

Best foot forward: Walking festival returns with expanded schedule

After months of cancellations and postponements it's good to see some regular major Waiheke events being put back on the calendar.

This week it's the turn of the Waiheke Walking Festival, which is planning a longer, expanded, 18-day schedule starting on 11 November.

The walking festival has grown immeasurably over the past 10 years and the 11th event - once again supported by Ray White Waiheke and sponsored by Treescape and Make Tracks with funding from the organisation's patrons - is doubling the usual time frame.

"This longer format allows us to have smaller numbers of walks each day, smaller numbers of walkers on individual walks, and repeat walks so that we don't restrict overall access to the walks," festival manager Vicki Angland says.

"The new format is aimed at attracting a steady stream of happy walkers to the island over a longer time frame, giving walkers a more intimate experience of the island and enabling groups of walkers to comfortably socialise, and support local businesses.

Obviously, the go-ahead for numbers and events will depend on which Covid-19 alert level the country and Waiheke is at come the start of spring, but current planning for the festival is based around a maximum of between 30 and 50 walkers per walk with the intention to repeat walks over the 18 days to allow as many



The walking festival attracts plenty of hikers from on and off-island.

people as possible to enjoy them.

Vicki says planning is well underway with highlights including a new nine-day Te Ara Hura trail, which involves walking between 9km and 12km each day, a three-day walk and accommodation package, and a bush survival skills walk.

Other walks include a five-day Te Ara Hura, specialty walks involving art studio visits, night sky telescopes,

a labyrinth or a ukulele, conservation and history themed walks, and premium walks through private land, with wine and dining.

The full programme is due to be published later in the year.

For more information on the festival, which will run from November 11 to 29, see waihekewalkingfestival.org or email info@waihekewalkingfestival.org

Get moving to the movies

Sick of Netflix? Bottomed out on the box sets? Why not binge on widescreen with a few friends or whānau.

Waiheke Community Cinema, like many Waiheke businesses, has struggled to meet ongoing expenses while being shut down by Covid-19 containment efforts, and so is promoting its slightly new take on the movie-going experience - private viewings.

"We were fortunate that during the shutdown, members of our community supported us by donating close to \$6000 to the cinema trust," Michael Somers told *Gulf News*. "This was sufficient to cover ongoing expenses like rent, insurance, equipment rental, etc that couldn't be 'turned off' during our

close-down.

"But now, with our seating capacity cut in half by physical distancing rules, and approaching a traditionally slow period of the year, we are looking at ways that we can increase revenue. Utilising the cinema during periods when we are not showing public screenings is one such strategy for raising revenue."

The deal on offer is to extend a special cinema hire rate of \$150 usually reserved for local not-for-profit organisations to everyone through the end of June.

This is a saving of \$100 from the normal public rental rate and means a group of 10 can rent the cinema and view a movie for \$15 per person - there's a choice of movies from the current programme as long as

bookings are made for times outside public screening sessions.

"We hope this initiative will allow any of our patrons still concerned about bursting their bubble to rejoin us at the cinema," Michael said.

The cinema has been a popular choice for people wanting to get out and about as the lockdown restrictions have eased, with all Sunday sessions booked out by Saturday, and staff are reminding patrons that to conform with the Covid-19 rules they're still not taking walk-ups. There's also physical distancing and sanitising of sofas between all showings.

For a list and schedule of movies now showing, visit waihekecinema.kiwi