



# BR Brake Van World Tour 7

## Firth of Thames and Taupo

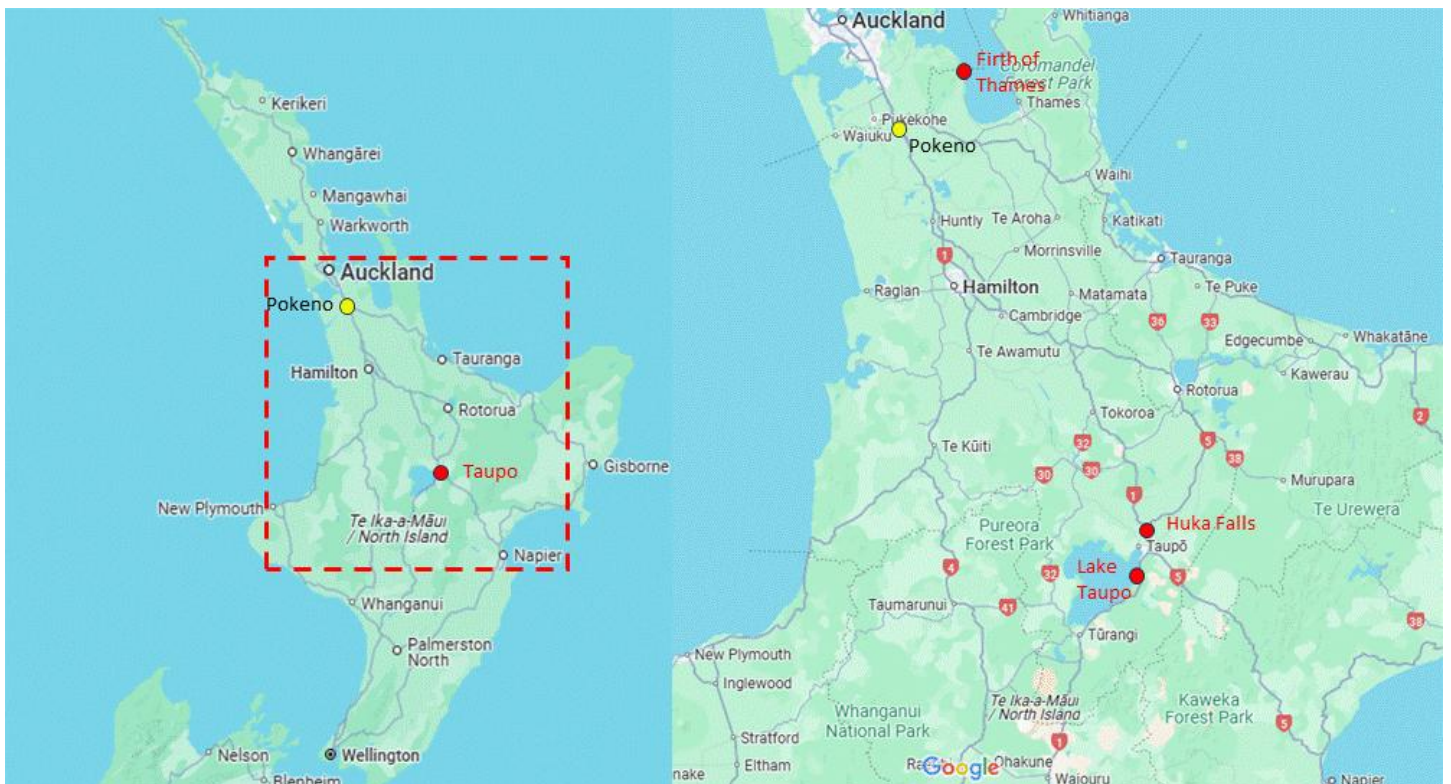


Author: John Boyson



*Huka Falls at the start of the Waikato River a couple of kilometres downstream of Lake Taupo.*

Two trips in this newsletter. Firstly, a local trip to the west side of the Firth of Thames for a sunset. Later in the month, we went down to Taupo in the central North Island for the day.



*A map of the North Island on the left, with a detail map of the area in question on the right. As usual, our home town of Pokeno is marked in yellow whilst the places visited and photographed are highlighted in red.*





*Looking south down the Firth of Thames with the Coromandel Peninsular on the opposite shore.*



*The view north.*





*This week's excursion saw us head to Taupo in the centre of the North Island to see Huka Falls as well as the Lake. For the benefit of those who are not familiar with the North Island, Lake Taupo lies in the centre of the Island at an elevation of about 500m asl. It is the source of the Waikato River which is New Zealand's longest. About 2km from the lake, the river surges through this narrow chasm where it is restricted in width to about 15 metres. However, the depth of the channel is significant at 10 metres deep to maintain capacity.*



*The view of the channel downstream.*





*The outfall into the main river channel downstream of the falls.*



*The falls. The drop is about 11 metres which is not particularly high. However, the power of the falls is what impresses.*





*Just up from the falls is Lake Taupo which is the source of the water passing over the falls. In the background, are the North Island's central volcanoes. All are active although most of the time not violently. The big three from left to right are Ruapehu (2,797m), Ngauruhoe (2,291m), and Tongariro (1,978m). The gentle sloped area to the left of the mountains is the Rangipo Desert formed by the ash from various eruptions from Ruapehu. It is hugely acidic so cannot sustain much life. There are just two routes south and east from Taupo. State Highway One which heads along the left shore lake and then over the desert (approximately 1000m asl) to gain the southern half of the North Island, or east along State Highway Five through the main divide to Napier on the East Coast. Both roads traverse some really wild rugged and empty country on their various routes.*



*Sunset on the lake shore. The lake is about 50km across in most directions and takes about 20 years to discharge. It's large enough to create its own false horizon which is visible in this view. The far shores lie below this. It is also a dormant volcanic crater. The shoreline is riddled with pumice. I found a reasonable lump of it and chucked in to see if it would float. It did as can be seen!*