

Last corrected: September 2019

COASTAL OTAGO & DUNEDIN

Oamaru Bushy Beach

Moeraki Lighthouse

Shag Point

Mapatouhi Pa



Ross Reservoir

Organ Pipes & Mt Cargill

Flagstaff Summit



Sandfly Bay

Tunnel Beach



Oamaru Bushy Beach

Yellow-eyed & little blue penguins

Bird hide and coastal views

Orange beaches

1 hour return

Graded track to beach

1 kilometre return

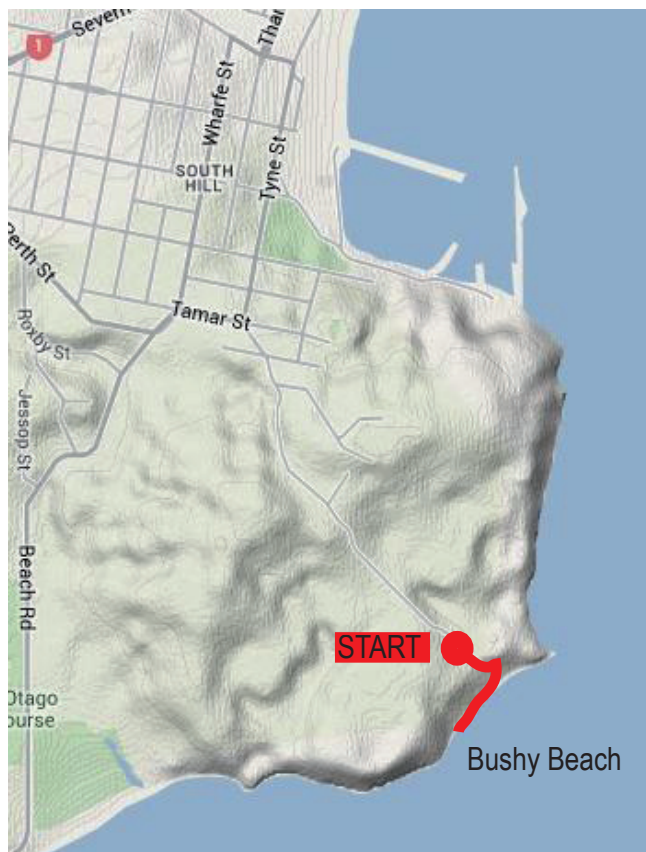
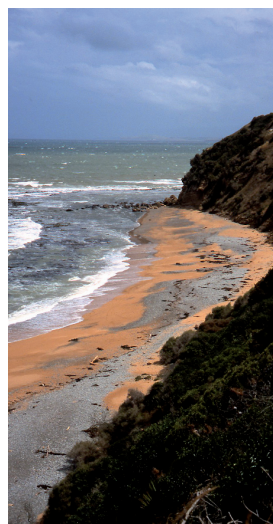
From Oamaru take Tyne Street, up to crossroads, and signposted junction to Yellow-eyed penguin colony down Bushy Beach road and carpark. No dogs.

A short track to a bird hide and a lovely beach. The old Graves Walkway that went from Oamaru to Bushy Beach has been closed for some time, due to coastal erosion.

From the carpark one track goes around to a bird hide and views over the coastal cliffs. This overlooks the orange sands of Bushy Beach, where both the little blue and the rare yellow-eyed penguin nest. The best time to watch for penguins is in the morning or late evening as they cross the sands. The birds will not usually come ashore if they see people on the beach.

The main track descends to the beach where ngaio, flax, manuka and matipo provide cover for the breeding penguins. The sands are a lovely golden orange and you can often see fresh penguins trails as they cross the beach to the sea.





Little Blue Penguins

A viewing area for little blue penguins (korara). Seating stands have been set up, and road signs warn of penguins crossing. A charge is made. Every twilight, bands of little blues clamber from the sea up the steep slopes of the wharf area and endearingly shuffle across to their burrows under the cliffs.

From Oamaru take Tyne Street, Arun Street into Waterfront/ Breakwater Road. 1km to carpark and penguin visitor centre.

Cafe: Steam

Moeraki Lighthouse

Penguin peninsula

Pretty coves and tidal crannies

Lighthouse and views

Abundant fresh air

1 hour return

Grass paths and scrambling

1 kilometre return

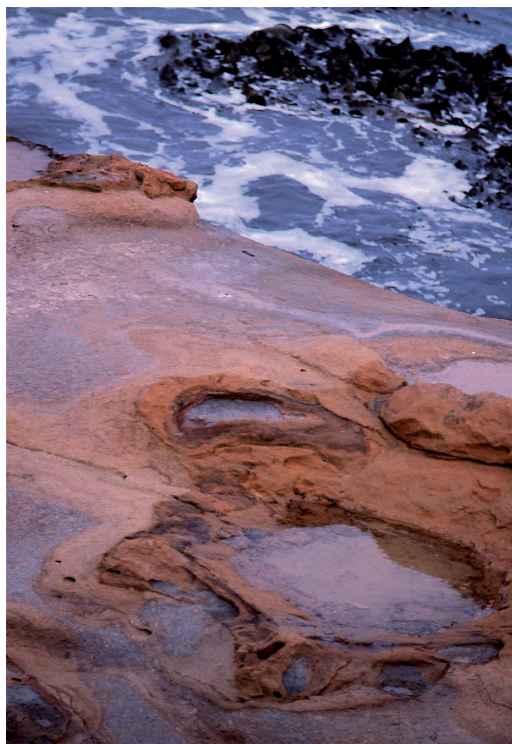
For Moeraki lighthouse go from Moeraki village on the Lighthouse Road 5 km to the car-park by the lighthouse itself.

The coastline between Oamaru and Dunedin has many surprises, which the average punter who stays on the main highway will never enjoy. Apart from the famous Moeraki boulders, Highway 1 resolutely avoids the interesting sites, so do yourself a favour and turn off to one of these places,

Moeraki is a good choice for a stop. You'll find a pleasant fishing and holiday village, motor-camp and a fish restaurant on the wharf. There are several hidden beaches and many quirky cribs (as Otago people call their baches).

The lighthouse walk is a blast of fresh air, and a low tide is the best time to go. The track descends past a viewing hide to an impressive coastline of rock platforms, sea-cliffs and a surging sea. Cute orange sand coves. The Katiki peninsula will certainly see the cobwebs blown off, because it is rare not to get a breeze along this rugged coast.





Moeraki Boulders

This is well signposted from Highway 1. As you turn off the highway the main road swings around to the Moeraki Boulders cafe and carpark, but there is also a large DOC carpark on the beach straight ahead.

Ten minutes to boulders north on the lovely beach. There are also other boulder rocks south from carpark.

Kaitiki Beach (alongside Highway 1 south of Moeraki) also has many boulder formations for those who want to explore.



Cafe: Fleurs Place, in Moeraki

Shag Point

Tide platforms

Seals and shag colony

Concretions and rock formations

Information signs

1 hour wandering about

Grass paths and tidal rock scrambling

1 kilometre return

From Highway 1 turn down sign-posted road 1 km past interesting cribs to carparks on headland.

Shag Point is a low headland south of Kaitiki Beach. It was once the site of one of Otago's largest coalmines, with half a million tons of coal extracted from undersea coal shafts from the 1860's to the 1980's. They also found a fossil plesiosaur here, a large marine reptile, inside a cretaceous concretion dated to between 65-135 million years old.

Once you start exploring Shag Point the beauty of the place becomes apparent. Massive tidal platforms are exposed at low tide, and shags flap vigorously along the coastal edge. There are pretty sandy coves, and fur seals loll about in lots of unexpected places.

There are several Moeraki-like concretions, but these Kaitiki concretions tend to erode from the inside out, and there are many stages of this process arrayed attractively on the low tide rocks.





Mapatouhi Pa

Wild beach and big cliffs

Historic pa and coast views

Low tide route to Doctors Point

Sea archway

2-3 hours return

Grass track and beach walking

4-5 kilometres return

Purakaunui Bay is signposted from Port Chalmers, but before Purakaunui village turn down Osborne Road 3 km to a car parking area. Doctors Point carpark is reached from Highway 1 at Waitati and 3 km to Michies Crossing.

Once the scene of a famous massacre, Mapatouhi Pa is now a peaceful lookout along a wild and beautiful stretch of Dunedin coastline. A low tide is best, then the kids can explore the sea-arch and wander through to Doctors Point carpark.

A vehicle track cuts through pine forest 1 km to Purakanui Beach, a fine glistening parade of sand. A short track climbs onto the headland pa along a defensive trench onto the flat top with great views.

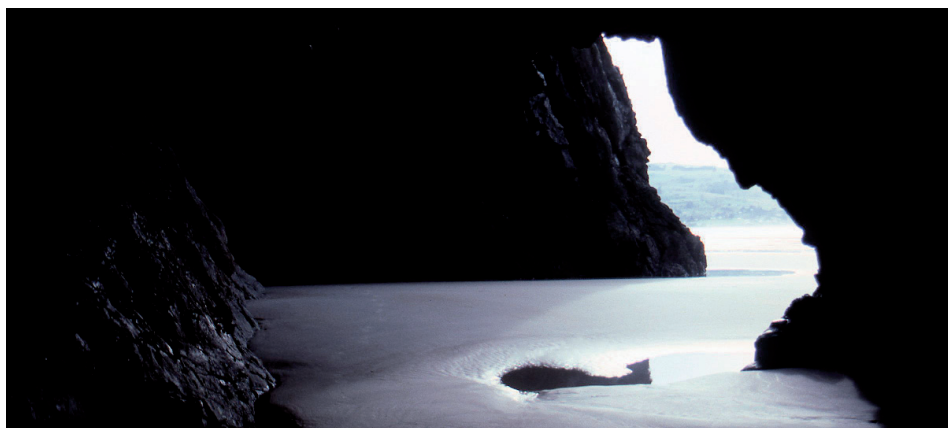
This attractive pa site was last occupied in the 18th century, and the remains of terraces and trenches are disappearing under the wind-blown grass and cabbage trees. On a soft summers evening it is hard to imagine the harsh lives of the inhabitants. Constantly looking out for enemies. It was a good defensive position,



with ready access to estuaries and tidal creeks, but it obviously was not strong enough.

Tradition suggests that the pa was sacked in winter during an inter-tribal feud. The story goes that the defenders set up dummies beside the pallisade walls so they could retreat to the warmth of fires, and the besiegers realised the ploy and attacked, and overwhelmed the defence. Most of the pa inhabitants were massacred, and in the traditional way, some would have been eaten, and the survivors taken as slaves.

Assuming a low tide, head north on rocks and wide sands through the pretty archway and onto Doctors Point and Blueskin Bay. A really fine stretch of shore, but don't get caught out by the returning tide.



Ross Reservoir

Peaceful reservoir sanctuary

Mossy glen and gorge

Historic valve tower

Many track options

1 hour return

Gravelled track

3 kilometres return

From central Dunedin turn off George Street into Malvern Street, then Woodhaugh Road. Alternative access off Rockside Road.

An easy urban walk into a rich, fern-filled gully and up to the serene pond of the Ross Reservoir. This historic dam is one of only two working nineteenth-century dams in the country; the other is also in Otago, in the Eweburn. The Ross dam was built in 1867 of local stone and puddled clay, to supply the rapidly growing city of Dunedin, flushed with gold and hope.

At Woodhaugh Road, where there is reasonable carparking, the track follows the Water of Leith past a boulder trap, then across a footbridge and on up past a quarry over another footbridge to the track junction with Rockside Road. There are some excellent information panels on the way.

The broad track now gets very shady and green as it climbs along the deep, mossy creek with brooding gorge cliffs above you. A last short steep climb up on to the dam and the seldom-rippled reservoir.





There is a circuit track around the lake, and the valve tower is worth a look. What is surprising is that after leaving the bustle of downtown Dunedin the view from the dam is almost completely rural.

Cafe: Everyday Gourmet, George Street, Dunedin.

Organ Pipes & Mt Cargill

Classic hill climb, 270 m

Organ Pipes rock formation

Panorama of Dunedin

Sheltering forest

2-3 hours return

Gravel track

1 kilometre return

From central Dunedin drive into the North-East Valley up North Road, which blends into Norwood Street then Mount Cargill Road, almost to the ridgeline saddle. Pitiful carpark.

Mount Cargill has a central position in Dunedin's geography and psychology, helped no doubt by the massive 104-metre television tower. The mountain can be seen from many parts of the city and the peninsula, and the name — a reference to Captain William Cargill — taps deeply into the city's pioneering past. So it is a 'must do' walk, but it is also a very good walk with fabulous views and includes the Organ Pipes.

From the carpark there are steep steps, then the track settles down as it passes a rock cave before zig-zagging up to the foot of the rock outcrop called the Organ Pipes. Curious yes, but overrated. Large, segmented volcanic chunks are piled below the outcrop and some of these segments have been utilised thriftily to make the steps for the track.

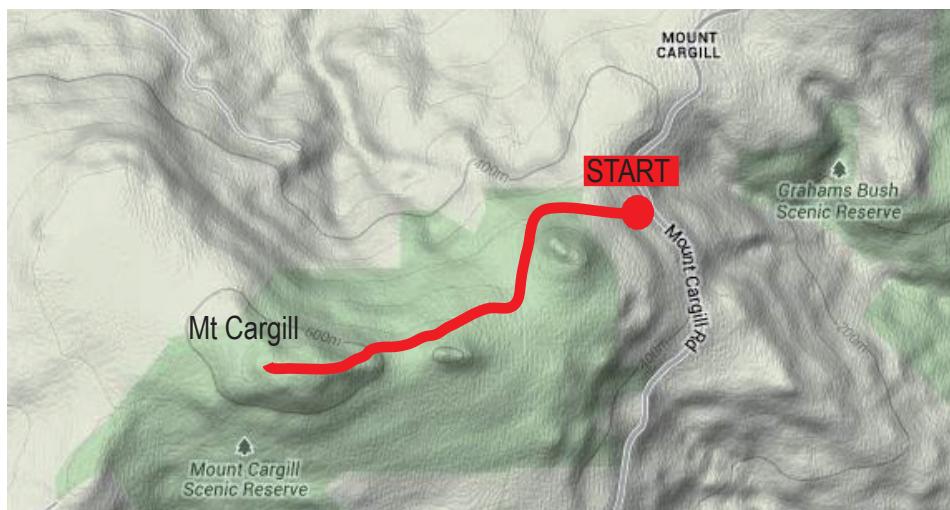




The track is steady from here to a saddle and a side-track to Butters Peak (617 m), with a good view on top. The native scrub is growing well up here and the views are getting less, with emergent totara and tall mountain cedars.

There is a flat section then a junction with the track to Bethunes Gully. The views in the tussock-line are now very good, and the track sidles around the base of Mount Cargill and turns quickly to the summit.

This is not a beautiful place. An ugly assemblage of concrete boxes and unlovely metallic structures, but at the other end of the summit from the tower there is a rock outcrop that makes a fine rest area. On a fair day you need an hour to absorb the view, because practically everything can be seen.



Flagstaff Summit

Easy summit with good views

Open tussock country

Plane table

Good family hike

1 hour circuit

Gravel and tussock track

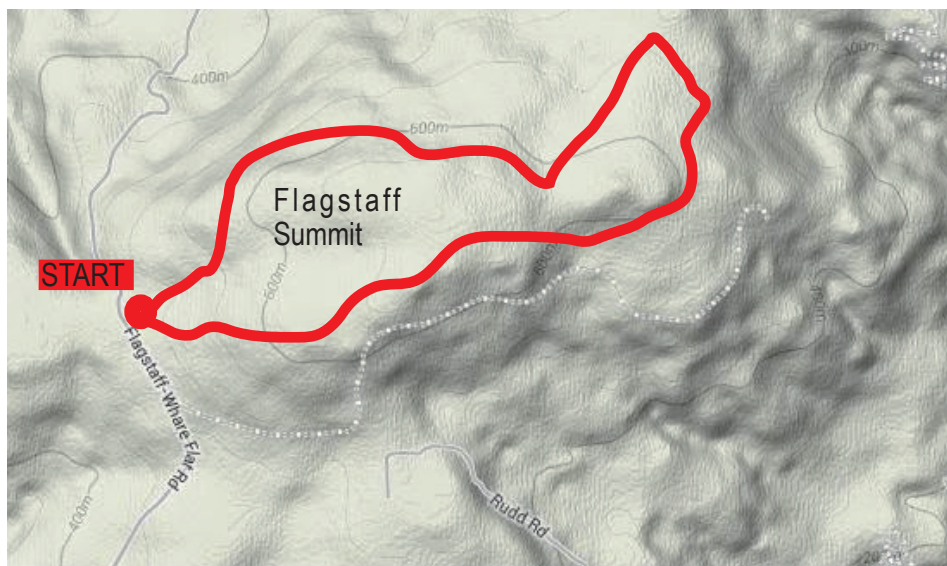
3 kilometre circuit

From Dunedin head up towards the hospital and Halfway Bush to Three Mile Hill Road, and turn off Flagstaff/Whare Flat Road 2 km to the Bullring carpark.

Great, expansive views over Dunedin and Central Otago on this easy mountain walk. Flat tussock country and rock outcrops. It is frequently misty up here so pick a fine day. Graded tracks and well-signposted.

At the carpark take the Flagstaff track as it climbs the hillside in open tussocks and kanuka onto the summit at 667 m. Views as far inland as the Lammermoors and the Rock and Pillar Range. Plane table on top.

Continue north off the summit (a side-track on your left is a short cut to the Firebreak Track) but carry on the main path for good views sidling around the Knoll 640 metres, and this meets the Pineapple Track. Turn left up to the Firebreak Track, and follow this broad easy road back to the Bullring carpark.





Sandfly Bay

Sand dunes and formations

Seal colony

Quick side trip to Mt Bruce

Great views all round

1-2 hours one way

Grass tracks and dunes

4 kilometres one way

About 18 km from Dunedin. Take Highcliff Road on Otago Peninsula (which leads to Larnach's Castle) and follow it to Pukehiki, and Seal Point Road to a carpark. Signposted.

There is a strong sense of welcome as you cross the farmland towards Sandfly Bay. The headlands' two strong arms seem to reach out to you, and the sand and sea glitter. The gravel track drops quickly downhill to a lookout, then you can let yourself go at the top of a huge sandhill, with a glorious romp down to the beach plain.

There is much to see. The wind manufactures small ventifacts, rocks shaped curiously by the abrasion of wind-blown sand, and everywhere the sand is patterned in absorbing and delicate shapes. Sandfly Bay is named after the wind, not the insects.



A small fur-seal colony exists on the far western end of the beach, and there are yellow-eyed penguins. There is an observation hide behind the dunes, though the birds are rarely seen except at dusk and dawn.

Just at this end of the beach a poled route climbs up through the sculptured sand dunes to the scrub line. The obvious route follows a fenceline and a 250-metre climb up to the carpark at Sandymount, and when you look behind, the bay looks sublime.



Tunnel Beach

Sea cliffs, sea stacks and archways

A whimsical tunnel

Great for families

Coastal views, low tide good

1 hour return

Gravel paths and grass trails

2 kilometres return

From Dunedin follow Highway 1 to Green Island, then Brighton Road, and Blackhead Road 3 km to Tunnel Beach Road and carpark. Track closed for lambing August to October.

If you are rich you can afford some eccentricity, and some privacy. Captain Cargill had a tunnel built through this sandstone headland in the 1870s to give his family exclusive access to their own private beach. But now even peasants can get there, and what a place it is — a powerful carved coastline of arches, sea stacks and sandstone cliffs, where the honey rock colours contrast with the wild blue sea.

From the carpark it is a steady downhill to the top of a broad sea arch, and views along the coast to other sea stacks. The tunnel has concrete steps and drops steeply to the surging bay. Swimming is not recommended, but what a beautiful and battered shoreline. The only downside is the 150 metres of climbing needed to regain the carpark.



