

## LEITCHS HUT

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

**Topo50 Map:** BF31Marokop & BF32 Piopio

### 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 about 2:20min to reach the start and the route from Taupo is indicated on the map below as the heavier red line.

**NZ Grid GPS:** Geodetic Datum 1949

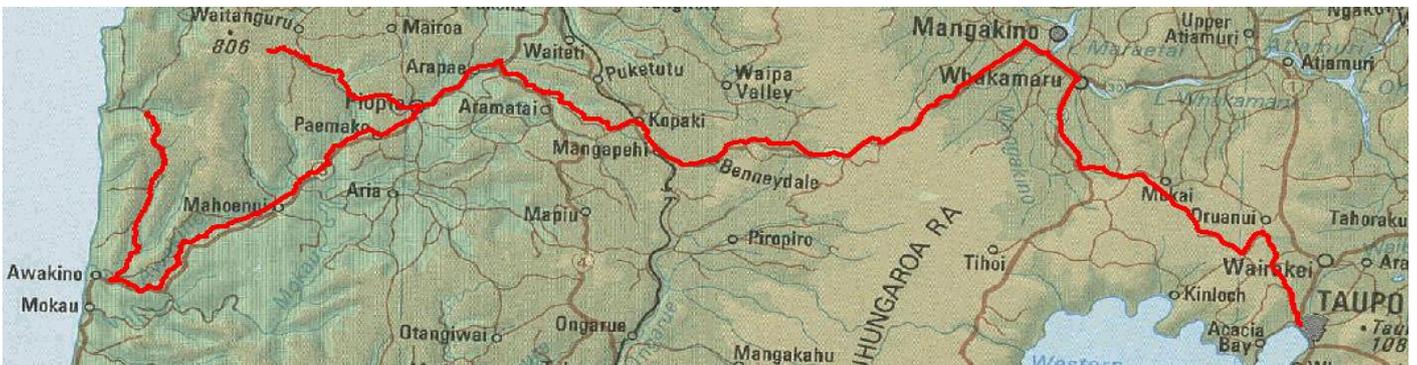
**NZTM GPS:** NZTM on WGS84

**Rough Description:** A moderately hard 2 day tramp in the Te Kuiti area over-nighting at Leitch's Hut (LH11). Not much in the way of views but good birdlife in parts, wood pigeon and paradise duck, and a "Frog Protection" area.

**Day 1** from the end of Leitch's Road, accessed from Piopio on SH3, comprises 3 hours to cover 10km with 235m ascent and descent on relatively well marked but poorly maintained trail made more difficult by the many saplings brought down across the muddy trail by browsing cattle. Leitch's Hut is well worth the visit being clean, well appointed and nicely situated. There is another route into the hut via Gibbons Road but access is restricted during the lambing season.

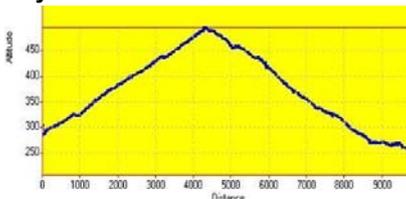
**Day 2** covers 16.5 taxing kilometres with an ascent of 140m in the first hour or so then a descent of 340m over a trail that is not well marked but relatively easy to follow and can take about 8 hours. The poorest marking is right at the start of Day 2 after the river crossing. The southern end of the trail is again badly pugged by browsing cattle and some muddy sections are knee deep! Windfalls are a constant trial on the trail so there are many up-and-overs, down-and-unders or roundabouts.

### 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.

### Day 1 GPS Data



Total Distance : 9.862 Km

Minimum Speed : No Time

Maximum Speed : No Time

Average Speed : No Time

Minimum Altitude : 259 Meters

Maximum Altitude : 494 Meters

**Detail: Day 1** Close to one hour 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 soon starts to prove a bit trying with mud (cattle pugging), saplings across the track (cattle browsing) plus there are several small streams to cross but they present no problem. About 20 minutes out the path is a bit stony / cobbly and slippery but there is a bit of a view (LH02 361masl) of the sheep-grazing farmland to the right. Twenty minutes or so more fighting the saplings and mud brings you back to the edge of the woodlands and a better view (LH03 395masl) before turning back into the woodlands.

Progress seems to have been made when you reach a high point where there is a distance notice board and directly behind the board there is a area "closure" board with some information about the "Frog Protection Area".

### Distance Board

### Frog Protection

### End of Road Start of Tramp



The next feature is a small rock-fall area where the path is dodgy (LH06 459masl) after which is a short uphill grunt and at 2 hours there is a pretty, dark valley head to cross (LH07 436masl).

From the high point progress seems better with fewer hazards to negotiate and a huge windfall with an arch (LH08 356masl) cut into it is reached in 2:30 minutes and this was named "Hobbiton Arch" by the taller members of the TTC. An open area (LH09 273masl) with a sign indicating 1km to the hut is reached in 3 hours but this kilometre takes close to 30 minutes since there is a tricky, poorly marked section of the route more or less on the rocks (LH10 259masl) at the edge of the river. Leitchs Hut (LH11 262masl) is reached in 3:30 minutes which is 30 minutes longer than the sign-boards claim due to all the minor hazards that have to be negotiated on the walk.

**Hobbiton Arch**



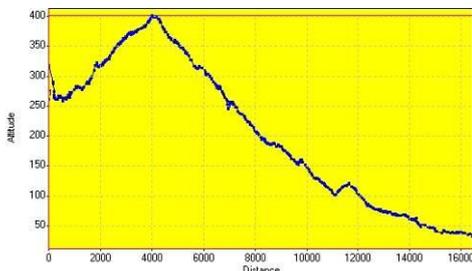
**Leitchs Hut**



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 verandah and inside the hut - plus the toilet is not too far away.

During Day one ample bird life was seen and heard with sightings of wood pigeon and Paradise Ducks.

**Day 2 GPS Data**



Total Distance : 16.500 Km  
 Minimum Speed : No Time  
 Maximum Speed : No Time  
 Average Speed : No Time  
 Minimum Altitude : 29 Meters  
 Maximum Altitude : 401 Meters

**Day 2** After an overly warm night due to the solid fuel stove (this stove can boil water and be used for cooking) it is worth considering not donning the boots immediately as there is a river crossing (LH12 287masl) within minutes of starting. However, the river bed is rocky and a bit slippery so be careful. Thirty minutes of organised chaos can now begin as the track signs are just not visible, do they exist? The answer is that on crossing the river do not follow the arrow indicated on the sign board but head more to the right and get a view across the river you have just crossed – some short distance on this line will give a view back over the river and "orange" markers will be seen in a tussock area, so cross back over the river again (LH13 260masl). AT 35 minutes, or less if you pick up the signs quickly, cross the river yet again (LH14 264masl) and make your way through the swampy valley bottom and slowly start to gain height and dry feet.

**Flying Crossing**



**Fellow Tramper on Dry Land**



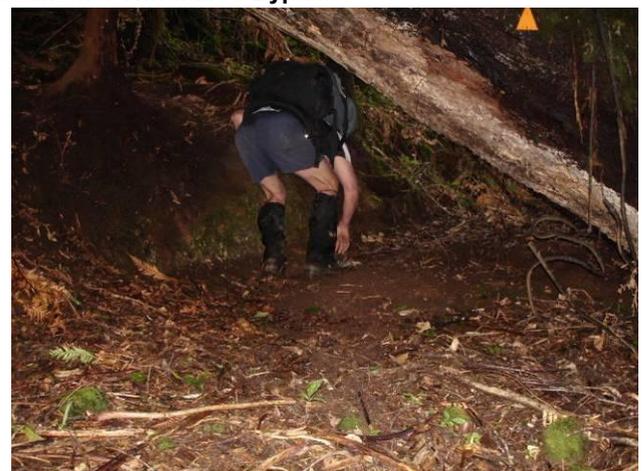
**First Crossing**



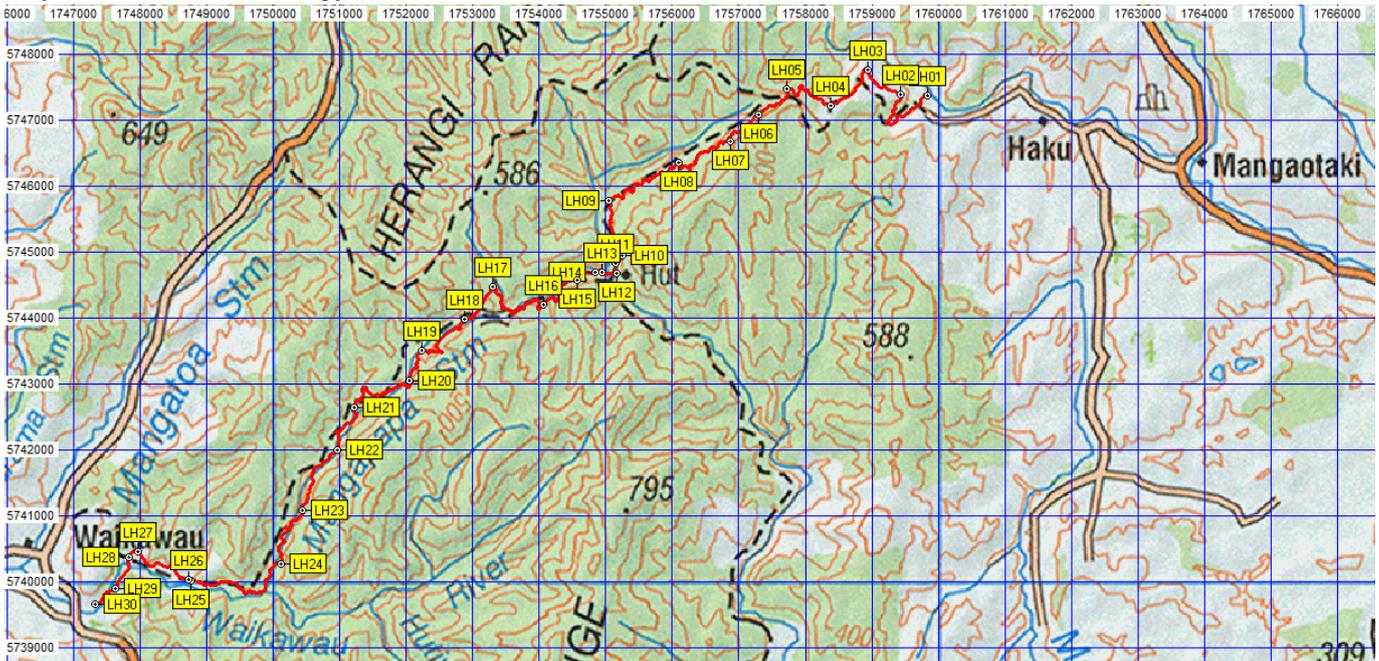
From here the route slowly ascends for the next hour and the walking is not easy or too pleasant as the path is on the side of a steep cross slope, there are many windfalls plus a few stream crossings but, as they say, "this is all character building". Features include a sign board (LH15 283masl), a wicked ascent at around 1:13 minutes (LH16 322masl) then a track junction (LH17 399masl) at a high point at just on 2 hours where you go left downhill. This is the start of a very long, almost never-ending, descent through good forest on cross sloping path with many windfalls which have to be got round, over or under.

**Top of the Hill 5 – 6 hours to go**

**Yet another Windfall to Bypass**



## Map with GPS track and waypoints



### Waypoints – NZ Grid

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
LH01	2669919	6309507	286	08-SEP-07 End Leitchs Road car park for tramp start
LH02	2669521	6309531	361	20 min walk: cobbly, slippery, muddy then view on RHS
LH03	2669027	6309901	395	45 min walk; Edge of fields then SW back into forest
LH04	2668455	6309350	438	1:10 min walk; small meadow area
LH05	2667794	6309619	490	1:30 min; Y-fork but right blocked off as frog Protection area
LH06	2667370	6309232	459	1:50 min; rock-fall area then short grunt uphill
LH07	2666947	6308820	436	2 hours; small, dark, pretty upper valley / valley head stream crossing
LH08	2666180	6308496	356	2:30 min; Hobbiton Arch - huge tree archway
LH09	2665123	6307932	273	3 hours; open area with "1 km to hut sign"
LH10	2665318	6307091	259	3:20 min; tricky, poorly marked section more or less in river / rocky ledge
LH11	2665225	6306968	262	3:30 min; Leitchs Hut
LH12	2665234	6306822	287	Day 2: 3 mins; mod flow, calf deep 5m wide river crossing
LH13	2665016	6306841	260	30 min; chaos as no track markers - second crossing to track markers on N side
LH14	2664910	6306841	264	35 min walk; third stream crossing
LH15	2664641	6306717	283	45 min walk; sign board then awkward walking as cross slope on path
LH16	2664131	6306363	322	1:13 min walk; bit of wicked ascent with tree falls and stream line crossings
LH17	2663365	6306619	399	1:54 min walk; high point with track junction and notices
LH18	2662954	6306132	359	2:23 min walk; tea break on hard cross slope section with many windfalls
LH19	2662320	6305667	302	3:18 min walk: small section of good, level open footpath
LH20	2662132	6305188	262	3:40 min; steep descent / re-ascent through incised stream line
LH21	2661302	6304796	187	4:30 min; only 3 - 4 metres above stream line so descending a lot
LH22	2661041	6304167	160	5:15 min; lunch spot - still hard work as path not clear plus windfalls
LH23	2660515	6303239	103	6 hours; stream crossing
LH24	2660201	6302426	89.9	6:30 min; noticeable bend in track in open area / small meadow
LH25	2658839	6302178	63.1	7 hours; fence line with open bit giving cows access
LH26	2658795	6302186	56.1	7:05 min; Conservation notice then into meadow / parkland with cows and conifers
LH27	2658042	6302611	42.1	7:25 min; pass through electric fence and see small, red hut/shed off right
LH28	2657910	6302530	39.0	7:30 min; pass through level paddock then gate to farm road
LH29	2657697	6302050	38.1	7:40 min; second gate on road, muddy due to cattle pugging
LH30	2657407	6301821	32.0	7:45 min; exit gate to gravel road with houses on left and asphalt road to the right

### NZTM

Easting	Northing
1759838	5747364
1759440	5747387
1758945	5747757
1758374	5747205
1757713	5747473
1757289	5747085
1756866	5746673
1756100	5746348
1755043	5745784
1755240	5744943
1755147	5744819
1755156	5744673
1754938	5744692
1754832	5744692
1754563	5744567
1754053	5744213
1753287	5744468
1752877	5743981
1752243	5743515
1752056	5743035
1751226	5742642
1750966	5742013
1750441	5741085
1750127	5740272
1748766	5740022
1748722	5740030
1747968	5740454
1747837	5740373
1747624	5739893
1747334	5739663

Memorable features are few and far between for the next 3 – 4 hours but there are all those windfalls to get past ensuring that there are some memories of the day. Hope starts to return after about 6 hours with a stream crossing (LH23 103masl) and soon you are into the open with a small meadow (LH24 90masl) and then at 7 hours a fence (LH25 63masl) – with a gap in it which has allowed the browsing cattle access to the nightmare of an excuse for a track you have just plodded down.

Minutes later there is a “Conservation” notice (LH26 56masl) then it is down-hill into a meadow – parkland indeed – with conifers and cows. Twenty minutes in here and you pass an electric fence (LH27) from where you see a small hut or shed off to the right indicating that civilisation is not far off. Another 20 minutes down the grass farm track takes you through 3 gates with the final one (LH30 32 masl) giving access to a motorable track that leads directly to the asphalt road which is your escape or return route. This point was reached in 7:45 minutes after covering 16.5 kilometres meaning you have been walking at only 2 km per hour which reflects the awkwardness, not the difficulty, of this track. Faster, fitter trampers will require an hour or less for this trip.

The drive back to Piopio takes just under an hour and presents no navigational challenges at all.

Organisationally this tramp needs either a car / van mover or split the party in two with some starting at either end hence one party drops and picks up the other. If you start at the end (LH30) you have a very long tramp uphill and there is every chance that you will need a tent as there is no way the Leitchs Hut can be reached the first night – unless you set off very early indeed.

Into the Parkland



Round the Corner to the End



Track and WPs on Google Earth



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