

## Trip Report: Riwaka Resurgence, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2010

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I know I might be a little biased but I always enjoy diving Riwaka Resurgence. Although the dive itself is not particularly long, deep or technically challenging it still brings out a big smile on my usually slightly grumpy looking face. (I'm not really grumpy – it's everyone else.) The setting is spectacular, the entrance pool is inviting, the visibility is usually fantastic, there are some great formations to look at and for most people that I guide this is a dive which involves facing and defeating their fears – which always guarantees a buzz. This trip was no exception – by the time I was entering the entrance pool I was already humming happily to myself.

My two buddies for this trip were both new to Riwaka and both excited about the dive. Peter was suitably thoughtful – admitting to a few nerves – and Steve, although cave qualified, was getting more nervous by the minute, worrying about whether he would get the photographs I wanted and justify his cave diving qualifications. Mel on the other hand was causing problems – having decided not to join us and give her ears a rest after the Lermontov trip she was in charge of the camera and was delightedly taking photos of us whenever we inadvertently adopted unflattering positions - hence why I'm writing this trip report instead of her!



Of course although I say this is a relatively simple dive that didn't stop us going overboard with the equipment. 3 cars, all of them full; enough tools and spares to fill a good sized dive shop and more cylinders, stage bottles and deco gas than we would ever need. OK, so it wasn't all for this dive, it was for the Blue Creek Resurgence trip planned for the following 6 days, but it impressed the few tourists that

happened to pass by. And we certainly weren't going to disillusion them about how heroic we were in tackling this death-defying bottomless chasm..... (For the full details of quite how much stuff we needed for Blue Creek and how that trip went check out Mel's trip report.)

After considerable faffing we completed our kitting up and took the gentle stroll up to the cave. Without gear it is an easy 5 minutes walk – with gear it feels longer – and as we sweated our way up I couldn't help but think of Blue Creek, with the 30min 1.7km 'gentle walk' to the cave entrance. No need for the gym this week! When we arrived at the cave the evidence of the record dry summer for the Marlborough/Nelson region was clear. The water level was noticeably lower than our last



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trip and the flow was equally light. However all that I was really concerned about was the temperature and I was very pleased to find that it hadn't dropped since the last trip – still a balmy 12 degrees – very comfortable for this dive. Negotiating the very slippery rocks we all eased ourselves into the water and completed kitting up – fins, masks etc. Then whilst I attached our guideline Peter and Steve swam around in circles following the camera bully's commands – anything for a good picture.

Sinking below the surface to spectacular visibility is inspiring on any dive and Riwaka did not disappoint. The beam from my canister light shone through the water lighting rocks that were at least 30m away; I was definitely smiling by this point. Following the right hand wall I reeled out slowly, allowing Steve and Peter to look around. The actual overhead part of the dive at this point is only 5m or so, but if you don't look up it is possible to swim for 100m or so through the cave without realising that you can surface at any time. It makes for a very safe but very spectacular start to a dive – a great combination when guiding.



After completing the first sump we all clambered out of the water and across the rock pile on our way towards sump two. The descend at the start of sump two is my favourite part of Riwaka, with large boulders and sparkling white sand below and a clear view ahead for as far as light beams allow. This is the view that either inspires people to understand the allure of cave diving or it doesn't and they don't. Even having dived the spectacular caves of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsular Steve was still entranced by the view.

Having surfaced in the second cavern we dumped all of our gear and whilst Steve and I checked out photo opportunities Peter went exploring. The cavern is huge and a tunnel towards the back leads off to the rest of the cave system and the many other sumps – you could explore this system for days. Steve and I weren't really paying attention to what Peter was up to but it was still a surprise when he returned 10mins later - his exploration efforts were not successful. I quote "I've no idea what I'm trying to do." Basically he'd taken a very dodgy torch which kept cutting out and left his glasses in the car – not a great combination!



After fumbling around taking a dozen black, grey and blank photos Steve finally announced success with the dry photos, so we all headed back to our gear to get some in water photos. We decided to use sump two for this and Peter and I spent 10mins swimming round and round in circles – talk about déjà vu. Finally Steve gave us the thumbs up and we headed out. We finally surfaced to a lovely sunny day 90mins after we initially entered the inner-world – the perfect way to return to the outside world. As we surfaced Steve said, "Now I'm really excited about Blue Creek tomorrow." I was thinking exactly the same thing myself.