

HERITAGE, HISTORY, LANDSCAPE, NIGHTSCAPE

Explore our heritage at Rakiura Museum / Te Puka O Te Waka which boasts a nationally significant collection. The museum showcases the development of industries based on Stewart Island's rich natural resources which first attracted Māori followed by a cosmopolitan mix of settlers - sealers, prospectors, timber millers, ship builders, whalers, fisherman and tourism providers.

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Take a scenic road tour. Book a tour, sit back and relax, and let someone else do the driving on our 28 kilometres of road while you listen to tales of island history. Take in the stunning beach views, panoramic vistas across Paterson Inlet, try making a phone call from the iconic 'telephone tree' near Horseshoe Bay, marvel at the Anchor Chain and Matariki sculptures at Lee Bay - where the road ends and the Rakiura "great walk" begins. Various modes of transport are available for road tours which cater for single travellers to large groups.

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The anchor chain symbolises the connection between Rakiura (Stewart Island) and Te Wai Pounamu (the South Island). It is said that demigod Māui, fished up Te Ika-a-Māui (the North Island) from his canoe (the South Island) which was anchored to Stewart Island. The late Russell Beck created the Lee Bay anchor chain sculpture in 2002 and its twin at Stirling Point was installed in 2009 at Bluff on the South Island.

The Tupuārangi pou (post/column) at Rakiura (Stewart Island) represents one of nine stars in the Matariki cluster. Matariki is the Māori name for the star cluster also known as Pleiades and marks the start of the Māori New Year, heralding a time of remembrance, joy and peace. The Tupuārangi pou was created by James York and Keri Whaitiri and is part of the Matariki wayfinding pou project connecting locations throughout the Southland region of New Zealand.

Look up! In 2019 Stewart Island / Rakiura was awarded "Dark Sky Sanctuary" accreditation by Dark Sky International (DSI). Classified as having outstanding sky quality and being accredited "Sanctuary" status helps to ensure that light pollution levels are controlled and that our natural nightscape is protected for the future. With little to no light pollution Stewart Island is one of the best places in New Zealand to marvel at the night sky. We have superb views of large and small Magellanic clouds, two galaxies visible to the naked eye at 170,000 light years away. Orion's Belt (also known as The Pot) is easily recognisable by the three brightest stars in a line when facing north. Northern hemisphere visitors please note that the moon and northern constellations will appear upside down! Guided options are available.

Aurora Australis (Southern Lights). If conditions are right, look up and look south. Stewart Island is a great place to watch this natural phenomenon. Observation Rock is a popular site with local Aurora watchers. Locations with viewing platforms include Lee Bay car park, Moturau Moana Gardens, Observation Rock & Ackers Point Lighthouse. Other locations with good sky quality (away from artificial lighting/outdoor lights) are Horseshoe Bay Beach, Butterfield Beach, Mill Creek/Bathing Beach & Deep Bay. Apps that map the night sky, show passing satellites and indicate likely Aurora Australis activity are available to download onto a smart phone.

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If you are venturing out after dark, please respect the privacy of homeowners and ensure you are visible to motorists.