

“Rangihau Valley Downhill Rage”

High in the Coromandel Forest Park is a ridge where you are 600 metres above sea level (2000 ft). Below you are Mercury Bay, the Mercury Islands, beaches to the north and beaches to the south. Forest and bush lie below and around you. A tramping track beyond takes you to the Pinnacles and the DOC hut; but you cannot ride this track as it is broken and fallen away. You can however ride down the forestry service road; a four wheel drive access way to the power supply for northern parts of the peninsula, and ride you do. Near the top is evidence of the fire in January 2008. There is a sharp descent into the first main creek. Leave the bike and walk downstream about 200 m where there are the remains of a large old kauri dam, one of many in the district 100 years ago. Back to the bike and you ride through bush, forest, farmland, and streams passing swimming holes, just downhill for over an hour or for slower riders, two hours plus. The road is narrow and follows the Waiwawa River. The end of the descent is Coroglen School adjacent to SH 25. Suggest you take a back pack for water, togs and camera. As you descend watch out for others users such as motorbike riders.

On SH 25 is Coroglen, originally called Gumtown, an old timber and gum diggers town. The Waiwawa River flows past it on the way to the Whitianga Harbour. A narrow bridge crosses it. This bridge replaced A suspension bridge built in 1902 to replace the ford was replaced by this bridge in 1943. This place is famous for it's tavern (it replaces the old Waiwara Hotel that burnt down in about 1922) and summer concerts there as well as the old stockyards still used once a month. Opposite the Gumtown Hall, is Rangihau Rd, with Coroglen School close by. This road is an entrance to the Coromandel Forest Park. Here is the finish of “the rage” and a cool ale at Coroglen Tavern is only 4 minutes away. But how do you get to the start?

Option one.

The Council road ends about 6 km up stream, but there is no parking there (a tow away sign!). A kilometre down the road it is wide enough for parking. You can also park at the Coroglen School that you pass on the right. Beyond this the road is narrow and often corrugated on surface. It passes Rangihau Ranch horse treks, orchards, a quarry, and farmland. About one kilometre beyond a bridge with a heap of letterboxes beside, there is the wider part of the road for parking. Start riding. Through the gate the surface does wash out with heavy rain. Shortly the road it starts to climb until it reaches the top. This is a relatively hard ride and the granny gear will be a first choice, but okay for those riding regularly. The trip up will take about two hours or more but from the top are the great views.

Option two.

Introducing an “Uphill Experience” to the “Downhill Rage”

There is an alternative way for those who are short of time or want to experience the best downhill ride in the North. *Coromandel Helicopters* operate from Whitianga airfield. They have a service whereby they will fly you and your bike from the paddock opposite the Coroglen Tavern to Pinnacle ridge at the head of the valley. Here, fresh and ready to ride, it is all downhill past the streams and log dam, trees, scrub, swimming holes, farmland, and the river crossings a truly awesome ride. After 1 to 2 hours, more if you swim; you are back to the car. Suggest you park at the school car park as it is only a short ride to the helicopter waiting in the paddock.

To book this ride, Call Coromandel Helicopters on 0274 672643 or 0800 864 354 www.coromandelhelicopters.co.nz. You may have to give a days notice in case the helicopter is booked for other work.