

Kohukohunui, Hunua Ranges Regional Park

Kohukohunui (688m) is the highest point in the Hunua Ranges and provides one of the best full-day backcountry walks close to Auckland.

Until eastern tracks were closed in 2018 to protect the kauri there, it was accessible from the Waharau Regional Park via a pleasant day walk. At present, it is accessible only via the western ridges as a longish day trip or an overnighiter if you stay at Piggotts Campsite.

Once past the campsite, you are on tracks with a natural surface (remember how they all used to be?), with a superb forest, great viewpoints and possibly the haunting call of the endangered kōkako, which is the target of sustained pest control activity.

From the Upper Mangatawhiri car park, follow the road up to and across the dam and pick up Lilburne Road through to Piggotts Campsite. From there, the choice is a gradual ascent to the summit track via Ernies Track and Upper Mangatawhiri Track, or for a more direct route, the Rata Ridge and the Mangatangi Ridge tracks. After Konini Stream the latter presents a solid 450m climb to the junction with Upper Mangatawhiri Track. From there, it is less than 1km to the summit and nearby historic Trig K Hut (1947). On a fine day the views to the east and west from the lookout platform are a great reward.

Return to Piggotts Campsite via one of three ridge tracks: Upper Mangatawhiri, Mangatangi Ridge, or down the easy Kohukohunui Track to Mine Road. The latter is well formed with steps and a few boardwalks. It is in the heart of the extensive kōkako management area, so keep an eye and an ear out for these elusive birds. All three western ridges are a showcase of the Hunua forest and a real delight, given that access to the area involves walking on metalled roads.

The Mine Road Track provides a steep 250m drop to the Mangatawhiri River followed by a 300m climb to reach the Upper Mangatawhiri Track junction. Follow this down to Ernies Track and Piggotts Campsite before the final leg down Lilburne Road to the dam and car park.

Wild File

Access Lilburne Road

Grade Moderate

Time 9hr

Distance 26km

Total ascent 1229m

Topo50 map BB33

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