



GOOD THINGS COME IN **SMALL** PACKAGES

Bigger is not always best when it comes to retail. Smaller spaces are proving a great trigger for entrepreneurs who may have limited capital or who want to make a statement through their minimal commercial footprint.

Back in 2013, a tiny store selling candles and jewellery opened in Park Ridge, Illinois, and according to its front door sign, was the world's smallest retail space.

The minuscule store's entrance was shy of 48 inches – less than 1.2 metres wide. It has since closed but there are plenty of examples globally of bite-sized premises that are making a commercial go of it.

In Birmingham, arguably the smallest coffee shop in Britain has opened. Jake's Coffee Box operates from a traditional red public phone box as part of a drive to use the vacant structures instead of leaving them to wrack and ruin.

The Tardis-like space has a water tank and mini fridge on the lower shelf, space above that for the espresso machine and storage for cups, and the top shelf houses a heated display unit for pastries and sausage rolls. Compact, eye-catching and out-of-the-phone-box thinking.



In New Zealand, the small commercial space movement is also alive and well with innovative business owners opting for functional premises which also give them a novel edge in the market. Foreign currency exchanges were early adopters of micro spaces

on the main streets of New Zealand's major cities and now retail – particularly the food and beverage sector – has followed suit.

Total Property whips out the tape measure and looks at some of the best in class.

2.8M² BAKERY OUTLET

In the coastal town of Raglan's main street, the Ruapuke Artisan Bread store is making a name for its size as well as its sourdough, spelt, and gluten-free products.

Baker Jenny Carter bakes bread off-site but sells it from a cubbyhole which opens onto the footpath.

"I had been selling my bread from a table on the footpath when I noticed a small boarded up doorway between Trade Aid and the neighbouring shop," explains Carter.

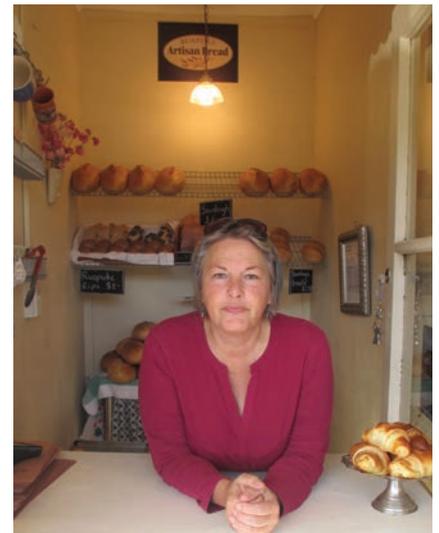
"I approached Trade Aid with a proposition to open up the old doorway, put in a false wall and sell my bread from there. They agreed, saying it was important to support small emerging

business in New Zealand as well as their fair trade partners overseas. I am very grateful for their support."

Jenny says she fitted the store out 'Raglan style' using materials at hand and creating a lift-up counter for access. Utility-wise there's just a power point for the electronic payment machine. Jenny has access to water in the Trade Aid shop.

"I didn't expect the shop to attract as much attention as it does and it's a rare day that it's not photographed," says Jenny.

"It's an interesting concept to maximise 'small'. I sometimes tell customers that I'm going to be a supermarket when I grow up."



4M² GELATO SHOP



Nathan Gutsell and Mulan Zhang searched high and low for an Auckland CBD site for their organic gelato, sorbet and popsicle business. They dreamed of high exposure for their gourmet brand seven days a week in a high foot traffic area.

"Queen Street rents are prohibitive for most food vendors so we had to be creative," says Gutsell.

Lalele Gelato's one-scoop-sized 'hole-in-the-wall' outlet now trades proudly on a busy retail strip with the necessary bells and whistles of

power, water, phone and internet.

It was the only feasible option in the pair's price range. Gutsell reveals that rent on the space is \$2,500 + GST per month plus minimal operating expenses.

"The shop frontage is very small which means it can be easy to miss and we can't display all our products, but the benefit is the fit-out was economical and the ongoing costs are affordable.

"It's also a great talking point with our customers."

9M² CAFE

It takes Anna and Gareth Wilson just minutes to mop the floor of their Coffix coffee outlet in Auckland's Newmarket and the low overheads that come with a pint-sized space allows the couple to maximise returns on their \$2.50 flat rate for a takeaway coffee – regardless of soy, double shot, added syrup and other permutations.

"There's no room for tables and chairs inside our wee store but there's a recycled wooden bench outside and we're growing plants and creating a visually pleasing space for our customers, and for us as we're here from 7am," says Anna Wilson.

She says there are definitely great benefits to having a small space – one of them being able to do most of the fit out themselves, and of course the clean-up at the end of the day is a dream.



13M² COFFEE ROASTERY



Located on the corner of Courtenay Place and Taranaki Street, Wellington in part of a historic building that was previously men's public toilets, is Gentlemen's Beans – a micro-roastery and coffee bar.

Gentlemen's Beans manager

Belinda Beckett, says the boutique business is in a unique position with high foot traffic and is ideally located for city workers.

"Our busiest time is 7am – 10am as the city is waking up for the business day," says Beckett.

"The coffee is roasted onsite with a large window showcasing the roaster, and an efficient extraction unit which delivers wonderful aromas around this part of the city."

The premises has water, gas and electricity and shares bathroom facilities with the adjacent business, Tommy Millions Pizza.

"The small space in itself hasn't been an issue. Every part of the shop is used to its fullest and we have under floor storage for excess stock," says Beckett.

"On the downside, this particular area can be quite susceptible to wind (along with much of Wellington!), so in winter it can get cold for employees but all-in-all the space really works.

"Our customers continue to come back and we find no reason to be put off small spaces for businesses."

15M² MICRO CO-WORKING AND COFFEE SPACE

Graphic designer and artist Lance Ravenswood – now based in Berlin – created multiple spaces within a hidden, quirky stairwell on Wellington's Manners Street and named the funky venture, Little Thunder.

The venue runs over two levels and includes the landing after the first set of stairs but the actual street front space is tiny.

"I originally saw the small space when it was being used as storage for

Flight Coffee's beans back in 2013 and it later housed a micro-training and takeaway coffee operation for Flight," says Ravenswood.

"I'd been experimenting with the design of studio bedrooms in Wellington, creating mezzanines and hidden storage space, and finding the power of modular design.

"I grabbed the opportunity to develop the space in 2015 when it became vacant because of its unique high ceiling, mezzanine-style half stairwell, and

knowing there was potential to creating various spaces within it."

In offering coffee, cold drinks, snacks, a couch to relax on, a bar to chat on, a "hot desk" to work on – it's a micro co-working space that has hit the spot with Wellingtonians.

Ravenswood says as a designer, the project was a good challenge and guaranteed the creation of an original space.

"From a feasibility point of view, maintenance is very low, set up is swift

and hitting the first revenue margin can happen quickly with the right business plan.

“People are fascinated by small spaces. I found during the build, many faces staring through the window into the golden glowing wood interior, exploring with eyes, and coming back when it was opened.

“So I guess, if you do your micro space right, are true to the natural design of the space, emphasise the little things that make the space unique, and have a good product, then people will come.

“It really amazed me how such a small space could retain such a large community,” says Ravenswood.



15M² BAR AND LIVE MUSIC VENUE

Lonely Planet says Mouvery, in George Street, Dunedin is one of the world's smallest bars.

The bar caters for Dunedin's caffeine fix during the day and morphs into an intimate live music venue at night.

It's well-spec'd with water, power, gas, bathroom and a private garden area which flies under the public radar and is known to few Dunedinites.

Owner Rhys Jeffery says the unique space is lauded by patrons.

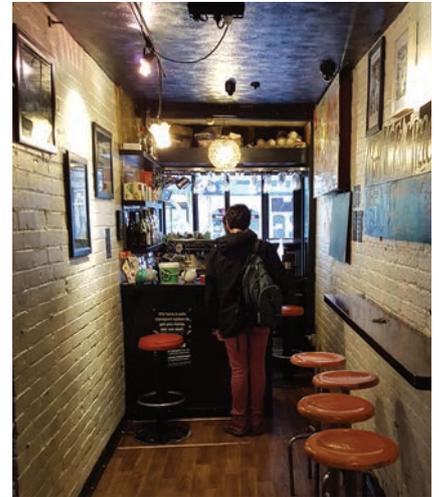
“In all of my time in the hospitality industry, I've never had such positive feedback about the ambiance, design, layout and artistic features of a

venue,” says Jeffery.

“Europeans, particularly, tell me it reminds them of home. The hole-in-the-wall layout, brick walls and decor are typical of an alleyway cafe in Berlin.”

The upsides of low overheads, low maintenance, intimacy, the unique relationships that can be formed with clientele and the easily-influenced ambiance are countered somewhat by the limited storage space, the easily-reached capacity and the unique staffing matters that come with a solo operation.

“But I believe this wee bar is unmatched in New Zealand and it's great to be part of it,” says Jeffery.



39M² COMMERCIAL KITCHEN, DISPATCH AND RETAIL



NZ Food Award finalist and peanut butter producers Fix and Fogg's tiny 'nut buttery' is located in the former laundry basement of the old Hannah's shoe factory on Eva Street in central Wellington with a

retail window onto the laneway.

Owner Roman Jewell says it's a quaint base for the successful business and the entire production, dispatch, staff room, storage area

and retail space totals less than 40 square metres.

“Our retail window looks straight into our production and dispatch room and we really like the level of transparency this gives people who come and visit as they can see everything that's going on,” says Jewell.

“We have all the services we need to make peanut butter – essentially just water and power – although access for delivery drivers to this part of the city can be challenging at peak traffic times.

“We pay close to market rate for our commercial kitchen, primarily because we worked with the landlord to convert the unused space into a registered commercial kitchen.

“The small space suited our start-up company and ensured we didn't over commit on this potentially significant expense item.”