

KETETAHI HUT, BLUE LAKE & CENTRAL CRATER

260 Series Map: Tongariro, T19

Topo50 Map: BH35Turangi

How to get to START: Exit Taupo on SH1 down the lake to Turangi then:

- Follow the Desert Highway (**SH1**) and turn off right on to SH46 for Rangipo
- At 13km on **SH46** from the junction turn left on to gravel road for Ketetahi
- One km up this road is the car park (**WP1**) at North end of the Tongariro Crossing
- Park here, be aware that your vehicle may not be secure.

There are toilets here and, usually from around 15:00 hours (3pm) onwards, there can be many people waiting for transport after completing the Tongariro Crossing.

The route can be traced on the map opposite where the major highways are labelled as is the location of the Ketetahi Hut (WP10). The gravel road from SH46 into the car park is shown as the small spur heading towards WP10.

Rough description: This is a moderate to fit day tramp and comprises the north end of the Tongariro Crossing where one walks in to the Ketetahi Hut from the North; this can be a bit tiring as there are, shall we say, a few “steps” on the otherwise very high grade track. Once at the Ketetahi Hut one can then admire the views or continue up for another hour to the Blue Lake or even as far as the Emerald Lakes and junction to the Oturere Track

The variations and times are:

- Up to the hut – 3 hours with a full pack, less on day walk with a light pack
- Back down from the Hut – 2 hours with a full pack and, again, less when walking light
- From the Hut to the Blue Lake – 1 hour to 1:15 minutes and less than an hour back down to the Hut
- If the loop out to the Oturere Track junction is added this requires about another hour

Altitude gain / loss to the Ketetahi Hut is about 700 metres and getting to the Blue Lake adds another 300 metres of ascent / descent. Maximum altitude reached is a bit over 1,700 masl.

Detail: The tramp leaves the back of the car park (**WP1** 760masl) past the shelter with the map of the Tongariro Crossing on a very good, gently sloping track. Your first three features are bridges (**WPs 2, 3 and 4**). Generally only the middle stream line has water flowing and there are a few minor, slightly uneven slopes to negotiate by the time you are at the third bridge. Take notice of the warnings about the water NOT being fit for drinking, it comes from geo-thermal sources.

After the third bridge, by which point you have gained about 100 metres in altitude, the hard work commences as steps and stairs come into play. You start to get your self uphill and, after 10 minutes or so of this, there is a welcome seat (**WP5** 930masl) on a small platform in a slightly open area compared to the relatively thick forest through which you have ascended. On the way up it takes about 45 minutes to reach this seat whilst on the way down you need about 1:15 minutes from the Ketetahi Hut. Do not worry about having a short rest, there is plenty more uphill to test you ahead - but DOC have been kind for another 10 minutes up the hill there is yet another seat (**WP6** 983 masl). Overall you will now have taken about 1 hour.

The uphill continues but it is never actually too steep, even when carrying a full pack, and one reaches the tree line (**WP7** 1037 masl) about 10 – 15 minutes after the last seat. To get to this point will have taken between 1 hour and 1:15 minutes and, for the record, on the way down about 55 minutes are needed to get here from the hut.

Once out into the low bush walking is a delight as there is a very high grade path with solid wooden edging and what looks like upended plastic milk crates filled with gravel and rubble to walk on. Be warned these can be slippery in icy conditions. Soon there is a fork in the track with the route that used to go to the Hot Springs signed as “closed”. The new track to the right is pretty easy and only has one steep ascent just before reaching the hut.

The old route from the springs, to which public access was not allowed, up to the hut, took about 30 minutes and needed a little bit more care as the path was not DOC maintained and it was quite rough in places – but it did not present any dangers. The route worked round a shoulder, down through yet another stream line then up past a second sign for the springs (**WP9** 1407masl) reaching this sign in about 2:05 – 2:15 min from the car park. Once past here it was no distance at all to the hut (**WP10** 1445masl) and it was usually reached this in a total of 2:30 – 2:45 minutes despite the notice board at the start of the trail saying 3 hours. In mid-2007 DOC began upgrading and re-routing and this was completed in 2010 when a much easier, well groomed track was opened. This track does keep walkers well away from the “springs” and does allow good views northwards – especially when descending.

NZ Grid GPS: Geodetic Datum 1949

NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS84

Access



Ketetahi hot springs



NB New track does not go near this spot now

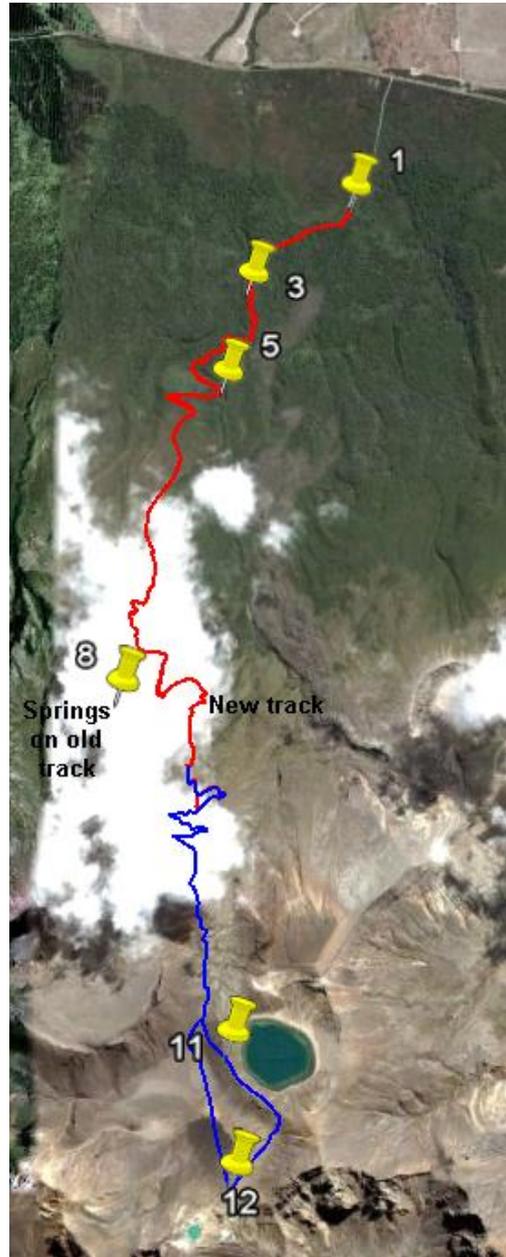
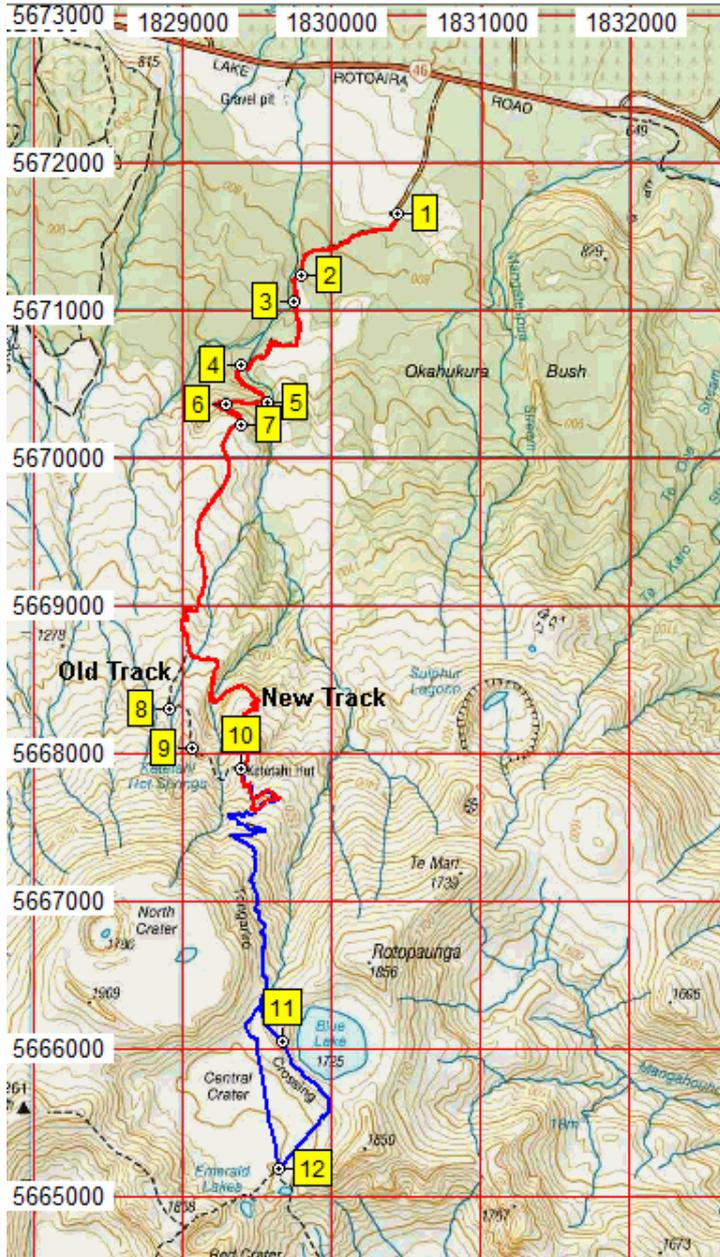
TTC trampers at Ketetahi Hut



Feathered friend crumb hunting



Map and Google Image with GPS data



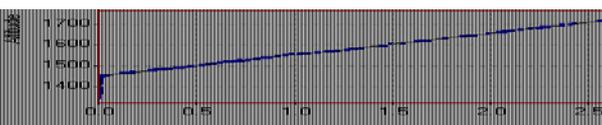
Waypoints – NZ Grid

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
1	2740531	6233503	759	Tongariro Car Park 1km SSW from 13km on Rangipo Road
2	2739880	6233080	810	Bridge over dry stream 15 min walk (1:38 from hut on return)
3	2739830	6232905	831	Second bridge over stream - 17 min walk (1:33 min from Hut on return)
4	2739490	6232477	860	Bridge with dry bed - 35 min walk (1:20 from hut on return)
5	2739652	6232229	931	Platform seat in slightly open area - 45min walk (1:13 from hut on return)
6	2739383	6232211	983	Second seat 55 min to 1:05 min walk
7	2739485	6232082	1037	Tree line 10 - 15 m above last seat 1 hour walk to 1:15 min (53min from hut on return)
8	2739009	6230142	1344	Ketetahi hot springs sign on old track (19 min from hut on return)
9	2739150	6229880	1407	Ketetahi hot springs second sign on old track
10	2739485	6229734	1445	Ketetahi Hut 2:30 - 2:45min walk from car park
11	2739759	6227895	1761	Crest above Blue Lake: 1:15 min above Ketetahi Hut
12	2739738	6227038	1701	Junction to Otutere Track: 20 - 30 min from Blue Lake depending on conditions

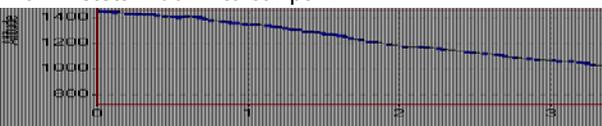
NZTM

Easting	Northing
1830428	5671390
1829777	5670967
1829727	5670792
1829387	5670363
1829550	5670115
1829281	5670097
1829383	5669967
1828908	5668027
1829049	5667764
1829385	5667619
1829660	5665779
1829640	5664922

Ketetahi up to Central Crater



From Ketetahi down to car park



Note: The map presents two different tramps:

- In the summertime the tramp was from the car park, past the Ketetahi Hut to just above Blue Lake (WP11 1761masl) and back down again
- In winter-time, whilst over-nighting in the Ketetahi Hut, a tramp was done from the Ketetahi Hut to the Blue Lake then along the track to the junction with the Otutere Track (WP12 1701masl). The return from this tramp is shown above as a loop passing back through the middle of Central Crater

For the fit and active the two tramps can be done in a day but the grading would then be upped to "Fit" category.

The Ketetahi Hut has seen better days and is due for replacement. It has sleeping capacity for around 20 though, on occasions, when the TTC (Taupo Tramping Club) have been sleeping-over in excess of 30 people have squeezed in – this involved some sleeping in the boot room outside and under the table in the main room. In the summer there is a warden, gas cookers plus gas heater but in the winter time only the gas heater can be found. This hut is to be replaced soon and relocated away from the main track to cut down the casual visitors stopping off for a rest whilst doing the Tongariro Crossing.

It should be noted when considering the walking time into the hut that the average time, as displayed on the notice board in the car park, is 3 hours. Also consider that the group from the TTC was composed of trampers who were not quite youngsters, were carrying full packs and made it in 2:45 minutes whilst younger members did it in considerably less time.

From the hut the track onwards and upwards leaves by passing in front of the toilets and then you are faced with a relatively steady climb up a series of zig-zags for the next hour or so. The 300 odd metres of ascent from the hut to the crest (**WP11** 1761masl) near the Blue Lake takes about 1:15 minutes in the winter time when snow is usually to be found on the track and a bit less in the dry days of summer. There are a few nice sheltered spots on this poled track for a lunch or a refreshment break – but watch out for approaching Tongariro Crossing walkers.

The short continuation to reach the junction to the Oturere Track goes along the poled section as seen in the photo below – easy in summer but quite tricky in winter when one should carry crampons. In fact, without crampons it can be difficult to stay on the track and reach **WP11** as there is a nasty cross slope which can be difficult to cross when it is iced up. At the end of the poled section the path goes down quite steeply to the right and again, without crampons, this can be very difficult in icy conditions.

On the winter day that this continuation was done it took about 20 – 30 minutes from above the Blue Lake to the track junction (**WP12** 1701masl). It proved easier, safer and very much quicker to return to begin the descent back down to the Ketetahi Hut by traversing more or less straight through Central Crater since everything was frozen solid.

Path above Blue Lake - summer



As can be seen the snowed, iced-up surface back over Central Crater was level and offered good walking. On wet days in the summer time one would normally avoid this route and follow the poled track. If you are tackling the Tongariro Crossing then the track is on Red Crater which is a struggle. Many “Crossers” come to grief on this slope as the footing is NOT good and once they have reached here “legs are tired”

Track junction notice



Virtually the same spot in winter



Red Crater & scree slope



Sunset through the steam



As can be seen above fantastic sunsets occur when the sunset cooperates with the steam from the hot springs.

NOTES:

- GPS Garmin GPSMap 60CSx
- **WP** = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit
- **masl** = metres above sea level (as recorded by GPS unit)