

## WAIPAKIHI HUT via UMUKARIKARI

Topo50 Map: BH35 Turangi & BH36 Motutere

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

### How to get to START:

- Exit Taupo down the lake on **SH1** through **Turangi** on to the **Desert Highway (SH1)** for 15 km.
- Turn left off Desert Highway to **Kaimanawa Road** signed to Rangipo Power Station
- Kaimanawa Forest Park sign on the road then turn left on to gravel track signed **Umukarikari** and over wooden bridge.
- Turn right at next sign for **Umukarikari** for the car park
- Path leaves through wooden gate on the upslope side

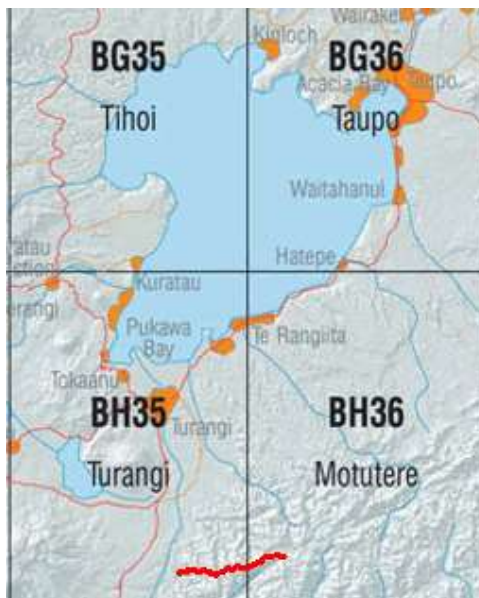
The location of the tramp can be seen opposite as a red line below the label for Umukarikari whilst the actual trail followed can be seen on the map which shows the GPS waypoints and track.

**Rough description:** A long, relatively strenuous tramp of 5 – 7 hours covering 14km each way, ascending over 900m on the way in and 500m on the way out. The high point is just off the summit of Umukarikari (1591m) whilst the hut is at about 1100m and the start at just over 700.

There is a bit of a brutal start as it is steep uphill as soon as the car park is exited into the beech forest. Once up through the forest the path is well marked but rather exposed on adverse weather days so beware since there are quite a few bluffs around. Some of the eroded steps should be repaired and upgraded soon (2010) but at present they are a challenge for Hobbits.

The new track sign for the Urchin track is a good indicator of progress and is a bit before the Umukarikari summit. After the high point vegetation is a bit scarce but the views can be magnificent as the descent commences. The final hour down to the hut is a challenge as the track is very degraded, well gullied and often rocky and gravelly. The hut itself is superb and is in a great location for evening views.

**Detail:** Exit the car park (**01 712masl**) on the upslope side via the wooden gate. The going is steep from the start through forest with red beech and quite a few "big steps" are encountered so "Hobbits" may find this tiresome – these steps are more bother on the way down when the legs are tired. There are several possible morning-tea or coffee stop places hence resting points are common. Within 5 -10 minutes an old survey beacon can be seen some metres off the track to the left (**02766masl**) as a yellow concrete cylinder.



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1845058	5663793	712	Car Park off Kaimanawa Road
02	1845252	5663790	766	9min (500m); Yellow, cylindrical concrete Survey Marker No XXXVIII
03	1845754	5663876	1046	1:15 min (1.33km); Minor crest steep walk up through beech forest
04	1847819	5664002	1244	2 hours (4.3km); Old, small campsite for lunch stop very close to bush line
05	1847981	5663826	1288	2:15min (4.7km); Bush line to eroded slope after grunty ascent in beech forest
06	1848473	5663745	1353	5.25km; Ridge to SE about 500m before veering to NE
07	1848999	5663655	1334	3hrs (6km); Low coll before long, moderate climb to Sharp Cone
08	1850111	5664244	1472	3:50min (7.3km); Narrow ridge below Sharp Cone
09	1850326	5664103	1506	4hrs (7.61km); Track marker with turn to the right for Urchin
10	1851021	5664453	1593	8.52km; Branch left off main path for rounded summit of Umukarikari
11	1852278	5664477	1478	4:40min (9.99km); Rather bare exposed area with bigger ups and downs plus good views all round
12	1853442	5664953	1440	5:20min (11.33km) Rocky outcrop with good view of hut off at 2 o'clock (Right)
13	1854245	5665408	1391	5:35min (12.32km); Steeper section of descent from tussock area. Track poor, boggy with step boards
14	1854851	5665568	1277	6hrs (12.99km); Enter vegetation after very rough, gravelly, eroded descent
15	1855253	5665410	1143	6:15min (13.54Km); End of very gnarly descent on rocks / in gullies and right to very gravelly track
16	1855470	5665344	1093	6:20min (13.81km); Minor, side stream crossing just metres from confluence with Waipakihi River
17	1855735	5665304	1122	6:30min (14.1km); Waipakihi Hut

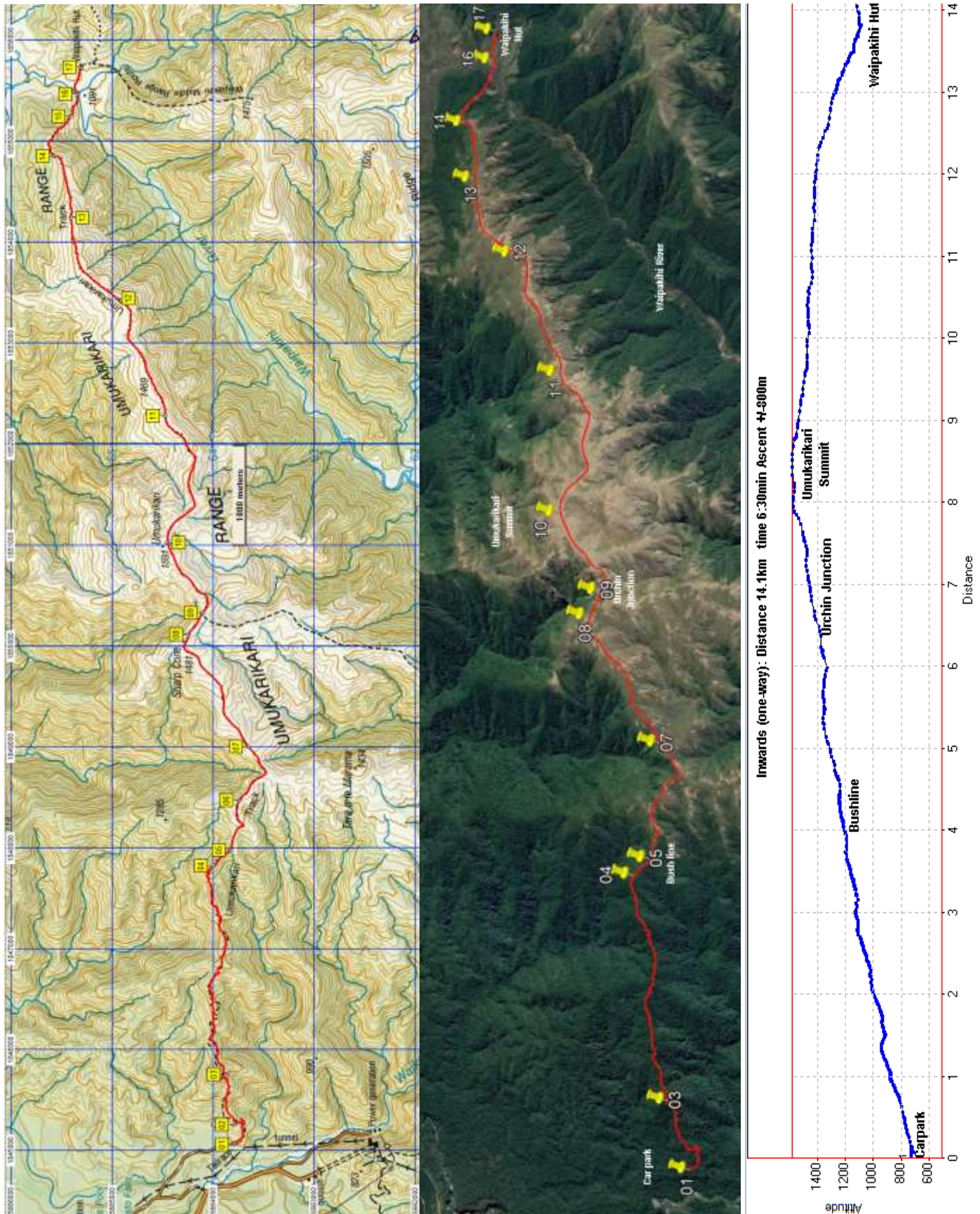
The first of many descents whilst ascending occurs after about 30 minutes then the going is undulating to rolling as the grind uphill continues, often with zig-zags and some big steps with gnarly roots to negotiate. A minor crest is reached in about 1:15 minutes after a steep ascent up through the beech forest and there is the odd "Lord of the Rings" giant tree to admire.

A final steeper section leads out from the forest to the bush line after 2 hours or so (**05 1288masl**) but before emerging there is an old camp site (**041244masl**) on the left which makes a good refreshment point if the weather is bad. Once in the open the surface is stony then rocky, eroded and rather exposed in places but there are plenty of DOC marker poles. There is a ridge heading to the SE (**061353masl**) for about 500m before the track veers round to the NE and a low coll before starting (**071334masl**) a long, moderate ascent towards Sharp Cone in about 3 hours. There is a short, narrow ridge (**08 1472masl**) heading SE just below Sharp Cone and before the new track marker (**091506masl**) indicating the turn to the right for the link track to Urchin. There are a few rocks around here if shelter has to be sought on windy days but it is all rather exposed in this area.



The push up to the Umukarikari summit is a bit of a grunt over a loose gravelly, scree area and some care is needed to get back up on to the ridge but overall Sharp Cone to the summit is fairly easy. Turning left at this point (**101593masl**) leads about 50 metres or so to the unspectacular round summit which is marked by two small stony cairns. Be warned that on windy days walking in this area is quite hazardous as the whole area is very exposed and the winds can come screaming in from the SE.





From this point onwards the track does descend but with the inevitable re-ascents as the ridge rolls up and down as it heads to the NE for the next three kilometres. This whole area is very exposed, has little vegetation and offers little shelter apart from the deeply incised sections of the track. However on clear days there are very good views in all directions (11 1478masl).

Somewhere on or just over 5hours there is a rocky topped exposure (12 1440masl) from where the Waipakihi Hut can be seen in the distance off at two o'clock – to the right. Fifteen minutes later the descent becomes significantly steeper (13 1391masl) after passing through a boggy, tussock area with old boards protecting what had been step edges on the track – they now act as mini dams making things wet. The bush-line is reached in about six hours (14 1277masl) whilst on a very rough, gravelly eroded descending slope.





View out over Lake Taupo



Exposed ridge route



Upper part of final descent



Lower part of final descent – the red is a tramper

The track has virtually been obliterated by erosion but it can be followed and the odd track marker pole can be found. Some of the sections can be quite challenging for tired legs such as is found after six hours (**15<sup>1143</sup>masl**) or so when there is a very rough rocky bit which then eases as it goes right into a very gravelly stream bed for a few metres before becoming very gnarly once again – DoC advises that hopefully the track will be upgraded sometime in later 2010 or 2011. Once down on the level there are a couple of minor “stings in the tail” as there is a small stream to cross (**16<sup>1093</sup>masl**) metres short of the confluence with the Waipakihi River then it is uphill through more degraded, boggy track to reach the hut (**17<sup>1122</sup>masl**).



The hut is a delight in being perfectly situated to catch the evening sun, has great views, two bunk rooms which hold six bodies each on squeaky bunk beds, good roof-water supply with inside and outside sinks, really good wood-burner with plentiful fuel supply – and the place was spotless with no rubbish seen at all plus the “threatened” resident mouse did NOT make an appearance. There are good signs outside indicating the rather long alternative routes out via the river to Waipakihi Road (8–10 hours), Kiko Road (8–10 hours) and the Cascade Hut – via private land (8-10 hours).

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

Minimum Altitude : 717 Meters  
 Maximum Altitude : 1586 Meters  
 Total Distance : 14.099 Km