

Discovering Tryphena

Trouble with Tryphena: if you linger here, it might make your ordinary life seem less than perfect.

All you need to know to enjoy exploring this area for a day.



The big easy

Tryphena - it's easy being great when you just are.

This is the bay with the biggest heart. This is Aotearoa at its best.



What's in a name?

Rangitāwhiri, as Tryphena is known to Māori, means 'a day of welcome.' Fitting, since this stunning bay has been welcoming settlers and visitors since before legendary explorer Kupe arrived in the 1400s.

Europeans first called it Tofino, after an 18th century Spanish navigator Vincente Tofino de San Miguel, who was famous for drawing good maps.

But the prevalent myth is that Tryphena was named after a ship that was supposedly built here. The brig was real, but built in NSW, Australia in the 1840s, and named after the owner's daughter. Yes the ship did visit the Barrier often, and her name stuck - perhaps because Tofino was harder to say.

Whatever name you know it by, let Rangitāwhiri be a 'day of welcome' to the treasures of Aotearoa.



When you see one of these - use it! They will lead you to lovely hidden spots.

Must-do activities

Don't miss out on these Tryphena essentials:

Visit all the bays - compare the communities of Stonewall Village ③, Mulberry Grove ④ and Shoal Bay ⑤. Sit down and have a kōrero (chat) with a local. They'll fill you in on all the gossip, tell tall tales and will make you wonder why you're not living here too!

Walk the foreshore and beaches any time of day. Get into the rhythm of Tryphena Harbour's tides, listen to the songs of native birds, see the fish jump. Keep a lookout on where you're at - the tides here have a maximum vertical rise and fall of 3.5m.

Eat fresh fare at one of the local restaurants. There's plenty of choice here, from a gourmet brunch or dinner at a private lodge, to a hearty meal at one of the popular pubs and eateries.

Get on the water with a charter boat or rent a kayak at Mulberry Grove and Shoal Bay. Remember: respect the moana, wear a life-jacket.

The three parts of Tryphena: Stonewall Village ③ has two bays. The northern Pah Beach where a major stream comes out is a great spot for viewing the bird life, while the southern side has more of the amenities: a nice foreshore reserve with toilets right by the shop and the local pub.

Mulberry Grove ④ is a bit smaller and more intimate. It has some beautiful pohutukawa trees right on the beach - great to hang out for hours with the kids. This beach also has good facilities

Left: Three bays lined up at Tryphena Harbour. Photo: John Kjgaard.



Pah Beach, Tryphena. Photo: Neal Coe.

right where you need them - including a modern playground and skate ramp.

Shoal Bay ⑤, the site of the main passenger ferry wharf, has its own kind of charm. You could call this 'interesting boats central.' A bit more tidal, more laid back than the other bays.

Hīkoi: Short walks

||||| Promenade the foreshore

The most leisurely way of walking, well suited to any holiday. You can't walk the entire coastline from bay to bay, but you can hop onto any of the beaches and saunter along. Take your pick, everyone ends up with a favourite spot.

— Miller's Hill walk

Great shortcut between Tryphena and Mulberry Grove, away from the main road, and up a bit.

— Te Rangitāwhiri Reserve

Tucked behind Mulberry Grove is a cute little DOC reserve with a babbling brook and beautiful big trees. It's picnic heaven.

— Station Rock Lookout ①

Take advantage of the highest point on Medlands Road: park up and climb one of the island's big peaks - great views are your reward for a relatively short climb (25 minutes).

Some of the walks are also described on the AKL Paths website. Directional bollards will also help you find your way.

Local myth?

Of the very few mythical animal sightings in New Zealand history, Tryphena boasts a beaut!

In November 1860, the young daughters of Neil Malcolm saw this thing: "Its height from six to seven feet, head like a goat or sheep, but with whiskers like a cat, and two horns protruding straight forward over the eyes, twisted and beautifully transparent like tortoiseshell, no visible ears, ewe-necked with full-crop in front, arms and fingers with long claws and large oval wings attached to the arms and lower quarters like a kangaroo. And now comes the singular part: it seems enveloped in a sort of mist..." *

Is it still out there? Dunno - it hasn't been seen since. But may as well keep a lookout, ey?

* From a letter to the Colonist newspaper 9 November 1860.

Haerenga: Longer walking tracks

— Dolphin Bay Track

About 1km along Cape Barrier Road from Shoal Bay, follow the track through the bush to a sheltered rocky bay. Good for fishing, getting away from it all or perhaps even some dolphin spotting. It's steep in places, but you'll have a stunning wee bay all to yourself.

3 hours return.

— Ross Bay Track ⑦

Take the right fork 25 minutes walk along the Dolphin Bay Track. At the end you'll get a glorious view of Tryphena Harbour - and beyond. Bring snorkeling gear in February/March; on calm days there's a lovely underwater garden to explore, after a final steep descent, and a scramble over the rocks.

3 hours return.

— Island Bay Track

Follow a ridge line with expansive views down to stunning Island Bay, and get up close to Motu Tohorā- the tail of the Southern Right Whale. Also known as Rabbit Island.

2 hours return.

— Ruahine Lookout Track ⑧

Park at the end of Cape Barrier Road, follow the marked track alongside the road, down to Johnson's Bay. From there, the trail heads to the right, winding its way up the mountain.

This trail stops at a great viewpoint, just a little short of the summit - it's private land from there on. Please respect the boundary.

3 - 4 hours return



Johnson's Bay.

— Whaler's Lookout Track ⑨

Follow the signs from Johnson's Bay to the southernmost point on Great Barrier - and the closest to the Coromandel. You'll have a good chance of spotting Brydes whales from here.

30 minutes return from Ruahine Lookout track.

— Kōwhai Valley Track

Downhill all the way to Medlands Beach - ends at the boardwalk over the wetland at the beach. Wear good shoes. Good for mountain bikes, too. The first section is steep though, so you'll need to be confident, or just get off and push.

30 minutes by bike, 1- 2 hours walking, one way.



Nature spotting

From ducks to dolphins, plenty to see - if you just slow down enough. From the roadside, or from a kayak, you'll often see dolphins in the bay.

The Colville Channel south of Tai-tu-mata, Cape Barrier ⑨ is known for its concentration of whales. Local Māori say the route whales take has changed because of the hunting from Whangaparapara - most tend to move up the east coast of the island now.

On land, native birds are recovering on Aotearoa. It is home to the world's biggest pāteke (brown teal duck) population. Kākā parrots will keep you amused too.



North Island kākā. Photo: Department of Conservation.

The exploding dunny

Kaboom! It's not always peace and quiet around here.

Bob Whitmore bought a Pūriri Bay section from gruff old Tom Alcock for £250 in the 1960s.

Bob's mate Arnie Willis helped him build a long-drop toilet. It had to be 25 feet deep, said Arnie.

To get through hard 'papa' rock they used small amounts of gelignite. But one time Arnie got carried away - and the resulting explosion was the biggest bang Tryphena's ever heard!

The second-biggest explosion was when Bob tried burning off paper in the hole - with the help of some petrol that Arnie had sloshed in. A good mate, Arnie...

Cartoon by Cathy Phillips.



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