

SANDY POINT DOMAIN



Sandy Point Domain offers the Invercargill community important environmental and recreational resources providing opportunities for picnicking, play, walking, biking, running and as an educational classroom.

Location:

7km west of Invercargill on Dunns Road

A rich human history

Long before the site of Invercargill was developed, the rich natural resources of Sandy Point supported an important Maori settlement/kainga called Oue. The arrival of sealers and whalers brought change, although the whaling station established there in 1836 was short-lived.

Owen McShane was Sandy Point's first European settler. While Maori valued the once abundant groves of cabbage tree/ti kouka for food and clothing, McShane became notorious for the rum he distilled from its roots.

Whalers became farmers. By the 1880s, over-grazing, fire and the liberation of rabbits had created serious erosion problems. Forestry replaced farming and dune planting programmes eventually stabilised the shifting sand.

Until 1929, the estuary was Sandy Point's only highway. Today, Sandy Point is a ten minute drive from Invercargill – an outstanding natural playground (over 2000 hectares) of beach, river, estuary and forest. It is managed as a recreation reserve by the Invercargill City Council and is home to many sporting and recreational clubs and organisations and other public users.



Exploring on Foot/Bike

An extensive network of well-formed, signed walking and multi-use tracks makes it easy to explore Sandy Point on foot/bike. Tracks are introduced below:

Kilmock Bush Walkway (2380m)



This gently undulating loop track starts from Fosbender Park and passes through a carpet of bush lily/astelia and hounds tongue fern/kawaowao, beneath gnarled totara trees. Access Fosbender Park to the north off Dunns Road after the Oreti River Bridge.

Rover Track (3245m)/Petrie's Track (1245m)



Take the coastal Rover Track to Daffodil Bay and return via the open pine forest of Petrie's Track. The Rover Track passes a lookout point and hugs the shoreline through regenerating native vegetation. Tracks start from the car park at the eastern end of McLennans Flat and Daffodil Bay.

Daffodil Bay Loop Track (3111m)



This track combines a totara/matai forest with good estuary views. From the Daffodil Bay picnic area take the coastal route to Hatch's Hill lookout with a side trip to Noki Kaik Beach. Hatch's Hill lookout provides panoramic views across the New River Estuary to Invercargill and south to Bluff and Stewart Island. Return to Daffodil Bay via the inland route.

Silver Lagoon (including McShane's Track) (1524m)



The track starts opposite the Cooper's Creek settlement and passes through an attractive remnant of native forest opening out to a forestry firebreak. The track to Silver Lagoon follows McShane's Track a short way and returns the same way. NO dogs allowed at Silver Lagoon.

Dunns Road Walkway/Cycleway (2200m)



This well-formed walkway/cycleway begins at the Dunns Road Bridge and heads west to Dune Crescent on the south side of Dunns Road. Watch for traffic at vehicle crossings.

Pit Road Walkway/Cycleway (3100m)



This well-formed walkway/cycleway begins at the corner of Dunns Road and Pit Road and follows Pit Road south, then crosses Links Road and carries on to the Mountain Bike Car Park. From here you can use the mountain bike tracks available and return along the same track, or alternatively you can cross Sandy Point Road and return to Dunns Road via the Oreti Walkway/Cycleway with views of the Oreti River.

Oreti Walkway/Cycleway (3600m)



This well-formed walkway/cycleway begins at the Dunns Road Bridge and heads south via McLauchlans Road to reach the Mountain Bike Car Park. From here you can make use of the mountain bike tracks and return along this same track, or alternatively you could go back to Dunns Road via the Pit Road Walkway/Cycleway.

Views of the Oreti River and other interesting landscapes make this a great walk or ride. Watch for traffic at sports club entrances and at Sandy Point Road.



A natural playground

Origins

In geological terms, Sandy Point is very young. The peninsula of sand, gravel and water-borne silt probably appeared some 4000-5000 years ago when sea levels were higher.

Old gravel storm beaches and ancient sand dunes are the main landscape features, forming low parallel ridges. Lagoons that once occupied the troughs between ridges have mostly disappeared. The largest remaining lagoon (and only source of fresh water) is Silver Lagoon.

Forest – native and plantation

Sandy Point's ancient sand dune forest of wind-sculptured totara and matai is rare and nationally important. Totara remains dominant, despite some milling at Daffodil Bay and Kilmock Bush in the 1880s. Other native podocarps include rimu, miro and kahikatea.

Native forest walks reveal a rich wildlife community from the shaded, ferny floor upwards. By contrast, the open pine plantations seem lifeless and better suited to recreational pursuits like mountain biking. Yet these forests also support wildlife, particularly on their outer edges.

Estuary and Wetland

Sandy Point is the home of popular water sports including rowing, water skiing and power boating.

The estuarine mudflats and salt marshes which fringe the Oreti River are also home to prolific plant and animal life. At least 15 different fish species have been recorded. For some, like eels/ tuna, *galaxiids* (which include whitebait) and sea-run trout, the estuary is part of a migration route. For several flounder species, its sheltered waters provide a commercially important nursery.

Abundant food attracts large numbers of birds, including migratory waders and waterfowl. This wildlife diversity extends inland to Sandy Point's freshwater lagoons and flooded gravel pits, providing a drawcard for fishermen, birdwatchers, photographers and educational groups.

The New River Estuary is part of the Awarua Wetlands, one of the largest wetland complexes in New Zealand and proposed as a Wetland of International Importance.

Location

Sandy Point is 7km west of Invercargill. The Dunns Road Bridge over the Oreti River marks the entrance to the reserve. Directions to the various recreation facilities are signposted off Dunns Road and also displayed outside the Visitor Centre on Sandy Point Road.

Visitor Centre, Sandy Point Road

An unstaffed facility provides informative displays on Sandy Point's human and natural history, as well as recreational information and location of clubs. The Visitor Centre is open weekends and by arrangement with groups. Please contact the Parks Office for more information.

Dogs

Dogs must always be on a lead when on formed walking tracks. Dogs are prohibited within ten metres of the children's playgrounds, sports fields and ponds and lagoons including Silver Lagoon. They are allowed off lead elsewhere. Pick up a copy of the brochure 'Walking your Dog in Invercargill' for more information, or contact the Parks Office.

Please pick up and remove any dog waste. Bags for this purpose should be carried at all times and are available free from the Queens Park Office, Visitor Centre and City Council Help Desk.

Picnic Sites/Bookings for Use

Large groups are encouraged to book picnic sites and any events through the Parks Division Office. Use gas barbeques only.



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