

Hi. I live in Auckland on the North Shore, which is in many ways similar to Sydney with Manly across the harbour. The North Shore has more of a casual feel to it, as it is dominated by beautiful beaches all around us.

Crossing to the Shore is the same as in Sydney, with a harbour bridge and frequent ferry crossings from Quay Street in the CBD to the beautiful suburb of Devonport. Many people include a ferry trip to Devonport as part of a day or afternoon out.

Devonport has the NZ Navy base on its left as the ferry docks, and also the Torpedo Bay Navy Museum to visit along the beach to the right.

Devonport has a village feel to it with only one arterial road in and out, linking it to Takapuna. It has some lovely cafes and shops, some beautiful beaches to walk to as well as two "mountains - Maunga" that are easy to climb or to walk around. North Head has some old military tunnels dotted through and on top of it that are still possible to see and walk through, with gun battlements and stunning views across to Auckland CBD. There is easy access to North Head from around the bay from Devonport, close to the museum, and you can climb the mountain to see the tunnels before then walking right around the base of the mountain to the next beach called Cheltenham, which is ringed with pohutakawa, one of our most gorgeous native trees. Unfortunately, it only flowers in December. The other mountain is called Mount Victoria, accessed from within the township of Devonport, just walk up the main road, with great views but no tunnels which are the special interest of those visiting North Head. On North Head kids love to take cardboard "slides" up to the top of the mountain on a sunny day and then slide down. Or there may be paragliders setting off from there, or sightseers watching a cruise ship docking.

However, my love is with Takapuna. It is my favourite beach and has a great

selection of boutique shops in a street setting although it also has a small mall with the usual brand shops. I love to wander its streets and see the huge variety of cafes and restaurants available to eat at. For those visiting during the day, most people walk along Takapuna beach before then stopping at the Promenade end at the Beach Cafe for one of their famous gelato ice creams. As well, there is an amazing walk around the beachfront from Takapuna to the next suburb of Milford. Along the way you will see some of Takapuna's most expensive houses, many little bays, as well as the "throne", at the bottom of the "castle" over head, built in the black rock so characteristic of the area.

Takapuna is currently being updated with different shops arriving and getting a complete makeover. There are now a number of cafes that look over the beach and are connected to Takapuna's main street. My favourite places to eat at depends on the time of day - for late afternoon platters with drinks, go to The Regatta or Francs overlooking the beach. For upmarket fusion Chinese and Hong Kong food - Art Wok in Hurtsmere Road. Try their delicious Xiao Long Bao - dumplings with soup entrapped as well as the filling. Or Guo Bao Rou - Crispy pork finished with their own sweet and sour sauce, their amazing seafood Da Pai Dong or either of their Wakanui or Wagyu beef dishes.

Everything tastes great. And my other personal favourite, Malaysian street food, at Madam Woo - run by one of our most well known chefs, Josh Emmett. Try their CHAR KUEY TEOW (Fried rice noodles with prawns and Chinese pork sausage), their BEEF RENDANG with Nasi Lemak, HONEY & SOY TOSSED SQUID cashew nuts, szechuan pepper, chilli, STIR FRIED PORK BELLY asian greens, oyster sauce, spiced crackling crumble as well as SUKOR SPICED STICKY CHICKEN WINGS. Situated on Lake Road and open from 12. And my personal favourite thing to do is to watch the sunrise over Rangitoto

Island from Takapuna beach as I walk along it. Emerging from the sea just 600 years ago, pest-free Rangitoto Island is the youngest volcano in New Zealand. The Department of Conservation completed a significant restoration programme on the island recently and it makes for a great walk to its top, (sometimes a tractor ride is available in busy times). Catch a ferry there again from Quay Street in downtown Auckland.



Hope you enjoy your stay in New Zealand and get to see some of what Auckland and the North Shore have to offer.

