

Maratoto and the Wentworth Valley

Introduction to Maratoto

The history of this area is rich and varied. Always important as a route across the Coromandel Peninsula, it has also been logged for kauri, mined for gold and farmed. One of the best known parts of the Maratoto is "The Wires" named for the telegraph line diverted through it during the Waikato Land Wars. The first Government line was erected in 1872 and some of the original totara posts can still be seen.

Logging history

In the 1800s Maratoto was extensively logged for kauri. Remains of two dams built to transport the logs out of the bush are still in the headwaters of the Tairua River and in the upper Te Hue Stream. Gumdiggers and farmers moved into the Wires area around 1916 and cleared much of the remaining forest. The remains of two mills, a mill worker's shanty, a portable steam engine and other machinery can still be seen but there is no marked track to them.

Goldmining

Gold was first discovered on a tributary of the Maratoto Stream in 1887 and successive companies developed a number of reefs with varied results. A 15-head stamper battery was built in the main Maratoto Valley in 1898. In the 1930s a treatment plant was installed on the old battery site but profits remained small. Despite this lack of success, an old adit was reopened in 1960 and mixed silver and base metal were mined until 1972.

Gold was also discovered in the Wentworth Valley in 1887 at the Glamorgan claim. However, only the initial return was profitable and by 1910, prospecting was abandoned. The Auckland claim was more successful with two reefs being worked from 1897. In 1900 a 10 stamper battery was built with another 10 stamps being added later. About 300 people lived in the valley at this time. There was a school, office and numerous houses. Mining activity ceased in 1908.

Warning

Today many of the old mine workings are partially collapsed and unsafe. Please keep to marked tracks and do not enter tunnels or shafts unless they are clearly marked for public access. Please do not damage or remove mining relics.

Off Road Vehicle Tracks

The Wires area was designated a special use area for off road vehicles in 1978. Individuals and clubs intending to use the 4WD tracks should phone 027 524 2132 to check whether the track is open.

Always keep to constructed vehicle tracks. Obey fire restrictions and ensure your vehicle exhaust doesn't spark.



Whangamata Track

(5.2 km)

The track begins at the gate at the end of Wires Road and follows the route of the old Whangamata Road up to the Wires Plateau. The gate at the start is sometimes locked because of bad weather or poor track condition. Entry to vehicles is prohibited at these times.



Loop Track

(5 km)

The track circles the north-eastern part of the Wires Plateau and crosses the Tairua River twice. It is negotiable both ways but a clockwise direction is recommended.



Waipaheke Track

(7 km)

Motor cycles only on this track. Always begin at the northern end (see map) to help prevent erosion. The track climbs over the hill, descends steeply into the Waipaheke Valley, then crosses out onto Maratoto Road. The exit crosses private land - please leave gates as you find them and avoid scaring livestock. In poor weather the track is very demanding even for experienced riders.



Off Road vehicle tracks

Mountain bikers may use any of the three off road vehicle tracks.



Whangamata Track

Horse riding is permitted on the Whangamata track but not on the Wires, Waipaheke or Loop Tracks. On reaching the Wires Plateau, horse and rider must return by the same track. Note: this is a multi-use track.

Take extreme care on multi-use tracks and respect the rights of other users.



Walking tracks from Maratoto

Maratoto to Golden Cross (4.3 km, 1 hr 45 min one way)

From the end of Maratoto Road, this track takes you through an old mining area, regenerating broadleaf/hardwood forest and reverting pasture land to the Golden Cross Road at Waikino. There are some interesting landforms in the area.

The Wires Track (2 hr 30 min to Wires Plateau)

The track is signposted off Wires Road 500 metres before the gate and car park. The paddock is private land - please use stiles, follow markers posts and avoid disturbing stock. Two beautiful waterfalls are found not far off the track on the Hamuti Stream. The Wires track joins the Whangamata off-road vehicle track at the Wires Plateau.

It is possible to return to the car park via the off-road vehicle track but be aware that vehicles may be using it. Other multi-use tracks include the Loop Track and Waipaheke Motorcycle track.

Walking times on vehicle tracks:

Whangamata track	2 hours one way
Loop track	2 hours return
Waipaheke track	3 hours one way

Maratoto/Wentworth Crossing (5 hr one way)

The Wires Track and the Whangamata off road vehicle track lead to the Wires Plateau. The off road track continues on to connect with the Wentworth Track some 2km above the falls. This section of track is recommended for experienced trampers only. Beyond the falls, there is a well-formed walking track down to Wentworth Valley Road. Transport needs to be arranged for end of track.

Walking tracks Wentworth Valley

The Wentworth Track (2 hr 30 min return)

The track follows an easy grade alongside the Wentworth River, with two bridged crossings, before climbing to a good view of the falls. From here, a steeper tramping track leads to a basin at the top of the falls.

Mines Walk (30 min to picnic area)

This walk starts at the concrete ford at the end of Wentworth Valley Road and passes through regenerating forest beside the river. There are two mine shafts visible from the track before it drops down to the stream opposite the picnic area. Carefully assess water levels before attempting to cross the stream.

Camping

The Wentworth campground is open all year. Bookings should be made over the summer holiday period by phoning 07 865 7032 but otherwise, campsites are allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. Also phone the Camp Manager in advance if you wish to bring your dog with you. The resident manager oversees camp facilities, enforces camp rules and collects fees. Camping is not permitted outside designated areas.

Fees:

Adults	\$9.20 per night
Child/youth (5-17 years)	\$2.00 per night
Infant (0-4 years)	Free

For more information contact:

Department of Conservation, Kuaeranga Visitor Centre
Box 343, Thames 3540

Tel +64 7 867 9080 , Fax +64 7 867 9095

Email: kuaerangavc@doc.govt.nz

Website: www.doc.govt.nz

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468
Report any safety hazards or
conservation emergencies
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