

Hut fees (per night)

Adults (18+ years) Fri–Sun: \$20 Mon–Thurs: \$15
Youth (11–17 years): Fri–Sun: \$10 Mon–Thurs: \$7.50
Child/Infant (0–10 years): FREE

Bookings are required. Book online at www.doc.govt.nz with the keyword 'Ōtamahua Hut'.

Overnight camping is available for approved groups – contact the DOC Ōtautahi/Christchurch Visitor Centre.



Ōtamahua/Quail Island: a Toyota Kiwi Guardians site

Toyota Kiwi Guardians is an activity programme for kids to learn about nature, earn cool rewards and go on epic family adventures.

Print the downloadable adventure map at home from the Kiwi Guardians website and see where it takes you. Find the Kiwi Guardians post on your travels, remember the code word on the plaque and email it in to receive the Ōtamahua/Quail Island medal. Check out www.doc.govt.nz/kiwiguardians for more sites and to earn more medals.

Your safety is your responsibility

Most track surfaces on the island are evenly graded or grassed, but sturdy footwear is recommended for the longer walks. All walking times are approximate.

Carry clothing appropriate to the conditions and be prepared for sudden weather changes – parts of the island are very exposed.



Ōtamahua is at times subject to extreme fire danger. Take care. If fire breaks out on the island:

- Head to the nearest beach or coastal area, if it is safe to do so.
- If you have a mobile phone, dial 111 for fire.



Dogs are not permitted anywhere on Ōtamahua – they are a danger to the penguins that live here.



No mountain bikes.



No firearms.

Further information

DOC Ōtautahi/Christchurch
Visitor Centre

PHONE: +64 3 379 4082

EMAIL: christchurchvc@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz



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Back cover: Exploring Ōtamahua/Quail Island Photo: *DOC*

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CANTERBURY

Ōtamahua/ Quail Island

Ōtamahua/Quail Island
Recreation Reserve



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Welcome to Ōtamahua

Ōtamahua/Quail Island lies in the flooded crater of an extinct volcano that created the natural haven of Lyttelton Harbour/Whakaraupō (Bay of Raupō).

For such a small island – barely 81 hectares – Ōtamahua has quite a history. This predator free and restored island offers beautiful scenery, great walks and a glimpse into the past.

The island is ideal for day trips or an overnight stay at Ōtamahua Hut. A short walk to either the Ōtamahua Hut and/or the beach may be enough for families with small children, who can then spend a leisurely half day swimming and picnicking. Longer walks around the island offer plenty to discover.

Discover relics of the past like historic buildings, replica dog kennels used by famous explorers, and the ‘ships’ graveyard’ with its eerie ship skeletons. You can also take a trip to the present and future by viewing the ongoing work into restoration plantings on the island. For the full experience, book a night at Ōtamahua Hut through the Department of Conservation (DOC) website.

Getting there

A regular bus service between Christchurch city and Lyttelton (No. 28) includes a stop at B jetty. Further information is available from **BUSinfo** – phone **(03) 366 8855**.

Black Cat Cruises operates a regular 7-day ferry service to the island during summer and a weekend service during winter; phone **(03) 328 9078** or visit their website www.blackcat.co.nz

Bring cash to purchase your ticket as EFTPOS is not available for Black Cat cruises.

History

The koreke/native quail that inspired the island’s European name was extinct by 1875. Local Māori dubbed the island Ōtamahua, meaning ‘the place where children collect seabirds’ eggs’. Iwi used the island to gather eggs, fish and shellfish. Fine sandstone collected from King Billy Island (Aua), was traded to use for grinding and polishing pounamu (greenstone).

The island was farmed from 1851. Five acres were set aside in 1881 as quarantine ground for cattle; in 1892, this was extended to cover the whole island. During the peak period of Antarctic exploration, between 1901 and 1929, the island was used to quarantine and train dogs and ponies for Scott’s and Shackleton’s expeditions.

A quarantine station

From 1875 the island also served as a quarantine station for both animals and people. At first it was used for new immigrants who contracted illnesses while on board ships that brought them to New Zealand, but it was also used during the 1918 influenza pandemic as well as to isolate those with diseases like diphtheria and smallpox.

For 19 years (1906–1925), the south side of Ōtamahua/Quail Island was also the site of New Zealand’s only leprosy quarantine colony. Nine patients lived here; the grave of one of them, Ivon Skelton, is on the southern side of the island. In 1925 the remaining patients were sent to Fiji.

Prisoners from Lyttelton Jail did much of the heavy construction on the island, building stone terrace walls and tracks, and planting trees.

The island was gazetted as a recreation reserve in the mid-1970s. Remnants and replicas of the island’s historic past are scattered around the island.

Pou whenua ‘Te Hamo o Tū Te Rakiwhānoa’

At the highest point on Ōtamahua is a new pou whenua (land post), installed and blessed by the local hapū o Ngāti Wheke in May 2019.

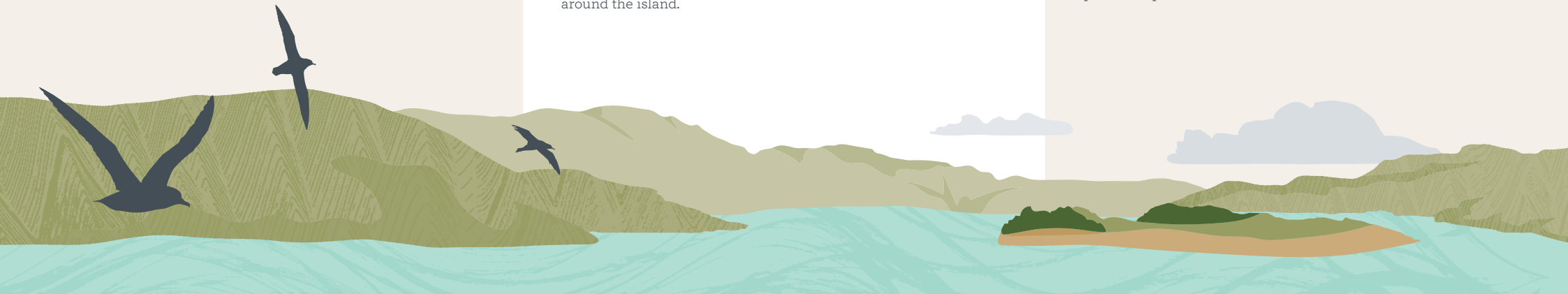
Pou whenua are used by Māori to mark territorial boundaries and areas of significance. With funding assistance from the Ngāi Tahu Fund, Ngāti Wheke commissioned Whakaraupō Carving Centre to create the impressive pou. Carved from one giant log over 3 months, it is nearly 9 m tall and weighs 650 kg.

The new pou is called ‘Te Hamo o Tū Te Rakiwhānoa’. A hamo is a multi-purpose tool used to clear debris and dig holes to plant vegetables. Tū Te Rakiwhānoa is one of the tūpuna (ancestors) of Ngāti Wheke.

The story goes that Tū Te Rakiwhānoa was on a quest to restore the waka Aoraki, and he used his hamo to clear the debris away from the waka. A taniwha (monster) named Koiro Nui Te Whenua was causing havoc in the area. Tū Te Rakiwhānoa – with the help of his cousins, Kahukura and Marukura – used the debris cleared from their waka to bury the taniwha.

On the side of the pou you’ll see a piece jutting out, called the teka. The ancestors would put their foot on this as they held the kō (digging stick) to dig holes and plant kūmara. The teka itself is different on each side; it represents the two whānau who helped Tū Te Rakiwhānoa keep the taniwha in its hole underneath the island.

DOC helped transport and install the pou, using a helicopter to airlift it across the harbour and lower it onto a concrete base. Dulux supplied the paint used in the carving as part of its partnership with DOC.



A native wildlife sanctuary

This predator-free island is home to birds such as pīwakawaka/fantails and riroriro/grey warblers as well as introduced quail and pheasant, while Canterbury's own kororā/white flippered penguins, tara/terns, kōau/shags, gulls and oystercatchers are seen on its coastal edge. Native ground beetles and Banks Peninsula tree wētā have been transferred to the island.

Ōtamahua/Quail Island Ecological Restoration Trust

The Ōtamahua/Quail Island Ecological Restoration Trust was established in 1998. This non profit group aims to replant about one third of the island with natives, reintroduce native fauna, recognise historic sites, respect historic values and foster environmental education.

The Trust has an ongoing pest eradication programme targeting rabbits, stoats, rats, feral cats and hedgehogs. All mammals except mice have now been eradicated from the island. There is a continual monitoring and trapping network to ensure Ōtamahua/Quail Island remains a haven for native flora and fauna.

Contact the **Quail Island Ecological Restoration Trust** at www.quailisland.org.nz

Ōtamahua/Quail Island walks

All walks start from the main ferry jetty and are one way unless stated.



Walking track – Easy to moderate walking from a few minutes to a day. Track is mostly well formed, some sections may be steep, rough or muddy. Suitable for people with low to moderate fitness and abilities. Walking shoes or light tramping/hiking boots required.

Ōtamahua/Quail Island Loop Track

2 hr 30 min, 4.5 km loop

This walk around the island passes the front of the Ōtamahua Hut, through open grassland and along the basalt cliffs to the Ward brothers' old cottage site. From here it leads to the northern point of the island and the bird observation barricade. Views extend down the harbour and across to Rapaki.

Turn south-west and skirt the stock dam to reach a vantage point for an excellent view of the ships' graveyard, which contains wrecks of at least 14 scuttled ships offshore.

Continue along to the southern-most point of the island above Walkers Beach and past the quarry workings. The grave of Ivon Skelton, one of the leprosy sufferers that died on the island, is found here.

Around the point the track turns north to the terraces behind the skiers' beach where the leprosy colony buildings once stood. View the replica cottage (built by students of Catholic Cathedral College) and walk past the stone terraces, admiring the craftsmanship of early 20th century prisoners from Lyttelton Jail. Turn left to climb a short distance to the dog kennels site; a replica of these has also been built by the students.

Return to the main track on the same path back down towards Whakamaru Beach and continue to the quarantine barracks. Walk around the beachfront, past the remains of the historic stock jetty and back to the ferry jetty.

Whakamaru Beach (swimmers beach)

10 min, 400 m

Although the track from the ferry jetty is a bit steep, it's worth the climb down to the beach, and the track surface is suitable for baby buggies. The beach is a safe place for swimming and the bay is reasonably sheltered. It is a great spot to pause, have a picnic lunch, fossick among the rocks or beach-comb for shells and seaweed to decorate a sand sculpture.

Summit Track

15 min, 700 m from Ōtamahua Hut

From the Ōtamahua Hut, walk the old tractor path as it gently climbs towards the highest point on the island. You will pass through a large area of replanting, the work of the Quail Island Ecological Restoration Trust. At the summit, enjoy panoramic views of the surrounding low mountains and Lyttelton Harbour.

The Summit Track can also be reached from Whakamaru Beach via the Dog Kennel Track.

Dog Kennel Track

10 min, 300 m from Whakamaru Beach

This track gives access to the replica dog kennels historic site, and is also a shortcut across the island.

Ōtamahua Hut

15 min, 500 m

This hut was built around 1910 by the Department of Agriculture for the animal quarantine station caretaker. It was used as a caretakers cottage until the early 1980s. Between 1906 and 1925, the caretakers cooked food for leprosy sufferers. In 1982, the hut was converted into the island's interpretation centre.

In 2018 the caretaker's cottage received a full makeover to become a bookable hut for overnight stays. It was renamed the Ōtamahua Hut in honour of the site. It is now a 'serviced' hut that accommodates 12 people.



- Campsite
- Accommodation
- Lookout
- Toilets
- Shelter
- Information
- Bird nesting area
- Historic site
- Walking tracks

