





Habit's 33m seawater lap pool

New *Habit*

Habit, the swanky new gym at the *Majestic Centre*, meets up with *The Guide's* Aisha Morgan, Wellington's best-known couch potato. Photos by Nick Servian

I'm a little bit annoyed with my personal trainer at *Habit* gym. He has managed to disprove one of my pet ideologies, and he did it within about twenty minutes of our first meeting. Now, instead of being able to tell myself that I don't exercise because it's an unpleasant form of self sadism, I have had to concede that exercise can actually be enjoyable and the only reason I don't do it much is because I'm lazy. This means that instead of feeling righteous about lying on the couch of an evening with a bag of chips and a glass of Pinot, I just feel a bit guilty.

This also means that Ben is good at his job. As well as being a physiotherapist and trainer, he is a director of *Habit Gyms*, and their whole ethos is about changing the way people view exercise. They believe that if a gym is gorgeous and friendly, people will want to be there, and it's an approach that seems to be working. Hot on the heels of their first Johnston Street gym which opened in March, they have launched a new gym in the *Majestic Centre* on Boulcott Street and it's twice the size. "A key thing if people are going to go to the gym regularly is for it to be nearby," Ben says, and with a *Habit* now at each end of the CBD they've got a fair whack of Wellington's workers covered on that count.

So what's different about their new gym? Facilities, in a word. It's got loads of them. *Habit* have taken over the old *Majestic Centre* gym and in just a few months completely recreated it. The aesthetics are in the same vein as the original *Habit* – soft natural tones on the walls,

stylish bathrooms that are designed for maximum cleanliness (and boast lockers so humongous that you could probably dispense with your child minder), and rooms full of sleek new workout equipment. The cardio room is even equipped with five widescreen TV's that are linked to each machine, so you can bring along your headphones and choose which box you want to distract yourself with.

But the *Majestic Centre Habit* is more than just a pretty face. For starters it's got the largest salt water training pool in Wellington. Thirty-three metres of salty swimability, with a high-tech filtration system under the floor keeping everything hygienic. The lack of chlorine makes a big difference to your swimming experience. "You don't get the burning eyes, you don't get the smell of chlorine, and you don't end up with hair like straw. It's just a healthier option, because you're not bathing yourself in chemicals," Ben says. Adjoining the pool is a spa, sauna and steam room, the last being fairly unusual for a gym. And down below is one of New Zealand's only altitude simulators – *Body O2*. I like the sound of *Body O2* because it involves nothing more strenuous than sitting at a table and watching TV, but wearing a mask that provides the kind of thin air that you get at high altitudes. Apparently it increases athletic performance and can also improve asthma and lung fitness in general.

To differentiate between *Habit's* two gyms, the original Johnston Street address has been re-named as *Habit Platinum* and offers more personalised care and smaller membership levels. You can also get a

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platinum membership at the *Majestic Centre*, but even if you don't the service is hardly shabby. Each new member still gets a fitness and physiotherapy assessment, enabling trainers to develop workouts tailored to the idiosyncrasies of your body. Your first three personal training sessions are just \$45, and will get you familiar with equipment and ensure you are exercising safely. "Our whole aim is to raise the bar of the fitness industry; we will not employ trainers who don't have high qualifications and experience," Ben says. "There are a lot of trainers out there that go and do a weekend course and suddenly they're looking after people's health and wellbeing, and it's crazy."

Ben's so professional that he didn't even laugh at the fact that I'd had to borrow some tracksuit pants because I don't own any. He assures me that the focus at *Habit* is not on appearance, but on fitness and physical health. "People have got such phobias about gyms, and either it's the whole image thing – all the marketing of hot pants and super-tanned bodies – or it's the experience of a trainer pushing them super hard on their first time and making them never want to go back. Neither of those things are our approach." Ben was indeed very gentle with me at my first training session – the fact that I went back, and more than once, testifies to that. I'm still having the odd glass of Pinot of an evening, but now I've got a new *Habit* as well. ●

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Joining fee: \$95 plus \$22.50 pw

