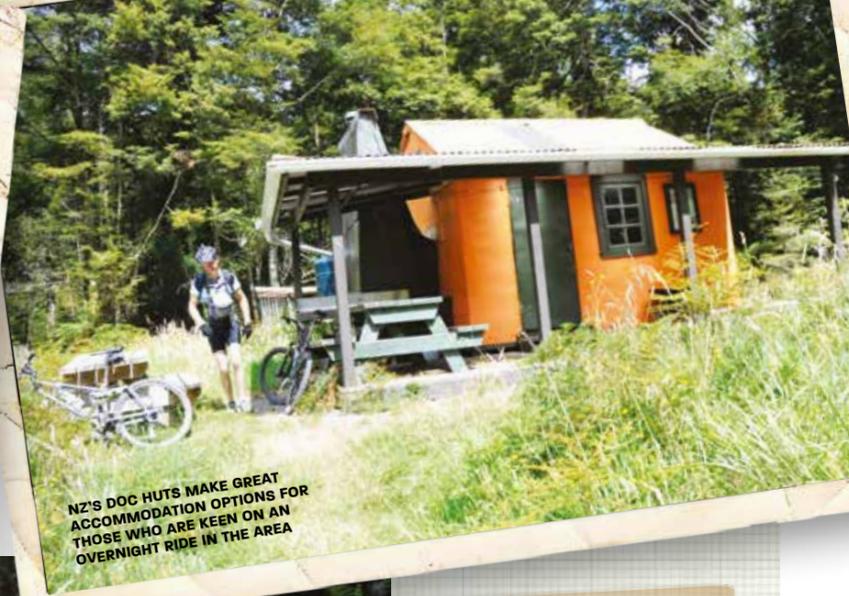


THE HUB  
WHAT,  
WHERE &  
HOW TO



JAILHOUSE SHUTTLES WILL SEE YOU TO THE START OF THE TRAIL AND CAN PICK YOU UP AT DAY'S END, TOO



NZ'S DOC HUTS MAKE GREAT ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS FOR THOSE WHO ARE KEEN ON AN OVERNIGHT RIDE IN THE AREA

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY HUW KINGSTON

# PLACES THAT ROCK

## THE MOERANGI TRAIL, NEW ZEALAND



THE SIGNAGE IN WHIRINAKI CONSERVATION PARK IS EXCELLENT

### FACILITIES

- TOILETS** Yes
- DRINKING WATER** Yes
- PARKING** Yes
- TRAILS SIGNPOSTED** Yes. All tracks throughout Whirinaki Conservation Park are clearly marked
- SHELTER** Yes
- BBO FACILITIES** No
- ACCOMMODATION** Yes, at DOC Huts on the trail or nearby campsites. Jailhouse Shuttles also offers accom.

### RATINGS

- Technical** ★★★★★
- Fitness level** ★★★★★
- X-Country** ★★★★★
- Trail** ★★★★★
- All/Mtn** ★★★★★
- Downhill** ★★★★★
- Jump** ★★★★★

CREEK CROSSINGS ARE FUN, BUT IF YOU CAN AVOID THEM ALL THE BETTER

While it's the Whaka Trails that made Rotorua famous, anyone heading over to New Zealand's Central North Island region for a week or two will want to experience any number of stunning rides and trails accessible from town. Taupo, and its increasing range of trails, is also only an hour away and offers days of riding as a mountainbike destination in its own right. The Motu Trails down by the coast near Whakatane are brilliant, too, and include the stunning Pakihi Trail. One magical ride not to be missed is the Moerangi Trail. Less than an hour (90km) south-east of Rotorua, hidden in Whirinaki Conservation Park, is this 37km singletrack gem. It's a point-to-point journey but, this being NZ,

bike shuttle options make it an easy option for riders. **GETTING THERE** Breakout Adventures and Jailhouse Shuttles (jailhousefarmstay.co.nz, Tel +64 7 366 3311) will get you from Rotorua to/from the Moerangi. Jailhouse Shuttles is based out at Whirinaki, where Scott and Vanessa have a 2500-acre farm, and farm stay (great option for an overnight). You can also drive yourself to the Jailhouse and get shuttled to the start of the trail and from the end (although it is only a 10km mostly downhill run back to your car from the trailhead at Te Whaiti Nui A Toi Canyon). **TECHNICAL NATURE** The trail has everything - a feeling of remoteness, exposed

trails, heart pumping climbs, long singletrack descents, clear rivers and a couple of beautiful huts that make you wish you'd brought your overnight gear. The trail was well known to walkers but in 2009 was opened to bikes. From the end of the road at Okahu, a steep climb gives warning of what is to come, but you're soon swooping down the side of the Whangatawhia Stream, beneath ancient podocarp trees and magnificent ferns. **YOU'LL NEED** Take plenty of food for the ride. There is good water at the huts and in the rivers. The ride will take reasonably fit people 4-5 hours but you won't want to rush this one. More information on [www.doc.govt.nz/whirinaki](http://www.doc.govt.nz/whirinaki)

Hut after 7km, too early for anything but a photo and a look around. A decent climb with some testing gradients takes you up and over to Rogers Hut 13km in. From Rogers, make sure you keep your wheels on the track as some sharp corners have precipitous drops if you miss them; Moerangi Stream is a long way down! After 22km, Moerangi Hut arrives in good time for lunch, and fuelling up for the sustained 4km, 300m climb to Moerangi Saddle. The final reward of a ride that is all good things, is a 9km run down (with a little up) to the Whirinaki River at Te Whaiti Nui A Toi Canyon, and then out to the road head for a pick up. **LOCAL KNOWLEDGE** Toilets, and picnic areas/shelters are found at Okahu Road End and also at the track's end-point

of River Road car park. The DOC huts along the trail also have toilets and water. **BEST TIME OF YEAR** You can ride the Moerangi Trail any time of year. October to March is warmer, with longer days, and it's worth checking weather conditions before heading out as the area can cop a lot of rain. **WHILE IN THE AREA** if you have any energy left after the Moerangi, pedal down the road and enjoy the Whirinaki Forest MTB Track, a dedicated MTB track that comprises 16km of sweet singletrack, which can also be broken up into shorter sections. Nearby Taupo and Rotorua are the two major tourist cities and offer a massive range of riding opportunities, as well as other adventure activities.

**LOCAL BIKE SHOPS** Rotorua is jam-packed with bike shops, all filled with friendly, super-helpful staffers who might even down tools and join you for a ride. Check [www.riderotorua.com](http://www.riderotorua.com) for a complete listing. **LOCAL CLUB CONTACTS** Rotorua Mountain Bike Club is a club we'd all like to be members off, thanks to the mega-impressive trail network in and around Rotorua. Check [rotorua.mtbclub.org.nz](http://rotorua.mtbclub.org.nz) for more info. **REGULAR EVENTS** Where do we start? This part of NZ is chockers with riding events: The Rotorua Bike Festival; Rotorua Moonride; the awesome Whaka 100 and many more. There are also plenty of club events on most weekends. MTB heaven? Yep, you betcha. **AMB**