

Walks in and around Tongariro National Park



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

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Tongariro National Park – World Heritage Area

The 1887 Tuku

Horonuku Te Heuheu Tukino IV, (Paramount Chief) of Ngāti Tūwharetoa, one of the tribes who have 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 New Zealand 23 September 1887. Described as a 'Tuku', or offer to extend custodianship, this ensured that the Central North Island mountains would stay pristine and protected with joint ownership between the mana whenua and the Crown.

Iwi (Maori tribes) had always held land on a communal basis. Horonuku did not want to see the sacred mountains of his 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 the 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 and his people, Tongariro National Park was the first national park in 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 the Tongariro National Park Act 1894 has not adequately recognised the intent of Horonuku's tuku as an expression to share the ownership 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 Pakeha and a piece to another. They will become of no account, for the tapu will be gone. Tongariro is my ancestor, my tupuna, 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.



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 herb fields, 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 World Heritage status for natural and cultural values.



Getting here

This 78,618 ha park, located in the Central North Island, is bordered by State Highways 1, 49, 4 and 47. The nearest towns are Turangi, 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 Turangi.

Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre

The visitor centre for Tongariro National Park is situated in Whakapapa Village. It is open every day (closed Christmas Day) from 8 am to 5 pm. Exhibits include cultural and natural history, World Heritage and ski history displays. The centre takes reservations for the Tongariro Northern Circuit Great Walk and sells hut passes, a range of books, cards, maps and walking brochures.

Tel: (07) 892 3729 | Fax: (07) 892 3814

Email: tongarirovc@doc.govt.nz

Information on the Park is also available from the i-Sites in Ohakune (06) 385 8427, Taumarunui (07) 895 494 and Turangi (07) 386 999.



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 activity.

Visitors should be aware that volcanic activity is possible in this region at any time, and with little or no warning. Anyone intending to tramp or climb on the upper slopes of the volcanoes should first check the current volcanic alert status and any recommended safety information for the area. During times of volcanic activity trampers and skiers should move to high ground and out of valleys to avoid lahar danger.

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

Weather

The climate of Tongariro National Park is highly unpredictable and it can snow or rain at any time of the year. Check the weather forecast and track conditions before starting out on any walk or tramping trip and always be prepared for bad weather.

Westerly winds prevail, resulting in more rainfall in the west and less in the east, but strong winds can arrive from any direction. There is no wet or dry season in the park, although summer and autumn are the warmest seasons. For an up-to-date weather forecast check at a local visitor centre or with MetPhone: 0900 999 15 or 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 such times some unbridged rivers become difficult or impossible to cross, particularly those on the longer walks such as the Round the Mountain and Whakapapa Valley Tracks. If you come across a swollen river, do not cross it. Turn back or stop and wait for the river to subside.

Lahar hazard

Mt Ruapehu is an active volcano. An eruption may generate lahars (volcanic mudflows) in major valleys and in the Whakapapa ski-area. Trampers and skiers should familiarise themselves with known lahar paths and be prepared to move out of valleys should an eruption occur.

Snow and avalanches

Throughout the year any of the tracks in the park may be affected by snow and ice. In these conditions walks may take longer than the prescribed track times. After heavy snowfalls, be aware of avalanche danger – check information on the current snow stability before you set out (www.avalanche.net.nz/, select Tongariro). Treat any loaded ice slope as a high hazard area.

Throughout winter, ice axes and crampons (and the experience to use them) are usually required for the Mt Ngauruhoe summit, Tongariro Alpine Crossing and Mt Ruapehu Crater trips. Whakapapaiti Valley, Tama Lakes and Round the Mountain Tracks can also be snow-covered during winter and will require extra care. Visitors must be able to make their own on-site assessments of weather, route and avalanche conditions, and should consider carrying an avalanche transceiver, probe and shovel if venturing into snow-covered areas.

It is recommended that visitors who are not experienced in or equipped for alpine conditions consider going with a guided party

Water

Giardia may be present in some streams in the park. We recommend you boil all drinking water (for at least 3 mins).

Water from the upper Mangatepopo Stream, Emerald Lakes and Ketetahi 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. 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 to bring dogs or any other introduced animals into Tongariro National Park. This includes bringing pets to Whakapapa or Turoa ski fields, or into Whakapapa Village. To give greater protection to native wildlife please leave your pets at home.

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 carparks, is not recommended.

Mountain biking

Mountain biking is permitted in Tongariro National Park on formed roads i.e. Bruce Road, Ohakune Mountain Road, Tūkino Road, Mangatepopo Road, the 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 kilometres up Ohakune Mountain Road. Mangahua Campsite is located off State Highway 47. There is a charge and self-registration is required. Toilets are provided.

Campsites are located near each of the huts on the Tongariro Northern Circuit. There is a charge for campsites at huts, check the DOC website or at a DOC visitor centre for current rates. Reservations are required during the Great Walk season. If you camp at a campsite with a hut you may use any of the hut facilities except a bunk and mattress.

Hut and camping 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 hut/campsite pass sales.

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

Huts

There are eight public huts in Tongariro National Park available for overnight use. Historic Waihohonu Hut, preserved as an historic building, is not available for overnight use.

Facilities at 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 (the start of the third weekend in October to 30 April) huts in the Tongariro Northern Circuit (Mangatepopo, Oturere and Waihohonu) are also supplied with gas cookers. Hut wardens 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. Maximum group size at huts or campsites is 16. Use is limited to two consecutive nights.

Hut bookings and fees

The 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 www.doc.govt.nz - click the Book Online link. Alternatively, if you are unable to book online, staff at an i-Site or a DOC visitor centre can make bookings for you.

A booking fee may apply.

Other huts

Other huts in Tongariro National Park do not require booking 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

These are listed on the DOC website for the Great Walks Season under Tongariro National Park. For backcountry hut fees please contact your closest DOC office or visitor centre.

Backcountry Hut Passes and Backcountry Hut Tickets are not accepted on the Tongariro Northern Circuit during the Great Walk Season.

Rubbish

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 at Whakapapa Village.

Leave no trace

Please follow these guidelines when travelling and staying in the back country.



leave no trace
NEW ZEALAND

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others



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 on Mt Ruapehu, you should always have adequate footwear (tramping boots for all but the short walks), wind and waterproof raincoat and overtrousers, warm clothing, a hat, gloves, sun screen, water, food, drink and a map.

For longer walks, also take:

- Additional warm woollen or thermal clothing
- First aid kit
- Map and compass

During winter and snow conditions:

- Snow gaiters
- Snow goggles
- Ice axe and crampons (and know how to use them)

Consider also:

- Avalanche transceiver
- Snow shovel
- Avalanche probe



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, such as the Mt Ruapehu Crater climb, are completely unmarked and require special care and navigation.

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.

The tracks described in this booklet have been classified as follows:



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



Short Walk: well formed, easy walking for up to an hour



Walking Track: well formed easy walks 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 but have track directional markers, poles or cairns



Route: unformed, suitable only for people with high level backcountry skills and experience

For more track information see:

- New Topo 1:40,000 Mount Ruapehu map
- NZTopo50 series maps: BJ34 Mt Ruapehu, BH34 Raurimu, BH35 Turangi, and BJ35 Waiouru
- Tongariro Alpine Crossing brochure
- Tongariro Northern Circuit brochure

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468

Report any safety hazards or conservation emergencies

For fire and search and rescue call 111

Whakapapa

Whakapapa Village lies within Tongariro National Park, on the lower north-west slopes of Mount Ruapehu. The village has accommodation and other visitor services.

Walks - less than 3 hours

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

1. Whakapapa Nature Walk



15 minute loop track. Begins 250 metres above Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre on SH 48.

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.

2. Mounds Walk



20 minutes return. Begins 5 kilometres below Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre on SH 48.

Debris avalanches during Ruapehu's periods of volcanic activity 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 minutes, return. Begins 4 kilometres below Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre on SH 48.

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 Walking Track



30–40 minutes, 1.2 kilometres return. Begins 150 metres above Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre.

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

5. Taranaki Falls Walking Track



2 hours, 6 kilometre loop track. Begins 100 metres below the visitor centre on Ngauruhoe Place.

The track to Taranaki Falls has excellent mountain views and crosses a range of land forms. All streams are bridged. The upper and lower tracks form a loop with the falls situated around the half-way 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 Ngauruhoe's symmetrical cone and the older, eroded mountains of Tongariro and Pukekaikiore are visible. Once in the forest, the track descends to Wairere Stream then climbs alongside it, passing 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 warbler and rifleman 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, Taranaki Falls come into view tumbling 20 metres over the edge of a large andesite lava flow which erupted from Ruapehu 15,000 years ago. Wairere Stream is slowly eroding a channel through this lava flow.

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 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, fern birds 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 manuka, leading easily back to the village.

6. Whakapapanui Walking Track



2 hours, 6 kilometres return or SH 48. Begins 250 metres above Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre.

After a 10–15 minute walk, the Whakapapanui Walking Track branches to the right (don't follow the Whakapapa Track sign in error!) and heads downstream. Water-logged clearings are passed as the track follows Whakapapanui Stream. Here, storm-damaged beech forest is slowly regenerating. The track comes out at the bridge of SH48 3km below Whakapapa Village. On fine days, enjoy the views walking back along the highway; on wet/windy days, enjoy the shelter of the forest and return back along the trail.

7. Silica Rapids Walking Track



2½ hours, 7 kilometres return via Bruce Road. Begins 250 metres above Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre.

This track takes in a range of vegetation types as well as the creamy-white Silica Rapid terraces. After crossing 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 freshwater crayfish (koura). The boardwalk makes walking over swampy ground more comfortable and reduces the impact of foot traffic on delicate vegetation. On clear days 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 Punaruku Falls. Here, after heavy rain, 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 totara and olive-green bog pine give way to sun-loving alpine herbs and alpine flowers like mountain daisies, hare bells 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.

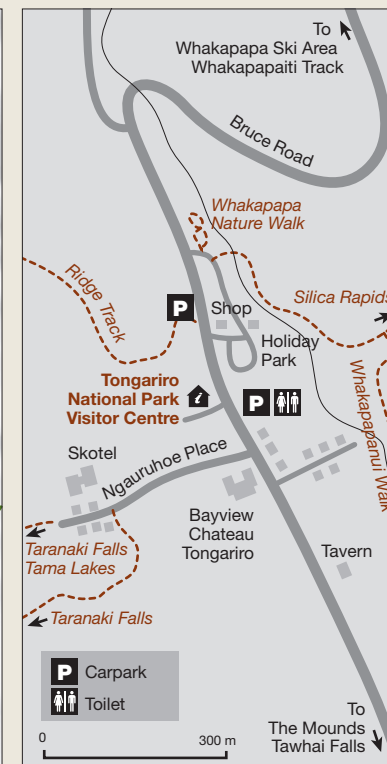
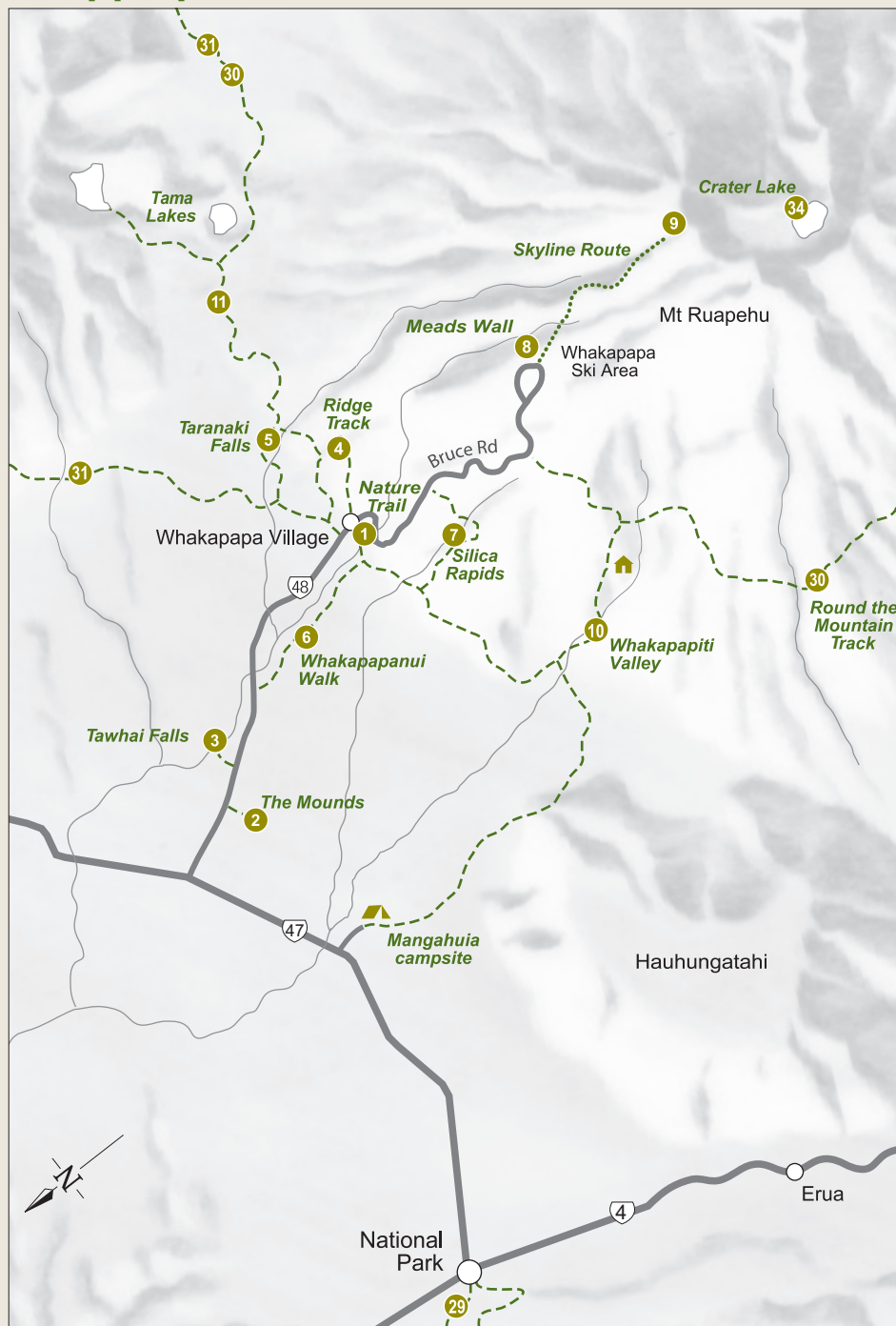
Moving on from the rapids, the track climbs onto a tussock-covered lava flow. A small clump of mountain beech and toatoa, seen a short distance up the mountain, forms the upper limit of beech trees in the area. The track then winds through tussock and sub-alpine shrubs to the Bruce Road, which can be followed downhill 2.5 kilometres to Whakapapa Village.

8. Meads Wall Route



Ten minutes return from Iwikau Village, at the top of the Bruce Road. Follow the route to Meads Wall – a spectacular rocky outcrop which was one of the filming locations for Lord of the Rings. Meads Wall drops off steeply and care is required whilst standing at the edge to enjoy spectacular views of the valley below and Ngauruhoe to the northeast.

Whakapapa maps



9. Skyline Route




1½–2 hours return from the top of Waterfall Express chairlift, Whakapapa Ski Area. This walk follows a poled route, marked only in summer, over steep rocky terrain and loose scree. There is no formed track. This walk is not recommended in winter, in poor weather, and/or snow or ice cover.

Follow the marker poles beside the Valley T-bar line, at the top of the T-bar, climb up the side of the ridge to your left for fantastic views. Return the same way.

Day tramps (3–8 hours)



10. Whakapapa Valley Tramping Track

 4–5 hours, 16 kilometre loop (including the Bruce Road section) or 11 kilometres one-way (transport required). Begins 250 metres above Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre. *See map (page 13).* The track can be walked in either direction but is described anticlockwise.

Follow Silica Rapids Track for about 45 minutes to the junction with Whakapapa Track. The track goes through forest then an open tussock-covered area. There is a bridged crossing of Whakapapa River, then the track continues up the valley, passing the junction with Mangahua Track (2–3 hours to campsite). Further up the valley there is an **unbridged river crossing** - it may not be possible to cross safely when the river is high following or during rainfall. Whakapapa Hut is 10–15 minutes further up the track.

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 Whakapapa Valley and the surrounding landscape. Continue to the Scoria Flat area on the Bruce Road. From here it is approximately 5 kilometres down the road to Whakapapa Village.

11. Tama Lakes Tramping Track

  5–6 hours, 17 kilometres return on same track. Begins 100 metres below the Visitor Centre at the end of Ngauruhoe 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 Taranaki Falls, the track branches off the Taranaki Falls Walk, to cross rolling tussock country and alpine herbfields. Further on, the track branches left to Tama Lakes, while the main track continues on to Waihohonu Hut. There is a view of the lower lake (1240 metres), and then the track climbs steeply to a viewpoint (1440 metres) of the upper lake.



Tama Lakes occupy several old explosion craters on Tama Saddle between Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe. The saddle acts as a funnel for prevailing westerly winds and windproof clothing is recommended.

Ohakune

Walks (less than 3 hours)


See Ohakune map (page 18)

12. Rimu Walk

  15 minutes return. This walk begins opposite the DOC Field Centre at the bottom of Ohakune Mountain Road.

This track loops off the Mangawhero Forest Walk. It meanders gently through an understorey of ground ferns and kāmahi and crisscrosses a quiet mountain stream. It is suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs.

13. Mangawhero Forest Walk

 1 hour, 3 kilometre loop track. This track begins opposite the DOC Field Centre 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 metres 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 returns to the Field Centre.

14. Mangawhero Falls Walk

 5–10 minutes return. Starts from a carpark on Ohakune Mountain Road, 13 kilometres past the DOC Field Centre.

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

15. Waitonga Falls Walking Track


 1 hour 20 minutes, 4 kilometres return. The track begins on Ohakune Mountain Road, 11 kilometres past the DOC Ohakune Base.

The park's highest waterfall, Waitonga Falls (39 metres), 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 Mt Ruapehu's southern face can be seen in the pools. Past the falls, the track continues as part of the Round the Mountain Track, a four to six day tramp around Mt Ruapehu (see page 25).



Lake Rotokura. Photo: Paul Smith

16. Lake Rotokura Walking Track

 30 minutes return. Signposted off SH 49, 12 kilometres from Ohakune enroute to Waiouru. Drive one kilometre from the turnoff along Karioi Station Road, cross the railway line, continue to Rotokura carpark. *See main map (page 20).*


Lakes, beech forest and plentiful bird life feature on this short walk in Rotokura Ecological Area. The first lake passed on the track is Dry Lake. Flat, grassed areas above the lake 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*

17. Ohakune Old Coach Road and Historic Viaducts Walk and Cycle Track:



Ohakune to Horopito (or reverse)

 15 kilometres: Ohakune Railway Station to Horopito
2 hours 20 min cycle 4 hours 30 min walk

Ohakune Railway Station to Marshalls Road carpark

From the station follow the footpath to the Mangawhero River Bridge and cross over onto Old Station Road. Continue about 1.5 kilometres and turn right onto Marshalls Road. Rongokaupo Wetland and picnic area, a community project under development, is situated about 350 metres before Marshalls Road carpark. Total distance, 3 kilometres. The track continues from the car park.

Marshalls Road carpark to Hapuawhenua Viaduct

From the car park the track follows the 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 (cyclists dismount on the viaduct) and enjoy both old and new viaducts and native forest surrounds. The limestone cliff that is visible high up on top of Raetihi Hill 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; 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 which supplied much of the rock for the cobbles as 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 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.



Cyclist on the historic Hapuawhenua Viaduct. Photo: Katie Millen, antonymillen.wordpress.com

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 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 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 enroute.

Please respect the environment and ensure all rubbish and human waste is removed from the park.

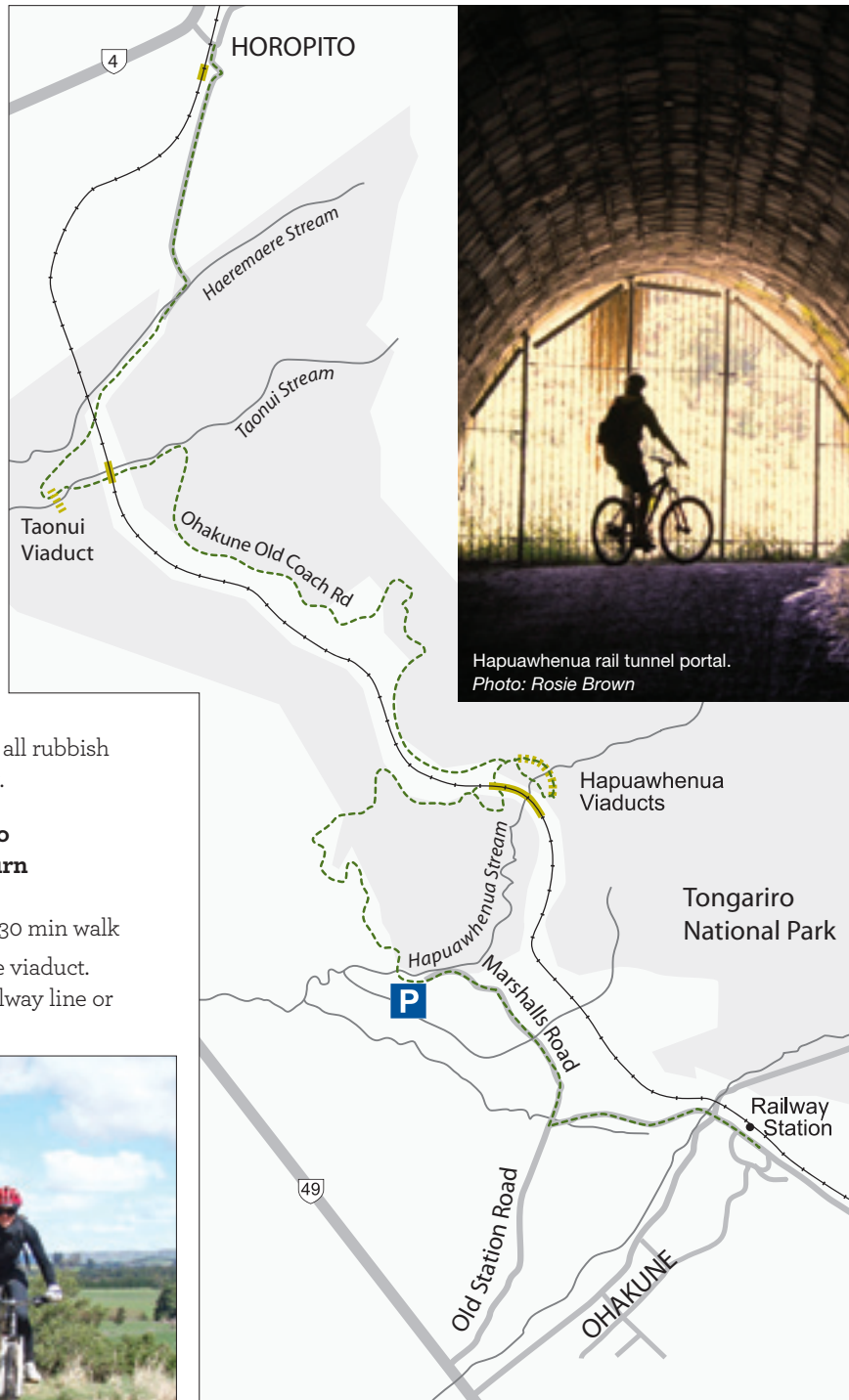


Marshalls Road, Ohakune to Hapuawhenua Viaduct return

6.8 kilometres return

1 hour 30 min cycle 2 hours 30 min walk

See description on page 15 (top right) to the viaduct. Return via same route. Access along the railway line or rail access road is not permitted.



Day tramps (3–8 hours)

See Ohakune map (page 18)

18. Lake Surprise Tramping Track

5 hours, 9 kilometres return. This track is part of the Round the Mountain Track and begins on the Ohakune Mountain Road, 15 kilometres past the DOC Field Centre.

After sidling around open country from Mountain Road, the track descends into Mangaturuturu Valley beside a beautiful cascade. This section can be very slippery. The creamy coating on the cascade is due to silica and mineral rich water from an alpine spring. Waterfalls and bluffs complement the backdrop of Mount Ruapehu. The Mangaturuturu River is forded shortly after passing Mangaturuturu Hut, (1 hour 30 minutes from the road). Evidence of the 1975 lahar (volcanic mudflow) can be seen here in the scoured treeless river banks. Lake Surprise, a broad, shallow lake set amongst beech forest and tussock, is reached after a steady climb from the river valley.

Return the same way or follow Horopito Track to Horopito (3 hours). *Please note that local landowner permission is required to bring vehicles on to the Horopito Trail.*

19. Old Blyth Tramping Track

4 to 5 hours, 11 kilometre round trip. This track begins on the Ohakune Mountain Road, 7 kilometres past the DOC Field Centre.

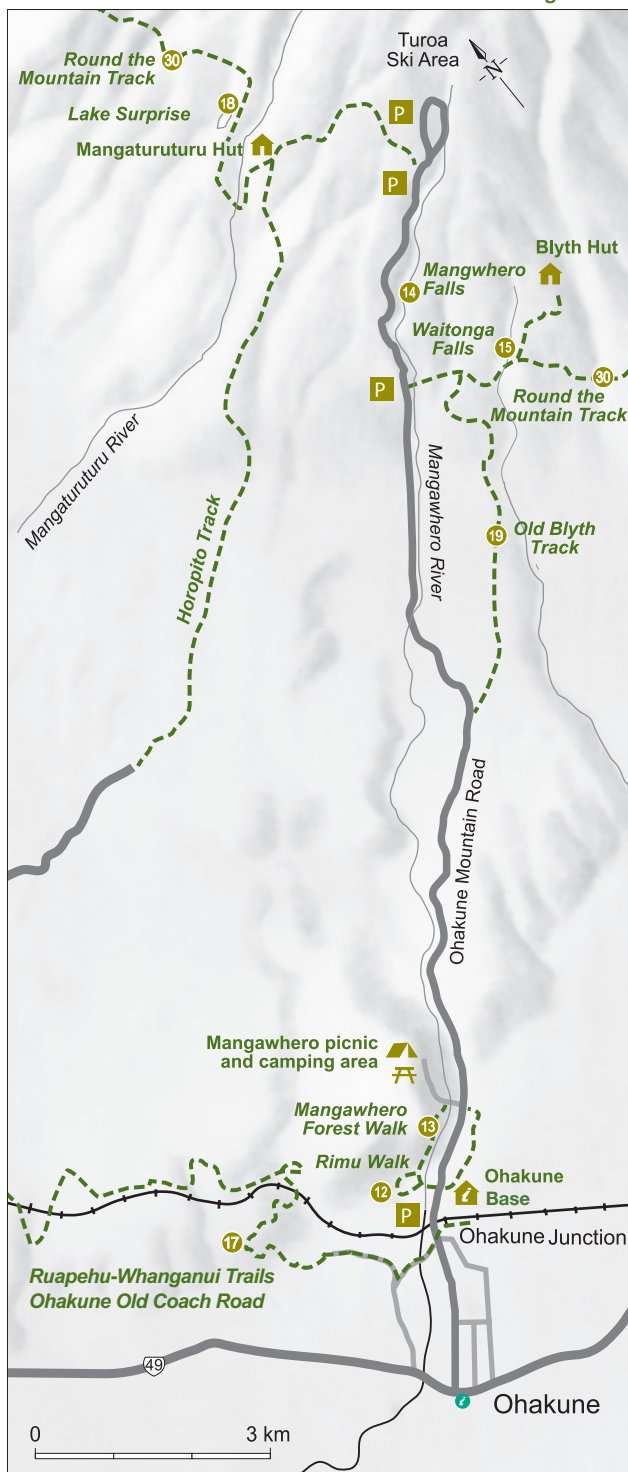
Following part of the historic route up Mount Ruapehu, the track climbs gradually through one of the few red beech stands in the park and then passes through kaikawaka and mountain beech until it meets the Waitonga Falls Track. When Blyth Track was constructed in the early 1900s, much of the route was 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 the Mountain Road via the Waitonga Falls / Round the Mountain Tramping Track, and then walk back down the road.



Photo: Brian Smith



Lake Surprise.
Photo: Sonia Frimmel



On and near Mt Tongariro

Walks (less than 3 hours)

See map (pages 20–21)

20. Soda Springs Walking Track



2 hours, 6 kilometres return. Begins at the Mangatepopo roadend 13.4 kilometres from Whakapapa Village, 7 kilometres up Mangatepopo Road, off SH 47.

The track to Soda Springs is part of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing Track and follows Mangatepopo Stream. Ngauruhoe's most recent lava flows 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.

Day tramps (3–8 hours)

21. Historic Waihohonu Hut



3 hours, 6.3 kilometres return from the Desert Road. 35 kilometres south of Turangi.

Built in 1903/04 by the government, this hut used to be a stop-over 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 an historical building and is classified by the Historic Places Trust.

The track meanders through beech forest and open tussock land, 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 five minutes to the next junction. Turn left to reach the historic Waihohonu Hut. Return the same way.

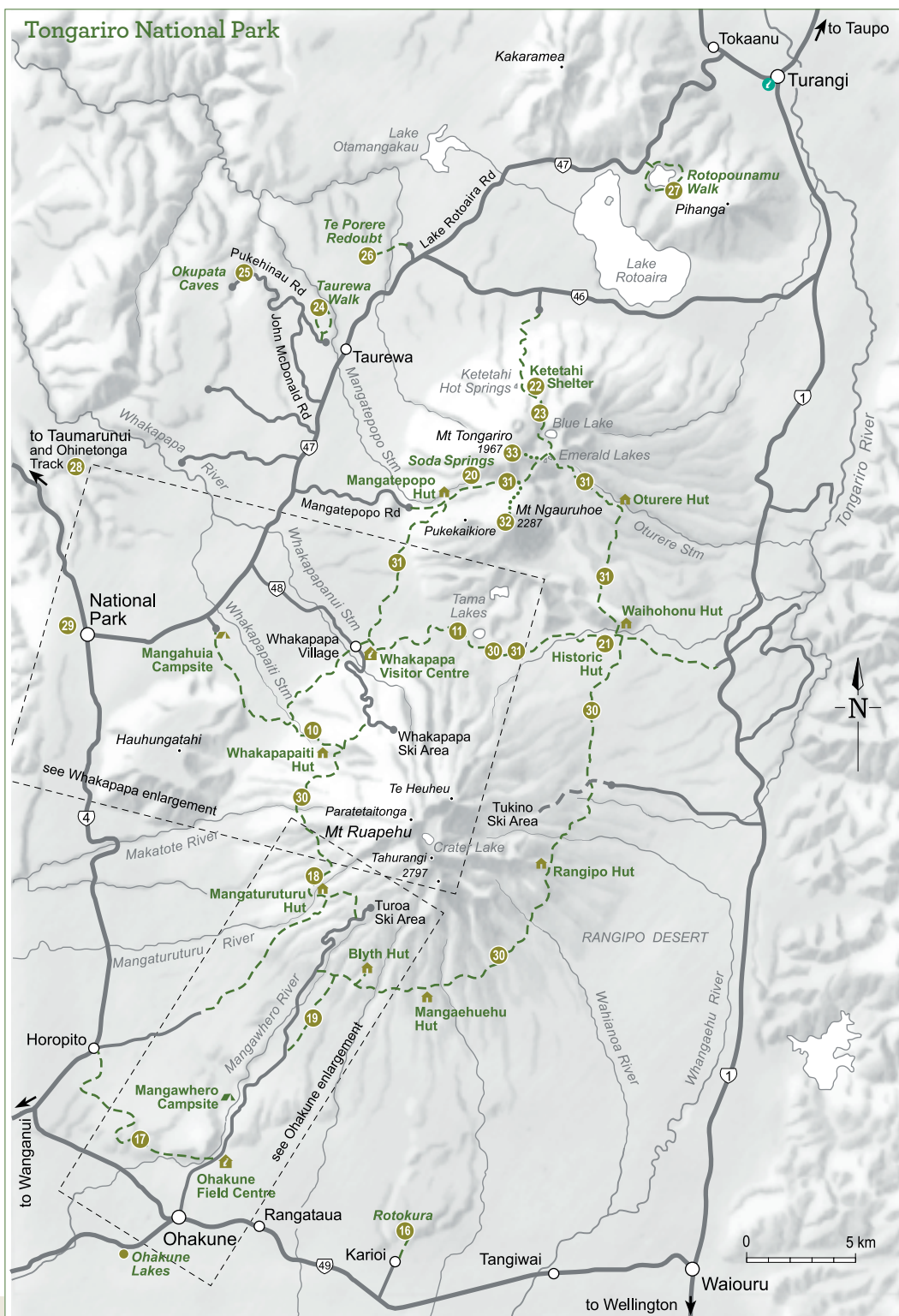
22. Ketetahi Shelter



4–5 hours, 13.4 kilometres return via same track. Signposted off SH 46, 25 minutes drive from Whakapapa Village or Turangi.

High on the slopes of Mt Tongariro, Ketetahi Shelter commands a magnificent view of Lake Rotoaira, Mt Pihanga and distant Lake Taupo. While it can no longer be used for overnight accommodation it is still a good place for lunch and marks the turn around point for this day tramp.

Tongariro National Park



Tongariro National Park



Photo: Sonia Frimmel

From the carpark, the track climbs through podocarp forest. For part of the way it follows a stream naturally polluted by thermal activity and unfit for drinking. The track opens out onto a broad tussock-covered ridge and heads up the slopes past Ketetahi Springs to the shelter.

23. Tongariro Alpine Crossing



7–8 hours, 19.4 kilometres one way. Recommended direction is from Mangatepopo to Ketetahi. This track is part of the Tongariro Northern Circuit and begins at the Mangatepopo roadend, 13.4 kilometres from Whakapapa.

The track winds up the Mangatepopo Valley to the saddle between Tongariro and Ngauruhoe. It climbs to Red Crater (1886 metres), then drops down to the vivid Emerald Lakes. After passing Blue Lake the track sidles around the northern slope of Tongariro, then descends in a zigzag past Ketetahi Shelter and down to the roadend.

This is a one-way track, so return transport is required. This is easy to arrange with your accommodation provider, and several local operators provide transport services. Details are available from the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre. Check weather and avalanche conditions before you begin the hike. Mountaineering experience and equipment is essential in winter conditions. A guide is recommended for inexperienced visitors. More detailed information and maps are available at Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre:

- New Topo 1:40,000 Mount Ruapehu
- NZTopo50 series: BJ34 Raurimu and BH35 Turangi
- Tongariro Alpine Crossing brochure

www.tongariro.org.nz/pocketranger

Download the free Pocket Ranger App to have everything you need to know about the Tongariro Alpine Crossing 'at your fingertips'.



Further afield

Walks (less than 3 hours)

See map (pages 20–21)

24. Taurewa Loop Walking Track



2–3 hours, 4.5 kilometre loop track. 17 kilometres from Whakapapa Village.

Take SH 47 north and turn left at John McDonald Road (gravel road that can be rough). Turn right onto Pukehinau Road and look for the Taurewa Track sign. The track starts on the edge of Tongariro Forest and follows old milling trails through bush.

25. Okupata Caves



25 kilometres from Whakapapa Village. Turn off SH 47 and travel 11 kilometres down John McDonald Road (gravel road that can be rough). Veer left at the Pukehinau Road intersection, 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.

26. Te Porere Redoubt Walk



45 minutes, 2.5 kilometres return. 25 kilometres from Turangi on SH 47 (just south of junction with SH46), 22.3 kilometres from Whakapapa.

These 1869 earthworks fortifications (outpost and main redoubt) were built by the Māori warrior Te Kooti and his followers. It was here that the last of the New Zealand land wars were fought. This area is preserved as an historic place.

27. Rotopounamu Walking Track



20 minutes to lake (one way), or 2 hours to and around the 5 kilometre loop track. 11 kilometres from Turangi and 35 kilometres from Whakapapa on SH 47. Carpark signposted on south side of Te Ponanga Saddle.

Beautiful Rotopounamu (the greenstone lake), nestled into the side of Mt Pihanga, is a favourite of tree lovers, birdwatchers, walkers and swimmers. Beginning opposite the carpark, the track winds gently uphill. At the top the track branches; either track leads around the lake, past several beaches and returns to the junction.

28. Ohinetonga Walking Track



2 hours, 3.8 kilometre loop track. 35 kilometres from Whakapapa Village. Turn right onto SH 4 at National Park and head north towards Taumarunui. Turn right at the 'Walking tracks' sign in Owhango.

This reserve lies between Owhango 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 hours)

29. Tupapakurua Falls Track



4–5 hours, 11 kilometres (return) to Tupapakurua Falls Lookout. Begins at Fishers Road, National Park Village.

Walk about 30 minutes down Fishers Road to the start of the Tupapakurua Falls Track (left side of road). The track has recently been upgraded by the local community in partnership with DOC. It begins with an easy 20 minute walk to the Taranaki Lookout. From this point the track becomes a back country 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 totara 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. Return via the same track.

Ohinetonga Lagoon, Photo: Sonia Frimmel



Multi-day tramping tracks

30. Round the Mountain



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.

The track can be walked at any time of year, but the safest and most popular time is from December to March. During this period the tracks are 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 herb fields; 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; Waihothonu 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:

- New Topo 1:40,000 Mount Ruapehu
- NZTopo50 series: BJ34 Mt Ruapehu and BJ35 Waiouru

Access

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

- **Whakapapa**
Whakapapa Village — Silica Rapids Track/Whakapapa Track entrance. There are overnight carparks in the village opposite the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre.
- **Scoria Flat**
5 kilometres from Whakapapa Village on the Bruce Road.
- **Desert Road (State Highway 1)**
There is a carpark just off the Desert Road, 35 kilometres from Turangi or 21 kilometres from the Rangipo Junction. It is approximately 1.5 hours to the Round the Mountain/Tongariro Northern Circuit junction, then a further 5 hours to Rangipo Hut.
- **Ohakune Mountain Road**
There are two access points: Waitonga Falls carpark (at 11 kilometres) and Wanganui Corner (at 15 kilometres) on opposite sides of the road.

- **Tongariro Northern Circuit**

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

- **Tukino Road (4 wheel drive)**

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

Track description (Note: Enjoyable in either direction)

Whakapapa Village to Waihohonu Hut

5½ hours, 14.3 kilometres

The track begins at the end of Ngauruhoe Place 100 metres below Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre. There are two options. The Lower Taranaki Falls Track crosses tussock and shrubland before following Wairere Stream through mountain beech forest to the base of 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 (1¼ hours to this point). Alternatively, the Upper Taranaki Falls Track takes you over tussock and shrubland to the same point in one hour.

After leaving the Taranaki Falls Track, it is a further 2 hours to Tama Saddle and 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 14*).

From Tama Saddle the track gradually descends for 2½ hours down 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 19*) about 10 minutes before you reach the new hut.

Waihohonu Hut to Rangipo Hut

5 hours, 12.5 kilometres

The track from Waihohonu Hut to Rangipo Hut is in one of the most unique areas in the park. It is the only true desert landscape in the North Island, and as such, 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 then traverses the eastern side of Ruapehu, past Tukino Mountain 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

5½ hours, 8.5 kilometres

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 Mt Ruapehu. A feature of this section is crossing the awesome Waihianoa Gorge which cuts a path down the mountain into Karioi Forest.

Mangaehuehu Hut to Ohakune Mountain Road

3 hours, 8.9 kilometres

The gradual downhill traverse from Mangaehuehu weaves through open alpine tussock country and mountain beech stands. After an hour and a half, a track junction gives walkers the option of a side trip to Blyth Hut (1 hour return) or continuing out to Ohakune Mountain Road. About 20 minutes past the track junction are Waitonga Falls (39 metres), reputedly 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 (1½ hours to the 7 kilometre point on Ohakune Mountain Road) on the left, or 15 minutes straight ahead to Waitonga Falls carpark (*see page 14*), the 11 kilometre point on the road. There is a 3 kilometre walk up the road to link up with the Round the Mountain Track again.

Ohakune Mountain Road to Mangaturuturu Hut

1½ hours, 3 kilometres

The track begins at Wanganui Corner, the 15 kilometre point on the 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



Mistletoe may be seen on beech trees along the track.

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 during wet or icy conditions. Mangaturuturu Hut, situated on the valley floor, is maintained jointly by DOC and the Wanganui Tramping Club.

Mangaturuturu Hut to Whakapapaiti Hut

5½ hours, 10.3 kilometres

On leaving the Hut, the track crosses the Mangaturuturu River. It may not be possible to cross safely when the river is high during or following rain. The river bed was scoured out in 1975 by a lahar (volcanic mud flow), thus the sides of the river are devoid of established vegetation. Take care crossing the river, particularly after heavy rain. 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 Manganui-o-te-Ao and the Makatote. These rivers merge in the Ruatiti Valley 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 the Bruce Road (1½ hours), or turning off to Whakapapaiti Hut (15 minutes) and on to Whakapapa Village (2½ hours).

Whakapapaiti Hut to Whakapapa Village

1½ hours to Scoria Flat. 2½ hours to the village. 8.7 kilometres

From Whakapapaiti Hut the track continues down the valley. Fifteen minutes below the hut it crosses Whakapapaiti River. 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 kilometres above Whakapapa Village on Bruce Rd. In winter, this route may be covered in snow and ice. Crampons, ice axes and alpine experience may be required.

About 45 minutes below the hut Mangahua Track branches off to the left (to Mangahua Campsite and SH 47). The track

to the village continues straight on 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 minutes to Whakapapa Village.

Side trips

Historic Waihohonu Hut

See walk 21 (page 19) for more information.

Blyth Hut

1 hour return from track junction

Blyth Hut can be reached by leaving the Round the Mountain Track at a junction just east of 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.

Tama Lakes

The junction to the Tama lakes is approximately one hours walking from Taranaki Falls on the way to Waihohonu Hut.

Lower Tama: 20 minutes return from the junction

Upper Tama 1½ hours return from the junction

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

Ohinepango Springs

Five minutes return from Round the Mountain Track. 1 hour return from new Waihohonu Hut

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

Lower Tama Lake.
Photo: Sonia Frimmel



31. The Tongariro Northern Circuit



Reservations required in the Great Walks Season (see page 7).

A range of trips can be planned around the Tongariro Northern Circuit. Day trips, overnight trips, or a three to four 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 Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre:

- New Topo 1:40,000 Mount Ruapehu
- NZTopo50 series: BJ34 Mt Ruapehu, BH34 Raurimu, and BH35 Turangi
- Tongariro Northern Circuit brochure

Track description

Whakapapa to Mangatepopo Hut

3 hours (up to 5 hours in bad weather), 8.5 kilometres

Begins 100 metres below the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre at Ngauruhoe Place and along the lower Taranaki Falls Track. About 20 minutes from the village the Mangatepopo Track branches off the Falls Track. For the last hour the track skirts around Pukekaikiore until it reaches the Mangatepopo Valley. Mangatepopo Hut is five minutes off the main Mangatepopo to Ketetahi Shelter Track.

Mangatepopo Hut to Emerald Lakes

3½ hours, 8 kilometres

The track follows Mangatepopo Stream up the glacially carved valley, climbing over a succession of lava flows from Ngauruhoe. A five minute detour at the head of the valley leads to Soda Springs, cold springs which emerge 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, Mt 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 Oturere Valley and the Kaimanawa Ranges to the east. At the top of Red Crater (the highest point on the Crossing at 1886 metres) a poled route to the left leads to Mt Tongariro Summit (1½–2 hours return). The main track continues on along the crater rim. The large flat topped crater seen ahead is North Crater.

A scoria covered ridge leads down to Emerald Lakes. These three lakes fill old explosion craters. 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 Emerald Lakes the track branches right, to Oturere Hut or continues straight ahead to Ketetahi Shelter.





Crossing South Crater. Photo: Natalie Douglas

Emerald Lakes to Oturere Hut

1½ hours, 4.8 kilometres

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



Emerald Lakes. Photo: Iris Broekema

Oturere Hut to Waihohonu Hut

3 hours, 7.5 kilometres

After leaving Oturere Hut the track undulates over a number of stream valleys and open gravel fields. The track gradually sidles around the foot hills of Ngauruhoe 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.

Waihohonu Hut to Whakapapa Village

5½ hours, 14.3 kilometres

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

On reaching the saddle a track branches right to Tama Lakes, two partially infilled explosion craters. The lower lake is a ten minute side trip from the junction while the upper lake is up a steep ridge, a one and a half hour side trip.

Whakapapa Village is approximately two hours from the Tama Lakes junction. After the first hour the track meets the Taranaki Falls loop walk. 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 beside Wairere Stream through mountain beech forest.

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



Taranaki Falls from the lower track. Photo: Iris Broekema

Summit routes (5–12 hours)

Warning: These summit climbing routes are unmarked and should only be undertaken by fit, experienced, well equipped people who can make effective judgments about alpine and volcanic hazards. Icy or ‘white out’ conditions can make all climbs a serious undertaking. Before setting out check at the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre for current route and weather conditions, volcanic activity and avalanche risk.

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

- New Topo 1:40,000 Mount Ruapehu
- NZTopo50 series: BJ34 Mt Ruapehu, BH34 Raurimu, and BH35 Turangi

The weather may deteriorate during the trip – alpine weather can change very quickly. Attempt these trips only in good weather and be prepared to turn back if conditions change.

During winter and times of snow, surface conditions will vary day to day. Depending on the time of year some of the following hazards may be encountered on Mounts Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe and Tongariro: icy slopes, ice cliffs, avalanches, waterfall holes, crevasses and schrunds.

Do not climb above your level of experience. Turn back as soon as you feel uncomfortable with the weather or route conditions. Tell a responsible person of your intentions.

32. Ngauruhoe Summit (2287 metres)



6–7 hours, 19 kilometres return on same route. Begins at Mangatepopo parking area. 3 hours return from South Crater.

The 2500 year old near perfect cone of Mt Ngauruhoe entices many visitors to its summit. Relatively quiet since 1975, this parasitic cone of Mt Tongariro is traditionally one of New Zealand’s most active volcanoes.

Follow the Tongariro Alpine Crossing Track up Mangatepopo Valley to the saddle between Ngauruhoe and Tongariro. A poled route leads to the foot of a ridge near the centre of Ngauruhoe’s northern slope. From here the route is not marked but climbs a band of red scoria to the summit. Be aware of falling rocks dislodged by others on the steep slopes above. A helmet and good boots are recommended for a safe climb; crampons, ice axes and alpine experience are required in winter

Avoid entering the inner crater area, where volcanic fumaroles may emit overpowering gases. Descend via the red scoria, then on the loose scree to either side of the ridge.

33. Tongariro Summit (1967 metres)



1½–2 hours return from Red Crater, a poled route branches off to the summit of Tongariro. The route offers some wonderful views of the area.

34. Mt Ruapehu Crater Climb (2672 metres)

7 hours, 10 kilometres return. Begins from Iwikau Village at the top of the Bruce Road.



Or 5 hours, 7 kilometres, return via the same route.

Take Whakapapa Ski Area chairlift from Iwikau Village. Walk begins at Knoll Ridge.

This is NOT a marked route. You need to be able to find your own way, have a map (New Topo 1:40,000 Mount Ruapehu) and be well equipped (see gear list in introduction). It is only suitable for fit, experienced, and well equipped people who can make effective judgments about alpine and volcanic hazards. A number of companies offer guided trips to the Crater. If unsure, travel with a guided party.

If chairlifts or the guided summit walk are not operating, it is a clear indication that conditions are not suitable for tramping on Mt Ruapehu.

Mountaineering experience and equipment (such as ice axes and crampons) are essential for winter climbing. Many people have enjoyed the climb to the Crater with its panoramic views and volcanic landscape. However, some have met with tragedy because they were either not experienced or were ill equipped to handle the conditions they encountered.

The following descriptions are simplified route guides from Whakapapa Ski Area to Dome Ridge, where you can view the crater area. The most commonly used early summer route, when snow is still present in the valleys, follows up the left-hand-side of the Knoll Ridge T-bar line and continues up the valley above the last T-bar pylon. At the head of the valley climb up onto the ridge behind Glacier Knob. From this point follow the narrow foot track zig-zagging up the side of and along Dome Ridge.



Dome Ridge in winter. Photo: Sarah Thompson

The second marked route is recommended when most of the snow has disappeared. From the top of the Waterfall Express chairlift travel to your right past pylons indicating the Knoll Ridge T-bar line and over to Restful Ridge. Stay on Restful Ridge as you climb towards the crater area. You will go up a series of rises. The terrain is mainly rock. At the top of Restful Ridge there is a more open face. From this point follow the narrow foot track zigzagging up the side of and along Dome Ridge.



The weather can deteriorate quickly. Photo: Iris Broekema

Lost and found

When travelling in the back country, 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.

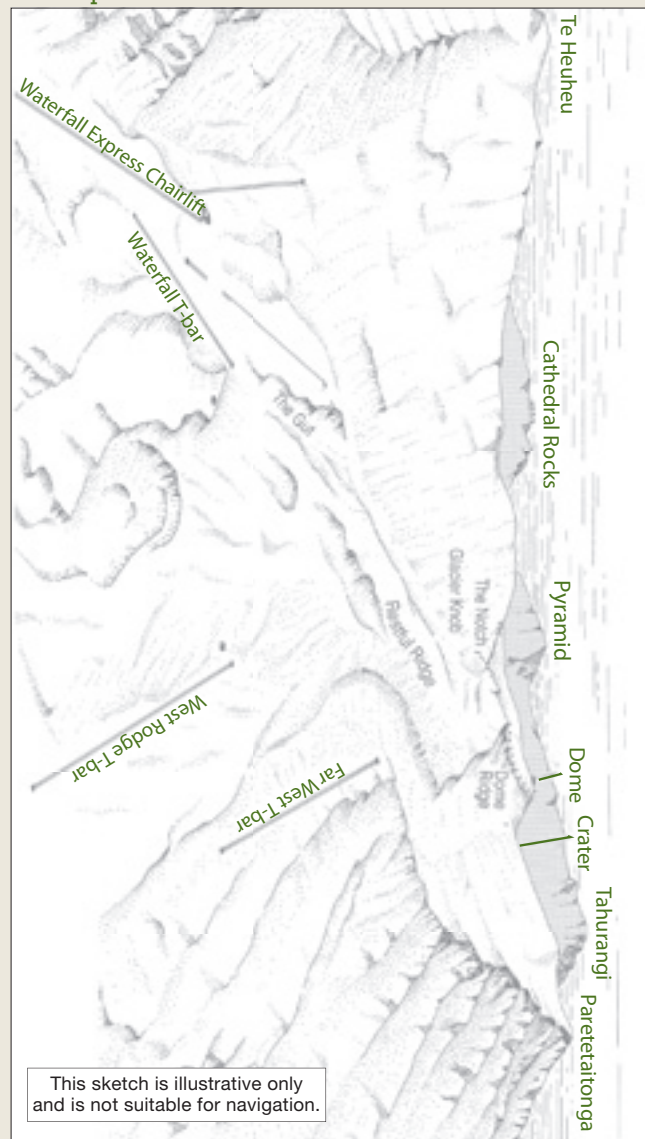
If you lose your way - do not panic!

- Try to retrace your steps to the last point where you recognise the route
- Mark your current position e.g. 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 can not find the route, and visibility allows, head for the best shelter that you can find (e.g. any building, the leeward side of a ridge, a large rock). Then stay in one place.
- Make your position as conspicuous as possible.

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

A Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) is a reliable method of alerting authorities to lost or injured trampers. PLBs are not available for rent or purchase in the Park but are available in nearby towns.

Mt Ruapehu Crater Climb



Tongariro's unique flora and fauna

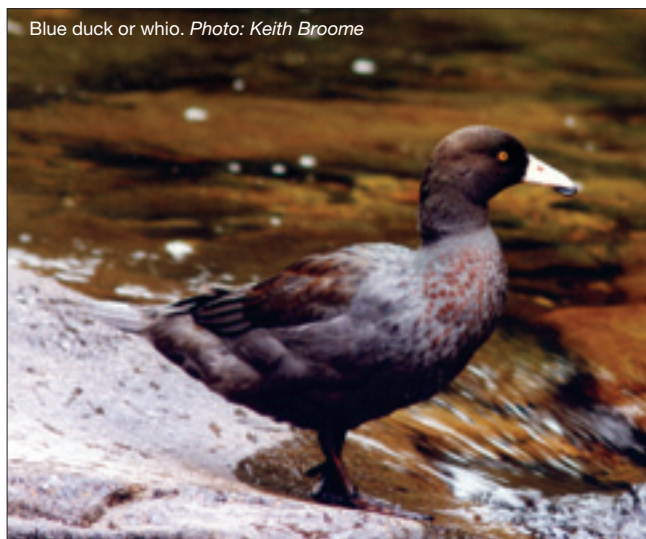
Wildlife

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

Birds found in Tongariro National Park include blue duck, North Island brown kiwi, the North Island robin, whitehead, kererū, fantail, silvereye, chaffinch, tūi, tomtit, blackbird, yellow-crowned parakeet, morepork and kākā. While the birds are mostly active during the day, many of the park's other unique creatures, such as bats and kiwi, only come out at night. Tongariro is home to 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.

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

Most notable amongst introduced animals are deer, goats, possum and hare, all of which cause severe damage to alpine and forest vegetation. Wasps also pose a threat to native bird species with whom they compete for nectar and other food. Red deer provide sport for hunters, but unfortunately also severely affect the health of our native forests.



Blue duck or whio. Photo: Keith Broome

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 like the vegetable sheep adopt a low creeping form, 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.

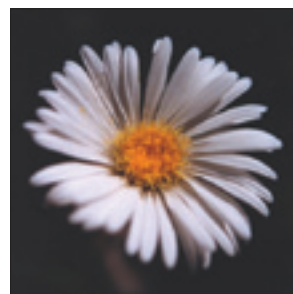
Sedges, rushes and flax are common in the park's wetlands, such as those on the southern slopes of Ruapehu, and around Hauhangatahi.

The greatest variety of plants probably exists in the tussock grasslands so 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 and 900 metres, various hardwood species and podocarps such as rimu, kamahi, kahikatea, and rātā can be found.

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



Mountain daisy (top) and gentian.
Photo: Jimmy Johnson

Protecting our natural heritage

Karioi Rahui

The Karioi Rahui is a 5300 hectare ecological restoration project managed jointly by DOC and the local iwi (tribe) Ngāti Rangi. Located on the southern slopes of Mt Ruapehu, the area contains an almost complete ecological sequence of forest spanning the altitude 700–1500 metres and largely intact sub-alpine vegetation in the 1200–2000+ metres altitude.

The Rahui contains a 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 New Zealand. There is also a small population of North Island brown kiwi. DOC and Ngāti Rangi are working together to protect the area by controlling pests like possums that destroy native plants and wildlife, and monitoring the bat and kiwi populations.

Access to the area is through the Rotokura Ecological Reserve, situated just off State Highway 49, 14 kilometres southeast of Ohakune, where there is a half hour walk to tranquil Lake Rotokura (*see page 15*).

Mt Pihanga and Rotopounamu restoration

Mt Pihanga is situated at the northernmost point of the Tongariro National Park. Rotopounamu (*see page 23*) is nestled into the flank of Mt Pihanga, an easy 20 minute walk from State Highway 47. A project commenced in 2003 with the aim of protecting and restoring the native biodiversity of the area. To date, Tongariro Natural History Society volunteers and DOC have achieved the following steps toward restoration:

- Monitoring and investigation towards introduced pest control within the area
- Nesting success study of New Zealand robin
- Set up bat detection boxes
- Completion of 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 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 Project Tongariro. Since establishment in 1984, as a living memorial to five people who died in a helicopter accident on Mt Ruapehu, Project Tongariro has contributed to promoting and supporting conservation efforts in and around Tongariro National Park such as the forest restoration of Rotopounamu, the restoration of the Hapuawhenua 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, contact them at:

E: info@tongariro.org.nz

T: 07 386 6499

www.tongariro.org.nz





Further information:

Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre

State Highway 48, Whakapapa Village

PO Box 71029, Mt Ruapehu 3951

T: 07 892 3729

F: 07 892 3814

Email: tongarirovc@doc.govt.nz

Or visit the DOC website:

www.doc.govt.nz



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