

## Rookie & Repeat Wins At Porirua Grand Traverse

**Over 800 participants from all ends of New Zealand turned out for 21st Porirua Grand Traverse, and when the dust had settled a local standout had nabbed his second victory, while a new Wellingtonian had nabbed her first.**

The epic kayaking, mountain biking and mountain running event around the hills, harbour and coastlines of Porirua City lived up to its reputation as one country's toughest, with the edge of cyclone Vainu adding to the rugged route to make 2026 one to remember.

Porirua's own Ryan Tait always remembers how hard this race is. It took him three goes before he won the 2024 Porirua Grand Traverse, and despite a year recovering from a training crash soon after, he was back this year to lead from start to finish for a convincing second win that he dubbed his hardest.

In a day of non-stop rain and high humidity, Tait crossed the line in 5hrs 13min 52secs, the conditions making him some 45min slower than expected. Hayden Smith was next through, 22min down but only three minutes clear of Josh Garrett.

The women's race was less clear-cut. Zoe McClure, second last year and third at the Fine Sign Crazyman, managed to use that experience to claim the top spot in 2026. But not without a fight.

McClure led off the 12k paddle, but lost her lead on the 32k mountain bike to specialist Emma Bateup. McClure proved the more rounded athlete, however, taking the lead 9k into the 21k mountain run to eventually win by 20min in 6hrs 23min 11secs. Wellington's Christie Hagen claimed third.

The Porirua Grand Traverse has long been considered a celebration of all things endurance. As well as the feature multisport race, the day includes a fun run and fun bike and options for just paddling, mountain biking or mountain running.

Stand outs included almost 100 people in the waka events and huge fun run team entries, with local Porirua gym Arena Fitness enter over 120 members, while Tawa Intermediate fielded almost 70 students and teachers.

Other standout winners included Kapiti's Scott Turkington setting a new record for the 10k fun run around Whitireia Coastal Park of 36min 11secs. Wellington's David Haunschmidt set another record by default when winning the new 21k mountain run over

Rangituhi and around the western coast, winning by 18min in 1hr 50min 45secs. In the 32k mountain bike on the purpose-built trails of Rangituhi and Spicer Forest, 50-year-old Craig Lawn, a national champion 25 years ago, dusted off the body to claim line honours in 1hr 59min 00secs, while his son Jagger won the junior men in 2hrs 18min 33secs. At the other end of the age spectrum, the 12k fun bike was dominated by 10-year-old Charlie Pidcock, who won by 4min in a race record 40min 11secs.

No less impressive was Wairarapa multisport stalwart, Les Morris, who participated in 2006's inaugural Porirua Grand Traverse, shrugging off a triple bypass two years ago to finish the 12k kayak in his sixth decade.

In 2027 the 22nd Porirua Grand Traverse is scheduled for Sunday 4th April.



Ryan Tait – Photo: [marathonphotos.live](https://marathonphotos.live)