WHAKAPAPA and PINNACLES RIDGES

260 Series Map: S20 Ohakune and T20 Ruapehu
Top050 Map: BJ34 Mt Ruapehu

NZ Grid GPS: Geodetic Datum 1949
NZTM   GPS: NZTM on WGS84

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. Left to SH47 at the one and only T-junction
- Turn off SH47 on to SH48 signposted for Whakapapa, or
- In Turangi turn off SH1 right to SH41 then left to SH47 and proceed as above.
- 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 strenuous walk in the fit category lasting four to six hours including breaks. It starts at the Chateau (**WP01**1134masl) in Whakapapa with the aim of exiting near the ski chairlift up above the top of Bruce Road.

- The plan on the day was to continue as far up Pinnacles Ridge to the actual Pinnacles then find a route down to the ski area. In fact the lower Pinnacles were reached, voices could be heard over the valley from the ski lift area but the gullies were so steep that only experienced mountaineers could have crossed them..
- Plan B on the day was to exit using the route as on the way in - back down the Pinnacles and Whakapapa Ridges.

The tramp should be looked at as having the following stages:

- Up the Whakapapa Ridge to **WP04**1440masl from the Chateau **WP01**1134masl or 300metres ascent
- The ascent up from the Whakapapa Ridge on to the Pinnacles Ridge to **WP05**1723maslalmsot 300metres ascent
- Getting as far up the Pinnacles Ridge as is possible in safety (**WP07**1866masl) about 150metres ascent
- Getting back down

Location and Access

The map above shows the tramping route at the top part of sheet BJ34 whilst the access roads can be determined from the map

Detail: Turn right out of the car park opposite the Chateau then cross the road and turn up behind the public toilets a few metres uphill from the Information Centre. The start is on a neat gravel track (marked Ridge Track) and just within the bush line but within 10 minutes the track degrades a bit with some large, anti-hobbit sized steps just before a semi-round table from where there are open views (**WR02**1240masl). At this point the track goes slightly to the right and soon enters a tussock area. Then it is essential to remain to the right (SW) side of an eroded edge where the silt-like vegetated cap towers above – do not enter this area as progress is very slow – just meander along the edge. Soon there is a break and the cap vanishes but there is a small isolated remnant ahead, (**WP03**1398masl) head for this and continue ascending the ridge heading in a SE direction. Another 20 minutes of steady ascent reaches the upper part of the Whakapapa Ridge (**WP04**1440masl) with an obvious stream line lying to your left (E) below.

Continue walking more or less parallel to this stream line heading (SE) then slowly, as the slope increases, head more or less due south. Once on the ridge (**WP05**1723masl) head upslope and to the SSW and the target Pinnacles should be very clearly visible by this time. Good visibility is essential as there are bluffs everywhere so be ready to retreat. If weather conditions are not good then back track following the entry route or, if you know the way, head more less north downhill on the ridge then slip off to your right – the east, into the Wairere Stream.

From WP05 the ridge begins to look quite daunting and, at first, pass the outcrops by staying on the east side of them till you get to a very obvious high point (**WP06**1840masl) with a much higher, rougher looking outcrop ahead. At this point move to the western side of the ridge and start a long sidle along below the high, rocky outcrops on the ridge crest.

Vegetated cap edge

High point WP05

View from near the top

From here onwards progress is very slow as the capabilities of a mountain goat are often required since there is a steep side slope to traverse and this slope comprises either large, awkwardly shaped rock outcrops or loose, unstable scree and landslip materials. Anyone not accustomed to scrambling should not proceed into this zone. Eventually a last high spur sloping down towards the ski area is encountered but it proved impossible to proceed any further since the gully ahead was very large with too many bluffs and steep slopes to consider crossing. However a relatively flat shelf can be found at **WP07**1866masl from where the views across the whole ski area are magnificent and unfortunately it is close enough to hear people talking within the ski area but it seems unreachable.

This is a good lunch spot before retreating back down the route used to get there. The return trip can be anything up to about 45 minutes quicker than the way in.

Map and Google Image with GPS data
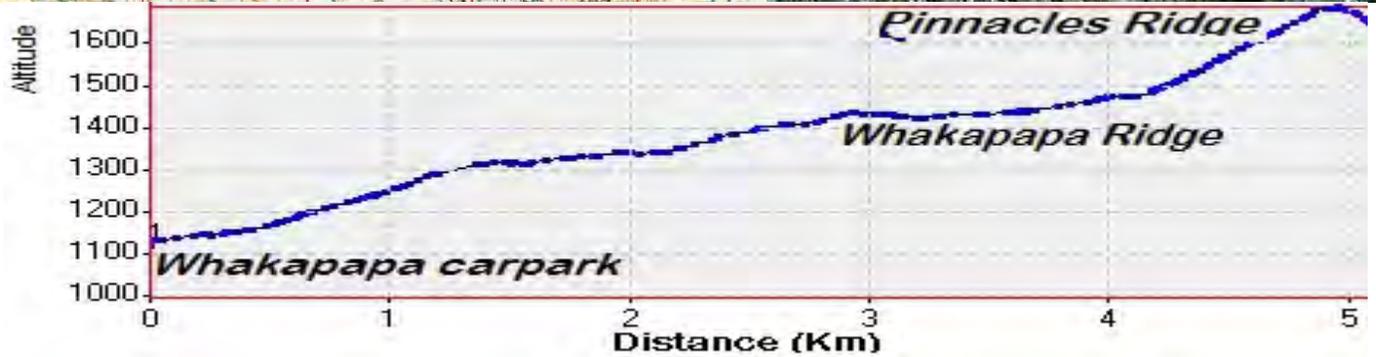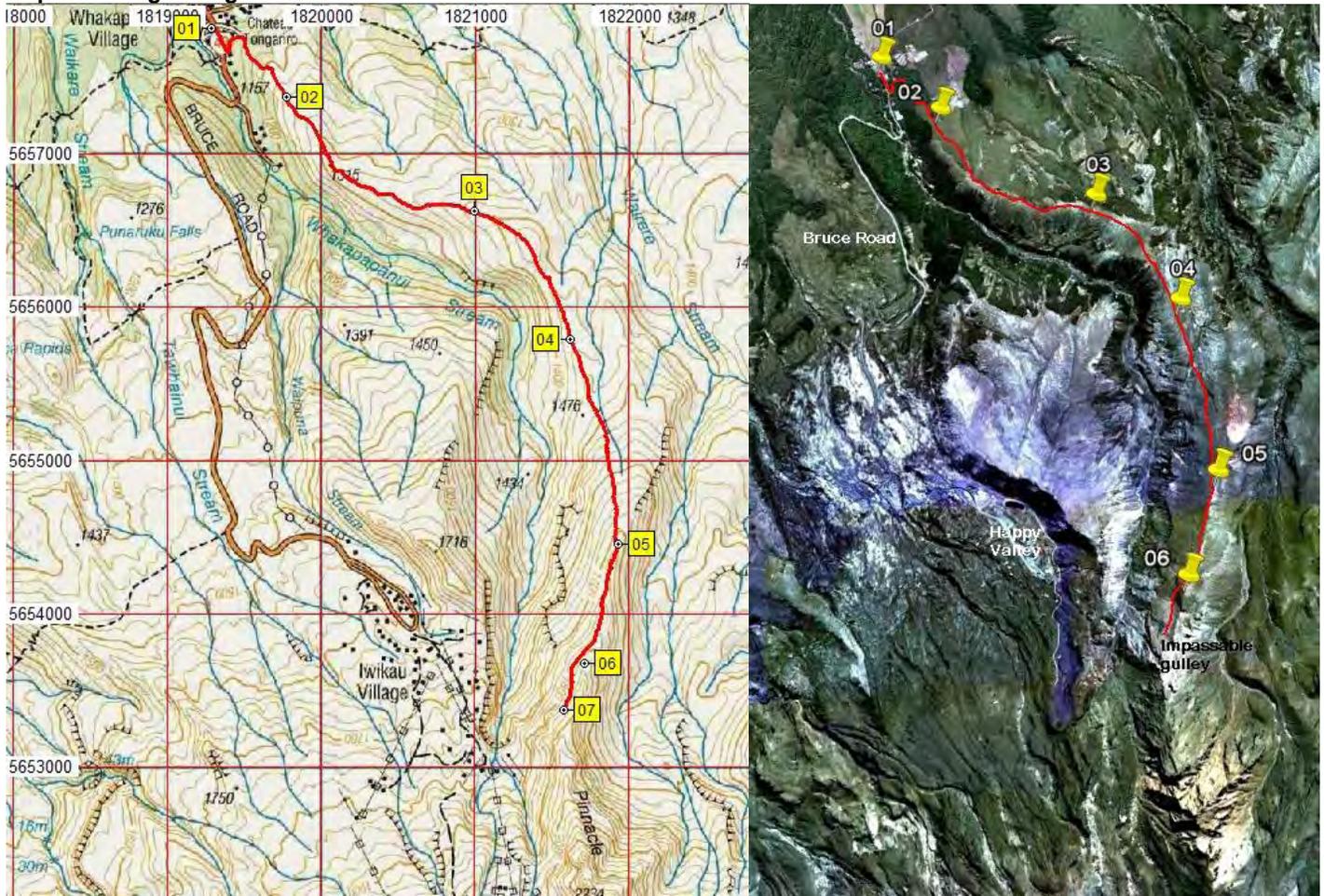
Waypoints – NZ Grid

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description	Easting	Northing
01	2729366	6219679	1134	Car park opposite Chateau in Whakapapa	1819280	5657823
02	2729856	6219231	1240	15mins; up track on Whakapapa ridge behind roadside toilets and at rounded picnic table	1819770	5657375
03	2731075	6218482	1398	48min; on Whakapapa Ridge at the highest remnant of the vegetated silt cap	1820990	5656626
04	2731699	6217649	1440	1:08min; near the upper limit of Whakapapa Ridge moving to Pinnacles Ridge	1821616	5655793
05	2732008	6216306	1723	2:15min; On Pinnaccles Ridge after fair grunt upslope and heading SSW	1821925	5654450
06	2731793	6215534	1840	3hrs; At one of the lower pinnacles and move from E side to W side of ridge	1821711	5653678
07	2731655	6215231	1866	3:45min; Level shelf area for lunch before retreating back down the ridge - no way forward	1821573	5653375

The target up behind the trampers

The Pinnacles

Pinnacle ridge and the Pinnacles

Pinnacle Ridge

Contemplating trampers

Ngauruhoe

View over Meads Wall and Happy Valley
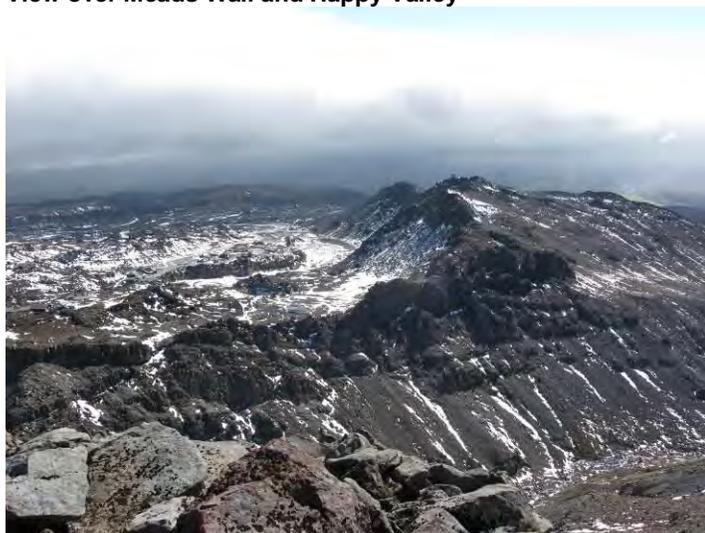
Fearsome bluffs
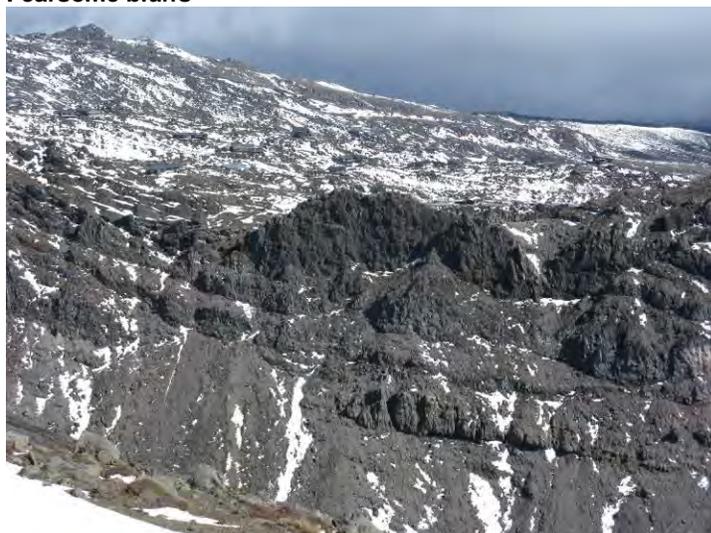
- **GPS** Garmin GPSmap 60CSx
- **WP =** Waypoint as taken by GPS unit
- **masl** = metres above sea level