WHOSE KNEES ARE THESE?
They can be yours this summer as Mt Ruapehu makes snow at the Top o’ The Bruce, Whakapapa, for summer snow play. Photo: David Holzapfel.

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Te Ara Mangawhero decision by February

A decision on whether the Te Ara Mangawhero – the proposed combined cycle and walking trail from Turoa to Ohakune – will be allowed is yet to be made, with February the possible end date.

To allow the trail, along with one out to Horopito to link up with the northern end of the Ohakune Old Coach Road, to be built, a change to the Tongariro National Park Management Plan is needed.

A proposed Plan change is with the New Zealand Conservation Authority and will then go to the Minister of Conservation for comment.

“We are still working through the stages of the process,” explained operations manager Bhrent Guy.

“An edit of the proposed policies has been made by the Conservation Authority and, from the last Conservation Board meeting, they have indicated their support for the proposed changes and asked for a couple of points of clarification.”

“It will then be sent to the Minister for comment and we are looking to have a final decision to announce in February next year [2018].”

Good reason

The groups involved are all champing at the bit to get started but most realise there is good reason why the Department of Conservation has rules around new developments in a National Park, especially a Dual World Heritage Park such as Tongariro.

Turn to Page 6

The proposed shared trails on the southern slopes of Mt Ruapehu.
Keen to frolic in a little North Island snow on Boxing Day?

For the first time ever, a summer sled ride is on offer at the Top o’ the Bruce, Whakapapa, until 29 April thanks to installation of one of the world’s most exciting advances in snow making technology.

Ahead of the 2017 ski season Ruapehu Alpine Lifts (RAL) installed New Zealand’s only TechnoAlpin SF210 all-weather Snowfactory machine.

RAL marketing manager Matt McIvor said he constantly hears from guests who have only experienced Whakapapa in winter, that the volcanic landscape in summer really surprises them.

“While the winter ski season has finished there is still plenty to do up here.”

With the ability to produce 210 cubic meters of snow a day in temperatures of up to 25°C, the chance to toboggan in the height of summer has become a reality.

A couple of dreary-looking railway containers housed at the base of the Rangatira chair at Whakapapa hide this exciting, ground breaking technology.

It’s housed inside is the equivalent of a big freezer where very fine layers of ice are allowed to form.

The enclosed nature of the machine means the snow can be made without any chemical additives as water is cooled to freezing with the help of a self-contained refrigerant.

It is then scraped off, creating small ice flakes that are blown out onto the field.

The new summer sledding run has been set up in the plaza area at the base of the field, featuring three lanes of varying speed to suit all ages and abilities.

Scheduled to open daily from 10am-3pm, visitors are advised that the ever-changeable mountain weather could result in some closed days and people are encouraged to check before heading up Mr Ruapehu to the ski field.

The cost for an hour access pass is: $20 for adults, $15 youth and infants 0-4-years-old are free. Sleds are included with the pass.

More information about summer sledding can be found at whakapapa.com.
PLEASE HELP LOOK AFTER RUAPEHU’S PRECIOUS ENVIRONMENT

Recycle right!

Please help our kerbside collection crews by following these few simple steps when using your recycling blue bin:

• Remove lids from bottles and jars & rinse.
• Squash tins & plastic*containers.
  *Plastic types 1 and 2 only
• You can put paper and cardboard in a plastic checkout bag or tie with string.
• Wrap sharp objects & do not mix rubbish with recycling.
• Do not overfill your blue bin!

Kerbside recycling and rubbish collection days are:

**Ohakune, Raetihi and Rangataua.**
• Every Monday except for Tue 26 Dec and Tue 2 Jan.

**Taumarunui, Kakahi, Mahoe, Manunui and Piriaka.**
• Every Thursday except for Fri 29 Dec and Fri 5 Jan.

Pink rubbish bags are available from all Council offices and local supermarkets and grocery stores.

Transfer Stations and District Landfill
• All Ruapehu Transfer Stations and the District Landfill in Taumarunui are closed on Christmas Day and New Year’s Day. They are otherwise open over summer as per normal hours.

For more information including locations and hours please see ruapehudc.govt.nz or the front of the Central Plateau Directory or call us on 07 895 8188 or 06 385 8364.
Done the Mountains to Sea? How was it?

Riders on the Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail this summer are being asked to share how they found it via an online survey designed to help improve the Trail experience.

The survey – at www.getsmartglobal.com/nzcycletrails – aims to capture peoples’ feelings and insights on all aspects of the Trail with the overall ambition of providing a first class, multi-day cycle experience.

Ruapehu’s economic development manager Warren Furner said that everyone involved with the Trail wanted to see it develop as one of New Zealand’s most iconic, must-do, bucket-list rides.

“The most important people in helping us to achieve this goal are the people who ride it,” he said.

“We would really like to encourage anyone riding the Trail or a section of it this summer, or have already done so, to help us improve the experience by taking a few quick minutes to complete the survey.”

“The survey provides insights into all aspects of the Trail experience including supporting services, information, accommodation, hospitality, transfers, etc., and the Trail ride itself.”

“The data provides an invaluable resource that helps to inform trail management and service decisions for anyone with a stake in the Trail’s long term success.”

Mr Furner added that survey data is collected on all of the Nga Haerenga, NZ Cycle Trail Great Rides, which is compiled into a monthly report that provides relevant benchmarking information.

“Great Rides aims to have a minimum of 100 completed surveys per year on each of the 22 Great Ride cycle trails throughout NZ.”

“Currently, Mountains to Sea isn’t getting to the minimum 100 completed surveys and we would like to see this target exceeded every year.”

He said as the official trial manager for the Mountains to Sea Trail, Ruapehu Council is keen to move to a stage where they can gain and share these results in terms of visitor origin, satisfaction and rider behaviour to anyone with a stake in the Trail’s long term success.

“Ultimately it is about understanding how Trail operators can offer the best experience possible.”

Take the train to Mt Ruapehu this summer.

Whether you walk Whakapapa or Turoa, the Northern Explorer scenic train is a fantastic way to get there, making stops at both Ohakune and National Park. The Northern Explorer departs Auckland and Wellington on alternate days, and with generous baggage allowances, there’s no need to leave any gear behind.

Book now at greatjourneysofnz.co.nz
The focus of the partial review is on whether the management plan should be changed to provide for additional shared-use walking and mountain biking tracks in the following locations:

- **Turoa to Ohakune**: 20km using a mixture of existing, historic and new trails to provide Round the Mountain walkers an alternative to the road and extend the Mountains to the Sea Trail.

  The proposed route extends from the Turoa Skifield base area, follows the Mangawhero Valley down to the Waitonga Falls Track then along the historic Blyth Track and Bennett and Punch Tramway, finishing near the Ohakune Field Centre/Ngāti Rangi office.

- **Mountain Road through to Horopito**, creating a loop with the Old Coach Road; this 11 km trail will connect the proposed Mountains to the Sea Trail extension above and use sections of the historic Cowan’s and Punch and Bennett tramlines.

- **Horopito to National Park (the Missing Link)** includes a 600m section linking with the Mountains to Sea Trail – the short section of the proposed route that is within the National Park.

  The Missing Link is a trail being proposed by Ruapehu District Council as part of the Mountains to the Sea Cycle Trail and is proposed to extend from Horopito to National Park Village.

  The proposal also includes a ‘Serpentine Loop’ – a trail that would use old logging tram tracks in the general area below the Ohakune water catchment.

*Trails decision*

*From Page 2*

Summer’s made for kids – and now there’s snow being made for them to summer slide on at Whakapapa.
Ruapehu Summertime Bulletin
2017-18 • 7

Scenic Chairlift Rides
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Open Dec 2 – April 29
PASSCHENDAELE
A descent into hell

Featuring 24 HOURS IN PASSCHENDAELE
photographs by Brett Killington
Remembering Passchendaele - a new experience in Waiouru

Opening in December 2017, Passchendaele: A Descent into Hell will be the first exhibition displayed in the new gallery space at the National Army Museum Te Mata Toa, in Waiouru.

Featuring artefacts from the museum’s collection and a large diorama, the exhibition tells the story of the New Zealand Division at Passchendaele in October 1917.

While many of the battles fought by the New Zealand Division on the Western Front during WWI were far greater tragedies than Gallipoli, most remain virtually unknown to the New Zealand public. Until recently, many New Zealanders knew very little about the costly battles involving Kiwi forces near Passchendaele, Belgium on 4 and 12 October 1917.

“Attack a failure on account of wire encountered. Casualties...
Ruapehu Events

JANUARY 2018
Mahi Aroha - DOC Summer Programme 1 – 30 January
Join us over the 2018 summer for the Mahi Aroha/Summer Programme that showcases and celebrates the Central Plateau’s stunning natural and historical treasures. For further information: Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre phone: +64 7 892 3729 or Ohakune i-Site phone: +64 6 385 8427.

Tussock Traverse Saturday 27 January
Offering both keen trail runners and walkers, as well as people new to the excitement of off-road adventures, one of the most scenic and varied courses in New Zealand. The event course cuts across the heart of the World Heritage Tongariro National Park, starting off at the Desert Road on the Eastern side of the Park and takes in the Rangipo Desert and Whakohohonu traverse track before finishing at the Chateau Tongariro in Whakapapa to the West. Enter online www.tussocktraverse.co.nz

FEBRUARY 2018
Waimarino A&P Show 17 – 18 February
Home to one of New Zealand’s oldest grandstands and with Mt Ruapehu as a stunning backdrop, the historic town of Raetihi hosts the annual Agricultural & Pastoral show. Supported by the local community the annual event is over 100 years old and has featured equestrian, miniature horses, dairy, beef, highland cattle plus sideshow entertainment for the whole family.

March 2018
Wild Food Challenge Saturday 3 March
The Local Wild Food Challenge, a culinary adventure founded by Kiwi's Bill and Sarah Mason, is to be held in the Waimarino at the Raetihi Cosmopolitan Club. The Challenges are designed to showcase the resourcefulness of people living in communities where wild food is available. For more information www.wildfoodchallenge.com/waimarino

Waimarino Rodeo 17-18 March
Friday Night: 16 March – 6pm LOCAL EVENTS ONLY. Food Stalls on grounds. Gate Prices Adult $10 Child $5 (Under 5 FREE) Family $30 Day Pass. Slacks 8am. Rodeo Start time 10am. Secretary: Cathy MacLean 06 385 4636 or 027 240 1090. Email: c_d_maclean@xtra.co.nz, Raetihi Rodeo Grounds, Parapara Highway

April 2018
Raetihi Gutbuster Sunday 1 April
Fun, family friendly, challenging cycle ride or run/walk on the fully sealed Raetihi to Pihirkiti Road, Central Plateau, New Zealand. Great spot prizes, no speeches. www.rideruapehu.com

Ring of Fire Saturday 7 April
The Ruapehu Ring of Fire will undoubtedly be one of the most challenging and exhilarating alpine adventure running events in the Southern Hemisphere with its unique combination of terrain, distance, altitude and views. 72km Solo, 50km Solo or 72km Teams relay. Due to the conditions of our DOC concession, places are limited for the event so please book early to avoid disappointment. www.ruf.co.nz for more information.

MAY 2018
T42 5 May
Run across sections of the 42 Traverse, this track is known by many mountain bikers as one of the best one-day hard-core trails in the country. For serious racers there are 45km mountain bike, 42.2 km trail run or a 24km trail run/walk options with 11 and 6.3km run/walk trails also on offer. www.t42.co.nz

June 2018
Ohakune Carrot Carnival TBA
The carrot carnival will be back again in 2018. Come along for a fun family day with stalls, entertainment and competitions. If you are keen to have a stall, provide sponsorship or require more information visit our website www.carrotcarnival.org.nz or email ohakune carrotcarnival@gmail.com

for more details, go to www.ohakune.info

Ruapehu Summertime Bulletin 2017-18

Passchendaele

From Page 9

extremely heavy. Hun machine guns and snipers play havoc. Absolute hell…Brigade practically wiped out.” States a New Zealand officer’s report from the battle.

The disastrous battle on 12 October accumulated a fatality list higher than that of any other day in New Zealand’s post-1840 history. It would become known as our ‘Darkest Day’. Huge losses during the attack were compounded by the fact that virtually no gains in ground were made. In the aftermath of Passchendaele, the New Zealand Division’s casualties numbered a staggering 4500 men of which 1300 were killed.

To accompany Passchendaele: A Descent into Hell, a series of images by photographer Brett Killington titled 24 Hours in Passchendaele completes the display in the new gallery.

Killington’s photographs offer a unique perspective on the modern-day landscape at Passchendaele, imagining a soldier’s viewpoint of the area where our ancestors fought 100 years ago.

“I wanted my images to reflect the landscape that the New Zealand soldiers experienced and give a sense of 1917,” says Mr Killington.

“My work is captured on a series of pin-hole cameras that exposes a sheet of film for 24 hours. These dream-like distortions dissolve the intervention of the 21st century, allowing the viewer to imagine what might have been.”

The new gallery exhibiting both Passchendaele: A Descent into Hell and 24 Hours in Passchendaele was built as part of the museum’s refurbished entranceway and will allow for more scope to host a wider range of exhibitions and larger artefacts. Also included in the recently completed renovation project are a council-run iSite and an expanded and redecorated gift shop.

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Junction House is a B&B where children and pets are most welcome. Babysitting and Doggy daycare available. Hosted accommodation with guest access to kitchen and shared areas in the heart of the Junction. Double and family room with shared bathroom or studio suite with ensuite. The perfect base for Tongariro Crossing, BBQ dinners by arrangement.

May 2018

5 May
Run across sections of the 42 Traverse, this track is known by many mountain bikers as one of the best one-day hard-core trails in the country. For serious racers there are 45km mountain bike, 42.2 km trail run or a 24km trail run/walk options with 11 and 6.3km run/walk trails also on offer. www.t42.co.nz

for more details, go to www.ohakune.info
Ruapehu trout no doubt

There are a number of quality trout fishing opportunities worth exploring around the Waimarino region, the most high profile of which is the Manganuiotao River north west of Raetihi.

This premier river is recognised with a water conservation order, one of 13 rivers in New Zealand awarded this National Park-like status. This river has both brown and rainbow trout and provides a stunning backdrop that adds to this big river angling experience.

Less high profile is the Mangawhero River flowing through and downstream of Ohakune. This river has solely brown trout and, while often not particularly obvious, there are good numbers of large fish between Ohakune down to below Pakahi Road.

Similarly, some of the smaller streams such as the Toanui, Tokiahuru and Waitaiki streams also hold some surprisingly large trout, though the small size of the streams belies a deceptively heavy flow, which with their often overgrown banks tends to make for challenging angling.

A feature of all these fisheries is that they often have a lively evening rise right on dark. Pools that appear empty during the day suddenly come to life, and for many local anglers this is when they go fishing using mayfly or beetle type dry flies. It also has the advantage that the crowds who have been swimming and enjoying the river will have left for the day and an angler can have this moment to themselves.

Most fishing access is across private land so it is necessary to seek permission – in the first instance usually by asking at the nearest house. Local landowners are very approachable and if you haven’t got the right house someone will invariably be able to point you in the right direction to contact the owner.

For more information (or a fishing licence) pick up a Sports fishing opportunities in the Ruapehu District brochure from Ruapehu i-Site or Top 10 Holiday Park in Ohakune or RFS in Raetihi.
### Summer nature programme

**01–28 JAN 2018**

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For more info visit:

- Ohakune i-SITE: [www.visitruapehu.com](http://www.visitruapehu.com)

Book now at [www.doc.govt.nz/mahiaroha](http://www.doc.govt.nz/mahiaroha)
Four new adventures for Mahi Aroha

There are four new activities for the Department of Conservation’s Summer Programme, Mahi Aroha – a visit to a seldom-seen waterfall, a unique hunter’s hut, a walk along a predator-control trail and a session on flax, weaving and its origins.

Now running for over half a century, the programme is the longest-running in the country, having started in 1964/65.

The original intent was to encourage families to enjoy themselves all while learning a little more about the amazing natural environment of the Ruapehu region.

**Sigley falls**

Hike through dense bush of Tongariro National Park, first along the Round the Mountain Track towards Mangaheuhu Hut, passing the Waitonga Falls, then bush-bash through to Sigley Falls, passing through alpine scrub, mountain beech and red beech forest and finishing near the Karioi ecological reserve. This trip takes between 5 and 7 hours and requires moderate fitness and good boots.

**Predator free 2050**

An introduction to NZ’s ‘furry foes’ – rats, possums and stoats – that are the targets of New Zealand-wide eradication efforts led by DOC.

Learn why they are trying to eradicate these pests and the benefits.

*Turn to Page 15*
Express gives access to ‘stunning trails’

Exclusive, private access to stunning trails combined with breath-taking views are the key features of the Camelback Ruapehu Express taking place Saturday 24 February 2018.

The Mountain Bike event takes participants on a traverse between the Tukino Mountain Road right through to Ohakune, taking in the NZ Army tussock LAV tracks, Karioi Forest single track and Rangataua Forest native bush.

Runners and walkers journey from Horopito to Ohakune via the historic Old Coach Road and the stunning Mangawhero Forest trail.

The event has enjoyed fast growth starting with 750 entrants in 2016, growing to 1000 entrants in 2017, with further increases expected for February 2018.

“This makes it the fastest growing MTB event in NZ,” says event director Nick Reader.

The event is the creation of the Ohakune Events Charitable Trust. Chairman James Foubister is a keen biker.

“It is so cool for us as a town to host so many bikers, runners and walkers. We are known as a winter ski destination, but more and more people are visiting us in summer to bike or hike which is great,” says James.

The 2018 event has attracted the support of new sponsors including Merida Bikes, TCB Ski Board and Bike and Tailwind Nutrition.

One lucky person will win a Merida 120 dual suspension Mountain Bike at the event prize giving. Camelbak have stepped up to be presenting rights sponsor. TCB are the local snow and mountain bike store in Ohakune and will be involved in race day specials, bike checks and general support.

Participants can either mountain bike 58km or 25km or trail run/walk 21km or 16km. Each event finishes at the Powderkeg located at the Ohakune Junction.

For many the event is not about the time taken, but is more about the personal physical challenge. However, for some like two-time 58km MTB winner Philip Mcilroy-Bisley, it is very much a race as he has completed the 58km in a blistering time just over two hours.

Information: www.ruapehu-express.co.nz or www.facebook.com/ruapehuExpress/.
for conservation, the environment, farming and the economy. Learn how to run your own pest control operation in your backyard, farm, or other areas using traps. Take a walk on the Mangawhero River trap line and see how DOC is protecting the local whio/blue duck population.

**Weaving Te Reanga Harakeke (The origins of Flax)**

An amazing opportunity to bring along your family to and learn about harakeke (NZ flax), including learning to weave (mahi raranga) and the process involved. Also learn about whakamarama (exploring the powhiri) and the origins of flax.

At Opotaka Scenic Reserve, near Lake Rotoaaira.

**Kiakawaka Villa**

Take a trip back in time to see the rustic Kiakawaka Villa, near Raurimu, constructed in the 1930s by the Bowley brothers. It is a now-rare example of a hut clad with split kaikawaka timber built by bushmen. It is a rare remaining example of this construction technique. Money from this event will go towards the restoration of the hut roof.

DOC also works with Project Tongariro and Hillary Outdoors who run some trips.

This year’s theme for the kite day (1 January) is about bird flight. If the weather is bad for kite flying they will have other activities such as bird mask making.

Bookings are now open for the 2018 events at http://www.doc.govt.nz/mahiaroha. See advert this issue for dates and other information.
The official start is Ohakune but we find it is easier to start at Horopito as you get more downhill sections this way.

(Horopito is 170m higher than Ohakune). The trail is 14.5km long.

This is one of our favourite rides as it has something for everyone. Stunning views, native bush and the restored 45m high Hapuwhenua Viaduct.

This will take from 1.5 hours if you are advanced or 2 hrs for intermediate level.

For sightseeing and lunch break allow at least 3.5 hours (beginner).

It’s a great idea to start your ride from TCB. Leave your car in the safety of our carpark and we can transport you out to the track start at Horopito.
**Bike tracks for Ruatiti from green farm plan**

Work to protect vulnerable hill country is turning into a benefit for mountain bikers, reports the Manawatu Whanganui Regional Council (Horizons).

“We often talk about land management being necessary to protect our hill country for environmental and economic reasons. However, we don’t always discuss the recreational benefits,” stated Horizons in a recent e-newsletter.

The council says land management such as its Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI) can mean less sediment in rivers means they are more suitable for swimming and fishing.

“There are other benefits – one (Ruapehu) SLUI farmer has retired land to develop mountain bike tracks for everyone to enjoy,” writes Horizons.

Brent Greig of Ruatiti Station has a 5000-hectare sheep and beef farm. The property has been part of the SLUI programme since 2010 and has undertaken a number of works since then. 2000 hectares of the property is native bush and shares a lot of unfenced boundary line with Department of Conservation land.

“One of the biggest challenges was that the Station was never fenced properly. This made keeping stock and wild animals out of areas that they wanted to protect very difficult.”

SLUI funding, which has subsidised fencing, is helping to solve this problem. Taking it a step further Brent decided to not only fence off areas, but also retire land so that their property could become part of the Mangapurua Cycleway.

Station manager Raymond Lacy says they have other work they’d like to do under SLUI but the first priority is retiring the corridor between the main creek on their property and the Mangapurua Cycleway from the farm.

“We’d also like to encourage community involvement in the project by getting the local school to help plant out the retired areas once they’re completed. Following that we hope to establish trap lines for pest control in the retired areas.”
Bonuses from Crossing parking changes

By Liz Brooker

Limiting the availability of car parking at the start of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing has come with a number of bonus benefits for walkers and hikers.

With the exponential increase in popularity of Ruapehu’s now world-famous day hike, vehicle over-crowding at both ends of the 19.4km track has been adversely impacting not only on the environment but also on people’s enjoyment.

On a fine day it was not unusual for cars and campervans to be littered along the 6km access road making it almost impossible to safely travel to the Mangatepopo starting point.

In October the Department of Conservation announced that up to 30 April, 2018 a four-hour time restriction applies to all private vehicles at Mangatepopo.

Because of the new restrictions all visitors tackling the Crossing need to use shuttle transport, but this has come with some added bonuses.

Thomas Kereopa from National Park Shuttles has been hosting tourists in the region for 30 years and sees the changes as great for both providers and hikers.

“I think what these changes have done is discouraged a lot of people out of freedom walking.

“There were a lot of people who were just being dropped off and no one knew they were there but now their name is on a safety sheet, they are accounted for and must come off the mountain.

“At the end of the day everyone is ticked off as having come down safely.”

Each season many rescues have been carried out in the Tongariro National Park where walkers have taken to the trails ill prepared.

“We carry out an equipment check for

Turn to Page 20
Experiencing the rescued Ohakune Old Coach Road

BY REBECCA O’BRIEN, TECHNICAL ADVISOR (HISTORIC)

I had come to cycle the iconic Ohakune Old Coach Road. I’d heard the community had rescued the road and transformed it into a stunning place to visit.

The road is a reminder people can achieve great things when they put their minds to it. It was a reminder I would need – I had a rough ride ahead of me.

I am not an experienced biker. People warned me the ride would be ‘tough’. Back in 1906, an intrepid reporter claimed the road ‘should contain no terrors’ for the traveller. Yet 20 people died in a snowstorm trying to build the magnificent Hapuawhenua Viaduct. And John Rochfort was held at gunpoint while surveying the route.

But surely I would be fine?

One sparkling autumn morning I picked up a red bike from one of the many local bike shops. The staff at the shop were extremely knowledgeable and had been part of the effort to save the road. I took their advice to try the ‘easy’ route – and started downhill from Horopito towards Ohakune. Three experienced cyclists from Germany immediately vanished into the distance. I was left alone. It was sunny and quiet. I decided to enjoy myself.

The road was built 101 years ago to cover the large gap in the North Island Main Trunk line. Travellers got out of their trains and travelled the gap in horse-drawn coaches. The road

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Located just a short stroll from the cafés and restaurants of Ohakune township, Rocky Mountain Chalets has 42, Qualmark 4 Plus rated, contemporary and beautifully appointed alpine style chalets. Each chalet is either two or three bedroom and consists of open-plan living, full kitchen and laundry facilities, outdoor deck, Sky TV, free WIFI and provisioned with linen ready for you to relax, connect, play and enjoy!

Guests are invited to enjoy the lounge room and soak in the two spa pools onsite after a day walking or mountain biking.

Bonuses from Crossing parking changes

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footwear, safety gear, jackets and make sure they have plenty of water.
“If anyone has high heels or jandals on they are not going to get on the bus.
“You have got to be a little bit sensible and know what you are going to come up against, please make sure you are fully equipped with the right gear.”

Along with receiving the messages about safety Mr Kereopa also personally shares kōrero about what the region and volcanoes mean to local iwi.
“We give a karakia (prayer) before we take off and give more of a cultural experience.
“We talk about that on the drive out there [Mangatepopo] as well and people start to think about it being more of it than just a walk, they start to understand it and what it means to local Maori, local people, which is great.”

Living locally also allows more flexibility for the owner-operator.
“We call it usually the night before but living in National Park the weather can change quickly but if it looks like it might improve later on in the afternoon we might not come in until 10 o’clock.
“For us we don’t mind if you come out (to the Ketetahi car park) at 7 o’clock at night because we live here.
“That’s one of the advantages we have, we don’t rely on big numbers.”

The four-hour parking restriction still allows time for visitors to still enjoy short walks like to Soda Springs, but people wanting to do the entire hike will need to use shuttle transport, which can be booked through iSites and Visitor Information Centres around the region.
How was it for you?

Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail rider survey

Everyone involved with the Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail is working to see it develop as one of NZ’s most iconic, must do, bucket list rides. The most important people in helping us to achieve this goal are the people who ride it.

If you are riding the Trail or a section of it this summer, or have already done so, please help us improve the experience by taking a few quick minutes to complete an on-line survey at:

www.getsmartglobal.com/nzcycletrails

Your feedback will help us offer the best possible rider experience. Thank you.

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Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail rider survey

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Ohakune Old Coach Road

From Page 19

was paved in cobblestones to keep it open all year. The cobblestones (just quietly) are not designed for comfort. One rattled passenger counted 433 bumps 15 minutes into his journey. The stones are as bone-rattling today. But I persevered.

And I was rewarded.

The road produced a fabulous ‘must-stop’ moment. This road lives up to its promise as a top heritage attraction. The Haeremaere Bridge is breath taking. It strides across the toitoi filled valley with symmetry and strength. It was the first of many ‘get-off-your-bike’ vistas. The road is punctuated by fabulously photogenic bridges, viaducts and tunnels. And a heart-stopping ride across the Hapuawhenua Viaduct. When I crossed the viaduct a school kid ahead of me screamed that she was “completely freaked out” — although she was grinning, and so was I.

I was exhilarated as I cycled triumphantly towards the end of the road in Ohakune. I had to hand it to the people who made this road possible. From its engineering wizards to the extraordinary people that brought it back to life, the road is an asset (and a credit) to Ohakune. To me it is also an invigorating, 13km reminder of the perseverance that shaped New Zealand. And surely that’s a reminder we can all use when faced with the bumpy roads in life.

It is also home to New Zealand’s only two native mammals, the short and long tailed bat. Sadly many visitors only ever allow enough time to hit the Crossing rather than taking the time to enjoy all we have to offer.

Simply stunning

I have to be honest, this hike is actually quite simply stunning but, I totally concur with the “gruelling” sentiment and respect needs to be shown.

Just like in winter, our mountainous summer weather patterns can change from brilliantly fine one minute to bitterly cold half an hour later.

Classed as a day-walk, the Alpine Crossing is definitely not a 6-8 hours stroll along a board-walk promenade designed for those wearing a sparkly pair of Gucci summer sandals.

Thankfully, unless you are doing one of the shorter walks to Soda Springs, the new four-hour parking restriction at the start of the Crossing has already seen a marked reduction of ill-prepared, under-equipped hikers.

This season the heavily in-demand shuttle bus operators are all running gear checks before even transporting their clients to the start. They are also helping to share more about the history and culture and encouraging everyone to show respect for the area and leave no trace.

Armed with water, food, extra thermals and a high-spec snowboarding blizzard-proof jacket I’m wondering whether at the ripe young age of 47 I’m fit enough to finish my challenging hike, which begins at 6am in low cloud.

From 1120-metres it’s a slow climb through the Mangatepopo Valley. The majestic view of Ngauruhoe towers over me as I pass through South Crater before clambering over loose rocks and scoria to the Red Crater.

The peaks of Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu are sacred to local Māori and visitors are asked to respect the sanctity of the maunga tapu (sacred mountains) by staying on the track and are now being encouraged to not climb the mountains or touch or enter the waterways, which includes the lakes.

Huffing and puffing and with quite a few desperate rest stops, I make my final ascent along with what seems like a couple of hundred other people to the highest point of the crossing at 1886m.

After packing up all my rubbish from lunch including my banana skin (if left lying around they can attract pests) I begin my delicate descent down through loose volcanic rock scree to the stunningly vivid Emerald Lakes.

Known as Ngarotopounamu (greenstone-hued lakes) they are vividly aglow in the sunshine.

After passing Blue Lake, also known as Te Wai-whakaata-o-te-Rangihiroa (Rangihiroa’s mirror) my track sidles around the northern slope of Tongariro and descends in a zigzag track past Ketetahi Shelter down to the road end to finish at 760m where we are all greeted by our respective shuttle bus operators ahead of our journey home.

The Tongariro National Park is a very special place in my back yard and if shown a little respect and cared for well one of the jewels in New Zealand’s crown should be able to be celebrated by generations to come whether as a local or a visitor from foreign climes.
Alpine Crossing numbers up six-fold, but still simply stunning

BY LIZ BROOKER

Whether summer or winter it is undeniable that that I live in one of the most unique, beautiful, ‘outdoorsie’ regions of the country.

Globally, many know Ruapehu, “that place you go to do the Alpine Crossing” but actually there is so much more to my big back yard.

“Spectacular”, “gruelling”, “wild and wondrous”, “NZ best one-day walk”, “an intrepid battle with the elements”, are just a few of the 1539 comments posted on Trip Advisor who also rank the day-walk as the Number One must-do.

This is not a surprisingly high figure when you learn there were 125,000 hikers in 2015 and this number has risen exponentially from just 20,000 in 1992.

Over 55% of the summer season now sees more than 600 hikers and on any fine day following a spell of bad weather this figure can surge to over 3000.

This is one person for every 6.5 metres of the 19.4km track and it is of little wonder one review was titled, “super walk, spoilt by sheer numbers of tourists”, so why even bother?

In 1990 Tongariro National Park was declared a World Heritage site, in recognition of its outstanding natural characteristics and in 1993 the Park was granted Cultural World Heritage status in recognition of its cultural significance and history.

Our maunga (mountains), the active volcanoes of Ruapehu (2797m), Tongariro (1967m), Ngauruhoe (2287m) and their surrounds are home to 56 significant species of birds, such as rare species like the North Island brown kiwi, kākā, blue duck, North Island fernbird, double-banded plover and New Zealand...
Crossing changes ‘well received’

BY LIZ BROOKER
Changes announced in October to the Tongariro Alpine Crossing experience are already being well received by locals and international visitors alike.

Department of Conservation (DOC) senior supervisor Stacey Faire said despite some initial confusion, walkers and hikers are generally understanding and appreciating the reasoning.

In an attempt to encourage a greater respect for the cultural and environmental values of Tongariro National Park, DOC has removed all access signs to the peaks and visitors are asked to stay to the marked and formed tracks.

Local kaumātua, Te Ngaehe Wanikau, explains, “The mountain peaks and all waterways on Tongariro and his peaks, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu, are sacred”.

People planning to hike the Crossing this summer are now

“Great location, even better hosts”

*TripAdvisor review – November 2017

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Most hikers on the Tongariro Alpine Crossing have given the changes the thumbs up.
Crossing changes

From Page 24

being urged to use a range of shuttle services from local villages and
towns because parking options have been limited at both ends of the
track including a four-hour time-restriction now applying to the start
point.

“It has been really positive, transport operators are saying the access
road to Mangatepopo is now a pleasure to drive and they are having
less delays in getting people to drop-off and pick-up points on time.

“People are not having to squeeze past cars and there has been a
dramatic drop in the risk of vehicle damage.

“At the moment we are working with tramping clubs and New
Zealander’s to make sure their needs are also being met while we work
to further protect this unique alpine environment.”

From December through to the end of April [2018], for the first time
ever, DOC rangers are going to be out and about at the start point and
roaming the track helping visitors learn more about the dual World
Heritage area.

“Visitors are really enjoying seeing our community rangers in the
field.

“They are helping share more information about the need to respect
for the cultural and environmental values and the parking changes.

“They are also taking the opportunity to check visitors have all the
information they need to traverse the Crossing safely including the
appropriate gear, shoes and are carrying water.”

Mrs Faire is also seeing a greater collaboration between Ruapehu
and Taupō iSITES and local visitor information centres.

“Having someone know where you are is also important in case you
encounter any difficulties.

“If you are planning to hike the longer Northern Circuit or Round
the Mountain track head into the iSite at Whakapapa Village and let
us know.

“The Mountain Safety Council website also has a lot of information
about how to keep safe.

“The changes we have made are a bit like the Crossing itself, it’s a
journey, this is only the first part.

“The longer journey is what the Tongariro National Park is going
to look like in 50 years time, we are work to ensure we preserve
this stunning environment and everyone can have a safe, enjoyable
experience.”

Additional toilets have also be put in place every 1.5-2 hours along
the track and visitors are encouraged to use them as defecating on the
tracks or in the alpine vegetation off track is, “unacceptable, offensive
and a human health hazard”.

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Whangaehu track Bridge closed for repair

Before hitting any of the trails of the Ruapehu region visitors are strongly advised to check both the weather and track conditions. The Whangaehu Swing Bridge on the Round the Mountains Track is closed for repairs until March 2018. The bridge is approximately 3km south of the Tukino ski field access road on the Eastern flanks of Mount Ruapehu.

Damage to both main cables on the swing-bridge has been identified, meaning the bridge requires partial replacement.

The Department of Conservation says that until this work can be completed the bridge is closed for all pedestrian access.

In the interim, river crossing access will be marked to the most practical point on the river. However, hikers are advised to be careful of loose rocks in the river channel and not to attempt crossing in flood conditions.

DOC operations manager Bhrent Guy stressed that any river crossing should be carefully evaluated and whenever possible, crossed as a group. Hikers are also reminded not to linger in the area as the river is the natural lahar path from Te Wai ā-Moe, the Crater Lake, on Mt Ruapehu.

Mr Guy said the Department understands the site has an increasing number of users especially going into the peak summer tramping season and is committed to completing work as soon as possible with all work to be completed before the ‘Ring of Fire’ ultra-marathon in April 2018.

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Central region tops search stats

The Mountain Safety Council wants you to make it home safe after your mountain hike. Photo Bevan Smith.

Advice from the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council:

If we told you that the Central North Island (CNI) has more people involved in backcountry search and rescues than any other district in NZ, would you be surprised?

The Mountain Safety Council’s (MSC) publication There and Back, 2016 highlights that CNI contributes 15% of all people involved in search and rescues and 63% of those are tramping/hiking.

It’s certainly true that there’s massive demand for the experiences you get from tracks like the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, so much so that the Department of Conservation is actively trying to highlight other tracks that are good alternatives.

So what can we do to help reduce the problem?

“Safety is the outcome of good planning and good decision making,” says MSC’s CEO Mike Daisley.

“Therefore, helping participants to plan more thoroughly is an obvious way to help prepare them for terrain that has a reputation for big weather changes and low temperatures.”

Funded by the Lottery Grants Board, MSC made their ‘Plan My Trip’ tool live on their website recently.

Plan My Trip has been developed with the participant in mind. The tool steps users through a few simple questions – activity, intended location, length of trip, group size – before delivering the relevant warnings and notices for the trip.

Currently, DOC has alerts (huts, campsites, tracks) as well as NZ Avalanche Advisory (avalanche.net.nz) if the region or sub-region coincides with a forecast area.

Plan My Trip then pulls all of the trip information, alert information and adds a packing list and trip recommendations into a shareable (email, Facebook), clickable and downloadable PDF.

So, if you know anyone heading out this summer, direct them to mountainsafety.org.nz and they’ll be planned in a jiffy.

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Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) gas emission rates at Mt Ruapehu have returned to a more normal level, reports Geological and Nuclear Sciences (GNS).

An earlier period of slightly higher volcanic unrest appears to have ended. The Volcanic Alert Level remains at 1.

On 5 December the carbon dioxide (CO₂) gas emission rate at Mt Ruapehu was measured as 440 tonnes/day, a substantial reduction from the rate of 2290 tonnes/day measured on 23 November.

An emission rate of 440 tonnes/day is less than the average emission rate over the last 10 years.

Emission rates of Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂) and Hydrogen Sulphide (H₂S), were also measured on 5 December, both well below measurements from 23 November.

No additional water or gas composition data has been collected from the Crater Lake (Te Wai Moe) since mid-November. Over the last two weeks (as at 12 December) the volcanic tremor at Mt Ruapehu has been at low or moderate levels, but the strongest since late 2016.

The lake temperature has risen from 36°C to 38°C in the last week, evidence of continued heat entering the lake.

The period of slightly higher volcanic unrest, which was inferred largely from the high CO₂ gas emission rate measured on 23 November, now appears to have ended, concludes GNS.

Crater Lake gas levels back to normal

RUAPUEHU DINING GUIDE

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By Liz Brooker

Making the lifestyle shift to move out of the city is not just benefiting New Zealand’s larger provincial towns.

After 20 years of working in the world of corporate advertising, Richard Faire and his young family made the move to National Park to set up My Kiwi Adventure which offers a variety of visitor experiences including New Zealand’s highest guided stand up paddle board adventure on Lake Otamangakau.

Having left behind the hustle and bustle of the city, the former media manager at TVNZ, Sky Television and media director for global public relations company Ogilvy has no regrets.

“One of the reasons we moved here was to expose the children to a range of different experiences they just can’t get in Auckland.

“Friends and family were going, ‘what are you doing?’ and we went, ‘let’s go for it’.

“We called it ‘breaking the golden handcuffs’, we love this place, the Ruapehu region is amazing and we haven’t looked back since.”

After building a holiday home at National Park six years ago, in 2015 the family made the big move from being surrounded by a population of 1.37 million to one of just 900 which also includes the wider surrounds including Whakapapa Village.

“We already had a close connection to the area and the community

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Paddle boarding on Lake Otamangakau, with snow-capped mountains, is proving a hit. Photo: Conrad Smith.
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What SUP on the Lake?

From Page 29

and really wanted to start a business that had something new to offer and make a difference for the local community and smaller businesses which make the region so unique.”

“Our foundation products were stand up paddle boarding and mountain biking and then transport and regional itinerary planning via our booking centre was added to that”.

“Most people know the Ruapehu region primarily skiing or hiking the Tongariro Alpine Crossing and I think to a lot of people it remains that way.”

“The idea was to get people to stay longer by showcasing the diversity of things they can do here.”

Despite these common perceptions, Mr Faire is pleased to see views slowly changing.

“I’ve been heavily involved with the National Park Business Association and we are slowly starting to see people stay longer and do different things.”

Adopting a collaborative approach is one way he believes the narrow view of what is on offer to visitors in the region can be changed.

“I’ve always thought the Ruapehu region has been under promoted and think the full story of what it has to offer with all the different activities needs to be highlighted more, which is starting to happen thanks to the recent Visit Ruapehu rebranding work done.”

“I think our tourism success will in part be all about how we work together and cross promote each other - our greatest competition is not necessarily the business next door but other regions competing for the tourist dollar.”

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Bayleys

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ELEVATED BEAUTY
6 Carters Terrace, Ohakune

This 3 bedroom character house is sitting proudly on a slightly elevated site in popular Carter Terrace at the junction end of Ohakune. Enjoy the views of the Ruahine Hills to the rear, Mount Ruapehu out your front bedroom windows and on a beautiful sunny day you will see Mount Taranaki through the window in the tastefully renovated bathroom. The simple landscaping and compacted metal driveway make this a low maintenance property for a holiday base or rental. Spend your summer evenings out on the sunny front deck after a day of exploring all the adventures that this alpine resort offers.

SERENITY
13 Tawa Street, Ohakune

Tucked away in the Turoa Village you will find this stylish and modern property offering everything you need to turn your next dream ski vacation into a reality or to simply utilise as your permanent residence. Tastefully decorated throughout with modernised features and quality furnishings, this house incorporates 5 bedrooms, modern kitchen, large bathroom and drying room as well as 3 living areas that are evenly spread throughout the house.

RED ALERT: IT NOW COMES FULLY FURNISHED
The Straw Bale House is a very unique property on the outskirts of Rangataua with extensive insulation ensuring a warm and cozy ambiance. The straw bale build has 3 double bedrooms, all opening on to the north facing deck, 2 bathrooms, 2 toilets, and an open plan living area with a wood burner and wetback. French doors open out on to a spacious and private deck which captures the sun. The natural and earthy interior is the perfect backdrop for your choice of exciting interior design. Well priced and well worth a look!