

NZ MEGA BREAKING NEWS

NZ Mega 2020 has officially been postponed to 2021.

This was not an easy decision by the NZ Mega Team, in fact it was a very painful one for the team to make. However, the team considers this to now be the most sensible response to the COVID-19 situation, and that it injects much needed certainty, allowing everyone the best opportunity to make or change plans accordingly and with as much advance notice as possible.

While we are not medical experts, we have consulted with advisors and professionals both medical and across the travel industry to gauge expectations of the post COVID-19 recovery, and have therefore based this decision on the following assessments:

- Cross-Tasman travel (between NZ and Australia) is not expected to restart for 6 months, approximately.
- International travel beyond the Tasman is not expected in any significant volume for at least 12 months, with a reasonable recovery not expected for 12 to 18 months.
- Travel restrictions, including 14 day quarantine upon arrival in New Zealand, are likely to be in place for the next 6 to 12 months depending on originating country.
- Event size restrictions could be in place for the next 6 months or more, posing unworkable limits on the number of people who can attend an event or public gathering.
- There is the possibility for additional wave(s) of COVID-19 infection following the relaxing of lockdown rules, as have been witnessed in other countries, meaning there is the potential risk of further/extended lockdown period(s).
- A vaccine for COVID-19 is expected in the next 12 to 18 months.

The team feels that the NZ Mega 2020 event is such a significant celebration – 20 years of the sport, and 20 years since GC45, the first geocache hidden outside of the USA – that allowing COVID-19 to compromise the event was simply not an option we could entertain.

Even if the NZ Mega 2020 event could have continued with the original date of October 2020, it would almost certainly have meant that no one from outside of New Zealand, including special guests from the US, Europe and elsewhere, would be able to attend. And that is not to mention the likelihood that the number of geocachers attending from around New Zealand would also be negatively affected due to health concerns and travel restrictions. Simply put, in the world of quarantine, restrictions and uncertainty that COVID-19 has dropped upon us while we battle with this virus, the event would not feel very "mega".

The NZ Mega 2020 event will go ahead, there is absolutely no doubt of that – so to ensure that it does so in a safe and responsible manner, the event has been rescheduled for Labour Weekend 2021 – 22nd to 25th October 2021. The official event date will be Saturday 23rd October 2021. Despite the event postponement, Geocaching HQ have confirmed that NZ Mega 2020 retains Mega status as it was awarded upon publication.

The NZ Mega Team understands that this may be very disappointing news to many of you. And indeed it is, but the team considers this to be the best and only way to guarantee a truly MEGA celebration – one that everyone can safely attend and enjoy, and one that suitably reflects the efforts of the team and event volunteers.

So now that COVID-19 has brought us to this point, let's kick it in the guts, flip it the bird, and start getting excited for a fantastic NZ Mega 2020 event in 2021!

Celebrating GC45's Birthday

Anyone who has been watching for updates on the "First NZ and First Outside the US" event (GC8HMW4) originally scheduled for May 12, will have seen the announcement that the event has been disabled and will be postponed to a later date, due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation. The NZ Mega Team feels it is "the only safe and responsible course of action at this time" due to the current COVID-19 response and alert level across New Zealand. Additionally the team do not want to encourage any non-essential travel or public gatherings for the time being.

But this does not mean we won't be celebrating GC45's 20th birthday – that would mean we've let COVID-19 win, and that's definitely not going to happen!

The place that GC45 occupies in the world history of geocaching is too important not to be celebrated, so the team have opted for a virtual birthday party in the form of a YouTube live-stream. We've talked to our good friends thecuriouskiwis, who will be running a live-stream on their YouTube channel on May 12, 2020, from 10am NZST. You won't want to miss this, as there will be a surprise for everyone, guaranteed!

Special thanks to thecuriouskiwis and geocoins.nz for making this happen.

Your Questions Answered

Why has the NZ Mega 2020 event been postponed?

The world is in a state of crisis due to COVID-19, with every country around the world taking measures to slow the virus spread and minimise its effects. This has resulted in unprecedented restrictions on people movement and contact, quarantine, travel restrictions and limits on public gatherings. With severe restrictions expected to remain in place for months ahead, it became the only responsible course of action to postpone the NZ Mega 2020 event until a time when we can expect COVID-19 to be under control, with travel and event restrictions lifted, and a vaccine widely available.

Will the NZ Mega 2020 event be cancelled?

No, the event will not be cancelled. The NZ Mega Team are fully committed to hosting an amazing NZ Mega 2020 event, and this is the very reason that the decision has been made to postpone the event until 2021 – to provide much-needed certainty to the wider geocaching community that the event will definitely go ahead safely and responsibly, and that they will be able to travel unhindered to the event, once the COVID-19 situation has been dealt with.

What if I have purchased a Supporter Pack or merchandise for pickup at the event?

Your Supporter Pack, and all other pre-purchased event merchandise, will be available at the NZ Mega 2020 event for collection, in October 2021. All Supporter Pack and merchandise sales will be honoured, and in fact the team are considering adding extra items to the Supporter Packs - bonus!

What if I can't make it to the event on the new dates?

For those that cannot attend the event on the new 2021 dates, the NZ Mega Team will work with you to ensure that you get your purchased items delivered out to you. Some items will need to wait until the event date before they can be sent out.

Can I get a refund on my Gold or Silver Supporter Pack?

Because the event has been postponed due to circumstances beyond anyone's control, and because the funds that the NZ Mega Team have collected so far have already been spent on the event – merchandise, contents of Supporter Packs, venue, etc – no refunds can be given. Instead, all event registrations will be automatically shifted to the new event dates, and all Supporter Packs and merchandise will be available at the NZ Mega 2020 event on the new dates.

How is the NZ Mega Team coping through all of this?

We're ok, thanks for asking. We are definitely concerned for our community though, and for the wider community beyond. These are truly unprecedented times, and many people, including those within the geocaching community, will be affected by this either directly, or through life-changing events such as loss of jobs, businesses, or loved-ones, so lets make sure we are all extra thoughtful, caring, and supportive towards one another. Together we will get through this!

How to Geocache from Home?

Quarantine or isolation getting you down? Itching to get back out there? When you're stuck at home, but you're dying to be out geocaching, what can you do? Well, there are actually a few things you can do – well, not really geocaching itself in terms of physically finding caches, but there is still a lot of fun to be had...

PUZZLE SOLVING

Try switching off Netflix and powering down down the Playstation, and pick up where you left off on some of those trickier puzzle caches dotted around your neighbourhood. Start with ones that are rated as easier and then work your way up to the more difficult puzzles. Stuck on a difficult puzzle? Try looking at easier puzzles, if there are any, by the same cache owner as this may give you ideas on where to look for clues. And don't forget the golden rule for puzzle cache solving - the final cache is almost always within 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) of the published coordinates, which means the final coordinates will bear some similarities to the published coordinates, nudge nudge...

TRIP PLANNING

Is there a cluster of geocaches sitting on your map just tempting you out for a day trip, or perhaps there's a string of caches out there just begging for a road trip? Now is the perfect time to check them out on the map, look for nearby roads and walking tracks and work out the most efficient (or most scenic, or enjoyable) order in which to tackle them. If they are roadside geocaches, check them out on Google Streetview to see if you can spot where they might be hidden, or identify the best and safest place to park when you are finally able to get back out there.

VIRTUAL TOURISM

No, we don't mean couch caching to claim finds on virtual geocaches. There are a lot of geocaches on the world map, in fact some countries look like they are literally carpeted with them. Have you seen Germany recently? No, neither have we – there are too many geocache icons on the map! But we all know that a lot of geocaches are placed by locals to highlight an amazing spot, some interesting history, a really cool park or walking track, or a great view, so try exploring the far reaches of the map to see what geocaches have been placed there, and what they are all about. Maybe you'll find some new bucket list locations to add to your travel goals!

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.



GEOCACHING

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