Walking & Hiking in Hamilton & Waikato

MUST-DO WALKS AND HIKES IN THE HAMILTON & 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 Hamilton & 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 as you climb to a spectacular 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.

The region’s high points all have breath-taking vistas - whether that’s the rich green farming countryside, or the distant sight of snow-capped mountains to the south, every hike has its own unique visual rewards at the top.

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. Meanwhile, the Hakarimata Range near Ngaruawahia in the north of the region (also part of Te Araroa) offers visitors the chance to get up close with ancient kauri trees.

Te Aroha’s namesake mountain has fine walks and views and the bonus of mineral spas at its base to soothe aching muscles afterwards, while at the other end of the region, Pureora Forest Park offers some serious tramping and the sight of the buried forest, created by a violent Lake Taupo eruption 1800 years ago.

MOUNTAIN STREAMS

You’ll never be far from clear mountain streams on the likes of Mt Pirongia and waterfall walks are scattered throughout the region, including the spectacular and aptly named Bridal Veil Falls near Raglan and the Wairere Falls near Matamata. Marvel at South Waikato’s Blue Spring at Te Waihou Walkway, with its stunning crystal clear and bright blue colour due to the purity of the water or simply stroll along the banks of the Waikato River and marvel at its flow.

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

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 hamiltonwaikato.com/walking
**Walks & Hikes**

**Bridal Veil Falls - Raglan**

The spectacular 55m high Bridal Veil Falls, also known as the Waireinga Falls, is an iconic Waikato attraction. Perfect for families, the walk to Bridal Veil Falls is an easy 10 minutes through native bush, to two viewing platforms, 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

**ACCESS:**
The Falls are signposted from State Highway 23, between Te Uku and Raglan

**DISTANCE:**
10 minutes each way to the top lookout

**For more information visit:**
www.hamiltonwaikato.com/bridal-veil-falls

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**Hamilton City River Walk - Hamilton**

Hamilton’s river paths are among the city’s most popular parks, favoured by runners, walkers and cyclists. This picturesque shared walkway and cycleway runs for 10km through central Hamilton, along the banks of the mighty Waikato River.

The track is well signposted and can be accessed at multiple points along the river. It stretches between Pukete in the north, where it links with the nearby Hamilton Mountain Bike Track in Pukete Farm Park, and the internationally acclaimed Hamilton Gardens in the south where you can continue your walk and wander through the stunning gardens.

Forming part of the wider ‘Te Awa – The Great NZ River Ride’ the Hamilton City River Walk section is suitable for all fitness and experience levels. There are several park benches and grassy areas along the track offering scenic views of the river and CBD.

**AT A GLANCE**

- Stunning river and cityscape vistas throughout
- Funky cafes and eateries along the way
- 2014 International Garden of the Year, Hamilton Gardens, at the southern end

**ACCESS:**
This walk can be accessed at various points along the trail on both the eastern and western side of the river

**DISTANCE:**
10km

**For more information visit:**
www.hamiltonwaikato.com/hamilton-city-river-rides

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**Hakarimata Scenic Reserve - Ngāruawāhia**

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

The Hakarimata Ranges itself boasts several great walking trails, with the Hakarimata 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 347m above sea level at the summit lookout.

Other walks in the range include the Hakarimata Kauri Loop Track which will take you past impressive native Kauri trees through a grove of young Kauri, as well as Rimu and Nikau; the Hakarimata 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

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

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

**For more information visit:**
www.doc.govt.nz
**MT PIRONGIA SUMMIT TRACK - TE AWAMUTU**

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, with a lookout tower at the top of the track offering panoramic views of the surrounding area.

An easier but slightly longer route is the Tahuanui Track, which branches off the Nikau Walk and is part of Te Araroa, New Zealand’s trail from Cape Reinga to Bluff.

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

**AT A GLANCE**

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

**ACCESS:**

The Southern Enclosure can be accessed from the carpark and Visitor Centre at the end of Tari Road, Pukenatu

**DISTANCE:**

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

For more information visit: www.doc.govt.nz

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**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 based inside the Maungakawa Scenic Reserve near Cambridge. The easy 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 Thorton 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

**ACCESS:**

Carpark off Gudex Road, off Maungakawa Road

**DISTANCE:**

1.2km loop walk

For more information visit: www.hamiltonwaikato.com/maungakawa-scenic-reserve

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**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 4.7kms 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 provides some of the best bird watching opportunities on the mountain.

**AT A GLANCE**

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

**ACCESS:**

The Southern Enclosure can be accessed from the carpark and Visitor Centre at the end of Tari Road, Pukenatu

**DISTANCE:**

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

For more information visit: www.hamiltonwaikato.com/sanctuary-mountain-maungatautari

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**MT PIRONGIA SUMMIT TRACK - TE AWAMUTU**

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, with a lookout tower at the top of the track offering panoramic views of the surrounding area.

An easier but slightly longer route is the Tahuanui Track, which branches off the Nikau Walk and is part if Te Araroa, New Zealand’s trail from Cape Reinga to Bluff.

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

**ACCESS:**

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

For more information visit: www.doc.govt.nz

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**DISTANCE:**

6.5km one way for Tirohanga Track or 10.7km one day for Tahuanui Track

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**DISTANCE:**

10.7km one day for Tahuanui Track
Weaving its way through rural and urban landscapes, taking in waterfalls and historic Maori sites as well as trendy shops, cafes and wineries the 70km river ride and walk, once completed, will span from Ngaruawahia 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.

Once complete Te Awa will also link with the Waikato River Trails near Horahora, providing walkers and cyclists with 170km of trail to enjoy.

The Te Waihou Walkway to the Blue Spring is definitely one of the region’s true hidden gems. Producing water so pure it supplies around 70% of New Zealand’s bottled water, the Blue Spring is fed from the Mamaku Plateau, taking up to 100 years to filter through with the resulting water so clean that it produces a vibrant, iridescent blue colour while being virtually clear.

The walk to the springs follows a track alongside the Waihou River, through wetlands and across rolling pastoral fields and features views of small waterfalls, native bush and the famous Blue Spring with glimpses of trout along the way.

The walkway offers two options – the first is a one and a half hour walk each way along the Waihou River, starting from Whites Road near Putaruru, while the second is a shorter 15 minutes (each way) walk which is accessed from Leslie Road.

The Talking Poles that line the central shopping streets of Tokoroa are a must visit South Waikato attraction.

More than 40 poles comprise the collection, with each one reflecting the variety of cultures that reside in the South Waikato area. The Pacific Memories and Professional Business Women Poles, the interestingly named Crazyman Pole, named because of the grass growing out of his head, and The Pine Man which stands tall along the main highway through town, are among the collection. The sculptures, which were developed as part of the retail upgrade Tokoroa has undergone in recent years, can be seen mainly around the CBD of Tokoroa and form a trail where you can take in the poles and learn about their stories and the history of the area.

As the area is renowned for its forestry heritage, most of the poles are made from species such as pine that are found in abundance in the area.

**Walks & Hikes**

**Te Awa - The Great NZ River Ride**

- 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

**AT A GLANCE**

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

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

**Te Waihou Walkway - Putaruru**

- Spectacular views of the Te Waihou River and its crystal clear water
- The Blue Spring itself
- Rolling farmland and native bush along the trail with quiet picnic spots along the way

**AT A GLANCE**

- Distance: Full track - 4.7km one way plus 0.5km loop track with a shorter route to Blue Spring via Leslie Rd
- Access: Whites Road or Leslie Road, Putaruru

For more information visit: [www.hamiltonwaikato.com/te-waihou-walkway](http://www.hamiltonwaikato.com/te-waihou-walkway)

**Tokoroa Talking Poles - Tokoroa**

- Crazyman Pole, located on the corner of Logan Street - inspired by the Cook Islands, this work is well-loved for its quirky appearance
- The Green Man pole, located on Leith Place, was a living tree while being carved and represents peace and the beauty of nature

**AT A GLANCE**

- Distance: Distance varies depending on how many Talking Poles are visited
- Access: The walking trail is accessible at any point along the route

For more information visit: [www.talkingpoles.co.nz](http://www.talkingpoles.co.nz)
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.

- 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 a fantastic glowworm display along the banks (during dry weather) – Don’t forget a torch, loop track not recommended during dark

For more information visit: www.doc.govt.nz

ACCESS: 25km from Waitomo Village on Te Anga Road
DISTANCE: 20 minute Loop track, 5 minutes to base of bridge

MANGAPOHUE NATURAL BRIDGE - WAITOMO

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

ACCESS: 5 minutes south of Te Kuiti adjacent to State Highway 30
DISTANCE: 7km loop

For more information visit: www.hamiltonwaikato.com/mangaokewa-scenic-reserve

MANGAPOHUE NATURAL BRIDGE - WAITOMO

OTOROHANGA KIWIANA WALK - OTOROHANGA

Celebrating all things NZ, the Otorohanga Kiwiana Walk is great for families and offers an entertaining stroll through Otorohanga, 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.

From the intricately carved totem poles in the town centre paying tribute to the ancestors of the local Manaipoto people, to a bronze bowler hat on a greenstone and stone plinth, the walk offers insight into New Zealand’s proud history and uniqueness.

Exhibitions within the gallery includes 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.

- 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

ACCESS: Via main street, Otorohanga
DISTANCE: 1km

For more information visit: www.otorohanga.co.nz

OTOROHANGA KIWIANA WALK - OTOROHANGA

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

ACCESS: 5 minutes south of Te Kuiti adjacent to State Highway 30
DISTANCE: 7km loop

For more information visit: www.hamiltonwaikato.com/mangaokewa-scenic-reserve

OTOROHANGA KIWIANA WALK - OTOROHANGA

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ACCESS: 25km from Waitomo Village on Te Anga Road
DISTANCE: 20 minute Loop track, 5 minutes to base of bridge

MANGAPOHUE NATURAL BRIDGE - WAITOMO

OTOROHANGA KIWIANA WALK - OTOROHANGA
WAIHERE 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 walk 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.

For more information visit: www.doc.govt.nz

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

ACCESS:
Goodwin Road, off Old Te Aroha Road

DISTANCE:
5km to the top return via same track

MT TE AROHA - TE AROHA

Densely forested, Mt Te Aroha is a bird lover’s paradise, where Kaka, Kokako, and Tui can often be seen and heard.

The Mokena Mountain 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 Taranaki 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.

For more information visit: www.doc.govt.nz

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

ACCESS:
Te Aroha Domain

DISTANCE:
45 minutes one way to Whakapipi Lookout, 3 hours one way to summit

PUEMOKEMOKE RESERVE - MORRINSVILLE

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 visible on a clear day. From the summit, the track loops back down the mountain to the ‘log hauler’ site, a large clearing perfect for a family picnic in the sunshine.

For more information visit: www.hamiltonwaikato.com/pukemokemoke

AT A GLANCE

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

ACCESS:
Whitikahu Road, north of Gordonton

DISTANCE:
1 hour 30 minute loop

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

ACCESS:
Goodwin Road, off Old Te Aroha Road

DISTANCE:
5km to the top return via same track

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ACCESS:
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DISTANCE:
45 minutes one way to Whakapipi Lookout, 3 hours one way to summit

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