

# Family-friendly outdoor adventures in the Waikato


## Adventures on your doorstep

Enjoying the outdoors is inexpensive, healthy and fun, and in the Waikato, we are lucky enough to have a wide range of opportunities on our doorstep. Whatever the level of activity and adventure your family enjoys, within 1½ hours drive of Hamilton there is something for you.

## Further information

This brochure highlights some of the best places for families to visit. For further information, contact:

The Department of Conservation (DOC)  
Level 5, 73 Rostrevor St, Hamilton  
Tel: 07 858 1000 Fax: 07 858 1001  
Email: [waikato@doc.govt.nz](mailto:waikato@doc.govt.nz)  
Hours: 8.00am - 4.30pm, Monday to Friday

 indicates that a brochure for the place listed is available from the above office or the DOC website at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).

## Things to do



There are many short walking tracks suitable for families within 1½ hours drive of Hamilton. Explore local pockets of bush, climb a hill for spectacular views or visit a lake or wetland. Remember to keep to marked tracks and leave gates as you find them.



Picnics are a great way for the family to enjoy the outdoors. For a picnic spot with a view, check out Mt Pirongia, Maungakawa Scenic Reserve, or Te Toto Gorge.



Camping spots suitable for families can be found at the Kauaeranga Valley, Miranda, Karangahake Gorge, Mt Pirongia and Lake Karapiro.



Bring your togs for a refreshing swim. Try the Kauaeranga Valley or Mt Pirongia.



Boating and canoeing are great ways to explore our local lakes. Remember your buoyancy aid and take care on the water.



For mountain biking, try the Kauaeranga Valley or Mt Te Aroha.


## Comfort and safety

Wear light, comfortable clothes and shoes, such as running shoes. Take a waterproof jacket, warm clothes, sun block, a hat, a small first aid kit and food and drink. For longer walks, take a more detailed map with you. Brochures showing walking tracks are available from DOC.

Weather conditions can change rapidly, especially at higher altitudes. Be prepared by taking warm clothes and a waterproof jacket and keep to marked tracks.

## North of Hamilton

**1. Kauaeranga Valley:** Located 15km east of Thames. Access is signposted, via Banks St at the southern end of Thames. Popular for camping, walking, picnicking, swimming and mountain biking. The Kauaeranga Visitor Centre has displays, maps and brochures.

 Kauaeranga Valley Recreation booklet available from DOC or at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

**2. Miranda:** Located on the western side of the Firth of Thames, near the Miranda Hot Springs. Home to thousands of migratory birds during the summer. There are plenty of viewing spots for bird watching. Check out the Miranda Shorebird Centre.

**3. Lake Okowhao Wetlands Walk:** 2 hour circuit. Located 2km north of Huntly Power Station. Access via private land from December to March. Contact the landowner on 07 828 8781.

**4. Lake Hakanoa:** 1¼ hour circuit. Located in the Main Domain, East Huntly. Walk through natural wetland vegetation and planted gardens, plus playgrounds, picnic areas and boating.

**5. Pukemokemoke Bush Reserve:** 1½ hour circuit. Access off Gordonton-Whitikahu Rd (next to quarry). Remnant of forest with over 300 native plant species.

 Pukemokemoke Bush brochure from DOC

**6. Hakarimata Scenic Reserve**  
*Hakarimata Rail Trail:* 1 hour return. Access is signposted on the Waingaro-Ngaruawahia Rd. Flat walk along an old railway line to picnic area and toilets. A further 5 minutes to Cascade Stream and small waterfall. Suitable for young families with mountain buggies.



**Waterworks Walk:** 1 hour return. Access from Brownlee Ave. Flat walk through shaded forest to an old dam built in 1922 to supply water to the township of Ngaruawahia.

**Kauri Grove Walk:** 1 hour 20 minutes return. Access from Parker Rd. A long flight of steps will lead you to some of the largest kauri trees in the Waikato. Return the way you came or continue on to complete the Kauri Loop Walk.

**Kauri Loop Walk:** 2 hours return. Complete the Kauri Grove Walk then climb through stands of large rimu to a lookout with views north and west. Another 20 minute walk gives views of Hamilton.



kahikatea

## East of Hamilton

### 7. Karangahake Gorge

📄 Karangahake Gorge brochure from DOC or at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

**Windows Walk:** 1 hour circuit. This spectacular walk includes a tunnel (take a torch) with window-like openings which look down on the river gorge far below. Cross the bridge to return back along the other side of the river, or take a small side trip to an old pumphouse before returning.

**Karangahake Tunnel Loop Walk:** 45 minute circuit. A scenic river walk which passes through an old rail tunnel (with lighting) over 1km long to take you back to your starting point.

**8. Te Aroha:** Mt Te Aroha, the highest point in the Kaimai Mamaku Forest Park, is popular for walking, mountain biking and hot pools. The tracks are easily accessed from the northern end of Te Aroha township via Tui Rd and the Te Aroha Domain.

📄 [www.destinationoutdoors.co.nz](http://www.destinationoutdoors.co.nz) and Te Aroha and Waiorongomai Walks brochure from DOC

**9. Waiorongomai Valley:** Just south of Te Aroha. A variety of walks of different grades and lengths. The 2 hours return Low Level Loop track includes some fascinating historic sites such as a tramway.

📄 [www.destinationoutdoors.co.nz](http://www.destinationoutdoors.co.nz) and Te Aroha and Waiorongomai Walks brochure from DOC

**10. Wairere Falls:** 3-4 hours return. Access from Goodwin Rd, off the Te Aroha-Okauia Rd. Walk to a lookout at the base of the 153m falls. Several sets of steps take you up the gorge – the climb is worth it. Return along the same track.

📄 [www.destinationoutdoors.co.nz](http://www.destinationoutdoors.co.nz)



North Island robin

## South of Hamilton

**11. Maungakawa Scenic Reserve:** Located off Maungakawa Rd about 8km from Cambridge. Enjoy views of the Waikato and Hauraki Plains from the picnic area or stroll through the bush.

📄 Maungakawa Scenic Reserve factsheet from DOC

**12. Te Tapui Scenic Reserve:** 2½ hour circuit. Access from Piakonui Rd, off Piakoiti Rd, west of Matamata. There are a couple of small, unbridged streams to cross near the start, then it's a fairly easy but steady climb through native bush to the summit. Steps lead to a viewing platform.

**13. Lake Karapiro:** Access from SH 1 or Maungatautari Rd. This lake has it all – a camping ground, lodge and cabins, toilets and showers, picnic areas, walks, swimming spots and boat ramps.

**14. Lake Ngaroto:** 2 hour circuit. Access from Bank Rd. The lake has a boat ramp, picnic facilities, a playground, toilets, a boardwalk through a wetland and is popular for duck hunting and boating. Outboards are not permitted.

**15. Yarnley's Bush:** 30 minute circuit. Access off Ngaroto Rd, off SH 3. The track is boardwalked and suitable for mountain buggies and passes through one of the largest kahikatea stands in the North Island. A viewing platform gives a unique bird's eye view of the forest canopy.

**16. Mt Kakepuku:** 3 hours return. Access off Kakepuku Mountain Rd. A well marked track crosses farmland to a viewing platform before entering the bush. A steep climb will reward you with magnificent views of the surrounding Waipa-Waikato landscape from another viewing platform at the top.

📄 Kakepuku Historic Reserve factsheet from DOC

**17. Te Waihou Walkway:** 1½ hours one way. Access off Whites Rd, near Putaruru. Follow the beautiful Waihou River to the Blue Spring. If you prefer, it's a shorter walk to the Blue Springs from the Leslie Rd end of the walkway. Keep to the track and do not disturb stock, as the track crosses private farmland. The track is closed from the first to the third Sunday in May.

📄 Te Waihou Walkway brochure from DOC

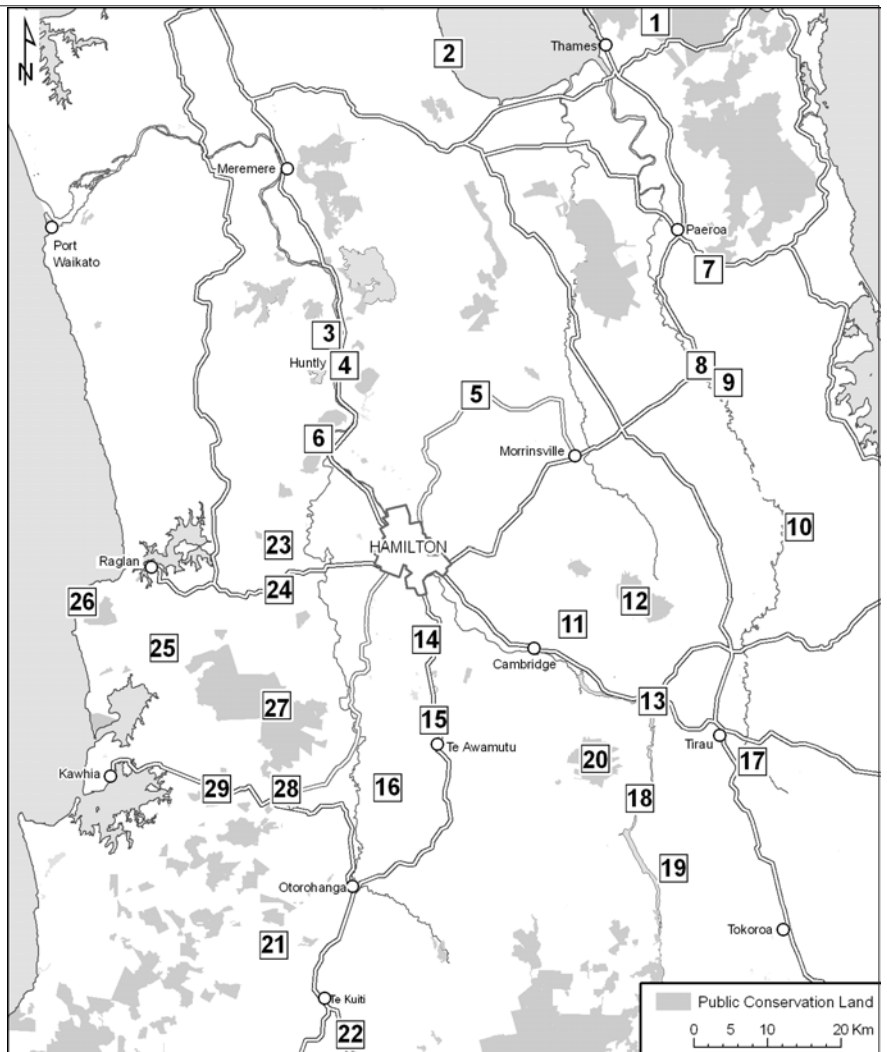
**18. Lake Arapuni:** Located 16km west of Putaruru. Swimming and picnicking opportunities at Bulmers Landing on the western side and Jones Landing on the eastern side of the lake. A 152m long swing bridge, suspended 54m above the power station can be accessed from Arapuni Village. Those who venture across will be rewarded with views of the scenic gorge.

**19. Barnett Bush:** 30 minute circuit. Access from Waotu South Rd, near Lake Arapuni. Main track is wide and generally easy. Extensive community work has gone into restoring the reserve, including the re-introduction of North Island robins.

**20. Maungatautari Southern Enclosure:** 1½ hours return for 2 tracks. Access via Tari Road, Pukeatua. A beautiful walk through bush, along streams, and past a couple of 800 year old rata trees.

## Family-friendly outdoor adventures

- 1 Kauaeranga Valley
- 2 Miranda
- 3 Lake Okowhao Wetlands Walk
- 4 Lake Hakanoa
- 5 Pukemokemoke Bush Reserve
- 6 Hakarimata Scenic Reserve
- 7 Karangahake Gorge
- 8 Te Aroha
- 9 Waiorongomai Valley
- 10 Wairere Falls
- 11 Maungakawa Scenic Reserve
- 12 Te Tapui Scenic Reserve
- 13 Lake Karapiro
- 14 Lake Ngaroto
- 15 Yarnley's Bush
- 16 Mt Kakepuku
- 17 Te Waihou Walkway
- 18 Lake Arapuni
- 19 Barnett Bush
- 20 Maungatautari Southern Enclosure
- 21 Ruakuri Scenic Reserve
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- 24 Karamu Walkway
- 25 Bridal Veil Falls
- 26 Te Toto Gorge
- 27 Mt Pirongia
- 28 Walter Scott Reserve
- 29 Te Kauri Park



## Waitomo and beyond

**21. Ruakuri Scenic Reserve:** 30 minute circuit. Located 4km from Waitomo village on Tumutumu Rd. A track takes you to the Ruakuri Natural Tunnel, giving you a view of a high-ceilinged cave with stalactites and a stream flowing into it.

**22. Mangaokewa Scenic Reserve:** 1 hour return. Located 2km south of Te Kuiti, off SH 30. Cross the bridge and walk up the river to a waterfall. Swimming spots along the way.

## Around Raglan

**23. Karakariki Scenic Reserve:** 20 minutes one way to waterfall. Access at the end of Karakariki Valley Rd. Follow the white markers across farmland for 5 minutes before entering the bush.  
 [i] The Karamu Walkway and Karakariki Reserve factsheet from DOC

**24. Karamu Walkway:** 2½-3 hours one way for entire walkway, or just do a section. Access from

SH 23. Suitable for mountain buggy if prepared to lift over stiles. Uphill through bush and then meander across open farmland, with views across the Waikato. Closed August and September.

[i] The Karamu Walkway and Karakariki Reserve factsheet from DOC

**25. Bridal Veil Falls:** 20 minutes return to top of falls. Two viewing platforms with wheelchair access. 1 hour return to base of falls. Turn off to Te Mata from SH 23. One of the most spectacular falls in the North Island.

[i] Raglan Tracks brochure from DOC

**26. Te Toto Gorge:** 1 hour 20 minutes return. From Raglan, drive the coastal Whaanga Rd to Te Toto Gorge car park and viewing platform. Walk down the steep route to the coast from the car park. Take a picnic and enjoy the spectacular views.

[i] Raglan Tracks brochure from DOC

## Mt Pirongia

**27. Mt Pirongia:** Only 25 minutes drive from Hamilton, this bush clad volcanic mountain is packed with family friendly activities. Enjoy a picnic,

take a bush walk, swim in a stream, look for eels, climb the mountain or go camping.

7 Pirongia Mountain brochure from DOC or at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

**Mangakara Nature Walk:** 1 hour return. This walk meanders through an ancient forest with large rimu, kahikatea, tawa, pukatea and kohekohe. From the Grey Rd car park you walk down to Mangakara Stream then circle back to the car park.

7 Mangakara Nature Walk factsheet from DOC or at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

**Nikau Walk:** 3 hours return. Access from Kaniwhaniwha car park on Karamu Limeworks Rd. Follows stream across farmland to a circuit through beautiful native forest. Swimming opportunities along the way. 45 minutes to a picnic area and campsite with toilets and 1 hour to a limestone cave. Take a torch and explore.

**Ruapane Lookout (Tirohanga Track):** 1 hour to lookout. Suitable for fit families. A steady climb from Corcoran Rd leads to Ruapane Trig. Excellent views across the Waikato and the Kaimai Ranges.

**28. Walter Scott Reserve:** 1 hour circuit. Access from Scott Rd, off Pekanui Rd. Easy introductory bush walk for young families through native bush.

**29. Te Kauri Park:** 1 hour circuit, plus 20 minutes return to visit the picnic area. Walk features a swing bridge over Waikuku Stream. Access off SH 31.



kohekohe

## Going to Kawhia

Activity Planner	Toilets	Playground	Picnic table	Walking	Suitable for mountain buggies	Wheelchair access	Swimming	Boating / canoeing	Mountain biking	Camping	Lookout
1. Kauaeranga Valley	•		•	•	•	•	•		•	•	
2. Miranda	•		•	•						•	
3. Lake Hakanoa	•	•	•	•	•			•			
4. Lake Okowhao Wetlands Walk				•							
5. Pukemokemoke Bush Reserve <sup>1</sup>				•							•
6. Hakarimata Scenic Reserve*	•		•	•	•						•
7. Karangahake Gorge	•			•			•				
8. Mt Te Aroha	•			•					•		•
9. Waiorongomai Valley				•							
10. Wairere Falls	•			•							•
11. Maungakawa Scenic Reserve	•		•	•							•
12. Te Tapui Scenic Reserve				•							•
13. Lake Karapiro <sup>2</sup>	•		•				•	•		•	
14. Lake Ngaroto <sup>2</sup>	•		•	•				•			
15. Yarnley's Bush <sup>2</sup>				•							
16. Mt Kakepuku				•							•
17. Te Waihou Walkway <sup>3,4</sup>				•							
18. Lake Arapuni <sup>3</sup>	•		•				•	•			•
19. Barnett Bush <sup>3</sup>				•							
20. Maungatautari Southern Enclosure				•	•	•					
21. Ruakuri Scenic Reserve	•		•	•							
22. Mangaokewa Scenic Reserve <sup>5</sup>	•		•	•			•				
23. Karakariki Scenic Reserve				•							
24. Karamu Walkway <sup>4</sup>				•	•						
25. Bridal Veil Falls	•		•	•	•	•					
26. Te Toto Gorge				•	•						•
27. Mt Pirongia*	•		•	•	•		•			•	•
28. Walter Scott Reserve <sup>6</sup>				•							
29. Te Kauri Park			•	•							

\* N.B. Each individual site at this location does not have all of the activities as marked. See individual site descriptions provided to find out which activities are available. Sites described are on public conservation land, except where noted:

<sup>1</sup> David Johnston Pukemokemoke Trust <sup>2</sup> Waipa District Council <sup>3</sup> South Waikato District Council <sup>4</sup> Includes private land <sup>5</sup> Waitomo District Council <sup>6</sup> Forest and Bird