



## HISTORY & BACKGROUND

Urban pathways navigate riders from the historic village of Upokongaro along the banks of the Whanganui River, through the heart of a historic and creative city and finally to the black-sand beaches where the Whanganui River meets the Tasman Sea.

With an 800+ year history of Te Ati Haunui-a-Paparangi occupation, the mouth of the Whanganui River has been home to iwi for hundreds of years. Whanganui was also an early destination for European settlers. The development of a bustling port and an expanding national rail network made Whanganui an important transport and trade hub from the late 19th century.

By 1916, Whanganui was New Zealand's fifth biggest city.

The city's heritage is still on display, with perfectly preserved Edwardian and Victorian architecture lining the main streets of the city. The Whanganui Regional Museum is home to a significant collection of taonga Māori. Two authentic riverboats still cruise the Whanganui River, and the Durie Hill Tunnel and Elevator have been operating for over one hundred years.

Today, Whanganui is a thriving community, known for its vibrant creative scene, beautiful city centre and welcoming culture. Riders will find plenty of reasons to stop and stay while.

## HIGHLIGHTS

**Coastal ride along the Whanganui River**

**Untamed Tasman Sea coast with black sand beaches**

**Whanganui – New Zealand's only UNESCO City of Design**

**Quirky cafes and eateries**

**Whanganui River Markets (Every Saturday)**

**Historic riverboats**

**Durie Hill Tunnel and Underground Elevator**

**Stunning street art and galleries**



## TRAIL ROUTE

A stunning mostly flat ride along the awa. Discover some of Whanganui's special moments in history, design secrets and more, culminating in the awe inspiring (and sometimes tempestuous) Tasman Sea, where the awa's journey from the maunga to the moana finally concludes.

Kicking off from the village of Upokongaro where riverboats ply their trade – taking passengers (and sometimes bikes) up and down from the city of Whanganui – as they have done for over a century. This is a fabulous place to stop and grab a coffee and sustenance from one of the great local eateries. This is also a great opportunity to pop out and explore the purpose-built mountain bike tracks at That Place (12km upstream from Upokongaro). Head south towards the pedestrian/cycling bridge (opened 2020). Follow the path over the bridge and take a sharp left under the road to the Upokongaro bridge. Connecting Aramoho and Upokongaro, this bridge, has made a significant difference to the community and the active habits of locals.

The mostly concrete trail hugs the right-hand side of the river wending through the horticultural outskirts of town. Mixing old and new; from the birthplace of New Zealand's kiwifruit industry (the Hayward variety was developed and grown here) past a new gin distillery nestled in its own pear grove. The suburbs of the city open around you- as you head past the Whanganui Top 10 holiday park, and Te Ao Hou marae.

The Hylton mountain bike park is up in the hills on your right, keep left as you head past the Aramoho Whanganui Rowing Club with the railway bridge next on your left. Next landmark is the old bailey bridge (known as Dublin St Bridge). There is an underpass at this bridge, so you don't have to brave the busy roundabout. On a clear day, if you look to your left there are spectacular views of Mt Ruapehu, a satisfying reminder of where the Mountains to Sea journey commences.

Passing the historic and culturally significant Pākaitore - Moutoa Gardens on your right you'll arrive at the pier where the riverboats dock. There are a multiplicity of sculptures to discover on your route, which will both intrigue and invite you to stop and consider. These include Balancing Act – Daniel Clifford (the Pencils), Mountains to Sea – Mikel Durel Browne, Kerry McDonnell and Max Cody, Protection in Adversity – Joe



Morrel, Moorings – Pete Nicholls, Bearing (a great place to take an insta shot of you and the river reflected in the stainless-steel surface) – David McCracken, Kererū – Paul Dibley, Here a train a comin – Britt Brunkley. For those inclined, is a whole trail dedicated to arts.

As you meander along Taupō Quay, make the most of what is on offer with a range of great cafes, artisan spots, the Sarjeant on the Quay (the Sarjeant Gallery on the hill will be reopening 2024) and more. If you're here on a Saturday, the Whanganui River markets are worth exploring. The city has been named New Zealand's UNESCO City of Design, it is easy to see why when you explore the buildings and their unique architecture.

Pop off the trail up into Drews Ave with its outdoor seating and a bohemian vibe – this a wonderful place to chill for a while. The local i-SITE is the place to discover more to explore in Whanganui. There is a map and a bike repair stand here also. Whanganui's main street, Victoria Avenue is up to your right, home to a range of independent and national retail options interspersed with fountains and other traditional features. This area is also home to the nationally famous Cooks Gardens athletics track (famous for Peter Snell's record-breaking mile in 1962), the outdoor wooden velodrome (1995) replacing one built in the early 1930's and the Royal Whanganui Opera House (1899). Records of cycling in Whanganui date back to the 1870's with locals racing and riding the aptly named boneshaker bikes! This area features great photo opportunities as you navigate among the murals. Plan time to explore the city centre, there's much to see and many arts opportunities to engage with.

This may be a suitable time to detour across the bridge, walk the 200m tunnel and take a ride on the historic Durie Hill Elevator. Built in 1919, it's New Zealand's only public transport elevator and operates daily taking people up inside the hill for 65m. At the top you'll see one of the best views of Whanganui, overlooking the awa and the city. Back on to the trail, ducking under the City Bridge (keep an eye out for the fountain that flows alongside) as you head towards the traditional fishing and industrial zones of the city. Stop and take your picture beside the leaning upturned train constructed entirely of locally fired bricks.



The river widens and changes through this section as the fresh water from the mountains starts to mix with the salty brine from the Tasman Sea. A visit to Whanganui is not complete without taking in the structural remnants of old wharves, driftwood and the ever-changing patterns on the riverbanks. Keep an eye out of the Mountains to Sea – Ngā Ara Tūhono km markers enroute as it can be easy to become distracted by everything around you.

High on the stop banks you'll pass the industrial heart of the city including just down the road Pacific Helmets who were New Zealand's only bicycle helmet makers for many decades. Keep a close eye on the trail markers as you skirt around Q-West (prominent for producing luxury boats) then turn left back onto the banks to the awa.

Soon your wheels will be rolling through the ubiquitous black sands of the North Island west coast. The North Mole (another name for a breakwater) stretches out into the Tasman protecting the harbour and providing a haven for fishing and surfing! This area has been recently restored as part of the Te Pūwaha joint initiative redevelopment.

Breathe in the fresh air and reflect on your journey. Look west towards Mt Taranaki, south to Kāpiti island and northeast towards Mt Ruapehu. Celebrate with your own driftwood creation on the beach and then continue to explore the area of Castlecliff village with its surf club, playgrounds, and local café.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE TRAIL  
AND SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE VIA  
OUR SHORT SURVEY.



SHARE YOUR PHOTOS & STORIES:  
HELP SPREAD THE WORD



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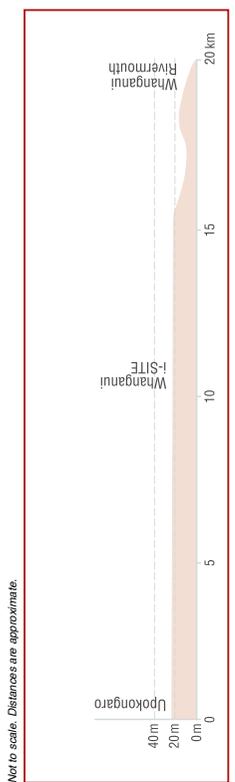
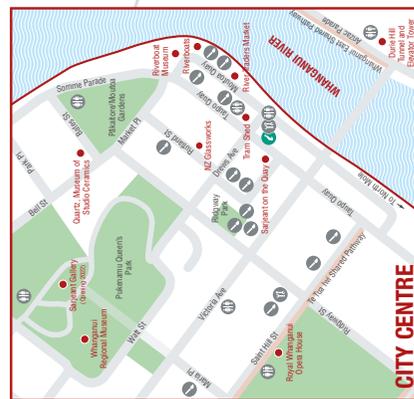
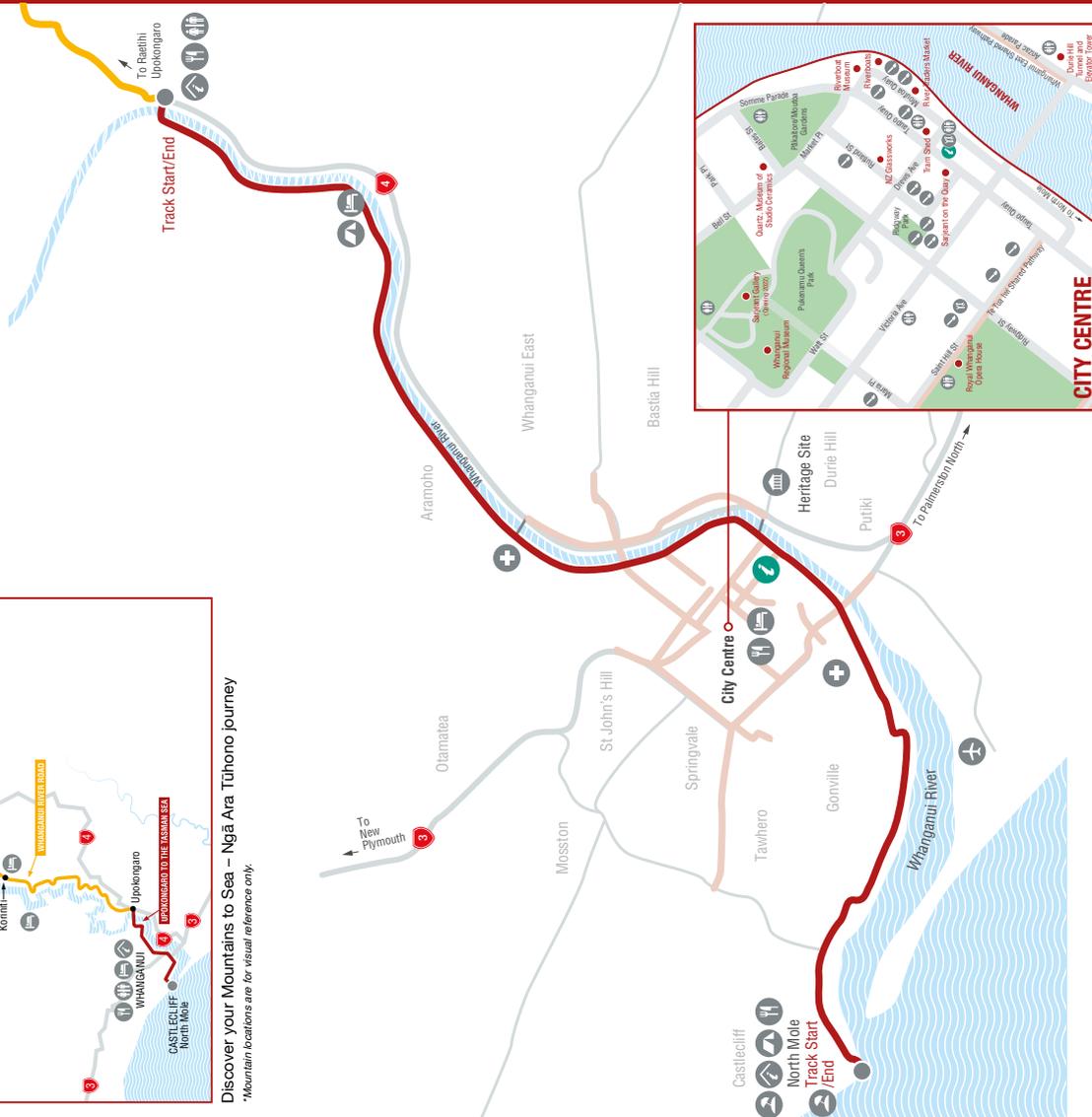
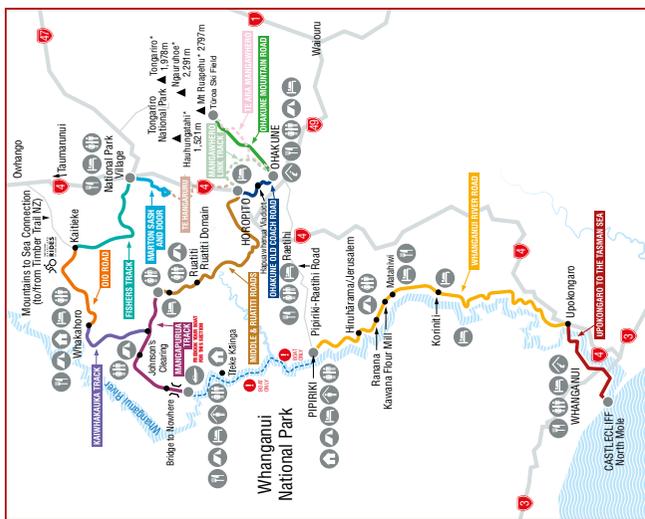
WHANGANUI  
ALL YOU NEED (AND THEN SOME)

# UPOKONGARO TO THE TASMAN SEA



**LEGEND**

- M2S Trail
- Road
- Information
- Toilets
- Heritage Site
- Public Art
- Food
- Campsite
- Accommodation
- Hospital/Medical Centre
- Beach
- Bike Repair



GRADE  
**3**

LENGTH  
**19 km**

TOTAL DESCENT  
**Undulating**

DURATION  
**1-4 hrs**

Or longer (depending on how much exploring you do)

LOCATION  
**Whanganui**

RIDE  
Take your time and enjoy the change of pace.

DIRECTION  
While the trail may be ridden in any direction, most people choose to ride from Upokongaro to North Mole.

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