



Here is what Charles Heaphy, the New Zealand Company draughtsman, saw as he entered the harbour in 1839:

*On entering Port Nicholson one is struck by the grandeur of the view. The harbour resembles an island rather than an arm of the sea, and in beauty far surpasses that of our English lakes. As we worked up to anchorage, the noble expanse of water, surrounded by a country of the most picturesque character, formed a scene of indescribable beauty; and the valley of the Hutt River opened up to our view, apparently extending far inland, until bounded by a snowy range, we wondered that a place which seemed so much to invite settlement, had not before been colonised.*



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# Formation of Wellington Harbour

From the top of the island you will have a full view of the harbour. You are on the top of a mountain ridge that was formed 1.5 million years ago. Mokopuna and Makaro/Ward Island are also part of this ridge. When earth movement formed the harbour, water covered the ridge and created three islands. Early stories tell of two entrances to the harbour (one on each side of Miramar Island), dense rainforest in the Hutt Valley and a wetland in the Petone area. In 1855 a major earthquake lifted land higher above sea level. The cliffs and caves that you will see around the shore-line are signs that tell you this land was once under the sea. You can also see the old shore-line at the bottom of the cliffs. It is a narrow platform about 1.5 metres above sea level. Remnants of an earlier platform are above this.

Colonel Wakefield saw  
“...a fine expanse of water the whole of which is anchorage ground and where no inconvenience could arise to any vessel taking the usual precautions.”

He saw the island as  
“...well adapted for a fort which could command both the entrance and whole extent between the hills which enclose the port to the west.”

-  **Describe your view of the harbour and beyond to someone in your group.**  
(Include the Green Belt around the city, Horokiwi Quarry, the fault-line, the motorway, Seaview, etc)
-  **Think about the changes people have made and the impact that this has had on the environment.**
-  ***How is the mainland coast different to the island's coast?***
-  ***What impact do you think the road running all around Wellington's coast has had on the wildlife? Consider little blue penguins wanting to shelter and build nests.***

Photo: Birdseye view of Port Nicholson. Charles Heaphy 1839. Alexander Turnbull Library. No. C-029-006-b.

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