

TAMA LAKES and TARANAKI STREAM

Map: Ruapehu, 1:50,000 T20, T19, S20 and S19

GPS: Geodetic Datum 1949

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

- Follow the Desert Highway (SH1) and turn off right on to SH46 for Rangipo. Meet SH47 at a T-junction and turn left then turn off SH47 on to SH48 signposted for Whakapapa and the Chateau, or
- In Turangi turn off SH1 on to SH41 on the right and then turn left off SH41 on to SH47 and proceed as above. This route is shown opposite
- Pass the Chateau on the left and park in the car park on the right which has toilets and is quite safe for vehicles compared to some other car parks.

Rough description: A long 16km, circular walk in the moderate to fit category lasting about six and a half hours which starts and ends at the Chateau in Whakapapa. There is an overall altitude gain of about 240 metres up to Lower Tama Lake and the walk to this point is on good footpath with very little obvious ascending.

The next part is off-track firstly heading NNW for about 2km to meet the Taranaki Stream which then flows WNW. The first part of this is relatively easy but once into the valley of the Taranaki Stream there are a few scrambles over rocks and up steep valley sides plus several stream crossings in wet weather or lots of rock hopping when the stream is dry. The latter part of the walk is on the footpath to Mangatepopo from Whakapapa – this path is not as well maintained.

On the map presented the main tramp route is shown in red and the blue sections are variations in the route used when the stream was flowing and when the stream bed could not always be used to walk in with safety.

Detail: Turn left out of the car park opposite the Chateau and turn immediately right and go along the road up the side of the Chateau; near the end ignore the track on your left [WP29], you come back this way, but head for the track that goes straight ahead at the end of the surfaced road and is signed Taranaki Falls [WP2].

Proceed on the very good track crossing an open wooden bridge in about 25 minutes then upwards parallel to the gully which you then cross and go up on to open, flattish moorland [WP4] with a view of Ngauruhoe straight ahead in about 30 minutes.

After 45 minutes descend off the moorland down to the Wairere Stream, over the bridge and uphill again reaching a signpost [WP6] indicating the routes for the lower post to Whakapapa via the Taranaki Falls and to the Tama Lakes – go straight ahead following Tama Lakes track. A gentle climb on reasonable footpath leads to a ridge or rise [WP7] with a view, as shown below, back towards the Chateau – this is a good point for a refreshment break.

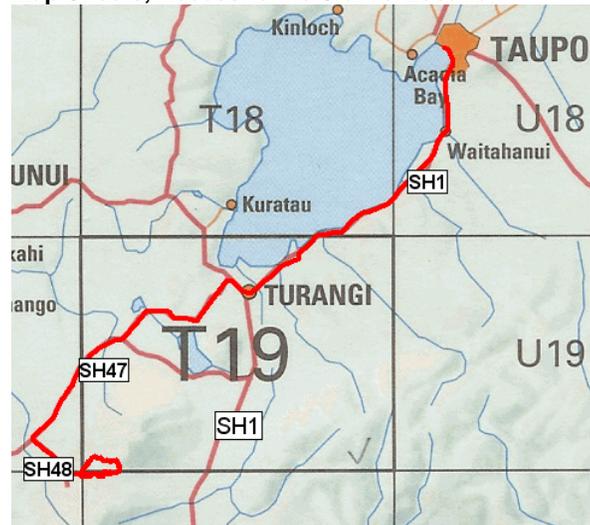
View from WP7 Back Towards the Chateau



After about 1:45 minutes there is a wet area with a board-walk [WP8] and 10 minutes further on enter and go up a narrow valley to cross the stream at the top – at this point the path gets a little rougher. At a Y-fork there is a signpost [WP11] with the path to Tama going left whilst the right fork goes to Waihohonu Hut. Ten minutes are required from this signpost to reach the next notice board and view over the Lower Tama Lake [WP12].

From here, continue on the path to Upper Tama Lake for a few metres but branch off left [WP13] into the stream-line just before the steep scree slope – if the plan is to go to Upper Tama Lake then follow the poled track up the scree slope. It is also possible to branch left just past the wooden seat opposite the view over Tama Lake. Both turn-offs are shown on the map. Following the stream-line in a NNW direction is easy at this point as the stream is not incised; the bush is low and the walking quite dry. A total walking time of about 2:45 minutes takes you to a bend in the stream when it swings almost due north in a flat stony area [WP14]. The confluence with the Taranaki Stream is arrived at in another 5 minutes when the route goes left into a narrower, well defined valley [WP15]. Continue downstream in this valley till you reach a large, upstanding pointed rock [WP16] where the first of the scrambles of the day starts when the route is forced out of the stream-line and up the bank on the north side. Continue in a westerly direction on the slope above and parallel to the gorge. Lunch can be taken at the rock in the stream or a good sheltered spot, with views of the gorge, is reached in about 3:15 walking from the start [WP18].

Map Sheets, Access to the Start & Location



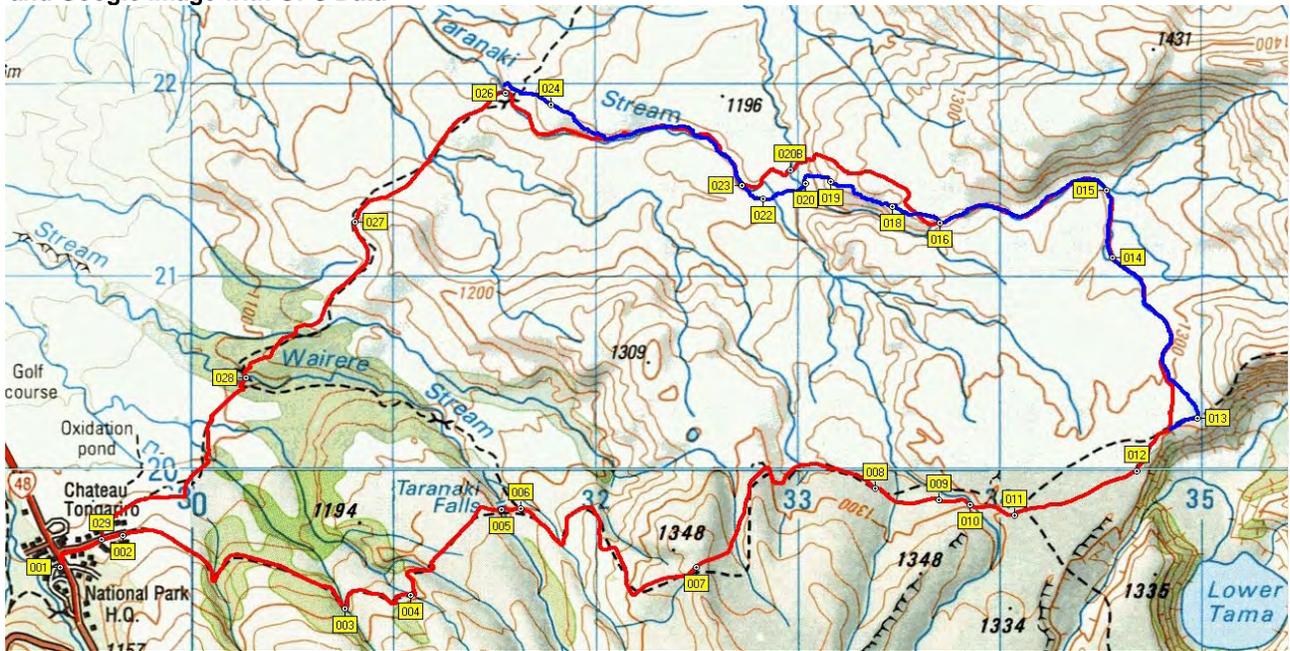
Ngauruhoe



Lower Tama Lake



Map and Google Image with GPS Data



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
001	2729351	6219487	1129	Car park with toilet opposite Chateau
002	2729658	6219653	1140	End of tar to path signed Tama Falls
003	2730761	6219271	1155	25 min - Open area with wooden bridge
004	2731084	6219341	1182	30 min - Upstream parallel to gully then cross & up to moor
005	2731533	6219788	1190	45 min - Drop off moor to Taranaki Stream and bridge
006	2731630	6219791	1202	47 min - Y fork and sign for Whakapapa and Tama Lakes
007	2732500	6219490	1350	1:15 - Ridge with views, tea stop
008	2733382	6219897	1270	1:45 Wet area with some board walk and moss on poles
009	2733702	6219836	1271	1:55 Enter and go up narrow V shaped valley
010	2733853	6219813	1274	1:57 Cross stream, path slightly rougher
011	2734074	6219759	1289	2:00 Y-fork and sign Left for Tama and Right for Waihothonu
012	2734678	6219989	1306	2:10 Above Lower Tama Lake
013	2734981	6220265	1314	2:23 Branch Left off Tama track just before scree slope up
014	2734561	6221098	1270	2:45 Continue following stream in flat stony area and swing right
015	2734532	6221445	1267	2:50 Confluence with Taranaki stream, left into narrower valley
016	2733708	6221275	1249	3:05 Big pointed rock, leave valley climbing up steeply to the N on true right bank
017	2733654	6221315	1272	3:07 On moor on top and parallel to gorge on the left
018	2733470	6221364	1259	3:15 Sheltered lunch spot with views above gorge
019	2733168	6221494	1237	3:50 Start down after working round shoulder above end of gorge
020	2733040	6221480	1187	4:00 Cross Taranaki stream after descent of steep eroded slope
020B	2732968	6221551	1192	Alternative crossing of Taranaki Stream after descending via the "second" gully route
021	2732894	6221416	1186	4:05 Double stream crossing then up to small pole
022	2732835	6221399	1194	4:07 Pole: Remnants of old seismological station, follow left bank
023	2732728	6221471	1178	4:10 min Cross to right bank of Taranaki, first of several crossings
024	2731784	6221891	1157	5:00 View track and start descent through higher bush
025	2731571	6222003	1129	5:10 Meet Mangetepopo track, go left
026	2731562	6221953	1125	5:12 On bridge over Taranaki Stream on Mangetepopo track
027	2730814	6221279	1154	5:33 View Chateau
028	2730272	6220473	1095	5:55 Bridge over Wairere Stream just before meeting Taranaki Falls track
029	2729555	6219632	1133	6:10 Junction of Mangatepopo track with asphalt

Seat opposite Lower Tama Lake



Once past the obstacle of the large pointed rock work along and round the shoulder of the ridge past the end of the gorge. Now pick a route to descend to and cross the stream flowing N/S below [WP20 or WP20b]. The second gully reached seems to be the best route and it follows a stream-line which has eroded slopes – care is needed as this slope is steep in parts with rather loose material underfoot; there is also thick vegetation near the bottom.

Narrow rocky valley of Taranaki Stream



The Large Pointed Rock Obstacle



Make a double crossing of the Taranaki Stream [WP21] and head up to a low pole on the horizon [WP22] – this is part of an old seismological station and is a useful landmark – unless DoC have been over-zealous and tidied the place up. If the pole is not visible then the route is down the stream line heading in a NW direction – this is still the Taranaki. There is now a choice; in dry weather the easiest route – with tricky rock-hopping plus the odd scramble over bigger bits of geology – is to follow the stream bed. When there is water flowing then full use cannot be made of the stream line.

For the best part of the next hour continue following the stream line, making several crossings to find the best, easiest, driest route till, when on the right (north) bank the view opens [WP24] up and the track being headed-for can be discerned in the distance running left to right. Just when you think it is all over the vegetation gets rather high and dense on the final descent off the hill-slope but this struggle does not last long and the Mangatepopo track is hit after approximately 5 hours.

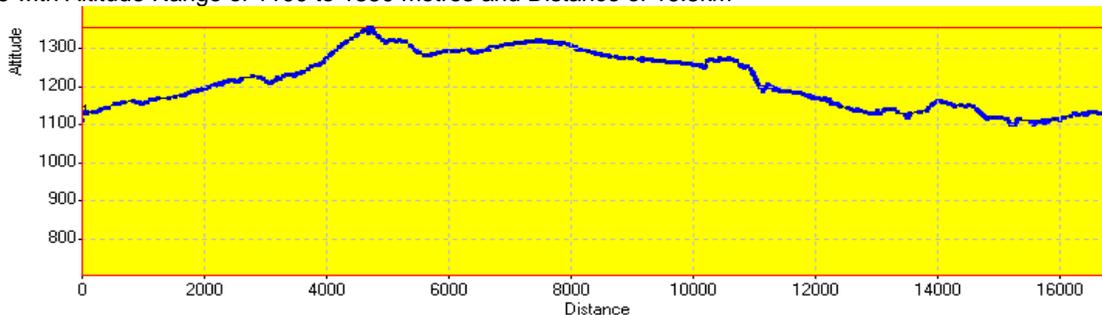
However, if the stream bed is followed all the way the first indication of the track is when the bridge over the stream comes into view all of a sudden.

Once on the Mangatepopo Track or on the wooden bridge over the Taranaki Stream [WP26] head in a westerly direction for Whakapapa or Easterly if Mangatepopo is the target. Continue heading in a south-westerly direction on this track but be aware that the track is not as well maintained as the Tama Lakes track used earlier and there are some rather large steps and eroded areas to be negotiated – bad news for the short legged walker. About 20 minutes after the bridge [WP26] there is a view of the Chateau [WP27] and a bridge over the Wairere Stream is crossed [WP28] just before the T-junction with the track from the Taranaki Falls in a total walking time of about 6 hours. Just over 20 minutes from here brings you to the edge of Whakapapa Village [WP29] to meet the surfaced road used in the morning and, by going right, another few minutes gets you back to the car park opposite the Chateau [WP1].

View of the Descent, the gorge of the Taranaki Stream with Ruapehu in the Background



Tramp Profile with Altitude Range of 1100 to 1350 metres and Distance of 16.5km



Notes:

- GPS Garmin GPSmap 60CSx on Geodetic datum 1949
- 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)