



# Activities & Courses

## **The MERC Facility**

The Sir Peter Blake Marine Education & Recreation Centre nestles under the cliffs at the southern end of Long Bay Beach, in the Hauraki Gulf, Auckland. The marine reserve plus the land reserve adjacent to the centre are widely utilised to create varied and interesting activity programmes.

The Centre offers:

- beds for 80 people overnight with separate teacher/leader accommodation,
- a multi-purpose hall seating up to 100 people,
- wheelchair access,
- a large industrial-style kitchen and dining facilities,
- conference facilities for up to 40 people (theatre style),
- facilities for day visitors with activities for up to 150 people at any one time.

## **Equipment**

Sir Peter Blake MERC has a wide range of first class gear and equipment to support all activities, including water-based activities that require wetsuits and buoyancy aids. There are rigorous procedures in place to ensure that all equipment is maintained to the highest standard.

## **Instructors**

MERC provides qualified instructors for every programme activity from our team of full time and contract personnel. Our instructors hold a range of qualifications obtained at AUT and other specialist institutes for outdoor pursuit training including wilderness training in group management, search and rescue, bush survival, first aid, weather reading, white water paddling, climbing and abseil safety.

Instructors are also given opportunities to extend their qualifications while working at MERC through nationally recognised seminars and training programmes hosted by MERC and other S.F.R.I.T.O training providers.

## **Programmes & Objectives**

MERC provides programmes for day groups, residential groups and adult training at Long Bay, as well as off-site programmes. On-site instructional programmes run between 9am and 4pm each day, with scope to organise short duration, single day and multi-day courses. Programme content varies from course to course and is developed to meet the needs of each group. To that end, instructors and management will work with you to develop programmes that will address your group's unique needs.

In the instructors' own words:

*"We offer outdoor education and recreation facilities with a strong emphasis on life skills, using the environment as our text book."*

MERC objectives are centred on a community-development ethos. We use outdoor activity to teach a range of essential life skills that are the foundations of healthy communities. Communication, relationship building, physical activity, confidence, decision-making, trust and self-esteem; these are the skill sets that are pivotal to community well-being. Additionally, MERC plays a vital role in teaching environmental care and guardianship in an experiential setting.

Activities include adventure games, body boarding, beach and bush walks, Canadian canoeing, climbing and abseiling, environmental experiential programmes, team challenges and expedition initiatives, kayaking, orienteering, overnight camping and trekking, rocky shore studies, rope course challenges, snorkelling, surfing, sailing, teambuilding and leadership courses along with wilderness survival. Please see below for further details.



## Water based options...

<b>Body Boarding</b>	Water safety skills are quickly gained and smiles bear testimony to the exhilaration of riding the first wave. This activity takes a priority when the surf is up.
<b>Canadian Canoeing</b>	Using large, open canoes, participants learn the importance of communication and quickly develop team paddling and control skills. The canoes are lashed together to form catamarans for safety during coastal expeditions.
<b>Dinghy Games</b>	This is an introductory small-boat safety activity, where participants experience balancing, paddling, capsizing and swimming under buoyant dinghies. Participants also discover the benefits of wearing the appropriate safety garments (wetsuits and buoyancy vests). This is an ideal activity for boosting water confidence before moving onto other marine pursuits.
<b>Kayaking</b>	Participants respond to the fun & games approach and soon grasp essential paddling strokes. This is a popular activity designed to deliver a successful experience that will leave participants feeling good about themselves. After an introductory session, paddlers have the skills to embark on a coastal expedition or surf on the waves rolling onto Long Bay Beach.
<b>Raft Building</b>	An activity designed to promote team building, communication, delegation, goal setting and planning skills. Each group's mission is to design and build a seaworthy raft using craft and rope skills. They soon learn from their mistakes because the rafts either sink or float.

<b>Sailing</b>	This is an introduction to sailing under the watchful eye of the instructor. Students have a go at steering the boat, turning and handling the sheets. This activity also works well following on from the dinghy games session. Teamwork is very important.
<b>Snorkelling</b>	A sequence of introductory mask and snorkel activities soon puts paid to 'head under' inhibitions. The group gains a first hand look at the underwater life on a marine reserve. Wearing wetsuits, the group floats about the reef investigating the wide variety of marine life beneath them. This is a very popular activity, but one more suitable to summer months.
<b>Surf Confidence &amp; Survival</b>	This is a great chance for the group to develop skills that may save their own or other's lives. Using a fun approach, students are gradually introduced to the techniques and equipment of surf-related sports. Developing water confidence and having fun are the main components. This activity will be run in conjunction with a surf-based activity unless otherwise requested – usually Bodyboarding.
<b>Surfing</b>	Everyone's seen it, why not try it? The thrill of standing up and riding a wave is unexplainable! Have some fun in the sun with top instructors while increasing technique and water confidence.



### Land based options...

<b>Abseiling</b>	Abseiling is a natural extension to the rope and harness work we do on our specially designed climbing wall. The wall is designed to give 'first timers' a gentle introduction to an exciting activity. However, leaning backwards over a sheer drop still requires nerve and a great deal of trust; completing the abseil installs feelings of self-empowerment and achievement.
<b>Adatok Games</b>	This is a 'whole group' exercise, which is not weather dependent. Small groups compete against each other in a fast and furious series of tests. Teamwork and strategy lead to success. The marine theme adds to the excitement of an activity. It is always a firm favourite with groups and best suited to 7-12 year olds.
<b>Adventure Based Games</b>	These are used predominantly as an icebreaker activity for incoming groups. The games are non-threatening physically and are cooperative in nature. They are great fun and set a positive tone for the rest of the course.
<b>Archery</b>	This activity requires discipline, skill and patience. Through focused safety instruction and goal setting everyone achieves success. Hitting that first 'bull's eye' is a thrill not easily forgotten.

<b>Climbing</b>	Participants challenge themselves and each other on the climbing wall. A low height bouldering-wall enables development of skills without the fear of falling. With planning, communication, cooperation and trust as key elements, the climbers are harnessed and roped into a safety system before using the bolted holds to reach the top. As confidence grows the return descent is often a highlight with a real sense of achievement.
<b>Mega Game</b>	Large scale games where the whole group is involved. Examples include 'The Conservation Game', an opportunity to be a part of the ecological food chain and 'Who Done It' or 'Cluedo', where groups complete activities and use cards in an effort to work out who did it. Good introduction or concluding camp activity.
<b>Multi-Sport Challenge</b>	An end-of-course option which pitches group against group in a variety of land and water based events, testing the skills learnt during the group's time at MERC. This is a most suitable concluding activity.
<b>Orienteering</b>	Initial introductions enable students to understand the elements of reading a map. From this base they are then able to take part in orienteering events (without the use of a compass for younger students). Sir Peter Blake MERC has a series of professionally drawn maps and orienteering courses that can extend most students at a variety of levels.
<b>Low Ropes</b>	The “ <b>Low Ropes</b> ” activity focuses on teamwork and trust & is very useful for groups who want a teambuilding focus to their programme. Suitable for 11 years upwards. Low Ropes does not require the use of climbing harnesses as it is at low-height; instead focussing on proper technique and communication among the participants.
<b>Tree Climb</b>	Come and experience a unique view of the Hauraki Gulf from the top of one of our Norfolk Island Pine Trees! An exhilarating activity which challenges all participants to not only achieve great heights but requires a great deal of team work to complete the task.
<b>Stack Em High</b>	Participants are harnessed in before proceeding to build a tower of milk crates. A great activity for balance and concentration while competing against each other to build the tallest tower. These challenges are often used as a peak experience.
<b>Team Challenge &amp; Teamwork Activities</b>	This is an all-weather option where groups are put to the ‘test’ using a variety of progressive initiative type activities. Designed to draw on the strengths of participants, each challenge is a blend of the physical and cognitive. While not overtly physical, the activities do require teamwork, strategy and implementation for success. Activities may be used to address a variety of issues such as communication, goal setting and trust. A most suitable activity as camp draws to a close to unite groups in their commitment to solve problems. These activities can be made available to day groups and can be scored if needed to create a competitive element.

<b>Slingshot</b>	Groups are given instructions for building a slingshot together– and must do so before having a chance to fire it. This is a great team-building activity, with the opportunity for lots of fun along the way as well as on completion of the slingshot.
<b>Outdoor Survival</b>	Learn how to survive in the great outdoors. Get an understanding of preparation; gain experience with the equipment you should take with you, and understand shelter building, cooking and what to do in an emergency. This session can be done either indoors or outdoors.
<b>Expeditions</b>	These can take a variety of forms; land or sea based, from a couple of hours to a couple of days. A number of different environments can be studied. There is the beach itself, the rocky shore, kayaking or sailing to the Okura River estuary and the historic Okura native bush walkway with its fine stands of kauri trees. The latter is only a 10-minute drive from site. Learning about survival in the great outdoors can be an exhilarating experience.



## Beach and environmentally focused options...

<b>Awaruku Bush Tour</b>	Visit an unexpected but amazing piece of native bush centred on a waterway, a short walk from site. Discover and gain outdoor knowledge of the native flora and fauna found in it. Participants enjoy the excitement of the expedition and a time of reflection as they experience the natural history.
<b>Beach Walk</b>	This gives an opportunity to become more aware of the beach environment and variety of life that lives on the beach. Groups challenge themselves by identifying different shells and becoming aware of the biodiversity around them.
<b>Rocky Shore Discovery</b>	The Long Bay Marine Reserve provides enormous scope for investigating many forms of life in and around the water. Using pictorial task sheets, the students are able to identify the treasures living on the rocky shore such as fish, crabs, kina, starfish, shellfish and seaweed. Other studies can include sand dune formations, local geology, weather and tides with the zones and biodiversity of marine creatures. A fun approach to this subject makes it most enjoyable and a variety of environmental games are included.
<b>Coastal Mission &amp; Discovery</b>	In this coastal group expedition the participants experience the challenge of negotiating their way around the rocky coastline, at low and high tide. This is an amazing opportunity to look at the different zones of animals on the rocky shore, discover the effects of erosion around our cliffs, view scenery never seen before and explore caves (tide dependent).



## Youth programme options...

<p><b>Team Work Activities</b></p>	<p>This is an all-weather option where groups are put to the test using a variety of progressive initiative type of activities. Designed to draw the strengths of participants to the fore, each challenge is a blend of the physical and cognitive. While not overtly physical, the activities do require teamwork, strategy and implementation for success. Activities may be used to address a variety of issues such as communication, goal setting and trust. A most suitable activity as camp draws to a close to unite groups in their commitment to solve problems. These activities can be run for the entire group.</p>
<p><b>Wilderness Camping Expeditions</b></p>	<p>Adventurous 5 – 7 day expeditions available for 13 year olds and upwards. Can be based in any one of following areas: Waitakeres, Hunuwas, Waitomo, Bay of Islands or Lake Tarawera with a selection of activities available such as sea kayaking, tramping, caving, mountain biking and outdoor survival (dependant on area chosen). We recommend you speak to a MERC representative and we will tailor a programme to suit your needs.</p>



For further information and booking details on these programmes please contact....

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