

Discover LE ROYS BUSH SELF-GUIDED WALK

NAU MAI HARAE MAI

This self-guided walk starts from the track near the Northcote Bowling Club opposite Little Shoal Bay.

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

Please remember to clean your footwear thoroughly at the spray station at the entrance to the reserve. This will help to stop the spread of kauri dieback and protect the kauri trees in this special area.

1. 'Stories from the Past' – looking out towards Little Shoal Bay

The sign near the bridge overlooking the wetland is a great place to stop and reflect on how the area has changed over time, from when Māori first settled here to the establishment of the valley as a reserve in 1949. The foreshore would have once been a good site from which to search for tuangi (cockles), tio (oysters), pipi, takarepo (mud snails) and kairau (mud crabs) at low tide and go out fishing in deeper water. The wetland and forest behind would have provided useful building materials and sources of food.

2. Raupō

Raupō is a reed that grows in fresh or brackish water throughout most of New Zealand. It has many traditional uses, as well as being used for thatching and raft building, the leaves could be used for sails and kites; the fluffy seed heads were used for bedding and the pollen baked into a sweet bread called pungapunga or porridge known as rerepe. Raupō wetland provides an important environmental service by filtering and cleaning the water that enters it; it is also a valuable habitat for native wildlife.

3. Next to the mangroves

Mangroves provide shelter for juvenile fish and roosting sites for birds. Herons are well adapted to catch fish and find small animals amongst the mangroves – they often stand or walk slowly waiting for the chance to dart forward and catch prey with their long beaks. Look for the low growing succulent glasswort (ureure) growing nearby – the cooked fleshy shoots were once an important food source for Māori.

You'll pass through a kauri dieback cleaning station before entering the main part of the reserve - this is designed to remove the harmful spores that cause disease. Please take the time to clean your footwear and dog's paws carefully to help keep the kauri in Le Roys Bush healthy for future generations to enjoy.

4. Look for tī kōuka (cabbage trees) next to the 'Wicked Weeds' sign

The nectar in tī kōuka flowers attracts insects, and birds love to eat the berries in summer. It is a versatile plant - early European settlers used to make chimneys from their trunks, which are very fire resistant and the dry leaves make excellent kindling. Māori traditionally used leaf fronds for roofing and to weave kete. The rounded base of the frond could be used as a bowl-like container. The tough leaf fibres were valued for their strength and durability especially in seawater. Rope made from tī kōuka is much stronger than rope made from harakeke.

Turn right and then left following the signs to Le Roy Terrace and Highbury.

5. Looking for kauri trees from the boardwalk

Kauri trees take on different shapes as they mature. Young trees have a classic triangular conifer shape but after 30-50 years they start to lose their lower branches and lengthen out. At this stage they are known as 'rickers', named after their use for naval masts and spars. Mature kauri have wider trunks and a crown of foliage. The largest kauri alive is Tāne Mahuta with a diameter of 4.6m and height of 52m. It is estimated to be between 1200 and 2000 years old.

To find out more about kauri visit teara.govt.nz/en/kauri-forest.

The cleaning stations and raised boardwalks along the tracks have been installed to protect the kauri trees in the reserve from being affected by kauri dieback disease. Please stay on the tracks and stop your dog from wandering to help stop the spread of the disease. For more information on kauri visit kauridieback.co.nz.

6. Counting climbing kiekie

Plants that grow on the trunks and branches of trees are called epiphytes. As well as kiekie you might be able to spot kareao (supplejack), mokimoki (fragrant fern) and northern rātā piggy-backing on other plants to help them reach the sunlight.

For more information about epiphytes visit teara.govt.nz/en/conifer-broadleaf-forests.

7. What's living in the Te Wai Manawa stream?

The 'Fabulous Freshwater Fish' sign describes the variety of species that can be found living in the streams and pools here, of note are giant kokopu and longfin eel (both nationally threatened species). Most of our native fish are nocturnal and so rarely seen during the day, but you may spot some in the pools if you are lucky as you walk up the track to your right.

The plants growing on the bank of the stream and the forest canopy above help to keep the stream shaded and cool, and their roots help prevent soil erosion and silt building up in the water. Stream-dwelling animals need cool, clear, clean water to survive. Cool flowing water has more oxygen dissolved in it, which is beneficial to the animals living in it. Murky or polluted water can clog up the gills of freshwater insects and fish.

8. Sit on the steps to listen and look for birds....

This is a lovely spot to sit quietly to look and listen for birds. You may hear the noisy chattering of eastern rosella or rainbow lorikeets – although pretty to look at these are non-native birds originally from Australia and they are a threat to our native birds as they compete with them for food and nest sites. You are likely to hear the tuneful song of tūī, they have two voice boxes that enable them to produce a melody of complex ringing sounds, clicks and whistles. Pīwakawaka (fantails) have short sharp repetitive cheeping calls. Riroriro (grey warblers) are more often heard than seen, their song starts with three squeaks and then becomes a long wavering warble.

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.

9. Look for taraire leaves and fruit

Taraire is a common tree in the park and can reach 20m tall. In autumn, the large purple fruits are enjoyed by kererū. Kererū are the only birds big enough to swallow the large fruit and disperse the seed over long distances, helping the process of forest regeneration. Unfortunately, possums are also attracted to the fruit, leaves and flowers of trees in the reserve, including taraire. Possums also prey on the eggs and chicks of kererū and other native birds. Pest control operations are carried out in the reserve to help protect and increase native wildlife populations.

10. On your walk back to Little Shoal Bay

The walk back to Little Shoal Bay takes about 30 minutes from the bottom of the steps leading up the waterfall. The Fabulous Freshwater Fish and Wicked Weeds signs will give you ideas on how you can help protect native wildlife in your local reserve or backyard.

TOP TIPS FOR VISITING

- This self-guided walk has been designed to take 2 hours at a moderate pace, starting and finishing at Little Shoal Bay.
- Alternatively, you could start at the Hinemoa Street entrance in Birkenhead and incorporate a visit to the viewing platform, Kaimataata o Wai Mōnawa. This provides panoramic views across Le Roys Bush, Auckland City and Rangitoto and describes the cultural history of settlement in the area.
- The walk up the steps to the waterfall will take 5-10 minutes.
- Bring a wildlife guide to help you identify what you see.
- To find out how to get involved with projects led by the Friends of Ley Roys Bush and Beyond the Fence please email: mylocalpark@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz
- To report a problem please go to aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/report-it or call 09 301 0101.