

WAIRERE FALLS & PUKETUTU HUT

Topo50 Map: BD36 Lower Kaimai

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

How to get to START: As this is well outside the Taupo area the first step is to head North on SH1 towards Rotorua then:

- Stay on SH1 at Wairakei by going left 12 minutes
- Pass Kinleith Mill in 45 minutes then through Tokoroa
- Pass through Putaruru on SH1 in about 1 hour
- Go right on to SH28 in 1:05 minutes
- Right at T-junction to SH5 for Rotorua in 1:10 minutes
- Left on to SH48 two minutes later
- Right on SH28 for Tauranga in 1:20 minutes
- Five minutes later left on SH29 then right for Matamata
- Two minutes later go right on Old Te Aroha Road
- T-junction, left on to Old Te Aroha Road in 1:40 minutes
- See sign "Falls 1km" on right in 1:50 minutes
- Right on to Goodwin Road on bend at 1:52 minutes
- Wairere Falls car park in 1:54 minutes (**WP00** in Figure opposite)

Rough Description: As indicated above it takes about 2 hours to drive from Taupo to the car park (**WF1**) at the end of Goodwin Road; all times are taken from Taupo Police Station on the Domain. The walk is best described as moderate plus with an almost non-stop, unrelenting climb from the word go till the crest above the top of the Wairere waterfall is reached. Most of this path is well groomed, not overly steep and there are several sections of steps and ladders, with platforms, large rocks and boardwalks. Once at the top the terrain is, at first, a well nigh level plain which can be boggy at times. The Wairere then the North tracks are followed and to reach the Puketutu Hut there is a small, poorly marked track branching off near an animal gravesite. This track takes about an hour with a slight grunt uphill. Being an out-and-back walk one can turn back at any time but the full walk requires 4 hours outwards and about 3 hours return. The final descent can be made "exciting" if the old Maori Trail down is followed – not recommended for the wary or unfit.

Detail: First of all it should be stated that the track alignment as shown on the current 50,000 scale map is not quite correct and the GPS trace shown will be more accurate. Careful study of the Google Image does show some of the stream lines not on the map.

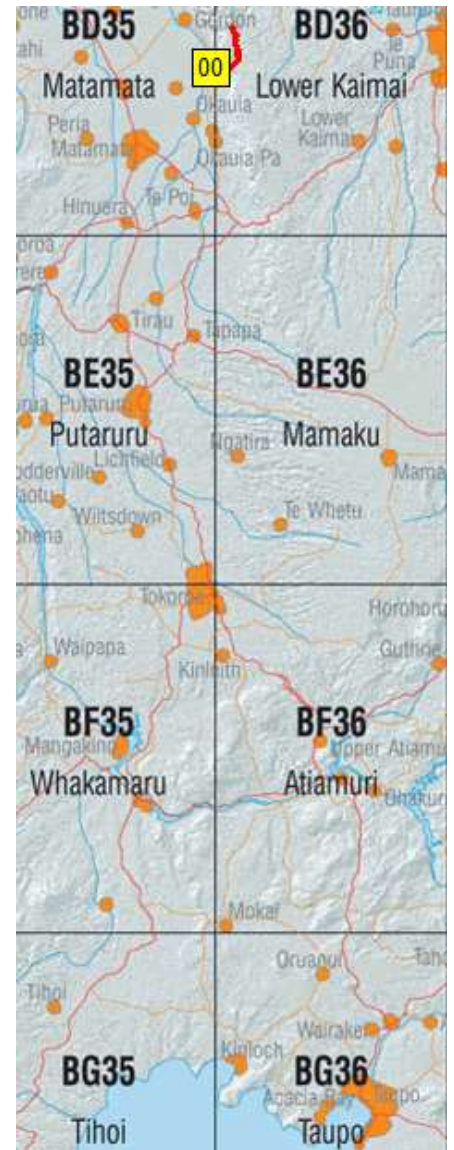
From the car park (**WP01** 50masl) the first few hundred metres of path are gently sloping but soon after the bridge over the Wairere Stream (**WP02** 95masl) slopes increase rapidly as progress is made through the dense broad-leaf forest. After 15 minutes there is a slightly open area next to a fenced paddock; after this the serious ascending begins and a notice board indicates the junction (**WP03** 150masl) to the Old Maori trail going off very steeply upwards on the right – this route is not recommended.

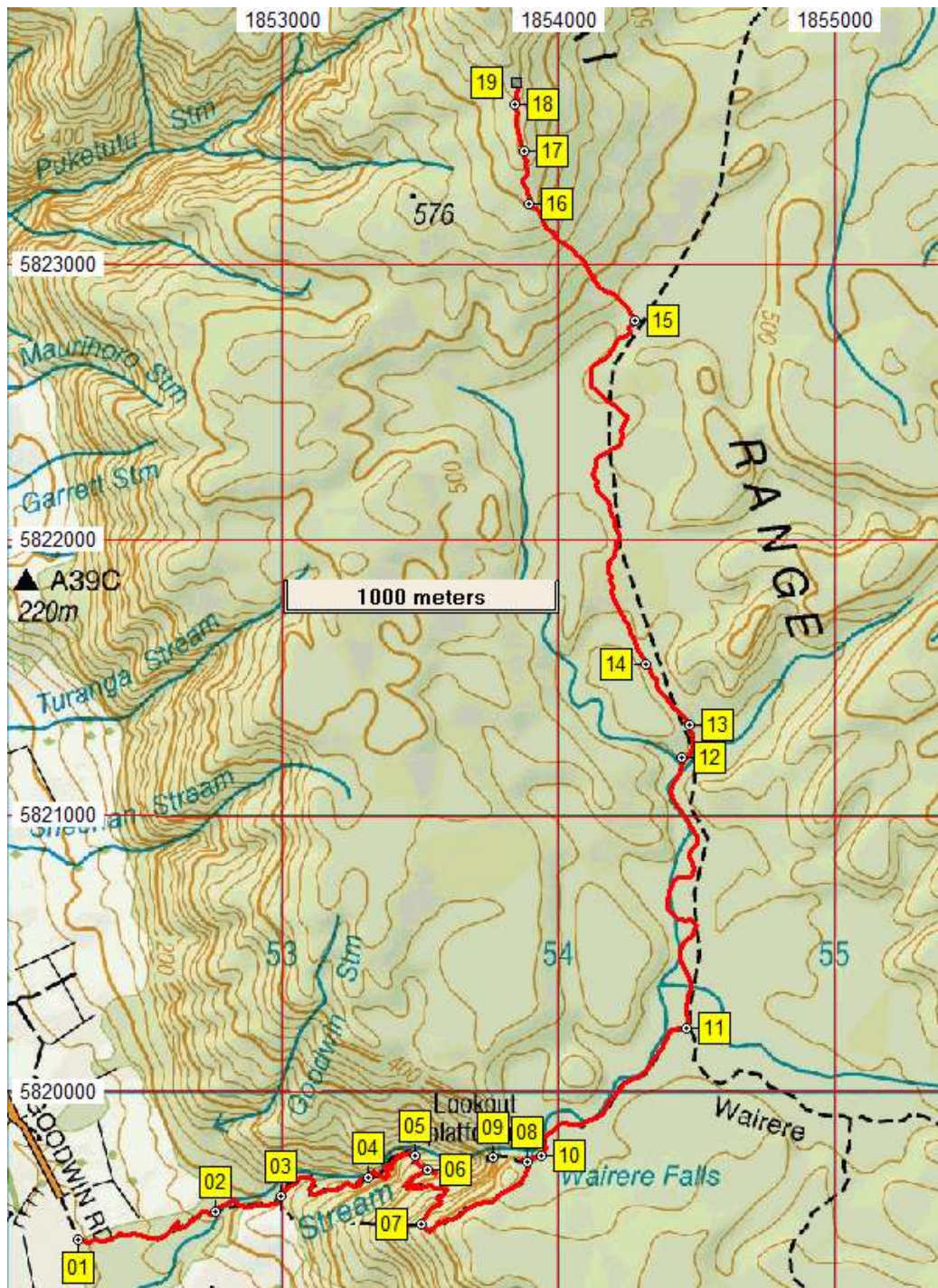
By this time the valley which the path follows is quite narrow with very steep sides. Within 30 minutes there is a large bridge (**WP04** 173masl) then some wooden steps, sections of boardwalk plus some large rocks forming a natural staircase upwards – nothing too steep or difficult if taken at the correct pace. Soon, within another 5 minutes, there is a very large wooden staircase but the steps are well chosen for size and ascending is relatively easy if taken at a sensible rate. Without this staircase it would not be possible to get up the slopes here except by using technical climbing skills and equipment. (**WP05** 238masl). Another 5 minutes upwards reaches a small path off to the left with a notice indicating the look-out one minute away (**WP06** 274masl). There is a large platform here with seats etc offering views of the falls plus a good place for morning tea.

About 15 minutes above the lookout there is a notice indicating the top of the Old Maori Trail (**WP07** 404masl) referred to earlier. Less than 10 minutes above this feature the slope eases and the virtually level plateau area is reached with an idyllic looking, slow flowing stream (**WP08** 412masl) which feeds the Wairere Falls off to the left. By going minutes left parallel to the stream the platform (**WP09** 410masl) above the Wairere Falls is reached.

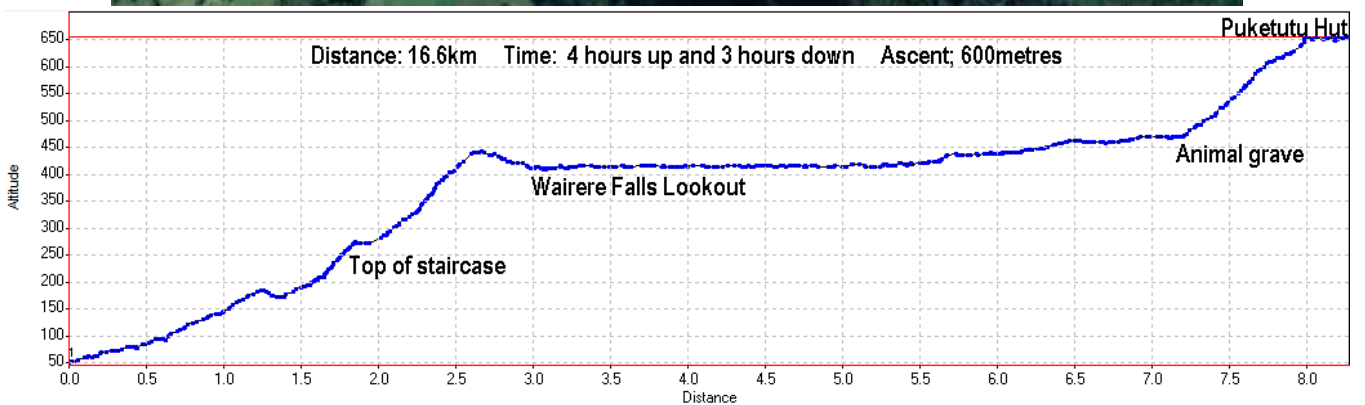
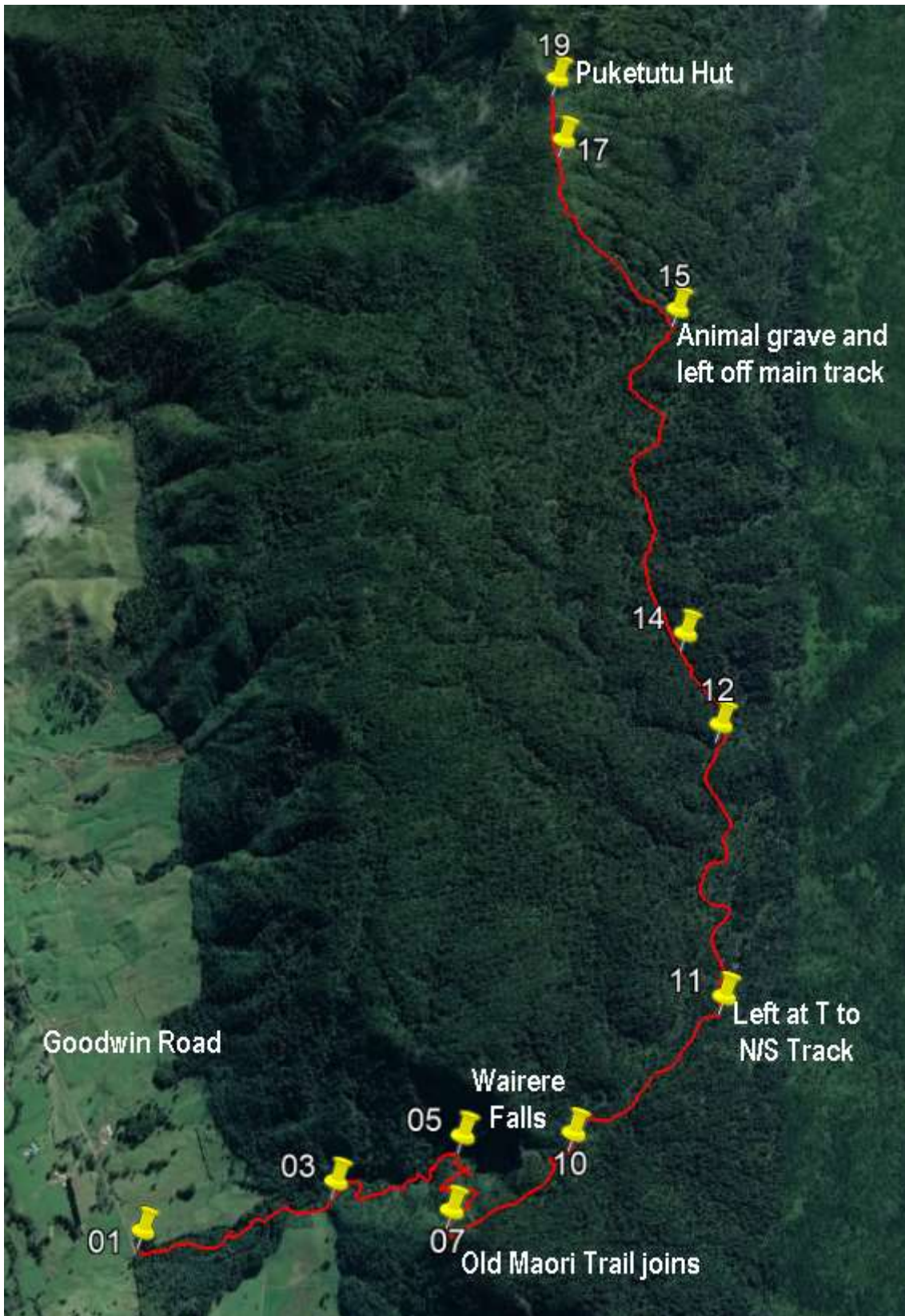
After viewing the falls and vista back-track along the river then turn left on the non-manicured track. Within minutes there is an unmarked, vague T-junction (**WP10** 415masl) where a turn left is made still on the Wairere Track. In total time of about 1:45min turn left at the marked "North" track (**WP11** 415masl). This path is less well maintained and there are muddy sections but it is virtually flat with three or four small bridges set in place by DoC and is all within superb broadleaf forest. One of these bridges (**WP12** 426masl) is crossed in just over 2 hours total time and it is interesting to note that these "platform" bridges (no foundations) are wired down – presumably to stop them floating away as and when the area floods. Walking becomes a bit easier from now on as the track does improve, the alignment on the ground is easier to see and the bush opens up a bit with more trees and ferns with a small stream crossing in a particularly attractive valley at about 2:17min (**WP13** 415masl).

There is yet another low bridge at 2:30min (**WP14** The winding trail through the forest does seem to go on forever with no major features until, at around 3 hours total walk time, a small grave (**WP15** 470masl) is found – identified by the edges being marked with punga, a small headstone feature and an animal skull – the significance of this grave is not known. At this point the North Track is left and the route crosses a small stream then starts to go uphill in a NW direction on a very poorly marked / defined track so be vigilant. This bit of a grunt up takes 40 minutes or so.424masl).





Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1852263	5819466	50.0	Car Park end of Goodwin Road
02	1852758	5819563	95.0	10min (607m); Bridge after DoC toilet on LHS of track
03	1852994	5819621	150	20min(893m): Left at Y-fork, right is Old Maori Trail
04	1853314	5819687	173	25min (1.37km); Bridge then boardwalk under bluffs
05	1853484	5819770	238	35min (1.67km); Top of long flight of stairs up bluffs
06	1853526	5819715	274	45min (1.94km); T-junction with short track off left to Falls viewpoint
07	1853505	5819515	404	1 hour (2.47km); T-junction with track in right coming from Old Maori Trail
08	1853883	5819746	412	1:10min (2.99km); T-junction on river edge with left to top of falls and right for Wairere Track
09	1853762	5819763	410	1:15 min; Platform above Wairere Falls
10	1853934	5819769	415	1:30min (3.18km); post "smoko" small, unclear T-junction, go left
11	1854463	5820228	415	1:45min (3.96km); T-junction with North Track, go left (North)
12	1854442	5821211	406	2:05min (5.16km): Small footbridge, wired down
13	1854471	5821331	415	2:17min (5.31km); Cross stream in superb small valley
14	1854312	5821551	424	2:30min (5.63km); Bridge
15	1854272	5822796	470	3 hours (7.18km); Animal gravesite. Cross small stream line and head NW on poor track
16	1853893	5823226	613	3:20min (7.80km); More open area on mild grunt uphill
17	1853875	5823415	653	3:30min (8.01km); Open area with views on both sides (E and W)
18	1853843	5823580	650	3:35min (8.21km); Open, grassy "helipad" area
19	1853845	5823661	655	4 hours (8.29km); Puketutu Hut - then return on same route



There are few features going up here but it is slightly more open in places (**WP16** 613masl), views to the E and W are obtained from an open area (**WP17** 653masl) whilst the “helipad” grassy clearing reached in just over 3:30 (**WP18** 650masl) is easy to spot. From here it is a matter of a couple of minutes to the Puketutu Hut (**WP19** 655masl). This is a real back-country hut with three sleeping benches (more at a squeeze), ample work-bench area, wood-burner plus a firewood supply, a crude roof-water collection system and the inevitable toilet out the back. The track does continue on up the ridge past the hut and passes round near the toilet. The view out over the Tauranga area from the front door is good and makes the effort getting to the hut worthwhile. Return is on the same route.

From the hut the walk back down to the car park takes about 3 hours, but there is a variation if desired. On the descent it is possible to take a short cut by using the Old Maori Trail from **WP07** down to **WP03**. However this route is not recommended unless you are very sure footed, plus have strong hands and arms, since the path is not maintained and use of trees and vegetation is often the only safe way of descending some of the slippery slopes. Variations of routes tramped by Taupo Tramping Club can be found in Te Tuhi to Wairere Falls, Aongatete to Wairere Falls and Wairere Falls tramp descriptions.

Morning tea Wairere Stream above falls



Uphill on poorly defined track



Animal gravesite



Wairere falls



Puketutu Hut



Hut interior



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