

WHAKAPAPA RIDGE and WAIRERE STREAM

Top050 Map: BJ34 Mnt Ruapehu & BH34 Raurimu

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. Left to SH47 at the one and only T-junction
- Turn off SH47 on to SH48 signposted for Whakapapa, or
- In Turangi turn off SH1 right to SH41 then left to SH47 and proceed as above.
- Pass the Chateau on the left and park in the car park on the right which has toilets and is quite safe for vehicles compared to some other car parks.

Rough description: A fairly strenuous walk in the moderate to fit category lasting four to five hours including breaks. It starts and ends at the Chateau (**WP011134masl**) in Whakapapa and can be lengthened or shortened at will or as the weather dictates.

- The plan on the day was to continue to the SSW from WP05 on the Pinnacles Ridge as far as possible until a descent was made near the chairlift up above Happy Valley – low cloud and very poor visibility made this impossible as there are bluffs all around in the area to be accessed.
- The exit used on the day was to head back down the Pinnacles Ridge then descend steeply into the Wairere Stream and follow that back to meet the Tama Lakes track and hence back to Whakapapa.

The ascent up on to the Pinnacles Ridge (**WP051677masl**) is straightforward, relatively easy and takes under two hours – in fact reversing the route is the easiest and safest way out if the weather turns bad. The push up from the Whakapapa Ridge to the Pinnacles Ridge (about 240 metres) is a bit steep but takes only 45 minutes since the footing is good and the way very obvious.

Detail: Turn right out of the car park opposite the Chateau then cross the road and turn up behind the public toilets a few metres uphill from the Information Centre. The start is on a neat gravel track (touristic) and just within the bush line but within 10 minutes the track degrades a bit with some large, anti-hobbit sized steps just before a semi-round table from where there are open views (**WP021240masl**). At this point the track goes slightly to the right and soon enters a tussock area. Then it is essential to remain to the right (SW) side of an eroded edge where the silt-like vegetated cap towers above – do not enter this area as progress is very slow – just meander along the edge. Soon there is a break and the cap vanishes but there is a small isolated remnant ahead, (**WP031398masl**) head for this and continue ascending the ridge heading in a SE direction. Another 20 minutes of steady ascent reaches the upper part of the Whakapapa Ridge (**WP041440masl**) with an obvious stream line lying to your left(E) below.

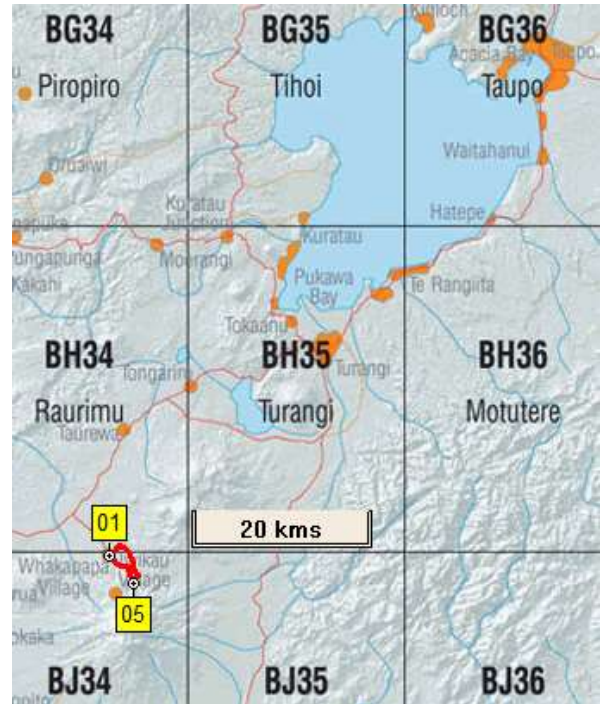
Continue walking more or less parallel to this stream line heading (SE) towards an obvious small rock on the horizon which lies just upslope of a red coloured, rocky volcanic outcrop. Once at the “marker” rock (**WP051677masl**) it is only a few metres to be on the crest of the ridge. By going uphill to the right – SW to SSW – the higher reaches of Pinnacles Ridge can be accessed but good visibility is essential as there are bluffs everywhere. If weather conditions are not good then back track following the entry route or head more or less north downhill on the ridge after working round the rocky, volcanic outcrop via the left or west side as there are severe bluffs on the east side.

Keep heading north with an eye open for a very basic track – or footprints on the ground – heading virtually eastwards. Follow this route and soon a fairly steep slope (**WP061500masl**) descends to the Wairere Stream; this gives a good way down.

Wairere Stream in rocky channel



The Wairere Stream is reached in a matter of minutes – depending on the trapper's like or dislike of descending slightly unstable slopes – and at this point the stream is carried within a deep rocky channel or chasm. Follow the stream on the true left bank until such time as a crossing point can be reached; there are one or two obvious places though, as normal, care has to be taken. On crossing pick up the vague track on the right bank and follow it downstream till the bridge on the Tama Lakes track is reached (**WP071207masl**). On reaching the bridge there is then the choice to follow either the upper or lower tracks back to Whakapapa – either route takes about an hour but at least the lower track does give a good view of the Taranaki Falls (**WP081185masl**) and then passes through very pleasant woodland that parallels the river. After about 5 hours pass the junction (**WP091089masl**) and bridge for Mangatepopo there is then a bit of a climb plus a few dips and stream lines to cross before eventually reaching the junction (**WP101128masl**) to the Tama lakes track with the Chateau only a few minutes away on the right.



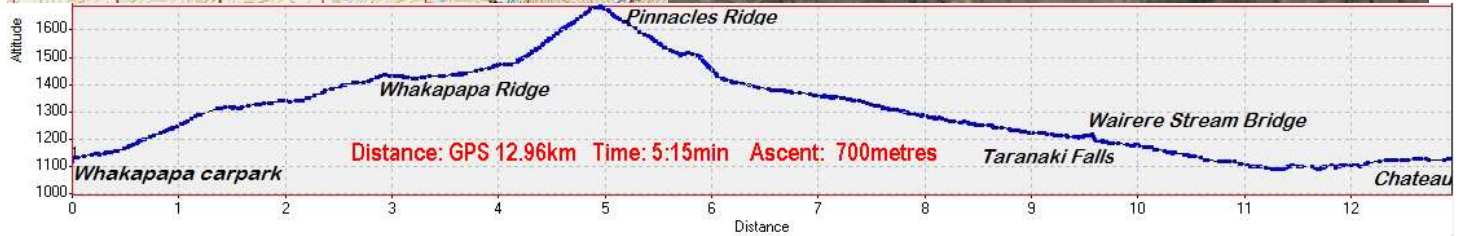
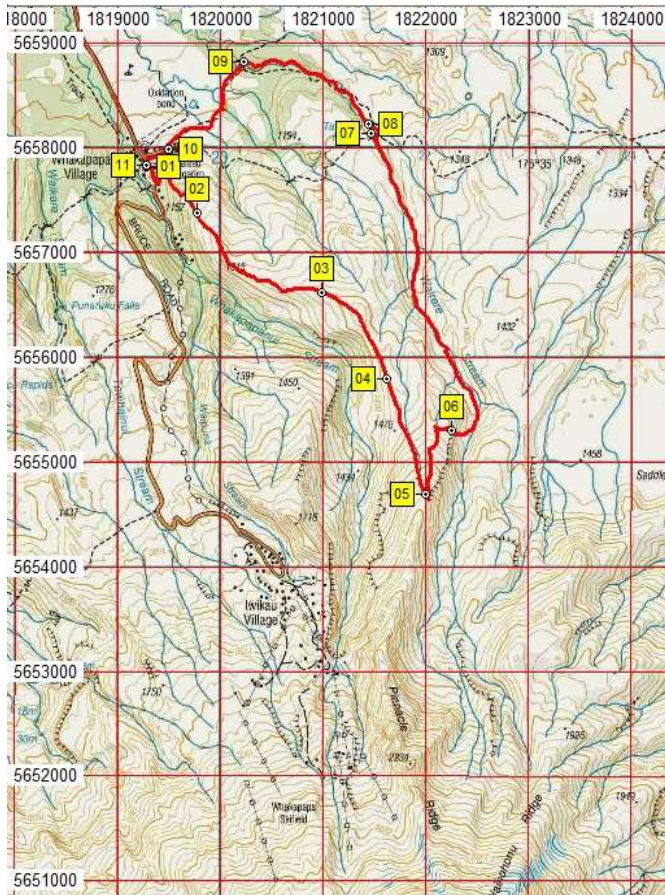
Above shows the route plus start and highest point

Vegetated cap edge



East side of volcanic outcrop





Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1819281	5657823	1134	Car Park
02	1819771	5657376	1240	15min (690m) Picnic Table
03	1820990	5656627	1398	48min (2.27km); Highest remnant of vegetation cap
04	1821616	5655793	1440	1:08min (3.37km); Whakapapa to Pinnacles Ridge merge
05	1821996	5654691	1677	1:53min (4.62km); Near crest of Pinnacles Ridge upslope of reddish outcrop
06	1822255	5655300	1500	2:30min (5.58km); Start steep, loose, rocky descent to Wairere Stream
07	1821471	5658134	1207	4:10min (8.93km); Footbridge on Tama Lakes track
08	1821437	5658228	1185	4:20min (8.93km); Picnic Table below Taranaki Falls
09	1820217	5658818	1089	5:00min (10.6km); Bridge junction with right for Mangatepopo
10	1819491	5657977	1128	5:05min (11.85km); Junction with Tama Lakes Track & road to Chateau on right

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