

Te Ara Moana, sea-going pathway:

By Ruth E. Henderson

Biting the cherry



In July a group of nine, predominantly from the North Shore Yakity Yak kayak club were determined to be amongst the first to trial the newly opened South East Auckland sea kayak trail. We soon found that there were many ways to bite this cherry, and we might need several bites.

At a glance, it looks easy, a daisy picking meander along the coast: A jaunt from Omana Regional Park in the North to Waharau Regional Park in the South. And that's how the Auckland Council planned it; a one way trip, with five days of between 8 – 14 km of paddling, with time to make camp and explore the different parks along the way. A total of 51 km, suitable for novices, ok for sit-on-tops.

As 'intrepid sea-kayakers' the plan was to do the whole thing there and back in four days, averaging 25 km per day. The forecast was for two brilliant days bookending two crappy days of up to SW25 to 35 knots depending on which website you favoured. Obviously Plan A was not going to work. But this trail allows for plenty of flexibility, and has many potential Plan B's which suits my 'no cancellation policy'. So, advising the others to chuck in their boots, back pack and togs, just in case, we met at 8 am at Omana Beach boat ramp to discuss the weather and our options. We opted to paddle while we could; do a return day trip to Duder, then to retreat to Miranda Holiday Park and its enticing hot pools.

It was a sparkling day and soon proved to be a latte day. First stop was Maraetai...some of us had after all been up since 5 am. Rounding Maraetai Pt we waved to some picnickers, then cruised past the marae and church at Umupuia Beach, past the flowering wattles and coral trees and around Whakekeiwhara Pt to Duder Regional Park. Standing proud, the blue and orange totem pole marked the spot of the newly opened campsite. We scrambled up the hill for the panoramic views back towards Omana, over to Waiheke Island and South East towards Kawakawa Bay. Gorgeous! It seemed impossible that the weather was predicted to change so dramatically. However, heeding advice and the mare's tails, we retreated and headed back to our cars.

Miranda Holiday Park tourist flats and backpacker cabins, mid-winter, were surprise, surprise fully booked. Luckily we had tents, aye! We luxuriated in the hot pools and toasty kitchen planning our next

two days. The majority choose the Pinnacles Hut overnight tramp option. A couple of foodies, choose, well... food. Next morning, my creaking bones and I were inclined to switch, but, hey, I'd set out for a physical adventure...I was the leader, so how could I pike? Trekking up the stone staircase built in the 1920's to make it easier for the packhorses weekly trip in to the kauri loggers bush camps, we reflected that in comparison to those days, we had it easy. Polypro, Icebreaker, Kathmandu, Gortex...and an 80 bed hut with gas hobs. The Kauaeranga Information Centre weather board had suggested a temperature of one degree and rain, and the fine print? Four to six degrees colder in the ranges. That bunk room was like a freezer and next morning there was ice in the puddles and cold, cold steel ladders at the rock face. Back at Thames wharf we had lovely HOT chips and at

We scrambled up the hill for the panoramic views back towards Omana, over to Waiheke Island and South East towards Kawakawa Bay. Gorgeous!

Miranda, we wallowed in the hot pools and plotted our next adventure. The wind was still up, but it would be on our backs if we headed North!

Frost on our tents was a good omen. A car shuttle later, we were at the Waharau Regional Park, in the sunshine and back on the water. Ali's sail proved a magnet, and for a while we rafted up and relaxed. Kayaking, tramping and now sailing! The coloured totem pole





the wind and www.windfinder.com for Kawakawa Bay had proved so accurate on the last trip and subsequent ones, I trusted it's 15 to 20 knot call. A couple still vacillated, but a plan to start at Kawakawa Bay and base ourselves at Waitawa Bay only 3 km away from our cars synched it; it was game on. The car parking issue was solved by the friendly guy at the Beachcomber Motel, and the four of us launched from the beach opposite the motel. We cruised past the settlement, and once past Pawhetau Pt could easily spot that nights campsite and the adjoining building site and earthworks for Auckland Councils latest park due to be open this summer, Waitawa Regional Park.

Soon we slipped under the jetty, and rounded Koherurahi Pt to meander along the coast line towards the Wairoa River mouth, the reeds and rushes along the foreshore and the beckoning Duder Regional Park. Back at Waitawa, we pulled our boats up high into the grass, pitched tents (and tarps) and set about making the cooking shelter into home. Clothes lines were soon strung, billies boiled, and once the plastic stool I had literally dug up at lunch time was put into service, along with the other's collapsible, more portable ones, we were set. And spoilt, as Julie produced four wee puddings, with real whipped cream.

Dawn was calm, and as we packed up the wind stayed still, the rain waited; although we were satisfied we'd completed the trail, we could not go home yet, so set off to explore the nearby island of Karemurama. We mooched past the quarry, crossed to Pakihi Island and its grass and pine trees, spotted some interesting old machinery, but with an eye on the developing white caps, and the mare's tails flicking above, it was time to make a sprint for the cars. As we hit the beach the skies opened and the wind would have hit 20

knots. Windfinder was spot on. This summer I trust it will deliver four days of sunshine and balmy breezes so we can do the trail in the pre-ordained order in consecutive days.

broadcast our arrival at the Waikaha Stream backcountry campsite of Tapapakanga Regional Park. This is up the hill a bit set behind some majestic mature native taraire trees. We opted to go the extra mile to lunch at the main beachfront camp, near to the historic Ashby 1900 homestead.

On the trail again, our next stop was the Tawhitokino Beach campsite. Next to a stream and set back a bit from the pohutukawa lined beach, this one has no road access, but otherwise the usual composting toilet, tap, plus a cooking shelter. It was a dinky wee campsite and got the vote as the most delightful spot so far. Now, all we had to do was round Raukura Pt to the boat ramp and car park at Kawakawa Bay. Neatly timed, we didn't have to wheel or carry our kayaks too far; something you have to beware of on this coast. Joining the dots between Kawakawa Bay, Waitawa campsite and Duder would have to wait for another time.

Take Two was an 'invitation only' trip, for keen members of the previous month's group, to complete what we had originally set out to achieve. The tides were right, but that rain and wind continued to frustrate! It was a case of pick which forecast suited your half full or half empty philosophy - do you look at the predicted wind or the gusts? I look at



There Is No Wrong Way To Do The Te Ara Moana -

but there are a few things you need to get right!

The first thing to get right is the tide; otherwise you could find it discouraging at launching or have a long portage at the end of the day. It may not be wet sand, or boggy mud that is the curse but boulders or rocky shelves, making trolley use impossible.

The second thing to get right is the wind. It may be hard to find a weather window of four or five days in a row without wind, but at least try to get it and your direction of travel compatible and get some assistance. Far nicer, less effort if you have tail wind compared to battling into it. This may mean starting at Waharau and heading to Omana. If starting at Waharau, doing a return journey and camping at Omana come around into Kelly's Beach, preferably at high tide, and land before the walking bridge. As you start to portage up the gravel track turn left to enter the camping ground at the lower end as this equals less distance to portage than the alternative tar-sealed track.



Tui Excel
A versatile, go anywhere kayak

Penguin
A tried and true winner that delivers affordable excellence

Shearwater
A proven design that just got better

Skua
An exceptional performance sea kayak

SOUTHERN ENDEAVOUR

Waterborne FREEDOM

For all the kayak specs. and stockists, visit www.q-kayaks.co.nz or phone 06 326 8667
Skua - 1st Plastic Sea Kayak -Trans Taupo Race 2011
- Circumnavigation around the South Island.



The third consideration is accommodation. Where to stop for the night is extremely well catered for. The Auckland Council has done a sterling job in this department with the addition of the campsite at Duder Regional Park and the latest park at Waitawa near Kawakawa. All bar Duder and Omana have a cooking shelter. All have taps and toilets. BYO tent and cooker. Waharau has hot showers! In winter the website will show most campsites to be 'fully booked'. This is code for closed to motorists due to wet ground and potentially bogged campervans and cars messing up the grass and needing towing. When booking you will need to explain that you will be arriving and departing by kayak and will make less of an impression than a wheelbarrow.



your gear at the beachfront near the boat ramp or the toilet block. Auckland Council suggests you start and park at Kelly's Beach, but I'd not want to leave my car there for several nights. If starting at Waharau, likewise I'd park by the Ranger's office. So the rangers don't call the cops thinking they have a missing person or stolen car, leave them a note with your name, car rego number and intentions. If starting in the middle at Kawakawa Bay there is a farmer who advertises parking 021 184 8260 and off-season ask at the Beachcomber Motel 09 2922815.

The fourth factor is transport and/or where to park your car. In the future, if enough folk do the trail, maybe an enterprising person will run a van and trailer unit to tote you and your kayak back to your car. Meanwhile you either need to get dropped off; do a car shuttle leaving at least one vehicle at your destination ready to take you back to the beginning; or paddle both ways. For the latter two options you need to confidently leave your car somewhere safe. If starting at Omana, I'd suggest you park in the car park near the Ranger's office. Firstly unload



Te Ara Moana, sea-going pathway: campsites heading in a South East direction

To book your campsite and/or to get an Auckland Council camping pass at \$63 year phone 09 301 0101, to print out a map and details of the trail got to www.regionalparks.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz find the Te Ara Moana listing and in the first paragraph, click for Brochure.



Omana Regional Park
Cliff top campground
\$13 adult
100 person max
7 nights max stay
Long drop toilets, water taps
outside toilets, camp fire site
Distance to next Park 11km
Portage 140m at high tide - 450m
at low tide from Kelly's
Beach; 1360m from Omana ramp.

Duder Regional Park
Te Wharau (Malua Bay)
\$6 adult
20 person max
2 night max stay
Long drop toilet
Tap on hill by toilet
Distance to next Park 14km
Portage 5-6m



Waitawa Regional Park
Waitawa Bay
\$6 adult
20 person max
2 night max stay
Long drop toilet
Tap on tank, cooking shelter
Distance to next Park 10km
Portage 12-30m

Tawhitokino Regional Park
Tawhitokino
\$6 adult
20 person max
7 night max stay
Long drop toilets, stream
Cooking shelter
Distance to next Park 8km
Portage 22-60m



Tapapakanga Regional Park
Waikaha Stream
\$6 adult
20 person max
2 night max stay
Long drop toilet, tap
Cooking shelter
Distance to next Park 8km
Portage 20-40m

Tapapakanga Regional Park
Beachfront campground
\$13 adult
40 person max
7 night max stay
Toilets, taps outside toilets
Distance to next Park 8km
Portage 5-20m



Waharau Regional Park
Tainui campground
\$13 adult
60 person max
7 night max stay
Flush toilets, showers, taps
Cooking shelter
Distance to next Park – end of
kayak trail but if going North
8km, portage 470- 525m

Waharau Regional Park
Blackberry Flat campground
\$13 adult
40 person max
7 night max stay
Long drop toilets, taps.
Distance to next Park - end
of kayak trail but if going
North 8km
Portage 1200m



NB. This camp is fully booked every year from about 7 Dec to 7 Feb.

Other options: Alternative Accommodation:

Miranda – useful if Waharau park sites full or unable to do the long portage.

Miranda Holiday Park 07 867 3205

Tourist apartments to backpacker style cabins even in winter are likely to be booked out on Saturday nights. Camping \$23 all-weather sites, excellent kitchen, includes use of the landscaped hot pool.

Miranda Shorebird Centre 09 232 2781

Self-contained suite with kitchen and loo sleep 6 or 4, averages out to about \$36 each or dormitory with shared facilities \$25

Kawakawa Bay – useful if starting or stopping in the middle of the kayak trail.

Beachcomber Motel 09 2922815

Normal motel units, but extra friendly and helpful. Tony let us park our cars for free when we were not even staying there! Off season motel units \$100/2 Peak \$120/2.