



PHOTO: GEMMA FINLAY

NORTH SIDE

THE coastal walk from Takapuna to Milford Beach offers stunning examples of early stonework, the Giant's chair, volcanic formations and rock pools teeming with marine life.

You could even try a spot of fishing off the rocks. If you aren't feeling at one with nature yet, the 6km Long Bay Coastal Walk offers great views of the Hauraki

Gulf from lookout points. Along the way you will find a WWII gun emplacement, part of a defence network to protect the Waitemata Harbour from Japanese invasion. Don't forget to stop off at the **Vaughn Homestead**. For a gold coin donation you can take a look around the homestead built by George Vaughn in 1893.

Undo all the hard yards you've trekked by indulging in goodies from **The Chocolate Boutique** in Mokoia Rd. The owner of the store really knows her stuff, and will gladly offer a recommendation if the selection overwhelms you. A

decent-size bag of high quality sweets will only set you back a few dollars, but how much you spend is entirely dependent on how indulgent you're feeling. The sweets are imported and the hot chocolates are a must.

Hit the road again for the **Harbourside Art Trail**. This tour of local artists' studios throughout Northcote and Birkenhead includes weaving, pottery and woodturning. Take the tour at your own pace during the week, but you may need to phone ahead on weekends. The only cost is the petrol to get you around, but you may like to

purchase some works too. For a full list of artists and contact details: www.tourismnorthshore.org.nz/id/4/top10

Take a stroll along the waterfront and climb **North Head**, a hill which served as a Maori Pa until the mid 19th Century. Then from 1870-1956 it was used as an army base, for prospective invasions from the Russians and later the Japanese, although they never quite made it here.

As a result, the hill is riddled with tunnels. In more recent years it was occupied by the Navy, until 1996.

IF YOU'RE feeling nostalgic, the **Howick Historical Village** will give you a real-time history lesson. It recreates the 1847 settlement of retired British soldiers in Auckland.

Every third Sunday of the month costumed interpreters stoke the fires, bake bread and carry out domestic and military activities. All this in the surroundings of stunning colonial buildings. A great family outing for adults at \$10 and kids for \$5.

For the adrenaline-junkie out east, **Whitford Forest** offers over a dozen mountain-biking tracks, suitable for beginners right through to advanced riders. The lengths and difficulties vary, and as a bonus, it's free.

EAST SIDE



PHOTO: LUCY ARTHUR

WE START in colourful South Auckland with the **Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens** open between 8am and dusk. 65 hectares of Auckland soil have been graced with over 10,000 plant types. The sheer numbers of plants mean that every season there is something in flower. And best of all, the cost is free.

Next it's on to the **Nathan Homestead**. Built in 1925, with expansive lawns and gardens, it has become the home of the Manurewa Theatre Company and regular art exhibitions. Once again, there is no entry fee.

The **Ambury Regional Park** at Mangere Bridge gives urban dwellers

the experience of a working farm, with cattle, sheep, goats, kune kune pigs and a horse or two. The park also includes coastal inlets which are home to 86 species of birds. During the autumn, 20,000 birds arrive from the Antarctic and the South Island, making the park their holiday home. The park is open everyday from 7.30am to 7pm. Entry is free but please leave Fido at home.

Other nearby attractions include **Mangere Mountain**, once the largest fortified Maori pa in Auckland and the Kiwi Esplanade which feature the finest example of Pahoehoe lava flows in New Zealand.

The **Otara Flea Market** is world



PHOTO: OWEN HEMERY

famous... or at least it should be! The Pasifika bazaar runs every Saturday from 6am until noon, with a mix of Maori, Pacific, Indian, Asian and European food, art, craft and culture. Set the alarm clock for an early start to experience the best of Auckland's multicultural diversity, enjoy a fresh pork bun (\$2) and take in the entertainment.

If this has whet the appetite for bargain hunting then head back up the motorway to **Mangere Town Centre Markets**. The highlights here are an abundance of cheap fresh produce, including live crabs (\$9.99 kg) and a lively atmosphere. Make sure you've packed your togs because across the carpark is the **Moana-nui-a-Kiwi Leisure Centre**.

Enjoy Auckland for under \$10

Everywhere there are billboards, advertisements, shop windows and discount flyers competing for your cash ... It seems this town is all about money. So what can you do if you don't have so much of the stuff? How do you spend your free time? And by free time, we mean *free* time. Read on to discover how free time can be free (or close enough) – even in Auckland.



PHOTO: SIMA STON

WEST SIDE

AUCKLAND'S wild, wild west is full of surprises. More than just bad haircuts and broken down cars, west Auckland offers the **Kiwi Valley Maze**. Nestled below the Waitakere Ranges, the outdoor maze is over 1 km and includes caves, an aviary and animal pens. The cost is \$9 for adults and students and \$7 for senior citizens and children.

Every Sunday the **Waitakere Tramline** rolls through native bush and on up to the Waitakere Dam. Highlights include travelling through the longest tunnel in Auckland which is home to glow worms. And stunning views of the Waitakere Ranges.

The tram leaves every Sunday from the end of Christian Rd in Swanson, at 10am, 11.30, 1pm, 2.30. Bookings are essential as trips are limited to 20 people. Phone: 836 0900. And the cost – well, for adults it's \$8 and school children pay \$4. For pre-school children it's free.

Another attraction of west Auckland is **Woodhill Mountain Bike Park**. Located in 411 hectares of Carter Holt Harvey forest in Woodhill and Riverhead, it has over 40 trails running over 70kms. The sand-based forest is suitable for people of all riding abilities, and there are even night riding trails, jumps with bridges and balancing beams. There is a cost... For adults it's \$4, kids \$2 and under-11's are free.



PHOTO: DANIEL MARKHAM

CENTRAL

THE grand **Auckland Museum**, atop the Auckland Domain, hosts regular exhibitions and events, ranging from New Zealand history to photography, design and fashion. Open daily, it has activities for the kids too. There is a "suggested" (but actually compulsory) \$5 donation.

Auckland city is a haven for art-lovers, with venues to suit all tastes.

Maota Gallery showcases Samoan art and culture at 283 Karangahape Rd. Wood

sculptures, oil paintings and mosaics are free to view Monday to Saturday from 9am-5pm.

Just down the road is the **Art Station**, at 1 Ponsoby Rd. New exhibitions run every three weeks, with a focus on unusual and different art from the Auckland community.

Late nights on Monday to Thursday, also open Fridays from 9am-5pm, Saturdays 9am-4pm.



PHOTO: OWEN HEMERY

SOUTH SIDE