

## RANGIPO HUT LOOP

**Topo50 Map:** BJ34 Ruapehu & BJ35 Waiouru

**GPS:** NZTM on WGS84

**How to get to START:** The route to the start can be traced opposite down **SH1** from Taupo through Turangi and then down the Desert Highway.

Exit the Desert Highway as shown opposite turning right on to the **Tukino Access Road** shown as the blue line – taking note of the signs at the start about 2 wheel drive vehicles.

Follow the gravel road and at the obvious **Y-fork go right** as turning left is posted as Army territory. Variants of the road weave around a little bit but follow the poles and in wintertime watch out for some minor puddles to rather large stretches of wet flooded areas.

The **2 wheel-drive car park** is reached in 15 minutes and a further 20 minutes is required to reach the repeater station with twin masts. Park near the masts (**01**<sup>1419masl</sup>) or even at the start of the Round-the-Mountain track (**02**<sup>1425masl</sup>)

**Rough description:** A moderate A to B tramp covering about 14km in 4-5 hours including refreshment breaks that takes you to the Rangipo Hut then cross-country back to near the Desert Highway passing through the area of the Lahar flow of early 2007. There are a few areas where care has to be exercised since in the summer the ground is rough with ankle turning opportunities and, in wintertime, some of the slopes could be icy. There is a height gain of about 200 metres to reach the hut and a loss of about 400m on the way back down to the road. A few climbs are a bit steep and tricky, especially on the return leg.

In addition the return leg borders the NZ Army Training Area and care must be taken not to stray into this restricted zone. Obviously this tramp can be done in either direction and a possible exploratory return route has been plotted but not tramped.

**Detail:** The Tukino Access Road leads to the Tukino Alpine Village which previously was a ski centre; you will see some of the huts or lodges from the Round-the-Mountain track as the walk proceeds.

Due to “not having the best skiing conditions or access” the area has now been taken over for use for Outward Bound or outdoor skills and training for youngsters. From the suggested car park (**01**<sup>1419masl</sup>) walk up the road from radio masts heading in a WSW direction for 5 minutes to where the “Round-the-Mountain” track crosses the road (**02**<sup>1425masl</sup>) and turn left off the road on to the well sign-posted track heading off in a SE direction. As can be seen on the map the present track does not quite follow the line of the mapped track and it does “wiggle” about a little bit but basically heads SSW crossing a few minor stream lines on the way. Within 35 minutes the first of the larger stream (**03**<sup>1400masl</sup>) lines is crossed and the track follows then runs parallel to a minor, sandy stream bed to climb up on to the next crest or ridge. The well poled track can be seen a fair distance ahead most of the time as it winds its way up and down through the various stream lines. After about 1 hour 10 minutes the footing gets a bit rougher and loose whilst the slope down into one of the tributaries of the Whangaehu is steeper than previously. Once cresting the far side of this valley the first of the “Lahar” warning signs (**04**<sup>1464masl</sup>) is encountered – this sign may be out of date now but it is a good historical marker. A few minutes later there is a second sign with a good view of the Lahar gully (Whangaehu River valley) and the refurbished bridge which was badly damaged during the Lahar outburst – the bridge (**05**<sup>1451masl</sup>) being reached within about 1 hour 35 minutes of leaving the car park. Once over the bridge turn hard right upstream in a narrow rocky channel which is steep in places.

Then pass through the “rock wall” sitting on the minor rise and down through the next channel and up a sandy gravelly slope to pass the “hazard board” (**06**<sup>1476masl</sup>) on the south side of the Whangaehu River.

The Rangipo Hut (**10**<sup>1561masl</sup>) is reached in about 2:30 minutes. This hut is quite exposed and can be difficult to reach in bad winter weather but offers about 20 bunks, wood burning stove, internal sink (no water supply) plus external sink with water supply and, of course, a modern toilet just above the hut.

For the return route retrace your steps for 7 - 8 minutes then branch off the track (**11**<sup>1550masl</sup>) down slope to the right (NE) and in minutes cross the stream line (**12**<sup>1522masl</sup>) at a point about 200m upstream from some bluffs on this stream. Whatever you do you must not follow this stream downhill but continue upslope north eastwards.

As a reminder as to why you must not follow the above mentioned stream line have a look at the bluffs some 15 minutes later (**13**<sup>1424masl</sup>), from here head slightly to your left, that is just north of east, and in 5 minutes you will be on the crest of a spur (**14**<sup>1410masl</sup>) and it is easiest to stay on this spur working your way down to cross a stream line (**15**<sup>1326masl</sup>) from where you can see a large sub-rounded boulder or rock on the slope on the far side of the stream. Cross the stream and start heading upslope to the NE and soon you should be some 150m below the rock (**16**<sup>1352masl</sup>).



The drive from Taupo takes about 1:30 minutes covering just over 100km.

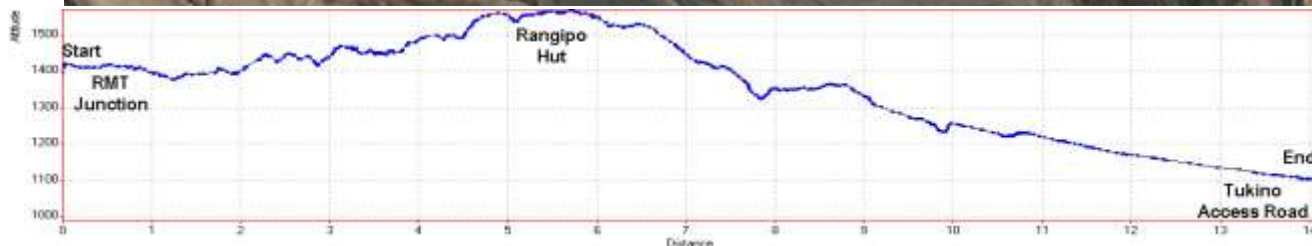
### The rocky channel



### Rangipo Hut



## Track and waypoints on map and Google Earth: anti-clockwise route



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1828955	5650154	1419	Park below radio masts (8.8km from SH1) and just before Round-the-Mountain track
02	1828772	5650065	1425	5min (200m); junction with Round-the-Mountain track on Tukino Access Road wsw from masts
03	1828378	5648663	1400	30min (1.9km); into first sizeable gully on the Round-the-Mountain track (RMT)
04	1827358	5647985	1464	1:05min (3.2km); first Lahar warning notice
05	1827167	5647915	1451	1:30min (3.5km); middle of Rangipo swing bridge then upstream in rock gully
06	1826896	5647875	1476	1:42min (3.8km); at top of sandy, gravelly ascent and past "hazard" board
07	1826607	5647641	1488	1:50min (4.2km); sandy then rocky descent to stream and left to pick up new track alignment
08	1826623	5647453	1538	2:00min (4.5km); on more level track after steepish ascent
09	1826550	5647431	1552	2:06min;(4.6km); SSE alignment heading straight for Rangipo Hut
10	1826258	5646637	1561	2:30min (5.5km); Rangipo Hut
11	1826404	5646994	1550	3hours -5min from hut (6.02km); branch right (East) down ridge off track
12	1826559	5647050	1522	3:05min (6.30km); cross stream line 200m upslope from bluffs in the gully
13	1827335	5647044	1424	3:20min (7.141km); on edge of very rough, steep bluffs. Go leftish on ridge away from bluff edge
14	1827512	5647051	1410	3:25min (7.32km); on crest of ridge - can sidle left or stay on top of spur down to stream
15	1827934	5646852	1326	3:38min (7.83km); stream line crossing with sub-rounded rock on spur above and to the left
16	1828073	5646881	1352	3:42min (7.99km); on spur crest 150m below (SE) of sub-rounded rock and Army Area poles clear on RHS
17	1828747	5647201	1363	4hrs (8.77km); above Lahar overflow channel. Descend steep slope then follow sandy motor track
18	1829349	5646956	1273	4:15min (9.5km); slip off road to the left heading ENE passing below small hill
19	1829692	5646999	1234	4:20min (10.58km); in middle of overflow channel before grunt up very unstable sandy, bouldery slope
20	1830298	5646866	1220	4:40min (10.58km); in middle of Whangaehu River (Lahar channel)
21	1833370	5647759	1103	5:20min (14.11 km); meet gravel road (3.5km from SH1) after minor stream line crossing

the walk is done in reverse this rock is a marker for a change in direction from SW to W and ensuring you stay on public land and do not stray into the NZ Army land. By this time the line of poles marking the Army boundary should be seen clearly on your right. At about 4 hours you should find yourself above (171363masl) and looking down into the Lahar overflow channel. There is now a steep descent and soon you can pick up an obvious motor track then branch left (18273masl) off this track round past a small hill and head ENE towards the Whangaehu River. Cross the overflow channel (RH19) then the river (RH20 1220masl), which nowadays seldom has water as it flows under the gravel from the lahar. After the crossing there is a fairly serious, very unstable slope to ascend and care must be taken if any boulders are dislodged from this sandy, gravelly steep slope. Once up the slope it should be possible to see where you are going which is basically NE following, but staying to the north of, the line of poles marking the edge of the army area. The last section out between waypoints WP20 and WP21 is a plod through loose, soft pumice and volcanic sands but it is easy though it can be a drag. Your transport should be visible waiting on the lower stretches of the Tukino Access Road (211103masl) and should be reached within about 5 hours total tramping time including rest and refreshment breaks.

**UPDATE:** The tramp was repeated in June 2016 but walked in a clockwise direction from **WP01** on the lower section of the Tukino Access Road adjacent to the Army Area. The route is basically the exit route as described above and starts by walking parallel to the army boundary to eventually meet the Round-the-Mountain Track (RMT) then turn left for Rangipo Hut. The exit route followed was back along the RMT to the NNE / NE to reach the twin communication towers where transport can still reach; 4 wheel-drive can sometimes be required though. On the map below the "BLUE" line is an untramped possible return route to avoid transport having to go up to the twin towers.

**Track and waypoints on map and Google Earth – clockwise route**



N...	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
01	1833093	5648148	1105	Park on Tukino Access Road with view of poles marking army boundary
02	1831457	5647400	1159	1.77km (35min); Meeting point with possible off-track return route
03	1831184	5647338	1167	2.13km (40min); First noticeable stream line
04	1830741	5647167	1191	2.67km (50min); Stream line 50m north of army area marker pole
05	1830329	5647040	1214	3.05km (55min); Lahar overflow channel
06	1830211	5647009	1215	3.21km (1:01min); Mangaehuehu Stream / lahar channel
07	1829817	5646927	1245	3.83km (1:39min); Middle of overflow channel before grunt up very unstable sandy, bouldery slope
08	1828595	5647174	1376	5.15km (2:10min); Above lahar overflow channel
09	1827249	5647541	1475	6.53km (2:50min); More or less up and on ridge
10	1827030	5647530	1496	6.88km (3:06min); Close to mapped bluff
11	1826730	5647470	1492	7.20km (3:28min); Meet RMT left for Rangipo Hut right for home
12	1826257	5646635	1562	8.28km (4:23min); Rangipo Hut 9.4 GPS km
13	1826896	5647875	1476	9.82km (5:48min); at top of sandy, gravelly ascent near "hazard" board
14	1827167	5647915	1451	10.13km (6:02min); middle of Rangipo swing bridge
15	1827358	5647985	1464	10.28km (6:10min); Lahar warning notice
16	1827855	5648336	1444	10.92km (6:30min); High point between stream lines
17	1828199	5648511	1412	11.42km (6:47min); Turn right SE off RMT for new possible return route
18	1828950	5650149	1416	13.32km (7:25min); Car park at twin communication masts



**Notes:** • **GPS** = Garmin GPSMap 60CSx and GPSMap62sc **WP** = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit **masl** = metres above sea level