

Cold Fingers on Lake Taupo

- Evan Pugh

Fine weather was forecast, fine and cold weather so on Tuesday August the 10th, after spending the night at Motutere camp ground half way down the eastern side of the lake, I paddled away at 6.30 a.m. just before daylight and headed south into a light southerly.

I followed the shoreline with the highway lights on my left for quite a way before the long Stump Bay with many black wild goats on the shoreline and past the Tongariro Delta with a scattering of boats at the river ends hoping for a catch. I landed before little Waihi for a stretch and feed before continuing on along the shore past Kuratua and Whareroa where I rescued a ball for the guy who's dog wouldn't go in the water (understandable).



The day had started cold and I had polypro gloves with dive gloves on top to start off with and had removed them as the sun came out and the day warmed to about 10°C. I had my shark skin long sleeved top on all day. The lake was flat calm as I approached my destination of Te Hapua Bay before the start of the Karangahape cliffs but noted only 47.5 kilometres on the GPS so decided to carry on another 6 kilometres to a tiny little bay along the cliffs where I camped on a small sandy beach and had the sun till 5.00 p.m. which was really appreciated. There's not a lot of room for more than two tents.

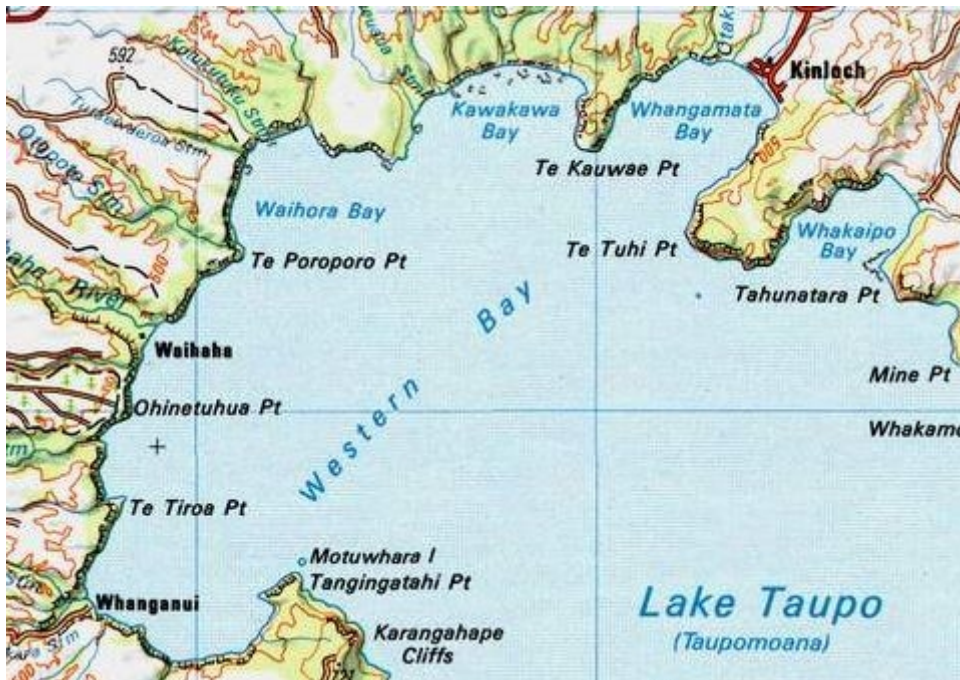
Total today 53 kilometres.

Wednesday on the water by 6.30 a.m. again after quite a cold night even with my good winter sleeping bag and sleeping bag liner made from a winter “thick” sheet. I also carry two bed mats, one a closed cell foam roll that goes down first then the self inflating one on top of that. When I pack my kayak the closed cell foam one goes in flat in the aft compartment, then the self inflating, once rolled up, goes on top and is pushed as far aft as possible.

Around the edge of the main cliffs you then head SW till Cherry Bay and past Whanganui and on till you get to Waihaha where I stopped for a stretch. The Waihaha River goes 5 kilometres up to a great waterfall and the river’s course into the lake had changed since I was here last by perhaps 200 metres to the south of its past course.

Again today it was calm and sunny as I made my way North following the shore, into Boat Harbour and on to Kawakawa Bay for another stop then around to Whangamata Bay with Kinloch in the far distance but I decided after a kilometre not to go all the way in and crossed to the Eastern side around the point and across Whakaipo Bay to the small stony beach near the point where I camped for the night. Once the drunken boaties buggered off, I set up on the beach again.

50 kilometres today.



Thursday morning was still quite cold, 6.30 a.m. paddling off along the shore past the Rock carvings and then headed north towards Taupo town. While still near shore I stopped at Acacia Bay for a break, I was having difficulty getting into my day hatch as my cold gloved hands were not acting as they should.

I wobbled up to a table and stood there, made a sandwich, dropped my VHF and paced around trying to warm up while a couple in the warmth of their car watched me looking like an idiot.

Once I departed the sun came up and the mist disappeared and it warmed up so off came the gloves and I felt as normal as I can once again. Paddling past the golf driving range on the waterfront, the divers were going out to retrieve the 5 million balls out in the lake.

Some people must slice them good as I saw an area with about a hundred well away from the course around the floating target.



After a stop at Whareroa Point I stayed by shore along past Waitahanui and the trout fishermen then along the White Cliffs and Hatepe before arriving back at Motutere and covering another 50 kilometres for the day after a two hundred meter extra paddle to make up the shortfall. As soon as I landed I hung my tent on a vacant camp ground clothesline before walking over the road to get the van and pack up.

I cut a couple of corners as the lake shoreline is 167 kilometres. My intention was to do 50 kilometre days and this became my tenth lap of Lake Taupo, six of them the full 167 kilometres.

For some reason I was knackered after the trip for a couple of days, maybe the cold, maybe the flat calm water, and my average speed was slower than normal at 6.3 kph which includes time spent in the kayak having a snack, drink, scratch, etc. I took the Mirage 580 which I have done plenty of day after day paddling in but not quite this distance loaded up.