Cape Palliser Lighthouse + Putangirua Pinnacles

Facilities

- Parking
- Toilets (Pinnacles Campsite)
- Walking tracks
- Dog walking
- Look out

Swimming
Picnic table (Pinnacles Campsite)
Camping (Pinnacles Campsite)
Water (Pinnacles Campsite)

Highlight
Explore the ‘badlands erosion’ of Putangirua Pinnacles, a spectacular landscape feature attracting many visitors to the dramatic and isolated Southern Wairarapa coast, or climb the 250 steps to the top of the candy-striped Cape Palliser lighthouse.

Description, values & significance
The majestic pinnacles were formed over the past 120,000 years by heavy rain gradually eroding an ancient gravel deposit eventually forming spectacular individual pinnacles or ‘hoodoos’. It is one of the best examples in New Zealand of badlands erosion and earth pillar formation. A number of scenes from the movie ‘Lord of the Rings’ were filmed against the backdrop of the Pinnacles because of the desolate, dramatic and stunning coastal vista.

Accessibility/How to get there/particular time of year to visit
Putangirua Pinnacles Scenic Reserve is 13km along Cape Palliser Road from the Lake Ferry turn-off, approximately one hour’s drive from Martinborough. The turn-off and campsite are 500 metres past the Department of Conservation caretaker’s residence. Cape Palliser Road turns off Martinborough-Pirinoa Road about 50 minutes drive south of Martinborough. It is a further 37km to Cape Palliser across both sealed and unsealed surfaces.

Threatened species/species of interest
There are many diverse and rare plants along the Cape Palliser coastline, ranging from the sand tussock Austrofestuca littoralis to Myosotis pygmaea, a tiny gravel bank spring annual. The indigenous vegetation in the Putangirua Pinnacles Scenic Reserve provides a natural corridor from the Aorangi Forest Park to the coast. The reserve incorporates a variety of habitats from mixed beech broadleaved forest, mānuka forest, and eroding shingle valley flats. Cape Palliser has the largest Fur Seal colony in the North Island.

Key threats
Threats here include dumped rubbish that endangers local wildlife and degrades the environment including tangled fishing lines, nets, plastic bags and wire. Much of the rubbish is marine flotsam washed ashore. Stock, rabbits, hares and possums graze some of the area threatening a wide variety of threatened coastal plants.
Walks (length)
Three routes lead to the Pinnacles. Allow two to three hours for a round trip. For a longer walk, with excellent views of Palliser Bay, allow three to four hours for a round trip. Cape Palliser lighthouse is located at the end of Cape Palliser Road, it takes 15 minutes to walk from the car parking area to the lighthouse.

Walks (grade)
Pinnacles Track is easy to moderate walking. However the Cape Palliser Lighthouse steps are steep and require moderate fitness.

How to get there