

## Whananaki Walkway, Whananaki South

There is always added value or unforeseen reward when you hike a track that comprises part of the Te Araroa Trail. The Whananaki Walkway connecting the picturesque settlement of Whananaki with the scenic beach of Sandy Bay is such a case.

The reward is situated at the beginning of the walkway, where the longest footbridge in the Southern Hemisphere links the estuary between the northern and southern section of the village. The unique structure of wooden piles was built in 1947 to enable children to travel to the local school. The bridge has an estimated length of 395m.

Once across the bridge, it's a left turn to follow the edge of the estuary. The track goes around minor settlements before ending at a spit from where it takes a southerly direction towards Pukekawa Road. In the event of high tide an inland shortcut leads to this site. Then a cart track fringes the coastline until it reaches Pitokuku Point. A brief stop at a small historic cemetery is a worthy diversion.

After passing Pitokuku Point, a steep grassy pathway, beyond a couple of holiday chalets, leads up a gentle slope to a stile, and onto well-kept farm driveway hemmed by pohutukawa trees. Along here, there are magnificent ocean views topped by the Poor Knights Islands on the horizon. The trail descends around landscaped bush and then enters a vast green rolling upland. There is another range of superb lookouts along the path as it winds through the hills.

Sandy Bay is probably the most popular surf beach along the Tutukaka Coast. It can be a perfect spot for a lunch break or a stroll along its idyllic nooks. On the easternmost cape, bizarrely wrinkled sandstone formations are exposed by the tide.

Returning to Whananaki by the same route can be enhanced with a detour to the Captain Bouganville Monument. A marked side track leads through a lush pine forest. It's quite steep but is worth the climb because of an impressive view over Oruaea Bay and the surrounding shoreline.

The monument includes a granite pillar and is a reminder of the tragic sinking of a cargo ship which was carrying meat and dairy products from Auckland to Sydney, Port Moresby and the Solomon Islands. On September 3, 1975, during a storm with a 12m swell, a fire broke out in the engine room directly below the lifeboats. The ship went down and claimed 16 lives.

From the monument, a short unformed track goes to the beach, and, at low tide, it's possible to reach Whananaki via the coastline.

### Wild File

**Access** Footbridge at Whananaki Estuary, accessed from either Whananaki South Road or Whananaki North Road

**Grade** Easy

**Time** 2.5-3hr (each way)

**Distance** 9.46km (one way)

**Total ascent** 499m

**Map** AW30

### Elevation Profile



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**Disclaimer:** While every effort has been made to map this route correctly, *Wilderness* does not accept responsibility for any errors. Users should plan their routes and gather as much information as possible before departing. The GPX file associated with this route has been drawn using Memory-Map software, version 6. Use discretion when following the route, especially when no track is marked on the map. The GPX file in these cases are a 'best guess' of the route only. Users should use a combination of GPS, visual observations, maps and compass to find the best possible route. Memory Map shows purple tracks and hut icons as verified routes and huts. Red or blue routes are those drawn by Wilderness.

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