

ROUND the MOUNTAIN TRACK

260 Series : Tongariro T19, Ruapehu T20 and Ohakune S20,

Topo50 Map: BH34 Raurimu, BH35 Turangi, BJ34 Mnt Ruapehu, BJ35 Waiouru

NZ Grid GPS: Geodetic Datum 1949

NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS84

How to get to START: Exit Taupo on SH 1 down the lake to Turangi (47km in 45 minutes) then:

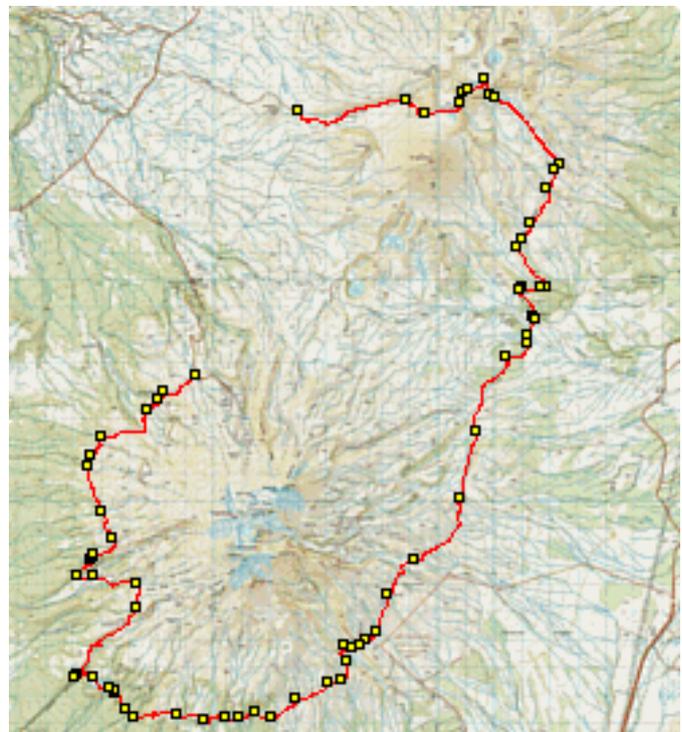
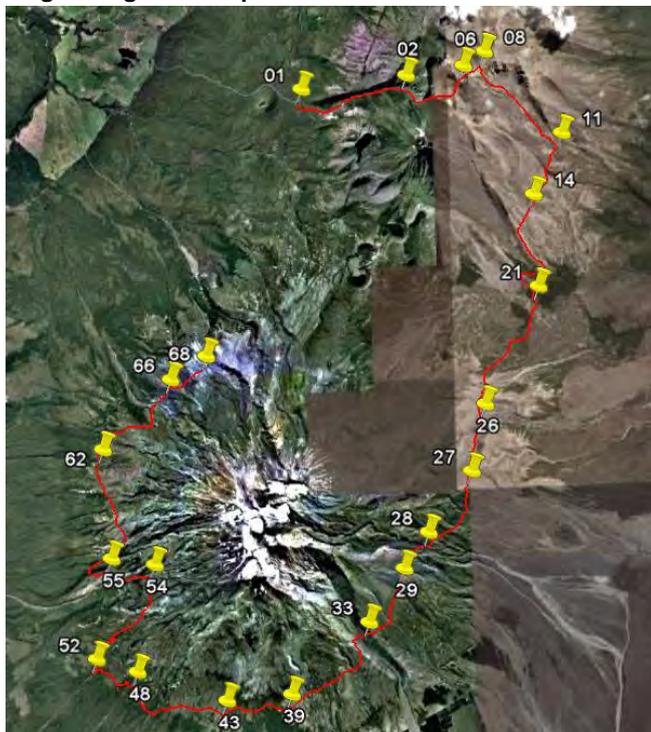
- Turn right off **SH1** to **SH41** towards Tokaanu
- Turn left to **SH47** for National Park
- Continue on **SH47** and at 90km (1:15 min) turn left on to gravel road for Mangatepopo & Tongariro Alpine Crossing – speed limit 40kph
- Park and off-load at car park (**WP01** 1127masl) with toilets at 96km and about 1 hour 30 minutes driving from Taupo.

Rough Description: A walk and a half covering over 80km of some of the most rugged terrain in the North Island round Mount Ruapehu in four to five days. The first day is virtually the Tongariro Alpine crossing but going to Oturere Hut instead of via the Ketetahi Hut. Day 2 comprises over 21km down past the Waihohonu Hut, crossing the Tukino Alpine access road, passing the course of the “Lahar” flow and on to Rangipo Hut – the highest hut on the walk. Day 3 is huge effort of over 24km passing the Mangaehuehu Hut and the track to the Blyth Hut to emerge on Ohakune Mountain road then continue down the “Cascades” to the Mangaturuturu Hut. Day 4 is shorter at just over 12km if Scoria Flats is the target and over 15km if Whakapapa is the aim and, apart from Lake Surprise plus a few magnificent mountain views, there are few other features to note.

Careful preparation is required for this tramp as it is a huge effort and sufficient food has to be carried unless supplies can be delivered by a third party en-route – this is possible when the track crosses the Tukino Alpine Road and also when the route uses a section of Ohakune Mountain Road. Water is available at all huts passed and from a few streams but a minimum of 3 litres per person should be carried since in some areas the stream lines are usually dry. If food supplies are to be replenished this is best done on the Ohakune Mountain Road when transport can also be arranged to get up the few kilometres of the road from where the track emerges from the Blyth Hut to the point where it goes off on the left to the Mangaturuturu Hut via the Cascades.

To have a complete circuit a fifth day is required to walk from Whakapapa Chateau back to the Mangatepopo car park but in decent weather this is not too far and does not have any of the user-unfriendly slopes etc of the other four days.

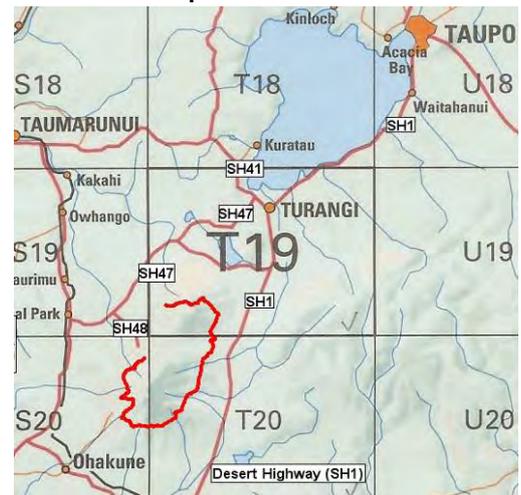
Google Image and Map with GPS Data



Excessive detail is not given for any of the days since many of these sections are fully described more fully elsewhere in the various Taupo Tramping Club publications:

- Tongariro Alpine Crossing: in “Longer Day Tramps on the Central Plateau accessible from Taupo”
- Three Huts: in “Selection of Overnight Tramps in the North Island”
- Tukino Access Road to Desert Highway via Rangipo Hut: in “Selection of Overnight Tramps in the North Island”
- Mangaehuehu Hut: in “Selection of Overnight Tramps in the North Island”
- Lake Surprise: in “Longer Day Tramps on the Central Plateau accessible from Taupo”

Access and Map Sheets

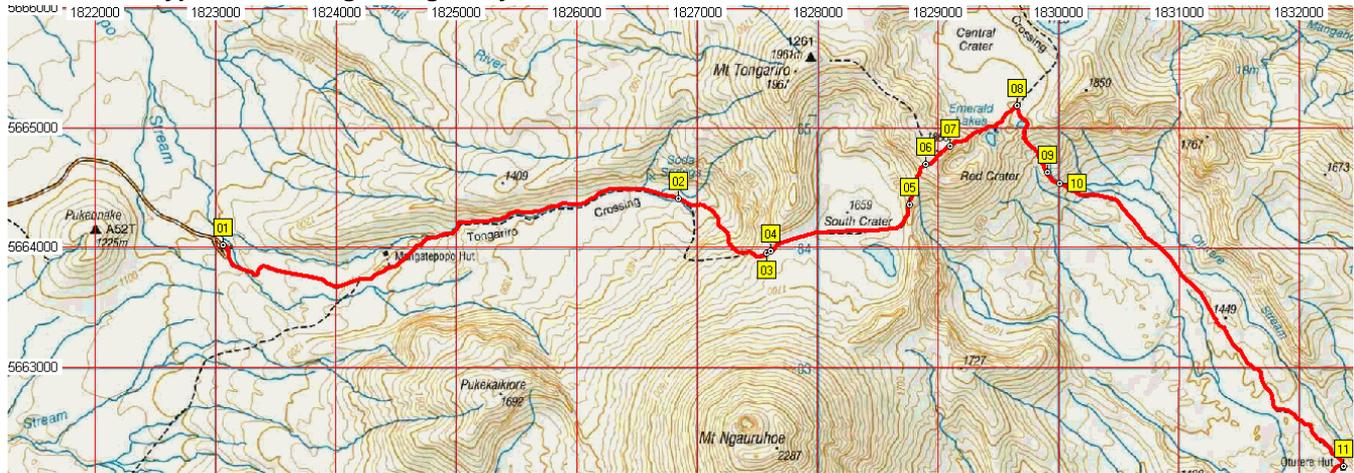


The tramp route is the red line.

Day 1: Mangatepopo to Oturere Hut

This section is virtually the Tongariro Alpine Crossing but after descending from Red Crater turn off the crossing track on to the one that heads south eastwards to the Oturere Hut. In total the day covers almost 13km, has an altitude variation of about 760metres and requires just less than 6 hours. The Oturere Hut is one of the Great Walk Huts with gas cooking facilities supplied in the summertime and the hut can sleep about 30 people and booking is necessary.

Track and Waypoints on Google Image: Day 1

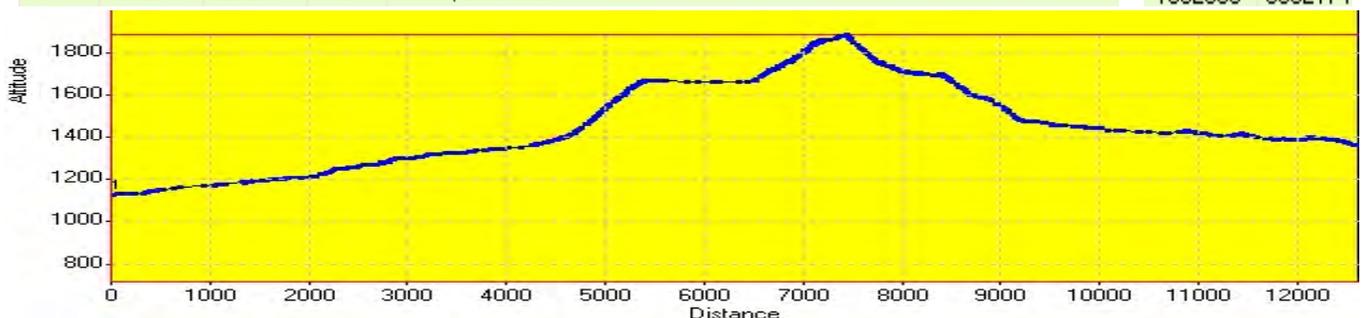


Waypoints – NZ Grid

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
01	2733050	6226117	1127	Mangatepopo car park at start of Tongariro Alpine Crossing track
02	2736829	6226507	1366	1:12min; DoC toilet before staircase (Smoko / Morning coffee)
03	2737561	6226048	1662	2:10min; top of the staircase after fair grunt up
04	2737592	6226070	1667	2:20min; Ngauruhoe turn then on level ground through South Crater
05	2738753	6226461	1736	2:45min; middle of the "rock wall" ascending Red Crater
06	2738885	6226793	1854	3hrs; notice for Tongariro summit turn off near crest
07	2739087	6226946	1882	3:15min; crest of "Red Crater" with loose, scoria descent ahead
08	2739642	6227283	1703	3:45min; track notice with turn off to right (SE) for Oturere Hut with steep, loose gravelly descent
09	2739890	6226723	1584	4:30min; post lunch and above amazing "scoria" moonscape terrain ahead
10	2740003	6226631	1534	4:35min; descend steep narrow "crocodile tail" ridge parallel to Oturere Stream
11	2742349	6224269	1366	5:45min; Oturere Hut

NZTM

Easting	Northing
1823060	5664016
1826841	5664409
1827573	5663950
1827604	5663972
1828765	5664364
1828898	5664697
1829100	5664850
1829655	5665187
1829903	5664627
1830016	5664535
1832365	5662174



The path leaves the car park (**WP01** 1127masl) and starts on a section of boardwalk near the toilets heading off up-valley basically in an easterly direction. Within 20 minutes the sign indicating the path to Whakapapa is reached then 5 minutes later there is a branch off left to the Mangatepopo Hut – this is intentional to stop all the day trippers going to the hut. After 30 minutes a small valley is crossed and the track becomes undulating as the first gentle ascending of the day is made. There is a level area with boardwalk after about 55 minutes, then the valley of the Mangatepopo Stream becomes narrower and there are intermittent sections of boardwalk. The path remains first class all the way to the toilets (**WP02** 1366masl) which are reached in a total time of just over an hour; as with the toilets in the car park there are usually queues. Before starting the ascent of the “staircase” it is worth taking a morning tea stop just past the toilets.

Part of the rock wall



The turn-off (**WP06** 1854masl) for the ascent of Tongariro is found just before the crest of Red Crater (**WP07** 1882masl). From the crest there is a spectacular view of the next target – the Emerald Lakes. However care must be taken on the descent as it is entirely on loose ash and pumice – the fit and agile can “skate” down this in a matter of minutes but the less agile take considerably longer and the use of walking poles can be essential for some. The Emerald Lakes make a good lunch spot but can be a bit crowded. On leaving the Emerald Lakes the route sets off NNE across the eastern side of the Central Crater and within 3:45 minutes the signposted track (**WP08** 1703masl) off right to the Oturere Hut is reached. The going is quite slow on the descent as the track is steep and gravelly and again care is required. An amazing scoria landscape - or is it moonscape? - comes into view in a total walking time of about 4:30 minutes (**WP09** 1584masl).

Amazing scoria moonscape terrain



The Oturere Hut turn off



The view of the ascent is quite daunting, especially with all the ant-like figures following each other up in an endless chain but, in fact, ascending the “staircase” is not too taxing and one requires 45 minutes to an hour.

The views back over one’s shoulder are great, especially to see how far above the toilets one climbs so quickly, and a feeling of achievement is felt on reaching the plateau area at the top (**WP03** 1662masl) and minutes later the notice indicating the route to climb Ngauruhoe is passed (**WP04** 1667masl). The pleasure of stretching the stride can now be enjoyed for 15 minutes or so as progress is made through South Crater where the track is billiard-table smooth and as wide as a motorway. At the eastern edge of South Crater the next “grunt” section begins with a steep, rough and often slippery slope of almost 200m to ascend to get to the crest at Red Crater passing parts of a ridge or rock-wall (**WP05** 1736masl) on the way up.

Scary descent to Emerald Lake



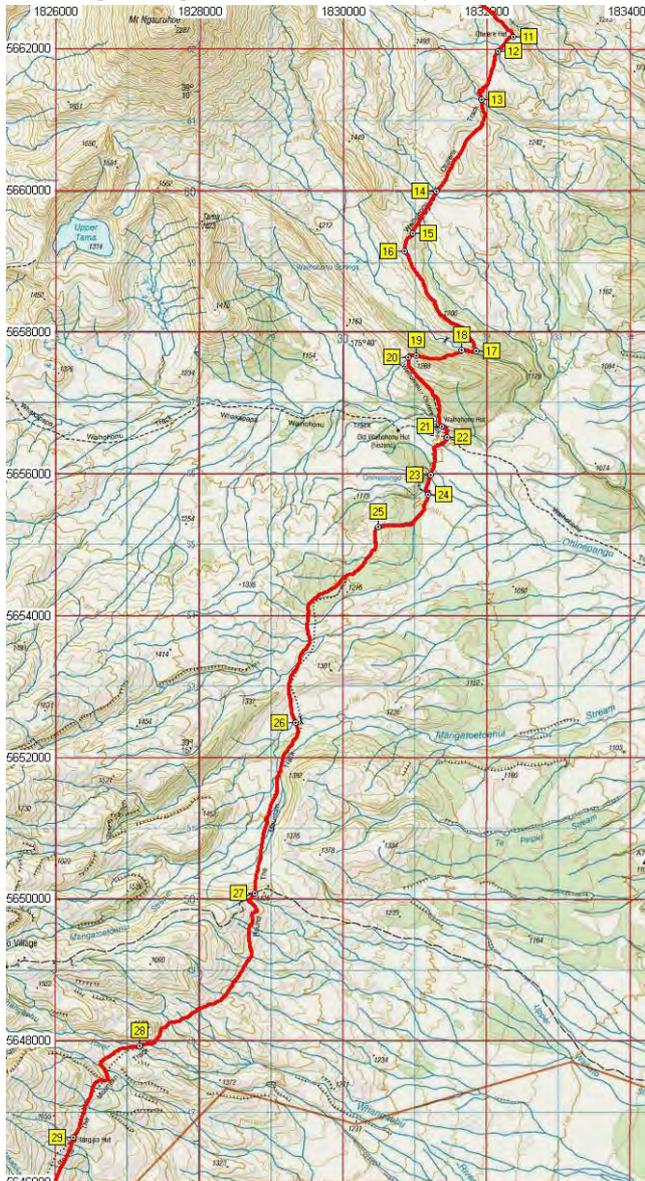
It seems a never ending descent down what looks like a crocodiles tail (**WP10** 1534masl) parallel to the Oturere Stream but as the descent proceeds the slope lessens and the going gets easier to arrive at the Oturere Hut (**WP11** 1366masl) in something less than 6 hours.

The Oturere is one of the Great Walk Huts and, during summer time, gas and gas cooking facilities are supplied, there is even a toaster in the set up. The hut accommodate s26, but well over 30 people can get in by squeezing up, and is really quite nice apart from the dodgy drainage from the external sinks. There is also a gas heater, two side rooms that can sleep 8 – 10 people each, an internal sink with water supply plus external sinks for washing up. The toilets are just above the hut and in summer time can be infested by blow-flies.

Day 2: Oturere Hut to Rangipo Hut

For most local trampers this section comprises walks they will most probably have done since many people have walked from the Desert Road in to Oturere via Waihohonu and also to Rangipo Hut via Tukino Access Road plus, possibly, branched round past the Ohinepango Springs from Waihohonu. Waihohonu Hut is reached in less than 3 hours and a further 4 hours are required to reach Rangipo Hut via the Tukino Access Road and the Lahar gully. The only real grunt of the day is within the last kilometre or so up from the Whangaehu (Lahar Gully) River.

Map and Google Image with GPS Data: Day 2

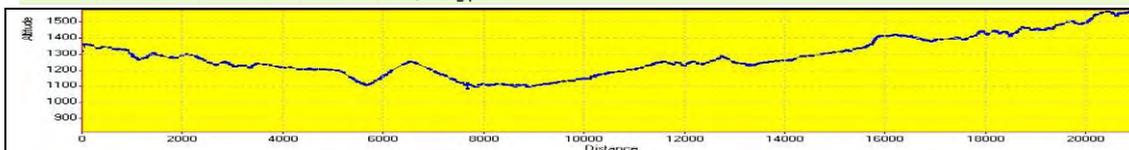


Waypoints – NZ Grid

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
12	2742142	6224060	1337	10min; gentle descent through rocky area to first river valley of the day
13	2741902	6223387	1267	25min; steep, tricky descent to river valley then easy walking
14	2741274	6222086	1235	55min; river crossing, easy
15	2740948	6221496	1216	1:05min; river crossing after rolling, easy walking
16	2740831	6221239	1235	1:20min; bear left (SE) on ridge, Ruapehu to the right and trees ahead (Note map track error)
17	2741837	6219829	1129	1:45min; long, gravelly side descent to enter trees and hear river
18	2741630	6219847	1111	1:50min; down through conifers, over bridge then up through broadleaf forest
19	2740995	6219771	1237	2:10min; near top of hard grunt up through forest
20	2740885	6219744	1254	2:15min; in the open on end of Tama Ridge which runs NW/SE
21	2741346	6218769	1107	2:40min; Waihohonu Hut (Smoko)
22	2741432	6218610	1111	3hrs; cross roads on poled tracks with Desert Road to SE and Chateau to WNW
23	2741205	6218087	1113	3:10min; steps and rope down very steep, gravelly slope then easy walking in low bush
24	2741162	6217814	1099	3:20min; notice for Ohinepango Springs (10min return) then long, wide, sandy dusty stream bed ascent
25	2740461	6217347	1143	3:40min; top of sandy section, bear left (S) near valley head area to undulating upper slopes
26	2739319	6214582	1234	5hrs; lunch at bridge over Mangatoetoenui stream after long rolling, bare area
27	2738753	6212182	1409	6:15min; steep grunt up to meet Tukino Access road just below locked gates and upslope from masts
28	2737143	6210023	1452	7:10min; bridge over Whangaehu River (Lahar Gully)
29	2736231	6208745	1565	9hrs; Rangipo Hut

NZTM

Easting	Northing
1832365	5662174
1832157	5661964
1831918	5661290
1831290	5659989
1830965	5659399
1830849	5659141
1831856	5657732
1831649	5657749
1831014	5657673
1830903	5657645
1831365	5656671
1831451	5656512
1831225	5655988
1831181	5655715
1830481	5655247
1829340	5652481
1828775	5650079
1827167	5647919
1826255	5646640



Total Distance : 21.102 Km
 Minimum Altitude : 1084 Meters
 Maximum Altitude : 1570 Meters

The day starts with a gentle downhill stroll through various rock formations passing through the first river valley of the day after 10 minutes (**WP12** 1337masl) then 15 minutes later there is a slightly tricky descent (**WP13** 1267masl) through the next valley followed by nice easy walking to an easy river crossing within the hour and another 10 minutes later after some rolling slopes. Within about 1:20 minutes the track bears left to follow the ridge SE and at this point Ruapehu is to the right and the slopes ahead are tree covered. A long, gravelly sidling descent leads down to the trees at about 1:45 minutes – the river can be heard at this point. The track then enters the coniferous trees (**WP18** 1111masl), works downhill and over a bridge then regains altitude passing up through broadleaf forest. At just over 2 hours the top of a reasonably hard upwards grunt is reached (**WP19** 1237masl) then 5 minutes later the Tama Ridge (**WP20** 1254masl), which runs NW/SE, is reached and clear views of the mountain are seen.

Approaching the Ohinepango Springs turn-off



The next 20 minutes or so is not too pleasant as the track is a relatively wide, very gravelly, dusty stream bed with moderately high bush on either side and can get a bit hot. Near a valley head on the right the route then swings round to the left (S) and crosses an area of undulating slopes before losing altitude down through a bare rolling area as the Mangatoetoenui Stream is approached – the bridge (**WP26** 1234masl) here is a good lunch spot. By keeping a look out from the ridges before descending to the river the twin communication masts on the Tukino Access Road can be spotted – these are the next target.

After lunch about one hour of relatively easy ascending through a relatively bare area with sparse vegetation ends with a fair grunt upslope to meet the Tukino Access Road (**WP27** 1409masl) a few hundred metres west of the communication masts and just down hill from the locked gate on the road. By this point about 6:15 minutes walking will have been done and before starting the last leg it is well worth having a refreshment break and refilling the tank – as they say – since the hard work of the day is still to come.

Rangipo Hut



The descent down through the forest is not too difficult though a bit rocky in places and in less than 30 minutes the old Waihohonu Hut (**WP21** 1107masl) appears and is a perfect spot for a break (Smoko). This hut is very similar to the Oturere and could be used if a shorter day was required. A new hut was built in 2010 near the cross-roads **WP22** 1111masl) of the poled tracks (round-the-mountain and Desert Road to Whakapapa Chateau) takes only minutes where the route is then straight on to the SE. Walking is now in nice low bush and easy but then there is a set of steps (**WP23** 1113masl) leading down to a very steep, slippery slope but there is a handrail in the form of a rope. The track soon improves and the notice (**WP24** 1099masl) for the Ohinepango Springs is reached after crossing a small bridge in about a total walk time of 3:20 minutes (the return trip to the springs takes about 10 minutes).

Steps and rope handrail



Swing bridge over Whangaehu River



There is a whole series of stream lines to cross on the rolling to hilly slopes and about one hour is required to get to the Whangaehu River with its swing bridge (**WP28** 1452masl). After crossing the bridge the track goes up a bit of a narrow, rocky defile, through a gap in the jagged rocky ridge and soon after getting free of the “Lahar Hazard Area” the final ascent commences. The poled route now takes a slight deviation from the mapped track since the old way was too steep and becoming dangerous with loose rocks. It is a grunt up this slope but when on top the walking is very easy on bare ground though there are several quite steep little stream lines to cross before the Rangipo Hut (**WP29** 1565masl) comes into view at the end of a rocky ridge.

The Rangipo Hut can sleep 20 people, has two side rooms plus the main sleeping / kitchen area where there is a sink (no taps or water) and a good wood burner. Outside there is a sink (at Hobbit height) plus roof-fed running water whilst the toilet is just upslope of the hut.

Day 3: Rangipo Hut to Mangaturuturu Hut via Mangaehuehu Hut

Day three is a monster of a walk in any one's language since the quoted time to the Mangaehuehu Hut is 6 hours, followed by 3 hours out to Ohakune Mountain Road then another 90 minutes down the Cascades to the Mangaturuturu Hut after a few kilometres up the Mountain Road. GPS records gave over 24 kilometres in 11 hours of very steady walking. There are a few real efforts during the walk including crossing the canyon of the Wahianoa River, the grunt up past the Waitonga Falls and the knee-trembling descent of the Cascades.

The day starts off through rough, rocky terrain with the first very rocky, steep sided valley (**WP30** 1455masl) with twin stream lines after 35 minutes and the second within 50 minutes. From here it is a steady climb to the crest (**WP32** 1492masl) to overlook the canyon of the Wahianoa River from where it really is a 30 minute, knee-trembling descent to the valley bottom where there is a minor ridge to cross 10 minutes before the swing bridge (**WP34** 1369masl). From here it is up the gully opposite, round a small valley head then a long, gentle side up to the SE on to the crest (**WP35** 1469masl) where there is a small rock wall forming a sheep-pen like windbreak and is reached in a bit over 2 hours. More stream line crossing and grunts uphill follow still in rough rocky terrain till a high crest (**WP37** 1467masl) is reached and "Smoko" seems a good idea. By 3:30 minutes the landscape starts to change and the first remnants of eroded bush are seen (**WP38** 1398masl) and the tree line, beech forest, is reached then entered at just on 4 hours (**WP39** 1352masl).

Above the descent of the day



Misty stream crossing on the Cascades



About half an hour later board walk is reached in a gullied area and at 4:45 minutes there is more board walk and open bush. A steep descent, on broken board walk (**WP42** 1292masl), at 5 hours leads to a bridge then it is uphill on new steps and boardwalk to reach the Mangaehuehu Hut (**WP43** 1291masl) in about 5:30min. For many people this would be enough for one day and a stop called here for the night!

From here there is a series of gullies to negotiate but some of these do have swing bridges with the last (**WP46** 1191masl) of the swing bridges being reached after 7:30minutes within beech forest. Fifteen minutes after this there is a wooden bridge for a change then the junction with the Blyth Hut (**WP48** 1226masl) reached 5 minutes later; the branch going to the Blyth Hut heads ENE off the main track. The first slightly poor marking of the track now surfaces after some stepping stones over one of the branches of the Mangateitei River (**WP49** 1163masl); cross the river, a tributary, go up the W bank and left (W) at a large orange triangular track marker to the Waitonga Falls.

Once past the Waitonga Falls there is tourist grade, wide, smooth (albeit with some steps) track and at about 8:30 minutes the junction (**WP50** 1254masl) with the Old Blyth Track, which goes off left (S), is met. Ten minutes later there is a wooden suspension bridge then in another 5 minutes the car park on Ohakune Mountain Road (**WP52** 1160masl) is reached – roughly 8:45 minutes after leaving the Rangipo Hut. This is where, hopefully, extra food supplies can be collected if arrangements have been made plus, if the offer is made, gratefully accept a lift up the 3 odd kilometres of steeply sloping road which burns the feet if walked. Once the car park on the left side of Ohakune Mountain Road is reached there is a steep, loose gravelly and stony descent down into the valley and again care is needed especially as almost all trampers have tired legs by this time. The track is then a bit rough with quite large rocks and boulders to negotiate on moderate slopes but within 30 minutes the upper reaches of the Cascades are reached (**WP53** 1470masl) as the track bears left into the valley of the Makotuku River.

Below the Cascades

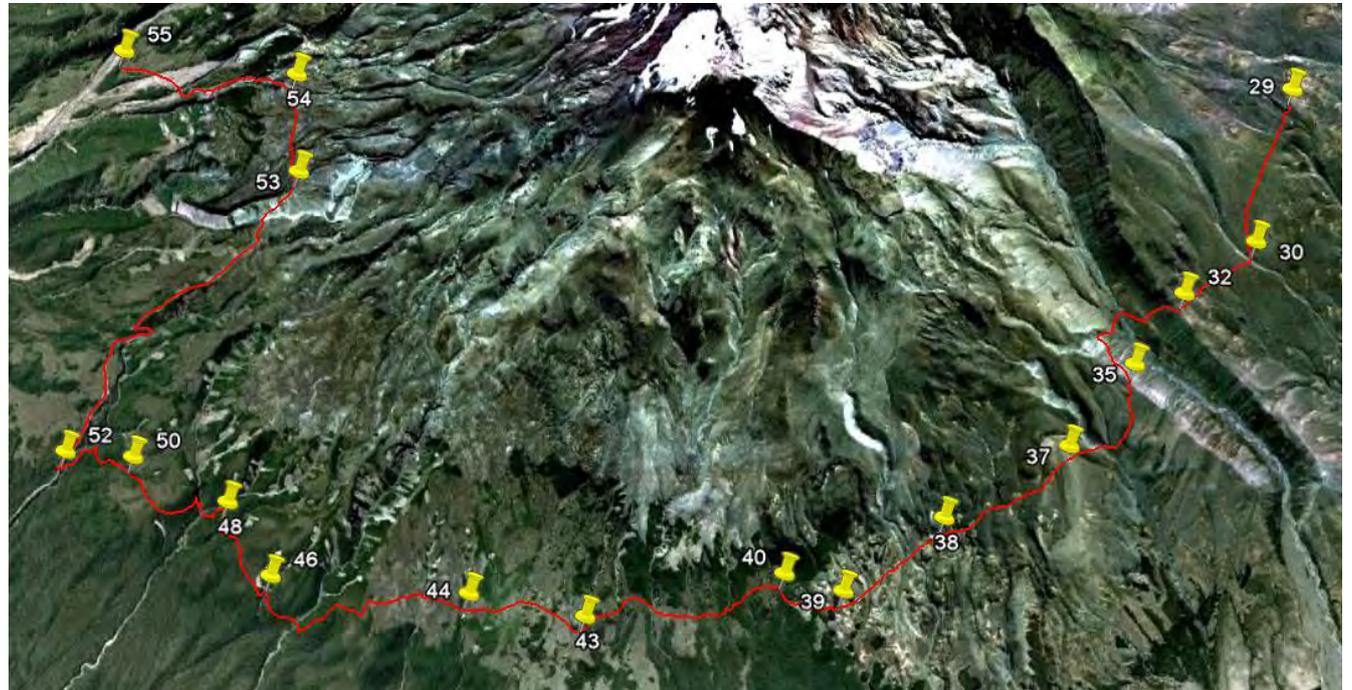
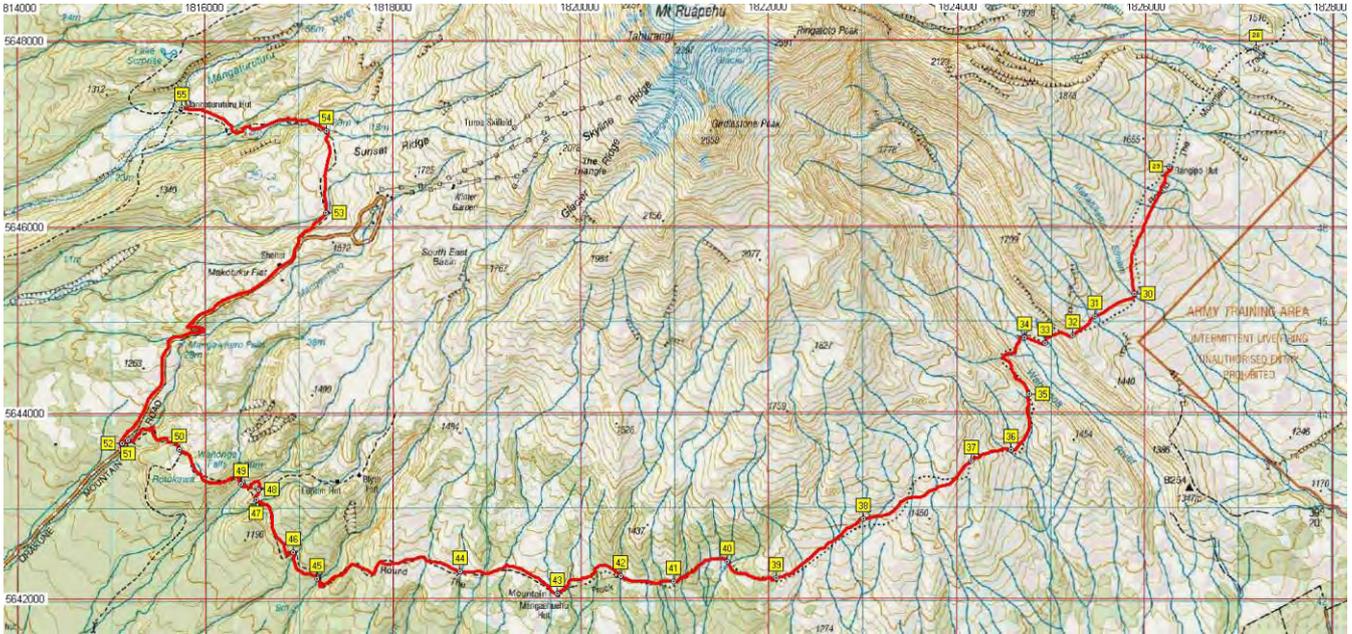


Evening view of Mount Ruapehu



Rather an exciting descent is now tackled down the rock ladder of the "cascades"; for many people this looks rather daunting and great care must be taken, however it normally takes about 40 minutes or so to get down to the bottom (**WP54** 1494masl). From here the walking is easy and there is a small diversion that can be taken to a large boulder with a cairn on the top off to the right is worth taking as this is a memorial to one Horace Hole drowned in the area in 1927. Back on the track there is then a very welcome notice showing it is 15 minutes to the hut and the boardwalk from here makes easy walking to the Mangaturuturu Hut (**WP55** 1256masl). The entire day as described took 11 hours and included a lift up the Ohakune Mountain Road. The Mangaturuturu Hut, maintained by DoC and Whanganui Tramping Club, is quite small and sleeps 10 people, has a wood burner, good work bench and internal sink with a roof water supply plus sink outside. The toilet is a little distance from the hut and could be called "Poets' Corner". Evening views of the mountain are stunning.

Map and Google Image with GPS Data: Day 3

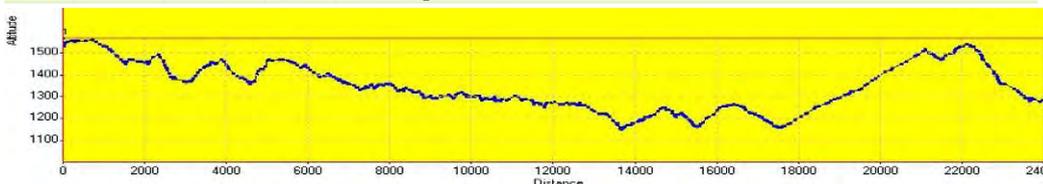


Waypoints – NZ Grid

No.	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
29	2736331	6208496	1565	9hrs: Rangipo Hut
30	2735963	6207128	1455	35min: first gully of day with twin stream lines and very rocky
31	2735542	6206889	1462	50min: ridge crest between two stream lines in gully
32	2735307	6206679	1492	1hr: crest above huge gully of Wahianoa River. Very steep, loose gravelly descent
33	2735012	6206595	1390	1:30min: on ridge in middle of valley bottom after knee trembling descent
34	2734788	6206661	1369	1:40min: swing bridge then up gully, round valley head and side to SE
35	2734842	6206052	1469	2:10min: at rock wind-break after long, easy side up gully side
36	2734650	6205450	1358	2:30min: cross small tributary stream in gully
37	2734229	6205328	1467	2:50min: "smoko" on crest after long grunt uphill
38	2733084	6204712	1398	3:30min: meet first part of isolated remnants of eroded bush
39	2732157	6204075	1352	4hrs: edge of mountain beech forest, then go right (N) to pass through trees
40	2731633	6204249	1328	4:25min: board-walk in gullied area
41	2731064	6204043	1303	4:45min: out of the trees into more open bush with board-walk
42	2730501	6204104	1292	5hrs: steep down hill on broken board-walk to bridge then new board-walk upslope
43	2729828	6203913	1291	5:25min: Mangaehuehu Hut (Quoted walk time from Rangipo ranges 5 - 6 hours)
44	2728789	6204152	1253	6:20min: swing bridge in 3rd gully after hut
45	2727266	6204077	1154	7:10min: steep descent through beech to swing bridge
46	2727007	6204364	1191	7:30min: swing bridge in beech forest
47	2726618	6204928	1212	7:45min: wooden bridge
48	2726642	6205042	1226	7:50min: track junction with right turn (ENE) to Blyth Hut
49	2726462	6205100	1163	8hrs: stepping stone river cross, up W bank and left (W) at big orange triangle to Waitonga Falls
50	2725803	6205474	1254	8:30min: track junction with notice for Old Blyth Track going off left (S)
51	2725251	6205572	1160	8:40min: wood suspension bridge on super-grade tourist track
52	2725194	6205541	1160	8:45min: car park on Ohakune Mountain Road
53	2727368	6208011	1470	9:40min: above the Makotuku River heading for the "cascade" rock ladder down
54	2727377	6208893	1494	10:30min: at foot of the "Cascade" rock ladder
55	2725829	6209149	1256	11hrs: Mangaturuturu Hut

NZTM

Easting	Northing
1826255	5646640
1825888	5645272
1825467	5645032
1825231	5644822
1824936	5644737
1824713	5644804
1824767	5644194
1824576	5643592
1824154	5643470
1823009	5642853
1822082	5642215
1821558	5642389
1820989	5642182
1820425	5642243
1819752	5642051
1818713	5642289
1817190	5642210
1816930	5642504
1816541	5643064
1816565	5643179
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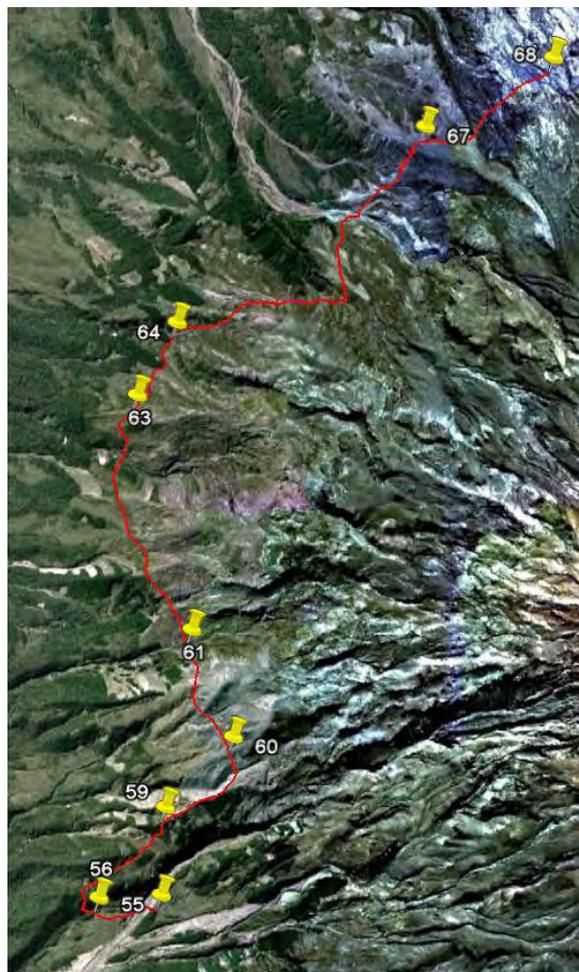
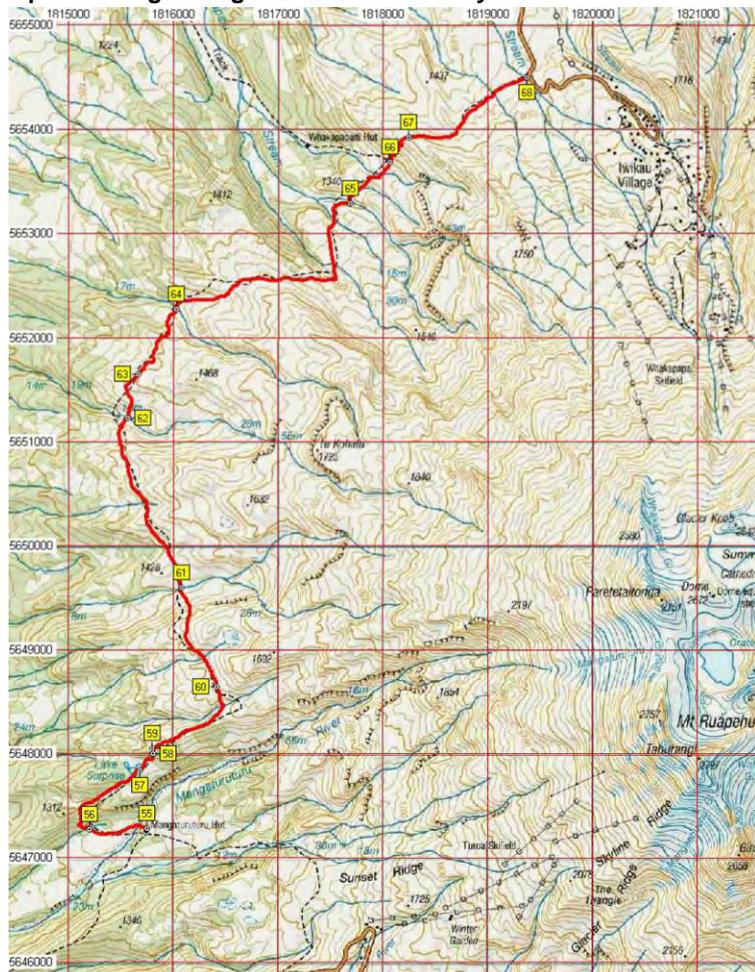


Total Distance : 24.263 Km
 Minimum Speed : No Time
 Maximum Speed : No Time
 Average Speed : No Time
 Minimum Altitude : 1150 Meters
 Maximum Altitude : 1565 Meters

Day 4: Mangaturuturu Hut to Scoria Flats, Bruce Road

Day four is not particularly long at just under 13 kilometres but the route is through rather heavy going terrain; there seems to be an endless series of ascents and descents with many of the descents being quite tricky due to either rockiness and or quite deeply eroded, gully-like sections on the footpath and these prove a fair trial after Days 2 and 3 both of which are rather long arduous walks. Most agree that the “dreaded” zig zags” up out of the Whakapapaiti Valley are one of the easier, more pleasant sections. However, the sight of Lake Surprise is pleasant and the 300 odd steps above the lake are actually very easy to ascend.

Map and Google Image with GPS Data: Day 4

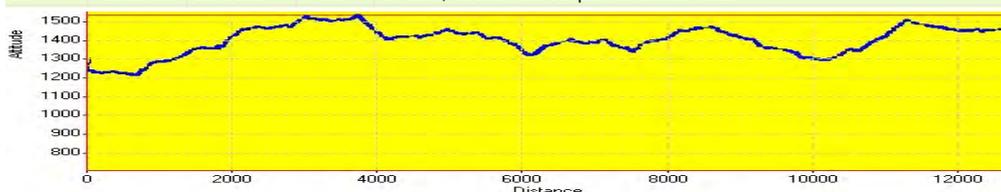


Waypoints – NZ Grid

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
55	2725829	6209149	1256	11hrs; Mangaturuturu Hut
56	2725287	6209140	1219	15min; enter trees at end of boardwalk and start ascent of low bluff
57	2725768	6209702	1361	50min; Lake Surprise
58	2725694	6209860	1390	1hr; 168 steps up easy grade, wooden staircase at turn and handrail
59	2725888	6209911	1413	1:05min; top of staircase (309 steps)
60	2726497	6210509	1523	1:35min; crest of ridge after steep grunt up and loop through river course
61	2726163	6211456	1406	2:40min; "smoko" on river bank after steep rocky, gravelly and muddy descent
62	2725645	6213095	1323	4hrs; clear rocky river after several deep ditch descents and easy re-ascents
63	2725749	6213514	1403	4:20min; upper slope with views of Ruapehu Pinnacles, Ngauruhoe and ski lifts
64	2726112	6214137	1351	5:15min; post lunch at rocky stream crossing
65	2727766	6215153	1296	7hrs; stepping stone crossings of Whakapapaiti Stream
66	2728149	6215543	1391	7:20min; track junction with Whakapapaiti Track below zig-zags
67	2728319	6215784	1510	7:40min; top of the zig-zags out of Whakapapaiti valley
68	2729450	6216353	1489	8:10min; Scoria Flats car park on Bruce Road

NZTM

Easting	Northing
1815749	5647286
1815207	5647277
1815688	5647840
1815814	5647998
1815807	5648049
1816416	5648648
1816082	5649594
1815562	5651234
1815666	5651653
1816029	5652276
1817683	5653295
1818065	5653685
1818236	5653926
1819366	5654496



Total Distance : 12,709 Km
 Minimum Altitude : 1216 Meters
 Maximum Altitude : 1535 Meters

Leaving the Mangaturuturu Hut the route passes between the stone seat outside and the hut following the poled route and in a minute or so there is a steep, gravelly descent to the river edge – ample stepping stones to use on this one. Once up the far bank there is good boardwalk for about 15 minutes then the tree line is entered (WP56 1219masl) and the ascent of a small bluff starts – this is not too difficult but care has to be taken on the loose stony sections. Above the bluff the route continues to ascend, via a small stream line then on extensive boardwalk till Lake Surprise (WP57 1361masl) is reached within 40 to 50 minutes. After passing round the eastern end of the lake a huge wooden staircase comes into view but the 309 steps only take about 10 minutes to ascend as they are of a very easy pitch with no “anti-hobbit” sized steps. The top of the stairs (WP59 1413 masl) is reached in about 1:05 walking time from the hut.

From here the route is to the NE into and round the upper reaches of a stream course with a relatively stiff ascent NNW up to the next crest (**WP60** 1523masl) – a good place for a look around and getting the breath back. From this point on for the next 2 – 3 kilometres the route is NW(ish) and is quite tiring as there is a series of river valleys to negotiate. One rocky coursed river or stream (**WP62** 1323masl) had very clear water but the descent down into the valley involved getting through several deep, ditched sections of track.

Between 4 hours and 4:20 minutes the Pinnacles and Mount Ruapehu come into view (**WP63** 1403masl) along with Ngauruhoe and the ski lifts of the Whakapapa slopes. At this point the route changes direction to NE as the track descends to one of the tributaries of the Makatote River – the river crossing is easy and makes a good lunch spot (**WP64** 1351masl). Post lunch the direction then swings round to almost eastwards on a long side round the slopes to descend eventually quite steeply into the valley of the Whakapapaiti River.

View of Pinnacles and Ruapehu from WP63



From the crest at the top of the zig-zags (**WP67** 1510masl) the next target can be seen – the car park at Scoria Flats on Bruce Road however, though it looks close, it does take another 30 minutes to get through the few ups and downs to reach the car park (**WP68** 1469masl).

For many trampers this is enough and transport down from here to Whakapapa is usually very welcome since this last day, though not over far, seems a long way on top of the previous 3 days and, by this time, some 70 odd kilometres have been tramped through very trying terrain in something around 33 hours whilst ascending and descending something over 2,000 metres.

Start of the Zig Zags



Lake Surprise



It is a huge relief to start on this descent since the Whakapapaiti Hut can be seen and the dreaded zig-zags up out of the valley can be discerned depending on the light conditions. The final descent down into the valley is basically northwards and there are several stream lines to cross but there is also a very easy, almost flat area to cross before the main river crossing. It is well worthwhile following the poled route carefully here as it does find the easiest crossing by going upstream a little and crossing over just above a minor confluence (**WP65** 1296masl) – meaning there are two smaller streams to cross rather than one bigger one. After the crossing the track is a little bit steep as it starts the climb up out of the valley, down and over yet another stream line before heading upwards to meet the signposted Whakapapaiti Track at the foot of the zig-zags (**WP66** 1391masl). Most people dislike the zig-zags but, in fact, this is an easy ascent that takes between 15 – 25 minutes and most people do not follow all the twists and turns but head straight up over the rocks.

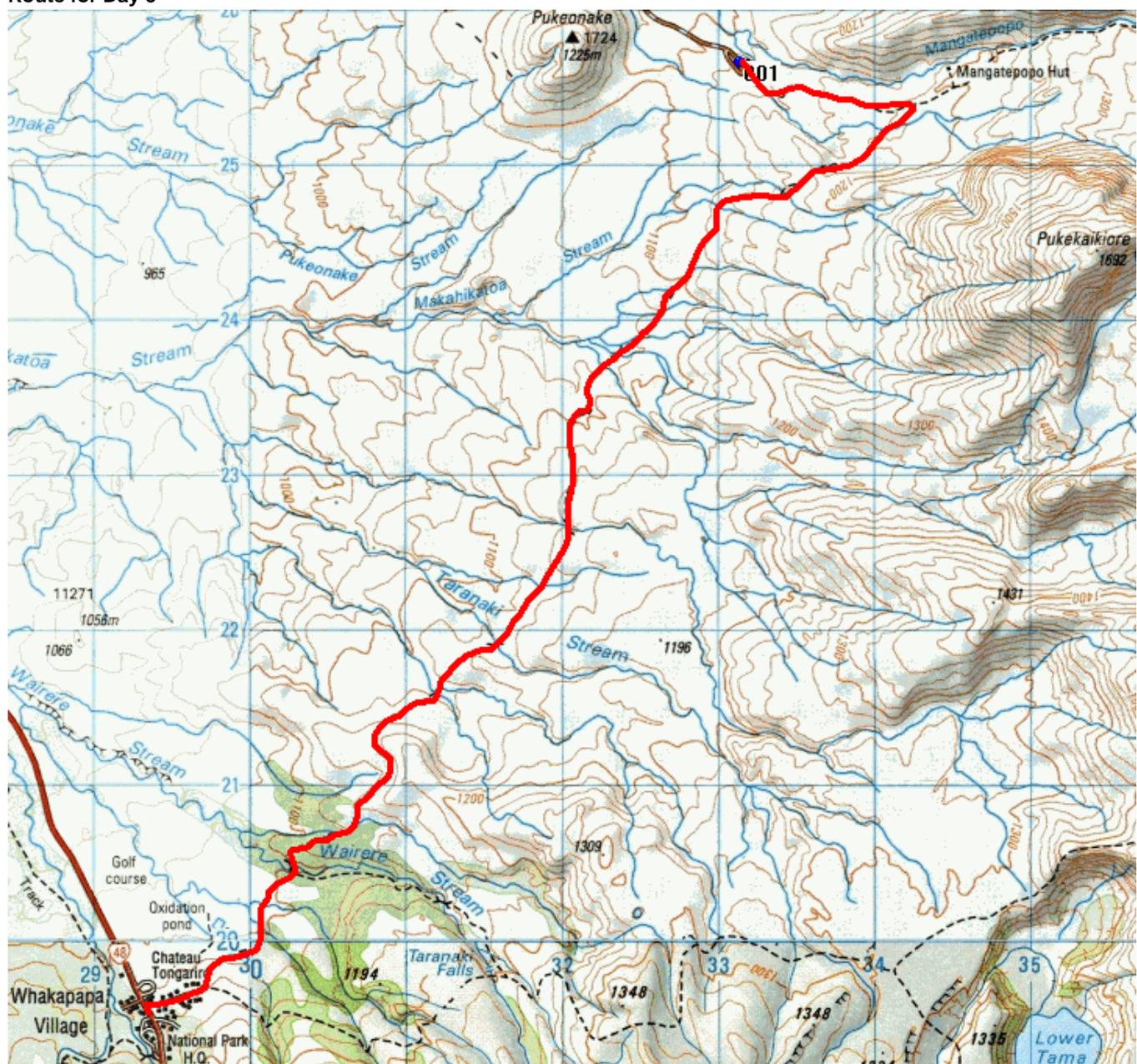
Narrow gullied path section



To complete the full circumnavigation of Mount Ruapehu there is a bit over 10kilometres still to walk and this can be tackled as Day 5. The route is shown on the following map but was not walked by the author on this particular tramp. However the route can be summarized as:

- A walk of between 3 and 5 hours, depending on conditions
- Distance of around 10 kilometres
- No huge altitude gains or losses and hence no serious "grunts"
- A dozen or so stream lines to cross with the major streams being the Wairere and the Taranaki
- A bit of altitude is gained in the latter third as the route climbs back up to the level of the Mangatepopo Stream then out to the starting car park.

Route for Day 5



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