**Time to Leave the Dock and Explore**

Many requests have been made seeking advice on where to go once you are in NZ.

You have come a long way so it is frustrating for we kiwis to see you sitting at the dock when you could be exploring our wonderful country. Yes, the water is colder but there are wonderful walks and beautiful scenery to enjoy. And if you are a fisher person then you will not go hungry.

The following tracks the trip Chameleon did last year – 20/21. It was a La Nina year so finding an anchorage on the east coast of North Island NZ was a challenge but it did not blow from the NE all the rime so we had an enjoyable 3 months. I like walking and kayaking. David likes getting rid of me so he can read in peace. So I have concentrated on telling you about walks. We are returning to Northland in this coming, hopefully neutral ENSO cycle season, so will add to the options next year. This is version 9/21. I may also include some Hauraki Gulf and Coromandel anchorages if that is of interest. Feel free to contact me with any further suggestions or comments. Enjoy, Patricia: [Ghradio@xtra.co.nz](mailto:Ghradio@xtra.co.nz)

To date our most used reference is the SpotX book and in fact you should have this on board as I will refer to it and not duplicate what you can find there. It gives guidance on where to anchor in the various wind conditions you will encounter. It also comments on fishing but they have another more detailed Fishing Guide

***Spot X Cruising New Zealand****, Author: Mike Pigneguy ISBN: 1-877374-69-5. Price $44.99*

We have also perused **NZ’s Northland Coast** by David Thatcher but it is pricy at $85 and we find the SpotX layout easier to navigate.

Chameleon lives at Gulf Harbour and it is hard to get to an anchorage in the north from Kawau in daylight unless the wind is perfect. As Great Barrier is a day sail away we generally start and return from there. We stopped at some places in both directions but cover them only once. I include cell phone coverage comments for both the Spark and Vodafone networks – when I remembered to check! For this trip we did not have an external antenna which will be rectified this coming season. Needless to say neither provider could be relied upon for the entire trip as they have carefully shared the coverage.

If you want to go north directly from the Whangarei area then start at 8. Mimiwhangata.

1. **Great Barrier Island**

**Ref Spot X page 69-85** I will only comment on specific walks as SpotX does a good job of the anchorages. Get the DOC publications from the office near the shop in Fitzroy or elsewhere.

Ref to DOC website <https://www.greatbarrier.co.nz/our-great-walks/>. There are walks everywhere so just get out and explore.

Cell phone coverage , and therefore internet, has been divided by Spark and Vodafone throughout the Island. Basically it is Spark in the south and Vodafone in the north! With a few weak anomalies. Starting from the north there is a Vodafone tower on a ridge on the Man of War side of Kaikoura Island. It gives good line of sight coverage to all the east side of Fitzroy Harbour , including Kaiarara Bay (particularly the north side) and the north end of Forestry Bay. The large bay on the south side of Man of War, Onerua bay – called Red Cliffs by locals, has good internet coverage as the tower is visible. Some of the east end of Kaikoura Island ie the west side of Fitzroy harbour, also has good Vodafone coverage. There is also had erratic to no Vodafone coverage on the east side at Whangapoua beach especially if your dinghy capsizes in the surf and your iphone sinks in the backpack! Down south at Tryphena, and from memory Whangaparapara, it is Spark country.

Starting from the north:

**1.1 Katherine Bay, Nimaru Bay** 36\* 07.895S and 175\* 20.95 no cell phone coverage

This is a pretty Bay and not highly frequented. We anchored on the shore side behind the mussel farm in Nimaru Bay and it was well protected from the 35Kts that developed on our trip from the mainland. There is a track from here to Abercrombie but the start is well disguised. Your challenge to find it! Good kayaking.

**1.2 Abercrombie Harbour, Nagel Cove** 36\* 08.456S and 175\* 19.273E Vodafone 2, Spark 0

Of interest is that in 1848 the 3 masted barqe, Stirlingshire, was launched in Nagel Cove which shows how extensive the kauri forests used to be on the Barrier. Nagel was very busy when we arrived so we anchored further along at what we call the Flying Fifteen anchorage. It has an upturned FF on pedestals. I have no idea what is behind this!

**1.3 Flying Fifteen anchorage** 36\* 08S and 175\* 19.66E 13m no Spark, good Vodafone

Do not swim anywhere at this end of Abercrombie from late afternoon as bronze whaler sharks inhabit the bay. Fisherman return and clean their catches so it is a good feeding time for all.

Good kayaking. (It took me about an hour to Karaka Bay). The farm is now owned by Chinese who are keen fishermen but not interested in the land. It is reverting to gorse and weeds but you can still climb to the top and check out ocean conditions. The track starts on the SW side by 4 pine trees and a small beach. When it branches take the left track towards the wind generator masts

**1.4 Karaka Bay**, 36\* 09.067S and 175\* 21.006E no cell phone coverage

There is an outdoor adventure camp here. Bush and farm tracks start to the left of the big corrugated iron building. Go up and over 2 gates and follow the signs from there. Remember the tide range when you tie to the dock at the Orama Settlement wharf.

* 1. **Fitzroy** 36\* 10.334S and 175\* 21.503E Vodafone 2, Spark 0 Fuel available at dock

We anchor away from the mooring area when it is busy and leave the dinghy at the dock. This anchorage is near Quoin Island. You can buy orange garbage bags, $5, and replenish supplies at the shop. No recycle except cardboard near the shop. Fuel at the big dock. The ferry makes regular visits during the summer season and many place a large grocery order from Countdown for delivery here. I find the shop has all our needs but for those with many mouths to feed this is a good option and sems to work well. There is a bar/restaurant up the road from the shop that opens when they feel like it.

Several must do walks in the area but DOC have infiltrated with their wood steps and walkway fetish.

Old Ladies Track – poorly named as it starts with an uphill climb up steps! Walk up the road from the shop, past the sometimes open restaurant and take the turn left to the tracks before road turns right. This track can be as long or as short as you like. It is attractive as it skirts the river and is through lovely bush.

The Redfern Loop track has one of the best stands of bush in the area but really is no longer a loop as the half that used to go through farm land is now a gravelled road. Sadly the beautiful bush part has a lot of wooden steps and walkways but is still outstanding. The surprise at the top end is a kick. A swing bridge takes you to the top of a kauri tree! We get to the start by taking the dinghy across to the dock opposite the Fitzroy dock. Tie out of the road and walk up past the two lawns of the Glenfern motel and follow the signs. Views from the top are good.

Other walks from here are covered in the DOC brochures. The Bridle track to a waterfall starts across the road from the shop and is pleasant.

**1.6 Kaikoura Island** divides Abercrombie and Fitzroy Harbour/Man of War and has a great walk between Bradshaw Cove on the north side to the dock on the Man of war passage south side. It is a solid 2 hours strenuous walk but interesting. The airfield is at the top and is used! The very much longer perimeter walk is not recommended as the track is not well maintained. The Vodafone tower is on the ridge north of Man of War so if you can see it you will have good coverage! Bradshaw Cove has poor holding on a rubbly bottom so not good in gale force winds.

**1.7 Kaiaraara Bay**

This huge bay has room for all and is where you will anchor to walk to the summit of Mt Hobson on the Kaiaraara track. You will only do this once as there has been an infestation of wooden steps and paths! Beautifully done but not as pleasant to walk on as soft soil. Especially when there is over 1000 of them! Much of the historic parts of the trip have been destroyed by storms so there is not much left of the kauri damns but the view from the top is fantastic and you can make a loop walk out of it if you have time and energy. Again , because of the tides it is better to have someone drop you off.

Good internet in this bay.

**1.8 Smokehouse Bay** 36\* 12.188S and 175\* 19.975E

This is a very social and popular anchorage so these coordinates are a short way along the coast. There is good anchoring all around so don’t feel you have to immerse yourself in the mob. If you want to stretch your legs go up through the scraggy bush past the outhouse to the road. Turn left if you want to walk to the Barrier Gold honey place. Only manuka and kanuka to see on the walk so maybe a kayak would be nicer. Don’t forget to gather more firewood if you use some for heating the wash water.

**1.9 Red Cliffs/ Oneura Bay**

This bay is just west of Smokehouse and is a good anchorage in heavy weather. There is a track on the left side of the beach which goes to the road at the top but remember to make notes for the return trip. Sharks are plentiful in the late afternoon.

**2.1 Whangaparapara Harbour**

There is good walking from here. We usually anchor in what they call Graveyard Bay, tucked in on the left just inside the entrance. The walks start at the end of the Bay. Once you set off take the first uphill track on your left. It is short but has a wonderful selection of native trees before you get to the top. Then on your return to the bottom you can carry on and find all the other longer tracks. Fuel at dock.

**3.1 Tryphena Harbour**. Not much of interest here but you could get pushed here with winds on your trip across from the mainland. The harbour is full of buoys so it takes some skill when dropping your anchor. Fuel at the dock I am told.

**4.1 Arid/Rakitu island 36\* 7.1s AND 175\* 29.5e**

This is a small beautiful cove on an island to the east of the northern side of Great Barrier. No dogs ashore. It is DOC owned and there is a great walk to the other side through farm land. Interesting kayaking as there are craggy caves around the cove. Busy during school holidays and no good in north quadrant winds.

**8.1 Mimiwhangata** 35\* 25.862 and 174\* 25.107E 4.7m Vodafone 2-3, Spark 2

We sailed in the ebbing tide from Great Barrier and had a positive current pushing us into the Mokes. Fishing would be great based on the bird life and bait balls but we have a slow boat so pressed on.

The above anchorage is tucked in around the corner and is out of the swell that can come in. A short kayak ashore to the start of a couple of good walks over the farm land. The beach disappears at high tide so better to take a dinghy to the main land. The beautiful long beach is often surfy so we take the dinghy around past the little head land to the next bay where there is a DOC camping site. Just walk back the few minutes over the headland track to walk the beautiful beach. The oyster catchers are very protective of their young and will dive at you which is scary given their long red beaks. The lookout walk, 40m, is at the far end of the DOC beach.

If the swell gets too uncomfortable move to:

**8.2 Whangaruru** 35\* 21.332S and 174\* 20.527 6m Spark 4 Vodafone 2

There are dozens of anchoring options. This one is on the eastern side of the little island.

There is a long isthmus and so you will be taking your dinghy to shore, to walk across to Bland Bay and the beautiful beach walk. Half tide to half tide going high. We go to the far right side with the dinghy and tie to a handy tree, just to the right of a small private slip. Walk about 50m back and take the walkway to the road. Cross over and take the track to the beach. You cannot walk through the camp ground, nor the maori land on the other side of the road. There is another entrance at the far end of the camp ground, sign posted as the CD station. The camp shop has a few basic food needs, like ice cream.

**8.3 Whangamumu** 35\* 14.996S and 174\* 17.825E 5.8m no to poor Vodafone and Spark

This attractive historical anchorage is by the old whaling station, where you can walk up to the waterfall. The track over to the Bay of Islands is at the end of the bay. After the steep daunting trek up you are rewarded with a lovely view of the anchorage and then bush walks to either Cape Brett (2.5hours), or over to the Bay of Islands. Good fishing, and dolphins visit often.

**8.4 Kauri Cliffs** 35\* 03.635S and 173\* 55.832E 4m no cell phone until you walk up the hill or go a mile out.

This is a truly beautiful cove. Our favourite but it is not often calm enough to stay here.

A very sandy beach and you can walk around it behind the rocks to get further along on the northern side. (Where there are a couple of comfortable private rocks for hair cutting)! You are surrounded by sand, trees of varying shades of green from Norfolk pines to poplars and other exotics, as well as pohutakawas, flaxes, and cabbage trees. There is a fresh water stream. You cannot see the resort due to the steep cliffs. A short walk up goes to a seat for a view of the anchorage but if you continue it just goes up, and up, and up ,…until finally you get to a big garage store room facility and a walkway to a kauri grove and the conifer grove and resort. This walk up the road is not recommended as the gravel is very sharp and ruins your sneaker soles. Interesting kayaking and good diving on both the reefs on the side.

**8.5 Opounui Cove** 35\*00.742S and 173\* 53.612 6m Vodafone 4 and Spark 1

A pretty short stop as good protection from NE-E winds. A steep gravel beach to private farm land. Another dotterel nesting sign but this seems to be a ploy to keep you away as we saw none here or at Kauri Cliffs. Lots of native trees.

**8.6 Mahinepua Bay** 34\* 59.920S and 173\* 51.133E 5.5m Vodafone 4, Spark 1

This is a long shallow bay and this anchorage is quite a way out. It is by the small motus which are good for kayaking interest. A popular anchorage but too busy for us.

**CHART NOTE : Cavalli Passage a 1:20,000 NZ5121 is useful.**

**8.7 Cavalli Islands, WAIITI Bay, Motukawanui Bay, 35\*00.447S and 173\*55.932E**

This is another favourite spot as the walk from one end of the island to the other is great. One of my favourites. DOC have ruined many walks by erecting wooden stairs and walkways which make them most unpleasant. This track, now maintained and free of gorse, is just a natural narrow dirt track with vistas on both sides of the island to enjoy. Rollers crashing on the rocks on one side and the northland coast on the other. This anchorage can get fairly crowed in the season but if the weather is settled the little islands to the north are worth a visit. Good kayaking and fishing. And a short trip to Whangaroa if the wind direction changes.

**8.8 Whangaroa**

8.8.1 Water Buoy anchorage, Pararako Bay 35\* 01.175S and 173\* 48.115E no cell phone but move across the bay to 8.8.2

8.8.2 Opposite water buoy, Pararako Bay 5.1m 35\*01.406 and 173\* 45.335S Vodafone 2, Spark 3-4

8.8.3 Fishing Club 5.1m 35\* 02.852S and 173\* 44.482E S5 V2

8.8.4 Waitapu Bay 35\* 02.34S and 173\* 45.343E 5.8m

8.8.5 Duke’s Nose, Pekapeka Bay in Rere Bay 35\* 00.61S and 173\* 43.82E

Whangaroa Harbour has something for everyone. Except food supplies. No matter what the wind direction or strength you can find a good spot to anchor and there is plenty of room.

The **water buoy** is a god send. Go down the second bay on the left from the entrance and find it on the left side. For $10 you can fill your tanks and the water is good. Do not waste it for boat cleaning! Even with a watermaker it is good to be able to catch up on laundry.

There is a **fuel dock** prior to the Fishing Club. Prices are good. In fact the best in Northland. Strong winds will challenge your boat docking skills.

The Fishing Club has basic meals for a cook’s night off. The dinghy dock is beside it. Go for the pizzas. Lovely to sit and have a cold beer with friends.

There is a much appreciated and well managed **refuse and recycle centre** beside the fishing club and blue bags can be purchased at the Club. This is the only convenient refuse place so make good use of it.

Now the walks. Tie off at the dinghy dock at the fishing club and walk back along the road. You will see a sign on the right to St Pauls peak. It does not take long, about 30min, and is worth it for the view down the harbour. Don’t be put off by the chain near the top. It is good practise for the Duke’s Walk!

My favourite walk is up the Duke’s Nose. Access is from the first bay on the right as you enter the harbour. Go right down to the end on the left and find a spot. Best to have someone deliver you as there is not much room for dinghies by the steps. This walk is not for the faint hearted as near the end there is a lengthy vertical climb up a pole. Straddle it and it is easier than it looks. Spectacular views from the level top out towards the ocean and over the harbour. This 40min climb is not to be missed.

**9. 1 Takerau Bay** 34\* 59.574S and 173\* 33.314E 8m Spark 1 Vodafone 0

This pretty bay is just south of the entrance to Mangonui. More of a day anchorage as the holding is not great and it can be swelly. Nice for a kayak and a walk ashore. No dogs allowed on the beach.

**10 Mangonui**

10.1 Butler Point 34\* 59.181S and 173\* 32.327 E 5m Spark 4, Vodafone 1-2

This spot happens to be on a buoy near Butler Point and we stayed through a sub tropical low bringing 55kts.

This is a fishing port and now a tourist centre. It is an attractive town to wander through with two main attractions for us - the well stocked 4 Square supermarket right on the water, and the fish and chips at the local pub. (NB. Not the more famous fish and chip place). For ladies there is a very nice dress shop, Antonetta’s, south along the waterfront road. A short time at the commercial dock is OK for the dinghy. The whaling museum at Butler Point is worth a visit, as is a walk through their grounds. The Mangonui Cruising Club has a gathering on Friday nights and welcome visiting cruisers to share their delicious meal options. You need to select your meal by text the day before.

It is interesting to watch the fishing boats loading with ice then returning with their catch. Many of the big fishing boats are away during the summer so if you contact the very obliging port captain, who runs a local motel, there maybe a buoy available for a short stay. Contact Steve on 021 02202009

**11. Matai Bay, Karikari Peninsula** 34\* 49.482S and 173\* 24.730E ref SpotX page 30

Another popular anchorage with a long sandy beach. Sadly for us the swell made it untenable so we will return when there is no La Nina. The Karikari Peninsula was difficult to explore during a La Nina year. Next year we hope to expand this section!

**12.1 Waipapa Bay, Karikari Peninsula** 34\* 47.713S and 173\* 23.718E 6.5m Vodafone 1, Spark 1

The cliffs heading up to Cape Karikari are spectacular. Orange sandy soil and sparse vegetation make the landscape very different from other parts of NZ.

We went around the top and tucked into the north eastern side between two rocky outcrops for protection from the swell. The rocky shoreline seems to be loaded with paua judging by the local maori harvesters. I think this is all maori land but you could not see the marai which probably is in a more sheltered spot inland. I went for a walk and there are many 4WD tracks but I never did find the light house.

We moved into the bay to escape the swell and anchored at :

12.2 Maraewhiti. 34\* 48.928S and 173\* 23.245E.

Not a place to leave the boat unattended if you get my meaning. We moved away from what looked like the area dump to a spot by the luxurious

12.3 Carrington Estate Winery. 34\* 50.095S and 173\* 22.883E

**13.1 Tom Bowling Bay** 34\* 24.949S and 172\* 58.703E 12m no cell signal at all

By now you are probably wondering what on earth we are doing up this part of the world. We would not recommend going up this far unless you are on your way around the top to go down the west coast. Or you just want to mark it off the bucket list. Check the weather and the currents. The Navy tables are needed here as the currents are strong. You do not want to be driven onto the scenic de Surville cliffs. We stayed 3 days and never got ashore. 3m waves suit neither kayak nor dinghy!. But we were comfortable on board into the wind. And the trip up and back provided entertainment from dolphins and whales.

**14 Bay of Islands**

14.1 Paradise Bay, Urupukapuka 35\* 13.132S and 174\* 13.5 E V 0-1, S4-5

14.2 Russel Yacht Club 35\* 16.411S and 174\* 07.570E Vodafone 1, Spark 4

14.3 Orokawa Bay 35\* 15.261S and 174\* 11.998E V1-2, S 4-5 a good place to shelter in miserable weather

This area needs no introduction and is well known to cruisers who arrive here. We like Urupukapuka for the different walks and the attraction of the restaurant/bar where a cold beer and good meal are appreciated as a reward. Download the map from the DOC web site.

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/northland/places/urupukapuka-island-recreation-reserve/?tab-id=50578>

The mooring field at the Russel Yacht Club is annoyingly long and large but after the long dinghy ride to the dock you have a short walk to town for resupplies. There is no Uber service in Russel and only one taxi so keep that in mind if you are not a weight lifter. If you anchor at Russel township you can take your dinghy closest to the town side of the commercial dock for a short stay. A fine dining experience at the Duke of Marlborough Hotel is a must. There is an interesting gift shop with kiwiana and other items of high quality. The ferry service to Pahia is frequent if you need any banking or just want to wander around. There is a big supermarket in Pahia but a long walk unless a bus back to Opua has been organised.

**15 Kawau Island ,**

**15.1** Bon Accord Harbour36\* 25.392S and 174\* 50.311E 5.8m V5 S5 wow, back in civilization

We normally anchor at Schoolhouse Bay which has the advantage of being close to the dock. There are a several great walks from this side. The only downside is that the ferries come in and out and cause a bit of a wake. This time we went further down Bon Accord Harbour.

Walk up the road from the Schoolhouse bay dock and try and find the track that leads off to the left and goes up along the stream. It is not marked but is before the road gets steeper and makes a right hand turn. This takes you off the road which is dusty in the summer time. When you get to the end of this track go left and take the turn off to the copper mine. If you started between the half tides going low you will be able to walk around the shore from the copper mine and go up another track. A loop walk is always more interesting. There are several walking options on the island. The Mansion House walk is pleasant too and sometimes the café is open for refreshments.

The Yacht Club has a good restaurant/bar so is a good place to meet at the end of the day. Basic food stuffs are available at the shop. Fuel and water are available from the easy access dock. Dinghys are best left at the RNZYC dock a little further on near the Lidgard House.

**16 Maharangi Harbour** 36\* 28.297S and 174\* 43. 474E 4.8m Vodafone 3, Spark 3-5

This is a huge protected harbour and many boats moor here for the winter. The above anchorage is well into the bay near Grant Island and reduces the dinghy distance to Warkworth which is 4.2nm up the river. This is a great trip but plan to go up with the tide and return with the ebb. And follow the buoys! NZ is in IALA A . The first red buoy is just past Grant Island. After the next red buoy ignore the green buoys around this area as they mark an oyster farm. You will then see a green triangle so hang a left and enjoy the scenery up the well marked river. There are mangroves, native bush, pine trees on the hills, an old cement works with boats on the hard, and nearing Warkworth you will see Robertson Boat Yard. At Warkworth there is a long area of dock so no trouble finding a place near the far end for your dinghy. Warkworth is an attractive town to walk around and apart from no Jaycar (there is a Noel Leeming) you will find anything you need. Cafes seem to specialize on pies so you will not go hungry. Restaurant reviews I think are written by family! There are two supermarkets but the gas station is a bit of a hike up to the main road if you need gasoline. There is a Hunting and Fishing and a good lingerie shop. A PaperPlus and several pharmacies also make Warkworth a great spot for stocking up easily. And the locals are friendly and helpful completing the needs for a very enjoyable place to visit.

Back in Maharangi we found several good walks. Check the tides, which can be up to 3m, before you leave your dinghy at the dock as it dries out at low tide. From the dock, cross the car park and head towards the bay entrance past the Scott House. You can walk around what is an island at low tide. If you go up the road about half a k from the car park you can take the track on the right. Go right at the top then drop left on a track that ends up at Scott House.

If instead of taking this track you stay on Ridge Rd you will eventually see a steep track going down to the bay at #59. You can go left to the car park or to the right.

Auckland Anniversary weekend at the end of January is a good time to visit this harbour as it hosts the largest regatta of classic boats in the country.