

A little out of the way, a lot out of the ordinary! I think I may have just found where our next home is going to be.

A few years ago there was a campaign 'Don't leave home till you've seen the country'. At the time I thought I had seen a reasonable amount of the country but as we recently discovered there is often a lot more to a place than a one day visit highlights. We had decided that a short break was in order - to recharge the batteries so to speak. We had been talking to Mike McGarry of the Mangawai Business Development Association who got us interested in visiting the district for more than a day by telling us 'To see the magnificence of Mangawai you have to be here.' After a bit of investigation we decided that Mangawai fitted the bill perfectly for our short break. We have visited this small coastal town on several occasions over the years for day trips but had never stayed long enough for a good look around the area. We were about to change that. One of the things that make this a great place is that it is a little way off the main road. Just over an hour drive north of Auckland with a beach, estuary, a golf course, vineyards, several cafés, gallery, outdoor activities and more, it was an easy destination choice and a chance to find out more about this delightful seaside area. That it is a bit warmer than Auckland. Mangawai is made up of two parts, Mangawai Village and Mangawai Heads. A causeway was built across the inner reaches of the estuary about

40 years ago, which brought the two places much closer together. What had been a 40-minute drive was cut down to 5 minutes. There is a wide variety of accommodation to choose from so it is easy to find something to suit, from apartments to backpackers, b & b's, cottages, farmstays, holiday homes, motels and lodges. And like all good Kiwi seaside communities there is camping ground accommodation - three in fact. We discovered that there were so many activities that we had to do a bit of planning as there was no chance of us fitting everything in. Saturdays are a great day to be in Mangawai. Farmers Markets are becoming more and more popular as a place to get fresh good quality produce and artisan foods. Mangawai Saturday Morning Market is no exception with organic, locally sourced food and produce. Open from 9am - 1pm every Saturday this small market is growing in popularity as it becomes more well known. After stocking up on a few things I couldn't resist it was time to move on to the next treat. Bennetts Chocolaterie! Who can resist a delicious melt in the mouth chocolate? You can spend time watching the chocolates being made and then take a leisurely look around the large shop - full of handmade chocolate creations. There are small bite size chocolates that you buy individually in just about every flavour imaginable or be a bit more adventurous and get a chocolate pipi or scallop full of smaller chocolates in shapes inspired by the sea. ▣

MANGAWHAI

Feature Mangawhai

Lunchtime - choosing where to have that took a bit of time as there are several cafes with different food styles and each had a tasty menu, or you can go to the local deli and get all that you will need to create your own picnic. If we had been staying longer we would have been going somewhere different each day.

After a relaxed lunch it was a drive to try out the local vineyards. There are 3 delightful boutique vineyards that sit in the foothills of the Brynderwyns. They all have cellar door sales so between the markets and the vineyards it is not hard to finish your stay with a full car.

Golf was on the agenda of course. The Mangawhai Golf Club is set between the village and the Heads. This is a club that is doing well when others have been struggling. Their membership is growing with over 100 new members in the last two years and it is a course that is popular with people throughout the country.

The club has realised that the needs of the modern golfer today are different to those of golfers in days gone by and they are constantly striving to stay connected with and address the needs of all golfers whether they be a member or visitor. The board has a plan for growing the club and catering to golfers different needs and it is working.

The large clubhouse sits up high with panoramic views out over the course and out towards the Heads. If you haven't been there before, behind the clubhouse and car park there is a short walk and a few steps up to a lookout that gives a great view over the course to give an idea of the layout, and an expansive 360 degree view of the area. Since we were having a short holiday we decided to treat ourselves and took one of the electric carts that the friendly staff organised for us. This is a links style course that is carefully maintained with undulating fairways and greens. There is a demanding mixture of wide and narrow fairways amongst native bush, exotic trees and wetlands that attract a variety of birdlife.

There haven't been many changes to the course over the years as the club has tried to maintain the natural state and beauty of each hole. A few years ago some pines were removed from the peripheries of the course, which made a huge



THE LARGE CLUBHOUSE SITS UP HIGH WITH PANORAMIC VIEWS OUT OVER THE COURSE AND OUT TOWARDS THE HEADS

improvement to it's condition. The course is not long by golf course standards but it does catch people out. Good course management is a must here as this course needs to be played strategically. If you are a big hitter you may find this is one of those courses where you keep your driver in your bag. We were told that many people arrive thinking they would beat the course because it is short but the majority of them go away having played quite a few shots over their handicap. We didn't go in thinking that we could beat the course but the course did come out on top. We decided that we needed to come again and get to know the course better so that we could get our scores down. It was a hard but fair test of our very average golf.



View from the lookout behind the Golf clubhouse

With its sandy base it is one of the few year round courses. As Mangawhai is a popular holiday destination (not hard to see why) the course is often busy so it pays to book a tee time before arriving at the course. Having said that the staff will do their best to fit people in.

After a relaxed post round drink and a tasty snack in the clubhouse enjoying the views it was time to move on to our next activity.

Another course is currently under construction not far away at Te Arai Point. Once constructed then Mangawhai will certainly be able to declare themselves a golfing destination - one that is well worth the short trip from Auckland.

A short drive took us out to the Heads. The tide was out so we decided to talk a walk along the beach. There are a series of walks, either partially or completely off road but as regular beach walkers it was hard to go past the surf beach. After a morning of golf we decided to keep it simple and stayed on the beach. For the more adventurous after a short walk along the beach you can turn off and climb up onto the cliff and follow a track along the cliff top where there are some spectacular views. The seaward horizon is dominated by the Hen and Chicken Islands, Great and Little Barrier Islands and the Mokohinaus. On a good clear day you can get views up to Bream Head and down to Hauraki Gulf. 📷



Bennetts Chocolaterie has a large selection to tempt you



There are three boutique vineyards close to Mangawhai



It's that sort of irresistible invitation. You can't say no, but ...
 That's how Mangawhai stands out from the everyday and the ordinary. Every hole invites you further into this wonderful game ... enticing you with options .. and rewarding you in every which way.
 You'll never leave this jewel of a course without feeling you've been tempted, tested and treated to a golfing experience that's as good as your game can get. ... A sand-based championship layout that's superb through every season, immaculate greens that roll fast and true ... and every hole teasing you in ways that only your A-game can answer.



Just over an hour north of Auckland. Just like nowhere else.
Molesworth Drive, Mangawhai Heads, Northland. www.mangawhaigolf.co.nz 09 431 4807. Membership options. Visitors welcome. Bookngs advised.

Feature Mangawhai



HOW TO GET THERE.

Drive north from Auckland on State Highway 1. You can either drive through Wellsford and turn right onto Mangawhai Road or take the shorter more scenic route by turning right onto Wayby Valley Road which is just after the dome valley.

The lagoon like Mangawhai Harbour

If you enjoy walking then Mangawhai is the ideal place to visit at the end of March each year when they hold their annual walking weekend. Now in its 15th year there are a large number of guides who plan the walks. With 30 walks on offer over the two days it is a chance to see this district in a way that is not usually possible as many of the walks are over private land that the owners have made available for the weekend.

For the water activity enthusiast there is plenty to keep you occupied. Fishing, diving, surfing, windsurfing, jetskiing, boating, kayaking and of course swimming - it's all here. You can choose between two ocean beaches or the more peaceful estuary and lagoon like harbour. Whichever you choose there are long stretches of white sandy beaches.

After our walk along the dramatic surf beach it was time to return home, rested and with our batteries recharged. Another visit is now on the agenda so that we can revisit some places and try out some of the things we missed and of course another round of golf to improve on our efforts. I might also keep an eye open for my next home as Mangawhai certainly is a the short trip off the main road and is certainly lot out of the ordinary. **NZGM**

Find out all you need to know about Mangawhai at www.mangawhai.co.nz
Mangawhai Golf Course: www.mangawhaigolf.co.nz



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