

VISITING CAPE RODNEY-OKAKARI POINT MARINE RESERVE (GOAT ISLAND)

NOTES FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS



Snorkellers at Goat Island. Photo: © Brian MacKie

Key information



Cape Rodney-Okakari Point, known as Goat Island, was New Zealand's first marine reserve. This marine reserve is a popular location for snorkelling and recreation in North Auckland. There are opportunities to see abundant biodiversity here, due to long-term protection.

From February to April, the beach at the marine reserve can be crowded. During Term 1, it is suggested that non-marine education activities such as kayaking, raft-building and beach sports be experienced at alternative large, less crowded beaches in the area, e.g. Te Kohuroa/Mathesons Bay or Omaha.

For more information and a map of this reserve, see: www.doc.govt.nz/goatland.

Tāwharanui Marine Reserve is also in north Auckland. For more information about what you can do in this reserve, see: www.doc.govt.nz/tawharanui-marine-reserve.



Visitor facilities and parking

Toilets, changing rooms and information displays are near the main car park. Drinking water and other refreshments are not available in the reserve. The Leigh township is close by and has accommodation and several shops for supplies.

Car parking is limited, especially during peak holiday periods.



- Public vehicle access is not permitted over the bridge on to Auckland University land or private land.
- There is a 5 min loading zone near the beach to drop off and pick up gear only. There is strictly no parking in this zone.
- Larger vehicles, including campervans and buses, should park in the lower car park. Avoid the sharp turn by accessing it from the main car park (see map on website).
- Goat Island Road is not suitable for very large buses.
- No overnight parking is permitted in any of the car parks.

Do not litter: place your rubbish in the bins provided in the toilet block.

See the Cape Rodney-Okakari Point Marine Reserve brochure for more information about car parking and facilities:  www.doc.govt.nz/goatisland.

Suggested self-guided activities for school groups



Biodiversity survey

The Marine Metre Squared Project (Mm2) is an easy quadrat survey for investigating what is living in your marine reserve. See  www.mm2.net.nz for resources. Rocky shore surveys or sandy shore surveys can be carried out approximately 2 hours either side of low tide. For more information, see  *Activity 8: Visiting Marine Reserves*.


Note: when conducting a Mm2 survey, it is important to keep disturbance of sand and animals to a minimum and put them back where you found them.

Litter survey

Conduct a litter survey on the beach to investigate human impacts on this marine reserve. You'll be cleaning it up as you go!

See page 9 of the DOC Habitat Heroes: Explore your local marine environment resource for instructions:  www.doc.govt.nz/habitat-heroes-marine-resource.pdf. Survey sheets and guidance for beach clean-ups and litter audits are available at  www.loveyourcoast.org.nz/learn (Love Your Coast/Sustainable Coastlines).

Short walks

- **Goat Island Walkway (approx. 2 hr return):**  www.doc.govt.nz/goat-island-walkway.
- **Pink Beach Walk (30 min one way):** At low tide it is possible to walk along the beaches and rocks, showing a variety of rock structures and habitats, towards Pakiri. Pink Beach was named because of the dominance of pink shell grit present.



Health and safety considerations

- The marine reserve is unsuitable for in-the-water activities during east or north-east winds of 20 knots or more, and east or north-east swells of more than a metre.
- Cellphone coverage can be inconsistent. In an emergency the operator may dispatch Leigh First Response. The nearest ambulance station is in Warkworth: almost 30 minutes away.
- Teachers should also consider general risk management around water and rock shelves. See also general health and safety considerations for schools in marine environments: 📍 *Activity 8: Visiting Marine Reserves*.

Please note: These notes are not a substitute for school safety planning.

Staff, students and the Board of Trustees of a school will need to consider other factors before conducting a visit outside the school and follow school procedures. Identifying and managing risks before the trip is essential, therefore a prior site visit is highly recommended.

Habitats and species in the reserve

There are accessible rocky shores exposed at low tide, and deeper reefs, underwater cliffs, canyons and sand flats at Cape Rodney-Okakari Point. The sandy shore provides a great place to rest, investigate or eat.

Snapper/tāmure and crayfish/lobster/kōura numbers are far greater in the protected waters of the reserve than anywhere on the surrounding coast. Other species of fish like butterfish, blue maomao, silver drummer, blue cod/pākirikiri, red moki/ngutere, and black bream/parore are often seen by snorkellers in the shallow water not far off the beach.

Education providers working here

Goat Island Marine Discovery Centre: 📍 www.goatlandmarine.co.nz.

This interactive, informative education centre is a 5-minute walk from the car park or beach. The discovery centre is part of the University of Auckland's Leigh Marine Laboratory. For school bookings, see: 📍 www.goatlandmarine.co.nz/groups-tours/#schoolgroups.

Snorkelling providers in the area


- **Experiencing Marine Reserves** is an organisation that specialises in safe snorkelling experiences for school groups in marine reserves and at other sites. They provide all the gear and expertise. For more information see: 📍 www.emr.org.nz, email: info@emr.org.nz and view 📍 www.facebook.com/emr.mtsct.
- **Saltwater Eco:** 📍 www.saltwatereco.co.nz.
- See also: 📍 www.leighbythesea.co.nz/things-to-do-in-leigh/experience-goat-island.



Other education experiences

Other education experiences


A glass-bottom boat operates off the beach in suitable weather. The trip includes a full commentary and identification of marine life seen. It visits the deeper reefs and caves around Te Hawere-a-Maki/Goat Island. Bookings are essential. See:

 www.glassbottomboat.co.nz.

- Learning Journeys can co-ordinate trips for years 7–13 students: see

 www.learningjourneys.co.nz/nz-schools/biodiversity.

- Kiwi guardians at Cape Rodney-Okakari Point: see

 www.doc.govt.nz/kg-cape-rodney

Accommodation

There are campgrounds at Te Hawere-a-Maki/Goat Island, Whangateau and Pakiri as well as a local marae that may be suitable for schools who want to stay near the reserve overnight.

PROTECT OUR MARINE RESERVES

They are special places that protect the species and habitats within them.

- No fishing of any kind
- Don't take or kill marine life
- Don't remove or disturb any marine life or materials
- Don't feed fish – it disturbs their natural behaviour
- Take care when anchoring to avoid damaging the sea floor
- Call **0800 DOC HOT** (0800 362 468) to report any illegal activity.

