

Last corrected: September 2019

WELLINGTON

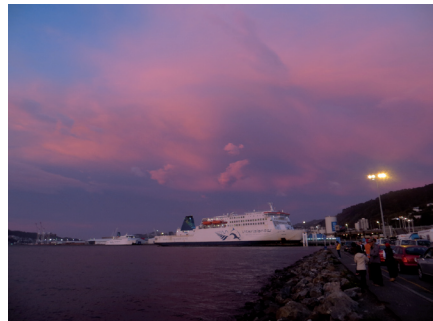
Queen Elizabeth II Park
Wairaka Point
Colonial Knob
Mount Kaukau



The Catchpool
Pencarrow Coast
Makara Headland



Rimutaka Incline
Pakuratahi Forks
Korokoro Stream & Belmont Trig



Somes Island
Downtown Investigations
Wellington Botanic Gardens
Oriental Bay & Mt Victoria
Red Rocks

Queen Elizabeth II Park

Easy family circuit walks

Beach and dune country

Many track options

Trams and historic sites

Picnic spots and toilets

1-2 hours return

Grass and sandy tracks

6 kilometres return

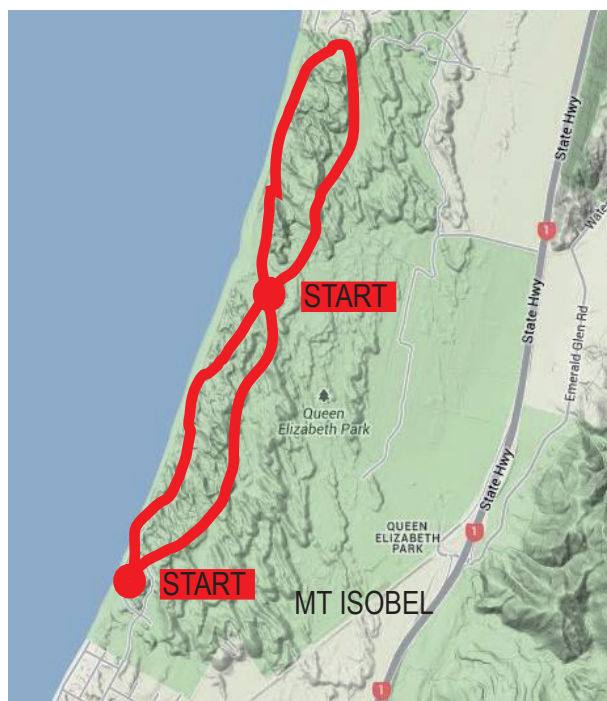
Two access points: From Paekakariki, turn down Beach Road and Wellington Road to southern entrance. Other access is off Highway 1 at Whare-roa Road (McKays Crossing) and carpark.

Great beach and dune walking, and the trams are a big hit with kids. Its a superb place for families with many track options, and you can walk a giant figure of eight from anywhere in the park.

At the southern access there is a sealed loop road leads to several sheltered picnic areas with toilets. The northern access has carparks, the trams and the historic American base.

The well-signposted tracks go through easy, rolling dune country. There are plenty of short or long walk options, the coastal pathway is usually gravelled, and there's easy access to the beach, with no cars to worry about, and good views of the dark offshore mass of Kapiti Island.





Other walks

Wetland and kahikatea walk, 30 minutes return, access from Whareroa Road.

Cafe: Beach Road Deli, in Paekakariki

Wairaka Point

Easy walk along rugged coast

Sea arch and driftwood

Interesting for small children

1-2 hours return

Coast paths and pebble beach

4 kilometre return

Turn off Highway 1 at Pukerua Bay onto Pukerua Beach Road then Ocean Parade and the appealing carpark and toilets at the far end.

This is a tough piece of coast, strewn with driftwood, and kelp washing against the rocks at Wairaka Point. Little blue penguins nest along here and there are small karaka groves, probably planted by the Maori for food and medicinal use. Good views of Kapiti Island.

From the carpark pick your way along the narrow coast trail through the Wairaka Wildlife Reserve, created mainly to protect the rare Whittakers skink. Around the first point there is an attractive sea arch. There is a generally reliable foot trail at the back of the beach, with occasional pebble sections on the way to Wairaka Point. There's an attractive assemblage of small rock stacks that you have to clamber over, and a rusty ladder at one point.





Good views along the beach, and just a little further is a stream and grass clearing, marking the site of an old hermit's cottage.

Most walkers return from here, for the rest of the route is less interesting, following along the high-backed shingle beach to the quarry works, and the road on to Plimmerton.

Cafe: The Perching Parrot, in Paekakariki

Colonial Knob

Mountain trails and views

Beech forest and open tops

Full circuit walk

Short walk options

2-3 hours circuit

Bush tracks and farm roads

5 kilometres return

From the motorway turn-off at Porirua, turn down Kenepuru Drive to Rahia Street, then Broken Hill Road to the carpark (just before the landfill entrance). There is other access off Rahia Street by Elsdon Youth Camp.



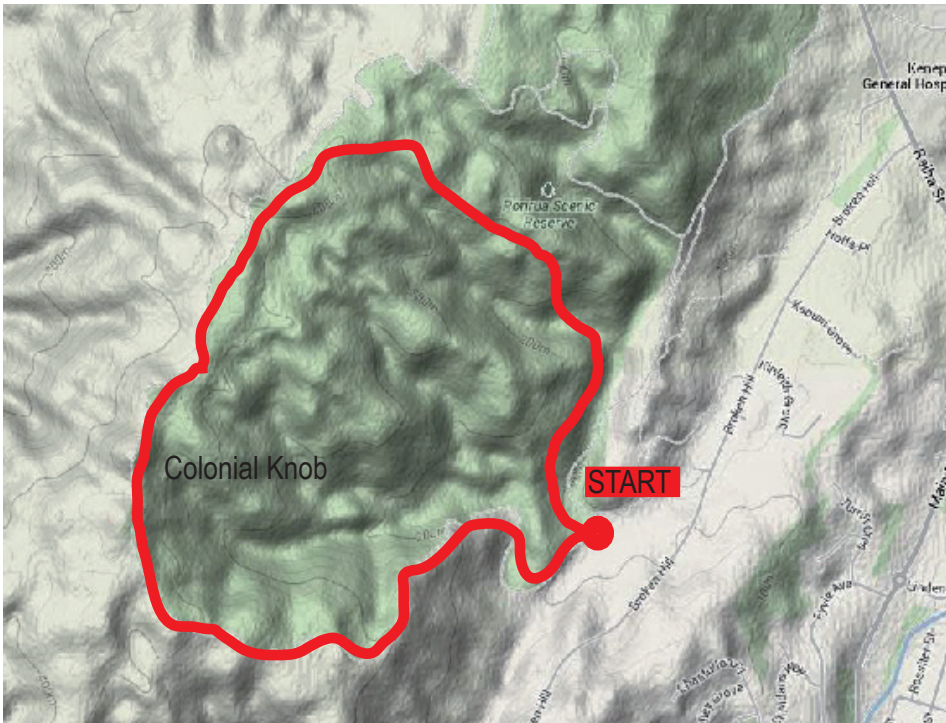
A blast out of the bush and onto the tops. The industrial estates of Porirua, and Porirua tip, might be discouraging, but this short climb gives the best views of Mana Island and Porirua estuary that you can find.

From the measly carpark at Broken Hill Road, take the main track up to the reservoir junction. Continue through forest and past the loop track, which returns back through the Spicer Botanical Park to the carpark. The main bush track climbs up a ridge through some pine trees and reaches open pastureland.

Marker poles march ahead and this is a hard slog up through the grasslands, with the noisy grind of the landfill and factories well behind you. The track eases and you sidle around the main Colonial Knob — 458 metres, with a black and white beacon on top — and go up to the Gulag assemblage of transmitter towers and buildings. What a view — you look down onto Mana Island, and the far estuary glitters.

As you descend, the marker poles follow the 4WD tracks and pass the junction to the Elsdon Youth Camp exit. Then it is a steep descent down a bush gully with quite a few nikau palms sticking out, and you need to be sharp to pick up the return track to the reservoir.

It is a worn path that zigzags down to a fence and stile, then enters a secret bushy glen, which it follows all the way to the serene reservoir, and onto the not so quiet carpark.



Mount Kaukau

Great climb to a massive tower
Superb views and windy as hell
Bush tracks and many track options
Cafe at start of walk

2-3 hour circuit
Bush tracks and farm trails
3 kilometres circuit

Several access points, but the best are up Woodmancote Road, where there is plenty of car parking beside the swimming pool. A short path links to Clarke Street.

Mount Kaukau is 455 m and is one of the windiest places in Wellington in a notoriously windy city. Views good, well marked tracks, and on a fine day worth the effort. At Woodmancote Road there is a sheltered area for families, with a children's play area, picnic grounds, toilets, summer swimming pool and cafe.

From the carpark follow the wide Summit Track as it crosses the gurgling Tyers Stream over several footbridges, past all the track junctions, until it turns uphill. The steps then get a bit remorseless as you climb through a healthy forest of, with a noisy sprinkling of fantails and tui. On the spur the track meets the Northern Walkway Track, where it sidles quickly onto the pastureland. The bristling transmitter tower is close, but the actual summit is marked with a beacon.

There is a lookout and peak-finding table, and you can see as far as the Inland Kaikoura Range.

A variation on the descent is to follow the Northern Walkway Track downhill past the Summit Track, and at the next track junction (seat and picnic table) turn left along the benched track as it sidles through dense forest back to the Woodmancote Road play area. A fine circuit.



Cafe: Cafe du Parc, on Woodmancote Road, in Khandallah



Rimutaka Incline

Great crossing of the range
Old railway line and tunnels
Fascinating railway history
Track shared with mt bikers

5-7 hours one way

Broad grass track and tunnels

18 kilometres one way

Just after Upper Hutt on Highway 2 there is a signposted turn-off at Kaitoke, then 1 km to carpark. For the Wairarapa entrance drive to Featherston and follow the Western Lake Road some 7 km to a side-road where there is a carpark after 1 km.

The Rimutaka Incline was once the steepest railway in New Zealand, with a 1 in 15 grade, and specialist Fell engines that gripped onto a central toothed rail. The train assembly had four spaced locomotives weighing 200 tonnes, and the maximum speed was 10 kph up, 16 kph down. Often the train moved more slowly than most walkers or mt bikers would achieve today.

The incline trains ran from 1878 to 1955, when the Rimutaka railway tunnel was completed. Tunnels, embankments and bridges have remained, and the gorse hillsides are turning into native bush.

The incline is more popular as a mt bike ride, but walkers or mt bikers should arrange transport if you are going right through. A whole day should be allowed. From either the Upper Hutt side or the Wairarapa side it is 3-4 hours return to the first tunnel. Excellent information signs all the way through, a real walk through history.





From Kaitoke a broad, well-graded track ambles past pine plantations and the Pakuratahi River as it gradually gains height to Pakuratahi Tunnel. Past the campsite at Ladle Bend Creek the railway twists around the hills to the long summit tunnel. Take a torch. Walkers should be prepared for passing (and whooping) mountain bikers.

Only 410 metres above sea level, the incline then drops through two tunnels and it is easy strolling down the Cross Creek valley to the Cross Creek shelter, (camping also allowed here) and good interpretation signboards with many historic photos and interesting anecdotes. A grand crossing.

Pakuratahi Forks

Beautiful bush reserve

Picnic areas and campground

River views and footbridges

Site of Rivendell

1 hour circuit

Bush track and boardwalk

1 kilometre circuit

From Highway 2 just past Kaitoke, turn down Waterworks Road past campground to Forks.

A gorgeous meeting of the waters, with fine stands of native bush and short easy tracks.

Here was the site of Rivendell from the Lord of the Rings film trilogy, and this idyllic spot seems a long way from busy, bustling Wellington.

At the forks carpark take the footbridge over the Hutt River as the track wanders through some impressive trees past the Loop Track and onto the Flume Bridge.

Cross here and follow the road past the site of Rivendell to the carpark again. There's also a link track from here back to the camping area.





Campsite: attractive DOC area at Pakuratahi Forks, plenty of sites and toilets

Korokoro Stream & Belmont Trig

Good trampers circuit

Popular mt bike trail

Bush gorge and fine views

Good info at start

5-6 hours circuit

Bush tracks and gravel paths

10 kilometre circuit

Turn off Highway 2 (Hutt Road) by the Petone overbridge onto Cornish Street. Carpark and signboards. Alternative access from Oakleigh Street carpark.

There is a bit of everything on this fine circuit, first up a lazy, secret gorge, then past a perfect bush dam and on to the top trig of Belmont. The route can be shortened easily, and Belmont is popular for mountain bikes. Some sections are closed for lambing from August to November.

The track leaves the ugly industrial buildings in Cornish Street and wanders up the tranquil Korokoro Stream, first through karaka and fuchsia forest, then opening out into a flax and tussock gorge. As you pass the remains of the Mill Dam and cross several footbridges it is hard to credit you are so close to a busy city.

After 3 km you reach the pine trees and track junction at Korokoro Forks. Take the right-hand option and follow up through dense bush to the Korokoro Dam, the nicest waterfall in Wellington. For Belmont Trig (456m) continue up the main track past two junctions and over Korokoro Stream, and climb up through beautiful native forest of rewarewa and tawa. At the bush edge follow the orange marker poles



across farmland and up Stratton Street track to the trig itself. Views include the Kaikouras and Kapiti Island.

To complete the circuit, take the steep track down through wind-shorn pepper-tree (horopito) and then out into open country again on the Belmont Ridge. It is a mix of grassy knolls, gorse and mahoe forest, and open country down to Baked Beans Bend.

There are nine stream crossings down this pretty waterway to Korokoro Forks, before you emerge from the slightly unreal haven of Korokoro Stream and into rushing reality.



The Catchpool

Lovely track to Orongorongo River

Forts and picnic areas

Good family camping and swim holes

2-3 hours return

Graded bush tracks

7 kilometres return

From Wainuiomata the Rimutaka Forest Park is 10 km south on the Coast Road.

A superbly graded forest track from the Catchpool Stream to the Orongorongo River. If you want to explore the quirky collection of private baches in the Orongorongo River you will need a good map, and some tramping experience to cross the river. Extensive carparking and picnic areas along the Catchpool Stream, and on a hot summer's Sunday the place is alive with day-trippers cooling-off in the crystal sharp waters of the Catchpool Stream.

Visitor centre, toilets, huge camping area and information boards. The Catchpool reserve gates are locked at dusk. The Orongorongo Track used to be known as the Five Mile Track, and still is in some quarters. The Catchpool is also a common name for the area. This name comes not from the prettiness of the valley, but from an early settler, Edward Catchpool.

The Orongorongo Track sidles gently upvalley from the carpark into native bush, crossing occasional footbridges and passing various track junctions. It is a broad and pleasant track, and climbs quietly to the saddle at the head of the Catchpool Stream.

The bush is lovely, with every bit of ground space filled up with



ferns. The track descends past the Mckerrow Track junction, and to the elegant arched bridge over the Turere Stream. There's a side-track out into the Orongorongo river-bed, and a well concealed toilet.

There are various options here. DOC signs indicate a good track up to the Big Bend Hut (40 bunks). This track continues upstream and you glimpse various private huts. If you cross the river you can reach the historic Baine-iti hut, private but open to the public, and the oldest hut in the valley. 1 hour one way, 3 km.

Or you can cross the Orongorongo River directly from Turere Stream, and on the other side is a maze of tracks linking up with 50 or so baches. Some belong to DOC, some to tramping clubs, some are private.



Campsite: extensive tent sites at the Catchpool. **Cabins:** DOC rents several attractive huts in Orongorongo valley. For bookings and keys contact DOC.

Pencarrow Coast

Peaceful coastal views

Historic lighthouse

Hidden lakes

Good mt biking

4-5 hours return lighthouse

Old road and bush tracks

12 kms return lighthouse

From Wellington or Lower Hutt take the Eastbourne Road right to the carpark and information signs at the end of the road by the locked gate.

The famous winds that come out of Cook Strait give rise to a good many of the jokes about 'windy Wellington', and also some of its tragedies. From the Pencarrow walk you are only 500 metres away from Barrett's Reef, which was the sight of the sinking of the ferry Wahine on in 1965. The Cook Strait ferries are a feature of this walk, as they (not surprisingly) tend to steer clear of Barrett's reef and come close to Pencarrow head.

During the summer a mountain bike operator sets up shop at the carpark, and since the 'track' is mostly a vehicle road, this is an option well worth considering.

From the carpark at Burdans Gate and Point Arthur the vehicle track winds around numerous small stony bays, each turn in the track reveals another angle on Wellington's hills. Rock outcrops protrude from the pebbly beaches and black-backed gulls patrol the shoreline. Little Blue penguins come ashore at dusk.





Just before the working automated lighthouse on the shoreline, an obvious side track climbs up to the historic lighthouse. This was built in 1859, the first lighthouse in New Zealand and has the unusual distinction of being 'manned' at one time by New Zealand's only female lighthouse keeper, Mary Jane Bennett.

She lit the light for the first time on 1 January 1859 and worked at the light with her five young children till about 1865. She was assisted by a junior keeper from 1860. The light was finally closed in 1935.

On a fine evening the setting sun illuminates the cliffs and hills alongside Wellington Harbour, and provides some compensation for the long trudge back.

Other walks

Parangaraku Lake area has a good track network along ridges and beside the twin lakes and wetlands of Kohangapiripiri and Kohangatera. Allow an extra 2-3 hours (3 km) to explore this interesting area.



Makara Headland

Kai moana and Raukawa Moana
Coastal fossicking and exploring
Historic gun battery
Interesting circuit and wind farm

3-4 hours return

Farm trails and beach walking

10 kilometres return

From Wellington city drive to Karori and take the winding Makara Road, some 16 km in all. Toilets at car-park.

Raukawa Moana is Cook Strait, and for the Maori at the pa overlooking Makara, Te Upoko o Te Ika, these waters were a good source of seafood, or kai moana. This walk will give your lungs a good workout, and the sea views are stunning — Cook Strait, Marlborough Sounds, Mana Island, Kapiti Island. A low tide is useful but not essential. The headland part of the walk is closed for lambing from August to October.

Follow the vehicle track around Makara Beach to Fisherman's Bay (Warehou), then a poled route heads up onto the faint terraces of the pa. The views are good already, and by the time you have managed the steep grass spur up to the old military fortifications you will have reached the highest point on the track circuit — 201 metres.





The gaunt gun emplacements were built hastily in 1942 because of the Japanese scare, but by 1944 were abandoned. There was a full barracks and quarters for the men. The South Island looks remarkably close here, as does the wind farm.

The marker poles continue to the top of an old sealed road, which makes for an easy descent to Opau Bay. Under the cliffs there is a worn trail that avoids the worst of the boulders and once around Warehou Point you get back onto a good track again, picking its way through all the colourful detritus that Cook Strait sends ashore.



Cafe: Makara Beach,
in Makara (Thurs -
Sun)

Somes Island

The heart of the harbour

Haven, refuge, prison

Short Ferry crossing

Great outing for families

1-2 hours explore

Easy grass trails

2 kilometres return

Take a boat or ferry to the main wharf. There are toilets by the western jetty. The island is open from 8.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

In the middle of Wellington Harbour, or Poneke, is the safe haven of Matiu or Somes Island. This rocky outcrop has for centuries been a place of refuge, and imprisonment, but today the island is a refuge for New Zealand's unique native plants and animals.

Since the early 1980s a revegetation scheme has replanted the 24.8-hectare island in native plants. There are penguins and many nesting seabirds here already, and tuatara have also been introduced — this is one of the few places on earth where they live.

Local Maori used to shelter here from invading tribes, and in the early years of European settlement the island was used as a quarantine and clearing station for weary settlers. During both world wars the island was used to intern aliens and New Zealanders of Italian and German extraction, and it was an animal quarantine centre until 1995.





From the main wharf the track climbs up onto the plateau, and there is a circular track around the island, overlooking the many little cliffs and rocky bays.

Some short tracks visit features like the gun emplacements. Wildlife is thick upon the land and in December the black-backed gull chicks think they own the place.

The light can change from minute to minute, swishing about the island like a sea itself, and Wellington city seems both close and far away.



Downtown Investigations

Quirky and intricate city paths

Bush and cemetery

Motorways and madness

Skyscrapers and secret places

1 hour circuit

Footpaths, bush paths, steps

2 kilometre circuit

Start at Bolton Street cemetery, off The Terrace in downtown Wellington. Easiest carparking on a weekend or park at Botanic Gardens and walk through.

This walk fossicks around the heart of downtown Wellington, enjoying the intricateness of back alleys, bush paths and the tight muddle of streets behind The Terrace, Bolton Street and Kelburn Park. The complexity of city paths in this area is surprising, a slice of Wellington that few people see, with the background of the the constant humming motorway. It's a mad place for a walk, but that's its charm.

From the Bolton Street cemetery chapel/museum, take the path through the headstones past the dell-like 'amphitheatre' onto the footbridge that crosses the motorway. There is a mess of paths on this side of the cemetery, but take the Hart Path on the left, then Powles Path as it plunges into a dark gully, where the graves are permanently lost in the wilderness of tall pohutukawas and sprouting bush.

Powles Path leads up to Easdale Street, then crosses Bolton Street to Tokyo Lane, a sealed bush path that slips under Aurora Terrace. There's an optional side-track to some cute brick lunch shelters, which never seem to get used.





At a junction (the other track goes to Clifton Station on the cablecar route and steps under the motorway) climb up some steps to Clifton Terrace, then walk along to Everton Terrace. Climb this very steep road under the cablecar to the furfite Talavera Terrace. (If you go up the broad path opposite the gull statue you arrive at Kelburn Park and water fountain).

At the end of Talavera Terrcae cul-de-sac, take the steps down to San Sebastian Street, then immediately climb up to Aurora Terrace. Follow this road as it crosses the motorway, and pick up the pleasant path that leads back to Bolton Street.

Wellington Botanic Gardens

Fine botanical gardens

Many tracks and options

Sculpture trail and info signs

Cafe by rose garden

1-2 hours circuit

Sealed paths

3 kilometre circuit

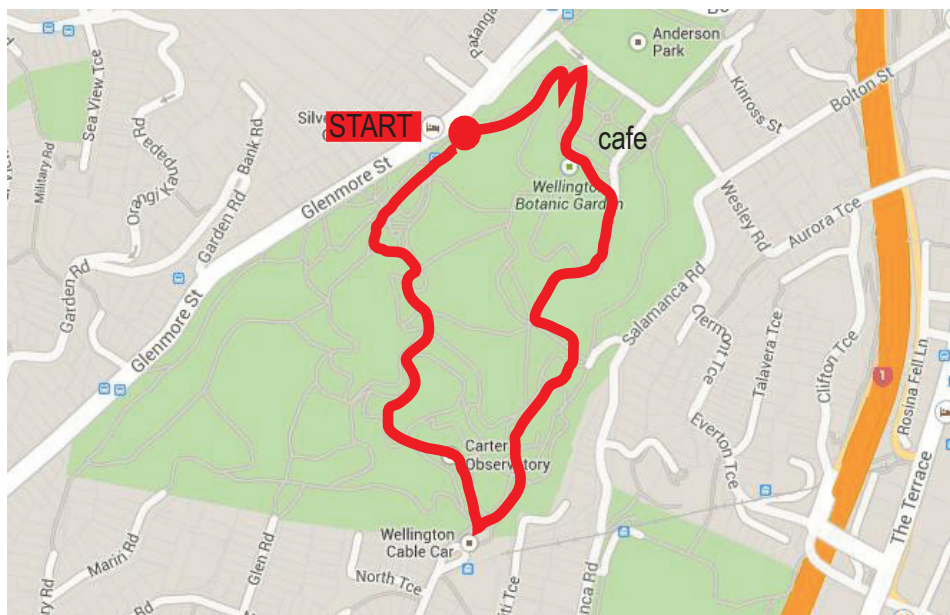
From downtown Wellington drive up Bowen Street to Glenmore Street, and main entrance.

Even on a short visit to Wellington you should visit the botanic gardens. Tulip flowerbeds in spring, formal rose garden and cafe, sculpture trail, bush gullies, childrens play area, lakes and historic buildings, fountains and duck pond, access to cable car, Carter observatory, fine views and unexpected surprises everywhere. Take a gardens map.

This is one route. From Glenmore Street carparking walk into the main entrance and past the formal flower gardens to the reservoir. Pick up the main trail (decorated with flowers painted on the pavement) and stroll past the childrens play area and forest up to Kelburn and the lookout beside the cable car.

Then head back past the Carter Observatory and pick up the sculpture trail as it winds down past fascinating exhibits to the formal rose garden. Cafe here. Take the steps and path back to Glenmore Street.





Cafe: Picnic, in Botanical Gardens

Oriental Bay & Mt Victoria

Quick flick to Mount Vic

Gingerbread houses at Oriental Bay

Many track options, but steep

2 hours return

Footpaths, steps, and bush trails

2 kilometres return

From downtown Wellington drive to Oriental Bay, plenty of carparking.

Most people who go to the summit of Mount Victoria drive there. But there is a lot of fun to be had exploring the tangle of steep Mediterranean-like lanes that lie between Oriental Bay and Mount Victoria. Every corner has a different surprise, with hair-raising tramways, quirky bush paths, expensive houses and the satisfaction of a panoramic view from the summit.

From Oriental Bay head/pant straight up the steep Hay Street, with the Mount Victoria tower framed by narrow houses, and a gingerbread house at the top.

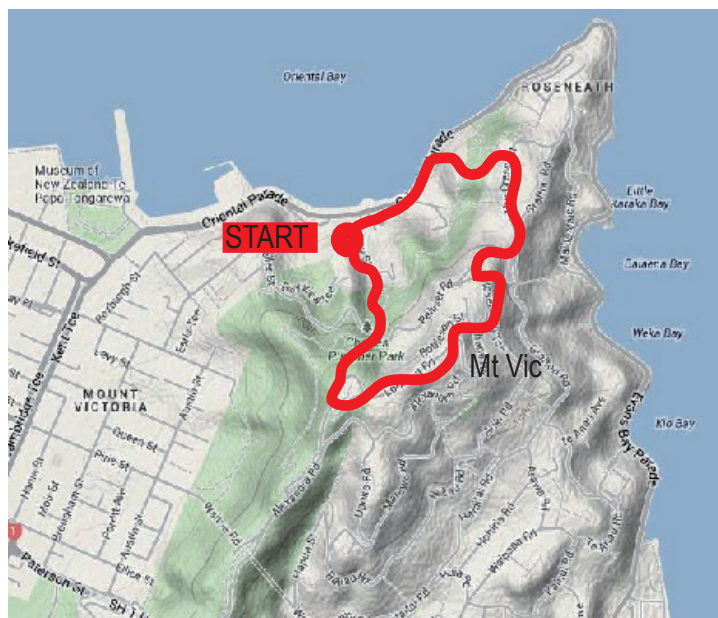


Turn into Telford Terrace and follow the sealed footpath (signposted) to the junction, and take the uphill option (signposted Victoria lookout, part of the southern walkway) along a path that climbs to Palliser Road. Note the home-built tramway.

Across the road keep on the southern walkway to a well-marked track junction. The obvious main walkway track is wide and easy, sidling quite a distance to a lower grass clearing with a prominent white-barked gum tree. Follow up the open spur track as it climbs to a top grass clearing and follow the advice of the 'Mount Victoria lookout' signpost along to road and summit.

There are three summits: first is the Byrd Memorial and noonday cannon, second summit is the real summit and the trig beacon, third summit has a quaint 1950s shelter, which obviously gives no protection from the wind at all.

After your breathing is back to normal try this alternative route down through the posh suburb of Roseneath. Follow the Mount Victoria Road to Alexandra Road, then turn onto Thane Road, into Palliser Road and along The Crescent. About halfway down The Crescent is a footpath leading down to Grass Street — an astounding 22 zigzags — and you are back on Oriental Parade, where you can now find a well deserved cafe.



Red Rocks

Sea breezes and seals

The South Island

Red rocks and tide pools

2-3 hours return

4WD tracks

8 kilometres return

Drive to Owhiro Bay and turn west to the large carpark and smart information shelter by the old quarry.

This is an invigorating pathway between the sea and the steep southern hills of Wellington, which has been popular for hundreds of years. The Maori used this coast extensively for habitation and food gathering, but today it is city slickers on mt bikes 'getting away from it all' who come to the Red Rocks coast.

There are plenty of rock crannies and rockpools to loiter by as you fill your lungs with some of the sweetest air in Wellington — until you smell the seals.

Follow the 4WD track as it swings around a bay with baches huddled under the hills. There is a track junction here for walkers and mountain bikies up onto Hawkins Hill or the old gun emplacements.

It is another kilometre along the coast to the strangely coloured red rocks, 'pariwhero', which are pillow lava, and around the corner there are more baches at Waipapa Stream, and then you reach Sinclair Head, which is a haul-out area for seals.





The road continues on to the Karori Stream baches, but somewhere about here either inertia, or a gale-force southerly, will spin you around for the way home. The interisland ferries slog on to the South Island, which now looks close enough to reach.

So time to buy the South Island ebook eh?

