

MAKETU TRIP, or as I call it "BEST BIRTHDAY EVER!!"

By Natalie Cox

We had a lovely drive to Lake Rotorua where we stopped at Hamurana Reserve to let everyone group together before continuing on Hamurana Rd to Okere Falls. After 30mins to explore the Falls, go to toilets, take photos and have a wander, we continued to Maketu for lunch..... Hang on, wait a minute!! That's what was SUPPOSED to happen before unheard-of levels of rain and numerous landslides closed roads, including Hamurana Rd. After the first slip was getting cleared away, (yep, it's gonna happen) there was a second slip (nope, it's not gonna happen) which totally ruined our plans for the run. Back to the drawing board, where we threw around 3 or 4 possibilities, some obscenities, and a threat of divorce just for good measure. After me pulling my hair out in frustration, (Steve doesn't have enough to spare) we finally ended up with only 1 feasible option. I mapped the new route and then wrote up some new run sheets and at 11pm joined my sleeping husband.

There were 11 cars that met us at Tye Park for a chat and morning tea. At about 10am we headed off, glad to get in our cars out of the cold wind. It was a leisurely drive along Highway 29a to Oropi Road, then along Oropi Gorge Road. It was a narrow, bendy road, perfect for big Jaguars. The navigators were able to enjoy the scenery through the Gorge (or knit, whichever took their fancy) while the driver's eyes were glued to the road in -case a truck, motorhome, 4-wheel drive or some kind of farmy animal came along and they had to take evasive action.



Failing to do so could make it messy, not to mention late for lunch. We played it safe and travelled along Pyes Pa Rd for a bit then turned on to Te Matai Rd. Hit some road works but nothing the trusty Jags couldn't manage. Then it was on to Maketu.

I love Maketu. We (I) wanted to do this run because it was an excuse to go there, and it was my "secret" birthday so I got to spend it at my special place with some good people.



We had another 4 people meet us at the cafe as our hosts John and Craig seated us. They had put us inside because of the cold wind, and offered "specials" of their famous fish'n'chips or seafood chowder which nearly everyone had and thoroughly enjoyed. In my opinion all their food is special, but anyhow...As we finished, Gary walked in with a big birthday cake (courtesy of Estelle) , announced it was my big day and got everyone to sing Happy Birthday. My secret was out, damn him.



Once I got over my embarrassment (with the assistance of a couple of glasses of wine...cause it **was** my birthday) I felt really touched that people were being so kind and generous. Meant a lot to me. The wonderful French lady, or the waitress as she's otherwise known, was really helpful and funny, sliced the cake, added a dollop of cream and doled it out to everyone. With stomachs full, especially mine.... cause it **was** my birthday, people started drifting off, heading home.

I am grateful to my husband for putting up with all my s..t, I am grateful I'm alive to officially become a pensioner, grateful for the Maketu Cafe and the people that run it for making it a special place for me, and I am grateful for the lovely people I got to spend my day with.

BEST BIRTHDAY EVER!!

Natalie

