



- Key:**
- Heritage Trail Sites
  - Location Points
  - Catlins Coastal Heritage Trail
  - Southern Scenic Route
  - Public Toilets



**The Trail runs between Niagara and Fortrose, and can be travelled in either direction**

	Distance	Time
Niagara Hall to Niagara Falls	300m	2min
Niagara Falls to Concrete Horse Trough	2km	3min
Concrete Horse Trough to the Waikawa Museum	2km	3min
Waikawa Museum to Waikawa Church	-	-
Waikawa Church to the Old Coach Road	1km	2min
The Old Coach Road to Porpoise Bay	7km	12min
Porpoise Bay to Curio Bay	600m	2min
Curio Bay to Waipohatu	11km	22min
Waipohatu to Slope point	7.5km	10min
Slope Point to Tararua Acre	22km	27min
Tararua Acre to Waipapa Point	1.2km	5min
Waipapa Point to The Smithy	15km	15min
The Smithy to Fortrose Cemetery	1km	2min

A project of South Catlins Promotions Incorporated [www.catlins.org.nz](http://www.catlins.org.nz) with support from...



## Nau mai haere mai ki te Ara Tapu o Te Akau Tai Tonga

Welcome to the Catlins Coastal Heritage Trail! Situated in the South Catlins area of Southland, *Te Ākau Tai Tonga*, this trail provides a rewarding detour off the Southern Scenic Route. Covering approximately 70 kms of road, part tar-seal part gravel, the Catlins Coastal Heritage Trail runs between Niagara (189 kms from Dunedin) and Fortrose (50 kms from Invercargill). It can be travelled in either direction, thereby complementing your existing travel plans.

The South Catlins is an area of isolated beaches, rugged coastline, native forests and wildlife as well as sheep, beef and dairy farming. The ports at Waikawa and Fortrose each originally had a whaling station and throughout the years an interest in fishing. The area was also well known for its saw milling. Sadly today little evidence remains of those settlements, most of which were sited on what is now private farmland.

The scenic beauty and rich history of the area unfolds along the Catlins Coastal Heritage Trail. To fully appreciate all 13 trail sites, including the short walks, be sure to allow at least 5 hours for the total experience. Food is available at Fortrose, Slope Point, Curio Bay, Waikawa and Niagara. If you have more time to spare, prolong your stay and enjoy some genuine South Catlins hospitality from the varying options of country accommodation available. See website [www.catlins.org.nz](http://www.catlins.org.nz).

Drive safely and have fun exploring this special part of New Zealand!

### 01. Niagara Falls – Mangai Piri

The Niagara Falls was named by a surveyor with an obvious sense of humour! He had seen the large North American falls and named these small falls after them.

The section of river between Niagara and Waikawa flows through what was then bush country and became the settlers' river-highway with houses built along its banks. Though small, the Falls could not be negotiated by boat and so the river-highway ended there. Settlers from the hinterland



brought their wool as far as Niagara by road, where it was then loaded onto the punt at the Falls and taken by river to the ships at Waikawa.



Today descendants of the early *Māori* still use this place for the gathering of food and cultural material (*mahinga kai*). A section of the riverbank remains a designated *Māori* campsite (*nohoanga*).

The *Māori* name for the falls, *Māngai Piri*, refers to the manner in which the lamprey eels (*kana kana*) wriggle up the falls in a mass, using their suckers to hang onto the rocks. This event is highly seasonal, occurring only when the eels migrate upstream to breed.

### 02. Concrete Horse Trough



Circa 1890. The concrete horse trough was situated close by the roadside allowing horse teams a welcome drink when they had completed the climb up Cemetery Hill.

The trip down the hill however was often more perilous. It is known that the brakes failed at least once on the Waikawa-Fortrose coach on the downhill journey.

### 03. Waikawa Museum

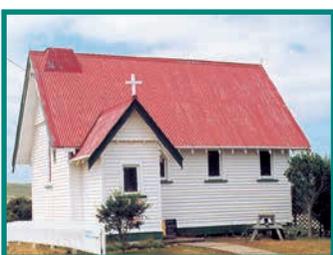
The first people to live at Waikawa were Southern *Māori* of the *Kāi Tahu*, *Kāti Mamoe* and *Waitaha* tribes, who are known collectively today as *Ngai Tahu Whānui*. They were extremely mobile people, travelling the whole coast as far south as Stewart Island (*Rakiura*), and inland through Southland to Central Otago, in search of food and cultural material (*mahinga kai*).

Waikawa was established as a whaling station in the mid 1800's. The first European settlers at Waikawa were the Haldane family who arrived in 1858. The settlement was a busy port and service township by the 1890's, serving the gold diggers and saw millers in the area. The museum is home to various displays that relate to the whaling, saw milling and goldmining industries of those early settlers. The museum building was originally the Waikawa School, which opened in 1912 and closed in 1972.

### 04. Former Waikawa St Mary's Anglican Church

The Former St Mary's Anglican Church is now owned by the Waikawa Museum. From 1902 services were held in local homes at Niagara and Waikawa, the dates dependent on "Paddy's lantern", the full moon, so that parishioners could see to travel to the service.

The foundation stone was laid on 1 May 1930 and the church was opened and dedicated by Bishop Richards on Thursday 10 March 1932. The Vicar then was the Rev WHS Hine. Sadly, with a dwindling congregation, the church was closed in 1994.



### 05. The Old Coach Road

The old Coach Road follows an ancient path (*ara hikoinga*) used by the early Southern *Māori* of the *Kai Tahu*, *Kati Mamoe* and *Waitaha* tribes to travel to their many sites of cultural significance. It was later used as a bridle track by goldminers.

The actual road was formed in the 1880's so that the coach could run between Waikawa and Fortrose (approximately 30 km). It was also used by other horse drawn vehicles. The Waikawa end followed the beach and was built up by hand with stone quarried locally.



By 1900 the alternative inland route, through Tokanui, was used by the coach and other travellers.

A section of the old road near the Waikawa Harbour is a twenty-minute return walk, which should only be undertaken at low tide.

## HERITAGE TRAILS 06. Porpoise Bay – Whaka Aihe

Porpoise Bay is home to Hector's dolphins, which are distinctive by their black and white markings. They are found only off New Zealand shores. With a total population of only three to four thousand, Hector's dolphins are one of the world's rarest dolphins. These dolphins, especially when young, are shy and can be easily frightened. It is best to let the dolphins come to you. Please do not approach them!

Porpoise Bay, with its tranquil beauty, also provides a safe and popular swimming and holiday spot.



## HERITAGE TRAILS 07. Curio Bay – Tumu Toka

Curio Bay is the site of one of the world's finest fossil forests. It is easily accessible at low tide, or can be viewed from a platform. Petrified stumps, fallen trees and fern imprints from the Jurassic period are 180 million years old. They are a national treasure and the rock face is a strictly protected area.



## HERITAGE TRAILS 08. Waipohatu Recreation Area

The Waipohatu walking track and picnic area has been developed on conservation land at the edge of the Waikawa Forest, which was last logged in the 1960's. The access roads are old saw milling roads and the picnic site, which still boasts a Fordson Tractor log hauler, was once a skid site where logs were hauled and loaded

for transport. An easy access short walk explores typical Catlins coastal forest with a fascinating range of tree and fern species.

There is also a tramping track which takes approximately 3 hours. This has been upgraded as a result of a joint effort from the local Promotions group and the Toi Tois Lions Club. Two new bridges have been put in and new directional signs added. The Lions Club members undertake ongoing maintenance on the track.



## HERITAGE TRAILS 09. Slope Point – Mata Tonga

Latitude: 46.40 min 40 sec South

Longitude: 169.00 min 11 sec East

The most southerly point on the South Island, Slope Point is 7 kilometres further south than Bluff. Access is through private land, which is closed from 1 September to 1 November due to the lambing season. PLEASE RESPECT THESE DATES! The windswept trees of the area are sites of original homesteads. The name Slope Point, it is believed, came from the sloping of the hill. From the cliffs at the Point, on a clear day, the entire length of Stewart Island can be seen, as well as Bluff and the Tiwai Point Aluminium Smelter.



## HERITAGE TRAILS 10. Tararua Acre

This site became known as the Tararua Acre after many of the casualties of New Zealand's worst civilian shipwreck at Waipapa Point were buried here in 1881. Other recovered bodies are buried at the Fortrose Cemetery.

On 29 April 1881, the SS *Tararua* ran aground on Waipapa Reef. Attempts were made to get passengers and crew ashore by lifeboats, but they encountered difficulties because of the rising sea. George Lawrence successfully swam 300 metres from a lifeboat to shore and made it to the nearest building owned by the Bruntons. From there a man rode to Wyndham to raise the alarm. Of the 151 passengers, 131 lives were lost.

## HERITAGE TRAILS 11. Waipapa Point



The Māori spelling was originally *Waipāpapa*, meaning 'basket of seafood' (*kai moana*). Early Europeans changed the name to Waipapa.

The Waipapa Reef was the scene of New Zealand's worst civilian maritime disaster in 1881 when the SS *Tararua* sank with the loss of 131 lives.

The lighthouse, the last wooden one built in New Zealand, was erected at the point after the disaster and first beamed in January 1884. John Frederick Ericson, a native of Sweden, was the first keeper. The lighthouse was automated in September 1976.



The recreation reserve surrounding the lighthouse has been developed as a picnic site by the Department of Conservation. Carpark, toilets and information panels are provided and the lighthouse itself has received a major overhaul. It is now listed on the Historic Places Trust Register.

## HERITAGE TRAILS 12. The Smithy, Fortrose

This is the site of the remaining stone of the Blacksmith and Wheelright shop built in 1883 by Hugh and John Chisholm. The shop was expanded in 1891 and became a busy and thriving business. Originally gigs, drays and wagons were built in their entirety on the property, however the business later concentrated on the maintenance of these vehicles and, of course, the shoeing of horses. Water tanks were also manufactured and repaired here. Business eventually faltered with the introduction of the tractor.



## HERITAGE TRAILS 13. Fortrose and the Fortrose Cemetery

Fortrose is situated at the mouth of the Mataura River. The earliest records are from 1834, when whalers established a station, which was later abandoned in 1836. The first settlement, known as the Kaik (derived from the Māori term for village, *kāika*), was on a hill overlooking the Fortrose Estuary and bounded by the Titiroa Stream. The area became well known with the arrival of an early whaler, Captain James Wybrow. The township name, Fortrose, appears to be attributed to a Scottish drover who claimed that the area was very similar to Fortrose in Scotland.

The Fortrose Cemetery is the earliest European cemetery in the South Catlins, the first burial here being recorded in 1873. Captain James Wybrow was buried here in 1878. Children of the Fortrose School raised enough money for a headstone to be erected at the cemetery in commemoration of the people who lost their lives during the wreck of the SS *Tararua*, along the South Catlins coastline, in 1881.



Fortrose Township 1900

Craig 18/2/44



- Protect the plants and animals
- Remove rubbish
- Keep streams and lakes clean
- Keep to the track
- Consider others
- Respect our cultural heritage
- Enjoy your visit

Toitu te whenua  
"Leave the land  
undisturbed"

the Real  
Discover New Zealand

# HERITAGE TRAILS Heritage Trail

Catlins Coastal  
Heritage Trail  
(Te Ara Tapu O Te Akau Tai Tonga)

