

Vacuum West - Did anyone mention Vestkanten? This is an area of Oslo confined by Parkveien to the east, Bogstadveien to the north, Kirkeveien to the west and Bygdøy Allee to the south. In cultural terms the area is quite a vacuum. To admit you come from there labels you a privileged dork in the eyes of most. It's got a really bad rap due to the grand, over-priced apartment blocks which are inhabited by grudgeful mop dogs and their owners. Growing up in this part of town, my weekends were mostly spent turning the music down. **Situated** between some top sights such as the Vigelands Park, Frogner Lido, Bygdøy and its infamous diving cliffs and last, but not least, the Denmark Cruiseline Stenaline, the area doesn't really have many noteworthy sites. But you might need to cross this part of town to get to any of the above. **Don't despair**. If you are on foot - and to be honest, Oslo is better done on foot than wasting time (and hard earned money) dealing for the only-every-15-minutes Sporveiene nonsense - there are small pleasures to enjoy. While few pedestrians venture here, the streets are wide, the architecture generous (18-1900's), with plenty plenty of leafy squares, small parks and cafs. In other words, it's a great place for dossing about if you want to get away from people. There are also several excellent, tucked away park benches suitable for the most advanced of pit-stops. **Oslo ranks** among the world's most expensive cities, so many of us will have to opt for budget cutting activities. And, surprisingly, there is no need to get fleeced to appreciate Vestkanten. If the sun is out, slip on your creepers, set off, choose your spot, roll out The Economist, tuck into your brown paper bag, relax, enjoy the solitude and don't expect to be bothered.

1.Vestkanttorget More dirt patch than park, this is where my first bike got nicked. There's a tucked away cove at the back of the park worth checking out if you're so inclined. It's nice and quiet. Hosts a pricey flea market most Saturdays.

2.Reumatikerparken Before this green gem opened to the public some fourteen years ago, it was a derelict over-grown garden. The park benches on its south-facing slope is a peaceful place for the lovers of sunsets.

3.Uranienborgparken Situated on a massive rock with an evacuation bunker below and a church on top. Its north facing peak provides a great overview of Uranienborgveien and beyond.

4.Gyldenløvsgate When it's super hot and the town is vacant, like in the middle of Fellesferien in July, this fountain-turned-roundabout transforms into giant feet-beer cooler.

5.Riddervolds plass Probably the busiest junction in the area, which is not saying much. An elevated spot for those interested in watching trams and trudgers pass by.

6.Hydroparken A turf wedged between some rather busy arteries. Boasts a fountain, some good benches and a fabulous old tree suitable for climbing.

