Rangitoto, the only volcano of its type in New Zealand, emerged from the sea around 600 years ago in a series of fiery volcanic explosions. Further eruptions sent red-hot lava flows down the sides of the volcano, forming the black basaltic rock that now makes up much of the island. Today Rangitoto is the largest, youngest and least modified of about 50 volcanic cones and craters in the Auckland volcanic field. It is probably extinct, although the Auckland field is only dormant.

The island’s name is derived from the phrase Te Rangi tōtonga a Tamatekapua – the day the blood of Tamatekapua was shed. Tamatekapua was chief of the before ancestors, which arrived about 1350, and was engaged in (and lost) a major battle with the Tanui at Islington Bay.

Maori History

There are several Maori myths associated with Rangitoto. One tells of the children of the Fire deities, who inhabited the Auckland area. One night a husband and wife quarrelled and cursed the fire deity Mahuika. She complained to Mataho, the deity of earthquakes and eruptions, who sent an eruption to destroy the couple’s mountain home. It was swallowed up by the earth and became Lake Pupuke on Auckland’s North Shore, and Rangitoto rose out of the sea. When mist surrounds Rangitoto, it is the tears of the couple as they weep over their lost home.

Maori were living on Motutapu Island when Rangitoto erupted from the sea depositing layers of fertile volcanic ash on their island. The dramatic appearance of this spectacular landmark ensured it an important place in Maori history and mythology. It has remained a place of considerable significance to Maori and is considered wahi tapu (a sacred place). Rangitoto’s rocky terrain was unsuitable for permanent settlement, though there is some evidence of coastal fishing villages. It was used as a look-out over the Hauraki Gulf and its islands.

European History

Rangitoto, only 47 islands included in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, is administered by the Department of Conservation. Day visitors are welcome to the island, and can explore a number of well-marked tracks and roads. Visitor information is sited at Rangitoto and Yankee Wharves.

Getting There

Fullers Ferries run a regular ferry service. Take care not to miss your ferry back as there is no overnight accommodation on the island and alternative transport to the mainland is expensive!

Fullers have a concession to operate a 4 wheel drive guided tour to the start of the Summit boardwalk (10 min to Summit). (Phone 09-307 9111 for bookings and details.)

For more Information

DOC Information Centre
phone 09-379 6476 fax 09-379 3609
e-mail: aucklandvc@doc.govt.nz
website: www.doc.govt.nz

For information on bach restoration contact:
Rangitoto Island Historic Conservation Trust,
33 Marine Parade Herne Bay
Contact Elizabeth Andrew 09-634 1398 or
Susan Yoffe 09-445 1894

Emergencies:
To report accident, fire or other emergencies contact Motutapu Ranger
Ph: 09-372 2060/(0274) 372 576 or
Auckland Conservancy Office 09-307 9279
(24hrs) or Fire: Ph: 111

Missed the last ferry? Phone the Water Taxi for assistance 0800 Taxi Boat (0800 829 426)

Welcome

Rangitoto, one of 47 islands included in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, is administered by the Department of Conservation. Day visitors are welcome to the island, and can explore a number of well-marked tracks and roads. Visitor information is sited at Rangitoto and Yankee Wharves.

Visiting the Island

What you need to bring
- Water/drink. The only drinking water available is a fountain at Rangitoto Wharf.
- sturdy walking shoes/boots that can cope with the island’s rugged lava surfaces.
- Sunhat and sunscreen. The heat rays reflecting off the lava can be intense.
- A torch if exploring the caves.
- There is no accommodation on Rangitoto, but neighbouring Motutapu has a basic campsite at Home Bay, and an outdoor education centre and lodge at Administration Bay.

Please
- Dogs and cats are not allowed on the island because they are a threat to native birds.
- Do not light open fires. There is a barbecue at the causeway.
- Please do not pick vegetation, or disturb historic artefacts – they belong here.
- Take your rubbish off the island with you. There are no rubbish disposal facilities on Rangitoto.
- Keep to the tracks so you don’t disturb plant life, or endanger yourself on the lava.
- No firearms.
- No mountain bikes.

Vegetation

The lava rock of Rangitoto seems an inhospitable environment for plant life. It is highly porous, there is no soil, little permanent water, and the black rock soars to very high temperatures. But on this strange and alien landscape, a distinctive plant community is developing.

Mosses, lichen and algae are the first plants to colonise the bare lava. Later on in the process of succession, pohutukawa trees establish and are the dominant tree. Rangitoto now has the largest remaining pohutukawa forest in New Zealand.

Pohutukawa seeds take root, in humus-filled crevices on the lava. As they grow, they form islands of vegetation, their branches sheltering, shading and growing humus for other plants like kakariki, koromiko, and pika. Eventually the “islands” of vegetation link to form a continuous forest cover.

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Safety Watch

0800 999 005
Report any safety hazards when you visit a conservation area
Walks begin at Rangitoto, Islington Bay and Yankee Wharves. Walking times are based on an average speed of 2 km/h, and will vary with different levels of fitness.

**MAIN SUMMIT WALKING TRACKS**

**SUMMIT TRACK**  
Time: 1 hour one way from Rangitoto Wharf. Distance: 2 kilometres  
The shortest and most popular route to the summit begins at Rangitoto Wharf and climbs through lava fields and forest to the peak at 259 metres above sea level. A few hundred metres from the start, you will notice a large flat clearing. This was made by prison labour in the 1930s and was the planned site of five tennis courts and a pavilion (they never eventuated owing to lack of finance). Rest stops and descriptive interpretation signs are sited along the track. The summit gives panoramic views of Auckland and the Hauraki Gulf. At the summit another track circles the rim of the crater.

**LA VALES TRACK**  
Time: 15 minutes from Summit Track, 60 minutes from Wharf one way. 1 hr 45 min wharf – lava caves – Summit Road – Summit  
This alternative route to the summit branches off the Summit Track before the Lava Caves Track turn-off to Summit. This short diversion off the Summit Track leads to lava tunnels and caves. These are formed when the outer surface of a lava flow cools and solidifies, enclosing a tongue of still-moving lava inside. As the inner fluid lava drains away, the outer shell is left as a cave or tunnel. Return to Summit Track or the Summit Road via the signposted track.

**WILSON PARK TRACK**  
Time: 1 hr 45 min from Wharf to summit. 45 minutes from Summit Track turn-off to Summit.  
This alternative route to the summit branches off the Summit Track before the Lava Caves Track turn-off. Wilson was an Englishman who planned to create a botanical park on Rangitoto in 1915, and introduced such exotic plants as cacti, figs, and pawpaws. Two remaining lava pillars on either side of the track were to have been the ‘Park’ gates.

**SHORT WALKS: from Rangitoto Wharf**  
**KOWHAI GROVE**  
Time: 45 min round trip  
This short walk leads to a small kowhai grove, especially attractive in spring when the trees are flowering.

**KIDNEY FERN GLEN**  
Time: 45 min round trip  
A track branching off the Summit Track leads through a glen of delicate, translucent kidney ferns, at their best after rain.

**FLAX POINT & HISTORIC BACHES**  
Time: 1 hr  
A coastal walk to a black-back gull breeding colony at Flax Point. Rangitoto has several nesting sites for the gulls. The gulls make their nests in the open on lava beds. Eggs are hatched in December and January. A shorter walk of about 15 minutes following the nominee includes one of the remaining historic baches.

**LONGER WALKS**

**LIGHTHOUSE WALK TO MCKENZIE BAY**  
Time: 2 hr 30 min one way from Rangitoto Wharf (to Summit add 1 hr 15min)  
This walk winds along the coast to McKenzie Bay, site of two natural sand beaches on Rangitoto and a good picnic and swimming spot. (The road continues on to the summit for those who want a really long walk – add 1 hr)

**RANGITOTO WHARF - SUMMIT - ISLINGTON BAY WHARF**  
Time: 2 hr 30 min  
Take the Summit Track from Rangitoto Wharf, and at the summit follow the road down to Islington Bay. This is a good walk if you can arrange a ferry pick-up at Islington Bay – make sure you check the ferry timetable first as Islington Bay stops are seasonal.

**COASTAL TRACK - RANGITOTO WHARF TO ISLINGTON BAY WHARF**  
Time: 2 hr 30 min  
This coastal walk passes many remnants of human activity - boathouses and baches near Rangitoto Wharf, old quarry sites, the ruins of wartime storage bases for mines, and Yankee Wharf built during World War II. Islington Bay is popular for swimming, picnicking and yacht anchorage.

**RANGITOTO WHARF TO ISLINGTON BAY WHARF**  
Time: 1 hr 30 min  
This alternative route to Islington Bay passes along a road built by prisoners. The road continues on over the causeway to Motutapu Island.

**ISLINGTON BAY WHARF TO HOME BAY (MOTUTAPU)**  
Time: 1 hr 45 min one way  
From Islington Bay, cross the causeway to Motutapu Island. A walk over farmland and cliff tops leads to Home Bay where a small pavilion (they never eventuated owing to it is difficult to work out which ship the wreckage has come from).

Rangitoto Wharf