

Hakarimata tracks



Introduction

The Hakarimata Range is located 10 km north-west of Hamilton, near Ngāruawāhia. It includes 1,850 ha of native forest which is protected as a scenic reserve. It is a great place to see kauri and to enjoy a walk or tramp through native bush not far from Hamilton. There are three access points to the reserve: off Waingaro Road to the south; from Brownlee Avenue at Ngāruawāhia; and from Parker Road at the northern end. From each entry there is a walking track of 1–2 hours return as well as access to a more extensive tramping track, the Hakarimata Walkway.

From the many viewpoints on the Hakarimata Range you can look out to the Waikato River and the lands around Ngāruawāhia. Imagine what life was like before European settlement and the importance of the land and the river for early Maaori!

Waikato te Awa

Ko Waikato te Awa

Ko Taupiri te Maunga

Ko Te Wherowhero te tangata

Waikato taniwharau

He piko he taniwha,

he piko he taniwha

Waikato is the River

Taupiri is the Mountain

Te Wherowhero is the man.

Waikato of the many chiefs,

at every bend of the river

is a taniwha.

This pepeha (tribal saying) of the Waikato people denotes the significance and the spiritual connection that tangata whenua have with the river and the land. The Waikato River was the primary source of food, transport, ritual and tradition for Maaori – it was their life blood. Taupiri maunga (mountain) is the sacred mountain of Waikato-Tainui. It was the historical paa site of the Waikato Chief Te Putu but after his slaying, the mountain became the burial ground of the Maaori Kings and Maaori Queen and also the people of Waikato-Tainui.

Many Waikato tribes lived at paa on the banks of the Waikato river, and the last part of the pepeha denotes this activity, the importance of their chiefs and the taniwha that lived in the river. Ngāruawāhia was also the home of Potatau Te Wherowhero, the first Maaori King who led the Kiingitanga movement from 1858–1860. It is the home of the Maaori dynasty and the current Maaori King, Tuheitia Pahi.

“The Waikato River is our tupuna and looks over us throughout our lives. The river feeds us, nurtures us and takes care of us, healing our hurts and protecting us from harm. The river is our lifeline from which we take our name, our identity and our mana.”

Iti Rangihinemutu Rawiri.

Hakarimata history

Six hundred years ago the Tainui tohunga Rakataura sent out Rotu and Hiaora to place a boundary marker on the Hakarimata Range to define the lands of Tainui. The marker was mauri koohatu, a talismanic stone intended to ensure a permanent abundance of forest birds for food.

Hakarimata owes its name to a conciliatory feast at various marae between the Ngāti Maniapoto and the Waikato people in the 17th century. The feast is said to have consisted of mainly uncooked delicacies and the hills were subsequently named Haakari-kai-mata which means the mountain of ‘uncooked food’, now shortened to Hakarimata.

Landforms

The Hakarimata Range is one of a succession of ranges running roughly north to south and forming the western boundary of the Waikato Basin. Sandstone, siltstone and greywacke, which have been strongly folded, faulted and overlaid by other sedimentary rocks, form the Hakarimata Range and adjacent land. To the north and west of the range is one of New Zealand’s major coal producing areas.

Biodiversity – the diversity of life

Hakarimata is a special place in the Waikato. It is dominated by lowland forest types (broadleaf-podocarp species) and also lies in a transition zone between northern kauri forest and southern beech forest. It has plants and animals of all three forest types making it highly diverse. It is also the largest remaining example of lowland forest that once dominated the Waikato Basin. Most lowland forest was converted to pasture for agriculture and now only exists in small fragments.

Large rātā and rimu can occasionally be seen along the crest and ridges of the Hakarimata Range, towering over the canopy of tawa, kohekohe, hīnau, rewarewa, mangeao and pukatea. There are also pockets of miro, Hall’s tōtara and tanekaha. The large kauri seen on the Kauri Loop Track is of special interest as kauri of this size (7 m girth) are rare in the Waikato area. The reserve also contains a number of threatened plants including the strongly scented daphne *Alseuosmia hakarimata* or topara.



Alseuosmia hakarimata/Topara.
Photo: www.forestflora.co.nz



Peripatus.
Photo: DOC/Paul Shilov



Banded kōkopu.
Photo: G. A. Eldon



NZ falcon/kārearea.
Photo: Graeme Loh/DOC

As well as the more common forest birds such as tūī, kererū (also known as kūkū or New Zealand wood pigeon), fantail and shining cuckoo, there are nationally threatened kārearea (native falcon), pekapeka (long-tailed bat), skinks and geckos found on Hakarimata. The reserve also contains over 122 different species of native land snail and the ancient peripatus.

Many streams flow off the ranges and provide important habitat for at least 16 species of native fish including short and longfinned eels (tuna) and the 'whitebait' fishes. These fish all complete their life cycle by migrating to sea 100 km downstream at Port Waikato. 'Whitebait' (the given name for their juvenile stage) includes threatened banded kōkopu, short-jaw kōkopu and giant kōkopu.

Environmental threats

Since the land was reserved (from 1905 onwards), the fringe areas and lower slopes have slowly regenerated after a history of light logging and fires. Introduced pigs, goats, possums, cats, hedgehogs, rats, mice and mustelids (stoats, weasels and ferrets) can cause significant damage to the reserve's plant and animal life. There have been sightings of deer and wallaby in the area. It is estimated 70% of New Zealand's forest birds (and bats) do not reach fledgling age due to predation by introduced animals.

Community restoration

Community restoration efforts have resulted in reduced goat numbers in the reserve. There have also been local possum and rat control initiatives. About 200 ha of privately owned forest adjoins the reserve, some of which is protected by covenant and being managed to control plant and animal pests.

Kauri dieback disease is a fungus-like disease that is specific to kauri and is killing kauri of all ages. The tiny phytophthora spores get into the soil, and infect and eat away at the roots. One of the main vectors for this disease is dirty footwear.

Ensure your footwear is clean and do not walk off track onto kauri roots.



Enjoying the outdoors safely

Safety - Be safe and tell a friend or relative of your intentions. Choose the type of walk that most suits the skills, fitness and abilities of your group. Check the weather forecast before you head out. See www.adventuresmart.org.nz for further information.

Track markers - Tracks are marked by orange triangles. Other coloured markers or tape are for land management purposes and should not be followed.

Track times - Times given are based on an average family group. They are a guide only and may vary depending on weather and track conditions. Track times are one way unless otherwise indicated.

Essential gear - Be well prepared for all types of weather and conditions. Have strong comfortable shoes (or boots if tramping) and suitable clothing and equipment. Carry a first aid kit, food and drink, and know what to do if things go wrong.

Hunting

Permits are required to hunt for pigs and goats in the Hakarimata Scenic Reserve and must be carried at all times when hunting. Permits can be obtained online at www.doc.govt.nz/hunting or from Department of Conservation offices in Hamilton.

No unauthorised drones

An authorisation is required from DOC to use drones on public conservation land. To apply, visit www.doc.govt.nz/drones



The Hakarimata Walkway: Northern section to the summit and Hakarimata Summit Track are part of Te Araroa, a walking trail from Cape Reinga to Bluff. www.teararoa.org.nz

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire
Check before you light a fire - a ban may be in place
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others



Further information

The track information in this brochure was correct at date of printing, but facilities and services can change. For more information, visit the DOC website or contact:

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Contact Waikato Office for information about community restoration initiatives.

Cover photo: Waterworks Walk to the Summit Track to Hakarimata Walkway in Hakarimata Range. Photo: Derek Ba
Back photo: Hakarimata summit lookout. Photo: Jack Garland

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North



Taupiri Maunga

Parker Rd



Kauri Loop Track



7



Waioteatua Strm

Hakarimata Rd

8



Hakarimata Walkway (northern section)

Tataekohia Strm

Takamapuna Strm

Hopuhopu



2

Hakarimata 374m Summit Tower



Summit Track



Mangarata Strm

Brownlee Ave



Historic dam

Waterworks Walk

4



Te Pahi Strm

Turangawaewae

3

Hakarimata Walkway (southern section)



Waikato River

NGĀRUAWĀHIA

Waikato River

Perry's Quarry

Waipa River

Waipa River

Waipa River

Waingarō Rd

Clark Rd

Te Puroa Rd

2

Hakarimata Rail Trail 1



Cascades



Firewood Ck

Track classification



Easy access short walk: suitable for people of all abilities, wheelchair assisted and children's buggies. Walking shoes required.



Short walk: well formed, easy walking for up to an hour. There may be steps or slopes. Suitable for most abilities and fitness. Walking shoes required.



Walking track: easy to moderate walking from a few minutes to a day. Mostly well formed, some sections may be steep, rough or muddy. Walking shoes or light tramping/hiking boots required.



Tramping track: challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking. Mostly unformed with steep, rough or muddy sections. Suitable for fit, experienced and adequately equipped people. Tramping or hiking boots required.



Dual-use track: walking and off-road biking are both available on dual use tracks. Bikers, stay in control of your bikes at all times and give way to walkers.



Dogs: dogs are prohibited on all tracks except for certified guide dogs and permitted hunting dogs. The first part of the Waterworks Walk, from the entrance to the dam, is owned by Waikato District Council.

1 Hakarimata Rail Trail (30 min, 1.5 km)



Access the car park off Waingaro Road next to Perry's Quarry. Turn right just before the Firewood Creek road bridge. This easy walk follows the route of the former Ngāruawāhia/Glen Massey railway. The railway was closed in the 1950s coinciding with the closure of the Glen Massey coal mine. The trail is suitable for buggies and bicycles. Walking from the car park to the first bridge you pass a wetland restoration site which is part of the Perry Quarry complex. The trail follows Firewood Creek through an area being replanted to a picnic site with toilets. From here, a short walk leads to attractive stream cascades. This is also the start of the southern section of the Hakarimata Walkway. Firewood Creek is a long-term native fish monitoring site and is vulnerable to disturbance. Remain on the walkway and do not access the upper creek. The entrance to the third bridge is Waikato District Council-owned land.

2 Hakarimata Walkway (7 hr 30 min, 12 km)



The Hakarimata Walkway traverses the ridge of the Hakarimata Range and can be walked either north/south or in the opposite direction. There are excellent views towards the coast and across the Waikato Basin. Use track descriptions for Hakarimata Walkway: Southern Section and Hakarimata Walkway: Northern Section to plan your journey.



3 Hakarimata Walkway: Southern section – Hakarimata Rail Trail to Hakarimata summit view tower (2 hr, 3.5 km)



The walkway starts at the Hakarimata Rail Trail. After crossing a small stream on a long wooden bridge, the track follows a stream up through attractive forest. Shortly after crossing a second bridge and leaving the stream, the track climbs steeply through mature forest with excellent examples of rimu, miro, mataī, rewarewa, tānekaha and kohekohe. You will pass an access track to the private property of the Christian Youth Camp. The track undulates through the forest until reaching the junction of the Hakarimata Summit Track. From the junction it is a short walk to the summit tower. You can head back the way you came, or continue along the Hakarimata Walkway to Parker Road (you will need to arrange transport) or take the Hakarimata Summit Track down to Brownlee Ave. A 1.8 km walk from Brownlee Ave along Waingaro Road will take you back to your start point. Kauri dieback cleaning stations are at all entrances.

4 Waterworks Walk (1 hr, 1 km return)

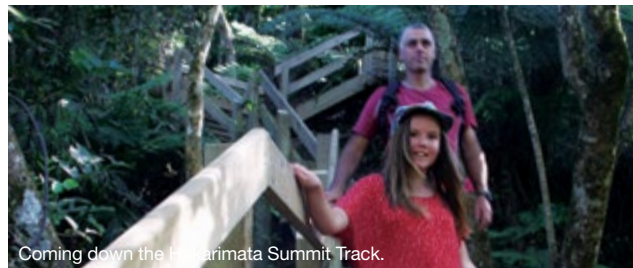


This walk leaves from Brownlee Avenue off Hakarimata Road and passes through attractive native bush alongside the Mangarata Stream on the way to an old dam. This part of the walk is owned by Waikato District Council. The 750,000 litre reservoir, built in 1922, was once the water supply for Ngāruawāhia. The track to the dam is an easy gradient with an all-weather metalled surface. It is a popular walk for young families.

5 Hakarimata Summit Track (3 hr, 2 km return)



Access from Brownlee Ave. Follow the Waterworks track to just before the dam where the track branches off to the right and climbs steeply up a well constructed set of steps and stairs. It is a 335 metre climb from Brownlee Ave to the summit with 1,349 steps! The track meets the Hakarimata Walkway and the summit tower at 374 metres above sea level. In spring you can smell the scented daphne, *Alseuosmia hakarimata* or topara growing beside the track. The tower provides good views out towards the coast and across the Waikato Basin and down to Ruapehu on a clear day.



Coming down the Hakarimata Summit Track.

6 Kauri Loop Track (2 hr, 3 km return for full loop; 40 min to kauri grove;)



The track from Parker Road car park starts with a long flight of steps to the track junction of the loop walk. Turning right, you walk past an old paa site (hidden by vegetation) through regenerating native bush to a large kauri tree. This is one of the largest kauri trees in the Waikato and estimated to be over a thousand years old. A few minutes further on the track passes through a grove of young kauri known as 'rickers'. Just past the rickers you reach a view point that looks out across the forest. From the view point, the track climbs steeply up many steps to a track junction. The track to the right leads to an excellent view point of Huntly and the north Waikato lakes. The track to the left follows steps down past nīkau palms to a lower lookout. This track then returns to the first junction and the start of the loop walk. Return down the steps to the car park.

7 Southern Lookout (20 min, 700 m)



From the top viewpoint on the Kauri Loop Track a tramping track leads south to the Southern Lookout. Views extend across Hamilton and south to Tongariro National Park on a clear day.

8 Hakarimata Walkway: Northern section from Parker Road to summit view tower (4 hr 30 min, 6 km)



From the northern end at Parker Road, follow the Kauri Loop Track as far as the top viewing point then take the track to the southern lookout where there are excellent views south across to Hamilton city. The track is undulating with exposed tree roots in places and rough underfoot. It passes through mature native forest of rimu, miro, mataī, tōtara, rātā, rewarewa, hangehange and tawa, with occasional views out to the west.

At the summit, it is possible to exit the walkway down to Brownlee Avenue (1 hr) or continue the full length to Waingaro Road via the Rail Trail (another 2 hr 30 min). Transport needs to be arranged for the end of the walkway.



Kauri dieback cleaning station. Photo: Richard Greenhill