

Rakiura

TRACK GUIDE



Duration: **3 days**
Distance: **32 km (loop)**



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

For in-depth local knowledge, visit:

Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre
15 Main Road, Oban, Stewart Island 9818

Phone: +64 3 219 0009

Email: stewartisland@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz/great-walks

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Care for the Rakiura Track



Protect nature

Keep your distance and don't feed wildlife. Feeding wildlife is harmful to them. Follow any rules restricting fires, vehicles or boats. No dogs or unpermitted drones allowed.



Keep New Zealand clean

Take all rubbish with you. Use toilets where provided. You can find them at all huts, campsites and shelters.



Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by planning and preparing for your trip. Share your plans and take a distress beacon.



Show respect

Respect others, respect culture

Welcome to the Rakiura Track, one of ten unforgettable journeys.

Escape on an island adventure and relax in peaceful surroundings with the bush, birds and beach at your side. Follow this leisurely circuit track along open coastline, through forest and along Paterson Inlet's sheltered shores. There are sites of historical interest and many sea and forest birds. This journey links the past and present – Stewart Island/Rakiura is steeped in history.



Plants and wildlife

Kiwi – the Rakiura tokoeka, or Stewart Island kiwi, has an estimated population of 15,000 birds. Their distinctive calls are often heard during the night, and occasionally they can be seen on the track during the day. Check kiwi-spotting guidelines in the huts.



Photo: DOC

Little penguin/kororā – the world's smallest penguin stands at just over 25 cm and weighs about 1 kg. Their plumage is slate-blue with a bright white belly. They can be spotted along the coast during the summer months. Islands around Rakiura are important breeding sites.



Photo: Leon Berard

New Zealand sea lion/rāpoka or whakahao, the world's rarest seal, can often be found resting on the beaches around the Rakiura Track and Ulva Island. These large mammals can move surprisingly fast on land when disturbed, so be sure to keep at least 20 metres away.

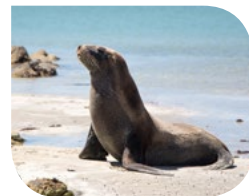


Photo: Jake Osbourne

Coastal birds – look out for sooty shearwaters/tītī, shags/kawau (pictured) and Buller's mollymawks/toroa. Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera hosts a variety of wading birds including dotterels/tūturiwhatu, oyster catchers/tōrea, herons/matuku-moana and bar-tailed godwits/kuaka.



Photo: Leon Berard

Orchids – a variety of native orchids can be seen along the track, such as greenhood/tutukiwi, which flowers from November to January and is found popping out along the banks; and Easter orchid/raupeka (pictured), which has a distinctive strong sweet scent and flowers in late summer and autumn.



Photo: Dick Veitch

Aurora australis – due to Rakiura's southerly latitude the night skies light up from time-to-time with the streaks and glows of the aurora australis (southern lights). At other times the outstanding profusion of stars and clarity of the sky delights star gazers. The island is an International Dark Sky Sanctuary.

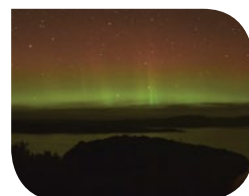


Photo: Jennifer Ross

See on the track

- 1 Lee Bay is a good place for viewing New Zealand sea lions/rāpoka or whakahaio during the summer.
- 2 In summer, Maori Beach swing bridge is an excellent spot to see the red flowers of southern rāia.
- 3 During the descent to Port William, look for the giant 500-year-old rimu trees that escaped the mill.
- 4 At Port William and North Arm, take the time to check out the coast and marine life.
- 5 Visit two log haulers, the best on-site examples of machinery of this type remaining in New Zealand.
- 6 Gallon's small water-powered sawmill site, which operated from 1861 to 1867.

Side trips – details overlaid

- A Ryans Creek
- B Ulva Island/Te Wharawhara



	Great Walk hut
	Great Walk campsite
	Visitor Centre
	Shelter and toilet
	Toilet
	Great Walk
	Walking track
	Tramping track
	Roads

0 500 m N

The map in this brochure is a guide only and should not be used for navigational purposes.


TRACK GUIDE

This is a circular track and can be hiked in either direction. The track is well marked and signposted but some sections are steep, and may be rough or muddy.

The times are approximate and will vary according to your fitness, direction of travel and the weather. It will take approximately 1.5 hours to walk the 5 km from Oban to the start of the track at Lee Bay.

Lee Bay Road to Port William Hut 3–4 hr, 8 km

Passing through the chain-link sculpture at Lee Bay, the track follows the coast to Little River. Once you have crossed the bridge a well-signposted high tide track continues directly off the bridge. At low tide you can cross the beach to the right where another track heads up the hill to join the main track; this is clearly marked with a DOC orange triangle. The track heads around Peters Point and on to Maori Beach.

 The creek at the eastern end of Maori Beach can easily be waded at low tide; at high tide continue along the track until you come to a small footbridge that will lead you back through the campsite to the beach.

Maori Beach campsite is in a grassy clearing close to the beach.

Maori Beach

In 1913 the island's last timber mill was developed at Maori Beach. By 1920 two sawmills were established. At the historic site behind the campsite you can see and read about the remains of the sawmilling enterprises that lasted until 1931.

A swing bridge spans the tidal stream at the western end of the beach. From here the track climbs a small hill and continues on to intersect with the track to North Arm. Continue straight ahead and you will gradually drop down to the campsite above Magnetic Beach in Port William/Potirepo. Port William Hut is just 5 min beyond the campsite.

Port William/Potirepo

Māori established hunting camps or kāika at many coastal sites, including Port William/Potirepo, reached by outrigger canoe. This was the site of the early Māori settlement of Pā Whakataka. During the 1800s its sheltered harbour was used by sealers, and later as a whaling base. Gold prospecting was unsuccessful but the discovery of an oyster bed proved more lucrative. The eucalyptus (gum trees) are the most notable remains of the attempted European settlement during the 1870s.

A Side trip – Ryans Creek

Additional 2hr return

Ryans Creek track intersects with the main track 15 mins before it reaches Main Road, offering an alternate finish to the hike.

Ryans Creek track follows an old logging road that leads to the site of the historic Ryans Creek mill. At low tide discarded timber from the mill is evident in the creek. The track continues to wind around the coast featuring stunning vistas out across Paterson Inlet before finishing at the sheltered waters of Faith, Hope and Charity islands. The last 15 mins by road will take you over the hill to Oban.



Photo: Keri Moyle (signsoflife.co.nz)

North Arm Hut to Main Road/ Fern Gully car park

4–4 hr 30 min, 11 km

This section of track provides access to the shores of Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera.

A moderate and undulating hike takes you through kāmahī and rimu trees with stunning vistas across the inlet. The track follows the coast down to secluded bays, passing a number of historic mill sites. Sawdust Bay has tidal mudflats, making it a great spot to watch wading birds feed at low tide.

Kaipipi Bay is a perfect place for a picnic. There is a small grassy knoll on the water's edge with a view across this sheltered waterway. The track ends at the Main Road/Fern Gully car park. From the track end it is another 2 km (20–30 min walk) along the road to get back to Oban township.

Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera

The sheltered waters of Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera were used early in the 19th century by whaling boats. The first large-scale industry was timber, beginning in 1861 with the opening of sawmills at Kaipipi. In the 1920s and 1930s, a Norwegian whaling company ran a repair base in Prices Inlet, where chaser boats were serviced in preparation for the Antarctic summer.

B Side trip – Ulva Island/ Te Wharawhara

Make the most of your island escape and explore Ulva Island, a predator-free sanctuary just a short boat ride from Golden Bay. The island is home to many rare and endangered native birds and there are easy walking tracks you can explore. Listen out as you walk around, and you may spot bellbirds/korimako, riflemen/tītītipouamu, or saddlebacks/tīeke. Rare South Island kākā are readily seen on Ulva Island – their noisy calls and colourful plumage make for easy identification.



South Island kākā. Photo: Leon Berard

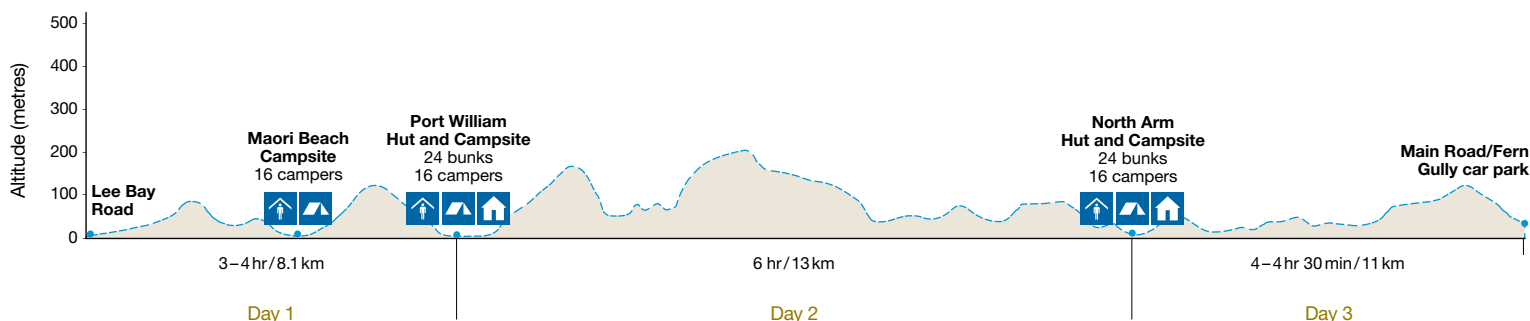
Port William Hut to North Arm Hut 6 hr, 13 km

The track to North Arm starts on the hill between Maori Beach and Port William/Potirepo. Trampers usually stay the night at Port William Hut and then backtrack the 40 min to the turn-off.

Around 20 min from the intersection, an incongruous sight reminds us of a time gone by. Two log haulers loom out of the undergrowth: the Johnston hauler was used to pull logs out of the bush, and the shaft-driven McAllister machine then lowered 'bogies' loaded with the logs down the tramway to the mill site. These haulers are the best examples in New Zealand of machinery of this type that remain in situ.

The track undulates through valleys and forested ridges. The vegetation is varied, including previously milled and virgin podocarp forest. A campsite, with shelter and toilet, is located above North Arm Hut.

Elevation profile



Track history

The Māori name for the island is Rakiura, commonly translated as 'land of the glowing skies', possibly in reference to the vibrant sunrise, lingering sunsets and occasional night-time glow of the aurora australis. One of the earlier Māori names for the island is Te Puka o Te Waka o Māui. This refers to the story of Māui, who used the South Island as his waka or canoe, to fish up the North Island while using Rakiura as his anchor stone. The chain link sculpture at Lee Bay, which marks the entrance to the Rakiura National Park, is in recognition of this legend.

Archaeological excavations have shown evidence of Māori habitation around Stewart Island/Rakiura from the 13th century. Hunting camps or kāiika were established at many coastal sites including Port William/Potirepo and Freshwater River, and were reached by outrigger canoe.

The livelihoods of the island's 400 permanent residents are today based around conservation, fishing, aquaculture, tourism and associated services.



Swing bridge, Maori Beach. Photo: B. Maryns

Staying safe on the Rakiura Track

STAY ON THE MARKED TRACKS

Off the tracks the valleys are steeply-sided and densely bush-clad. If you become lost, you should stop, find shelter and stay calm. Put on extra clothing to keep warm and assist rescuers should you hear them searching for you.

TIDAL CROSSINGS

Little River

The high-tide track is well signposted once you have crossed the bridge. The track continues directly off the bridge. The low-tide track is across the beach to the right where another track heads up the hill to join the main track. The track is clearly marked with a DOC orange triangle.

Maori Beach

Descending to Maori Beach from Peters Point the track splits. Take the high-tide track that will lead you over a bridge and past a historic site. If the tide is low and conditions are safe, you can wade through the creek right onto the beach.

TRACK CLOSURE

During periods of heavy rain, two bridges between North Arm and Port William may become impassable. Trampers are advised to turn back or wait until it is safe to cross the bridges.

REMEMBER

Hunting season

Rakiura has a population of introduced white-tail deer, and is the only place in New Zealand where these animals can be hunted in the wild on conservation land.

Hunting occurs all year round in Rakiura National Park. You may see hunters with guns as they travel to their hunting blocks. Hunting is not permitted near the track but you may hear guns fired in the distance.

BE PREPARED FOR ALL CONDITIONS

Weather can change rapidly on the track. Walkers should come well equipped and prepared for all weather conditions, as extreme weather can occur at any time of the year.

Hypothermia (too cold)

During cold, wet and windy conditions, hypothermia (a drop in core body temperature) can become a serious problem. From initial stages to unconsciousness can take as little as 30 minutes.

- **Prevention:** wear warm and weatherproof gear. Eat and drink regularly during your walk.
- **Watch for symptoms:** people may shiver, be clumsy, confused, have slurred speech, and deny they have a problem.
- **Treatment:** immediately make or find shelter; get the person into warm, dry clothing, put them into a sleeping bag, give them warm, sweet drinks, monitor them and seek immediate medical help.

Heat exhaustion

This can be serious and is usually caused by physical activity in a hot environment and not drinking enough water.

- **Prevention:** carry and drink water regularly throughout your walk.
- **Watch for symptoms:** headaches, thirst, weakness, dizziness, nausea or vomiting.
- **Treatment:** move to a cool shaded area to rest, remove excess clothing and give water to drink.