

Summer in Auckland is one long lazy day of sun, sea and sails. It's also the perfect time and place to explore Project Crimson's Crimson Trails.

In Auckland you'll discover Crimson Trails that take you to some of the most magnificent pohūtukawa stands the City has to offer.

You can take advantage of the shade pohūtukawa offer throughout summer, but it's the spectacular crimson canopy that makes an expedition in Auckland even more vibrant during the summer months.



Let's explore the Crimson Trails in and around Auckland

1. Cornwall Park

Cultivated pohūtukawa flourish in Cornwall Park as groves and avenues, starting with Pohūtukawa Drive at the main entrance to the park off Greenlane West. At the end of Pohūtukawa Drive you can make your way to Huia Lodge (the Information Centre) and discover an exceptional specimen which dates back to 1800. It's a five-minute return vehicle trip, but it's worth parking and taking a leisurely half-hour walk.



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.



2. Tamaki Drive

Tamaki Drive runs east of the city along the coast to the seaside suburb of St Heliers. Starting where The Strand joins Tamaki Drive, this eight kilometre one way Crimson Trail is a busy road and a broad pavement enjoyed by walkers and joggers year round.

From Hobson Bay to Okahu Bay, through Mission Bay and Kohimarama to St Heliers, pohūtukawa line Tamaki Drive. Pohūtukawa fringe the beaches and cling precariously to cliffs, bowing low over steep banks.

The bays all provide safe, popular swimming beaches and in summer there's always a scramble to find relief from the sun under the shade the pohūtukawa provide.

An absolute 'must see'

In Auckland's Parnell Rose Garden you will discover a truly awesome pohūtukawa tree. Broad, low and exceptionally majestic, this is a 'must see' specimen. If you continue to walk through the gardens and down to Judges Bay you can see more majestic old trees and look out beyond Tamaki Drive to Rangitoto Island.

3. Motuihe Island

Motuihe is a very popular island for day trippers and in summer there's a regular ferry service (less frequent in winter). On Motuihe you can swim, walk, picnic, camp if you wish, and watch out for two threatened bird species, the New Zealand dotterel and the variable oystercatcher.

You can also see first-hand the extraordinary damage that can be inflicted on an environment by rabbits. Rabbits were destroying the ecology of the island, damaging historical sites and making farming very difficult. In July and August 2002, Motuihe was closed so that the Department of Conservation could begin an intense rabbit eradication programme. Motuihe is now rabbit free and the Motuihe Trust has embarked on a comprehensive restoration project that will truly reflect the natural, historic and cultural heritage of the island. This project has been supported by thousands of seedlings provided to the Motuihe Trust by Project Crimson. Today pohūtukawa form a coastal fringe for the island.

4. Waiheke Island

Waiheke Island reflects many of the characteristics of Auckland's coastline. Waiheke Island, like Great Barrier Island, is possum free, so pohūtukawa have always flourished. Here pohūtukawa inhabit the main beaches and can be found almost anywhere on the island.

Like the Auckland mainland coasts the northern and eastern coasts are more populated with pohūtukawa and there are fewer old stands remaining. The southern and western coasts are more heavily populated with dense bush featuring majestic pohūtukawa. Pohūtukawa are very much an important aspect of island life and part of the accepted heritage. There is a both a bay and a water-side avenue aptly named after the species.

If you have a day it's an easy and gentle drive around the island. It is a very rewarding bicycle ride if you have a number of days, and it's a walkers' paradise if you're staying over.

We recommend you explore the western and southern parts of the island if you're looking for some truly magnificent stands and coastal forest environments.

Some Waiheke 'must sees' ...

At the end of Donald Bruce Road (where the vehicle barge lands) head to Kennedy Point where you will see some magnificent trees with twisted gnarly trunks. Here you can also find a great picnic spot under a beautiful pohūtukawa on the foreshore complete with a swing that hangs out over the water on a full tide.

Heading back up Donald Bruce Road, take a left-hand turn on to Kennedy Point Road and discover the Kennedy Point Reserve. Access to the reserve is from the right-hand side of the road, it's not immediately obvious but worth looking out for. There is a small carpark area at the top of the reserve area.



From here you can walk down to the foreshore through the most magnificent stand of old and huge pohūtukawa.

You might also head to Omiha, also known as Rocky Bay. From the little seaside village you can take a two-minute stroll along Pohūtukawa Avenue that will have you clambering beneath an old tree, richly festooned with epiphytes, that spreads its branches out over the sea.

5. Rangitoto Island

Rangitoto is home to the world's largest pohūtukawa forest and every year, just before Christmas, the brilliant flowering pohūtukawa turns the island red.

In recent times however the situation on Rangitoto became desperate. By the end of the 1980s Rangitoto's pohūtukawa forests were clearly dying – ravaged by possums and wallabies – both introduced species. At this time Project Crimson was still a very young organisation but we made Rangitoto one of our first large projects by supporting the Department of Conservation's campaign to eradicate these destructive browsers.

Rangitoto Island is possum and wallaby free and pohūtukawa flourish once more.



6. Kawau Island

Another popular day trip is a visit to Kawau Island. To get there you need to take a ferry across from Sandspit which is one hour's drive north of Auckland. The island has many pohūtukawa in its bays and coastal forest and has a small number of permanent residents and holiday homes.

A popular haven for boaties is Bon Accord Harbour with some magnificent pohūtukawa framing the shoreline. There are a number of easy walks from Mansion House Bay through native forest to beaches and the old copper mine.

The Auckland Crimson Trail is one of a series of Project Crimon'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

7. Tiritiri Matangi

Tiritiri Matangi, meaning "tossed by the wind", is an Open Scientific Reserve managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC) in partnership with the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Inc. Tiritiri Matangi lies four kilometres off the coast of the Whangaparaoa Peninsula and is one of the most successful conservation projects in the world. Since 1984 Tiritiri Matangi has been transformed by a community based habitat restoration programme.



Unwanted predators were eradicated, and the once-pastoral island was replanted with around 300,000 native trees. These trees, including pohūtukawa, have been grown from seed collected on the island, and today most replanted areas are well established. And now that Tiritiri Matangi's forest and wetland habitats are restored, 12 rare and endangered birds have been introduced or returned to the island, including saddleback, takahe, kokako, little spotted kiwi, stitchbird and the brown teal duck along with three reptile species. Restoration of the island has returned the dawn chorus from the bird life. The island's sanctuary status allows 150 visitors per day to walk the island's tracks and enjoy its special flora and fauna.

When you step off the wharf a ten-minute walk to your left takes you to some lovely old pohūtukawa that have been a great seed source for the replanting work. A highlight of your visit will be discovering the ancient 'Queen' of pohūtukawa – one of the largest in New Zealand.

8. Great Barrier Island

Ninety kilometres to the north-east of the City, in the outer Hauraki Gulf, Great Barrier Island is remote, rugged and very beautiful. Great Barrier Island is, in many ways, how New Zealand used to be. Here pohūtukawa, northern rātā and southern rātā flourish, along with other rare native flora and fauna, in the absence of predators.

This is a unique location in the Crimson Trails. Unusual in two ways: first because it's the only place in the world where natural hybrids between pohūtukawa and southern rātā are known to occur. And second, it's the only place in New Zealand where you can take one walk and see pohūtukawa as well as northern and southern rātā together.

Must sees on Great Barrier Island ...

Walk from Windy Canyon to the top of Mt Hobson and then drop down toward Port Fitzroy to view all the species together. You'll need plenty of water, good walking shoes or boots and allow two hours if you are really fit or four hours for a great walk.

Walk along Medlands Beach and look back to see, silhouetted on the foredune, two magnificent pohūtukawa trees that have featured widely in Project Crimson brochures and literature over the years. Access to Great Barrier Island is by sea or air and we recommend you research the island before going.

Protecting our pohūtukawa and rātā

For over 20 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


PROJECT / CRIMSON
renewing pohūtukawa and rātā

