

Last corrected: September 2019

COROMANDEL PENINSULA

Cathedral Cove
Sailors Grave Coast



Waitawheta Gorge
Orokawa Bay



Pinnacle Track
Crosbies Clearing Hut
Broken Hill & Collins Drive



Cathedral Cove

Natural archway

Splendid views over Mercury Bay

Secluded bays and bush

Puriri groves

1-2 hours return

Gravel track

3 kilometres return

From Tairua take Highway 25 drive to Whenuakite Junction, then to Hahei. The road to Cathedral Cove climbs to a lookout and large carpark. Viewing platforms, toilets, information boards. Also toilets at Cathedral Cove itself.

Captain Cook observed the transit of Mercury here in 1769, and Joseph Banks enthusiastically noted a 'truly romantick' archway. Maori lived along this coast for centuries and there was once a fortified pa site right above the archway itself. It is a short, eye-catching walk, massively popular in summer, so get in early.

From the carpark the track wanders in and out of bushy gullies and past a side-track through a puriri grove, which is well worth taking. These puriri are immense trees, famous for the hardness of their wood.

A smidgin further there is another short side-track down to Gemstone Bay, and still further on another side-track to Stingray Bay. Both these secluded bays are good for snorkelling in summer, with crystal-sharp water.

The main track continues with occasional good views of Mercury Bay, then zigzags down a flight of steps to Mare's Leg Cove. A delightful bay named for an unusual offshore rock formation that has since collapsed.





The archway is on your left. Currently, due to rock-fall danger you are not permitted to pass through it. Twenty metres high and 10 metres wide, it leads through to Cathedral Cove itself, which is dominated by Te Hoho or Sail Rock.

On a hot day the lapping water, sculptured rocks and sparkling views over Mercury Bay are so overwhelming you just have to lie down and take a nap in preparation for the long hot slog uphill.

Sailors Grave Coast

Untouched coast and coves

Tidal platforms to explore

Optional longer bush walk

Low tide important

2 hours return

Bush tracks and beach

4 km return

From Tairua drive 3 km on Highway 25 to Sailors Grave Road, then down to big carpark overlooking Te Karo Bay. Toilet.

This is a lonely grave on a lovely coast, unspoiled by too much housing development. The local Tairua community fought hard for this benefit, and apart from a few discreet baches, the bush coast looks pristine and inviting from the carpark. A coast begging to be explored.

From the carpark walk down to Te Karo Bay and across the stream, tucked under the bush, is the sailors grave. In May 1842, 22 year old William Simpson from the British Navy ship HMS Tortoise, was accidentally killed while loading kauri spars onto the ship in Te Karo Bay. The headstone and white picket fence are well maintained and the grave is surprisingly serene.



Stroll along the shore till a well marked track climbs over the headland into Otarara Bay. This is even prettier than Te Karo, and at the far end is marked a second headland track which climbs a bit higher and leads over to Lynch Stream bay.

A charming way to return to the carpark is at low tide, scrambling around the headlands and admiring the rich yellow and red oxides that taint the rocks in rainbow colours. Offshore islands and islets sprinkle an azure sea, which just dazzles in the morning sunlight. Magic.



Longer Bush Walk

The reasonably well-marked Lynch Stream bush track, takes 2-3 hours one way from Highway 25 to the coast, and it's best done in that direction. For the start continue north on main highway 3km to Whenuakite Kauri Grove track and carpark. The first part of the track is well-graded and leads to some impressive kauri, but from then on it's an up and down tramping trail. There's quite a lot of stream crossings and you need to be alert for track markers, but the break out to the beach is very satisfying.



Pinnacle Track

Mountain trail to rock plugs

Historic staircase and kauri dam a

Big tramp day

Lunch hut

7-9 hours return

Bush track and mountain path

12 kilometres return

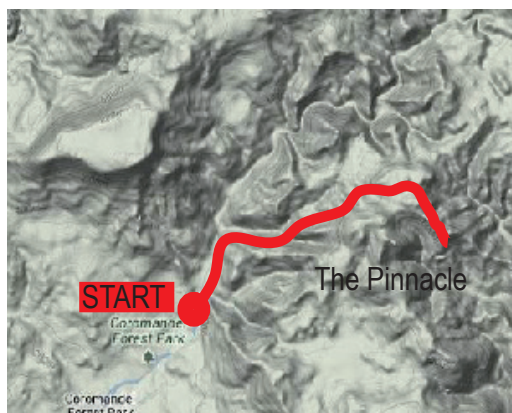
From Thames drive south 2 km to the Kauaeranga Valley Road, and 13 km to the visitor centre. The park headquarters has good information panels and toilets. A further 6 km on a winding road to the road-end carpark.

A great daytramp, that climbs through the twisted volcanic plugs and plateaus of the Coromandel landscape up to the high point of 773 m at The Pinnacles. There are plenty of rewards along the way, including nikau palms, waterfalls, historic stone staircase, original kauri dams, and amazing views.

From the carpark the track crosses the Kauaeranga River on a long footbridge and follows the river at an easy grade through groves of nikau palms. At the junction, take the Webb Creek/Pinnacles/Kauaeranga Kauri track as it climbs steeply up this attractive and narrow stream.



Camping: there are several excellent camping grounds along the Kauaeranga road. Book and pay at visitor centre.



There are many waterfalls in this tight valley, as well as three foot-bridges, and the original hand-cut stone staircases, that were built to assist the pack-horses up this steep grade. Almost a 300 m climb to the Hydro Camp, and after rain these steps can get greasy.

Bluffs lean over the track as it reaches the track junction at the Hydro Camp. During the late 1940's workers camped here when establishing the 'hydro-line' (power-line) over to the east coast, and the lines are still there.

Easier in grade now, the Pinnacles track sidles past the gloomy plug of Tauranikau, and winds through stunted scrub forest to a track junction. A side branch drops down to the spacious Pinnacles Hut (40 bunks, gas cookers and a warden in season). There's also a side-track to an impressive kauri log dam.

The well-marked track to Pinnacles begins gently, then steepens as it approaches the rock outcrops. It needs the assistance of several ladders before it reaches the final top, a total 200 m climb from hut to the first and highest pinnacle at 773 m.

Much of the Coromandel is visible. A foreground of contorted rock outcrops and white-stumped hillsides. Sea on both sides and the Hauraki Plains fade into haze.



Crosbies Clearing Hut

Big bush climb to hut
Hut with 360 degree views
Regenerating kauri forest

6-7 hours return

Bush tracks

14 kilometres return

From Thames drive south 2 km to the Kauaeranga Valley Road, and 13 km to the visitor centre. The park headquarters has good information panels and toilets. Drive to the Booms Flat campsite carpark.

A big climb to a great viewpoint and a funky modern hut that overlooks the historic farm of Crosbies Clearing. The partly kauri forest is full of birds and this is a good day out for the fit and keen. Don't be too put off by the signposted times, they are mainly for people carrying full packs. A day trapper should halve those times.

From Booms Flat campsite the track wanders through some scrubby stuff and then winds up through pine trees onto the bush spur. A steady 200 m climb to the first track junction, then another 140 metres climb onto the rolling bush ridge top and second junction.

Turn west along the ridge and after the track goes up and down till it suddenly reaches an old bridleway or pack track. A kilometre along here to the third junction, a horse pack-track that goes down to Thames. The farmers used this route to access Crosbies Clearing.





The broad pack track sides to a signpost onto a side-track that climbs directly to the hut on its wonderful hilltop site. Views everywhere, and its worth enjoying the sunny outlook.

As a slight variation on the return, you can follow a side-track towards Crosbies Clearing until you meet the main pack-track again, then return the way you came up.

Camping: there are several sheltered bush camping grounds along the Ka-ueraanga road. Book and pay at visitor centre.

Broken Hill & Collins Drive

Historic mining area

Water-races and tunnels

Fascinating for families

Great camp spot

2-3 hours return

Steep narrow tracks and tunnels

3 kilometres return

Broken Hills (or Golden Hill) the access is off Highway 25 at Hikuai, then 6 km up the Puketui Valley Road to the carpark. The old through-road to Highway 25A is closed.

Adits, drives and tunnels are all the same thing — artificially dug holes in the ground. The Collins Drive is a spectacular 500-metre-long tunnel, and part of a track circuit that also includes three craftily chiselled water-race tunnels and a complicated network of mining ruins. If gold-mining history is your thing you will love this place. Even if it is not, you will still be impressed.

From the carpark follow the old road over the footbridge and turn uphill on the signposted track. It is a steep, hard climb through bush past the Water Race Track junction and up to a saddle. Here a side-track climbs steeply to a not very good lookout.

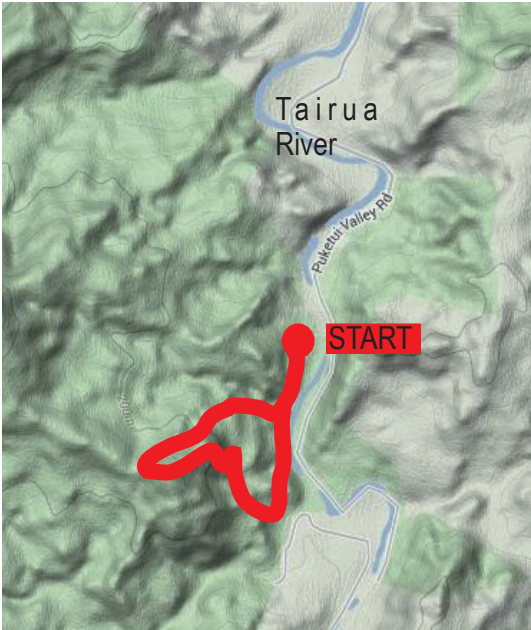


Down from the saddle the track reaches the entrance of Collins Drive, and there's a boardwalk through it now. Lots of very good glowworms in the dark side-passages, but 500 metres is a long way in a tunnel, phew, you're out.

Turn right and follow the easy grade around to the first track junction, then descend steep steps to end up on the Water Race Track, right beside the first tunnel.

Go through the three elegant tunnels and along boardwalks and staircases to exit back onto the main track.

Camping: pleasant DOC grass and tree sites by the deep pools of the Tairua River



Other walks

There are many short walks in this area, including Gem of the Boom, Golden Hills Battery and Broken Hills Battery.



Waitawheta Gorge

Deep, dramatic gorge

The amazing 'windows' walk

Tunnels and mine relics

Great circuit

Windows walk (1 km) 1 hour;
main circuit 3–4 hours (8 km)
return.

Gravel paths and bush track

Off Highway 2 at Karangahake
carpark, there are informa-
tion panels, toilets, and a cafe
across road.

This is a superb walking circuit that cuts up a sheer-sided gorge, walls stained with the peculiar red and yellow oxides of minerals. Tunnels, tramways, and other old mining relics give a tremendous sense of the past. A high return via Karangahake hill completes the satisfying circuit. Children would enjoy just the flat gorge walk.

The first footbridge over the Karangahake River is an old-fashioned beauty, then at the immediate junction the Crown Track (or Waitawheta Track) slips into the gorge. It follows the old tramway and later water supply line, and edges around steep cliffs to the second footbridge. The side-track leads through a tunnel onto several more interesting tunnels in the hillside. Spooky and you need a torch.

From the bridge, the track wanders around a corner and across gantries and platforms to the underground pumping station. From here the gorge opens a little and a good track leads for 30 minutes further to a 100 m straight tunnel, which you can sneak through without a torch (keep your head low!).





Cafe: Talisman, at Karangahape. Watch for speeding traffic.



Camping: access to the far end of the Waitawheta gorge is via Dickey Flat Road and an unimpressive DOC camp site with toilets.

Just before the tunnel is an excellent picnic spot on rocks beside the river, and a man-made tunnel used to divert part of the stream. Shortly after the tunnel, the track crosses a footbridge and reaches a junction. Straight on the track goes over another footbridge to Dickey Flat road end.

Turn up the Dubbro bush track, as it climbs steadily. It crosses a side-creek, then climbs again up to a second junction with the Flat 7 Track (the other route goes up onto Karangahake Hill itself). Follow the easy Flat 7 Track around richly-coloured mineral bluffs to the gravel road, and go down road 10 minutes to Scotsman Gully. Follow this short, pretty track for 15 minutes back to the main track.

The Windows Loop

A short spectacular circuit, which could be combined with the main gorge walk. From the carpark cross two footbridges, then climb up onto a higher level tramline track which pierces the rock walls with various 'holes' or windows overlooking the Waitawheta gorge along the way. A torch is handy but you can get away without one. Shortly the track goes down a staircase back to the main gorge track. A stunning short walk.

Orokawa Bay

Beautiful, isolated bay

Quiet retreat on a lonely coast

Waterfall and bush

Waihi beach

2 hours return

Graded bush track

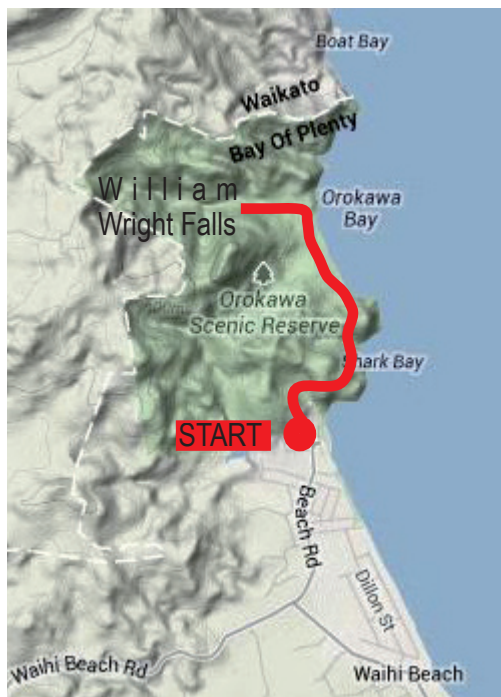
4 kilometre return

From Waihi Beach settlement make your way to the far north end of the beach by the large carpark. The first part of the walk might get blocked at high tide, though an hour either side should be fine.

This pleasing track to a lonely, lovely bay, starts from the far north end of Waihi Beach, where old shaggy pohutukawa trees shade the track signs. The track climbs to the first headland corner at Rapatitio Point, and turns into a much quieter world. Orokawa Bay has no roads leading to it.

The track ambles along about 200 metres above the sea, slipping through attractive bush gullies and wandering around headlands with good views back over the coast. You can see Mayor Island and White Island, occasionally gushing white smoke. The coastal forest is lush, tropical and alert.





The first view of Orokawa Bay is seen through manuka and waving toetoe and there is a seat to appreciate it. Then it is a quick descent to an untrammelled piece of coast with a white and glorious beach, backed by rustling pohutukawa.

There is plenty to explore here, including the fishing rocks. But the track up Orokawa Stream to the William Wright Falls was heavily damaged by a storm in 2014.