

LEITCHS HUT day walk

Topo50 Map: BF31Marokop & BF32 Piopio

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

How to get to START:

1. Exit Taupo on SH1 North and left to Poihipi Rd
2. At end of Poihipi road turn right on SH32 northwards
3. At Whakamaru turn left (NW) on SH30
4. In 3km bear left still on SH30 Mitchell Road
5. Two km on turn left (SW) on Scott Road (SH30)
6. Pass through Benneydale (toilet stop)
7. Left off SH30 signed-posted to Mokau
8. Right to Pukurimu Road
9. Right onto SH4 signed Te Kuiti
10. Left to SH3 signed New Plymouth and Piopio
11. Through town (Piopio) and off right to Waitanga Falls
12. Left at T-junction on to Mangotaki Road
13. Left at Y-fork to Leitchs Road
14. Right at T-junction still on Leitchs Road
15. Left at small Y-fork uphill into car park for track start

Total driving time is about 2:20min to the start at the end of Leitchs Road and about 3 hours from the end of Gibbon Road back to Taupo. The route is shown below.

Rough Description:

A moderately hard day tramp in the Te Kuiti area accessing via Piopio and exiting at Mahoenui. Not much in the way of views but good birdlife in parts, wood pigeon and paradise duck, and a "Frog Protection" area.

From the end of Leitchs Road it is now a relatively easy walk in to Leitchs Hut which requires about 3 hours covering less than 10km. Five years ago this was a messy, hard walk due to windfalls and serious cattle pugging of the track but the track is now wide, clear and allows good progress. The exit route is not quite as easy. The signs at Leitchs Hut state four hours out and the full 4 hours are required as this is mainly back-country grade track, much of it on shelf width with steep cross-slopes and there are many stream crossings. However it is all through superb forest with several large grassy meadows some of which are covered in buttercups in season.

Total walk length is just over 21km with 562m of ascent and 660m of descent reaching a maximum altitude of 506m with the lowest point being 136m.

Road Access and Exit



The route followed is the red line with the northerly spur from Piopio being to the start point at the end of Leitchs Road – the gap between the two spurs in the top NW corner of the map is where the tramp was done. Road mileage totals 388km.

Detail: Close to forty minutes is needed to drive in from Piopio, where there are cafes and a toilet for weary travellers, with the various turns being detailed above in steps 11 – 15. The road is asphalt then gravel and is an easy drive – on the way in look for the house named "Heaven's Above" – it is well named.

From the car park (01286masl) pass by and read the notices then head off on to a wide track that used to prove a bit trying with mud (cattle pugging), saplings across the track (cattle browsing) but it is now a clear, well-made track. There are several small streams to cross but they present no problem. About 20 minutes out there is a bit of a view (02361masl) of the sheep-grazing farmland to the NE. Twenty minutes or so more brings the route back to the edge of the woodlands and a better view (03395masl) before turning SW back into the woodlands.

Progress seems to have been made when a high point is reached where there is a distance notice board and directly behind the board there used to be a clearly visible area "closure" board (05490masl) with some information about the "Frog Protection Area".

Great views



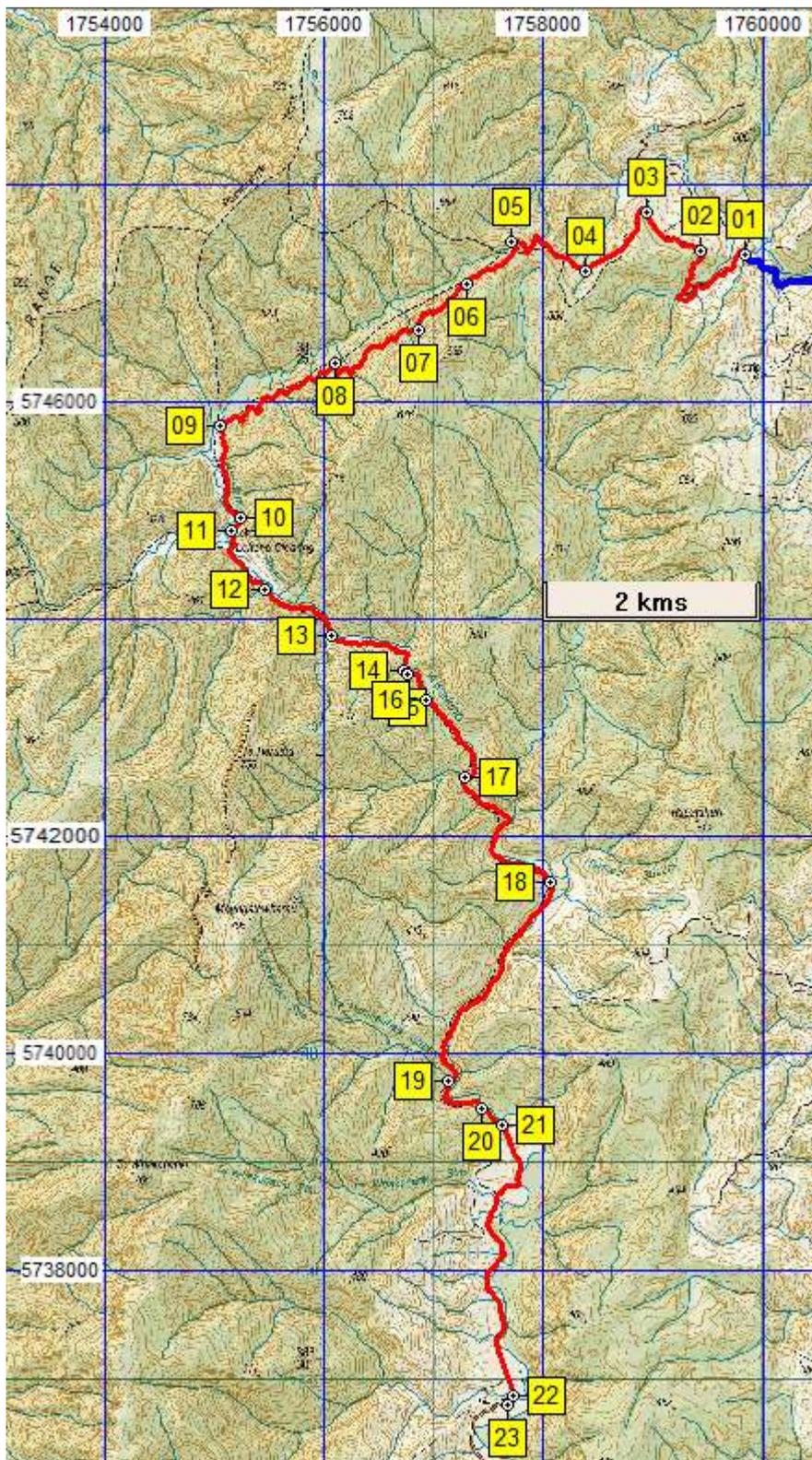
Distance board



Frog protection – now well hidden



The track continues on basically to the SW and it does climb as it moves upslope away from the mapped track for a spell passing through a pretty, dark valley head (07436masl) at about 2 hours then the present route and mapped one merge 30 minutes later at a large arch cut in windfall – christened "Hobbiton Arch" (08356masl). The SW direction with several more stream line crossing continues until the track emerges into a meadow (09273masl) with a sign that Leitchs Hut is one hour away. The Pomarangai Track is mapped as passing through this meadow heading to the North. Meadow walking continues for a bit then instead of getting wet feet, as happened on the old track, there is a small bit of a grunt up and over (10259masl) to soon get a view of Leitchs Hut (11268masl) which is easily reachable within 3 hours.



Hobbiton Arch (WP08)



The hut is a very pleasant surprise as it is clean and very well equipped having 16 sleeping bunk spaces in two dormitories, polished floor throughout, a wood/coal burner, internal water supply and sink plus hot water system supplied via the solid fuel stove. There are ample drying racks / lines on the deck and inside the hut - plus the toilet is not too far away.

Leitchs Hut



Study of the map indicates 17 river or stream crossings on the way out to Gibbon Road which is noted on the DOC track-board as 10km away to the south requiring 4 hours. This is all on real back country tracks and the full 4 hours are needed.

Within minutes of leaving the hut the Awakino River is crossed then followed all the way downstream by turning hard left to the SE in a pleasant grassy meadow. There is a stream to cross in the meadow before entering the woods where the track is on a nasty cross slope. This combination of meadows, streams and tricky cross-slope tracks continues for a long time and is quite pleasant walking with some meadows having flowers, goats running about in places and continual evidence of rooting pigs but does become hard work.

Colour other than green



From : 17-Oct-12 09:48:50
To : 17-Oct-12 17:23:20

Time taken : 7:34:30
Total Distance : 21.292 Km

Minimum Speed : 0.027 KPH
Maximum Speed : 11.356 KPH
Average Speed : 2.811 KPH

Minimum Altitude : 136 Meters
Maximum Altitude : 506 Meters



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1759838	5747364	286	08-SEP-07 End Leitchs Road car park for tramp start
02	1759440	5747387	361	23min (1.44km); cobbly, slippery, muddy then view on RHS
03	1758945	5747757	395	35min (2.15km); edge of fields then SW back into forest
04	1758374	5747205	438	1:03min (3.02km); small meadow area
05	1757713	5747473	490	1:22min (4.09km); Y-fork but right blocked off as frog Protection area
06	1757289	5747085	459	1:33min (4.78km); rock-fall area then short grunt uphill
07	1756866	5746673	436	1:46min (5.46km); small, dark, pretty upper valley / valley head stream crossing
08	1756100	5746348	356	2:11min (6.68km); Hobbiton Arch - huge tree archway
09	1755043	5745784	273	2:37min (8.27km); open area with "1 km to hut sign"
10	1755240	5744943	259	2:53min (9.24km); tricky, poorly marked section more or less in river / rocky ledge
11	1755147	5744819	262	3:20min (9.44km); Leitchs Hut
12	1755456	5744275	259	3:37min (10.18km); stream crossing to meadow then into woods on nasty cross-slope
13	1756058	5743851	254	3:53min (11.03km); stream crossing 1km SE of Leitch's Hut
14	1756713	5743531	244	4:14min (11.96km); unmapped stream line
15	1756763	5743500	242	4:16min (12.02km); stream line in rough, very undulating area
16	1756928	5743259	231	4:25min (12.37km); stream line on steep cross-slope
17	1757281	5742547	217	4:53min (13.37km); 4th stream crossing SE of Leitch's Hut
18	1758065	5741582	190	5:41min (15.03km); turn from SE course to SSW / SW
19	1757130	5739757	172	6:34min (17.41km); Putahaehae stream line crossing
20	1757441	5739503	168	6:46min (18.04km); unmapped stream, track triangle some metres upstream from entry point
21	1757616	5739350	170	6:51min (18.28km); enter large clearing
22	1757721	5736852	143	7:32min (21.19km); bridge just before road end of Gribbon Road
23	1757670	5736778	143	7:34min (21.29km); car park at farm at end of Gribbon Road



Inward to Leitchs Hut – Google Earth



Outwards to Gribbon road – Google Earth



A major change in direction is made in a bit under 6 hours when the overall heading changes from SE to SW (**18**¹⁸⁰masl) then at around six and a quarter hours there is rather a nice waterfall to be admired a few hundred metres before crossing the Putahaehae Stream (**19**¹⁷²masl)

Fifteen minutes after crossing the Putahaehae there is an unmapped stream which can cause confusion as the track is not too easy to spot. On crossing this stream (**20**¹⁶⁸masl) immediately head upstream 20 metres or so and a large orange track marker will be found on the true right bank (that is on the left heading upstream).

Soon after this a stock control gate is passed through on the track, then less than 10minutes later another gate gives access on to farmland (**21**¹⁶⁸masl). Please note that there are no track markers on these final 3km but the track is clear enough on the ground to ensure no offence is caused to the farmer by disturbance of the stock. This is now all easy walking though in places the ground can be well churned up (pugged) by the cattle but there are still few stream lines to allow boot washing. It is only 3km through the farmland though, with weary legs, it can seem interminable but soon enough there is a bridge to cross (**22**¹⁴³masl) then a gate leads to the car park at the end of Gribbon Road (**23**¹⁴³masl). Gribbon Road leads out to and joins SH3 at Mahoenui where by turning left one is soon back in Piopio.

All in all a great tramp covering a half marathon in superb forest and attractive farmland though it might be a bit much for some – but then an overnight stop can be made at Leitchs Hut.

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