for Excellence in Sustainable and Environmental Practices sponsored by CentrePort Ltd went to Pact Group Holdings Ltd and Excellence in Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Innovation sponsored by ACC New Zealand went to MJH Engineering Ltd. Empower Pacific Ltd snagged Diversity, Inclusion, and Growing People sponsored by Hutt City Council, while Prologic Skin Care took home the Best Small Business sponsored by Gallagher.

J Tomlinson & Co Ltd / JT Group, Arrow Uniforms, and Black Diamond Technologies Limited were inducted to the Hall of Fame, which was sponsored by New Zealand Media and Entertainment (NZME).

Naughty or nice?

The recently widowed Ms. Claus (Millie Osborne) is ready to be wooed. In search of an everlasting winter romance, she's signed up for *Ms. Christmas Bachelorette* – will she choose someone naughty or nice?

Brought to Wellington on the back of a sleigh from the North Pole by award-winning improv troupe PopRox, *Ms. Christmas Bachelorette* will see three eligible bachelors (Austin Harrison, Jed Davies, and Dylan Hutton) and one bachelorette (Nina Hogg) vying for the favour of our snow queen at Hannah Playhouse on Friday the 13th of December. Charismatic host Isaac Thomas will fan the flames while he slips, slides, and segues through the evening's proceedings accompanied by ice-cool tunes from Lia Kelly on keys.

"It's cheeky, hilarious, and just the right amount of raunchy," director Dylan Hutton beams. "Bring your friends, bring your mum, bring your whole office for a Christmas party they'll be talking about for ages. Honestly, it's the perfect show to get us Wellingtonians into the holiday spirit."

With a year of sold-out shows at Circa Theatre and two seasons of their New Zealand International Comedy Festival hit *Farce Onion* under their fluffy coats, PopRox's Christmas-themed, improvised dating show is so hot it had to be set in the snow.

Ms. Claus will be checking her list and checking it twice before she chooses

who'll come home with her tonight. It's anyone's guess which elfish eligible she'll invite to stand under the mistletoe on Christmas Eve!

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Sunday 29th December	Closed

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Monday 30th December	9am-6pm
Tuesday 31st December	9am-6pm
Wednesday 1st January	Closed
Thursday 2nd January	Closed
Friday 3rd January	9am-6pm
Saturday 4th January	9am-5pm
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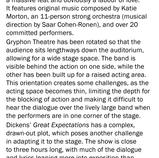
Pip: The Musical

Based on John Bolton with Tanya Piejus, Talia Carlisle, and Ross Morton
Directed by Tanya Piejus
Gryphon Theatre, 27th Nov 2024
Reviewed by Stanford Reynolds



A new, locally written adaptation of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, this musical is massive heart and obviously a labour of love. It features original music composed by Katie Spencer, an 11 person strong orchestra (musical direction by Sean Cohen Ronnen), and over 20 committed performers.

Gryphon Theatre has been rotated so that the audience sits lengthways down the auditorium, allowing for a wide stage space. The band is visible behind the action on one side, while the other has been built up for a raised acting area. This orientation creates some challenges, as the acting space becomes thin, limiting the depth for the blocking of actors and making it difficult to hear the dialogue over the lively large band when the performers are in one corner of the stage. Dickens' *Great Expectations* has a complex, drawn-out plot, which poses another challenge in adapting it to the stage. The show is close to three hours long, with much of the dialogue and lyrics lasting every bit of exposition than character development. Many technical elements are employed to tell the story, including sound effects (sound design by director Tanya Piejus), projections (AV design by Emma Maguire), smoke, and even a puppet. As the lighting (design by Jamie Byas and Brian Byas) uses colour creatively to set location and mood, the projections – which are tricky to see – feel superfluous to me. Wardrobe design by Wendy Howard assisted by Kelly Knight excellently captures the characters and time period. I would love to see more focus on the emotion in the acting and blocking over the use of technology, which I feel would help to lift the story (and music) off the page.

Under an adaptation of this scale faces many challenges, when the full ensemble sings in harmony there is a fantastic sound and vibrancy. I hope to see future productions of *Pip* and commend Wellington Repertory Theatre for going all out on this ambitious production, dedicated to the memory of John Golder and his wife Alison.

The MILKYVERSE

Created and directed by
Sean Burnett Dugdale-Martin
Presented by Ruff as Gutz
Mats Theatre, 26th Nov 2024
Reviewed by Madelaine Empson

The MILK canon is rightly exceptional because it is very loud (like a canon, work and chaotic. "It's like Wipeout but insidé", creator Sean Burnett Dugdale-Martin with in a press release, proving my point. MILK is long-form improv meets water sports, whereby a group of players – in this case Salomé Grace Neely, Anna Barker, Sarah Penny, Adriana Dana Vasiura, and Ezra Prattley – create a story out of suggestions from the audience, who pelt them with properties whenever they want something created to change.

This could be as simple as a performer going from happy to sad, stoked about a twig (hairy egg, of course) to grossed out by it, or it could be as dire and consequential as a death in the MILK family. This happens when a seemingly ordinary, secretly legendary water balloon explodes, revealing its creamy contents and changing the course of the show forever.

In *The MILKYVERSE*, which MC Dugdale-Martin introduces in a fittingly hilarious and hectic manner (in fact, they even forget to tell us what to do with the water balloons) (all good, it's probably explanatory), our protagonist, Diana Vasiura has moved out of Mum/Grandma's (Grace Neely) home into a flat with an eccentric Dry Boots roommate (Prattley) whose mum (Barker) has America, according to a doctor monologuing as Chappell Roan (Penny). Tasked with clearing the hair out of the flat lest the Milkyverse combust, the unassigned housemate (a different dimension where people (especially whoever Barker is playing at the time) can open doors to other worlds) Dry Boots drops in their line of vision though! Still, impressive! Special shoutout to design lead and technician Ken Lacoron for a brilliant lowering of Grace's line-thrower 2(%)! Get it, like two-percent milk!

I will now officially sign off and leave the puns to the experts: Ruff as Gutz, who have chumed out yet another udderly fantastic show. Why to go!

The Planets: Elgar & Holst

Presented by
New Zealand Symphony Orchestra
Conducted by Gemma New
Michael Fowler Centre, 22nd Nov 2024
Reviewed by Tamsin Evans

Photo by Rob Kelly.

After a busy international season, principal conductor Gemma New is at home on the podium with the NZSO and it was a pleasure to see her expressive, expansive style again.

We know a lot about what the universe looks like, but the resonances of space have to be continually augmented by technology before we can hear a sound wave in a vacuum. Music often settles in this absence of sound and Kaija Saariaho's *Adrenal 4270*. Tickles so unquestionably what my contemporary experience tells me space sounds like. Wonderful orchestration of slow and eerie sounds of strings and harps punctuated with blasts of brass and percussion left us in no doubt that there is a lot to listen to in that vacuum.

Tetsuro Ishikawa tasked Elgar's Violin Concerto in B Minor with absolute mastery. His rich, confident, emotional tone contrasted with technical excellence and a fine combination of speed, double stopping, and huge shifts with the low didn't faze him at all. After Tourish, this was musically more Earth bound but also sky high. Gustav Holst's *The Planets* is epic, evocative, and vivid. New's sense of drama is well suited to bringing these astrological characters to life. The polarity of the representation between conductor and orchestra was absolutely on point. Holst's composition, rhythm and orchestration is of course critical and brings the characters to the stage – *Mars, the Bringer of War*; Saturn, the *Bringer of Old Age*; *Neptune, the Mystic* and so on – but the conductor and musicians must make them real. Musical excellence gave each of the planets their individual nature, the section principals were brilliant as usual, and the tone and volume of the Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir were flawless. There was also something more going on in this performance. New somehow linked the heartbeats of the planetary cousins to human connection and an awe-inspiring sense of the whole universe.

Sleeping Beauty: The Pantomime

Written by Gavin Rutherford and Simon Leary
Directed by Gavin Rutherford
Circa Theatre, 16th Nov 2024
Reviewed by Tanya Piejus

Photos by Rob Kelly.

Celebrating 20 years of the Circa pantomime, this year's offering was always going to be special. It's Doctor Who, that this edition of the panto has a TV Who-inspired, time-travelling twist with Anita Minute (Jhan Morgan) dressed in a sparky third-dimensional tailcoat and Dalek-inspired hat (design by Sheila Horton) and a Portal-Door in place of the TARDIS. It's great to see Jackson Burling back in a full role, rather than playing swing, as Justin Time, Adam's companion. There's even a nerdalicious nod to *Jurassic Park* in Natasha McAllister's velociraptor minion and the occasional callback to previous panto, including Lil-Bee-Jane Rutherford's Gooey with her nasal "Hoooooonk!" for those of us old enough to remember *Mother Goose* 11 years ago.

Writers Gavin Rutherford and Simon Leary have created another wonderfully entertaining, homegrown adaptation of a classic fairytale with all the Wellington-flavored and political jokes we've come to expect. The digs at David Seymour, Winston Peters, and Shane Jones elicited laughs from the largely adult opening-night audience and Bronwyn Turei hearing in half a sheet of paper and performing a hake with Morgan received the biggest roar of applause for acknowledging current political events.

The cast of experienced performers work beautifully and energetically together and lean into the gender-fluid and inclusive nature of the panto. No one does a villain like Bronwyn Turei as evil fairy Duke, and Simon Leary and Kathleen Burns are charming as Sleeping Beauty and Dude to the delightful Aurora Australis (Rachel McSweeney and her stunning singing voice.

Yes, of course, Michael Williams comes up trumps with his musical arrangements of pop hits by stars ranging from The Beach Boys to Cher and Ed Sheeran and even sneaks in a homage to the *Dr Who* theme.

Ian Harman's set design, including a stunning coloured-gobstopper floor, and Marcus McShane's lighting create a lush and vibrant stage for yet another fabulous, funny, and flirty pantomime. Oh, no they didn't! Oh, yes they did!

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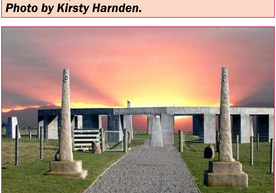
What's on December

6th Dec. Gingerbread: A Kid Friendly Christmas Drag Show: *The Fringe Bar, Allen Street, Te Aro* – 4pm. Adults and tamariki alike will have a jingle-ball at this festive drag show. Hosted by Willy SmacknTush [pictured] and featuring a sleighful of naughty and nice performers from across the snow globe, Gingerbread is a fantastic way to get into the Christmas spirit!
Photo by Kirsty Harnden.



21st Dec. The Star of Bethlehem and Summer Solstice: *Stonehenge Aotearoa, Ahiaruhe Road, Carterton* – 7:30pm. The summer solstice marks the longest day of the year. Enjoy some music, watch the sunset, learn all about the night sky, discover ancient practices and traditions, and celebrate late into the warm evening.

Wairarapa

7th Dec. Masterton Christmas Fair: *Rotary Club of Masterton South, South Road, Masterton* – 8am. Crafts, food, entertainment, and stalls collide at this festive fair.

8th Dec. A Very Carterton Christmas: *Carrington Park, High Street, Carterton* – 3:30pm. Keep the Christmas celebrations going after the festive parade with music, kids' activities, stalls, food, dancing, and more.

Music

6th Dec. Dave Murphy and Janet Muggeridge: *Thunderbird Café, Featherston Street, Te Aro* – 5:30pm. Playing mandolin and guitar coupled with sonorous vocals, Dave and Janet will perform Americana and folk classics, plus some originals.

8th Dec. Wellington City Orchestra Presents: Donald Maurice conducts Lilburn, Shostakovich, Ritchie: *St Andrew's on The Terrace, The Terrace, Te Aro* – 3pm. Enjoy an afternoon performance of delicious classical music favourites.

12th Dec. Solar Daze: *Meow, Edward Street, Te Aro* – 7pm. Catch local Pōneke neo-soul hip-hop five-piece Solar Daze as they release their new single.

12th Dec. Kita: *Rogue and Vagabond, Garrett Street, Te Aro* – 9pm. See Kita where they first cut their teeth as they celebrate their newest music video *Chasing Summer*.

13th Dec. Come Together – Big End of Year Bash: *St James Theatre, Courtenay Place, Te Aro* – 8pm. Aotearoa's finest musicians will perform the greatest 20 rock songs of all time.

14th Dec. New Zealand Symphony Orchestra Presents: Messiah: A Christmas Tradition: *Michael Fowler Centre, Wakefield Street, Te Aro* – 7:30pm. The trumpets shall sound as the NZSO rings in Kiwi summer with Handel's *Messiah*.

15th Dec. Saxcess: *St Andrew's on The Terrace, The Terrace, Te Aro* – 3pm. Celebrate the joy of the season at the Saxcess Christmas concert!

Performance

Until 11th Jan. Sleeping Beauty: The Pantomime: *Circa Theatre, Taranaki Street, Te Aro* – various times. With the help of sassy fairies and two interdimensional travellers, Aurora must venture through the time-space continuum to reclaim her throne from evil forces.

5th-6th Dec. Fruitcake: A Jolly Good Christmas Drag Show: *The Fringe Bar, Allen Street, Te Aro* – 8pm. This Christmas drag spectacular is for everyone, whether you've been naughty or nice.

7th Dec. Urzila Carlson: *The Opera House, Manners Street, Te Aro* – 7pm. Get ready for brand-new jokes from New Zealand's favourite South African Kiwi.

7th Dec. Have A Very Merry Caburlesque 11: *The Fringe Bar, Allen Street, Te Aro* – 8pm. Celebrate the silly season with bewitching Christmas-themed cabaret and burlesque performances.

13th Dec. PopRox Presents: Ms. Christmas Bachelorette: *Hannah Playhouse, Courtenay Place, Te Aro* – 7pm. *Ms. Christmas Bachelorette* stars a recently widowed and ready to be wooed Ms. Claus in her search for an everlasting winter romance!

14th-15th Dec. IDIOM: *Te Auaha, Dixon Street, Te Aro* – 8pm. Expect top-notch circus, comedy, dance, music, and more from local and international artists at the top of their game, with a special appearance from Laser Kiwi.

20th-21st Dec. Tama Alexander's December Double Up: *The Fringe Bar, Allen Street, Te Aro* – 6:30pm. Award-winning stand-up comedian Tama Alexander shares his wild and wacky experiences.

21st-22nd Dec. The Pantoloons Present: A Very Messy Christmas!: *Little Theatre, Lower Hutt; Southward Theatre, Paraparaumu* – 11am, 1pm; 1pm. It's nearly Christmas Eve, and everything is going wrong in Santa's workshop!

Festivals

Until 14th Dec. Six Degrees Festival: *BATS Theatre, Kent Terrace, Te Aro* – various times. Victoria University of Wellington – Te Herenga Waka Master of Fine Arts students present a smorgasbord of five diverse plays.

7th, 14th Dec. Christmas in the Quarters: *Various locations and times in Wellington*. Catch craft sessions, music, circus acts, and Santa at Wellington City Council's Christmas celebrations.

14th Dec. Paekākārīki Christmas Fete: *St Peter's Village Hall, Beach Road, Paekākārīki* - 10am. Stalls, live music, and entertainment converge in this celebration for Christmas.

I can believe what we like. But in matters of church and faith. Unless there is some substance to that belief The answer is 'blowing in the wind. Farting breeze. Bob dylan. Where have all the flowers gone? Neve knew that song. We wid be inviting deceivers. convert to a futile false belief? tragic. My nghbr has tell 5x family deaths. Wories are they all all true? Hav to work thro one by one. Unlawful act. stab at prison kitchen? It is critical let down. Noscrutiny. Coun post. Leagu. My justice. Casual dismiss. Yes a measure of Truth -atoms. Let balance bgnn. Guess or suppose is fools proof. I mean no proof of fact. Only persuasive lawyer Theology. Sic world full of idiots. m0277 845 900. Certain you nono know. Avoid mistakes. 2 coming. Pythagoras. Donald McDonald quad rflin genius hawking int-nat jour.

What's on January

Until 7th Jan. Summer Group Show: *Vincents Art Workshop, Willis Street, Te Aro.* Artists from all backgrounds, experiences, ages, and walks of life come together in Vincents Art Workshop's final exhibition of 2024. With so much diversity, the works presented are vast and varied and span all kinds of different mediums. ***Detail of Doily by Anne Marie Bush.***

11th Jan. Isuzu UTE A-League – Wellington Phoenix v Adelaide United: *Sky Stadium, Waterloo Quay, Wellington Waterfront* – 5pm. The first home game for the Wellington men's football team is set to be a rollicking and rambunctious occasion. With the success of last year in their wings, the Phoenix are set to soar in their match against Adelaide United.

Wairarapa

4th-5th Jan. Dragstalgia – Wildbunch Wars: *Masterton Motorplex International Dragstrip, Manaia Road, Masterton* – 10am. This car-centric event is the perfect place for motorheads to ring in the first days of 2025.

10th-12th Jan. Wairarapa Music in the Country: *Tauherenikau Racecourse, State Highway 2, Featherston* – various times. Celebrating 10 years running, Wairarapa's annual country music festival features an epic lineup.

11th Jan. Ruth Pretty's Cookbook Library Extravaganzal: *Greytown Town Hall, Main Street, Greytown* – 9am. Celebrated chef, restauranteur, writer, and caterer Ruth Pretty settles in at the Greytown Library with her beloved cookbooks and a whole lot of stories.

Music

31st Dec. New Year's Eve at Upper Hutt Cosmopolitan Club: *Upper Hutt Cosmopolitan Club, Logan Street, Upper Hutt* – 7pm. Ring in 2025 with classic rock and pop tunes from Money For Old Rope.

4th Jan. Insecure Delusion Presents: A Tribute to Tool: *Valhalla, Vivian Street, Te Aro* – 9pm. Insecure Delusion plays tunes from acclaimed prog-rock outfit Tool.

10th Jan. Mimi and Ruby: *Meow, Edward Street, Te Aro* – 8pm. Aussie folk favourites Mimi Gilbert and Ruby Gill co-headline a tour through Aotearoa over summer.

Performance

6th Jan. The Barden Party Presents: Macbeth: *The Dell, Wellington Botanic Garden ki Paekākā, Glenmore Street* – 6:30pm. Get ready to spice up your summer with a thrilling, saucy rendition of Shakespeare's classic tragedy *Macbeth*.

10th Jan. Pauly Smith: *Michael Fowler Centre, Wakefield Street, Te Aro* – 7:30pm. After selling out arenas across the UK, Paul Smith brings his smash-hit tour *Pablo* to New Zealand.

11th-13th Jan. Sarah Millican: *Michael Fowler Centre, Wakefield Street, Te Aro* – 8pm. With two Wellington shows already sold out, be sure to catch comedian Sarah Millican's *Late Bloomer* before you're out of luck!

Sports

4th Jan. Ninja A-League – Wellington Phoenix v Perth Glory: *Trust Porirua Park, Mungavin Avenue, Cannons Creek* – 3pm. Cheer on the Wellington women's football team in the first game of the New Year.

15th Jan. Isuzu UTE A-League – Wellington Phoenix v Sydney FC: *Sky Stadium, Waterloo Quay, Wellington Waterfront* – 6pm. The Wellington men's football team provide some mid-week excitement with a match against Sydney FC to help you shake off the post-holiday blues.

Galleries

Until 20th Jan. The Art of Banksy: *Tākina Wellington Convention & Exhibition Centre, Wakefield Street, Te Aro.* Art, culture, and politics collide when a blockbuster exhibition of Banksy's works descends on the capital.

Until 20th Jan. Fortune: *Te Waka Huia o Ngā Taonga Tuku Iho Wellington Museum, Jervois Quay, Wellington Waterfront.* Artist Bev Moon presents a banquet of knitted food exploring history, culture, and shared family values.

Until 9th Feb. Toss Woollaston: Figures from Life: *New Zealand Portrait Gallery Te Pūkenga Whakaata, Lady Elizabeth Lane, Wellington Waterfront.* Toss Woollaston's approach to portrait painting was radical and served as a catalyst for change in New Zealand's art scene.

Until 9th Feb. Mana Tipua Tuku Iho: *Courtenay Place Light Boxes, Courtenay Place, Te Aro.* This series of photographic visualisations depicts takatāpui as Mana Tipua in and around the waters of Te Whanganui-a-Tara.

Until 9th Mar. Diane Prince: Activist Artist: *Pātaka Art + Museum, Parumoana Street, Porirua.* Painter, weaver, installation art practitioner, set designer, and educator Diane Prince's practice emphasises activism.

Festivals

31st Dec. New Year's Eve Courtenay Carnival: *Courtenay Place Precinct, Te Aro, Wellington* – 4pm. Starting with family-focused performers, characters, and activities before giving way to live bands, DJs, circus acts, drag queens, roving performers, and top music artists, this first annual festival is set to be a massive celebration.

31st Dec. Brew Year's Eve: *Brewtown, Blenheim Street, Upper Hutt* – 4pm. Ring in the New Year with Home Brew, The Black Seeds, and Sublime with Rome.

For your inclusion in our mid-late January listings, email: whatson@regionalnews.kiwi. Close off for the next issue's listings is noon Tuesday 10 December.

To the best of our knowledge, the information provided to us regarding the above events was correct at the time of press. Our company accepts no liability for events postponed, cancelled, sold out, or otherwise adapted.

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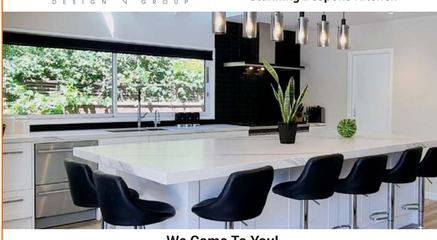

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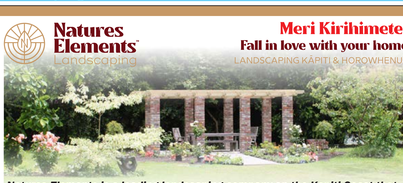

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Regional News

Connecting Wellington

Summer 2024-25

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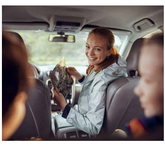

My favourite places
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Bucket list travel – Chatham Islands **Page 18**

South Island travel – Otago **Page 19**

Gardens Magic

Presented by Wellington City Council, Gardens Magic is back from the 7th to the 26th of January 2025, featuring Wellington's iconic concert series, an enchanting light display, the engaging kids' garden trail, and the interactive kids' explorer days.

The Gardens Magic concert series will fill our summer nights with the sounds of a wide range of music genres performed by our capital's vivacious talent, set in the Botanic Gardens ki Paekākā Soundshell. The free concerts start with a warm-up solo act at 7pm before the main act kicks off at 8pm. Concerts will take place each week from Tuesday to Sunday. Come early to grab a good picnic spot and stay after the sun goes down to take in the stunning light display by MJF Lighting. On every night from 9pm to 10:30pm, the display transforms the Botanic Gardens into a glowing wonderland.

During the day, explore the kids' garden trail between 9am and 5pm. Learn about the plants in the gardens and how they grow with Oskar the backpacking tourist. Print out Oskar's activity sheet or pick up a copy at the Soundshell, the Treehouse, or Cable Car ticket office, to discover hidden scenes in the Botanic Garden. Drop your activity sheet into the boxes located in the pick-up places to go in the draw to win a prize pack. Meanwhile, the kids' explorer days, taking place on the 8th, 15th, and 22nd of January, give tamariki the opportunity to spend time in nature, learn about plants and animals, and take part in nature-themed activities.

To find out more about Gardens Magic, visit www.wellington.govt.nz/gardens-magic

Cover: A member of Tautua Dance lighting up the Wellington Pasifika Festival 2024.

The views expressed in this newspaper reflect those of the authors or businesses individually and not necessarily those of *Regional News*.

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Summer times
Palmers Garden News

Enhance your outdoor space

by Steve Goslin

Transforming your backyard into a beautiful outdoor space is easier than you think. Whether you're a seasoned gardener or a first-timer, the team at Palmers can help get you started.

It's helpful to first think about what you already have in your garden and if there's a certain style you're trying to achieve – like cottage garden, mediterranean, or native, as this will help inform plant choice. Your local environment and soil conditions will also play a part in determining your garden. New Zealand natives are a great choice as they require less water and maintenance and are hardy against the Wellington wind. Drought-tolerant plants from other coastal regions, such as Australia, South Africa, California, or the Mediterranean will thrive in exposed gardens as well.

Once you've decided on your style, select three to four varieties and colours. For a hot, tropical garden, for example, go with reds, oranges, and yellows.

Layer your garden by starting with trees at the back. They'll provide the structure and shade for the rest of your garden. Then select medium-height shrubs and ground cover to fill in the gaps and supress weeds. A simple trick for creating visual appeal is planting in groups of three. Whether it's flowers, shrubs, or coastal plants, arranging them in odd-numbered clusters creates a natural, balanced look. This also adds depth and interest to your garden while making it feel fuller and more cohesive.

When it comes to grey and burgundy colours, my favourites are Loropetalum Plum Delight, Parahebe Snowcap, and Artemisia, while Abelia Sunshine Daydream, Pittosporum Little Gem, and Lomandra make for a great tropical colour scheme.

Not sure where to start? Visit our Palmers Plimmerton or Miramar store for advice today.

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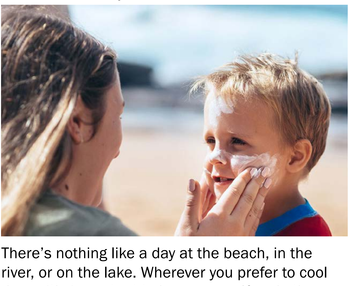
Swim safely



There's nothing like a day at the beach, in the river, or on the lake. Wherever you prefer to cool down, it's important to keep yourself and others safe.

The most important safety measure is simple: don't swim alone. If you're swimming with children, keep an eye on them at all times and keep any inexperienced swimmers within arm's reach.

There are plenty of other tips and tricks too. Stretching before you swim is a good way to avoid cramps while in the water. Knowing your ability and not going outside your comfort zone is also important. Don't get pressured into swimming further or deeper – you know your limits! Avoid drinking alcohol when swimming too. It slows down your reaction time and can put you to sleep, which is dangerous when you're around bodies of water.

Be aware of natural hazards when swimming. Check the tides and the weather, but don't forget to also monitor for any contaminants that could have entered into waterways. Also, have a peek at what's below before you jump in. Cannonball!

When swimming in the ocean, it's important to take note of tidal changes and dangerous currents. Educate yourself on how to spot a rip current, and how to respond if you get caught in one. Always swim within the lifeguard flags.

Oh, and don't forget to slip, slop, slap, and wrap. Be safe and happy summer swimming!

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Summer times

A pathway for tomorrow

St Mark's School and Preschool is a leading Anglican Wellington co-educational independent primary school. St Mark's was established in 1917 and is a school and preschool with traditions of the past that meet today's modern technologies and teaching pedagogy. St Mark's is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School for girls and boys from preschool to Year 8 that prides itself on preparing tamariki for success at secondary school.

As the beginning of your child's educational journey, preschool is where they have the opportunity to develop a love for learning. Choosing St Mark's Preschool gives your child a positive start along their educational pathway while also preparing them for what comes next.

Children aged two to five enjoy a happy, fun, and engaging environment through a stimulating curriculum and extensive enrichment opportunities. A balance between child-initiated inquiry and structured, age-appropriate activities is maintained in this vibrant, cheerful, and environmentally mindful setting.

The educators at St Mark's believe that children are the agents of their own learning, which is why they have an active voice, responsibility, and a stake in the learning environment. A safe, inclusive, and collaborative space is paramount so that each child's individuality, innate curiosities, and desire to learn can be nurtured to the fullest.

Together with St Mark's School and Preschool, you can support your tamariki to reach their full potential. By fulfilling your child's needs now, tomorrow they can stand strong.

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Fruit Guys $100
Maree Crighton - Lower Hutt

All vouchers have been couriered out

Summer times

Wonderful Wellington waterways

Wellington is a vast and varied region: from bustling urban centres to tranquil natural landscapes, there are strokes for all kinds of folks. If you're hankering for something a little bit different, cruise down the river with Wellington Rafting.

Based in the Hutt Valley, they offer a range of wilderness white water rafting experiences on Te Awa Kairangi (the Hutt River) and the Waiohine River. With expert staff onboard, every trip is made safe, challenging, and fun, whether you're an adrenaline junkie or a leisure-lover. What's more is that anyone can join in on the fun, no matter your size, age, or ability.

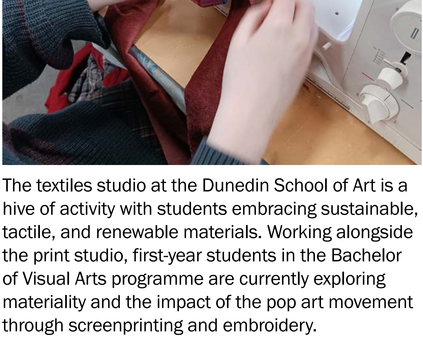
There are multiple excursions available through Wellington Rafting. Guided inflatable duckie tours are perfect for pairs, canyoning is for families, colleagues, groups, or parties, and there are even multiple levels for the more experienced adventurers.

On the Akatarawa Forest Canyoning Trip, guests will hike 20 minutes into the bush, exploring caves, jumping off rocks, and abseiling down waterfalls.

The Te Awa Kairangi/Hutt River Grade 2 Scenic Duckie Tour is tailor-made for first timers – sit back and relax while you enjoy spectacular views. The Grade 3 Wilderness Duckie Tour is suited for those who prefer an added dose of thrill.

For a once-in-a-lifetime experience, opt for the helicopter journey into the Tararua Ranges. From here, you can paddle back down to base traversing 10 kilometres of the Waiohine River.

Sustainable textiles



The textiles studio at the Dunedin School of Art is a hive of activity with students embracing sustainable, tactile, and renewable materials. Working alongside the print studio, first-year students in the Bachelor of Visual Arts programme are currently exploring materiality and the impact of the pop art movement through screenprinting and embroidery.

The resurgence of textiles in contemporary art reflects a renewed appreciation for craft, materiality, and the tactile qualities of fabric. Historically relegated to the realm of decorative arts or domestic work, textiles are now being acknowledged as a powerful medium for artistic expression. Students can gain skills in traditional weaving, embroidery, felting, knitting, crochet, and fabric manipulation techniques, transforming them into statements that address identity, culture, and social issues. Textiles, often recycled or repurposed, carry inherent histories, offering a rich medium for storytelling and commentary on consumption, labour, and memory.

The tactile nature of fabric engages viewers in a sensory experience that contrasts with our increasing digital encounters. As a result, textiles in art are celebrated for their ability to convey complex narratives and embody cultural, social, and environmental concerns in a physical and immersive way.

The Dunedin School of Art has a range of programmes, including certificate, undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degree qualifications, that offer access to the hands-on textiles studio as well as seven other dedicated studio facilities.

Bayleys real estate

Legacy of excellence

Founded on a 50-year legacy of excellence, Bayleys is synonymous with showcasing quality property, offering exemplary customer service, and delivering superior results. This approach started with Pam, Graham, and John Bayley in 1973, and it still lives on today.

There are four business philosophies that underpin Bayleys' leadership in sales, auctions, leasing, marketing, management, research, financial analysis, sponsorship, and public relations.

The first is maintaining a focus on clients. Every Bayleys team member will take the time to get to know you, your property, and your desired outcomes in order to maximise the value of your assets. From here begins a process of collaboration, which is the second foundational value. As you work towards a shared goal, the team use every tool and technology at their disposal, ensuring innovation remains a pillar of their approach. Lastly, the entire nationwide team are committed to accountability and delivering on their promises.

With over 1000 offices across Aotearoa and the Pacific Islands, Bayleys has completed nearly 12,000 sales and leasing transactions – that's over $13.4 billion in sold or leased properties. This in-depth experience, knowledge, and successful track record is reinforced by proactive presence and demonstrated leadership across all property sectors.

As Bayleys has continued to grow over the years, the Kiwi owned and operated business has remained committed to service and delivering the best results. That's why clients come back time and again, and across generations.

Lower Hutt

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If you are looking to buy or sell real estate, Lou would love to be there to help and guide you through the process with her team at Bayleys, New Zealand's leading Real Estate agency.

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Award-winning agent Lou is known for her dedication to her clients, often forming lasting friendships long after the sold sign goes up. She prides herself on personal service, tailoring her approach to each client and property to enhance its saleability. With precise market feedback and expert advice, Lou ensures you have a clear understanding of what to expect. She sells all property types with outstanding results, backed by a fantastic team, including Matt Thomason. Together, they deliver exceptional service, superior marketing, and unmatched work ethics. With Lou and her Bayleys team, the process will be seamless, stress-free, and rewarding.

Upper Hutt

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Reliability, integrity, and stellar service are the cornerstones of Justine Lord's approach. She is results-driven and committed to securing the best price, whether you're buying or selling. Justine is available when you need, working flexible hours to ensure your journey runs as smoothly and stress-free as possible.

Due to her background in veterinary management, Justine is level-headed in high-pressure situations. During her years as a real estate agent, she has acquired a wealth of insider knowledge, excellent negotiation skills, and a thorough understanding of the market climate, all of which works together to ensure you get the best possible price for your home.

Kapiti

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Sarah George has been in real estate since 2008. Having navigated the market in all conditions, she can offer advice for buying and selling all types of houses. Thanks to her background in account management, Sarah is big on communication, ensuring all of you are on the same page every step of the way. She is friendly, engaging, and dedicated to providing an outstanding professional service that ensures you get the result you want.

As a local Kapiti Coaster, Sarah is well versed in what makes the district unique and firmly involved in the community. Let her help make your property dreams reality.

Palmerston North

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As a seasoned real estate salesperson with over 20 years of experience in the industry, Maura Tootill has an extensive track record of helping clients buy and sell their homes and investment properties. With a deep knowledge of the local market and a commitment to delivering outstanding results, Maura is dedicated to providing a smooth and stress-free experience.

"I believe that communication is key to a successful real estate transaction, and I always keep my clients in the loop throughout the entire process," she says. "I take the time to listen to my clients' needs and work hard to exceed their expectations."

Wairarapa

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As a Bayleys real estate team, they combine their strengths and a data-driven approach to create a client-focused strategy.

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Paremata

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With accolades and awards aplenty, Ralph Kindl of Bayleys Paremata delivers winning results. Personable, organised, and always positive, he works hard to make buying or selling an enjoyable experience.

Driven by a genuine passion for helping people make significant life decisions, Ralph adopts a personalised approach with each client. He collaborates closely with them, identifying their objectives in order to craft a personalised strategy. As a former UN soldier and diplomat to the Austrian government, Ralph has excellent communication and negotiation skills that he uses to secure the best deal and help you achieve your property goals.

Back to contents

ADVERTISEMENT

Wanting more from your Primary school?

At Marsden, we believe that the ultimate goal of education is to prepare children for lives of meaning, accomplishment and genuine happiness. We support tamariki to be the best they can be, and to develop into confident, independent, lifelong learners.

Small classes

Our small class sizes greatly benefit development and academic achievement. We get to know each child's personal strengths, challenges and learning preferences, ensuring that their individual needs are met.

Exceptional teaching and support

Our passionate, forward-thinking teachers embrace the individuality of each student, nurturing both their progress and achievements. Specialists teach Physical Education, Music, Library and Information Literacy Skills and Te Reo Māori, offering tamariki a diverse and dynamic learning experience.

Future-focused learning

We prepare our tamariki for the future by encouraging them to think critically, solve problems creatively, and collaborate with others. Technology is seamlessly integrated into their learning, empowering students to explore, innovate and connect in a rapidly changing world.

Intentional wellbeing education

We prioritise hauora with a proactive and holistic approach to mental health and wellbeing. Our programmes equip tamariki with the tools to manage their mental, social and emotional health, allowing them to thrive both in and out of the classroom.

Specialised facilities

Our architecturally designed classrooms and purpose-built library offer a bright, inspiring space for learning. Students also benefit from the access to Marsden's top-notch facilities, including Science labs, Art House, gym, auditorium, artificial turf and sports fields.

A spacious, green learning environment

Nestled in the greenery of our Karori campus, Marsden Primary offers tamariki a natural playground. They can climb trees, swing on the jungle gym, become engineers in the sandpit and enjoy the expansive spaces that inspire creativity, exploration and play.

"In 2020 we moved our daughter to Marsden Primary at age 6 and we haven't looked back. She loves school and has thrived both inside and outside the classroom. Marsden has the ability to connect and work with each child's uniqueness and ensures that there is no opportunity missed. We have since started our youngest daughter who is also thriving.

Marsden is more than just an education for our girls, it provides a proactive learning environment that encompasses life skills, sport, music and cultural activities to help them shine in the way they would like.

The staff are connected and interested in each child's outcomes, both educational and personal. Most importantly, our girls are happy and engaged in their schooling and look forward to each day.

We highly recommend Marsden to anyone considering investing in their children's wellbeing and education in this way."

Mark and Francesca Jurgeleit

Meet our Head of Primary, Jo Burns

Jo is an outstanding educator with over 20 years' experience in Primary School education in a variety of contexts, including state and private education in New Zealand and internationally.

A lifelong learner, Jo has a certificate in Advanced Leadership with a focus on women in leadership and is working towards a Masters in Educational Leadership. She has trained extensively in conceptual-based learning, inquiry instruction and differentiation, having taught both the National Curriculum and International Baccalaureate.

Passionate about sport, Jo has played and coached netball and is involved in high-performance sport with New Zealand Artistic Swimming. She is an International Artistic Swimming Judge, having judged at the Olympics, Commonwealth Games, and World Championships.

Jo feels privileged to be able to collaborate with the teachers, tamariki and community at Marsden Primary and Marsden Preschool and empower our students to reach their full potential in an everchanging world.

Advancing literacy and numeracy

We are committed to building strong foundations in literacy and numeracy through evidence-based programmes. Our iDeaL Structured Literacy approach and PRIME Mathematics curriculum align with international best practices, offering teaching that is explicit, cumulative and systematic. These programmes ensure that students not only excel in their early years but also help us address gaps for those joining later. With regular assessment checkpoints and staff collaboration, we track progress carefully, ensuring every student is supported to achieve their full potential.

Specialist learning support

We are dedicated to meeting the individual needs of every student and offer tailored interventions when needed. Our specialist learning support teacher and our Arrowsmith Program® allow us to deliver comprehensive support. We work closely with parents, fostering a collaborative approach to ensure students with additional learning needs receive the care and resources they need to thrive.

Enrolments for 2025 and beyond are open, however, spaces are limited for 2025. Secure your child's place today! For more information, visit **www.marsden.school.nz**, call us on **(04) 476 8707** or email **enrol@marsden.school.nz**

Girls Years 1–13, Co-ed Preschool

Marsden *Inspiring Girls*

SAMUEL MARSDEN COLLEGIATE SCHOOL

Discover summer fun in Porirua!

15 DEC
Celebrate Christmas at Te Rauparaha Park & Pātaka Art + Museum

17–20 JAN
Enjoy the Summer Concert Series – four evenings of music at Adventure Park, Whitby

6 FEB
Don't miss Waitangi Day at Te Rauparaha Park and Arena

6–31 JAN
Unleash your inner rockstar at our City Centre Library holiday programme

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Take in some art at Pātaka Art + Museum

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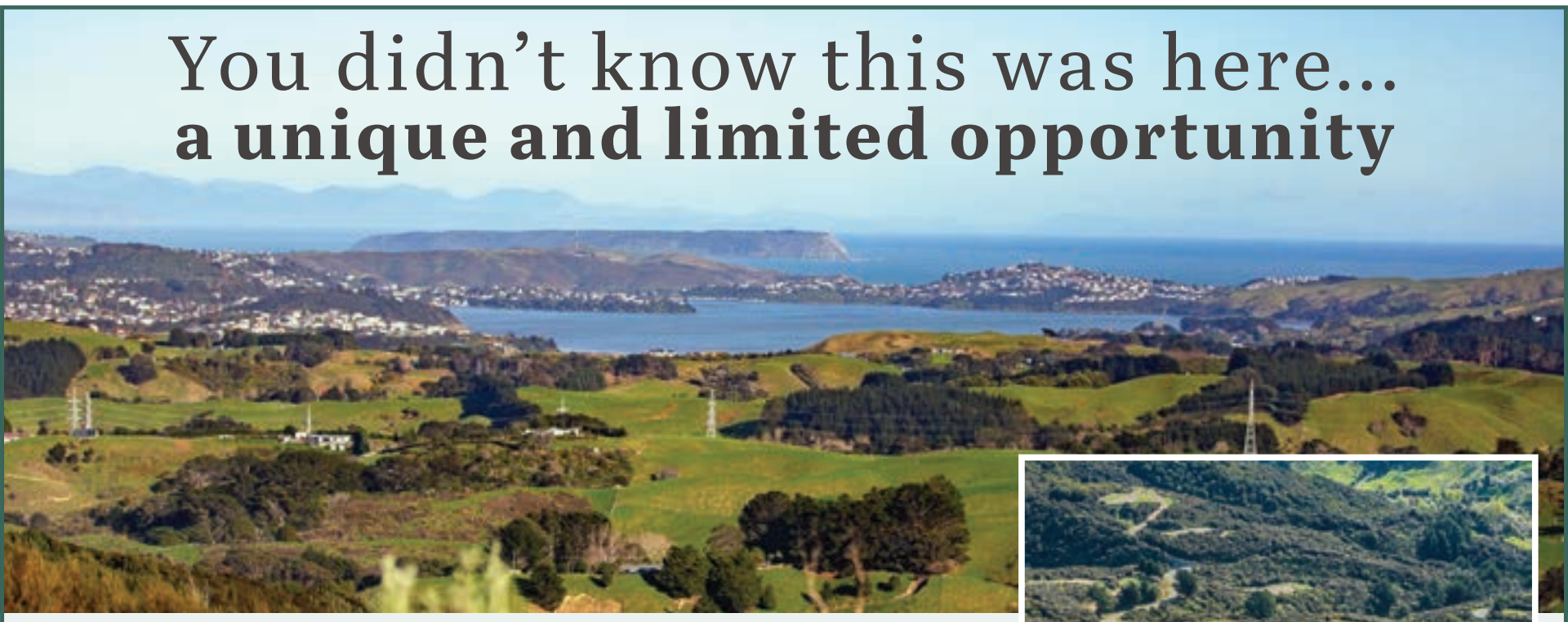

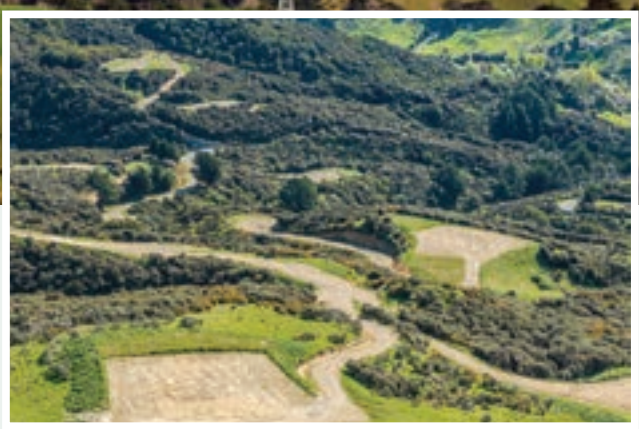

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Summer times

Check out summer events in Porirua

Summer has begun and the holiday season is drawing near. There are plenty of free and fun events happening in Porirua in December and January, so make sure to pop the following dates in your calendar.

Holiday festivities officially kick off on Sunday the 15th of December with Kirihimete in the City at Te Rauparaha Park and Pātaka Art + Museum. Between 3:30pm and 7:30pm, come along with friends and whānau to purchase Christmas gifts and enjoy delicious kai from local stallholders. Warm up your vocal cords for some well-known carols with Nick Tansley from 5pm. If the weather has other ideas, outdoor festivities will move inside to Te Rauparaha Arena and begin at 5pm.

The fun and celebrations don't stop with Christmas. Once we're into the new year, get ready for a long Wellington Anniversary weekend of live music and dancing as part of the free Summer Concert Series, from 6pm to 8pm each night between the 17th and 20th of January. Next year, the concerts will be held in the new location of Adventure Park in Whitby. Pack a picnic and get your dancing shoes on for four fabulous nights of live music from local bands.

Then, Porirua's summer events will end in style with another action-packed, free Waitangi Day event featuring live music, activities, and stalls at Te Rauparaha Park, Te Rauparaha Arena, Pātaka Art + Museum, and Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour from 12pm to 5pm.

Visit poriruacity.govt.nz for more information about all the events in Porirua this summer.

Explore the sanctuary

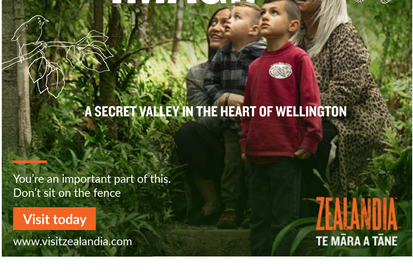
Only minutes from the centre of Wellington, a lush native forest sits waiting for you to explore. Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne is a 225-hectare ecosanctuary located in a hidden valley surrounded by the world's first predator exclusion fence. This special fence keeps mammalian predators out, providing rare and threatened native species with a safe place to call home.

These species have been reintroduced as part of Zealandia's 500-year vision to restore the valley. Some species have even begun spreading out into Wellington, creating one of the only cities in the world where bird biodiversity is increasing. The award-winning sanctuary provides the opportunity to get up close with these rare and endangered species living wild.

Kākā fill the air with their whistling sounds, takahē roam the valley hills, and rare hihi/stitchbird flit among tree branches. A guided day tour with our experienced guides is the best way to take in the sights and sounds of this regenerating native forest, learn to spot even the rarest of species and get the most out of your visit.

At night, get close to the iconic species of Aotearoa. Kiwi are heard and seen rustling through the undergrowth, ancient tuatara venture out of their burrows, and glow worms put on a majestic light display.

With 32 kilometres of trails, an onsite café, day tours, night tours, and amazing wildlife, there's plenty to see. Don't sit on the fence – head to visitzealandia.com and visit today!



Summer times

Up, up, and away

The Ōtaki Kite Festival will transform the Kapiti Coast into a whimsical, wondrous world of imagination on the 8th and 9th of March. Kites in the shape of sea creatures will dive between the clouds while others taking the form of creatures and characters of all kinds will soar up, up, and away into the sky.

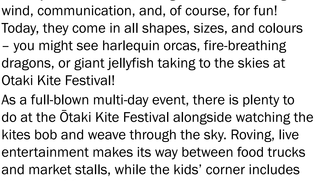
The free family extravaganza, taking place on the beautiful Ōtaki Beach, is renowned for sparking imaginations young and old as world-class kites of all shapes and sizes take flight, thrilling and delighting both avid kite flyers and those who haven't hoisted one in years. Attracting roughly 30,000 visitors, the event features kite flyers from across the motu and around the world, while some of the contraptions are flown specially at the Ōtaki Kite Festival.

An ancient invention that has been traced back to the 5th century BC, kites were said to have been invented by Chinese philosophers Mozi and Lu Ban. They've been used for centuries in a wide variety of applications including scientific research, military missions, measuring distances, testing wind, communication, and, of course, for fun! Today, they come in all shapes, sizes, and colours – you might see harlequin orcas, fire-breathing dragons, or giant jellyfish taking to the skies at Otaki Kite Festival!

As a full-blown multi-day event, there is plenty to do at the Ōtaki Kite Festival alongside watching the kites bob and weave through the sky. Roving, live entertainment makes its way between food trucks and market stalls, while the kids' corner includes all kinds of fun.

Float into magic and whimsy at the 2025 Ōtaki Kite Festival.

Create and explore



Artwork by Martin Henty.

Creativity shines bright in Ōtaki over Wellington Anniversary weekend when the Ōtaki Pottery Club's Festival of Pots and Garden Art takes up residence in the beautiful Anam Cara Gardens from the 16th to the 20th of January.

Renowned for its vibrant and eclectic atmosphere, the festival serves as a platform for emerging and established creatives to come together, exchange ideas, and connect with a community of likeminded individuals. Visitors on the other hand enjoy the unique opportunity to engage with industry creatives and learn about the artform.

Artist exhibitions will be vast and varied, showcasing the diverse range of styles and techniques New Zealand's talented potters, ceramicists, and multidisciplinary artists have mastered or engineered. Visitors can find their favourites and even purchase a special piece of artwork for their home or garden.

For those who prefer a hands-on approach, interactive workshops and live demonstrations provide the perfect platform for exploration. Artists will proffer their skills and techniques to visitors in the live pottery-making sessions while the Kelly & Co Have a Go space allows festivalgoers to try their hand at the wheel for free under expert guidance.

For professional and recreational potters alike, as well as for the simply curious, guest artist talks offer insightful conversations with featured creatives. Meanwhile, the delightful onsite café is the perfect place to sit back and enjoy the live music.

Immerse yourself in a world of natural beauty, artistic expression, and unbridled creativity at the Festival of Pots and Garden Art.

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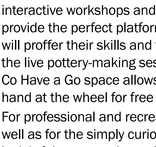

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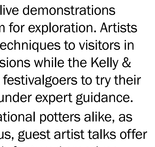

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Festival of Pots and Garden Art 2025

Wellington Anniversary Weekend January 16th - 20th 10am - 4pm (late night on Friday until 8pm)

Featuring:
Artisan Market, Demonstrations, Have a Co, Artist Talks, Onsite Café
Anam Cara Gardens 150 Rangiuru Rd, Otaki | www.otakipotteryclub.org

Back to contents

Summer times

Everything and more

Ōtaki is chocka with personality and originality. Sitting at the top of the Kapiti Coast and at the end of Transmission Gully, this shining gem of a town is a treat in the summertime – whether you're after nature, culture, shopping, or relaxation.

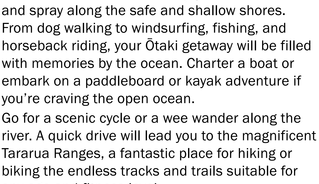
On Ōtaki's vibrant main street there are cafés, eateries, and outlets aplenty. In fact, whether you're in the market for Christmas presents or post-holiday sales, Ōtaki's boutiques will let you shop till you drop! By venturing just off the main drag or even further afield, you'll discover a library, museum, galleries, and the weekly market if you're there on a Sunday. There are several marae dotted around the township and the Māoriland Hub hosts community arts events over the course of the year, so keep an eye on Ōtaki's social calendar for fun gigs and shows scheduled this silly season.

Ōtaki Beach is an ideal spot for outdoor activities and perfect for the kids to enjoy the sand and spray along the safe and shallow shores. From dog walking to windsurfing, fishing, and horseback riding, your Ōtaki getaway will be filled with memories by the ocean. Charter a boat or embark on a paddleboard or kayak adventure if you're craving the open ocean.

Go for a scenic cycle or a wee wander along the river. A quick drive will lead you to the magnificent Tararua Ranges, a fantastic place for hiking or biking the endless tracks and trails suitable for any age and fitness level.

Make your way to Ōtaki for a quintessential Kiwi summer.

Down to business



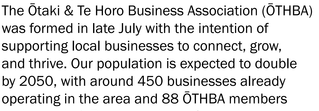
The Ōtaki Te Horo area is the cool northern bookend of the Kapiti Coast. Our region is rich with history, a strong and active local community voice, and now faster than ever to get to with the Raumati to Ōtaki stretch shaving those minutes off at 110 kilometres per hour!

The Ōtaki & Te Horo Business Association (ŌTHBA) was formed in late July with the intention of supporting local businesses to connect, grow, and thrive. Our population is expected to double by 2050, with around 450 businesses already operating in the area and 88 ŌTHBA members and counting. Run by business for business, we welcome new and existing enterprises to join – together we can be a strong collective voice.

There's a lot of opportunity here for new retail, industry, agriculture, creatives, trades, IT, education, you name it. Ōtaki Railway retail area is getting a makeover starting in 2025, so now is the perfect time to join the action. For example, we don't yet have a butcher, deli, shoe shop, pharmacy, kids' wear store, or wine bar in this part of town yet!

They don't call it Sunny Ōtaki for nothing and we're excited about what the future brings for our businesses. We've had some excellent mahi to scaffold from that has already been done in the area, with plenty of passionate local organisations, groups, and individuals who work hard to constantly improve the place they call home.

If you're thinking of making the move, get in touch with ŌTHBA at otakitehorobusinessassociation@gmail.com to start making connections.



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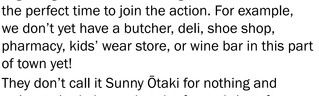
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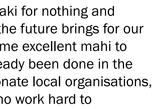
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Summer times – Wairarapa

Holiday comfort

With holidays on the horizon, ensuring your suitcase is packed efficiently is a necessity. Your swimsuits should make you feel comfortable and secure all day long, while a good-fitting bra that works for all occasions is paramount for any vacation – whether luxurious or adventurous! Shalari Boutique Lingerie & Swimwear will ensure you find the perfect fit for your summer vacation.

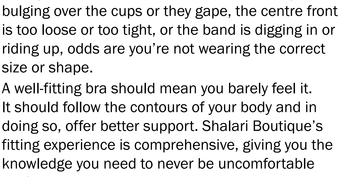
Lingerie and swimwear are not one-size-fits-all garments, as we are all different shapes and sizes! In fact, around 80 percent of women are wearing the wrong size bra. For the best support and comfort, visit Shalari Boutique for a fitting.

There are many signs of an ill-fitting bra. If the underwire feels uncomfortable; the straps are too tight or too loose or ride up, there are signs of bulging over the cups or they gape, the centre front is too loose or too tight, or the band is digging in or riding up, odds are you're not wearing the correct size or shape.

A well-fitting bra should mean you barely feel it. It should follow the contours of your body and in doing so, offer better support. Shalari Boutique's fitting experience is comprehensive, giving you the knowledge you need to never be uncomfortable again.

With an extensive catalogue of fashionable products, Shalari Boutique has styles to suit every figure and taste. The same bra may not work for everyone, but Shalari Boutique is always the perfect fit.

Invest in memories

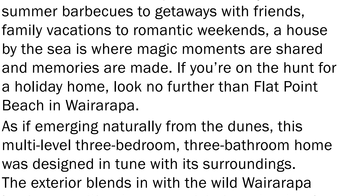


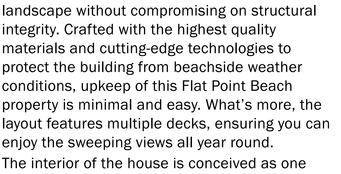
A bach at the beach is quintessentially Kiwi. From summer barbecues to getaways with friends, family vacations to romantic weekends, a house by the sea is where magic moments are shared and memories are made. If you're on the hunt for a holiday home, look no further than Flat Point Beach in Wairarapa.

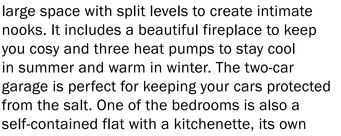
As if emerging naturally from the dunes, this multi-level three-bedroom, three-bathroom home was designed in tune with its surroundings. The exterior blends in with the wild Wairarapa landscape without compromising on structural integrity. Crafted with the highest quality materials and cutting-edge technologies to protect the building from beachside weather conditions, upkeep of this Flat Point Beach property is minimal and easy. What's more, the layout features multiple decks, ensuring you can enjoy the sweeping views all year round.

The interior of the house is conceived as one large space with split levels to create intimate nooks. It includes a beautiful fireplace to keep you cosy and three heat pumps to stay cool in summer and warm in winter. The two-car garage is perfect for keeping your cars protected from the salt. One of the bedrooms is also a self-contained flat with a kitchenette, its own bathroom, and its own deck.

Catch sunsets and moonrises, enjoy bluebird days and tumbling storms, and create a lifetime of memories at this beautiful boutique bach in Flat Point Beach.







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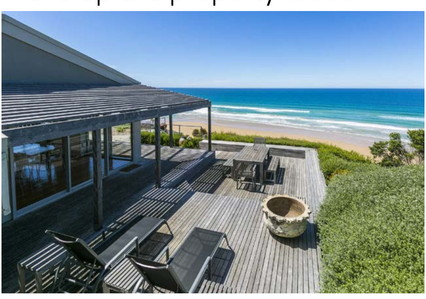
Summer times

Move up the property ladder



When you own your own home and you're ready for a new project, what do you do with your equity? That's when it's time for a change.

At WBS, our lending team are all experienced in arranging lending for people who are looking to rebuild, renovate, or buy a second home. These clients are usually at a point where they are in a good financial position and ready to move up the property ladder.

WBS mortgage and lending specialist Rose Stevens says she enjoys working with people taking these next steps in their lives.

"Often (but not always), these people are in their 50s. They're at the stage when they have equity in their existing property and they want to do something new," Rose says. "I like dealing with these clients because they're like us, like our lending team. They're in our age group. We can put them at ease because we're at a similar stage of our lives."

The people approaching WBS about lending for secondary projects are often reaching the point where they're setting themselves up for retirement.

The team also have many younger clients looking to renovate a house they've bought, or to rebuild a home.

"The best first step for any property change is to come and discuss your plans with us," Rose says. "We'd be more than happy to talk through your plans, and we'll do our best to sort out your borrowing needs."

Dive into bliss

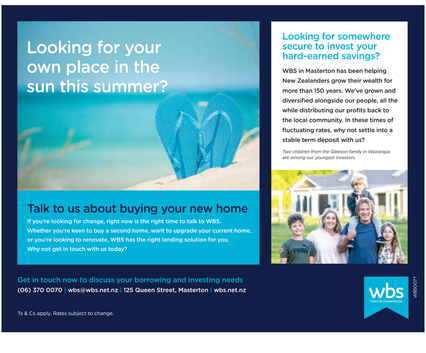
Photo by LCD Photography.

You don't have to travel to Provence to frolic amongst the famous lavender blooms – you can find that same joie de vivre right here in Aotearoa at Lavender Abbey in Carterton. Beautifully framed against the Tararua Range, the seemingly endless purple rows fill the air with sweet fragrance and the day with magical memories.

The plants are in full bloom during the summertime, which is why December and January are chocka with lavender-themed events. Pick your own lavender days offer a unique, hands-on experience that are fun for little and big Kiwis alike. The best way to enjoy the day at the farm is by bringing along a picnic of fresh local produce from this fertile region. Once all your treats are secured, find a spot in the middle of the field and while the day away enjoying the breathtaking views, the sweet fragrance, and the one-of-a-kind photo opportunity!

With more than 3,500 flowering lavender plants, Lavender Abbey has been awarded best lavender oil in New Zealand under the grosso variety for three years running: 2022, 2023, and 2024. Their high-quality, spray-free, boutique-grown lavender is transformed into essential oils and used in a variety of natural health and wellbeing products. From soaps to creams, salts to candles, you can bring home a slice of this magical farm by visiting The Big Box of Lavender shop.

Dive into a sea of purple and become immersed in bliss at Lavender Abbey this summer.



Summer times

Par2 Minigolf

Minigolf has been a staple of Napier's Marine Parade since the 1940s. What began simply as a large putting green has developed into Par2 Minigolf, guaranteed fun for you and the kids. Located adjacent to the local isite, you'll enjoy panoramic views of the coast of Hawke's Bay while you compete on one of two courses: Pacific Pro-Am or Deco Drive. The former is a quintessential minigolf course, full of wacky angles, tricky water hazards, and tree obstacles. Deco Drive is a complex course with organic curves and harsh slopes.

MTG Hawke's Bay

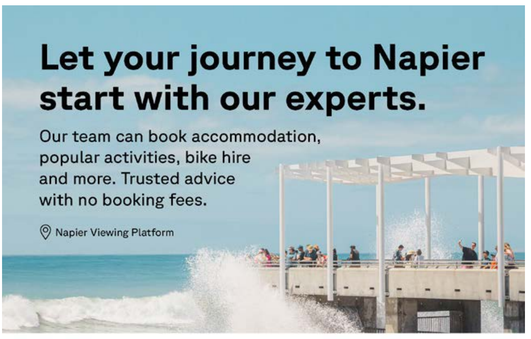
There is always something new and exciting to discover at the MTG Hawke's Bay. This award-winning museum is made up of three distinct buildings – an art deco masterpiece, a modernist gem, and a light-filled gallery that looks out across the Pacific Ocean. The museum's collections tell historic stories of the region and beyond, including the 1931 earthquake that devastated the region and the legacy of art deco architecture that is still celebrated today. Their fabulous shop also sells a range of beautiful cards, gifts, books, and mementos.

Faraday Museum of Technology

Ignite your imagination at the Faraday Museum of Technology, where hands-on adventures await visitors of all ages! Discover interactive exhibits where you can touch, play, and explore the wonders of science, technology, and history in exciting ways. From historic appliances and engines to energy sources and games, there's so much to see and uncover. A magical place where history comes to life anew, the Faraday Museum of Technology offers an experience you won't forget that's perfect for families and anyone with a curious mind!

The National Aquarium of NZ

The National Aquarium of New Zealand is home to saltwater, freshwater, and land animal exhibits from New Zealand and around the world. The 1.5-million-litre Oceanarium, which you can experience with a walk through an underwater viewing tunnel, showcases the variety of aquatic species that exist in Hawke's Bay, including stingrays, kingfish, hāpuku, snapper, and more. Watch the famous little penguins feed and play in the Penguin Cove, and connect with native wildlife like tuatara and kiwi. ***Photo by Molly Rose Nilsson.***



Summer times

Kennedy Park

Located near the heart of Napier, Kennedy Park is an accommodation option that's fun for the whole whānau. There is so much to do onsite that you'll be tempted to spend entire days on the premises. Kids and adults will love the heated swimming complex, basketball half court, and giant outdoor chess board. Stroll the gardens or relax at the café while the tamariki let loose at the adventure playground and on the colourful jumping pillow. Spend time in the games room playing pool, table-top games, or air hockey together as a family.

Hawke's Bay Farmyard Zoo

Known for its unique atmosphere, Hawke's Bay Farmyard Zoo provides a safe, clean environment with informative signage, limestone walkways, and a picnic area to accommodate large groups such as birthday parties and work functions. The animals at the zoo include pigs, sheep and calves, ostriches, alpacas, turtles, peacocks, and many more, and kids will have the opportunity to get up close and feed some of them. With a playground, train rides, and pony rides available, the hardest part will be getting the family back into the car.

Napier Aquatic Centre

You don't have to wait for hot summer days to enjoy a day in the water. Napier Aquatic Centre is open year-round for water-based exercise and fun. Three pools means everyone can jump in – choose from the five-lane 25-metre lap pool for walking and lane swimming, the disability-friendly six-lane Ivan Wilson Pool, or the learners' pool complete with toddler pool and mini waterfall. The complex also features waterslides, a spray park open from October to March, a beautiful outdoor area, and relaxing spas. Jump in and have fun!

Ocean Spa

Ocean Spa is Napier's premier heated pool and fitness complex located on Marine Parade. Boasting open-air, heated, and chlorinated pools and spas with panoramic ocean views, visitors can enjoy a range of options from the toddler pool to therapeutic pools with water fountains and pool jets. Visitors can unwind in spacious outdoor spa pools and refuel with a coffee or bite to eat at Bach Café. Centrally located, Ocean Spa is the perfect spot to relax and re-energise, rain or shine.

My favourite places

Take your whānau on a trip they'll remember forever this summer.
Our beautiful country is at her sparkliest in the warmer months, no matter your niche. From beach days to breathtaking lookouts, stargazing to animal excursions, thrill-seeking adventures to luxurious relaxation locations, Aotearoa has it all. We're lucky to call this place our home,
so get out there and explore it this summer!

1. Blackfern Lodge

2. Time For Food Cafe

3. Mairenui Rural Retreat

4. Admiral's View Motel

5. Bus Stop Cafe

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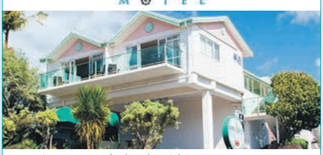

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6

My favourite places

Whether you choose to point your compass north or south, prefer to embrace the heat on the beach or escape to the cool of the mountains, like to revisit your favourite hotspots or explore new places, one thing is guaranteed in Aotearoa in the summertime: long days, bright nights, and that feeling of adventure. Take your time and soak in the season this holiday – it's the Kiwi way!

7. Alexandra Holiday Park

8. The Packing Shed

9. Paulina's

10. Golden Bay A&P Show

11. Anatoki Salmon

12. Hanmer Springs App

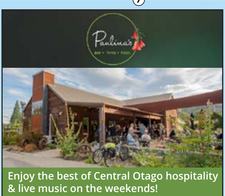
13. Otira Stagecoach Hotel

14. Okarito Boat Eco Tours

15. Geraldine Vintage Car & Machinery Club Museum

16. Muscle Car Madness

17. Quinney's Bush Camp



Bucket list travel – Chatham Islands

Island adventures

Following just a two-hour flight from New Zealand, you can find yourself on the Chatham Islands, a paradise with dramatic coastlines plunging into deep blue seas, thick emerald forests, a fascinating history waiting to be unlocked, and all the hunting, fishing, diving, swimming, and adventures you could ask for.

In the summertime, the Chatham Islands register an average temperature that is simply perfect. Warmed by the sun, you won't be able to help taking a dip in the crystalline waters every chance you get. It's teeming with marine life and excellent for snorkelling, diving, and fishing. Plus, it makes for a great view while lounging on the beach.

From ancient forests to native and endemic species, islands Chatham and Pitt enjoy an incredibly diverse natural environment. Explore the basalt columns and 90-million-year-old fossils – there are over 700 recorded archaeological hotspots. Hike through Henga Scenic Reserve, Nīkau Bush Conservation Area, Admiral Garden, and Tuku Nature Reserve, where you'll encounter unique species of flora and fauna. Going on bushwalks or coastal tracks are must-dos, whether that's by foot or on horseback!

The Chatham Islands aren't lacking in cultural and historical attractions either. Wander the museum, local art galleries, and private studios, as well as the 11 registered historic places. Eco focused, leisure lover, adventure seeker, or history aficionado, the Chatham Islands are a whole world away.

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Tour #60
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Thur 16th Jan 2025, depart Chathams 9:30am - arrive Wellington 10:45am

Tour #61 (Prior to Easter)
Tue 8th April 2025, depart Christchurch 2:00pm - arrive Chathams 4:45pm (CI time)
Tue 15th April 2025, depart Chathams 9:30am - arrive Christchurch 11:00am

Tour #62 (Over Easter)
Tue 15th April 2025, depart Christchurch 2:00pm - arrive Chathams 4:45pm (CI time)
Tue 22nd April 2025, depart Chathams 9:30am - arrive Christchurch 11:00am

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South Island travel – Otago

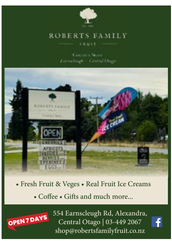
Choose your niche

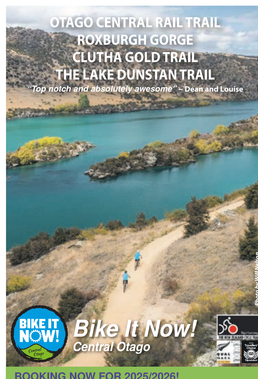
Summer is well and truly on its way, which means it's time to start planning your vacation. If you're keen to explore the rolling hills, tumbling rivers, bush-clad mountains, and sprawling valleys of Central Otago, let Bike It Now! worry about all the tricky organisation, so you can just enjoy the ride.

Whether you're with your pals, spending time with your whānau, taking time for the two of you, or off on a solo adventure, Bike It Now! has an extensive catalogue of pre-built itineraries for all ages, levels, abilities, and interests. Nature nuts, history buffs, food fanatics, luxury lovers, and adrenaline junkies alike will find something to suit their niche.

Spanning Grade 1 to Grade 3 trails, the self-guided itineraries trace some of the most popular trails in Aotearoa, including some of our country's Great Rides. Follow along the Lake Dunstan Trail, the Otago Central Rail Trail, Roxburgh Gorge Trail, Clutha Gold Trail, or if you simply can't choose just one, embark on a combo excursion. Depending on your schedule, you can opt for a one-day or overnight trip, or a multi-day itinerary that runs from three to five days or even six to 10.

For those who love getting into the thick of it but also enjoy a comfortable space at the end of the day, the luxury tours are the best of both worlds. Enjoy boutique accommodations, the finest local produce, and a one-of-a-kind luxe experience.





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