

# VISITING LONG BAY-OKURA MARINE RESERVE

## NOTES FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS



Photo: Auckland Council

### Key information



This popular beach and marine reserve is in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park and on Auckland's North Shore. The reserve has a large, picturesque sandy beach, rocky reefs, estuarine mudflats and mangroves. The adjacent Long Bay Regional Park (managed by Auckland Council) has many walks, picnic areas, a playground, space for recreation and barbeque facilities.

For more information and a map of this reserve, see:  [www.doc.govt.nz/long-bay-okura-marine-reserve](http://www.doc.govt.nz/long-bay-okura-marine-reserve).

### Visitor facilities and parking

Several toilet blocks and changing rooms are available in the reserve. The beach and rock pools are an easy, relatively short walk from the car parks. There are information displays near the entrance and signs throughout the reserve. Drinking water is available from a number of taps and drinking fountains.

Other refreshments can be purchased at the nearby township of Torbay, which is a 5 minute drive from the reserve.

The area can be very busy during summer, especially from February to April, so booking a site in advance is essential to ensure you have enough space and shelter available for conducting activities with your students. For bookings, contact Auckland Council on (09) 301 0101. School bookings are free on weekdays (except public holidays).

The reserve has plenty of parking throughout, and buses regularly visit from the Auckland CBD. See Auckland Council website for information on parking and buses:  [regionalparks.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/longbay](http://regionalparks.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/longbay).



## 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](http://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.

Rocky and sandy shore surveys can be performed at each end of the beach where there are rock pools and suitable sandy shores.

### 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](http://www.doc.govt.nz/habitat-heroes-marine-resource). Survey sheets and guidance for beach clean ups and litter audits are available at  [www.loveyourcoast.org.nz/learn](http://www.loveyourcoast.org.nz/learn) (Love Your Coast/Sustainable Coastlines).

### Dune plant survey

Look at the dune plants and see if you can identify them. Be careful not to walk on dunes during your survey and respect any barriers. See page 10 of the DOC *Habitat Heroes: Explore your local marine environment* resource for instructions:  [www.doc.govt.nz/habitat-heroes-marine-resource](http://www.doc.govt.nz/habitat-heroes-marine-resource).

### Short walk

**Nature trail (30 min):** This easy walk goes through native bush from the Vaughan homestead down to the wetland. See:  [regionalparks.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/longbay/track/Nature%20Trail](http://regionalparks.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/longbay/track/Nature%20Trail)

## Health and safety considerations

- Check weather conditions and tides before your visit.
- Slips and erosion from cliffs at the north end of the beach can be a significant hazard. Please watch for signage and avoid such areas if recommended. Stay back from cliff faces.
- In easterly conditions the water can be choppy, making snorkelling more difficult.
- 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 at both ends of the beach which are exposed at low tide. When exploring the rocky shore, time your visit for the low tide, when the rock shelves are most accessible and rock pools are visible. In the intertidal zone you can find a variety of sea snails, sea stars and seaweeds. In the subtidal zone you may find kina, snapper and lots of kelp. If you dig in the sand at low tide, you may find some tuatua shellfish which make their home by burrowing down into the sand.

The estuary and mangroves are also easily accessible from the beach. Coastal walks meander alongside the stream. Here you can see a variety of shorebirds and wetland species, including pūkeko, herons and pied shags.

## Education providers working here

- Auckland Council's **Learning Through Experience** education team offer several facilitated programmes for school groups. Programmes include: Coastal Biodiversity Detectives, Healthy Waterways, Outdoor Challenge, and Sensational Senses.

These programmes are suitable for Year 0–8 students. For more information, visit the Auckland Council website:  [www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) and search for 'Learning Through Experience'. For school bookings, contact:  [longbay.schoolbookings@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:longbay.schoolbookings@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz).

- At the south end of the beach at the park's entrance is the **Sir Peter Blake Marine Education and Recreation Centre** (known as M.E.R.C):  [merc.org.nz](http://merc.org.nz). MERC offers a variety of facilitated outdoor education programmes, including land-based games (including archery, abseiling, orienteering, mountain biking) as well as water-based activities (including kayaking, paddle boarding, sailing and canoeing). Contact 09 473-0714 or [office@merc.org.nz](mailto:office@merc.org.nz) for bookings and school enquiries.

## Other education experiences

Long Bay Nature Kindergarten  [www.playandlearn.net.nz/long-bay-nature-kindergarten](http://www.playandlearn.net.nz/long-bay-nature-kindergarten).

### 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.

