

Friday: Produce at Makara Farmers Market.

Photo: Belinda Feek

## Hamiltonian Belinda Feek heads up the highway a little for a weekend experience in the bigger smoke.

### FRIDAY

**1pm:** We hit the road for the bright lights of Auckland. My friend and I are amazed we do the trip in 90 minutes. Hamilton and Auckland – we're practically neighbours.

**2.30pm:** Arrive at the Heritage Hotel on Hobson St. Our room has the highest hotel ceilings I've ever seen and it's spacious, with super-comfy beds.

**4pm:** It's drink o'clock, so we walk up to Al Brown's hip restaurant-bar Depot, in the Sky City precinct, for a bit of people-watching.

**5pm:** We're off to a show, so it's only fitting to get the hair done. Hello, Dry & Tea for hair up and French-style high tea: club sammies, sweet and savoury scones, and sweet treats. We get our hair washed, dried then styled, all while getting to nibble away on our treats and sip on bubbles. As we walk out the door, the lovely folk hand us the best-ever goodie bags with countless samples, discounts, chocolates – even a free facial.

**6pm:** We're finished earlier than expected, and with me being a beer fan we pop over to Brother's Beer for a drink. Although cosy in size, this place not only has a 4800-litre brewery on site, but over 200 different beers in stock, with 18 on tap. They serve food and wine and cider, but we're too excited with our goodie bags and start sprawling our haul on the table.





**6.50pm:** Refreshed, we head off on foot down the road to the Civic Theatre for *Wicked*. What a venue. We follow the winding red velvet stairs and join the queue. We're early, so we join the other queue – at the bar, before finding our seats. To be honest, I'm not the biggest musical fan – don't get me started on *Glee*. But the show hasn't even started and I'm intrigued. A monstrous stainless steel dragon-like structure spans the top of the stage. It's quite a sight.

**8pm:** The eyes of the dragon open up. They're bright red and its head even turns from side to side. I'm so easily entertained.

**10.30pm:** What a show. Glinda is my favourite character, with her super-excited singing, talking, dancing. She is just a ball of energy. From what I could tell, it was a flawless performance overall. It's been a fun show, but I'm ready to stand up. The Civic seats are not as comfy as those at our local movie theatre.

The adrenaline from the show is still going so we walk it off and stop off at Britomart for a drink on the way back to the hotel.

## SATURDAY

**9.30am:** It's a pretty good day for a drive, so we head to Matakana Farmers Market, an hour or so north of the city on the Mahurangi Peninsula. By 11am, I've sampled dukkah, beer, wine, cheese, oils and watched pizza being made.

**Noon:** After a bit of window shopping, we head to nearby Snells Beach, where we discover Brick Bay Vineyard and Sculpture trail.

We decide to do the 2km sculpture trail and work up an appetite. It's an easy trek among

native flora and fauna, and a variety of sculptures – at a variety of prices, the most expensive being well over \$100,000.

Next up is wine tasting. Brick Bay has four wines – pinot gris, rose and reds Martello Rock and Pharos. They're all delicious. We pick one each to have with our antipasto platter for lunch. I opt for the pinot gris, while my friend has the rose, and we share a platter of wild venison salami, medjool dates wrapped in prosciutto, and chicken liver parfait.

**2pm:** Part of a trip to Auckland has to be the shopping, so we head back to the city and down to Britomart.

**3pm:** It's a bit drizzly, and after checking out half a dozen shops, we opt for shelter. At the pub. The Northern Steamship Co is the perfect pit stop.

**4pm:** The drizzle has cleared, so we take the short stroll back to the hotel.

**6pm:** Another thing Auckland does well is eating out. This time, it's new Italian restaurant Baduzzi, run by Michael Dearth of The Grove fame. Having mentioned the place to a few people during our mere 24 hours in the city, we're told "oh, the meatball place". But it's so much more than that.

Firstly, it's cheaper than I was expecting. We nab a \$40 bottle of Italian sauvignon blanc and the food ranges from about \$9 to \$18, with mains stretching out to \$28. However, you can't not visit this place without trying the meatballs (\$12 to \$16). And if you're into tiramisu, it's also a must.

**8.30pm:** Neither of us can fit anything else into our stomachs. We manage to drag ourselves out for a slow walk back to the hotel.

## SUNDAY

**9.30am:** After checking out, we pop into the Auckland War Memorial Museum to see the exhibition, *Moana: My Ocean*. This would be the perfect place to bring the kids. Not only is it informative but it gives a close-up view of our underwater kaimoana.

**Noon:** We've been at the museum for two hours. It's time to head back to the Tron.

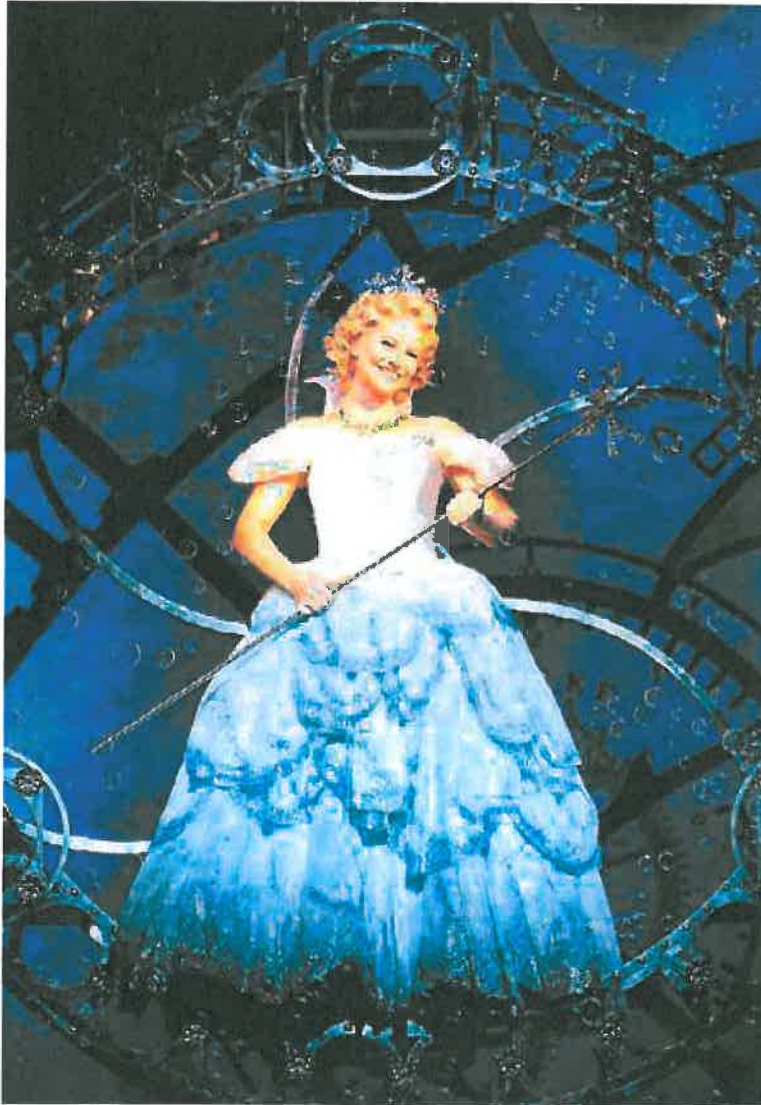
**12.45pm:** We're coming up to Bombay. Not only is it a petrol stop, it's also home to fine dining restaurant, Bracu, with top chef Mikey Newlands at the helm.

Despite travelling through Bombay countless times, I'd never heard of this place, which is a crime in itself. Bracu sits among the Simunovich Olive Estate, which also has its own skincare range. We enjoy a lunch degustation matched with wine. I don't want to gloat too much, but I can say it ranged from asparagus soup with truffle ice cream and home made croutons, to salmon with avocado sorbet and cream with bloody mary drops, a mouth-watering veal dish, popcorn flavoured ice cream with a salted caramel tart . . . needless to say, the food is delectable. The setting is idyllic – no wonder it's a popular wedding venue.

**3.30pm:** Bellies full beyond all recognition, it's time for us to make the hour-long trip back home. And hit the gym.

**Belinda Feek travelled to Auckland courtesy of Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development. For a chance to win tickets to the musical *Wicked* and your own Auckland weekend package, go to [facebook.com/visitauckland](http://facebook.com/visitauckland)**





**Star quality: Suzie Mathers as Glinda in *Wicked: The Musical* at the Civic Theatre, Auckland.**

## Fact file

### Where to stay

► The Heritage Auckland, 35 Hobson St, Auckland, 09 379 8553, heritagehotels.co.nz

### Where to eat

► Brick Bay Vineyard, Arabella Lane (off Mahurangi East Rd) 09 425 4690, brickbay.co.nz

► Baduzzi, corner Jellicoe St and Fish Lane, Wynyard Quarter, 09 309 9339, baduzzi.co.nz

► Bracu Restaurant, 49 Main Rd, Bombay, 09 236 1030, simuolive.co.nz

### What to do

► Dry & Tea 90 Wellesley St, 09 366 1522, dryandtea.com

► Wicked, Civic Theatre, wickedthemusical.co.nz (season continues until November 24)

► Matakana Farmers Market, 2 Matakana Valley Rd, Matakana, 09 422 6889, matakanaoast.com

► Britomart, britomart.org

► Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland Domain, Parnell, 09 302 9768, aucklandmuseum.com



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Menu magic: Baduzzi, where meatballs take centre stage.

Photo: John Selkirk



Exhibition central: The Auckland War Memorial Museum.