

Cathedral Caves

Digging deeper...

The same process of erosion by the sea that formed the Cathedral Caves formed another of the Catlins' many tourist attractions, Jack's Blowhole. This blowhole is around 100m from the sea, 55m deep and has an opening measuring 140m by 70m. It performs best with big swells at high tide.

X *X marks the spot*

Cathedral Caves are close to the southern tip of Otago in the Catlins Ward of the Clutha District Council.

At the northern end of Waipati Beach on the Catlins coast are some massive caves, including one more than 30m high! These are the Cathedral Caves and were given their name by Dr T M Hocken in 1896 because of their cathedral-like shape. His party even tried out the cave's acoustics with whistling and singing while exploring the caves.

These caves are a must visit on your tour through the Catlins. However, access to the caves is limited to the one or two hours either side of low tide, so plan ahead carefully! An access road of around 2km ends in a carpark from which a track leads down to Waipati Beach. This is a private road and a small fee is charged at the carpark.

Once on the beach head left to find the caves. The caves have been formed by marine erosion, the action of the sea on the land. The two largest caves are joined in a V formation so you can walk in one and come out the other.

There is much more to do here than just venture into the caves. Waipati Beach is a lovely spot for a picnic or some beach cricket on a nice summer's day. The whole area is set amongst impressive native bush. A kilometre south of the Cathedral Caves turn-off an unsealed road also leads to a track to the superb McLean Falls, perhaps the most stunning of the Catlins' numerous waterfalls.



Looking out from inside one of the large caves



Walking along Waipati Beach towards the caves



Photo: Stephen Jaquary

Photo: Stephen Jaquary

Photo: Stephen Jaquary