

1. Auckland



Auckland is a fabulous city, regularly featuring in lists of the world's best cities in which to live, and packs a plethora of activities into its modest span (1,086 km², roughly two thirds that of Sydney). But given just a single day, what should one do? What is the most worthwhile use of 24 hours in New Zealand's most populous city?

8.00am - Breakfast at Viaduct Quay – serving some of the best coffee and at No.1 café is where it is served the location is convenient. It's impossible to start a day without coffee



9.00am – Auckland Adventure Jet boat - Situated at Pier 3 on the waterfront, directly in front of the distinctive terracotta and yellow bricks of the Ferry Building. Expect to see all of the city's iconic landmarks; the impressive skyline, Auckland Harbour Bridge, the Hauraki Gulf Volcanoes and iconic Sky Tower.

10.00am - Ferry to Devonport - The ferry terminal is a literal hop, skip and jump from the Auckland Adventure Jet pier. Take a gentle voyage lasting 12 minutes to the pretty seaside town of Devonport, which is known for its arts and crafts, beautiful views, and plenitude of cafés.



10.30am - North Head Mount - Walk to Devonport's North Head Mount is mildly strenuous but exceedingly worthwhile, with a summit that affords spectacular views that reach across Auckland's cityscape and down the Hauraki Gulf. The mount itself is atop a volcanic headland, and played an important role in New Zealand's military history, the remnants from which add colour and interest to any visit.

11.30am - Devonport browse shops - It's worth spending a little time in Devonport itself, where a selection of quaint shops provide a pleasant distraction and chance to catch one's breath.



12.00pm - Lunch at the Olive Press - The Olive Press Bistro & Bar opened at the beginning of 2011, and has already established itself as one of Devonport's most beloved eateries. I particularly like the peaceful courtyard, a small slice of the Mediterranean in the middle of a mellow Kiwi suburb, which is a perfect spot to indulge in some of the restaurant's divine Italian classics.

13.30pm – Return Ferry to Auckland - The return to Auckland offers another chance to digest Auckland's stunning skyline, along with the picturesque boats that fill Waitemata Harbour and give the city its moniker, The City of Sails.



14.00pm - Kelly Tarlton's Cage Dive - Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounter. Experiences here range from the serene to the extreme, which is why I found myself in a metal cage, part-submerged in murky water and feeling quite alone. Except I wasn't alone, for somewhere in those waters were sharks, principally those of the Sand Tiger, School, Broadnose Sevengill and Wobbegong varieties. It's an oft-referenced adrenalin activity, which, as my heart can testify, more than lived up to expectations



16.45pm – Queen Street - Queen Street is Auckland’s most popular shopping district, easily accessed via bus and a perfect walkway. This is where you’ll find the famous Smith & Caughey department store, the oldest of its kind in New Zealand, with opulent Victorian interiors that forerun the stylish modern clothes beneath.

17.00pm – Elliott Stables - Opposite Smith & Caughey sits Elliott Stables Epicurean Village, a marketplace of fodder that brings together connoisseurs of meats, cheeses, wines and more. The whole place is presented in an old-Auckland style, and is a delightful spot to sit and enjoy some coffee and cake.



17.30pm – SkyJump - SkyJump is a bit like Base Jumping, except with the removal of the parachute, and the addition of a wire. Neither is wholly reassuring, and both find a way of sending your body into a strange rush that scatters your focus and overloads every sense with adrenalin.

19.00pm - Dinner and Drinks at Viaduct Harbour - The best place to round off a day in Auckland is a sumptuous meal overlooking the water in Viaduct Harbour, with a great selection of restaurants, the choice of bars. **The perfect end to a perfect day.**



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