

BRIDGE to NOWHERE

Topo50 Maps: BH32 Tokirima, BH33 Retaruke, BJ32 Pipiriki, BJ33 Raetihi

NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS84

Topo250n Map: Sheet 9

How to get to START: Exit Taupo on **SH1 southwards**

- Turangi in 45min going right then left on to **SH47**
- Right to **SH4** at **National Park** in 1:20 min
- Left off **SH4** on to **Olo Road** in 1:35 min for Whakahoro 44km
- Road becomes gravel at 2:05 min – blind bends
- Pass “Condemned Bridge” on right at 2:30min
- **Whakahoro** at 2:35min before the road turns sharply NE down to the boat landing (**BTN3**) on the Retaruke River
- Park in campsite field off small access road to Hut going down right (WP **BTN01**)
- Check-in at road end at top of field for Jet Boat

The route driven from Turangi onwards is shown as the red line following SH47, SH4 then Olo Road to where that line meets the first yellow WP mark. The tramping route is shown by the line of yellow waypoints on sheet R20 which then works up between R19 and S19.

Rough description: A thought provoking tramp of two nights and three days through the area settled after World War 1 by returning soldiers who were allocated the land as a reward for their efforts. The route encompasses the Wanganui and Mangapurua River valleys with the settlements being in the latter from 1917 until 1942 when the last settler left the area.

The thought provoking comes from thinking about what the area would be like nowadays if the settlement had succeeded and the reasons why some of the meadows are still totally grass covered and have not been invaded by bush and tree species – it is assumed that the local population of goats and deer keep these original meadows well grazed.

The history and social aspects of the area are well documented in the “Historical Map of The Mangapurua Valley and Wanganui Valley” published by the “Four Friends Trust” via the Wanganui Tramping Club, PO Box 678 Wanganui. The DOC “Mangapurua Track” leaflet is another good source of information.

The drive from Taupo to Whakahoro takes about 2:30 minutes, the jet-boat trip down the Wanganui River to Mangapurua Landing takes 1:30 minutes (about NZ\$140) and the walk back to Whakahoro is comfortably done in three days with the sites of the original holdings marked by signboards with family names and the odd artifact such as gates and ploughs. Some remnants of the houses still exist on the sites designated as campsites.

The track up to the actual Bridge from the Mangapurua Landing is well manicured and heavily used by day trippers, after this it is still good but less well maintained. Day 2 track gets a bit muddy in wet weather, offers no hazards but there is a climb of about 1:30 – 2hrs to reach Mangapurua Trig. The track on day 3 is not so good due to some parts being carved up by quad bikes (hunters) and there are some “shelf-like” sections through some very steep hilly terrain as well. The final part of the walk is on undulating, gravel road where the feet burn up on hot days.

Detail: Before setting off on the jet-boat it is worth walking the few metres past the landing (**BTN3**) to have a look at the “bent bridge” (**BTN2**).

The tributary river is quite a few metres below the bridge deck but not too long ago river flow was so high the bridge got bent when passing logs hit it and put a minor kink into the bridge. Ensure you are well wrapped up on the jet-boat as it is not a warm trip, even in summer time. The trip down river takes 90 minutes and there are good river and forest views and, at the right time of year, many kayakers are seen making the down-stream trip. Once out of the jet-boat (**BTN05**) there is a steepish start to the tramp up the slope but the path is so well manicured for the day-trippers that little effort is needed to get up the hill where there is a very convenient toilet stop (30 mins walking) well marked by an old plough at the side of the track (**BTN06**). From here it is a mere 15 minutes to the actual Bridge to Nowhere (**BTN07**) which makes a good spot for lunch – with all the tourists!

Map Sheets and Location



The jet boat trip down-river on the Wanganui River takes 1:30 minutes and is shown by the red line lying to the west of the yellow waypoint markers in the above map. The single waypoint on the river is where a lone trumper was dropped off.

The Bent Bridge



Whakahoro – Start and end point



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
BTN1	1779058	5669072	130	Park near hut at Whakahoro
BTN2	1779416	5669113	104	Bent Bridge at Whakahoro
BTN3	1779304	5669118	92.0	Boat ramp at Whakahoro

Map and Google for Day 1



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
BTN5	1769407	5650034	46.9	Mangapurua Landing 1:30 min downstream on jet boat
BTN6	1770280	5650816	78.0	Toilets with plough marker 30 mins up manicured track from river landing
BTN7	1770149	5651293	77.1	Bridge to Nowhere for lunch after 45 min uphill on manicured track
BTN8	1770729	5653749	125	Battleship Bluffs 45 min post lunch and 2 hours total walk
BTN9	1771008	5655597	159	Waterfall Creek notice after 2:45 walk and 10 min short of Cody's Bluff
BTN10	1771626	5656673	169	Well formed old gate still swinging on hinges 3:15 min total walk
BTN11	1771585	5656697	162	Signpost for southern end of Te Mata Road at 3:15 min total walk (Refer WP BTN31)
BTN12	1772618	5658753	202	Bettjeman's farm clearing with chimney and hunters' bivouac at 4:05 min total walk - camp

The path is still good after the bridge but it is no longer manicured so trampers will feel less like tourists and being on a normal path. Battleship Bluffs are reached less than one hour after the bridge (**BTN08**) in total walk time of 2 hours.

Bridge to Nowhere



In about 2:45 min walk time there is a notice for Waterfall Creek (**BTN09**) and some 10 min later Cody's Bluff is reached. There is half of one of the original farm gates still on its hinges at 3:15 minutes (**BTN10**). The sign for the southern end of Te Mata Road (**BTN11**) is encountered after 3:30 minutes total walking. Refer to the previously mentioned leaflets for details.

Camp on Day 1 was made at the Bettjeman clearing which is recognised by a line of poplars on your right as you walk on the track.

Battleship Bluffs



The best campsite is slightly upslope on the right where the chimney of the original farm house can be seen with a plaque with some settlement details of this family and a hunters' bivouac which is helpful on a wet night as it offers immediate shelter. Water can be obtained from the stream just past the DOC toilet which is a matter of metres further along the track and also on the right hand side.

Day two starts off as it means to continue for some time – with muddy sections of track due to the passage of hunters and their quad bikes. Within 20 minutes the first bridge of the day is found (**BTN13**) with the quad track branching off to your right upstream. A lovely settler site is arrived at after about 45 minutes where there are Rhododendrons and some huge coniferous trees, there is a notice board (**BTN14**) detailing that the McDonalds were the last settlers in the area (presumably the last to arrive and settle or the last to leave).

Start of Day 2



Bettjeman Clearing



McDonald Clearing



Map & Google for Day 2



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
BTN12	1772618	5658753	202	Bettjeman's farm clearing with chimney and hunters' bivouac at 4:05 min total walk - camp
BTN13	1773585	5659335	199	First bridge Day 2 after 20 min walk, quad bike tracks go upstream to cross
BTN14	1774198	5659665	201	McDonald clearing with Rhododendrons and pines and "Last Settler" notice in 45 min walk
BTN15	1775541	5659214	236	McLennan, Walsh & Johnson clearing with toilet at 1:20min then swing bridge with old beams beside it
BTN16	1776908	5658177	297	Slight open area after climb up gentle slope and turning to E at 2:25 min
BTN17	1778732	5657478	520	T-junction, very muddy entrance on RHS on level area after steady climb of 1 hour at 3:25 total walk
BTN18	1779672	5657704	615	Barker clearing below Mangapurua Trig Point and above toilet at 4 hours
BTN19	1779677	5657665	634	Cave 2 min above Barker Clearing, poor access track
BTN20	1779734	5657651	657	Mangapurua Trig point 5 min rough climb above Barker Clearing
BTN21	1780704	5657370	578	Gated T-junction with Whakahora and Ruetihi tracks at 5:30 min total. Go left
BTN22	1780410	5659819	312	Campsite in Cootes meadow at 6:30 min total including stops

One of the larger clearings – McLennan, Walsh and Johnson (**BTN15**) – is reached after about 1:30 min and makes a good coffee stop as there is a DOC toilet here. Soon after this there is a swing bridge with the beams of the original bridge still visible below the new structure. Most of this section is well vegetated and a gentle climb soon starts. At about 2:30 minutes there is an open area where a reliable GPS signal can be obtained (**BTN16**) and the track then winds about with some slightly steeper slopes until a T-junction comes in on the right hand side on a level part of the road (**BTN17**) at 3:30 minutes.

From this junction it is about another 30 minutes to the Barker Clearing (**BTN18**) which lies just 5 minutes below and to the NW of the Mangapurua Trig Point (**BTN20**). There is a small cave excavated into the hillside on the way up to the Trig Point and this was used for storing ammunition.

The path to the cave is quite clear and easily found but the branch path up to the Trig can be awkward to find as it branches off to the left about 30m before the cave and there are some tricky bits on this path – the climb to the Trig is not worth the effort as there is no view.

From Barkers clearing it is essentially downhill and within 30 minutes (total walk time 5:30min) a gated exit (**BTN21**) is arrived at where you turn left towards Whakahoro on the Whakahoro - Raetihi track which is pretty wide and motorable, at least for quad bikes, most of the way to the campsite (**BTN22 and 23**) at Cootes Clearing.

This is a good campsite with ample washing and drinking water in the streams and a very friendly hunter with a bach who offers free hot showers to trampers. There are lots of sheep so watch where the tent gets pitched, the lower, northern site away from the bach is better.

McLennan, Walsh Johnson



The Cave Entrance



Coots Hilton



Tobin Chimney



Cootes Camp



Day three exits Cootes Clearing on a very rutted, muddy, rough track and proceeds over some very deep valleys with bridged streams. Quite often the path is on a narrow shelf and care has to be taken to avoid falling off the path into the thick bush which covers these slopes or bluffs.

The first track markers of the day are found after about 45 minutes walking (**BTN24**) and just before the second bridge of the day. A rumbling waterfall or stream line is heard after just about an hour (**BTN25**) though no clear view of the stream is obtained. GPS signals are rather poor in this area due to the vegetative cover and the narrowness of the valleys – there is a very steep eroded valley at about 1:15 minutes and then a steep descent to a bridge over a very deep gully at 1:40 minutes then a smaller valley with a bridge at 1:45 minutes. A GPS signal was obtained in a more open area (**BTN27**), where coffee and tea can be enjoyed, just short of 2 hours' total walk time. Five minutes on from here there is another less-steep gully with a bridge (**BTN28**) and 5 minutes later there is some boardwalk leading into the open.

Thick Vegetation



The Bagley Meadow (**BTN29**) is entered at 2:35 minutes walking and from here a waterfall can be seen tumbling down the bluffs upslope to the left.

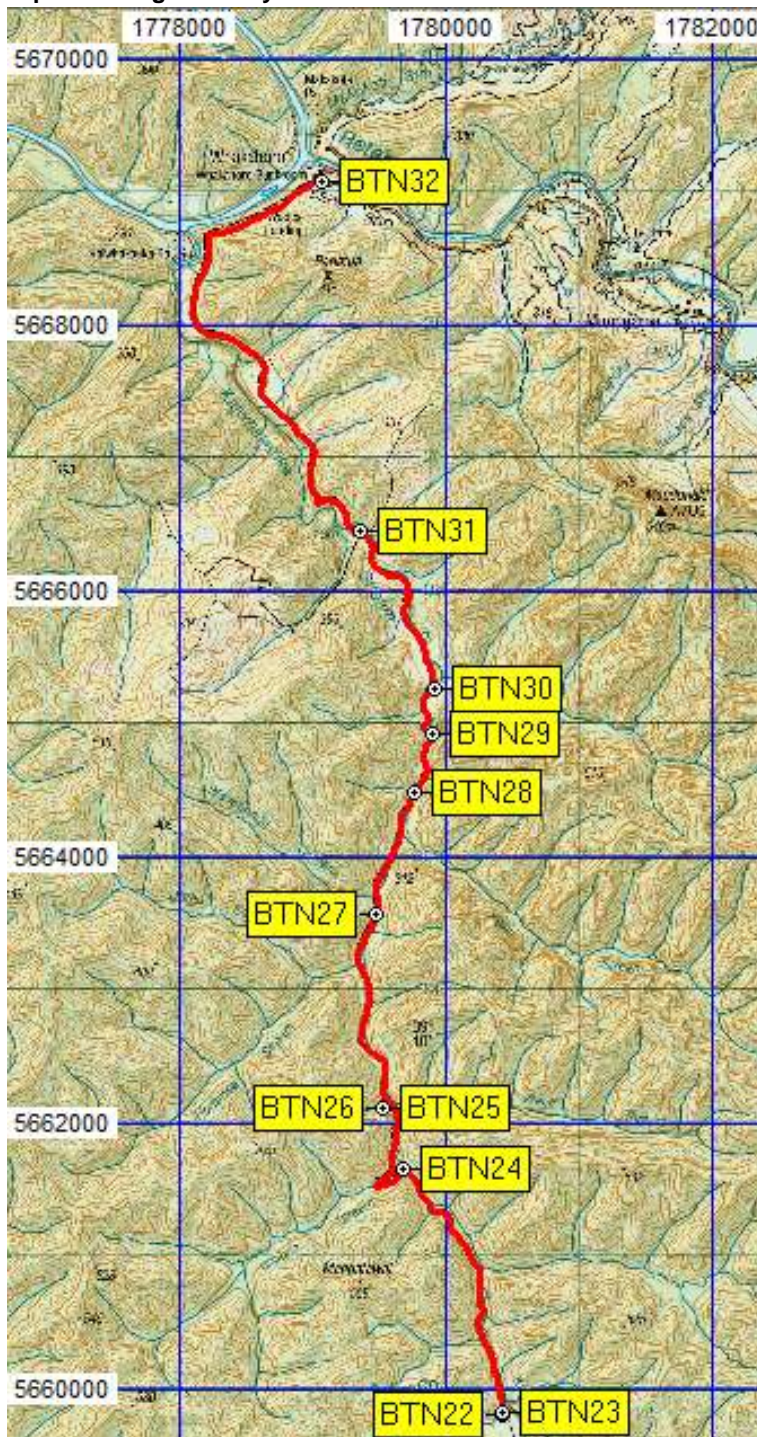
The Wanganui National Park boundary (**BTN30**) is crossed at 2:45 minutes when the track continues on farm tracks through private land where the walking is easier. After 3:15 total walk time there is a gated (**BTN31**) entrance sign-posted to a hut and the northern access to Te Mata Road (Refer Day one **BTN11**). Immediately after this there is a bigger bridge with remnants of an older bridge over the river and there is a recent wash-out on the road.

Bagley Meadow



From here the walk cannot be described as exciting as it is all on “foot-burning”, winding, undulating road but then the Wanganui River is sighted at around 4:15 minutes walking and the hut plus car parking camping-field (BTN32) is arrived at in 4:30 minutes total walk time.

Map and Google for Day 3



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
BTN23	1780408	5659822	315	Day 3 GPS check at campsite
BTN24	1779678	5661667	228	First track marks at 45 min on rutted, muddy, rough track with steeply incised streams and river
BTN25	1779523	5662121	210	Rumbling waterfall in side stream below small bridge at 1 hour walking
BTN26	1779524	5662120	189	Very steep, eroded stream line at 1:15 min walk (poor GPS signal) then very deep gully 20 min on
BTN27	1779472	5663573	158	Coffee stop at 1:45 min in slight clearing about 5 min before bridge in gully
BTN28	1779754	5664485	141	Bridge over less steep valley at 2:10 min then boardwalk 5 min later
BTN29	1779894	5664927	138	Bagley meadow with waterfall on bluffs above at 2:20 min
BTN30	1779906	5665267	138	Exit Wanganui National Park on to private land at 2:30 min on well formed farm track
BTN31	1779348	5666450	129	North end of Te Mata Road at 3 hours with road gates then on to large bridge and proper road
BTN32	1779054	5669067	119	Back to car park in 4:30 min after very boring road section

- **GPS** Garmin Summit with slightly poor signal in places due to forest cove / deep valleys.
- **WP** = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit
- **Masl** = metres above sea level altitude