

Discover TĀHUNA TŌREA SELF-GUIDED WALK

NAU MAI HARAE MAI

1. Roberta Reserve

The bridge at the far end of Roberta Reserve is a great place to stop and reflect on how people enjoy using this recreational space and the estuary. If you're lucky you might spot eels and fish in the stream from the bridge.

2. Looking out from the top of the hill

From this vantage point you'll be able to see Bucklands Beach (Komiti), Brown's Island (Motukorea) and Musik Point (Te Naupata) – once the site of the 500-year-old pā of Te Waiarohia of Ngai Tai. The area along the Tāmaki Estuary once supported many Māori settlements. Fertile soil supported prosperous villages and māra kai (gardens), and the coast provided rich fishing grounds. To read more about the history of the area visit waiotaiki.co.nz/blog/from-rubbish-tip-to-reserve.

3. On the foreshore

The area just behind the shore was once the site of a Māori summer camp. It would have been the perfect site from which to search for tuangi (cockles), tio (oysters), pipi, takarepo (mud snails) and kairau (mud crabs) at low tide and fish for small sharks, whai repo (stingray) and pātiki (flounder) in deeper water. Use the guide available from: otago.ac.nz/marine-studies/resources/otago110042.pdf to identify different shells.

Did you know that our native cockle is one of the most important animals in the estuary ecosystem, providing food for wading birds and other animals, filtering water and recycling nutrients.

This self-guided walk starts from the bridge at Roberta Avenue Reserve before continuing along the path to the entrance of Tāhuna Tōrea.

The numbered points on the map are associated with suggested activities and the following notes.

Please remember to
'Take nothing but memories, leave nothing but footprints'
'Haria ko ngā maharatanga anake, waiho ko ngā tapuae anake'.

4. By the bench on the beach

The intertidal mudflats at Tāhuna Tōrea provide wading birds with a bountiful supply of food. Around 60 species of waders have been recorded in New Zealand, 13 of which live and breed here all year round. Species you are likely to spot include tōrea (pied oystercatcher), tōrea pango (variable oystercatcher), poaka (pied stilt) and tūturiwhatu (New Zealand dotterel). Arctic waders including the kuaka (bar-tailed godwit) and huahou (lesser knot) breed in the Arctic Circle and fly here to feed during our summer months. Wading birds are well adapted to help them find worms, snails, crabs, shellfish and other small animals in the mud. Their long legs help them feed without getting their feathers wet, their long bills can probe down into the mud and sand to feed on hidden animals and open bivalve shells.

5. Next to the intertidal lagoon

The intertidal lagoon to the right of the path leading away from the beach was once an old Māori fish dam. Fish including pātiki, (flounder), toitoi (bullies), kārara (whitebait) and (tuna) eels were driven in at spring tide and caught with a net. Mangroves provide habitats for juvenile fish and roosting sites for birds.

6. At the lookout over the lagoon

This is a lovely spot to sit quietly to observe and listen for birds.

nzbirdsonline.org.nz is a great online tool for helping to identify what you see.

Visit doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/birds to listen to birdcalls.

A quote from the book Tahuna Torea: Tip Site to Nature Reserve by Chris Barfoot evokes memories from the past whilst relaxing here:

*Here swam the mokopuna, in mangrove inlet deep;
Here was trapped the fleshy godwit, and fish dam its store did keep;
The mudflats teemed with pipi, and kūmara on the flats;
Kai moana's harvest, fills umu and fish racks.
From all around the families come,
From Ōrākei and Maungarei,
from Taurere and Komiti;
And deeds of old hold the young enthralled,
While the nights are long, with laughter and song
In the old summer camp by the shore.*

7. By the griselinia trees on the Lagoon Walkway

The holes created by pūriri moth caterpillars are found in many species of tree including these griselinia. Read more about the life cycle of the pūriri moth on the signage under the trees. Adult moths may emerge at any time of year, but the most common season is October–December. The trees along the Lagoon Walkway were mostly planted in the 1980s after an extensive effort to rid the area of weeds including fennel, wooly nightshade, gorse and wattle. The native vegetation now provides habitat and food for native birds. Look out for the interpretive signage that describes how each species was traditionally used by Māori and early European settlers.

8. Next to the midden on the Lagoon Walkway

Middens are places where food remains such as shells and animal bones; ashes and charcoal raked out of cooking fires; and worn out or broken implements were discarded. A midden can provide information about how and when people lived in the area, the resources they used, how long a site was occupied and even which month of the year different shellfish species were gathered in.

9. Near the Reg Connelly Lookout

Kawakawa is one of the many plants people have traditionally used for medicinal purposes. The sweet fruits are eaten by kererū and Māori sometimes added them to food after removing the small seeds. The peppery leaves could be used to make tea and brewed to make beer. Near the bench look for the sign "Tainui Pōhutukawa" to read the story of the Tainui waka and find out why this Pōhutukawa tree is special.

10. On the shore at Cable Beacon Point

This is another great spot to take a closer look at the growth of mangroves and search for their propagules on the shore. Mangroves trap sediments and nutrients, providing a habitat for shellfish and other small animals forming the base of a complex food web. Visit sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/1230-life-in-the-estuary to find out more. For more about mud crabs visit gopi.org.nz/education/tunnelling-mud-crabs.

Along the boardwalk on your way to the freshwater pond

As you walk along the boardwalk look out for tī kōuka (cabbage trees). Captain Cook named them cabbage trees because the cooked shoots taste like cabbage. The shoots, tap roots and core of the trunk were an important food source for Māori and also had lots of medicinal uses. The leaves were woven to make rope, clothing, roof thatching and baskets. Tī kōuka flower nectar attracts insects and birds love to eat the berries in summer.

11. At the freshwater pond

The sign overlooking the freshwater pond provides an excellent overview of how the area has been transformed from abandoned farmland into a haven for wildlife. The inspiration to develop Tāhuna Tōrea as a nature reserve came from naturalist Ronald Lockley. A dedicated group of volunteers, the Tāhuna Tōrea Rangers, has since planted thousands of trees, formed tracks, controlled pests and eradicated weeds and created signage in partnership with the Auckland Council to bring his vision to life. The reserve is now an ecologically significant area for a number of native and migrating bird species.

12. Returning to Roberta Reserve via the Lower Bush Walk

The walk back to Roberta Reserve takes about 20 minutes from here. After the Godwit Lookout, be sure to follow signs to the Lower Bush Walk – the Upper Track is a longer route back that will take you uphill. On your way you'll find lots of interpretive signage describing the features and use of native trees. You might like to find a quiet spot to look and listen for tūi and pīwakawaka (fantails).

TOP TIPS FOR VISITING

- This self-guided walk has been designed to take 2 hours at a moderate pace. You could always start at the West Tamaki Road entrance and complete a shorter part of the walk if you have less time to spend exploring.
- There is a lot to see and experience in the reserve all year round. The best time to view wading birds is from November to March and between full-tide and half-tide. For tide times visit metservice.com/marine-surf/tides/auckland
- Bring a pair of binoculars and a wildlife guide to help you identify what you see.
- Useful books available from your local Auckland Council library include:
Tōrea Tōrea: Tipsite to nature reserve by Chris Barfoot
Native Birds of Shore and Wetland: Penguin Pocket Guide
New Zealand Seashell Identification Guide by Andrew Crowe
- To find out how to get involved with projects led by the Tāhuna Tōrea Rangers please email mylocalpark@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz
- To report a problem, visit aucklandcouncil.govt.nz or call 09 301 0101.