

Spotlight on Auckland: Tawharanui Regional Park

You might want to pencil this into your wishlist for a day trip (or two, or even an overnight camp) when you are in Auckland for the NZ Mega event next October. **Tawharanui Regional Park** is an absolute slice of paradise that up until recently was relatively untouched by the game of geocaching, with just a few geocaches located in the vicinity.

The park is situated on a stunning piece of North Island coastline, approx 1 hr drive north of Auckland. It features a predator fence allowing for rare native birds to have been introduced to the area including Kiwi (brown kiwi - Kiri's brothers from other mothers, well, sub-species anyway) along with the endangered Takahe.

Within the last few months, the geocache population at Tawharanui has exploded, mostly along the Takatu peninsula that extends into the Hauraki Gulf at the south-eastern end of the beach. The park is a paradise for walkers, runners, and cyclists (with suitably off-road-capable bikes), who are rewarded with spectacular 360 degree views from many vantage points around the park - indeed there almost isn't a single spot that you couldn't call beautiful! Upon reaching the tip of Takatu point, the views are amazing across the gulf to the Coromandel Peninsula in the south-east, and Little Barrier (Te Hauturu-o-Toi) and Great Barrier (Aotea) islands to the east. You can even look north to the Hen and Chicks (Marotere) Islands.

FUN FACT: Takahe are so rare that they were, at the turn of the 20th century, thought to be entirely extinct. They were only re-discovered in 1948 after there had been no sightings, nor evidence found of their survival, for 50 years! As of 2020 there are known to be just over 400 Takahe in existence.



There are currently more than 90 geocaches hidden in the park, along with two excellent Adventure Lab series - with a wide variety of geocache containers, hiding types and styles represented - surely more than enough to keep any mere mortal geocacher satisfied for at least a day or two! What will you do? Will you pick out the easiest ones, the most scenic ones, or just go all out because everyone secretly knows you actually do gotta cache 'em all (just kidding, really... or maybe, no really... or...)

As Bruce will now demonstrate in the pictures below, and I am sure you will all agree, this is a stunningly beautiful spot to spend a day or two looking for hidden boxes! And the occasional photo opp...



What do you give a **MAAAD** Geocacher for Xmas?

The gift of **geocaching** of course! Don't worry, we are not about to break out into a chorus of Jingle Bells - you'll be getting enough of **that** at the supermarket I'm sure - but here are a few of our suggestions for packing the best goodies into your geo-Christmas stockings this year:

- 1** - An amazing **Gold** or **Silver supporter pack** for the NZ Mega event next year, jam packed full of really awesome swag! Come on, you didn't expect us to not suggest that did you? But seriously, it's a great way to **support the event** while also getting some seriously cool stuff for your geo-friend or loved one.
- 2** - A year of **premium membership** with Geocaching.com. Self-explanatory really, you just get all of the cool **premium functionality** offered on the geocaching.com website so that you can make geocaching all about getting outdoors and finding caches and not so much about admin!
- 3** - **NZ Mega pathtags** and **geocoins**. Great for collecting and trading, all tags and coins produced for the NZ Mega are designed in New Zealand and strictly limited in quantity, so there's always that collectible rarity about them.
- 4** - We couldn't go any further down this list without mentioning the **awesome geocoins** available from the NZ Mega principal sponsor: **geocoins.nz**. Check out their **store** for, not only NZ Mega merchandise, but also some gorgeous geocoins such as the **GC45 Tribute Plaque** and **Aotearoa Deluxe geocoins**, and select **Shop Geocaching items**.
- 5** - OK, so we ran out of great ideas here, so maybe just loop back up to number 1 and go through the list again! 😊

COVID Update

We'll make this update fairly brief and to the point just to bring you up to speed with what we know about what's happening in the world at the moment. For two reasons:

- 1. We don't really know any more than anyone else*
- 2. We really really don't want to jinx anything (Murphy needs no encouragement right now)*

What we do know is that New Zealand is proudly leading the way with its attempt to "control" the virus, or at least hold it at bay. Australia is not doing too bad either, and after a hiccup in Melbourne a couple of months ago, they are slowly relaxing their state borders and allowing more freedom back into daily life. It seems apparent that a travel bubble at least between New Zealand and Australia, along with one or two Pacific islands, is near to becoming reality.

We also, like a lot of people, I think, have our fingers crossed for the release of a vaccine. No, we're not counting chickens yet, and nor do we want to get in amongst the debate of whether a vaccine will be effective, accepted and administered widely enough, or even how to overcome all the problems in distributing such a vaccine around the world. We're just hoping that some people much smarter than us are on the case, and we will continue to watch events unfold.

What we can definitely say is that the **NZ Mega** event is on course to go ahead in October 2021, and the team will continue, as they have been, to do everything in their power to make that happen.

In the meantime, certainly our hearts go out to all of the populations around the world that are still well and truly embroiled in the Covid crisis. We wish every one of you the best and hope that you stay safe, stay healthy, and get through this mess, along with us here in New Zealand.

Please email nzmega2020@gmail.com to find out how you can support the event and become an NZ Mega 2020 Partner or Friend of NZ Mega.

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