

RAINBOW MOUNTAIN

260 Series Map: Rotorua, U16

Topo50 Map: BF37 Waiotapu

How to get to START: From the police station on the domain go out on to SH1 north

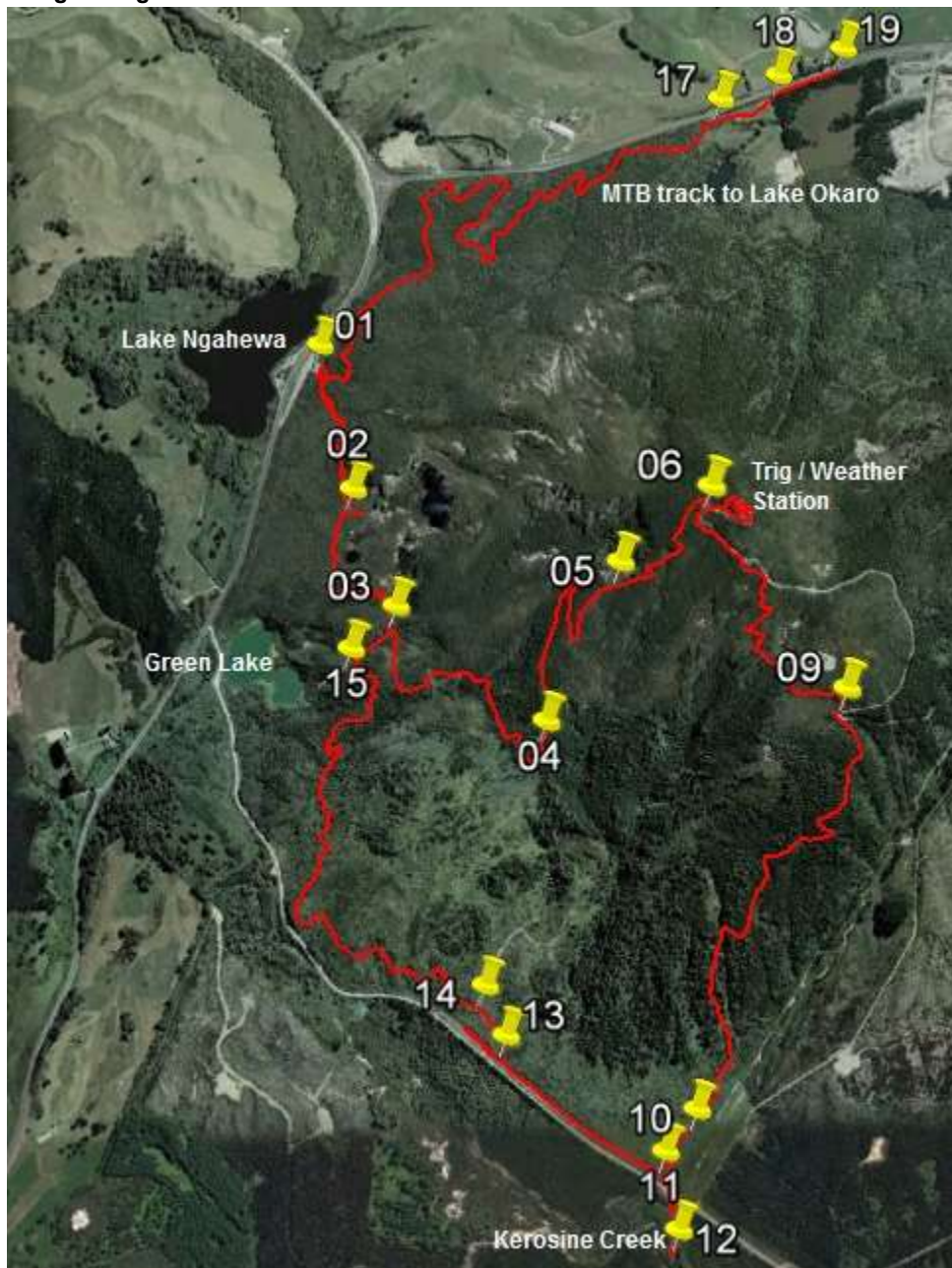
- Up SH1 and at Wairakei go on to SH5
- Stay on SH5 for Rotorua till you have done 54km, about 45 minutes
- There is a well-marked car park on the Right Hand Side of the road for Rainbow Mountain just before the junction to SH38 for Murapara

Rough description: An “easy” to moderate tramp depending on exactly what you do. The ancients or the very young can do the easy option and just go straight up and down whilst to do the loop described is actually quite tricky in places and good footwork is necessary. It is a bit steep going in places but the path is good, unless it is wet and then the red clays can be slippery. If the extension from SH5 through to near Lake Okaro on SH38 is added then serious distance is involved.

There are views of the crater lake on the way up and, if the weather is clear, you can see a long way from the top including Lake Tarawera.

Most of the walk is through native forest, mainly regrowth as very few larger trees are seen. The walk up the mountain takes between one hour and 1:30 minutes whilst the way down is a bit quicker if the same route is followed – allow 4-6 hours if the loop to Kerosene Creek and extension to Lake Okaro are both included with total ascent of about 500m over the 13km.

Google Image



NZ Grid GPS: Geodetic Datum 1949

NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS84

Access Route



The access route is the “brighter” red line following the main road from Taupo, through Golden Springs to Rotorua.

In the past few years or so virtually all of the tracks in the area have been upgraded and most are now bike track so care must always be taken. There are several shelters in the area and all of these display information and maps showing the track system – do not rely on the tracks shown on the current published maps.

Detail: The tracks leave from the back of the car park (**WP1423 masl**). It has to be decided if the extension to SH38 is going to be attempted and if this is done as a first step or at the end of the loop. The extension leaves from the top left corner and is easy going all the way whilst the loop to include the mountain leaves from the top right hand side via a shelter with information notices.

To begin the loop track is very gently sloping but there are a few possible slippery spots – recognised by their red colouration. In about 10 minutes there is a small T-junction (**WP2437 masl**) with the path to the left offering views of the Crater Lake. The cliff face of Rainbow Mountain can also be seen from this viewpoint and some of the colourations for which the mountain is famous can be seen. At one time samples of the coloured sand / soil were bottled as a tourist attraction.

In 25 minutes there is a junction (**WP3453masl**) with uphill to the left for the summit whilst straight ahead goes to Kerosene Creek and is the return route.

From here on the path is a little steeper and the forest a little thicker and in about 40min (**WP4544masl**) the vegetation clears enough to offer some views of the bluff faces then within the hour there is a viewing platform (**WP5638masl**) with wooden guard rails etc. Altitude is being gained but overall the going is quite easy. In just over an hour the track emerges on to the gravel access road (**WP6725masl**) for service vehicles getting to the communications mast and equipment, there is also a NIWA air monitoring installation in the building. Turn left up the road for a minute or so and there is a small path going off on the left (**WP7729 masl**), stay on the road or use the small path to reach the summit where the first thing to be seen is the survey trig point (**WP8751 masl**) as seen in the photograph below. On the top there is also a communication mast and a building with a look-out platform. For the return there is a choice; go back down the same route as used to get there or, metres past the point where the inwards track met the road (WP6) there is another tracking heading off downhill to the SE. There are ample warning signs at the head of this track and they should be considered as this is a very steep, raw, unformed track and is designed for expert bikers.

Start of the uphill (WP3)



Trig point, mast and hut



Bluff faces of Rainbow Mountain



Shelter with info near Kerosene Creek (WP11)



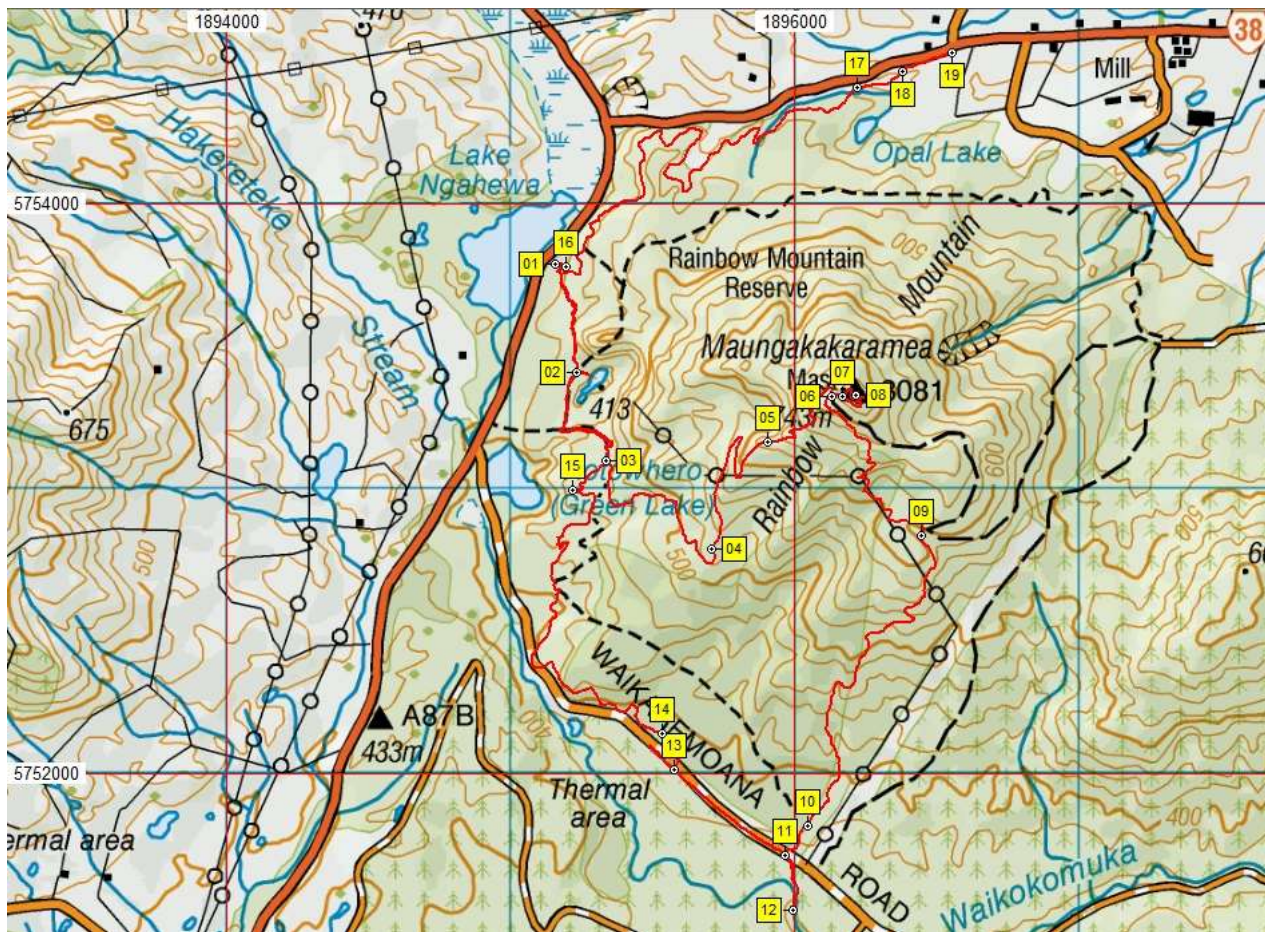
There is an altitude loss of about 150metres over 400 metres or so with some very large drop offs but in 20 minutes or so the gravel road is reached again (**WP9593masl**) and a corner is crossed to start on the signposted Te Rangi track which is much more gentle and very attractive as it passes through very pleasant forest. Slopes ease further then an area of dead black-berries is passed through (**WP10379masl**) before meeting an old forest road (**WP11372masl**) to turn left to a shelter with information boards. This shelter is virtually on The Old Waitapu Road (shown on the map as Waikaremoana Road) at the carpark for Kerosene Creek. To go to Kerosene Creek cross the gravel road to get on to the small track which leads down this rather attractive little valley to a flat area above a swimming hole (**WP12363masl**) below a small waterfall.

Kerosene Creek



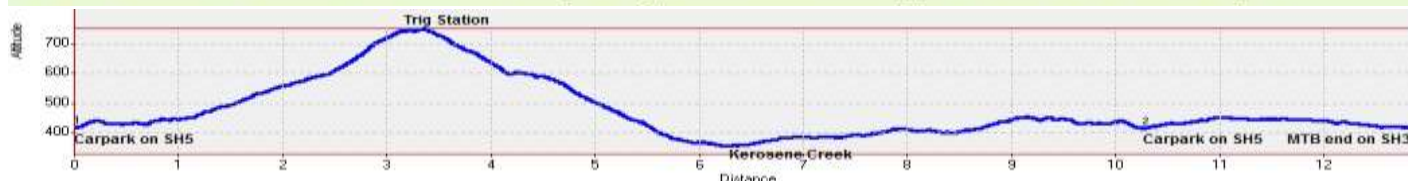
After a dip, a foot-wash or just admiration of the creek get back to the shelter at WP11 and head parallel to The Old Waitotapu Road NW on the track for about 500metres to a small junction (**WP13**^{387masl}) and go to the right on a smaller dirt road. The track is now undulating in nature as it gets back into forest to meet a T-junction (**WP14**^{394masl}) where by turning left downhill leads back to the Old Waitotapu Road on a new section of bike trail – the trail then crosses the road and continues towards Taupo. By turning right, uphill at WP14 the bike track is followed back towards the starting point at WP01 in the car park on SH5. The track wends its way to the North West slowly gaining altitude then it swings round to a more northerly direction. A very well designed and obvious wood fenced viewpoint over SH5 and the Old Waitotapu Road is to be found on the left (**WP15**^{453masl}) where the views are quite good. From here it is only minutes back to WP3 where the ascent of Rainbow Mountain Started. From the junction at WP3 it is about 20 minutes back to the starting point.

Map with GPS data



NB The above named Waikaremoana Road is now actually signposted as Old Waitotapu Road and leads to Kerosene Creek
Waypoints NZTM Grid

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
01	1895157	5753791	423	Car park on SH5 for Rainbow Mountain
02	1895232	5753411	437	12min (0.48km); branch off left to view point for mountain and lake
03	1895336	5753100	453	1.1km (24min); gate at junction, left and uphill for summit
04	1895707	5752789	544	1.8km (39min); more open area with views of bluff faces of mountain
05	1895904	5753164	638	2.6km (54min); view point off left with wooden guard-rail
06	1896128	5753325	725	3km (1:08min); meet gravel road and turn uphill to the left
07	1896170	5753328	729	3.1km (1:11min); start of short, steep short-cut to the mast and Trig
08	1896219	5753330	751	3.3km (1:14min); Maungakakaramea Trig point
09	1896447	5752835	593	4.4km (1:59min); bottom of wicked descent to meet gravel road with Te Rangi track signed ahead
10	1896049	5751815	379	5.8km (2:24min); dead blackberry area with good track and gentle slopes
11	1895967	5751714	372	5.9km (2:28min); meet gravel Old Waitotapu Rd and left to shelter with info boards
12	1895992	5751519	363	6.1km (2:35min); swimming hole below small waterfall on Kerosene Creek
13	1895576	5752015	387	6.9km (2:37min); branch right to slightly smaller dirt road
14	1895529	5752141	394	7km (3:00min); T-junction with right uphill for track back to carpark or left to get to road on bike
15	1895218	5752998	453	8.7km (3:32min); wooden fenced view point on left overlooking SH5 and Old Waitotapu Road
16	1895192	5753779	423	10.24km (3:50min); Back at car park on SH5
17	1896222	5754409	409	12.57km (4:23min); Gated access to and from SH38
18	1896377	5754468	399	12.75km (4:26min); Track shelter with information boards
19	1896550	5754533	392	12.95km (4:30min); Start/end of MTB track opposite entrance to Lake Okaro carpark



Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPS Garmin GPSmap 62sc • WP = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit • masl = metres above sea level (as recorded by GPS unit)
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