

# Lake Okareka

- One day of a great trip.

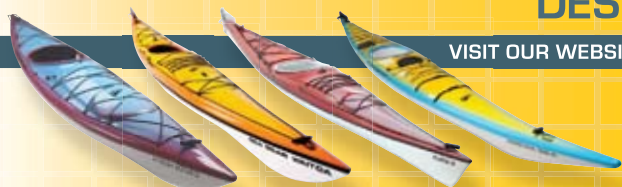
By Diana Austin

*Navigating through the tunnels while being careful not to scratch our boats.*

Ten enthusiastic Auckland Yakity Yakkers led by Luke and myself were paddling Lake Okareka's 10 km circumference clockwise on the windless Monday of Queen's Birthday weekend. Mist created an eerie atmosphere in which we explored the beautiful, bush covered shoreline and mysterious caves.

Shortly after venturing onto the water we discovered several moss shrouded tunnels along the lake's edge. The tunnels intersected and were a boat length or two long. There was some boat scraping and head banging as each group member travelled through in all directions (everyone except me in our shiny new Wind 585!). Further along reflections of the bush to the water's edge with a touch of mist were stunning.

After lunch and chatting with knowledgeable locals who were on the walkway we paddled past the south and southwest wetland of giant,



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rush-like plants and massive water lilies. Then we 'real estate dreamed' about the lawns, deck chairs and houses with wonderful views. The lake had charmed us.

Our weekend trip had included three of Rotorua's lakes; a brave trip in the wind and rain to explore Lake Tarawera, the traditional hot water pools on Lake Rotoiti and lastly by vote (with a marginal win) Lake Okareka. Lake Okareka is close to the Blue (Tikitapu) Lake and 15 minutes drive

from Rotorua. It drains into Lake Tarawera underground. Although not a big lake, this group of paddlers made it last several hours leaving no corner, cave or tunnel uncovered. There was something awesome and tranquil about Lake Okareka that we all experienced that day. A less well known lake provided one of those memorable paddles you treasure.

P.S. The boats and gear were cleaned between lakes to avoid the spread of didymo.



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