

# Walking & Hiking in the Waikato Region

## Must-do walks and hikes in the Waikato region.

From winding mountain tracks through ancient bush-clad landscapes and wildlife reserves to casual strolls along the river and fertile rolling hills, the Waikato region offers an array of excellent walking and hiking trails to suit all levels.

### Something for Everyone

Meander alongside the mighty Waikato River, or get the pulse racing climbing to an inspirational mountain top view. There is everything from gentle jaunts on well laid out tracks to more ambitious hikes including overnight hut stays – and it's all easily accessible.

New Zealand's national walkway, Te Araroa (Long Pathway), passes through the region, taking in a historic walk at Mercer, farmland from Waitomo to Te Kuiti and most spectacularly a traverse of Mt Pirongia including the summit.

Explore the region on foot year round to discover what makes the Waikato region's unique landscape so beautiful.

## SHARED TRAILS

Some of the fantastic tracks and trails in the region have been created for multiple types of users, including cyclists and walkers/hikers, to enjoy.

Sometimes the shared path is sign posted to let you know what type of user has priority, and in this case, you need to give way to the user identified. When a shared path does not have priority signs, be sure to give way to the slower user.

If you are walking on a shared trail you should:

- Keep to the left of the path
- Watch for cyclists and listen for the sound of bicycle bells approaching from behind
- Allow cyclists to pass on the right



## MAN'S BEST FRIEND

Please note that many of the walking trails in the Waikato region do not allow dogs. Hamilton & Waikato Tourism recommend checking with the Department of Conservation before taking your four legged friend on any of the paths, tracks and trails in the region.

### KEY:



Accessible options for assisted wheelchairs and strollers



On-leash dogs allowed



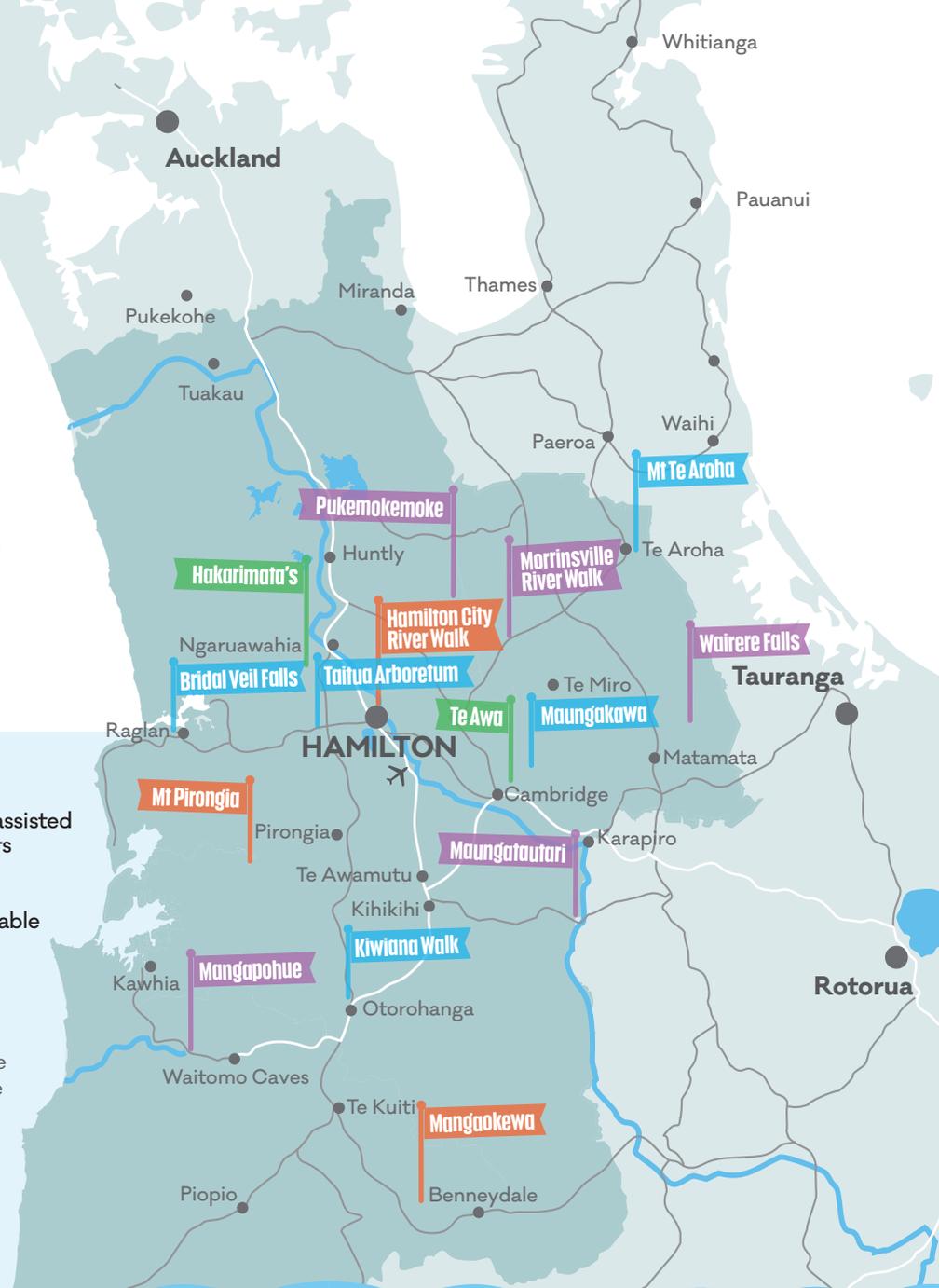
Overnight options available



Shared trail options (walk and cycle)

### MORE INFORMATION

While we have highlighted some of the most popular walks in the region there are many other fantastic trails available – for more information about these as well as the tracks and trails profiled in this brochure please visit: [waikatonz.com/walking](http://waikatonz.com/walking)





## Hamilton City River Walk - Hamilton

A scenic walking and cycling track follows the banks of the Waikato River through the heart of Hamilton.

The walk offers great views of the Waikato River and there are park benches and grassy areas along the track for those who want to sit and watch the boats, birds and people go by.

Towards the south of the river track are the Hamilton Gardens. These themed gardens are renowned internationally, especially for the Paradise Garden Collection - designed to showcase a history of gardens through time, including Maori horticultural, Italian renaissance, English, Indian Char Bagh, and American modernist. Explore the garden's peaceful meandering walks, or enjoy the many picnic spots.

These walks are wheelchair friendly, with many entry points, car parking, and conveniently located toilets.

Whether you walk the whole trail or just a portion, these Hamilton walks will leave you refreshed and renewed.

### AT A GLANCE:

- Stunning river and cityscape vistas throughout
- Funky cafes and eateries along the way
- Award-winning Hamilton Gardens, at the southern end

**Distance:** 📍 **Varies depending on track taken**

**Access:** This walk can be accessed at various entry points along the western & eastern banks of the Waikato River  
For more information visit: [waikatonz.com/hamilton-city-river-walks](http://waikatonz.com/hamilton-city-river-walks)



## Hākārimata Scenic Reserve - Ngāruawāhia

Located in the town of Ngāruawāhia, the Hākārimata Ranges include 1,850 hectares of native forest protected within the Hākārimata Scenic Reserve. A walk in the reserve will reward you with babbling streams, picturesque waterfalls and impressive views over the surrounding countryside.

The Hākārimata Ranges itself boasts several great walking trails, with the Hākārimata Summit Track being one of the most popular. Having secured a following with local fitness enthusiasts, you may see people on the track timing themselves to see how fast they can run or walk up the infamous stairs as part of their training.

With over 1000 stairs one way, this walk is a popular challenge with the reward of stunning views from 374m above sea level at the summit lookout.

Other walks in the range include the Hākārimata Kauri Loop Track which will take you past impressive native Kauri trees through a grove of young Kauri, as well as Rimu and Nikau or the Hākārimata Rail Trail which is a shared cycle and walkway and suitable for buggies and assisted wheelchairs and the Waterworks Track which ends at an old dam before connecting with the summit track on the southern side of the range.

### AT A GLANCE:

- Tackle the infamous staircase for a challenging workout with rewarding views at the top
- The grove of young Kauri trees towering above form a delicate, picturesque canopy of leaves

**Distance:** 📍 **Distance varies depending on which trail you walk**

**Access:** From Hamilton (southern end): off Brownlee Avenue, off the Ngāruawāhia end of Hākārimata Road; From Huntly (northern end): at the end of Parker Road, off Hākārimata Road.

For more information visit: [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)



## Wairēinga/Bridal Veil Falls - Raglan

Only 15 minutes drive from Raglan, the spectacular 55-metre-high Bridal Veil Falls, also known as the Wairēinga Falls is a popular Waikato walking track.

The Wairēinga/Bridal Veil Falls walk is an easy 10 minute walk through native bush, following the Pakoka River for most of the way, to two viewing platforms at the top, both providing stunning vistas and ample photo opportunities of the plunging white falls flanked by grey rock and green bush.

Looking down to the base of the waterfall, you will see soft sandstone rocks, worn away by the water to form a large amphitheatre.

A steep set of steps leads down to the bottom of the falls. From here there is another magnificent view, directly across the pool and up at the falls, where you can see the band of hard basalt rock that has resisted the erosive power of the water and now forms the lip of the falls.

### AT A GLANCE:

- Two different views of the stunning 55m falls
- Sandstone rock formations
- Top viewing spot easily accessible for all ages and abilities
- No swimming permitted as the water quality does not meet the standard required

**Distance:** 📍 **10 minutes each way to the top lookout**

**Access:** The falls are signposted from State Highway 23, between Te Uku and Raglan

For more information visit: [waikatonz.com/bridal-veil-falls](http://waikatonz.com/bridal-veil-falls)



## Mt Pirongia Summit Track - Pirongia

The green slopes of Mt Pirongia can be found 25km south of Hamilton. With a range of easy to more challenging options, Mt Pirongia's walks provide a rejuvenating experience amongst lush native forest and clear mountain streams.

The Mt Pirongia Summit Tracks offer a fairly strenuous full-day bush walk leading to and from the summit. The Tirohanga Track will take you to the summit through steep and at times challenging terrain. A lookout tower at the top of Tirohanga Track offers panoramic views of the surrounding area.

An easier but slightly longer route is the Tahuenui Track, which branches off the Nikau Walk and is part of Te Araroa, New Zealand's Trail from Cape Reinga to Bluff. This track climbs steadily up a tawa-clothed ridge and joins the Tirohanga Track five minutes from the summit.

Mt Pirongia walking tracks are also popular for overnight hiking options, staying in the Pahautea Hut.

### AT A GLANCE:

- Panoramic views of the region from the summit
- Lush native bush
- An overnight trip to the summit offers a full two day hike staying in the DOC hut

**Distance:** 6.5km one way for Tirohanga Track or 10.7km one way for Tahuenui Track

**Access:** Tirohanga access 5.5 km north of Pirongia, turn off SH39 onto Te Pahu Road, which is signposted for Pirongia Forest Park. Tahuenui access via Kaniwhaniwha carpark on Limeworks Loop Road.

For more information visit: [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)



## Maungakawa Scenic Reserve - Cambridge

What was once a TB Sanatorium for returned servicemen, the Maungakawa Scenic Reserve boasts regenerating native forest with a scattering of exotic trees, plenty of native birdlife and a 30 minute loop walk.

The Maungakawa Loop Walk is set in the Maungakawa Scenic Reserve near Cambridge. The easy bush walk includes descriptive signage identifying native trees along the way and is perfect for young families.

The reserve also boasts a rich heritage, with a magnificent Japanese walnut tree, camellia hedge, rhododendrons, bluebells and snowdrops all a legacy of the Thornton Garden. Old concrete footings and the shell of an old building are also visible remains of the TB sanatorium that gave the reserve the name Sanatorium Hill.

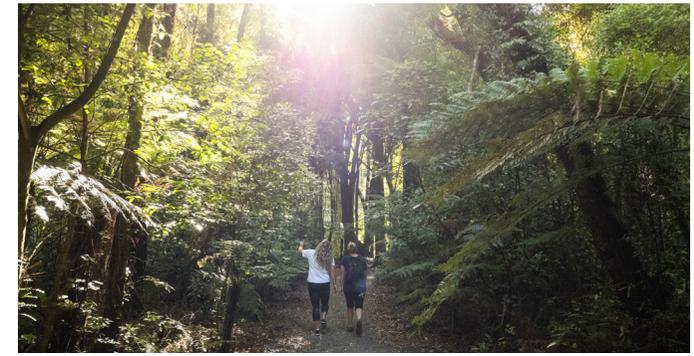
Serious walkers can start in Cambridge and walk 8.8km (17km return) to the reserve via Thornton Road and Maungakawa Road.

### AT A GLANCE:

- Perfect picnic spots with stunning flowering cherries in the spring
- Regenerated native forests with ample bird watching opportunities
- Rich heritage to explore

**Distance:** 1.2km loop walk

**Access:** Carpark on Gudex Road, off Maungakawa Road  
For more information visit: [waikatonz.com/maungakawa](http://waikatonz.com/maungakawa)



## Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari - Te Awamutu

Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari is the largest ecological 'island' on mainland New Zealand. A haven for native wildlife and plants such as Kiwi, Kokako (wattlebird), Tuatara and more, Maungatautari also provides great walking and hiking tracks.

Surrounded by 47kms of predator proof fence which encloses 3,400 hectares of Mt Maungatautari, the Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust strives to eradicate mammalian predators so that native bird populations, trees and ferns are able to flourish uninhibited.

The Southern Enclosure's five walks provide some of the best bird watching opportunities on the mountain. The enclosure also includes a bird feeding area where visitors can watch the kaka and other birds as they come to feed, weta boxes that can be checked to see if anyone is home, and a 16 metre high Canopy Tower that takes visitors up into the treetops. Guided walks are also available by appointment and are a great way to learn about the history of the mountain and the Sanctuary Mountain project.

### AT A GLANCE:

- Guided day and night tours available by appointment
- 16m high canopy tower takes you up into the forest canopy
- Flourishing native birdlife provide ample bird watching opportunities in the bird feeding area

**Distance:** Distance varies from short walks to full day hikes depending on the trail followed

**Access:** The Southern Enclosure can be accessed from the carpark and Visitor Centre at the end of Tari Road, Pukeatua  
For more information visit: [waikatonz.com/sanctuary-mountain](http://waikatonz.com/sanctuary-mountain)



## Te Awa - The Great New Zealand River Ride

Weaving its way through rural and urban landscapes, taking in waterfalls and historic Māori sites as well as trendy shops and cafes, the 70km river ride and walk, once completed, will span from Ngāruawāhia to Lake Karapiro.

The sections through Hamilton City and between Cambridge and Lake Karapiro are complete and ready for walkers now, while the remaining sections are currently in development. The track is primarily wide, smooth and largely flat making Te Awa suitable for all fitness and experience levels.

### AT A GLANCE:

- River views and a mix of rural and urban landscapes
- Beautiful views of Lake Karapiro and a 400m boardwalk around the edge of the lake
- Wide, flat track shared by walkers and cyclists

**Distance:** 📍 70km (once completed) sections open now:  
Hamilton 15.5kms, Cambridge - Lake Karapiro 15.2km

**Access:** This trail can be accessed at various points along the route

For more information visit: [www.te-awa.org.nz](http://www.te-awa.org.nz)



## Taitua Arboretum – Hamilton

Taitua arboretum provides an opportunity to escape the bustle of city living and a tranquil picnic spot just outside the city.

The arboretum is home to an impressive selection of mature trees spread across 22 hectares of open spaces featuring lakes, woodland gardens, birdlife and ample picnic spots, all linked by a network of walking tracks, the arboretum is perfect for a leisurely weekend stroll, family picnic or more active outing.

Those looking for a longer walk can start at the Tills Lookout on Melva Street in Dinsdale for great views of Hamilton City and follow the path for a 30 minute walk to the arboretum.

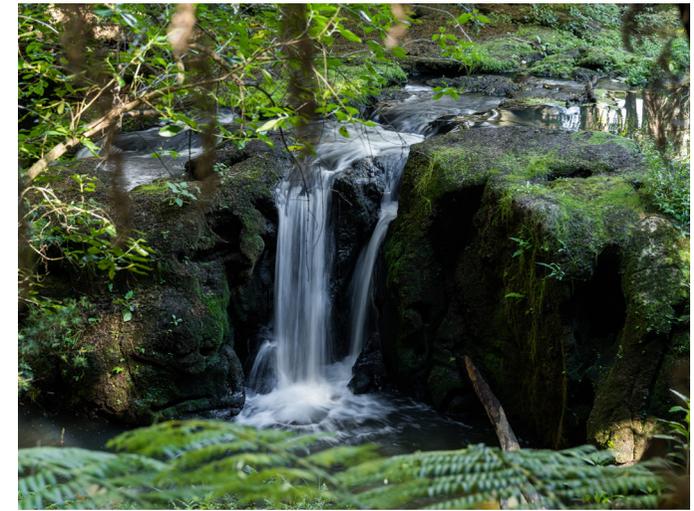
### AT A GLANCE:

- Taitua Arboretum is open seven days from 8am, with ample parking on site.
- Dogs are also welcome within the arboretum, but must be kept on a lead at all times.

**Distance:** 📍 **Varies depending on how far you choose to walk.**  
**From the Tills Lookout on Melva Street it is 30 minute one way to the arboretum.**

**Access:** From Hamilton follow SH23 west (towards Raglan) and turn left into Howden Road, then left again into Taitua Road.

For more information visit: [www.waikatonz.com/taitua](http://www.waikatonz.com/taitua)



## Morrinsville River Walk

The rural township of Morrinsville is home to several great short walks, from heritage and art trails to park and forest tracks.

The Morrinsville River Walk provides a pleasant 40 minute walk in the heart of Morrinsville. Taking in the Morrinsville Recreation Ground, the walk follows the river through a stand of mature trees including native Totara.

Highlights include a small waterfall and plenty of spots to stop for a family picnic, as well as the added bonus of the playground in the recreation ground and the nearby Swim Zone for summer swimming.

### AT A GLANCE:

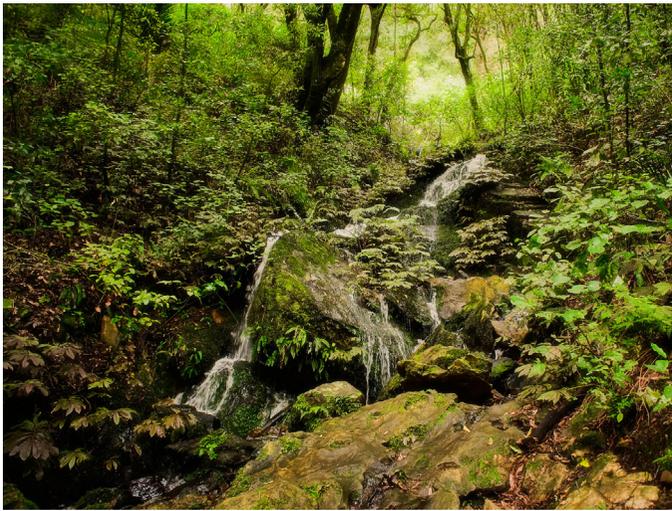
- Scenic river walk that includes stands of native trees and a waterfall.
- The stand of native Totara trees have been identified as significant in the Matamata-Piako District

**Distance:** 📍 **1.8km one way approx. 40 minutes one way**

**Access:** Entrance off Avenue Road South, Morrinsville

For more information visit:

[www.waikatonz.com/morrinsville-walks](http://www.waikatonz.com/morrinsville-walks)



## Mangaokewa Scenic Reserve - Te Kuiti

The Mangaokewa Scenic Reserve is home to great tramping and walking trails along with areas for other recreational activities.

Providing a variety of great tramping tracks that form part of the Te Araroa Trail, the Mangaokewa Scenic Reserve also offers picnic areas and an easy walk to the Cascade Waterfalls. Areas for swimming, bird watching and other recreational activities are also available.

Enjoy an easy one hour walk through native forest, over the swing bridge and up river to a picturesque waterfall, or just take a picnic and relax in the wide open spaces of the reserve.

### AT A GLANCE:

- Take a picnic and enjoy the stunning waterfall and wide open spaces
- Great place for bird watching and swimming in the clear waterways

Distance:  7km loop

Access: 5 minutes south of Te Kuiti adjacent to State Highway 30  
For more information visit: [waikatonz.com/mangaokewa](http://waikatonz.com/mangaokewa)



## Mangapohue Natural Bridge - Waitomo

A short drive from Waitomo Village towards Marokopa is the Mangapohue Natural Bridge. Follow the boardwalk as it weaves its way through the impressive limestone gorge bringing you underneath the stunning natural bridge.

The natural bridge is a 17m high limestone arch; the remains of an ancient cave system. Take an easy five minute stroll to the base of the natural bridge, or continue along the track for a 20 minute loop walk that takes in superb views of the natural bridge and gorge, stalactite-like formations, farmland and 25 million year old fossilised oysters that are exposed in the limestone outcrops.

This easy walk is perfect for a weekend outing with family and friends, and while you're there why not experience one of the other walks on offer in the area including the Marokopa Falls, Piripiri Cave and Opapaka Pa Walk.

### AT A GLANCE:

- View million year old fossils exposed in the limestone outcrops
- Stunning views of the 17m high limestone arch
- Start the walk at dusk and wait for darkness to be treated to a fantastic glowworm display along the banks (during dry weather) – Don't forget a torch, loop track not recommended during dark

Distance:  20 minute loop track, 5 minutes to base of bridge

Access: 25km from Waitomo Village on Te Anga Road  
For more information visit: [waikatonz.com/mangapohue](http://waikatonz.com/mangapohue)



## Ōtorohanga Kiwiana walk

Celebrating all things NZ, the Ōtorohanga Kiwiana Walk is great for families and offers an entertaining stroll through Ōtorohanga, the 'Kiwiana capital of New Zealand'.

The main street features a Kiwiana display gallery, murals and sculptures, and even the public toilets are a light-hearted tribute to NZ's popular culture.

There are carved totem poles in the town centre that pay tribute to the ancestors of the local Manaiapoto people and a bronze bowler hat on a greenstone and stone plinth, which celebrates the region's history.

Exhibitions within the gallery include a tribute to Sir Edmund Hillary, Weetbix, Marmite, rural life, pavlova, No.8 Wire, the Buzzy Bee, All Blacks great Colin Meads and much more.

### AT A GLANCE:

- Featuring all things Kiwiana from No.8 Wire to the pavlova, Buzzy Bee and more
- Snap a picture in front of the Kiwiana Wall on the southern end of town
- Pick up a kids quiz sheet for along the walk from the i-SITE

Distance:  1km

Access: Via main street, Otorohanga  
For more information visit: [www.otorohanga.co.nz](http://www.otorohanga.co.nz)



## Wairere Falls - Matamata

The Wairere Falls is the highest waterfall in the North Island and one of the most popular walking tracks in the region.

The return hike to the viewing platform at the base of the Wairere Falls takes about 1.5 hours. Small wooden bridges take you across the stream at several points, affording lovely views of little cascades and providing opportunities to cool tired feet in the refreshing water.

More avid hikers can continue on to another lookout at the top of the falls, from where there is a breath-taking view back over the valley and the Waikato plains beyond. It is about two hours from the base of the falls to the top lookout, so getting there and returning to your car will make this a rewarding full day hike.

### AT A GLANCE:

- 153m two tier waterfall
- Over the summer there are plenty of pools to paddle in and the track can be explored further upriver

**Distance:** 📍 5km to the top return via same track

**Access:** Goodwin Road, off Old Te Aroha Road

For more information visit: [waikatonz.com/wairere-falls](http://waikatonz.com/wairere-falls)



## Mt Te Aroha

The walking tracks up and around Mt Te Aroha offer stunning views of the Waikato region, historical sites and much more.

The Summit Track starts at the Mokena Geyser in Te Aroha Domain and quickly ascends to the Whakapipi Lookout.

The lookout provides panoramic views over the Hauraki Plains. The hike to the lookout takes about 45 minutes, then from the lookout, the track continues through a small saddle and then steeply up for another two hours to reach the top.

From the summit there are 360 degree views across the Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions, and Mt Ruapehu, Mt Ngauruhoe and Mt Tongariro are all visible on a clear day.

Multi-day hikes are also available in the area on the Kaimai Ranges, as well as plenty of shorter walks on and around Mt Te Aroha – including the popular Waiorongomai Valley.

### AT A GLANCE:

- Enjoy a relaxing soak in the silky waters after a long hike at the beautiful Te Aroha Mineral Spas
- Native bird life
- 360 degree views from the summit

**Distance:** 📍 45 minutes one way to Whakapipi Lookout, 3 hours one way to summit

**Access:** Te Aroha Domain

For more information visit: [waikatonz.com/mt-te-aroha](http://waikatonz.com/mt-te-aroha)



## Pukemokemoke Reserve - Gordonton

The Pukemokemoke Bush Loop Track enjoys a rich diversity of native plant life, boasting over 300 natives including matai, totara, kauri, kanuka and kahikatea, great picnic spots and stunning views of the wider region.

The remnants of the old stopover pa can be found about half way up the track from the bridge, and deep trenches, food pits and other architectural elements can still be identified amongst the fauna that has now taken over the site.

The lookout at the summit of the track provides stunning 360 degree views of the region, with the Hakarimata Ranges, Mt Te Aroha and more, all visible on a clear day. From the summit, the track loops back down the hill to the log hauler site, a large clearing perfect for a family picnic in the sunshine.

### AT A GLANCE:

- Diversity of native plant life
- Picturesque views from summit
- Remnants of an old pa site

**Distance:** 📍 1 hour 30 minute loop

**Access:** Whitikahu Road, north of Gordonton

For more information visit: [waikatonz.com/pukemokemoke](http://waikatonz.com/pukemokemoke)