

Capital Coffee – Milk at Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop

The importance of the former railway paths to the residents of the city has been clearly illustrated in recent weeks. The response to the [proposal to route a tramline](#) along the 'Roseburn corridor' has caused consternation, especially among cyclists and [local community groups](#). Though long mooted, the real possibility that it might happen has raised the temperature. The fierce online debate it has stirred has illustrated how difficult it is to balance competing interests when it comes to transport issues.

One of the best sections of the path network is to be found snaking through Trinity and towards Newhaven. This takes you through a densely wooded part of the city and is well used. Superb green spaces such as Victoria Park connect with the path. A great treat at the start or end of a long walk or cycle is the chance of a cracking coffee. [Milk](#), at Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop in Hawthornvale, hits the mark. On my last visit, a group of (slightly mud-spattered) cyclists were clearly delighted to have found a warm, dry and comfortable spot for refreshment. A sense of food and drink well earned!



What can set cafes apart is the environment. Here, the abundance of glass gives a place a very light and open feel. Many of the tables provide a view out into the courtyard of the sculpture workshop; at times you will see unique creations being forged – at other times just works in progress. Something to chew over and think about as you eat and sip. Generally, any sun is captured here, while the generous wooden tables also add to the sense of warmth; balancing against the preponderance of concrete and tinges of brutalism that pervades the area. Lying lower than the surrounding streets, the café space is a nestled nook. In good weather, the substantial seating area outside is a very desirable spot. With so many dogs walked along the paths, the place prides itself on being dog friendly.

The café is just a small part of the Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop (completed in 2012), a centre which provides artists with studio and exhibition space. The building is an

intriguing maze of complex interior spaces with more open public spaces, including Milk. Milk at ESW is one of three locations. The others are on Morrison Street and a 'coffee shack' in Inverleith Park (next to the Sundial Garden).



Cortado

Ultimately, the experience for any coffee lover is determined by what they are served. The cortado I had on my last visit was particularly well made. This fantastic little drink is often misunderstood. With varied opinions on what a cortado is, there's plenty of room for miscommunication. However, it is usually defined as having a 1:1 milk to espresso ratio, with the milk cutting through the intensity of the espresso, toning down its acidity a notch while retaining the coffee's flavour. A small, more intense flat white, in some sense. How

its taste is determined by how well the espresso is 'dialled in' and how well the textured milk and espresso are blended. Milk uses beans by the roasters [Santu](#). Their beans come from Espirito Santo, a renowned coffee producing region of Brazil. Santu also has its own snug coffee bar on the Canongate, nearby the Museum of Edinburgh and the Canongate Kirk.



At the weekend, Milk at Howthornvale place is generally brimming. If you want to secure a table at lunchtime it's advisable to book ahead. The menu varies with the seasons, but staples include focaccia sandwiches, salads, soups and stews. A Chicken Souvlaki adds a Greek flavour, though there are plenty of vegan and veggie options. To complement the coffee, there is usually a good range of baking. Milk is another reason to make your way along the superb Edinburgh path

network. A well made coffee provides a great incentive to keep going in drizzly, muddy conditions so prevalent in the Scottish winter.

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