

SOMETHING FOR EVERY EXPLORER

Your itinerary to history where it happened.

Whakapā mai

Contact us

To learn more about Tohu Whenua or find out how to contact your regional coordinator, email us: tohuwhenua@heritage.org.nz

Rapu kōrero anō

Find out more

Website: tohuwhenua.nz

Aru mai i a mātou

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TOHU WHENUA

Landmarks that tell our stories





He tiro wawe ki Tohu Whenua

Tohu Whenua at a glance

Tohu Whenua is a tourism and regional economic development programme that connects New Zealanders and international visitors with Aotearoa New Zealand’s cultural heritage by promoting places of historical significance that offer high quality visitor experiences.

Tō mātou wawata

Our vision

A nationwide network that sits alongside Great Walks and Great Rides as a sister programme of must-dos at the places where history happened.

Ō mātou mātāpono ārahi

Our guiding principles

Whāinga | Goals

- To build a trusted and connected network of heritage sites that are visitor-ready and, together, tell the defining stories of Aotearoa New Zealand.
- To promote exceptional visitor experiences that are authentic, stimulating, emotionally engaging and memorable for manuhiri of all ages and backgrounds.
- To boost regional tourism by giving visitors a reason to stay longer, delve deeper and support our regional economies.
- To have strong, active partnerships with our iwi partners. Meaningful and enduring relationships with mana whenua will ensure integrity in how Aotearoa New Zealand’s heritage stories are told.
- To support thriving regions and community wellbeing through communities that know and are proud to share their heritage.

Uara | Values

- Tūturu | Authentic in our dealings with others and the stories we tell
- Kauawhi | Inclusive in our decision-making and relationships
- Patuitanga | Partnerships that are collaborative in working towards common goals
- Whakaute | Respectful of differing perspectives and ways of working
- Awhero | Ambitious in the goals we set and how we work towards these
- Auaha | Innovative in all aspects of programme design and implementation

Tohu Whenua: anei mātou

Tohu Whenua: who we are

He patuitanga mahi tahi ā-kāwanatanga

A government partnership

Our team is funded and supported by a partnership of government agencies. Our governance is co-delivered by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga and Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai with input from Te Puni Kōkiri Ministry of Māori Development, Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage, and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment Hīkina Whakatutuki.

He kaupapa ā-motu ka ratao ā-rohe

A national programme delivered regionally

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga administers Tohu Whenua. Our governance and management functions are centralised in Wellington, but we also have a small team of staff based around the motu.

In Tohu Whenua regions under development, we employ a fixed-term project manager, who is given support and advice from our partner agency regional staff. Once a Tohu Whenua region is launched, we employ a regional coordinator one day a week.



Ngā patuitanga ā-rohe

Local partnerships

Our team works with iwi and with community groups, including regional tourism organisations and local government, to identify and select sites and to then develop and promote these in the region.

He whatunga ā-motu hei whakatairanga

A national network for promotion

Our programme's role is to:

- Connect New Zealanders and international visitors with Aotearoa New Zealand's cultural heritage by promoting a cohesive network of places of historical significance that offer high quality visitor experiences;
- Create a framework within which site owners and kaitiaki, and their communities are enabled to tell their stories authentically;
- Support site owners and kaitiaki to realise the tourism, economic, social and cultural benefits of being part of the network.



He takanga wā mō Tohu Whenua

Tohu Whenua timeline

2016

Tohu Whenua launches in Te Tai Tokerau Northland

- » Rākaumangamanga Cape Brett
- » Rangihoua Heritage Park
- » Kororipo Heritage Park
- » Pompallier Mission and Printery
- » Waitangi Treaty Grounds
- » Te Waimate Mission
- » Māngungu Mission
- » Clendon House
- » Ruapekapeka Pā

2017

Tohu Whenua launches in Otago

- » Arrowtown
- » Kawarau Suspension Bridge
- » Historic Hayes
- » TSS Earnslaw
- » Bannockburn Sluicings
- » Historic Ōamaru
- » Totara Estate
- » Otago Central Rail Trail
- » Larnach Castle
- » Olveston
- » Dunedin Railway Station
- » Taieri Gorge Railway

2018

Tohu Whenua launches in Te Tai Poutini West Coast

- » Denniston Mine
- » Historic Reefton
- » Brunner Mine

2020

Added to Te Tai Poutini West Coast

- » Waiuta
- » Hokitika Port, Commercial and Government Centre

2022

Added to Te Tai Poutini West Coast

- » Te Kopikopiko o te Waka

2024

Added to Te Tai Poutini West Coast

- » Ōkārito

2024

Added to Otago

- » Huriawa

2025

Tohu Whenua launches in Waitaha Canterbury

- » Kaikōura Cultural Artwork Trail
- » Kaikōura Peninsula Walkway
- » Fyffe House at Wai o puka
- » Te Matatiki Toi Ora The Arts Centre
- » Pūtaringamotu Riccarton House & Bush
- » Te Whare Waiutuutu Kate Sheppard House
- » Awaroa Godley Head
- » Lyttelton Timeball
- » Ng King Bros Chinese Market Garden Settlement
- » Ōtūwharekai: Hakatere heritage
- » Te Ana Ngāi Tahu Māori Rock Art Centre

2026

Still to come

- » Murihiku Southland

2027

- » Manawatū-Whanganui
- » Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

2028

- » Te Whanganui a Tara Wellington
- » Taranaki

Tā mātou e tāpae nei

What we offer

Tāpoitanga Tourism

Kātū wheako ā-ao | World class experiences

Our sites give visitors experiences that are authentic, varied and culturally enriching. Our feedback surveys tell us when visitors spend time at a Tohu Whenua site, they become interested in visiting other Tohu Whenua sites and recommend Tohu Whenua to their friends and family.

Te whakapāpātanga whai tikanga | Meaningful engagement

At Tohu Whenua sites, visitors learn about Aotearoa New Zealand's heritage. They stay longer in a region, delving deeper, and returning often.

Hua ōhanga | Economic gains

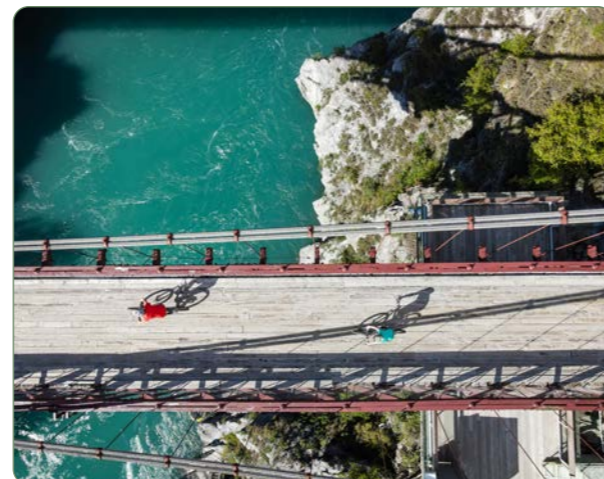
By exploring our Tohu Whenua network, visitors take in multiple sites in multiple regions. They discover more, do more and spend more, contributing to regions, communities and tourism businesses that thrive.



Whakaakoranga Education

Te akomanga o waho | The outside classroom

At our sites, young New Zealanders learn about Aotearoa New Zealand using a 'history where it happened' approach. Tamariki and rangatahi gain confidence in their identity and sense of place.



Te iwi, te hāpori hoki Iwi and community

Ahurea kitea | Cultural visibility

Tohu Whenua sites that acknowledge diverse mana whenua stories lead to increased awareness and understanding of Māori history and culture.

Whakahī hāpori | Community pride

Tohu Whenua sites with strong regional stories encourage locals to feel proud of their history, enthusiastic about welcoming visitors, and keen to take part in heritage experiences.

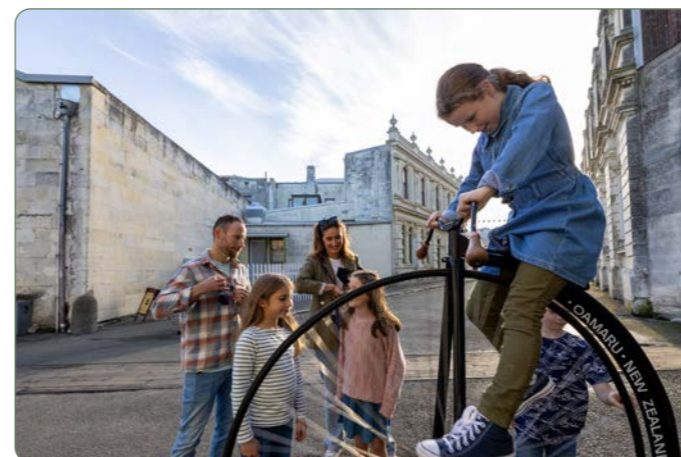
Otinga uiui o inātata nei

Recent survey results

88% of visitors were extremely or very satisfied with their experience at a Tohu Whenua site.



More than half of visitors would visit another Tohu Whenua site in the next 12 months



78% of visitors wanted to learn more about Aotearoa New Zealand's heritage.



Some newly recognised Tohu Whenua sites have seen **increases of up to 150% visitation** in their first year in the programme.



Kia tohua hei wāhi Tohu Whenua

Becoming a Tohu Whenua site

What you can expect if you become part of the Tohu Whenua network – from selection, to launch, to ongoing support.

Nō wai te mana pupuri me te mana whakahaere o ngā wāhi Tohu Whenua?
Who owns and operates Tohu Whenua sites?

Tohu Whenua sites are publicly and privately owned places. Some are owned or cared for by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga or Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai. Many are managed by trusts and some are privately owned.

We never list a site as a Tohu Whenua without its kaitiaki, owners or managers being on board. Tohu Whenua works with site owners on promotion, but we are not responsible for site condition and maintenance, or for developing and delivering visitor experiences.

Te whakarite me te whakanui whakamānutanga
Launch preparations and celebrations

- If your site is selected to be a Tohu Whenua place, our team will work with you to prepare for the launch. This includes ensuring the site is ready, installing a site marker post and developing the narrative that will be used in our marketing material.
- Depending on when sites are ready in your region there may be a large regional launch event. Each site may also choose to have its own celebration. The format of launch events is flexible and can be tailored to suit your preferences. The Tohu Whenua team will work with you to prepare material for social media, other marketing platforms and media coverage.

Tukanga kōwhiri wāhi
Site selection process

- To nominate your place to be a Tohu Whenua site, your regional project manager will work with you to complete a nomination form which will be assessed against the Tohu Whenua programme’s criteria.
- We are committed to meaningful engagement with mana whenua and communities. All nominations are considered by a site selection team including regional and specialist technical staff from our partner agencies, iwi representatives and tourism experts.
- All Tohu Whenua sites are finalised by approval of the Tohu Whenua Governance Group (which includes representatives from the partner agencies).

Taunaki ā-rohe, ā-motu haere tonu
Ongoing regional and national support

You are part of a network; we continue our relationship with all Tohu Whenua sites following the site launch and provide ongoing support. If you have questions, concerns or ideas, you can contact your regional coordinator or a member of the Tohu Whenua team.

Te waitohu Tohu Whenua ki tō wāhi
Tohu Whenua branding at your site

- Tohu Whenua sites are marked with a timber post with attached metal faceplates that include a QR code. Visitors can scan the QR code which takes them to the site page on tohuwhenua.nz. We prepare the posts and work with you in arranging the post installation.
- Tohu Whenua also supply you with marketing collateral and branded apparel for your staff: brochures, stickers, badges, t-shirts, flyers.

Te whakatairanga me te whakawhiti
kōrero haere tonu
Ongoing marketing and communications

- We produce photoshoots and video shoots featuring your site.
- Your site is presented on our website, in social media and our Explorers newsletter.
- We promote your special events on our channels.
- Your site is highlighted in our paid advertising campaigns.



Paearu kōwhiri wāhi

Site selection criteria

We consider four criteria when assessing Tohu Whenua site selection.

Significance

- Special significance to Aotearoa New Zealand
- Storytelling potential

Iwi and community

- Iwi and community benefit
- Stories that matter to people

Visitor experience

- Accessible
- Family friendly
- Potential to grow

Suitability

- Willing owner or kaitiaki
- Presentation



Hiranga | Significance

Paearu kōwhiri wāhi Site selection criteria	Tā mātou e rapu nā What we are looking for
Hiranga motuhake mō te kōrero tuku iho, te ahurea rānei o Aotearoa Special significance to Aotearoa New Zealand’s history or culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Places that are among the ‘best of the best’ of New Zealand’s heritage places.• Places of relevance to New Zealanders that are likely to be popular.• Heritage listings may help demonstrate significance although they are not a requirement.
Te pitomata o te kōrero pūrākaut Storytelling potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Places with a special story about Aotearoa New Zealand’s history.• We take a ‘history where it happened’ approach.• Places that share history where it happened; where there is a direct connection to the past onsite.• Places that are the best site to tell their specific story compared to other similar sites.• Immersive site elements that visitors enjoy interacting with and that help them understand the story. For example, a guided waka tour, tunnels at mining sites, or original buildings.



Painga iwi, painga hapori hoki | Iwi and community benefit

Paearu kōwhiri wāhi Site selection criteria	Tā mātou e rapu nā What we are looking for
Ka kite te iwi i te painga o te whanake wāhi me te whakapoapoa manuhiri Iwi see benefit in the site being developed and attracting more visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Places where iwi see opportunities to further their cultural, social and economic aspirations.Places where iwi choose to share the stories of places where they hold mana whenua or acknowledge traditional or cultural associations.Places where iwi see opportunities to support or enhance kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga.Places where iwi see opportunities to safeguard Māori heritage and ensure it is valued more widely.
Ka kite te haukāinga i ngā painga o te whanake wāhi me te whakapoapoa manuhiri Locals see benefit in the site being developed and attracting more visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Places where locals benefit from a heritage site that develops and sustains long-lasting community engagement and connections, adding to community cohesion, well-being and quality of life.Places where locals and community groups use, protect and promote the site.Places where international and domestic visitors who visit the site stay in the region longer and spend money at local hospitality, retail, accommodation and tourism businesses.Places with year-round experiences and events that encourage local, sustainable economic and business opportunities.
He pūrākau whai tikanga ki te iwi Stories that matter to people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Places that tell a story of special significance to Māori.Places with connections to compelling, well known and popular Aotearoa New Zealand stories. For example, stories of mana whenua, early explorers, particular industries or historical events. There is evidence of these stories drawing visitors to the site.Places with a strong social media platform that demonstrates people’s interest in their story and place.

Wheako manuhiri | Visitor experience

Paearu kōwhiri wāhi Site selection criteria	Tā mātou e rapu nā What we are looking for
Āheitanga Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Places that are accessible by public transport.Places that take less than half the time to drive to (from a tourism hub, town or city) than it takes to complete the visitor experience.Places that are near to a State Highway or tourism route.Places with sealed road access, as visitors prefer no more than a ten-minute drive on a gravel road.Places with a nearby carpark so visitors can park and walk to the site easily.Places with carparks and walkways that are accessible for people with mobility issues.
Manaaki whānau Family friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Places with walkways and built features that are clearly marked, safe, reasonably dry and durable. Most people of all ages and fitness levels can walk around and explore the site easily and comfortably without specialist clothing or equipment.Places with amenities suitable for the length of experience. Amenities needed are:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><30mins: none30 mins-2 hours: toilet2+ hours: toilets, water, shelterPlaces that families consider good value for money. Families prefer places that are free or that have concessions for children, students, New Zealanders or locals. If there is an entry fee, families see it as worth paying.
Te pitomata kia tipu Potential to grow	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Places that are already popular that visitors might expect to be a Tohu Whenua.Places that are close by to other popular attractions and easily added to a tourist itinerary.Places that have a plan for managing the impact of increased visitation.Places that have other features that attract visitors. For example:<ul style="list-style-type: none">outstanding/regionally unique scenery (e.g. beaches, glaciers, lakes and geothermal activity)at least one ‘wow’ photo opportunityconnecting with Māori cultural storiesiconic wildlife, e.g. birds, seals, glow worms



Tōtika Suitability	
Paearu kōwhiri wāhi Site selection criteria	Tā mātou e rapu nā What we are looking for
Te whakaaturanga Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Places that are well cared for with high quality amenities.Places with clear, well-maintained signage and wayfinding.Places with high quality and interactive onsite interpretation that visitors enjoy.Places with the potential to expand or improve the visitor experience over time.

Te whakaaetanga rangatira, kaitiaki rānei Willing owner or kaitiaki	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Places where owners and kaitiaki want the place to become a Tohu Whenua site (applies to places not owned or operated by the New Zealand Government).Places where owners and kaitiaki are committed to maintaining the site to a high standard. Maintenance and management plans can demonstrate this.
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He mōhiohio tāpiri

Additional information



He aha te tikanga o te ingoa ko Tohu Whenua? What does the name Tohu Whenua mean?

In te reo Māori ‘tohu’ translates to sign, mark, symbol, landmark, and ‘whenua’ means land, country, domain in this context. ‘Tohu Whenua’ acknowledges memories of the land, marking places made significant by our forebears and telling their stories.

He aha te rerekētanga o Tohu Whenua ki te National Historic Landmark? What is the difference between Tohu Whenua and National Historic Landmarks?

Tohu Whenua is a visitor-focused programme that tells stories and promotes heritage.

National Historic Landmarks is a separate, statutory programme focused on heritage protection, risk management and resilience. It adds a layer to the recognition and safeguarding of our country’s most valuable built and land-based taonga.

Some sites may be both National Historic Landmarks and Tohu Whenua but one does not determine the other. For example, the first National Historic Landmark launched in June 2019, Waitangi Treaty Grounds, also happens to be a Tohu Whenua site.

He nama, he mea angitu rānei mō ngā wāhi Tohu Whenua? Are there costs or opportunities for Tohu Whenua sites?

There is no financial cost to being part of the Tohu Whenua network. Being designated as a Tohu Whenua site may help your site’s chances in funding applications. Our Tohu Whenua team are happy to provide a letter of support for any funding or grant applications.



Image: Huriawa walk at launch



Image: Karitane Māori Tours manager Chris Wilson guiding manuhiri across Te Awa o Waikouaiti at Huriawa, featured in the 2024 Tohu Whenua Spring Advertisement.

Huriawa | Tohu Whenua case study

Situated on Te Tai ō Araiteuru, Huriawa is one of many unique places in the Otago region that link members of the local hapū to their tūrakawaewae. Huriawa holds a long history of Māori occupation and remains an actively treasured place of significance to mana whenua.

“It’s about having the people of the land, tangata whenua, telling their stories”

- Pou Matarautaki Operations Manager Coastal Otago, Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai, Gabe Davies



Image: Matapura Ellison, Suzanne Ellison & Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Chief Executive Andrew Coleman

Kotahitanga

At the launch event, Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka Ki Puketeraki welcomed guests including members of the community, Karitane Primary School, representatives from other Tohu Whenua sites in Otago, local tourism organisations, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai and regional media. The day included a pōwhiri, unveiling of the Tohu Whenua post and a guided hīkoi with Karitane Māori Tours where tangata whenua stories were shared.

“I am just in awe of this whole occasion”

- Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka Ki Puketeraki Chair, Matapura Ellison, on Tohu Whenua launch day



Image: Huriawa launch day

Huriawa becomes a Tohu Whenua

Kāti Huirapa ki Puketeraki nominated this special place to be a Tohu Whenua site in October 2023. They worked in partnership with Tohu Whenua to prepare promotional material, identify media opportunities and organise a Tohu Whenua launch event. Huriawa was added to the national Tohu Whenua itinerary in May 2024; acknowledging it as one of Aotearoa New Zealand’s must-see heritage places. Huriawa is cared for in partnership with Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka Ki Puketeraki, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and the Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai.

TOHU WHENUA
Landmarks that tell our stories



Huriawa

Living history in an ancestral landscape

A strategic vantage for early Māori settlers and rich in natural resources, this peninsula, and the surrounding landscapes are home to layer upon layer of treasured Kōi Tahu stories.

Found on the edge of the seaside village of Karitane, Huriawa and its surrounds hold the history of the siege of Te Pa o Te Wera, whaling practices that led to the depletion of the tūhoro (Southern right whale) population and the first mission station in the South Island.

These stories are woven into the landscapes of this region and provide a basis for identity, belonging and practice, in an area that remains an actively treasured place of significance to mana whenua.

See & Do:

- Take a self-guided Huriawa Pā Walk (a 2.4km loop track)
- Book a Māori Pā Experience, Māori Waka Experience, or an immersive 4 hour package including both, with **Karitane Māori Tours**.

Huriawa is proudly cared for in partnership by **Kōi Huiapora Rūnako ki Puketeareki, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and The Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai.**

Plan your next heritage adventure at:

[**TOHUWHENUA.NZ**](http://TOHUWHENUA.NZ)
[**@TOHUWHENUA**](#)

Photo credit: Taiti Raika Ngipatu

Site specific flyers.

Launch day video, and feature within a 'What is Tohu Whenua' video.

Several social media posts featuring Huriawa, including this launch day video with a 95k reach.

TW Tohu Whenua is at Huriawa Peninsula. Published by Carmel Wonder · July 9 at 6:19 PM · Dunedin · 🌐

Huriawa was recognised as a Tohu Whenua in 2024 for its historic importance to Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki. ... [See more](#)

Dedicated webpage on tohuwhenua.nz

Features in tourism magazines, like these examples in *Our NZ* and *NZ Today*.

Every transfer to To'Ho Puaele West Coast should start by transferring to Waka, the state's second largest village, just a few minutes' drive from Pt. Glacier and the most prominent peak of the Northern Alou Islands. For the first time, it's the story of why this landscape is so special to Maori.

It's here in the heart of the town of Waka, the second largest village in the state, that the story of the Maori people begins. It's here that the Maori people first came to the islands, and it's here that they first began to build their homes and their lives.

The Maori people have lived on the islands for over 1,000 years. They have built their homes and their lives around the land and the sea. They have built their homes and their lives around the land and the sea.

And now, after years of hard work and dedication, the Maori people are finally getting their chance to tell their story. They are finally getting their chance to tell their story.

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