

Nudibranch.
Photo: Luca Davenport-Thomas,
iNaturalist



Kōroa/little penguin.
Photo: Shellie Evans



Blue cod. Photo: Darryl Torckler



Jewel anemone
Photo: John Turnbull,
iNaturalist



New Zealand eagle ray Photo: Glen Gitsham iNaturalist



Kapiti Marine Reserve

| Kapiti Coast



Further information

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Cover photo: Darryl Torckler

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**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai





What is a marine reserve?

Marine reserves are areas of the sea, seabed and foreshore where all natural features, including marine life, are legally protected. They provide a place for scientific research and for the recovery of marine life by reducing or eliminating the threats associated with human activities. The New Zealand Government is working towards establishing a network of marine protected areas, including marine reserves, around the country to help safeguard our marine species and ecosystems for the future.

The Guardians of Kapiti Marine Reserve



The Guardians of Kapiti Marine Reserve is a registered charitable trust whose purpose is to advance and promote the conservation and protection of the Kāpiti Marine Reserve and surrounding marine environment. The Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (DOC) acknowledges their unfaltering dedication to the preservation of this reserve.



Kekeno / New Zealand fur seal. Photo: Leon Berard

Why is Kapiti Marine Reserve special?

Kapiti Marine Reserve was established in 1992 to protect the nationally significant recreational, educational, ecological and scientific resources in this area, as well as some of the finest underwater scenery in the Wellington region. In 2022, the marine reserve celebrated its 30th anniversary – a significant milestone in its history.

Two major sea currents converge at Kapiti Marine Reserve – the cold, clear Southland Current meets the warm, turbid and saltier D’Urville Current. The wind and swells favour one current over the other at different times, creating a zone that supports a fascinating mix of marine plant and animal communities that would usually be found in colder or warmer waters, from seals and penguins through to subtropical fishes and sharks.

Kapiti Marine Reserve also connects Kapiti Island Nature Reserve and Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve, forming a very rare continuum of protected land, sea and estuary habitats.

Know before you go

 Kapiti Island and its surrounding waters are known for changeable weather – sea conditions can quickly become treacherous.

Before departing, make sure you:

- get an up-to-date marine forecast
- check the tides
- have a VHF radio
- use the local maritime chart (NZ4631)
- notify responsible persons of your intentions, including your destination and intended time of return.

VHF radio users should note that transmission is often difficult from the western side of Kapiti Island.

Care for Aotearoa



Protect nature

Keep your distance and don't feed wildlife. Follow any rules restricting dogs, fires, drones or vehicles.



Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by planning and preparing for your trip.



Keep New Zealand clean

Take all rubbish with you and use toilets where provided.

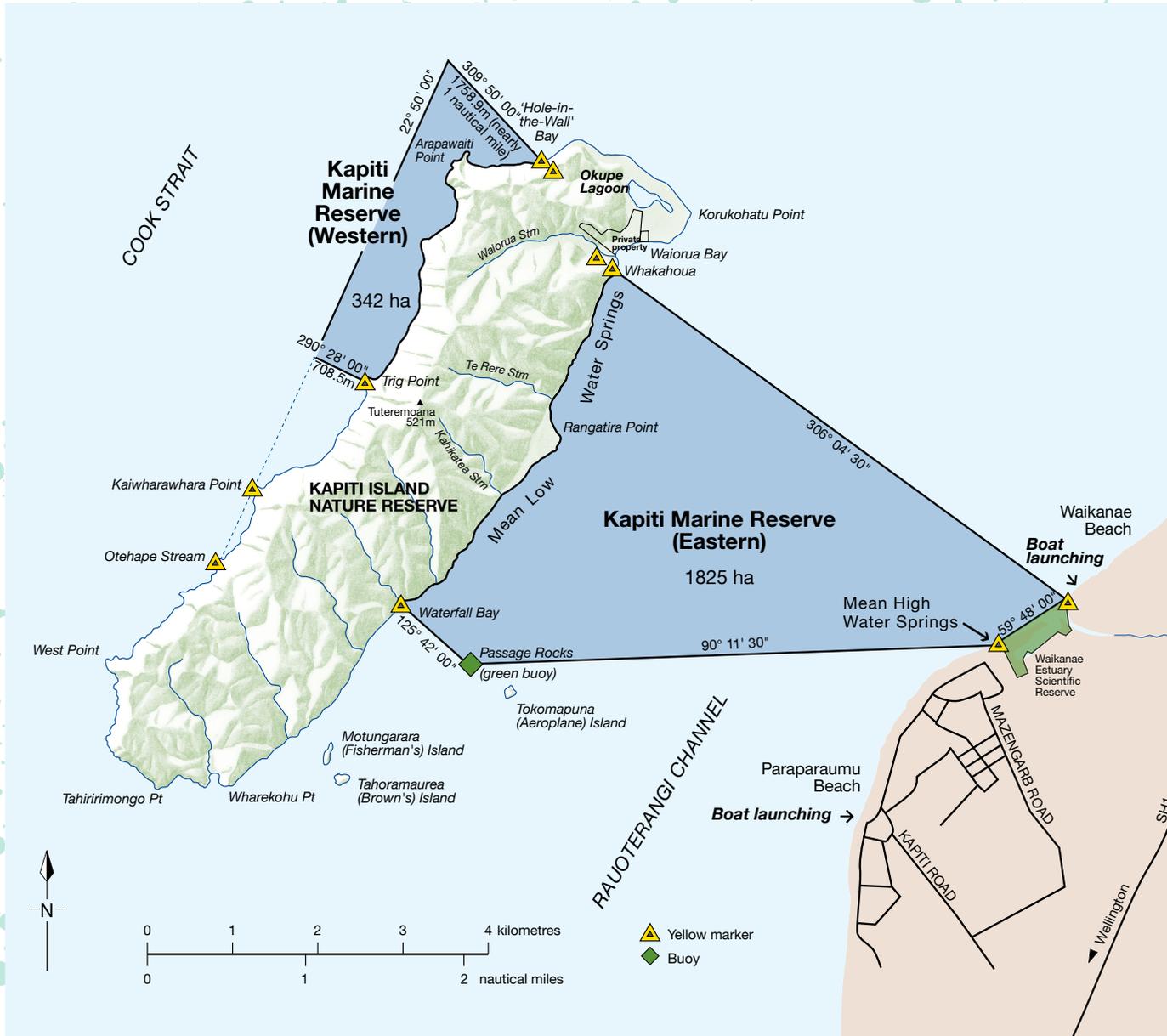


Show respect

Respect others, respect culture.



Map of reserve boundaries



Features of the reserve

Kapiti Marine Reserve covers an area of 2167 ha and is made up of two separate protected areas – the western and eastern reserves.

Western marine reserve

The western side of Kapiti Island is more exposed than the eastern side to the prevailing winds and swells, with strong currents in the water off the headlands. The reef extends to a depth of 25 m and is dotted with spectacular underwater rock formations, while the seabed supports a dazzling array of encrusting life, including carpets of jewel anemones and other invertebrates. The clear water supports a luxuriant seaweed cover, and kina are common and larger on this side of the island and fish more abundant and diverse.

One of the top dive spots in this area is the Hole-in-the-Wall, a remarkable underwater archway with stunning light and living walls.

Eastern marine reserve

The eastern side of Kapiti Island is more sheltered but still experiences strong currents offshore. The reef is narrower and shallower, with much of it extending to only 5-10 m, and the waters close to the island are dotted with narrow boulder reefs with patches of sand. Offshore and connecting with the mainland, the seafloor comprises silt, sand and gravel to depths of 80 m.

A particularly special feature in the eastern reserve are the beds of rhodoliths (free-living red seaweeds) that have calcium carbonate skeletons and form fascinating coral-like structures that provide important habitat for a variety of other plants and animals, such as juvenile fish. The eastern side of the island also has beds of horse mussels, which are not known to be present on the more exposed western side.

Access

Kapiti Marine Reserve is 30 km from Wellington City and is located between Paraparaumu and Waikanae beaches and Kapiti Island. The marine reserve's only point of contact with the mainland is 1 km of beach at the Waikanae River mouth, adjacent to Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve. The Marine Mate app can be used to assist in navigating the boundaries of the reserve.



Foot access to the reserve is from Waikanae Beach or Paraparaumu Beach, while the nearest boat launching sites are at the Waikanae and Kapiti boat clubs.

Permits and reservations

To visit Kapiti Island or snorkel from its shores, you need to travel to the island with one of the authorised boat services and ensure you have a valid day visit permit. For more information and to book, visit the DOC website (www.doc.govt.nz/kapitivisits) or contact us at the Kapiti Wellington Visitor Centre.

Things to remember

In all marine reserves, you can swim, snorkel, dive, sail, kayak, go boating and take photographs. The only major difference between a marine reserve and other waters is that the natural features are protected.

To help protect the marine life inside Kapiti Marine Reserve, remember the following rules.

- No fishing of any kind, from either a boat or the shore.
- No damage to or taking of natural things, including shellfish, seaweed and shells.
- No littering, polluting or discharging of toxic substances.
- No interference with marine life (eg feeding fish) as this disrupts their natural behaviour.

Penalties for failing to comply under the Marine Reserves Act 1971 include confiscation of equipment, vessels or vehicles, fines, and imprisonment.

How you can help

DOC is responsible for managing Kapiti Marine Reserve. You can help us by:

- calling the DOC HOTline if you see people conducting illegal activities in the reserve
- calling the Greater Wellington Regional Council's environmental and pollution hotline if you spot any pollution, oil spills or navigation hazards
- taking photographs of environmental incidents and illegal activities (try to capture the vessel or vehicle name and a natural feature that identifies the location - but remember to keep your distance and put your safety first)
- picking up any litter you find and disposing of it in bins.

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468
Report any safety hazards
or conservation emergencies
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111

**Greater Wellington Regional
Council Environment Hotline**

0800 496 734

Boat at Kapiti Marine Reserve. Photo: Leon Berard



Red perch by kelp. Photo: Darryl Torckler

