

## PUKEKAIKIORE to the CHATEAU via TAMA LAKES

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 Highway (**SH1**), turn off right to SH46 for Rangipo
- Continue on **SH46** to the T-junction with **SH47** and turn left
- At 90km (1:15 min) turn left on to gravel road for Mangatepopo & Tongariro Alpine 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:** A fairly strenuous walk of about 7 hours covering about 20km, with another 3km added for altitude gain and loss, in some of the wildest terrain in the Tongariro National Park. Starts on the tourist track from Mangatepopo car park towards the Tongariro Alpine Crossing and branches off clockwise before reaching the Mangatepopo Hut passing between Ngauruhoe and Pukekaikioire (1692metres) on a rough, back-country track which is basically unmarked whilst it clambers over scoria mounds filling river valleys. At the high point there is then some serious cross-country tramping to get to the Tama Lakes before heading back to the Chateau on the Northern Circuit track coming from Waihothonu.

### Heading towards the cleft



Careful planning and attention to the weather must be applied. The tramp starts at 1100 masl at the Mangatepopo car park and rises to 1600m just below Ngauruhoe before climbing another 30 metres about halfway through the tramp having crossed some of the wildest, roughest terrain to be found in this area. At any time of the year be prepared for some serious weather changes as temperature will drop as the ascent is made and there is some serious exposure to any winds that blow. If high winds or other inclement weather is forecast think twice before starting since there are some very serious bluffs on the route and they must be visible at all times and ensure full wet-weather and cold gear is carried plus, especially in warm weather, in excess of a couple of litres of water – there is none available once you start ascending. The path is first rate as far as the turn-off (**02**<sup>1183masl</sup>) then it is back-country grade with very few pole markers and basically off-track walking till you rejoin the tourist track coming down from the Tama Lakes.

**Detail:** Make an early start from Taupo (7:30 am) as it takes 90 minutes to drive the 96km to Mangatepopo car park (**01**<sup>1115masl</sup>) where there is now ample space with the newly revamped car park. Hundreds of people could be about to do the Alpine Crossing and 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 then immediately there is a branch off right (**02**<sup>1183masl</sup>) basically into a stream line heading SE passing in and out of the river bed several times on a very basic track heading towards bluffs. Below the bluffs enter a narrow valley heading ENE (**03**<sup>1184masl</sup>); the track is clearer now and there are a few marker poles.

Within the hour a minor crest (**04**<sup>1284masl</sup>) is reached after a small grunt then the track continues upwards parallel to a very deep gully on the right. Ten minutes later the track vanishes and the first of the scoria mounds or flows has to be crossed (**05**<sup>1362masl</sup>) as the route continues upwards on the true left bank. There is a stream confluence (**06**<sup>1381masl</sup>) within 90 minutes at a group of boulders just past a minor Y-fork where a very steep path goes off up the stream joining from the right. The track requires full concentration from now on as it is quite tricky in places.

For the next 30 minutes the going is very rough passing (**07 and 08**) in and out of the stream line, over mounds of scoria and working along the junction between the scoria flows and the older country rock; there are several occurrences of basin like features between the mounds of scoria. Around 2 hours walking the high point (**09**<sup>1601masl</sup>) is reached when the route ahead should be studied and compared with the map whilst the Chateau can be seen in the distance. At this point the rudimentary track is abandoned and some hard, off-track walking to scrambling starts as several gullies in the scoria are crossed whilst heading SE. Looking westwards a flat area known as the Cricket Pitch can be seen – there is a route passing through this but it is longer - and by looking straight ahead (**10**<sup>1610masl</sup>) a marker pole can be seen on the ridge on the horizon.

This pole is reached in about 3 hours (**11**<sup>1630masl</sup>) and is the highest point of the tramp; from here the descent to the SSE commences aiming for a sandy stream bed (**12**<sup>1541masl</sup>). Once walking in the stream bed head slightly to the right aiming at the bluffs ahead and hold closely in to the base – soon after this a “cube” shaped rock is passed. The route is a clockwise loop till you are heading westwards. At the end of this long section a small dried up lake bed is arrived at (**13**<sup>1390masl</sup>).



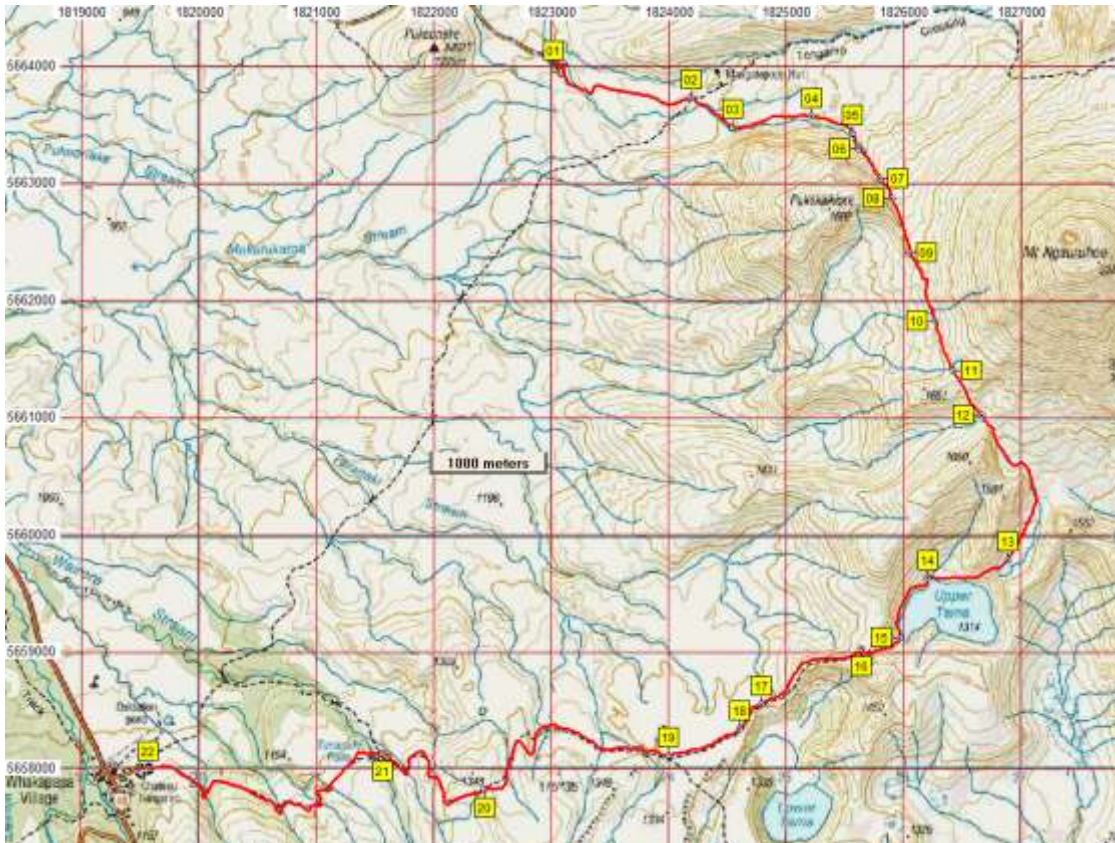
Distances and times are taken from the Police Station in Taupo. Road routes are in blue. The tramp route is the red line.

### Navigators



### Descent to stream bed





The ground can still be moist at the edge of this small depression even at the end of long dry spells. After this it is a gentle uphill walk due west to arrive at a point overlooking the Upper Tama Lake – a great lunch spot.

**Upper Tama Lake**

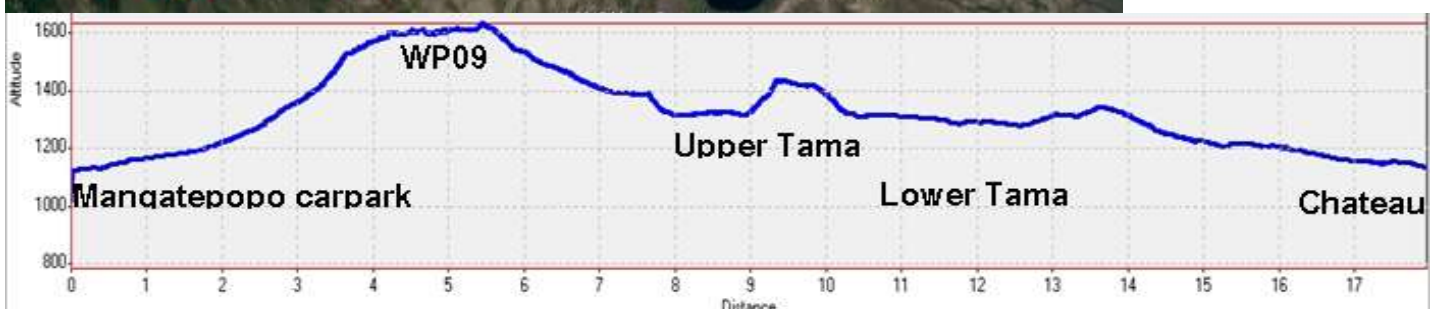


The route from here is a small reasonable track along the northern side of the lake (141319masl), it looks a long way but really only takes 30 minutes but there are a few “exciting” bits where small landslips have occurred. Once at the SW corner of the lake (151317masl) it is steeply uphill with very loose material covering the surface near the top — to arrive on the crest of the ridge at the stone shelter (161434masl).

**Quite a grunt**



**At the stone shelter**



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1823020	5663977	1115	9:00am; car park at Mangatepopo
02	1824186	5663728	1183	20min (1.43km); go right off track just past junction with Whakapapa track heading SE on small track
03	1824544	5663476	1184	40min (1.87km); enter narrow valley to ENE below bluffs on RHS
04	1825221	5663570	1284	55min (2.59km); minor crest after minor grunt, go upwards ESE parallel to deep valley on the right
05	1825564	5663422	1362	1hour (2.98km); off vague track over scoria valley fill to continue upwards on true left bank
06	1825617	5663295	1381	1:25min (3.14km); confluence of stream from the right 50m SE of minor Y-junction
07	1825796	5663047	1465	1:40min (43.46km); in stream-line on rough rock plus scoria with steep ascent to SE
08	1825894	5662869	1528	1:55min (3.70km); nose of scoria flow then up RHS on junction of scoria and rock
09	1826044	5662405	1601	2:05min (4.20km); high point with views of Chateau. Leave minor track and go cross country to SSE
10	1826274	5661826	1610	2:40min (4.93km); big boulders above Cricket Pitch in gullied scoria area with pole on ridge ahead
11	1826422	5661395	1630	3 hours (5.42km); at white wooden marker pole on ridge crest. Start descent to SSE
12	1826665	5661025	1541	3:15min (5.9km); off slope to stream line going right to hold close below bluffs. Cube shaped rock
13	1826889	5659790	1390	3:50min (7.44km); dried up mini lake, moist ground. Gentle upslope to overlook upper Tama Lake
14	1826199	5659626	1319	4:30min (8.23km); on lake edge with fair track with some "exciting" slip sections
15	1825974	5659122	1317	4:45min (8.91km); SW tip of upper Tama then steeply uphill with loose material on upper slopes
16	1825639	5659024	1434	5:05min (9.33km); crest of ridge after fair grunt and at stone shelter
17	1824785	5658553	1317	5:20min (10.42km); wooden seat for VERY tall trampers on RHS
18	1824611	5658343	1317	5:30min (10.74km); above Lower Tama Lake
19	1824005	5658113	1304	5:40min (11.4km); junction with track left for Waihohonu and right for Chateau
20	1822429	5657822	1285	6:10min (13.64km); ridge with views of Ngauruhoe, Ruapehu and Mount Taranaki
21	1821564	5658135	1216	6:35min (15.15km); junction, right for Taranaki Falls and straight for Wairere Stream and Chateau
22	1819569	5657992	1137	7:12min (17.96km); car park at end of tar seal behind Chateau

Depending on the state of fitness and conditions there is a choice as to which route one now uses to get back to the Chateau. The more scenic way is to head off along the ridge basically to the south to pick up the route described in the Tama Lakes Loop tramp. The route mapped and shown here is the more direct, though slightly boring way heading downhill all the way to the SW down to the Lower Tama Lake – from the crest to the viewpoint (181317masl) for the lower lake takes another 30 minutes; on the way one passes a wooden seat (17) obviously designed for trampers with very long legs.

The track improves dramatically here as it becomes "tourist" grade – however it does burn the feet a bit. The next feature of note is the junction (191304masl) where the Northern Circuit track comes in from Waihohonu on the left. From here the return feels a bit like a route march as it seems to go on forever but there are still several spots worth watching out for; just over 6 hours walking should offer reasonable views (201285masl) of Ngauruhoe, Ruapehu and Mount Taranaki. Twenty-five minutes after this the track for the Taranaki Falls (211216masl) goes off to the right then the valley of the Wairere Stream is passed through. After this, three or four bridges are crossed and a wooded section of track is passed through close to the stream on the right. About 35 minutes from the Wairere Bridge the small car park at the end of the sealed road behind Tongariro Chateau is reached (221137masl).

#### Author taking notes

#### Rugged terrain between Ngauruhoe and Pukekaikio



Happy feet now it is all over



Approaching the shelter above Upper Tama Lake



#### Notes:

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

**Total Time:** 7 hours 15 minutes

**Total Walk Time:** 6 hours 30 minutes

**Total walk length:** 18km (GPS records)

**Overall altitude gain:** 798metres