

# Thrive

## Supporting sustainable business in the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area

October 2015

### The Hillary Trail

#### Keeping the balance

The Hillary Trail, 76km of challenging and sometimes harsh wilderness, is a taonga (treasure) for the people of the Waitākere Ranges.

It's a difficult walk, whether you do the full 76km or break it into smaller sections, and it's becoming more popular as more people hear about it.

The greatest challenge for the people who live and work alongside the trail lies in striking a balance between recreational visitor management and keeping the wilderness and rugged coastline wild and wonderful.

Wayne Mackenzie, who runs Whātipu Lodge under licence from Auckland Council, says that people need to respect the land. A local historian, Wayne has a long history in the area; his ancestors, the Laing's of Laingholm, arrived at the southern coastal edge of the Waitākere Ranges in 1853.

"We often see people who are unprepared for the conditions and have underestimated the challenge of the hills between Huia and Whātipu," he says.

"They need to stick to the trail and tell people where they expect to be."



The Hillary Trail is a spectacular multi-day tramp in the Waitākere Ranges area.

#### More about the Hillary Trail

For a map, route guide and more information about the Hillary Trail, including a video, go to [hillarytrail.org.nz](http://hillarytrail.org.nz) or [facebook.com/HillaryTrail](https://www.facebook.com/HillaryTrail)

#### Building community

Auckland Council, which manages the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park, is looking to strengthen the ties between the people who use the Hillary Trail and the communities through which it passes.

The underlying idea is similar to the Otago Central Rail Trail: people doing the Hillary Trail benefit from the local communities in the form of accommodation, food and entertainment, and the community benefits from the economic and social input of those walking the trail.

To help achieve this, the council has launched the [hillarytrail.org.nz](http://hillarytrail.org.nz) website.

The trail is now broken into eight sections. This means that people can come for a day or a weekend and complete one or two sections of the route. Users are given accommodation options, shown where they can get a meal after the hike, where toilets are located and – importantly – where fresh water is available.



Craw Homestead.

"Once someone has completed a section, they can experience being in the community, and become part of it," says ranger Stuart Leighton. "Even if this is just for an hour, or if they stay the night, they are contributing to the community on the route."

"People can come for a walk, stay somewhere nice, maybe get breakfast, buy a coffee and visit a gallery. They contribute to the economy of the area."

"We want people to tailor an experience on the Hillary Trail to suit their fitness levels, time available and the level of comfort they are seeking – which ranges from basic remote campsites to some of Auckland's best boutique accommodation."



Tramping the Hillary Trail.

### Away from it all

Businesses along the Hillary Trail face some challenges because of isolation. This isolation can also be a unique selling point for the business, especially when you consider how close the area is to central Auckland. The limited mobile phone and 3G coverage in much of the area gives people a chance to take a break from being constantly available.

"The beauty of the Hillary Trail is its isolation," says Anna Saunders of Waimanu Luxury Tents. "By the third day, many people are looking for a comfortable bed, something to eat and a nice hot bath."

Waimanu Luxury Tents focuses on quality accommodation. "There are all sorts of businesses popping up, but they need to respect the heritage area," say Anna. "We need to respect the land and its history."

"Small-scale sustainable businesses such as this offer people a unique experience, without placing a heavy burden on the land," says Anna. "Our tents are designed for the New Zealand environment."

### Caring for the land

Jeanette McMillan of 216 Luxury Accommodation, at 216 Oaia Rd, Muriwai Beach, often has guests who walk part of the trail during their stay. They stop by the business to be spoiled with a little luxury at the end of the track. 216 aims to reduce their environmental footprint by using sound environmental practices, including collecting and filtering their own water, using a bio-cycle sewerage system, sourcing local food as much as possible, and undertaking native planting and regeneration.

"If you are starting a business in the area, talk to someone already set up and take the time to complete a thorough business plan," says Jeanette. "We are so lucky in New Zealand with a raft of resources available to us."

Running a business in a heritage area has its own challenges. There are important limits to economic activity in the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area.

The Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008 was put in place to recognise the area's national, regional and local significance and to promote the protection and enhancement of its heritage features for present and future generations.

The heritage area covers 27,720ha of public and private land that includes the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park, urban areas of Titirangi and Laingholm, the foothills and coastal villages. The Act identifies the heritage features of the area and promotes their protection, restoration and enhancement through the Resource Management Act (RMA) and Local Government Act.

### Many hands

A strong and positive force for change is provided by the numerous individuals and volunteer groups, both local and from the wider Auckland region, who are actively working to protect and enhance indigenous ecosystems in the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area and to raise public awareness of their importance. These include the Waitākere Ranges Protection Society, the Royal Forest and Bird's 'Ark in the Park' project in the Cascades, Friends of Arataki, Piha Coast Care, the Lone Kauri Forest Restoration Group, the La Trobe Restoration Group, the Waitākere River Care Group, the 26 Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups created since 2008, and many others. Some of these groups have been active for many years, for example, the Waitākere Ranges Protection Society was formed in 1973 and recently celebrated 40 years of conservation work in the Waitākere Ranges.



There's a poster for the Hillary Trail at the Arataki Visitor Centre with the caption 'It isn't Everest, but it isn't easy.' As a veteran of a number of multi-day tramps in New Zealand and overseas, I discovered how true that was after my wife and I took off our packs five days later, tired but exhilarated from the experience of walking the 76 kilometres of track together.

The Hillary Trail is unique. The lush sub-tropical bush of Huia, the fantastic wild coastline, the 'Little Yosemite' of the Pararaha Valley and magnificent kauri-podocarp Forest of the Ark in the Park ; the Hillary Trail is worth every step – whether done as a multi-day tramp or broken up into several day trips.

What makes the tramp special is the opportunity to mingle with the locals who live and work along the trail. You won't find that on the Heaphy, Milford or Copeland Pass!

On the Hillary Trail you can enjoy a coffee at the Huia Beach Store and Café, stay at the historic Whātipu Lodge, get provisions at the Piha Store and enjoy a pizza slice from the Piha Café before the tramp up to Craw Homestead. Depending on your style, you can backpack or arrange accommodation at the many homestays and bed and breakfasts along the way.

As the trail continues to grow in popularity the local communities and businesses will play an important part in making the experience a memorable one and in safeguarding the ranges for generations to come. This issue of Thrive looks at some of those doing that today.

### Steve Tollestrup

*Waitākere Ranges Local Board  
Economic Development portfolio holder*

## The Piha Store



Hungry trampers resupply at the Piha Store.

Peter Chapman, owner of the Piha Store, says at this stage it appears the Hillary Trail is having a positive impact on his business. In response to this he makes sure his staff are knowledgeable about the area. "The local people have a great love and knowledge of the area. Our business donates one person for a day once a week to work as a park volunteer. There is real passion and knowledge connected to the people and service networks within the park."

The original Piha Store opened in 1945 when Piha was a very different place. As the community has changed, the store has grown with it. It has introduced different products and now sells homemade breads, pies and cakes from the store kitchen.

Peter's advice for business setting up in the area is to always have a plan B. "Things don't always go to plan and you may need to live lean." The store has faced some challenges around the reliability of the power supply in the area, but they have put in place infrastructure to deal with that.

Peter finds many of the local businesses support each other through networks and local relationships. It's a small community with seasonal traffic so there is only so much the market can sustain during the winter months.

Peter's best advice to someone walking the Hillary Trail is to take your time. "Go into the communities and discover what is available in them."



On the Hillary Trail.

## Upcoming events

ATEED (Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development) has a range of activities to help businesses grow – for a full list of upcoming events including networking and workshops please visit: [aucklandnz.com/business/events](http://aucklandnz.com/business/events)

### One-on-one business clinic

To assist small business owners in the Waitākere Ranges who have aspirations to grow, you can meet with a local ATEED business adviser who can offer information and advice and connect you with experts, resources and other businesses. Your business may even be eligible to access free or part-funded training programmes, or research and development grants. For details of dates and venues for free clinics in Henderson and Titirangi, go to [aucklandnz.com/business/free-business-clinics](http://aucklandnz.com/business/free-business-clinics) and register for an appointment. Or call Gill Ellis on 09 354 0067 during business hours for more information.

### Starting Off Right seminars

This free four-hour workshop will provide information about the many concerns business owners have when starting a business. It also provides an opportunity to network with others who are at a similar stage of the start-up process.

For details of seminars in October and November in Henderson or Rosedale, go to [aucklandnz.com/business/events/category/starting-off-right](http://aucklandnz.com/business/events/category/starting-off-right) to book your place, as numbers are limited.

### IRD seminars and workshops

The IRD holds tax seminars and workshops in Henderson.

- introduction to business seminars
- GST workshops
- employer workshops.

These seminars are free to attend.

For more information go to:

[ird.govt.nz/contact-us/seminars/auckland/henderson/](http://ird.govt.nz/contact-us/seminars/auckland/henderson/)

Bookings are essential. Please email [advisory.takapuna@ird.govt.nz](mailto:advisory.takapuna@ird.govt.nz) to book your seat or for more information.

### Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area webpage





Auckland Council's website now has pages specifically for the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area so that information about the area is available in one place. To find out more, please visit: [aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) and search 'Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area'.



The Hillary Trail.

If you would prefer to receive Thrive by email, or if you have any feedback or suggestions, please email Raj Maharjan at [raj.maharjan@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:raj.maharjan@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

#### Find out more:

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-  [WaitakereRangeslocalboard@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:WaitakereRangeslocalboard@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)
-  [aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/WaitakereRanges](http://aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/WaitakereRanges)
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Local Board**   
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