

WHANGANUI

ALL YOU NEED (AND THEN SOME)

WHANGANUI RIVER ROAD GUIDE



visitwhanganui.nz

Haere mai ki Whanganui Welcome to Whanganui

A visit to the Whanganui River and the road which winds beside it into the Whanganui National Park is a special and authentic journey for visitors. The Whanganui River, Te Awa o Whanganui, and the Whanganui River Road are two inter-related journeys. The Whanganui River Road follows the lower reaches of the Whanganui River from Pīpīriki to Whanganui and is the only scenic driving route alongside a river in New Zealand with such richness of cultural and natural heritage.

This intimate and scenic 64-kilometre road leads to the Whanganui National Park, and enables travellers to visit small river communities and experience a pace of life which is unique in contrast to much of the rest of the country. The road is narrower than the main highway and follows a winding route, which requires slower driving speed than usual.

There are stunning views of the river along much of the road's length and of particular interest are the many beautifully preserved marae (gathering places) which are usually visible from the road. Please respect all marae and urupā (cemetery) – entry to view marae must be arranged in advance as permission is required to visit these treasured places.

WHANGANUI
ALL YOU NEED (AND THEN SOME)



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History



From its origins high on magnificent Mt Tongariro, the awa (river) travels towards Taumarunui, then winds south through the Whanganui National Park. For more than 800 years, Māori have lived here, building marae and kāinga (villages), cultivating sheltered river terraces and engaging with the forests. Numerous marae still exist along the river, and the river is home to many descendants of the original inhabitants.

European settlers followed in search of a new life in New Zealand and opportunities and in the late 1800s and early 1900s the river became a major visitor attraction, with people enjoying leisurely river boat cruises. The Whanganui River became internationally known as the 'Rhine of New Zealand.'



The Whanganui River **Te Awa o Whanganui**

In Māori culture important geographic features are personified. In Whanganui, the river is revered as a kuia, or grandmother, although the tumbling rapids often reveal her male side. As a woman, she feeds her children and gives them life, drawing them to her and uniting them in times of need. As her children say —

*“E rere kau mai te Awa nui, mai i te Kāhui Maunga ki Tangaroa.
Ko au te Awa, ko te Awa ko au”*

*“The river flows from the mountains to the sea. I am the river
and the river is me.”*

How the Whanganui River was created

After stowing away on his older brothers' fishing expedition, the legendary figure of the South Pacific, Maui-tikitiki, used his grandmother's sacred jawbone to haul up Hāha-te-Whenua, a writhing landmass which later became known as Te Ika-ā-Māui, The Great Fish of Māui, or the North Island. This fish had great mana (power) and could only be subdued by something of greater mana. Ranginui, the Sky Father, placed Matua te Mana (Mt Ruapehu) in the centre of the great fish, easing its thrashing and struggling.



For a long while, Mt Ruapehu stood in solitude, aching with loneliness. Seeing his pain, Ranginui gifted him with two teardrops to flow from his feet, one being Te Awanui-a-Rua, the Whanganui River. This is the reason why Whanganui tribes refer to Ruapehu as the main mountain and Whanganui as their river. But Ruapehu was still lonely, so Ranginui created four Ruapehu companions of his own kind – Te Kāhui Maunga of the Mountain Clan, placing Tongariro, Taranaki, Ngāuruhoe and the mountain maiden Pihanga by Ruapehu's side. Tongariro then became the guardian of the Whanganui River and Ruapehu the guardian of the second teardrop. Pihanga was given in marriage to Tongariro and from them came forth the remainder of the mountains throughout the North Island.

However, Pihanga was tempted by Taranaki, causing Tongariro distress. Consequently, Ruapehu, the grandfather of the clan, instructed Taranaki to leave the area lest there be trouble.

So Taranaki drew away from the clan, leaving a shadow of his memory on a humble hill in the hinterland, and followed the teardrop of the Whanganui River. As he followed the river downstream, he widened the channel to make it what it is today. When he arrived at the coast he turned northward and settled on the plains where he now stands. These days, from high points around the western half of the North Island you can see Taranaki looking towards the mountain clan he left behind in the centre of the island.



Our woven rope, Our sacred river

“He Muka nā te Taurawhiri-a-Hinengākau.”

“I am a strand of the sacred woven rope of Hinengākau.”

Hinengākau, along with her brothers Tama-ūpoko and Tūpoho, is one of many prominent ancestors on the river. The lower river reaches sit under the mantle of Tūpoho.

Whanganui River Road

The Whanganui River Road was completed in 1934 following 30 years of construction. It opened the Whanganui River valley to a new world, but changed the river itself forever. Sadly, during construction it desecrated a number of sites sacred to the Whanganui tribes.

Originally, many Whanganui River marae were on the true right of the river. These settlements were protected from the elements and enjoyed the warm morning sun. With the opening of the road on the true left, time saw the gradual shift of many marae to the road side of the river. Prior to the 1930s almost all access to these remote settlements was from boats operating along the Whanganui River.

Ways to experience the Whanganui River Road



Today, the Whanganui River valley is still a major attraction for visitors and locals, and offers unrivalled opportunities for walking, cycling, hunting and tramping in a pristine wilderness, as well as a full range of activities on the water, including jetboat trips and single and multi-day canoeing. The Whanganui River valley offers many places to stay and relax, to experience the relationship of the local people to the river, to learn the stories and enjoy the beauty and serenity of the area.

The Whanganui River and Whanganui River Road can be explored in many different ways, by vehicle, bike, jetboat, canoe or on foot. You may want to explore the area in your own private vehicle or join tours run by local operators. Please contact the i-SITE in Whanganui for more information.



Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail Ngā Ara Tūhono

Part of the New Zealand National Cycle Trail, Ngā Ara Tūhono starts on Mount Ruapehu and ends in Whanganui, travelling through Tongariro and Whanganui National Parks, including the Whanganui River Road from Pipiriki to Whanganui. The trail takes four to six days and covers a variety of terrain; the Whanganui River Road section is classified as Grade 2. From Pipiriki follow the trail down the scenic Whanganui River Road, revealing a richness of natural and cultural heritage of the Māori and early European settlers. Engage with locals, absorb the serenity and history as you cycle alongside the Whanganui River through small settlements.

Te Araroa – New Zealand’s Walking Trail

Te Araroa, New Zealand’s Trail, is a continuous 3,000-kilometre walking track from Cape Reinga to Bluff, connecting settlements, towns and cities. The Whanganui River Road section of the trail has a recommended walking time of three days.

We recommend cyclists and walkers on the Whanganui River Road wear a high visibility vest.



Whanganui National Park

Whanganui is a gateway to the pristine and beautiful Whanganui National Park which has at its heart the Whanganui River - Te Awa o Whanganui.

Of all of New Zealand's national parks, Whanganui National Park is most closely associated with human settlement. It is bisected by the Whanganui River, the longest continually navigable river in the country. Although the bed and waters of the river are not part of the park, it is an integral part of the landscape and provides an important accessway into and through the park.

The park protects one of the largest remaining tracts of lowland forest in the North Island. This extensive forest comprises many different communities reflecting changes from north to south, riverside to high ridges. Large Northern Rata trees occur throughout the park, forming a spectacular display in midsummer when in flower.

The isolated reaches of the park support a range of native birds. The park is home to the largest population of North Island brown kiwi in New Zealand. Whio (blue duck) inhabit the clean fast-flowing river habitats in the park.

Hiking tracks and river trips through the wild lowland forests are hugely popular with visitors. The Matemateaonga Track



traverses between Taranaki and the Whanganui River. Using an old Māori trail and settlers' dray road, you are able to penetrate deep into the remote interior of the park. The 43-kilometre track is usually tramped in three to five days.

The Mangapurua and Kaiwhakauka Tracks pass through the historic Mangapurua and Kaiwhakauka Valleys. These valleys were rehabilitation settlements where land was offered to soldiers following World War I. The tracks form two stages of the Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail.

The Ātene Viewpoint Walk is an enjoyable outing for the entire family and provides one of the few places where the public can easily access the Whanganui National Park while the Ātene Skyline Track, a loop walk, offers a more challenging tramp.

The Whanganui Journey is one of nine Great Walks and is a 145-kilometre journey by canoe from Taumarunui to Pipiriki. The journey takes an average of five days to complete, while a shorter three-day journey from Whakahoro to Pipiriki is also available.

*Conservation for prosperity
Tiakina te taiao, kia puawai*



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Whanganui River Road Points of Interest

1. SH4 and Whanganui River Road
2. Aramoana Viewpoint
3. Pungarehu
4. Parikino
5. Oyster Cliffs
6. Ātene (Athens)
7. Ātene Skyline walk
8. Downes Hut
9. Otumaire campsite
10. Hand dug culvert
11. Koriniti (Corinth)
12. Matahiwi
13. Kawana Flour Mill
14. Rānana (London)
15. Moutoa Island
16. Hiruhārama (Jerusalem)
17. Ōmōrehu waterfall
18. Pīpīriki



Raetihi

PIPIRIKI - RAETIHI RD

Pīpīriki

18

17

Jerusalem / Hiruhārama

16

15

WHANGANUI RIVER RD

Rānana

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Matahiwi

11

Koriniti

9

8

7

6

Ātene

5

4

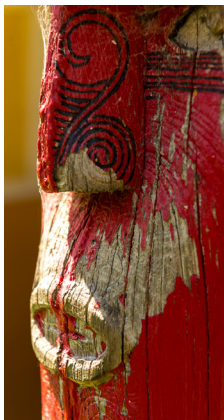
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Parikino

1

Whanganui River

Ūpokongaro



SH4 and Whanganui River Road

0km

Before you begin your journey up the Whanganui River Road, take time to stop at the display at the information kiosk to understand a little more about the history and spiritual and cultural significance of the Whanganui River to its local people.

No. 2 Aramoana Viewpoint

3km

A popular stop, the Aramoana viewpoint showcases views of the river valley, Pungarehu and Mount Ruapehu. Aramoana means “the path to the sea”.

No. 3 Pungarehu

6.3km

Pungarehu is the first of many Whanganui River Marae on the Whanganui River Road. The Whare Tupuna (ancestral house) Maranganui was built by their Rangatira, Te Ratana Te Urumingi and esteemed carver Hori Pukehika and whānau in 1905. Pungarehu Marae was fully restored to its former glory in 1986. It also houses one of the last historical waka used on the Whanganui River.

No. 4 Parikino

8.5km

The Parikino settlement is located on the site of a former village named Kaitangata. The original Parikino Pā was located across the river. Carvings from its old ancestral house are displayed in the Whanganui Regional Museum.

**A “Pā” was a term used before the arrival of European settlers. The main feature is the fortification of the external areas of the Pā in preparation for an invasion by other tribes.*

No. 5 Oyster Cliffs

13.5km

The Whanganui region was once seabed that has been uplifted. A fascinating showcase for this fact can be found in the cliffs which are layers of fossilised oyster shells.

No. 6 Ātene (Athens)

21km

This settlement was named by the missionary Reverend Richard Taylor. Prior to a flood in 1904, the settlement was closer to the river than present day. The small Ātene meeting house was constructed in 1886. Just south of the Ātene settlement marks the entry to the Whanganui National Park.

No. 7 Ātene Skyline walk

21.5km

Part of the Whanganui National Park, the Ātene Skyline track rises to a height of 523 metres above sea level and offers views over the region and an unusual land feature called a “meander”, where the river once flowed in a near circle and now has cut through to create a shortcut to the sea. The Ātene Viewpoint walk takes 1-2 hours and follows the ridge of the old river valley and the Skyline track takes 6-8 hours (note, a good level of fitness is required to attempt the Skyline track).

No. 8 Downes Hut

21.9km

On the riverbank opposite the road is Downes Hut. This small hut was built by Thomas D Downes during his time as the River Foreman in the early 1920s and later bequeathed to the Whanganui River Trust Board. The Department of Conservation is now the custodian and the hut is used by canoeists and other recreational groups. The hut is built on a former kāinga site known as Pukupuku. A magnificent Pūriri tree planted by Downes still flourishes.

No. 9 Otumaire campsite

23.5km

Otumaire is a free camp site with drinking water and toilets provided by the Department of Conservation.

No. 10 Hand dug culvert

26.6km

This large hand-built culvert can be found down a short track from the road. It was built when the Whanganui River Road was constructed.



No. 11 Koriniti (Corinth)

33km

The home of Ngāti Pāmoana, Koriniti is a large and beautiful marae, and features two traditional wharepuni (Poutama and Te Waiherehere) as well as a small museum, "Hikurangi". Poutama was moved from a site upriver to its current location. One of three ancestral houses here, Te Waiherehere is a smaller version of one built in 1845, and has tukutuku panels designed by the late Cliff Whiting, a New Zealand Māori artist, heritage advocate and teacher.

No. 12 Matahiwi

40km

Matahiwi is the hub of a small farming community. In 1923, a building was transported by riverboat from Parinui, 46 kilometres upriver, to Matahiwi, and was used as the local school for many years. Today it is the local café and gallery open during the summer. Matahiwi takes its name from a nearby hill (hiwi) where visitors would stop and light a fire to announce their imminent arrival.

No. 13 Kawana Flour Mill

41.5km

The Kawana Flour Mill was constructed in 1854. It is now a great example of a rebuilt water-power mill, and features its original water wheel and grinding stones. It was first built with the help of Governor Grey to grind the wheat grown by local farmers and was one of several built in the Whanganui River valley in the 19th century. Now a museum, there is also a restored miller's colonial style cottage alongside the mill. Drinking water and a toilet is available here.

No. 14 Rānana (London)

45km

Rānana is sheltered by the hills and is now the largest community along the Whanganui River Road. As well as a century old Catholic church, the settlement also features two beautiful marae. The local school for the Whanganui River valley is located here.

Kauika, a fee paying campsite with toilets, is located next to the river past the marae. The fee for the campsite is collected in the early evening.





No. 15 Moutoa Island

46km

This small island was the scene of a short and fierce battle in 1864 between Whanganui Māori. A monument to the memory of the fallen was erected in Pākaitore (Moutoa Gardens) in Whanganui. On the 100th anniversary a memorial cairn was placed at Rānana Marae.

No. 16 Hiruhārama (Jerusalem)

53.5km

Hiruhārama is home to a century old catholic church and convent built in the 1890s. The church features a beautifully carved altar of Māori design and kōwhaiwhai panels adorn the walls. Once the home of an orphanage, the convent today hosts retreats and offers accommodation, and the rosary way garden offers peace and serenity. The impact and history of the mission and its founder Mother Aubert in the Whanganui region is immense, and details of this history can be found in the convent. In the 1970s Hiruhārama was also the location of poet James K Baxter's community, which closed soon after his death in 1972.

On a clear day the approach to Hiruhārama offers a stunning photo opportunity with the settlement reflected in the river.

No. 17 Ōmorēhu waterfall

59km

The waterfall offers a great photo opportunity and is an example of the many waterfalls that fall into the Whanganui River.

No. 18 Pīpīriki

64km

Pīpīriki is the end of the Whanganui River Road journey. Today Pīpīriki is the gateway to the upper Whanganui River and the Whanganui National Park. Many canoe and jetboat trips start and finish here and there are also short walks. The Department of Conservation has a shelter at Pīpīriki with toilets, water and a camping area, and a story-board display of the history and cultural significance of the Whanganui River.

Whanganui River Adventures

Jetboat Tours & Canoeing

2522 Pipiriki Raetihi Road, Pipiriki

✓ NZ Tollfree 0800 862 743

✉ info@whanganuiriveradventures.co.nz

🌐 www.whanganuiriveradventures.co.nz



Locally owned, tour operators (Ken and Josephine Haworth) offer the most authentic and unique scenic river tours on the middle reaches of the Whanganui River. We are based in Pipiriki - our hometown, born and bred locals to this iwi - Te Ātihaunui a Pāpārangi, our ancestral area. We share our local history and stories of the river with you when you visit the "Bridge to Nowhere" on our tours.

Whanganui
River



Adventures

Pipiriki Camping Ground & Cottage Accommodation

Located in Pipiriki Village – The Southern Gateway to the Whanganui National Park. The camping ground has tent and campervan sites, a six bunk cabin, family cabin and a communal lounge and kitchen area. We also have a lovely three-bedroom cottage which sleeps six people. Whanganui River Adventures accommodation offers affordability and a place to relax right on the doorstep of your next adventure!



Mountains to Sea Trail

No worries about transport hassles, we can do it all at our one-stop operation! Most popular of all is the "Oneday" Ride, all transport options covered including passenger transport to the start of the track, scenic jetboat out to Pipiriki and we will transport back to your accommodation in Raetihi/Ohakune. We also link with the M2C trail with other options available! Book online at our website or at an i-SITE near you.



Bridge to Nowhere

Lodge, Jetboat & Canoe Tours

On the Whanganui River

- 📞 0800 480 308 or 06 385 4622
- ✉ info@bridgetonowhere.co.nz
- 🌐 www.bridgetonowhere.co.nz



Jetboat Tours and Canoeing

We are a family owned and operated outdoor adventure tourism business, based in the wilderness region of the Whanganui National Park. See nature at its finest. Our jetboats travel up river through fern clad gorges to the Mangapurua Landing. A 40-minute bush walk takes you to the Bridge to Nowhere. You can then jetboat with us or canoe back down the river at your own pace exploring as you go. Unforgettable!



Mountain To Sea Cycle Trail

"If you only have the chance to do one adventure ride this year, this is North Island's best" — Jonathan Kennett

Our most popular adventure ride covers the Mangapurua - Bridge to Nowhere section of the Whanganui National Park. We cover everything from accommodation, pick up to track start, jetboat to Pipiriki and shuttle back to your accommodation. Bike hire also available. Check our web page for our two-day overnight package - it's amazing!



Lodge and Campground

www.whanganuiriveraccommodation.co.nz

If you are looking for the ultimate NZ wilderness experience, you have come to the right place. The Lodge is situated deep in the Whanganui National Park wilderness region, surrounded by native bush overlooking the river. It is the only accommodation of its kind in the area. We offer comfortable backpacker or fully catered accommodation with buffet meals, and a licensed bar. Our exclusive campground has tent sites, new cabins, hot showers, cook house. Amazing!



Whanganui River Tours



On the Whanganui River

- 📞 64 6 3438229 or +64 22 423 2131
- ✉ info@whanganuirivertours.co.nz
- 🌐 www.whanganuirivertours.co.nz

One Day River Experiences

Locally owned and operated, Ash Patea and his family draw inspiration from the tribal landscapes of Whanganui, enriched by the river's unique stories of yesteryear. Born and bred along the banks of the Whanganui, Ash's team offers NZ's most authentic Māori cultural experience in New Zealand. If you're looking for a cultural river experience, but limited for time, this is the trip for you. From the city outskirts to city centre, or a small drive north to one of the local Marae, enjoy a relaxing river tour with a local guide as you listen to the history of the area. Refreshments and lunch included in all guided trips.



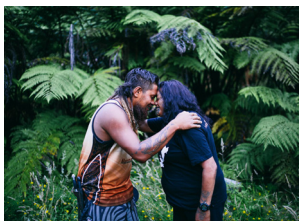
Whanganui River Cultural Tours

If you're looking for a multi-day river tour, nothing can beat the experience Ki Tai can offer. Enjoy the comfort of our six-man waka (canoes) unique only to the local Māori as a guide shares with you the place they call home. Offering two-man canoes and freedom hire we are bound to appease your request. Wrapped in a cultural ribbon, Ki Tai's Whanganui River Tours give you exceptional service and memories that will last a lifetime.



Marae Experiences

The Whanganui River region has many marae along the banks stemming from the Mountain to the Sea. As the saying goes "I am the river and the river is me," we offer experiences to large groups looking to make authentic connections. Stay on local marae and feel one with the river that flows beside it. From participating in workshops, enjoying Māori cuisine or being entertained by local performing artists, this experience will have you embracing the Māori culture as much as the local Māori.



Whanganui River Canoes & Raetihi Holiday Park

10 Parapara Road

☎ 0800 40 88 88

✉ info@whanganuirivercanoes.co.nz

🌐 www.whanganuirivercanoes.co.nz
www.raetihiholidaypark.com



Whanganui River Canoes

info@whanganuirivercanoes.co.nz

Whanganui River Canoes is your first choice when planning a multi-day Whanganui River trip. With the best canoes in the Whanganui National Park, there is nothing we love more than helping our customers make lasting memories. Friendly service, great equipment, our trips range from three to six days. Choose freedom hire canoes to explore at your own pace or a fully guided tour, and learn the history of the river as you paddle down.



Raetihi Holiday Park

info@raetihiholidaypark.com

Raetihi Holiday Park is an excellent base for any adventure in our area. On SH4, we are next to the ski-fields of Mount Ruapehu in winter, near the Whanganui River and the Tongariro Crossing for your summer adventure. Shuttles arranged to any adventure in the area - just ask when you book. Accommodation is comfortable and affordable. We offer basic cabins, spacious non powered and powered sites, with lovely communal facilities and hot showers!



Mountain Biking and Tramping

The Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail is an amazing experience with something for every rider. Our specialty is the historic Mangapurua-Bridge to Nowhere Track, riding through the valley of forgotten dreams all the way to the magnificent Whanganui River. Knowledgeable staff can organise everything for you from accommodation to shuttles, mountain bike hire, to jetboat. We can help you plan any mountain biking or tramping adventure in the area so get in touch today! Based at the Raetihi Holiday Park.



Rivertime Lodge

1569 Whanganui River Road

☎ 06 342 5595

✉ info@rivertimelodge.co.nz

🌐 www.rivertimelodge.co.nz



Rivertime Lodge
Whanganui River

Rivertime Lodge is a delightful self-contained cottage on the Whanganui River Road section of the Mountain to Sea Cycle Trail. The cottage sleeps four and we have three private cabins to accommodate groups up to ten. There is easy access for luggage transfers and secure bike storage. Expect a warm welcome, a good night's rest and a quiet relaxed atmosphere. At this place you are on river time.

Whanganui Scenic Experience Jet

Jetboat Tours

1195 Whanganui River Road

☎ 06 342 5599 or 0800 945 335

✉ tours@whanganuiscenicjet.com

🌐 www.whanganuiscenicjet.com



Experience the Whanganui River with us. We specialise in scenic, historical jetboat tours with local guides. Let us share with you the beauty and tranquillity of the Whanganui River valley. Learn the stories, history, and rich culture, and visit unforgettable places with spectacular scenery. Tours depart from our farm base, a 25-minute drive from Whanganui, and range from two hours to our all day tour to the Bridge to Nowhere.



Matahiwi Gallery Cafe

Whanganui River Road

☎ 06 342 8112 or 06 342 8116

✉ mtranganui2013@gmail.com



Matahiwi Gallery Cafe is the central point between Whanganui and Raetihi. Come relax and enjoy the country hospitality over tea, coffee, cold drinks, light food. Arts & Crafts - old and new. Tent site available. Eftpos is available.

Seasonal, closed May to September.

Open October to April, Wednesday to Sunday 9am-4pm.

Kohu Cottage

20 Koriniti Pa Road

- ☎ 06 342 8178
- ✉ lois.gilbert@xtra.co.nz
- 🌐 www.whanganuiriver.co.nz



Pamper yourself in this cosy renovated one-bedroom 100-year old cottage nestled in the tranquil Whanganui River Valley, 45 minutes from Whanganui. Sit on the verandah and listen to the sounds of the birds in the bush and watch the world slip by.

Journeys on the Whanganui

Whanganui River

- ☎ 021 466 486
- ✉ Info@whanganuiriver.co.nz
- 🌐 www.whanganuiriver.co.nz



Journeys on the Whanganui is a group of operators working on and alongside the stunning and culturally important Whanganui River and Whanganui National Park. We offer a range of places to stay, canoeing and jet-boating trips, and walking and cycling tours. Our group offer visitors the ability to engage with locals whose family and historical links to the area mean people can hear the stories of earlier generations, both from the perspective of local Māori and the European who followed them.



Journeys on the Whanganui

The Flying Fox Koriniti

Eco-friendly boutique accommodation

- ☎ 06 927 6809
- ✉ info@theflyingfox.co.nz
- 🌐 www.theflyingfox.co.nz



Accessed only by aerial cable car or boat, this is unique, eco-friendly accommodation, overlooking the Whanganui River. This tranquil setting provides the perfect place to relax away from the hustle and bustle of modern living. An ideal base for exploring the river or a stop-over on the Mountains to the Sea trail. With options ranging from hand-built cottages to glamping/camping there's something to suit all tastes and budgets. Catering is available by prior arrangement.





Whanganui River Hunting & Wild Food Festival

Paraweka Marae, Pipiriki
Whanganui River Road

☐ Annual Event in April
www.aotearoahuntnation.co.nz



Hosted by different Whanganui River Marae annually, this mid-year event allocates registered teams of hunters and individuals to a block of land within the river district. An opportunity to bring more people to the Whanganui River communities and to reconnect with the natural environment, the Whanganui River Hunting and Wild Food Festival is a competition and event for all whanau (family) and ages with a prize-giving featuring hangi and local food, music, games and novelty events. Run by iwi, this festival truly celebrates and connects iwi and visitors with Māori as a people living off the land and the river.



