



# Discovering Whangaparapara and Okupu

Once was bustling - now slowed right down, just for you.

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

## Key (turn over for description of each walk)

Easy walk to Green Campground	Te Ahumatā Track
Track to historic mill site	Te Ahumatā summit
Beach access to Former whaling station	Track to Iona Mine
Tramline Track to Kauri Falls	Forest Road (tramping track)
French Road/Harpoon Hill loop	Other tramping track
Kaitoke Hot Springs Track	Sealed road
Safe beach	Gravel road
<b>Information</b>	Mountain bike route (Grade 2. Also tramping track)
<b>Petrol/diesel</b>	Mountain bike route (Grade 3. Also tramping track)
<b>Heritage site</b>	Restaurant/bar
<b>Scenic site</b>	Public toilets
<b>Ferry</b>	Shop/store
<b>Safe swimming</b>	Camping
<b>Child friendly walk</b>	Golf/Sports
<b>No dogs</b>	Boat ramp
<b>Dog off leash</b>	Barbecue
<b>Child friendly walk</b>	Kayak hire
<b>No dogs</b>	Parking
<b>Dog off leash</b>	Public toilets

**Aotea Great Barrier Local Board**  
Auckland Council



# All quiet now...

## One hundred years ago, very different.

Here's a place where the trajectory of history is unexpectedly inverted.

Economic growth has turned into quietude and reverie.



Kauri Timber Company Sawmill and wharf, Whangaparapara. Photo: L.R. Young, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

### Walk to the Green Campground

At the northern head of the bay, 1km from the wharf, you'll see the track to the Green Campground ①. It's a flat, easy walk of about 15 minutes one way, and baby buggy friendly.

Left: Whangaparapara Harbour. Photo: Ben Island.



Whales were processed at Whangaparapara in the 1960s. Photo: Auckland War Memorial Museum - Tamaki Paenga Hira. C47938.

Before the arrival of Europeans, Whangaparapara was a place of commerce on Aotea. The area was protected by a number of Pā Kaha or fortified strongholds - sites which remain sacred today. This harbour was an access point to valuable obsidian deposits which the people traded with other iwi (tribes).

After British colonisation, whales were hunted from here ③ in (very) small boats, right up to 1962. The remains of New Zealand's last whaling station are seen across the bay.

Then there was a huge timber mill ②, north of the whaling station. It had an impressive jetty, big enough for many ships to tie up, and was connected to the hinterland with tramlines. The sawmill also processed logs from Northland and the Coromandel. It was frantically busy from 1906-1916. Then poof! All gone. Timber ran out.

The stamper battery ⑥ on the road back to Claris, is what's left of the equally short-lived gold and silver mining industry (1892-1920). The solid stone foundations show that this was where they crushed the rocks to find the glittery stuff. Where the stamper is now was once a mining town called Oreville with 400 people. Thirty men worked underground. Horses were used to pull empty ore trucks from the stamper back to the mine.



Steam tractor used on the logging tramway, near the mill site.

Of course you can access the campsite by boat or kayak from the wharf or beach.

The campsite has a cooking shelter and toilets, but no drinking water and no vehicle access.

15 minutes one way.

### Track to historic mill site ②

From the Green Campground a rugged trail takes you over a steep hill to the site of the former Whangaparapara Timber Mill Company. All that remains of this large operation are bits of the timber tramlines, an impressive steam engine, and wharf piles along the foreshore.

At low tide you can wander along the foreshore to the site of the whaling station that operated here - locals can tell you stories from those days. Stick to the beach and the tracks to respect the culturally valuable sites of significance which are often unmarked.

Allow 2 hours return from the Green Campsite.

### Adventure playground

Don't expect a shopping mall - 'cause there ain't one. Be ready for the splendid outdoors.

From this bay you can go on lots of great walks, from the sedate to the heavy-duty. There's a lovely waterfront campsite, just across the bay, and reached by a short walk on the flat. Plenty of places to stop for picnics, too.

There are mountain biking and kayaking options here too.

You can link your walks from here to the Aotea Track which over two or three days circles the heart of the island. All Department of Conservation land on the island became the Aotea Conservation Park in April 2015.

### Tramline Track to Kauri Falls

The Tramline Track is part of an extensive system of bush tramlines that helped get kauri logs out in the bush logging days.

About 45 minutes up the Tramline Track South you'll find some lovely swimming holes, with waterfalls, ideal for young families. ④

Tramline Track South is an easy walk up to the waterfall. Beyond that point it becomes a more challenging trail (Tramline Track North), so take care if you are planning to explore further afield.

For a loop from Whangaparapara, head up the Tramline Track South, and turn right onto the Forest Road, and return along Whangaparapara road. Along the Tramline Track you'll experience lovely forests. It's not hard to imagine what this place was like in pre-European times. Our Māori ancestors had the right idea!

4 - 5 hours return.

### Harpoon Hill loop

Just up the road from the Wharf is a gentle local loop that connects French Road with Harpoon Hill Road. Your reward: great views across the Harbour.

20 minute return.

### Wetlands, bush and natural hot tubs

Kaitoke Swamp and Waitepua - treasured for centuries.

Kaitoke and Waitepua are historically rich and it's not hard to see why. This significant awa (river) reaches the sea just north of Claris and is part of an extensive and extraordinary wetland system in the heart of Aotearoa, fed by the maunga and ranges on the island.

You'll find plants endemic to the island, rare native birds, and peaceful hot springs - which are a major attraction for the Lonely Planet set. Soak, rest and rejuvenate in a place that has been providing sustenance and healing waters for generations.



Kaitoke Hot Springs. Photo: Roger Thorp.

### Kaitoke Hot Springs Track

For a 'there-and-back-from-the-road' option, park at the track entrance, and take your togs for the easy walk to the hot springs. ⑦ On the way there you get some beautiful glimpses of the Kaitoke wetland.

Enjoy the hot pools, and take care of the river banks. Don't take soap - it messes up the water quality downstream. So spare a thought for the ducks and the fish.

And DO NOT put your head under - the warm water is a great environment for some nasty bugs. It's totally safe for a careful dip, though.

45 minutes one way.



Watch out for pāteke (brown teal), a rare native duck.

### Kaitoke Hot Springs loop

Make your trip to the Hot Pools into a challenging day trip: past the hot pools, take the left fork along the old logging Tramline Track, back on the Forest Road and a downhill stroll along Whangaparapara Road. Good chance to stop and have a look around the old Oreville Stamping Battery ⑤ along the way.

Or if you're keen and car-less, you can take a day to walk up the Tramline Track from Whangaparapara, dip in the pools and walk back. Be prepared, the tracks between 4 and 7, especially the linking Tamline Track North, are challenging.

3-4 hours loop, excluding the soak in the hot pools.



Kids' artwork in local school bus stops depicts island plants.



Below: Kaitoke wetland. Photo: John Kjargaard.

### Forest Road

An old unsealed road that connects Whangaparapara with Port FitzRoy. Closed for vehicles, but ideal for walkers and mountain bikers. Be prepared for some big climbs and impressive views, this road crosses big hills and dips into deep valleys. Classed as an intermediate-advanced ride. Stick to the Mountain Bike Code - look out for walkers and don't use the tramping tracks, as they are too narrow to share.

Forest Road to Port FitzRoy - 2 hours by bike, 4-5 hours walking (one way).

### Te Ahumatā Track

Follow an old mining road that once linked Whangaparapara and Blind Bay. Marvel at wind-swept bonsai-like plants at the summit, and spot many species of orchid on the way up. And views, views, views, from atop the white cliffs. Also the place significant for obsidian - a valuable Māori resource. Many local names include 'matā' (obsidian).

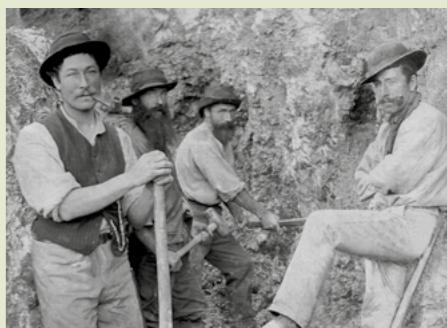
Alternatively, keep going down the road to lovely Okupu Bay and arrange a lift back.

Whangaparapara Road to Blind Bay Road - 30 minutes by bike, 1 hour walking (one way).

### Te Ahumatā Summit

Another great day trip for walkers: follow the Te Ahumatā Track to the top of the ridge and then take the summit track to the summit of Te Ahumatā ⑥ and enjoy the view.

Branch track to summit - 30 minutes walk (one way).



History comes alive at the Iona Mine site. Photo: Ben Sanderson coll.

### Beyond the bay

More worthwhiles to see and do.

### Iona Mine ⑧

A short walk off the Blind Bay Road takes you to one of the Iona Mine shafts. Get the gen in an interpretive sign of the fascinating history of the short-lived gold rush on the island. This short walk - and others - can be found on the AKL Paths website.

### Okupu Bay

Or you can drive down to the beach front: giant old magic trees, quiet swimming beach, a picnic heaven. Then drive further out along Blind Bay Road across historic stone bridges to beautiful Okupu Wharf. This is deep chill-out territory.