

Kōpiko Aotearoa

New Zealand's Cape to Cape: 9 January 2024 update

Happy New Year folks

Well, it's only 12 days until the Kōpiko 2024 starts! There are still some track and road closures along the course – this update covers what we know about, right now. As is usually the case to some extent, we forge ahead not knowing exactly what the conditions are like along the entire route or what the next month of weather holds in store. Fortunately, we do know that bikepackers are agile adventurers capable of dealing with unforeseen challenges as they arise.

This year's Kopiko will involve small groups, with a total of 50 riders. You can check out their names, here - <https://kopikoatoteaaroa2024.mapprogress.com/> Of course, you'll also get to meet casual riders, just out doing parts of the route. The Timber Trail and New Plymouth Coastal Walkway are two sections where you can expect to see many rides going in both directions.

Hopefully you'll also get to meet and have a korero with the locals along the way. So many of them are truly salt of the earth.

Course conditions

Most of the course is looking great, but there are a couple of sections of course currently closed, and a new section of cycle trail west of Opotiki that we can take advantage of.

First up, the walking track up to East Cape Lighthouse is closed due to storm damage. We don't know when it's likely to re-open, so at this stage we'll be starting about a kilometre from the car park at the end of East Cape Road, where we can see the top of the lighthouse and the sunrise. See the photo below.



There's a toilet at the car park nearby, at the end of East cape Road, which is the best spot to unload if you are getting dropped off at the start, and a good place for east-bound riders to finish.

Second, there is a road closure near Tiniroto, so for 2024 we will need to go via Whakatane rather than Waikaremoana. Here are the directions for the detour from east to west:

Motu Road to Opotiki

When you get to the intersection of SH35 and Motu Rd, either carry on along SH35 for 400m before popping onto the gravel cycle trail on your right. The Motu Trail signs will lead you to the Dunes Trail, which ends at Opotiki.

OR, if you are feeling really keen, head up Motu Road for 37 km and then ride to Opotiki via the Pakihi Track (grade 4). Continue through Opotiki to the bridge at the western end of the Dunes Trail.

The Motu Trails' Opotiki trail brochure shows the easier, coastal route from Motu Rd, past Opotiki, and onwards to the west.

https://motutrails.co.nz/backoffice/assets/Brochures/Opotiki-trail-brochure-2023.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3T_2ri3VLGMKGwbuYBifFnbUNO35U2tKyB7Sh5l18T0QfHFH2z0qnk7Ww

Opotiki to Whakatane

From the massive suspension bridge at the western end of the Dunes Trail, turn right and skirt around Opotiki on an obvious path. If coming from the Pakihi Track, just go past the suspension bridge on your right and stay on the riverside trail.

The 9 km west of Opotiki follows the Waioweka Trail then Waiotaha Trail to Te Ahiaua/the Pipi beds. The trail signage is clear, including a couple of short bits where it pops onto roads.

From Ahiaua Reserve, go along SH2 for 800 metres, then turn right just after the highway bridge.

Take the following roads to Whakatane: Ohiwa Beach Road – Ohiwa Harbour Road – Reeves Road – Ohiwa Loop Road – Ruatuna Road – back onto SH2 – right onto Wainui road – left onto Stanley – right onto McCoy – left back onto Wainui Road – left onto Burma Road.

Burma Road is gravel for about 1 km. At the end, turn right onto a well-formed farm track, crossing a gate almost immediately. You climb, steeply in places, to a ridge, then drop down the other side. There are several gates. After dropping back down to the next valley, turn left at the junction. This is the western end of Burma Road and is well formed. It climbs steadily to a parking area, then drops down to Ohope Road. Turn left at Ohope Road and ride on the roadside 'Shared Zone' path, and just over a kilometre later, turn left again onto Gorge Road (the Shared Zone path continues). At the bottom of Gorge Rd, turn right, onto Commerce St. At the end of Commerce, turn right, onto The Strand, and then left onto Kakahoroa Drive, and then pop onto the shared path on the waterfront.

Whakatane to Rainbow Mountain

Ride west along the Warren Cole Walkway, cross the highway bridge, ride the footpath for a hundred metres then turn right down Keepa Road.

Turn left onto Ferguson Road, then right onto Wano Road, and follow Golf Links Road – Pacific Coast Highway – Powdrell Road – McLean Road – East Bank Road – SH2 into Edgecumbe.

Leave Edgecumbe on Main Street which becomes Te Teko Road and then Tahuna Road. Follow Galatea Road – Pokairoa Road – Ngamotu Road – Ash Pit Road (south not west) – Rerewhakaaitu Road – right at SH38, which is the standard Kopiko course, and down to Rainbow Mountain. Make sure you turn left onto the Te Ara Ahi trail just opposite Okaro Road.

Now just follow the standard course, westward.

West to East Detour

The route is as above, in reverse, except that you can not ride up the Pakihi Track. If you choose to ride it, you will need to ride from Opotiki to Motu Rd (via the Dunes Trail) and then up Motu Rd and down the Pakihi Track back to Opotiki, and then ride the Dunes Trail a second time, to get back to the intersection of SH35 and Motu Rd.

Arataki Swing Bridge

The infamous Arataki Swing Bridge is being replaced, right now. We hope it'll be finished by the 21st, but these jobs are weather dependent, so there are no guarantees. If the bridge is not complete, there is a detour in place (see map at the link below). For the latest news, keep an eye on the Timber Trail Facebook page or Trail Status web page - <https://www.timbertrail.nz/trail-status/#Arataki>

General Info

Road rules apply on all roads (e.g., ride single file when other traffic is coming up behind you).

Take it easy on single tracks (most are two-way and all are shared with walkers).

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/366075710744657>

This is a great source of information. If you have a question that you can't find an answer for online, post it here and there's a good chance somebody will be able to help.

Start times

As usual, these will be the local sunrise times, give or take a few minutes:

East Cape – 6:07 am

Cape Egmont – 6: 21 am

Best get to the start at least 20 mins prior to the start, to do your last-minute prep. When you and your fellow riders agree the start time has arrived, pedal forth!

Photo Control Point Changes on the Whakatane reroutes

1. swap a scene along Motu Road for a scene along the Dunes Trail
2. swap Rere Rockslide for a shot of Burma Road track
3. swap Lake Waikaremoana for Whakatane River from the Warren Cole Walkway
4. swap Minginui Pou for Pine Plantation south of Te Teko.

Kōpiko Distance for 2024: Approximately 720-800 km (depending on whether or not you include the Pakihi Track).

Brevet Time for 2024: 3–12 days. No more, no less.

Hopefully the weather gods play nicely this year, and everyone rides beyond their expectations!

As the whakatauki/proverb goes...

Ko te pae tawhiti whāia kia tata, ko te pae tata whakamaua ka tina.

Seek out distant horizons and cherish those you attain.

Good luck!

Simon Kennett