

# NGAURUHOE - MOUNT DOOM

Topo50 Map: BH34 Raurimu & BH35 Turangi

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

**How to get to START:** Exit Taupo on SH1 down the lake for 47km in 45 minutes to Turangi then:

- Follow the Desert Road (**SH1**) and turn off right on to SH46 for Rangipo
- Continue on **SH46** to the T-junction with **SH47** and turn left
- At 90km (1:15 min) left on to gravel road for Mangatepopo & Tongariro Crossing – speed limit 40kph
- Park and off-load at car park with toilets at 96km and about 1 hour 30 minutes driving from Taupo.

**Rough Description:** One of the must-do walks on the North Island which takes 5–7 hours. Very strenuous effort is required on the 1.5km ascent of the actual cone – where 1177m are gained - with the descent being shorter and quicker but it involves “scree-skating” – not for the weak of leg or faint-hearted. There are many well placed warning notices about volcanic activity and of falling – or rolling – boulders on the actual cone. Full attention must be paid to the warnings as this is a fairly high risk outing. Careful planning and attention to the weather must be applied.

**Detail:** Make an early start from Taupo (6:30–7:00am) as it takes 90 minutes to drive the 96km to Mangatepopo car park (**WP01**112masl) where car park improvements have made a huge difference to congestion and space to park. There are often several coaches, vans and cars off-loading some hundreds of people about to do the crossing – most of these people want to use the toilets so there will be a queue. The path starts on a section of boardwalk near the toilets and heads off up-valley basically in an easterly direction.

Within 20 minutes or so the sign indicating the path to Whakapapa is reached (**WP02**1186masl) then 5 minutes later there is a branch off left (**WP03**1169masl) to the Mangatepopo Hut – this is intentional to stop all the day trippers going to the hut. After 30 minutes a small valley is crossed and the track becomes undulating as the first gentle ascent of the day is made. As a section of higher ground is reached there is a small, inconspicuous track (**WP04**1227masl) off left that gives access to Hardman’s Ridge. There is a level area with boardwalk (**WP05**1283masl) after 50 min walking, then the valley of the Mangatepopo Stream becomes narrower and there are intermittent sections of boardwalk. The path remains first class most of the way to the toilets (**WP06**1361masl) which are reached in a total time of about an hour; once again there are usually queues. Before starting the ascent of the “staircase” up through the scoria it is worth taking a morning tea stop just past the toilets. The view of the ascent is quite daunting, especially with all the ant-like figures following each other up in an endless chain but, in fact, ascending the “staircase” is not too taxing and one requires 45 minutes to an hour depending on fitness and like or dislike of stairs.

## In the carpark weather perfect



The views back over one’s shoulder are great, especially to see how far above the toilets one climbs so quickly, and a feeling of achievement is felt on reaching the plateau area of South Crater at the top in about 1:50min.

On entering this area the sign (**WP07** 1656masl) for the ascent of Ngauruhoe points off to the right and for the first few hundred metres there are blue track marker poles and an incipient trace of a track on the ground. This part is quite bouldery and the slope slowly increases. All that can be seen as indicators is where the vegetation stops and colour changes.

## Ngauruhoe cloud clearing



## Start of the staircase



A few tracks can be found in the gravels but these need to be avoided as they involve two steps up and one down due to slippage (**WP08**1820masl). The plan should be to keep left and head for the rocky outcrops that can be seen above, progress upwards is easier (not easy) close to the rock as there is something to hold on to and slippage is less (**WP09**1983masl). Once on the edge of the rocky area it is possible to see people scree-skating down the steep slopes to the right but rolling boulders can also be seen. Boulders are very easily dislodged and they career downslope at very high speed so total awareness must be retained. Near the top the colour changes to reddish basaltic material but the going is tough with some big steps up and a gravel covering in places always presents a hazard. Eventually a last big effort on dying legs allow the crater rim to be reached (**WP10**2271masl).

## Start of the ascent



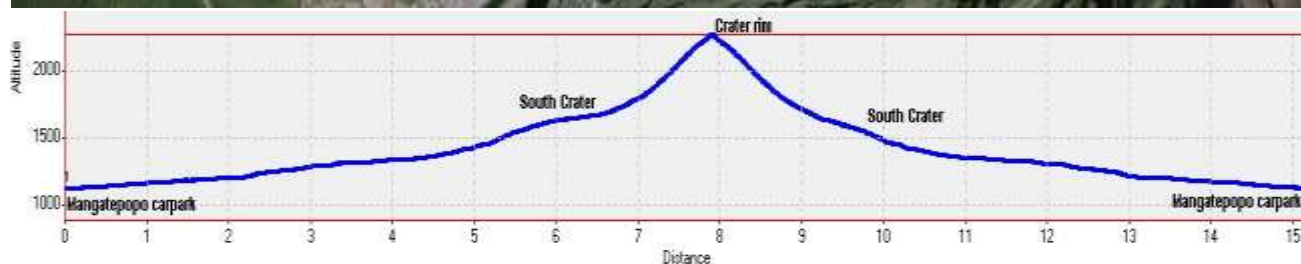
## Dreadful gravel



## The rocky ridge



## Map and Google with GPS data



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1823044	5663953	1127	Mangatepopo carpark
02	1824188	5663728	1186	1.5km (22min); Junction to track from Whakapapa
03	1824421	5663824	1169	1.7km (26min); Sign for Mangatepopo Hut off to left
04	1824905	5664118	1227	2.4km (34min); Turn-off on the left into valley for Hardman's Ridge
05	1825546	5664294	1283	3.1km (49min); Level area with boardwalk then narrow valley and intermittent boardwalk
06	1826857	5664404	1361	4.4km (1:07min); DoC toilets, bottom of staircase
07	1827603	5663969	1656	6.3km (1:56min); Entrance to South Crater and track junction, right for Ngauruhoe summit
08	1827629	5663293	1820	7km (2:19min); Vegetation line, very steep in loose material
09	1827605	5663033	1983	7.4km (2:56min); On the rocky ridge and "easier" ascending with handholds
10	1827511	5662581	2271	7.9km (3:55min); Crater rim of Ngauruhoe
11	1827398	5663760	1640	9.3km (5:28min); Meet "crossing" track after leg-shattering scree descent

On good weather days the views are magnificent all around as is the actual crater which is very steep sided. If the wind is low and it is not too cold it is possible to walk all the way round the rim before starting the descent. The route down basically runs parallel to the rocky ridge used for the ascent but the descent is in loose gravel so strong legs are required and, as there are small sections of underlying rock close to the surface, tumbles and falls can be expected as gravel on rock is lethal. Several "tracks" down through the gravel can be seen but it is also possible to choose a totally new line as long as it heads for South Crater – people have become lost when descending in the wrong direction. Near the bottom of the descent the obvious route swings a bit to the west – the left – and meets the Tongariro Alpine Crossing Track a short distance below the entrance to South Crater.

**On the crater rim**



**View over South Crater**



**The crater**



**The slope descended**



The picture on the left shows a huge boulder that crashed down the slope on the day of this outing. The walker sitting on the boulder actually dislodged it whilst ascending as he used it to haul himself upslope!

There were people on the lower slopes and the boulder missed them only by metres!

**GPS Data**

From : 20-Nov-13 08:52:47  
To : 20-Nov-13 15:48:46

Time taken : 6:55:59  
Total Distance : 15.207 Km  
**GPS Distance: 16.98km**  
Minimum Speed : 0.008 KPH  
Maximum Speed : 6.032 KPH  
Average Speed : 2.193 KPH

Minimum Altitude : 1125 Meters  
Maximum Altitude : 2274 Meters  
**Total Ascent; 1177metres**

<p><b>Notes:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>GPS</b> Garmin GPSMap 62sc</li> <li>• <b>WP</b> = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit</li> <li>• <b>masl</b> = metres above sea level as recorded by GPS unit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Total Time:</b> 6hrs 50 min</li> <li>• <b>Total walk (gps):</b> 16.98km</li> <li>• <b>Overall altitude gain:</b> 1149m</li> <li>• <b>Total ascent:</b> 1,177m (GPS Data)</li> <li>• <b>Cone ascent:</b> 1.6km 1:59:20 for 615m</li> <li>• <b>Cone descent:</b> 1.3km 59:43 for 631m</li> </ul>
----------------------	--	--