Pukeiti Gardens, Taranaki

**WILD FILE**

**Access** Take Carrington Street then Carrington Road from New Plymouth. Pukeiti Gatehouse is 23km from the city.

**Grade** Easy

**Time** 3-4hr

**Distance** 8km

**Maps** BH29, or maps of the tracks are available at the gatehouse

**Cafe** Open 1 October - 31 January

**Description**

In 1951, Pukeiti Hill was bought by enthusiasts who later formed the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust, as the area, with its acidic soil, 400m altitude, 3500mm annual rainfall and shelter provided by native bush, was ideal for growing the plant. The garden, covering around 26ha, was successfully established but money was always tight and in 2010 the Taranaki Regional Council assumed ownership and responsibility for the whole 360ha Pukeioti Gardens. Since then, the council has begun major development, aiming to make it a significant community facility.

The first part of this tramp is through the garden, passing the tree huts, always a popular attraction when families visit. Next comes a giant rata. Festooned with creepers, this ancient but still healthy tree towers above the forest.

Take the White Walk to the swingbridge over the Puketewhiti Stream, and enter the rainforest proper. A notice mentions that ‘trampers only’ should pass this point.

At the top of the rise, the Hauler Station sign indicates that the area was logged in the 1920s. Rimu trees were felled and hauled by a winch so they could be loaded on to a bush tramline.

The next part of the walk follows this line until veering to the right on the Pukeiti Summit Track. This is a reasonable climb to the lookout at the top of the 490m hill.

The name Pukeiti means ‘little hill’ but an earlier Maori name, Piro ngiha, which means ‘burning stink’, hints to its volcanic origin.

From the summit, follow the road to the Jubilee Track, named for Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust’s 50th jubilee in 2001. This leads down to the tramline where a loop track leads to the ‘Paint Mines’.

These ochre deposits were mined from 1918, after the First World War, when imported ochre, used to make paint, was not available. At first the material was taken out by horse, but from 1926 the bush tramline was used. Mining ceased in 1931 when the tramline was dismantled.

Pick up the Jubilee Track to the junction with Kaitake Track, which you can follow in a westerly direction back to the start.

**Elevation Profile**

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Disclaimer: While every effort has been made to map this route correctly, Wilderness Magazine does not take responsibility for any errors in the route. Users should use discretion when planning their routes and gather as much information as possible before departing.

Maps are created with Memory-Map software, version 6. This software shows purple tracks and hut icons as verified routes and huts – meaning they are where they say they are and should be passable. If a purple track is shown, it is the route from the Memory-Map software. If a red or blue route is shown, it has been drawn by Wilderness.