

GULL COLONY LOOP

260 Series Map: Ohakune S20 and Ruapehu T20

Topo50 Maps: BH34-Ruarimu & BJ34-Mnt Ruapehu

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. 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 .

Rough description: A fairly long (16km), circular walk in the moderate category lasting five to six hours including breaks which starts and ends at the Chateau in Whakapapa, uses the track to Tama Lakes and returns via the Wairere Stream. There is an overall altitude gain and loss of about 350 metres. If a detour is made to the Tama Lakes more altitude and distance is involved. The first part of this is very easy but once past the Wairere Stream bridge on the way out the track is less good due to erosion and there is a little bit of uphill getting to the Tama Lakes turn-off (**GCL07** 1306masl).

From this turn-off some very easy bush-bashing is involved heading south to get above the Gull Colony (**GCL11** 1481masl). The return also involves off-track walking in a westerly direction then steeply downhill into the Wairere Stream (**GCL13** 1397masl) then NW down valley back out to the Tama Lakes track.

Detail: Turn left out of the car park (**GCL01**) opposite the Chateau and turn immediately right to go along the road up the side of the Chateau heading NE. Near the end of this access road ignore the track on your left (you might come back this way) and head for the track that goes straight ahead at the end of the surfaced road and is signed Taranaki Falls [**GCL02** 1145masl]. Proceed on the very good track crossing an open wooden bridge (**GCL03** 1187masl) in about 25 minutes then upwards parallel to the gully which you then cross and go up on to an open, flattish area with a view of Ngauruhoe straight ahead after 30 minutes.

After 40 minutes descend to the Wairere Stream, over the bridge, straight ahead and uphill again reaching a signpost [**GCL04** 1220masl] indicating the route for the lower path to Whakapapa and Taranaki Falls, a possible diversion on the return. Go straight ahead for Tama Lakes.

The track continues to gain altitude but the grade is easy as it wanders around through quite badly eroded areas and the track is rather in need of upgrading especially when it turns from SSE to ENE (**GCL05** 1320masl). After about 1:45 minutes there is a wet area with board-walk in places and 10 minutes further on enter and go up a narrow valley heading E (**GCL06** 1289masl) to cross the stream at the top – at this point the path is quite rough. A signpost (**GCL07** 1306masl) is met at a Y-fork in 2 hours or so with the path to Tama going left whilst the right fork goes to Waihohonu Hut.. This is where the off-track starts as the route heads S then SSW and the guide is a rough, jagged rocky ridge running parallel on the left (E).

Ten minutes gets one up on to the first crest (**GCL08** 1335masl) after fairly easy walking through minor tussock or other “lumpy” vegetation. From here on the surface is easy walking with little vegetation and small soft gravel underfoot. At about 2:40 minutes cross a small stream coming from the SW to get on to a clearer, slightly steeper (**GCL09** 1383masl) ridge – still with the guiding, jagged, rough ridge on your left over the river with steep side slopes. About 20 minutes are need to crest this ridge, passing a largish boulder (**GCL10** 1427masl) on the way. Stay on the top or slightly to the left of the top of the ridge as this enhances views into the valley and crater ahead.

Guiding rocky ridge on left



View over crater and gull colony



Once at the top of the ridge (**GCL11** 1481masl) there are good views of the crater lying to the E and also of the Gull Colony. There are gulls to be seen floating about but careful looking can be required as they might be a long way off. From the high-point crest, head off SW and soon a stream line is met; stay on the right hand side descending carefully as it is a bit steep and loose with rocks and boulders waiting to stop a rapid descent. There is a super small pool below a mini-waterfall (**GCL12** 1422masl) as a lunch spot before the final descent to meet the path at the edge of the Wairere Stream (**GCL13** 1397masl) within about 4 hours total time.

NZ Grid

NZTM

GPS: Geodetic Datum 1949

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

Access



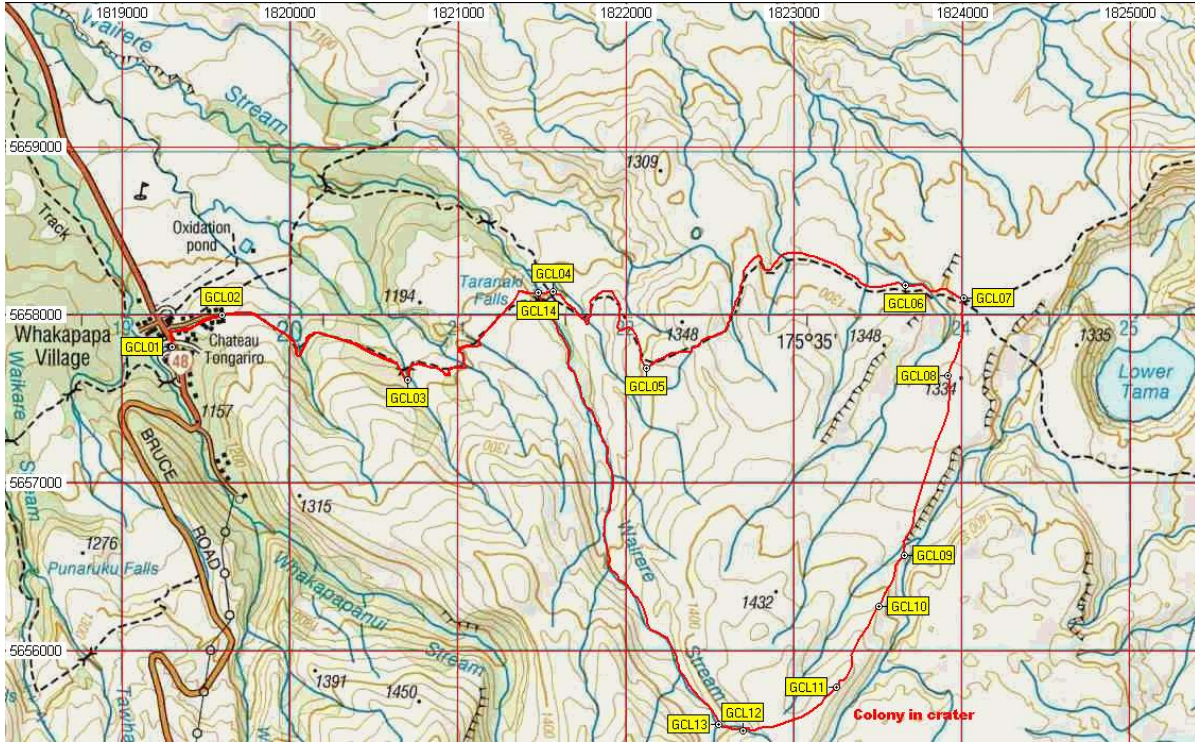
Smoko on degraded track



Bridge over Wairere



Map and Google Image with GPS data



From here follow the badly eroded, ill-defined track on the true right bank – parts of this are more or less in the stream at times.

Go all the way to meet the bridge (GCL14 1204masl) on the Tama Lakes track; this bridge was crossed on the way out.



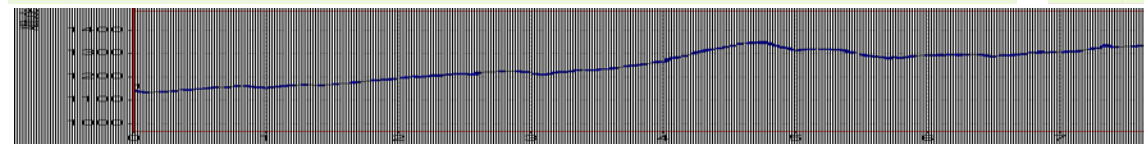
From here it is 45 minutes for the 3km back to the car-park on the path used at the start of the walk or, if a diversion is taken to exit via the Taranaki Falls, possibly about one hour.

Waypoints - NZ Grid

Na...	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
GCL01	2729382	6219667	1139	Car park with toilets in Whakapapa Village
GCL02	2729678	6219855	1145	7min (400m); Start of track at end of road up past back of Chateau
GCL03	2730788	6219471	1187	28min (1.8km); First large wooden bridge
GCL04	2731649	6219991	1220	50min (3.2km); Track junction with left to Taranaki Falls and Whakapapa
GCL05	2732206	6219539	1320	1:10min (4.4km); Old rough, degraded path now replaced with super highway turns from SSE to ENE
GCL06	2733745	6220030	1289	1:55min (6.6km); Small, V-shaped valley heading East
GCL07	2734093	6219957	1306	2:05min (6.9km); A few metres before the junction for Tama Lakes leave the track to bush-bash due S
GCL08	2734003	6219494	1335	2:15min (7.4km); On crest of first ridge after mod easy, lumpy off-track
GCL09	2733742	6218424	1383	2:40min (8.5km); Off-track after crossing incised stream line and on lower part of gravelly ridge
GCL10	2733589	6218117	1427	2:50min (8.9km); Large rock on upper parts of long, easy-ascend ridge. Stay on ridge edge for views
GCL11	2733339	6217638	1481	3:05min (9.5km); Crest of ridge with good views of Gull Colony to E plus waterfall
GCL12	2732781	6217375	1422	3:25min (10.2km); Lunch spot with pool below mini-waterfall overlooking Wairere Stream
GCL13	2732638	6217418	1397	3:53min (10.4km); Post lunch, meet mini, ill-defined Wairere Stream track - head NW
GCL14	2731561	6219990	1204	4:45min (13.5km); Rejoin Tama Lakes track at bridge. Go left with 45min 3km walk back to car park

NZTM

Easting	Northing
1819285	5657540
1819581	5657728
1820692	5657345
1821553	5657866
1822110	5657415
1823649	5657906
1823998	5657834
1823908	5657370
1823647	5656300
1823495	5655992
1823244	5655513
1822687	5655250
1822543	5655293
1821464	5657865



From: 15-Dec-2010 09:52
 To: 15-Dec-2010 14:00:40
 Time taken: 5:21:59
 Total Distance: 16,025.9m
 Maximum Speed: 0.166 km/h
 Maximum Speed: 2.500 km/h
 Average Speed: 2.040 km/h
 Maximum Altitude: 1450 Meters

Notes:

- GPS Garmin GPSmap 60CSx
- masl = metres above sea level