

Rangitoto zipline, gondola rides suggested: iwi plan to make island more accessible

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Even a ski chairlift is being planned for the Hauraki Gulf Island.
Photo / Getty Images.



By: [Anne Gibson](#)
Property editor, NZ Herald
anne.gibson@nzherald.co.nz @anneherald

Aucklanders may soon be able to zipline from Rangitoto Island's summit.

An influential Auckland iwi leader has put forward commercial plans for zipline and gondola rides on Rangitoto.

The proposal, which is currently being considered, has also won the backing of the powerful Tāmaki Makaurau rangatira.

James Brown, chair of Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, said of the Rangitoto plans today: "We want to make these iconic landscapes accessible so a zipline is possible and also a gondola."

An alternative was a ski chairlift, he said.

Whatever form the proposed rides took, Brown said they could run from near Islington Bay where ferries docked to around the summit of the maunga.

"There's no better way to get the elderly, injured and impaired to that iconic destination than only the fit and healthy and enjoy," Brown said of the gondola scheme. "We could put in ski chairs, who knows?"

This morning, Ngarimu Blair, a rangatira of Ngāti Whātua Orākei, backed the iwi plans for the two motu and said "exciting ventures are in the pipeline."

Brown said the zipline and gondola plans would not be detrimental to Rangitoto because they would not be visible from the mainland, would skim the bush line yet would provide a significant amenity for many more people to enjoy the motu.

"This will make the islands more accessible for Aucklanders, New Zealanders and international visitors," he said.

Rangitoto zipline option



Rangitoto summit view / Google Maps

Brown didn't mince words when responding to the question of whether the new amenities could damage the environment.

"To any person who says 'that's not good for the islands and that's wrecking the environment' - my ancestors didn't wreck Rangitoto or Motutapu or any island. The Crown and its mates did. You would not be able to see these [rides] from the mainland because the [crater] rim is lower than the summit and there's landing points," Brown said of the plans.

A 20 to 22-bedroom lodge was also planned for Motutapu and work on that might start in the next three years, Brown said: "You're looking at \$15m to \$17m for that."



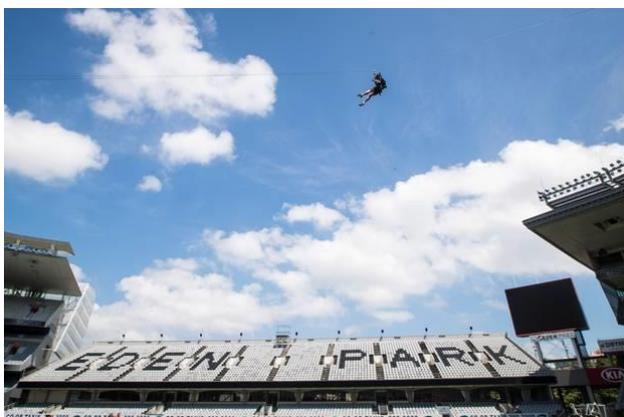
Ngarimu Blair - many new tourism initiatives will emerge soon. Photo/Dean Purcell

The infrastructure would bring thousands more people to the motu in the Hauraki Gulf.

"These islands are completely under-utilised because there's no access here," he said, speaking from Motutapu this morning. Visitors wanting to get to Motutapu's Home Bay campground had to walk some hours from Islington Bay where ferries dropped them off, he said, and that was not possible for many.

"This is why the camp ground is completely under-utilised," he said.

Cycle tours of Motutapu are also planned and these would be guided because the motu was the most significant archaeological area in Auckland, Brown said.



Paul Flynn of The Hits on the Eden Park Stadium zipline in 2017. Photo/Jason Oxenham.

On Wednesday, the iwi signed a relationship agreement with the Department of Conservation and it was in a *Herald* article about that quoting Brown that the idea of the Rangitoto zipline first emerged.

Brown spoke about his iwi signing a relationship agreement with DoC for Motutapu, giving it a role as mana whenua in influencing policies, looking after the whenua and taonga species, providing visitor information and protecting waahi tapu.

Read more: [Auckland iwi Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki lays out bikes and beds plans for Motutapu](#)

Blair said many new initiatives would emerge soon.

"Ngāti Whātua totally supports Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki as the ahi kaa and lead iwi at Rangitoto and Motutapu. We gave formal support in their legal case against the Crown and DoC in the early stages and fully congratulate them on their win in the Supreme Court to have their rights recognised," Blair said.

Ngāti Whātua also had a strong win in the Supreme Court against the Crown and the Marutuahu settlement in September which sends a strong signal that the ahi kaa and settled iwi's rights must not be cast aside in the rush to settle claims, Blair said.



Home Bay, Motutapu. Photo/Richard Robinson

"Ngāi Tai have shared their tourism ideas with us and other iwi and we are close to finalising a Māori tourism strategy for the wider region which will see Tāmaki Makaurau over time have many authentic sustainable Māori experiences. We look forward to collaborating with Ngāi Tai and other Auckland tribes on these and other exciting ventures in the pipeline," Blair said.

The Supreme Court last month outlined the iwi's kaitiaki over the motu.

"The Ngāi Tai Trust represents the iwi of Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki. The rohe of Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki extends across Tīkapa Moana/Hauraki Gulf and includes the ancestral

motu of Rangitoto, Motutapu, and Motu-a-Ihenga (Motuihe), with which it has deep and long-standing connections," the court [said](#).