



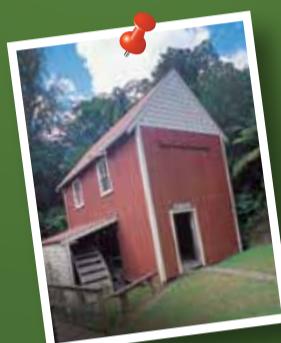
## History

From its origins high on magnificent Mt Tongariro, the awa (river) travels towards Taumarunui, then winds south through the Whanganui National Park. For over 800 years, Maori have lived here, building marae and kainga (villages), cultivating sheltered river terraces and engaging with the forests. Numerous marae still exist along the river, and the river is home to many descendants of the original inhabitants.

European settlers followed in search of a new life and farming opportunities and in the late 1800's and early 1900's the river became a major visitor attraction, with visitors enjoying leisurely river boat cruises. The Whanganui River became internationally known as the Rhine of New Zealand.

The Whanganui River Road was first opened in 1934 and took 30 years to construct. The project was delayed many times due to flooding and slips. Prior to the 1930's almost all access to these remote settlements was from boats that operated along the Whanganui River.

Today, the Whanganui River valley is still a major attraction for visitors and locals, and offers unrivalled opportunities for walking, cycling, hunting and tramping in a pristine wilderness, as well as a full range of activities on the water, including jet boat trips and single and multi-day canoeing. The Whanganui River valley offers many places to stay and relax, to experience the relationship of the local people to the river, to learn the stories and enjoy the beauty and serenity of the area.



## Ways to experience the Whanganui River Road

The Whanganui River and Whanganui River Road can be explored in many different ways, by vehicle, bike, jet boat, canoe or on foot. You may want to explore the area in your own private vehicle or join tours run by local operators. Contact 'Journeys on the Whanganui' [www.whanganuiriver.co.nz](http://www.whanganuiriver.co.nz) or Visit Whanganui [www.whanganuinz.com](http://www.whanganuinz.com) for more information.

### Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail, Nga Ara Tuhono

Our stunning section of the New Zealand National Cycle Trail, Nga Ara Tuhono starts on Mount Ruapehu and ends at the river mouth in Whanganui, travelling through Tongariro and Whanganui National Parks, including the Whanganui River Road from Pipiriki to Whanganui. The trail takes 4 to 6 days and covers a variety of terrain; the Whanganui River Road section is classified as easy. Overnight accommodation is available to enable this section to be travelled over two days.

### Te Araroa – New Zealand's Walking Trail

Te Araroa, New Zealand's Trail, is a continuous 3,000 km walking track from Cape Reinga to Bluff, connecting settlements, towns and cities. The Whanganui River Road section of the trail has a recommended walking time of 3 days.



Journeys on the Whanganui  
AOTEAROA - NEW ZEALAND

[www.whanganuiriver.co.nz](http://www.whanganuiriver.co.nz)

## Members of Journeys on the Whanganui

'Journeys on the Whanganui' is a collaborative group of tourism operators who offer their visitors a way to participate in a remote and adventurous journey of discovery and understanding. Stories of the history of both Maori, and the European settlers who followed them to this land, are shared with their guests as they journey the Whanganui River and National Park by cycle or on foot, by canoe or jet-boat, staying in riverside accommodation and enjoying locally produced food. Visit [www.whanganuiriver.co.nz](http://www.whanganuiriver.co.nz) for more information.

### Operators

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#### D Whanganui Scenic Experience Jet

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#### G Whanganui River Adventures

See contact under Operators



## Introduction

A visit to the Whanganui River and the road which winds beside it into the Whanganui National Park is a special and authentic journey for visitors.

"Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au" "I am the river and the river is me".

These words embody the spiritual, cultural and historical relationship of Whanganui Maori with the river which holds their ancestry.

The Whanganui River, Te Awa O Whanganui, and the Whanganui River Road are two inter-related journeys. The Whanganui River Road follows the lower reaches of the Whanganui River from Pipiriki to Whanganui and is the only scenic driving route alongside a river in New Zealand with such richness of cultural and natural heritage.

This intimate and scenic 64km road leads to the Whanganui National Park, and enables travellers to visit small isolated river communities and experience a pace of life which is unique in its contrast to much of the rest of the country. The road is narrower than the main highway and follows a winding route, which requires slower driving speed than usual.

There are stunning views of the river along much of the road's length and of particular interest are the many beautifully preserved marae (gathering places) which are usually visible from the road. Please respect all marae and urupa (cemetery) – entry to view marae must be arranged in advance as permission is required to visit these treasured places.

## Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail

The Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail (Ngā Ara Tūhono) uses a combination of local mountain biking trails, public roads and a jetboat to take riders from the mountains of the Central Volcanic Plateau to the sea in Whanganui. Riders traverse two national parks that are rich in natural and cultural heritage, enjoying stunning scenery along the way. The full trail can be ridden over four to six days.

From Pipiriki, follow the trail down the scenic Whanganui River Road, revealing a richness of natural and cultural heritage of the Maori and early European settlers. Engage with locals, absorb the serenity and history as you cycle alongside the Whanganui River through small settlements. Continue on to Whanganui cycling through parks and along the boardwalks through the centre of town, past artists' studios and workshops to the North Mole, where the Whanganui River meets the Tasman Sea, the final point of the Mountains to Sea cycle trail.

Overnight accommodation is available to enable the Whanganui River Road section to be travelled over two days. For more information about the Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail visit [www.mountainstosea.co.nz](http://www.mountainstosea.co.nz)



## 1. SH4 and Whanganui River Road - 0 km

Before you begin your journey up the Whanganui River Road, take time to stop at the display at the information kiosk to understand a little more about the history and spiritual and cultural significance of the Whanganui River to its local people.

## 2. Aramoana Viewpoint - 3km

A popular stop, the Aramoana viewpoint showcases views of the river valley, Pungarehu and Mount Ruapehu. Aramoana means "the path to the sea".

## 3. Pungarehu - 6.3km

Little remains of the original pa built on this site, however over the years the meeting house, Maranganui, has been extensively restored.

## 4. Parikino - 8.5km

The present Parikino settlement is located on the site of a former village named Kaitangata. The original Parikino Pa was located across the river.

## 5. Shellrock Cliffs - 13.5km

The Whanganui region was once sea bed that has been uplifted. A fascinating showcase for this fact can be found in the cliffs which are in fact layers of fossilized oyster shells.

## 6. Atene - 21km

This settlement was named by the missionary Reverend Richard Taylor. Prior to a flood in 1904, the settlement was closer to the river than present day. The small Atene meeting house was constructed in 1886. Just south of the Atene settlement marks the entry to the Whanganui National Park.

## 7. Atene skyline walk 21.5km

Part of the Whanganui National Park, the Atene skyline track rises to a height of 523m above sea level and offers views over the region and an unusual land feature called a "meander", where the river once flowed in a near circle and now has cut through to create a shortcut to the sea. The Atene Viewpoint walk takes 1-2 hours and follows the ridge of the old river valley, and the skyline track takes 6-8 hours (note, a good level of fitness is required to attempt the skyline track).

## 8. Downes Hut - 21.9km

On the riverbank opposite the road is Downes Hut. This small hut was built by Thomas D Downes during his time as the River Foreman in the early 1920s and later bequeathed to the Whanganui River Trust Board. The Department of Conservation is now the custodian and the hut is used by canoeists and other recreational groups. The hut is built on a former kainga site known as Pukupuku. A magnificent puriri tree planted by Downes still flourishes.

## 9. Otumaire campsite - 23.5km

Otumaire is a free camp site with drinking water and toilets.

## 10. Hand dug culvert 26.6km

This large hand-built culvert can be found down a short track from the road. It was built when the Whanganui River Road was constructed.



This tour is designed as a brief guide to the sites and features of the Whanganui River Road. More detail is online at [WhanganuiNZ.com](http://WhanganuiNZ.com).

Set your odometer to 0 at the fork in the road before turning left onto Whanganui River Road (see the flag "Start here" below). The distance to each point of interest is shown after the name.

## 11. Koriniti 33km

Koriniti is a beautiful example of a small local marae and features two traditional wharenui (Poutama and Te Waiherehere) as well as a small museum, "Hikurangi". Poutama was moved from a site upriver to its current location. A popular stop for cultural tours and overnight stays, access must be booked in advance.

## 12. Matahiwi 40km

Matahiwi is the hub of a small farming community. In 1923, a building was transported by riverboat from Parinui, 46km upriver, to Matahiwi, and was used as the local school for many years. Today it is the local café and gallery open during the summer.

## 13. Kawana Flour Mill 41.5km

The Kawana Flour Mill was constructed in 1854. It is now a great example of a rebuilt water-power mill, and features its original waterwheel and grinding stones. It was first built with the help of Governor Grey to grind the wheat grown by local farmers and was one of several built in the Whanganui river valley in the 19th century. Now a museum, there is also a restored miller's colonial style cottage alongside the mill. Drinking water and a toilet is available here.

## 14. Ranana 45km

Ranana is sheltered by the hills and has become one of the larger settlements along the Whanganui River Road. As well as a century old catholic church, the settlement also features a beautiful marae. The local school for the Whanganui River Valley is located here. A campsite with toilets is located next to the river past the marae.

## 15. Moutoa Island - 46km

This small island was the scene of a short and fierce battle in 1864 between Whanganui Maori and an invading Hauhau force. The battle helped establish a close bond between local Iwi and European settlers. A monument to the memory of the fallen was erected in Pakaitore/Moutoa Gardens in Whanganui. On the 100th anniversary a memorial cairn was placed near Moutoa Island itself.

## 16. Hiruharama (Jerusalem) 53.5km

Hiruharama is home to a century old catholic church and convent built in the 1890s. The church features a beautifully carved alter of Maori design and kowhaiwhai panels adorn the walls. Once the home of an orphanage, the convent today hosts retreats and offers accommodation, and the rosary way garden offers peace and serenity. The impact and history of the mission and its founder Mother Aubert in the Whanganui region is immense. In the 1970's Hiruharama was also the location of poet James K Baxter's community, which closed soon after his death in 1972.

On a clear day the approach to Hiruharama offers a stunning photo opportunity with the settlement reflected in the river.

## 17. Omorehu waterfall - 59km

The waterfall offers a great photo opportunity and is an example of the many waterfalls that fall into the Whanganui River.

## 18. Pipiriki 64km

Pipiriki is the end of the Whanganui River Road journey. Today Pipiriki is the gateway to the upper Whanganui River and the Whanganui National Park. Many canoe and jet boat trips start and finish here. The Department of Conservation has a shelter at Pipiriki with toilets, water and a camping area, and a story board display of the history and cultural significance of the Whanganui River.

Details of accommodation, camping, tours and food and refreshment availability are listed separately.