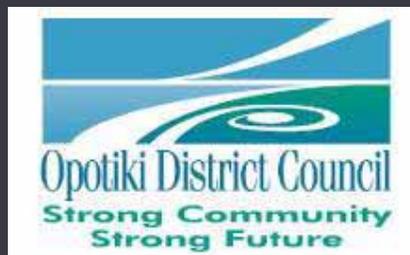




TAIRAWHITI GREAT RIDES PROPOSAL





RAUKOKORE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

In partnership, Gisborne District Council, Opotiki District Council and Tourism Eastland promote the **'Eastland Traverse'** and **'East Cape Tour'** as Great Rides of New Zealand. We seek that these rides become part of the National Cycleway Project announced by the Prime Minister, John Key.

The East Cape Tour provides a genuine and interactive physical and cultural experience for long distance touring cyclists riding the sealed iconic Pacific Highway from Gisborne to Opotiki, or visa versa. Cyclists will have the opportunity for rest and relaxation in some of the most isolated and diverse coastal communities in New Zealand, and will be able to experience genuine cultural tourism products. The route could also extend through the dramatic scenery of Waioeka Gorge as a complete loop.

The Eastland Traverse is an inland route connecting Gisborne and Opotiki on mainly gravel roads through remote Eastland hill country farms and the historic bush-clad Old Motu Road. It provides an experience of New Zealand off the beaten track, as well as an insight to what New Zealand was once like. It takes advantage of existing back country roads with little traffic and brings visitors to less frequented corners of New Zealand's conservation estate.

Recognition and promotion of these routes as Great Rides will provide significant economic benefits for the eastern part of New Zealand, which is one of the most economically challenged areas in the country. This is an opportunity to make a real difference to small, isolated rural and coastal communities by expanding markets for cultural tourism and services. Promotion and development of the routes would also benefit the relatively poor centres of Gisborne and Opotiki.

Riders, in turn, will experience a remote corner of New Zealand, rich in genuine cultural experience and history with stunning scenery and a great climate.

In terms of the wider New Zealand network, links can be made between these routes and the Wairoa District and Hawkes Bay Region, as well as the Bay of Plenty. Consideration could be given to use of the Napier-Gisborne railway in the future should the route no longer be used by trains.



EAST CAPE TOUR

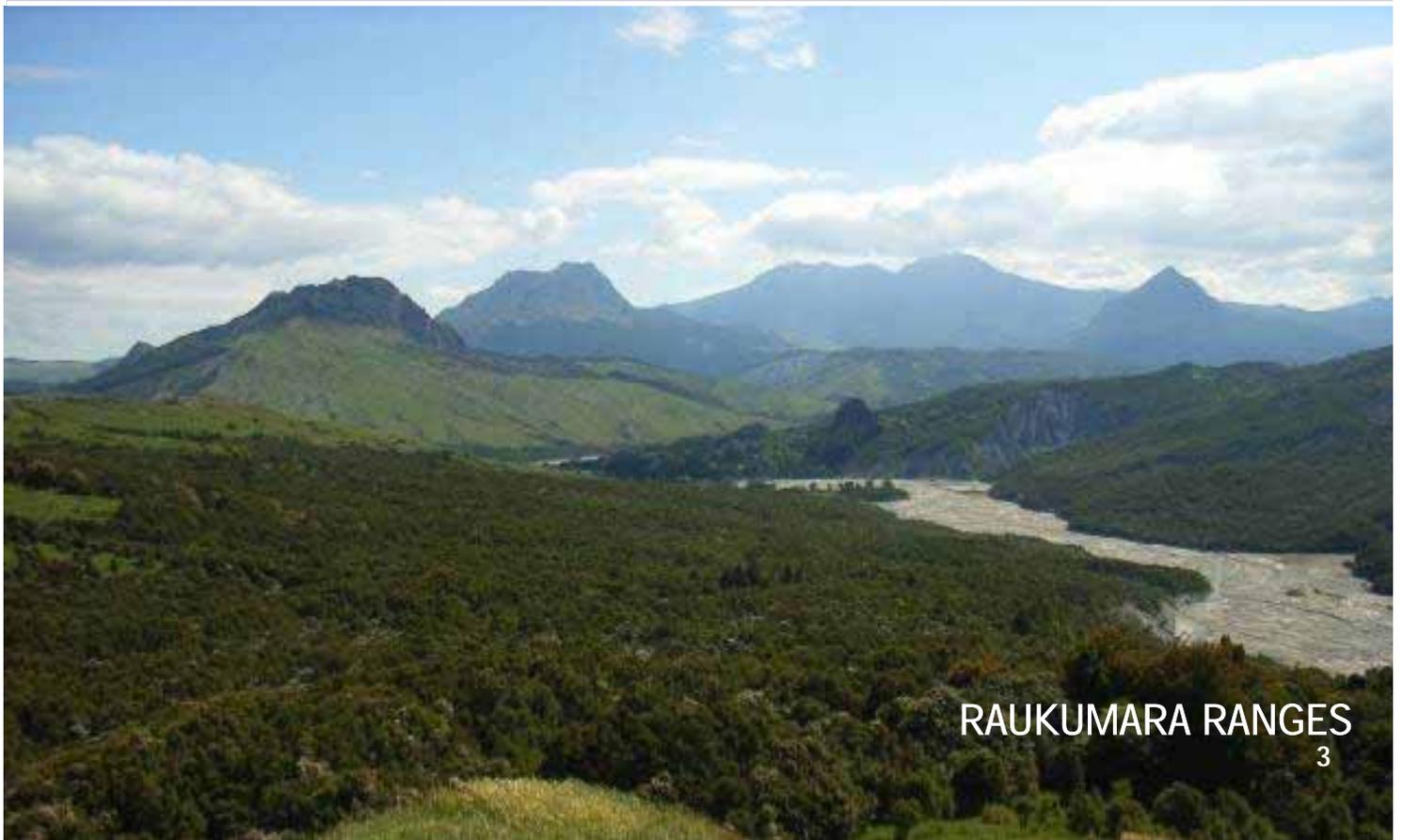
Route

The East Cape has been described as offering the best coastal cycling the world. According to Lonely Planet (Cycling in NZ, 2000), 'while there are many worthy contenders for that crown, this is a ride that unquestionably offers an abundance of outstanding coastal scenery'.

The route connects Gisborne and Opotiki on a 330km stretch of State Highway 35, around the East Cape. It takes in wild coastline of rugged little bays, inlet and coves and backdrops of Mount Hikurangi and the Raukumara Ranges. Riders are also presented remnants of a bygone era and depth of history evident in abandoned structures and buildings. This contrasts markedly with an alive and rich culture: riders pass about forty marae and will hear Maori spoken on the streets of the small coastal settlements.

The route is well serviced for food and accommodation. Whilst sparsely populated, coastal settlements are spaced at least every 30-40km. Accommodation is already available at most of the settlements, as well as some farmstays in between.

The distance traveled per day can be varied to suit a variety of fitness levels. Some may wish to cycle only part of the route. Riders may also wish to break up the journey and stay on to absorb the local culture and relax on the beaches. The route follows the Tairāwhiti heritage trails and riders can stop to enjoy heritage sites such as the Tolaga Bay wharf, abandoned freezing works, Tikitiki St Mary's church and Raukokore church.





Funding and Development

The focus would be on improving safety along State Highway 35. Many cyclists already ride the route. However, it is considered improvements could be made to make it safer and more attractive. The first step would be to conduct a safety assessment of the State Highway. This would identify the actual and potential safety issues and recommend possible engineering solutions to remedy or mitigate the issues. Examples could include better signage and road markings, or surface treatment. The assessment would also highlight opportunities to incorporate the proposed safety measures within the current maintenance and renewal programmes, such as the Gisborne – Tolaga Bay Seal Widening Project. Further, the assessment would provide an estimate of costs for the proposed solutions.

We envisage that not all improvements will be completed straight away but recognition as a Great Ride will result in ongoing improvement with all road works designed with cyclists in mind. We also note that the project could tap into the \$200,000 set aside by the New Zealand Transport Agency for cycleways and walkways in settlements along the route.

Other additions that would enhance the route include:

- Information and interpretation boards, as an exciting way to inform, educate and involve people about the environment and attractions along the route.
- Mile and altitude posts.
- Secure cycle parking/storage facilities in key destinations and settlements around the route. Cyclists may want to take time out from cycling and participate in other activities in the knowledge that their equipment is secure.

Economic Benefits

The East Cape Tour is a 'real' opportunity to improve economic wellbeing on the East Cape, as well as increase revenue for Gisborne and Opotiki. Currently, the isolated communities on the East Cape are challenged with having one of the highest economic deprivation rates across our nation. It would only take a fairly modest increase in tourists to make a real impact on these communities.

In the short term, jobs could be created through the design, construction and maintenance of the proposed enhancement works. However, the focus for this project will be to grow the market for tourism-related services, such as the emerging cultural tourist market. There are also opportunities to widen the markets for luxury accommodation, local stores, tour operators, etc.

The route will particularly appeal to 'interactive travelers'. These tend to be well educated, often wealthy people, who have a clear propensity for cultural tourism activities, physical outdoor activities and natural wonders. The East Cape offers truly genuine and unique cultural experience. It is already experienced by the 'fully independent traveler', but is also well suited to package tours and semi-independent travelers.



SECLUDED BAY



MOTU FALLS

EASTLAND TRAVERSE

Route

The Eastland Traverse connects Gisborne and Opotiki on mainly back-country gravel roads. If leaving from Gisborne, riders would travel across the Poverty Bay Flats, through vineyards and horticulture to Wharekopae Road and onto Te Wera Road. An intersection with State Highway 2 is reached approximately 95km from Gisborne and riders follow the State Highway for a short distance to Matawai township. At Matawai the route turns off the State Highway into Motu Road, along the valley to Motu township. More direct attractive connections between Gisborne and Matawai are also possible.

From Motu the route follows the Old Motu Road for 40km, famous as the mountainbike leg of the Motu challenge and for the Motu Rally. This road was once the main link between Gisborne and Opotiki but now sees almost no motor vehicles. The countryside is primarily regenerating bush with small remnants of pioneer farms in the valleys. Several Department of Conservation scenic reserves and the Raukumara Forest Park border the road.

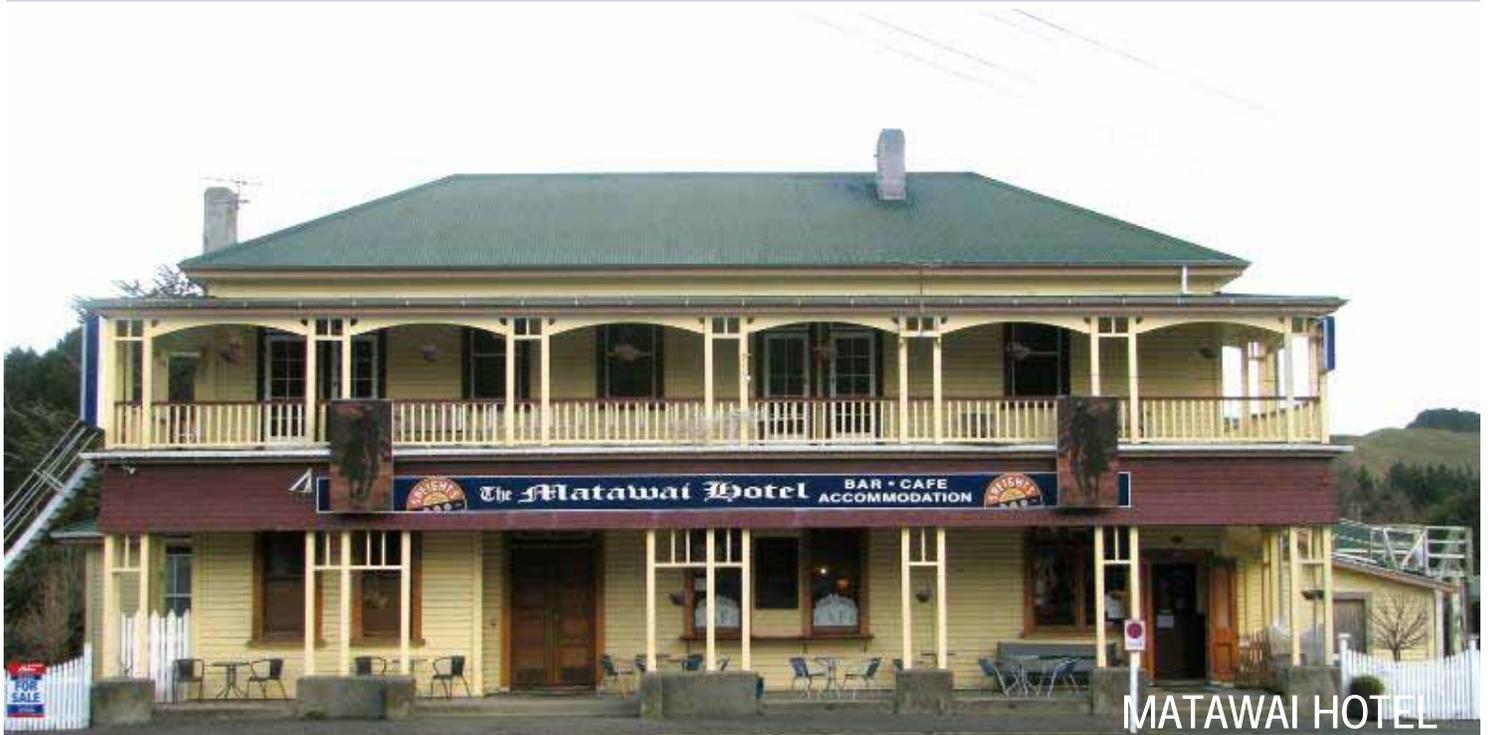
Many natural and cultural features enrich the route, for example:

- Varied landscapes, coastal to hill country.
- Eastwood Hill National Arboretum (35km from Gisborne), which was first planted in 1910 and now boasts the largest collection of northern hemisphere trees and shrubs in the country.
- Rere Waterfalls, Rere Rockslide (a natural 'hydroslide') and the Champagne Bathing Pools (60km from Gisborne).
- 2,000 hectares of indigenous forest bordering Te Wera Road (15 km from Matawai).
- Classic iconic New Zealand hotel at Matawai, filled with memorabilia of the past.
- Spectacular waterfalls on the Motu River, near Motu township.
- Reminders of bygone eras such as old railway bridges, valleys cleared by returned soldiers, remnants of a once thriving community at Toatoa, on the Motu Road.
- Sites of battles and sieges between Maori and Pakeha and remnants of old Maori fortifications.

Accommodation is already available at Eastwood Hill, nearby farmstays, Matawai and Motu. In addition a Mountain Safety Club hut close to Te Wera Road could potentially provide accommodation.

While predominantly unsealed with some long climbs, the Eastland Traverse is not overly technical and could be completed by less experienced riders, particularly as more accommodation and other services develop. Rather than complete the entire route, riders could choose to complete just the Motu section. Indeed tours already operate on occasion in this area. A further day trip possibility is Matawai downhill to Rere for a swim at the rockslide.

An exciting alternative route to Opotiki is to upgrade the Pakihi track. Starting 15km after Motu village, this track takes a more direct route through a spectacular gorge in Department of Conservation Reserve. Historically this track was formed to move stock between Matawai and Opotiki. The existing walking track would require some upgrade and bridge work to accommodate riders.





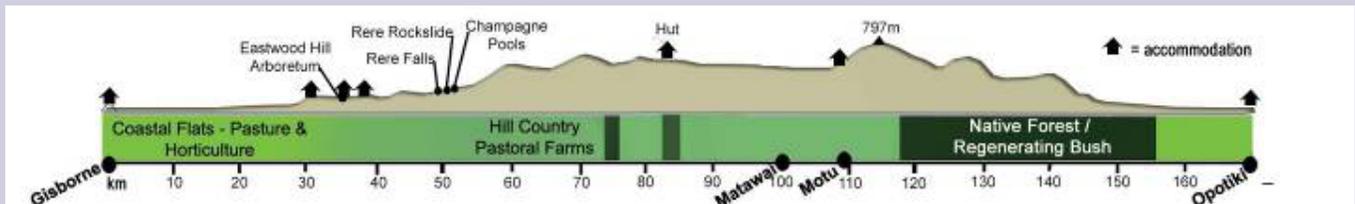
OLD MOTU ROAD

Funding and Development

The route follows legal road. It can be, and is already, used for cycling. Little physical improvement of the route is needed and it will continue to be maintained by the relevant roading authorities (Gisborne District Council, Opotiki District Council and the New Zealand Transport Agency).

We primarily seek recognition and promotion of the route as a Great Ride rather than the development of major infrastructure. However, funding would be used for:

- Interpretive information panels.
- Road safety signage.
- Route markers, and distance and altitude posts.
- Huts/emergency shelters on the Motu section (alternatively, the Department of Conservation could provide such facilities).



Economic Benefits

The Eastland Traverse would create demand for secondary services such as bike rental, repairs, tours, accommodation and supplies in Gisborne and Opotiki. While tourist numbers are forecast to increase (Eastland Regional Tourism Forecasts 2008-2014 by the Ministry of Tourism, November 2008), Gisborne and Opotiki are two of the most economically challenged centres in New Zealand and well deserving of initiatives to expand the tourist market.

The small rural towns of Matakawai, Motu and Ngatapa, as well as services at Eastwood Hill would benefit from increased demand for accommodation and food. It is foreseeable that other support services such as bike rental and bike tours could develop in these areas. Development and promotion of the route would also expand the market for existing farmstays and support the development of further accommodation.

PARTNERSHIPS

Gisborne District Council, Opotiki District Council and Tourism Eastland have worked as partners to develop this proposal. We have consulted and gained widespread support from local organisations such as the Gisborne based Cycling Advisory Group, Te Runanga o Ngati Porou, the Maori tourism organisation for Tairāwhiti and local marae. The parties will continue to work together and with other organisations to ensure the proposals can be achieved.

INDICATIVE COSTS

East Cape Tour

Safety assessment	20,000
Minor safety works (NZ Transport Agency)	150,000
Information boards	30,000
Distance/altitude markers	10,000
Bike storage facilities	25,000
Longer term safety works (NZ Transport Agency)	500,000
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	735,000

Eastland Traverse

Minor safety works	100,000
Information boards	30,000
Distance / altitude markers	10,000
Shelters / huts (possibly by Department of Conservation)	75,000
Bike storage facilities	25,000
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	240,000
Optional upgrade of Pakihi Track	260,000
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	500,000

\$1,235,000



TE WERA ROAD