

TAMA LAKES CIRCUIT

Topo50 Map: BH34Raurimi & BJ34 Mnt Ruapehu

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

How to get to START: Exit Taupo on SH1 down the lake to Turangi then you have the choice:

- Follow the Desert Highway (SH1) and turn off right on to SH46 for Rangipo. Meet SH47 at the one and only T-junction and turn left
- Turn off SH47 on to SH48 signposted for Whakapapa and the Chateau, or
- In Turangi turn off SH1 on to SH41 on the right and then turn left off SH41 on to SH47 and proceed as above. This route is shown opposite
- Pass the Chateau on the left and park in the car park (01) on the right which has toilets and is quite safe for vehicles compared to some other car parks. Alternatively park up behind the Chateau at the end of the tar seal (02).

Rough description: A fairly long (19+km), out-and-back walk in the moderate to fit category lasting six to seven hours including breaks which starts and ends at the Chateau in Whakapapa. There is an overall altitude gain and loss of about 480 metres if Upper Tama Lake is reached and the circuit round the lower lake is done. The first part of this is relatively easy but once past the Wairere Stream bridge the track is less good due to erosion and there is a bit of a grunt uphill from the Lower to Upper lake. If the weather is good a variation on the return can include Taranaki Falls.

Detail: Turn left out of the car park (01 1061masl) opposite the Chateau and turn immediately right and go along the road up the side of the Chateau heading NE to the end (02 1088masl). At the end of this road ignore the track on your left (you might come back this way) and head for the track that goes straight ahead at the end of the surfaced road and is signed Taranaki Falls.

Proceed on the very good track crossing an open wooden bridge (03 1155masl) in about 20 minutes then upwards parallel to the gully which you then cross and go up on to open, flattish area with a view of Ngauruhoe straight ahead.

After 30 odd minutes descend to the Wairere Stream, over the bridge (04 1206masl) and uphill again reaching a signpost [05 1204masl] indicating the route for the lower path to Whakapapa and Taranaki Falls, a possible diversion on the return. Go straight ahead for Tama Lakes.

The track continues to gain altitude but the grade is easy as it wanders around through quite badly eroded areas and the track is rather in need of upgrading. A high point with views of Ngauruhoe, Ruapehu and Mount Taranaki (06 1285masl) is a good place for smoko after about 1:15 minutes. Thirty or so minutes later there is a wet area with board-walk in places and 10 minutes further on enter and go up a narrow valley heading E (07 1271masl) to cross the stream at the top – at this point the path is quite rough.

A signpost (08 1306masl) is met at a Y-fork in just under 2 hours with the path to Tama going left (NE) whilst the right fork goes to Waihohonu Hut. Ten minutes NE from this signpost reveals a superb view over the Lower Tama Lake (09 1320masl). The track ahead can now be clearly seen heading NE up a slope passing a seat for the weary (10 1316masl) before a moderate upslope grunt is tackled. It takes about 30 minutes to ascend this slope which is covered with loose gravel and scoria; then a slight descent leads to a wind-shelter built of rocks overlooking Upper Tama Lake (11 1441masl).

After a break, probably lunch, in the lee of the shelter walls head SE and upwards to begin the circuit on the ridge round and down past Lower Tama Lake – care is required on the gravel slopes to begin with as the slope is steep and can often be frozen and slippery. A last high point on the ridge is reached after about 20 minutes from the top (12 1465masl) from where it is an easy descent on quite soft, sandy ground to meet up with the track for Waihohonu (13 1327masl). On the track head right (NW) to soon return to the previously seen signpost (08/14).

From here it takes about an hour back to the next track junction (05 15) from where a variation can be built in by branching right and passing below the Taranaki Falls following the course of the Wairere Stream. After about 45 minutes on this route the Whakapapa to Mangatepopo track is joined (18 1107) and, by going left (SW), the original outwards track is rejoined near 02 just up behind the Chateau. Close to an hour is added by going via Taranaki Falls for a spot of sigh-seeing otherwise the whole tramp can be concluded in about 6 hours,



Lower Tama Lake



Upper Tama Lake



The ridge descent



Lower Tama Lake plus the ridge descent below Ngauruhoe



Ngauruhoe and Lower Tama Lake from the south





| Name | Easting | Northing | Alt... | Description |
|------|---------|----------|--------|---|
| 01 | 1819297 | 5657806 | 1061 | Car park opposite Chateau in Whakapapa |
| 02 | 1819593 | 5657994 | 1088 | 4min (350metres); End of tar-seal behind Chateau |
| 03 | 1820697 | 5657612 | 1155 | 23min (1.76km): Open area with wooden bridge |
| 04 | 1821461 | 5658126 | 1206 | 47min (3.04km); Bridge on Wairere Stream |
| 05 | 1821563 | 5658133 | 1204 | 50min (3.15km); Track off north for Taranaki Falls and start on new track section to Tama |
| 06 | 1822429 | 5657822 | 1285 | 1:28min (4.66km); Rejoin old track on ridge with views of Ngauruhoe, Ruapehu and Mount Taranaki |
| 07 | 1823639 | 5658180 | 1271 | 1:52min (6.48km); Enter and go up narrow V-shaped valley |
| 08 | 1824009 | 5658098 | 1306 | 1:58min (6.87km); Track junction with NE for Tama and SE for Waihohonu |
| 09 | 1824620 | 5658329 | 1320 | 2:11min (7.58km); Above Lower Tama Lake |
| 10 | 1824785 | 5658553 | 1317 | 2:15min (7.89km); Wooden seat on LHS (NW) side of track |
| 11 | 1825636 | 5659026 | 1441 | 2:38min (9.06km); Above Upper Tama in lee of stone enclosure / pen |
| 12 | 1825819 | 5658480 | 1465 | 3:20min (9.83km); Last high point before descent off ridge |
| 13 | 1824905 | 5657029 | 1327 | 3:56min (11.81km); Meet Whakapapa to Waihohonu track |
| 14 | 1824011 | 5658101 | 1305 | 4:15min (13.35km); Back at track junction with right for Tama and straight for Whakapapa |
| 15 | 1821564 | 5658137 | 1215 | 5:15min (17.05km); Track junction right (N) for Taranaki Falls, straight for Chateau (20.2km total) |
| 16 | 1821436 | 5658226 | 1190 | 5:25min (180m); If you go lower track -Steeply down to large round wooden picnic table |
| 17 | 1821171 | 5658530 | 1167 | 5:40min (630m); If you go lower track - Large bridge over Wairere Stream |
| 18 | 1820205 | 5658808 | 1107 | 6:05min (1.77km); If you go lower track -Junction with Whakapapa to Mangatepopo track |
| 19 | 1819310 | 5657759 | 1061 | 5:50min - 6hrs (20.28km);Back at the start without lower track diversion of 3.45km |
| T | 1821539 | 5658091 | 1206 | New DoC toilet Sept 2019 |

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| Notes: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPS Garmin GPSmap 60CSx • WP = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit • masl = metres above sea level |
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