

OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST

Kapiti Island

Kapiti Island lies around five kilometres off the west coast of the southern North Island. It's ten kilometres long and about two kilometres wide and, unlike many nature reserves where access is difficult, Kapiti is one of the few relatively accessible island reserves. The island is now one of New Zealand's most important sites for bird recovery. Once on Kapiti Island you will find birds that are either very rare or absent from the mainland, including the little spotted kiwi. In the bush you'll find kereru (NZ pigeon), North Island tomtit, kaka, whitehead, tui, fantail, long-tailed cuckoo and silvereye.

Around the coast you'll discover black-backed and red-billed gulls, the white-fronted tern, the variable oystercatcher, the reef heron, and black and spotted shags. Cats, deer, goats, sheep, cattle, pigs, dogs and rats have been eradicated from the reserve, and, between February 1980 and November 1986, 22,500 possums were also eradicated.

Originally Kapiti Island was dominated by huge rata and podocarps such as matai and miro. Some of these ancient trees have survived in the deep gullies which the fires of the 1800s missed. And, while today the island's main forests are kohekohe, tawa and kanuka, Kapiti also supports large numbers of northern rata.

On the island there are several tracks including the Wilkinson Track that will take you to the summit of the island – Tuteremoana. It costs \$9 per adult and \$4.50 per child, plus launch transport costs, to visit Kapiti Island Nature Reserve. Boat companies take you to the island from Paraparaumu Beach on the Kapiti Coast, 50 minutes drive north of Wellington. Only 50 people per day may visit Kapiti Island Nature Reserve. Please contact the Department of Conservation for a landing permit.

Catchpool Valley, Rimutaka Forest Park

Rimutaka Forest Park is approximately 33 kilometres from Wellington City, via the coast road from Wainuiomata. There is a Visitor Centre that contains information and displays.

The walk takes you along beside Catchpool Stream through a varied forest supporting beech trees, podocarps such as rimu, and many ferns. After two hours comfortable walking you will arrive at the Orongorongo River. Look up at the surrounding hillsides and see emergent northern rata standing tall above hardwood forest.

Rata Restoration in Progress at Karori Wildlife Sanctuary

Karori Wildlife Sanctuary is ten minutes drive from the centre of the city. While, as its name suggests, the scope of the Sanctuary goes beyond rata, what you will find here is a huge rata restoration programme taking place. One of the largest restoration programmes of any kind in New Zealand, it is certainly Wellington's biggest project. In the Sanctuary you'll discover an extensive series of trails that allow you to see northern rata restoration first-hand.

While the young northern rata are not immediately visible, the one sole surviving adult rata is visible from Tui Terrace. Possums have done their worst to this tree and it has not yet flowered since the possums inflicted so much damage.

It's the climbing rata (*Metrosideros fulgens*) that currently features most prominently in the Sanctuary and it flowers profusely in season. This red-flowered species is easily spotted around the bush edge and its flowering season is from April to October.

Access to the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary is via the Visitors Centre on Waiapu Road, which is the first left turn after the Karori Tunnel. The Sanctuary is open every day of the year (except Christmas Day) 10 - 5pm. There is an entry charge of \$8 for adults, \$4 for children and \$20 for families.

Meridian Energy is New Zealand's largest generator of electricity. The partnership with Project Crimson reflects our commitment to Keeping New Zealand New by using only renewable forms of generation, such as wind and hydro. We are privileged to live and work every day amongst New Zealand's awe-inspiring natural environment, at Manapouri, the Mackenzie district, and Te Aiti. We feel equally privileged to be able to support the Trust's goal of renewing the splendour of pohutukawa and rata for future generations.

Find out more about northern and southern rata at www.projectcrimson.org.nz

Why Project Crimson?

Once, long ago, rata forests would have turned Wellington's coastlines and hillsides red. This is unlikely to occur again. The introduction of the Australian brushtail possum, together with human development, not only destroyed the forests but threatened the species itself. Through a wide range of programmes to educate and inform, through community partnerships, widespread planting and possum eradication programmes, Project Crimson seeks to enable rata to flourish once again in their natural habitat.

This Wellington Crimson Trail is one of a series of Crimson Trails to be identified by Project Crimson throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. Each Crimson Trail is unique to its region, presenting either rata (northern and southern) or pohutukawa, or both, according to location within New Zealand. What the Crimson Trails share is that special time of the year when glorious crimson blooms cloak the trees and the wind-blown stamens carpet the ground all around.

Crimson Trails can be explored in the following areas:

North Island (Te Ika a Maui)

Auckland
Coromandel
Mount Maunganui
Rotorua
Wellington

South Island (Te Waipounamu)

Golden Bay
West Coast
Otago Southland



Brochures for each Crimson Trail are available from Department of Conservation offices, local information centres and can be downloaded from Project Crimson's web site.

Project Crimson wants to particularly thank the Department of Conservation (Wellington) for assistance in the presentation of the Wellington Crimson Trails.

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Summer in Wellington is a fabulous time to be outdoors.

This is especially true if you are walking through native forest with rata flowers in bloom. The spectacular crimson canopy will make a summer walk even more enjoyable.

Here you will discover a series of Crimson Trails that take you into some of the most magnificent rata forests in Wellington. And, while the pohutukawa – New Zealand's 'Christmas Tree' – is not native to Wellington, it also blooms brilliantly between December and January.



Photo: Tim Oleary

Our 'iron-hearted' trees

Northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*) is very important in Wellington's native forests. It supports honey-eating birds such as bellbird and tui. It protects understorey vegetation from exposure and it grows to a height of 25 metres.

Its crimson flowers can be seen most spectacularly in late December and early January.



Northern Rata

Photo: John Crawford

Pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*), otherwise known as New Zealand's Christmas tree, has been planted extensively throughout the city and is a valuable addition to private gardens. It forms a tree up to 20 metres tall and flowers from early December until January.



Pohutukawa

Photo: John Crawford

Southern rata (*Metrosideros umbellata*) is similar to northern rata but is very rare in Wellington. It grows to just 15 metres and can only be seen in the Taranaki Forest Park where it flowers from November to January.

LET'S EXPLORE...

The Crimson Trails in Wellington



1 Wellington City – from city to sea

In the heart of Wellington there is a trail that will take less than two hours to complete. It takes you from Point Jerningham along Oriental Bay to the centre of the city.

The Number 14 bus from the city centre will take you to the start of the walk at Oriental Bay. From Point Jerningham follow the coastal pathway back along Oriental Parade past the planted pohutukawa. Keep beside the water's edge, and walk past Te Papa and on to Frank Kitts Park and the railway station. Pohutukawa can be seen all the way. If you are more energetic head towards the cricket ground at the Basin Reserve or to Central Park in Brooklyn where there are several northern rata growing amongst the pohutukawa.

The black dots mark northern rata on the map at Central Park.

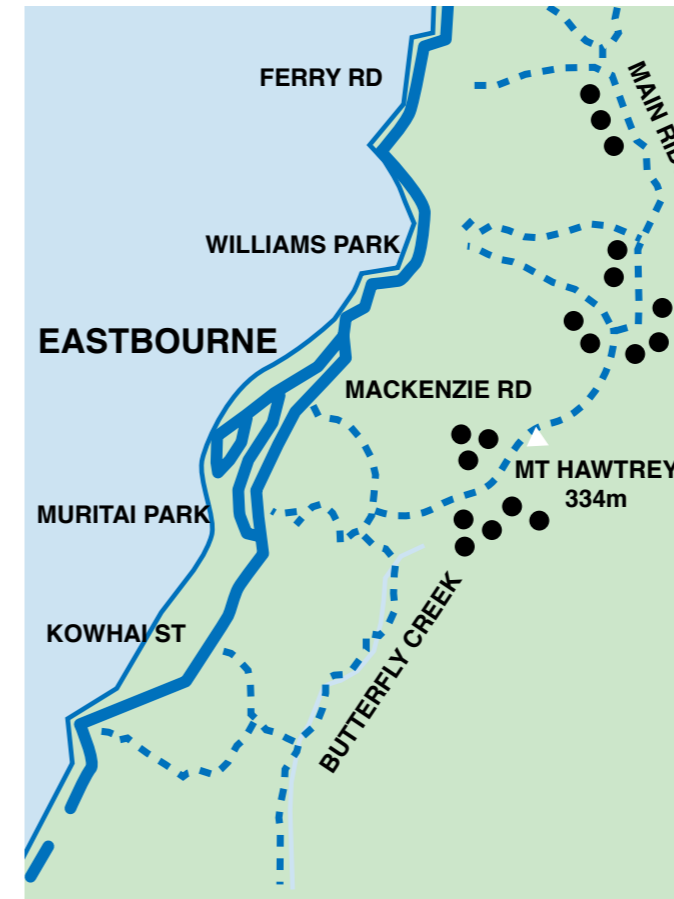


2 Butterfly Creek & Mount Hawtrey, Eastbourne

Thirty minutes drive from Wellington around the harbour (or half an hour across the harbour by ferry) are Days Bay and Eastbourne. They are the gateway to Butterfly Creek and the Eastbourne Hills. Many trails lead up the hillside through beech forest and regenerating bush through Williams Park to the main ridge and also over the ridge to Butterfly Creek. Along the ridge and down the other side there are many stands of northern rata. It is here that the largest northern rata in the region (32 metres in circumference) may be found.

A reasonable level of fitness and good walking shoes are required. You may also note that there are pest control operations here to protect the forest in the long term.

The black dots on the map mark the location of northern rata on this trail.



3 Otari-Wilton's Bush

Less than ten minutes drive (Number 14 bus from the city centre) from Wellington is Otari-Wilton's Bush on Wilton Road. From the carpark on the west side of Wilton Road there are over ten kilometres of walking tracks. The longest of these is the five-kilometre loop of the reserve which takes three hours to complete. Along this track there are many opportunities to look at northern rata, both distant views and up close. At the start of Otari-Wilton's Nature Trail (Post 2) you'll find two climbing rata, *Metrosideros perforata* and *Metrosideros diffusa*, both white-blooming rata and both native to the Bush.

Then, at Post 8 on the Nature Trail, you'll discover an impressive rimu that's at least 400 years old. The northern rata started life as an epiphyte high in this rimu and now the vertical roots of the rata have grown large and fused together to form a pseudo-trunk.

At Otari-Wilton's Bush you will also find a wonderful Information Centre with photos of the rata and information on the forest. The Information Centre is open between 9am and 5pm daily and the Garden is open from sunrise to sunset.

This is a 'must do' Crimson Trail.

The black dots mark northern rata that you'll pass on your walk.

