

WAIRERE STREAM, PINNACLES & WHAKAPAPA RIDGES

Topo50 Maps: BH34 Raurimu & BJ34 Mnt Ruapehu

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

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

- Turn off SH1 on to SH41 on the right and then turn left off SH41 to SH47
- Turn off SH47 on to SH48 signposted for Whakapapa and the Chateau
- Pass the Chateau on the left and turn right almost immediately into the car park with toilets. Park here (WP01) or
- Leave car park, turn left and immediately right up the side of the Chateau – park at the end of this road (WP02).

Rough description: A moderate to fit loop tramp of 5 to 6 hours depending on fitness level or as the weather allows. This is a high altitude tramp and adverse conditions can exist in any season. There are many bluffs after about 2 hours and good visibility is essential. The tramp starts on the tourist track towards Tama Lakes from the Chateau then heads SSE following the Wairere Stream on a rough track which is unclear at times. About an hour or so out there is a series of waterfalls and impressive whaleback ridges and pinnacles. There is a “grunty” ascent up through bluffs at about 2 hours on to a gently to moderately sloping area – this ascent can be impossible in snow and ice. At some point the Wairere Stream line is crossed and the route then loops back towards Whakapapa via the Pinnacles then Whakapapa Ridge. This walk can be attempted in wintertime but is better as a summer outing. The tramp can be both shortened and lengthened.

Detail: Leave the carpark (WP01^{1137masl}) and head up the road at the side of the Chateau to get on to the very good track heading in an easterly direction which goes to Taranaki Falls and the Tama Lakes. In minutes the trees are left behind for more open terrain and to cross a newish wooden bridge within 20 minutes (WP03^{1190masl}). Five minutes later cross to the other side of the stream on another bridge (WP04^{1204masl}), walking parallel to a largish gully before the path winds round and crosses this gullied stream line. Progress continues to be fast with an easy ascent and there is the odd bit of boardwalk before descending to the larger bridge over the Wairere Stream (WP05^{1202masl}). Cross the bridge and immediately turn right on to quite a small, sometimes indistinct, rough path heading SE parallel to the stream. In just over one hour total walk time (WP06^{1256masl}) the first in a series of waterfalls on the Wairere Stream will be seen.

Cold stop – steep slopes



For the next hour or so the mountain scenery is superb with several waterfalls plus impressive rocky ridges – some of which look like giant lizards’ or dinosaurs’ tails in misty weather. There is a very clear whaleback rocky ridge (WP07^{1321masl}) and then a flattish area (WP08^{1350masl}) is reached suitable for a refreshment stop and from where one can:

- Branch right for a shortcut with relatively easy stream crossing to get up on to Whakapapa Ridge and a relatively easy tramp
- Branch left up the ridge slope to get to the Gull Colony then retrace the route to exit
- Continue up the Wairere Stream there is soon a small landslip area (WP09^{1386masl}) on the edge of the stream-line to negotiate so some care is needed.

Minutes past this slight hazard there is a small stream (WP10^{1399masl}) to cross and this is the point where, by going left (eastwards) uphill, the Gull Colony is reached – this point can be reached in 1:50– 2:15 hours. From this point on there is more ascending to do but none of it is really serious, just a minor grunt in places. At just on 2 hours walking the valley is much narrower (WS11^{1421masl}), a bit steeper and there are bluffs above on the left hand side.

There is then one of the best “dinosaur tail” ridges to walk alongside, before the steepest part of the tramp so far - getting up and round the top of the next rocky ridge and behind a bit of a pinnacle (WP12^{1512masl}) – steep but with fair footing; In winter time this is a serious ascent as it can be very icy. From some of these points it is possible to look down into the gorge of the Wairere Stream. From now on good weather and visibility are both essential as there are bluffs virtually all around and the stream itself is in a gorge. If it is not possible to see clearly do not attempt to continue but go away and come back another day.

From the ridge behind the pinnacle head due south aiming at the peak of Te Heuheu, there are some rudimentary cairns (WP13^{1560masl}) to follow as the route aims at a largish round boulder on the cross slope. As the boulder is approached slowly move down-slope, left of it and work down to cross the stream at any suitable spot – there are several. **NB** *The tramp can also be lengthened from around here by staying on a S heading in the in the Wairere Valley, refer to the blue trace on the map.*

On crossing the stream-line head upwards on the slope bearing NW to get up on top of the Pinnacles Ridge, this is a steep grunt with some loose rocks but most of the slope is very manageable and is quite stable requiring close to one hour .

The ridge is crested (WP14^{1723masl}) just below and north of the first of the upstanding Pinnacles. This is a good spot for lunch whilst admiring the scenery. From here it is about 4km back along the ridge but this is done in about 90 minutes. The only point to watch out for is to ensure that after about 500m north of cresting the ridge the route does bear slightly left - otherwise, if the right branch of the ridge is followed one ends up back in the Wairere Stream valley.

The walking is fast on very soft ground with some weaving about through the rocks and boulders though there is one slightly uphill section to reach a highpoint (WP15^{1438masl}). Ten minutes later the first of the vegetation (WP16^{1362masl}) is reached – this is a high eroded bank and is virtually impenetrable so ensure you walk to the left of it. Somewhere around 5 hours there is a clear view of Tongariro Chateau (WP17^{1318masl}) and from here it is downhill on a deteriorating track with the only other feature of note being a picnic table (WP18^{1242masl}) in the middle of the path. The track improves and the end is behind the shelter with toilets on the road in Whakapapa (WP19^{1146masl}).



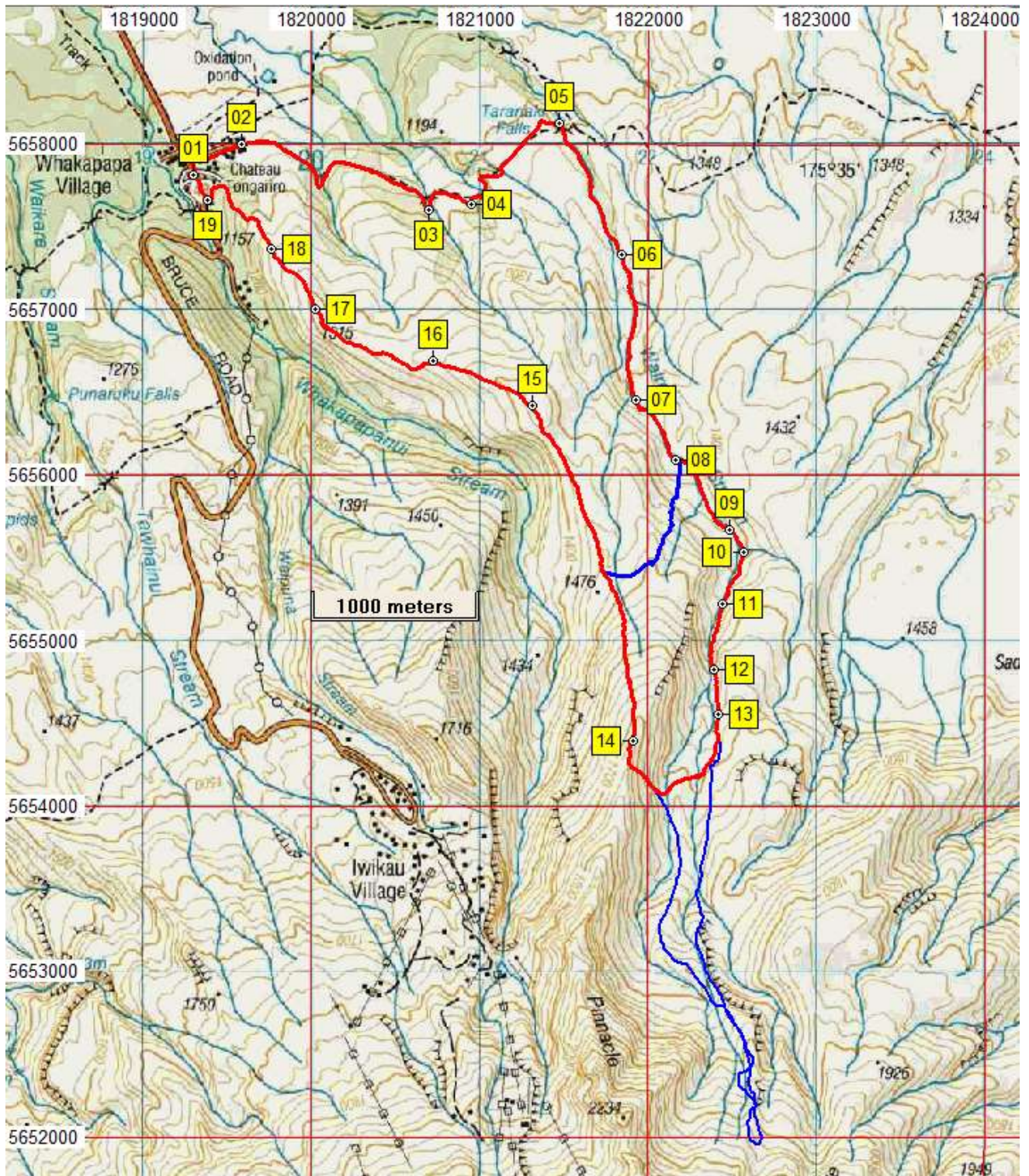
The tramp route shows in red

Dinosaur tail up to WP12



The view of the ascent to Pinnacle Ridge





Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1819306	5657814	1137	Car park with toilets opposite the Chateau in Whakapapa
02	1819583	5658000	1141	5min (400m); Car park at head of Tama Lakes track up behind the Chateau
03	1820697	5657609	1190	22min (1.8km); Bridge in open on very good path
04	1820946	5657639	1204	27min (2.2km); Wooden bridge over valley, parallel to large gully then work round gully top
05	1821473	5658136	1202	42min (3.1km); Turn right SSE at fifth bridge walking parallel to Wairere Stream on basic track
06	1821846	5657332	1256	1:00min (4km); Superb waterfall on RHS, first in a series of falls
07	1821927	5656458	1321	1:32min (5.1km); Whale back rock outcrops plus series of waterfalls
08	1822167	5656101	1350	1:42min (5.5km); Left up ridge for Gull colony or right over stream for Whakapapa
09	1822492	5655677	1386	1:58min (6.1km); Land slip area on edge of stream line
10	1822567	5655533	1394	2:03min (6.3km); Stream line and normal turn left for Gull Colony
11	1822448	5655222	1421	2:10min (6.6km); Valley steeper and narrow below bluffs on LHS
12	1822398	5654824	1512	2:26min (7.1km); Behind pinnacle after fair grunt up slope. Head due south aiming for Te Heuheu
13	1822422	5654559	1560	2:35min (7.4km); Small cairn on cross slope, aiming at Te Heuheu and right of large round boulder
14	1821909	5654395	1733	3:51min (8.6km); Pinnacles Ridge just below and N of The Pinnacles after 0.5km ascent in 55mins
15	1821315	5656421	1438	4:31min (10.8km); High on Whakapapa Ridge after fast, soft walking weaving through rocks N and NW
16	1820724	5656692	1362	4:43min (11.5km); Vegetated bank on the right, stay left and do not enter the vegetated area yet
17	1820022	5657009	1318	5:05min (12.4km); Clear view of the Chateau. Head downhill on degrading, poor track
18	1819768	5657374	1242	5:13min (12.8km); Table in middle of the excuse of a track - the track soon improves ahead
19	1819381	5657664	1146	5:24min (13.5km); Emerge on to the road at small car park at toilet block in Whakapapa



Wairere Stream waterfall with Ruapehu behind



View of the Pinnacles Ridge



Te Heu Heu and the Pinnacles in foreground



Edge of the vegetated area on Whakapapa Ridge



NOTES:	GPS unit Garmin GPSmap 62sc WP = waypoint as taken by GPS masl = metres above sea level altitude
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