

Aotea Track, Great Barrier Island

From the pass on the Whangaparapara Road, the track heads north on Forest Road Track for 2km and then turns west, skirting a spur coming off The Hogs Back.

At the Junction with Pack Track, continue west over a small stream and climb to a low saddle beneath Maungapiko. A short detour to the 280m summit leads to a rocky outcrop requiring some scrambling. The track carries on to the north-west, descending to cross another stream before climbing again.

About 5km before Kaiaraara Hut along the Forest Road Track, a five-minute detour leads along a short, steep descent to a majestic pair of kauri trees.

The main track then descends to another stream before climbing the western flanks of Mt Young and turning north towards Kaiaraara Bay, passing by the Line W Track to the west and the South Fork Track to the east. It drops to Kaiaraara Hut, located in a tropical setting of nikau palms, silver ferns, and near the small Kaiaraara Stream. Banded rail can be seen near the hut, and kākā can also be seen and heard flying up the valley. From the hut, the trail crosses the stream on a swingbridge and turns right on the Kaiaraara Track. It leads upstream, passing several large puriri trees.

A few bridge crossings and short ascents later, the first of two old kauri dam sites is seen. The trail steepens after the second of these, becoming a narrow, wooden staircase with great views down the Kaiaraara Stream. Many stairs later is the junction with Palmers Track, coming in from Windy Canyon. Continuing up, more stairs are climbed to a viewing platform on the summit of Mt Hobson.

About five minutes from the summit, the South Fork Track leads south on a steep descent to the saddle between Mt Heale and Mt Hobson and then around to Mt Heale Hut.

After a few minutes along the South Fork Track, the trail turns left onto the Peach Tree Track and descends through scrub to the Tramline Track North. It then continues in a southerly direction through mānuka bush. Shortly after turning west, the Kaitoke Hot Springs Track is reached. This climbs a small rise and drops to the hot springs where trampers can soak aching muscles and sore legs.

From the hot springs, a short flat walk edges around Kaitoke Swamp back to Whangaparapara Road.

Note, the route described here is reverse to that recommended by DOC and has a different starting point.

Many variations are possible thanks to other connecting tracks and possible starting/finishing points.

Wild File

Access From the saddle near Pt170 on Whangaparapara Road

Grade Moderate

Time 2-3 days. Whangaparapara Road to Kaiaraara Hut, 5hr; To Mt Heale Hut, 3.5hr; To Whangaparapara Road via Kaitoke Hot Springs, 4hr

Distance 25.2km

Total ascent 1445m

Accommodation Kaiaraara Hut (\$15, 28 bunks), Mt Heale Hut (\$15, 20 bunks)

Map AY34



