

## The Home of Karapoti

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The Karapoti Classic takes place in Upper Hutt's Akatarawa Ranges, one of the remotest and most historic areas of wider Wellington.

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The Akatarawa Ranges rise at the head of the Hutt Valley, stretching from Upper Hutt to Waikanae. The area was once dense native bush, touched first by Maori, who used it to hunt and gather food, as well as a route north to the upper Kapiti Coast. Indeed, the name Akatarawa is Maori and translates to "Trailing Vines".



Five kilometres into the Akatarawa Valley, where the Akatarawa River East drops into the main Akatarawa River, a rare flat area was named "Karapoti," which translates as "surrounded". There couldn't be a more literal place name because Karapoti is surrounded both by the hills and waters of the Akatarawa.

European settlement brought logging, animals, fires and recreation to the Akatarawa's. Saw-milling was an important part of the economy and during the early 1900s large communities settled into the Karapoti Park area.

Access was via Karapoti Road, which was formed in 1911 as a tram track with wooden rails. Old tram lines, trucks, discarded machinery and evidence of cottages can still be seen on the Karapoti course today.

Initially the logging was native timbers such as rimu, matai, totara, kahikatea and miro. But un-merchantable podocarp were left alone and can be seen still scattered throughout the area.

From 1930 replanting took place with Douglas fir, Lawson's cypress, Monterey cypress, western red cedar and Japanese cedar. Today many of these tree species can still be seen blending with the surrounding native bush.

Today the Akatarawa Ranges is divided between life-stylers, farm blocks and the Akatarawa Forest Regional Park, which is where the Karapoti Classic takes place. Karapoti Park and Karapoti Gorge are administered by Upper Hutt City Council, while the 14,000 hectare forest park comes under Greater Wellington Regional Council.

And while logging is still a major activity in the Akatarawa, the growing penchant for outdoor recreational has seen the area become a major recreation spot for everyone from walkers and runners to motor cyclists, four wheel drive enthusiasts and - of course - mountain bikers.

*Source: Greater Wellington Regional Council.*

