

Lake Waikaremoana Walks



TE UREWERA NATIONAL PARK



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai







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Photo: C Rudge.
 Photo: J Haxton.

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Introduction

The Lake Waikaremoana area of Te Urewera National Park is a marvellous destination for walkers. Besides the famous Lake Waikaremoana Great Walk there are a multitude of interesting short and day walks. Clean sparkling lakes, dramatic rock-bluffs, magnificent forest and profuse birdlife are all highlights.



An aerial view of Lake Waikaremoana.

Photo: C Ward.

Te Urewera National Park is managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC), in association with local Maori. DOC encourages visitors to enjoy the park in a manner which ensures that natural and historic features are protected.

In this booklet, times given for walks are roughly average, and grades given are estimates – do not take either too literally.

The lake is almost 600m above sea level, with a cooler, wetter and more changeable climate than lower altitudes. Warm clothes, raincoat, food and drink should be carried on all but the shortest walks. Add hat and gloves if climbing to higher altitudes. Tramping boots are recommended for long walks and after rain, but are not needed for short walks in dry conditions. Drinking water should be boiled or treated.

Follow the Environmental Care Code to make your contribution to the protection of this unspoilt national park.



North Island robin.
Photo: R Powlesland.

Walking standards



Easy walking path



Moderate walking track



Hard walking track

Environmental Care Code



Protect plants and animals



Remove rubbish



Bury toilet waste



Keep streams and lakes clean



Take care with fires



Camp carefully



Keep to the track



Consider others



Respect our cultural heritage



Enjoy your visit

Toitu te whenua (leave the land undisturbed)

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468

**Report any safety hazards or
conservation emergencies**

For fire and search and rescue call 111

Walks near the Aniwaniwa Visitor Centre

The Aniwaniwa Visitor Centre is also a museum. The centre has been registered as a collector of artefacts to allow it to keep taonga (artefacts), and to ensure that both Maori and European artefacts from Te Urewera National Park can remain within the park.

The dramatic landscape of Te Urewera has attracted people to it for centuries. Settlers and visitors have left a legacy of artefacts, photos and paintings which give clues to following generations of how people have lived in the area over the years. Taonga held at Aniwaniwa have been collected, donated or lent to the museum.

Lake Waikareiti Track

1 hour, one way



The track begins 200m from the visitor centre on the road to Rotorua. A well-graded track rises 300m in altitude to the day shelter at Lake Waikareiti. The forest is predominantly red and silver beech with mighty rimu trees emerging above the canopy.

You may hear two of NZ's increasingly endangered parrots: the screech of the kaka (the forest relative of the South Island alpine kea) and the chatty ki-ki-ki of the yellow-crowned parakeet (kakariki). Listen too for smaller but equally remarkable forest birds: the rifleman (which weights a mere 6 grams and measures 80mm in length), the tomtit (which can spot an insect as far away as 12m) and the inquisitive North Island robin.

Lake Waikareiti was formed by a massive landslide which took place about 18,000 years ago. A thick slab of country 10km wide slid off high ridges in the north-west, depositing uneven debris over a wide area. Lake Waikareiti and several lakelets formed in hollows in the debris.



The lake is free of pollution and all introduced aquatic plants, and has amazing water clarity.

Lake Waikareiti
Photo: C Rudge.



The islands in the lake are possum-free allowing rare red and yellow-flowered mistletoes to flourish. Rahui Island features an unusual "lake-on-an-island-in-a-lake".

There is a landing stage and short track to the small lake (Tamaiti) about one third of the way along the north-western side of Rahui Island. One way of enjoying the lake and visiting these features is to rent a dinghy - arrange this at the visitor centre.

Beyond the day shelter a tramping track runs parallel to the lakeshore to Sandy Bay Hut at the northern end of the lake (3 hours from the day shelter). The hut (bookings required) lies idyllically on the shores of a shallow bay which features brilliant white sand.

Ruapani Circuit

6 hours round trip (described anti-clockwise)



About half an hour beyond the Waikareiti day shelter, a left fork takes you onto the Ruapani Circuit Track, which passes 7 wetlands to exit onto the Waikareiti Track near the main road. The forest is consistently beautiful, especially the profusion of neinei (pineapple scrub, *Dracopyllum latifolium*). Interesting plants grow around some of the lakelets, e.g. the insectivorous sundew, and NZ's tallest species of tree, the kahikatea.

Hinerau Walk

30 minutes round-trip (described anti-clockwise)



The Hinerau Walk begins and ends near the visitor centre, and is an easy stroll suitable for all. The highlight is the three waterfalls, collectively known as the Aniwaniwa Falls. Aniwaniwa is translated as “rainbow”. The first fall is the Bridal Veil, a 15 metre drop on one branch of the Aniwaniwa Stream. The Momahaki Fall is on the other side of an “island” in the middle of the river. This fall, together with the lower one (11 metres) form a spectacular sight from the next viewpoint down.



Aniwaniwa Falls.

Photo: C Rudge.

Hinerau was a Tuhoe woman of high rank famed for her beauty, who once lived at the foot of the Huairau Range. One day, while gathering food in the forest, she was trapped between a chasm and a cliff by a violent earthquake. In an attempt to get help she tied an ornament to a flax leaf and cast it into the Aniwaniwa River. The flax leaf was caught by a magical “rakau tipua” (spirit log) which carried it off. Hinerau gave herself up to despair, thinking that she would never be rescued. In her grief and fear she began to cry. Very soon these tears became a rivulet and then a torrent, cascading over the rocks of the nearby chasm, forming a beautiful waterfall.

Luckily for Hinerau, the rakau tipua carried her flax leaf message to Te Toru, a chief of Ruapani, who was walking along the shore of Lake Waikaremoana. Te Toru rescued Hinerau from her prison and was so smitten by her beauty that they were married.

The lower part of the Aniwaniwa Falls commemorates this event and is called “Te Tangi-o-Hinerau” (the tears of Hinerau).

Beyond the waterfalls there is a grassy clearing above the track, thought to relate to early Maori occupation. It gives a good view across the valley to a slope mantled with typical southern Urewera forest. At least three distinct forest layers can be made out. The Hinerau Track leads through a forest dominated by silver and red beech trees, but there is a great diversity of plants. Look out for the broad-leaved cabbage tree or toi: it looks tropical but favours the Urewera’s cool high-altitude habitat. The forest has been modified here - fire is thought to have swept through about 1915.

In the spring the sparrow-sized shining cuckoo migrates to New Zealand from tropical islands where it has wintered. The 6,000 kilometre journey, sometimes via Australia, is considered to be one of the most remarkable migrations by any landbird. Its thin call (a rapidly repeated “coo-ee”) contrasts with the harsh piercing cry of the long-tailed cuckoo, which arrives in October too. You may hear both in this area. Continue along the track, past a view over the lake, to the visitor centre.

Aniwaniwa Falls Track

20 minutes return



On the other side of the river from the Hinerau Track, the Aniwaniwa Falls Track gives a closer view of the falls. It leads down to a tranquil stretch of river below the bottom falls. Introduced black swans and mallards share habitat with native scaup and pied shags.

Papakorito Falls

2 minutes walk from the carpark



To complete your visit to the suite of waterfalls drive or walk 2 km up the Aniwaniwa Road (opposite the Visitor Centre) to Papakorito Falls. Although the forest has previously been burnt near here, the 20m fall is spectacular.



Papakorito Falls.
Photo: A
Lincoln.

Aniwaniwa Valley Track

6 hours return to the Ward's Hut site



From Papakorito Falls you can follow an old road up the Aniwaniwa Valley. The track follows the line of the former coach road to Gisborne, used before the present Waikaremoana/Wairoa road was constructed.

The valley floor is very broad and swampy - wet feet are usually unavoidable. Not far beyond the falls there is a magnificent grove of kahikatea (white pine) trees, thick with honey-eating birds (tui, bellbird, kereru) when fruiting. The thin whistle of the threatened blue duck (whio) may sometimes be heard on the nearby stream. The whio's preferred habitat is unmodified fast-flowing mountain streams.



Rata vine growing on kahikatea.
Photo: T Lilleby.

Beyond the kahikatea the vegetation becomes more open. Old fences and introduced plants bear witness to attempts to farm the land after the forest was logged and cleared. Many of the swampy sites once carried kahikatea, cut early in the 20th century for boat building and butter boxes.

Beyond the Ward's Hut site, (the hut was destroyed in 1997) the track continues as a lightly marked route through primary forest, eventually emerging into farmland in the Ruakituri River catchment (access permission required).



Bellbird.
Photo: D Baigent.

Walks near the Waikaremoana Motor Camp

Black Beech Walk

30 minutes one way



This pleasant walk links the Waikaremoana Motor Camp and the visitor centre. It follows the line of the old road, which after Lake Waikaremoana was lowered 5 metres in 1946, was bypassed by the new easier road built on the former lake beach.

There is a spectacular view over the Home Bay (Whanganuioparua) area of Lake Waikaremoana to the motor camp and beyond to Panekire Bluff. A few specimens of black beech, one of NZ's four species of beech, grow beside the track.



Panekire Bluff
at sunset.

Hinau Walk

20 minutes one way



A short walk from the back of the Waikaremoana Motor Camp up to Waitiri Point offers good views of the lake. Waitiri Point was once the site of the Lake House Hotel, for years the only accommodation close to the lake.

It opened in 1900 and became the official Government Tourist Hotel in 1909. In 1918-19 it closed briefly during an influenza epidemic. But by 1930 the Wairoa-Rotorua Road had opened and the hotel had launched its own boat, the "Ruapani". Further improvements were made and in 1956 the Tourist Hotel Corporation took responsibility. Because of financial difficulties the hotel was closed in 1972, and demolished 5 years later.

Directly across the road from Waitiri Point the Ngamoko Track begins.

Ngamoko Track (to the Ngamoko Range summit)

2.5 hours one way



2.4km along the road from the visitor centre towards Wairoa a sign indicates Whaitiri Point. Opposite this the Ngamoko Track climbs, steeply at times, through dense forest. At lower altitudes the variety of forest trees is superb: light green tawa, red and silver beech trees, tall rimu with draping golden green leaves, and the mighty northern rata.

Higher up, above a row of sandstone bluffs, cooler temperatures and strong winds means the forest is dominated by the hardy silver beech. At the summit itself (1099m) gaps in the vegetation give glorious views of the length of Lake Waikaremoana in one direction, and green farmland ridges stretching away towards Gisborne and Wairoa in the other.



Northern rata and tree ferns.
Photo; B D Lloyd.

Whaitiri Point to Lake Kaitawa via Ngamoko Track

5 hours one way



This is an extension of the tramp above.

Near Ngamoko summit a turn off to the right indicates the start of a long ridge which descends gradually through forest to Lake Kaitawa. There are good views in places. Transport will be required from Kaitawa.

Tawa Walk

30 minutes round trip (described clockwise)



Follow the Ngamoko Track from Whaitiri Point for a short distance, then turn left onto the Tawa circuit. One highlight is the delicate willow-like yellow green foliage of the tawa tree.

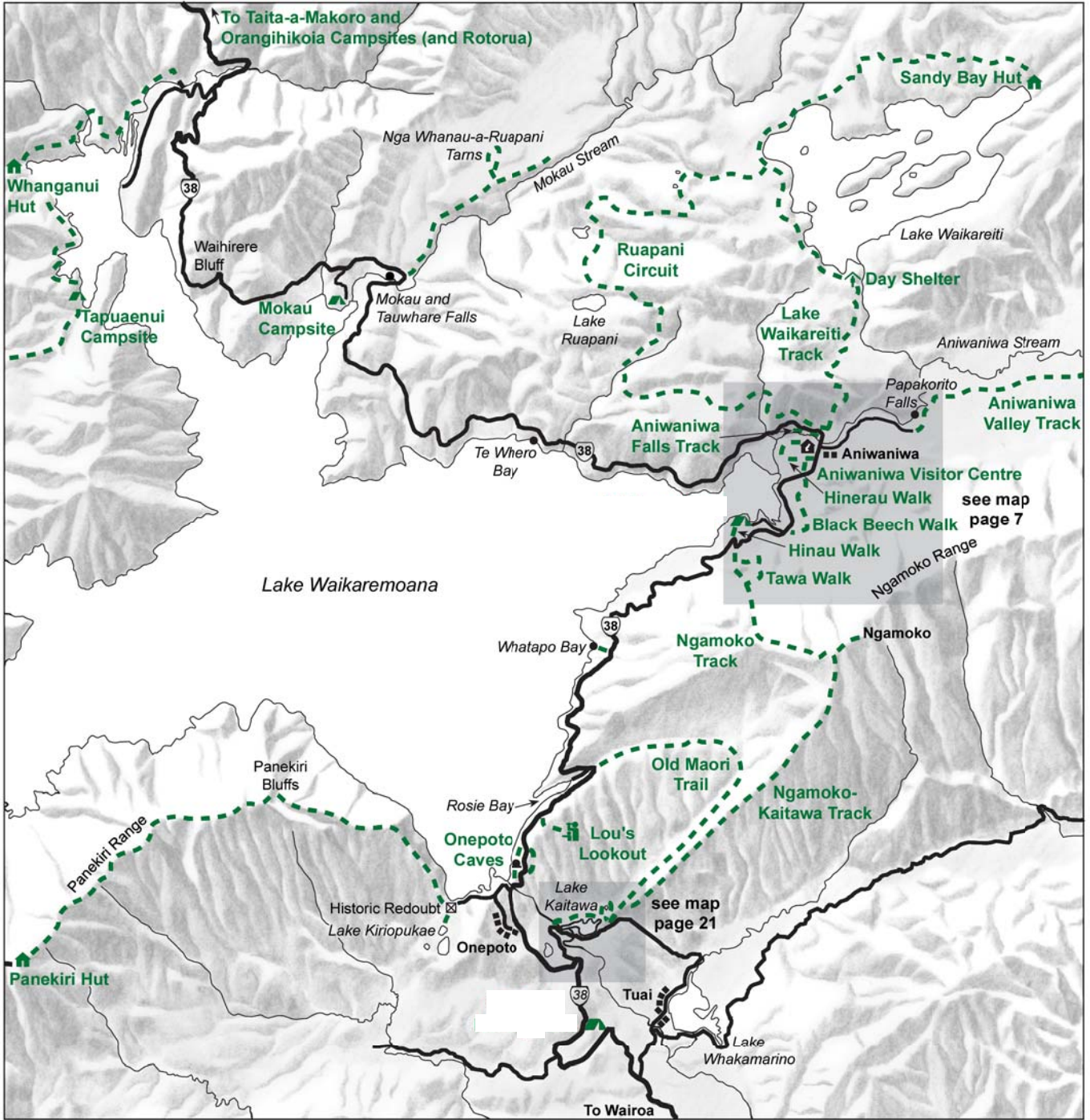
Another spectacular sight is the number of northern rata of various ages growing on their host trees. The northern rata begins life as an epiphyte perched high in the forks of another tree, usually a mature rimu. Its roots descend the host's trunk to reach the secure water and nutrient supply in the soil. As the rata grows its roots/ stems thicken and coalesce, and the host tree reaches old age, dies and decays. The rata becomes free-standing and often grows to a massive size. The rata's legendary toughness is reflected in its scientific name, "Metrosideros" meaning iron-hearted.

The destructive introduced possum shows a preference for rata flowers and leaves over virtually every other plant. Intensive browsing on the new season's leaves can kill a tree after just a few seasons.

Follow the Tawa Walk round until it rejoins the Ngamoko Track. Turn right to head back to the road. A short detour along the Ngamoko Track to the left takes you to one of the biggest rata trees in the country. It is around 1,000 years since it began life as a germinating seed high in the forks of a tree that itself was probably 400-500 years old.



Rata tree.



see map page 7

see map page 21

Walks from the road to Wairoa

Whatapo Bay

10 minutes return



About 5.6km from the visitor centre towards Wairoa a walk leads to a safe shallow sandy bay, suitable for swimming and picnicking, and featuring wide views.

In 1946 the lake was lowered five metres to enhance hydro-electric generation at the Kaitawa, Tuai and Piripaua Power Stations. The former lakeshore benches and beaches exposed by the lowering have in places been slow to regenerate to forest.

Rosie Bay

Rosie Bay is about 8km from the visitor centre and has a small, pleasant camping area located on the lakeside.

Old Maori Trail

2 hours one way



Starting at Rosie Bay, the track follows what was a traditional Maori route to Lake Kaitawa. It follows a valley which arcs around the trailing edge of the landslide block which slid from Ngamoko (see Lou's Lookout description). It features grassy clearings and some beautifully formed totara and matai trees. After passing through dense bush the track descends gradually to Lake Kaitawa.

Onepoto Caves

2 hours return including exploration time



The caves were well known to the Maori people of the lake. Oral history tells of Tuwai, a warrior chief of Ngati Ruapani, who slew five men who tried to overcome him as he slept in one of the caves.

Another story tells of the time that Tuwai and some of his people took refuge from a taua (war party) in one of the caves named Te Ana-o-Tawa. Tuwai, placing himself at the narrow entrance to a cave, disposed of the enemy one by one as they tried to enter.

The caves were formed by the same upheaval that

created Lake Waikaremoana some 2,200 years ago. The Waikaretaheke River used to flow through a deep, narrow gorge between the Panekire and Ngamoko Ranges.

It was dammed when the Ngamoko side of the gorge collapsed, probably triggered by an earthquake. The landslide blocked the river with debris over 200m thick, spilling down the valley for 4km. Shortly afterwards a second landslide of similar size occurred when the end of the Ngamoko Range slid down to ram into the earlier debris and settle in an almost intact block on top of it.

The Onepoto Caves you see today were formed in this "intact block" of strong, layered sandstone as it fractured and bent under the stresses of sliding and the subsequent impact. In many places you can see the "jigsaw" effect of interlocking rock shapes with caves and tunnels forming narrow slots between them.

The caves range from small cavities and rock overhangs under loose boulders that broke free from the sliding block, to deep recesses and tunnels up to 50m long, some with multiple entrances.

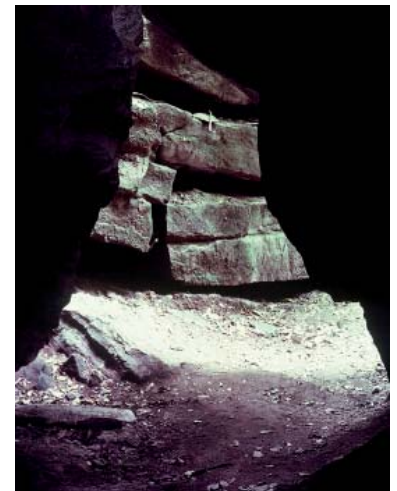
Cave weta are found in the Onepoto Caves. These harmless insects gather in the caves during the day and venture out at night to feed on plants.

From the lake view carpark blue markers indicate the main track through the area. From the spillway carpark (by the former lake outlet) orange markers show the main track.

It is essential to take a torch if you intend to explore the caves as they have little natural light, and some contain hazards such as deep holes and slippery floors. Children should be closely supervised.

An alternative route between carparks is signposted on the eastern side of the road.

Rock formations, Onepoto Caves.
Photo: C Rudge.



Lou's Lookout

45 minutes return



About 9km from the visitor centre towards Wairoa this track begins on the uphill side of the road. It rises through rock bluffs and huge boulders in the forest to a platform which gives a spectacular view of Lake Waikaremoana and Panekire Bluff. The reason for the lake's name, "sea of dashing waters" is sometimes apparent from up here when strong winds whip up the lake's surface.

Lou's Lookout and the track up to it lie on a massive landslide from the end of Ngamoko (the peak to the east of the lookout) 2,200 years ago.

Lou's Track is named after the late Lou Dolman, a long-serving Tuai policeman who was instrumental in constructing the track in the 1960's.



The view from Lou's Lookout.

Photo: A Lincoln.

Armed Constabulary Redoubt, Lake Kiriopukae

45 minutes return



The Onepoto Road, 10.3km south-east of the visitor centre, leads to the start of the Lake Waikaremoana Great Walk.

Ten minutes along the track is the site of a pa visited by William Colenso in 1841. Here on the urupa (burial ground) the former Armed Constabulary built a redoubt initially seeking to capture or destroy support for the powerful Maori leader Te Kooti.

In 1869, work began on construction of a wooden

redoubt and of two wooden boats to provide transport across the lake. A whale boat from the "St Kilda" and a dinghy were dragged up from Wairoa to provide additional transport across the lake. A change of government in June 1869 resulted in a change in policy and the military forces were withdrawn from Waikaremoana.

The two newly built boats were filled with stones and sunk in the lake, and the other two were buried. One of the sunken boats was salvaged by the Mahia Dive Club in the 1960's. Oars from the boat are exhibited in the visitor centre.



Sunken boat oars.

Photo: A Lincoln.

In 1871 a permanent defence post was established at Onepoto which was manned until the Armed Constabulary was disbanded in 1887.

Although the war against Te Kooti finished in 1872, additional buildings were erected in 1874 including a block house, barrack room, orderly room, sergeants quarters, forage store, library, cook house store, canteen, gymnasium and officers quarters.

The track passes to the right of a fenced rock overhang where the soldiers scratched their names while stationed here. A little further on, the grassed area past the remains of the redoubt's stone walls was once a "nicely levelled parade ground".

At the far end of the old parade ground a left fork takes you down to Lake Kiriopukae. This is an area of low turf and wetland vegetation with two small picturesque lakes, but after wet periods the whole area may fill to form a single lake. Look out for the small cemetery on the right just before the first lake. Members of the Armed Constabulary and early farming families are buried here.

In spring the bush around Lake Kiriopukae is alive with birds - tui, kereru and bellbirds. The lake itself is home to a number of waterbirds e.g. white-faced heron, paradise shelduck, mallard duck and the pied stilt.

Panekire Bluffs

2 hours to 1 day return



From the Redoubt Site the track rises steadily up Panekire Bluff to the first trig (1 hour, one way). This is a moderate walk with magnificent views of the lake and mountains. The track continues less steeply along the ridge with various excellent viewpoints along the way, the grandest being Bald Knob at 1155m (3 hours one way).

Take care when walking near the edge of the cliff.

Bald Knob is a few minutes off the main track and is not signposted, but is the obvious open area that has been burnt in the past. Two hours further on is Panekire Hut (bookings required for overnight use).



Amongst the trees on Panekire Range.

Photo: M Lee.

The forest on the mid-slopes of the Panekire Range is dominated by red beech and the forest floor is often a dry carpet of leaf litter. At higher altitude it merges into silver beech forest, rainfall and moist cloudy weather are more frequent and the trees and forest floor are clothed in many mosses and ferns. The ridge top forest of irregular trees takes on a mysterious “goblin-like” appearance in misty weather.

Please carry sufficient water on this trip as there is none available.



Panekire rocks.
Photo: M Lee.

Lake Kaitawa, Green Lake, Fairy Springs

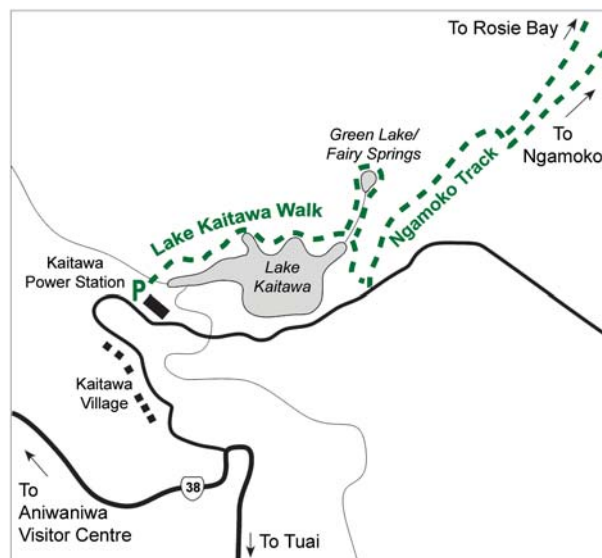
1 hour (described clockwise)



About 12km from the visitor centre towards Wairoa a signpost indicates the turn-off on the left to Kaitawa. Drive down the sealed road to the Kaitawa Power Station. A track on the left of the powerhouse crosses a footbridge over a large stream, the upper part of the Waikaretaheke River, which is diverted here by canal into Lake Kaitawa.

Lake Kaitawa is an artificial lake formed in the 1920's as part of the system delivering water to the Tuai hydro electric power station. The track leads around the lake past some majestic rimu trees to a turn-off near a small bridge. A left turn here takes you to a translucent green pool in the forest. Water wells up gently as “Fairy Springs” in this pool. The water flows from Lake Waikaremoana through “leaks” in the lake bed.

Attempts were made from 1948 to 1955 to seal the leaks to maximise the water available for power generation. But water still percolates through gaps in the rock (landslide debris from the Ngamoko Range) to emerge as springs feeding the upper Waikaretaheke River and Fairy Springs. The track leads around this pool and back to the bridge. Climb over the stile and return to the power station along a gravel road. The Ngamoko Track and the Old Maori Trail can both be started at Kaitawa.



Walks from the road to Rotorua

Te Whero Bay

5 minutes return



4.5km from the visitor centre a signpost indicates the track to this delightful shallow, sandy beach.

Mokau Falls

10.5km from the visitor centre the Mokau Stream flows out from its narrow valley and drops 37m to the riverbed below.

The best view is from the roadside 300m further on.

At this viewing point the smaller Tauwhare Falls pass beneath the road to drop 45m.



Mokau Falls.
Photo: A Lincoln.

Nga Whanau-a-Ruapani Tarns

4 hours return



The tarns are reached via a tramping track leading from the Tauwhare Falls. The track climbs up a ridge through beech/podocarp forest to the tarns which are small swampy ponds surrounded by tall forest. The main track continues for about another hour to reach the Mokau Stream.

Waihirere Bluffs

15km from the visitor centre the road follows a cliff face with a sheer drop to the lake below. From here there are marvellous views of the narrow Whanganui arm of the lake.

Mokau Campsite

Situated about 1.5km beyond the Tauwhare Falls, off a side-road, this popular area is a self-registration campsite with plenty of grassed sites next to the lake.



The entrance to Mokau Campsite.

Photo: A Lincoln.

Whanganui Hut

3 hours return



A few kilometres on is the turn off to Hopuruahine and the northern end of the Lake Waikaremoana Great Walk. The walk to Whanganui Hut is a pleasant lakeside walk. Bookings are essential for overnight use.

Further along the road to Rotorua, DOC campsites are situated at Taita-a-Makoro (20km from the visitor centre) and Orangihikoia (25km from the visitor centre).



Whanganui Hut.

Photo: M Lee.

Further Information

DOC Offices

Aniwaniwa Visitor Centre

State Highway 38, Aniwaniwa
Private Bag 2213
WAIROA

Ph: 06 837 3803
Ph: 06 837 3900 (Great Walk bookings)
Fax: 06 837 3722
Email: urewerainfo@doc.govt.nz

East Coast Hawke's Bay Conservancy

63 Carnarvon Street
GISBORNE

Ph: 06 869 0460
Fax: 06 867 8015
Email: echb-conservancy@doc.govt.nz

Website: www.doc.govt.nz

Safety

You can get the latest information about facilities, local conditions and weather, hut passes and tickets and conservation information from DOC Visitor Centres.

If you think there is a safety hazard or conservation emergency in a conservation area, call the DOC Hotline 0800 362 468 or the nearest DOC office. For fire and search and rescue call 111.

Fires

Extreme fire conditions can exist during summer when fire bans will apply. The use of gas cookers is preferred or use existing fireplaces where available.

Dogs and Pets

Only registered, avian aversion certified pig hunting dogs, guide dogs and dogs used for special services (including conservation management activities) are permitted in the park.

All other dogs and pets are banned.

