

Last corrected: September 2019

CATLINS & SOUTHLAND

Nugget Point
Cannibal Bay



Jacks Blowhole
Picnic Point
Slope Point & Waipapa Lighthouse

Estuary Circuit
Foveaux Walkway



Nugget Point

Rock islets and cliffs

Fur seals and Hooker's sealions

Coastal views and lighthouse

Tidal platforms and kelp

30 minutes return

Gravel tracks

1 kilometre return

From Highway 92 turn off at Romahapa (16km south of Balclutha) and drive to Kaka Point, then follow the coast road past Willsher Bay to Roaring Bay and Nugget Point carpark.

Nugget Point is a finger-like promontory that ends in wind-battered islets. The isolation enabled wildlife to stay relatively undisturbed, for this is the only place in New Zealand where elephant seals breed, and is a known haul-ashore point for Hooker's sealions and breeding place for fur seals and yellow-eyed penguins.

The short walk from the carpark goes up to a lookout, then onto a picnic area (which was the old carpark) and follows a narrow path to the lighthouse and viewing platform. The sooty shearwater or muttonbird (titi) colonies are one of the largest on the mainland. Many of the islets have Maori names: Te Anau Putu, 'the islet with the sea cave'; Pae Koua, 'perch of the shag'; Makanui, 'seals'; and Porokaua, 'the furthest stack'. Up to 60 fur seal pups are born here each year in a





colony of up to 500 seals, and the seals have made tracks all over the rock jumble on the platform.

At Roaring Bay there is a viewing hide overlooking a small breeding colony of yellow-eyed penguins. At low tide you can walk to the small southern headland which has a pretty double sea-arch drilled through it. There's a chance you might spot Hooker's sealions basking on the stones which loll about in the kelp and tidal platforms around the headland.



Cannibal Bay

Coastal beaches and sandhills

Moa-hunter sites

Tidal platforms

Hooker's sealions

2 hours return

Dune tracks

4 kilometres return

2 km north of Owaka on Highway 92 turn onto the signposted Cannibal Bay road for 9 km to the small carpark and picnic area by the beach.

Cannibal Bay and Surat Bay are two wide sandy beaches separated by sand dunes and a headland called False Islet. Surat got its unusual name from the French ship that was wrecked here in 1874, and Cannibal Bay goes back to the time when the Maori occupied sites among the sand dunes, and there is evidence of moa-hunting.

Cannibal Bay is the smaller and prettier, with a fascinating tidal platform at the east end at low tide. The rocks have been etched into 'railway tracks', long straight layers of sandstone that were tilted and later exposed, with the harder types of





sandstone standing proud. Bull kelp has attached itself firmly to the rocks by means of its rock-like yellow foot (or 'holdfast') and the usual oystercatchers and gulls hover around the rocks.

At the south end of Cannibal Bay a signposted track leads through the extensive sand dune area across the base of False Islet and reaches the south end of the lovely Surat Beach, 3 km or so of yellow sand.

On both Cannibal Bay and Surat Bay there is certainly a chance of seeing bull Hooker sealions, particularly during spring, where they like to gather and bask on the warm sands or in the dunes behind. On hot days they often flick sand over their black bodies and could be mistaken for a large lump of driftwood.



Jacks Blowhole

Impressive blowhole

Good track and cliff views

Fuchsia forest

Sandy beach at Jacks Bay

1 hour return

Gravel and farm tracks

1 kilometre one way

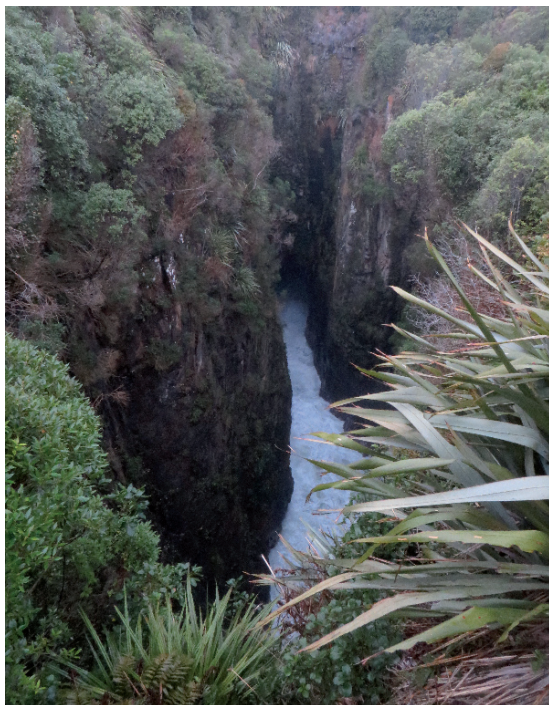
From Owaka follow the signs to Jacks Bay across the bridge over the Catlins Lake (really an estuary). 5 km to wide sandy bay backed by many cribs.

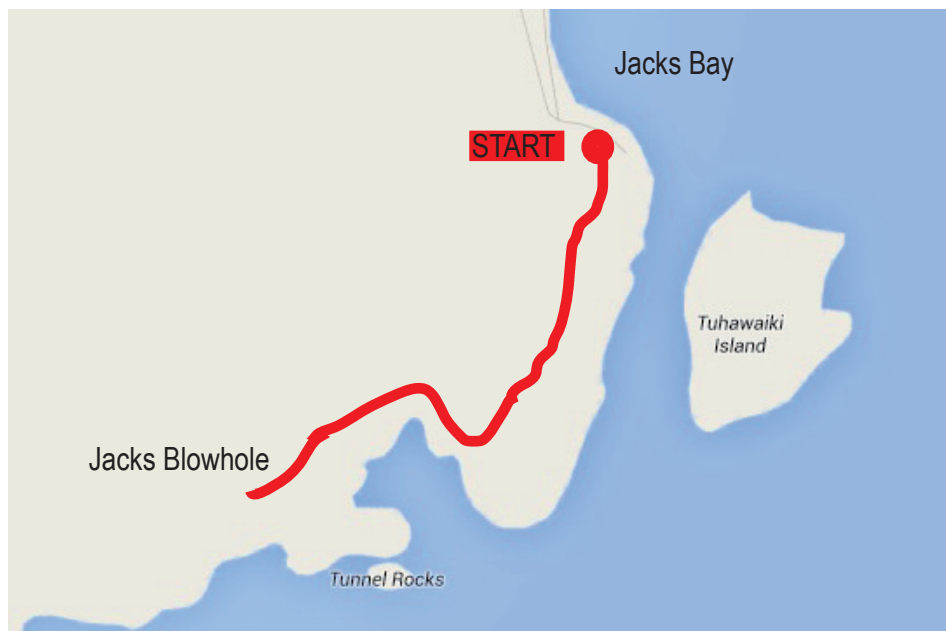
A short impressive walk, with cliff views and a surging blowhole. Jacks Bay is a lovely sweep of sand.

At Jacks Bay carpark, hop over the stile and follow the good track alongside fuchsia forest to a double stile. Cliff views here.

The track climbs up the cliff-line then down to the blowhole, which is fenced off. A track goes around the blowhole to a viewing platform.

The hole is 55 metres deep and 200 metres from the sea edge itself, and the sea boils through the chasm.





Picnic Point

Estuary exploration, low tide best

Tidal platforms and sea birds

Sandy beach

Interesting for kids

1 hour return

Bush track and beaches

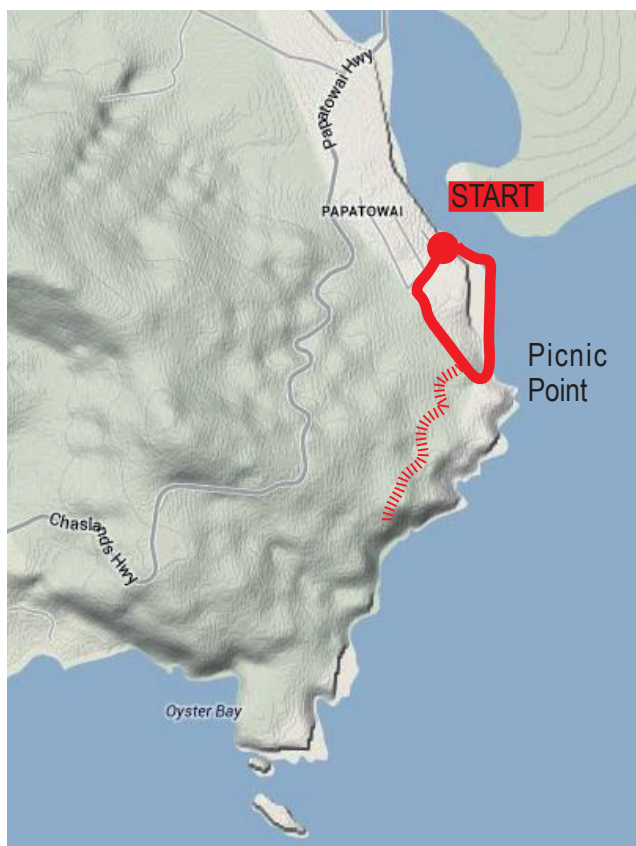
2 kilometres return

From Highway 82 at Papatowai store drive through the bach backstreets down to the foreshore and picnic area. A children's play area up the road a wee way.

The Catlins is a coastline that demands exploration, and a quick drive through-misses the magic of the place entirely. At Papatowai the Tahakopa River swings out into the bay and has manufactured a small, brilliant estuary at Picnic Point. Papatowai store sells everything including most foods, good wine, takeaways and petrol.

If its a low-tide from the beach carpark wander out onto the sands of the estuary and head south. After less than 1 km is a seat commemorating local landscape painter Edna Robinson. There are some excellent tidal platforms here. From the seat a lovely bush track leads back to Cross Street and Papatowai.





There is also a track to Kings Rock. It sidles through bush for a while then reaches farmland, and marker poles lead you across to the sea edge.

The outlook is magnificent and you have a grandstand view of the surfers, who get towed out to this famous surf break by jet skis.

Camp: The DOC camp at Papatowai is easy to miss, right behind the store. Sheltered and peaceful.

Slope Point & Waipapa

Severe southern coastline

Dunes and quicksands

Historic gold dredge and cemetery

Useful to have low tide

2-3 hours one way

4WD and beach sands

10 kilometres one way

From Highway 92 take the Waipapa Road 4 km to carpark and toilets. For Slope Point, continue on Highway 92 10 km to Slope Point Road, then 7 km past Slope Point carpark, to end of road.

A raw and restless coastline, with a wild beach and stark pieces of human history — a cemetery built for a shipwreck, the bucket chain of an old gold dredge, a solitary lighthouse. Slope Point is the southernmost point of the South Island and gets blasted by winds that often have bits of Antarctica in them.

At the Slope Point road end (and four-wheel-drive sign) follow the sandy road through gorse out to Waipapa Stream. There is quicksand here, which lies in a narrow margin of 1–2 metres alongside both sides of the stream. If in doubt walk upstream on the dune banks and cross higher up. Just past Waipapa Stream is the remains of a gold dredge, tucked behind the main sand dunes. All that is left is the restored bucket chain.

Waipapa Beach stretches some 4 km to Lake Brunton, which may also have soft sand or quicksand by its outlet. When Lake Brunton is full and breaks out to the



sea, the outlet becomes impassable. About 1 km further there is a lower part of the sand dunes, and if you cross to this area you should find the Tararua Acre.

This cemetery was built to hold most of the 131 victims from the SS *Tararua*, which hit Otara Reef off Waipapa Point in 1881. It is a bleak, lonely scene matched by the loneliness of the little wooden Waipapa lighthouse, 2 km further along the beach. This was built in 1884 because of the terrible tragedy.



Other Walks – Slope Point

A short walk across farmland to the southernmost point of the South Island. 30 minutes return.



Estuary Circuit

Wetland and waders

Historic replica locomotive

Good for mt bikes

Excellent information boards.

1-2 hour circuit

Gravel tracks and boardwalk

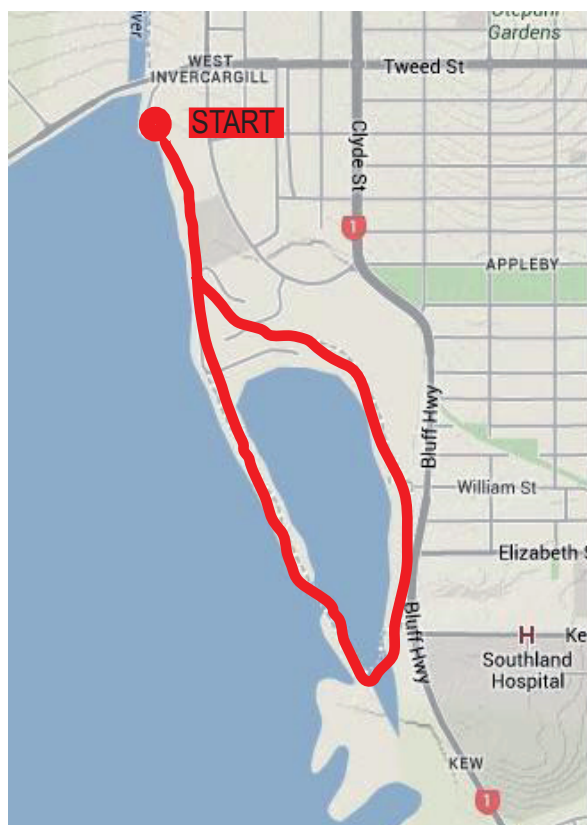
4 kilometres circuit

From Invercargill drive down Tweed Street to the Stead Street bridge, and turn into the carpark and scout hall at Steads historic wharf beside the New River estuary.

This is a charming walk combining estuary views, wading birds, and insights into Invercargill's fascinating history. Spend a few minutes reading up about the replica steam train that originally ran on wooden rails, and the replica cutter, that once served this busy wharf. There has been a massive re-vegetation of this once derelict area.

From the carpark the broad track wanders along the estuary edge 15 minutes or so to a track junction. Continue along the seaside embankment with occasional info signs that tell you this was once a popular bathing site.





Cross the footbridge over the tidal inlet and you reach another track junction, and useful shelter when the sou'westerly blows. Turn onto the Roger Sutton boardwalk, that zig-zags amiably across the inlet. Plenty of wading birds here, with large populations of black swans.

Where the boardwalk ends there is a link with a car-park and road, but the main track edges around the inlet with a good lookout seat at the end. The trail finishes by climbing up onto another carparking area (with seats) and the track meets the original trail and completes the loop.

Foveaux Walkway

Coastal views to Rakiura

Podocarp forest

Old gun emplacements

End of Highway 1

3-4 hours circuit

Gravel tracks

5 kilometre circuit

Drive from Invercargill to Bluff township, through to the Stirling Point carpark, world signposts, an impressive chain sculpture and the termination of Highway 1.

This is a blast at Bluff. It is a rare day without wind on this track, something to do with the gale-force personality of Foveaux Strait. The trees get bent, and the sea thrashes along the coast. In compensation there are brilliant light bursts along the squally horizon, and a pretty healthy forest with bellbirds and fantails enjoying the bracing climate.

From Stirling Point the track follows through coastal forest, past good information signs. Beyond the Glory Track junction, the track turns the corner to the Foveaux Memorial and the Millenium Track.

This track climbs steeply through bush up to Motupuhoe, or The Bluff, at 265metres. Great views from the lookout. The dark shape of Rakiura or Stewart Island is omnipresent, and squalls blur the horizon.



For the downhill section, take the Topuni Track 20 minutes or so down to the Glory Track junction, then go past the old Second World War gun site back down to Stirling Point. A really fine coastal circuit.

