

CRATERS of the MOON

Topo50 Map: BG36 Taupo

GPS: NZTM on WGS 84

How to get to START: Exit Taupo Northwards on SH1 over the control gates bridge:

- About 5km out turn right opposite the road that is signposted for Craters of the Moon
- Park on the grass opposite the Hub Café and the Helistar Helicopter

The route is shown as the heavy red line opposite and the parking place is shown as the yellow square – WP01

Rough description: A tramp that can be tackled in almost any weather conditions as there is excellent cover offered by the forest trees – though several areas are being logged. The tramp is on bike tracks which are all named and used in the text. Walks of various length can be found but what is described below is about as much as can be done in a sensible day. As described just over 5 hours were required, almost 19km were covered, overall altitude difference was almost 200m and an estimated 415m of ascent made. Quite a tiring outing.

Detail: Once parked opposite the Helistar chopper look due north and you will see a bicycle floating in the air – this bike marks the start of the track. By going down the track into the gulley bearing left at the first junction, right at the second soon arrives at the tunnel under SH1. It is a bit of a grunt up the other side to then cross the Craters of the Moon Road – you will have walked about 10 minutes to cover an actual 150 – 200meters from the car park.

A track heads off upslope on the bank on the west and in minutes ignore the branch (**WP02** 406masl) on the right – you return on this one – but go straight ahead up “Goods Inwards”.

Start of track



Access & Location



This bit of track is rough, there is a DoC counter and within 15 minutes turn left on the much larger track (**WP03**422masl) with an information board and graded G3. This an easy grade track in superb forest with no way of getting lost but in 30minutes go straight at a T-junction on the “Piker” track heading for the (MTB) car park. At the end of this section of track cross a gravel road then a small bridge with a shelter and head across the car park (WP05 429masl) to pass through a tunnel. Soon bear right on Link G2 to cross the sealed road with a steep descent on the north side. Within 45 minutes meet a bridge where there is a choice: go immediately left on for the “Tank Stand” or pass under the bridge and go left on the “Coaster”. These two tracks rejoin on the crest (WP07502masl) with the Coaster being slightly longer whilst there has been logging on the other branch.

Continue on the undulating to rolling track and in an hour or so go left (**WP08**482masl) for the “Grinder” and “Mr & Mrs”

Debs Track



Ten minutes later the edge of the logged area is reached where a new memorial track – “Debs Track” – starts but stay on “Mr & Mrs”. At the next junction there is a choice of going very steeply downhill to the North on “Coles Killer” (**WP10**555masl) but it is easier to stay on “Mr & Mrs” which soon (about 2 hours) heads downhill to reach a gravel road where the route goes right. Pass the entrance to the “Young Pines” (**WP12**443masl) on the left and exit of “Coles Killer” on the right to meet the golf club “predator” fence and the start of the “Outback” and “Walters Wiggles” (**WP13**427masl). Get on to the “Outback” by closely approaching the fence and heading northish passing a small track bridge in the process. The track then wanders about heading NW.

Very slippery bike ramps



After 20 minutes on this track go right at a junction (**WP14**444masl), over a gravel road and then some bike ramps to get back into the woodland – be wary as some of these bike ramps are steep and can be very slippery. Just short of 3 hours exit (**WP15**428masl) the woodlands, cross a wide track and head uphill – this is a long climb and though it is not steep it seems a long way. When in the open the golf club fence can be seen heading up a very steep slope but “fear-not” the route does not follow this forbidding looking ascent.



Twenty minutes later the track crosses an open turning area (WP16^{490masl}) at the end of a gravel forest road and then after a section of more level walking another gravel road (WP17^{494masl}) is met where the track turns sharp left and parallels the road before crossing it in about a total time of three and a half hours. (WP18^{495masl}). There are few features to note until the track exits the woodland down a steepish bank to meet yet another, or it might be the same, road at a Y-junction of the road. Go right (WP19^{493masl}) uphill on the road signposted "Outback" and soon get back on to track by slipping off the degraded road to the left. In an area of larger trees again bear left heading SE (WP20^{479masl}) to the "Retro" track rather than uphill on the "Luge". The next point of interest is again a sharp change in direction on meeting a fence line at the edge of a gum-tree plantation (WP21^{447masl}) where the track to follow goes right heading almost due south then south east. The road crossed hours earlier is again crossed (WP22^{449masl}) and there is a bike ramp at each side of the road; watch these as the first is of tin and can be slippery whilst the second is constructed with rounded metal rods. The area immediately after this makes a great lunch spot under the huge pines.

Open area at WP19



Holding the signs up but nearly home



Soon after this the inwards route approaches and crosses the outward route on a small bridge. Minutes later pass under a bridge (WP23^{435masl}) carrying the outward route before approaching the "predator" fence and the junction where the "Walter's Wiggles" track heads off in a SW direction up the side of a fence. Less than 20 minutes are required to reach the last bend (WP24^{432masl}) in the climb up Walter's Wiggles which ends at a small bridge where the "Coaster" track takes off. From this bridge head into the tunnel with a warning about horses crossing then go left at a small Y-fork (WP25^{438masl}) to soon cross the Craters of the Moon road, then bear left and downhill to pass through the tunnel to get back into the MTB car park. Cross the car park passing the shelter, over the bridge and bear slightly left to pick up the "Tourist Trap" track (WP26^{429masl}). This is a trap since if you are half asleep you will end up back in the car park just walked through as the trap is a circular path and it was used at the start of the tramp. About ten minutes on the "Tourist Trap", which does wander about so watch out for the odd very obvious short-cut, take the very small exit left (WP27^{431masl}) on to the Goods Inwards and downhill. This soon gets back to the grass on the edge of SH1 where there is the option to go back through the tunnel or take a massive, dangerous shortcut by crossing SH1. In all 5 – 6 hours required for this longish walk.

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1868699	5718269	395	Park opposite Helistar Hub Cafe. Head due North for bike track to get to tunnel
02	1868553	5718209	406	12min (850m); Go straight uphill at T-junction on Goods Inward track. Return on the other branch
03	1868536	5718025	422	16min (1.05km); Meet larger Tourist Trap track and go left
04	1868332	5717829	431	30min (2.01km); Go straight on the Piker track for car park at T-junction
05	1868041	5717980	429	36min (2.48km); Bridge at bikers' carpark, thro' tunnel then right to cross Craters of the Moon Road
06	1868036	5718239	437	43min (3.07km); Meet bridge: Left to use Tank Stand and under bridge for the Coaster (They meet up)
07	1867307	5718354	502	1:03min (4.68km); Coaster and Tank Stand tracks meet at crest
08	1867138	5718437	482	1:10min (4.99km); Y-fork, left for Grinder and Mr & Mrs tracks
09	1866746	5718763	556	1:20min (5.62km); Edge of open recently felled area with Deb's Track signposted. Stay on Mr & Mrs
10	1866596	5718834	555	1:28min (5.80km); Go straight staying on Mr & Mrs; not right and down on Coles Killer
11	1866196	5718899	483	2:07min (7.40km); Heading downhill on Mr & Mrs track to turn right on gravel road
12	1867091	5718884	443	2:18min (8.34km); Pass entrance to Young Pines track on left and Coles Killer exit on right
13	1867355	5718758	427	2:23min (8.65km); Gate on road near golf club fence, start of Walter's Wiggles and Outback tracks
14	1867368	5719143	444	2:41min (9.69km); Y-fork go right then over road and bike ramps
15	1867517	5719363	428	2:50min (10.15km); Exit woodland cross wide track and head uphill - this is a long climb
16	1867840	5719649	490	3:10min (11.26km); Open area at end of a gravel road. Track continues over open space
17	1868057	5719881	494	3:20min (11.60km); Go left and parallel to gravel road
18	1867766	5719884	495	3:25min (12.03km); Cross straight over gravel road
19	1867312	5719884	493	3:38min (12.83); Come off steep bank to meet gravel road at junction. Go right on Outback sign
20	1866794	5719683	479	4:16min (14.21km); Sharp left on Retro Track and not uphill on the Luge Track
21	1867241	5719514	447	4:23min (14.75km); Meet fence at edge of gum tree plantation; go right down edge on track
22	1867364	5719155	449	4:31min (15.25km); Tin ramp to road then rodded ramp towards bridge over the out-ward track
-	1867276	5718953	435	4:35min (15.25km); Under bridge of outward track then meet golf fence & bridge near Walter's Wiggles
24	1868121	5718244	432	4:55min (16.92km); Last bend near top of Walter's Wiggles
25	1868030	5718211	438	5hours (17.11km); Small Y-fork - go left
26	1868072	5717960	429	5:05min (17.42km); Enter Tourist Track after crossing bikers' car park
27	1868496	5718132	431	5:15min (18.14km); Exit Tourist Trap on smaller Goods Inwards track and downhill 300m to the end

Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPS Garmin GPSMap 60CSx • WP = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit • masl = metres above sea level 	Total Distance : 18.457 Km Minimum Altitude : 367 Meters Maximum Altitude : 557 Meters
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