

Walks in and around Tongariro National Park



Further information:

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Cover photo: Tongariro Northern Circuit.
Photo: DOC/90 Seconds

This information was accurate at the time of printing. For the latest information on DOC's policies and facilities, visit www.doc.govt.nz.

Published by:
Department of Conservation
Tongariro National Park
Visitor Centre
PO Box 71029
Whakapapa Village
Mount Ruapehu 3951
New Zealand

Editing and design:
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DOC Creative Services

November 2022

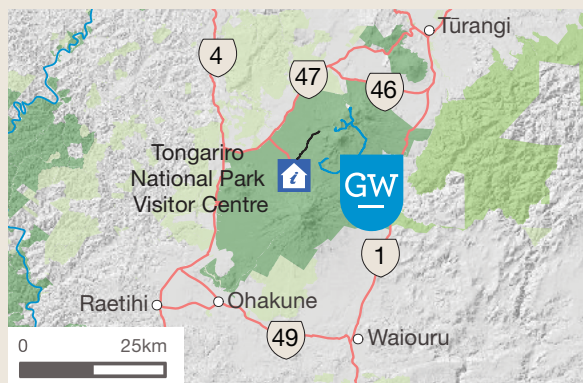
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Getting there

This 78,618-hectare park, located in the central North Island, is bordered by State Highways 1, 49, 4 and 47. The nearest towns are Tūrangi, National Park and Ohakune. The small village of Whakapapa is located within the park.

The main trunk railway runs through National Park and Ohakune townships. Regular bus services operate to Ohakune, National Park and Tūrangi.



DOC HOTline
0800 362 468

Report any safety hazards
or conservation emergencies
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111

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For your safety

When visiting Tongariro National Park, always follow the Land Safety Code.

- ▶ **Choose the right trip for you**
Learn about the route and make sure you have the skills for it.
- ▶ **Understand the weather**
It can change fast. Check the forecast and change your plans if needed.
- ▶ **Pack warm clothes and extra food**
Prepare for bad weather and an unexpected night out.
- ▶ **Share your plans and take ways to get help**
Telling a trusted person your plans details and taking a distress beacon can save your life.
- ▶ **Take care of yourself and each other**
Eat, drink and rest, stick with your group, and make decisions together.

For further information, visit www.adventuresmart.org.nz.



Remember, if you are not experienced and equipped for alpine hiking, we recommend that you choose a track below the bushline where alpine experience is not required, or go with a guide.

To book a guide, contact your nearest i-SITE, or visit www.visitruapehu.com or www.greatlaketaupo.com.

Tongariro Alpine Crossing.
Photo: Graeme Murray



Tongariro National Park World Heritage Area

The Sacred Tuku 1887


Horonuku Te Heuheu Tūkino IV (Paramount Chief), Matuaahu Te Wharerangi and other rangatira of Ngāti Tūwharetoa, one of the tribes with mana whenua (occupational authority) over the land in this region, extended the kaitiakitanga (custodianship) of the peaks of Tongariro, Ngāuruhoe and part of the peak of Ruapehu to the people of Aotearoa New Zealand on 23 September 1887. Described as a 'Tuku' (an offer of shared kaitiakitanga), iwi would, through a partnership with the Crown, ensure that the landscape and cultural values of the North Island mountains would be protected for all time.

Iwi (Māori tribes) had always held land on a communal basis. Horonuku, Matuaahu and the other rangatira did not want to see the sacred mountains of their people divided into blocks and sold to land-seeking settlers. Loss of this land would mean loss of the sacred volcanoes and a loss of mana (status, prestige, integrity) for Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Rangī and Whanganui iwi who all have mana whenua of the mountains.

An Act of Parliament formally established Tongariro National Park in 1894 and it was gazetted as such in 1907. The original Tuku area of 2360 hectares has been increased over the years by government procurement of surrounding land to create a national park of 78,618 hectares.

Due to the insight of Horonuku, Matuaahu and other Ngāti Tūwharetoa rangatira, Tongariro National Park was the first national park in Aotearoa New Zealand and the fifth in the world.

While the mountains have been protected, and are recognised as a World Heritage site, the mana whenua feel that the Tongariro National Park Act 1894 has not adequately recognised the intent of the Tuku as an expression of shared kaitiakitanga and management of the mountains. The mana whenua would like to restore the partnership intended by the 1887 Tuku by making a new partnership arrangement for the National Park.



“If our mountains of Tongariro are included in the blocks passed through the court in the ordinary way, what will become of them? They will be cut up and sold, a piece going to one Pākehā and a piece to another. They will become of no account, for the tapu will be gone.

Tongariro is my ancestor, my tūpuna, it is my head; my mana centres around Tongariro.

You know how my name and history are associated with Tongariro, I cannot consent to the court passing these mountains through in the ordinary way.

After I am dead, what will be their fate?

Te Heuheu Tukino IV, 1885

Introduction

National parks represent glimpses of our environment as it once was, and also form cultural icons connecting people to the land. The varying landscape of Tongariro National Park features herbfields, forests, lakes, streams and desert-like areas, as well as dramatic terrain formed by volcanic activity. The landforms, volcanoes and ecosystems of Tongariro National Park are now recognised as having outstanding international significance and have been awarded UNESCO dual World Heritage status for natural and cultural values.

Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre

Call in to the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre, situated in Whakapapa Village, and meet Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (DOC) rangers who have first-hand, in-depth local knowledge about conservation places and activities. The centre is open every day (except for Christmas day) from 8 am to 5 pm during the summer season and 8 am to 4.30 pm during the winter season. Hut tickets, hut passes and topographical maps are available for sale, as well as books, souvenirs, clothing and a selection of outdoor safety items. A foyer is open 24 hr for access to a public telephone, weather and avalanche reports, and track information.

Phone: **07 892 3729** Email: tongarirovc@doc.govt.nz

Information on the park is also available from the i-SITES in:

Ohakune	06 385 8427
Taumarunui	07 895 7494
Tūrangi	07 386 8999
Taupō	07 376 0027

Know before you go



Weather

The climate of Tongariro National Park is highly unpredictable and changes quickly.

High levels of rain and very cold temperatures are common, and snow is possible at any time of the year. Check the latest weather forecast and track conditions before starting out on any hikes, and always be prepared for bad weather.

For the latest weather forecast, check at the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre or visit www.metservice.com/mountain/tongariro-national-park.



River crossings

Heavy rain will cause increased water flow in all streams and rivers in the park. At these times, unbridged rivers may become difficult or impossible to cross, particularly those on the longer walks such as the Round the Mountain and Whakapapaiti Valley tracks. If you come across a swollen river, do not cross it. Turn back or stop and wait for the river to subside.



Volcanic hazards

One of the main reasons Tongariro National Park is considered a special area is because of its volcanic features. Although volcanic events are often spectacular to view at a safe distance, there can be considerable risk for those who venture close to the active volcanoes.

Visitors should be aware that volcanic activity is possible in the area at any time with little or no warning. Anyone intending to hike or climb on the upper slopes of the volcanoes should first check the current volcanic status and safety information for the area. During times of volcanic activity, hikers and skiers should move away from the crater and onto high ground to avoid flying rocks, lahars and blasts.

Check Geonet for the volcanic status:
www.geonet.org.nz/volcano.

Lahar hazards on Mount Ruapehu

Mount Ruapehu is an active volcano. An eruption may generate lahars (volcanic floods and mudflows) in major valleys and in the Whakapapa Ski Area. Hikers and skiers should familiarise themselves with known lahar paths and be prepared to move out of valleys should an eruption occur.

1975 Ngāuruhoe eruption

Incandescent lava blocks, some the size of small cars, leave vapour trails in the sky. Some of the heavier material begins to drop, causing fluid pyroclastic flows (glowing avalanches of fragmented rock) travelling 2 km from the crater down the Mangatepopo valley.



Mount Ngauruhoe eruption. Photo: DOC



Snow and avalanches

Throughout the year, tracks in the park may be affected by snow and ice. In these conditions, hikes may take longer than the posted track times. Be aware of avalanche danger after heavy snowfalls. Before you set out, check information on the current snow stability at the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre or visit www.avalanche.net.nz/region/1. Treat snow slopes in the lee (downwind) aspect of recent winds and ice slopes as high hazard areas.

Throughout winter, ice axes and crampons (and the experience to use them) are required for tracks in the alpine areas of the park. Visitors must be able to make their own on-site assessments of weather, route and avalanche conditions, and should carry an avalanche transceiver, probe and shovel if venturing into snow-covered areas.

It is recommended that visitors who are not equipped for or experienced in alpine conditions go with a guide.



Water

Tongariro National Park is a volcanic zone and high mineral concentrations are present in many of its waterways. Giardia may also be present in some streams in the park. We recommend you boil all drinking water for at least 3 min. Water from the upper Mangatepopo Stream, Emerald Lakes and Ketetahi Hot Springs is not suitable for drinking due to its high mineral content. In times of volcanic activity, water tanks at huts may be disconnected to avoid ash contamination, and streams and rivers could also become contaminated. Visitors should carry their own water supply.

For cultural and health reasons, swimming is not advised in many of the lakes, streams and rivers of the park. Check with DOC staff for further information.



Dogs and other pets

It is an offence under the National Parks Act 1980 to bring dogs or any other introduced animals into Tongariro National Park. This includes

bringing pets to the Whakapapa or Turoa ski areas, or into Whakapapa Village. To give greater protection to native wildlife, please leave your pets at home.



Drones

No unauthorised drones are allowed within Tongariro National Park.

Drones can:

- interfere with helicopters for search and rescue, fire and operational needs
- disturb native birds and visitors to the park.

For further information, visit www.doc.govt.nz/drones.



Rubbish and recycling

There is a 'pack-it-in, pack-it-out' policy within the park. Please carry out all your rubbish.

There is a recycling and rubbish transfer station in Whakapapa Village, 300 m above the Visitor Centre.



Vehicles

Do not leave valuables in parked cars and if possible arrange alternative transport to and from tracks. Carry important documents like passports and credit cards with you. Leaving vehicles parked overnight in more isolated car parks is not recommended.



Mountain biking

Mountain biking is permitted in Tongariro National Park on formed roads, ie Bruce Road, Ohakune Mountain Road, Tūkinō Road, Mangatepopo Road, Ohakune Old Coach Road and Ruapehu-Whanganui Trails.

Mountain biking is permitted in adjacent Rangataua Conservation Area on the southern boundary of Tongariro National Park east of Ohakune. Erua and Tongariro Forest conservation areas are also good locations for mountain biking, hunting and tramping. Disused logging tracks provide trails through varied and scenic forest.

Camping

Mangawhero Campsite is located 2 km up Ohakune Mountain Road and Mangahua Campsite is located off State Highway 47 (SH47). To book a spot, go to www.doc.govt.nz/camping. Toilets are provided.

Campsites are also located near each of the huts on the Tongariro Northern Circuit. There is a charge for using these – check the DOC website or ask at a DOC visitor centre for current rates. During the Great Walks season (end of October to 30 April), reservations are required. If you camp at a campsite with a hut, you may use any of the hut facilities except a bunk and mattress.

Camping and hut fees (see following section) contribute to service and maintenance and help to ensure that these special backcountry facilities remain available. Contact a DOC visitor centre and/or an i-SITE centre for more information and to purchase a campsite/hut pass.

Camping is not permitted at picnic sites, in the Active Volcanic Hazard Zone of Mount Tongariro or within 200 m of any State Highway or other road. Camping is also not permitted within 500 m of the Northern Circuit track or within 200 m of any other track except in designated campsites.

Huts

There are eight public huts in Tongariro National Park available for overnight use. The historic Waihohonu Hut which has been preserved as a historic building, is not available for overnight use. Facilities at the huts include toilets and a water supply. Firewood and an axe or saw are provided at huts with wood burners.

During the Great Walks season, huts along the Tongariro Northern Circuit (Mangatepopo, Oturere and Waihohonu) are also supplied with gas cookers. Hut rangers are in residence at these huts over this period and can provide park and weather information.

Considerate hut use

During your visit to Tongariro National Park, please respect the rights of other visitors. Clean the benches, sweep the floor and ensure no food scraps (which encourage vermin) remain. The maximum group size at huts or campsites is 16 and use is limited to 2 consecutive nights.

Hut bookings and fees

Tongariro Northern Circuit Great Walk

During the Great Walks season, bookings must be made for Mangatepopo, Oturere and Waihohonu huts. Bookings for these huts can be made online at bookings.doc.govt.nz. You can create your own account, view, modify and cancel your booking.

Other huts

Other huts in Tongariro National Park do not require bookings at any time. They are on a first-come basis only. Backcountry tickets may be purchased for these huts from DOC visitor centres.

Hut fees

Hut fees are listed on the DOC website: see www.doc.govt.nz/tongariro for fees during the Great Walks season and www.doc.govt.nz/hut-categories for all other times. For backcountry hut fees, please contact your nearest DOC office or visitor centre. Backcountry hut passes and tickets are not accepted on the Tongariro Northern Circuit during the Great Walks season.



Plan and prepare

Care for Tongariro National Park



Protect nature

Keep your distance and don't feed wildlife. Follow any rules restricting dogs, fires, drones or vehicles.



Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by planning and preparing for your trip.



Keep New Zealand clean

Take all rubbish with you and use toilets where provided.



Show respect

He Maunga Tapu – the mountains are sacred to iwi, Ngāti Tūwharetoa and Whanganui. To show respect, do not climb the mountain summits or enter or touch waterways.



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



tiaki

Essential equipment

Weather in Tongariro National Park is notoriously changeable. Be prepared for four seasons in one day and take the correct clothing and equipment.

While an afternoon walk on a short track will obviously require less gear than a full day hike, you should always have adequate footwear (tramping boots for all but the short walks), a wind and waterproof raincoat and overtrousers, warm clothing, a hat, gloves, sun screen, water, food, and a map.

Check list

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate footwear | <input type="checkbox"/> Hat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wind and waterproof raincoat | <input type="checkbox"/> Gloves |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overtrousers | <input type="checkbox"/> Water |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Warm clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Food |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Map |

For longer walks, also take:

- additional warm woollen or thermal clothing
- a first aid kit
- a map and compass.

During winter and snow conditions, take:

- snow gaiters
- snow goggles
- an ice axe and crampons (and know how to use them).

Consider also taking:

- an avalanche transceiver
- a snow shovel
- an avalanche probe
- a personal locator beacon (PLB)
- GPS.

In your pack, carry:

- sun screen
- a first aid kit
- food and plenty of water
- extra warm clothing
- wet weather gear.

Tracks and walks

There are many walks suitable for most visitors in and around Tongariro National Park. This booklet gives brief track descriptions and simple locality maps. These should be used in conjunction with more detailed maps. Supplementary information like track and hut conditions, daylight hours, etc is available from DOC visitor centres and offices and some i-SITES.

Most of the shorter walks are on well-surfaced tracks and are suitable for most visitors. Many of the longer tracks follow poled routes only. Some are unformed and completely unmarked, and require special care, navigation, and high-level backcountry skills and experience.

Before setting out on your trip, remember to inform a reliable person of your intentions, and check in with them on or after your return. If you are overdue, they should contact the New Zealand Police.

Track grades



Easy access short walk: Suitable for people of all abilities, wheelchairs and children's buggies.



Short walk: Well-formed track; easy walking for up to an hour.



Walking track: Well-formed track; easy walking from a few minutes to a day.



Great Walk or easy tramping track: Generally well-formed track for comfortable overnight tramping/hiking trips.



Tramping track: Mostly unformed track with steep, rough or muddy sections; has directional markers, poles or cairns.



Route: Unformed track suitable only for people with high-level backcountry skills and experience.

Mountain bike grades



Intermediate grade 3: Steep slopes and/or avoidable obstacles possibly on a narrow track and/or with poor traction. There may be exposure at the track's outside edge.



Chateau Tongariro Hotel and Mount Ruapehu, Whakapapa Village.
Photo: Drew Divehall

Whakapapa

Whakapapa Village is the northwest entrance to Tongariro National Park and the Whakapapa Ski Area.

Walks (less than 3 hr)

These walks are accessible on foot from Whakapapa Village or require a short drive to the starting point.

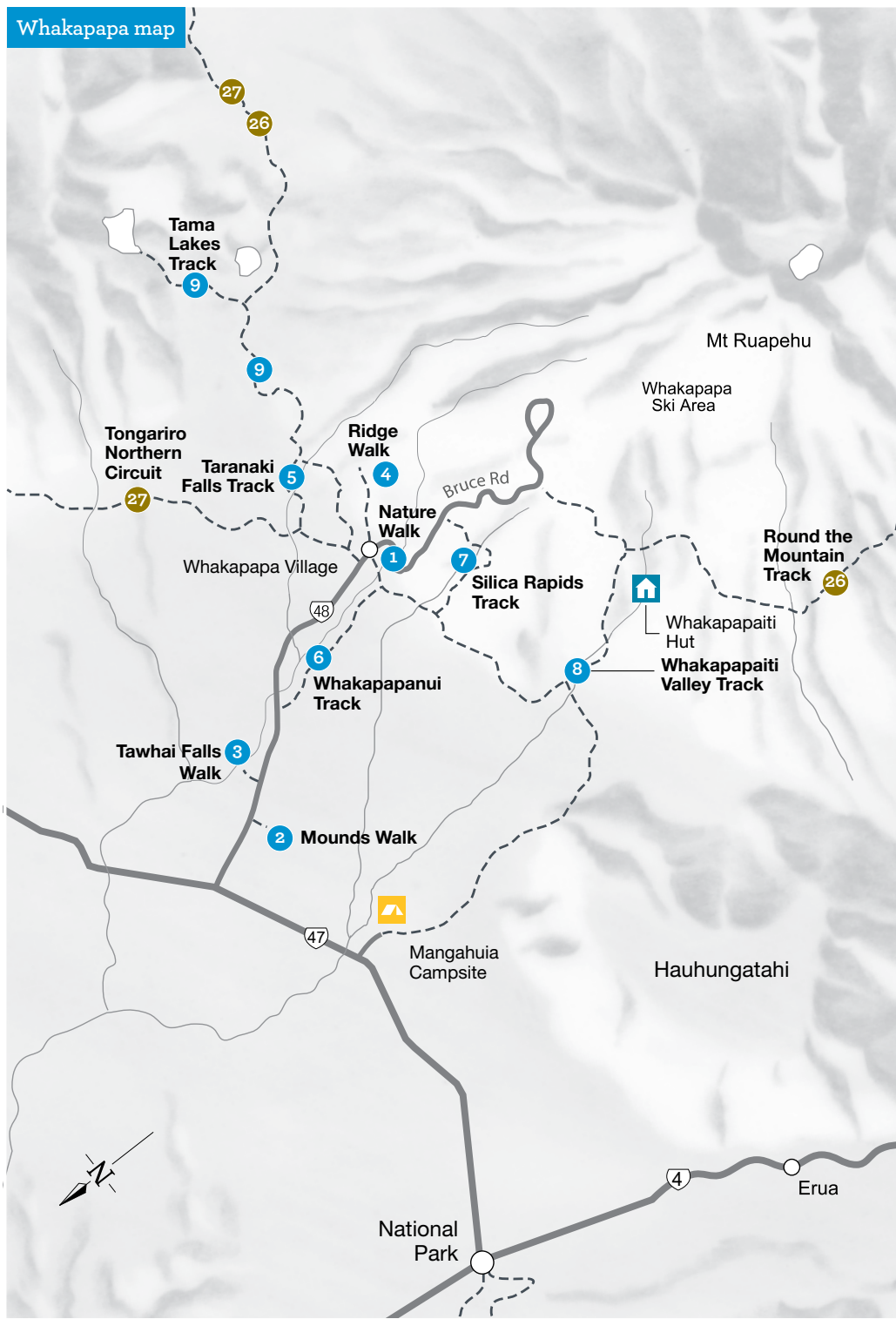


1 Whakapapa Nature Walk 15 min loop walk

Begins 250 m above the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre on SH48.

This sealed loop track gives a glimpse of the unique flora of Tongariro National Park. A series of on-site information panels explain the various vegetation zones in the park.

Whakapapa map

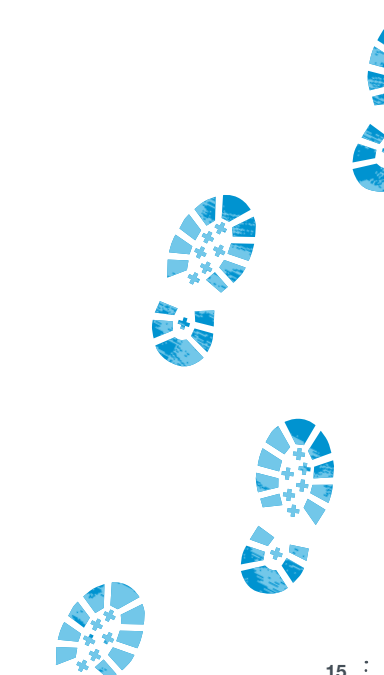


Village enlargement



- Car park
- Toilet
- Visitor shelter

0 300 m



 **2 Mounds Walk**
20 min return

Begins 5 km below the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre on SH48.

Debris avalanches that occurred during periods of volcanic activity at Mount Ruapehu are believed to have formed these mounds thousands of years ago. The top of the track offers good views of the volcanoes and surrounding area.

 **3 Tawhai Falls Walk**
20 min return


Begins 4 km below the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre on SH48.

The falls, which tumble over the edge of an ancient lava flow, are reached after a short stroll through mountain toatoa and beech forest.

 **4 Ridge Walk**
30–40 min, 1.2 km return

Begins 150 m above the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre.

After a short climb through low beech forest, the track emerges into alpine shrublands with panoramic views of Mount Ngāuruhoe and the surrounding landscape.

 **5 Taranaki Falls Track**
2 hr, 6 km loop track

Begins 100 m below the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre on Ngāuruhoe Terrace.

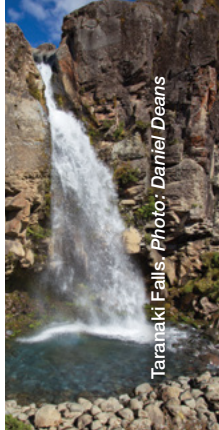
The track to the Taranaki Falls has excellent mountain views and crosses a range of landforms. All streams are bridged. The upper and lower tracks form a loop with the falls situated around the halfway point. The lower track is generally the more sheltered on windy days.

The lower track passes through tussock and alpine shrublands before entering beech forest. On a clear day, the symmetrical cone of Ngāuruhoe and the older, eroded mountains of Tongariro and Pukekaikiore are visible. Once in the forest, the track descends to the Wairere Stream and then climbs alongside it, passing the Cascade Falls. The forest consists mainly of large mountain beech trees, shiny broadleaf, mountain five-finger, umbrella ferns and mountain toatoa. Small native birds such as whiteheads, grey warblers and riflemen are commonly seen.

From the forest edge, the track passes over the Wairere Stream with impressive views of a small, narrow gorge. Continuing on up the track, the Taranaki Falls comes into view, tumbling 20 m over the edge of a large andesite lava flow that erupted from Ruapehu 15,000 years ago.

The trail from the falls climbs up a flight of 100 steps to a forest of mountain toatoa before joining the Tama Lakes Track. Turn right to return to Whakapapa, cross the Wairere Stream and climb the shoulder of the lava flow, now covered with red tussock. Native birds likely to be heard in this area include pipits, fernbirds and occasionally skylarks.

The return track crosses a series of eroded gullies formed by wind, rain and frost action on volcanic soils. As the trail begins to sidle around the slopes of Mount Ruapehu, it merges with the wider old Waihothonu horse trail. Here, layers of pumice and ash from previous eruptions are exposed. After passing through the last patch of bush, the track emerges again into red tussock and mānuka, leading easily back to the village.





6 Whakapapanui Track

2 hr, 6 km return via same track or via SH48

Begins 250 m above the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre.

After a 10–15 min walk, the Whakapapanui Track branches to the right (don't follow the Whakapapaiti Track sign in error!) and heads downstream.

Water-logged clearings are passed as the track follows the Whakapapanui Stream, where storm-damaged beech forest is slowly regenerating. The track comes out at the bridge of SH48, 3 km below Whakapapa Village.

Keep a look out along the river for the endangered whio/ blue duck. They are the same colour as the rocks so can be very difficult to spot, but you may hear the male's whistling call.



7 Silica Rapids Track

2 hr 30 min, 7 km return via Bruce Road

Begins 250 m above the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre.

This track takes in a range of vegetation types as well as the creamy-white Silica Rapids terraces. After crossing the Whakapapanui Stream at the top end of the Holiday Park, the track meanders through beech forest. Pass the Whakapapanui Track turn-off and continue towards Silica Rapids. The track soon crosses a bubbling stream with a gold-toned bed. The coloured deposits are iron-oxide clays from upstream swamps. Coprosma, five-finger and broadleaf surround the track.

Emerging from the bush, the track climbs to a swampy area of wire rush, tangle fern and red tussock. Seepage ponds beside the boardwalk are home to kōura/ freshwater crayfish. The boardwalk makes walking over swampy ground more comfortable and reduces the impact of foot traffic on delicate vegetation. This is a great place to enjoy mountain views.

After passing the Whakapapaiti Track turn-off, the Silica Rapids Track follows the stream up through dense bush to the Punaruku Falls. Here, after heavy rain, the Tawhainui Stream tumbles over the edge of an ancient lava flow. Close to the track, metal bands on tree trunks protect mistletoe from possums. At the forest edge, gold-coloured snow tōtara and olive-green bog pine give way to sun-loving alpine herbs and flowers like mountain daisies, harebells and ourisia.

A little further up the hill, the stream bed widens and forms a series of shallow terraces coated in creamy white deposits – the famous Silica Rapids. When the stream emerges from lava cliffs at the head of the valley, the water is rich in aluminium and silicate minerals. As the stream gathers speed and the water is aerated, the alumino-silicates are deposited on the stream bed.

Moving on from the rapids, the track climbs onto a tussock-covered lava flow. A small clump of mountain beech and toatoa, seen a short distance up the mountain, forms the upper limit of beech trees in the area. The track then winds through tussock and subalpine shrubs to reach Bruce Road.



Day tramps (3–8 hr)

8 Whakapapa Valley Track 4–5 hr, 16 km loop (including the Bruce Road section) or 11 km one way (transport required)


Begins 250 m above the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre. See map (page 14).

The track can be walked in either direction but is described anticlockwise. Follow the Silica Rapids Track for about 45 min to the junction with the Whakapapa Valley Track. The track goes through forest and then an open tussock-covered area. There is a bridged crossing of the Whakapapa Stream, after which the track continues up the valley, passing the junction with the Mangahuia Track (2–3 hr to campsite). Further up the valley there is an unbridged river crossing. Whakapapa Hut is 10–15 min further up the track.

Note: It may not be possible to cross safely when the river is high during or following rainfall.

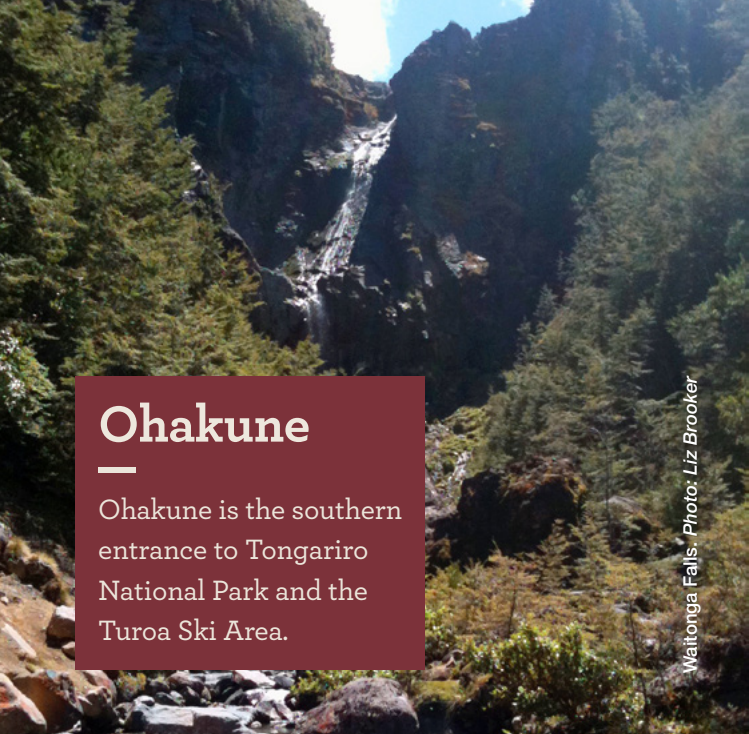
Leaving the hut, the track winds its way through stunted beech forest, then up the valley to the Round the Mountain Track junction. Turn left here towards Bruce Road. The track zig-zags up and over a moraine ridge with great views of the Whakapapa valley and the surrounding landscape. Continue to the Scoria Flat area on Bruce Road. From here it is approximately 5 km down the road to Whakapapa Village.

9 Tama Lakes Track 5–6 hr, 17 km return on same track

 Begins 100 m below the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre at the end of Ngāuruhoe Place.

This track is an extension of the Taranaki Falls Track and part of the Tongariro Northern Circuit and Round the Mountain tracks.

At the top of the Taranaki Falls, the track branches off the Taranaki Falls Track to cross rolling tussock country and alpine herbfields. Further on, the track branches left to the Tama lakes, while the main track continues on to the Waihohonu Hut. There is a view of the Lower Tama (1240 m), and then the track climbs steeply to a viewpoint (1440 m) of the Upper Tama. The Tama lakes occupy several old explosion craters on Tama Saddle between Ruapehu and Ngāuruhoe. The saddle experiences strong wind and cold temperatures, so windproof clothing is recommended.



Waitonga Falls. Photo: Liz Brooker

Ohakune

Ohakune is the southern entrance to Tongariro National Park and the Turoa Ski Area.

Walks (less than 3 hr)

See *Ohakune map* (page 23)



10 Rimu Walk

15 min return



This walk begins opposite the DOC Ohakune Base at the bottom of Ohakune Mountain Road.

The track loops off the Mangawhero Forest Walk and meanders gently through an understory of ground ferns and kāmahi, while criss-crossing a quiet mountain stream. It is suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs.



11 Mangawhero Forest Walk

1 hr, 3 km loop track

This track begins opposite the DOC Ohakune Base at the bottom of Ohakune Mountain Road.

After crossing the Mangawhero River, the track leads into a forest of kāmahi, broadleaf and five-finger, with giant rimu, mataī and kahikatea reaching 30 m or more above the forest floor. Immediately after passing through a cut log, the track crosses a large volcanic crater. At its highest point, the track crosses Ohakune Mountain Road and then returns to where you began.





12 Mangawhero Falls Walk

5–10 min return

Starts from a car park on Ohakune Mountain Road, 13 km past the DOC Ohakune Base.

This short walk provides excellent views of a beautiful waterfall close to the road. Here, not far below the bushline, the beech forest is stunted because of the harsh climate. Spectacular icicles form around the falls in winter.



13 Waitonga Falls Track

1 hr 20 min, 4 km return

This track begins 11 km from the bottom of Ohakune Mountain Road.

One of the park's highest waterfalls, the Waitonga Falls (39 m), is reached via a well-formed track through mountain beech and kaikawaka / mountain cedar forest. The track passes Rotokawa, an alpine bog where on a calm day the reflection of the southern face of Mount Ruapehu can be seen in the pools. Past the falls, the track continues as part of the Round the Mountain Track, a 4- to 6-day tramp around Mount Ruapehu (see page 37).



14 Lake Rotokura Walk

30 min return

Signposted off SH49, 12 km from Ohakune en route to Waiouru. Drive 1 km from the turn-off along Karioi Station Road, cross the railway line and continue to the Rotokura car park (see main map on fold-out back cover).

Lakes, beech forest and plentiful bird life feature on this short walk in Rotokura Ecological Area. The first lake you will pass on the track is Dry Lake, above which are flat, grassed areas that are perfect for family picnics. The track continues past Dry Lake to Lake Rotokura. This lake is surrounded by ancient beech forest and on clear days Mount Ruapehu is reflected in the lake's calm waters. Native birds such as tūī, kākā, bellbird, fantail and North Island robin are commonly seen or heard along the track to the lake. Rotokura is tapu (sacred healing waters) to Ngāti Rangi, the local Māori people or tangata whenua. Please respect this by not eating at or near Rotokura. Fishing is also prohibited.

National Cycle Trail: Ruapehu–Whanganui Trails

Ngā Ara Tūhono

From the mountains to the sea



15 Ohakune Old Coach Road and historic viaducts



Walking and cycling track: Ohakune to Horopito, 15 km.

Ohakune Railway Station to Horopito, 2 hr 20 min cycle / 4 hr 30 min walk

Ohakune Railway Station to Marshalls Road car park (3 km)

From the station, follow the footpath to the Mangawhero River Bridge and cross over onto Old Station Road. Continue about 1.5 km and turn right onto Marshalls Road. The track continues from the car park.

Old Coach Road. Photo: Camilla Stoddart



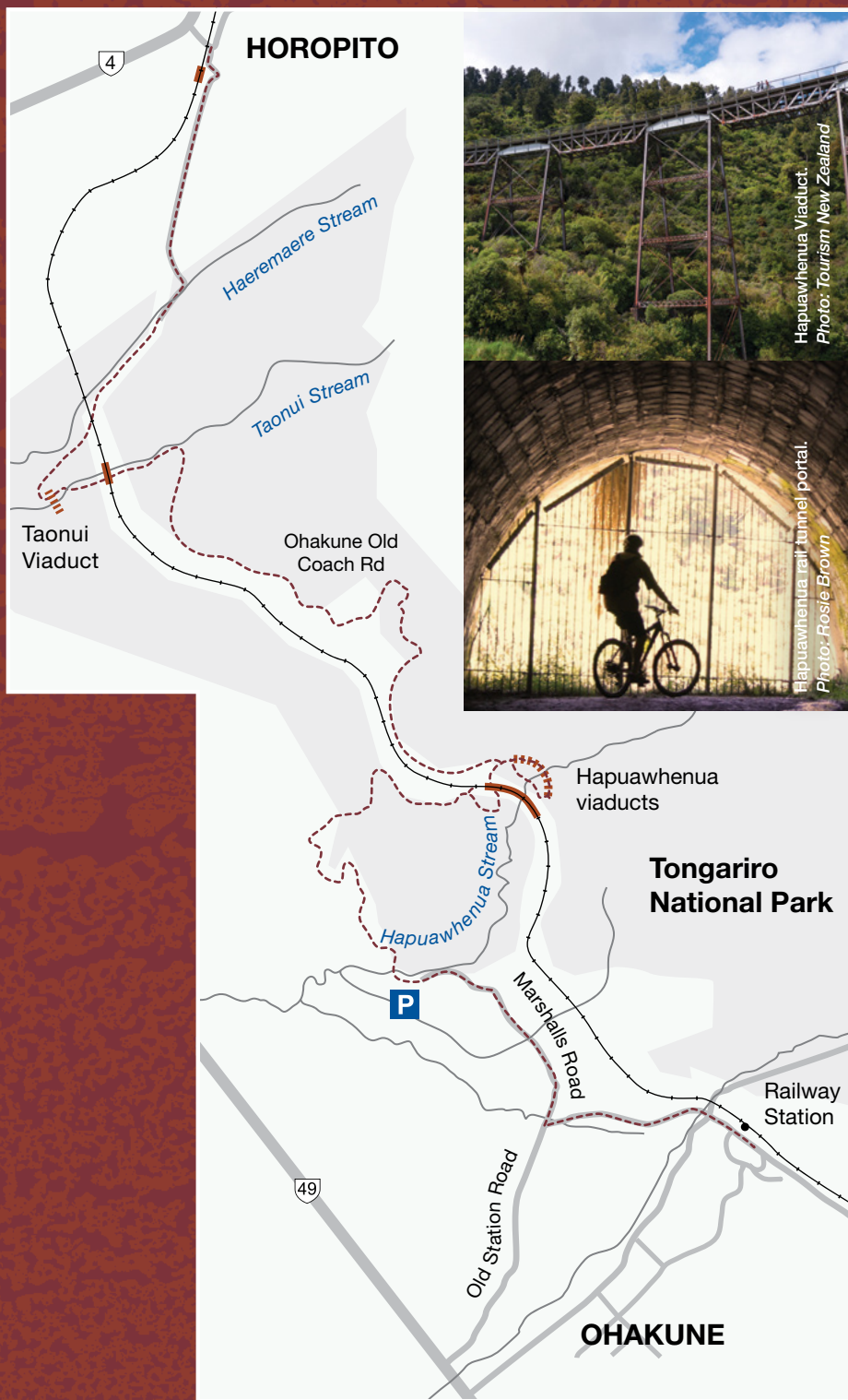
Marshalls Road car park to Hapuawhenua Viaduct

From the car park, the track follows Ohakune Old Coach Road, weaving its way through rolling farmland with views over the spectacular Ohakune basin. It then heads into native bush toward the Hapuawhenua viaducts. Cobblestones (setts) are still evident along the track. Explore the Hapuawhenua Tunnel and marvel at the workmanship of yesteryear. The track climbs up to a ridge before dropping into the Hapuawhenua valley. There are good stands of kahikatea, rimu, mataī and ponga along the way. From this point, the two viaducts come into view. Walk the historic Hapuawhenua Viaduct and enjoy both old and new viaducts and native forest surrounds. The limestone cliff that is visible high up on top of Raetihi is a reminder that this area was once under the sea. From here you can return to Ohakune or carry on to Horopito.

Hapuawhenua Viaduct to Horopito

From the western end of Hapuawhenua Viaduct, access the cycle trail to Horopito. The trail passes through a beautiful section of native bush before coming out on the original Old Coach Road again. This is known as the Skyline section, and some kilometres of it can be very muddy and difficult for less experienced riders. On the way to the highest point, the trail passes the old quarry that supplied much of the rock for the cobbles when the old dray road was upgraded to a coaching road in 1905.

At the top of the ridge you again pass by some magnificent rimu and rātā trees and there are beautiful views over farmland



and hills. Throughout this part of the trail there are old campsites that were established when the dray road was upgraded. While not much can be seen of them, they are a reminder of the hardships the road workers and their families faced while living in canvas-covered houses in the midst of a cold, wet rainforest.

Shortly after crossing the bridge over a beautiful spring-fed stream, there is a grassed picnic area surrounded by rimu and tawa trees. This is an ideal place to stop for a rest before continuing through the forest, down the hill to the Taonui Stream and under the new Taonui Rail Bridge. The trail follows the stream down to the historic Taonui Viaduct. From the top of the viaduct, you follow part of the old railway alignment through to the present-day railway line. The railway line must be crossed at the designated crossing point. Use caution when looking for trains which regularly use the line.

From the railway line the next points of interest are the old viaduct abutments across the Haeremaere Stream. From here the trail crosses the stream and follows the Old Coach Road through to Horopito. Signs at each end of the trail give distances and time estimates for riding and walking. There are also directional signs en route. Please respect the environment and ensure all rubbish and human waste is removed from the park.

Marshalls Road, Ohakune to Hapuawhenua Viaduct return

6.8 km return, 1 hr 30 min cycle / 2 hr 30 min walk
See description on page 26 to the viaduct. Return via same route. Access along the railway line or rail access road is not permitted.

Day tramps (3–8 hr)

See Ohakune map (page 23)



16 Old Blyth Track

4–5 hr, 11 km round trip

This track begins on Ohakune Mountain Road. Following part of the historic route up Mount Ruapehu, the track climbs gradually through one of the few red beech stands in the park and then passes through kaikawaka and mountain beech until it meets the Waitonga Falls Track. When the Blyth Track was constructed in the early 1900s, much of the route was through alpine bog. Logs placed horizontally across the track ('corduroy') helped improve the muddy surface. The remains of this type of track can still be seen.

For the return it is necessary to retrace your steps or walk out to Ohakune Mountain Road via the Waitonga Falls/Round the Mountain tracks.

On and near Mount Tongariro

About a million people visit Tongariro National Park each year. Despite the popular ski fields on Mount Ruapehu, there are more visitors in summer than winter due to the excellent hiking opportunities.



Mangatepopo Track. Photo: John Strother

Walks (less than 3 hr)

See map (fold-out back cover)



17 Soda Springs Walk

3 hr, 6 km return

Begins at the Mangatepopo Road end, 13.4 km from Whakapapa Village, 7 km up Mangatepopo Road, off SH47. A 4-hr car parking restriction is in place at Mangatepopo car park from Labour weekend (at the end of October) until May.

The track to Soda Springs is part of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing and follows the Mangatepopo Stream. The most recent lava flows from Mt Ngāuruhoe appear

dark in contrast to the older flows, which are slowly revegetating.

Under the headwall of the Mangatepopo valley, these cold water springs create a small oasis of lush yellow mountain buttercups and white foxgloves in summer.

Mountain foxglove. Photo: C. Rudge



Day tramps (3–8 hr)



18 Historic Waihohonu Hut

3 hr, 6.3 km return

From the Desert Road, SH1, 35 km south of Tūrangi. See images (page 42).

Built in 1903/04 by the New Zealand Government, this hut used to be a stopover for stage coaches. The walls are constructed of a double layer of corrugated iron with a layer of pumice sandwiched between for insulation. No longer used for accommodation, the hut is preserved as a historical building and is classified by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

The track meanders through beech forest and open tussockland, crossing the Ohinepango Stream. At the junction where the track branches right to the new Waihohonu Hut or left to Rangipo Hut, continue straight ahead towards Whakapapa for about 5 min to the next junction and then turn left to reach the historic Waihohonu Hut. Return the same way.



19 Tongariro Alpine Crossing

7–8 hr, 19.4 km one way

Recommended direction is from Mangatepopo to Ketetahi. This track is part of the Tongariro Northern Circuit and begins at the Mangatepopo Road end, 13.4 km from Whakapapa.

This challenging trip begins at 1120 m above sea level, winding up the Mangatepopo valley to the saddle between Mounts Tongariro and Ngāuruhoē, through South Crater before climbing again to Red Crater, the highest point on the crossing at 1886 m.

The descent follows a volcanic rock scree track to the vivid Emerald Lakes, known as Ngā Rotopounamu (greenstone-hued lakes). After passing Blue Lake, also known as Te Wai-Whakaata-o-te-Rangihīroa (the mirror of Rangihīroa), the track sidles around the northern slope of Tongariro, and then descends on a long zigzag track down to the road end at 760 m.

For further details, see the summer Tongariro Alpine Crossing Day Hikes factsheet at www.doc.govt.nz/tac-brochure.

Take these essentials

- Drinking water (water not safe), food and toilet paper
- Waterproof jacket and pants, sunhat, sunscreen, warm hat, gloves, and layered clothing
- Sturdy tramping or mountaineering boots
- Mobile phone, personal locator beacon (PLB)
- Map, compass and/or GPS

Seasonal restrictions



Car parking

A 4-hr parking restriction is enforced each year from Labour weekend in October until May at the Mangatepopo and Ketetahi car parks. Traffic management staff are in place and a DOC ranger will carry out compliance work.

Plan ahead and book a shuttle with the i-SITE located in Whakapapa Village or at the nearby towns of Tūrangi, Ohakune, Taumarunui and Taupō: visit www.visitruapehu.com and www.greatlaketaupo.com. Shuttles can also be arranged with accommodation providers.



Winter conditions

You need special skills and preparation to complete the Tongariro Alpine Crossing during the winter months (May to October). There are increased risks from snow, ice, avalanche and sub-zero temperatures. An ice axe and crampons are essential, as is competency in using them. Be prepared to turn back if conditions are no longer safe or if your progress is too slow.

Dress for cold, windy and icy conditions: On a calm day, Red Crater is at least 10°C colder than Taupō and 5°C colder than the start of the track – and subtract another 2°C for every 10 km/hr of wind. Conditions can change quickly. Layer your clothes to trap warm air in and keep cold wind out. Start with a base layer of polypropylene/merino, add an insulation layer of fleece/wool and finish with a waterproof shell layer.

Expect ice on the track between April and October. A helmet, crampons and ice axe are essential, as is competency in using them, as 38% of tramping injuries are from slipping.

Be avalanche alert: Take an avalanche transceiver, avalanche probe and snow shovel, and be competent in using them.

Make a plan: Talk with someone at the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre who knows the current crossing conditions. See also www.doc.govt.nz/tongariroalpinecrossing.

For further information, see the winter Tongariro Alpine Crossing factsheet *Are you prepared?* at www.doc.govt.nz/tac-winter-brochure.

The Mountain Safety Council also has great information and short videos to help you plan and prepare for your trip. Visit www.mountainsafety.org.nz.



Lake Rotopounamu.
Photo: DOC

Further afield

Venture further out to explore a beautiful lake surrounded by native forest, a special favourite of tree lovers, birdwatchers and families.

Walks (less than 3 hr)

See map (fold-out back cover)

20 Taurewa Loop Track 2–3 hr, 4.5 km loop track

17 km from Whakapapa Village. Take SH47 north, turn left at John McDonald Road (gravel road) and turn right onto Pukehinau Road. Look for the Taurewa Loop Track sign. The track starts on the edge of Tongariro Forest and follows old milling trails through bush.

21 Okupata Caves 25 km from Whakapapa Village. Turn off SH47, travel 11 km down John McDonald Road (rough gravel road). Veer left at the Pukehinau Road intersection and continue to caves.

A natural, unmarked network of limestone passages in Tongariro Forest. Recommended for experienced cavers only. Heavy rainfall may result in rising water levels or flooding in the caves.

22 Te Porere Redoubt Walk 45 min, 2.5 km return

25 km from Tūrangi on SH47 (just south of junction with SH46), 22.3 km from Whakapapa.

These 1869 earthwork fortifications (outpost and main redoubt) were built by the Māori warrior Te Kooti and his followers. It was here that the last of the Aotearoa New Zealand land wars were fought. This area is preserved by Heritage New Zealand and Te Rūnanganui o Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro.

23 Lake Rotopounamu Track 20 min to lake; 2 hr, 5 km loop track

11 km from Tūrangi, 35 km from Whakapapa on SH47. Car park signposted south of Te Ponanga Saddle. The beautiful Lake Rotopounamu (the greenstone lake), nestled into the side of Mount Pihanga, is a favourite of tree lovers, birdwatchers, walkers and swimmers. Beginning opposite the car park, the track winds gently uphill and then branches at the top – both tracks lead around the lake, go past several beaches and return to the junction.

24 Ohinetonga Track 2 hr, 3.8 km loop track

35 km from Whakapapa Village. Turn right onto SH4 at National Park, head north towards Taumorunui and turn right at the ‘Walking tracks’ sign in Ōwhango. This reserve lies between Ōwhango and the Whakapapa River (not shown on map). The track winds through a variety of attractive scenery, past Ohinetonga Lagoon and through beautiful forest. There are picnic areas and good places to swim by the river.

Day tramps (3–8 hr)

See map (fold-out back cover)

25 Tupapakuraa Falls Track 4–5 hr, 11 km return to Tupapakuraa Falls Lookout

From National Park village, walk 30 min down Fishers Road. The Tupapakuraa Falls Track starts on the left. The track has recently been upgraded by the local community in partnership with DOC. It begins with an easy 20-min walk to the Taranaki Lookout. From this point, the track becomes a backcountry adventure track and is suitable for experienced trampers only. The track follows a ridge and then descends steeply to a stream. There are good stands of tawa, mature rimu, miro and tōtara to see along the way. Climbing from the stream, the track winds its way around bluffs to a good lookout point with views of the falls.

Multi-day tramping tracks

Tongariro National Park has a range of day and multi-day tracks for serious trampers.



26 Round the Mountain Track

This is a 4–6 day tramp around Mount Ruapehu. It is ideal for those seeking solitude, magnificent mountain views and a backcountry experience, and is a more remote alternative to the popular Tongariro Northern Circuit. Enjoyable in either direction.

The track can be walked at any time of the year, but the safest and most popular time is from December to March. During this period, the track is normally clear of snow and the weather is less severe.

The Round the Mountain Track traverses a myriad of landscapes, ranging from mountain beech forest, tussock country and alpine herbfields to desert lands and glacial river valleys. Although a greater part of the track is in an alpine environment, there are no major alpine passes.

There are six huts on the track. Five are backcountry huts on a first-come basis only, while Waihohonu is a Great Walk hut requiring reservations in the Great Walk season.

More detailed information and maps are available at the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre.

- NZTopo50 series: BJ34 Mount Ruapehu and BJ35 Waiouru

Access

It is possible to walk sections of the track in 1–2 days, or complete the full trip in up to 6 days. Access points are at:

- **Whakapapa**
Whakapapa Village – Silica Rapids Track/Whakapapaiti Track entrance. There are overnight car parks in the village opposite the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre.
- **Scoria Flat**
5 km from Whakapapa Village on Bruce Road.
- **Desert Road (SH1)**
There is a car park just off the Desert Road, 35 km from Tūrangi or 21 km from the Rangipo Junction. It is approximately 1 hr 30 min to the Round the Mountain Track/Tongariro Northern Circuit junction, then a further 5 hr to Rangipo Hut.

- **Ohakune Mountain Road**

There are two access points on opposite sides of the road: the Waitonga Falls car park (at 11 km) and Whanganui Corner (at 15 km).

- **Tongariro Northern Circuit**

There are two connection points with the Tongariro Northern Circuit: Whakapapa Village and the Waihohonu Track junction.

- **Tūkino Road (four-wheel drive)**

This is not a regular track access point. The road leads to the Tukino Skifield and road conditions vary - it can be rough at any time of the year and is often impassable in winter due to snow. In summer, there is a locked gate beyond the point where the Round the Mountain Track crosses the road.

Whakapapa Village to Waihohonu Hut

5 hr 30 min, 14.3 km one way

The track begins at the end of Ngāuruhoe Place, 100 m below the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre.

There are two options. The lower Taranaki Falls Track crosses tussock and shrubland before following the Wairere Stream through mountain beech forest to the base of the Taranaki Falls. On leaving the falls, the track climbs a set of steps and brings you to the junction with the upper Taranaki Falls Track (1 hr 15 min to this point). Alternatively, the upper Taranaki Falls Track takes you over tussock and shrubland to the same point in 1 hr.

After leaving the Taranaki Falls Track, it is a further 2 hr to Tama Saddle and the Tama lakes junction. From here a side trip can be made to the Tama lakes. Tama Saddle is exposed and can be windy in bad weather (see page 21).

From Tama Saddle, the track gradually descends for 2 hr down the Waihohonu Stream to Waihohonu Hut (note that reservations are required from late October to April). A side trip can be made from the Round the Mountain Track to the historic Waihohonu Hut (see page 31), about 10 min before you reach the new hut.

Waihohonu Hut to Rangipo Hut

5 hr, 12.5 km one way

The track from Waihohonu Hut to Rangipo Hut is in one of the most unique areas of the park. It is the only true desert landscape in the North Island and features vast plains of wind-sculptured sands and volcanic rock. The Rangipo Desert is dryer than most areas in Tongariro National Park as it is sited in the rain shadow to the east of Mount Ruapehu.

The track passes Ohinepango Springs and then traverses the eastern side of Ruapehu, past Tūkino Road and the Whangaehu River, eventually arriving at Rangipo Hut. The hut is perched on the southern edge of the desert with views east to the Kaimanawa Mountains.

Rangipo Hut to Mangaehuehu Hut

5 hr 30 min, 8.5 km one way

The trip from Rangipo to Mangaehuehu is an undulating traverse. It leaves the desertlands of Rangipo, re-entering the mountain beech forest on the southern flanks of Mount Ruapehu. A feature of this section is crossing the awesome Wahianoa Gorge, which cuts a path down the mountain into Karioi Forest.



Rangipo Hut. Photo: Eduardo Vilouira Stengl

Mangaehuehu Hut to Ohakune Mountain Road

3 hr, 8.9 km one way

The gradual downhill traverse from Mangaehuehu weaves through open alpine tussock country and mountain beech stands. After 1 hr 30 min, a track junction gives walkers the option of a side trip to Blyth Hut (1 hr return) or continuing out to Ohakune

Mountain Road. About 20 min past the track junction is the Waitonga Falls (39 m), one of the highest falls in Tongariro National Park. The track out to the road passes Rotokawa, a tarn featuring several alpine wetland species and spectacular views of Ruapehu on a clear day.

A second junction indicates the Old Blyth Track to the left (1 hr 15 min to the 7-km point on Ohakune Mountain Road) or the Waitonga Falls car park straight ahead (15 min to the 11-km point on the road) (see page 24). There is a 3-km walk up the road to link up with the Round the Mountain Track again.

Ohakune Mountain Road to Mangaturuturu Hut

1 hr 30 min, 3 km one way

The track begins at Whanganui Corner, the 15-km point on Ohakune Mountain Road, and descends into the Makotuku valley. It crosses over a lava ridge covered in alpine herbs and then descends into the expansive Mangaturuturu valley via The Cascades, where a mountain stream tumbles over a spectacular rockfall. The rocks are coated with a creamy-coloured silica deposit left behind by the fast-flowing stream.

Take care here, as the rocks can be slippery all year round. Mangaturuturu Hut, situated on the valley floor, is maintained jointly by DOC and the Wanganui Tramping Club.



Mangaturuturu Hut to Whakapapaiti Hut

5 hr 30 min, 10.3 km one way

On leaving the hut, the track crosses the Mangaturuturu River. Take care crossing the river and be aware that it may not be possible to cross safely when the river is high during or after heavy rain. The river bed was scoured out in 1975 by a lahar, so the sides of the river are devoid of established vegetation. A climb out of the valley brings you to Lake Surprise, a shallow alpine tarn. The staircase that climbs up from Lake Surprise onto the ridge above was constructed to protect the fragile alpine environment previously destroyed by trampers clambering up the difficult rock face.

The traverse to Whakapapaiti features two magnificent river valleys, the Manganuioteao and the Makatote. These rivers merge in the Ruatiti valley and then flow into the Whanganui River. This part of the track features views of Hauhungatahi, a conical peak to the northwest of Ruapehu, as well as spectacular waterfalls tumbling off lava bluffs in the Whakapapaiti valley. The track junction just before Whakapapaiti Hut gives you the option of continuing on to Scoria Flat on Bruce Road (1 hr 30 min) or turning off to Whakapapaiti Hut (15 min) and continuing on to Whakapapa Village (2 hr 30 min).

Whakapapaiti Hut to Whakapapa Village

1 hr 30 min to Scoria Flat one way

2 hr 30 min, 8.7 km to the village one way

From Whakapapaiti Hut, the track continues down the valley and crosses the Whakapapaiti River 15 min below the hut. In low flow, it is possible to boulder hop across the river, but after heavy rain, crossings can be unsafe. If necessary, take the alternative return route via the Round the Mountain top track to Scoria Flat, 5 km above Whakapapa Village on Bruce Road. In winter, this route may be covered in snow and ice. Crampons, ice axes and alpine experience may be required.

About 45 min below the hut, the Mangahuia Track branches off to the left (to Mangahuia Campsite and SH47). The track to the village continues straight on and then veers east. Interesting features of this area are the groves of kaikawaka and cabbage trees amongst the beech forest. From here the track undulates for a number of easy climbs and descents before joining the well-formed Silica Rapids Track for the last 45 min to Whakapapa Village.

Side trips

Historic Waihohonu Hut

See walk 18 (page 31) for more information.

Blyth Hut

1 hr return from track junction

Blyth Hut can be reached by leaving the Round the Mountain Track at a junction just east of the Waitonga Falls. A gentle climb through mountain beech forest brings you out into the open, from where the hut is a short climb above the headwaters of the Mangateitei Stream. The hut site features expansive views of the mountain and the countryside to the south.



◀ Inside the historic Waihohonu Hut

This is the oldest existing mountain hut in Aotearoa New Zealand. Built in 1904, this was the first hut in Tongariro National Park and served as the base for the first recreational skiing.



Beware of strong crosswinds on the ridgelines up to the Upper Tama lake lookout.



Tama lakes

Lower Tama: 20 min return from the junction

Upper Tama: 1 hr 30 min return from the junction

The junction to the Tama lakes is approximately an hour's walk from the Taranaki Falls on the way to Waihohonu Hut.

The Tama lakes are two infilled explosion craters that are named after Tamatea, the high chief of the *Tākitimu* waka, who explored the area six centuries ago. The lower lake (1200 m above sea level) is a 10-min side trip from the junction. Volcanic debris is slowly washing in and filling the crater. The upper lake (at 1314 m) is a further 35 min up a steep ridge. This beautiful lake is reputed to be very deep.

Ohinepango Springs

5 min return from the Round the Mountain Track

1 hr return from the new Waihohonu Hut

The springs are signposted on the Round the Mountain Track heading south towards Rangipo Hut. Crystal-clear cold water bubbles up from beneath an old lava flow and discharges at an enormous rate into the Ohinepango Stream.

**27 Tongariro Northern Circuit**

Reservations required in the

Great Walks season (see page 9).

A range of trips can be planned around the Tongariro Northern Circuit, from day trips to overnight trips or a 3- to 4-day walk around the complete circuit. The most popular time of year to walk the Tongariro Northern Circuit is during the summer months (December to March) when the tracks are normally clear of snow and the weather is less severe.

The Tongariro Northern Circuit connects with the Round the Mountain Track at two points – Whakapapa Village and Waihohonu.

More detailed information and maps are available at the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre:

- NZTopo50 series: BJ34 Mount Ruapehu, BH34 Raurimu and BH35 Tūrangi
 - Tongariro Northern Circuit brochure
- www.doc.govt.nz/tongarironortherncircuit

Whakapapa to Mangatepopo Hut**3 hr (up to 5 hr in bad weather), 8.5 km one way**

Begins 100 m below the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre at Ngāuruhoe Place and along the lower Taranaki Falls Track.

About 20 min from the village, the Mangatepopo Track branches off the Taranaki Falls Track. The track then skirts around Pukekaikiore for about an hour before reaching the Mangatepopo valley. Mangatepopo Hut is 5 min from the Mangatepopo Road end.

Mangatepopo Hut to Emerald Lakes**3 hr 30 min, 8 km**

The track follows the Mangatepopo Stream up the glacially carved valley, climbing over a succession of lava flows from Ngāuruhoe. A 5-min detour at the head of the valley leads to Soda Springs, cold springs that emerge from beneath an old lava flow.

The steep climb to Mangatepopo Saddle is known as the Devil's Staircase. It rewards climbers with views of the valley and, if clear, Mount Taranaki to the west. From the saddle, the track crosses South Crater, not a true crater but a drainage basin between the surrounding volcanic landforms.

The climb to Red Crater offers splendid views of the Oturere valley and the Kaimanawa Mountains to the east. Local iwi ask that you respect their tikanga and do not climb to the summit. Follow the main track along the crater rim. The large flat-topped crater seen ahead is North Crater.

A scoria-covered ridge leads down to the Emerald Lakes. These three lakes fill old explosion craters and their brilliant colour is caused by minerals washed down from the thermal area of Red Crater. The lakes are tapu or sacred and also have a high mineral content, so swimming in them is not permitted. Just beyond the Emerald Lakes, the track branches right to Oturere Hut or continues straight ahead to the Ketetahi Road end.



Emerald Lakes to Oturere Hut

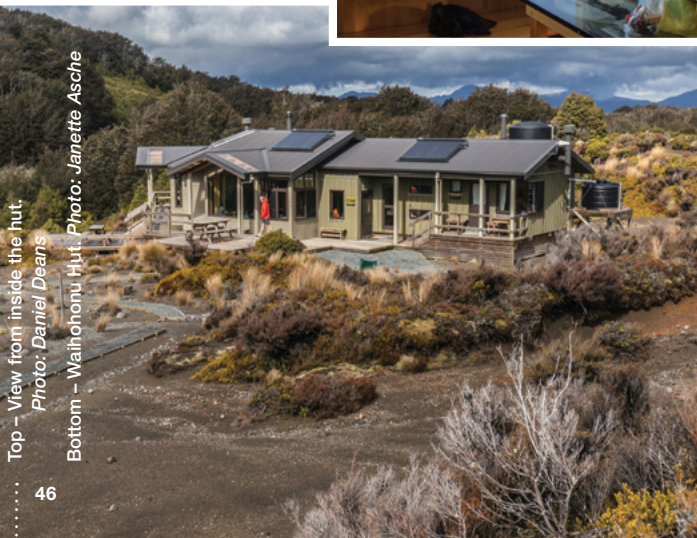
1 hr 30 min, 4.8 km

From the Emerald Lakes, the track descends steeply into the Oturere valley, offering views of the valley and the Kaimanawa Mountains. The track weaves through an endless variety of unusual jagged lava forms created by early eruptions from Red Crater. This is a magical place to visit, especially on a misty day. Oturere Hut is nestled on the eastern edge of these flows.

Oturere Hut to Waihohonu Hut

3 hr, 7.5 km

After leaving Oturere Hut, the track undulates through a number of stream valleys and open gravel fields. The track gradually sidles around the foothills of Ngāuruhoe, descending into a valley and crossing one of the branches of the Waihohonu Stream. Continue through a beech-clad valley before climbing towards the ridge top. Waihohonu Hut is in the next valley.



Top - View from inside the hut.
Photo: Daniel Deans
Bottom - Waihohonu Hut. Photo: Janette Asche

Waihohonu Hut to Whakapapa Village

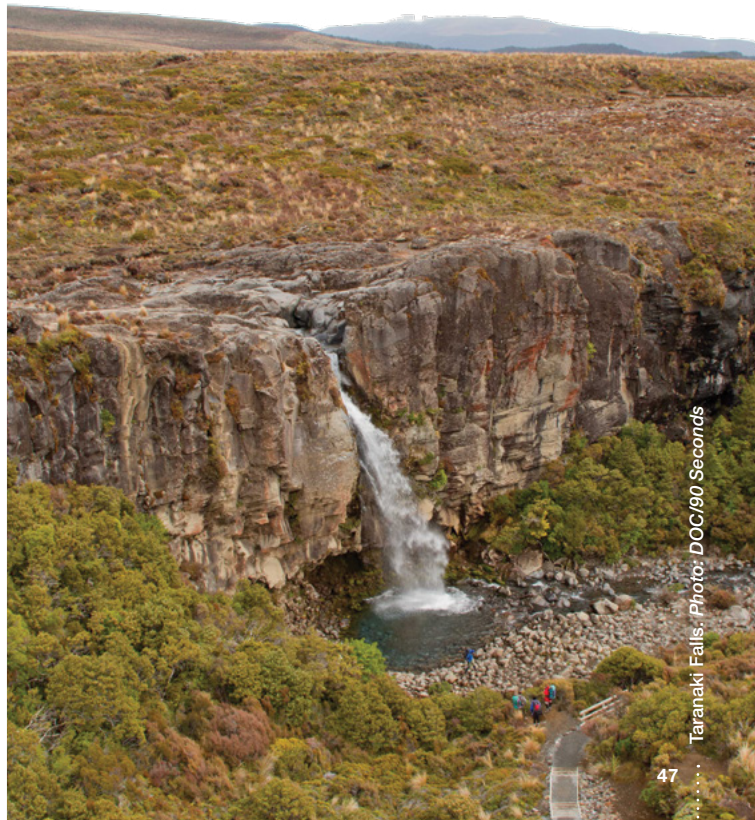
5 hr 30 min, 14.3 km

From the historic hut, the track follows the Waihohonu Stream, gradually climbing to Tama Saddle. Note that this saddle is exposed and can be windy in bad weather.

On reaching the saddle, a track branches right to the Tama lakes, two partially infilled explosion craters. The lower lake is a 10-min side trip from the junction while the upper lake is a 1 hr 30 min side trip up a steep ridge.

Whakapapa Village is approximately 2 hr from the Tama lakes junction. After the first hour, the track meets the Taranaki Falls Track. To view the falls, follow the lower track down a flight of stairs to a boulder-ringed pool at the base of the falls. The track then continues alongside the Wairere Stream through mountain beech forest.

Alternatively, take the upper track through tussock and shrubland. Both options take about 1 hr to return to the village.



Taranaki Falls. Photo: DOC/90 Seconds

Backcountry travel in Tongariro National Park



Travelling beyond the track network in Tongariro National Park is not recommended without backcountry skills and experience. Skills and experience in navigation, route selection, hazard identification, weather interpretation and survival are needed to safely visit the wilderness. Natural hazards are not managed in Tongariro National Park beyond the ski areas. Visiting backcountry alpine areas exposes you to volcanic hazards, avalanche terrain, ice and potentially dangerous weather conditions. Before deciding to venture off the track, ask yourself 'Do I have the skills, equipment and experience to make it home?'.

There is reasonable cellular coverage around the park. If you are lost and/or injured, call 111 and ask for Police. In New Zealand, the Police handle all land search and rescue operations.

A personal locator beacon (PLB) is a reliable method of alerting authorities to lost or injured trampers. PLBs are available for hire at the i-SITEs at the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre, Tūrangi and Ohakune.



Don't lose your way

When travelling in the backcountry, especially on unmarked routes, it is essential to have excellent navigational skills and equipment, as well as favourable weather conditions. Otherwise you may find yourself lost.

If you lose your way – do not panic!

- Try to retrace your steps to the last point where you recognise the route.
- Mark your current position (eg with a hat on a rock) and only move within sighting distance of this object so that you do not stray further from your known route.
- Do not split up the party.
- Do not travel in 'white out' conditions or in the dark.
- If you cannot find the route, and visibility allows, head for the best shelter that you can find (eg any building, the leeward side of a ridge, a large rock). Then stay in one place.
- Make your position as conspicuous as possible.

Unique flora and fauna

Wildlife

Aotearoa New Zealand's plants and animals have developed during 80 million years of isolation from the ancient supercontinent of Gondwana. As a result, many of them are unique and found only in this country.

Birds found in Tongariro National Park include whio/blue duck, North Island brown kiwi, North Island robin, whitehead, kererū, fantail, silvereye, chaffinch, tūi, tomtit, blackbird, kākārīki/yellow-crowned parakeet, ruru/morepork, kārearea/New Zealand falcon and kākā.

While most of the birds are active during the day, some of the park's unique creatures, such as bats and kiwi, only come out at night. Tongariro is home to Aotearoa New Zealand's only native land mammals, the short- and long-tailed bats. Skinks and geckos are also found in the park, but are more likely to be visible during the warmer summer months.

Silvereye. Photo: Sabine Bernert



Kākā on a branch. Photo: Sabine Bernert



Whio/blue duck.
Photo: Sabine Bernert

Insects found in the park include many varieties of cicada, Aotearoa New Zealand's largest beetle (the huhu), the rare forest ringlet butterfly, wētā and many species of moths.

Most notable among the introduced animals are deer, goats, possums and hares, all of which cause severe damage to alpine and forest vegetation.

Wasps also pose a threat to native bird species with which they compete for food. Red deer provide sport for hunters, but unfortunately also severely affect the health of our native forests. Stoats and rats are major predators of native birds.

Wētā are found throughout the park. Photo: Sabine Bernert



Huhu beetle perched on a plant. Photo: Rob Scotcher



Ruru/morepork. Photo: Sabine Bernert

Vegetation

The park's plant life has to cope with a wide spectrum of climatic conditions and temperatures that range from warm to freezing cold.

In barren, dry and cold environments like the Rangipo Desert or high slopes on the mountains, many plants adopt a low creeping form (eg vegetable sheep) or shelter in cracks and crevices.

In moist alpine environments, mountain shrubs survive, many of them herbaceous. Common plants in this category include mountain inaka and white daisy.

Sedges, rushes and flaxes are common in the park's wetlands, such as those on the southern slopes of Mount Ruapehu, and around Hauhungatahi.

The greatest variety of plants probably exists in the tussock grasslands that are characteristic of the park's mid-mountain slopes. While red tussock may seem to dominate these landscapes, these native grasses

shelter a large number of other plants, including mosses, daisies, hebes and mountain toatoa.



Mountain beech forest is the most widespread forest type in the park, occurring as an almost continuous belt around the western and southern slopes of Ruapehu. Distinctive in these mountain beech forests is kaikawaka or mountain cedar, which is recognised by its dark green, conical appearance.

Silver and red beech occur in isolated patches on the eastern slopes of Tongariro and extensively on the south slopes of Ruapehu, in a zone below the mountain beech. In other scattered areas of the park, usually between 600 m and 900 m, various hardwood species and podocarps can be found, such as rimu, kāmahī, kahikatea and rātā.

Native plants in the park have been displaced by introduced plants (or weeds), including heather and broom. Although these weeds have attractive flowers, they are aggressively invading many tussock grasslands in the park.



Protecting our natural heritage

Rangataua Forest

Rangataua Forest is a 10,000-ha forest located on the southern slopes of Mount Ruapehu. It contains a high number of nationally ranked, high-priority threatened species and ecosystems, including the North Island's largest mistletoe population and the largest known population of short-tailed bats in Aotearoa New Zealand. There are also populations of North Island brown kiwi and kākā, as well as endangered wetland orchids.

DOC's work in Rangataua Forest involves controlling pests like rats and stoats that prey on the endangered birds and bats, as well as controlling possums that destroy native plants. DOC also monitors the bat, kiwi and endangered plant populations, as well as carrying out weed control in the wetlands and alpine areas.

Rangataua Forest is a significant area for the local iwi Ngāti Rangī because of their cultural and historic association with the southern side of Mount Ruapehu.

Access to the area is through Rotokura Ecological Area, situated just off SH49, 14 km southeast of Ohakune, where there is a 30-min walk to tranquil Lake Rotokura.

Mount Pihanga and Lake Rotopounamu restoration

Mount Pihanga is situated at the northernmost point of Tongariro National Park, and Lake Rotopounamu (see page 34) is nestled into its flank, an easy 20-min walk from SH47. A project began in 2003 with the aim of protecting and restoring the native biodiversity of the area.

To date, Project Tongariro volunteers and DOC have:

- undertaken monitoring and investigation of pest control in the area
- carried out a nesting success study on New Zealand robin
- set up bat detection boxes
- completed a freshwater study of the lake.

Project Tongariro

Project Tongariro (known for many years as the Tongariro Natural History Society) is made up of people from throughout Aotearoa New Zealand with a love for Tongariro National Park and the surrounding areas, and a commitment to conservation.



The vision is to promote a wider knowledge and appreciation of the unique natural heritage, historic, educational and recreational values of Tongariro. Since its establishment in 1984 as a living memorial to five people who died in a helicopter accident on Mount Ruapehu, Project Tongariro has contributed to promoting and supporting conservation efforts in and around Tongariro National Park, such as replanting the forest around Rotopounamu, restoring the Hapuwhenua Viaduct as a walkway and providing opportunities for students to study in the park.

Project Tongariro welcomes new members. If you enjoy visiting the park and wish to give practical support or are interested in learning more, please contact them.

Email: info@tongariro.org.nz

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Diverse range of alpine plants.
Photo: stokeforsaturday.com

Tongariro National Park

Map key

- 8 Whakapapaiti Valley Track
- 9 Tama Lakes Track
- 14 Lake Rotokura Walk
- 15 Ohakune Old Coach Road and historic viaducts
- 16 Old Blyth Track
- 17 Soda Springs Walk
- 18 Historic Waihohonu Hut
- 19 Tongariro Alpine Crossing
- 20 Taurewa Loop Track
- 21 Okupata Caves
- 22 Te Porere Redoubt Walk
- 23 Lake Rotopounamu Track
- 24 Ohinetonga Track
- 25 Tupapakuraa Falls Track
- 26 Round the Mountain Track
- 27 Tongariro Northern Circuit

-  Scenic campsite
-  Serviced hut
-  Great Walk hut
-  Picnic area
-  Information
-  Caving

Note that the maps in this brochure are a guide only and should not be used for navigation. The appropriate NZTopo50 series maps for these trips are:

- BJ34 Mount Ruapehu
- BH34 Raurimu
- BH35 Tūrangi
- BJ35 Waiouru.

