

## Warkworth ★★★★★

North

including Matakana, Leigh, Snells Beach and Omaha



Service towns don't come much prettier than Warkworth. It's in an idyllic spot that hugs the languid curves of the Mahurangi River. Little more than 2.5 square kilometers in area, it fizzes with community spirit and is 15 minutes drive away from 15 beaches. Warkworth is the self-proclaimed heart of the Kowhai Coast. It's also the gateway to the busy road to Matakana, Omaha, Leigh and Kawau Island. Less than 10 years ago, Matakana was a two-shop, pub stop, Holden and Harley Davidson drive-thru town but while the laid-back character is intact, it now has a high-profile market and a substantially expanded village. Omaha is best known for its monolithic modern holiday homes that spring forth from the sand dunes. Snells Beach is the hub of the Mahurangi peninsula and has a coastal/suburban flavour to match.



For colour key, see page 230

### Population Profile

Population	8,772
% Aged Under 15 Years	16.94
% Aged Over 65 Years	21.17
% European	79.00
% Maori	7.80
% Pacific Peoples	2.19
% Asian	2.46

### Who Lives There?

Warkworth, Snells Beach and Leigh have a mix of young families and long-term older residents. This area is popular with elderly people retiring from Auckland and professionals commuting to work in Albany and the North Shore. There's a great community spirit. Local people stumped up \$50 a plank to fund the riverside boardwalk; sausage sizzles and garage sales pay for the museum building's upkeep.

Omaha is a high profile spot for those with enough cash to fund a sophisticated holiday home (not a bach). Famous residents including fashionista Trelise Cooper and P.M John Key

### Typical Homes

There's a wide range of housing in each community. Warkworth has villas, weatherboard houses and stylish renovations of these, as well as new houses in subdivisions.

Matakana's mix of traditional bungalows, farm cottages and relocated villas now includes a group of new brick and tile houses in a development behind the bakery. Famous for its rural lifestyle, Matakana also has acreage properties around the fringes.

Leigh has everything from caravans to large coastal lifestyle blocks and new areas of subdivision with executive homes currently under construction.

Old Omaha to the north was developed in three stages from the 1960s to the 1980s, so there's everything from board-and-batten, group-style housing to two-storey houses that were the fashion of the day. To the south, houses continue to sprout up in the 600-section The Dunes development. Their design has to meet strict criteria for this upmarket beach resort.

### Amenities

#### Schools ★★★

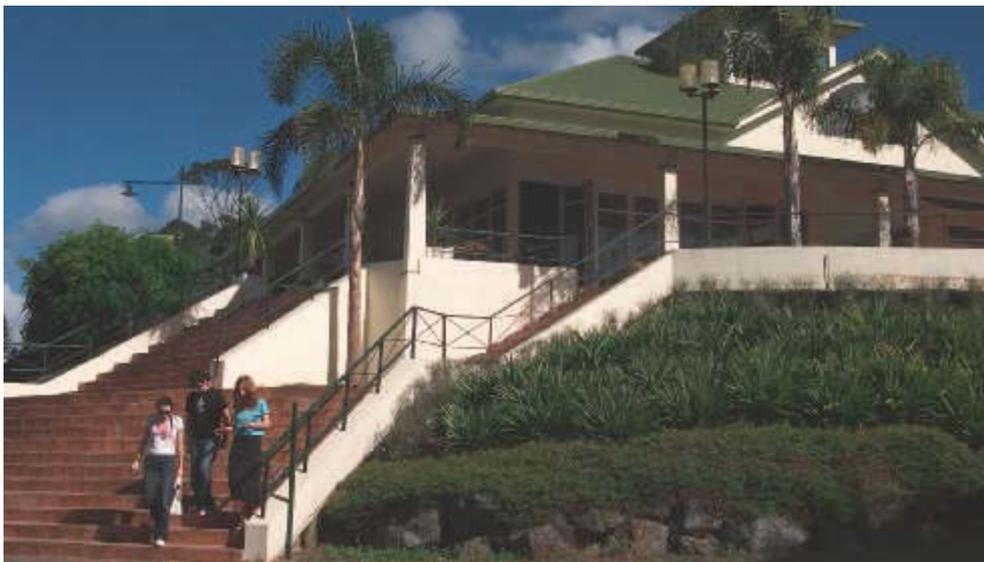
Warkworth, Snells Beach, Leigh and Matakana have a primary school. The well resourced Warkworth School is one the largest in the area with a roll close to 550. The co-ed Mahurangi College in Warkworth is the local secondary school. According to a recent ERO report "although there is a range, some high quality teaching is evident across the school." For a full list, see page 270.

#### Shops ★★

Warkworth's main shopping area runs through the centre of town, and offers everything from fishing gear to flooring, home appliances to chiropractic care. There are also numerous art galleries.

The new upmarket shopping options in Matakana are aimed squarely at the needs of these affluent and far-flung communities. Omaha has a variety of new shops, the first stage in a small retail development.

Snells Beach has its Mahurangi Shopping Centre. Leigh has a general store.



**Leisure ★★★★★**

Being outdoors is everything here, whether it's canoeing down the Puhoi River or riding horses, admiring the tuatara at New Zealand's only reptile zoo at Leigh or peering at the fish at Goat Island Marine Reserve from the glass-bottom tourist boat.

Boat tours of the Mahurangi River are popular. The less adventurous can stroll along the river's edge.

The jewel in the crown is Tawharanui Regional Park, a pest-free haven for native plants and animals. Scandrett Regional Park, which opened in 2004, is a short drive beyond Snells Beach.

The ferry to Kawau Island leaves from Sandspit. Omaha has bowls, an excellent harbourside golf club and a beautiful ocean beach.

Warkworth has many historical treasures, including the Warkworth Museum, the Parry Kauri Park, the site of New Zealand's first Portland cement operation and the Kowhai Park limestone kilns dating back to the 1880s. Foodies have the Matakana Village Farmers' Market for artisan foods and wine, and Ascension vineyard restaurant for lazy lunches. There's also the Matakana Country Park for art, crafts and entertainment.

Warkworth cafés include the Queen St Corner Café. Winery restaurants are scattered throughout the outlying area. At Leigh, the

Sawmill Café is particularly popular as an eatery and venue for live music. Omaha finally has a restaurant!

**Real Estate****Trends**

In early 2009 the massive Northern Motorway Extension (ALPURT B2) was completed, and driving north no longer includes that annoying dawdling dog-leg at Orewa. There's been a lot of land bought up in this picturesque area in recent years and suddenly – maybe because of the now does improved motorway access – many of those sections are being developed. The extension has been one of the mitigating factors in holding properties values high here along with the coastal sea views.

Contemporary executive homes in and around Warkworth cost around \$800,000. Sections at The Dunes, at the southern end of Omaha, are selling for mid \$300,000s compared with \$400,000 a year ago. Waterfront Omaha prices are in the mid \$2millions. Recently subdivided land in Leigh has 1500m<sup>2</sup> sites from \$750,000-\$800,000 on the waterfront. Back from the water, the prices start from \$300,000.

**Best Streets**

In Warkworth, Earlsway and Ashmore Ct are the pick of the bunch. In Matakana, brand new River Glade is tops.



**Local Hero: Matakana Village Farmers' Market.**



Everybody who is anybody comes to the farmers' market for the artisan breads, sausages, fruits and vegetables and the wine, the coffee and the entertainment. It's the trendy outdoorsy way to shop. Located in purpose-built rustic stalls down by the river, the market needs no signage. Just follow the European cars from Auckland and Omaha. The market is part of Matakana's quest for international Slow Town status, which is about savouring food harvested from local soils and prepared with pride to local recipes. The system is strict, so don't expect to be handed your produce in a plastic bag – you'll need to buy a canvas one to carry you're goodies. And don't expect to trot your designer dog around in its diamante collar either – yours will just have to people-watch from the doggie creche beside the carpark.

**At a Glance...**

**Travel Times**

From Warkworth:

CBD	peak 90 min off peak 50 - 60 min
Snells Beach	peak 20 min off peak 10 min
Leigh	25 min
Matakana	8 min
Omaha	10 - 15 min

Intercity Coachlines and Northliner Express Coachlines operate bus services seven days a week between Warkworth and Auckland's CBD. There is no public transport serving Leigh, Snells Beach and Matakana.

**At a Glance... continued**

**House Prices**

**Warkworth**

**Basic house**

Bedrooms   
Price \$470,000 - \$650,000

Bedrooms   
Price \$570,000 - \$850,000

**Executive house**

Bedrooms   
Price \$1,200,000

**600m<sup>2</sup>+ sections**

Price \$350,000+

**Matakana/Leigh**

**1500m<sup>2</sup> Waterfront section**

Price \$950,000+

**House on a large section**

Bedrooms   
Price \$750,000 - \$1,000,000+

**Large coastal properties**

Price \$4,500,000+

**Omaha**

**Older house**

Price \$950,000 - \$1,200,000+

**Modern house with beach or reserve frontage**

Price \$2,800,000+

**Average Rents**

**House**

Bedrooms   
Price \$480/wk

Bedrooms   
Price \$550/wk