

# VISITING PUNAKAIKI MARINE RESERVE

## NOTES FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS



Photo:

### Key information



Punakaiki Marine Reserve surrounds the Pancake Rocks and blowholes at Dolomite Point, on the west coast of the South Island. The marine reserve was established in 2013 and covers an area of more than 35 square kilometres, from Perpendicular Point to near Maher Swamp, and out to two nautical miles from shore.


Punakaiki is located on State Highway 6, about 40 minutes drive north of Greymouth and 50 minutes south of Westport. It is part of the Paparoa National Park. The park is located alongside the very scenic State Highway 6.


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

### Visitor facilities and parking

The Paparoa Visitor Centre (on Coast Rd, Punakaiki) has toilets, a picnic area, car parking and visitor information. Refreshments can be purchased at the Pancake Rocks Café. There is a craft centre and campground in the area. No drinking water is available at Paparoa National Park.

Fuel up at Westport or Greymouth; there is no petrol station at Punakaiki.

Intercity buses have a regular service to the area, see:  [www.intercity.co.nz/cheap-south-island-buses/bus-to-punakaiki](http://www.intercity.co.nz/cheap-south-island-buses/bus-to-punakaiki).

See DOC's Paparoa National Park brochure for more information on parking, toilets and other facilities:  [www.doc.govt.nz/paparoa-np-brochure](http://www.doc.govt.nz/paparoa-np-brochure).



## Suggested self-guided activities for school groups

### Biodiversity survey

Take part in a Marine Metre Squared (Mm2) rocky shore survey and/or sandy shore survey with students to investigate what is living in this marine reserve. Try a sandy shore survey at low tide north of the rocks beside Pororari Lagoon or south at Pakiroa Beach. At low tide you can survey the rocky shore at Tauranga Bay (1 hr north of Punakaiki).

For more information, see [www.mm2.net.nz](http://www.mm2.net.nz) and [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.

### Short walks

- **Pancake Rocks and Blowholes Walk (20 min):** This famous walk takes in the spectacular blowholes and pancake rocks. For more information, see: [www.doc.govt.nz/pancake-rocks-and-blowholes-walk](http://www.doc.govt.nz/pancake-rocks-and-blowholes-walk).
- **Truman Track (15 min):** Truman Track is a walk through unspoiled subtropical forest where podocarp and rātā trees tower above thickets of vines and nīkau palms. The track emerges on a spectacular coastline with cliffs, caverns, a blowhole and a waterfall which plummets straight onto a rock-strewn beach. A stairway provides access to the beach, which may be safely explored when the tide is out. The sandy beach at either side of the Pancake Rocks and Blowholes is accessible.
- More Punakaiki walks: [www.doc.govt.nz/punakaiki-area-walks/#truman](http://www.doc.govt.nz/punakaiki-area-walks/#truman).

### Kiwi Guardians

Kiwi Guardians in Paparoa National Park: [www.doc.govt.nz/paparoa-national-park](http://www.doc.govt.nz/paparoa-national-park).

## Health and safety considerations

- The weather on the West Coast can quickly change. Always take good wet weather gear and warm clothes, adequate food and water.
- Check the weather, tides and sea forecast before visiting and be aware of large waves when walking on the beach or rocky shore. Keep children well supervised when visiting.
- **NOTE: DO NOT SWIM** at this reserve. Swimming is dangerous here.
- Do not go off the tracks. This is limestone country and there can be a risk of unexpected holes in the ground.
- There is tidal vehicle access to some beaches (e.g. Pakiroa Beach) but be careful driving any vehicles onto the sand as they often get stuck.
- Teachers should also consider general risk management around water and cliffs. See general health and safety considerations: [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


The Pancake Rocks are 30 million year old limestone formations: the shells of ancient marine animals overlaid with soft mud and clay, raised by earthquakes and etched out by the sea.

There are also incredible rock formations visible along the Truman Track at lowest tide, at the sandy/pebbly Truman Beach.

There are also sandy beaches directly north of the Punakaiki main village, beside the Pororari Lagoon and at Pakiroa Beach (south of the Pancake Rocks). Access is tidal.

Offshore, beyond rocky reefs, the seabed is mostly a rippled surface of sand and mud that provides habitat for burrowing surf clams and worms, as well as fish like stargazers/moamoa, gurnard/pūwhaiau and sharks.

Westland petrels/tāiko breed in the hills above Barrytown Flats and are often seen in the reserve. Albatrosses/toroa, shags/kawau, terns/tara and gannets/tākapu also pass through. Blue penguins/kororā and Hector's dolphins/waiaua can be seen within the reserve.

For more information about little blue penguins and the West Coast Blue Penguin Trust, see:  [www.bluepenguin.org.nz/education](http://www.bluepenguin.org.nz/education).

### Other education experiences

Information and educational displays are available at the Paparoa National Park Visitor Centre, on Coast Road, Punakaiki.

#### 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.

