

A photograph of two cyclists riding on a gravel path through a wooded area with autumn foliage. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter. The text is centered over the image.

# 2025 EVALUATION OF NGĀ HAERENGA GREAT RIDES OF NEW ZEALAND

SNAPSHOT FOR  
WAIKATO RIVER TRAIL

## INTRODUCTION

This **snapshot** provides a summary of key data collected for the 2025 Evaluation of Ngā Haerenga Great Rides of New Zealand and compares results for Waikato River Trail (where available) with results for the Great Rides network as a whole. For example, the total number of trips taken on Waikato River Trail in the year ending June 2025 was 7% lower than in the year to June 2021; the total number of trips taken across the Great Rides network increased by 18%.

Data is presented in relation to **trail usage**, and then each of three impact domains: economic, social and environmental. For further information on the 2025 Evaluation, please refer to the full report [here](#). Data for the 2025 evaluation was drawn from four primary sources: -

### TRAIL COUNTER DATA

Trail counters are installed on each of the 23 Great Rides that make up Ngā Haerenga (including some counters managed by DOC and private land owners). Data used for the 2025 evaluation encompasses the full year ending 30 June 2025.

In late July 2025, trail counter data was extracted from the Be Counted system and otherwise sourced from DOC and private landowners via Trail Managers. After being checked and cleaned, the counter data was analysed using a new set of algorithms developed by Jonathan Kennett for the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment.<sup>1</sup> These algorithms are used to calculate **unique users** (accounting for any double-counting of users across multiple counters on a trail).

The resulting calculations of individual trail users were checked for consistency with 2021 outputs, reviewed with Jonathan Kennett or the relevant trail manager where needed, and then confirmed for use in the Evaluation analysis.

### SURVEY OF TRAIL USERS

An ongoing survey of Trail Users is undertaken using a survey developed for Ngā Haerenga and the 23 Great Rides that make up the network. The data used for the 2025 evaluation is based on a total sample of n=7475 trail users in the year ending June 2025.

Data relating specifically to Waikato River Trail is based on a YE June 2025 sample of n=569 trail users.

### SURVEY OF TRAIL MANAGERS

A survey of Trail Managers was undertaken to capture the data required for the evaluation. This survey was undertaken in June/July 2025.

22 Trail Managers completed the survey.

### SURVEY OF TRAIL STAKEHOLDERS

A survey of Trail Stakeholders was also undertaken to capture data needed for the evaluation. This survey was undertaken in April/May 2025.

Initial databases were compiled by Trail Managers, with contacts requested across a range of stakeholder groups, including Iwi, hapū and marae groups; local government agencies; Regional Tourism Organisations/Economic Development Agencies; businesses providing products/services for people using the trails; local government entities; local schools, sporting and recreation groups; and other community groups.

All contacts were emailed with a personal invitation to complete the online survey. One follow-up reminder was sent to non-responders.

Data for the YE 2025 evaluation was based on a final sample of n=434 stakeholders across the 23 Great Rides.

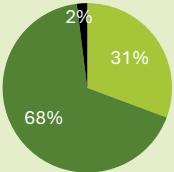
This included a sample of n=17 stakeholders for Waikato River Trail.

# Waikato River Trail – YE June 2025

## TRAIL USAGE



**35,832**  
**Total trips**  
-7% vs 2021  
(+18% vs 2021 all Great Rides)



■ Local residents  
■ Domestic visitors  
■ International visitors

(All Great Rides: 31% local residents, 57% domestic visitors, 12% international visitors)

**Pedestrians**  
**19,326**  
-5% vs 2021  
(+21% vs 2021 all Great Rides)



**Cyclists**  
**16,506**  
-10% vs 2021  
(+14% vs 2021 all Great Rides)



**73%**  
rated their trail experience  
9 or 10 (out of 10)  
(73% all Great Rides)



**+77**  
Net Promoter Score  
(+79 all Great Rides)

## ECONOMIC IMPACTS



**22,167**  
estimate of **visitors** attributable to the Trail  
(1.3 million all Great Rides)



**28,968**  
estimate of **visitor nights** attributable to the Trail  
(4.5 million all Great Rides)



**\$295.03**  
average expenditure per visitor  
(\$964.10 all Great Rides)

## SOCIAL IMPACTS



**\$8.7 million**

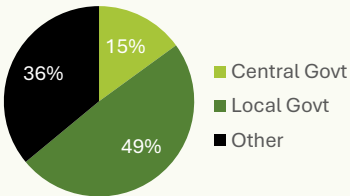
value of health benefit from trail  
use by New Zealanders  
(\$696m all Great Rides)

	Waikato River	All Great Rides
My sense of wellbeing or mental health has improved	60%	57%
My physical fitness has improved	63%	57%
I have developed a closer relationship with the people I was with	28%	33%
I have developed or improved my skills	28%	30%

### AGREE THAT WAIKATO RIVER TRAIL ...

Provides a high-quality experience for trail users	100%	91%
Has increased the profile of the area	100%	90%
Is valued by the local community	94%	87%
Is a source of pride for the local community	94%	85%
Has become part of the community's identity	82%	85%
Is making the area a more vibrant or appealing place to live	94%	82%
Is creating greater understanding of area's natural environment	100%	81%
Is improving overall quality of life in the area	88%	79%
Is accessible to a wide range of people	65%	77%
Has been a catalyst for community development	82%	71%
Has been a catalyst for investment in the area	76%	70%
Is creating greater understanding of the area's cultural heritage	76%	63%

### Trail Income



(All Great Rides: 43% Central Govt, 33% Local Govt, 24% other)

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS



As a result of their Waikato River Trail experience...

- 15%** understand more about the natural environment (21% all Great Rides)
- 13%** understand more about the local culture and heritage (29% all Great Rides)
- 52%** appreciate the natural environment more (48% all Great Rides)
- 20%** appreciate the local culture and heritage more (30% all Great Rides)
- 17%** are more conscious of their impact on the environment (18% all Great Rides)

## NOTES

METRIC	
Trail Usage	Based on counter data extracted from the Be Counted Eco-Visio system and adjusted using the algorithms in the report 'NZCT Counter Data Analysis 2024-2025', Jonathan Kennett, for Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment.
Proportions of local residents, domestic visitors, and international visitors	Calculated using trail user survey data for the year ending June 2025
Trail user satisfaction rating and Net Promoter Score (NPS)	Calculated using trail user survey data for the year ending June 2025
Estimate of visitors attributable to the trail	Based on trail user survey data for the year ending June 2025, scaled by trail counts: number of trail users visiting the area <b>only or mainly because of the trail</b>
Estimate of visitor nights attributable to the trail	Based on trail user survey data for the year ending June 2025, scaled by trail counts: number of nights stayed in area by trail users visiting the area <b>only or mainly because of the trail</b>
Average expenditure per visitor	Based on trail user survey data for the year ending June 2025: average expenditure by each trail user visiting the area <b>only or mainly because of the trail</b>
Value of health benefit from trail use by New Zealanders	Calculated using reported experience of individual trail sections (from trail user survey for the year ending June 2025) and length of individual sections in kms (publicly available or sourced from trail managers). Scaled by trail counts and using per-km values documented in Waka Kotahi's Monetised Benefits and Costs Manual 2024.
Trail income	Calculated using trail manager survey data for the year ending June 2025
Health impact statements	Based on trail user survey data for the year ending June 2025
Social impact statements	Based on trail stakeholder survey data for the year ending June 2025
Environmental impact statements	Based on trail user survey data for the year ending June 2025