

WHIRINAKI TRACK & CENTRAL HUT, THE CAVE and MINGINUI

Topo50 Map: BG38 Wairapukao

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

How to get to START

- Exit Taupo on **SH5** for Napier
- Straight on through Rangitaiki
- 40 minutes turn left on to **Pohokurua Road**
- Cross bridge, left at **T-junction** on rough forest road
- About 1 hour pass through mature coniferous forest
- 1:05min go **right at T-junction**. This is signed left for SH5 on the way out
- 1:07min right at next T-junction passing Circuit Road
- Right on to **Pine Milling Road**
- Left on to **Plateau Road** – straight on
- Car park with toilet (**WP01**)

Access to the starting point on Plateau Road is not too easy and use of the map or, better, someone who knows the way acting as a guide is a good idea. Access via Link Road etc requires a permit and can be problematic so the above route is recommended.

The start of the route back to Taupo is also shown opposite with the forest road followed to Minginui where SH38 is picked up for Murapara, as shown. Stay on SH38 till SH5 (Taupo Rotorua) is met then followed.

Rough description: Several variations are possible but this note basically covers walking from the car park on Plateau Road in the forest area north of the Napier Road (SH5) to Minginui via the Central Whirinaki Hut and the “cave”.

Variations that can be done include Plateau Road to the Central Hut and return (21km) or exit via Upper Whirinaki Hut and then again go all the way through to Minginui (26km). If tackling the whole “through” walk it is slightly less demanding to go from Plateau Road to Minginui rather than the other way round as there is an overall altitude loss of 550-700 metres. This altitude gain / loss is at the Plateau Road end so it means that, if coming from Minginui, the last part is a huge grunt uphill. The short detour to the cave is well worth doing as the cave is quite large and worth seeing.

Detail: Assuming that you have actually found your way to the car park (**WP01** 950masl) after about 1 hour 30 minutes drive from Taupo exit downhill through the archway where you will find a notice board and map of the area. In 15 minutes you reach a Y-fork with a notice (**WP02** 926masl) to the Upper Whirinaki Hut – the main path for Central Hut goes left. Another Y-fork (**WP03** 629masl) is found after 1:10 walking and this time the path to the right goes to the “Cave”. It only takes a few minutes to reach the cave so this diversion is worthwhile though it is not too obvious where to go. When you come to a slightly incised stream line turn and go upstream for the cave. Immediately after the side path to the cave there is a swing bridge and another path (**WP04** 631masl) goes off right to the Upper Hut whilst you continue to the left for the Central Hut. In a walk time of about 2 hours cross another bridge (**WP05** 620masl) with signs for the Mangamate and Upper Whirinaki Huts to the right and the Central Hut to the left. The latter (**WP06** 599masl) is reached in 2:30 minutes. If hungry it is a good idea to take an early lunch here at the hut if you are going straight through. This is a good place to overnight if you have set-off later in the day.

Start



Cave mouth



Central Hut



The sign-boards give good estimates of the walking times and distance back to Plateau Road but overstate the distance to River Road by 2 km. Remember that the walk out southwards from the hut does take longer than the walk in – a huge ascent up to Plateau Road. Continuing on northwards from the Central Hut there is a tunnel (**WP07** and **08**) after about 20 minutes then the Kakanui Stream (**WP09** 510masl) is met. The walk seems to go on forever in forest with little to see apart from trees and vegetation – though there are some rather fine trees to be seen. Little bird life was seen though some was heard and many DOC traps can be seen so a clean-up is in progress.

Distance board at Central Hut



An open area, Verns Clearing or Camp (**WP10** 476masl), is reached in total time of 4:30 minutes to 5 hours. This is a good place for a late lunch if going straight through as lately a huge new shelter with a sink, benches, a work top and even a wood-burner has been erected. There is ample camping space around here or, if conditions were really bad, it would be possible to sleep in the shelter with some comfort..

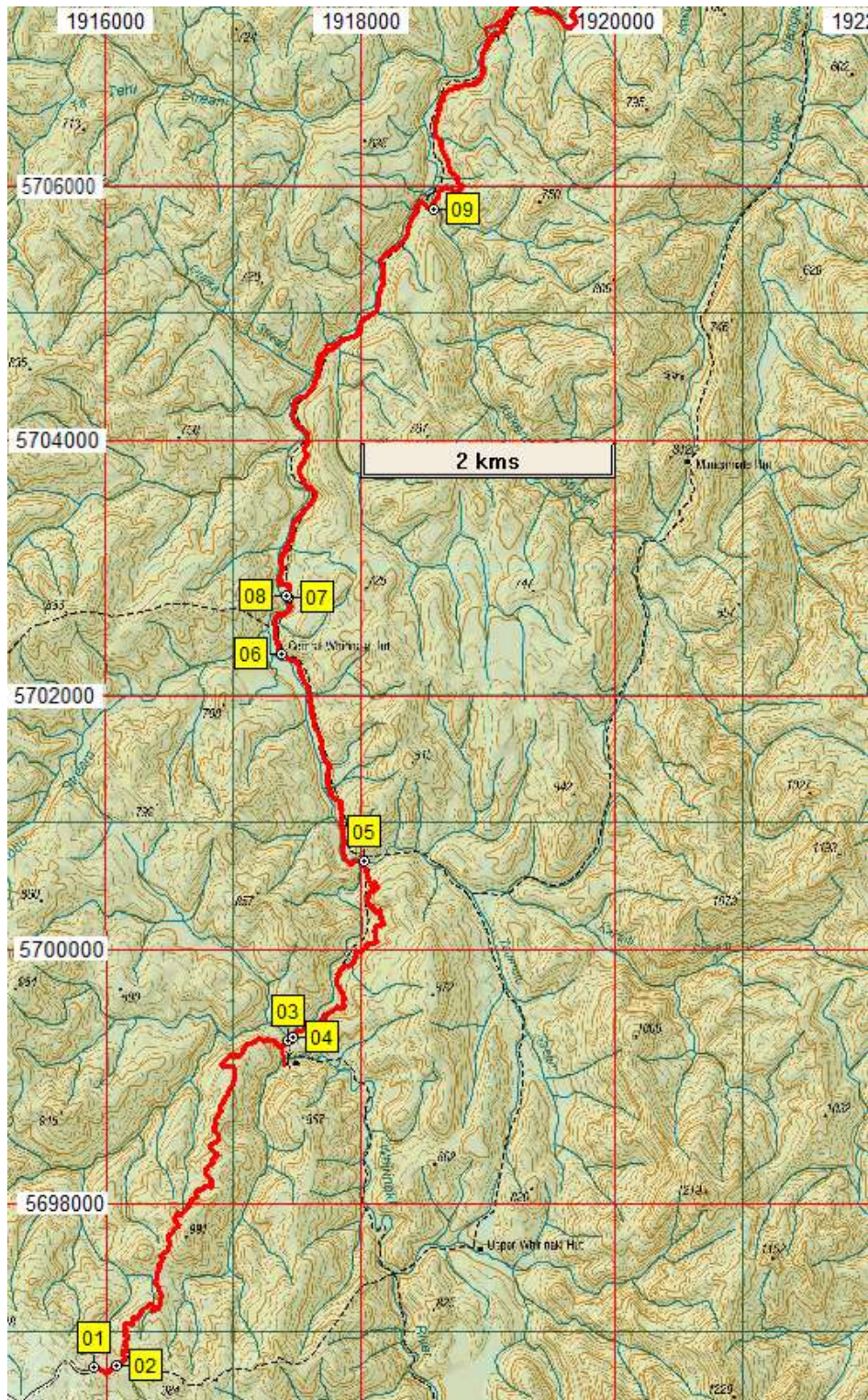
An hour further on there is a T-junction (**WP11** 442masl) with the Waterfall and Falls Loop track going off left; go right towards River Road which is noted as being 2 hours walk away. At the next T-junction (**WP12** 419masl) go left over the bridge whilst going straight goes to the Mangamate hut. Thirty minutes further on there is yet another T-junction (**WP13** 399masl) where you go left towards Minginui Road but right if heading for Moerangi Helicopter pad and peak.

The tunnel



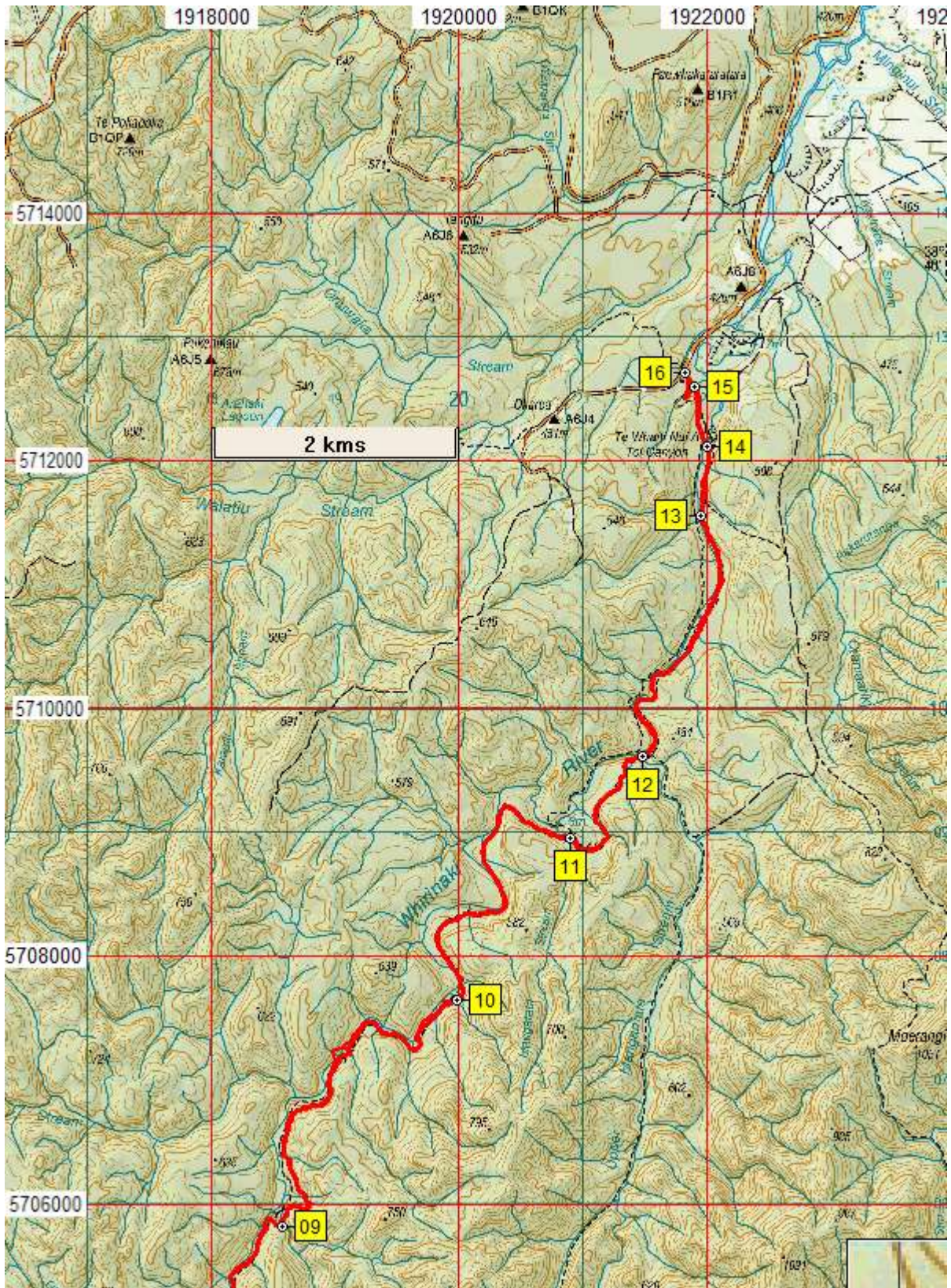
Getting to the start can be a lottery as forestry activity can deny or change access – best to talk to someone who has been recently.

The return route via Murapara the past Rainbow Mountain is fairly straightforward



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1915899	5696724	950	Car park with DOC toilet on Plateau Road and start of Whirinaki track
02	1916081	5696734	926	5min (0.28km); Y-fork plus notice for Upper Whirinaki Hut plus track log book
03	1917426	5699290	629	1:29min (4.8km); Track off right to the "Cave" just before bridge
04	1917466	5699319	631	1:33min (5km); T-junction on crossing bridge with left to Central Hut and right to Upper Hut
05	1918030	5700703	620	2:10min (7.5km); T-junction on crossing bridge with left for Central and right for Mangamate
06	1917383	5702325	599	2:43min (9.5km); Central Whirinaki Hut
07	1917429	5702764	606	2:53min (10.1km); Entrance to tunnel 10 min North of Central Hut
08	1917414	5702779	606	2:11min (7.5km); Exit from tunnel
09	1918570	5705823	510	4:15min (14.5km); Kakanui Stream
10	1919979	5707647	476	5:06min (18km); Verns Camp with new DOC shelter and woodburner etc
11	1920895	5708957	442	6hours (21km); T-junction with right to River Road carpark and left for Falls Loop
12	1921487	5709614	419	6:15min (22.3km); T-junction with straight to Mangamate Hut and left to cross bridge and River Road
13	1921952	5711562	399	6:50min (24.8km); T-junction with track for Moerangi off right
14	1922007	5712114	389	7hours (25.4km); Bridge over Te Whaiti Nui A Toi Canyon with Waterfall Loop track joining
15	1921903	5712602	395	7:06min (25.9km); Track log book
16	1921820	5712720	414	7:15min (26.3km); Car park at track end on River Road

There is a large, new bridge over Te Whaiti Nui A Toi Canyon (**WHIR14** 389masl) at around 7 hours where the route goes straight ahead whilst the Falls Loop track joins from the left. Indications of the end of the track are noticed as large explanatory notices for the day-trippers about the flora and fauna. The track log book (**WHIR15** 395masl) is then found on the left and the car park on River Road at the end of the Whirinaki Track (**WHIR16** 414masl) is reached in about 6:45 minutes to 7:15minutes.





The Verns Camp wood burner



Notes:

- **GPS** Garmin GPSMap 62sc
- **WP** = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit
- **masl** = metres above sea level