



E ngā manuhiri, tēnā koutou – To the visitors, welcome

Ōtātara Pā Historic Reserve is one of the largest and most ancient Māori pā sites in Hawke's Bay. It comprises 58 ha, and incorporates two pā sites: Ōtātara Pā (on the lower portion of the hill) and Hikurangi Pā, 500 m higher up the ridge. It is administered by the Department of Conservation in partnership with the local hapū, Ngāti Pārau (one of the hapū within the Ahuriri Hapū) as kaitiaki (guardians) of the reserve.

Chosen for the site's natural defensive qualities and the area's resources, Ōtātara Pā was once the greatest pā in the area. Today the reserve encompasses one of the most outstanding defensive and settlement complexes in New Zealand. It comprises an upper pā (Hikurangi), and a lower one (Ōtātara) that has been extensively damaged by quarrying but is now marked by palisades. It is significant for its size and for the many tūāpapa (terraces) still evident today. Some tūāpapa housed large pit complexes and gardens, while others had living areas.



Access

Ōtātara Pā Historic Reserve stands beside the Tūtaekuri River at the southern boundary of Taradale. You reach it from Springfield Road, just south of the Eastern Institute of Technology, between Napier and Hastings. The pā entrance is immediately on the right.

Cover: The waharoa (gateway) to the pā.

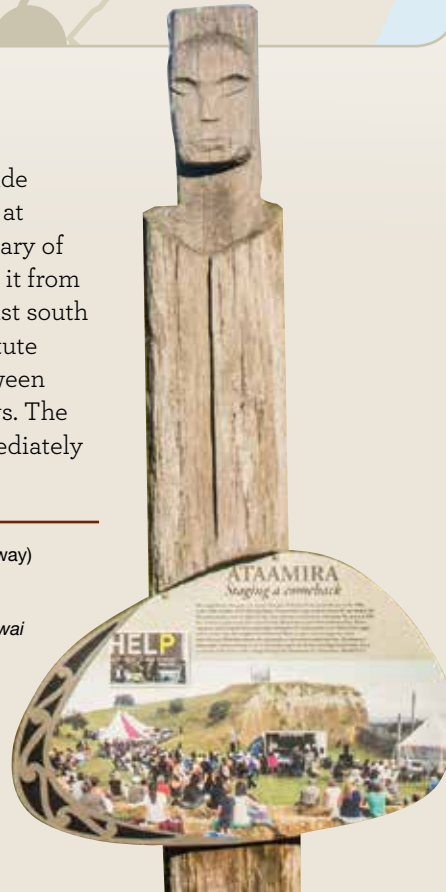
All photos: Richmond Palleson, courtesy of Hinewai Hawaikirangi

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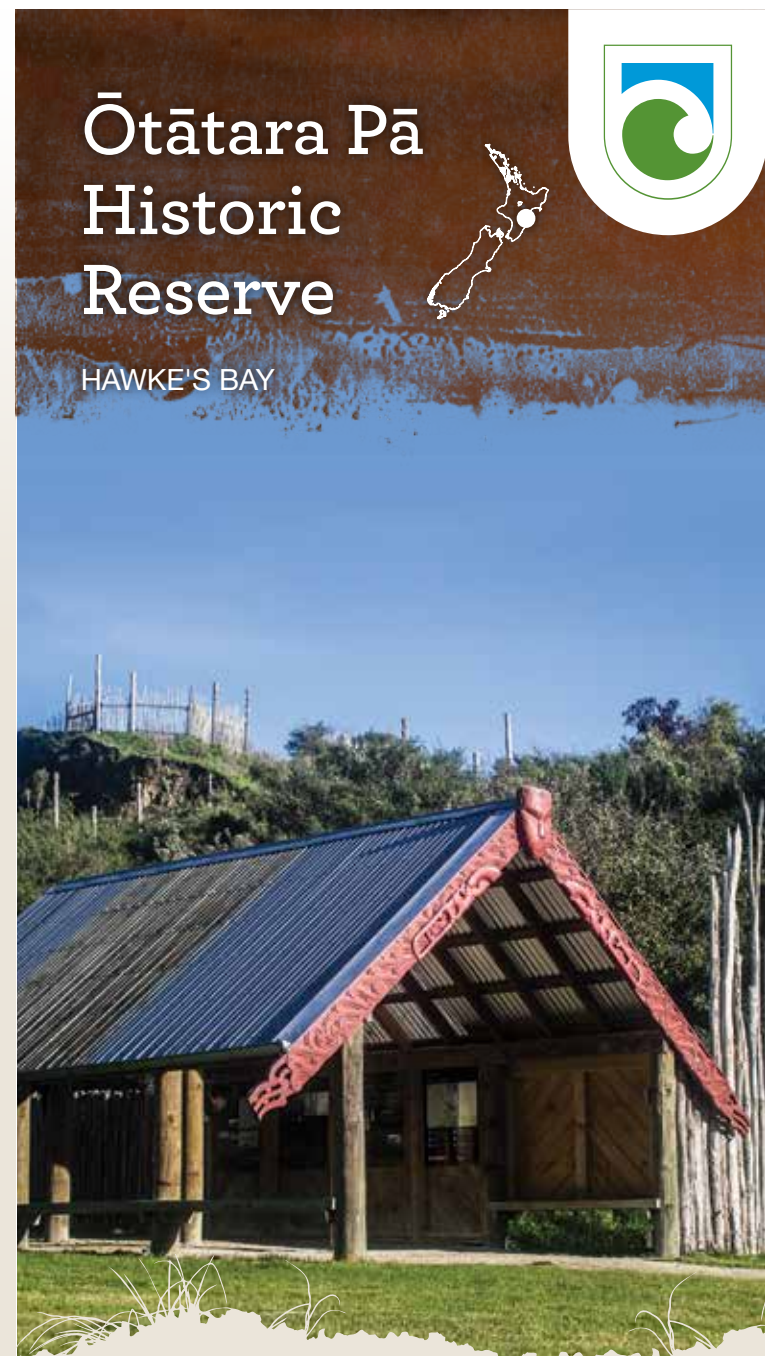
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Ōtātara Pā Historic Reserve

HAWKE'S BAY



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Walking track

Te Ara ā Makere – Maggie's Way
45 min, 1.6 km (one way)

The walking track over the reserve, Te Ara ā Makere – Maggie's Way, was named in honour of Margaret McCoward. The track starts at the Springfield Road car park where visitors pass under the carved waharoa (gateway) to enter the pā. As the track heads uphill, you will pass restoration work including palisades and pouwhenua, and archaeological features such as tūāpapa, whare and rua kūmara.









Enjoy the expansive views and reflect on why the site was chosen for its strategic position. Take time to read the story of Ōtātara Pā, depicted by the Turauwha Pou – part of the Te Ara o Nga Tipuna (Pathways of our Ancestors) project. Continue downhill to Churchill Drive; from here you can exit the reserve or return on the same track to the Springfield Road car park.

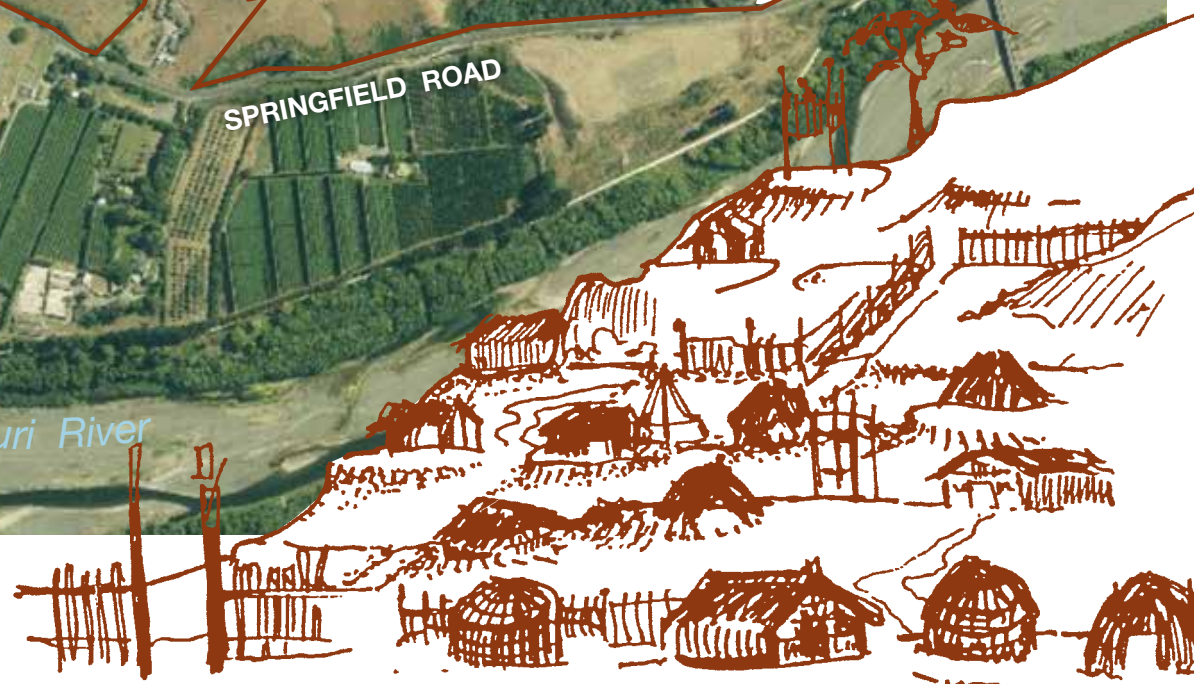
Please respect these sacred sites

Sites of battles, deaths or burials are considered wāhi tapu (sacred) by Māori. Feel free to wander and look but please treat the pā areas with respect. All archaeological and physical features of the pā are protected by law.

Respect our cultural heritage: do not consume food on the pā, and keep to the track. Above all, remember "Toitū te whenua" – leave the land undisturbed.

Take care visiting Ōtātara and Hikurangi pā

- Domestic animals, including dogs and horses, are not allowed.  
- Leave bicycles and motor vehicles (including motorbikes) at home.   
- There is no camping at the reserve. Fires are forbidden.  
- No litter.
- No firearms! 



An ancient traditional history

Ko Ōtātara me Hikurangi ngā maunga – mountain

Ko Tūtaekuri te awa – river

Ko Ngāti Pārau te hapū – people

Ko Ngāti Kahungunu te iwi – tribe

Ōtātara and Hikurangi pā sites were occupied early in human settlement. The many overlapping versions of Ōtātara Pā's traditional history reveal the web of relations and perspectives of the groups associated with Ōtātara, and its connection and importance to the peoples of the wider Heretaunga region.

A series of tribal groups (iwi) once occupied these sites: Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Whatumāmoa, Rangitāne, and (most recently) Ngāti Kahungunu. All have distinct perspectives on events. Elders say that a chief named Koaupari built the original Ōtātara Pā. Another early chief was Turauwha, who had high rank from his mother, who was Whatumāmoa, and his father who was Ngāti Awa.

Early inhabitants lived in peace. A key moment in the pā's history occurred with the arrival of Taraia, a legendary chief of the Ngāti Kahungunu iwi. Driven from his lands near Turanga (Gisborne), Taraia fought his way down the coast. At last, he arrived to attack the food-rich Heretaunga district, and with it the Kahungunu people, led by Turauwha at Ōtātara Pā.

There are competing tales of what happened next: one account relates that Taraia fiercely attacked both Hikurangi (the upper pā) and Ōtātara Pā, but with little success as the people of both pā rushed to help each other. Taraia eventually overcame Hikurangi with a cunning ambush, but Ōtātara held firm thanks to valiant defence and the huge trench dug between the two pā by the defenders. Taraia withdrew to Wairoa, defeated.

Peace returned – but not for long. Taraia returned a second time with canoe-loads of women and children. Turauwha and his people, seeing the approaching force and fearing the worst, fled to Puketitiri, northwest of Napier.

Taraia had prevailed. The ancient proverb “The land is Turauwha's, but the mana is Taraia's” explains the dual descent of the Heretaunga people and the complexities of its political and social relations.



A sacred place

For the descendants of Chief Turauwha and the people who lived at Ōtātara and Hikurangi, the pā is a special place – both spiritually and as a tangible reminder of its historical significance. The pou (poles) were erected in memorial to the ancestors of Ōtātara and Hikurangi. Descendants of Taraia and Turauwha, the Ngāti Pārau, live today at Waiohiki Marae, which sits across the Tūtaekuri River in the shadow of Ōtātara.

The waharoa (gateway) to the pā and the Turauwha Pou were carved by Ngāti Pārau tohunga whakairo (master carver) Hugh Tareha. Local artist, Roberta Hawikirangi, also of Ngāti Pārau, depicted the history of Ōtātara and Hikurangi on the pou.

To learn more, see the *Assessment of Heritage Significance: Otatara Pa Historic Reserve*, at www.doc.govt.nz/otatara-pa-assessment/.

The archaeologists' view

Ōtātara and Hikurangi are invaluable sites for archaeologists. The many remaining tūāpapa, whare (dwelling) sites and the metre-deep rectangular rua kūmara (kūmara pits) tell of the former large-scale habitation.

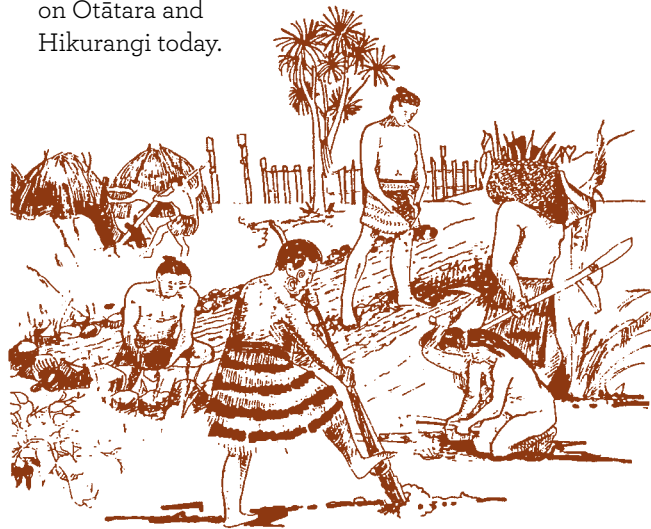
Visitors to the high grounds of the pā will understand its dominance over the district thanks to the panoramic views of the coastline and the Heretaunga Plains. There were three ditches at Ōtātara and Hikurangi (dug with hand-crafted tools), only two of which remain today. The rest of the pā was also strongly fortified with palisading.

Whare sites

These are flat areas of ridges, knolls and spurs that form the remains of villages that, in Ōtātara and Hikurangi's cases, were close to gardens and the lagoon. People at Ōtātara and Hikurangi probably moved between the two pā according to the seasons, with shelter, warmth and shade in mind.

Māra (gardening)

Kūmara gardening was an important, labour-intensive activity. Crops were planted in spring on sheltered slopes and flat areas often modified for the purpose. The kūmara were dug and stored within roofed, underground rua kūmara in flax kete (baskets). The pits were generally located on dry ridges or spurs. Many are still evident on Ōtātara and Hikurangi today.



Recent events

Abundant natural resources

The surrounding flats were once part of the inner harbour, Te Whanganui-ā-Orotu, a huge tidal lagoon rich in kaimoana such as ngohi (fish), tuna (eels) and mātaitai (shellfish). Flax and raupō were nearby for weaving, water came from matatiki (springs). The Tūtaekuri River provided an additional source of food and an important route to both the sea and the fertile hills and flats of the interior, which were ideal for growing kūmara and fernroot.

A changing landscape

Over the centuries, natural erosion gradually filled in the lagoon with sediment. The devastating 1931 earthquake uplifted over 3,000 ha of the lagoon by 1.5 m, significantly altering its shape and structure. Half the lagoon bed was exposed; most of the rest was left as shallow patches of brackish water that have since been drained and used for agriculture and settlement.

During the earthquake, part of Ōtātara Pā slumped down to the Tūtaekuri River, revealing 'red metal' suitable for roading. Large-scale quarrying (possibly started in the 1920s) intensified after 1931 as the district was rebuilt, destroying much of Ōtātara Pā – and with it an important spiritual and archaeological site.

Ōtātara and Hikurangi today

Despite all these ravages, the features of the pā and the scale of the complex are still very evident today. To protect the pā's historic values and prevent further damage, the Crown (assisted by Napier City Council and Hawke's Bay County Council) purchased the land in 1972. In 1973, the land was gazetted as a historic reserve.

In November 2016, the Deed of Settlement between the Crown and Ahuriri Hapū was signed. With this settlement, the Crown acknowledged Ahuriri Hapū's traditional, historical and spiritual association with the Ōtātara Pā Historic Reserve. The local hapū, Ngāti Pārau are acknowledged as holding ahi kā (continuous ancestral occupation) over the reserve site.

1965

1865