



HAIL HAWKE'S BAY



Hawke's Bay on New Zealand's North Island is a region bursting at the seams with premium wine, food and, of course, stunning natural beauty.



SHADES OF BLUE

The striking Elephant Hill cellar door, also pictured bottom left. Top left: Cape Kidnappers.



BOUNTIFUL BAY
Smith & Sheth's Village Oenothèque.
Right: Craggy Range.



It's hard not to be charmed by Hawke's Bay, when laid at one's feet is a bounty of wineries, local produce and stunning natural beauty, all to be enjoyed on any of the East Coast's balmy sunny days. On the east coast of the North Island, clustered around the southern end of the bay is where the majority of cellar doors and restaurants are located in this, New Zealand's second largest wine region.

On the Coast

Start with the coastal village of Te Awanga and a visit to **Te Awanga Estate** (teawangaestate.co.nz), where winemaker Rod McDonald has a knack for producing wines with a distinctive regional signature. Overlooking the vineyard, the cellar door is host to **Wildsong**, the newest label in the line-up. First developed with a Hawke's Bay sauvignon blanc, the range has been expanded to include a pinot gris, chardonnay, rosé and syrah. The distinctive labels sum up the style of this quintet as fresh, vibrant, and a pleasure to drink.

After working with **Vidal Estate** for many years, Hugh Crichton has taken a new position at **Elephant Hill** (elephanthill.co.nz), alongside assistant winemaker Kate Douglas. A reimagined restaurant now offers a relaxed dining experience of platters using locally sourced produce – curated with Elephant Hill wines in mind. Book a night or two at The Lodge to enjoy views framed by magnificent floor-to-ceiling windows looking out over the swimming pool, and down to the vineyard, ocean and Cape Kidnappers. Specials during the summer months include an extra night's accommodation free of charge.

Just a short drive from Te Awanga in the hills of Clifton Station, is **Clifton Glamping** (cliftonglamping.co.nz) and an excellent base from which to explore the local wineries. Camping this is not. Rather, luxury safari-style tents resplendent with creature comforts, and a spot to soak under the stars, create an oasis of serenity and restoration after a busy day out.

Up the Mountain

Nearby is the town of Havelock North with wineries, cellar doors and dining options sprinkled around the foothills of the spectacular Te Mata Peak. Exuding sophistication and style, **Smith & Sheth's Village Oenothèque**, handily located behind Porters Boutique Hotel, provides three venues in which to enjoy wine and food (smithandsheth.com). The cellar door, open during the day is transformed into a wine lounge in the evening. Alternatively, the personalised tasting experience at the Heretaunga Wine Studio lets you ease into the lounge seats of the private cinema and cellar as a selection of treats including barrel samples are presented.

If you're an oyster lover, book a ticket for Oysters & Albariño, 20 March, to enjoy the latest albariño release with new season's Bluff oysters. If you are visiting in April, secure a ticket to the French-inspired garden party, one of the final events of the summer **F.A.W.C. (Food and Wine Classic) festival** (fawc.co.nz).

From the top to the bottom of Te Mata Peak, a tandem paraglide will get your heart pumping and the adrenaline flowing. Soak up the breathtaking views sweeping down the cliff face and out to the gorgeous coastal arc framing a glittering ocean as the cool air whistles around you.

With feet on the ground, head over to **Craggy Range** (craggyrange.com), which you will have spotted from your bird's-eye view. The highly awarded winery restaurant offers a shared menu, including a vegetarian option, showcasing the best in-season local produce. From May to September take advantage of the specials at the **Craggy Range Cottages** at the foot of Te Mata Peak. The very embodiment of luxury amongst the vines, the cottages look out to the rugged escarpment and the Tukituki River.

If a more relaxed meal at the end the day is desired, head back into Havelock North to **Mary's Wine Bar** (marys.co.nz), the latest collaboration from **Craggy Range** and named after Mary

WINE & DINE

Craggy Range is home to an award-winning restaurant.



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Peabody, of the winery's founding family. Chef Casey McDonald serves up outstanding dishes, in addition to his day job as chef at the Craggy Range winery restaurant. The menu is a journey of temptation from one mouth-watering dish to the next, whether it be a burger and buffalo chips, charred beef tacos, local tarakihi fish or pillowy gnocchi.

East 200

Staying inland, make a beeline to the trendy East 200 block in Hastings for a multitude of dining options. A good way to start the day is coffee and pastry at **Cupple Coffee** (*firsthand.coffee*). Check out their schedule as you may find yourself heading back there for one of their pop-up wine tastings, with producers such as Amy Farnsworth from **Amoise**, and **Halcyon Wines'** Amy and Olly Hopkinson-Styles.

Dinner should include a visit to **Fun Buns** (*funbuns.co.nz*) for bao buns and cocktails. This is a super popular spot with locals and visitors alike, and the recent extension makes it easier to procure a table.

For spirit-lovers, nearby **Hastings Distillers** (*hastingsdistillers.com*) is the place to be. Bringing an air of sophistication and elegance to an old print shop building, Hastings Distillers is the creation of Kate Galloway and David Ramonteu. Push open the heavy wood doors and step into the carefully crafted aesthetic that is the trademark of this duo. A sleek, lux-industrial interior with polished concrete, dark wood, brass countertops, and teal banquettes sets the tone for your tasting experience.

Billed as New Zealand's first certified organic producer of spirits and liqueurs, Hastings Distillers explores botanicals with a uniquely local twist. A range of gins are on offer alongside their own Campari-style aperitif, L'Opera, and a wonderful, sweet vermouth, Rubis. The plant-based neutral spirit also means the drinks are suitable for vegans.

New releases include two Eau de Vie, one feijoa and one plum flavoured. An aged, skin-contact white wine is used to produce the **Aubyn Dry** and **Aubyn Sweet** orange vermouth.

Hastings Distillers will be making its Australian debut this year so keep an eye out for the distinctively labelled bottles; to avoid disappointment, be sure to stock up at the conclusion of your visit.

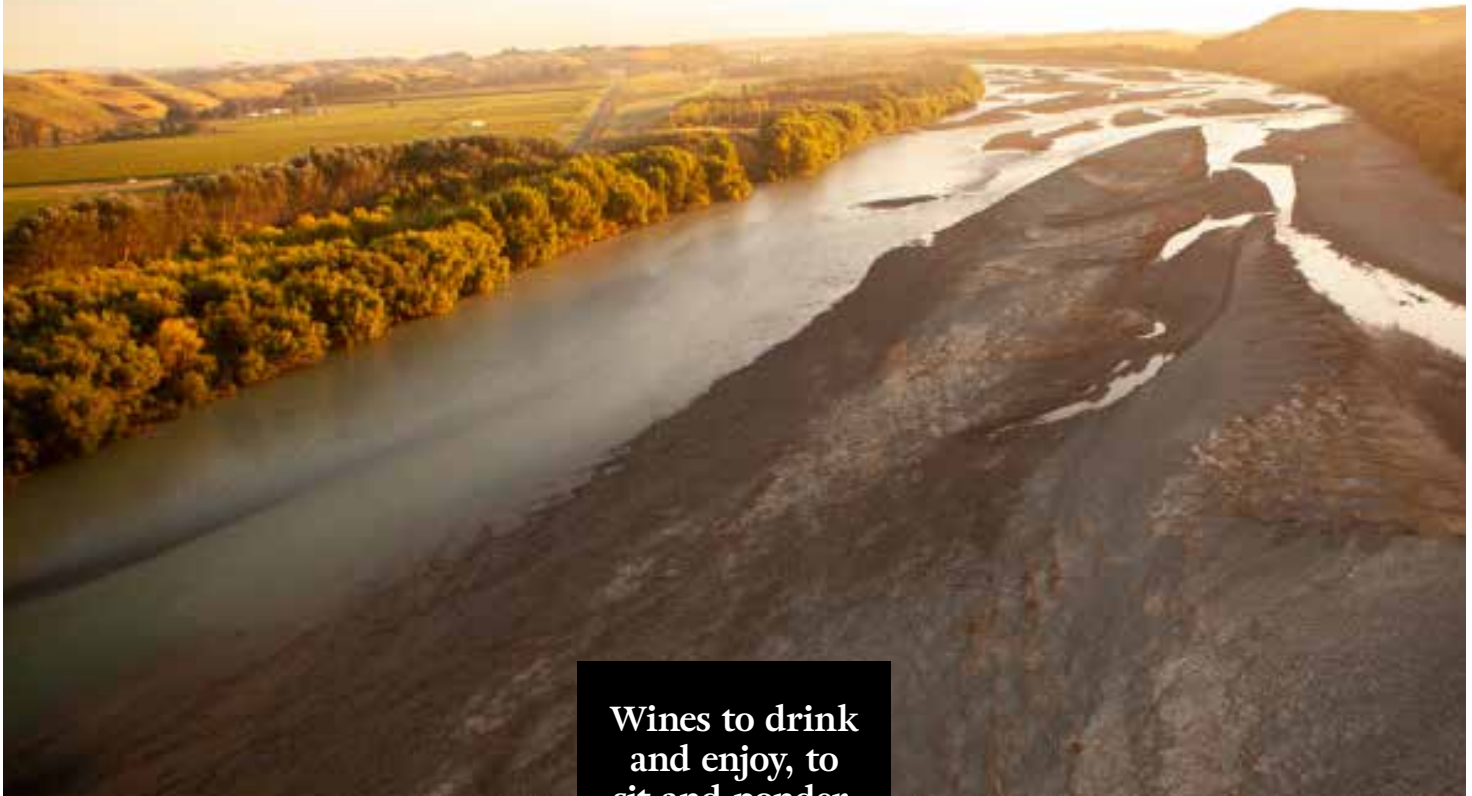
For live music, poetry and open mic nights, head next door to **Common Room Bar** (*commonroombar.co.nz*) where, as they say on their website, they offer comfort food well done with some bloody good puds! There are all hallmarks of a neighbourhood pub, so grab a pint, wine or tippie and relax with the locals.

For low 'n slow American-style BBQ, try **Bareknuckle BBQ** (*bareknucklebbq.co.nz*). The smokers are fired up early morning and by the time lunch and dinner rolls around, the meat is melt-in-the-mouth tender, juicy and delicious. If you are visiting in March, look out for the BBQ Competition, on 13 March, pitting contestants against each other in a range of classes with not a gas or pallet smoker in sight.

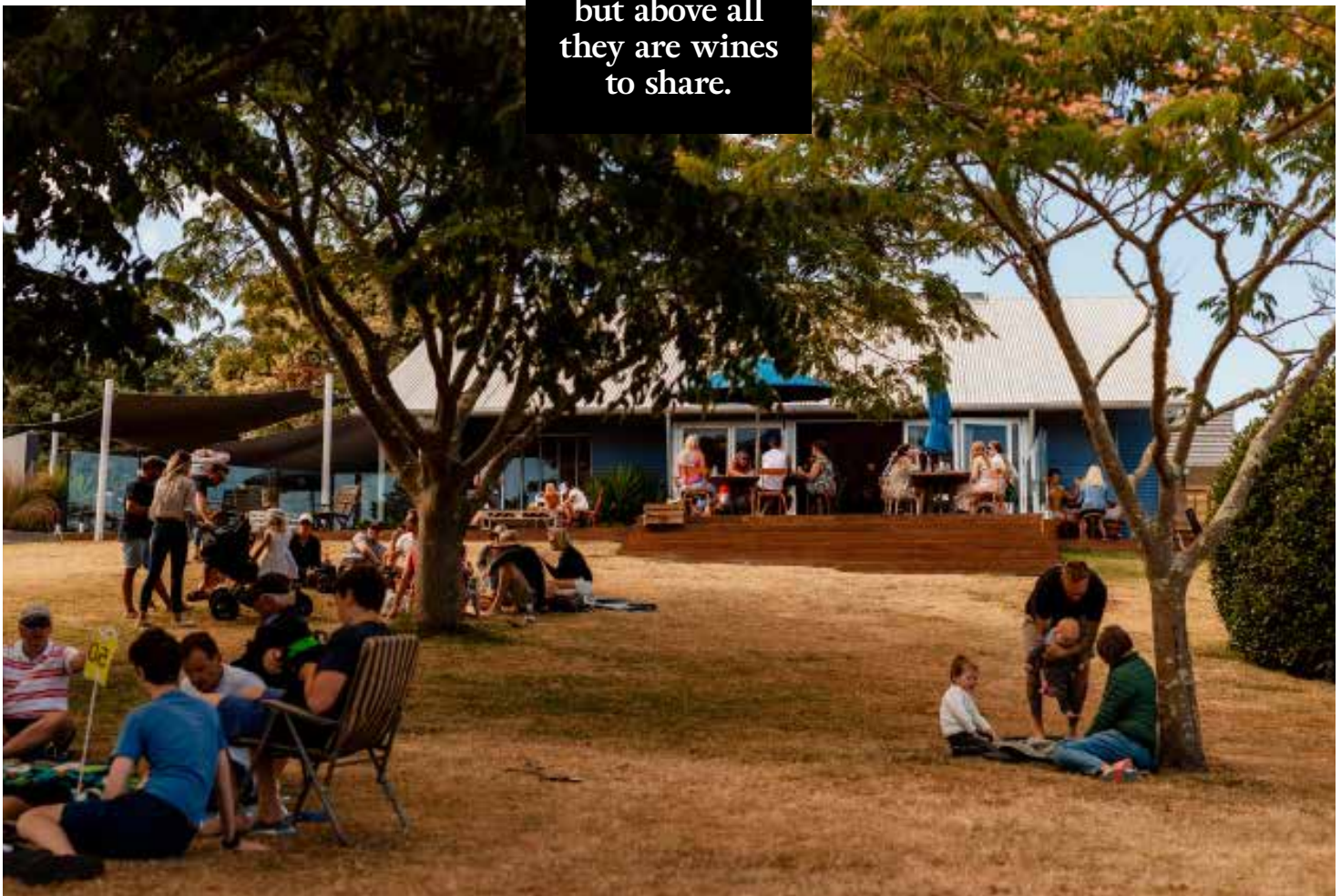
Art Deco Capital

Heading north, you'll find Hastings' twin city, Napier. Home to one of the most comprehensive collections of art deco buildings in the world, Napier has a number of great options when it comes to dining.

With its focus on plant-based choices, **Hapi Café** (*hapi.nz*) is an excellent spot for coffee and cake in addition to scrumptious sandwiches, smoothies and wraps. In this little nook of Napier, you will also find **Bistronomy** (*bistronomy.co.nz*), a bistro, wine shop and tasting room all in one. Open evenings, it is as easy to stop for a cheeky glass and cheese as it is for dinner or the chef's choice menu with matching wines.



Wines to drink
and enjoy, to
sit and ponder,
but above all
they are wines
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For a caffeine hit, **Georgia on Tennyson** (*georgiaontennyson.co.nz*), voted Best Coffee Establishment in the 2021 Hawke's Bay Hospitality awards, is just around the corner. In addition to coffee, Benny Fernandes and the team run a series of tastings with the Winemaker and the Winter Series, featuring 12 winemakers over consecutive weeks, starts July 2022.

The River

Mention Hawke's Bay wine and it's impossible not to think of Gimblett Gravels, Bridge Pa and the Mangatahi Terraces, all defined by their proximity to the Ngaruroro River and its gravelly soils. It is from this land that Amy Farnsworth sources much of the fruit for her label, **Amoise** (*amoisewines.co.nz*).

Amoise is very much a labour of love for Farnsworth, vineyard manager for Smith & Sheth by day. Having her own label affords her the opportunity to produce meticulously crafted wines made from certified organic grapes and according to biodynamic principles. While there isn't a cellar door, you can get in touch to make an appointment via the website. You can also taste the wines at Cellar NZ and Matisse Wine Bar in Napier, and at Sazio and Cornucopia Organics in Hastings – be sure to look out for the newly released chenin blanc and cabernet franc, both from the 2021 vintage.

Another small producer releasing wines constantly evolving to tantalise the tastebuds and inspire the poet within is **Halcyon Wines** (*halcyonwines.co.nz*), run by Amy and Olly Hopkinson-Styles. The fruit here is also certified organic, and the wines are exemplars of cerebral blending, precision structure and harmonious elegance. These are wines to drink and enjoy, to sit and ponder, but above all, they are wines to share.

From new to heritage, **Stonecroft** (*stonecroft.co.nz*) is the historical home of syrah in the region. Owners Dermot McCollum and Andria Monin have continued the legacy with intense and elegant age-worthy wines. A visit to the cellar door in 2022 will coincide with 40-year anniversary celebrations, including the release of a 2020 Reserve Syrah, available for tasting. Keep an eye out for the commemorative anniversary label. A 2020 Original Syrah will also be released. Produced from the oldest vines on the estate, this is only the fourth time this single barrel wine has been made.

It's time to remedy that wanderlust and get planning. With so many experiences on offer, the biggest challenge for a visit to Hawke's Bay will be in choosing which adventure to go on. 🍷

Wines to Try

2020 Amoise Gris, NZ\$37

Fermentation began with a starter of grapes left in the vineyard to ferment naturally. The organic fruit from Two Terraces Vineyard in Mangatahi Terraces was hand-plunged once a day and the juice left in contact with the skins for 28 days. A delectable wine, dancing lightly on the palate where juicy green fruits and ginger spice meet floral and ripe stone fruit.

2020 Amoise Syrah, NZ\$43

There is a moreish textural crunch to the bright berry flavours and bursts of spicy pepper in this lighter style. At 11.5% ABV, the wine could also be served chilled and enjoyed with charcuterie, cheese and smoked meats.

2019 Smith & Sheth CRU Heretaunga Albariño, NZ\$35

Highly aromatic conjuring an image of a summer orchard in full bloom, with heady aromas of white blossoms, soft, juicy fruit, ripe citrus – summer in a glass. The texture, at once satiny and creamy, is freshened with the zing of lime juice in a luxurious delight of summer fruits.

2014 Smith & Sheth CRU Omaha Syrah, NZ\$60

Dark and tightly woven with brooding black fruit, pencil shavings, peppery spice and soft red fruit enveloped in a silky-smooth texture. The wine spills across the palate, leaving a delicate web of finely textured tannins and succulent acidity as dark fruited and smoked meat flavours settle and linger on the back palate.

2020 Halcyon Days Kōtare (Sauvignon Blanc, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Noir), NZ\$50

Plump yellow and tropical fruits enclose an array of savoury, spice and herbal flavours that duck and dive across the palate, peeking out from an exquisite structure to captivate. Lemon zest, lychee, chamomile, sourdough, fennel, white pepper and ginger unite in an intriguing melange of flavours, bringing forth a library of possible dishes for pairing.

2020 Halcyon Days Ruth (Pinot Gris, Syrah rosé and Pinot Noir rosé), NZ\$35

Slipping across the palate, leaving the merest hint of tannin, an ingenious structure threads together amaro bitters, strawberries, redcurrants, and purple florals before peppery spice steps forward, remaining long after the final sip.

2020 Craggy Range Gimblett Gravels Vineyard Chardonnay, NZ\$40

A bright future is ahead for this nifty youngster. Taut with zippy acidity and intense flavours. Ruby red grapefruit, Meyer lemon, white blossom and wet stones float over a rich base of ripe peach, burnt butter and lemon curd. It will be difficult, but patience will be rewarded.

2019 Craggy Range Gimblett Gravels Vineyard Syrah, NZ\$40

Inky purple stains the glass and delicious aromas fill the room, with soft summer fruit, tart currants, spicy green peppercorns, and a wisp of smoky barbecued meat. With a sip, the wine slips over the palate leaving a calling card of polished tannins and tightly wound flavours that unfurl, revealing dark fruits and charred meats, a snap of spicy pepper and the promise of so much more to come in the years ahead.