

Last corrected: September 2019

UREWERA & POVERTY BAY

Whirinaki River

Arahaki Lagoon

Rogers Hut

Waikareiti & Ruapani Lakes Circuit



Makorori Headland & Pouawa Estuary

Morere Hot Springs

Mahia Reefs



Whirinaki River

Magnificent podocarp forest

Gorge and river

Remote and serene

Mt biking track

2 hours circuit

Graded bush track

8 kilometres return

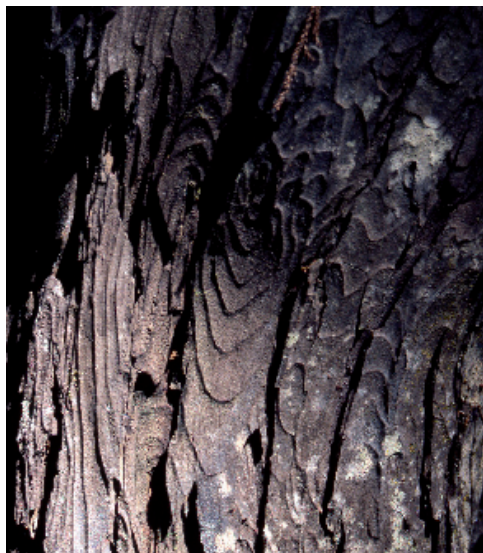
From Highway 38 turn right towards Minginui turnoff, then turn right over the Whirinaki River bridge to River Road. Follow River Road upvalley for about 7 km to the carpark and sign-board.

Simply the best forest in New Zealand: statuesque, magisterial, dense, it is a forest of exceptional quality and calibre. Trees like rimu, kahikatea, matai and miro grow to extraordinary heights at Whirinaki and have a profound effect on the visitor.

The Whirinaki track starts by passing through the Oriuwaka Ecological Area, a scientific reserve where there are outstanding podocarp trees, then crosses the Whirinaki River at Te Whaiti-nui-a-toi canyon. This is a deep, attractive slot in the rockbed.

After the canyon the track settles into an easy, well-benched grade along the river terrace, passing the side-track to Moerangi. The birdlife can be vocal, with robins, shining and long-tailed cuckoos, parakeets, kaka, songthrush, blackbirds, tui and bellbirds.

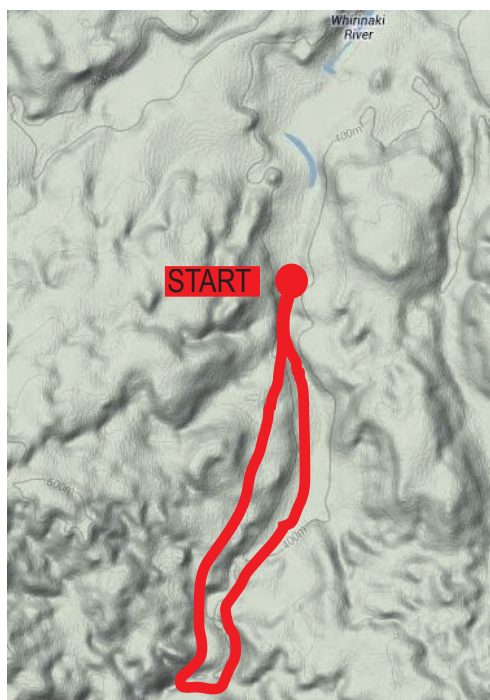




There is a footbridge over the Mangamate Stream and not long afterwards a side-track goes down to the Whirinaki waterfall.

A bridge crosses the top of the waterfall to other vantage points, and this track can be followed back to the carpark.

It travels along an old logging road on the other side of the Whirinaki River, and makes the visual point that this magnificent forest came within a few hundred metres of being eradicated.



Camping: attractive Mangamate DOC camping area Old Te Whaiti Road, shelter, toilets, waterfall, picnic area

Arahaki Lagoon

Lagoon in the heart of the forest

Other-worldly place

Solitude

1-2 hours return

Well graded bush track

4 kilometre return

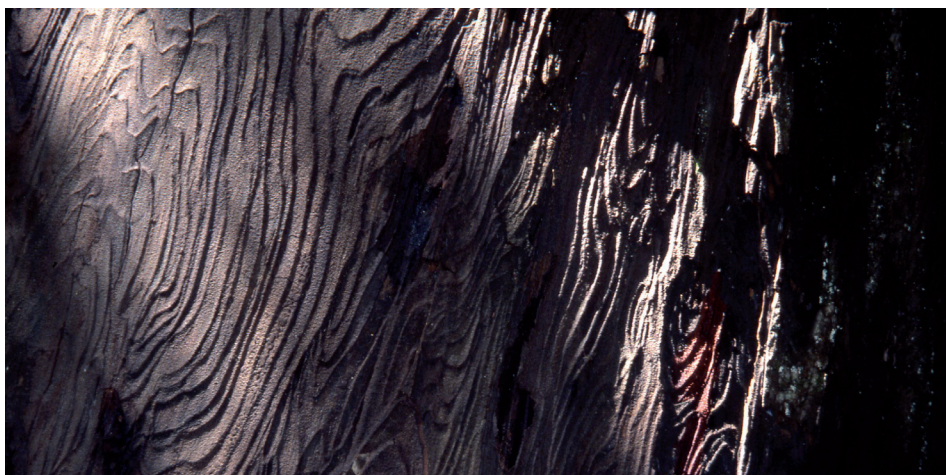
From Highway 38 turn right towards Minginui, then right over the Whirinaki River bridge to meet River Road. Head upvalley to the Whirinaki Track carpark, then continue on a much rougher road some 2 km to the carpark.

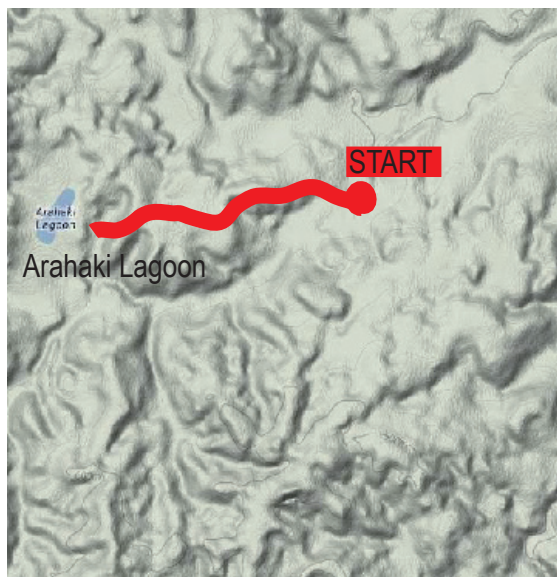
This is an ancient place that smothers your thoughts with the silence of centuries — a lonely lagoon in the midst of a circling rim of kahikatea trees. The thick silence is broken only by the calls of kaka, robins and bellbirds.

The track starts unexceptionally, wandering through an old logging area with manuka and lancewoods, then it descends to a footbridge to cross the Waiaitiu Stream.

A short, steepish climb brings you into dense tawa forest with the occasional massive rimu, and the track softens onto a ridge, passing through groves of perfect tree ferns. There is little windfall, and the forest seems undisturbed by the outside world.

The descent is hardly anything at all and quite suddenly you arrive at the lagoon. If you visit after a wet summer the lagoon will be full, almost touching the stately





kahikatea. Much of the time the lagoon is a grassy swamp with a worn trail around it. The frogs sound like an orchestra of didgeridoos, and large black shags and kaka flap melodiously across the empty marsh. Little else disturbs this pond of tranquillity.



Rogers Hut

Historic slab hut

Beech forest valleys

Isolated and peaceful

6-7 hours return

Bush track

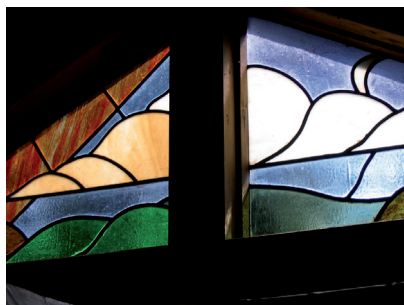
18 kilometres return

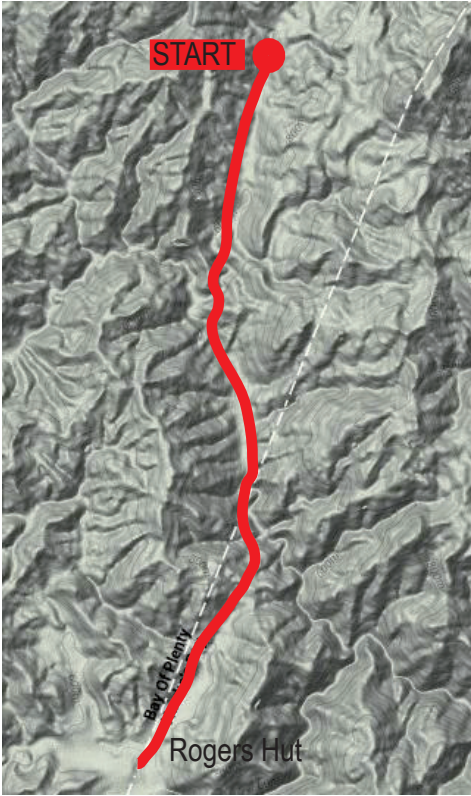
From the Urewera highway turn off at Ngaputahi onto the Okahu Stream Valley Road some 11 km to the carpark at the road end.

Te Wairoa or Rogers Hut was built in 1952, and named by Rex Forrester (foreman) after his new born son Roger. It's a beautiful hut, in a fine setting, and the tramp there is equally appealing, as the track winds down long remote bush vallies. Don't be put off by the distance, 18 km return, the tracks are easy and its a comfortable daywalk.

Tramping up the Okahu River is pleasant. Immediately there's a low saddle into the Mangatawhia Stream and the good track wanders down this for 5 km with several footbridges to Skips Hut. Nine bunks and a nice spot for a cuppa. Then it's 4 km over another subtle saddle into the head of the Moerangi Stream and Rogers Hut is in an attractive riverside clearing.

Rogers Hut was built in August-September 1952 with matai studs, interior walls of slab beech and a tongue and groove floor. DOC have also added a large verandah. The interior of Rogers Hut is still attractive, with slab beech walls and the famous stained glass window. It's a journey back in time examining all the tin lids darkened by woodsmoke and hammered with the names of people who have passed through.





Waikareiti & Ruapani Lakes Circuit

Beautiful lakes, secret ponds and
silent swamps

4-5 hour circuit

Bush tracks

11 kilometres circuit

Highway 38 is an unsealed, tortuous and narrow road that passes through Urewera National Park to the visitor centre and carpark at Lake Waikareiti. Rumour has it that this road will be sealed, but don't hold your breath.

A full forest daywalk, a slow circuit of Lake Waikareiti, isolated ponds and strange silted-up lakes, with their own 'tundra' of wetland plants. You feel psychologically displaced in this remote landscape and the views across the dry ponds seem positively Jurassic — you half expect to see a moa strolling across the meadow.

The track to Lake Waikareiti is a garden path and climbs effortlessly to a low saddle, to a toilet and a lakeside shelter. An ordinary bush track follows the shores of Lake Waikareiti for 2 km to the junction with the Lake Ruapani track. Soon there is the eerie tranquillity of Puna Hokoi, a clearing and wetland, followed by two small ponds, Hine Rere and Ngutu Manu.

The track follows a stream that disappears, then climbs a small saddle to Whano o Ruapani, a larger lakelet.

It is 1 km over a bigger hill to Lake Ruapani itself. Orchids are often found on the wetland margins of the lake and, surprisingly, black-backed gulls and spur-winged plovers can also be seen. After this the track goes over another short hill and down a streamside to the Waipai Swamp and a respite from the engulfing bush, then it is 2 km back to the carpark and out of the woods.





Campsite: by Lake Waikaremoana, by park headquarters

Makorori Headland & Pouawa Estuary

Coastal rock formations

Estuary and tidal platforms

New Zealand dotterels

Makorori headland and return via low tide route 1 hour (1 km).

Pouawa estuary 1-2 hours (2 km) exploring.

Both walks are best at mid to low tide.

East Cape has a wonderful coastline, charged full of drama and sunlight, and these two short coastal walks prove the point. From Gisborne take Highway 35 about 10 km to rest area at the south end of Makorori Point. Toilets and shelter.

Pouawa is another 8 km and down a side-road to a carpark and toilets. At the moment camping is allowed about a kilometre before the estuary. See signs.

Makorori Headland

From the rest area and carpark at the beach it is an easy walk up onto the Makorori Point headland. Good views all around, before the track descends back to the beach, and close to a group of pine trees where pied shags roost. At low tide it is an easy scramble around the coastal headland, where there strata in deeply etched layers, rocks shaped like bollards and sea-pebbles the size of dinosaur eggs. Large tidal platform.

Okitu bush walk, 15 minutes return, starts opposite southern Makorori point carpark, and it is worth strolling along the shore to the blue whale cemetery. Okitu Bay beach is a fine long sandy straight, and much of the way there's a trail through the sand dunes.





Campsite: Pouawa estuary

Pouawa River Estuary

Pouawa estuary is a lovely wee spot. Extensive reef platforms, and small sea-channels run through the rocks where seaweed clings like fine hair. It is a short, interesting walk around Pariokonohi Point and another huge beach stretches out, running all the way to Whangara Island. The rare New Zealand dotterels breed here, despite the endless disturbance of quad bikes and holiday makers.



Morere Hot Springs

Hot pools amongst nikau palms

Great for families

Good tramp circuit

2-3 hours circuit

Gravel paths and bush tracks

4 kilometre circuit

From Wairoa on Highway 2 it is about 40 km to Morere, or 60 km south of Gisborne.

Morere is an attractive bush reserve, full of nikau palms, and dissected with small gurgling moss streams. There is a café and shop, and a charge for use of the hot pools, which in practice means that you have to pay to gain access to walk in this reserve. Since most people are keen for a bathe anyway this is not a difficulty, but if you object to paying for walking there is a free alternative entrance to the reserve off Tunanui Road via the Ridge Track.

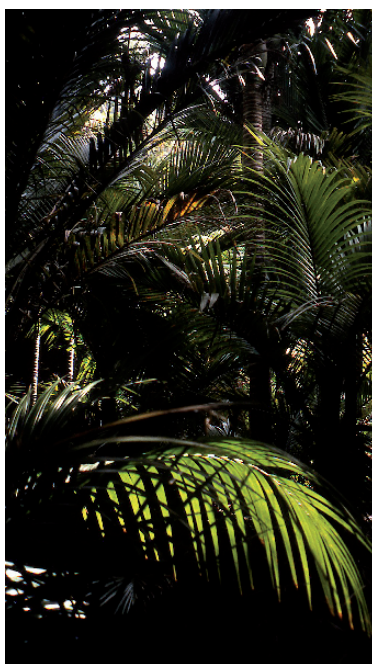
The hot pools are in two parts, the lower baths are the biggest, with a swimming pool and attractive glades for picnicking, the upper pools are hotter, smaller and surrounded by deep bush.

From the office and rest areas, follow the signs to the Mangakawa Track junction, and start to wander up this gentle spur. The nikau forest is profuse, rimu, totara, tawa, kohekohe are all present, as is the twisting kie kie vine higher up. Grey warblers and shining cuckoos call in spring and summer.

The track crosses to the top of another spur, and descends this very steeply — you will need your hands here, eventually easing into a moist series of gullies, where mosses and lichens cram every available niche. The track crosses the elegant creek in a small series of bridges and steps, and you will pass several small cascades. The whole streambed seems alive with greenery as well as several slimy 'hot spots' in the bush.

Where the creek slightly opens out you pass a track junction with Ridge Track and reach the Nikau Pools. There are two hot pools and a cold plunge pool, as well as changing sheds and toilet. The hot pools vary in temperature from 32-40 degrees Celsius, and after the bush walk are eminently satisfying.

Cafe: at Morere Springs campground and shop



Mahia Reefs

Amazing 'tramway' formations

Good exploring at low tide

Chill out coast

Ideal for families

1-2 hours exploring

Rock platforms

3-4 kilometres

From Wairoa it is about 40 km to Mahia Beach, and another 10 km across the peninsula to Mahia village and Auroa Point. From Mahia onwards there are many rest areas and pull-off areas along the shoreline.

Mahia is a place to wander and explore on a long murmuring shore. There's a tangible isolation, and one translation of Mahia is 'indistinct sounds', which explains the atmosphere exactly.

(Mahia latterly has become famous because Rocket Lab launched its first satellite into orbit from here in 2018. But the pad is at the far south tip of the peninsula and there's no public access or even viewing platforms. Pity).

The main sandy bay at Mahia Beach is backed with hundreds of sometimes lavish summer houses, but if you drive over to the other side of the peninsula at Oraka, the baches are more homely. Mahia village sits on top of a headland and after here the road winds around the shoreline to a romantic if dodgy fishing wharf at Whangawehi Stream.

The Whangaweri Reserve has a hollowed out stone which reputedly was used as a baptismal font by the early missionaries in 1842. Also, several small Maori cemeteries enjoying an unrivalled outlook over to the distant Young Nick's Head.

The seal ends but the road edges around Auroa Point and unexpectedly runs out onto a sandy beach. Pohutukawa and ngaio provide some shade on the foreshore. All along this coast at low tide the sea reveals a virtual rock-desert of sea-reefs and tidal platforms. Long furrows of rock like tramlines run from the sandy coves out to sea, as if some mad ploughman had decided to have a go at bringing the sea-bed to pasture.

Whilst humans stroll about in bemusement at the geological spectacle, white-faced herons carefully probe the channels of water, and sleek gannets do a spectacular dive for fish just offshore. If you sit in the sun at Mahia you are bound to nod off, as the foreshore tussocks rustle in the sea-breeze and the pied shag spreads its wings to dry. When you wake up the sea has returned.

