

The 50k Classic - Course Description

This is the biggie. New Zealand's original mountain bike race. Limited to 1000 riders, we've had up to 1800 people wanting to ride! The reason is simple: an uncompromising yet exhilarating and achievable 50km of 4WD trails, gnarly single track, wheel sucking sludge, raging river crossings, wall to wall wilderness and almost 1500m of climbing and descending to provide workout for both your granny ring and grin.

In short, "The Classic" has something for everyone and with a bit of training almost everyone can achieve it... Almost!

Karapoti's Iconic Start



The 50k Classic starts LeMans-style, bikes in hand, with a sprint across the Akatarawa River, followed by a kilometre on a sealed road before heading west into the spectacular Karapoti Gorge.

Karapoti Gorge is 6k of rough single track cut out of the cliff walls created by the Akatarawa River West. The Gorge climbs very gradually before breaking out onto the Hukinga Forest trail, passing McGhie's Bridge on your left and continuing west on an undulating forest track for another 4k deep into the Akatarawa Ranges to the affectionately named "The Warm Up" climb.

The **Warm Up** is a gravelly 1.5k long uphill that is the shortest but steepest climb you'll encounter at Karapoti. At the top you're straight into 1k long downhill that gets increasing steep and rocky before diving into the spectacular Cederholm Creek, where after 300m of flat riding along the creek bed the course heads uphill again on Deadwood Ridge.

Karapoti Gorge



Deadwood



Cederholm Creek



"**Deadwood**" is so named because that's exactly what your legs will feel like at the top. Made up mostly of hard-packed clay and rock, it's a 2k long climb peaking out at 575m above sea level. At the top you're approx 15k into the race and deep in the heart of the Akatarawa Ranges, flanked by native bush that opens every now and then to huge vistas to the north and south.

The course continues along the top of Deadwood Ridge, undulating on a fast track for 5k until you reach the top of the "Rock Garden", which turns off to your left.

The Rock Garden is so named for the 3k of gradually descending single track of soccer ball size rocks and waist high drops.

Surrounded by wall-to-wall native bush, there's also fallen trees, creeks, wash-outs and ditches to negotiate, all of it rideable if you're feeling keen. But enjoy it while you can, because things are about to get tough.

If Karapoti was a golf course (heaven forbid), then the Rock Garden would be the first signature hole. At the bottom, after crossing the Akatarawa River West and another 1k of single track, you'll find the second signature hole.

The Rock Garden



"Devil's Staircase" is a 2k long uphill through dense bush that is so steep in some sections that huge steps have been cut out of the track.

Bits and pieces are rideable, but they're broken up by plenty of bikes-on-shoulders action and Devil's Staircase infamous bogs; mud holes with suction such that riders have lost shoes forever.

Both literally and figuratively, the top of Devil's Staircase is the high point of the race at the 613m high Titi. Depending on your fitness and luck, it's also more or less halfway in regard to your ride-time.

At the top you'll find an aid station and awesome views out over to the Kapiti Coast before heading into a few kilometres of fast, undulating riding that leads to Karapoti's longest downhill.

Devil's Staircase



"Big Ring Boulevard" is nothing more and nothing less than 10k of big smiles.

With fast, wide tracks and only the odd gravel patch, tyre-wrecking rock and off-camber corner to watch out for, the biggest challenge is grin-induced facial cramps and brake-induced finger cramps. Oh, and the hidden drop into Dopers Creek at the bottom.

On a hot day, Dopers Creek is a merciful respite amid the hottest part of the course because after a couple of kilometres on the flat you're into the last 3k climb up the Pram Track to the top of the 531m high Dopers Hill.

Pram Track



Big Ring Boulevard



One Last River



The Pram Track takes its name because in the early years riders had to do as much pushing as riding. But track and bike improvements have turned this final climb into mere hard work.

It's Karapoti's longest climb. But the climb itself is the easiest, because after a steep, rocky first 100m it moves to a more gradual incline on hard-packed clay and rock for almost 2k before a series of short steep pinches to the top.

The descent off Dopers Hill is glorious. You're back into dense bush for 4k of sweet switching downhill that has the odd ditch, bog and gravelly corner to watch for. Then you break out into the open for a final 1k charge down a steep, fast and gravelly track to the Akatarawa River West.

After crossing the river you'll remember being here earlier. From here it's just 7k of gradual downhill back through Karapoti Gorge, across the Akatarawa River for one last time, and then 400m up into the Karapoti Park finish line.

The Finish: The rock stars amongst us cut this out in well under 3hrs. But if you're one of Karapoti's 1000-odd mere mortals then you'll be somewhere closer to four or five hours. Either way it's a hell of an achievement!

Finished !

