

Marsden Cross Walk, Rangihoua Heritage Park, Northland

On Christmas Day just over two hundred years ago, Māori joined European missionary settlers to celebrate the first Christian service in New Zealand. At Rangihoua Bay in Northland's Bay of Islands, the Rev. Samuel Marsden preached at what is now the Marsden Cross Historic Reserve.

In 1814, the bay was overlooked by Rangihoua Pā and it was the local chiefs, Ruatara and Te Pahi, who had invited Marsden to set up a mission in New Zealand. It was at Rangihoua that the first European school was built, the first book on te reo Māori was prepared and the first Pākehā child was born. Marsden Cross is where the foundations of New Zealand were laid.

The walk begins at a car park on Oihi Road where there is a structure built from rammed earth with a winged roof that houses a three-dimensional model of the area along with other information.

The track is of an easy grade and winds gently downhill through open farmland. There are views out across the Bay of Islands.

The track to the bay is little more than a kilometre in length but is punctuated by information panels which tell the stories of the main characters who populated the Rangihoua settlement. Around a dozen of these boards is passed before reaching an area of overgrown orchards, New Zealand's first, close to the beach.

A memorial here commemorates Thomas and Elizabeth Hansen, the first non-missionary settlers in New Zealand. Thomas arrived on the brig *Active* in 1814, his wife joined him two years later. The memorial, complete with anchor, was erected in 1991. The track loops around here and comes out above the beach by the Marsden Cross.

This cross has been in place since 1907 but large interpretation panels were installed in 2014. By the beach there is a board showing what the settlement looked like on Christmas Day 1814.

By 1832, the settlers moved from Rangihoua Bay to Te Puna, a little to the west, where land was more fertile.

Wild file

Access Rangihoua Heritage Park is 36km from Kerikeri

Grade Easy

Time 80min return

Total ascent 13m

Distance 1.01km

Map AV29

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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