



Family walks in the Waikato



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

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Waireinga/Bridal Veil falls
Cover photo: On the Nikau Walk, Pirongia

Family walks in the Waikato





— an introduction

Enjoying the outdoors can be inexpensive, healthy and fun, with many walking tracks suitable for families to explore native bush, climb a hill, visit a lake or wetland or enjoy coastal views within a 1 hr 30 min drive from Hamilton.

Tracks can vary from easy walks to more strenuous exercise—the ones listed in this publication should be achievable by most people of average fitness. In some of the locations there are more challenging tracks that should only be attempted if you have the fitness/skills and are prepared for a longer day.

The majority of walking tracks are developed and maintained by the Department of Conservation (DOC) but a number managed by other agencies are included as they provide a complementary experience.

Many of these walks can be combined with other activities:

-  Picnics are a great way for the family to enjoy the outdoors. For a picnic spot with a view, check out Mt Pirongia, Maungakawa Scenic Reserve or Te Toto Gorge.
-  Camping spots suitable for families can be found in the Kauaeranga valley, at Kaniwhaniwha on Mt Pirongia, in Te Kauri Park and Jim Barnett Bush Reserve.
-  Bring your togs for a freshwater dip in the Kauaeranga valley, the Kaniwhaniwha Stream or at Karakariki.
-  For family cycling try the Nikau Walk on Mt Pirongia, Hakarimata Rail Trail or Waikato River Trails.

Other symbols

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Dogs on a lead |  Bird watching |
|  Toilets |  Historic place |
|  Information centre |  Fishing |
|  Information panels |  BBQ |
|  Lookout/viewpoint |  Managed by DOC |

Recreation information

Choose the type of walk that most suits the skills, fitness and abilities of your group. Be well prepared, with food and water as necessary and wear appropriate clothing. Check the weather forecast before your head out—remember, safety is your responsibility.



Easy access short walk: suitable for people of all abilities, wheelchairs, and pushchairs.



Short walk: well formed, easy walking for up to an hour. There may be steps or slopes. Walking shoes required.



Walking track: easy to moderate walking from a few minutes to a day. Track is mostly well-formed, some sections may be steep, rough or muddy. Walking shoes required.



Easy tramping track: generally well-formed track for hiking or tramping. Some sections may be rough, muddy or steep. Light tramping/hiking boots required.



Tramping track: challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking. May have steep grades. Suitable for fit, experienced and adequately equipped people. Tramping boots required.



Dual-use track: walking and off-road biking are both available on dual-use tracks. Bikers, please stay in control of your bikes at all times and give way to walkers.

Mountain bike - Grade 1: Easiest.

Mountain bike



Grade 1: Fairly flat, wide, smooth track or gravel road.



Grade 2: Mostly flat with some gentle climbs on smooth track with easily avoidable obstacles such as rocks and potholes.

Track times are based on an average family group. They are a guide only and may vary depending on the weather and track conditions. Track times are one way unless indicated otherwise.

Please note

Tracks on conservation land are marked by orange triangles. Other coloured markers or tape are used for land management purposes and should not be followed.

North of Hamilton



1) Hakarimata Scenic Reserve

The Hakarimata Scenic Reserve is a great place to see kauri and to enjoy a walk through native forest only 10 km from Hamilton.

Hakarimata Rail Trail (30 min/1.5 km)



Access the car park off Waingaro Rd next to Perry's Quarry. The walk follows an old railway line that was used until the 1950s to transport coal to Glen Massey. The Rail Trail is flat and suitable for pushchairs, assisted wheelchairs and bicycles. The walk finishes at a picnic area by Firewood Creek. You may like to continue up the steps and along the tramping track to the next bridge and then take the side track to the cascades (10 min).

Waterworks Track (1 hr/1 km return)



Summit (3 hr/2 km return)

This easy walk through native forest leaves from Brownlee Ave off Hakarimata Rd and follows the Mangarata Stream to an old dam. The 750 000-litre reservoir was built in 1922 to supply water to Ngaruawahia. From the dam is the much more challenging Hakarimata Summit Track. The track is well formed but steep with numerous steps. The viewing tower at the summit provides spectacular 180-degree views.

Kauri Loop Track (40 min to Kauri Grove; Loop Track 2 hr/3 km)



The walking track starts from Parker Rd, off Hakarimata Rd up a long flight of stairs. At the track junction, turn right, walking along the largely level track to a big kauri. The track then passes through a grove of young kauri (rickers) to a viewpoint over a bush-clad valley. Return the way you came or take the steeper track to the upper viewing point and complete the loop track.

Kauri dieback

Kauri trees are under threat from a disease caused by a soil-borne pathogen. To prevent the disease spreading, stay on the tracks and always clean your footwear and bike tyres before and after use.



Hakarimata Dam

2) Lake Hakanoa

(1 hr/3.6km circuit)



This popular and easy walk starts at the Huntly Domain off Wight St. The circuit around the lake takes you through many specially themed gardens and wetland areas. The lake also has jetties, playgrounds, picnic areas and opportunities for boating.

3) Whangamarino Historic Walkway

(25 min/900m loop)



Accessed from Oram Rd, off SH 1 between Meremere and Mercer. Walk through regenerating native bush before climbing a grassy spur, with views over the Waikato River and highway. The fortification ditches were part of Te Teoteo's Pā, a pre-European pā site. A short distance further on is the Whangamarino Redoubt that was constructed by British forces during the Waikato War of 1863–64.



4) Miranda



On the western side of the Firth of Thames, the Miranda coast is a world-renowned destination for birdwatchers. Thousands of wading birds from the Arctic tundra along with similar numbers of New Zealand breeding shorebirds are present at Miranda each year. The Miranda Shorebird Centre has extensive displays and information on the natural history of Miranda and its international importance. Birds are best viewed at high tide. An easy 35 minute walk with interpretive panels starts from the Shorebird Centre and leads to viewing hides. See www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz for more information.

Birds at Miranda



5) Pukemokemoke Bush Reserve

(1 hr 30 min loop track)



A network of basic tracks allows exploration of this 40-ha private reserve accessed off Whitiakahu-Tauhei Rd. There is a lookout platform at a high point giving panoramic views of the Waikato basin. The reserve is an excellent place for family outings, with plant identification plaques and a covered gazebo and large picnic area. You will see restoration work along the stream being undertaken by the Friends of the Pukemokemoke Bush Reserve. See www.doc.govt.nz.

6) Kauaeranga Valley



An ideal destination for a holiday or family day out, the Kauaeranga Valley behind Thames has numerous walks and tramping tracks and is popular for camping, picnics and swimming. The DOC Visitor Centre is the main port of call for conservation information and has excellent displays and audiovisual material.

See DOC's *Kauaeranga Valley Recreation* booklet for more information, available from www.doc.govt.nz/kauaeranga.

7) Karangahake Gorge



One of the best places to see New Zealand's mining heritage with old mine buildings and relics to be seen along the walks. Access via SH2 at Karangahake.

Karangahake Windows Walk (1 hr/2.5 km return)



Begin this spectacular walk by crossing the suspension bridge over the Ohinemuri River and the Lower Waitawheta Gorge bridge. A torch is advisable as the track takes you through old gold mining tunnels with four windows that look down on the river gorge. Cross the bridge to return back along the other side of the river.

Karangahake Gorge Historic Walkway

(2 hr/7 km)



This walk follows a section of the old Paeroa to Waihi railway line along the river and passes an old rock quarry and mining relics. Bicycles and dogs on a leash are permitted. The walk finishes at the Victoria Battery site near Waikino Station Café and Goldfields Railway.

See DOC's *Karangahake Gorge* booklet for more information, available at www.doc.govt.nz/tauranga.

8) Te Aroha

At 952 m, Mt Te Aroha is the highest point on the Kaimai-Mamaku range. A number of walks, tramping and mountain bike tracks are based around the Te Aroha Domain, which also features Edwardian gardens, the Te Aroha Museum and Bathhouse, Te Aroha i-SITE, café, geysers and soda springs. A great destination for all ages and interests.

Te Aroha Domain Upper and Lower Walks (20 min)



Beginning at the Mokena Geyser, you choose either the Upper Walk, or Lower Walk (which is suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs). Look out for the beautiful ground-covering parataniwha with red and green leaves along the way. Both walks can be combined to create a loop track.

Tui Domain Track (1 hr 30 min)



Starting at the Mokena Geyser, this track takes you through regenerating bush and past mountain streams. There is a 5-min detour to a waterfall lookout before you reach the junction with the Tui Link track and finally emerge onto Tui Rd.

Bald Spur Track (45 min)



Starting at the Mokena Geyser, the track zigzags its way through mature pines and pūriri that were planted in the early 1900s. The Whakapipi lookout provides a stunning view of Te Aroha township, the wetlands, river and beyond. (A tramping track continues on through a saddle and then steeply up for another 2 hr to the summit of Mt Te Aroha).

Howarth Memorial Wetland Loop Walk (1 hr circuit)



On the left bank of the Waihou River, a well-formed walk creates a circuit around an established wildlife refuge and wetland area managed by Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game Council. An ideal early morning or evening walk. The bird hide at the end of the boardwalk is the perfect place to spot pied stilt, grey teal and heron. Access is from Spur St, via a footbridge at the end of Lawrence Ave, or via a boardwalk at Kenwyn Reserve on Kenrick St.

See Matamata-Piako District Council's: *Explore Walking and Mountain Biking Tracks in Matamata-Piako* booklet and DOC's *Kaimai to coast* brochure for walks and tramps in the Kaimai-Mamaku Forest Park.

9) Waiorongomai Valley



The Waiorongomai Valley is a significant historic gold mining site in the Kaimai-Mamaku Forest Park. The valley offers a number of tramping and walking opportunities following old mining trails including the historic Piako County Tramway, with excellent information panels.

Low Level Loop (2 hr/5.5 km return)



From the car park follow the signposted Low Level Loop track as it winds up the valley through regenerating bush, across a few small streams and past a small tunnel and pipeline. The track turns back south at a signposted junction and joins the Piako County Tramway at the base of Butlers Incline where a section of the rail is still in place. The walk then descends along the tramway to the top of the Fern Spur Incline with views south. It is then a short walk down the hill to the car park.

10) Wairere Falls



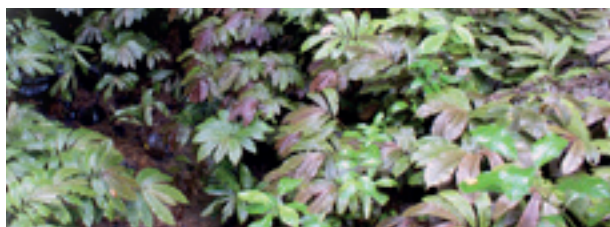
(3–4 hr/5 km return)

Accessed from Goodwin Rd off the Te Aroha-Gordon Rd, this walking track takes you through beautiful natural scenery and up to the spectacular 153-m high falls. The falls lookout and summit offer magnificent views of the valley and the Waikato Basin. From the car park, there are a number of bridged river crossings and steps up to a lookout platform (45 min from car park). There are then more steps and staircases in the steeper section to the summit and falls lookout (another 45 mins).



Tramway relic at Waiorongomai

West and south of Hamilton



Parataniwha

1) Karakariki



(20 min/1km to waterfall; 1 hr/2.5 km to fenceline)

This reserve is accessed via the Karakariki Valley Road near Whatawhata. The track first crosses private farmland over two stiles and a swingbridge before following the stream to a small waterfall—a great place for a picnic and swim in summer. You can explore upstream and look for fossils in rocks and water. From the waterfall, it is a steeper climb up a bush-covered ridge, passing some big rimu trees and groves of nīkau before finishing at a fenceline with views over farmland and bush. It is private property beyond the fence.

2) Karamu Walkway



Superb 360-degree views and impressive limestone bluffs are features of this walkway over farmland and through bush. You can choose to do the whole walkway or a section of it.

Four Brothers Track (15 min/630 m)

Start at Four Brothers Scenic Reserve car park on Hamilton-Raglan Highway (SH23). The track climbs through bush across a fence to viewpoints at the start of the Karamu Walkway.

Karamu Walkway North (1 hr 30 min/2.7 km)



Start with the Four Brothers Track before crossing onto open farmland. This section of walkway crosses private land. Follow the white posts and orange markers along the main ridge to Old Mountain Rd.



Karamu Walkway

Karamu Walkway South (2 hr 30 min – 3 hr)



From the south side of Old Mountain Rd there is an initial climb before you cross gently-rolling pasture studded with limestone outcrops and then drop down into bush. The track descends steeply in places and is slippery when wet. Look out for large tōtara and kahikatea along the way. Follow the markers to the exit onto Limeworks Loop Rd.

Please note:

- The Karamu Walkway is closed from 1 August to 31 October each year
- Keep to the marked route
- Use stiles not gates
- Avoid disturbing stock
- No dogs are allowed on the Walkway
- Do not carry firearms
- Avoid hay barns and other farm structures



3) Waireinga/Bridal Veil Falls



This is one of the most spectacular waterfalls in New Zealand. Take the turnoff to Te Mata Rd off the Hamilton/Raglan Highway (SH23) and follow the signs.

Car park to top of falls (10 min/600 m)



This easy walk through bush is especially designed for wheelchairs and pushchairs. It takes you to large viewing platforms at the top of these beautiful falls.

Top of the falls to base of the falls (10 min/200 m)



The track descends steeply down 256 steps. There is a good midway viewing point of the falls and at the bottom, a viewing bridge and shelter with information panels where you can take in the full force of this 55-m waterfall. *Please note: the water*

quality of the pool and river is not healthy for swimming.



Information shelter at Waireinga

4) Bryant Memorial Reserve, Raglan

Ngarunui Track (20 min/800 m)

Access is from Wainui Rd with the car park next to Camp Raglan. The well-formed track takes you down through lush coastal forest, to a lookout along with excellent coastal views. Steps lead to Ngarunui Beach where you can walk along to Wainui Reserve.

Water-race Track (25 min/1 km)



On the opposite side of Wainui Rd from the Ngarunui track, this walk follows a historic water-race through regenerating coastal forest and leads to a seat by the stream. There is also alternative access from the Upper Wainui Road.

5) Te Toto Gorge

Continue along the Raglan coast road to Te Toto Gorge. At Te Toto Gorge car park there is a viewing platform that provides magnificent views along the west coast and down into the Te Toto amphitheatre, which was formed by the erosion of an ancient volcano. The car park is also the starting point for the Karioi Track—a steep and challenging tramping track. It takes 3.5 hr to reach the summit of Karioi Mountain.

6) Kaniwhaniwha, Pirongia

These walking tracks are accessed off Limeworks Loop Rd. The Kaniwhaniwha Stream Reserve is a great place for family picnics with good swimming spots.

Nikau Walk (2 hr 30 min/7 km return)

The walk starts from the car park and follows the stream to a picnic, campsite and loop walk, lush with nikau palms, suitable for family cycling. There is a campsite with toilets 45 min from

the car park and the loop walk is 1 hr return on foot. Combine with the Kaniwhaniwha Caves for an underground adventure!



Leaving the Kaniwhaniwha campsite

Kaniwhaniwha Caves (2 hr 30 min/7 km return)



There are two limestone caves near the start of the Bell Track, 5 min from the Nikau Walk junction. The main cave is 20 m long. The second smaller cave is tight and narrow. The caves are wet underfoot and you will need a torch. (A tramping track continues on for another 1 hr 30 min to the tallest kahikatea tree in New Zealand, or to the summit, which is 6 hr from the caves).



Coming out of Kaniwhaniwha Caves

7) Corcoran Rd, Pirongia



Lookout (15 min return)

A 100-m walk suitable for wheelchairs leads through forest to a picnic area and viewing point. There are extensive views across the Waikato Basin to Mt Te Aroha and beyond. Access is from the car park at the end of Corcoran Rd.

Ruapane Lookout (1 hr/2 km)



The Tirohanga Track to Ruapane Trig is more challenging, involving a steady climb from Corcoran Rd car park. Nearer the top, the formed track ends and a tramping track leads up over rock to the trig viewpoint with excellent views across the Waikato Basin to the Kaimai Ranges.



8) Mangakara Nature Walk



(1 hr/1.5 km return)

A great walk for families with information panels and a self-guided nature trail. The well-graded loop track winds through attractive native forest down to the Mangakara Stream. The nature walk information sheet can be downloaded from www.doc.govt.nz/mangakaranaturewalk. Access is from the Grey Rd car park.

See DOC's: *Pirongia and Raglan tracks* booklet for information about other tracks on Mt Pirongia, available from www.doc.govt.nz/pirongia.

9) Walter Scott Reserve



This reserve is owned and managed by Forest & Bird and situated on the southern foothills of Mt Pirongia at the intersection of Scott and Pekanui Rds off Ngutuni Rd. There are several short walks in this reserve ranging from 10–20 min suitable for pushchairs, as well as a 1-hr loop track with some steep steps.

10) Te Kauri Park Circuit



(1 hr/2 km loop)

From the car park at Te Kauri Lodge, carefully cross the road (SH 31) to the Manuka Track and descend to the swingbridge. Take the Waikuku Track alongside the stream to a bridge and follow signs for the Sheep Track. Just before the bridge there is a junction with a track that leads to a camping site and nice picnic area. Back on the main track take the Sheep Track up to a ridge with views out to Kawhia and Pirongia, and complete the circuit back to the car park. There are a number of other short walks and day walks in this reserve.



11) Kakepuku

(3 hr/2.6 km return)



From the car park off Kakepuku Mountain Rd, a well-formed track leads to a historic pā site and viewing tower. A broad track leads up to a lower viewing platform then follows up through regenerating forest to the edge of the historic reserve. No mountain bikes beyond this point. The track narrows, climbing up on steps past a viewpoint, to the pā site and view tower. The view tower has interpretation panels about the site and excellent views. See www.doc.govt.nz/kakepuku for more information.

12) Yarndley's Bush

(30 min circuit)



Access is off Ngaroto Rd off SH 3. The track is boardwalked and suitable for pushchairs. It passes through a stand of remnant kahikatea. A viewing platform gives a birds-eye view of the forest canopy. See www.waipad.govt.nz for more information.

13) Lake Ngaroto



Lake Ngaroto has a boat ramp, picnic areas, playground, toilets and and a 1.5-hr walk around the lake and wetland areas. Access to this popular recreation reserve is off Bank Rd off Paterangi Rd. See www.teawamutu.co.nz for more information.

14) Opapaka Pā

(25 min return to fenceline)



This walking track starts at the Waitomo Adventure Centre and follows an easy gradient up through bush. There are plant identification labels along the walk. Towards the top the track becomes steeper as it crosses farmland to a pā site.



View of Kakepuku mountain

15) Waitomo Walkway



(1 hr 15 min/3.3 km for the full distance)

The first 0.5 km is an easy pushchair-friendly walk across the Waitomo Domain and through bush where you may continue as far as the Waitomo Caves car park. The Walkway climbs through bush and sculpted rocks onto farmland where a lookout affords spectacular views. Return at this point, or carry on across Te Anga Road, following the Waitomo Stream through to the Ruakuri Caves and Bush Scenic Reserve.

16) Ruakuri Caves and Bush



(45 min/1 km return)

The Ruakuri bush walk is a highlight of the Waitomo area and a must for visitors, with classic limestone outcrops, caves, tunnels, and beautiful native forest. A spectacular loop walk leads through a forested gorge following the stream and then winds up and around limestone bluffs and outcrops, through tunnels, and into the Ruakuri natural bridge where you can see speleothems (cave formations). A great place for a day trip and picnic with coin-operated barbecues available.

See DOC's *Waitomo and Kingcountry tracks* booklet for other walks and tracks in the Waitomo area, available from www.doc.govt.nz/waitomo.

17) Mangaokewa



(1 hr return to waterfall)

Located 2 km south of Te Kuiti adjacent to SH30, this reserve has picnic areas and an attractive bush walk to the Cascade Waterfalls. There is also a play area and swimming holes. A tramping track also forms part of the Te Araroa Trail and follows the Mangaokewa River—orange markers mark this. See www.waitomo.govt.nz for more information.

Southeast of Hamilton



1) Maungakawa



A great place for a family picnic, Gudex Memorial Park (also known as Sanatorium Hill) is located adjacent to the Maungakawa Scenic Reserve and is a 15-min drive or 9 km from Cambridge. Look out for tū and kererū (wood pigeon) when trees are in bloom or fruiting.

Maungakawa Loop Track (30 min/1.2 km)

A 30 minute loop walk that starts at the end of the open lawn area passes through attractive forest with some interesting artefacts. The walk loops back around the lawn picnic area to your starting point.

2) Te Tapui



(2 hr 30 min/4 km return)

Access to this loop track is from Pikonui Rd at Richmond Downs. There are a couple of small, unbridged streams to cross near the start, then it's a fairly easy but steady climb through bush to the summit and lookout tower. There are great views across to the Kaimai Ranges and Firth of Thames.

3) Maungatautari (Sanctuary Mountain)



A truly unique place to visit, Maungatautari is your chance to experience New Zealand's largest predator-free mainland island under the care of the Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust.

Northern Enclosure (30 min/1.1 km)

Te Aria Tirohia loop track goes round the inside of the predator-proof fence and is accessed from Hicks Road, 17 km from Cambridge. Follow the markers across farmland and the signs to the enclosure and double gates.

Southern Enclosure (Te Tui a Taane)

This is Maungatautari's showcase site with 5 km of wide, metalled walking tracks (some paths suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs) and a 16-m high canopy tower.

Hihi/stitchbird, takahē, tīeke/saddleback, North Island robin and kākā are just some of the birds in the reserve. Access is from Tari Road, 46 km from Cambridge but check the Trust's website before you go to make sure the enclosure is open.

There is a fee to enter the Southern Enclosure (Te Tui a Taane).

See www.sanctuarymountain.co.nz for more information.

4) Te Waihou Walkway



(1 hr 30 min/5.2 km)

Experience the magic of Te Waihou—‘the new water’. The Walkway follows alongside the upper reaches of the Waihou River, where the water is extremely clear and pure, being fed by many springs and from tributary streams in the Mamaku ranges. Water flows from the Blue Spring at a rate of 42 cubic metres (9240 gallons) per minute. Look out for the trout—or if you have a licence, have a go at fishing!

Access is from Whites Rd off SH 1 north of Putaruru or SH 5 between Tirau and Rotorua. Access is also from Leslie Road, which is off Whites Road. The walk to the Blue Spring is about 1 hr 30 min from Whites Road car park and 10 minutes from the Leslie Road car park. See www.southwaikato.govt.nz for more information.



5) Waikato River Trails

A series of trails a total of 103 km long, follow the course of the Waikato River between Lake Karapiro and Atiamuri. Many of the trails are dual use, suitable for walkers and off-road bicycles. No dogs are allowed. See www.waikatorivertrails.com for details on each of these trails.

These trails are recommended for walking:

Lake Karapiro

Little Waipa Reserve to Arapuni Village (2 hours/6 km)

Arapuni Village to Arapuni Dam (45 min/2 km)

Lake Arapuni

Waotu South Road to Waipapa Dam (6 hours/15 km)

Lake Maraetai

Mangakino Lakefront to Whakamaru Dam (4 hours/12km)

Lake Whakamaru

Whakamaru Reserve to Dunhams Reserve (2 hr 30 mins/8km)

Dunhams Reserve to Atiamuri (6 hours/14km)

6) Jim Barnett Bush Reserve

This reserve southwest of Putaruru on the Waotu South Rd

also has camping facilities. Two walks offer easy walking with a few short, steep



sections. The Main Track takes about 30 min to walk and the Totara Track, which is narrower and rougher, a further 15 min. Significant community work has been undertaken in this reserve, which includes the re-introduction of North Island robin. See www.southwaikato.govt.nz.



Further information

Descriptions given here are brief. To find out more go to the websites identified for the various walks or to the DOC website www.doc.govt.nz or contact:

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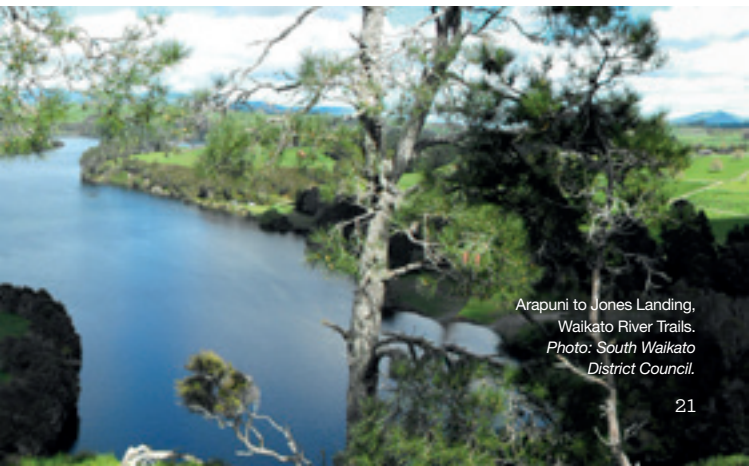
253 Chadwick Road
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For information on walks and tracks from Karangahake Gorge and Te Aroha east.


DOC acknowledges the contribution from:



as well as Te Aroha Information Centre, Waikato Forest & Bird and Friends of Pukemokemoke



Arapuni to Jones Landing,
Waikato River Trails.
Photo: South Waikato
District Council.

- 
- Plan ahead and prepare
 - Travel and camp on durable ground
 - Dispose of waste properly
 - Leave what you find
 - Minimise the effects of fire
 - Respect wildlife and farm animals
 - Be considerate of others



leave no trace
NEW ZEALAND

Photos: DOC, unless otherwise stated.

Published by:

Department of Conservation
Kirikiriroa / Hamilton Office
Private Bag 3072
Hamilton 3240
New Zealand
December 2016

Editing and design:

Publishing Team, DOC National Office

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

DOC HOTline
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New Zealand Government