

Capital Coffee – Santu Coffee Bar, Canongate.

For those in search of really good coffee, the Royal Mile has been something of a desert.

There are decent places in the vicinity, such as Milkman (two branches on Cockburn Street), Hideout (Upper Bow), The Edinburgh Larder (Blackfriars Street) and Procaffeination (St Mary's Street), but otherwise the area is dominated by chains and touristy cafes for whom coffee is something of an (overpriced) afterthought. Things may now be changing.

Santu on the Canongate has recently arrived to fill a significant gap and to raise the general standard. They have judged that, as well as a passing tourist trade, there will be sufficient coffee lovers who work and live nearby – including in well populated places such as Moray House, The Scottish Parliament and Dynamic Earth. After feeling empty for many months, The Royal Mile has again started to regain some of its usual liveliness with the chatter of tourists again evident in the closes, museums and shops.

[Santu Coffee](#) is a snug and stylish newcomer on the Canongate, a few doors down from the Museum of Edinburgh. Although primarily a takeaway, they do have one comfortable armchair and a wooden bench for those wanting to sit in. It's a lovely cosy spot to shelter from any wintry weather. On our recent visit there, it was sleeting outside and a warm drink and shelter was much needed. While there you can enjoy their excellent coffee, teas and hot chocolate- as well as a selection of baking (their almond croissants are particularly tasty).

The owners are aware that they are taking something of a risk with this venture. As one of their baristas put it, "There may be a very good reason why there have been no other specialty coffee places on the Royal Mile". They are also aware that their style of course might not be to the taste of many of the tourists, especially those from Mediterranean countries. They will likely be used to more traditional dark roasts, rather than the more subtle and varied third wave coffee which Santu serve. Santu use beans from their own range, all with subtly different characteristics. They currently have four roasts on offer, with Coffee 1 their usual espresso, and Coffee 2 generally on filter.

Coffee 1 is grown by Alfredo Casagrande as has sweet and fruity notes with a balanced body. All four are sourced from growers in Brazil. For many years Brazilian coffee tended to be overlooked by those in the specialty coffee world, due to the size and scale of the Brazillian coffee industry. Only a small percentage of the beans produced in Brazil are of the specialty variety but those that are, are often of exceptional quality.

Washington Vieira, the man behind Santu, has a wealth of experience in the coffee trade, having grown up on his grandparent's coffee farm in Brazil before working as a coffee trader in New York. Santu supplies beans to a number of coffee houses and eateries across Scotland, including the [Milk](#) cafes (in Inverleith Park, Trinity and Morrison Street) and the recently opened Kate's on Causewayside.

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Santu's knowledgeable and exceptionally friendly team of baristas consistently produce smooth and tasty coffee with their Astoria Storm machine. The baristas are clearly enthusiastic about coffee and happy to discuss the finer points of specialty coffee; roasts, grinds, doses etc.

As to where to drink your takeaway coffee, there are several nice sipping spots nearby. On warm days, the nearby [Dunbar's Close Gardens](#) is an ideal quiet spot to sit while admiring the stunning views of the old Royal High School and Calton Hill. Alternatively, the [new physic garden](#) at Abbey Strand (next to the Palace of Holyroodhouse), is another gorgeous place for drinking top-class coffee. The picnic tables beside Dynamic Earth also afford great views- of Salisbury Crags. For those feeling a little more energetic, a Santu coffee will fuel a walk up Calton Hill or Arthur's Seat – both of which are nearby.

Santu have plans to expand further, with another coffee bar apparently being planned. Hopefully their new place on the Canongate will be the start of a general improvement in the coffee offer in the heart of Edinburgh's tourist zone.

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