

POUNAMU PATHWAY

JOURNEY TO A LAND OF LEGENDS

Pounamu Pathway - The Museum of Kawatiri: Wētā Workshop Collaboration Celebrates Buller District Locals and History

The Coaltown Museum, located in Westport, has undergone a significant update and is proud to unveil its new identity as The Museum of Kawatiri, the second experience centre to open along the Pounamu Pathway. Promising an enriched journey through the cultural and historical treasures of the region, the transformation highlights the collaborative efforts of Pounamu Pathway and The Museum of Kawatiri Trust alongside the creative brilliance of Wētā Workshop.

The Pounamu Pathway will consist of four interconnected experience centres — Māwhera (Greymouth), Awarua (Haast), Kawatiri (Westport) and Hokitika — each serving as a gateway to captivating and emotive visitor experiences. The Māwhera Pā was the first to open in December last year showcasing a rich Māori culture experience.

“The Pounamu Pathway team and The Museum of Kawatiri Trust’s Board have been working closely together to ensure the revitalisation of the museum celebrates the history and endeavour of the people of Buller District. We can’t wait to share this with everyone,” says Dan Maloney, Chair of the Trust.

The Museum of Kawatiri is comprised of four captivating experiences: Wealth of the Land, Early Settlement, Ecstasy of Gold, and People Pou. Each of these exhibits is truly extraordinary, thanks to the remarkable craftsmanship and dedication of Wētā Workshop.

Visitors will learn about the geological (and galactic) origins of three highly prized and precious elements, each shaping the face and history of Kawatiri: coal, gold, and pounamu, in Wealth of the Land.

Early Settlement gives visitors first-hand access to real taonga from the once-in-a-lifetime archaeological discovery found at Carters Beach. In this discovery, archaeologists uncovered tools and treasures from one of the earliest known migrations of Polynesian settlers to Te Tai o Poutini (the West Coast of New Zealand).

Through Ecstasy of Gold, visitors will also learn about the gold rush and the influx of European migrants seeking fortune in the West Coast, discovering stories of risk and reward.

Visitors will hear the first-hand stories of real citizens of the Buller District, telling stories about how the past contributes to their lives today, through the People Pou. Locals share highly personal and emotional stories, about their pride and whakapapa (genealogy).

“Meeting some of the locals and capturing their stories for the People Pou has been really rewarding. Their warmth, authenticity, and willingness to share, highlights the spirit of the people of the Buller District,” said Jason Aldous of Wētā Workshop.

The Museum of Kawatiri official opening is scheduled for Wednesday 31 January and will open to the public on Thursday 1 February.

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About the Pounamu Pathway

The Pounamu Pathway is a groundbreaking tourism initiative on New Zealand's West Coast, celebrating the region's cultural, historical, and natural heritage. Through immersive storytelling and world-first experiences, it offers visitors a once-in-a-lifetime journey through the rich traditions and history of Aotearoa and the people of Poutini Ngāi Tahu. The first of the visitor experiences, the Māwhera Pā, Greymouth, which showcases local Māori cultural stories, opened in December 2023.

About Wētā Workshop

Wētā Workshop brings imaginary worlds to life by delivering concept design, physical effects, collectables, immersive visitor experiences and games to the world's entertainment and creative industries.

Established by Richard Taylor and Tania Rodger in 1987, they are best known for their screen work on The Lord of the Rings trilogy, Avatar, and Dune, their immersive visitor experiences, Gallipoli: The Scale of our War, Expo 2020 Dubai's Mobility Pavilion and Wētā Workshop Unleashed. Based in Wellington, New Zealand, Wētā Workshop's ground-breaking work has earned them multiple international awards. Their expertise brings cinematic magic to the Pounamu Pathway, making it a truly immersive experience.



