

SKYLINE TRACK

# EXPLORE WELLINGTON

Discover Wellington's Town Belt, reserves and walkways



SKYLINE TRACK VIA JOHNSONVILLE AND KARORI

## Absolutely Positively Wellington City Council

Me Heke Ki Pōneke

This track runs North and South along the ridge between Old Coach Road in Johnsonville and Makara Saddle in Karori. You can start the track at either end and follow the yellow directional markers.

walk up the hill. This will lead you to the Johnsonville Reservoir on the west side of the track. Take a two minute walk down the Truscott Track and you will arrive at a tunnel in the bank that once accommodated the (now disused) outlet pipe from the Reservoir.

In 1910 the Johnsonville Town Board purchased land on the Northern and Eastern slopes of Mount Kaukau to build a high-pressure water supply to all properties in their area. Water was pumped up from a dam in the Ohariu Valley to the reservoir, built 314 metres above sea level. It flowed under considerable pressure to the township below.

Follow the trail up to Mt Kaukau.

### 3 BCL TV Transmitter

Constructed in 1965, the Broadcast Communications Limited TV transmitter on Mt Kaukau stands an impressive 122 metres tall. It is the site that replaced the initial television service WNTV broadcast from Mt Victoria, and greatly improved the coverage for Wellingtonians.

### 2 Johnsonville Reservoir

Leaving the farm land behind you, cross over the stile and take a short



## EXPLORE

This dual use track runs North and South along the ridge between Old Coach Road in Johnsonville and Makara Saddle in Karori.

Allow up to five hours to traverse 12kms of Wellington's ridge tops following the Outer Green Belt onto Mt Kaukau, the Crow's Nest, Kilmister Tops and Johnston Hill. Take time to indulge in the stunning rural, city and coastal views along the way. On a clear day, views of the Kaikoura ranges, the Marlborough Sounds, Wellington city and harbour, and the Tararua and Orongorongo ranges will take your breath away.

Please be aware that the route is challenging in areas and weather conditions can be extreme on this very exposed ridgeline.

This track can be completed in stages as there are many entry and exit points along the way to plan a safe and enjoyable experience. Reasonable fitness is required for completing the entire trail, it can be strenuous. Warm clothing and stout footwear are essential. Bring lunch and plenty of water. There are no toilet or water facilities along this walkway.

The completion of the track link between Makara Saddle and Chartwell was made possible with the support of Meridian Energy who agreed to grant public access over their Otari property and shared the costs of the track development.

Follow the yellow directional markers along the track.

## MAORI HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

While European settlers named parts of the skyline, most of the central ridge was known to local Maori as Te Wharangi (broad open space). This ridge was not inhabited by Maori, but they traversed frequently by foot when moving between Te Whanganui-a-Tara and Owhariu.

The Old Maori Trail runs from Makara Beach all the way to Thorndon Quay, which is categorised as a landscape track and is of medium historic significance.

7

KILMISTER TOPS 4

MT KAUKAU 3

NGAIO

KHANDALLAH

Otari Farms (privately owned)

Ohari-Wiltons Bush

Tinakori Hill

JOHNSTON HILL

Karori Cemetery

START/FINISH Makara Rd carpark

Wrights Hill Reserve

NORTH

along the Skyline ridge to the Kilmister Tops. Photo: View of Khandallah from Mt Kaukau 1940 (Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand).

### 4 Kilmister Tops

John and Henry Kilmister, sons of the early settler John Kilmister, bought Sky Farm or Kilmister Tops from the Crown in the 1860s and split the land in half.

Heading South from Mt Kaukau at the first set of pines, approximately 1km past the turn off to Chartwell Drive, was Henry's half known as Henry's Pines.

1km further on is the second set of pines, John's land. John sawed the timber from one tree to build his

house (which still stood in 1920-1930s) with the roof built level to the ground for shelter from the wind. Lawrence Kilmister (grandson of John Kilmister and son of Frederick) built the chimney-like structure that still stands today for mustering in the 1930s.

It is the primary source of television and radio coverage for the greater Wellington region and is supported by more than forty translators scattered around the district providing in-fill coverage.

The area surrounding the television tower and lookout is privately owned. Please respect the landowners and their wishes.

### 3 Mount Kaukau

Climb onto the viewing platform for 360 degree views.

Experience views of the entire city, Wellington Harbour, the Rimutaka and Tararua ranges, Porirua Basin, Kaikoura ranges and the Tasman Sea. On a clear day you can see the snow-capped Mount Tapuaenuku 2885m (see picture below) on the South Island, the first significant peak climbed by New Zealand's most famous mountaineer, Sir Edmund Hillary. From Mt Kaukau, head West and follow the yellow directional signs where you can exit the track onto Bells Track, Awarua Street or continue

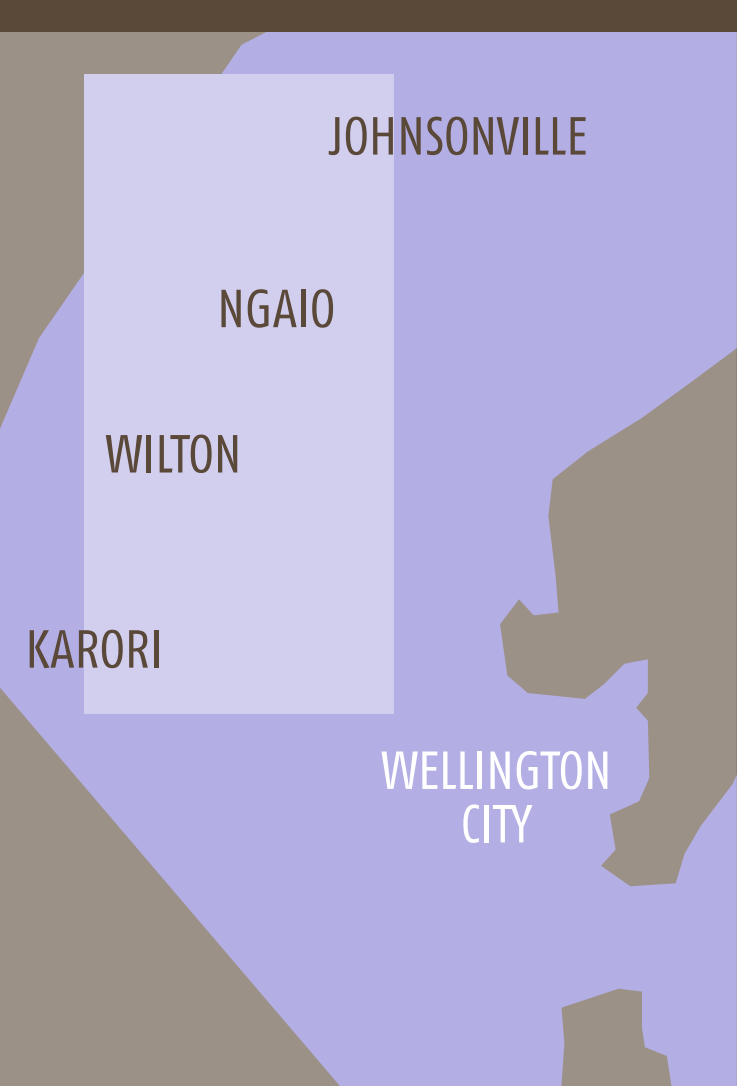
## Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park

Wellington City Council set aside 200 hectares of retired farmland South-West of the city for a mountain bike park in 1998. Volunteers immediately began development of the Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park by planting trees and cutting new tracks. In the first year, six tracks were built and 14,000 native seedlings planted. A significant effort was also put into controlling possums and goats, which were destroying the pockets of native forest in the park.

There is 28km of track ranging from 'Easy' to 'Extreme'. For an up-to-date map and other information, refer to [www.makarapeak.org.nz](http://www.makarapeak.org.nz).



Walk through some of Wellington's beautiful parks and discover picturesque views, stunning flora and fauna, and some early history of the area. The Skyline Track guides you from Old Coach Road in Johnsonville to Makara Saddle in Karori.



JOHNSONVILLE

NGAIO

WILTON

KARORI

WELLINGTON CITY

Kilmister Tops is a peneplain remnant which is high, broad and largely clear of tall vegetation. This seems more dramatic close-up rather than at a distance, despite the glimpses of green and golden pasture at the top of the hill that contrasts to the dense bush below.



**5 Parkvale Road**

John and Henry Kilmister built a farm road extension to Parkvale Road that links to the Crow's Nest. They would start work in the morning and continue through the night, setting fallen bush on fire to allow them to dig in the dark.



**6 Wilton Farm Homestead**

Following on from Kilmister Tops, look South-East towards Wilton locating one of Wellington's oldest houses, Wilton Farm Homestead, looking over the Wilton Bowling Club green.

The original two bedroom cottage was built in 1861 and later developed into a two-story, five bedroom house in the



1880s. This is the house that can be seen today.

The Wilton's cleared and farmed most of their land that stretched almost to the top of Tinakori Hill but fenced off an area of 17 acres of forest near their homestead allowing public access. This became a popular leisure destination for people from the city. The Wilton's land was put together with other forested areas purchased in 1905 by Wellington City Council and is still operated today as a recreational destination known as Otari-Wilton's Bush.

This is the only botanic garden in New Zealand completely devoted to native plants. It consists of 100 hectares of plant collection. The forest nestles in the deep valley formed by the Te Mahanga branch of the Kaiwharawhara Stream flowing North-East towards Ngaio Gorge. The long, straight North-Western boundary borders steep rural land stretching up to the Te Wharangi ridge on the Skyline.

Photos: Waugh Family Collection in 1920, then 2006 (above).

Face west towards Makara and you will see the entrance to the cemetery.



**7 Makara Cemetery**

In 1940 the Board of Health required Wellington city to locate another burial site as Karori Cemetery edged towards full capacity. Makara was the chosen location. Land was bought under the Public Works Act in 1951 and 1955, and the first burial occurred in 1965. The cemetery is now roughly one third full.

**8 Karori Reservoir**

Prior to becoming a wildlife sanctuary in 1995, this valley was traditionally part of the city water supply system. In recent years the area ceased to be a resource for the water supply system. However, the lower valley contained



(and still contains) infrastructure forming part of the Wellington city water reticulation system.

The remaining features of historical interest are the two dams and their associated structures, including the iconic valve tower in the middle of the lower dam. Development of the sanctuary provided public access to this formerly closed area and the opportunity to fund and carry out restoration and interpretation of the reservoir.

Karori Wildlife Sanctuary is a safe haven for endangered native birds and other wildlife, located minutes from downtown Wellington. The world's first predator proof fence surrounds the Sanctuary, protecting wildlife and ensuring forest regeneration.

Rare and endangered wildlife roam free in their natural habitat. Many species have been returned to the New Zealand mainland for the first time – including tuatara, little spotted Kiwi, Maud Island frog, hihi and North Island saddleback.

**Gold prospecting excavations**

A number of former gold prospecting excavations and other remains exist in the Outer Green Belt. There is a well preserved drive on the ridge between Ohariu and Tawa. The remains of shafts and drives of the more intensive mining period from 1869 to 1873 can be seen in the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. Generally, the excavations have the form of horizontal shafts 20 metres or more in length. These suggest beliefs in the 19th century that Wellington was likely to contain significant gold deposits. Nothing of any significance was ever found.



**9 Makara Road**

Makara Road was one of the three major roads built by the Provincial Council in the late 1850s to open up outlying farm areas. The road was maintained for many years by the Makara Road Board. Apart from sealing and widening, the road has barely changed since its construction. Photo: View along coastline at Makara Beach

1930s (Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand).

**Makara Hill Windbreak**

To reduce the impact of strong winds on traffic passing the summit of Makara Hill Road, the Makara Road Board built a timber windbreak on the North side of the road in 1894. In 1913 the rotting structure was replaced with concrete. It has remained there ever since. The views towards Makara from this site are worth the trip.



**Native Birds**

At the Makara end of the Skyline you may see Kereru, Tui, Fantail, Morepork, Grey Warblers, Silveryeye and even North Island Robin.

New Zealand Falcons may be seen in the vicinity. There is a small population



of Kaka from the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary that venture around the city by day. These may also be sighted along the Skyline.

**SAFETY AND REGULATIONS**

The Skyline Track is a very exposed trail with very little shelter. We strongly recommend considering all weather conditions to be prepared for your journey.

- Warm clothing and stout footwear are essential as weather conditions can be extreme on this exposed ridgeline
- Be Sunsmart – take a sun hat and sunscreen
- Bring water for hydration
- Pack food
- Reasonable fitness is required
- Mountain Biking is prohibited on Bell's Track, Johnston's Hill, Otari-Wilton's Bush and the Woodmancoate Road, Simla Crescent and Truscott Avenue exit trails of the Northern Walkway.
- There are no toilet or water facilities along the Skyline Track

**FARMING OPERATION HAZARDS**

1. There is animal grazing in the area, please do not disturb the stock.
2. Use gates and styles, please leave gates as you find them.
3. Dogs must be kept on a leash at all times while using this track. Unleashed dogs may frighten stock or ground nesting birds.
4. On-going predator control.



**OTHER TRACKS AND WALKS**

**Te Araroa**

For some kilometres along the ridges behind the city, the Skyline Track merges with Te Araroa, the National Walkway. Depending on your route, Wellington is the beginning or end of the North Island section of this magnificent project – a defined track from North Cape to Bluff. Te Araroa means 'the long pathway', and that is certainly what this will become: a legal thoroughfare for footsloggers. It is nearly 3000km long across mountains and lowland, through bush and pine forest, by way of all varieties of farm country and local communities, from North to South of New Zealand. The aim is to have it completed by 2008.

A small team of local enthusiasts are working with Wellington City Council and other regional councils to establish and mark the Te Araroa trail from Levin to the top of the Cable Car. Walkers will enter the Wellington City Council section

South of Colonial Knob behind Porirua.

1. From here it joins into Spicer Forest and then onto Ohariu Valley Road, meeting up with Rifle Range Road, along Old Coach Road and up to Mount KauKau.
2. Via Bells Track.
3. From here, if you wish to walk to the South Coast, you can join the City to Sea Walkway. This will take you to the coast at Island Bay. This will at last be a walk from sea to shining sea – from Cape Reinga\*.

\* Known to Maori as Te Rerenga Wairua "the leaping place of the spirits," it is believed that after death Maori spirits travel to Cape Reinga where using seaweed as ropes, they slide down the hill to the 800 year old Pohutukawa tree at the northern most tip of the cape. The spirits make their final leap from the tree down to the roots and then return to Hawaiki, the Maori Ancestral Homeland.

**Bell's Track**

This re-established route starts at the top of Awarua Street and joins a farm track up to a saddle on the ridge where

it joins the Skyline Track. This route originally provided access between farms in Ohariu Valley and the Ngaio Railway Station.



**Wright's Hill Fortress**

Historically, Wright's Hill is best known for Wellington's most extensive World War II fortifications. The fortress was built from 1942 to 1949 to service the 9.2 inch battery gun to protect Wellington from a potential Japanese invasion. This is one of three such installations built in New Zealand. Restoration of the Fortress began in 1988 and is continued today by the Wright's Hill Fortress Restoration Society Inc. who host open days. Society members guide one hour tours showcasing a fascinating insight into the measures taken to protect New Zealand during World War II.



**Otari-Wilton's Bush**

Nestled on the Outer Green Belt between

Khandallah Park and Johnston Hill in Karori.

Otari-Wilton's Bush includes a short 75 metre walkway through the forest canopy, a wide range of native plants from around New Zealand and several off shore islands, 10km of walking tracks, and some of Wellington's oldest trees including an 800 year old Rimu.

**PARKS & RESERVES**



**Khandallah Park**

The Northern Walkway winds down from Mt Kaukau to one of New Zealand's oldest parks – Khandallah Park, first designated as a domain in 1909. It has more than 60 hectares of native bush with 9km of walking tracks winding through dense bush and passing several lookouts.

Photo: Khandallah swimming pool, tea kiosk and park, 5 January 1931 (Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand).



**Karori Park**

In 1911 the Karori Borough Council acquired several dairy farms and formed Karori Park. Cricket, hockey, bowls & croquet were soon established with a refreshment tent provided. The Park was considered too windy for tennis.

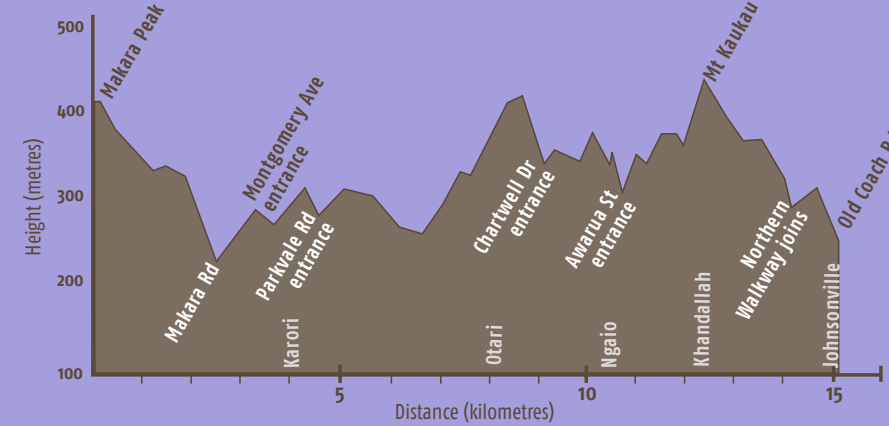
Photo: Hockey match at Karori Park 1950s (Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand).

**Johnston Hill**

Lying above Otari-Wilton's Bush are the higher eastern slopes and the main ridgeline that links to Johnston Hill.

The campaign to acquire Johnston Hill as a reserve was led by Mr S.S.B. Fletcher and Mr George Penlington, both long time residents of Karori. Johnston Hill was officially opened as a public recreation domain in the middle of World War II, 28 March 1942. It was named after John Johnston who

**TOPOGRAPHICAL PROFILE**



purchased the land from the first pakeha owner Judge Chapman. Johnston, a Scottish settler with his wife, arrived in Wellington in 1843. The "lookout" was named after Mr Fletcher. Today we know it as "Fletcher's Carpark". Mr Penlington's name was given to the main track through the bush – an appropriate recognition of the work both men had done.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO:**

- Onslo Historical Society Inc.
- Brian Kilmister & the Kilmister family
- Karori Historical Society Inc
- Department of Conservation
- Dr John Dawson
- Karori Wildlife Sanctuary
- The Kennett Brothers
- Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc.
- Waugh Family



**FLORA AND FAUNA**

Descending to the South of the BCL TV Transmitter, the trail passes through an area of low and in places continuous growth of shrubs that are sheared and grooved by violent gales. The twigs of these small-leaved shrubs are so abundantly branched and interlaced that they provide comfortable seats. It may appear that only one species of shrub exists in the area but there are at least a dozen, as well as a variety of vines.

Scattered logs indicate low forest once existed in the area, cleared for farming many years ago. Eventually, such a forest may return.

Planting a tree is a wonderful way to commemorate something special or to take an active part in creating a greener future. There are lots of ways you can help restore the city's reserves, bush and coastal areas – and some don't involve getting your hands dirty! Phone 499 4444 or visit www.Wellington.govt.nz for more information.