

SOUTHLAND

# Stewart Island/ Rakiura short walks

Rakiura – land of the  
glowing skies



Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

# Contents

Stewart Island/Rakiura .....	2
History .....	4
Ulva Island – Te Wharawhara Marine Reserve and Te Whaka a Te Wera Mātaitai Reserve .....	6
Ulva Island (Te Wharawhara) a special place .....	7
Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre .....	8
Map .....	10
Short walks and tracks .....	12
Other places to visit .....	25
Recreational activities .....	26
Local birds .....	28



## Stewart Island/Rakiura

Just 20 minutes by plane from Invercargill or an hour by ferry from Bluff, Stewart Island/Rakiura is a place where you can experience lush rainforest, clear, clean water, and abundant marine and bird life.

‘An actual piece of the primeval world’ was how naturalist Leonard Cockayne described Rakiura in 1909. Cockayne’s description is still relevant today, with 85% of the island protected by national park status. Halfmoon Bay / Oban, is the only settlement on the island and has a population of around 400 people. Although there are only a few shops in the township, nearly all items visitors require are available from the town’s general store.

**Please note:** There is one ATM on the island that is only accessible during shop hours and does not accept foreign credit cards. Many places also accept EFTPOS, Visa and MasterCard.

### Naming

The Māori name Rakiura came about when Te Rakitamau, second son of Tukekawa, crossed Te Ara a Kewa (Foveaux Strait) to Mouterenui (Big Island) to ask a Kāti Māmoe chief for his eldest daughter’s hand in marriage. On finding that she was tāpui (betrothed) to another, he blushed in embarrassment and asked to marry the second daughter instead. When he found that she was tāpui also, he blushed even deeper. From this arose the saying ‘te raki o te uranga a Te Rakitamau’ (the day of the blushings of Te Rakitamau). In memory of the event, the saying was used as a new name for the island and soon became shortened to Rakiura (blushing skies) or Raki (Te Rakitamau) ura (blushing).

Kayaking on Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera. Photo: Liz Cave



Lee Bay entrance to the Rakiura Track and Rakiura National Park. Photo: Jeremy Pearce

One of the earlier Māori names for the island, Te Puka o Te Waka a Māui (the anchor of Māui’s canoe) refers to the story of the discovery of Aotearoa New Zealand by Māui. He used Te Waipounamu / the South Island as a waka (canoe) to fish up Te Ika-a-Māui / the North Island while Stewart Island/Rakiura anchored his canoe. The chain sculpture at Lee Bay, which marks the entrance to Rakiura National Park, is in recognition of this legend.

Today, Rakiura is commonly translated as ‘land of the glowing skies’, possibly in reference to the vibrant sunrises, lingering sunsets and the occasional night-time glow of the aurora australis (southern lights).

Stewart Island takes its European name from William Stewart, who began charting the southern coasts of the island in the early 1800s while on board the sealing vessel *Pegasus*.

### Weather

The weather on Stewart Island/Rakiura is often unpredictable. There are no distinctive wet and dry months – it is possible to have four seasons in one day! Rain falls on around 265 days of the year, with rainfall averaging 1600 mm per year in Oban and increasing to 5000 mm in the south and west of the island. Sunshine hours in Oban equal the national average, with temperatures in summer reaching the mid-twenties Celsius. The maximum average winter temperature is 9.9°C and heavy frosts are uncommon.

# History

Archaeological evidence shows that Māori have been visiting Stewart Island/Rakiura on food-gathering expeditions since the 13th century, taking advantage of the rich sea and bird life. Today, cultural harvest of tītī/muttonbird on the nearby Tītī/Muttonbird Islands is still important for many Rakiura Māori, and Stewart Island/Rakiura is still of great importance to Ngāi Tahu Whānui.

Stewart Island/Rakiura and the Foveaux Strait area were significant for economic and cultural interactions between Māori and early European sealers and whalers in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Many men who came in search of seals and whales married local Māori women, had families and stayed. Local Māori also became involved in whaling and sealing. This became the foundation of the modern settlement of the island and many residents trace their ancestry to these early beginnings.

Crown agents purchased the island from Rakiura Māori in 1864 for £6,000. However, tītī harvest rights for Rakiura Māori were protected. Gold and tin mining, sawmilling, boat building, and fishing industries developed with the growing population, and by 1870 Oban was a small yet active township. Tourism began to develop around this time, based around the island's scenic values. Reserves were created to protect these values, beginning with Ulva Island in 1899 – one of the first reserves in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Visitors to Harrold Bay will see one of the oldest buildings in Aotearoa New Zealand: a stone house built by Lewis Acker in 1835. On the way are Lonnekens Beach and Leask Bay, each associated with early whaling and fishing industries. In 1875, the island's first hotel was opened at Lonnekens Beach and the giant blue gums seen today were planted. For further insight into the history of Stewart Island/Rakiura, the Rakiura Museum Te Puka o Te Waka is definitely worth a visit.

Today, the island's main industries are cod, kōura/crayfish and pāua fishing, salmon and mussel farming, and conservation and tourism.

## Natural history

Rimu and kāmahi are the main tall forest trees around Oban, with rimu, miro and tōtara providing timber for the early settlers. Rimu from the island was greatly prized due to its high proportion of heartwood, a result of the slow growth rate on Stewart Island/Rakiura.

Kāmahi is the most common tree, identified by the whitish blotches on its spreading trunk and its toothed, wavy leaves. Rātā is also widespread and, in summer, its spectacular show of bright red flowers makes it easily recognisable.

Horoeka/lancewood, coprosma, tree fern and kapuka/broadleaf make up the forest understory. Kōtukutuku/tree fuchsia is common around Oban and is one of Aotearoa New Zealand's few deciduous trees, as well as the largest fuchsia in the world. It has orangey, papery bark and pendulous purple flowers, whose nectar is a favourite food for tūi and korimako/bellbird. Kererū feed on the purple, fleshy berry known as kōnini. Ferns throughout the forest are lush and varied and grow in a variety of habitats, along with 30 species of native orchid.

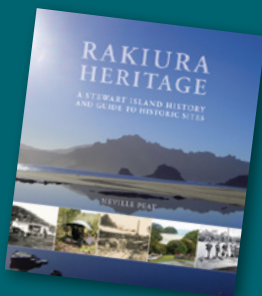


If you arrive by boat, your introduction to the birdlife on Stewart Island/Rakiura is often the tītī, gulls, toroa/Buller's mollymawks and kororā/little blue penguins. Around Oban, korimako/bellbirds, tūi and kākārīki/parakeets are easily seen. Most island residents boast of having these birds, as well as pīwakawaka/fantails and kererū, in their gardens. Summer evenings resound with the liquid melody of kākā high in the trees or calling across the waters of Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera, while riroriro/grey warblers sing in the forest, particularly after rain. Walkers commonly encounter miromiro/tomtits on the tracks.



## Rakiura Heritage

*Rakiura Heritage*, by Neville Peat, provides a guide to the intriguing array of historic sites found on the island. This book is available from various outlets on Stewart Island/Rakiura, including the Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre.



# Ulva Island – Te Wharawhara Marine Reserve and Te Whaka a Te Wera Mātaitai Reserve

From early times, Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera has held spiritual significance for tangata whenua. The inlet's combination of rocky reef, sand and soft-mud floor is an important habitat for more than 46 species of fish. It also has more varieties of seaweed than anywhere else in Aotearoa New Zealand and other interesting species, such as the living fossils called brachiopods.

In recognition of the inlet's continuing special importance, Rakiura Māori and the Stewart Island/Rakiura community secured a mātaitai reserve in 1994, prohibiting commercial fishing within all internal waters. The boundary is between Ackers Point and Bullers Point on The Neck.

See the Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (DOC) website ([www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)) or the Ministry of Primary Industries website ([www.fish.govt.nz](http://www.fish.govt.nz)) for bylaws and recreational fishing rules that apply in this area.

Ulva Island – Te Wharawhara Marine Reserve covers 1075 ha, or about 15% of Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera, adjoining Ulva Island. All marine life is fully protected in the marine reserve. This special area provides a haven for animals such as fish, shellfish, seals and penguins, as well as seabirds that breed on land but feed at sea.

Free from harvest, a reserve can return to its natural state, providing opportunities for study and enjoyment in an undisturbed marine environment.

## Ulva Island – Te Wharawhara – a special place

Ulva Island is the jewel in Rakiura National Park's crown and a place not to be missed. Just 10 minutes by boat across Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera, Ulva Island is one of the few sanctuaries in Aotearoa New Zealand that is open to visitors.

Abundant birdlife, rich forest, golden sand beaches and a variety of well-formed walking tracks make for a wonderful half- or full-day visit, either by yourself or with a guide. The island was declared free of rats in 1997 following a pest eradication programme, allowing endangered birds to be released and the forest to recover. DOC biosecurity teams are committed to maintaining this status. It is the ongoing responsibility of everyone to help protect this special place. The Ulva Island Charitable Trust, a community volunteer group dedicated to providing a refuge for endangered species in the sanctuary, is helping to restore the island.

Ulva Island has an interesting human history, being the site of a post office established in 1872 that served as a focal point for the inlet settlements at that time.

There is no entry fee to the island. For more information, please refer to *Ulva Island - Explore an island paradise*, available from the Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre and at the Ulva Island shelter in Post Office Bay.

For visitors with children, this is a Kiwi Guardians site – for more details, visit the Visitor Centre or [kiwiguardians.co.nz](http://kiwiguardians.co.nz).



Jellyfish at Ulva Island. Photo: Keri Moyle



# Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre

Situated on Main Road, a 5-minute walk from the ferry terminal and flight centre, Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre is open every day except Christmas Day. Opening hours vary according to the season. For the current hours, check the Visitor Centre doors or the DOC website [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).

## The Visitor Centre offers:

- national park and conservation information
- up-to-date weather and track information
- hunting and permit information
- hut tickets
- Rakiura Track bookings
- a range of retail products
- topographical maps for hire or purchase
- emergency locator beacons for hire
- lockers that are accessible during opening hours
- an area where visitors can watch DVDs and videos on conservation-related topics
- a display area with information on the cultural and natural history of the island.



Vaila Voe Bay. Photo: Keri Moyle





# Short walks and tracks

Times for the tracks described below range from 30 minutes to 6 or 7 hours. Times given are for return trips from the Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre.

Most walking tracks around the village are gravelled and can easily be walked in practical shoes. However, tracks marked with an asterisk (\*) can be muddy, and tramping boots are recommended. Carry a raincoat, because weather on Rakiura changes rapidly and it is best to be well prepared for all conditions.



Bicycles are allowed on some walking tracks around Oban. Check track information and observe the signs.



Dogs can harm birdlife and are not permitted on most tracks. Ask at the Visitor Centre for information on where you can take your dog.



Drones are not permitted in Rakiura National Park.



The coastal tracks in this area are in a tsunami hazard zone. In case of a strong earthquake, move to higher ground.

## Track grades



**Easy access short walk:** Suitable for people of all abilities, wheelchairs and children's buggies.



**Short walk:** Well-formed track; easy walking for up to an hour.



**Walking track:** Well-formed track; easy walking from a few minutes to a day.



**Great Walk/easy tramping track:** Generally well-formed track for comfortable overnight tramping/hiking trips.



**Tramping track:** Mostly unformed track with steep, rough or muddy sections; has directional markers, poles or cairns.

## 1. Observation Rock – Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Path 30 min



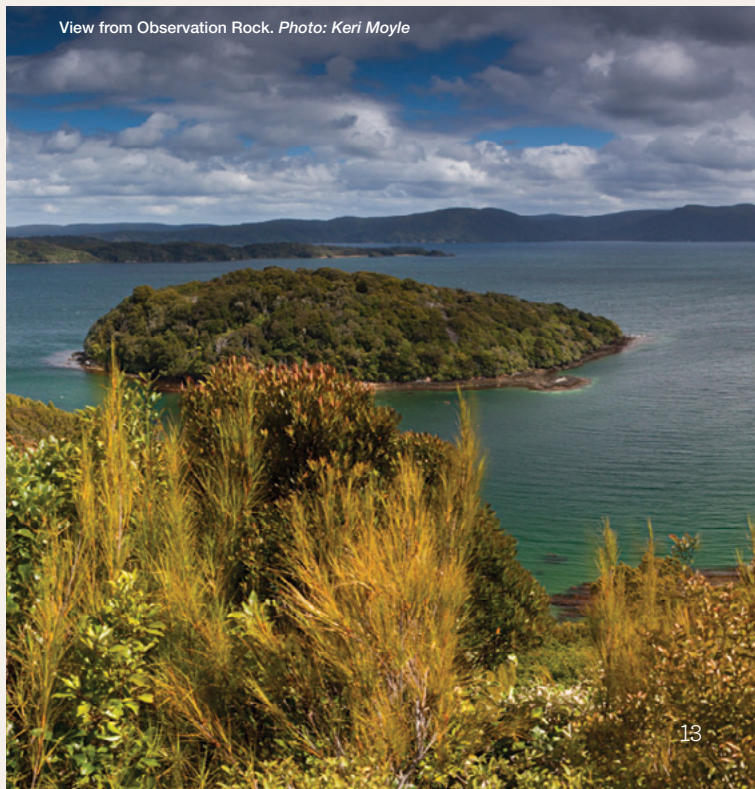
*This track passes through a residential area. Please be considerate.*

Although it is a steep walk to reach Observation Rock, you are rewarded with panoramic views over Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera and, on clear days, views of Mount Rakeahua. Observation Rock is also a superb place to watch sunsets – and sometimes the aurora australis.

This track was named as a gift to Queen Elizabeth II in honour of her Platinum Jubilee.

**Directions:** From the Visitor Centre, head towards the waterfront, turn right, walking along the waterfront until you reach Ayr Street. Turn right here and follow the road to the top of the hill, turning left at Leonard Street. At the end of Leonard Street, the road bends to the left to Excelsior Street. Look for the DOC signpost marking the short path to Observation Rock.

View from Observation Rock. Photo: Keri Moyle





## 2. Fuchsia and Raroa walks

1 hr



Five minutes from the Visitor Centre lies an area of rich natural forest untouched by early milling operations. Two tracks run through this section of scenic reserve, which was gifted to the Government in the 1960s by Captain George Turner. He recognised the importance of protecting walks near Halfmoon Bay that had been undamaged by early milling or land clearance. The track takes you past 500-year-old rimu, lush ferns, vibrant mosses and tree fuchsia. During the summer months, this area of forest is alive with the chorus of korimako/bellbirds, tūī, kererū and kākā.

**Directions:** Turn left outside the Visitor Centre and left again into Dundee Street. The Fuchsia Walk is signposted about 100 m to your right. Follow the walk to Traill Park. From here you might choose to cross the field and climb Observation Rock or continue diagonally across the field and onto the Raroa Walk. This 15-minute track takes you to Watercress Beach and Thule Road.

Raroa Walk. Photo: Keri Moyle



## 3. Fern Gully\*

2 hr



Fern Gully follows an old sawmill track along a stream flanked by beautiful ferns and regenerating forest. This is a sheltered walk with minimal elevation – ideal for children and those wanting a gentle day hike. Because of the low gradient, this track can be muddy, which is why it is classified as a tramping track. Sturdy footwear is recommended.

**Directions:** Turn left outside the Visitor Centre and continue up Main Road for 2 km. Main Road will take you to the Fern Gully car park where a signpost marks the start of the Fern Gully track.

Fern Gully. Photo: Georgia Carpenter



#### 4. Golden Bay – Deep Bay – Ringaringa Beach – Peterson Hill

1 hr 30 min – 2 hr



This coastal-fringe track winds, climbs and falls to provide scenic views of Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera, Ulva Island and Halfmoon Bay from the top of Peterson Hill. During bad weather, the forest offers some protection from rain and wind. The Deep Bay Track involves a number of steps.

A picnic table at Deep Bay provides a place to pause and enjoy the scenery. You may also continue straight ahead from Deep Bay, along the road to the Ringaringa Beach lookout.

A monument to Reverend Wohlers, an early missionary, is situated not far from this point. Carry on past the Ringaringa Beach lookout until you see the marked trail beginning as the road ends.

This track travels over private land so please respect this area. From the monument, you are rewarded with panoramic views over Native Island and the inlet.

**Directions:** From the Visitor Centre, follow Golden Bay Road past Traill Park and down into Golden Bay. Before you get to Golden Bay Wharf, you will see the track signposted to your left. To return to Halfmoon Bay, walk back along the road past Deep Bay for a short distance until you meet the track through Deep Bay Scenic Reserve and over Peterson Hill.

Wohlers Monument. Photo: DOC



Bathing Beach. Photo: Keri Moyle

#### 5. Bathing Beach

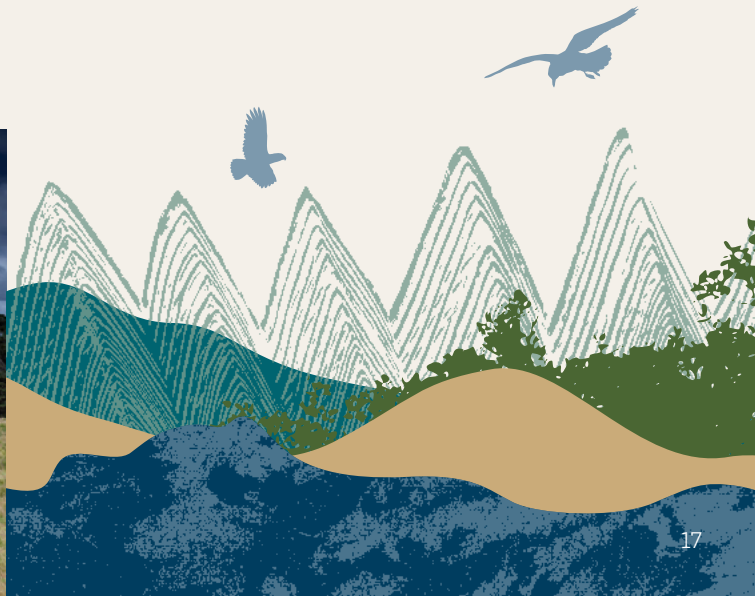
30 min



Bathing Beach is a popular and sheltered swimming area with a white sand beach. The adjacent Mill Creek estuary is an interesting place to explore at low tide, with remnants of timber from early milling days still visible along the creek edge. This track is maintained by the Southland District Council.

**Directions:** Continue uphill from the general store, turning right into Kamahi Road and following this around until reaching the Bathing Beach signpost.

Ringaringa Point. Photo: Keri Moyle



## 6. Moturau Moana Native Gardens

1 hr



Moturau Moana translates to ‘islands of bush above the sea’ and is a mostly native garden, gifted by the late Noeline Baker to the New Zealand Government. Miss Baker collected the plants both from Stewart Island/Rakiura and on field trips to Te Waipounamu/the South Island. Today, these gardens provide a peaceful setting with views over Halfmoon Bay. The gardens are suitable for pushchairs. Picnic tables, a shelter and toilet facilities are provided.

**Directions:** From the Halfmoon Bay waterfront, continue left up the hill from the general store, along Horseshoe Bay Road. Continue past Butterfield Beach to the Bragg Bay turn-off. The entrance to Moturau Moana Native Gardens is a few minutes along this gravel road, signposted on the left.

Moturau Moana Native Gardens. Photo: DOC



## 7. Harrold Bay and Ackers Point

3 hr



Harrold Bay and the Ackers Point track follows the southern coastline of Halfmoon Bay to a scenic lookout.

Rich in history, picturesque Harrold Bay boasts one of the oldest stone buildings in Aotearoa New Zealand. Venture inside the house, built by Lewis Acker in 1835, and imagine life here with his nine children!

Continue along the main track through coastal forest until you reach Ackers Point. Here you will discover fantastic views out over the Tītī/Muttonbird Islands and Foveaux Strait. In mid- to late summer, tītī/muttonbirds, also known as sooty shearwaters, can sometimes be spotted returning to their burrows around the point after dark. If you are lucky, after dusk you may be able to spot a kororā/little blue penguin, but remember to stay on the gravelled path! A lighthouse at Ackers Point, translocated from The Neck, lit the way for boats until 2006. It has since been replaced by a beacon and viewing platform for visitors.

For visitors with children, this is a Kiwi Guardians site – find more details at the Visitor Centre or online at [kiwiguardians.co.nz](http://kiwiguardians.co.nz). Toilet facilities are located at the start of this track; however, toilet paper is not provided.

**Directions:** To get to Harrold Bay and Ackers Point, turn right at the Halfmoon Bay waterfront and follow Elgin Terrace, passing Lonnekers Bay and Leask Bay until you reach the end of the road marking the start of the track. Please respect the privacy of the landowners while visiting Harrold Bay and Ackers Point.

Ackers Point beacon. Photo: DOC



## 8. Horseshoe Point

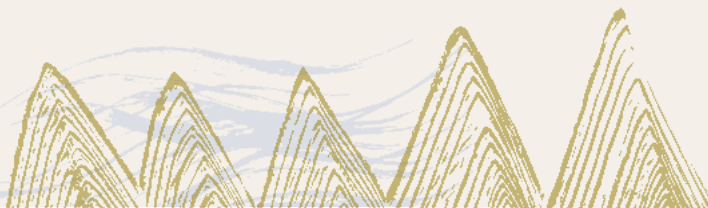
3–4 hr



Maintained by Southland District Council, the Horseshoe Point track meanders along the coast from Bragg Bay, winding above secluded bays and crystal-clear water. It descends steeply to Dead Man Beach which despite the name, is a pleasant spot to stop for a rest.

Horseshoe Point is about an hour's walk from Bragg Bay and is an ideal place to view Foveaux Strait. From the point, the track passes under huge macrocarpa trees, remnants of a former homestead site, and eventually finishes beside the entrance to the Resource Recovery Centre.

**Directions:** Follow Horseshoe Bay Road north for about 1.5 km, turning into Bragg Bay Road just uphill from Butterfield Beach. The track starts at the end of the road.



View from the Horseshoe Track. Photo: DOC



## 9. Ryans Creek\*

3 hr 30 min – 4 hr



*Sections of this track are accessed through private property – please be mindful.*

Between 1861 and 1931, a series of sawmills in this area milled mainly rimu timber, along with some tōtara and miro. Remnants of one of these mills can be seen in Ryans Creek

at low tide. Rimu, tōtara and miro make up the majority of the forest canopy in Stewart Island/Rakiura. These podocarp trees produce fruit that numerous native birds rely on for food. Southern rātā, kāmahī, kāpuka/broadleaf and mānuka make up much of the forest subcanopy, with an abundance of ferns and mosses carpeting the forest floor.

In addition to scenic views of Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera, walkers may also see wading birds feeding on the Vaila Voe Bay mudflats at low tide. Remember to keep an eye out for the tiny and delicate native orchids.

Dogs (on leash) are permitted on this track from Fern Gully to the picnic table. Please return the same way.

**Directions:** The Ryans Creek track is accessible from either the Thule Road end or Kaipipi Road end, with the track winding, climbing and descending through coastal vegetation.

**Biking:** As this track is an original logging road, biking is permitted from Fern Gully to the picnic table. Bikers must return the same way. Please make yourselves known to walkers.

Native orchid. Photo: DOC



## 10. Kaipipi Bay\*

3 hr



During the first 30 years of timber milling, activity was very intense, and more than 100 people were employed at the mills. In its heyday, the track to Kaipipi Bay was one of the busiest and best-maintained roads on the island, with people and supplies travelling back and forth between the mills and Oban. A large wharf was located at Kaipipi Bay to ship timber out. The predominant vegetation present is regenerating forest.

Dogs (on leash) are permitted on this track until you reach the sign at Kaipipi. Please return the same way.

**Directions:** The walk to Kaipipi Bay takes you along an old logging road. The surface is still in reasonable condition considering all the traffic that has travelled along it. At the track end, a small grassy clearing looks out over Kaipipi Bay, an enclosed haven on the north shore of Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera. The track continues to North Arm Hut along part of the Rakiura Track Great Walk.

**Biking:** As this track is an original logging road, biking is permitted to the sign at Kaipipi only. Bikers, please make yourselves known to walkers.

## 11. Garden Mound – Little River\*

4–5 hr



For panoramic forest views over Oban, a walk up Garden Mound cannot be beaten. Garden Mound, an early scenic reserve, escaped the milling activity that was once widespread from Port William/Potirepo to the northern coast of Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera. In the early 1900s, Garden Mound was a popular place for locals to visit, being one of the few areas close to the village with forest still intact and where birds were common.

Huge rimu, rātā and kāmahi are a feature of the track, which climbs to 160 m before dropping steadily to Little River. A scenic round trip is possible by returning towards Lee Bay through the chain link sculpture which marks the entrance to Rakiura National Park.

As Garden Mound is a tramping track, it is steep and slippery in sections. Tramping boots are advised.

**Directions:** Walk north past the general store and along Horseshoe Bay Road for about an hour until you reach the Lee Bay Road turn-off at the far end of Horseshoe Bay. The start of the Garden Mound Track is signposted to your left, about 10 minutes along the road to Lee Bay.

Lee Bay to Mount Anglem/Hananui. Photo: DOC



## 12. Maori Beach

6–7 hr



For those wanting to venture further afield into Rakiura National Park, Maori Beach is an excellent choice for a day walk, offering stunning scenery and plenty of local history.

Between 1913 and 1935, the Maori Beach area was a busy settlement with a school, along with several houses for workers from the Maori Beach Sawmilling Company. After the mill closed in 1931 (the last operating mill on Stewart Island/Rakiura), people gradually drifted away. Today, the area is peaceful and picturesque, with regenerating forest quickly hiding evidence of those earlier days. However, remains of a boiler and steam engine used by the mill can still be found, along with clumps of montbretia and bluebells – legacies from the sawmillers' cottages.

At the beach, a campsite for trampers provides a small shelter, drinking water and a toilet, but not toilet paper. People intending to stay overnight must first book the campsite either online at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) or at the Visitor Centre.

**Directions:** From Oban, follow Horseshoe Bay Road north for about an hour, until reaching Lee Bay Road. Turn left here, following Lee Bay Road until the end, which marks the start of Rakiura National Park and the track to Maori Beach and Port William Hut. There are high tide tracks at Little River and Maori Beach – the Maori Beach high tide section can be muddy but the rest of the track beyond is gravelled and in good condition.

Maori Beach. Photo: Bevan Mudie



## Other places to visit

### Cemetery

45 min



The Southland District Council's Halfmoon Bay Cemetery offers an insight into the lives of some of the early settlers on the island, while providing stunning views out over the Mill Creek estuary.

**Directions:** From the general store, continue left uphill on Horseshoe Bay Road. Just after crossing Mill Creek bridge, turn left into Mapau Road and follow this road until turning left at the cemetery signpost.

Halfmoon Bay Cemetery, overlooking Mill Creek estuary. Photo: DOC



Ulva Island. Photo: DOC



# Recreational activities

## Overnight tramping

In addition to the short walks mentioned in this brochure, there are three tramping tracks on the island offering a variety of overnight options. For more information on the 3-day Rakiura Track Great Walk, the 11-day North West Circuit Track and the 5-8-day Southern Circuit Track, visit the Visitor Centre.

## Fishing

Fishing from the rocks may be difficult because of the kelp forests surrounding the rocky coastline. However, charter boat trips are popular, and a variety of options are available.

About 15% of Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera is marine reserve and most of the remainder of the inlet is a mātaimai reserve. Please make sure you know the local fishing rules before venturing out. For more information, visit [www.mpi.govt.nz/fishing-aquaculture/recreational-fishing/fishing-rules/southland-fishing-rules/](http://www.mpi.govt.nz/fishing-aquaculture/recreational-fishing/fishing-rules/southland-fishing-rules/).

## Hunting

With the only readily accessible herd of whitetail deer in the southern hemisphere, Stewart Island/Rakiura is a popular location for deer hunters. Permits are required to hunt in the designated areas of public conservation land. For more information, visit [www.doc.govt.nz/stewartislandhunting](http://www.doc.govt.nz/stewartislandhunting).

## Stargazing

The sky in Stewart Island/Rakiura lights up from time to time with the streaks and glows of the aurora australis (southern lights). At other times, the abundance of stars and clarity of the sky delights stargazers. The island is an International Dark Sky Sanctuary. Head up to Observation Rock (page 13) for an elevated view.

## Snorkelling and diving

Ulva Island/Te Wharawhara Marine Reserve surrounds much of Ulva Island, providing a safe haven and nursery for a variety of marine life. With the clear waters of Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera, divers and snorkellers can enjoy the spectacular range of seaweeds, along with fish and shellfish, and other marine animals such as seals and penguins.



Snorkelling, Ulva island. Photo: DDC

## Biking

Because there is only 28 km of road, biking is an alternative to hiring a car as a means of getting around Oban. Ensure that you observe all signs and follow the Mountain Bikers Code: Respect others, respect the rules, respect the track.

**Please note:** mountain bikes and e-bikes are not allowed on most tracks; however, two tracks have partial access. If in doubt, please check with the Visitor Centre.

## Kayaking

On calm days, Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera and the eastern coast of the island are excellent for kayaking. The clear water, abundant marine life and bush-fringed coastline make the island a kayaker's paradise.

Kayaking. Photo: Liz Cave



# Local birds

Native birds are abundant around the Oban area. Bird numbers have been steadily increasing, thanks to the efforts of the Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project initiated by the Stewart Island/Rakiura Community and Environment Trust (SIRCET). This community-driven pest control project aims to enhance backyard biodiversity and the return of native species.

Some of the birds commonly encountered around the township and wider area are shown below.



**For more information about SIRCET, please contact:**

Stewart Island/Rakiura Community and Environment Trust  
 PO Box 124  
 Stewart Island 9846  
 Email: [info@sircet.org.nz](mailto:info@sircet.org.nz)  
[www.sircet.org.nz](http://www.sircet.org.nz)

Tūi. Photo: Tui de Roy



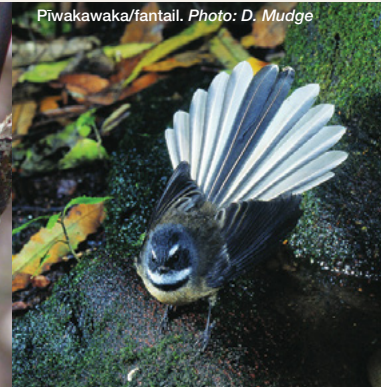
Korimako/bellbird. Photo: Brent Beaven



Toutouwai/Stewart Island robin. Photo DOC



Piwakawaka/fantail. Photo: D. Mudge



Kererū. Photo: Eamonn Ganley



Weka. Photo: Brent Beaven



Kākāriki/New Zealand parakeet. Photo: DOC



Riroriro/grey warbler. Photo: Kari Beaven



Tauhou/silvereye. Photo: Brent Beaven



Miromiro/tomtit. Photo: Brent Beaven



Kākā. Photo: Brent Beaven



Tōrea/oystercatcher. Photo: DOC





## Further information

### Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre

15 Main Road, Halfmoon Bay  
Stewart Island 9818  
PO Box 3

**PHONE:** 03 219 0009

**EMAIL:** [stewartisland@doc.govt.nz](mailto:stewartisland@doc.govt.nz)

[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

## Care for Aotearoa



### Protect nature

Keep your distance and don't feed wildlife. Follow any rules restricting dogs, fires, drones or vehicles.



### Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by planning and preparing for your trip.



### Keep NZ clean

Take all rubbish with you and use toilets where provided.



### Show respect

Respect others, respect culture.



Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*



Front cover: Ulva Island. Photo: Dean McKenzie

This information was accurate at the time of printing. For the latest information on DOC's policies and facilities, visit [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).

Published by:

Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai  
Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre  
PO Box 3, Stewart Island 9846

November 2022

Editing and design:

Te Rōpū Ratonga Auaha  
Creative Services

This publication is produced using paper sourced from well-managed, renewable and legally logged forests.



**Te Kāwanatanga  
o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

R215840