

# Chatham Islands walks

| Chatham Islands Rēkohu/Wharekauri

A guide to public-access walking tracks



## What's so different?

The Chatham Islands consist of two main inhabited islands – Chatham and Pitt – and many smaller outlying islands within a 40 km radius. Pitt Island lies 17 km southeast of Chatham Island.

Chatham Island, formed by tectonic uplift and repeated volcanic eruptions, is predominantly flat with gently-rolling landscapes and several small peaks in the northwest. Te Whanga Lagoon covers about 20,000 hectares – one fifth of the island.

The original inhabitants of the Chatham Islands were the Moriori, who may have arrived at least 500 years ago. They named the islands 'Rēkohu' (meaning 'misty skies'), and adapted their culture and lifestyle to the prevailing harsh climatic conditions.

A Royal Navy party, led by Lieutenant William Broughton in the brig *Chatham*, rediscovered Rēkohu in November 1791 and gave the island its European name.

Māori arrived in 1835, landing in Port Hutt (Whangaroa Harbour). Ngāti Mutunga and Ngāti Tama named the island 'Wharekauri'.

The islands' rich biodiversity of plant and bird life make them important to conservation. The islands support 20% of New Zealand's threatened bird species, and 11% of its threatened plants.

Interpretation boards throughout the island hold information about the surrounding environment. Look out for the many island treasures hiding in plain sight.

There are 10 public walking tracks. Most are signposted with brown signs from the road, and have picnic tables and a toilet.

The rugged roads of the Chatham Islands provide unique opportunities for mountain biking. Visitors can bring bikes or hire from local providers.

A round trip on the Te Matarae loop or return trip down the South Coast from Waitangi are all options to be explored. Most roads are well graded with the island being relatively flat. High-vis gear, safety glasses or sunnies and helmets are a must. Ensure you book your bike through Air Chathams freight if you are bringing it to the island.

*A few things to consider when using the tracks:*

**Safety is your responsibility – are you well prepared for all weather and conditions?**



- Plan, prepare and equip yourself well
- Choose a trip suitable for the skills, knowledge and experience of your group – be realistic
- Check the latest weather and conditions
- Facilities and services change! Always check the latest information before you venture out
- Let someone know before you go
- There is no mobile phone coverage



leave no trace  
NEW ZEALAND

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others

You are welcome to enjoy the walks in this brochure without seeking permission. Some places of interest are located on (or accessed through) private property, for which permission and a fee may be required. Main visitor sites are signposted. Please leave gates as you find them and if in doubt, please ask.

### For more information

Rekohu/Wharekauri/Chatham Island Office  
North Rd, Te One  
Chatham Island  
Phone: +64 3 305 0098  
chathamislands@doc.govt.nz  
www.doc.govt.nz

*Published by:*  
Department of Conservation  
Rekohu/Wharekauri/Chatham Island Office  
PO Box 114, Waitangi  
Chatham Island 8942  
November 2018

*Editing and design:*  
Publishing Team, DOC National Office

**New Zealand Government**

This publication is produced using paper sourced from well-managed, renewable and legally logged forests.

## Plants and birds to look out for

### Nīkau

*Rhopalostylis sapida*

A tall palm with an erect trunk ringed with scars of fallen leaves. It bears lilac flowers from November to April, and hard fruit (which turn red when ripe) from February to November.



### Chatham Island tree daisy/akeake

*Olearia traversiorum*

Akeake is common on the Chatham Islands dune systems, and grows up to 15 m tall. At Henga and Ocean Mail scenic reserves you will see planting efforts to recover the akeake forest.



### Parea/Chatham Island pigeon

*Hemiphaga chathamensis*

Although related to the kererū the parea is considered a different species – it is heavier, has more purple plumage and an orange tip on its bill.



### Chatham Island ribbonwood

*Plagianthus regius* subsp. *chathamicus*

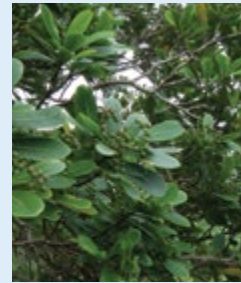
This deciduous tree grows up to 15 m tall. The greenish flowers appear from October to February, while brown fruit occurs in open clusters from February to March.



### Hoho

*Pseudopanax chathamicus*

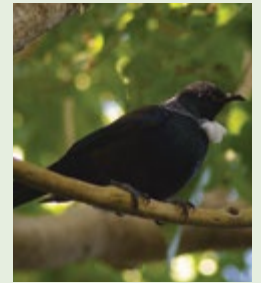
This plant grows up to 12 m tall and is endemic to the Chathams. It is a relative to the lancewood but looks distinctly different in juvenile form. Hoho berries are an important winter food source for parea.



### Chatham Island tūī

*Prothemadera novaeseelandiae chathamensis*

The Chatham Island tūī is a subspecies of the New Zealand tūī. It has longer throat tufts, is larger and has a different song.



### Chatham Island aster

*Olearia semidentata*

This shrub prefers wet habitats and flowers from November to March. The mauve flowers fade with age. The fruit are crowned by hair-like bristles and ripen from January to June.



### Tarahinau

*Dracophyllum arboreum*

Tarahinau can grow up to 12 m tall and has almost black bark. Decomposed tarahinau leaves make up much of the peat on the Chatham Islands. Tarahinau is common in southern Chatham Island.



### Chatham Island astelia/kakaha

*Astelia chathamica*

Known as the Moriori flax, this plant has long leaves clad in silvery hairs. It flowers from October to December, and bears orange or red fruit from February to July.

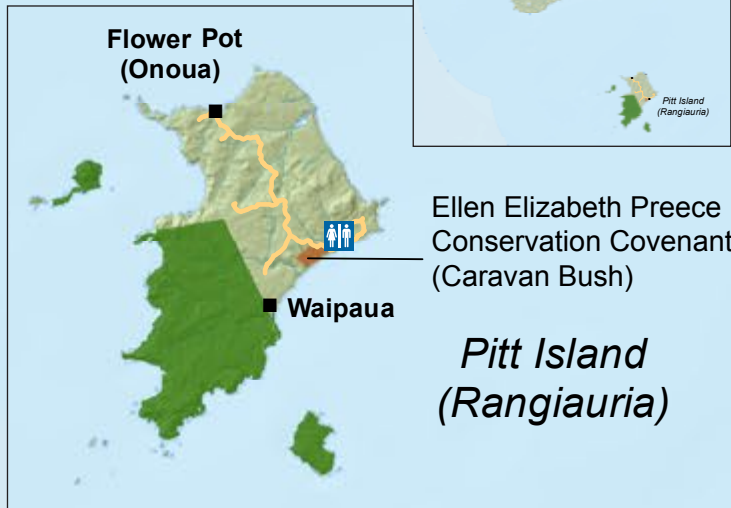
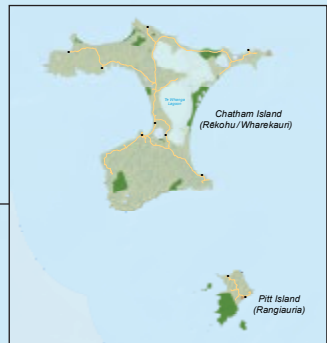
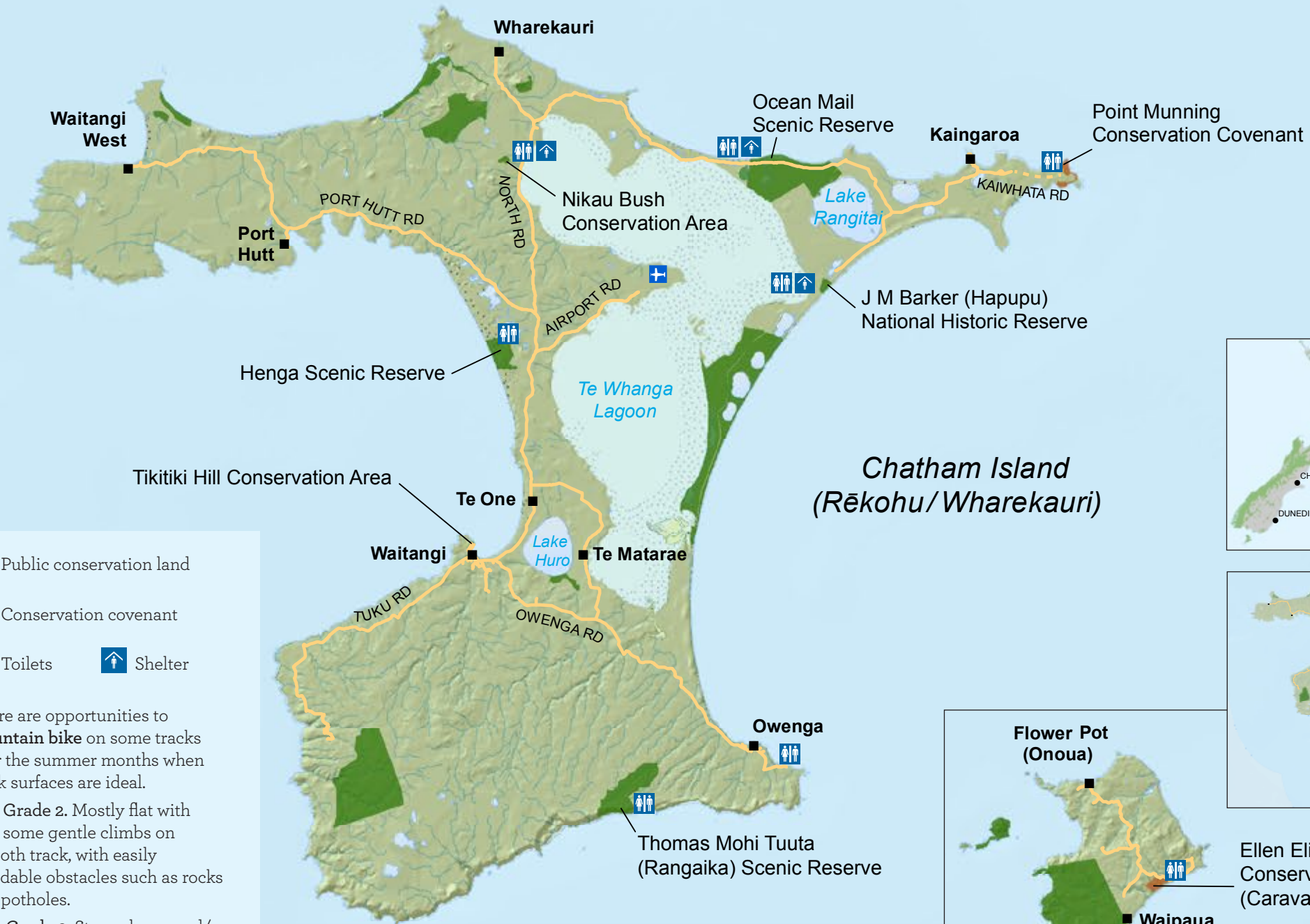


### Chatham Island forget-me-not/kopakopa/kopukapuka

*Myosotidium hortensia*

This glossy-leaved 'megaherb' is found on coastal cliffs, rocky outcrops and beaches. It flowers from September to October.



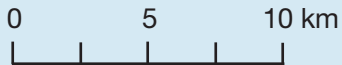


- Public conservation land
- Conservation covenant
- ♂ ♀ Toilets
- ↑ Shelter

There are opportunities to **mountain bike** on some tracks over the summer months when track surfaces are ideal.

**Grade 2.** Mostly flat with some gentle climbs on smooth track, with easily avoidable obstacles such as rocks and potholes.

**Grade 3.** Steep slopes and/or avoidable obstacles, possibly on narrow track and/or with poor traction. There may be exposure at the track's outside edge. Bikes may need to be carried in some areas.



## Ocean Mail Scenic Reserve


830 hectares, purchased by the Crown in 1990

The contrasting landscapes of dune systems, akeake forest and peat wetlands meet in Ocean Mail. The picnic area overlooks the akeake reforestation project. From the picnic area you reach the beach, where you can see a dune restoration project – planting native pīngao in place of introduced marram grass.

### Wetland walk

A **15 min loop walk** with views of the wetland and peat lakes. This walk provides a close look at endemic plants such as the Chatham Island spargrass and bamboo rush.

### Aster walk

A **20 min (return) walk** along ancient sand dunes which reach into the vastness of the wetland. The beautiful purple flowers of the Chatham Island swamp aster can be enjoyed from November to March. There is a picnic table at the far end of this walk. 


### Lake walk

This continues on from the Aster walk and will take about **2 hours 30 min** to complete the **8 km loop track**. The track continues through the wetland along the shore of Lake Rangitai, then back to the road. Wear sturdy footwear on this track; in winter parts may be inundated by water.

## Nikau Bush Conservation Area

19 hectares, purchased by the Crown in 1981

On the north-western shore of Te Whanga Lagoon, this lowland broadleaf forest was once common throughout the islands. This is the largest stand of nikau remaining on main Chatham Island and is spectacular when flowering between December and January. The area was fenced in 1981 to exclude stock leading to rapid bush regeneration.

The full loop walk will take approximately 1 hour. 

## Henga Scenic Reserve


170 hectares, gifted by Denise and John Sutherland and fenced in 1982

This reserve features a huge sand-dune system, coastal forest, impressive vegetation regeneration, limestone outcrops and spectacular views over Petre Bay.

In pre-European times the dunes were covered in a mosaic of herbfields, mingimingi shrublands, and mixed akeake forest, which are now recovering. The inland dunes were almost entirely covered in coastal forest made up of kōpī, matipo and akeake.

The Moriori occupied this area – living inland where the forest gave shelter, and using the ocean as a food source.

**Access** to this walking track is from North Road; follow the fence to the reserve across the paddocks.

**The road to the lookout (return) is 1 hour 30 min;**  
**the full return walk is 2 hours 30 min.** 

## J M Barker (Hapupu)

### National Historic Reserve

33 hectares, gifted by Barker Brothers Ltd in 1979

This reserve is one of only two national historic reserves in New Zealand. Hapupu is culturally and historically significant because of the rākau momori on the kōpī (karaka) trees, and because of the Moriori archaeological landscape they sit within. Rākau momori are carvings incised or bruised into living kōpī trees by Moriori. The forest's health has declined in the past 10 years – and in the past 18 months this decline has accelerated. Due to the decline, access is currently limited to try an increase the lifespan of the remaining carvings. Please contact DOC, by phone, email [chathamislands@doc.govt.nz](mailto:chathamislands@doc.govt.nz) or at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

## Point Munning Conservation Covenant

47 hectares, conservation covenant owned by the Muirson family

A unique example of protected forest and shrubs over schist rocks. The track opens out onto eerie, pock-marked peatland, then on to the seal colony. **The walk takes 15 minutes one way.**

## Thomas Mohi Tuuta (Rangaika) Scenic Reserve

407 hectares, gifted by Thomas and Annie Tuuta in 1977

This reserve is a great example of peatland forest that once covered most of the southern Chatham Island. Tarahinau forest dominates these regions where the gentle topography favours peat formation. In contrast, the steep coastal banks with their thin soils are clothed in hardy native herbs, flax and mixed broadleaf forest or shrub. These species have adapted to the full force of salt-laden winds.

**Access** to this track is from the road on the way to Owenga. **The full walk is approximately 8 hours.**

## Tikitiki Hill Conservation Area

Tikitiki Hill walk provides a great lookout over Petre Bay, towards the Red Bluffs. You'll also be able to look down onto Waitangi township, and have a bird's-eye view of the Waitangi Wharf. This **10 min (return) walk** is clearly signposted and suitable for all ages and abilities. On a nice day the lookout area is an ideal spot for a picnic. Be careful in strong winds as the lookout and track are very exposed.

## Ellen Elizabeth Preece Conservation Covenant (Caravan Bush), Pitt Island

53 hectares, conservation covenant owned by John and Bridget Preece, and Greg and Karen Preece.

There are two short loop tracks within Caravan Bush. Both tracks stay inside the area, which is surrounded by a cat-proof fence. Native birds like tomtits and tūi are abundant. Gain access by joining a guided tour with Flower Pot Lodge.

