

RUAPEHU CRATER LAKE

260 Series Map: Ohakune, S20

Topo50 Map: BJ34 Mnt Ruapehu

How to get to START: Exit Taupo on SH1 down the lake to Turangi where there is a choice:

Option 1

- 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

Option 2

- In Turangi turn off SH1 on to SH41 on the right and then turn left off SH41 on to SH47. (This is the shorter route but the road can be slippery on frosty days)
- Turn off SH47 on to SH48 signposted for Whakapapa and the Chateau
- Continue up Bruce Road past the Chateau and park at the top near the Ski Village. Plenty of parking in the summer-time but little in the winter – of course ascending Ruapehu in winter is not really recommended.

Rough description: A fairly stiff tramp as there is an ascent of over 1000metres from the Ski car parking area to the Dome Shelter overlooking the Crater Lake on Mount Ruapehu. A huge range of surfaces to traverse from solid rock, boulder fields to loose, unstable scoria slopes plus snow in season. There are sections of poled track and in places there are small cairns but sometimes it is free navigation upwards (this is not recommended when visibility is poor). Time to the top is between 3 – 4 hours. The effort can be reduced by using the ski lifts as they operate even in summertime

Crater Lake



Detail: This is not a tramp to be undertaken lightly and, unless high skill levels in alpine climbing are held, not to be undertaken in winter time. The best seasons are usually in high summer or early autumn when most of the snow will have cleared apart from in very sheltered gullies and valleys. Whatever the season full dry and wet weather gear must be carried since conditions can change in minutes from warm, balmy and gentle into life threatening cold and wild. Ample water (minimum 2 litres) should be carried as there are few places to refill empty bottles once above the ski areas.

Parallel to the ski lift



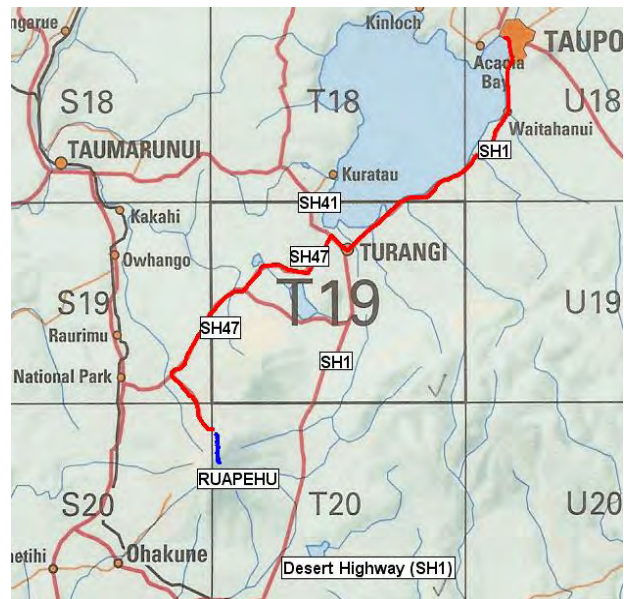
From the car park (**R01**^{1616masl}) area set off walking uphill on the rough road between the end of the shops/ cafeteria and the bottom station of the ski lift. This is on a rather rough access road which parallels the ski lift and in about 30 minutes the upper ski lift station is reached (**R02**^{1767masl}). Bear to the right and a line of poles can be seen going up the ridge – this is the route. Take great care as the lower parts, in particular, are rather rough with some very jagged pieces of rock ready to inflict quite serious damage if a tumble is taken.

Footing improves a bit once properly on the ridge and a high point presents itself within the hour where a refreshment break can be taken. A good view back down and over the ski village area can be obtained from here. Stay on the ridge heading more or less due S and when up a little bit side over to your right (W) and again pick up the poled track route within a small valley. Soon there is a bit of a bluff on the left and after about 1:20 min some pieces of concrete foundations can be spotted – this was the site of the original Alpine Hut (**R03**^{2013masl}) back in the mid to late 1960s.

NZ Grid GPS: Geodetic Datum 1949

NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS84

Access

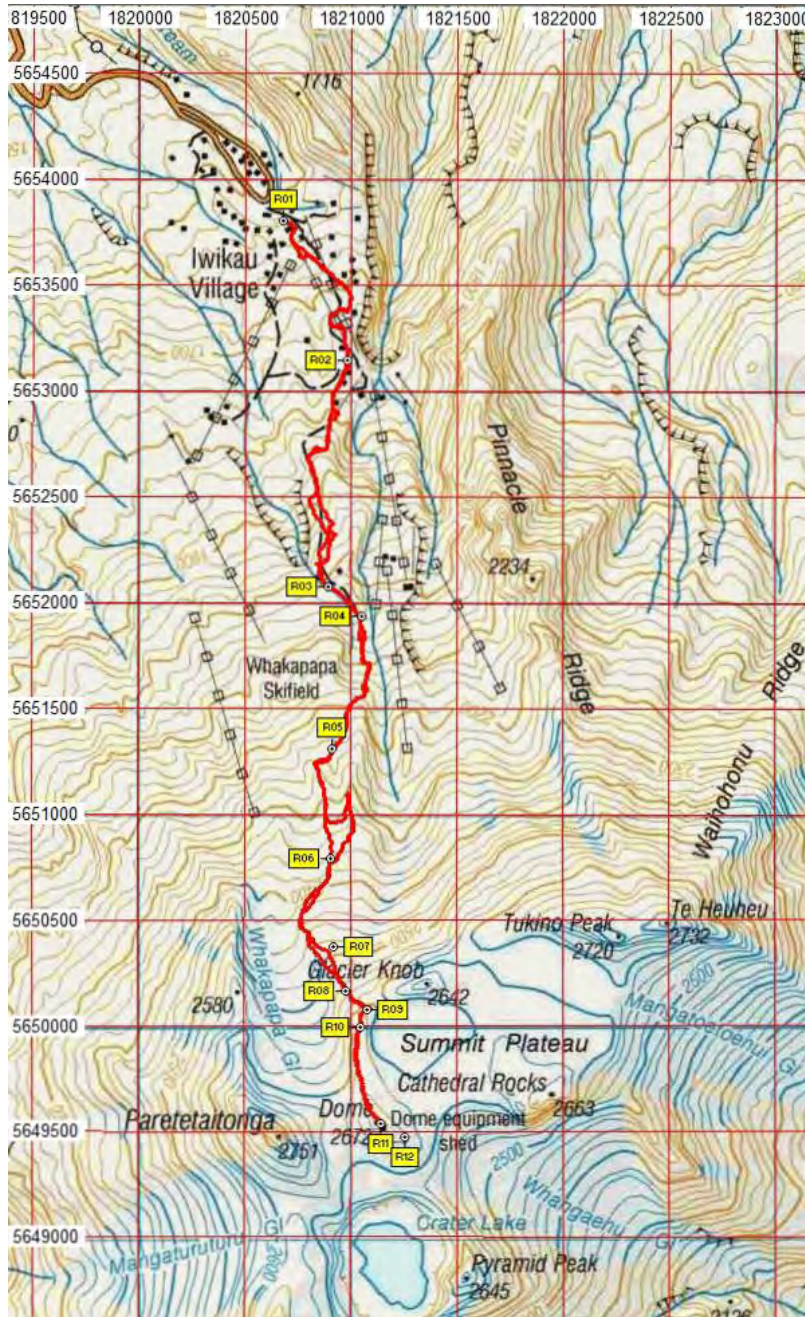


The access route can be seen as the red line above whilst the tramp location is the blue line. The drive from Taupo to the car park takes about one and half hours.

Rough country



Map and Google Image with GPS data

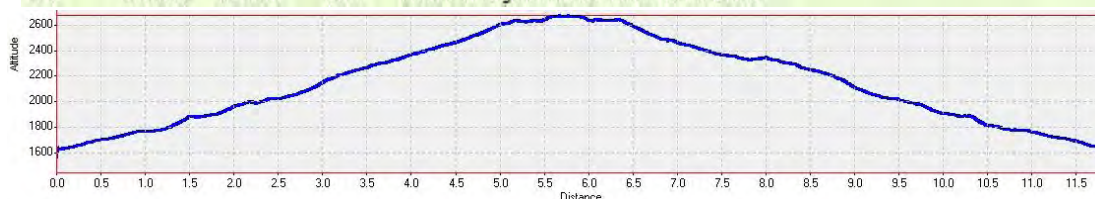


Waypoints - NZ Grid

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
R01	2730763	6215662	1616	Car park at top of Bruce Road above Happy Valley
R02	2731066	6215003	1767	15 - 20min; in line with the top station on the first ski lift
R03	2730974	6213931	2013	1:20 - 1:30min; on ridge where old alpine hut situated (1966/7) and below the present hut
R04	2731130	6213795	2034	1:35min; at snout (top end) of rocky ridge after long ascent up valley. Close to ski lift
R05	2730995	6213169	2242	2:15min; snow filled area, usually for much of the year
R06	2730990	6212647	2366	2:30min; rocky area with surface scratches from recent lahar flows
R07	2731000	6212232	2481	2:55min; Site where DOC toilet used to be located (not there in early 2011)
R08	2731055	6212018	2555	3:10min; off rock on to scoria slopes and loose footing
R09	2731159	6211930	2602	3:15min; on crest overlooking Summit Plateau with glaciers and huge ice blocks
R10	2731125	6211846	2631	3:25min; high point on narrow, exposed ridge with view of final ascent to Dome Shelter
R11	2731219	6211396	2669	3:45 - 4:00hrs; east edge of Dome Shelter
R12	2731338	6211327	2641	At end of ridge 5 minutes below Dome Shelter

NZTM

Easting	Northing
1820681	5653806
1820983	5653146
1820893	5652074
1821049	5651938
1820914	5651312
1820909	5650789
1820920	5650374
1820975	5650161
1821079	5650072
1821045	5649989
1821139	5649538
1821258	5649469



From : 12-Jan-11 08:57:04
To : 12-Jan-11 16:32:37

Time taken : 7:35:33
Total Distance : 11.840 Km

Minimum Speed : 0.000 KPH
Maximum Speed : 6.253 KPH
Average Speed : 1.559 KPH

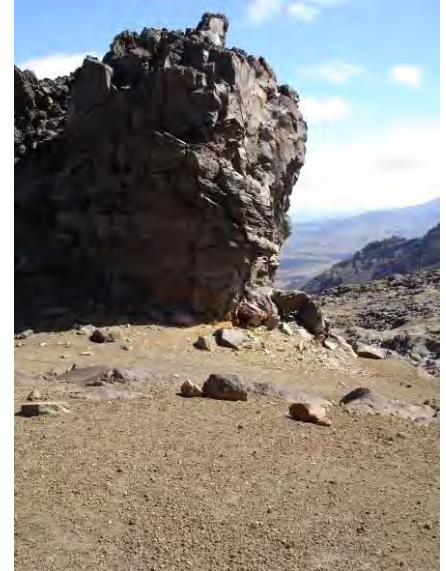
Minimum Altitude : 1571 Meters
Maximum Altitude : 2673 Meters

View over ski village area



If you are keen it is possible to get up on to the top of the ridge forming this bluff as the present Alpine Hut sits atop. The upper end of this ridge has a spectacular “snout” which is reached in 1:35 minutes (R04 2034 masl). As you pass this point the top of the upper ski lift can be seen off to the left (W) and the sensible walkers are making their way from the lift to join in the walking part of the ascent. Real walkers walk all the way. The track is not so well marked now but some small cairns do exist so keep a lookout for them. The first patch of snow was hit on the day after 2:15min at 2,250 metres (R05 2242masl) and soon after this walking was easier as the rock underfoot was almost continuous, hard and relatively smooth – so smooth in fact that scratch lines could be seen on it, these were assumed to be scratches caused by the last rock bearing lahar to pass over the area. The next target used to be a DoC toilet lashed to the ground (R78 2481masl) but this had vanished by 2011.

Rocky snout



The top of the solid rock is at just over 2,500metres when the track passes onto scoria slopes (R08 2555masl) and the effort required to continue upwards can be felt, but it is not a huge effort and the track is pretty clear and easy to follow. The upwards grunt continues till about 3:15 minutes walking when the crest is summited (R09 2602masl) and the Summit Plateau depression comes into view – this was previously an extensive glacier but now much reduced. It is feasible to walk through this area but beware of sink holes. A pretty stiff grunt now awaits by turning to the right and going up the well-defined path on the ridge but the crest (R10 2631masl) of this is reached in 10 minutes when a superb view of the rest of the ridge all the way to the Dome Shelter (R11 2669masl) can be seen. Much of the final sections of the track are on very narrow ridge so care must be taken, especially on poor visibility days when it is windy. The Dome Shelter is easily reached within 3:30 – 4 hours for most people and there are stunning panoramas to be seen from here of the surrounding countryside out over the Desert Road as well as locally over Crater Lake.

Windy toilet – where has it gone?



Dome Shelter



The adventurous continue down the scoria slopes and walk over to the edge of the lake whilst most people do at least go down a couple of hundred metres or so of the ridge (R12 2641masl) that runs SE from Dome Shelter.

The return should be the same as the way in but be very aware that if the normal clouds roll in at 2pm, as is their wont, it is very easy to lose the track coming back down. Many people that do walk all the way up relent on the way down and treat themselves to a cup of coffee at the uppermost cafeteria then get onto the ski lift to transport them with ease back down the mountain. But in fact it can be quicker and easier to walk out the same route as used to get up there

DoC have clear notices on Dome Shelter that this shelter is for emergency use only and have threatened to remove it – it would be a very comforting to know that it was to stay where it is for the day when things go wrong. Study of the map shows an odd loop near waypoint R06 – this was on the descent when the party headed too far to the right (east) and had to back-track and get on the old, poled route (intermittent, broken white track poles). Another loop can be seen near waypoint R03 – the more westerly track is the correct one though both have the odd broken old marker – the westerly one is easier on the feet.

Sample Distance and Altitude Data

Altitude range	1135 metres
Overall ascent	1200 metres
Distance walked	11.32 km
Distance + ascent	16km
Total time	6 hours 45 minutes
Walking time to top*	3 hours 35 minutes

The above varies depending on exact route and mini excursions – like to the edge of the lake etc

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