

WAIPAKIHI VALLEY

Topo50 Map: BH35 Turangi

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

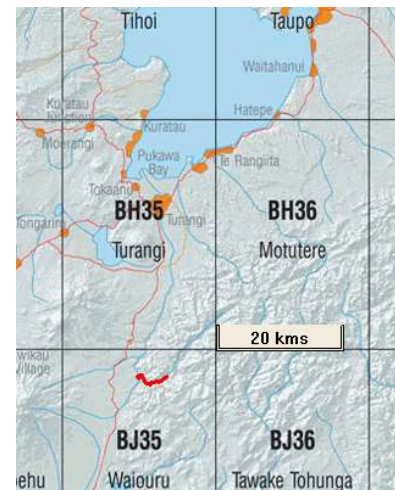
How to get to START Exit Taupo down the lake on SH1

- Straight through Turangi (SH1) on to the **Desert Highway** for +/- 19 km passing both the turn off to Umukarikari and the road quarry on the left.
- Turn left off Desert Highway on road signed **Waipakihi Road** which has a potholed asphalt surface
- Park (**WP01**) on RHS just before steep downhill about 3.5 – 4km from the highway

The location of the walk is shown opposite as the red line on sheet **BJ35**.

Rough description: An easy, if somewhat wet, tramp of 4 – 5 hours up the Waipakihi River and back. The walk is wet because there are about 14 river crossings to be tackled. This number increases the further the tramp is extended. There is a track in many places though it is not too distinct but walk direction is relatively simple as it follows the river. The access from the Desert Highway plus GPS track of the walk can be seen on the map.

There is an altitude loss of just over 50 metres from the car park down to the first river crossing then a gradual gain of the same amount walking up the valley to the point reached on this outing. Total walk distance inwards, as mapped, is 7.5km (GPS) giving over 15 km for the round trip.



Detail: From the car park (**01896masl**) start walking steeply downhill on the surfaced, asphalt road and in 5 – 10 minutes branch off right (**02790masl**) on gravel road / track parallel to river on a level, rather wet (in season) old track. There are a few up-and-overs through the bush to avoid the worst of the eroded edge. The old car park area (**04847masl**) is reached in 20 minutes with a sign back to start showing “Two Wheeled Car Park” – two wheels being assumed to be feet as only a pretty special vehicle could reach this point following the route walked.

Downhill start



The old car park



Eroded area



From the old car park enter the bush on RHS, immediately passing a picnic table in a small campsite and soon the going is rather rough on the slope whilst working round the massive eroded edge of the river which is shown above. When working round the eroded river section ensure you do not walk too close to the steep, eroded river bank – it is a long drop to the river. After about 30 minutes the “path” makes the first river crossing (**05854masl**) – the first of many feet-wetting crossings on the day’s walk. Here there is an area of utter devastation caused by a massive flood plus landslide – see photo below. Lots of deer tracks seen and many hunters seen in season – be careful and NOT too quiet, they shoot at things that move.

Devastated area



There are really few features of note and most waypoints taken serve as time-checks as an aid to progress. However, after about an hour whilst walking on the south bank below a gravelly bluff look out for the breather pipe (**09875masl**) sticking up. This “breather” is from the Moawhango-Tongariro Tunnel (head-race for the power station) that lies buried below. The cement collar on the pipe gives some indication of the amount of river-bank erosion there has been. The track keeps crossing and criss-crossing the river and eyes have to be kept open for tell-tale signs of the track – there are no markers. There are also many small “hunters” campsites such as found after about 70 minutes (**10876masl**).

Breather pipe



During dry spells it can prove quicker to walk up the middle of the gravelly bed of the river (**14887masl**) but do not attempt this if there is the chance of rain – the flow looks calm but is really quite strong in places. The only other features of note are the several wide, low terraces covered in river gravel and boulders and often with a large number of washed-down trees (**15896masl**) – this indicates that things can get wild in this valley.

Strong current

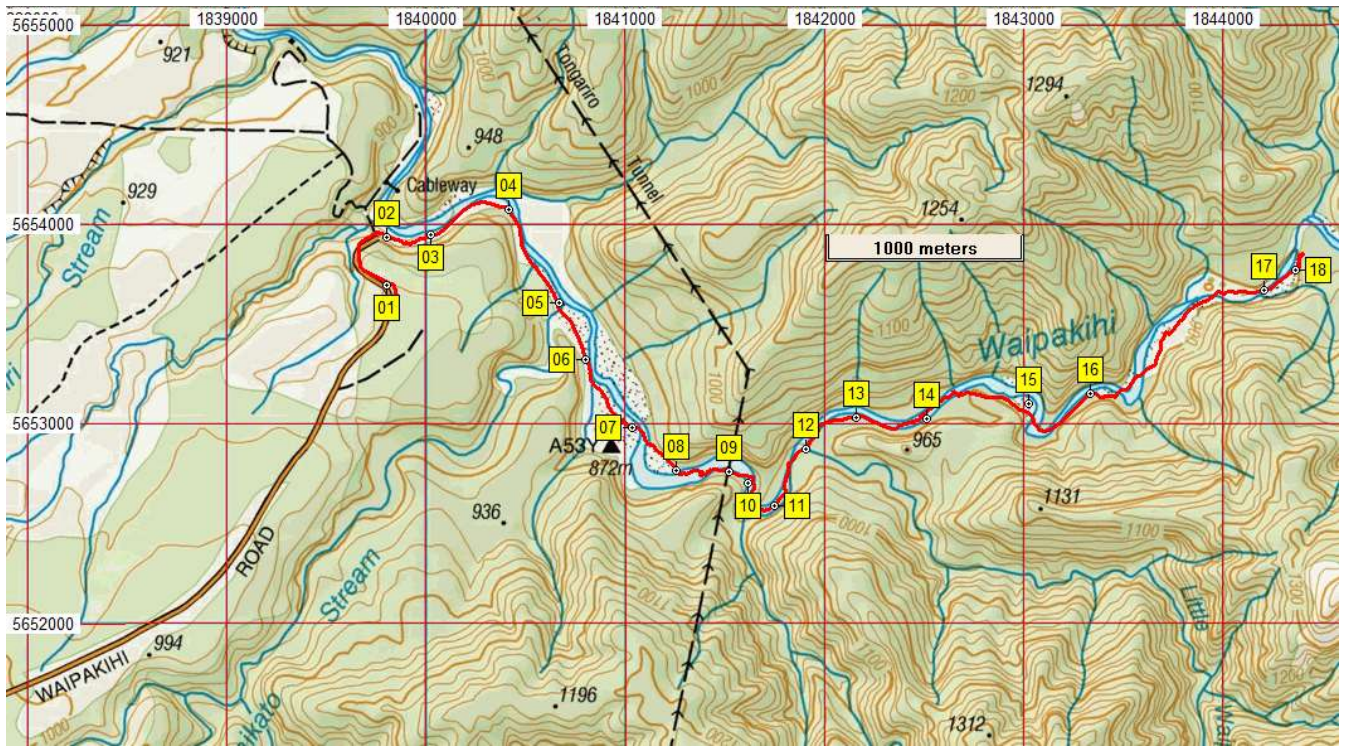


Vegetation on this tramp is quite lush with:

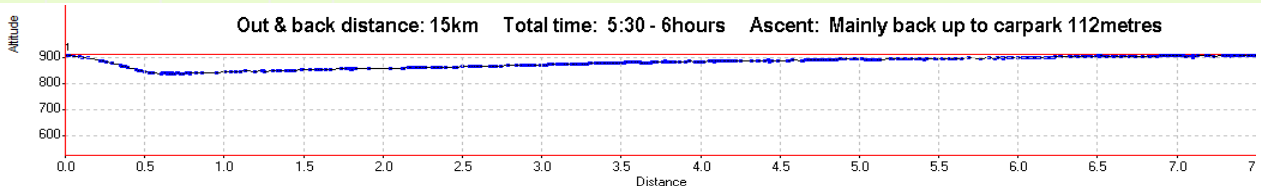
- Beech (Silver and Red)
- Totara – Mountain Totara
- Kamahi
- Manuka
- Rimu and Miro
- Some ferns
- Some 5-fingered Coprosmos

Nearly back!





Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1839804	5653694	896	Park on East side of Waipakihi Road at top of hill near gravel road junction
02	1839804	5653933	840	10min (528m); off road onto dirt road to right along river after steep descent on pot-holed asphalt
03	1840023	5653948	840	15min (775m); wet, muddy track along badly eroding river bank - care needed
04	1840413	5654075	847	20min (1.25km); sign for 2 wheel car park before entering bush
05	1840671	5653604	854	35min (1.79km); first river crossing of side stream from the SW (right)
06	1840804	5653320	859	40min (2.12km); out of the bush into the river and over
07	1841033	5652982	865	45min (2.56km); large gravelly low terrace then cross river again
08	1841255	5652768	871	55min (2.89km); steepish drop after open gravelly track back into the water
09	1841521	5652763	875	1:05min (3.23km); breather for Moawhango Tongariro Tunnel
10	1841614	5652706	876	1:10min (3.42km); campsite with fireplace (huge rocks) before river crossing
11	1841748	5652591	880	1:20min (3.70km); probably the seventh river crossing
12	1841909	5652876	881	1:35min (4.09km); minor side-stream from the SE
13	1842163	5653035	886	1:50min (4.44km); ninth stream crossing?
14	1842512	5653028	887	2hr (4.83km); if river low, move to mid-river bed and walk upstream. If higher water stay on N bank
15	1843027	5653102	896	2:15min (5.47km); large bouldery, gravelly area with many washed down trees
16	1843335	5653151	898	2:30min (5.90km); time check
17	1844205	5653673	903	2:50min (7.11km); time-check
18	1844368	5653774	903	3hours (7.51km); stream line narrows, heavily over-grown and track not-obvious. Lunch and turn



The round trip back to the car park on same route as above is 5 hours with lunch and morning tea stop; + / - 4.5 hours.

Notes: • **GPS** Garmin GPSMap 60CSx **WP** = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit **masl** = metres above sea level