

HEADLINE: New Zealand's Great Rides pump billions of dollars into economy

18 November 2025

New Zealand's iconic cycle trails are boosting local economies to the tune of \$1.28 billion a year, according to new research.

The 2025 evaluation of the Ngā Haerenga Great Rides of New Zealand released today show visitor spending attributed to the 23 Great Rides jumped a massive 35 percent for the year ending June 2025, compared to the same period in 2021.

"We saw cycle tourism grow during Covid, but our latest report shows our Great Rides continue to grow in popularity and are having a massive economic impact for regional New Zealand," says NZCT chief executive Janet Purdey.

Domestic visitor spending makes up 72 percent of the \$1.28 billion total, and international visitor spend 28 percent.

Numbers on the Great Rides have surged dramatically too, with more than 2.5 million trips (cyclists and pedestrians) recorded for the year ending June 2025. That's up 18 percent on 2021 figures.

International visitor numbers make up about 300,000 of those trips. In fact, 17 percent of trail visitors are international.

"The figures overall paint a clear picture that our Great Rides are having a huge impact economically, environmentally and socially," says Purdey.

"We are providing world-class cycling experiences that highlight our importance in the New Zealand tourism landscape, and that Government investment is well-spent."

The Government puts \$8m a year towards the 23 Great Rides, which showcase Aotearoa's epic landscapes, history and culture, through the International Conservation and Tourism Levy (IVL).

That money goes towards trail development, maintenance, and promotion, while additional funding for the likes of trail development varies from year to year.

The direct economic benefit is also reflected in the latest visitor nights data in accommodation near the Great Rides. Visitor nights tally 4.5 million in the year ending June 2025, up 25 percent from 2021 statistics.

On a per-visitor basis, spending has increased from \$892 in 2021 to more than \$960 in 2025 too.

“Our riders are spending more on accommodation, food, beverage and hospitality providers near the Great Rides, along with off-trail activities and cycle tour operators,” says Purdey.

Not surprisingly, the number of businesses servicing the Great Rides has jumped markedly, from 1600 in 2021 to more than 2900 for the year ending June 2025.

Bike tour operator Cycle Journeys entered the market 24 years ago and in that time owner Geoff Gabites has seen the industry flourish.

“The objective of the Great Rides was to create a world-class cycle infrastructure and customer experience that would attract riders. We are now seeing this happen - in significant numbers both domestically and internationally,” he says.

“This may well be the best tourism investment the Government has ever made as we now see rapidly growing numbers of international riders seeking out New Zealand as a key cycle destination.”

The impact of the Great Rides doesn’t stop there – the latest report shows health benefits resulting from the trails totaling \$696 million.

Many riders reported improved mental health, physical fitness, and greater appreciation of their natural environment.

The positive impact the Great Rides have on the environment is reflected in the latest report too.

Collectively, the 23 Great Rides have planted almost 450,000 native trees, shrubs, flaxes or rushes, fenced almost 120km of waterways and laid 2700 traps for pests.

Much of this work has been done by trail managers and their communities, says Purdey.

In fact, the latest figures show volunteers across the network total more than 560, contributing more than \$620,000 in value.

“Our Great Rides continue to deliver on multiple fronts. Not only are they a compelling example of sustainable tourism in action, but they are also a catalyst for driving economic development and bringing communities together.”

ENDS

Notes for media:

Ngā Haerenga Great Rides of New Zealand acknowledges the contributions of the Government and Cycle Journeys, who have helped to financially support this evaluation report.

The report was carried out by Angus and Associates and draws on survey data gathered from trail users, stakeholders and trail managers, and data collected using counters on the trails.

Please find attached an impact national snapshot of the report.

The [full evaluation report is available here](#), along with human interest stories from throughout the country that illustrate the economic, social, and environmental impacts of the Great Rides. Feel free to use them as you see fit.

For images relating to the human interest stories, or for generic images of our Great Rides, check out [our image library here](#).

To arrange interviews with **New Zealand Cycle Trails chief executive Janet Purdey**, or for any other queries, please get in touch with content lead Deb Tapp.

E-mail: deb.tapp@nzcycletrail.com
Phone: 021 424 116