

MOUNT TAMA via Tama Ridge plus Tama Lakes

Topo50 Map: BH34&35 Raurimu & Turangi
BJ34 & 35 Mt Ruapehu & Waiouru

NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS84

How to get to START: Exit Taupo down the lake on **SH1** through Turangi on to the **Desert Highway** (SH1) for just over 15 km.

- Turn right off Desert Highway just after the Rangipo Intake Road on gravel, motor track signed **Waihohonu Track**
- Drive in the few hundred metres and off-load in the car park (**WP01**^{978masl}).

The route from Taupo to the start can be followed opposite and takes about one hour driving. The return route is from Whakapapa Village back to Turangi on SH48 and SH47.

Rough description: A long fit grade tramp with some technical scrambling possibly required of 7 hours or so over 20+km with a total ascent in excess of 1,000metres.

From the car park (**WP01**^{978masl}) near the desert highway into the Waihohonu Hut (**WP02**^{1092masl}) is an easy, if somewhat boring, walk taking 1:30 min. The boring part is only boring if you have done it several times as the view of the mountain is great on clear days. No difficult sections apart from a few steps in places. From the Waihohonu Hut there is a bit of a climb up past the site of the old Waihohonu Hut (**WP03**^{1099masl}) on the path towards the Oturere Hut but the slope eases once the path is left (**WP04**^{1254masl}) and the NW ridge running up towards Tama is followed.

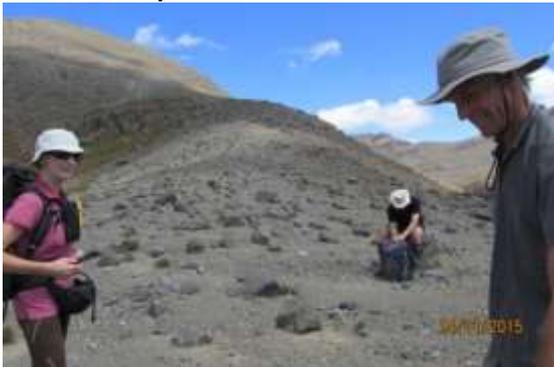
Off-track from here though the footing is pretty good but, further up the ridge, the slopes do increase and the last section to Tama summit is grunty. From the summit the route heads a bit further west before following ridges down the east side of the upper Tama Lake to join up with poled track above the lower Tama Lake. From here it is foot burning, motorway grade tourist track back to the Chateau.

Detail: The walk in to Waihohonu Hut (**WP02**^{1092masl}) can, if done often, become a bit of a boring “blast” but it is not taxing and the chance to stretch the legs does exist at the start of the day. Features are the view of the mountain, a bridge 15 minutes after starting, some spectacular erosion of bits of the path plus a view of the path a long way ahead. Full details can be found in other write-ups including “Three Huts – Waihohonu to Ketetahi” and “The Waihohonu Huts”. If you “blast” it this takes just over an hour but relaxed walking gets you there in 1:30 minutes.

Things change as the track junction with the Round-the-Mountain track is approached and new gravel track heads off slightly to the right through the trees then loops round left to reach the hut. After inspecting the new hut it is backtrack slightly, down some steps to a newish bridge, past a DoC toilet which serves the campsite then steeply up to the site of the old Waihohonu Hut (**WP03**^{1099masl}) on the track for Oturere.

About 25 minutes out from the hut there is a minor crest (**WP04**^{1254masl}) and the route bears left off the main track to a smaller but distinct track and continues up the ridge. There are vestiges of a path in places and the ground cover starts as tussocks then becomes stony and boulder covered in places – it can be windy on this section. Approximately an hour from the hut there is a very small cairn (**WP05**^{1251masl}) on the right (N) side of the ridge from where a sandy, scree slope can be seen leading down into the valley to the right; if a detour is wanted it is possible to go to the Waihohonu Springs for a look – but the walk in hand is long enough without any diversions. Stay on the ridge heading NW until it gets very rocky when it is necessary to veer off to the left (**WP06**^{1377masl}) on to a sandy fan where the slope is less severe. From here the route ahead can be clearly seen and soon it is a fairly grunty ascent (**WP07**^{1393masl}) but the footing is good over and through the boulders. The crest (**WP08**^{1596masl}) should be reached in around three and a half hours and makes a good lunch spot.

Start of the steep ascent to Tama summit



View over upper Tama from Tama summit



The next part of the route is down the pale coloured ridge towards & past the visible upper Tama Lake in the photo on the left

If an easy way down is required then head due S on the ridge from **WP08** to eventually hit the Whakapapa-Waihohonu track. To continue the Tama walk head NW along the ridge towards the rocky protuberance as seen in the photo on the right. On the day the sidle was selected on the left hand or southern side (**WP09**^{1524masl}). However, be warned the less capable or nervous might not be happy so the longer route over the actual summit should be used. One past this hurdle head down the ridge, which is easy walking, to the SW for about 500metres to end up overlooking the upper Tama Lake (**WP10**^{1433masl}). At this point the long sweeping curve of the ridge ahead can easily be seen so continue downwards heading S then loop round to the right (W) above and south of the Lake where almost level walking is found and the high point at the southern end of the lake can be seen above to the W / WSW very often with day trippers wandering about. The poled track on this high point is the next target (**WP13**).

To summit or sidle

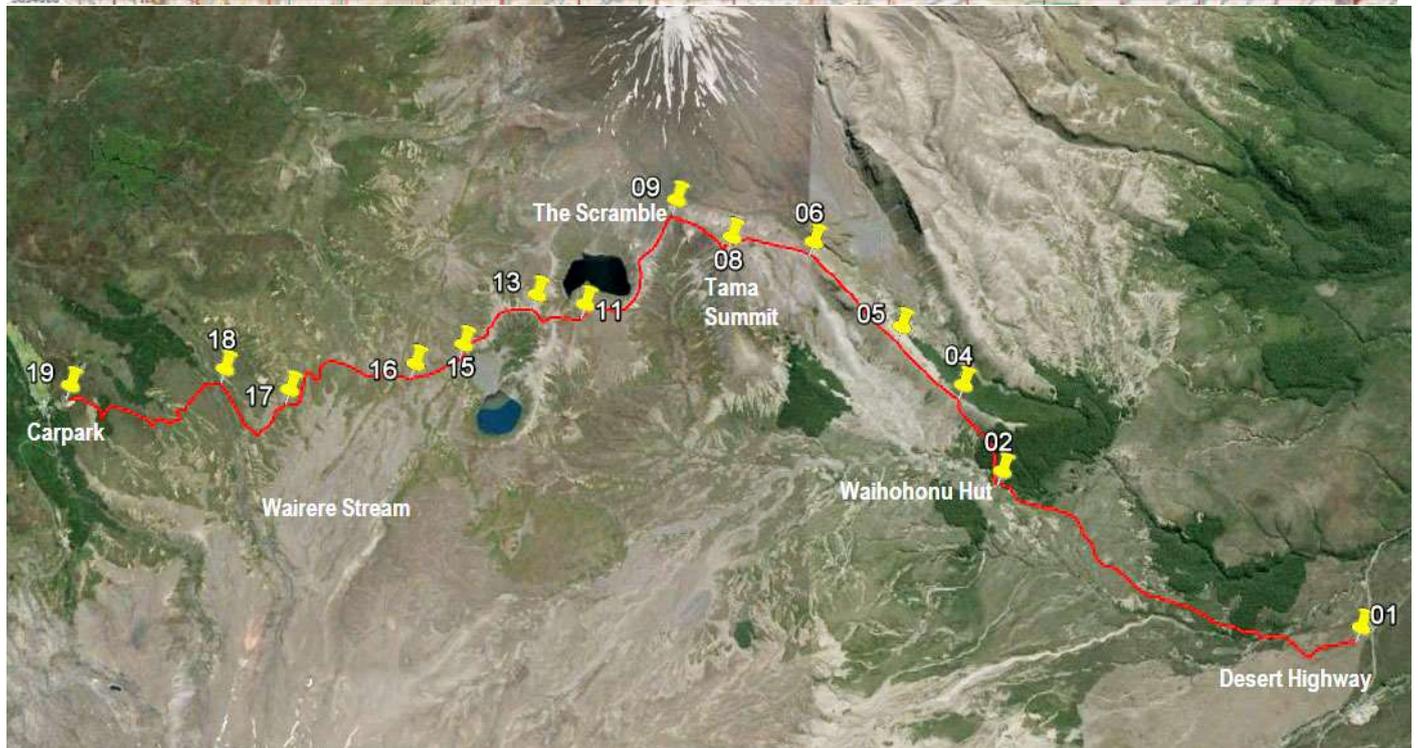
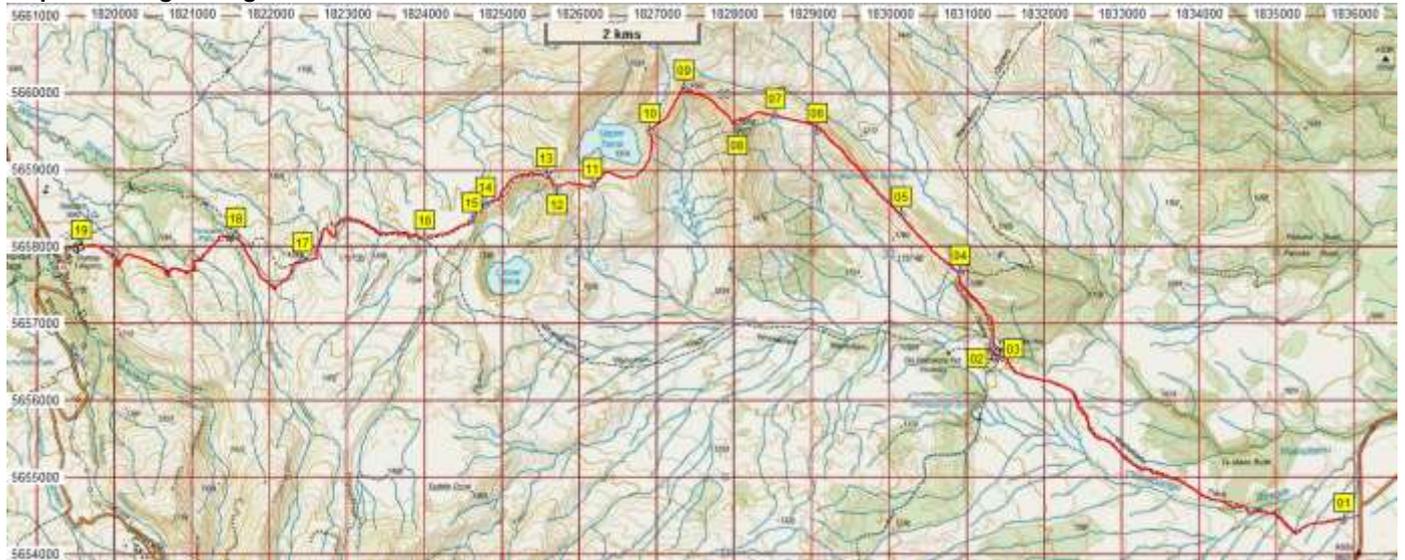


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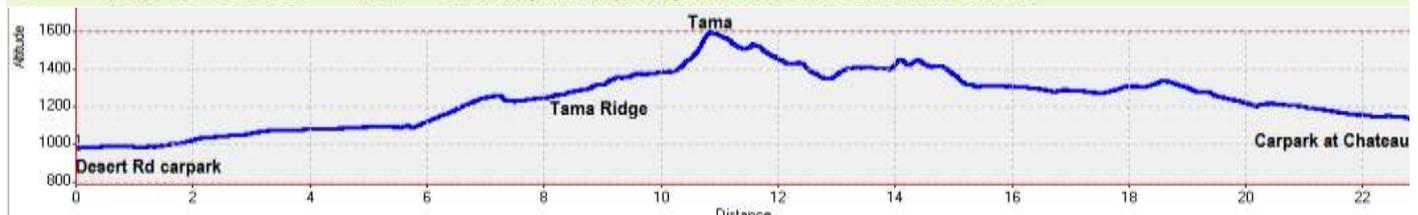
The red line is the tramp route

Map and Google Image with GPS data



NZTM Waypoints

N...	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
01	1835880	5654435	978	Waihohonu car park 100m off Desert Road
02	1831377	5656551	1092	1:29min (5.68km); Waihohonu Hut
03	1831373	5656667	1099	1:32min (5.82km); Old Waihohonu Hut site
04	1830908	5657651	1254	1:57min (6.97km); Branch left NW off Oturere track to vague track on Tama Ridge
05	1830154	5658420	1251	2:17min (8.05km); If going to Waihohonu Springs cairn marking point to head N off ridge
06	1829069	5659510	1377	2:52min (9.66km); Move to left off rocks to more gravelly, gentler slope
07	1828526	5659700	1393	3:03min (10.23km); Start ascent of steep ridge to W then WSW
08	1828040	5659547	1596	3:34min (10.84km); Tama summit after fairly grunty ascent on rocky slope
09	1827357	5660060	1524	4:32min (11.69); Scree scramble sidle below summit at 1562, easier to go over summit then SW
10	1826909	5659509	1433	4:47min (12.41km); Ridge end above Upper Tama, head S then SW on gravelly ridge, easy walking
11	1826170	5658787	1403	5:13min (13.7km); Turn due W heading for high point above Lower Tama lake
12	1825703	5658780	1425	5:29min (14.3km); Head NW on narrow track up to high point and mapped track
13	1825570	5658926	1444	5:43min (14.43km); Meet track and head left or due W
14	1824785	5658553	1317	5:58min (15.41km); Wooden seat for VERY tall trampers on RHS
15	1824611	5658343	1313	6:02min (15.71km); Above Lower Tama Lake after very gravelly, slippery slope down
16	1824005	5658113	1304	6:09min (16.35km); Junction with track left for Waihohonu and right for Chateau
17	1822429	5657822	1285	6:44min (18.62km); Ridge with views of Ngauruhoe, Ruapehu and Mount Taranaki
18	1821564	5658135	1216	7:02min (20.02km); Junction to right for Taranaki Falls and straight for Wairere Stream and Chateau
19	1819569	5657992	1137	7:37min (22.85km); Car park at end of tar seal behind Chateau



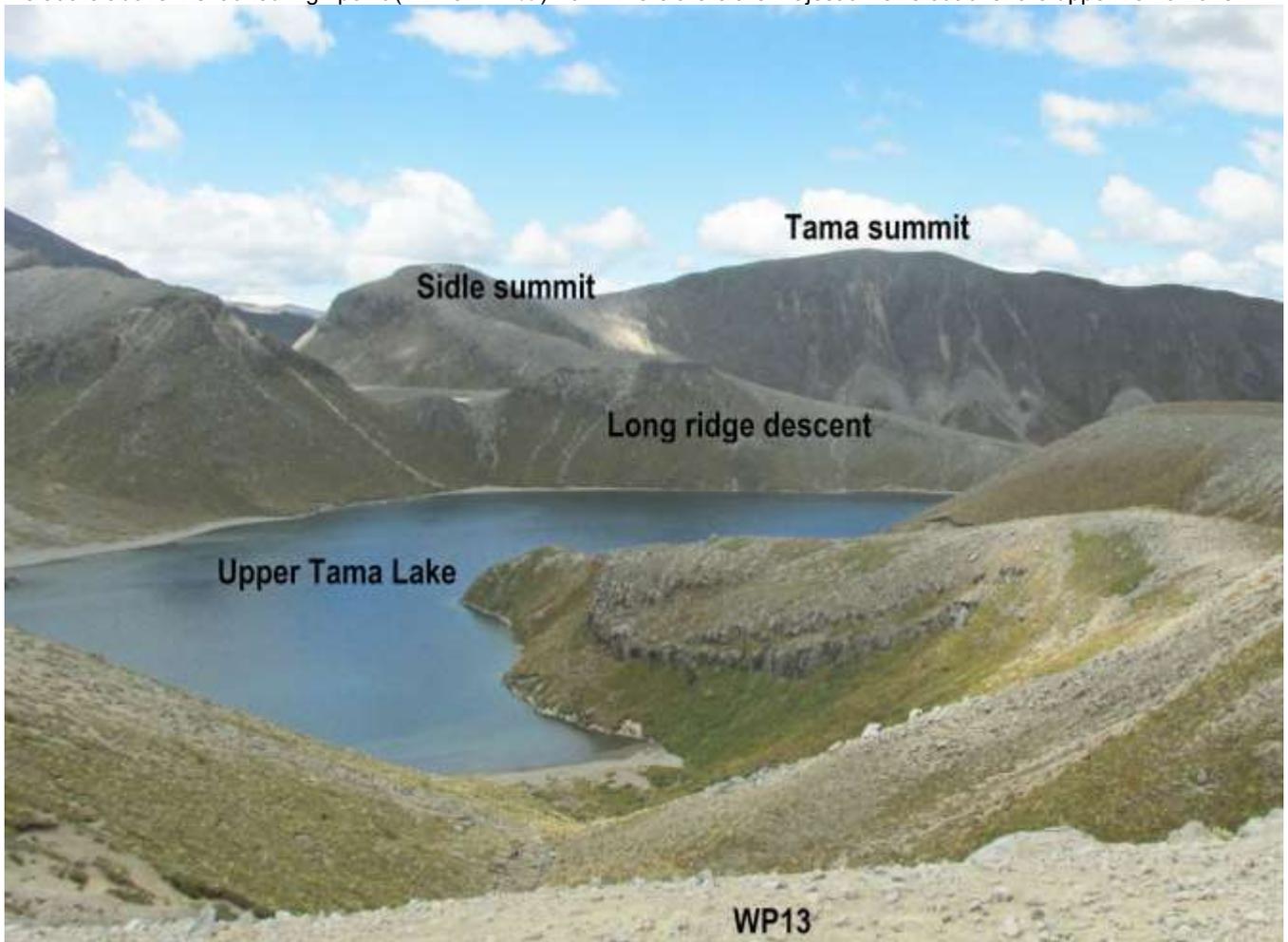
Heading down from WP09 towards the upper Tama Lake



View over upper Tama Lake from WP13



After heading about 700m westwards a small track can be picked up (**WP12**^{1425masl}) which then steeply ascends for 150m or so to arrive at the above mentioned high point (**WP13**^{1444masl}) from where there are majestic views out over the upper Tama Lake.



The poled track can be found heading off WSW on not too steeply sloping ground but be warned that there are several quite nasty gravel covered sections ahead – where the gravel is deep there is no problem but otherwise it can be like walking on a slope covered in ball bearings and the “feet for sky” syndrome hits many walkers. The route mapped and shown here is a very direct, though slightly boring way heading downhill all the way to the SW down to the Lower Tama Lake – from the crest to the viewpoint (**PK15**^{1313masl}) for the lower lake takes another 30 minutes; on the way one passes a wooden seat (**PK14**) obviously designed for trampers with very long legs.

The track improves dramatically here as it becomes “tourist” grade – however it does burn the feet a bit. The next feature of note is the junction (**WP16**^{1304masl}) where the Northern Circuit track comes in from Waihohonu on the left. From here the return feels a bit like a route march as it seems to go on forever but there are still several spots worth watching out for; just short of 7 hours walking should offer reasonable views (**WP17**^{1285masl}) of Ngauruhoe, Ruapehu and Mount Taranaki. Twenty-five minutes after this the track for the Taranaki Falls (**WP18**^{1216masl}) goes off to the right then the valley of the Wairere Stream is passed through. After this three or four bridges are crossed and a wooded section of track is passed through close to the stream on the right. About 35 minutes from the Wairere Bridge the small car park at the end of the sealed road behind Tongariro Chateau is reached (**WP19**^{1137masl}).

Notes:	GPS	Garmin GPSMap 62sc
	WP	Waypoint as taken by GPS unit
	masl	metres above sea level (as recorded by GPS unit and may not agree exactly with map spot heights)