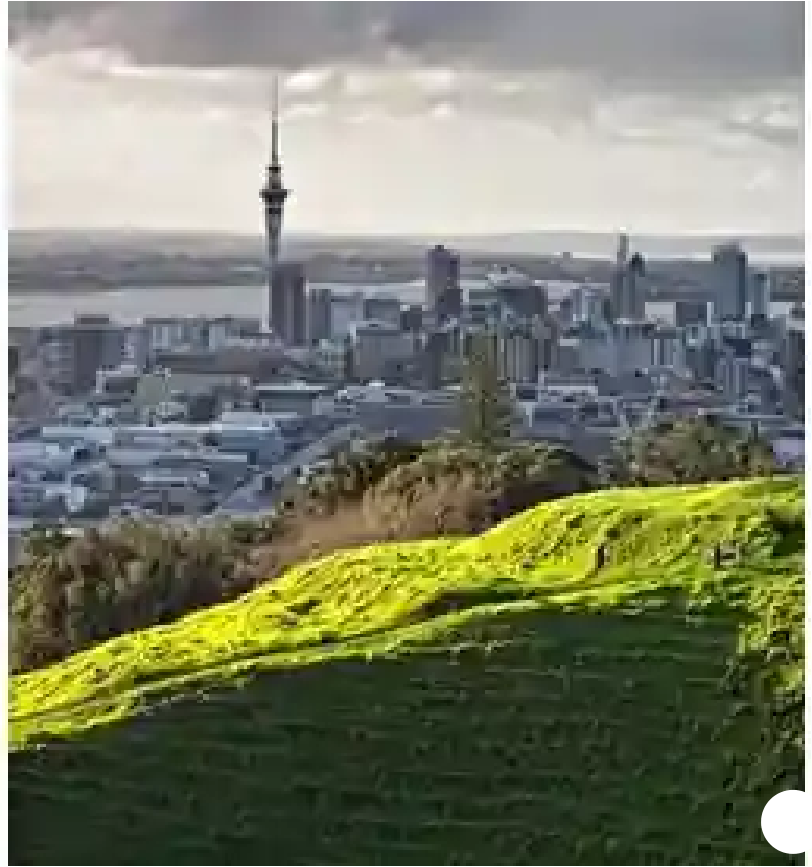


The Guardian



Neil Finn on Auckland

The solo artist and Crowded House frontman on food, music and the great outdoors in Auckland, New Zealand

Interview by Robert Hull

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The city has so much character. It's a sprawling place that weaves around bridges and harbours, and there are lots of neighbourhoods, such as Britomart, Ponsonby and Grey Lynn, where good things are happening. I love the Polynesian aspect to the city. There's a strong Maori presence and tradition but there's also been an influx of people from the islands, too.

Buy fish and chips and climb Mount Eden. Get your food at The Ancient Mariner and head up the nearby hill (Maungawhau in Maori). You get a great 360-degree view of the city and a volcanic crater to peer into. You can walk up or take a car ... but don't leave the handbrake off: I once saw a car roll into the crater.

One of the venues I'm fondest of is Powerstation (powerstation.net.nz). I played there before Christmas and it's just one of those really good clubs - nothing when you first walk in, but with a room full of people it has a big vibe. For a more close-quarters gig, there's the Kings Arms. It's a good place to see up-and-coming bands, as is the Golden Dawn.

New Zealand cuisine is about influences and fusions. I also associate it with tasty, fresh local produce. SPQR is one of my favourite restaurants. It's glitzy but also relaxed. My wife and I only ever go there early but it gets really wild late at night, so I'm told. There are places worth