



Places to Go: West Auckland Airport Parakai

Saved from closure and with some great development over the last few years by the Lockie family, West Auckland Airport at Parakai is an excellent base for further exploration into the north, as well as a destination in itself. Ruth caught up with Harvey Lockie recently who as a resident expert on the area, co-wrote this edition of 'Places to Go'.

FOR THOSE from out of town, it can be intimidating to fly into Auckland with its heavy traffic using the eight aerodromes listed in the AIP: Auckland International, Whenuapai Air Base, Ardmore, North Shore, West Auckland Parakai, Waiheke Island, Mechanic's Bay heliport and Pikes Point heliport.

West Auckland Parakai is a low-stress option, just fly up the West Coast beaches below 1500ft to stay clear of all controlled airspace, and once on Muriwai Beach hop over the



Left: Parakai not only has a sealed runway, but also an observation tower. A courtesy car is available for visiting pilots. Leading Edge Aviation provide maintenance facilities at the airport and with Avgas and Mogas available, Parakai is an ideal base from which to explore the north. Right: Muriwai Beach is a short distance to the west.



the "Skydive Status?" from 10 miles out, they will tell you if they are about to drop, and are happy to advise if you will have time to get down, or are better to go for a short scenic flight up the harbour and they will then tell you when all jumpers are down. So there doesn't need to be any dodging of chutes on final. They can also advise which runway is favoured by the wind so there is no need to join overhead.

There is no controlled airspace north of West Auckland Parakai,

and it is a good base from which to explore the Far North. There are interesting day trips to Dargaville 50 miles away at the other end of the Kaipara Harbour and Whangarei (BP avgas) much the same distance. And further north to Kerikeri (BP and Zed), Kaikohe and Kaitaia (Zed).

A great day

trip is to fly up one coast to North Cape and back down the other, a 340 mile round trip with the ability to land at Kerikeri or Whangarei for a cuppa at the cafes in the airports there. North Cape is at latitude S34, and you're getting seriously far north here - it's much the same latitude as Sydney.

There's a wide variety of scenery. On the West Coast you have miles of long empty beaches and wild scenery, and it is sometimes possible to land on Ninety Mile beach. This is designated as an official 'road' and has regular tourist buses so there are usually tyre tracks to indicate where it is hard enough to land safely.

The East Coast is very different, with a succession of seaside towns, islands, bays and harbours full of yachts. There are plenty of modest fibrolite baches (cribs?) where you'll see families gutting freshly caught fish, and lots of holiday mansions with Aucklanders sipping lattes on the deck, and everything in-between as well.

Great Barrier Island is 50 miles to the East and 50 years back in time. It's well worth a visit and a short walk into the Claris CBD for one of the famous 'Roadkill Pies' at the Claris Texas Café.

Visit www.ParakaiAirfield.co.nz for the 'Nearby Airfields' page which has the details and photos of the 100 airfields within easy flying time of West Auckland Parakai. This page is widely used by aviators in the North, and gets some 300 visits a month from those looking for somewhere interesting to go in the area.

There is spectacular flying to be had at the top of the North Island. NZPI provides a low stress arrival for those visiting Auckland and a great base for travelling further northwards. If you haven't been there, add it to your must-do-soon list today.

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