

Walk of the Month



Welcome to 10,000 Steps Northland's 'Walk of the Month'. Each month a stunning walk somewhere in Northland will be highlighted. If you have a favourite track or walk in your community, contact us by email at 10000steps@sportnorth.co.nz.

March's Walk of the Month – **Te Araroa, The Long Pathway**

Did you know that you could walk a tramping trail from Cape Reinga in the North to Bluff in the South which forms part of Te Araroa, the New Zealand-long pathway?

Achieving 10,000 steps a day is approximately 8 kilometres – there are many local tracks that form Te Araroa (check out www.teararoa.org.nz for the various opportunities) of this distance. The entire track stretches approximately 3,000 kilometres from Cape Reinga to Bluff and offers numerous opportunities to get out and enjoy it.

The entire track is not quite finished yet (due to be completed towards the end of 2010). Some sections are still missing, however once these final pieces are put into place, it will rank amongst the longest hiking trails in the world.

The dream of Te Araroa belongs to Geoff Chapple, who finished walking along his planned route in 2002 and says: "That 3000-kilometre walk included easy sections, and some forest and ridgeline routes that were quite hard – I was lost a couple of times and there was always a background fear of rivers to cross, and whether the next hut would be where the map said it was. But it's got easier since with trail development work by our dozens of volunteers the length of the country, and some professional help."

Uncertainties at forks in the path have largely been taken care of. Most sections of the track are now marked with orange track markers and maps at many track access points give walkers an overview of the route. The website gives good track descriptions and Te Araroa Trust is now also rolling out on-site mapping to assist in planning walks both long and short. Chances are that a section of Te Araroa, suitable for a day's outing, runs right through your neighbourhood.

In the Whangarei district alone, Te Araroa comprises of 21 individual track sections totalling approximately 150 kilometres of tracks. Some are new and some are existing Department of Conservation or Council tracks. There are some missing links where access negotiations are still in progress. In those circumstances, Te Araroa is likely to lead along a country road, providing alternative routes for the growing number of through-walkers. All Te Araroa sections in the district are doable in a day.

The section the Te Araroa Trust would like to introduce in this article, is the Whananaki Coastal track.

The northern end is at the Whananaki footbridge, the southern end is at the gate at the end of McAuslin Road, Sandy Bay. This section is 7.5 kilometres (9,375 steps) long and is classified as an easy tramping track that could take you about 2.5 hours to complete. The

track is only one way so you can either arrange for transport back to your starting point or walk back. For a shorter day trip you could walk part way in and back again.

Presuming you are travelling in a North to South direction, the track starts at the Whananaki North village. There is a track next to the school which leads to the footbridge. Once across, head east along the estuary around the small settlement and over the spit before heading south on Pukekawa Road parallel to the shore (if the tide is high, there is a 1 kilometre detour by road around the back of the settlement). Beyond Pitokuku Point, a grassy track goes behind private baches and over a stile to join up with a well-graded Pohutukawa-lined farm track/driveway with excellent views of the coast and the Poor Knight Islands. There is a possible diversion via a short, steeper track

to the Capitaine Bougainville Memorial on the north point of Oruaea Bay. Take in the great views from here along the coast. Continue on the driveway until reaching the gate at McAuslin Road. Please note that there is limited beach access from the track – i.e. after the Spit, only at Sheltered Bay.



Pictured above - View looking over Sandy Bay which forms part of Te Araroa – The Long Pathway

As the Te Araroa Trust puts some of the final tracks in place and moves towards an opening at the end of this year, Te Araroa Trust welcomes donations from the public. The website has a donations page for anyone interested - www.teararoa.org.nz.

Enjoy another Northland gem!