

THE BEST DAY WALKS ON THE HAURAKI GULF ISLANDS

Sunday 23 February – Sunday 2 March 2025

7 delightful days exploring the best short walks on 7 idyllic islands

Leader: Phillip Donnell



The warm and sheltered waters of the Hauraki Gulf have been home to humans for up to a thousand years, providing a fertile fishing ground for early Māori and today forming the backdrop to New Zealand's biggest city.

While Hauraki itself means the "north wind", which used to bring raiding parties from that direction – the gulf now has another official Māori name: Tikapa Moana o Hauraki, a sea protected by a sacred rock or mauri placed by the navigator Tametekapua of the Arawa canoe on an islet at the entrance to the gulf.

The gulf contains more than 50 islands, from rocky islets barely above the high-tide mark to suburban Waiheke. Most are largely uninhabited; several are reserves and all fall within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, covering more than 1.2 million hectares of ocean.

On the weekends – and on any fine weekday – the inner gulf is abuzz with small boats: ferries, fishers, sailors, cruisers, explorers. Protected by the outstretching arm of the Coromandel Peninsula and its outlier Great Barrier, the Gulf's waters are host to schools of snapper,

kahawai and fighting kingfish; a breeding ground for sharks; and home to bottlenose and common dolphins, their larger cousin the orca and the magnificent Bryde’s whale.

Many of the islands are home to rare and wonderful birds, too: sanctuaries such as Tiritiri Matangi, Motutapu, Motuihe and Rotoroa are playing an important role in bringing endangered species such as takahē, kiwi and tīeke (saddleback) back from the brink, while seabirds such as oystercatchers, gannets and terns enjoy the seafood buffet as much as the area’s human inhabitants.

Price: \$1400pp (6 persons or more), \$1500pp (5 persons), \$1600pp (4 persons)

The price includes:

- Road transport in a 12-seater van
- 7 nights accommodation (motels or Air BnB)
- Breakfasts (continental)
- The services of an experienced Kiwi leader/guide throughout

The price does not include:

- Ferry fares to and from the islands (allow \$400-\$500)
- Lunches and dinners
- Travel insurance
- Personal incidentals and excursions

DAY	POSSIBLE WALKS	OVERNIGHT
	Participants should gather in Auckland by Saturday evening 22 February . Accommodation is available (this is an additional cost)	
Day 1 Sunday 23 February	Rotoroa Island (ferry from Auckland) After a hundred years as a Salvation Army alcohol- and drug-rehabilitation centre, Rotoroa now offers a different kind of sanctuary. Managed by a trust, the island has been opened to the public as an arts, heritage and conservation park through the philanthropy of Neal and Annette Plowman. Takahē, tīeke (saddlebacks) and kiwi are thriving on the island, which also retains remnants of its addiction-therapy days when it was nicknamed ‘Alcatraz’. A stunning – and, yes, sobering – visitor and exhibition centre tells the island’s story. <i>Possible Walks:</i> Southern Loop Track (1h15m), North Tower Loop Track (45m), Mai Mai Bay Track (10m), Cable Bay Track (30m).	Auckland Central
Day 2 Monday 24 February	Waiheke Island (ferry from Auckland) The island is 19.3 km in length from west to east, varies in width from 0.64 to 9.65 km, and has a surface area of 92km ² . The coastline is 133.5 km, including 40 km of	Oneroa
Day 3 Tuesday		Auckland Central

25 February	<p>beaches. The port of Matiatia at the western end is 17.7 km from Auckland.</p> <p>Waiheke has a resident population of 9,420 people (June 2023) with most living close to the western end. The settlements of Oneroa and Blackpool are the furthest west, followed by Palm Beach, Surfdale, and Ostend. Further east lies Onetangi. To the south of this on the opposing coast is the beautiful Whakanewha Regional Park and Ōmiha (also called 'Rocky Bay'). Much of the eastern half of the island is privately owned farmland and vineyards.</p> <p><i>Possible Walks:</i></p> <p>Matiatia-Church Bay-Oneroa (2h), Matiatia-Owhanake-Oneroa (2-3h), Oneroa-Blackpool (2h), Park Point (1h) Matietie Walk (55m), Stony Batter Tunnels and Opopo Bay (2h30m), Orapiu-Pearl Bay (2h), Waikoupou Bay (1h30m), Hekerua-Palm Beach (2h), Te Whau Loop (2h), Rocky Bay-Whakanewha (2h), Onetangi (1h), Cross Island Walkway (3h).</p>	
<p>Day 4 Wednesday 26 February</p>	<p>Rangitoto Island (with possible Motutapu Island) (ferry from Auckland).</p> <p>Visible from around Auckland – sometimes looming large, then shrinking back to its regular size, as if caught out – Rangitoto is an icon of the city. The last, or should we say latest of the region’s volcanoes to erupt, a mere 800 years ago, the cone is quiet and cold now. Rangitoto’s also home to the world’s largest forest of pohutukawa, and the island also offers great hiking and kayaking.</p> <p>Motutapu (1500ha) was an island apart until Rangitoto decided to pop up out of the sea. Much older and very different geographically, Motutapu (meaning “sacred island”) was inhabited by Māori at the time of its neighbour erupted; human footprints have been found in ash layers there.</p> <p>Motutapu’s bush was cleared and its rolling hills farmed for more than a hundred years. However, now the forest and its birdlife are resurgent. Both Rangitoto and Motutapu are now officially pest-free, and a trust is coordinating revegetation and the reintroduction of rare species such as takahe.</p> <p><i>Possible Walks:</i></p> <p>Lighthouse Walk: Wharf to McKenzie Bay (2h30m one way)</p>	<p>Auckland Central</p>

	<p>Rangitoto Wharf to summit to Islington Bay (2h30m one way)</p> <p>Coastal Track from Rangitoto Wharf to Islington Bay Wharf (2h30m one way)</p> <p>Inland route from Rangitoto Wharf to Islington Bay Wharf (1h30m one way)</p> <p>Islington Bay Wharf to Home Bay (Motutapu Island) (1h45m one way)</p> <p>Islington Bay Road to Wreck Bay (1h one way)</p>	
<p>Day 5 Thursday 27 February</p>	<p>Motuihe Island (ferry from Auckland)</p> <p>Very soon after arrival of the Europeans in the area, farming began in the 1840s. Groves of Norfolk pines and olive trees are remnants of this time.</p> <p>In 1872 the island was designated as a human quarantine station for smallpox victims. A quarantine station was built on the western section of the island in 1873. It was used in 1874 for scarlet fever arriving on an inbound ship, and operated for almost 50 years, slowly growing in size.</p> <p>During the First World War, the station was used as an internment camp whose most famous prisoner was Count Felix von Luckner and his crew of the commerce raider <i>SMS Seeadler</i>. Captured in September 1917, in December Luckner used a Christmas play as a ruse to organise an escape.</p> <p>Following the First World War, the island was again used as a quarantine station during the 1918 flu pandemic.</p> <p>With the outbreak of World War II, the buildings became a naval training base, HMNZS <i>Tamaki</i>, and a number of newer buildings were added. The base remained a navy training ground until 1963, when its functions were moved to the North Shore mainland.</p> <p><i>Possible Walks:</i></p> <p>Tieke Track (5km, 1.5 to 2.5 hrs), Eastern Beaches Track 5.5km, 1.5 to 2.5 hrs), Bald Knob Track (6.5km, 2-3 hrs), Headland Heritage Walk (1 km, 20 - 45 min)</p>	<p>Warkworth or Snells Beach</p>
<p>Day 6 Friday 28 February</p>	<p>Kawau Island (ferry from Sandspit)</p> <p>The island is named after the Māori word for the shag (cormorant) bird. The island was bought by Sir George Grey, Governor of New Zealand, in 1862 as a private retreat. Grey extended the original copper mine manager's house (built 1845) to create the Mansion House, which still stands, and made the surrounding land into a botanical and zoological park, importing many plants and animals. The house changed hands</p>	<p>Orewa or Whangaparoa</p>

	<p>several times after Grey, and decayed increasingly, but has been restored and furnished as it was in the Victorian era, It is now in public ownership in the Kawau Island Historic Reserve, administered by the New Zealand Department of Conservation. The reserve covers 10% of the Island, and includes the old copper mine, believed to be the site of New Zealand's first underground metalliferous mining venture (1844). The ruins of the mine's pumphouse are registered as a Category I heritage structure. The island is home to kiwi and two-thirds of the entire population of North Island weka.</p> <p><i>Possible Walks:</i> Mansion House Gardens/beach/viewpoint, Two House Bay Track (15 mins), Ladys Bay (15 mins), Momona Point and Pā, Mansion House to Coppermine Lookout (25 min one way), Mansion House to Lookout to Coppermine (1 hour one way), Coppermine round trip via Dispute Cove Coastal loop – low tide only, Mansion House – Coach Road – Dispute Cove Road – Dispute Cove – coast – Coppermine (around 1 hour one way, Schoolhouse Bay Road-Schoolhouse Bay – Lookout (35 min one way).</p>	
<p>Day 7 Saturday 1 March</p>	<p>Tiritiri Matangi Island (ferry from Gulf Harbour) One of New Zealand’s conservation success stories, Tiri, as it’s usually known, is another open sanctuary. Its Māori name means ‘buffeted by the winds’, and early Polynesian settlers imagined it to be afloat on a huge fishing net.</p> <p>Tiri’s lighthouse, built in 1864, once housed the brightest light in the southern hemisphere, its beam visibly sweeping across bedroom walls of houses on the North Shore every 15 seconds from dusk till dawn.</p> <p>It is still a vital navigational aid, but today the lighthouse-keepers and farmers have gone, replaced by regenerating native bush, which is home to species such as takahē, kōkako, tīeke (saddleback) and hihi (stitchbird).</p> <p><i>Possible Walks:</i> Wattle Track (40m), Hobbs Beach (10m), Kawerau Track (40m), Northeast Bay and East Coast (2h), Ridge Road (25m), Full Loop Track (3h).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Farewell celebration dinner</i></p>	<p>Auckland Central</p>
<p>Day 8 Sunday</p>	<p>Trip concludes after breakfast.</p>	

2 March	Participants can be dropped off at the airport (additional cost) or take the Skybus.	
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FOOTSTEPS WALKING & TRAVEL CLUB OF AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND
HAURAKI GULF ISLANDS 2025

Booking Conditions

1. Participants agree to all terms and conditions by signing the Registration Form.
2. Phillip Donnell and *Footsteps Walking and Travel Club* are not responsible or liable for any injury, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity which may arise from weather, pandemic, defect in any vehicle, vessel or aircraft, or through the acts or default of any person or company engaged in carrying out any of the arrangements of the trip. Everyone participates entirely at their own risk. The separate waiver form must be completed.
3. We reserve the right to cancel the trip if minimum numbers don't eventuate. In such an event, all monies paid will be refunded. The minimum number for this trip is four.
4. *Footsteps* reserves the right to make any modifications to the trip that may be necessary. The walks undertaken each day are determined by group consensus, but as far as possible we endeavour to meet your personal preferences.
5. The trip fee includes subsidisation of the leader/driver administrative and travel expenses, as well as a gift of appreciation/gratuity.
6. Registrations close on **23 December 2024**, or earlier if all the spaces are filled.
7. Registrations are accepted in good faith on a first comer's basis on receipt of the Registration Form and passport scan. A deposit of \$250 per person is paid at the time of registration. The balance of the trip fee is due to be paid by **23 January, 2025**
8. Our preferred method of payment is internet banking to Footsteps, Kiwibank 38-9002-0435674-03. Please write your surname and the name of the trip ("Hauraki Is") in the reference box.
9. Cancellations: If you need to cancel your registration for any reason, you must advise Phillip in writing as soon as possible. An email is acceptable, a phone call alone is not. Full refunds are given up to 90 days prior. Following that, refunds are by negotiation, with the aim of refunding the maximum amount possible. Travel insurance can cover you for unexpected changes of plan that have a valid reason. If you find a suitable replacement person, cancellation fees MAY be waived.
10. Personal travel insurance is recommended. This should include Covid cover.

A Registration form and Waiver form are below...

Footsteps Walking & Travel Club of Aotearoa New Zealand Hauraki Gulf Islands 2025: Trip Registration Form

Complete and send this (along with a passport scan and the waiver form) to our postal address (see base of page) or scan and email. The deposit required is \$250 per person. Our preferred payment method is internet banking into Kiwibank 38-9002-0435674-03 (with covering email please, or your surname/name of trip in reference column).

Your full name(s) and please underline or highlight your preferred first name(s):

Postal Address:

Day/Night phone:

Mobile:

Email:

Date(s) of birth:

Are you comfortable in close contact with like-minded travellers with all the give and take needed for harmony? Please extend your answers overleaf or on separate paper, or by email.

Specify any dietary requirements, allergies or medical conditions

Contact person in NZ for any emergencies : name, address, contact phone numbers, email and the relationship to you. In the event of any emergency, this is the sole person you are authorizing us to liaise with

I/We have read the trip information and booking conditions. I / We enclose the deposit of \$250pp. I / We agree to pay the remainder of trip costs by the due date.

(signed and dated by each person registering)

Send (with waiver form) to :

Footsteps, 3/B Te Arawa Place, Welcome Bay, Tauranga 3112. Email: footstepsanz@gmail.com

FOOTSTEPS WALKING & TRAVEL CLUB OF AOTEAROA / NEW ZEALAND
RELEASE AND WAIVER OF LIABILITY FORM

PROVIDER: Footsteps Walking and Travel Club (Phillip John Donnell)("Footsteps")

PARTICIPANT:

("the Participant")

I, the Participant, release and forever discharge and hold harmless Footsteps from all and any liability, claims, demands and damages, of whatsoever kind or nature, whether foreseeable or otherwise, either at law or in equity, which arise or may arise from the services and activities provided and arranged by Footsteps.

I understand and acknowledge that this Release and Waiver discharges Footsteps from any liability or claim that I may have against Footsteps in respect of personal injury, illness, medical treatment, death, property loss or damage, and otherwise howsoever, resulting from the services and activities provided and arranged by Footsteps. I hereby waive all such rights and remedies.

I accept that I participate in the services and activities entirely at my own risk.

I acknowledge and accept that this Release and Waiver:

- (a) Extends to and covers all contractors, agents, volunteers and employees of Footsteps; and
- (b) Binds the executors, administrators, successors, attorneys and assigns of both parties.

Signed by the Participant:

Date: _____