

WANGAPEKA TRACK

Topo250 Map: Sheet 12 (250,000 scale)

Topo50 Map: BQ22 Karamea, BQ23 Wangapeka Saddle & BQ24 Tapawera

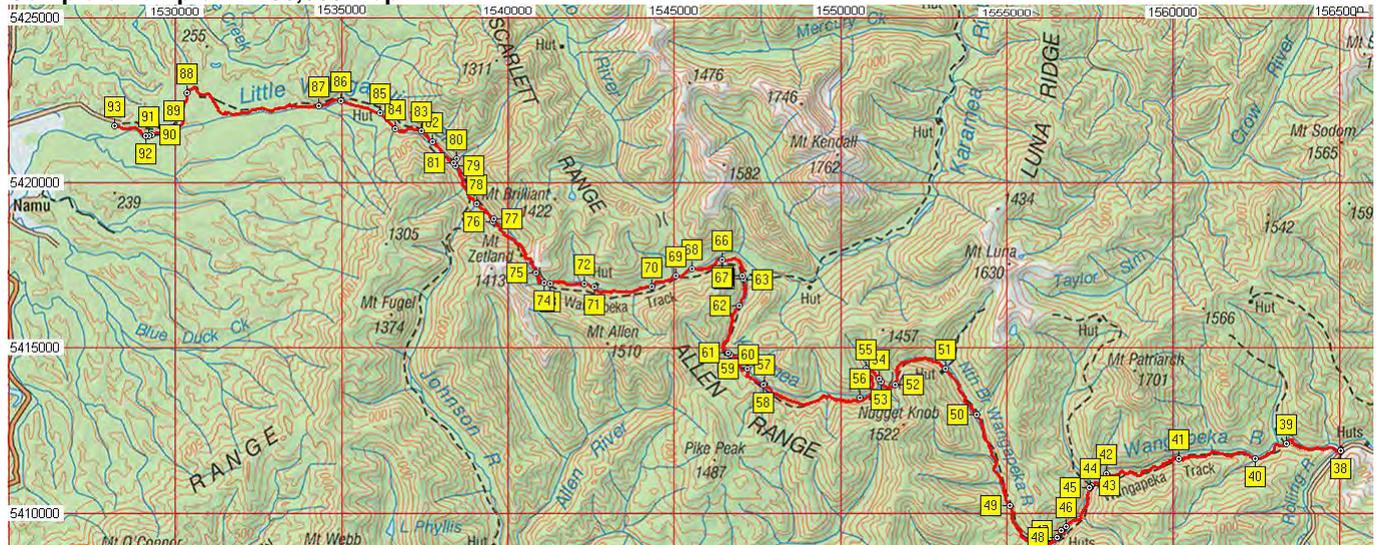
How to get to START: Starting point is in Motueka at the Top 10 Holiday Park. Take the SH60 southwards as far as Tapawera. Turn off to the right on entering Tapawera, cross the Motueka River then head SW following the Tadmor River. In Tadmor turn off right again, pass through Matariki then follow the Wangapeka River. Stop in the small car park with the Rolling Junction Shelter (**WP38**) – the track starts behind the shelter.

Rough description: A very hard five day four nights tramp on some of the toughest back-country tracks tackled for a long time. Many very tricky sections, wicked ascents and descents – some of them on or past landslips. Good huts all the way and not overly busy whilst the South Island Robins were a delight every day. Walking times may seem very slow but the average age of the party was over 68 and many people had commented in the hut books that times quoted on track notices were not quite accurate enough and virtually all trampers took a lot longer than the DoC times!

Day 1 Rolling Junction (WP38) to Kings Creek Hut (WP47).

The Rolling Junction Shelter (**WP38**^{301masl}) is not exciting but does offer cover when the weather is bad and there is a raised area in the hut on which to sleep – good water supply from the river below. From the shelter the track goes steeply downhill on zig-zags to a swing bridge then there are river flats before the terrain becomes undulating to rolling – but the track is wide and good. After 40 minutes there is a track junction (**WP39**^{315masl}) with the Gibbs Route going off right to the NW and the river. There are then some steep slopes down but soon there are large flat river terraces with lots of succulent blackberries in season.

Complete tramp on 1:250,000 map



Start of track



Black fungus on trees



After the flats it is undulating then there is a wooden bridge on Wright's Creek (**WP40**^{332masl}) – the beech forest in this area is covered in black, sooty fungus which lives on the sticky honeydew produced by a scale insect which buries itself in the bark and feeds on the tree sap. Excess honeydew is excreted through a hair-like tube and Bell Birds feed on this. By the number of bees in the area bees also like the secretion. The forest scenery is good but there are not too many features and the next few are an old wire fence and gate after 2 hours (**WP4**^{1377masl}), sign for Stoney Creek (**WP42**^{427masl}) then the sign for the Kiwi Stream (**WP43**^{451masl}) on the right after about 3:40 minutes. Just after this there is a swing bridge (**WP44**^{458masl}) crossing the Wangapeka River just south of the confluence with the Kiwi Stream and 4 minutes later there is the sign at the junction (**WP45**^{465masl}) with the Kiwi Track. The Kings Creek Hut is noted as 30 minutes to the left whilst the Kiwi Saddle Hut is 3 hours to the right.

Historic Cecil King's hut

Half an hour later whilst heading SW there is a sign (**WP46**^{470masl}) for Camp Creek and Kings Creek Hut (**WP47**^{479masl}) is reached in a total time of 4:30 minutes. The hut is fairly modern and quite roomy but like all the huts on this track water supply has to be obtained from the river. Minutes beyond this hut is the old historic hut built and used by Cecil King for much of his life.

Overall a fairly hard day on good track in beech forest with some very deep river pools inviting a swim for those brave enough.



NZ Grid GPS: Geodetic Datum 49

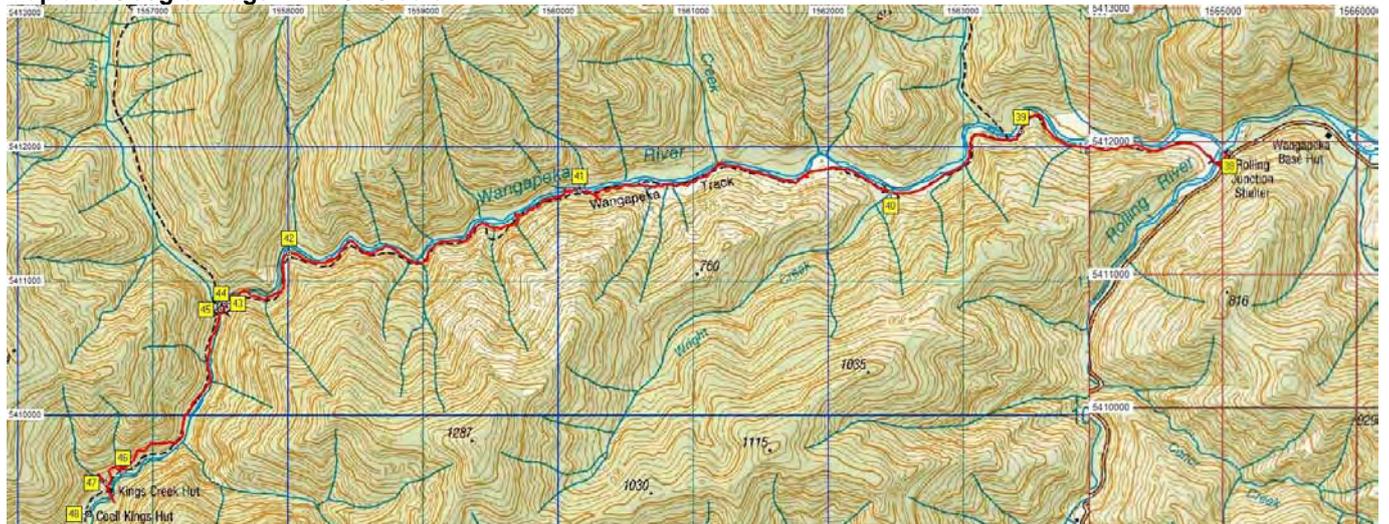
NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS 84

Tramp Location



Red is the road route to the start from Motueka and waypoints show the tramp route

Map and Google Image with GPS data



Waypoints - NZTM

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
38	1565046	5411919	301	Rolling Junction shelter car park
39	1563426	5412113	315	40min: Track junction off right to river on Gibbs Route. Continue straight and downhill to flats
40	1562461	5411660	332	1:05min: Wood bridge on Wright Creek. A lot of black fungus on trees etc
41	1560157	5411670	377	2:05min: Wire fence and old gate on track
42	1558008	5411209	427	2:20min: Sign for Stoney Creek on RHS (N) side of track
43	1557530	5410831	451	3:40min: Sign for Kiwi Stream on RHS
44	1557509	5410799	458	3:45min: Swing bridge over Wangapeka River
45	1557499	5410787	465	3:50min: Junction to Kiwi track with King's Creek hut signed 30min to the left (S). Kiwi Hut 3hrs N
46	1556779	5409577	470	4:20min: Camp Creek notice then firewood store / shelter
47	1556652	5409489	479	4:30min: King's Creek hut

NZ Grid

Easting	Northing
2475034	5973804
2473413	5973998
2472448	5973544
2470142	5973554
2467993	5973093
2467515	5972715
2467493	5972682
2467484	5972670
2466763	5971460
2466636	5971372



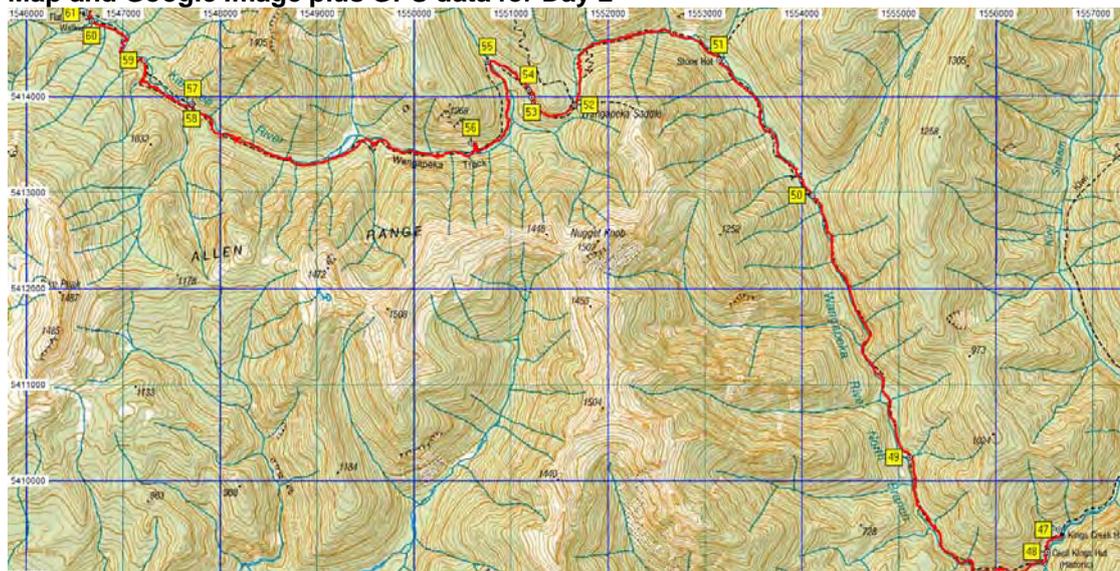
Day 2 Kings Creek Hut (WP47) to Helicopter Hut (WP61)

Day 2 starts with a slight uphill and within 10 minutes Cecil King's historic hut (WP48^{469masl}) is reached – it is possible to stay here and it is rather a homely sort of place. After an hour there is a slightly tricky crossing of Coal Creek after coming across many wild raspas - Gunnera. The track does not have too many exciting features at this point but at 2:10 minutes there is a swing bridge (WP50^{644masl}) over the Luna Stream then soon there is a second bridge over the Wangapeka to the true right bank. Another 30 minutes or so walking to the NW reaches the Stone Hut which is quite modern, 10 bunks, wood burner, clothes rack, bench and table but, again there is no piped water and the supply is from the river. The route for Mount Luna crosses the Wangapeka at the hut and then follows the Stone Creek.

Wild Raspas (Gunnera)

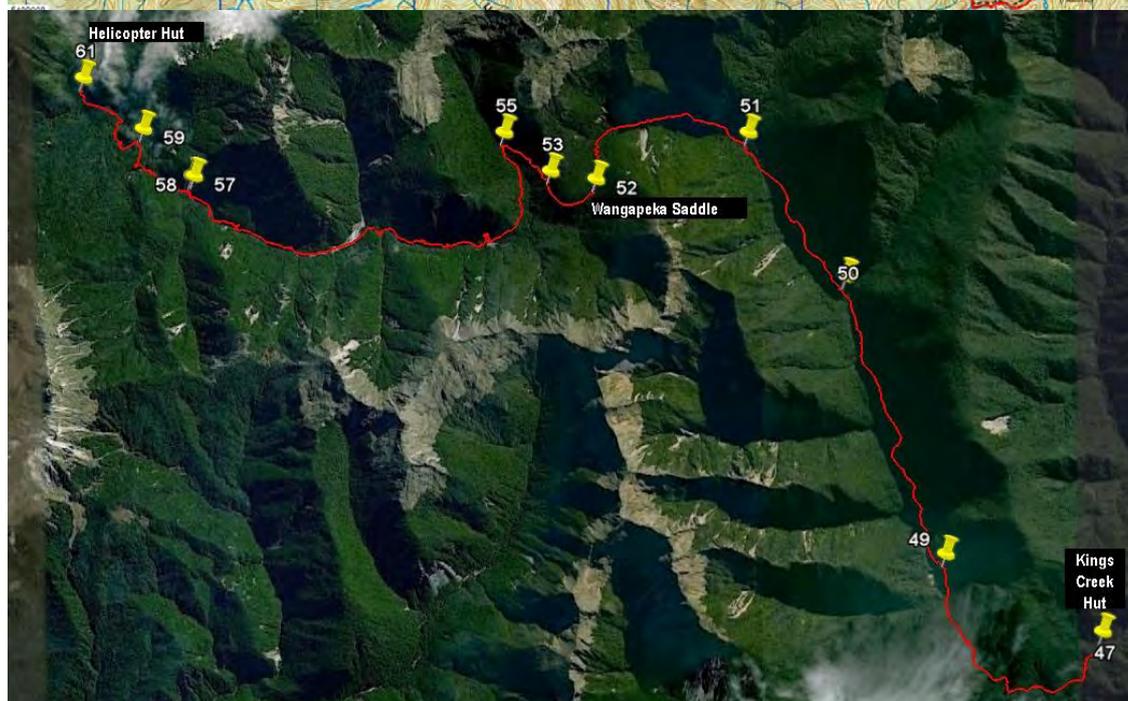


Map and Google Image plus GPS data for Day 2

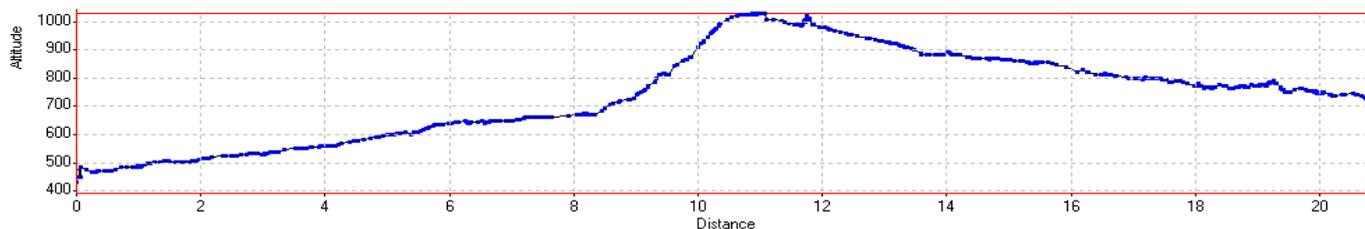


There is now a fairly hefty grunt needing 1:45 min to be tackled to get up to the top of the Wangapeka Saddle (WP521028masl).

However this seems to come in quite easily and there are no leg bursting slopes to contend with. The saddle was reached in 4:30 minutes and is a great place for lunch at the junction for Nugget Knobs and Biggs Top Route. Down the other side of the saddle sees a big improvement of the track but only for 45 minutes or so as there is then a fair grunt on a diversion up and over a big, fairly recent landslip (WP53989masl). The diversion only takes 10 minutes but it is hard work to get back down and on to the main track (WP54 990masl).



After this it is upslope to the NW on Chime Creek to then cross (WP55 956masl) and head south.



Waypoints NZTM

Na...	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
48	1556524	5409262	469	Day 2 Historical Cecil King's Hut 10 minutes from DoC hut
49	1555106	5410244	532	1 hour: Coal Creek, slightly tricky crossing. Many wild rasps (Gunnera)
50	1554110	5412972	644	2:10min: Swing Bridge over Luna stream then another swing bridge over Wangapeka to true right bank
51	1553145	5414380	676	2:45min: Stone hut - newish, 10 bunks with Luna route going N in Stone Creek for Mount Luna
52	1551655	5413912	1028	4:30min: Wangapeka Saddle with track junction to Nugget Knobs & Biggs Top Route after fair grunt up
53	1551209	5413985	989	5:15min: Start of diversion upslope round relatively new land slip. Fair grunt
54	1551174	5414064	990	5:25min: Rejoin main, good path after very steep descent of diversion
55	1550753	5414364	956	5:35min: Cross Chime Creek to head S after good, easy path heading upstream to NW
56	1550587	5413508	886	6:10min: Poor GPS signal in deep valley and actually close to edge of Karamea River
57	1547716	5413917	768	7:50min: Decision point. Up and over on dry route or wet feet via river. High route is horrid!
58	1547701	5413915	768	8:05min: Rejoin track / route after very hard up-and-over
59	1547214	5414376	752	8:40min: Back on main track and at lower altitude
60	1546672	5414789	733	9:30min: Water's Creek crossing with boulder hopping if low and 3-wire bridge if high
61	1546625	5414873	728	9:40min: Helicopter Hut after very hard day with 2 major slips to negotiate

NZ Grid

Easting	Northing
2466508	5971145
2465090	5972127
2464093	5974856
2463127	5976265
2461637	5975796
2461190	5975870
2461156	5975948
2460734	5976249
2460568	5975392
2457696	5975800
2457681	5975799
2457194	5976260
2456651	5976673
2456604	5976758

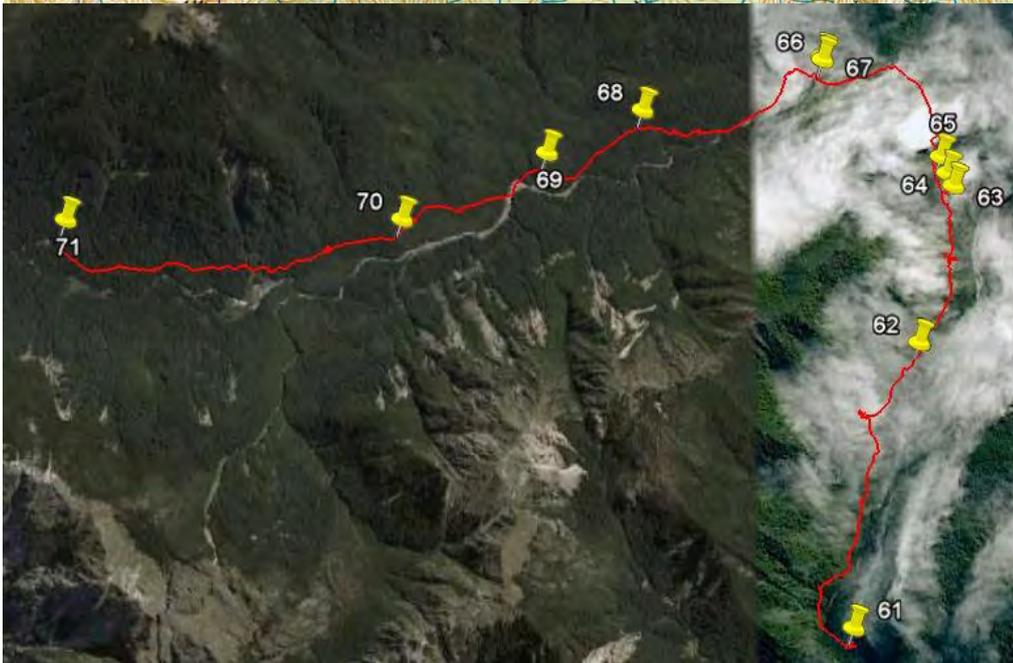
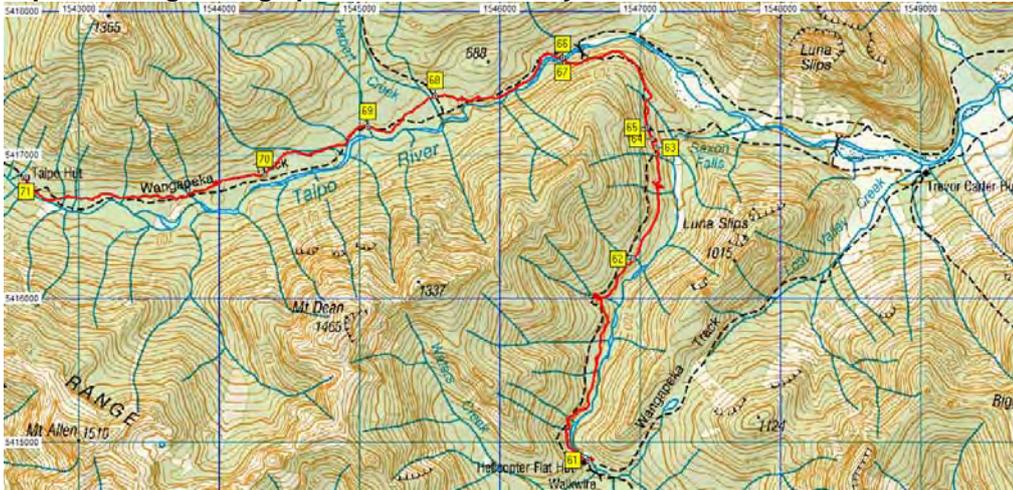
GPS signal is then a bit poor in the valley close to the Karamea River (**WP56** 886masl) then there is a long section parallel to the river basically heading west. After almost 8 hours a decision (**WP57**768masl) is required as to whether wet feet are risked or if the high, “up-and-over” route is used. The high route is really horrid and a struggle all the way with the final sting-in-the tail being a new totally unmarked massive landslide – this obstruction takes a long time to work round but DoC promises to improve this in April 2010. Water’s Creek (**WP60** 733masl) is then crossed by boulder hopping or by use of a three wire bridge and ten minutes later Helicopter Hut (**WP61** 728masl) is reached. The hut is not modern, basic design, ten bunks and the usual water supply from a nearby creek.

Contemplating the high route

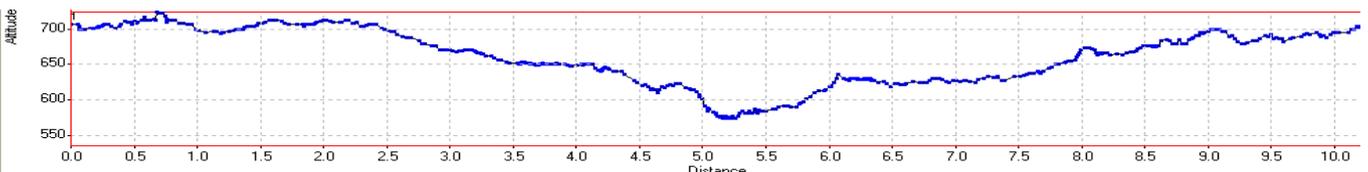


Day 3 Helicopter Hut (WP61) to Taipo Hut (WP71): Since Day 2 was a monster it was decided to take the quicker, easier route to Taipo Hut and not go via the Lost Valley

Map and Google Image plus GPS data for Day 3



On entering the clearing for Helicopter Hut the track to the Lost Valley goes off on the right but on this occasion it was not followed and the other track heading NW then NNE was followed. About 40 minutes out there is a bridge over a gully minutes after a “black chute” waterfall line crosses the track. After this the rough track improves to some degree. A granite ledge with a handrail crosses a waterfall (**WP63** 653masl) ten minutes before the site of the historical Brough’s Tabernacle is reached (**WP64** 652masl) – this site has several artifacts including old axes, chisels etc – Jonathan Brough was in charge of track gangs working in connection with gold mining and built his hut (tabernacle) in 1898. Minutes past the Tabernacle site, which is good for smoko and views are good if the weather is OK, the track (**WP65** 648masl) from the Trevor Carter Hut joins from the right – this is indistinct suggesting it would be rather hard work. The next stream crossing has a wire to aid passage in times of high flow.



Waypoints NZTM

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
62	1546946	5416277	705	Day3 - 50min N of Helicopter Hut with bridge over gully 5min after "black chute" waterfall on track
63	1547114	5417049	653	1:20min: Granite ledge with handrail over waterfall
64	1547083	5417109	652	1:30min: Smoka at Brough's Tabernacle site with views and relics (axe, chisels etc)
65	1547049	5417190	648	1:50min: Junction to right (E) for Trevor Carter's hut. Next stream has wire to aid crossing
66	1546447	5417663	578	2:25min: Downhill to cross swing bridge
67	1546445	5417679	576	2:30min: Track junction with Taipo hut signed as 1:10min to the WSW
68	1545539	5417409	623	3:30min: Cross rounded boulders on Herbert Creek with route to Kaipō Saddle off NNW
69	1545056	5417195	625	3:43min: River crossing with guiding rope for flood situations
70	1544326	5416863	664	4:10min: Wire rope for river crossing
71	1542623	5416848	693	5hours: Taipo Hut

NZ Grid

Easting	Northing
2456926	5978162
2457093	5978934
2457062	5978995
2457028	5979075
2456426	5979549
2456423	5979564
2455517	5979294
2455034	5979080
2454303	5978748
2452600	5978732

After a downhill section a swing bridge is crossed (WP66 578masl) and five minutes later there is a track sign indicating the Taipo Hut is only 1:10 minutes ahead to the WSW – this time did not seem too accurate when viewed in retrospect. The features ahead are all based on river crossings with Herbert Creek (WP69 623masl) full of large rounded boulders with the route for Kaipo Saddle going off to the NNW. Another crossing with a wire rope for safety is crossed in about 3:45minutes with yet another (WP70 664masl) in just over 4 hours. Taipo hut reached in just on 5 hours (WP71 693masl).

Taipo Hut



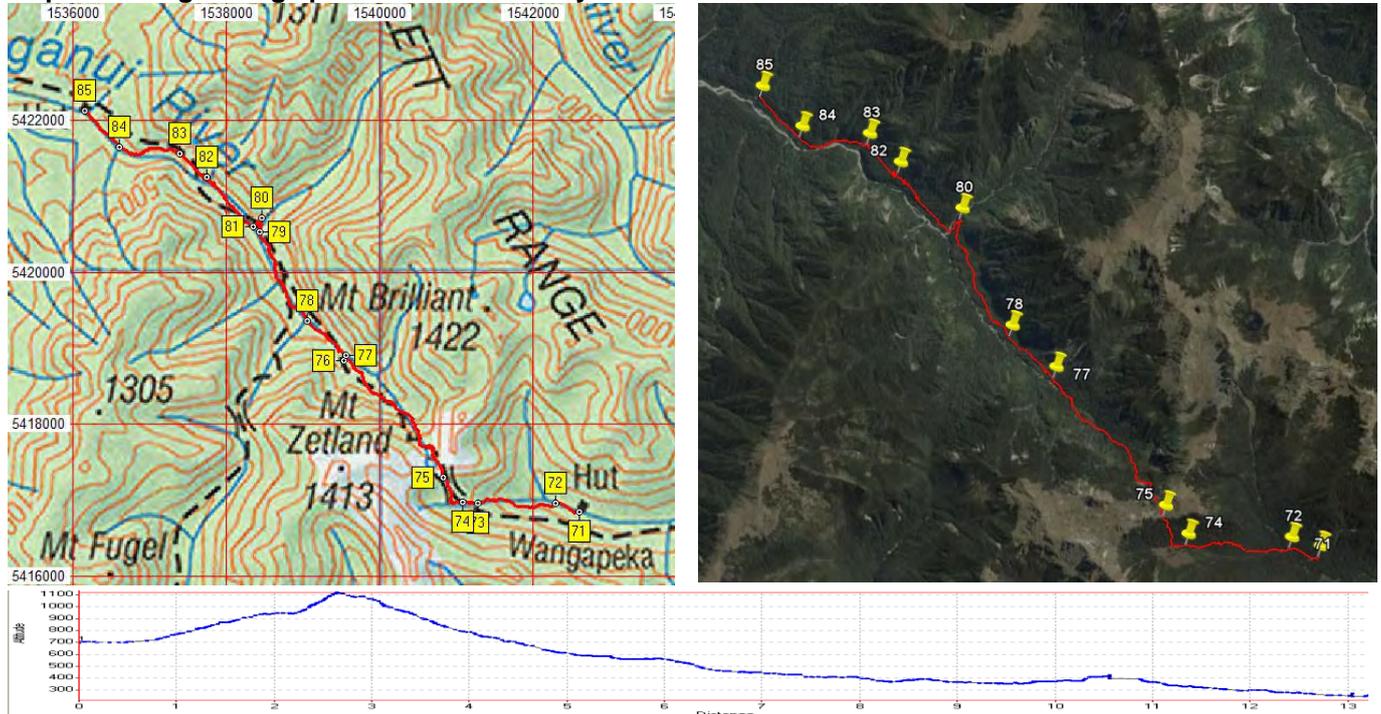
Taipo Hut is modern and of different design with back and front doors, mezzanine level bunk rooms(16 bunks) with a shelf in the right hand room. The kitchen has a good bench plus large table plus a wood burner. There are streams uphill and downhill for ablutions and there is an outside water tank fed from a roof supply but there is no sink.

A hardish day with the quoted time of 3:30 minutes just not possible on well marked track with some tricky bits, a few river crossings, deep river pools to be seen and robins galore.

Day 4 Taipo Hut (WP71) to Belltown “Mananui” Hut (WP85):

Ten minutes NW of Taipo Hut a swing bridge, with the steepest approach ramps ever encountered is crossed (WP72 706masl) , over Pannikiri Creek then pass a waterfall in just on one hour (WP73 914masl) after a bit of ascending. The Stag Flats shelter is reached (WP74 948masl) where there are wonderful views of the ridges to the south. After the shelter there is a fair bit of boardwalk through the wet area but soon the ascent of the day begins to get to the top of the Little Wanganui Saddle (WP75 1120masl). Views from the top are amazing including the tarns, the steep descent and the coast.

Map and Google Image plus GPS data for Day 4



Waypoints NZTM

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
72	1542288	5416946	706	Day 4 - 10min NW of hut cross swing bridge on Pannikin Creek
73	1541285	5416957	914	1hour: Waterfall
74	1541096	5416973	948	1:15min: Small new Stag Flat shelter with views then boardwalk in wet area before ascending
75	1540833	5417301	1120	1:50min: Little Wanganui Saddle after mod grunt up zig-zags. Views and tarns then long, hard descent
76	1539542	5418830	590	4:25min: Little Wanganui Shelter at end of short spur off main track
77	1539558	5418896	584	4:30min: Major swing bridge over Little Wanganui River
78	1539048	5419371	457	5hours: River crossing
79	1538433	5420536	370	6hours: Decision point. Uphill for bridge or forward for river crossing of Tangent Creek.
80	1538462	5420722	383	7hours: Swing bridge on Tangent Creek with waterfall and pool upstream
81	1538368	5420589	373	7:10min: Back on track and at NW end of the up-and-over diversion. On to cross major twin slips.
82	1537747	5421251	377	8hours: Cross McHarrie Creek with very steep, rock and root laddered slopes. Many cabbage trees
83	1537389	5421578	329	8:40min: Cross big slip of Smith Creek
84	1536611	5421655	276	9 hours plus: Hut signed as 15minutes ahead
85	1536150	5422119	255	9:40min: Belltown Mananui Hut

NZ Grid

Easting	Northing
2452264	5978831
2451262	5978842
2451072	5978858
2450810	5979185
2449518	5980715
2449534	5980781
2449024	5981256
2448408	5982422
2448436	5982608
2448343	5982475
2447721	5983137
2447363	5983464
2446584	5983541
2446123	5984005

Boardwalk towards saddle



Little Wanganui Saddle



View to the coast and way down



The descent down from the saddle takes about 2:30 minutes and is pretty hard work to get down the 500 odd metres. By going left at a small junction it is minutes only to get to the Little Wanganui Shelter (**WP76**^{590masl}) which is a pretty old, small hut with a couple of bunks – but would be a real seaviour on a bad day after the descent from the saddle. Five minutes on from the junction is a huge swing bridge over the Little Wanganui Gorge (**WP77**^{584masl}). Study of the map will show that this point appears to be less than half way to the target.

Wanganui Gorge shelter



The tramp now seems to go on and on a bit with river crossings with a decision required at one to go for the bridge or ford – in this case the bridge is a good choice as it is only a couple of hundred metres upstream on Tangent Creek (**WP80**^{383masl}) and there is quite a nice pool and waterfall to be seen upstream. Ten minutes later the track in the main valley is rejoined at the other end of the diversion; then it is on to cross major twin landslips.

Wanganui gorge



About an hour later cross McHarrie Creek (**WP82**^{377masl}) which has extremely steep, rocky slopes with root ladders – take care this is dangerous. There are many cabbage trees on the slopes around here. Yet another large landslip is crossed at about 8:40 minutes on Smith Creek (**WP83**^{320masl}) and 20 minutes later there is a sign that the hut is only 15 minutes ahead. Once again the party was incredibly slow or the DoC times were way-out as it took another 40 minutes to reach the Belltown “Mananui” Hut (**WP85**^{255masl}). This hut is pretty good, not too new, has 10 bunks, wood stove, outside sink and water supply plus attendant sandflies.

There is a small creek 50 metres past the hut suitable for ablutions if that is preferred to trying to wash in the sink! The toilet is one of the newer DoC installations but if you want to avoid ammonia gassing then avoid it – it really stank!

Belltown Mananui Hut



Day 5 Belltown “Mananui” Hut (WP85) to Wangapeka Road end (WP93): Said to be an easy riverside walk out requiring only 3 hours.

Minutes after leaving the hut there is a small bit of excitement as the river-bank has been collapsing but the track still passes close to this. Clamber through the bushes or use the aerial root walk-way. In half an hour there is a new swing bridge (**WP86**^{198masl}) on the Lawrence Stream. At about one hour there is a huge landslip (**WP87**^{212masl}) crossing – this is the second or third slip of the day - but 20 minutes later emerge on to the river-flats and much easier walking. The mystery of the day is an isolated sign (**WP88**^{109masl}) in the middle of flat bush pointing as to where the road is – it is assumed that previously the road may have come much further up the valley but just where the sign is there is only one track. From here head virtually due S till the river is reached and entered then pass back (**WP89**^{91masl}) into the bush and back to the well defined track via a small grassy glade. Then minutes later a decision is required whether to use the (**WP90**^{83masl}) high level diversion or get the feet wet – the high route starts off with a very steep difficult-to-get-slope so go via the river if water levels are low.

Root walkway



Monster landslip crossing

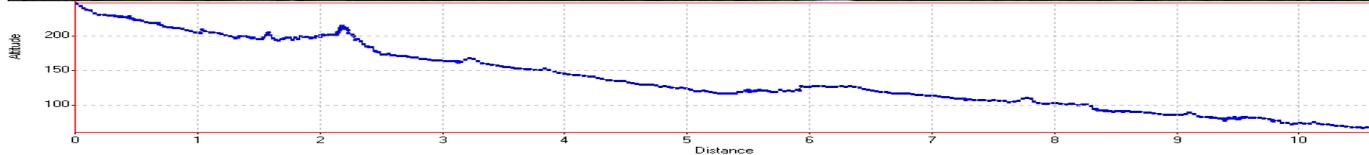
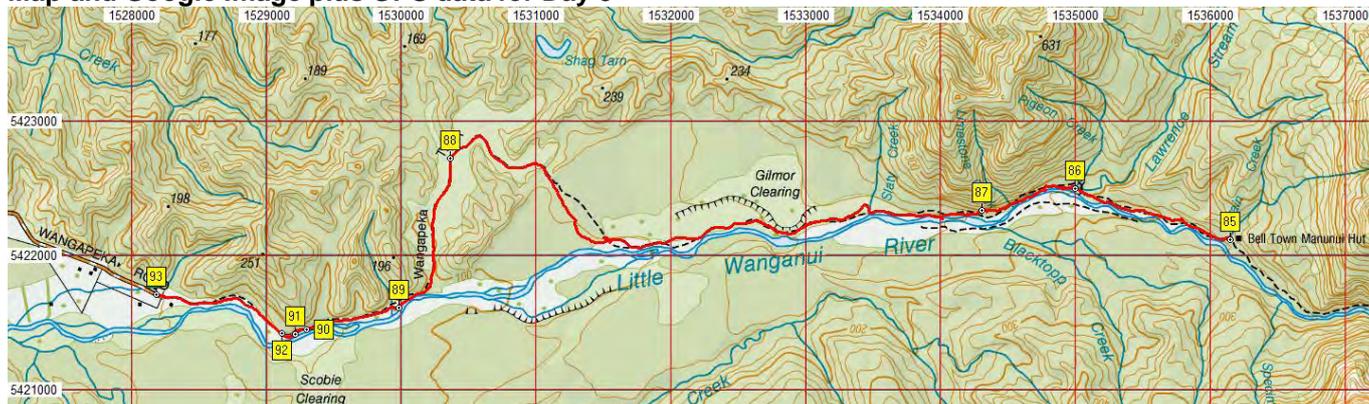


The river crossing (**WP91**^{80masl}) is manageable but can be deep – it was thigh deep at the end of a long dry spell – and the rocks are big and very slippery. This is a good place to have a bit of practice at various river-crossing techniques. In a bit over three and a half hours once again rejoin the main track heading NW after a second river crossing followed by a boggy area – boots do get rather fouled up here as it is a messy bog!

The track now just gets better and better and soon buildings appear – private property so keep out – and the car park at the end of Wangapeka Road is soon a welcome sight (**WP93**^{66masl}).

An easier day but still requiring an hour longer than the quoted DoC time. To begin with the track is a bit rough and exciting with the river eroding badly. In fair weather the up-and-over diversions should be avoided but even then the river crossings can be tricky.

Map and Google Image plus GPS data for Day 5



Waypoints NZTM

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
86	1535002	5422501	198	Day 5 - 30min NW of Mananui Hut new swing bridge on Lawrence Stream
87	1534307	5422340	212	1hour: Start downslope on huge slip (2nd or 3rd of the day). 20min later out of hills and on flats
88	1530366	5422723	109	2:45min: Isolated sign for road and track in middle of flat bush area
89	1529980	5421613	91.0	3:10min: Pass from river to bush then grassy area and back on main track
90	1529295	5421449	83.0	3:20min: Decision as to high level diversion or river crossing
91	1529211	5421416	80.0	3:30min: Knee deep, fairly swift river crossing
92	1529114	5421419	82.0	3:40min: Rejoin main track heading NW after second river crossing then boggy area
93	1528185	5421713	66.0	4hours: Car park at road end of Wangapeka Road

NZ Grid

Easting	Northing
2444975	5984388
2444280	5984226
2440337	5984608
2439950	5983498
2439265	5983334
2439181	5983301
2439084	5983304
2438155	5983598

Little Wanganui River



River crossing



A seat at last



Notes:

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