Did you know:
In 1900, the busy Kauri milling township of Kohukohu had a population of almost 2,000 people.

Please respect sacred urupā and cemeteries by not eating, drinking or smoking there.

Find more at northlandjourneys.co.nz

To Dargaville, Auckland Via Ancient Kauri Trail

1. Kohukohu
2. Mitimiti
3. Opotiki
4. Hokianga Archives & Museum
5. Rawene
6. Waioua Forest Visitor Centre

WANDERING WITH ANCESTORS
STORIES OF THE SS VENTNOR

Arai Te Uru Reserve

NORTHLAND JOURNEYS

SS Ventnor
28 October 1902

15 Km

Point of Interest
Food
Photo stop
Local favourite
Petrol station

Draft 5
Mar 2018
History

The beautiful Hokianga coast is the home to one of New Zealand’s most moving pieces of living history. The story starts in 1902 when the SS Ventnor, bound for Hong Kong, sank off the Hokianga coast. Thirteen crew and passengers lost their lives. Also lost was some very special cargo: the remains of around 500 mostly goldminers who had died in New Zealand and were being returned to their families in China. To the great despair of the families, all was believed lost in the wreck.

But it was not the end of the story. In the weeks and months following the sinking, Chinese remains began to wash ashore. Up and down the coastline, local people - Māori and Pākehā – began collecting them. The tangata whenua (people of the land), Te Roroa and Te Rarawa, took special care. In the case of Te Roroa the remains were buried next to their own ancestral burial grounds and the history was passed down from generation to generation, in expectation the Chinese families would return.

In 2007, more than 100 years later, a chance meeting connected the Chinese descendant community with the people of Te Roroa and Te Rarawa. Since then, a special bond has grown between the communities based on shared values and history that have been forgotten, but in 2018 the Chinese community erected a memorial to Rawene cemetery to honour those lost, and celebrate the shared values and history that have brought together Chinese and Māori, as well as Pākehā communities of the Far North. The memorial is a significant cultural feature in the area.

In celebration of this, and in honour of those lost, a set of memorials has been built in some of the most spiritual and hauntingly beautiful areas of New Zealand.

For more information visit: www.website.com

WANDERING WITH ANCESTORS

Waipoua Forest Visitors’ Centre
The Waipoua Forest is the start of our journey, and the head of our dragon. It is home to the people of Te Roroa, who tell of their tūpuna (ancestors) finding both coffins and bones from the SS Ventnor wreck all around the tiny Kawerua harbour.

Outside the Waipoua Forest Visitors’ Centre there is a memorial plaque in the Ventnor Grove presented by the Chinese community to Te Roroa in 2013. People who want to pay their respects in the traditional way can offer incense sticks at the foot of the memorial.

A must see in this area is Tāne Mahuta, the magnificent giant Kauri to the north of the site.

Further information is available at the visitors’ centre, which offers a café, accommodation and information on guided tours.

Signal Station Point: Arai Te Uru Reserve
The look out point at the end of Signal Station Road offers spectacular views of the Hokianga harbour entrance and the coastline stretching from north to south, and out across the Tasman Sea. The site at which the SS Ventnor sank is at the direction of 10 o’clock, about 15 kilometers out to sea. The wreck itself is now a protected archaeological site. To the south (on the left), is Kawerua where Te Roroa gathered and buried the Chinese remains. To the north, beyond the sand dunes, is Mitimiti, the last stop in the trail. You can also see the mouth of the Hokianga Harbour and its notorious sandbar.

Arai Te Uru reserve is a significant historical site. According to Māori mythology, Arai Te Uru and Niua or Niwa were two taniwha (sea monsters) who guarded the harbour entrance. Their job was to lash out with their powerful tails and stir the waters into such a frenzy that invading waka (boats) would be swamped and rendered helpless.

Old Wharf Road
Of all the historic photos of the SS Ventnor sinking one is the most famous. The image shows lifeboats and survivors coming ashore at Ōpononi beach surrounded by rescuers. The end of Old Wharf Road is where the original 1902 photo was taken. In all, three lifeboats made it to shore. A fourth floated up on Mitimiti beach empty - 13 people had lost their lives. Old Wharf Road offers an excellent view of the sand dunes on the other side of the harbour, which are accessible by ferry.

Hokianga Archives and Museum
Close to Old Wharf Road is the Hokianga Archives and Museum. Staffed by volunteers from the Hokianga Historical Society, this small museum reflects the pride the community has in its history. Inside is a permanent collection and display. Check their website for opening hours: www.ourhokianga.com

Rawene Cemetery
On the hill overlooking the historic township of Rawene is a cemetery said to contain an unmarked grave for numerous Chinese remains.

According to local accounts, a group of people who had found remains washed ashore wanted to send them to Auckland so they could complete their journey back to China. At that time, roads were not well developed and boats were the main form of transport. The plan was to place the remains on one of the “cream boats” that serviced the Motukaraka Dairy Factory, which would then meet the coastal shipping boat bound for Auckland. Unfortunately, the superstitious crew refused to take the remains onboard, fearing the same bad luck that had sunk the SS Ventnor. With nowhere else to go the remains were taken to the Rawene Police Station, and a decision was made to store them in the cemetery until someone came to claim them.

The exact location of that burial has been forgotten, but in 2013 the Chinese community erected a memorial at Rawene cemetery to honour those lost, and celebrate the shared values and history that have brought together Chinese and Māori, as well as Pākehā communities of the Far North. The memorial is a significant cultural feature in the area.

Mitimiti Urupā – the magnificent Red Gateway
The last stop on the trail is the hauntingly beautiful coastal settlement of Mitimiti - home to the people of Te Rarawa. The wide open beach is said to be one of the remotest on the planet and along this stretch Te Rarawa tūpuna collected and buried the remains from the SS Ventnor wreck. Over 100 years later, a modern-day tribute to the event was built on the hill above

Clearing the waves (The footsteps of our ancestors) - Chinese Proverb
Ngā tapuwae o ō tātau tūpuna (The footsteps of our ancestors) - Māori Proverb

飲水思源 (Drinking the water we remember its source) - Chinese Proverb