

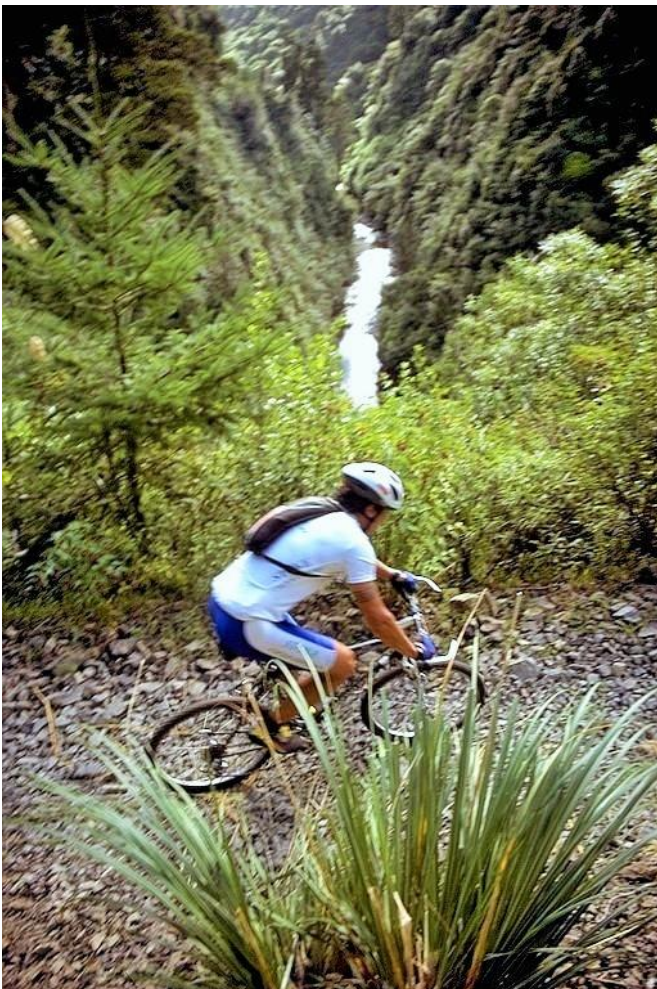
The Home of Karapoti

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

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 or tangled vines.

Five kilometres into the Akatarawa Valley 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 convergence of the Akatarawa River and Akatarawa River West.

Karapoti Gorge



Akatarawa Valley Painting - 1890s

For Maori, Karapoti had been just a convenient stopover in their travels. But European settlement brought logging, animals, fires and recreation to the Akatarawa's. Akatarawa Road was started in 1876 and took 24 years to complete right through to Waikanae but was immediately a major thoroughfare for logging and transport.

Saw-milling was an important part of the economy and by the early 1900s large communities had settled into the Karapoti Park area. Access was via the Akatarawa Road, with logging access up Karapoti Gorge road, which was formed in 1911 as a tram track with wooden rails.

Initially the logging was native timbers such as rimu, matai, totara, kahikatea and miro. But unmerchantable podocarp is still evident today. Proof of those early European settlers can still be seen in old tram lines, trucks, discarded machinery and cottage fireplaces on the Karapoti Classic mountain course today.

During this time the Akatarawas Ranges was also significant as the last sighting in 1905 of New Zealand's extinct Huia bird.



From 1930 the first re-plantings took place with Douglas fir, Lawson's cypress, Monterey cypress, western red cedar and Japanese cedar. Today many of these species can be seen blending with the regenerating native bush.

Today the Akatarawa Ranges is divided between lifestyle, 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, with much of it now regenerating native bush.

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

Source: Greater Wellington Regional Council.

