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FORGOTTEN WORLD HIGHWAY



Welcome To The Forgotten World

Seeing the perfect volcanic cone of Mount Taranaki in the rear view mirror means one of two things – you're heading down one of Taranaki's famous coastal roads in search of a great wave or a secluded beach, or you're leaving the province. If you're leaving, then New Zealand's oldest touring route, the Forgotten World Highway, offers an unparalleled journey through our pioneering past and richest landscape.



The 155km adventure begins in Stratford and ends in Taumarunui on the Central Plateau, with Mount Ruapehu looming in front of you. It follows ancient Maori trade routes and pioneering farm tracks, through ambitious historic settlements, untamed native bush and stunning natural scenery.

Along the Forgotten World Highway, you'll encounter a landscape where man and nature have fought each other for centuries and more than 30 historic or natural points of interest. You'll still receive a wave from the locals as you pass. Whether you approach the Forgotten World Highway as a three-hour scenic link between the West Coast and the Central Plateau, or explore its many stories over several days, you'll be treated to an adventure 'like no other'.

The Journey Begins at Stratford

Named after Shakespeare's birthplace, the streets of **Stratford** (1) reflect the Great Bard's characters. The town is home to New Zealand's only glockenspiel clock tower, which performs scenes from Romeo and Juliet at 10am, 1pm, 3pm and 7pm daily. Renowned as the gateway to Egmont National Park, Stratford is the last petrol station and major town before Taumarunui. **Pioneer Village** (2), on the outskirts of Stratford, is worth a visit and sets the scene for a journey back in time through the Forgotten World Highway.

The Highway leaves Stratford via Regan Street, from the northern of the town's two roundabouts. The first stop is the **Whakaaurangi Maori Trail** (3), a significant ancient route between North and South Taranaki, which now contains useful information on the road conditions through the Touring Route.



After passing through vivid green dairy country, the Highway reaches the village of Douglas. A quintessential Taranaki rural village, its fortunes have flourished and waned since its heyday in the 1890s - its prosperity dictated by that of its dairy factory. **The Douglas Brick Kiln** (4) is classified with the Historic Places Trust and closed in 1981 after turning local clay into bricks and tiles for over 60 years. The Kiln's landmark 33m chimney was demolished in 1985 for safety reasons.

The **Strathmore Saddle** (5) is the first of four natural saddles along the Highway, and offers spectacular views of Mt Taranaki to the west, and Tongariro, Ruapehu and Ngaurahoe to the east. The saddle lies close to the fault line and surrounding hills display fossilized shells dating back to when this land lay on the ocean floor.

The village of Strathmore is another once vibrant frontier town that fed the pioneering expansion along this route. A surviving example of that growth is the **Makahu Tunnel** (6), which opened in 1907, giving access to the Makahu and Puniwhakau Valleys.

The Makahu Tunnel leads to the start of the **Matemateonga Walkway** (7), a multi-day tramp through to the Whanganui River that can be experienced either as a return trip or one-way to Wanganui by jetboat. When these isolated valleys were first accessed in the early 1900s, scores of settlers flocked to make their living off the land – though most walked away heartbroken years later, beaten by the isolation and constantly encroaching bush.



The road leads on to the **'Bridge to Somewhere'** (8), a substantial concrete bridge built in 1937 in an unlikely location, recalling the ambitions of these hardy pioneers. Allow 90 minutes return from Strathmore to reach the bridge – a sister to the even more isolated 'Bridge to Nowhere' on the Northern banks of the Whanganui River.

Beyond that the old Whangamomona Road takes a turn for the rugged, and becomes strictly for the dedicated four wheel drive, motor bike, mountain bike or tramper from here through to Whangamomona.

Back on the Forgotten World Highway, the next stop is **Te Wera** (9), an early Maori settlement and more recently the base for the 6500ha Te Wera Forest. The former New Zealand Forest Service campsite is still well used, and a number of walks lead from here through the forest and arboretum.

The second of the Highway's saddles is the **Pohokura Saddle** (10), which provides a view into the valley used as a large railway construction campsite in the 1880s, and is named after a prominent Maori Chief. The pass was first used by the Taumata-Mahoe Maori track and three major Taranaki rivers flow nearby – the Waitara, Patea and Whanganui. The early road over the saddle was so rough it took days to traverse.

The **Whangamomona Saddle** (11) also offers spectacular views of the surrounding landscape with a backdrop of beech and Podocarp forest. Two walkways start at the saddle – a 100m walk and a three-hour loop track – and provide an insight into the terrain that confronted early surveyors and pioneer settlers.

Whangamomona: Valley of Plenty

First settled in 1895, the village of **Whangamomona** (12) was once a bustling frontier town, with up to 300 residents providing strong service links

to the hardy farmers trying to wrestle a living from the nearby bush. The 'great flood' of 1924 put paid to the town's expansion, and its population has since declined to around 30 residents. The village has a Historic Places Trust precinct ratings, and is centred around the iconic Whangamomona Hotel, which provides hearty meals and accommodation for locals and travelers alike.

Whangamomona declared itself a republic in 1989, complete with its own presidential election. The famous Republic Day is held biannually in January and enjoyed by thousands of visitors. Passports to the Republic of Whangamomona are available from the Hotel.



The memorial to **Alice King** (13), just north of Whangamomona, recognises this intrepid farmer and mother, who raised one of the first seven families to settle the area in 1884. Alice's grave site is marked over the river by a stainless steel cross.

A Forgotten World

The final saddle of the journey at **Tahora** (14) offers another great vantage point and views of a prominent Maori Pa site, railway tunnels and the central North Island mountains. It is also home to the remote Kaiti café, which seems to be at the top of the world, literally. A 6km detour from Tahora along Raekohua Road leads to the former **Tangarakau Village** (15), once home to a substantial community with 1200 residents, fuelled by construction of the nearby railway.

Back on the Forgotten World Highway, the road surface turns to gravel for 12km north of Tahora, through the 180m long **Moki Tunnel** (16). Built in 1936 and known locally as the Hobbit's Hole, this single lane tunnel is home to fossilized giant crabs, harking back to the region's geographic past. The tunnel's floor was lowered in 1989 to allow access for triple-decked stock trucks.

Natural Delights

Shortly after the Tahora, a detour along Moki Road leads to a 20 minute walk to **Mt Dumper falls** (17). At 85m this is the North Island's highest waterfall, and is a spectacular sight, particularly after heavy rain. Surrounded by dense native bush, the falls spill over a horse-shoe-shaped papa bluff and eventually find their way to the Tongapoutu River, reaching the Tasman Sea in North Taranaki. The Moki Road runs through the **Moki Forest** (18), which features some of New Zealand's fastest regenerating native bush traversed by walking tracks, old milling roads, and picnic spots, and is home to the endangered Kokako bird.

The Forgotten World Highway returns to a sealed surface shortly after the Moki Road turnout, before passing through the breathtaking **Tangarakau Gorge** (19), which marks the boundary between the Stratford and Ruapehu Districts. The Gorge offers an incredibly scenic passage through the magnificent Podocarp forest that still characterises the region.



Pioneering Ambitions

The final resting place of respected early surveyor **Joshua Morgan** (20), who died in 1892 at the age of 35, is marked by a memorial and a short walkway through native bush to his grave site. This memorial also remembers the many other pioneering farmers who sought their fortunes in this remote and inhospitable area.



One of the Forgotten World Highway's historic settlements, **Tatu** (21) once featured four houses, a school and hall, though was overshadowed by the nearby town of Puketihi further up the valley which boasted 30 homes, a post office, two-teacher school and even a reticulated water supply. A remnant of the once prosperous coal mining industry in this area, the **Tatu Mine Entrance** (22) is located 6.5km along Waro Road, and can be accessed by foot in a two hour round trip. A greater insight into this area's bustling past can be found in the **Ohura Museum** (23), a 10km diversion off the Forgotten World Highway.

Nevin's Lookout (24) offers panoramic views of the Central North Island from a vantage point a short walk from the road. Please ensure the gate is shut behind you. Though the original **Aorangi Flour Mill** (27) no longer survives, the trenches used to carry water from the Opetea Stream to the mill wheel are still visible. The site sign is located on River Road opposite the Koiro Road junction.



The historically significant **Maraekowhai Reserve** (25), in the Whanganui National Park can be accessed along Paparua Road. The reserve was a stronghold for Hauhau warriors, and the site of Rongo Nui – a war pole calling warriors to arms – in 1864, and Rere Kore – a peace pole to announce the end of hostilities – both of which are preserved on the site. A 20-minute walk leads to a viewing platform overlooking Ohura falls.

The early settlers made the most of the materials to hand, as much through necessity as choice. An example of this is one of the last remaining **Papa Drive** (26) that were used extensively as roading culverts in the 1900s.

The settlement of Aukopae was once home to an **impressive tunnel** (28) hewn from the papa landscape over a decade and completed in 1923. Made redundant by the road cutting in 1968, the tunnel can be seen on a 45 minute walk following the old road. Aukopae was also the site of a once bustling **river-boat landing** (29), where regular paddleboats navigated the Whanganui River with a cargo of settlers, supplies, and livestock. The landing is located 200m down Saddler Road. The **Nukunuku Museum** (30) is signposted from the Aukopae river landing, and features interesting displays of memorabilia from the area and the river boats.

A distinctive bridge leads to **Te Maire Reserve** (31) in the upper reaches of the Whanganui National Park. This towering Podocarp forest features a range of spectacular walks and can be a great way to spend a few hours.

The significant geological site of **Herthill's Bluffs** (32) showcases the area's ancient history through 1300m thick layers of coarse sandstone and fine mudstone. Causing a headache for roading construction over the last century, these bluffs date back 15-25 million years to when this part of New Zealand lay at the seabed.



Found Again

The journey through the Forgotten World Highway concludes in **Taumarunui** (33), at the junction of the Whanganui and Ongare Rivers. Taumarunui holds great significance in both Maori and New Zealand history – it is the point of convergence for the Whanganui, Maniapoto and Tuwharetoa tribes, and has been an important location for New Zealand's rail network since the pioneering era. From Taumarunui the Central North Island can be easily accessed.



PLEASE NOTE

12KM OF THE FORGOTTEN WORLD HIGHWAY IS UNSEALED ROAD

THERE ARE NO PETROL STATIONS ALONG THE FORGOTTEN WORLD HIGHWAY

WHEN IN NEW ZEALAND, PLEASE DRIVE ON THE LEFT!

For more detailed information visit: www.taranaki.co.nz or www.visitruapehu.com