

# Wellington Region



If your New Zealand travels thus far have been all about the great outdoors and sleepy rural towns, this is the city that'll blow the cobwebs away. Art-house cinemas, funky boutiques, hip bars, live-music venues and lashings of restaurants – it's all in 'Windy Welly'.

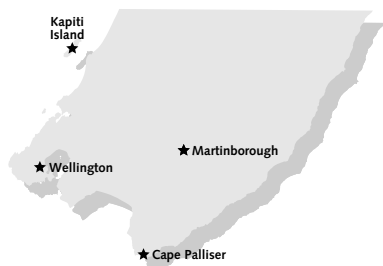
Wellingtonians lay passionate claim to the crown of 'cultural capital', and the mantle is surely theirs. Suited-up civil servants there are, but the city also supports a significant population of creative types who foster an admirably active and accessible arts scene. It's a proud, tight-knit town, where the citizenry are convinced they're living in the world's best-kept secret.

As the crossing point between the North and South Islands, travellers have long been passing through these parts. Te Papa and Zealandia now have visitors stopping in their tracks, and even a couple of days' pause will reveal its myriad other attractions – a beautiful harbour and walkable shoreline, hillsides clad in pretty weatherboard houses, ample inner-city surprises, and some of the freshest city air on the planet.

Less than an hour away to the north, the Kapiti Coast offers more settled weather and a beachy vibe, with the Kapiti Island nature reserve a highlight. On a different tangent, but still only an hour away over the Rimutaka Range, lies the Wairarapa. Here you'll find farming country dotted with cute towns and famed wineries, and a wild, windswept coastline.

## HIGHLIGHTS

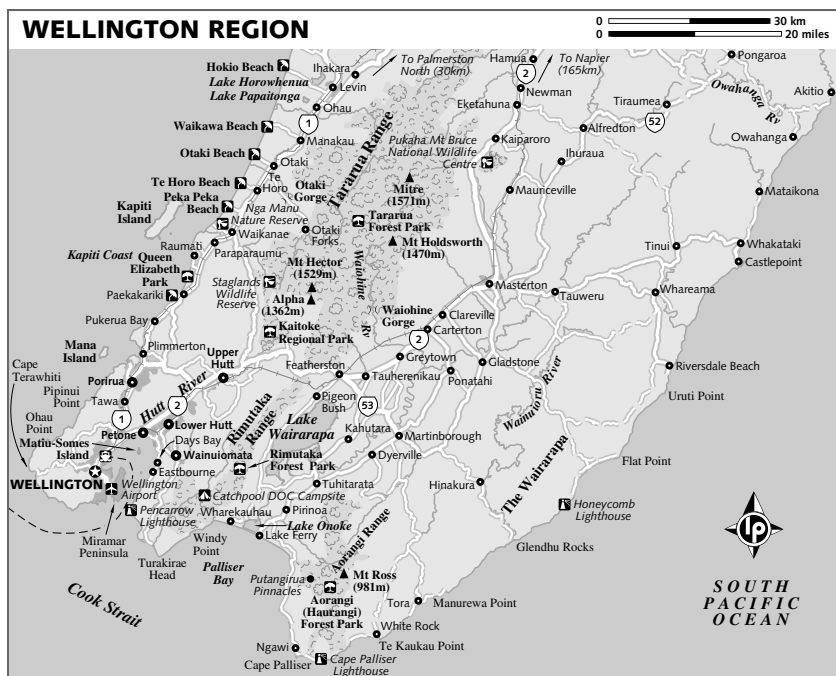
- Getting interactive at NZ's finest museum, Wellington's **Te Papa** (p403)
- Scaling the lighthouse steps on wild and remote **Cape Palliser** (p426)
- Sampling the great coffee and quality beer that Wellingtonians demand at the city's slick **bars** (p412) and bohemian **cafes** (p411)
- Exploring **Kapiti Island** (p421) and saying hi to the takahe, one of NZ's rarest birds
- Maintaining a straight line on your bicycle as you tour the picturesque **Martinborough wineries** (p424)
- Riding the ratchety **cable car** (p402) from Lambton Quay to the leafy **Wellington Botanic Gardens** (p401)
- Ripping up the trails at **Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park** (p404)



■ Telephone code: 04

■ [www.wellingtonnz.com](http://www.wellingtonnz.com)

■ [www.wairarapanz.com](http://www.wairarapanz.com)



## Climate

When Wellington's weather turns bad, it can be *truly* foul: lacerating winds and sheets of freezing rain coming in sideways. It ain't called 'Windy Wellington' for nothing...

November to April are the warmer months and the best months to visit, with average maximums hovering around 20°C. From May to August it's colder and wetter – daily temperatures lurk around 12°C.

## Getting There & Around

Wellington is a major transport hub, being the North Island port for the interisland ferries. Wellington Airport is serviced by international and domestic airlines.

Easy train and bus connections make commuting into Wellington a viable option – many people travel to work (or to party) in Wellington from the hinterland. Approaching the city from the north, you'll pass through either the Kapiti Coast to the west via State Highway 1 (SH1), or the Wairarapa and heavily populated Hutt Valley to the east via State Highway 2 (SH2).

**InterCity** ([www.intercity.co.nz](http://www.intercity.co.nz)) is the main North Island bus company, travelling just

about everywhere. Commuter trains run from Wellington to the Kapiti Coast and the Wairarapa; long-distance **Tranz Scenic** ([www.tranzscenic.co.nz](http://www.tranzscenic.co.nz)) trains run from Wellington to Auckland via Palmerston North. See p415 for details on getting to/from Wellington.

## WELLINGTON

pop 164,000 (city), 424,000 (region)

A small city with a relatively big reputation, Wellington is most famous for being NZ's capital. It is *infamous* for its weather, particularly the gale-force winds wont to barrel through, wrecking umbrellas and obliterating hairdos. It also lies on a major fault line. And negotiating the inner-city one-way system is like the Krypton Factor on acid.

But don't be deterred. 'Welly' is a brilliant city, as those who spend any more than a couple of days there will attest. For a starter it's lovely to look at, scattered around bushy hillsides encircling a magnificent harbour. There are super lookouts on hilltops, golden sand on the prom, and spectacular craggy shores along the South Coast. Downtown,