

CHATEAU to DESERT ROAD

Topo50 Maps: BH34-Raurimu, BJ34-Mnt Ruapehu, BJ35-Waiouru

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

How to get to START: Exit Taupo on SH1 down the lake to Turangi then:

- In Turangi turn off SH1 on to SH41 on the right and then turn left off SH41 on to SH47
- Turn off SH47 on to SH48 signposted for Whakapapa and the Chateau
- Pass the Chateau on the left and turn almost immediately into the car park with toilets Park here or
- Leave car park, turn left and immediately right up side of the Chateau – park at the end of this road (**WS1** 1141 masl).

Rough description: A long, over 20km, rather boring walk which can turn into a bit of a route march, especially on poor weather days. Ascend almost 200m within 4km from the start then rolling to undulating terrain for 4km before descending from about 1310m to 978m at the Desert Highway. In good weather good views of both Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe plus glimpses of Lower Tama Lake and passing close to the new and old Waihohonu huts. *Drive to the start (and return) takes 1 hour 15 minutes from Taupo*

Detail: From the car park behind the Chateau head for the track that goes straight ahead at the end of the surfaced road and is signed Taranaki Falls [**WP01** 1147masl]. Proceed on the very good track through woodland with good birdlife crossing an open wooden bridge [**WP02** 1186masl] in about 20 minutes then upwards parallel to the gully which you then cross and go up on to open [**WP04** 1205masl], flattish moorland with a view of Ngauruhoe straight ahead. After 35 minutes or so descend off the moorland down to the Wairere Stream, over the bridge and uphill again reaching a signpost [**WP06** 1218masl] indicating the route for the lower path to Whakapapa on the left and to the Tama Lakes straight on. From here on the track is not manicured and tends to be rougher and muddier. In about 50 minutes there is a bit of a high point [**WP07** 1253masl] and then the track bears to the right whilst a very eroded hill face can be seen on the left and a long, slightly gruntish ascent starts.

In 1:10 minutes there is a roughish descent to cross a stream line [**WP8** 1310masl], in 1:40 there is a wet area [**WP09** 1290masl] with moss on the poles plus some boardwalk and 5 minutes later another descent on an eroded section of path before ascending into a narrow valley [**WP10** 1285masl]. On entering this valley cross the stream then follow a small branching stream off to your left. In around 1:50 minutes go right at the Y-fork [**WP11** 1301masl] which is signposted Tama Lakes and Waihohonu.

Tama Lakes or Waihohonu?



By this time you have done most of the ascending but now there is a steepish descent on a zigzag track down a very eroded area to a stream line [**WP12** 1296masl] then you ascend again in a long V-shaped valley after a river crossing. There is now quite a boring area (if the cloud is down there are no views) through rolling terrain but there is a glimpse of the Lower Tama Lake [**WP13** 1329masl].

A sheltered spot for lunch presents itself in about 3 hours below a small bluff [**WP15** 1183masl]. Half an hour after this there is a river channel to cross [**WP16** 1157masl] and off left from here a belt of trees is visible above an erosion cliff face. After crossing a river terrace there are several gullied channels / eroded slopes to negotiate (in about 4 hours) but generally these present no problem as generally the surface is sandy through a few are slippery.

Some sections of upgraded track appear and soon after this there is a Y-junction [**WP19** 1109masl] with a 5 minute diversion off right to the Old / Historic Waihohonu Hut and minutes later the New Waihohonu Hut can be seen off left. In 4:15 minutes there is a cross-roads [**WP19** 1109masl] when the “round-the-mountain” track is met plus the branch that goes to the (new) Waihohonu Hut.

Access



Eroded hill

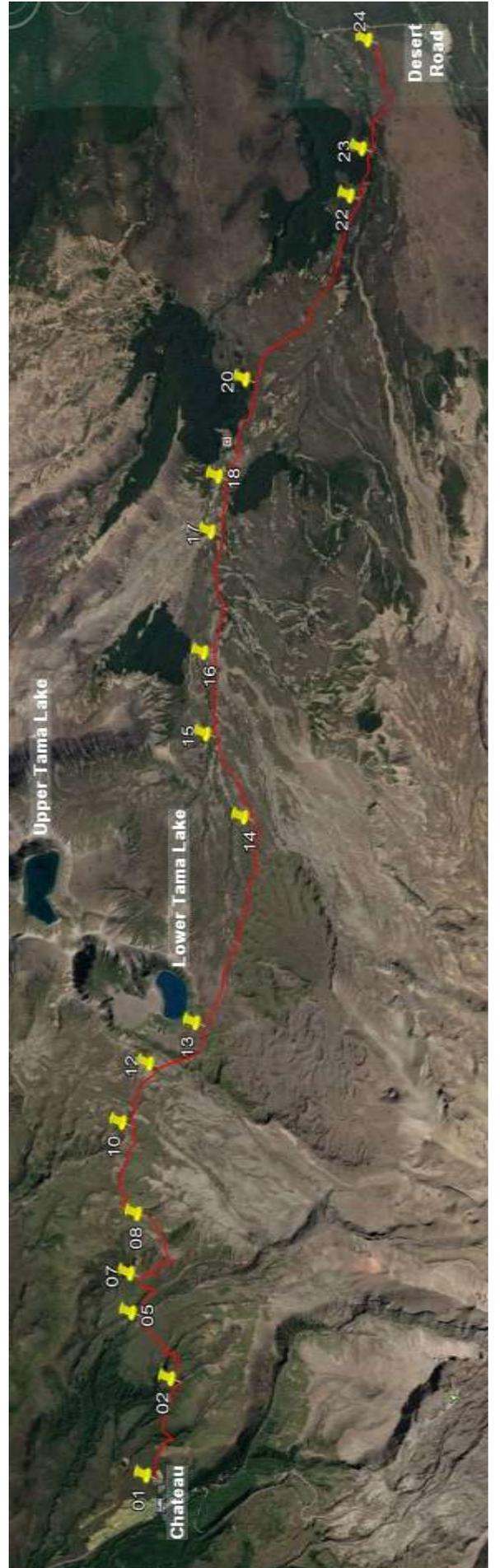
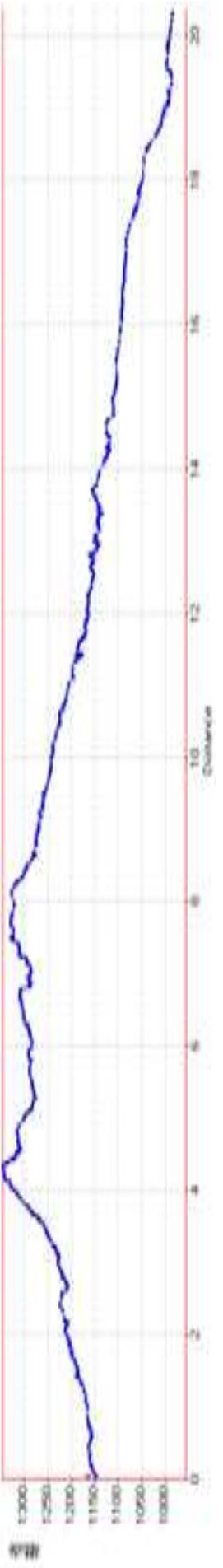
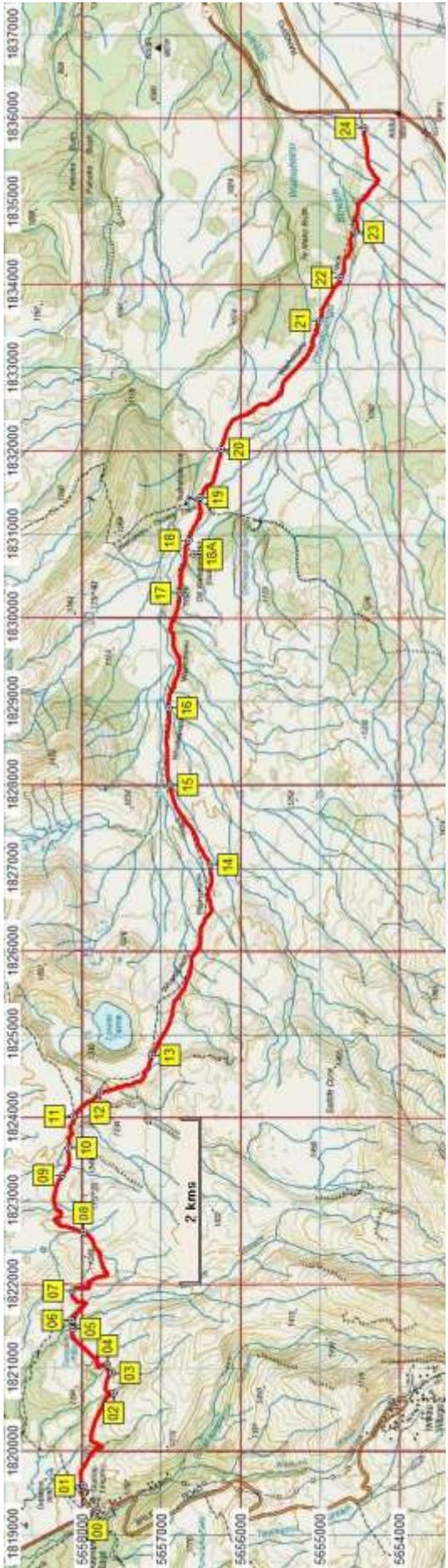


Lower Tama Lake



Lunch





New Waihohonu Hut in the distance



By going right from this sign-posted junction there is just over one hour more to walk – and all regulars consider this bit to be rather boring as it is rather flat and featureless apart from passing through some trees, then a gullied area before a small patch of forest with a bridge [WP23 994masl] over Ohinepango Stream – however from the bridge to the track end is only another 15 minutes or so.

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
00	1819286	5657809	1070	Car park with toilet opposite the Chateau
01	1819579	5657993	1147	10-OCT-07 Car park at end of asphalt road behind Tongariro Chateau
02	1820695	5657610	1186	20min (1.44km); wooden bridge after passing through open woodland with many bird calls
03	1820939	5657640	1200	24min (1.77km); S-bend in manicured path with bridge
04	1821043	5657685	1205	26min (1.91km); pass through gullied area with boardwalk bridge then up to edge of lave flow
05	1821461	5658128	1209	37min (2.67km); drop off to Wairere Stream and bridge
06	1821559	5658137	1218	50min (2.80km); sign for Whakapapa (Left) and Tama Lakes (Right) then normal track + mud etc
07	1821920	5658128	1253	40min (3.39km); high point in levelish, eroded area with rilled hill to left then up long semi grunt
08	1822620	5657989	1310	1:10min (4.57km); down pretty rough, eroded track to cross stream line
09	1823305	5658253	1290	1:40min (5.63km); wet area with some board walk and moss on poles
10	1823644	5658175	1285	1:45min (5.99km); down rough track to ascend narrow valley, cross stream then follow stream on left
11	1824011	5658108	1301	1:50min (6.41km); Y-fork and sign Left for Tama and Right for Waihohonu
12	1824300	5657776	1286	2hours (6.86km); zigzag down eroded slope then long g ascent to V-shaped valley after river crossing
13	1824747	5657121	1329	2:15min (7.81km); rolling area with view of Lower Tama lake on the north (left) side
14	1827038	5656399	1232	2:50min (10.26km); boring, rolling terrain with fair track in middle of nowhere
15	1827995	5656905	1183	3:05min (11.40km); sheltered lunch spot below eroded pumice bluffs
16	1828922	5656915	1157	3:40min (12.4) ; cross channel with trees visible on left above eroded bluff then onto river terrace
17	1830297	5656778	1143	4hours (13.88); several minor grunts up and down eroded channels and gullies
18	1830926	5656660	1124	4:10min (14.51); Y-fork with short diversion to right to Historic Hut then view of current hut
18A	1830764	5656595	1111	Historic Waihohonu Hut as 5 minute diversion off main track
19	1831450	5656512	1109	4:15min (15.04km); X-roads with round the mountain track / Waihohonu Hut
20	1832027	5656255	1090	4:25min (15.76km); enter section with trees on track
21	1833562	5655012	1058	4:55min (17.81km); higher bush plus trees
22	1834089	5654738	1038	5hours (18.43); enter gullied area with slippery slopes then into trees
23	1834633	5654554	994	5:05min (19.07km); down through trees then over bridge on Ohinepango Stream
24	1835884	5654437	981	5:25min (20.48km); car park at end of track

The gullied section



Notes

- **GPS** = Garmin GPSMap60 CSx
- **WP** = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit
- **masl** = metres above sea level