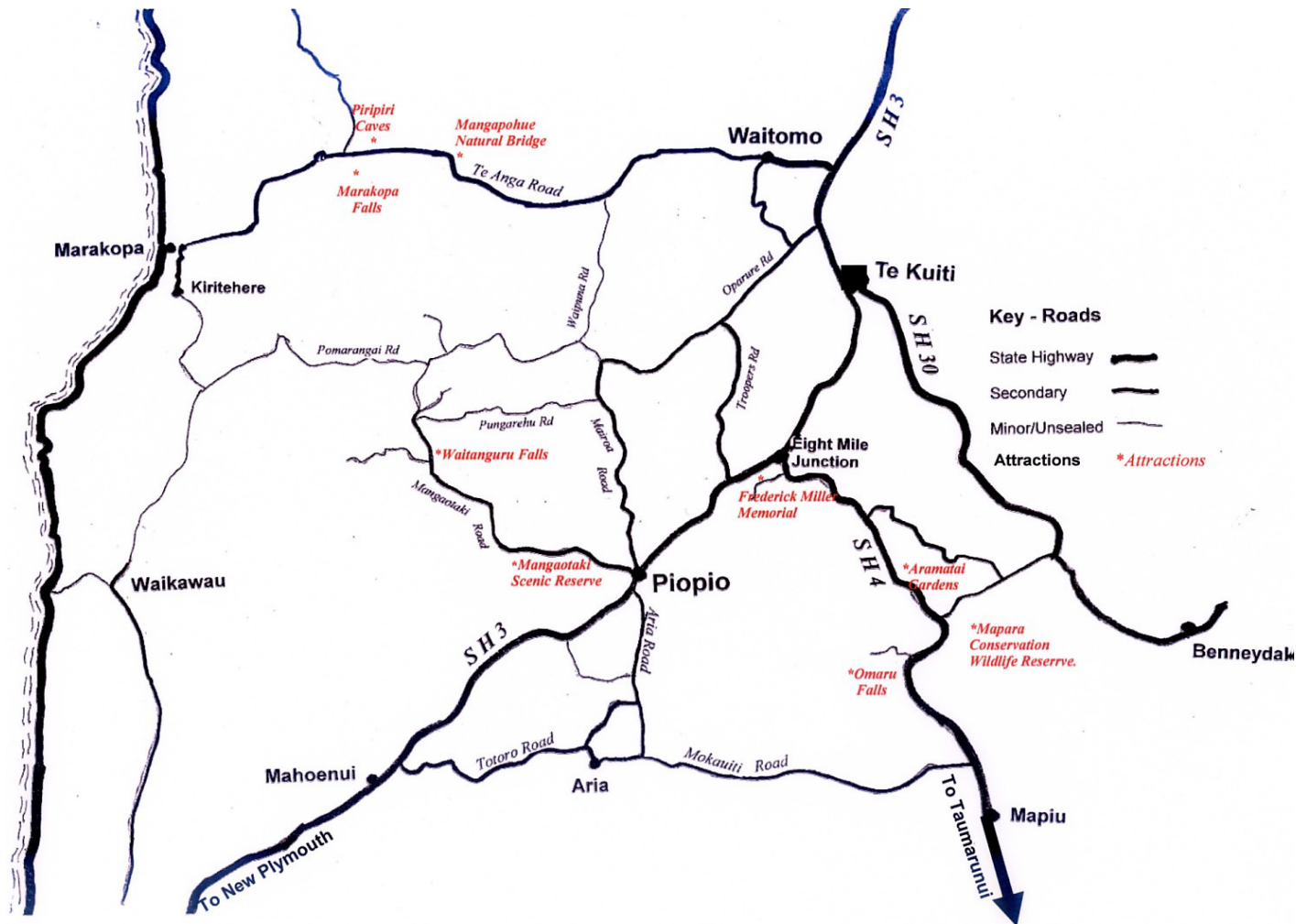


# Scenic Routes & Loop Roads

One of the best ways to explore the Piopio area is to get off the busy main highways and travel the country roads. You may need a picnic hamper as there will not be a Café in sight! A reasonably good map is a good idea too. Some roads have a gravel surface so it is important to take your time and keep a watchful eye out for farm vehicles and animals on the road. Many of these roads are also ideal for mountain biking. Make sure you fuel up before you leave.

Browse the list, to the right, of the routes that we have to offer in our area, and then open the brochure to read more details of the sights along the way and the destinations, so that you can make choices according to your next stopover. Routes 1 and 2 are to the north of Piopio, route 3 is south and east and route 4 is south and west. Routes 5 and 6 are much longer and take you west to Taranaki. Route 7 is a loop road combining parts of Routes 5 and 6.



Scenic Routes  
and  
Loop Roads

## 1 Piopio – Waitanguru – Mairoa – Piopio

On this route the road is quiet and there is ample opportunity to park and enjoy a picnic or a stroll to take in the scenery. It is also suitable for mountain biking. From the centre of Piopio, travel south, turn right off State Highway 3 (SH 3) into Kaka Street, then continue left into Mangaotaki Road. This road will take you past the **Mangaotaki Scenic Reserve Walkway** (20 minute walk) and through the picturesque Mangaotaki Valley featuring unique limestone cliff formations, and on to the **Waitanguru Falls** (5 minute walk). Continue on from the falls then take the first turn right into Pungarehu Road. This is a narrow, winding, unsealed road, but safe provided you drive carefully and take your time. At the end of this road turn right and enjoy magnificent views as you return to Piopio via the Mairoa Road. Travel time by car is approximately 1.5 hours.

### Alternative extension:

If you really enjoy back-road driving, and have plenty of fuel on board, it is possible to reach the West Coast via the winding but scenic Pomerangai Road to Kiritihere. Instead of turning right into Pungarehu Road continue on the Mangaotaki Road then turn left on to the Pomarangai Road. From there, there are more options:

- At \* **Kiritihere** turn right and travel to the small seaside settlement of **Marakopa**. Continue on the Te Anga Road towards Waitomo via \* **Marokopa Falls**, \* **Piripiri Caves**, and also the \* **Mangapohue Natural Bridge**.



You may return to Piopio either via Waipuna Road - right onto Oparure Road - left onto Mairoa Road or via Waitomo and SH 3.

- Before Kiritihere turn left onto the Mangatoa Road and travel south to Waikawau. Check out the tunnel access to the beach at Waikawau (you will need to turn right and go down a side road). Return to the main route and travel south on the Manganui Scenic Route to the junction with SH3 just north of Awakino. Return to Piopio via SH 3.



\* **Kiritihere Beach** typifies the rugged character of New Zealand's isolated West coast. Look for interesting uplifted landforms and at low tide you can see fossilised clams, mussels and monitis in the rocks at the end of the beach.

\* **Marokopa Falls** in a native bush setting is one of the most beautiful waterfalls in the country. These 30 metre falls drop over a fault line into a deep valley cut by the Marakopa River. The well formed track is 30 minutes return.

\* **Piripiri Cave** is not operated commercially. You will need a torch and good footwear. There is a short walk to reach the caves but once inside you will be able to view layers of giant oyster fossils towards the back of the cave.

\* **Mangapohue Natural Bridge** is a 17 metre high natural arch spanning the Mangapohue stream and is the remains of an ancient cave system. There is a loop track, (25 minutes return), partially through farmland, on which you can see 30 million year old fossilised oysters in the limestone outcrops.



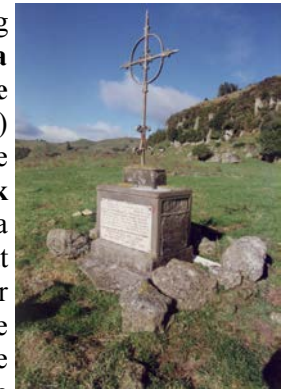
## 2 Piopio – Mairoa – Waitomo

In the centre of Piopio turn right into Kea Street and on the outskirts of the village travel straight ahead into Mairoa Road. Turn left into Ngapaenga Road at the end of Mairoa Road and after a short distance turn right into

Waipuna Road. This winding, gravel road offers some spectacular views so be prepared to stop often to admire these views. At Te Anga Road, turn right and a picturesque drive will take you to Waitomo village. Should you have plenty of time when you reach Te Anga Road, turn left and travel towards Te Anga and choose between three popular attractions, or take in all three. These are the \* **Mangapohue Natural Bridge**, \* **Piripiri Cave**, and the \* **Marokopa Falls** (see above for all three), then back-track to the Waitomo Village.

## 3 Piopio – Aria – Mokauiti – SH 4 (State Highway 4) – Piopio

Travel south from Piopio on the Aria Road. In Aria village, turn left and follow the signs to Mokauiti. Continue on the Mokauiti Road to join SH 4 north of Mapiu. Turn left and return to Piopio via SH 4 and SH 3. Features along the way include the **Wairere Falls**, spectacular after heavy rain, rolling to steep sheep, beef and dairy farmland and the attractive Mokauiti Valley. Once on SH 4 the **Omaru Falls** and walkway (40 minutes return) are well worth a visit. Other attractions on or near this route are the award winning **Aramatai Garden**, **Mapara Conservation Wildlife Reserve** (home of the endangered Kokako) and spectacular views can be enjoyed from the **Frederick Miller Memorial** on Tuhua Road. For more details about these attractions look out for our Attractions & Activities Brochure or check our website [www.piopio.net.nz](http://www.piopio.net.nz). Volcanic



rhyolite cliffs feature in this drive, giving the landscape quite a different appearance to the limestone cliffs in the Mangaotaki Valley, north of Piopio. Travel time is from 2 hours to all day, depending on the amount of side-tracking you do! The more adventurous traveller may wish to return to Piopio via Tuhua, Tikitiki (both unsealed) and Kahuwera Roads. A good map showing local roads is advised.



## 4 Piopio – Aria – Mahoenui – Piopio

Travel south, approximately six kilometres from Piopio on the Aria Road, and then turn right after crossing the Mokau River. On the right is the Wairere Power Station and Falls. These falls are spectacular when the river is in flood. Before you reach Aria, turn right into Totoro Road, signposted to New Plymouth. Totoro Road is quiet, featuring a mix of easy rolling and steeper farmland, and at the western end features views of the steep razor-backed ridges bordering the Mahoenui Valley to the south-west. This road will take you through to the junction with State Highway 3 (SH 3). Turn right and travel back to Piopio on SH 3. On this leg you will travel through the Mangaotaki River Gorge featuring limestone outcrops and cliffs and also native bush reserves. Travel time is approximately 50 minutes. **Extreme caution** is required if cycling the section of SH 3 north to Piopio.

## 5 Piopio – Awakino – Mokau – New Plymouth (SH 3)

This main route via State Highway 3 to New Plymouth is very scenic with many attractions along the way. After leaving Piopio you will travel through the Mangaotaki and Awakino River



Gorges, see rolling to very steep farmland, native bush reserves and impressive limestone cliffs. You reach the West Coast at the small settlement of Awakino and just further on is the historic 19<sup>th</sup> century coastal shipping port of Mokau. The beaches are known for black sand (owing to high iron content), sand dunes, great views and in stormy weather the sea can be spectacular. It is a popular area for fishing, including whitebait in the open season. River trips operate on the Mokau River from Mokau. Travelling on from Mokau is The Three Sisters attraction signposted at Tongaporutu. This attraction is

accessible at low tide by walking around the mouth of the Tongaporutu River. This is also near the start of the famous Whitecliffs Walkway. Forest-clad Mount Messenger is only a few kilometres



further on. Look out for the Whitecliffs Brewery, four kilometres north of Urenui, where you can sample award-winning organic beer or take a tour. Other food and drink is available. Another attraction before arriving in New Plymouth is the visitor centre at the Motunui Synthetic Fuel Plant. Approximate travel time is Piopio to Awakino 45 minutes, Piopio to New Plymouth two hours.

## 6 Piopio – Ohura – Whangamomona – Stratford

This scenic route takes the traveller over varying roads and through differing and picturesque landscapes. Make sure you have plenty of fuel. Travel north 10kms from Piopio on SH 3. Turn right into



SH 4 and travel 45kms towards Taumarunui. Turn right into SH 40 and travel approximately 29kms to Ohura. Continue through Ohura on to \* **Whangamomona** via the beautiful Tangarakau Gorge and the 180 metre long Moki Tunnel. You will now be travelling on SH 43, \* **The Forgotten World Highway**. West of Whangamomona is the Awahou Scenic Reserve and Te Wera Forest, and from there on you will notice a marked improvement in the road. The landscape will gradually become more gentle and the farming more intensive as

you get closer to Stratford. Allow all day to make the most of the stunning views, attractions and walkways and take care on the winding roads. There are few services en route.

\* **The Forgotten World Highway** is one of the AA's must do's for Kiwis! It is New Zealand's first heritage trail, crossing four mountain saddles and through native beech and podocarp forest. Travelling the highway is like a step back in time through what was once a thriving 19<sup>th</sup> century railway, road making and forestry community. The area is steeped in history, impossible to cover here. To learn more go to the excellent website [www.windwand.co.nz](http://www.windwand.co.nz).

\* The people of **Whangamomona** created a stir in 1988 when they declared it a Republic. Republic Day is celebrated on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January every year and has been attended by up to 6000 people. The local pub is well known for its hospitality.

## 7 Piopio – West Coast – Forgotten World Highway – Piopio

Combine some of the best features of the above two routes to make a loop excursion. Travel south on SH 3. Travel a few kilometres past Tongaporutu then instead of continuing to New Plymouth turn left into the Okau Road (SH 40), signposted \* **Mt Damper Falls**. Travel 53 kilometres to SH 43 (\* **The Forgotten World Highway**) via the Mangapapa and Moki Roads. At SH 43 turn left and travel back to Piopio as in the route above, only in the reverse direction.



\* **The Mt Damper Falls** at 85 metres high are one of the highest in the North Island. To view the falls you will need suitable footwear to walk across farmland.