

Mount Maunganui is one of the most perfect places to set out on a Crimson Trail that celebrates the pohutukawa. It's one of the few areas in New Zealand where you can see so many pohutukawa in such a concentrated area.

This Crimson Trail starts out on Mount Drury, diverts briefly to Moturiki Island and then continues along the delightful boardwalk toward Mauao (Mount Maunganui). The entrance to the camping ground signals the beginning of a spectacular section of the Crimson Trail around Mauao.



Orokawa Scenic Reserve

Places of Special Interest

On the main highway between Auckland and Tauranga is the well-signposted Waihi Beach turn-off. Take this road to the north end of Waihi Beach and you come to the Orokawa Scenic Reserve track. This is one of the country's most spectacular coastal tracks and it leads to Homunga Bay.

In 1989 Homunga Bay had one of the most severely damaged pohutukawa forests in the Coromandel. Together with the Department of Conservation, Project Crimson undertook fencing, possum and goat control, and started replanting. Today, rather than using the reserve for winter grazing, the local farming community operate the pest-control stations and take pride in the extraordinary turnaround in the fortunes of the pohutukawa in Homunga Bay.

This sense of community ownership and pride in the long-term benefits of planting restoration and regeneration can also be seen at Te Puna Quarry Park on the outskirts of Tauranga. Since 1997, volunteers have been transforming an old quarry site into a world class, award-winning park. Here, with Project Crimson's support, pohutukawa take their place in the native planting areas.



Pohūtukawa

It is frequently referred to as the 'New Zealand Christmas Tree' and, for many New Zealanders, the pohūtukawa dominate favourite landscapes and childhood memories.

It belongs to the genus *Metrosideros*, the iron-hearted myrtles, which is a reference to its hard, very heavy, dark red heartwood. There are two native pohūtukawa (mainland and kermadec).

Growing

The pohūtukawa has a massive spreading crown. It's wider than it is tall.

Roots form out of trunks and branches and the roots are able to grow in air over surfaces as they search for crevices, pockets of soil and moisture.

Living

Dormant leaf and floral buds are protected against damage from cold, salt and abrasion by bud scales. Leaves are hairy when young, but once mature the hair on the upper surface is replaced with a tough, shiny coat of wax, protecting leaves against drought and salt.

Flowering

Pohūtukawa trees colour our coastlines crimson between November and January. Individual flowers are arranged in dense clusters, each of which has around 14 large, red 'brush' flowers that stay open for around seven days.



Mount Maunganui's Crimson Corridor

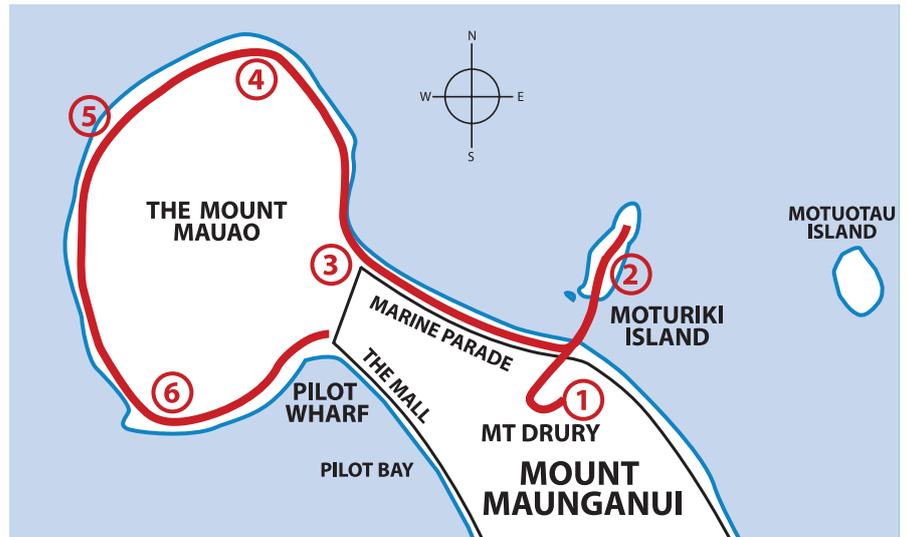
In 1998, a student listening to the song of a lone bellbird at Mount Maunganui College asked where all the native birds had gone. From this grew the commitment to bring native birds back by planting flowering native trees.

Guided by the concept of biological corridors, the students began with 500 cuttings struck from local stock and, over the next four years, they set about planting over 2,000 pohutukawa throughout private homes, public parks and the extensive sand dune network along the coast.

The students' Crimson Corridor will generate much magic for generations to come.

Mount Maunganui's Crimson Trail

In a gentle two hours you will complete this Crimson Trail, which is a delight year-round. The sea always in sight and the pohutukawa plentiful. You'll be truly rewarded if you choose to take the Trail from late November to early January when the trail is at its most crimson.



1. Mount Drury is really a very little hill – a gentle five minutes up and three minutes down. Around 20 metres from the start of the Trail, on your right, you'll find a huge old pohutukawa with masses of aerial roots. Unlike this old giant, the majority of the pohutukawa on Mount Drury have been planted within the last 60 years.
2. Moturiki is only an island on the highest tides and a natural path takes you across the beach to its rocky western end. The track along the length of Moturiki presents another gentle stroll and as you head to its highest point you'll see that the tiny island to your right, Motuotau, is completely covered in pohutukawa.
3. 'Round the Mount' starts at the camping ground entrance where the local council has placed an impressive and very informative display sign. Here you learn more about Mauao, and the constant threats to the pohutukawa growing on its slopes.
4. The Trail path is wide and well walked by young and old alike. It's a lovely stroll that will take approximately one hour, and from the path you can marvel at the tenacity of trees that will put their roots down in eroding banks and rocky crevices. Here you'll see first-hand how pohutukawa will colonise almost any surface above high tide, and how re-growth occurs in sproutings from bare roots.
5. Shortly after the plaque commemorating the shipwrecking of the Ranui, you'll come to a seat located in a grove of pohutukawa. This grove gives you some idea of how the trees would have grown in the past, before fires, possums, and humans began periods of destruction.
6. As you make your way around Mauao on the 'homeward journey' to Pilot Bay you may just glimpse the bronze statue of Tangaroa – god of the ocean – which stands out at sea, both on guard and in greeting.

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

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

Renewing our pohūtukawa and rātā

For over 25 years Project Crimson has been working with communities around New Zealand to renew and restore our precious ecosystems, with a particular focus on our iconic pohūtukawa and rātā trees. All New Zealanders can be part of our work by joining our planting days, making a donation to the Trust or buying our products.

Join us in our mission to protect and enhance New Zealand's natural environment. Visit: www.projectcrimson.org.nz


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