

URCHIN UMKARIKARI link

260 Series Map: Tongariro, T19

Topo50 Map: BH35 Turangi

How to get to START:

- Exit Taupo southwards on **SH1** to Turangi (45 min)
- From Turangi stay on SH1 passing the turn off to SH46
- At 55 min (63km) a passing lane starts, get into left lane
- Turn left into **Kaimanawa Road** at 63.5km
- Cross single lane bridge at 66.5km (1 hour) – still on tar seal
- At 67km (just over 1 hour) turn right on to Urchin signed gravel road
- At 68.5 km tight turn to left on to steep hill, slippery when wet
- At 69.8 km stay left again still on gravel
- At 71 km turn into car park on your right (**WP01**) with track signs etc.

Kaimanawa Road is sealed and normal width but about 3km down it there is a single lane bridge so be prepared to give way. Almost immediately after this there is a signed track on the right for Urchin and other locations – this is a gravel track with several tight turns and steep slopes.

Rough description: Several years ago Cyclone Bola obliterated the track linking Urchin and Umukarikari and the tramp described here was on the link reopened in 2009. This is a hard day walk requiring between 7 and 10 hours and should not be undertaken by large parties or the fainthearted. The actual “link” is a route –not a track - and is best described as a gnarly, grunty obstacle course in several places, but it is well worth doing. It is possible to do the tramp as an overnighter since there is a rather exposed possible campsite (**WP08**) and water can be taken from the small tarns close by (**WP07**). The tramp can be done in either direction but as the car park at Urchin is about 120m higher than the one for Umukarikari the attraction of less altitude to overcome is worth considering. It has been done in both directions and the difference in time is negligible.

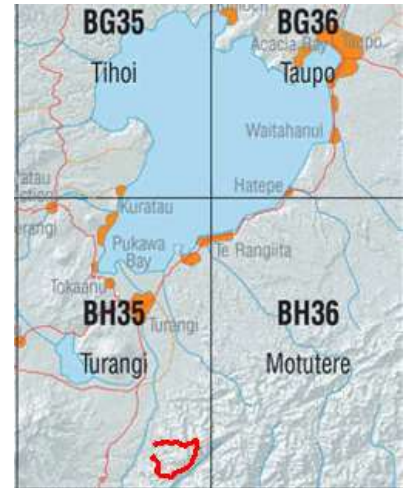
Detail: On wet days be ready to get out and push on the gravel road if the vehicle does not have all-terrain tyres and / or 4-wheel drive but, normally, all vehicles can pass without any or much problem. The car park for the start of the Urchin track is on the right near a crest and is easily located. There are no facilities in this car park.

Leave the rear of the car park on the well signed track and immediately start ascending, this is a bit steep but the track is in fairly good condition. The first hour or so is in forest with some huge trees and remnants of huge trees. Reference to the map will explain why the going is a bit hard since the track is making its way up a ridge heading SE then S and the bush line (**WP02** 1311masl) is normally reached in well under 1:30 minutes. There is then a stiffer climb on a gravelly poled track up to the Trig point on the crest (**WP03** 1398masl). The panorama from here from Ruapehu to Taupo is stunning.

NZ Grid GPS: Geodetic Datum 1949

NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS84

Access route



Drive time from Taupo to the start off Kaimanawa Road 1:10 minutes

GPS Data

From : 28-Jan-15 08:38:15
To : 28-Jan-15 16:10:57

Time taken : 7:32:42
Total Distance : 17.889 Km
GPS walked distance 19.44km
Minimum Speed : 0.005 KPH
Maximum Speed : 5.765 KPH
Average Speed : 2.371 KPH

Minimum Altitude : 707 Meters
Maximum Altitude : 1494 Meters
Total ascent 1329 Metres

Ruapehu to Taupo panorama



Track information

Department of Conservation Te Papa Atahuri	
Urchin Track	
Urchin Trig (bushline)	5.5km/2-2hr 30min
Waipakahi River	7km/5-4hr
Waipakahi Hut (via Umukarikari Range)	17.5km/7hr 30min-9hr
Umukarikari Road (via Urchin & Umukarikari Range)	18.6km/8hr 30min-9hr

The route continues more or less eastwards along the undulating to rolling ridge on an eroded but recently re-poled track - blue metal poles with orange reflectors on top - until such time as a view down into the Waipakahi River valley is obtained before reaching a Y-junction (**WP04** 1354masl) with the right branch descending down right into the Waipakahi valley whilst straight-ahead follows the route for the loop track to link to Umukarikari. The track descends a bit to go over a small watershed then heads up into the bush and scrubby trees – this is the start of the link which is a route rather than a track. The way ahead is a bit of a challenge as many parts are heavily overgrown and on a very narrow undulating to rolling ridge (**WP05** 1279masl).

Obstacle course

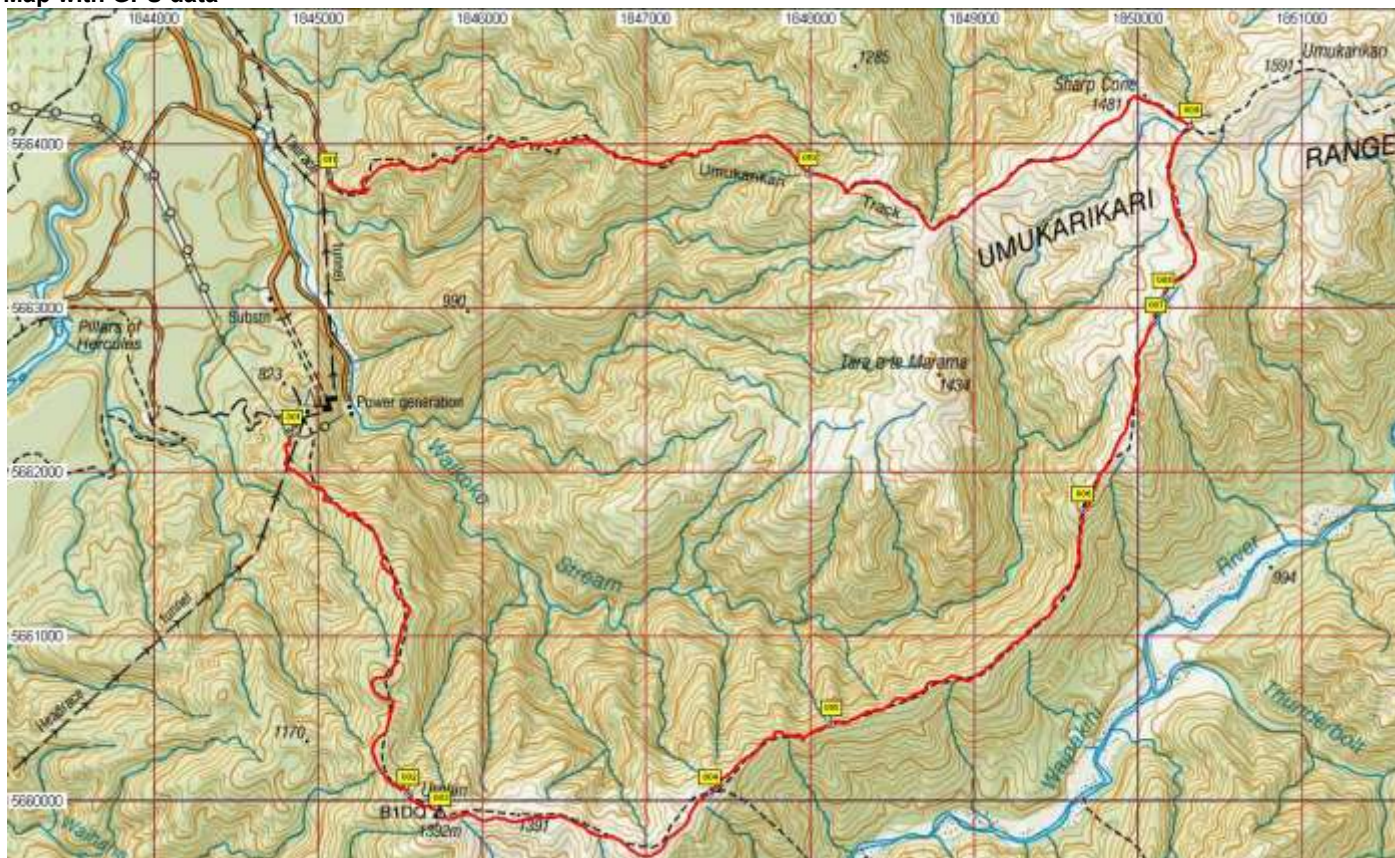


Although there is hardly a track it would be very difficult to lose the route as the bush on either side is virtually impenetrable, the side slopes very steep and there are ample orange markers and ribbons. Roughly 90 minutes are required to get through this section and it is a nice surprise when the bush-line (**WP06** 1313masl) is reached in something like 4 hours. There are now views and open walking whilst heading NNE upslope towards Sharp Cone. There are two small tarns (**WP07** 1430masl) just off track then a possible campsite (**WP08** 1445masl) if an overnight stop is contemplated – this is an exposed site!

A few windfalls



Map with GPS data



Waypoints NZ Grid

Na...	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
01	2754902	6223876	830	Urchin car park
02	2755602	6221684	1311	1:22min (3.1km); Bush line after ascent through beech forest
03	2755798	6221558	1398	1:32min (3.35km); Urchin trig point
04	2757440	6221680	1354	2:15min (5.3km); T-junction with right downhill to Waipakihi Valley and straight for Umukarikari
05	2758185	6222106	1279	2:45min (6.3km); On very narrow, undulating, gnarly, grunty ridge
06	2759718	6223402	1313	3:50min (8.6km); Bush line with slope above open and less steep heading NNE to Sharp Cone
07	2760162	6224550	1430	4:46min (9.9km); 50m off track to the east to view water supply in tarns
08	2760208	6224704	1445	4:50min (10.2km); Possible campsite on windswept flatter area
09	2760375	6225737	1511	5:15min (11.4km); Junction with main Umukarikari track
10	2758045	6225451	1266	5:57min (14.2km); Bushline then down on tricky track through native forest
11	2755125	6225439	701	7:18min (17.8km); Umukarikari car park

NZTM Grid

Easting	Northing
1844846	5662237
1845548	5660044
1845744	5659918
1847386	5660042
1848132	5660468
1849665	5661766
1850108	5662915
1850155	5663069
1850321	5664103
1847989	5663815
1845068	5663801

Emerging at bush-line



Note the large orange markers

Panorama back over Urchin

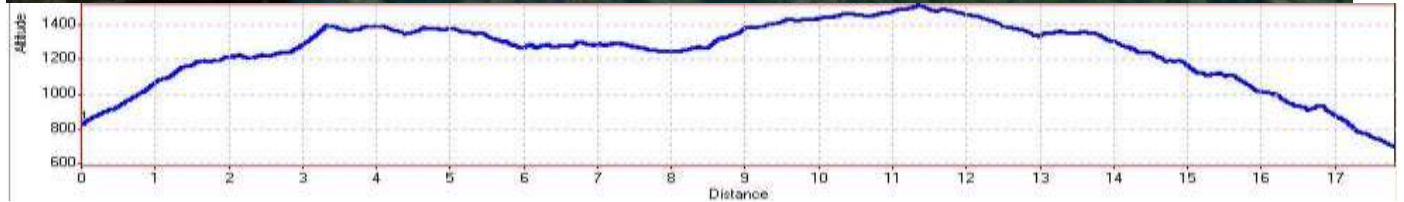


It is possible to get up this section after emerging from the bush to meet the Umukarikari track in about two hours but for quite a long time Sharp Cone does not appear to get any closer. On the day in question the Umukarikari track (WP09 1511masl) was reached just as the rain swept in from Ruapehu making the next part of the tramp slightly less pleasant. The super-fit might want to make the extra effort and go and walk on the top of Umukarikari before starting the long descent down to the car park.

Start of the ascent to Sharp Cone



Google Image with GPS data



Approaching Sharp Cone

Descent from Umukarikari



The track from Sharp Cone down to the bush line (**WP10** 1266masl) is good and really good progress can be made as the up-hills involved are really minor and hardly slow progress at all – less than one hour is required.

Once back under the tree cover the track does have a few slower, tricky bits but the forest offers good protection on wet and windy days as well as shade on hot summer days. The car park (**WP11** 701masl) is a pleasant site after the tramp about which DOC information states that between 8:30 and 10 hours are required for the whole walk – however these times presumably including both Urchin and Umukarikari tops as stated on the note boards.

More detail about the two individual tramps Urchin and Umukarikari can be found in the write up of those tramps.

GPS Notes:

- **GPS** Garmin GPSmap 62sc
- **WP** = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit
- **masl** = metres above sea level

Distance taken from the map is just short of 18km but as there is over 1300m of ascent the distance covered is closer to 19.5km and is as recorded by the newer GPS units

