

Ferry Landing Lodge Information Sheet on local historic sites and Walking Tracks in Ferry Landing and Flaxmill Bay

5 - 10 minutes a track in front of the property (which begins at Ferry Landing car-park) leads up to Whitianga Rock. Facing the water outside the Lodge, turn left and take the small path to this historic Maori Pa site. Don't forget your camera to take some great photos of the panoramic views over the estuary and into Back Bay. You can see the new development of the Whitianga waterways which was once just flat, low lying land not much good for farming. The waterways sections now sell for a premium and will no doubt have an influence on the town's growth. Look for the rock wall used for 'holding' kauri logs which can be seen clearly at low tide. Stingrays can also be seen in Back Bay and it is not good for swimming. Because of its historic significance to the area, it cannot be dredged and has become much silted. The huge 'weather shaped' rocks above Back Bay, may look comparatively easy to access, are not and it can be quite dangerous to attempt to climb in that area. These caves are thought to have been Maori burial sites.

35 - 40 minutes on your return from the top of the rock, just before the information board, take the right turn into the defensive ditch built by the Maoris, and walk through to Back Bay, down the path that has been cut out of the bank. It is plain to see the mounds of shell fish (middens) that were thrown there by the Maori population who inhabited this historic Pa site. Captain Cook comments on this Pa site in his journal, Saturday 11 November 1769 after visiting the area on H.M.S. Endeavour. Continue on down more steps to the bay itself and tread carefully as it can be slippery. Go back up onto the bank on your left after passing the rock outcrop following the track to a small wooden bridge on your right. Go over and continue on towards your left for a short time before starting the climb up and over the Maramaratotara track. This steepish track is largely defined by nature, refined by man and can be slippery when wet. There are great views from a rock formation which is also a great resting place! The track continues on through native bush until it levels out before starting the decline down to Purangi Rd between Flaxmill Bay and Front Beach. Turn left to come back to the Lodge. Or if you want to reward yourself with a good coffee and awesome snacks continue on the road to Eggsentric Café. It's another 10 minutes walk to beautiful Flaxmill Bay.

40 - 45 minutes Just over the 'ford' at the end of Flaxmill Bay, on your left, is a fairly steep track which is well signposted which leads up to Shakespeare Cliff Reserve. The views of Flaxmill Bay and Front Beach are amazing and it is well worth the climb. At the top the track walk over grass fields, past some large Pohutakawa trees and onto the gravel road which began off Purangi Rd, sign posted Shakespeare Cliff Historic Reserve. Turn left, continue on the road then take a small track on your left to the 'Look out point' and enjoy the wonderful 180 degree panoramic views. Breathtakingly beautiful, it is a historically significant place because it commemorates Captain James Cook visit to this area, where he observed the transit of Mercury and named the bay. There is a monument to this famous visit. Continue the 'loop' down, stop at the small platform and enjoy the views of picturesque Lonely Bay. This Bay was so named because for many years a hermit lived here in a small hut. When he died the hut was dismantled and it is now part of the Shakespeare Cliff reserve. There are public toilets at the top but please do not litter and take rubbish with you.

From here, you can take the track directly down from the lookout to Cooks Beach which also turns off to the left to reach Lonely Bay or you can return via the road which is somewhat easier. Continue on the track and you will reach another track leading off to Cooks Beach. As you can see on the map, the area between Flaxmill Bay and Cooks Beach is criss-crossed with tracks giving several options.

1 - 2 hours Walk or use our mountain bikes and check out Cooks beach central where there is a café, takeaway, general store, liquor outlet, hardware and real estate agents. The walk can continue along Cooks Beach foreshore all the way to Purangi Estuary. This delightful area is very popular with young families as it is a safe swimming, snorkeling, kayaking area and a boat launching ramp. There's a children's playground, picnic area and public toilets too.