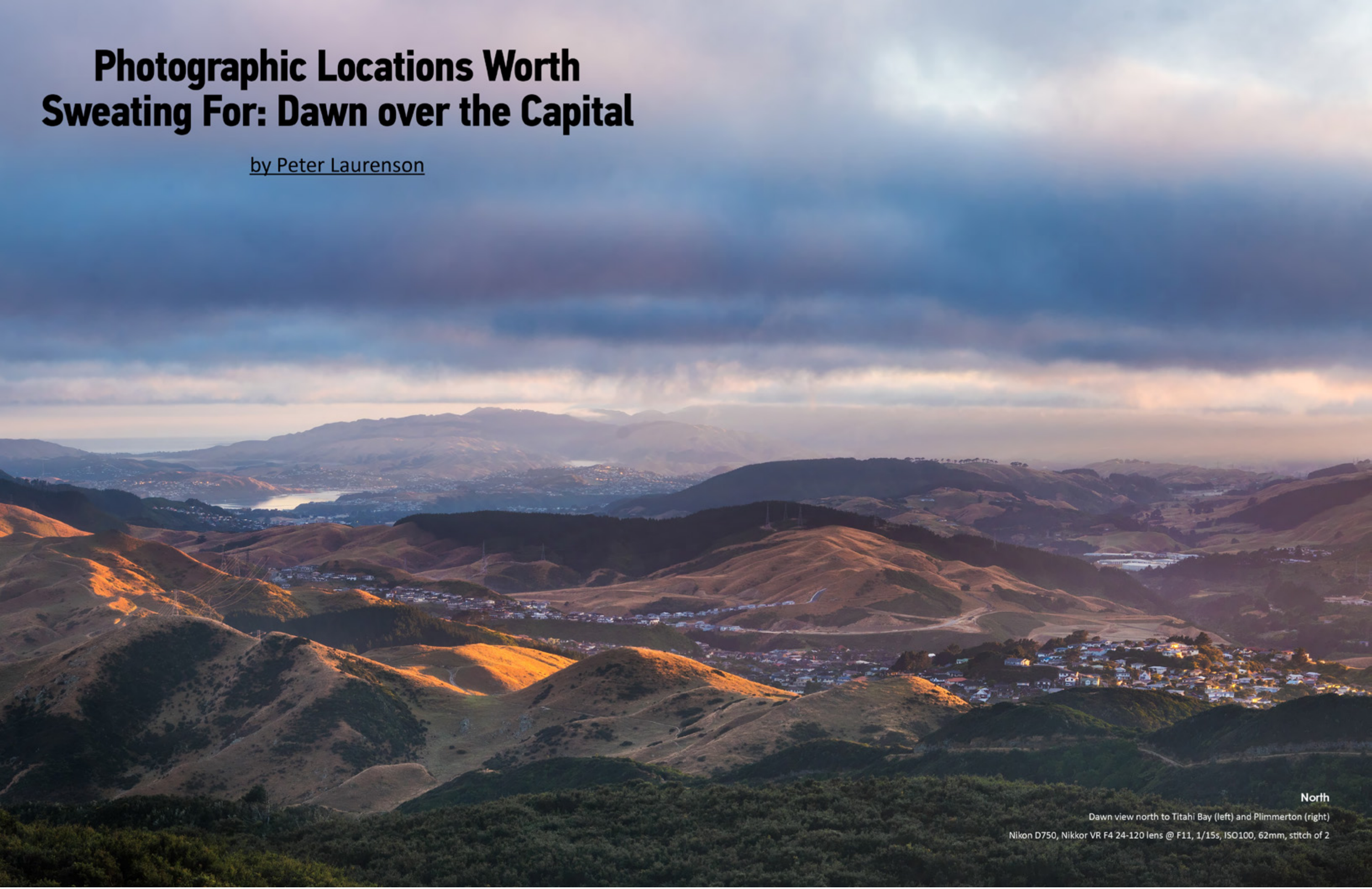


Photographic Locations Worth Sweating For: Dawn over the Capital

by Peter Laurenson



North

Dawn view north to Titahi Bay (left) and Plimmerton (right)

Nikon D750, Nikkor VR F4 24-120 lens @ F11, 1/15s, ISO100, 62mm, stitch of 2



South

Dawn view south to Wellington's CBD
Nikon D750, Nikkor VR F4 24-120 lens @ F11, 2.5s, ISO100, 40mm, stitch of 2

Mount Kaukau is one of the highest viewpoints in close proximity to Wellington City. At 445 metres, only the Hawkins Hill viewpoint south of Brooklyn is higher (495m). The well graded trail from the Woodmancote Road car park in Khandallah leads quickly to the wooden platform at 425 metres, a little below the true summit of Mount Kaukau, marked by a trig to the north. The platform offers panoramic views and a perfectly even and stable spot to place a tripod.

As a Wellingtonian, I've been up Mount Kaukau countless times, but only recently did it occur to me to go up there for dawn. I switched on my head torch and strolled peacefully along the trail leading through bush up the south ridge. I thought I was alone, but soon in the pre-dawn tranquillity, I heard that quintessential New Zealand sound of Ruru calling – morepork, morepork! They were close. As I tuned in to the forest the scrapping of Weta legs became apparent. Then I saw glow worms twinkling in the darkness – sometimes competing with city lights beyond the trees. It really was beautiful – just like being in the hills much further from the city.

The climb to the viewing platform follows a well maintained trail, but there are plenty of steps between

the car park and the top 250 metres above. By the time I reached the platform I'd raised a small sweat, but the predawn wind soon cooled me down. I was glad I'd brought my coat. Dawn unveiled slowly. While the horizon was turning red as I arrived, it took about an hour before the bright orb of the sun poked into view. I guess that's why it's called the 'magic hour'.

And magic it was – panoramic views in all directions. The city, compactly draping twinkling lights all over the folds of the hills to the south made a rewarding photographic subject. Further out to the east, beyond Wellington Harbour, the lights of Eastbourne underlined the rise of the Remutaka Range. To the north the lights of Petone, Lower Hutt, Plimmerton and Titahi Bay all glimmered as the sun's rays gradually dimmed their brilliance, painting everything in soft warm colour.

Why hadn't I done this before? And I was still alone! If you're reading this then the secret's out...

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www.occasionalclimber.co.nz/browse-images-2/new-zealand-north-island/around-wellington-browse/mt-kau-kau-to-macara



Top: West

Dawn view west to Quartz Hill, stitch of 2
Nikon D750, Nikkor VR F4 24-120 lens @ F11, 1/40s, ISO100, 50mm



Bottom: East

Dawn view east to Somes Island
Nikon D750, Nikkor VR F4 24-120 lens @ F11, 1/20s, ISO100, 85mm