

## Upper Mangatāwhiri Reservoir loop, Hunua Ranges Regional Park

This circuit combines easy gravel roads and a rough tramping track, pretty bush, scenic views of the reservoir, even a hut.

The track begins at the car park adjacent to the campsite at Upper Mangatāwhiri Dam. The dam, Auckland's second largest, was completed in 1965. It's one of a series of rolled earth water-supply dams completed in the Hunua Ranges – the others are Cosseys, Wairoa and Mangatangi dams.

Follow Waterline Road (a gravel road, closed to general traffic) northwards past many small inlets framed by mature ponga trees along the western shores of the Upper Mangatāwhiri Reservoir. After an easy 3km, leave the road where it starts to climb to the junction with Wairoa Hill Road.

The real tramping begins here. Turn right onto Ernies Track (signposted), which undulates through the bush, crossing several small creeks and a swampy area as it skirts around the northern end of the reservoir to reach Mangatāwhiri River. Be prepared to get wet feet, as the crossing can be anywhere from calf to thigh deep depending on recent rainfall.

The track passes through a unique and quite unexpected bamboo grove (follow the orange track markers) to St Paul Stream, then climbs a steep spur through bush for 1.6km to reach Pt497.

Although the high point has been reached, there are still plenty of ups and downs as you continue past a junction with the Upper Mangatāwhiri Track. The trail descends many stairs before reaching Rata Ridge Track and Lilburne Road (closed to traffic). Walking Rata Ridge Track would add another hour to this circuit.

A little further down Lilburne Road, Piggotts Hut and campsite is reached. The hut is named after Lionel and Harriet Piggott, early settlers of the Moumoukai Valley. It makes a nice lunch spot. Campsites can be booked through Auckland Council. It's then along Lilburne Road south-west through regenerating bush, eventually descending steadily to Upper Mangatāwhiri Dam.

The Hunua Ranges are included in the North Island Kōkako Recovery Plan. In 1994 only one breeding pair remained, but thanks to a pest control programme there are now more than 116 pairs. Stop and listen to the wealth of birdlife: you may hear the haunting organ-like notes of the kōkako. The pest-controlled area also provides benefits to other species: kākā, Hochstetter's frogs, tomtits, long-tailed bats and korimako/bellbirds.

### Wild File

**Access** Upper Mangatāwhiri Campground car park

**Grade** Moderate

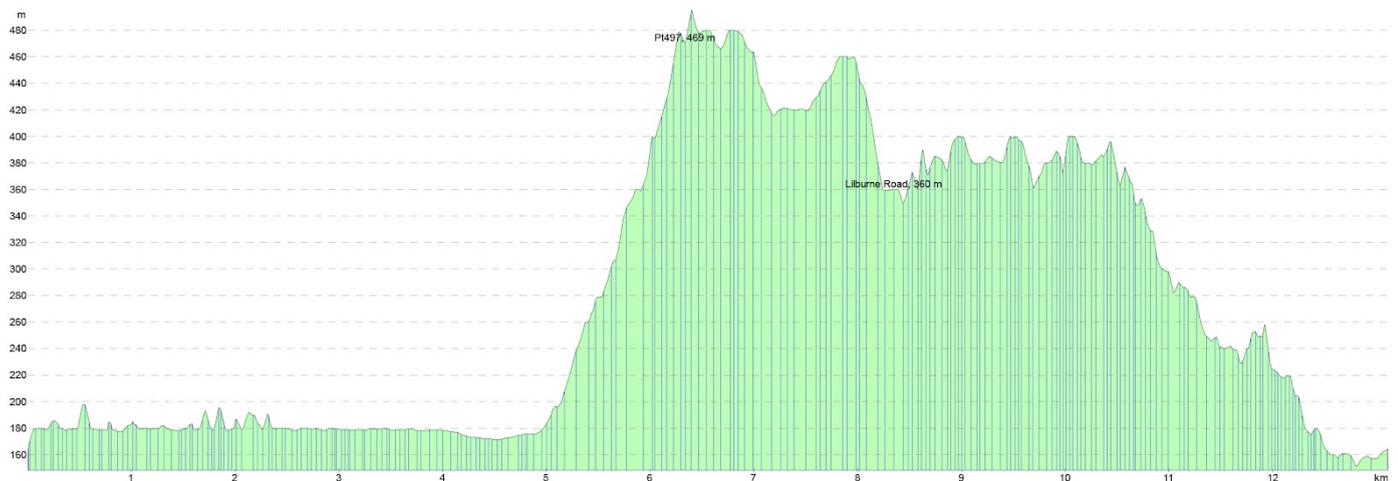
**Time** 4-5hr

**Distance** 13km

**Total Ascent** 732m

**Topo 50 map** BB33

### Elevation



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