

The magnificent northern rata, with its beautiful crimson flowers can be seen in all its glory in Golden Bay. The Trail leads from Takaka to the Grove Scenic Reserve, where massive trees sprout from limestone outcrops, then past the spectacular cliffs at Pohara to the beaches of the Abel Tasman National Park.

This Crimson Trail will lead you to outstanding examples of this New Zealand native tree as well as guide you through some of the best scenery the South Island has to offer.



Northern Rata, Motueka

The Trail begins in Takaka at the Information Centre

1. A tree planted over 90 years ago grows in the main street opposite the Telegraph Hotel.
2. The Grove Scenic Reserve is characterised by massive northern rata growing on curiously shaped limestone outcrops. There is an easy 20-minute walk passing some impressive roots over large limestone blocks. Look for the rata starting to encircle the host tree's trunk, on your left some ten metres after the start of the return trail.
3. From the Pohara Store, northern rata dominate the limestone cliff skyline for about one kilometre. This is the only old-growth coastal forest left in the district. Current die-back is caused by drought. Mid-December is the peak flowering time.
4. In Wainui Bay note the three mature rata on the left by a small turn-off and picnic site before the Wainui Bridge. Wainui Falls Walk (look for sign to carpark on right after the bridge). A grove of northern rata, mainly growing on pukatea, are on the left after the first loop track sign. On the left, above the swing bridge, is a magnificent specimen of a fully mature rata, from which the dead rimu host is falling away. Many rata grow on bluffs around the falls.



Northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*)

The tiny seeds of this tree, blown by the wind, come to rest high above the ground, in the humus-filled forks of pukatea or rimu trees, or occasionally on rock outcrops. Germinating, the seedling draws nutrient from the humus while sending one aerial root, or more, on the long journey to the ground.

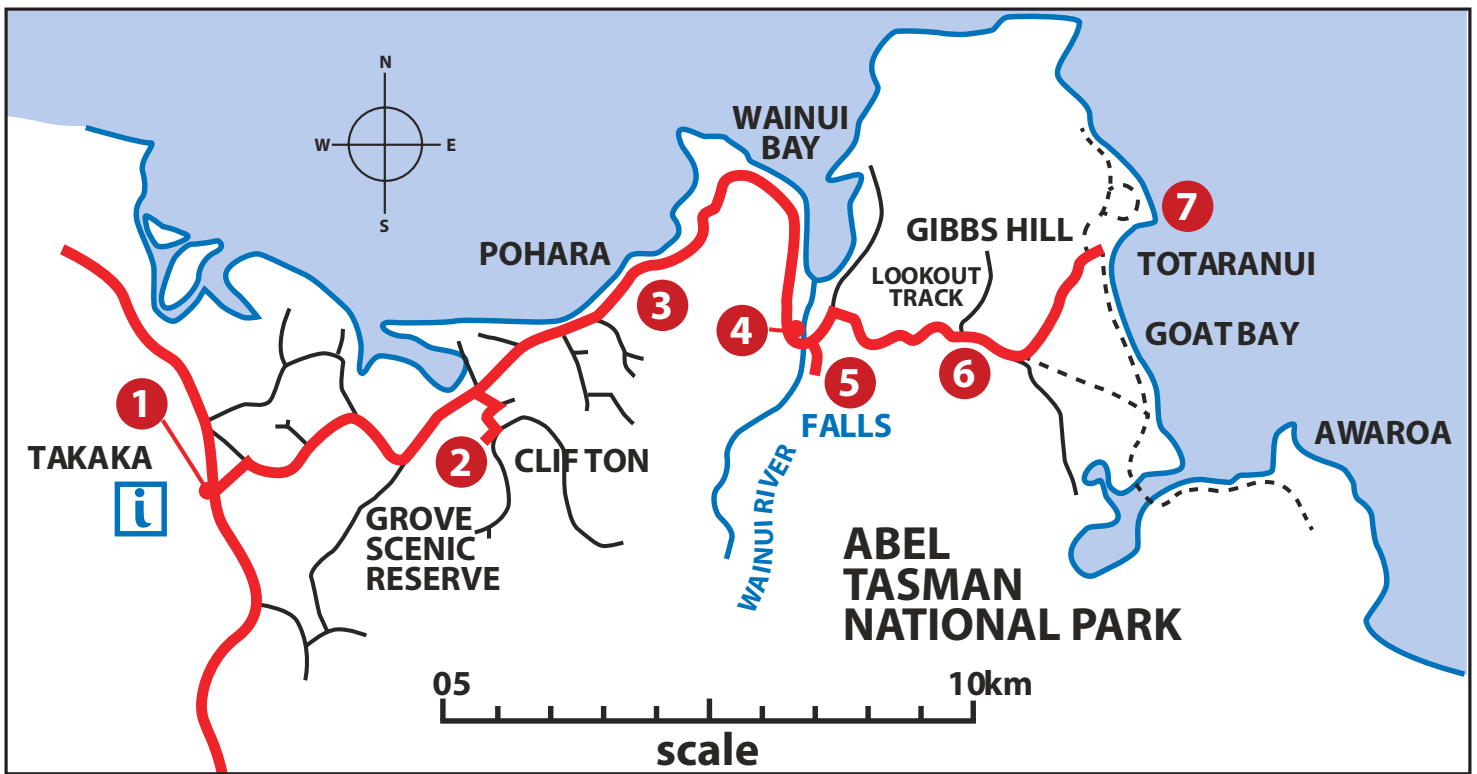
As the rata grows, the thickening roots send encircling bands round the host tree's trunk, much like the tropical strangling fig. At the same time, the rata's crown, now rapidly expanding, begins to overshadow the host tree's canopy. Hundreds of years go by. The host, robbed of its supply of light and with its tissues disrupted by the tightly gripping aerial roots, weakens and dies. The rata's roots, now merging to form a single massive trunk, continue to grow as the host rots away, leaving a hollow core to mark its passing.

From this beginning the tree can go on to live for over a thousand years, each year sending a new batch of tiny seeds away on the wind.



Southern rata (*Metrosideros umbellata*)

This tree has its stronghold in the South Island where it favours the cold wet Westland forests and coastlines and Stewart Island. It even grows as a tangled shrub on our sub-Antarctic islands. Unlike northern rata, southern rata prefers to start life on the ground. Northern and southern rata can be distinguished by their leaves: if it's sharp it's southern; if it's notched it's northern. In Golden Bay, southern rata is found at higher altitudes where the climate is cooler, and can be seen at Hawkes Lookout on the Takaka Hill.



Grove Scenic Reserve



Northern rata forest

5. Pigeon Saddle, the highest point on the road to Tataranui, has many northern rata, mainly on the left and along the Lookout Track. This is a species-rich area and boasts several massive trees along the track. Late December is the best flowering time for rata here and all the way to Awaroa turn-off.
6. From Tataranui Beach, large northern rata can be seen on the headland. At the top of the Headland Track are several massive northern rata and the shorter Pukatea Walk also passes some magnificent specimens. A walk to Goat Bay in the south passes through groves of rata.

Other rata places of interest

Mount Burnett – Wakamarama Range

Pass the Collingwood turn-off, then turn right to cross the Aorere River. The mountain slopes directly ahead feature northern rata, with southern rata near the top. From December it is possible to see progressive flowering up Mount Burnett and the slopes of the Wakamarama Range.

The Kaituna Track

You'll find many huge rata in a beautiful bush setting a short distance up the track.

Whanganui (Westhaven) Inlet

Northern rata grows along the estuary. Southern rata and the rare Parkinson's rata are found up the Knuckle Hill Track. Go to the Anatori River and discover an overarching grove of rata just before the descent to the river.

The **Golden Bay Crimson Trail** is one of a series of Project Crimson's Crimson Trails throughout New Zealand. Each Crimson Trail is unique to its region. What the Crimson Trails share is that special time of the year when glorious crimson blooms cloak the trees and the wind blown stamens carpet the ground beneath.

Crimson Trails can be explored in the following areas:

- Auckland
- Coromandel
- Mount Maunganui
- Rotorua
- Wellington
- Golden Bay
- Canterbury
- West Coast
- Otago/Southland

Brochures for each Crimson Trail can be downloaded from www.projectcrimson.org.nz

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