

## MOUNT TIHIA CIRCUIT

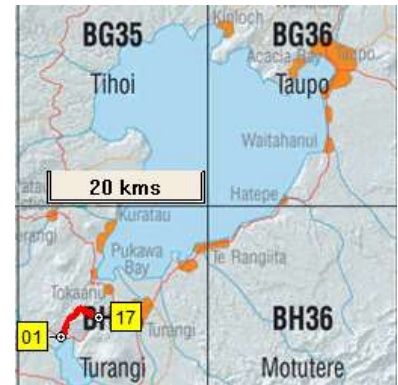
Topo50 Map: BH35 Turangi

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

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

- In Turangi turn right off **SH1 on to SH41** towards Tokaanu
- Turn left off **SH41 on to SH47** as if going to Whakapapa – set your trip meter
- Look for small car park on **RHS** of road at 4.5km from Junction (This is where you exit) [WP17]
- Pass the path on your left to Lake Rotopounamu (*the van mover might go and walk round here*)
- Pass both tracks on your left that go down to the head of Lake Rotoaira
- About 1km past the second of the above access roads look for a small grassy track on your right when heading NW. Walk in on this track from the road (**WP01**)

*The start and end points of the tramp show as yellow WPs opposite whilst the route is the red line*



**Rough description:** This is a long walk not to be undertaken lightly or without having someone along who knows just where they are going and reliable navigation skills. Most of the walk is on uncharted tracks, there are some “paint splurges” on trees or plastic ribbons tied on trees but there is a great deal of “bush bashing involved. Much of the bush bashing is through very high, very thick virtually impenetrable shrubs which do a good job of skin removal and offer many trip-ups – the bush recalls the story of the tribe of pygmies wandering through high bush and having to stand on each other’s shoulders to see if there was anything to see accompanied by cries of “where the f&%# are we” – the tribe eventually being called the “Werethefukawee!” Allow 6 – 7 hours including tea and lunch stops plus some spare in case you have navigational irregularities. There is a height gain of around 430 metres taking about 3 hours; you then lose 25 metres passing through the basin of the crater followed by another gain of about 90 metres to just below the top of Mount Tihia. Some of the descent is quite steep and relentless but relieved by the birdcalls (Tui).

**Detail:** Drive out of Turangi on the Tokaanu Road (SH41) then turn left on to the road for Whakapapa (SH47) and continue up SH47 for 4.5km when you should see a small car parking area on the right hand side of the road as you go up. The van or car mover should take note of this as the walkers will emerge here in a few hours.

Continue up the highway passing the start of the circular walk of Lake Rotopounamu – the car or van mover might want to walk round this lake. Keep going on SH47 passing the access / exit tracks that lead to the head of Lake Rotoaira and about 1 km past the second access road / track look for a grassy track on your right. This is your starting point and is noted as **WP01**. After a matter of 2 minutes on this track turn right at an old “dumped” car (**WP02**) then in another minute or so bear left under the power lines (**WP03**) and almost immediately right at a T-junction when you start ascending. The path is not at all clear so keep your eyes open for signs of previous trampers or hunters – foot prints, broken or cut branches, odd paint spots or ribbon.

In about a total time of 15 minutes you should find an old track crossing and you should bear leftish (**WP04**<sup>646masl</sup>) at a large conifer. There is then a small meadow (**WP05**<sup>942masl</sup>) which is, reportedly, the site of a previous village. From here you ascend further and pass several holes and trenches on the ground – these are reportedly old fortifications. It is possible that the trench might have been a water supply channel. The forest in this area is most attractive with many varied species and some “old giants” tower high above you. In about 1:30 minutes after some slightly steep sections you reach a minor crest which has a bivouac constructed from poles and black plastic (**WP06**<sup>942masl</sup>) which makes a good tea / coffee stop. The forest is very thick here and it can be seen opposite that there was no GPS signal so there is a break in the red line which indicates the GPS track.

Anyway, you should be heading uphill, roughly north eastwards and several sections of the track have been marked and chopped shrubs and branches also indicate the correct route. In about 2:20 minutes the amazing tree as shown below should be encountered (**WP07**<sup>1012masl</sup>).

### Amazing looped tree



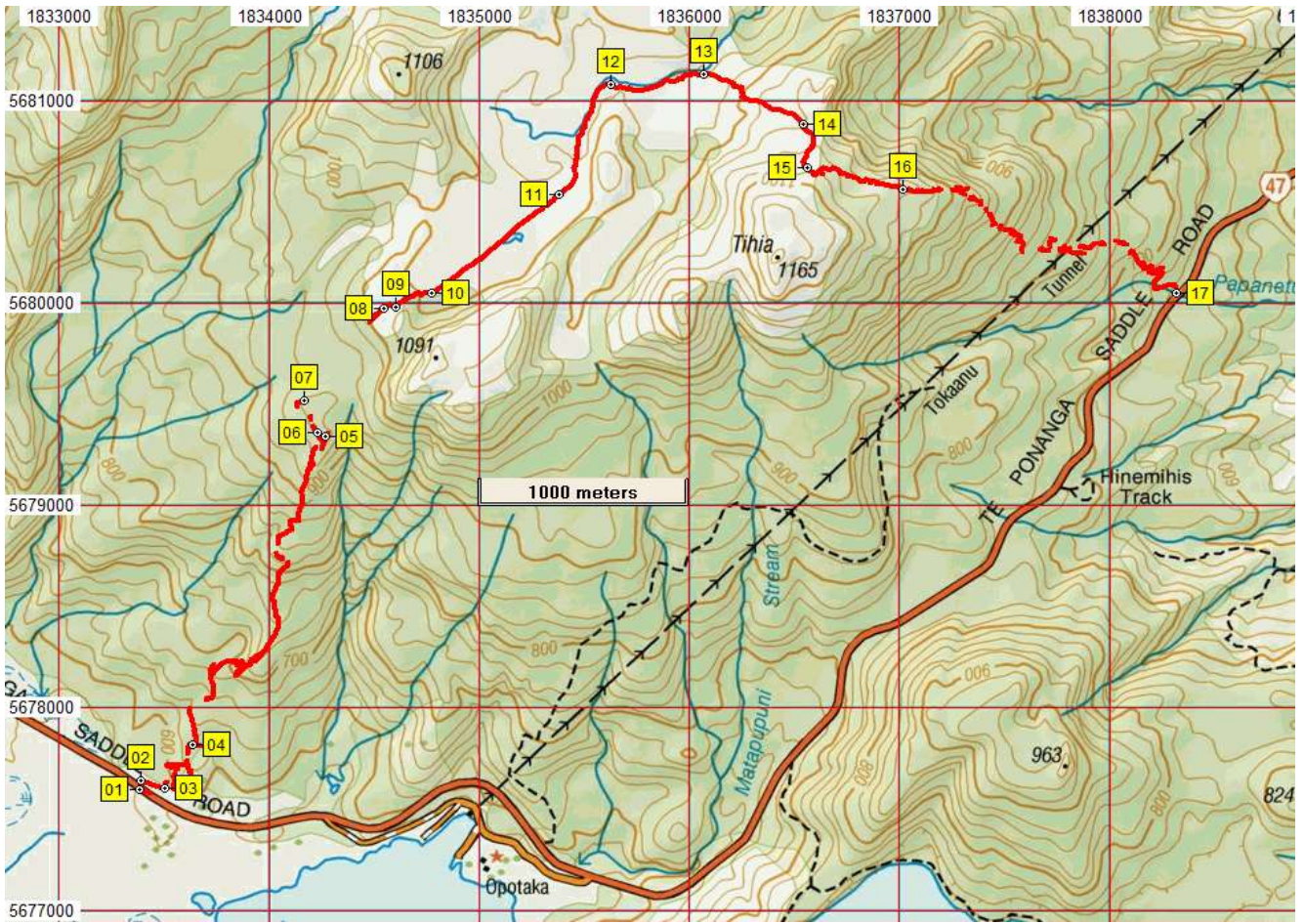
This tree must have been damaged or bent round whilst a sapling as it is well-nigh fully grown with a strong trunk which lies along the ground.

On the day this walk was done the next 20 minutes or so passed upwards in a continual struggle through dense forest with virtually no clear indications of where you were or guide indications. A position fix was taken in a slight clearing by GPS (**WP08**<sup>1009masl</sup>) at 2:45 minutes walking time. From this point a compass bearing was used to continue in a north-easterly direction until emerging out into the open and turning left on to a minor footpath (**WP09**<sup>1016masl</sup>) at just on 3 hours.

The edge of the crater depression was reached in 10 minutes or so (**WP10**<sup>982masl</sup>) when walking became a pleasure on the short tussock grassland. Fifteen minutes later the NE corner of the crater was reached (**WP11**<sup>996masl</sup>).

### Thick dark forest





NB Broken GPS trace as Garmin Summit in use and signal lost

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1833381	5677602	586	Side of main road with track on N side
02	1833387	5677642	585	5min (120m), T-junction, go right at old, dumped car
03	1833504	5677603	596	8min (270m);, Bear left under power line then go right and up on poorly marked path
04	1833635	5677823	646	18min (860m); Old track crosses, go leftish at large conifer
05	1834268	5679345	942	1:32min (3.82km); meadow, was old Maori village, then up through fortified area with holes/trenches
06	1834231	5679360	942	1:57min (4.02km), Bivouac on crest after thick, steep forest
07	1834164	5679519	1012	2:14min (4.31km); Looped tree
08	1834545	5679977	1009	2:50min (5.09km); Nasty thick bush (Fix position for compass bearing)
09	1834600	5679981	1016	3hrs (5.17km); Out of nasty bush into open then left on small path
10	1834775	5680051	992	3:11min (5.43km); Edge of crater depression on tussock grass
11	1835381	5680536	996	3:30min (6.23km); NE edge of crater and into low bush
12	1835627	5681082	994	3:43min (6.9km); Mound at edge of crater below Mnt Tihia after long slow ascent parallel to stream
13	1836072	5681130	966	3:56min (7.4km); Lunch stop above stream
14	1836542	5680883	1046	4:53min (8.09km); Into high bush, awful bush bashing
15	1836561	5680666	1082	5:11min (8.4km); Emerge into the open again and hit rough track below Mnt Tihia
16	1837016	5680561	1061	5:46min (9.09km); Near end of ridge with rocky outcrop before descent
17	1838319	5680050	652	6:45min (12.22km); Emerge onto SH 47 at car park on edge of road

### Morning tea on the path!



At this point there is a low ridge (3:30 minutes) and this is ascended into low bush. Over the ridge the stream is followed on the true right bank till a low mound is reached (**WP12<sup>994masl</sup>**) below Mount Tihia. The route then continues through more of the crater in an ENE direction to arrive at a reasonably sheltered lunch spot (**WP13<sup>966masl</sup>**) just above the stream line (4 hours walking). From here the going gets really tough with a fairly steep climb up on to the shoulder of Mount Tihia through almost impenetrable bush (**WP14<sup>1046masl</sup>**).

After 25 minutes of not seeing anything, but knowing there were people ahead since the bushes were moving and minor cries of anguish etc the relief is immense on re-emerging into the open in much lower bush (**WP15<sup>1082masl</sup>**) with an obvious track.

### Emerging from the impenetrable bush



From here the track gets better and better and offers some very good views of Lake Taupo and Mount Ruapehu. The descent from this point takes about 1:30 minutes and once you are past the rocky outcrops (**WP16<sup>1061masl</sup>**) in 5:45 total walk time it is all downhill.

The descent is a bit brutal as it is relentless, made worse due to several windfalls, but it is again very attractive forest and rich in bird life. The end is near when you cross the line of the Tokaanu Tunnel and the road is reached in something like 6 to 7 hours total walking (**WP17<sup>652masl</sup>**).

An easier alternative, with no bush bashing, is to ascend Mount Tihia from the end point of the above tramp as described. This, of course, means going up and down on the same route – but this gives two chances to hear the birds when they are in song.

Notes: **GPS** Garmin Summit **WP** Waypoint as taken by GPS unit **masl** metres above sea level (as recorded by GPS)