

CLOSE TO HOME



Water everywhere

Water cannons, water clocks and water bikes are among the attractions at The Waterworks, a quirky complex in Coromandel Town. There's also a playground, some friendly farm animals, a swimming hole and picnic spots, and a cafe and shop. December 10-11 is a \$3 weekend, with \$3 entry, \$3 icecream, \$3 coffee and \$3 soft drinks. Three new attractions will also be open.

Contact: (07) 866 7191

On the web:

www.thewaterworks.co.nz

Taste of Waiheke

Relax in the picturesque olive grove and gardens of Rangihoua Estate during the Waiheke Olive Festival, November 26-27, 11am-5pm. Local olive oil and artisan food producers will be showcasing their products, and there'll be live music throughout the day. Entry is \$15, under-12s free.

Contact: (09) 372 6214

On the web:

www.waihekeolivefestival.co.nz

Get smart

The Department of Conservation has introduced CamperMate, an application that gives smartphone users free access to important local information around the country. It provides GPS coordinates and details of facilities such as hostels, campsites, public toilets, dump stations, police stations, hospitals, free wi-fi spots, supermarkets, petrol stations and even rubbish bins.

On the web:

www.campermate.co.nz

Private tea party

Anyone who loves the ritual of taking tea will enjoy the new afternoon tea options at Queenstown's historic Eichardt's Private Hotel. Dainty delights prepared fresh every day and served on a tiered stand can be taken in the courtyard of the lakefront property or in its stylish bar. Teas will be available from December 4 and bookings are recommended.

Contact: (03) 441 0450

On the web: www.eichardts.com

Music at Mandeville

For a relaxed family-friendly music event down Canterbury way, visit the Mandeville Music Festival on December 10. Held in the landscaped surrounds of the Mandeville Sports Centre 25km northwest of Christchurch, the festival features headline act The Warratahs and several local bands. Gates open at 12.30pm and entertainment will continue until 9pm.

On the web:

www.mandevillemusicfestival.co.nz
Heather Ramsay



COASTAL PANORAMA: Mangawhai Cliffs Walkway provides superb views of the coast often framed by stands of nikau palm.

Keeping track up north

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they're as rare as it gets.

Further down the beach were several devoted pairs of variable oyster catchers and a couple of dotterel families. One oyster catcher put on a performance of having a broken wing but the dotterels trusted their camouflage.

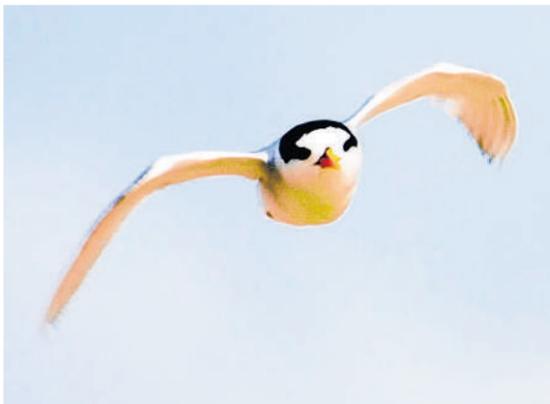
It was now about an hour since I left John to his calls so I thought I should see how he was going. Back down the beach, he was just finishing another call but had at least been able to watch a lone dotterel, a pair of oyster catchers and even a couple of white-fronted terns as he did so.

Back at Waipu Cove, we had a reviving coffee at the Cove Cafe then headed for Lang's Beach via a coastal track developed by the Waipu Lions Club. The track was a bit rough but there were more great coastal views, nice patches of bush and some fascinating rock formations.

As we hopped from rock to rock, John said they looked rather like layers of limestone while I thought they were similar to the famous Punakaiki Pancake Rocks.

Shortly afterwards, I found a small notice tacked to a pohutukawa tree saying that the rocks were indeed layers of sedimentary limestone and the only other place they were found nationally was Punakaiki. Snap.

It was worth the walk just to see their amazing shapes, patterns



IN FLIGHT: Fairy terns (left) and variable oyster catchers can be seen on northern coastal walks.



PICTURES / PAUL ESTCOURT, JIM EAGLES

» CHECKLIST

■ FURTHER INFORMATION

You can find out about Catered Coastal Walks at www.cateredcoastalwalks.co.nz
To check out Te Araroa see www.teararoa.org.nz

and colours (some were orange).

After checking out a secret viewing point in the middle of suburban Lang's Beach, we did some rock hopping round to McKenzie Bay where Natalie was waiting to lead us up a network of tracks through their neighbours' land, past more viewing spots and some superb stands of kowhai, kauri, rewarewa and puriri, back to base.

By the time we got there, we'd be walking for nearly six hours so I don't mind admitting I was a bit tired. But a shower and grandad nap had me all set for Jac's offering of flash roasted fish with a lemon caper topping, potato gratin and an orange, olive and red onion salad with cumin and paprika dressing, followed by a vanilla bean and rosewater creme brulee. A bit better than our usual camping fodder.

Next day, we had a shorter walk, down a newly cut track through regenerating bush on the Spyksma property, across Cove Rd to Bream Tail Rd, on to the missing link track which basically runs through Bream Tail Farm and up to Mangawhai Cliffs.

The views here were the best yet so we wandered slowly along the clifftops, enjoying the coastal

panorama and some nice stands of nikau, then climbed down a staircase track to the beach.

You can return to the coastal walks base by walking along the beach and round Bream Tail to McKenzie Bay.

But, unfortunately, the tide was too high and anyway we really needed to get home.

So we just headed along the sand to Mangawhai Surf Club where my kindly wife was waiting with the car.

As it happens, we were still walking along Te Araroa, which runs along the beach, swoops inland from the surf club to get around Mangawhai Harbour, then returns to the coast and runs south along Te Arai and Pakiri beaches, heading for Auckland.

It looked like a great walk ... but that's for another day.