

Wellington's freebies

10 great things to see and do in Wellington, for free.

1 MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND TE PAPA TONGAREWA: New Zealand's national museum not only has all the requisite historical artefacts and Maori treasures, but devotes a large amount of space to modern and contemporary art and culture. Highlights include the shaking earthquake house, a junk shop that comes to life and the virtual bungy jump. Open daily, 10am-6pm (9pm on Thursdays). Cable Street.

2 MUSEUM OF CITY AND SEA: just down the road from Te Papa at Queens Wharf, the Museum of City and Sea tells the capital's stories of sea and land in a restored 1892 Bond Store (customs house). Traditional museum techniques are combined with holographic special effects, re-creations, interactive exhibits, and a giant cinema screen telling the stories of Wellington's heroes, rogues, ratabags and pillars of society. Open daily, 10am-5pm.

3 CITY GALLERY: the city's main art gallery presents innovative exhibitions of art, architecture and design from both New Zealand and around the world. It's on Civic Square and is open daily, 10am-5pm.

4 THE BEHIVE PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS: take a guided tour of Parliament Buildings and gain a fascinating insight into New Zealand's nationhood and the weightier matters of state. Legend has it that the building, fondly known as The Beehive, was actually designed on the back of a cigarette packet as a joke – the designer never dreamt it would be built. It is one of the largest existing building complexes in the world to be strengthened by base isolation – a concept invented by a local Lower Hutt man to enable buildings to survive large earthquakes. Free public tours take visitors to see them in Parliament's basement.

5 CABLE CAR MUSEUM: it will cost you \$2.50 to ride the cable car from the city to the top entrance of the city's Botanic Garden but the Cable Car Museum at the top is free. It tells the story of the cable car system, which started service in 1902 and is one of the city's newest museums. Cable Car Lane, Lambton Quay.

6 WELLINGTON BOTANIC GARDENS: take a walk through the Botanic Gardens to see some of the oldest exotic trees ever planted in NZ as well as the ever changing innovation garden, beautiful peace garden with its peace flame from fire created by the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. There's also an observatory, lots of art works, a great kids playground and glow worms galore.

7 WRITERS WALK: follow in the footsteps of some of the many writers who have lived and worked in the windy city. It combines a stroll along Wellington's waterfront with sculptural quotations from famous poets, novelists, playwrights and writers of prose, past and present. Ask for a free map at the Wellington i-SITE Visitor Centre on the corner of Victoria and Wakefield streets in Civic Square.

8 FREE MOVIES: the Film Archive collects and preserves New Zealand's moving image history, including documentaries, home movies, newsreels, television commercials and feature films. The mediaplex, which includes a cinema as well as changing exhibitions, is open daily from noon and you can watch the flicks for free. It's on the corner of Ghuznee and Taranaki streets.

9 POPUP GALLERY: if you like pop art head to the PopUp Gallery and Boutique on Ghuznee Street for the latest and greatest in pop surrealism, subversive lowbrow art, street design, pop and counter culture. Open daily, 57 Ghuznee Street.

10 WETA CAVES: come face to face with some of the characters, props and displays from your favourite movies in the brand new Weta Cave, the home of the Academy award-winning digital special effects that brought such great movies as Lord of the Rings and King Kong to life. It's on the corner of Camperdown Rd and Weka St, Miramar, and is open Tuesday to Friday 11am – 6pm and Saturday 10am – 4pm.



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