

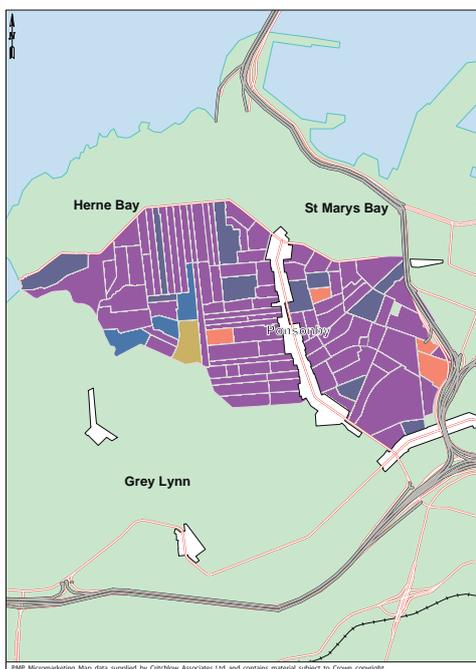
Ponsonby ★★★★★

Central

including Freemans Bay



Ponsonby is home to the pink dollar and good coffee. Yummy mummies sip skinny lattes with their designer-clad toddlers or their gay neighbours. To live in its narrow, double-parked streets you've probably sold your successful organic food company for millions, drive a late-model European and know what a Ghost chair is (a designer, see-through plastic number). Almost all of the tumble-down houses have been renovated to within an inch of their lives and spawned a new language: brown is mocha and a back verandah is a loggia. Historically, Freemans Bay was a poor and often disreputable quarter. It's now known for its pretty mix of heritage homes and more modern single-dwelling houses. It is popular with young professional couples and trendy families alike. Homes have spectacular grey views, but a reputation for losing the sun early in the day.



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For colour key, see page 230

Population Profile

Population	9,354
% Aged Under 15 Years	13.75
% Aged Over 65 Years	7.65
% European	70.88
% Maori	6.80
% Pacific Peoples	8.92
% Asian	5.68

Who Lives There?

Ponsonby is not the eclectic mix of races and economic strata that it used to be. Professional sportspeople, media celebrities, advertising types, entrepreneurs and icons of Auckland's gay subculture rub shoulders in Ponsonby Rd's busy cafés, but that's about as varied as it gets.

There's no shortage of people clamouring to live here but they have to have the money and the mindset to do so. Very few Asian migrants buy into Ponsonby – mainly due to the higher upkeep of the older homes. While it's true the area has a warm social conscience and an appetite for all that is trendy, there's

also an obvious hankering for the finer things in life. Ponsonby residents are what the rest of New Zealand is visualising when they seethe on about “Dorklanders.” And Ponsonby residents love it.

Typical Homes

Ponsonby people love their houses, lavishing them with architect-inspired renovations then filling them with designer fittings and furnishings. This is where towels are folded onto the rail, not slung and where pillows are there for decoration, not comfort.

Most houses are old villas and workingman’s cottages, nestling cheek-by-jowl on tiny sections in the narrow streets. You certainly get to know your neighbours well around here, even if you don’t want to.

Freeman’s Bay has a broader mix of house styles – old villas, a smattering of 1930s bungalows, many 1960s ex-council flats (now being fought over tooth-and-nail by buyers for their retro appeal) and some new-ish townhouses. There’s even a beautiful little village of smart, angular wooden houses nestled between Howe St and the elevated motorway.

Amenities

Schools ★★★

This high-decile area is well served by primary and intermediate schools but the secondary

schooling is scant for boys. The attractive and well-resourced Ponsonby Primary is very popular and according to a recent ERO report, continues to provide, “...high quality education.”

At secondary level, the area is in-zone for Auckland Girls Grammar and conveniently close to Western Springs College. Many of the moneyed residents prefer to send their kids to private schools across town.

While most Ponsonby residents would rather choke on their brioche before moving across to what they see as “the Dark Side” (Remuera and Epsom) some are forced to do so once the children reach secondary school age to get them into Auckland Grammar or Epsom Girls Grammar.

No such problems for Catholics – St Mary’s College (girls) and St Paul’s College (boys) are in the neighbourhood. For a full list, see page 270.

Shops ★★★★★

This area is famous for its shopping. Ponsonby and Jervois Rds are lined with trendy specialty stores selling designer clothing and homewares heavily interspersed with cafés and restaurants. Ponsonby Rd has its own website www.ponsonby.co.nz

There are supermarkets in Richmond Rd and College Hill and plenty of bakeries, flower and fruit shops. Downtown Auckland, St Lukes mall and, in fact, Takapuna shops, are all close by.



Leisure ★★★★★

Many local parks, including Victoria Park, Western Park, Grey Lynn Park and Cox's Bay, are great places to relax and get some fresh air. The famous local rugby club sharing the suburb's name now plays just down the road in Western Springs.

Residents enjoy being close to the Zoo, MOTAT and Western Springs Park. The Pt Erin Baths and its lead-free dog walking park are well patronised, as are the little, newly re-sanded beaches along the waterfront. Local sports clubs include bowling, yachting, rugby, soccer, snooker, tennis, petanque and squash.

If we're being honest, however, the only game in town is people-watching while sipping a trim latte. Ponsonby Rd is alive with restaurants and bars catering to various tastes (and sexual predilection). Notable eateries include SPQR (take a torch if you want to read the menu), Dizengoff, Sawadee, Rocco and the Musket Room. For the most addictive pizza in Auckland, go to Il Buco in Ponsonby Rd.

Real Estate

Trends

Serious vendors are recognising that the astronomical price rises of the past few years have cooled to a simmer. The opportunists, with a "we'll only sell if we get a ridiculously

high price" mentality just aren't selling their properties.

The ongoing demand for renovated quality homes looks set to continue. People pay premium prices for totally – and recently – renovated places, up to \$2million. A three-bedroom Ponsonby villa do-up will easily sell in the mid-\$600,000s.

Large, top-quality townhouses with very high-end specifications aren't that common because of the restrictions of the Res. 1 and Res. 2 heritage zones which limit demolition and redevelopment. A one-bedroom apartment can still be picked up for the low-to-mid-\$200,000s, but the price of a rarer two-bedroom apartment is at least \$400,000 to \$500,000.

Ponsonby's narrow streets and closely-spaced dwellings mean that off-street parking is sought-after – an apartment with a parking space will cost about \$25,000 more than one without. The general lack of off-street parking is off-putting for some, but others look on the positives and rejoice that most places they want to go are within easy walking distance.

Perspective, the swanky apartment building on College Hill has 81 apartments in seven low-rise buildings which surround a plaza, giving these well-heeled apartment dwellers some outdoor space (and a lap pool). Prices range from \$400,000 to about \$750,000.



The proposed \$200million Soho Square development, on what was New Zealand's only dedicated yeast factory, remains a hole in the ground as a result of the insolvency of the developer, however the land has been re-sold to a major supermarket chain. Who knows what the future may hold? Locals roundly oppose any development which might undermine the historic nature of the area.

Best Streets

Vermont St, O'Neill St and Summer St in Ponsonby; and Arthur St, Paget St and Hepburn St in Freemans Bay.

**Local Hero:
The Cavalier Tavern**



The Cavalier – or ‘The Cav’ as it is better known to its regulars – on College Hill has been a feature of the Ponsonby landscape for nearly 120 years. It was originally called The Suffolk Hotel and built when Ponsonby was a sparsely populated grubby suburb called Dedwood. ‘The Cav’ has been the place to meet and socialise for Ponsonbyites for years. In the early days its patrons were a rough and ready bunch, whereas these days they’re a mix of well-to-do locals, PR and media types. In the evening the atmosphere is busy and loud with the blinking, whirring pokies attracting the attention and the dollars of the locals. At lunchtimes the place is equally busy but the punters are local office workers drawn by the excellent, home-made pub-grub. At any time of the day the very friendly bar staff make everybody welcome, local and stranger alike.

At a Glance...

House Prices

Apartment

Bedroom	
Price	\$370,000+
Bedrooms	
Price	\$600,000 - \$750,000+

Do-up character house

Bedrooms	
Price	\$900,000 - \$1,200,000

Renovated character house

Bedrooms	
Price	\$1,100,000 - \$1,300,000
Bedrooms	
Price	\$1,300,000 - \$1,800,000+

Top-end house

Price	\$3,000,000 - \$4,500,000
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Average Rents

Flat

Bedroom	
Price	\$400/wk
Bedrooms	
Price	\$580/wk

Apartment

Bedroom	
Price	\$450/wk

House

Bedrooms	
Price	\$820+/wk
Bedrooms	
Price	\$1,000+/wk

Travel Times

From Three Lamps shops:

CBD	peak 15 min off-peak 5 min
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on foot 15 min

North-western motorway	5 min
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Airport	35 min
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St Lukes mall	15 min
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The area has excellent bus services, especially with the Link buses that run on a continuous circuit from Ponsonby Rd to Newmarket via the city.