

# WELLINGTON CRIMSON TRAIL

PROJECT / CRIMSON  
renewing pohutukawa and rata

Summer in Wellington is a fabulous time to be outdoors. This is especially true if you are walking through native forest with rata flowers in bloom. The spectacular crimson canopy will make a summer walk even more enjoyable.

Here you will discover a series of Crimson Trails that take you into some of the most magnificent rata forests in Wellington. And, while the pohutukawa – New Zealand's 'Christmas Tree' – is not native to Wellington, it also blooms brilliantly between December and January.



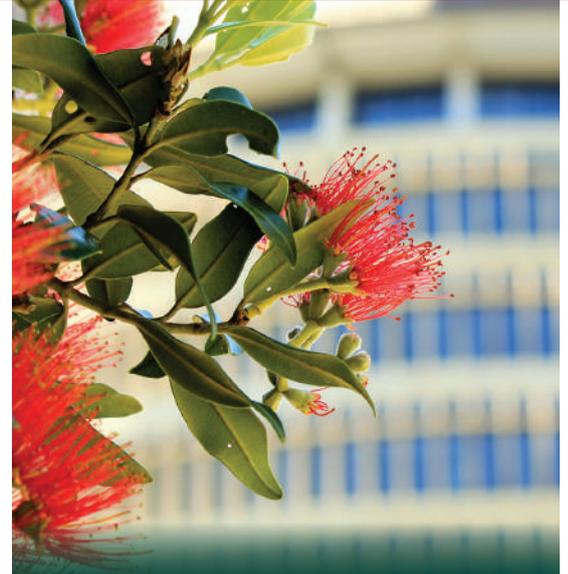
Pohutukawa at Wellington's Cable Car terminal

## Let's explore the Crimson Trails in Wellington

### Wellington City – from city to sea

In the heart of Wellington there is a trail that will take less than two hours to complete. It takes you from Point Jerningham along Oriental Bay to the centre of the city.

The Number 14 bus from the city centre will take you to the start of the walk at Oriental Bay. From Point Jerningham follow the coastal pathway back along Oriental Parade past the planted pohutukawa. Keep beside the water's edge, and walk past Te Papa and on to Frank Kitts Park and the railway station. Pohutukawa can be seen all the way. If you are more energetic head towards the cricket ground at the Basin Reserve or to Central Park in Brooklyn where there are several northern rata growing amongst the pohutukawa.



## Pohūtukawa and rata in Wellington

### Northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*)

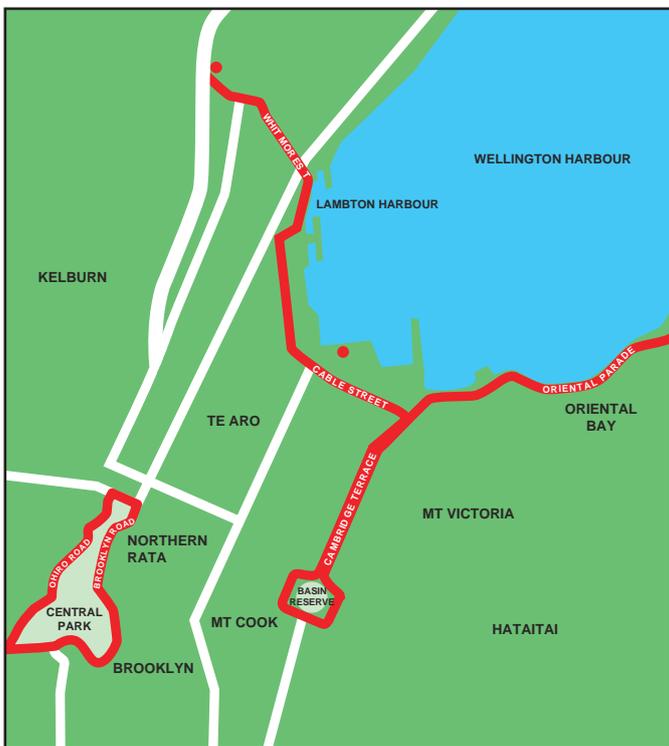
is very important in Wellington's native forests. It supports honey-eating birds such as bellbird and tui. It protects understorey vegetation from exposure and it grows to a height of 25 metres. Its crimson flowers can be seen most spectacularly in late December and early January.

### Pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*)

otherwise known as New Zealand's Christmas tree, has been planted extensively throughout the city and is a valuable addition to private gardens. It forms a tree up to 20 metres tall and flowers from early December until January.

### Southern rata (*Metrosideros umbellata*)

is similar to northern rata but is very rare in Wellington. It grows to just 15 metres and can only be seen in the Tararua Forest Park where it flowers from November to January.



## Wellington Crimson Trail (continued)

### Butterfly Creek and Mount Hawtrey, Eastbourne

Thirty minutes drive from Wellington around the harbour (or half an hour across the harbour by ferry) are Days Bay and Eastbourne. They are the gateway to Butterfly Creek and the Eastbourne Hills. Many trails lead up the hillside through beech forest and regenerating bush through Williams Park to the main ridge and also over the ridge to Butterfly Creek. Along the ridge and down the other side there are many stands of northern rata. It is here that the largest northern rata in the region (32 metres in circumference) may be found.

A reasonable level of fitness and good walking shoes are required. You may also note that there are pest control operations here to protect the forest in the long term.

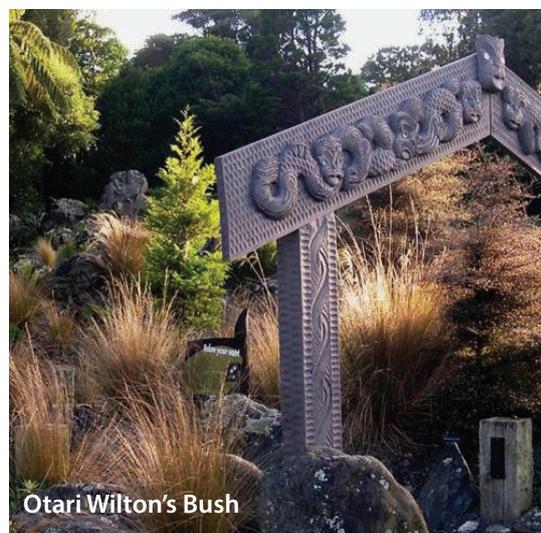
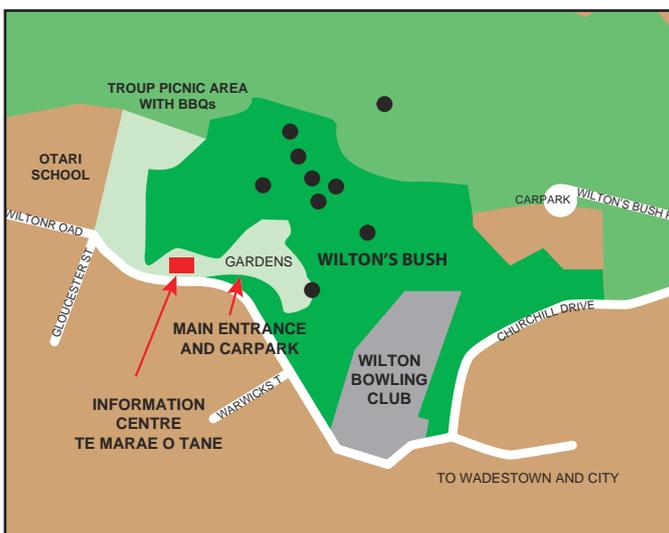
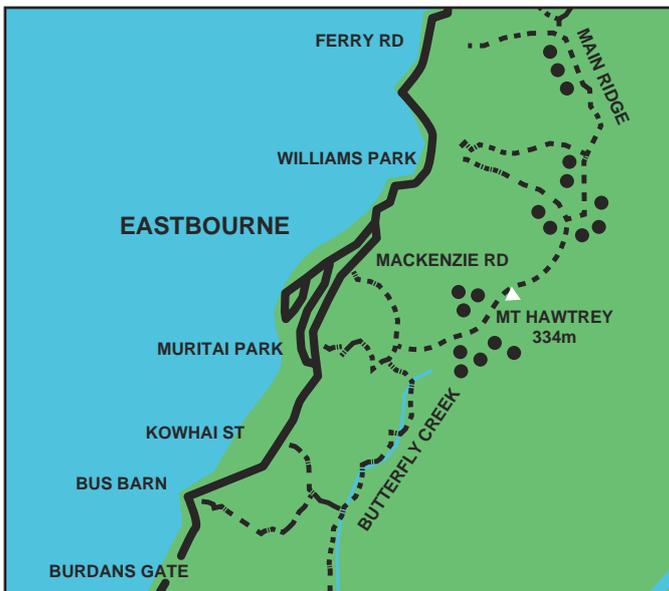
### Otari-Wilton's Bush

Less than ten minutes drive (Number 14 bus from the city centre) from Wellington is Otari-Wilton's Bush on Wilton Road. From the carpark on the west side of Wilton Road there are over ten kilometres of walking tracks.

The longest of these is the five-kilometre loop of the reserve which takes three hours to complete. Along this track there are many opportunities to look at northern rata, both distant views and up close. At the start of Otari-Wilton's Nature Trail (Post 2) you'll find two climbing rata, *Metrosideros perforata* and *Metrosideros diffusa*, both white-blooming rata and both native to the Bush.

Then, at Post 8 on the Nature Trail, you'll discover an impressive rimu that's at least 400 years old. The northern rata started life as an epiphyte high in this rimu and now the vertical roots of the rata have grown large and fused together to form a pseudo-trunk.

At Otari-Wilton's Bush you will also find a wonderful Information Centre with photos of the rata and information on the forest. The Information Centre is open between 9am and 5pm daily and the Garden is open from sunrise to sunset. This is a 'must do' Crimson Trail.



Otari Wilton's Bush



## Other Places of Interest

### Kapiti Island

Kapiti Island is now one of New Zealand's most important sites for bird recovery. Once on Kapiti Island you will find birds that are either very rare or absent from the mainland, including the little spotted kiwi. In the bush you'll find kereru (NZ pigeon), North Island tomtit, kaka, whitehead, tui, fantail, long-tailed cuckoo and silvereye.

Around the coast you'll discover black-backed and red-billed gulls, the white-fronted tern, the variable oystercatcher, the reef heron, and black and spotted shags.

Cats, deer, goats, sheep, cattle, pigs, dogs and rats have been eradicated from the reserve, and, between February 1980 and November 1986, 22,500 possums were also eradicated.

Originally Kapiti Island was dominated by huge rata and podocarps such as matai and miro. Some of these ancient trees have survived in the deep gullies which the fires of the 1800s missed. And, while today the island's main forests are kohekohe, tawa and kanuka, Kapiti also supports large numbers of northern rata.

On the island there are several tracks including the Wilkinson Track that will take you to the summit of the island – Tuteremoana.

You cannot land on Kapiti Island without a permit and must organize your trip through a DOC approved commercial operator. Visit [www.kapitiislandnaturetours.co.nz](http://www.kapitiislandnaturetours.co.nz) for more information and bookings.

### Catchpool Valley, Rimutaka Forest Park

Rimutaka Forest Park is approximately 33 kilometres from Wellington City, via the coast road from Wainuiomata. There is a Visitor Centre that contains information and displays.

The walk takes you along beside Catchpool Stream through a varied forest supporting beech trees, podocarps such as rimu, and many ferns. After two hours comfortable walking you will arrive at the Orongorongo River. Look up at the surrounding hillsides and see emergent northern rata standing tall above hardwood forest.

### Rata Restoration at Zealandia

Zealandia is ten minutes drive from the centre of the city. While the scope of this urban sanctuary goes beyond rata, what you will find here is a huge rata restoration programme taking place.

One of the largest restoration programmes of any kind in New Zealand, its certainly Wellington's biggest project. In Zealandia you'll discover an extensive series of trails that allow you to see northern rata restoration first-hand.

It's the climbing rata (*Metrosideros fulgens*) that currently features most prominently in the Sanctuary and it flowers profusely in season. This red flowered species is easily spotted around the bush edge and its flowering season is from April to October.

Access to Zealandia is via the Visitors Centre on Waiapu Road, which is the first left turn after the Karori Tunnel. Zealandia is open every day of the year (except Christmas Day) 10 - 5pm and entrance charges apply. Visit [www.visitzealandia.com](http://www.visitzealandia.com) for more information.

The Wellington 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](http://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](http://www.projectcrimson.org.nz)

