

Waitaia Beach Ride

[Allow car travel 20 mins each way; ride time- 2 hours + and extra for swim]

This ride is ideal in the summer, and whilst winter riding is also on, some of the road rocks can get slippery. To access it, drive from Whitianga 14 km on SH 25 towards Kuaotunu. On the right is Waitaia Road. It is really like a country lane (an old miners track) as it winds its way up the Waitaia Valley. There are a few lifestyle farms alongside the road, and then it comes to an end with signage advising that the road beyond is not maintained by TCDC and also the DoC sign for the start of the Waitaia Loop Track and Kiwi Zone. No dogs are permitted in the area.

Here there is a small car park. Use it as the road through the Coromandel Forest Park has no passing bays for nearly a kilometer. Whilst the road is okay for 4 wheel drive, cars should not attempt it but it is a good riding surface with wash outs, muddy holes and some large slippery rock faces. This road then enters the forest following old mining trails with streams below. Alongside are pink markers for trapping lines; please do not touch them.

The road continues to climb, and climb and climb. Most of it can be ridden but you may have to push a few spots. At the saddle rest and eat to recover. Time lapse is about 35 mins. The downhill ride has some loose rock on hard surfaces. At the end of the road is a gate behind which is pasture. You can park the bike here and follow the stream to the beach, which is a 5 minute walk.

Waitaia Beach is a pleasant sandy beach facing south. There is a stream in the middle and it is said that there is thermal water flowing there but I did not see it. The outlook is to Hahei Beach, Cooks Beach and the Mercury Bay islands. Swimming is good and safe. There are mussel rocks close by. Remove car keys from your pocket before swimming!

The return is back to the bikes and a climb up to the saddle. However once at the top the ride back to the car park is fast and exhilarating, quite an adrenalin rush, but do not touch your disc brakes when you stop as they will be hot.

Load the car and head back to SH 25. If you want surf to cool off in, turn right to Kuaotunu Beach 1.5 km before retracing your steps to Whitianga.

For those in the group not riding:

At the car park go through the gate on the right and across pasture for a 2 hour return trip on the Loop Track. It is a well marked DoC track. Track follows stream with waterfalls. Bush has some large trees and most is re-growth. Lots of kanuka, old puriris and even rimu. There are old mines and workings so keep to the track to avoid old mine shafts. After heavy rain track can be muddy and streams will wet your feet. Follow the stream and pass the picnic table. After 30 mins there is a part that needs climbing up the steps but otherwise it is easy going. Look for a small detour (2 mins) on a side track near the top. Here there is a picnic area surrounded by mine workings. The return trip being downhill is faster. There are good views down the valley from various spots. The two hours suggested is generous and allows for extended picnics at the tables along the track.

No mobile telephone reception in area. (Oct 08.)