

DAY WALKS

IN NEW ZEALAND

For Tania



Sunrise from the Rock and Pillar Range Conservation Area, Otago

DAY WALKS IN NEW ZEALAND

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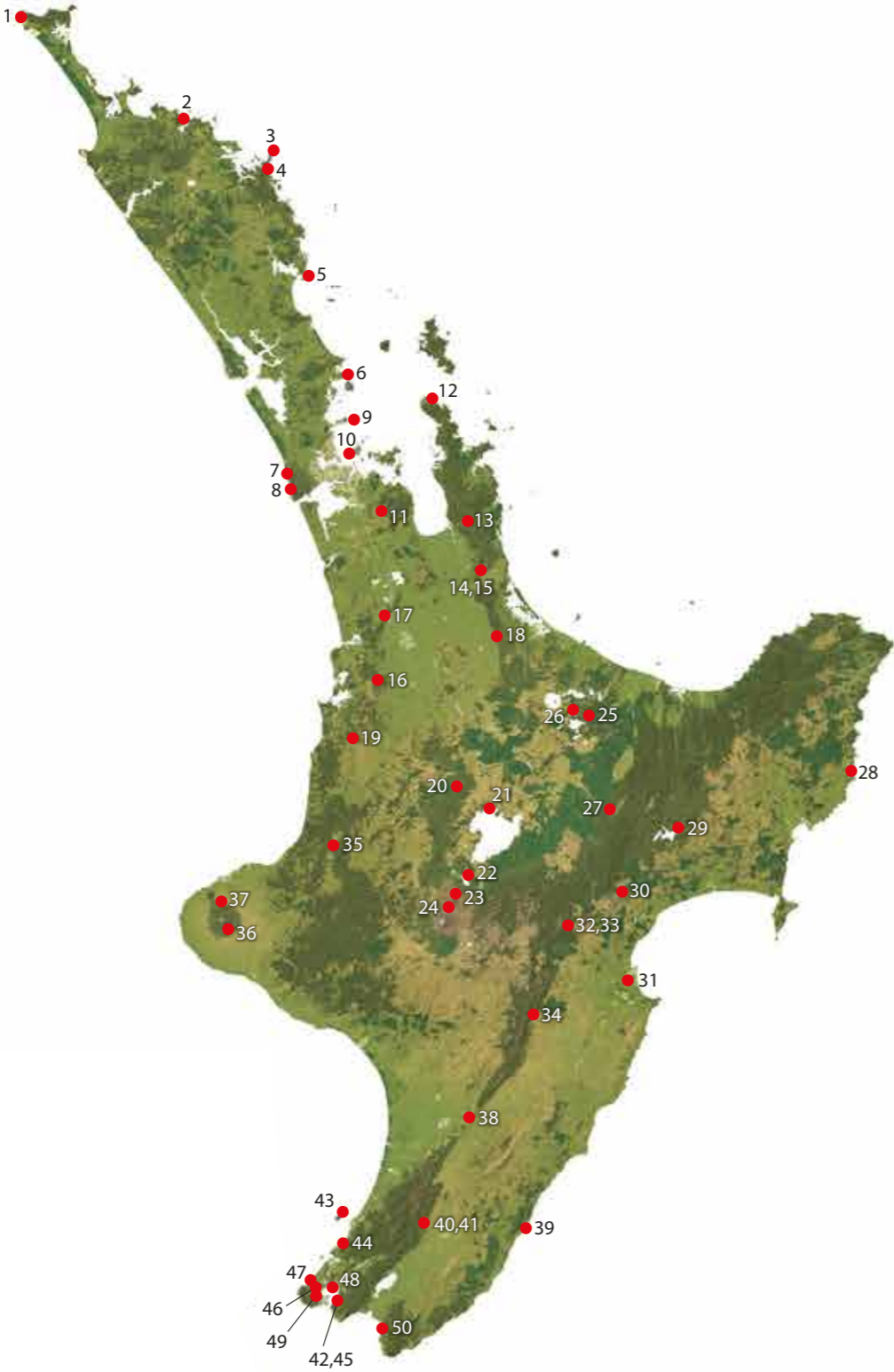
OPPOSITE Walker at Wharariki Beach, Pūponga Farm Park, Golden Bay

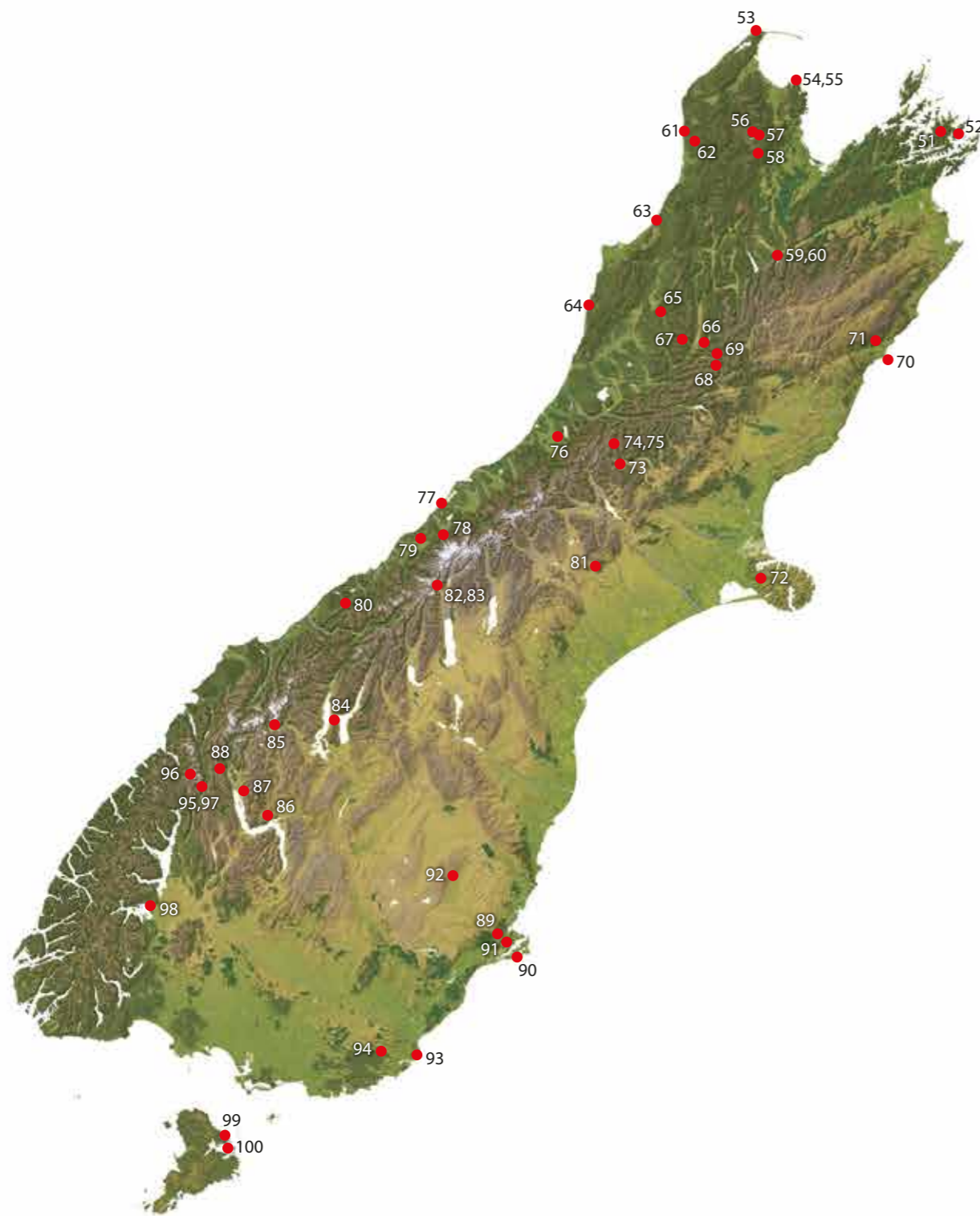


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INTRODUCTION

Walking is one of life's great pleasures. Humans evolved to walk; the pace allows us to observe and absorb our surroundings, and we gain great benefits from the rhythm and physicality of striding. Walkers can set out knowing they are doing something physically good for themselves and something good for their minds as well. There is nothing like a good stroll to shake off petty worries, to gain a clean and clear perspective on the burdens of busy, modern lives. Aotearoa New Zealand offers such a diversity of walking that you could spend a lifetime strolling and never visit all of the tracks.

As a place for walking, New Zealand rates as one of the best in the world. Few other countries offer such a diversity of terrain – ranging from coastal to alpine – in such a small area. Aotearoa's tracks feature active volcanoes, hot springs, rainforests draped in moss, ragged fault ranges, glacier-carved valleys, island-studded lakes and golden-sand coastlines.

And because New Zealand has been isolated from other landmasses for over 80 million years, much of the flora and fauna here has evolved to become unique. Among many examples, creatures like the kea (the only alpine parrot in the world) and plants like the kauri (a tree of great girth and grandeur) make the experience of walking here distinctive.

In addition, there are no snakes or savage animals in New Zealand, and the only poisonous spider is the shy and increasingly rare katipō, the bite of which is almost never fatal. Many of our backcountry streams remain safe for drinking from without having to filter or boil the water. The temperate climate, while highly changeable and unpredictable, lacks the extremes found in large continents. So, with the right clothing and equipment, walking is possible all year round.

Another great aspect of walking is the luxury of spending a decent length of time with your companions, away from the distractions of urban lives and digital devices. You can walk and talk but you can also saunter with no compulsion to communicate – companionable silence seems acceptable. Equally, walking alone offers great rewards; in your own company you have the luxury of strolling at your own pace with your own thoughts.

Not surprisingly, the best walking in New Zealand lies in those parts of the country where nature still holds sway; where streams tumble through forest, where mountains shoulder into the sky and birds chime. It is largely from these areas that the walks in this book are drawn, although there are plenty in rural and urban settings too.

Walk selection

The walks selected for this book were chosen from throughout New Zealand, reflecting a range of length, difficulty, terrain, natural history and human interest. The tracks suit a range of abilities ranging from the novice walker to the experienced. Few of the walks featured are beyond the abilities of a moderately fit person with some tramping experience. None involve any serious off-track travel, and generally tracks are well marked and of a high standard.

Selecting the country's 'best' walks was necessarily subjective. I have tried to cover a range of scenery, length and difficulty, while at the same time providing nationwide coverage. Although someone else might argue for an entirely different list, together the 100 walks detailed here reflect the great diversity of New Zealand walking.

This book contains 80 of the 100 walks included in the first (2007) edition of *Day Walks in New Zealand*, but they are updated with fresh information, maps and photographs. Twenty of the walks have been replaced with new walks, partly to offer more opportunities closer to the main cities of Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. Other substitutions reflect recent significant changes to New Zealand, the extent of which has surprised me. Some, for example the Cape Kidnappers walk, have been closed because of rock fall risk. Yet others have been shut because of the spread of the devastating kauri dieback disease that is destroying many of our most magnificent trees. Myrtle rust, thought to have established here after spores were blown across the Tasman Sea from Australia, forced closure of the Karioi Track near Raglan. On a positive note, new walks, such as the Paekākāriki Escarpment Track, have been developed, opening up new opportunities.

Mass tourism is also changing the nature of walking in New Zealand, with over 3.8 million international visitors in 2018, up from 2.5 million just five years before. Tracks that were once the sole preserve of a few local enthusiasts are now popular destinations for people from not only other areas in New Zealand but also all parts of the planet. Some walks, like the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, have become so popular that thousands of people may stride over them on any one day. While the popularity of walking is to be celebrated, sheer numbers mean the pressure on many wild areas is becoming severe, requiring bigger carparks and more toilets, and unfortunately resulting in unsightly rubbish, disturbance to



Tramper on track, Kakanui Stream, Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tāne Conservation Park, Bay of Plenty

native species (notably penguins in coastal areas) and even congestion on tracks. Too many people can result in damage to trails and adjacent areas, toilet waste and the erosion of goodwill from overwhelmed locals.

Recently, a picture of Otago's Blue Pools Track appeared on social media, showing more than 40 people standing on a footbridge engineered for a maximum of 15. However, the answer is not building bigger and ever more expensive facilities; rather it is trying to encourage walkers to comply with safe load limits, show tolerance when tracks are crowded and respect the places they are enjoying. And, yes, better leadership from the tourism industry to minimise impact, offset damage and provide a greater contribution to help the over-stretched Department of Conservation in its work maintaining facilities and conserving native species.

Writing a guidebook can only encourage more people to these areas, and I thought hard about the impact this might have when choosing some of these walks. I considered excluding the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, but decided it was

so popular (especially in an age of social media) that omitting it would be pointless. DOC have put some measures in place to reduce parking pressure, and no one walks the track now expecting it to be anything other than busy. However, I did exclude other tracks that have become horribly overcrowded.

I also decided to leave out some walks in kauri forests, even those which are still open, for fear that walkers might spread kauri dieback disease. Those walks through kauri forests that I have included are all high-grade tracks where the risk of spreading the disease is minimised. Nevertheless, walkers are encouraged to stay on tracks, use boot-cleaning facilities at trailheads and avoid walking near kauri tree roots.

Tourism has had many benefits, too, sometimes resulting in improved tracks, facilities, transport and access, and greater appreciation of the importance of wild places and restoration. And good tracks have the dual advantage of providing access for conservation efforts. For my part, I help run a pest trap line in Remutaka Forest Park, using part of the Ōrongorongo Track, which features in this book.

Length and difficulty

Each walk is classified according to difficulty, which readers should note depends very much on conditions. Wet weather could very well turn a medium tramp into a hard, or even impossible one, while winter snow may transform a medium trip into one that requires mountaineering equipment and skills. When selecting a walk for a group, consider the abilities of all party members.

Each walk is classified ‘easy’, ‘medium’ or ‘hard’ with some in between. By far the majority falling into the ‘easy’ or ‘medium’ categories.

Easy: Expect gentle terrain, well-marked tracks, no river crossings and walking times of 2–4 hours.

Medium: The walker may come across unbridged river crossings, steep sections of track or some travel on open tops. Travel times could be 5–6 hours per day.

Hard: These trips will often entail walking for more than 6 hours, may involve steeper sections of terrain where a head for heights is preferable and navigation skills required.

Walking times

Walkers must expect some variation in trip times depending on conditions. In summer, a hard-baked track will provide much firmer and faster footing than the same track churned to mud in winter. I have tried to tailor times for the likely ability of walkers in each grade. For example, a fit and experienced walker will probably be capable of halving some of the times suggested for an ‘easy’ walk. Conversely, an inexperienced and less fit walker will struggle to match the times suggested by a ‘hard’ walk. In other words, the easier the walk, the more generous the time given.

Maps

The maps in this book are digital images created by Roger Smith, the director of Geographx, a Wellington-based company that specialises in advanced digital mapping. Roger’s maps – perhaps oblique panoramas are a better description – do what no photograph can achieve: offer a complete overview of each tramp, showing tracks, huts and major features.

While these maps indicate tracks, huts and major topographical features, they are not intended to be used for navigation. No map will be necessary for many of the easy and some of the medium walks, but if in doubt you should purchase a Topo50 series 1:50,000 scale topographical map or appropriate track map. The correct map number(s) for

each tramp is included in the fact file for each walk. Note that ‘true left’ refers to the left bank of a river when facing downstream, and ‘true right’ to the right bank. For some of the regional parks in the Auckland region, the brochures produced by the Auckland Council have a better scale and more information than the topographical maps. Most are now available online for downloading.

Many mobile phones have the capacity to show online maps or even be used for GPS navigation, but when your battery runs flat these devices make a poor substitute for an actual paper map and compass.

Alternative routes

Wherever possible, both shorter and longer alternatives to the walk described are mentioned. Some walks that pass huts offer the possibility of turning the walk into an overnight tramp, hence details of hut capacity have been included.

Keeping information up to date

Although every effort has been made to ensure information in this book is both correct and up to date, please remember that wild places change constantly. Floods alter rivers, volcanoes erupt from time to time and storms or earthquakes can devastate forests and tracks. Furthermore, the condition of tracks varies according to how recently they have been maintained. For these reasons, trampers should always check with the local Department of Conservation visitor centre for updates before their intended trip. The relevant DOC office telephone number has been given for each walk, and DOC’s website (doc.govt.nz) is also an excellent source of information. If you do find any safety hazards – such as a bridge is washed out, or a new slip is on a track – please report it. (tel: DOC HOTline or 0800 362 468).

A brief history of walking in New Zealand

The popularity of walking, and the vast network of tracks that now exist would have been almost inconceivable to those who first settled in Aotearoa New Zealand. Walking for pleasure has a comparatively short history here, spanning not much more than 150 years. Certainly, for Māori and early European explorers, walking provided the main means of getting about. Then, in frequently mountainous and heavily forested terrain, often untracked, walking was often anything but enjoyable, and mostly tackled only when there was no better alternative. In other words, walking was for a purpose, whether it was for transport, war, gold, missionary activities, surveying, mapping or exploring.

Some four decades after English poet William Wordsworth was gambolling about the walking tracks of Britain and Europe’s scenic spots, and writing romantic verse about the experience, New Zealand explorer Thomas Brunner was struggling through the wilds of the Buller River. In an account of the epic five months he toiled in the Buller, Brunner wrote:

Large granite rocks heaped confusedly together all over the surface, with a thick growth of underbrush and briers, an immense quantity of dead and rotten timber, and all these on the steep and broken declivities of a range of high mountains, interspersed with perpendicular walls of rocks, precipices, and deep ravines, form a combination of difficulties which must be encountered to be adequately understood ...

While the romantic aesthetic of Wordsworth and his fellow poets came to New Zealand with the first Pākehā settlers, it was ironically only as the wilderness was beaten back, burnt and tamed that New Zealanders began to truly appreciate walking and scenery for its own sake. When walking was as much of an effort as Brunner and his fellow explorers found it, there could be little sense of the sublime. The country was simply too heavily forested, mountainous and undeveloped.

With the progression of road and rail in New Zealand in the latter half of the 19th century, the accessibility of many scenic places increased. Tongariro, the country’s first national park, was formed in 1887, and the earliest scenic reserves in 1903. Later, in 1954, came the first forest park, Tararua Forest Park. Early walking tracks followed the routes of Māori trails, gold prospectors and surveyors, but by the early 20th century tracks were being developed specifically for the pleasure they provided.

New Zealand’s first tramping club, Wellington’s Tararua Tramping Club, formed in 1919, and many others began in the 1920s and 1930s. Clubs played a crucial role in providing transport, developing tracks and building huts. Later, both the Department of Lands and Survey and the New Zealand Forest Service actively developed tracks for recreation, until in 1987 both merged to form the Department of Conservation who manage the majority of walks described in this book.

New Zealand’s natural areas

More than a third of New Zealand’s land area is now managed by DOC and by far the majority of walks in this book lie on this public conservation land. DOC administers this land under a range of categories that include:

National Parks

New Zealand has 13 national parks ranging from Tongariro National Park in the North Island to Rakiura National Park on Stewart Island. Generally, national parks are large, mountainous and scenically spectacular. The former Department of Lands and Survey had responsibility for managing them (along with scenic reserves) until DOC took over this role in 1987.

Forest Parks

New Zealand has 19 forest parks, ranging from Northland Forest Park to Catlins Forest Park in Otago–Southland. Like national parks, they are generally large and often mountainous, although often have a more subtle beauty. All forest parks were established by the former New Zealand Forest Service between 1954 and 1984, partly to complement the country’s then growing number of national parks. Today, like national parks, they are managed by DOC. Some have been renamed, such as Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tāne Conservation Park and the Catlins Conservation Park.

Conservation Parks

Over the last two decades, 10 new conservation parks have been created in areas that were formerly used for sheep grazing in high-country areas of the South Island. Some of these parks, such as the Hāwea Conservation Park, are immense. Aotea Conservation Park, located on Auckland’s Great Barrier Island, was the most recent conservation park established.

Scenic Reserves

New Zealand boasts literally hundreds of scenic reserves, ranging from tiny patches of bush to quite large forests. They are the main type of reserve; others include nature reserves (such as Kāpiti Island), scientific reserves (such as Tiritiri Matangi Island), recreation reserves and a national reserve (of which there is only one, at Lewis Pass).

Other areas

DOC also manages some farm parks, of which the Cape Colville Farm Park (Coromandel Walkway) is just one. In addition to areas managed by DOC, local bodies manage some of the walks covered in this book. For example, Wellington Regional Council manages a system of regional parks providing many excellent walking opportunities. Similarly, Auckland Council administers more than 20 regional parks, such as the Waitākere Ranges and Hūnua Ranges.

Walkways and Te Araroa

Walkways have special status, for they traverse land of varying tenure, sometimes including private farmland. Originally the idea, sparked by Auckland trumper Bob Ussher and supported by the Federated Mountain Clubs in 1967, was for a walking track spanning the length of the country. During the 1970s, the idea was whittled down to a more manageable task, resulting in 125 walkways, ranging from 1 kilometre to the 65-kilometre-long St James Walkway. In the late 1990s, however, Auckland trumper and journalist Geoff Chapple took up the baton, devised a route for a New Zealand-length trail, formed a trust and championed the project with successive governments. Work throughout the country culminated in the opening of the 3000-kilometre-long Te Araroa – New Zealand’s trail, in 2011. Chapple’s magnificent gift to the country has opened up many previously inaccessible areas, created entirely new walks (with the Paekākāriki Escarpment being a great example) and – perhaps most significantly of all – fostered long-distance walking in New Zealand. Hundreds of people now tackle the entire route every year, and several walks featured in this book use part of Te Araroa.

Practical considerations

Seasons and weather

New Zealand’s temperate latitude fools some visitors to this country into thinking that the weather will always be mild. Although tempered by its maritime surrounds, New Zealand’s position in the path of the ‘roaring forties’ and its mountainous terrain combine to produce some of the most changeable and unpredictable weather conditions on the planet.

In the mountains, where many of the walks in this book are located, snow can fall at any time of year, although obviously is rarer during summer. Some parts of New Zealand, particularly the West Coast and Fiordland, experience some of the highest rainfall in the world – some 7–9 metres of rain falls at Milford Sound annually, while one year a West Coast valley near Hokitika received over 15 metres of rain. Heavy rain can, on rare occasions, make sections of some tracks or stream crossings impassable.

Walkers need to respect and plan around the weather. Always obtain a forecast before you leave, and be prepared to pare back or change your plans accordingly.

As a general rule, late summer and early autumn (January–April) are the best months for walking in the South Island. During these times the temperatures are at their mildest, the rainfall is generally less and the probability of snow unlikely. Spring and early summer (September–December)

offer the delights of alpine flowers, but in very mountainous terrain avalanches may pose a risk. For those who are suitably equipped and experienced, winter (May–August) offers its own rewards: generally fewer people, sometimes crisp, long spells of fine weather and all the glories of snow-capped mountains. In the North Island, excepting the central plateau, Mt Taranaki and main axis mountain ranges, walkers can expect milder, snow-free weather all year round. For further information, visit metservice.co.nz and avalanche.net.nz

Water, rubbish and conservation

The quality of water available on any particular track depends on its location. For rural and coastal walks, it is advisable to carry your own drinking water. However, in more mountainous backcountry areas, you can most likely still safely drink straight from streams. The water-borne parasite *Giardia* is present in some streams and lakes so, if in doubt, carry water treatments or use a water filter.

Take care when toileting. If there is no long drop and you don’t have a portable waste container, go to the toilet in a forested or vegetated area at least 100 metres away from any tracks or waterways and bury all your waste in a shallow hole at least 15 centimetres deep. The cooler temperatures in rocky or alpine environments mean that waste does not decompose easily and can remain for a long time.

Have consideration for the environment; don’t take anything natural, and don’t leave anything unnatural. Carry out all your rubbish and any you find.

Make sure you properly clean and dry your boots, socks and gaiters before moving to another region to avoid spreading the invasive algae didymo.

Safety, clothing and equipment

This book lacks the scope to exhaustively detail equipment and safety advice, but a brief list of what should be carried for a typical medium or hard day walk is as follows: warm woolly hat, sunhat, gloves, raincoat, warm jersey or fleece, pair of polypropylene or woollen long-johns, wool or polypropylene top, a pair of shorts, first-aid kit, map, compass, sunscreen and enough food for the trip duration plus some emergency snacks. Obviously some of these items will be superfluous on a short, coastal walk in summer.

For hard trips you may want to take a flysheet and sleeping mat in case of an emergency. Gaiters or puttees are excellent for keeping out mud, river stones, snow and cold. In winter you may need to add an ice axe, crampons, sunglasses, more warm gear and extra food.



John Ombler and Tim Dennis descending from Isthmus Peak, above Lake Hawea, Otago

For excellent advice about safe backcountry travel consult the Federated Mountain Club’s online safety manual, *In the Mountains*, at wilderlife.nz/in-the-mountains

Intentions

Signing an intentions book at the track start does not guarantee that anyone will notice you have become overdue. Walkers should leave their intentions, including possible bad weather alternatives, with a trusted friend who can, in the event of your party becoming overdue, be relied upon to contact the police Search and Rescue (SAR) – they should telephone 111 and ask for police.

If you pass a hut or huts during your walk, sign the hut log-book so that your route can be followed in the event you later become overdue or have an accident. I strongly recommend carrying a personal locator beacon (PLB), which can be activated in the case of an accident or other emergency. Such devices often save lives, or reduce the long-term impact of injuries. Some outdoor stores and clubs have them available for hire.

Adventure Smart offers an online intention system at adventuresmart.nz/outdoor-intentions-form

Dogs

Dogs are prohibited on all tracks in national parks, wildlife refuges and nature reserves. For other areas, such as forest and regional parks, dogs are often permitted unless they pose

a risk to local populations of ground birds, such as kiwi or weka. Where a track passes through sections of farmland, such as on many walkways, local farmers may not allow dogs, which can disrupt stock. If dogs are prohibited, this is usually indicated on the sign at the start of the walk.

Finally, Alfred Reed, one of New Zealand’s most prodigious walkers (and founder of one the country’s longest-running publishing firms) summed up the pleasure of walking with these words written in 1917:

Life has aptly been likened to a walk. We start out with vim and vigour in the early morning, and, sooner or later, settle down to a steady walk, while at eventide we turn our eyes towards our resting place, from which we look to set out with renewed vigour on the morrow. Sometimes the skies are sunny and sometimes overcast. Now the road [track] is rough and stony, and presently a stretch of grassy sward. Sometimes a stream is crossed, from the cool clear water of which a refreshing draught is taken; or, for awhile we rest under a grove of shady trees ... And always there is the mystery and hopeful anticipation of the unknown that lies ahead.

Happy walking!

1 TE PAKI COASTAL TRACK

CAPE REINGA/TE RERENGA WAIRUA

Cape Reinga/Te Rerenga Wairua is a place of surreal beauty, of rippled sand dunes, craggy headlands and even craggier pōhutukawa, offshore islands, a place where nature holds sway and two oceans converge, sometimes violently. Between five and two million years ago, the area consisted of islands, but in the last million years huge quantities of sand, deposited by oceanic currents, created a connection with the mainland. Now, only the islands around Cape Maria van Diemen remain separated.

The cape is of immense importance to Māori, who know it as Te Rerenga Wairua, or the leaping place of the spirits. Here, souls of the deceased depart Aotearoa to begin their long journey back to the ancestral homeland of Hawaiki.

Contrary to popular opinion, Cape Reinga is not the northernmost tip of New Zealand's mainland; that title belongs to Hikurua/de Surville Cliffs of Otou/North Cape, which lies to

the east and a full 2 kilometres closer to the equator.

While most of the hundreds of thousands of people who visit the cape are content to wander the short sealed path to the lighthouse and gaze over the turbulent waters at the meeting of the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean, more adventurous walkers will find a rewarding loop track to Cape Maria van Diemen and Paengarēhia/Twilight Beach. The route crosses some of New Zealand's most distinctive and expansive coastal scenery. It is also the start of a 3000-kilometre-long journey for trampers setting off to walk the length of the country on Te Araroa, New Zealand's Trail.

Cape Reinga to Cape Maria van Diemen turnoff

2–2.5 hours

Branching off the path to the lighthouse, a well-benched track descends for 30 minutes beside coastal cliffs to the long



View from Herangi Hill over Te Werahi Beach, with Cape Reinga/Te Rerenga Wairua beyond



sweep of Te Werahi Beach. After following the coast southwards for 45–60 minutes, the track reaches a junction with the northern part of the Twilight–Te Werahi Loop Track (a possible exit route to Cape Reinga Road).

After crossing Te Werahi Stream (sometimes impassable above mid-tide), Te Paki Coastal Track heads inland up grassy slopes to colourful dunes beyond, dominated by the native sand grasses pīngao and spinifex. A gentle climb leads over the flanks of Herangi Hill (159 metres) to a signposted track junction, which offers fine views of Cape Maria van Diemen and its offshore islands. On a clear day the 90-minute return side-track leading to the cape is well worthwhile.

Cape Maria van Diemen turnoff to Twilight Beach and Cape Reinga Road 2.5–3 hours

From the track junction, the main walkway enters coastal shrublands, dominated by prostrate mānuka, traversing a broad ledge above the cliffs of Maungatiketike and Pitokuku points before descending through lupins towards Twilight Beach. From a signposted track junction, the 5-minute walk to Twilight Beach is worthwhile. Back at the junction, head inland through a vast area of dunes, where there is some curiously charred and eroding rock exposed in places. Here, large orange squares atop tall poles indicate the route at intervals. A short section of dense lupins leads to a sidle through twisted mānuka forest and out into the open again beside an extensive wetland in Te Werahi Valley. The track crosses a narrow neck of the raupō-dominated wetland on a boardwalk

to a final mānuka stand before reaching farmland. Across a stile, poles lead up grassy slopes to a farm ridge, which is followed to Te Werahi Gate on Cape Reinga Road. Walkers can choose to walk the 4.5 kilometres of road back to the cape or pre-arrange a shuttle pick-up.

Grade Easy–Medium

Total walking time 4.5–5.5 hours return (excluding the 90-minute side trip to Cape Maria van Diemen and the section of road between Te Werahi Gate and Cape Reinga)
Map AT24 Cape Reinga

Access From Kaitaia take SH 1 north as far as it goes. Allow 90 minutes' drive for the 111 km section of road, which was sealed all the way in 2010. Near the cape is a carpark, toilets and information panels.

Alternative routes Walkers can begin from the Cape Reinga Road on the northern section of the Twilight–Te Werahi Loop Track, which descends directly to Te Werahi Beach without passing the section at Cape Reinga. Another shorter alternative is a return trip from Cape Reinga to Cape Maria van Diemen. East of Cape Reinga, a pleasant walk leads to Tapotupotu Bay and a carpark and campsite there (allow 90 minutes each way). Further south, off Cape Reinga Road, the enormous sand dunes at Te Paki are also a rewarding visit.

Information DOC Kaitaia, tel: 09 408 6014, email: kaitaia@doc.govt.nz

2 KAIARAARA ROCK AND LANE COVE

RANFURLY BAY SCENIC RESERVE, WHANGAROA HARBOUR

Among the many monolithic peaks that rise above the vast arms of Northland's Whangaroa Harbour, it's easy to pick out the one that Europeans came to name Dukes Nose. A craggy eminence on the face of the rock arches over the harbour like the aquiline nose of a condescending face, much like a haughty old gentleman with his nose firmly out of joint. Māori, who had lived in the harbour for centuries before the arrival of Europeans, called the peak Kaiaraara (often spelt incorrectly as Kairara).

Northland has many splendid harbours, but few as sheltered or as vast as Whangaroa, with its narrow entrance and several long arms. In the 19th century, sailors often quipped that it could harbour the entire British navy, with room to spare.

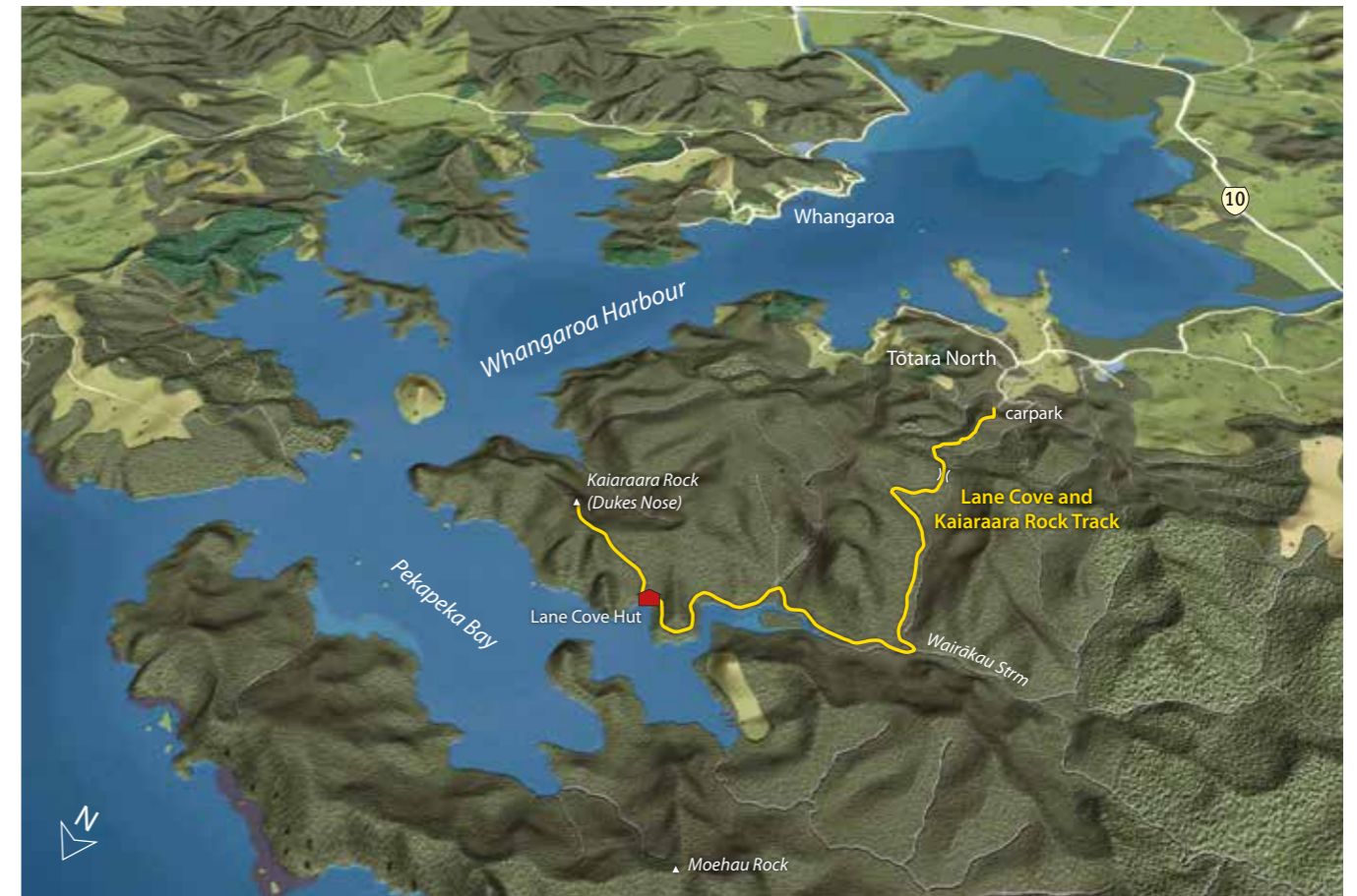
Lane Cove is one of the more attractive bays in the harbour and can be reached either on foot from Tōtara North, through Ranfurly Bay Scenic Reserve, or by water taxi. A former bach has been converted into a DOC hut (booking required well in advance) and nearby is a track to climb Kaiaraara. Note that the ascent, beside steep volcanic cliffs, requires a good head for heights, even with the safety rail provided.

Tōtara North to Lane Cove (16 bunks, booking required) via Wairākau Stream Track 2 hours

From the end of Campbell Road, the track climbs steadily through subtropical coastal forest typical of much of Northland, with mamaku tree ferns arching over the track, as well as pōhutukawa, nīkau, pūriri and mānuka. Also typical of Northland are red, clay soils, which can be slippery when wet. The track wends uphill, cresting the ridge just below 200 metres, then begins a descent into the Wairākau Valley. In the forest you're likely to hear tūi, kōtare (kingfisher) and, upon reaching the grassy valley floor, the track crosses the stream twice in quick succession (normally, fording is no problem, but heavy rain can make it impassable). The stream merges into an inlet of Pekapeka Bay at a mangrove estuary. From there, the track sidles across steep hillsides, curling around a headland to reach Lane Cove. Lane Cove Hut was built in the 1920s by the Lane family, who enjoyed many happy holidays there before selling the cottage and surrounding land to the government in 1971.

Lane Cove to Kaiaraara Rock 45 minutes each way

From Lane Cove, the track to Kaiaraara heads inland, climbing gradually at first until reaching the base of the cliffs, where it steepens and narrows to reach an overhang. The final ascent climbs a steep weakness in the cliffs, with a safety rail in place to hold on to (replacing a hand chain put in earlier). The first section is the steepest, but there are good footholds. On the summit, superb views of Whangaroa Harbour open out, with the harbour entrance to the northeast, and the curious craggy formations of Moehau Rock on the far side of Pekapeka Bay. Take care on the descent, which is usually more difficult than the ascent, and be aware of kicking stones down on others.



OPPOSITE Walkers using the safety chain (since replaced by a rail) to ascend Kaiaraara Rock (Dukes Nose)
BELOW Lane Cove Hut, Ranfurly Bay Scenic Reserve



Grade Easy–Medium
Total walking time From Tōtara North allow 5.5–6 hours return
Map AV28 Whangaroa
Access From Kerikeri, take SH 10 north and follow for 30 km before turning onto Tōtara North Road. Follow this for 3 km until Campbell Road branches off to the left and continue to the end of the road where there is limited parking. Allow 40 minutes for the drive from Kerikeri. Water taxis operate from Tōtara North and Whangaroa, and land at a small wharf at Lane Cove, where there is a shelter available for use by day walkers.
Alternative routes Using a water taxi, you can arrange a through trip either being dropped off, picked up or both. During summer, some operators run scheduled drop-off and pick-up services.
Information DOC Pēwhairangi/Bay of Islands, tel: 09 407 0300, email: bayofislandsbooking@doc.govt.nz