

New Lite Challenge in Lake to Lighthouse

Great news if you're not keen on the full force of the 'Genesis Energy Lake to Lighthouse Challenge' which traverses Lake Waikaremoana to Wairoa on the Hawkes Bay coast this November 18-20. There's now a slightly easier option to race alongside the world's best - the 'Lake to Lighthouse Lite'.

At 103km, the Lite will join the second day of racing (Saturday 20 November) and still be a pretty tough day in a pretty spectacular office under the backdrop of the Wairoa region. Starting from Tuai near Waikaremoana, the event will begin with a full on 23km mountain bike, and follow up with a 43km road ride, 21km flat water river paddle down the Wairoa river and finally a leg-aching 16km run around the hills that skirt Wairoa.

Lite? Well, kind of. But you won't be able to wing it without training.

"We've added the Lite option to give something for first timers and slightly less serious competitors. Running 46km around Lake Waikaremoana [in the 2 day main event] can be a bit intimidating," explained event director Chris Joblin.

With registration and briefing on the Friday night, The L2L Lite also won't commit you to so much time away, so it's great if you're busy. It's for individuals and two-person teams.

As for the original (full-fat?) version, the third Genesis Energy Lake to Lighthouse Challenge will again be a two-day race, with superb cultural entertainment and dining the evening beforehand. The course is exactly the same as last year, when Richard and Elina won in dominating fashion, in around 13 and 15 hours.

Day one will see a 15km uphill mountain bike to Waikaremoana, followed by a 14 km paddle on the 'sea of rippling waters'. Then there's the highlight (or maybe low-lite if fitness is lacking!) taking in the full 46km length of the Lake Waikaremoana great walk.

The last leg is thankfully easy, an exhilarating downhill plunge on the mountain bike back to the start in Tuai, to be greeted by the crowd, cool down in the lake and prepared for the dinner that night. Day two will be the same as the Lite.

"We had great feedback last year so we're keeping the stages the same," said Joblin. "Even the teams competitors found it pretty epic. That's the endorsement we want!"

"One change we have made is adding in the option to paddle by waka (in both events). If you prefer, you can use a W1 instead of a multisport kayak. On a calm day, a fast multisport kayak should be faster than a waka. But if it's choppy a waka could have the edge. It's another choice. You could even paddle a waka on day one and a kayak on day two."

The waka option is yet another way the event celebrates the history and culture of the Waikaremoana region. The Lake to Lighthouse partners with local iwi to create an experience that is truly unlike anything else in multisport. There's superb entertainment on Thursday and Friday evenings.

Fitness and injuries allowing, Richard and Elina Ussher will be back to defend their wins from 2009/08. Joblin expects plenty of other guns, as word gets around. "The numbers are building each year."

"I'd love to be there again," said Gordon Walker, who last year won the teams' category with Dwarne Farley. Solo or team? "I guess that depends on the level of fitness I can obtain over the months between now and then. I would prefer to do individual – it's a huge challenge and one that I'd like to meet at some stage."

"That said, it's a perfect race for a two person team and I have never done a race and had some much fun at the same time as pushing myself to the limit," Walker said. "In a team the atmosphere is so much more relaxed and you can really enjoy yourself. If you're honest though, you feel like a bit of a wuss when an individual does the full Monty!"

Walker thinks it's a special event. "I think the two essential ingredients to a great race are the course and the people. The L2L has both well and truly wrapped up. A race will never be a great race unless the course has something special, something unique, something wild – an X Factor. The Lake is a jewel. You get a real sense of being somewhere special as you make your way through genuine New Zealand wilderness."

"Intertwining the Maori culture into the event makes it more memorable and so much more of an experience. From the Director to the Iwi to the competitors one and all – it has great people."

Also of note, there's now a vintage category for 50 pluses. There's also a new corporate category for two, three and four person teams. Earlybird discount entries close next week, 30 June, so enter now at www.laketolighthouse.co.nz