

LEITCHS HUT day walk

260 Series Map: Te Kuiti, 1:50,000 R17

Topo50 Map: BF31Marokop & BF32 Piopio

NZ Grid GPS: Geodetic Datum 1949

NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS84

How to get to START:

1. Exit Taupo on SH1 North and left to Poihipi Rd
2. At end of Poihipi road turn right on SH32 northwards
3. At Whakamaru turn left (NW) on SH30
4. In 3km bear left still on SH30 Mitchell Road
5. Two km on turn left (SW) on Scott Road (SH30)
6. Pass through Benneydale (toilet stop)
7. Left off SH30 signed-posted to Mokau
8. Right to Pukurimu Road
9. Right onto SH4 signed Te Kuiti
10. Left to SH3 signed New Plymouth and Piopio
11. Through town (Piopio) and off right to Waitanga Falls
12. Left at T-junction on to Mangotaki Road
13. Left at Y-fork to Leitchs Road
14. Right at T-junction still on Leitchs Road
15. Left at small Y-fork uphill into car park for track start

Total driving time is about 2:20min to the start at the end of Leitchs Road and about 3 hours from the end of Gibbon Road back to Taupo. The route is shown below.

Rough Description: A moderately hard day tramp in the Te Kuiti area accessing via Piopio and exiting at Mahoenui. Not much in the way of views but good birdlife in parts, wood pigeon and paradise duck, and a "Frog Protection" area.

From the end of Leitchs Road it is now a relatively easy walk in to Leitchs Hut which requires about 3 hours covering less than 10km. Five years ago this was a messy, hard walk due to windfalls and serious cattle pugging of the track but the track is now wide, clear and allows good progress. The exit route is not quite as easy. The signs at Leitchs Hut state four hours out and the full 4 hours are required as this is mainly back-country grade track, much of it on shelf width with steep cross-slopes and there are many stream crossings. However it is all through superb forest with several large grassy meadows some of which are covered in buttercups in season.

Total walk length is just over 21km with 562m of ascent and 660m of descent reaching a maximum altitude of 506m with the lowest point being 136m.

Road Access and Exit



The route followed is the red line with the northerly spur from Piopio being to the start point at the end of Leitchs Road – the gap between the two spurs in the top NW corner of the map is where the tramp was done. Road mileage totals 388km.

Detail: Close to forty minutes is needed to drive in from Piopio, where there are cafes and a toilet for weary travellers, with the various turns being detailed above in steps 11 – 15. The road is asphalt then gravel and is an easy drive – on the way in look for the house named "Heaven's Above" – it is well named.

From the car park (LH01 286masl) pass by and read the notices then head off on to a wide track that used to prove a bit trying with mud (cattle pugging), saplings across the track (cattle browsing) but it is now a clear, well-made track. There are several small streams to cross but they present no problem. About 20 minutes out there is a bit of a view (LH02 361masl) of the sheep-grazing farmland to the NE. Twenty minutes or so more brings the route back to the edge of the woodlands and a better view (LH03 395masl) before turning SW back into the woodlands.

Progress seems to have been made when a high point is reached where there is a distance notice board and directly behind the board there used to be a clearly visible area "closure" board (LH05 490masl) with some information about the "Frog Protection Area".

Great views



Distance board



Frog protection – now well hidden



The track continues on basically to the SW and it does climb as it moves upslope away from the mapped track for a spell passing through a pretty, dark valley head (LH07 436masl) at about 2 hours then the present route and mapped one merge 30 minutes later at a large arch cut in windfall – christened "Hobbiton Arch" (LH08 356masl). The SW direction with several more stream line crossing continues until the track emerges into a meadow (LH09 273masl) with a sign that Leitchs Hut is one hour away. The Pomarangai Track is mapped as passing through this meadow heading to the North. Meadow walking continues for a bit then instead of getting wet feet, as happened on the old track, there is a small bit of a grunt up and over (LH10 259masl) to soon get a view of Leitchs Hut (LH11 268masl) which is easily reachable within 3 hours.

Map with GPS track and waypoints



From : 17-Oct-12 09:48:50
 To : 17-Oct-12 17:23:20
 Time taken : 7:34:30
 Total Distance : 21.292 Km
 Minimum Speed : 0.027 KPH
 Maximum Speed : 11.356 KPH
 Average Speed : 2.811 KPH
 Minimum Altitude : 136 Meters
 Maximum Altitude : 506 Meters

Hobbiton Arch (LH08)



The hut is a very pleasant surprise as it is clean and very well equipped having 16 sleeping bunk spaces in two dormitories, polished floor throughout, a wood/coal burner, internal water supply and sink plus hot water system supplied via the solid fuel stove. There are ample drying racks / lines on the deck and inside the hut - plus the toilet is not too far away.

Leitchs Hut



Study of the map indicates 17 river or stream crossings on the way out to Gibbon Road which is noted on the DOC track-board as 10km away to the south requiring 4 hours. This is all on real back country tracks and the full 4 hours are needed.

Within minutes of leaving the hut the Awakino River is crossed then followed all the way downstream by turning hard left to the SE in a pleasant grassy meadow. There is a stream to cross in the meadow before entering the woods where the track is on a nasty cross slope. This combination of meadows, streams and tricky cross-slope tracks continues for a long time (LH12 to LH17) and is quite pleasant walking with some meadows having flowers, goats running about in places and continual evidence of rooting pigs but does become hard work.

Colour other than green

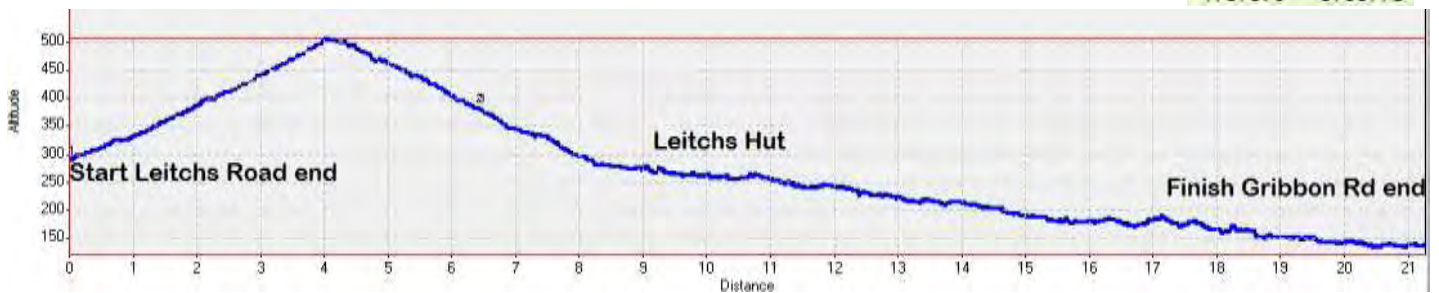


Waypoints – NZ Grid

Waypoint	Easting	Northing	Altitude	Description
LH01	2670019	6309255	286	Car park at end of Leitchs Road
LH02	2669621	6309279	361	20min: good track with fast progress
LH03	2669126	6309649	395	34min; edge of fields with good views to NE then back into forest and SW
LH04	2668555	6309098	438	1hr ; small meadow and minor stream crossing
LH05	2667894	6309367	490	1:20min; sharp turn to head due S, all well off mapped track
LH06	2667470	6308980	459	1:30 min; previous rock-fall area then uphill section
LH07	2667047	6308568	436	1:45min; small, dark, pretty upper valley well upslope of mapped track
LH08	2666280	6308244	356	2:10min; Hobbiton Arch - huge tree arch. close to mapped track
LH09	2665224	6307681	283	2:37min; open meadow area with sign "1km" to Hut
LH10	2665418	6306839	259	2:50min; end of meadow area, head uphill on rough "up-&-over" to then see Leitchs Hut
LH11	2665327	6306716	268	2:57min; Leitchs Hut in huge meadow
LH12	2665634	6306171	259	3:37min; stream crossing to meadow then into woods on nasty cross-slope
LH13	2666236	6305736	253	3:53min; second stream from hut, tricky shelf path then meadow with goats
LH14	2666890	6305426	244	4:14min; unmapped stream line
LH15	2666940	6305395	242	4:16min; stream line in rough, very undulating area
LH16	2667105	6305154	231	4:25min; stream line on steep cross-slope
LH17	2667471	6304420	215	4:51min; fourth mapped stream line, tricky crossing with multi branches
LH18	2668239	6303475	180	5:41min; turn from SE course to S then SW
LH19	2667303	6301652	172	6:34min; Putahaehae stream line crossing
LH20	2667614	6301398	168	6:46min; unmapped stream, track triangle some metres upstream from entry point
LH21	2667796	6301234	168	6:50min; gate at end of track entering farm land
LH22	2667888	6298751	138	7:33min; bridge
LH23	2667839	6298672	143	7:34min; car park at farm at end of Gribbon Road

NZTM

Waypoint	Easting	Northing
LH01	1759838	5747364
LH02	1759440	5747387
LH03	1758945	5747757
LH04	1758374	5747205
LH05	1757713	5747473
LH06	1757289	5747085
LH07	1756866	5746673
LH08	1756100	5746348
LH09	1755045	5745785
LH10	1755240	5744943
LH11	1755149	5744819
LH12	1755456	5744275
LH13	1756059	5743840
LH14	1756713	5743531
LH15	1756763	5743500
LH16	1756928	5743259
LH17	1757295	5742526
LH18	1758064	5741582
LH19	1757130	5739757
LH20	1757441	5739503
LH21	1757624	5739340
LH22	1757718	5736857
LH23	1757670	5736778



Inward to Leitchs Hut – Google Earth



Outwards to Gribbon road – Google Earth



A major change in direction is made in a bit under 6 hours when the overall heading changes from SE to SW (LH18 180masl) then at around six and a quarter hours there is rather a nice waterfall to be admired a few hundred metres before crossing the Putahaehae Stream (LH19 172masl)

Fifteen minutes after crossing the Putahaehae there is an unmapped stream which can cause confusion as the track is not too easy to spot. On crossing this stream (WP20 168masl) immediately head upstream 20 metres or so and a large orange track marker will be found on the true right bank (that is on the left heading upstream).

Soon after this a stock control gate is passed through on the track, then less than 10 minutes later another gate gives access on to farmland (LH21 168masl). Please note that there are no track markers on these final 3km but the track is clear enough on the ground to ensure no offence is caused to the farmer by disturbance of the stock. This is now all easy walking though in places the ground can be well churned up (pugged) by the cattle but there are still few stream lines to allow boot washing. It is only 3km through the farmland though, with weary legs, it can seem interminable but soon enough there is a bridge to cross (LH22 138masl) then a gate leads to the car park at the end of Gribbon Road. Gribbon Road leads out to and joins SH3 at Mahoenui where by turning left one is soon back in Piopio.

All in all a great tramp covering a half marathon in superb forest and attractive farmland though it might be a bit much for some – but then an overnight stop can be made at Leitchs Hut.

- Notes:**
- GPS Garmin GPSMap 60CSx
 - WP = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit
 - masl = metres above sea level