

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN RECREATIONAL CYCLING CLUB – TOUR OF NEW ZEALAND FEB 2016

This Review is both a report and a kit-set for others to follow

There are many hyperlinks to follow and highlights in red are selected 'must dos'

SARCC Tour of North Island New Zealand 19th February to 5th March 2016:

SUMMATION:

Recreational, Fun, Challenging and overall a highly successful Tour,

THE MODEL:

- Invite 36 active Cyclists on a DIY Cycling Tour in NZ
 - (Participants must be compatible DIY team players).
- Participants **Hire Bikes** and we hire luggage/**Bike Trailers** ([Natural High](#))
 - (Or participants bring their own Bike).
- Group **Hire Three Minibuses** ([Botany Hire Auckland](#))
 - (We need good volunteer Drivers).
- Group Book Accommodation as below
 - (Enable two per room... approximately 50% couples)
- We have as many **DIY group kitty meals** as facilities allow
 - (We need good volunteer Cooks)
- Participants do their own Airline bookings - not inclusive in Tour price
 - (It is not feasible to block book each person has different requirements.)



FINANCE:

The tour price was \$1100 per person, great value for money for all participants - not even a ¼ of the cost of a Commercial Tour. A breakeven was achieved albeit we need to do better with currency exchange our Australian Banks not only charge \$28 per transaction they paid at best AUD100 = NZD1.02 when the official rate was NZD1.07. We have been referred to City Bank as a lower cost currency exchange operator.

ACCOMMODATION:

[Manukau](#): Not available, now closed– sold for housing. Average but room allocation clumsy due to cabins booked available and changed without notice. Excellent staff a good choice because of its ideal close location to Auckland Airport but sadly the Manukau Accommodation Park is closed.

[Miranda](#): **A good choice.** Location a little too far from Hauraki rail trail, until Hauraki trail extends from Kopu to Miranda. Clean basic with great group kitchen/dining facility, comfy warm-hot pool. Cabins a little remote from lodge, quality ablutions block, and lodge rooms adequate for 2 (would be crowded for 5).

[Rotorua Thermal](#): Reluctantly not a good choice. Price good for region, Great location, tired Accommodation Park, tidy but dated cabins, inflexible administration – 'don't turn up early and you must park minibuses 50m away from cabins'. Old but free thermal pools. Look for another because Rotorua City is a must, [Eat Street dining el fresco](#) is a **vibrant essential visit**. Love Fat Dog Café iced coffee.

[Snowy Waters Lodge Raetihi](#): **This accommodation is fantastic, a real gem.** The ambiance, the superb kitchen, comfortable bedrooms, great dining room and views are all enhanced by the exuberance of the proprietor, Sandy and her staff. This Lodge promotes camaraderie and offers many interesting additions e.g. a drying room, a pet goat, your own car park but most of all a glorious atmosphere.

[Taupo](#): Lacks character/atmosphere but made up for by expensive **flamboyance and panache**. No obvious group meeting place. Salubrious comfort out of town and near trails to Huka falls. The town has fantastic lake front dining and every shop you ever need including 12 bike shops.

[Epworth](#): **Another gem.** This is a very large church camp in excellent remote surroundings and in superb condition. Rooms are great, beds a bit firm but comfortable enough. Ingrid the caretaker/manager gave us a very warm welcome. You need to hire bed linen and preferably bring your own towel. Again a superb Kitchen dining, meeting hall and more than adequate parking. We were met by our fantastic host Ingrid and settled easily into the great camaraderie inducing atmosphere of the tranquil camp

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THE RIDES



Friday 19th Feb 2016 Auckland, Puketutu Island, we needed a volunteer to lead a ride while final preparations for the tour were put in place. Helen (Thanks) led a suburbs ride through Manukau and Mangere to Puketutu Island. A great 40km urban ride with lunch on the Island across the causeway albeit a giant [wastewater disposal project](#) it is beautiful and tranquil.

Saturday 20th Feb 2016 Auckland **Tamaki Drive**, this was a planned ride but we needed a leader due to Eric's tour commitments again; thanks Helen. Train and bikes from [Manukau and Homai](#) and met at [Britomart](#) (central Auckland City). The ride was the bike trail along the beautiful Auckland Harbour Foreshore from Britomart turning off at Long Drive St Heliers and weaving through South Auckland suburbs back to Manukau a distance of 32km



Auckland Coastal Path



Sunday 21st Feb 2016 Coromandel; we loaded at 8am onto the [360 Fullers Ferry](#) from Auckland to **Coromandel**, arriving at 10.45am with Bicycles. The Minibuses were driven to Hannaford's Wharf by volunteers (a note of caution - vehicle pickup/drop off at Hannaford's wharf Coromandel is difficult due to no adequate parking facility at the wharf). We divided into two rides:

The short ride was Hannaford's Wharf to Coromandel Town 11km, , the ride was barely successful due to returning to minibuses at 1330 (a communication glitch by Eric) the minibus was meant to leave at 1500 not arrive at Thames at 1500. Oh well ☺ it all worked out. The Longer ride was Hannaford's wharf to Thames on the coastal road 52km with two 200 metre climbs in the first 16 km, thereafter a glorious coastal ride with native bush and waters lapping close to the road. A note of caution this is a busy road with minimal shoulder and single file is the only safe way. The ride was brilliant and successful.

Monday 22nd 2016 Hauraki Rail Trail. For recreation this is one of the best. We dropped 5 riders at Kopu; their task was to ride to Waihi to bring three minibuses back. The remaining Riders drove to Waihi and rode through the [Bush Clad Karagahake Gorge](#) to lunch at [Paeroa](#) then on through quiet country side to Kopu. The trail is a little undulating for the first 5km then settles to flat for the remaining journey. This is a not to be missed recreational ride.



Tuesday 23rd Feb 2016. This day was planned to offer a ride on the [Moto Trails](#) but after consideration of the 450km 6 hour journey to and from, the 42km ride it was abandoned. We played in Rotorua instead. Would we ride Moto another time – Yes?

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Wednesday 24th Feb 2016 [Te Ara Ahi](#), In Maori means - **The Path of Fire**, yes it lived up to its reputation we rode it both ways from Rotorua to Waikite Valley team 2 and team 1 Waikite to Rotorua. Between the 48km trail heads at Rotorua and the Waikite Valley Thermal Pools, this cycle trail takes riders to four significant geothermal fields: Whakarewarewa, Waimangu Volcanic Valley, Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland and Waikite Valley Thermal Springs. A range of amenities such as cafés, toilets and we stripped down to underwear to soak in the **Hot pools of Kerosene Creek**! The trail is mostly sealed but for grade 3 unsealed bush single track trail for 10km to Kerosene Creek and on to Waiotapu Hotel then back to sealed road. A challenge worth the effort – immensely satisfying ride.

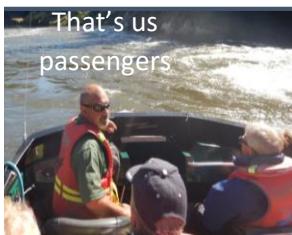


Thursday 25th Feb 2016 Whakapapa just a simple but **exhilarating downhill off a Volcano**. The Ski Field car park is 1618M up the east side of Mt Ruapehu and you ride at your own pace down to National Park at 818M in 22.3Km. We regrouped at Schnapps Tavern it's a red building with a large Kiwi Wooden Sculpture out front on the corner of SH4 and Findlay Street.

Friday 26th Feb 2016... Bridge to Nowhere – we changed dates to avoid any inclement weather and you wouldn't ride this track in any rain. The **Bridge to Nowhere Track** is an incredible ride that includes a huge range track styles, stunning scenery and New Zealand bush. It's one of the best 'adventure rides' on the North Island and a must for all mountain biking enthusiasts.

To get to the start of the Mangapurua Track we had a driver drop us to the easy to find start. Be prepared with an emergency kit, never ride alone and consider bringing along a Spot Tracker in case of emergency. From the signposted start of the [Mangapurua Track](#), we had a well-graded but challenging climb. Over the course of about 4 kms, you'll climb just about 300 metres on a 4 wheel drive farm track - we found our granny gear and stopped every now and then to look back at the mountain views behind. From the Mangapurua Trig the track literally flies down into the valley for about 7 kilometers before it flattens out and meanders down Mangapurua Stream along the valley floor for a further 20 kilometers crossing countless swing bridges. Finally travelling along the Valley floor the Bridge to Nowhere quite literally appears from nowhere. You can expect to complete the Mangapurua Track to the Bridge in 4 to 6 hours - including many stops along the way. The track is nearly 100% rideable apart from the dozen or so swing bridges; it is still [a bit technical](#) in some downhill parts and some of the exposed sections where the track crosses bluffs. You can expect to hop off your bike a couple times to cross these bluffs. A short 3km track takes you from the Bridge down to the Mangapurua Landing on the edges of the Whanganui River.

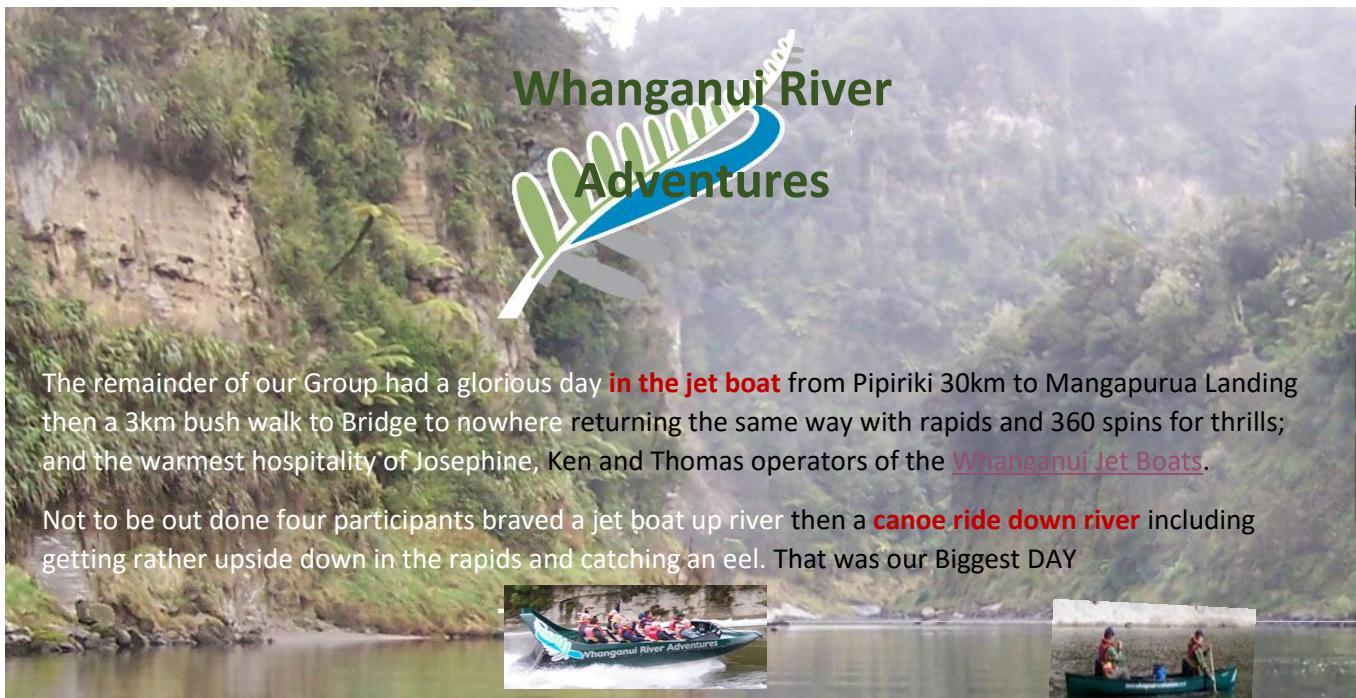
Ken of [Whanganui Jet Boats](#) picked us up from Mangapurua Landing and took us on a fantastic adventure 30km down river to [Pipiriki](#) where we organized our Minibus to take us 28km home to Raetihi. What an adventure WOW!



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The remainder of our Group had a glorious day **in the jet boat** from Pipiriki 30km to Mangapurua Landing then a 3km bush walk to Bridge to nowhere returning the same way with rapids and 360 spins for thrills; and the warmest hospitality of Josephine, Ken and Thomas operators of the [Whanganui Jet Boats](#).

Not to be out done four participants braved a jet boat up river then a **canoe ride down river** including getting rather upside down in the rapids and catching an eel. That was our Biggest DAY



Saturday 27th Feb 2016... We Drove 30km up to Turoa at 1625M. We all disembarked in a cold thick cloud and **rode down 1000M** on a sealed road 16km to Ohakune, the cloud parted at 100M down and the speeds became faster – WOW – the thrill and the concentration was intoxicating. To cap it off we rode through the finish line at Ohakune to cheers and cameras... we had interrupted a MTB race round the base of the Mountain and crossed the line in first place – oh well. Great coffee break at OCR Café Ohakune.

Then off to ride the [Old Coach Road Ohakune to Horopito](#) –

(I recommend ride Horopito to Ohakune next time) the views of the old viaduct and the bush make the bumpy cobble stone track bearable. Albeit the climbs are not long nor too steep the surface is far from smooth. We had lunch at [Hapuawhenua Viaduct](#) and were lucky to see a freight train cross the new viaduct – literally a real hoot.

Sunday 28th Feb 2016 **Whanganui River Road** is a quiet sealed 62km country road ride that has climbs at each end and tolerable undulations alongside the very scenic river; a pleasure to ride. With a bonus coffee shop “to-die-for” midway. Marlene Ranginui converts haere mai (welcome) into a warm and pleasant revival with her tranquillity and a shiny new espresso coffee machine. **The Matahiwi Gallery** with the old river Queen Steam Boat outside the historic former single room wooden school can seat 20 people, inside and outside, and is the only cafe between Pipiriki and Upokongaro... Don’t miss it.

Monday 1st March 2016... Taupo here we come, sadly our only inclement day so we opted not to ride the SH1 from Motuoapa through the forestry roads from Hatepe then linking the Lions trail at five mile bay to Taupo. Instead we unloaded at the Camp walked the Taupo City and then to **Huka Falls** before **dining al fresco** and watching a stunning sunset over the lake and volcanos.



‘Gorillas in the mist’ at 1600M ready for 16km High speed Ride down to Ohakune at 600M – WOW!

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Tuesday 2nd March 2016... Two Taupo events - a ride to **Huka Falls, Craters of the Moon, Wairakei Thermal Power Station and culminating at Aratiatia Dam** just as the sensational flood gates were opened. The ride back was down the Riverside Trail - in all a solid test of trails and hills made endurable by stunning events and scenery.



Huka Falls Taupo



Aratiatia Dam water release

The alternative ride was a drive to Kinlock and ride the fantastic **Great Lake Trails**. [The W2K Trail](#) is one of the Great Lake Trail's northern sections, and offers access to explore the Whangamata Bay headland. The W2K trail climbs steadily up through native bush and onto the headland, providing great views across the lake and back down into Kinlock. We took the option to ride the 9.5 kilometer Headland loop trail – don't miss that loop, it is spectacular. The ride back down to Kinlock is superb – you could be horizontal on the inward bends and nervous on the outward turns i.e. a real adrenalin rush.

Wednesday 3rd March 2016... Waikato River Trails a short taste of a long trail. We located [Jim Barnett Reserve](#) a beautiful **miniature forest** in a farm covered landscape. After unloading we rode towards Arapuni (at half way we had encouraging loud music broadcast from our support vehicle "Simply the Best") and then a Coffee at the [cute Rhubarb Café](#). The [Jones Landing short](#) trail can be avoided by riding the road. Jones landing tail is a walking trail complete with stairs. After a good break we road over the **Arapuni Dam Giant Swing Bridge** and on through undulating green pastures to [Epworth..](#)

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Thursday 4th March 2016... Our last days ride how did that come so quickly. The plan was to drive two vehicles forward to the start of [Te Awa Trail](#) at Meadow View Lane, Horotiu (it was a little hard to find). Half of us were to ride back to Lake Karapiro where the others started. **Te Awa Trail** is fantastic along the Waikato River through Hamilton to the Hamilton Gardens – then oops you find your own road to Cambridge. We did - going east through the Hamilton Gardens Right Howell Ave, Right Geoffrey Pl, Through Hammond Park. Down a flight of stairs, Left follow the river Tail coming out at Riverlea Rd. Follow Riverlea North to SH1 turn right use the footpath to Newell Rd. Follow Newell Rd, Turn Right with care onto Airport Rd, Left into Pencarrow Rd, Right into Hooker Rd, Across SH1 into Racecourse Rd, Right into Peake Rd, Right Carefully across SH1 and re-join the Te Awa Trail at the **Avantidrome**... a GPS helps. Te Awa Trust, please finish the Trail or at least install markers on the back road alternative. Regardless of the missing middle section Te Awa is a great trail in the making.

The penultimate evening was our traditional prize Night' It was a great evening with the amusement of the observed significant events throughout a very successful tour and participants selecting a random collection of prizes.

Thanks to all who made this Tour Memorable your team spirit and camaraderie is what generates the pleasure and the recreation.

For me it's the reward of seeing the smiles and satisfaction of knowing you all enjoyed the Tour.

Eric Chaney
President SARCC
NZ Tour Coordinator