

Families

Itinerary 1

There's so much for kids to do at **Muriwai Beach**. The views are stunning, with or without the large gannet colony that is in residence from October to February. The walks from lookout to lookout are easy and rewarded with impressive vistas at every turn (*approximately 40 minutes from the central city*).

If horse riding is their thing there's no better place to do it. Black sand dunes and views of the surf make for an energetic, invigorating trot, canter or gallop. And it's not just for experienced riders either, lessons are available for those who've never ridden before.

You can even take a drive on the beach itself if the tide is right out. Or if you have fit teens, there's a great 90 minute walk (*low to mid tide only*) from the Lagoon Carpark around the south coast and over the rocks to **Maori Bay** and back

Either way they're going to have worked up an appetite. There's **Sand Dunz Cafe** on the beach itself and **Top Shop** a bit further up (make sure you try their home baking) or the lovely **Waimauku Food Station** back at the turnoff for great fish and chips, fish tacos and other interesting twists.

And what child wouldn't want to spend the afternoon at **Parakai Springs**, up and down the waterslides and in the pools. They'll definitely sleep well after a day like this (*approx 25 minutes from Muriwai Beach*).

No day out west is complete without a fresh strawberry ice cream and the options are endless. **Juicy Gelato**, **Phil Greig** and a plethora of fruit and veg shops and cafes offer this great summer time treat. Just look out for signs on the way back from Parakai, they are everywhere.

NorthWest COUNTRY

Itinerary 2

Head up to **Shelly Beach** via **Macnuts Cafe** for some of their macadamia cake and a drink on the deck. Take the kids for a walk through the macadamia trees if they're keen. Drive 10 minutes up the road to the beach itself and spend some time walking up the pier and along the beach. If you're hungry, pick up some fish and chips and have lunch on the beach (*around 55 minutes from the central city*).

Option 2

Head up to the waterfalls at **Omeru Scenic Reserve** for a swim or some adventuring fun. The **Kaipara Coast Sculpture Gardens** are just down the road too if you'd like to introduce your kids to art outdoors in a fun environment (*approx 35 minutes from the central city*).

Whichever option you choose, spend the afternoon in **Helensville** checking out the historical buildings (*pick up a heritage trail map from **Art Stop Cafe***) - it's fun for kids to imagine life 'in the olden days' There's a tiny **Railway Museum** which is worth a quick look and **Ginger Crunch cafe** in the train station building is great for home baking for afternoon tea.

If it's the right season, picking your own strawberries is lots and lots of fun. **Phil Greig's** is pretty popular but there are other places too. Finish with a fresh strawberry ice cream and go home laden with beautiful red berries ready for a gorgeous fruit salad or summer pavlova.

Or if you're lucky enough to be returning on a Sunday afternoon then you can take the kids to The Boat House at The Riverhead with 'Sunday Live' from 2-6pm (opens at 12 noon). The Boat House has the large open lawn, live music, wide open decks, gazebos and marquee and the food is cooked in their unique outside kitchen with wood fired pizza coming from an old boiler and an Adaso grill made from an old agricultural seeder.

Option 1