

HUKA FALLS TRACK

Topo50 Maps: *BG36-Taupo*

How to get to START

From the Police Station on the domain in Taupo exit past the courthouse and library to the traffic lights:

- Go left at the traffic lights to the round-about
- At the round-about take the second exit - Spa Road
- Just short of 2km take the left branch at the Y-fork
- Pass County Avenue (Spa Thermal Park) on the left
- Turn first right to AC Baths Avenue & immediately left
- Car Park at AC Baths / Taupo Events Centre

Parking is suggested here rather than in Spa Park itself as the small car park at the end of County Avenue is not patrolled on a regular basis and vehicles can be at risk.

From the AC Baths car park head virtually north to cross Spa Road / Centennial Drive (50metres) then bear slightly to the right (NE) over the grass and more or less parallel to the road on the right (still Spa Road) that heads downhill. At the edge of the trees on the grassy area there is a locked gate across the access to Spa Park – go through the side of this and head down hill on the obvious track which leads to a wide, virtually flat area with trees on the right hand side above a steep drop behind the trees.

Rough Description: A moderate walk of about 5 hours starting in or near Spa Thermal Park out past Huka Falls to Aratiatia (if time permits) which avoids use of most of the tourist track – however, be aware that much of this is on bike tracks so caution and respect for the cyclists must be observed. There are good views of the Waikato River, Huka Lodge, parts of Wairakei and the Prawn Farm. On the return a riverside track is followed instead of walking back up the steep slope into Spa Park after crossing hot-water bridge.

Detail: Walk along the tree-lined, NE edge of the “field” and up the short steep slope at the north end, staying on the narrow but obvious track on the ridge. Near the bottom of the slope turn off to the right (**WP02** 383masl) on to the bike track using either of the wide, downhill tracks to get into the valley. At this point there is a very obvious bridge, with a Bike Taupo notice, over the steaming stream.

Fifty metres or so over the bridge turn right uphill so that you are facing any bikes that might be using the track – this is a cycle track so be very aware of on-coming cyclists, but it is far safer to face them than have them come up behind you. The track goes up through quite a deep gully with many blackberries and passes under a collapsing pumice bluff on the left but once up it is a pleasant almost flat stroll through the coniferous forest.

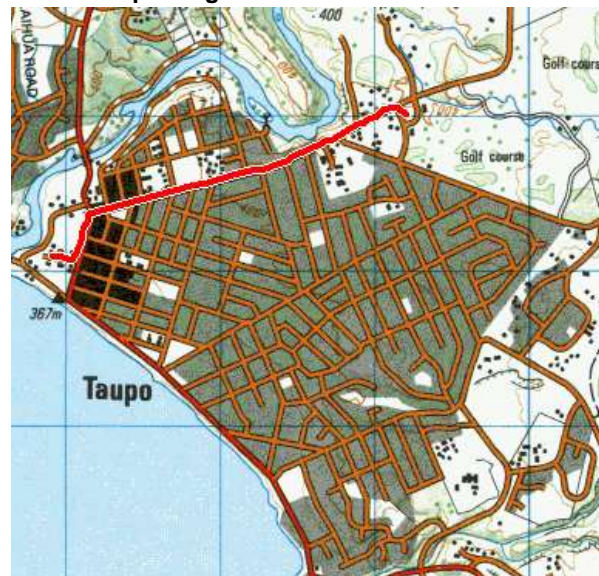
Within 20 minutes or so there is a T-junction where the “outwards” bike track is met joining from the left (**WP03** 392masl) before a short uphill section. Minutes after this a small short-cut (**WP04** 401masl) branches off to the right and rejoins minutes later once on the crest – there are now open fields on the right, the track is undulating to rolling and there are views of the Waikato River to the left.

From here on whenever there is a branch in the track go to the right selecting the track that is nearest the farmland to the east. At 40 minutes following the right branch (**WP08** 392masl) leads through a gullied area to an exposed, eroded, shelf-like section of path which descends in a long gentle curve to a bridge (**WP10** 375masl) with a sign – 2km to Huka Falls. There is now a bit of a grunt upwards on a zig zagging track with “displaced” plastic / rubber mats laid to give grip for bikes. Near the top of this ascent there is a memorial sign “Taylors Bluff” (**WP11** 392masl) from where it is 2 minutes to the top with some river views and the walking is more or less level to gently undulating before passing into some “magic” attractive coniferous forest which offers superb walking. Within an hour the “pipeline” track (**WP13** 411masl), which goes left down towards the river, is met but by going straight small notices can be seen on the trees – follow the right hand branch and within minutes the track heads downhill and offers views of Huka Lodge.

At the bottom of this descent the lower track rejoins (**WP14** 379masl) from the left before a descent to Paddy’s Bridge (**WP15** 373masl) and a short steep grunt up past where there was a “match-stick” man sign showing the way to Huka Falls – over-keen track edge clearing seems to have demolished this feature.

NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS84

Access and parking



Parallel tracks and not steep

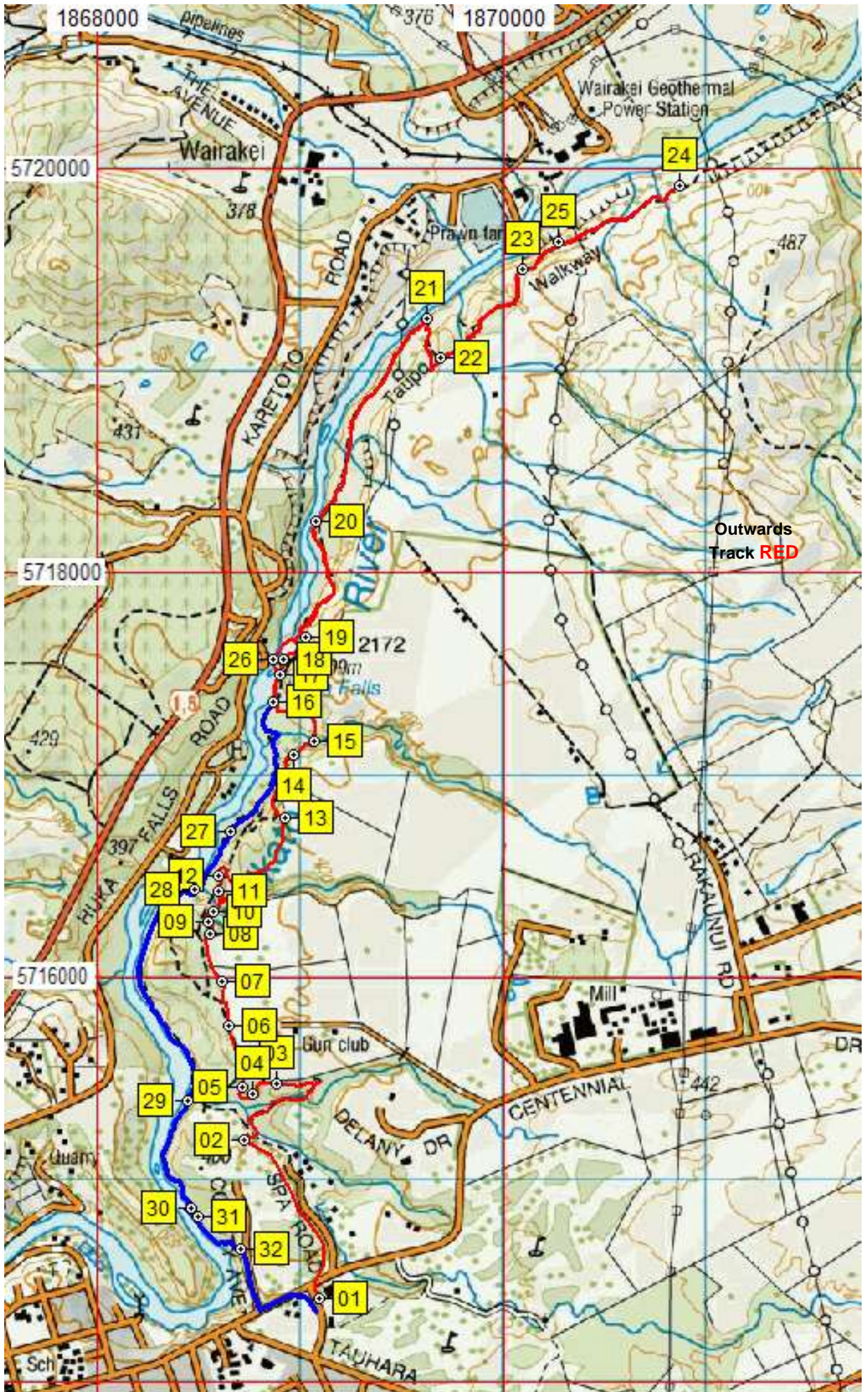


Massive erosion



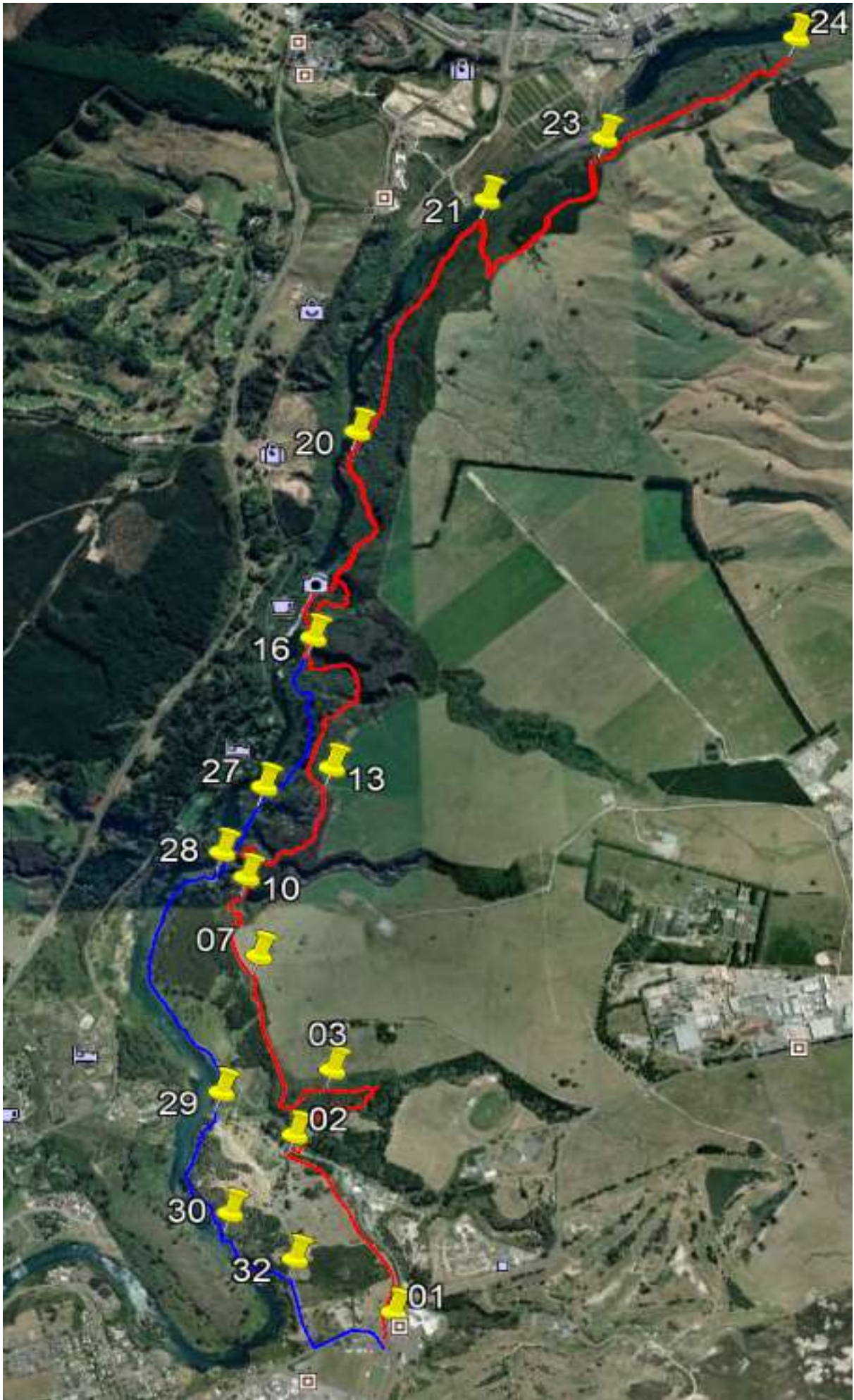
Waikato river view





Inwards
Track
BLUE

Outwards
Track RED



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1869090	5714415	414	AC Baths Avenue opposite car park entrance to AC Baths
02	1868726	5715196	383	10min (980m); Exit Spa Park flat grass area on to bike tracks
03	1868885	5715475	392	25min (1.82km); Junction with "outwards" section of bike track
04	1868769	5715419	401	26min (2.02km); Junction on RHS to minor shortcut
05	1868715	5715456	405	28min (2.13km); Short cut rejoins from the RHS once over the crest
06	1868647	5715763	388	32min (2.49km); Y-junction, follow right branch paralleling other track
07	1868612	5715983	395	35mins (2.70km); Split in track rejoins from the left
08	1868554	5716213	392	40min (2.98km); Y-fork, follow to right on very gullied edge then long curving descent
09	1868542	5716273	386	42min (3.12km); Split in track rejoins from the left at top of long descent
10	1868575	5716324	375	44min (3.17km); Bridge with "2km to Huka" sign then ascend quite steeply
11	1868601	5716429	392	48min (3.45km); Taylors Bluff notice - still upwards grunt
12	1868590	5716505	407	50min (3.57km); High point with views after fair grunt upwards then level walking
13	1868928	5716791	411	1hr (4.25km); Meet "pipeline" track going off left downhill. Go straight then branch right at Y-fork
14	1868969	5717103	379	1:08min (4.65km); Meet lower track from left after long descent with views of Huka Lodge
15	1869066	5717166	373	1:10min (4.77km); Paddy's bridge then steeply upwards past "broken" match-stick man signboard
16	1868874	5717361	365	1:15min (5.16km); DOC track counter (NOW GONE) then go right on main tourist track
17	1868894	5717496	361	1:20min (5.31km); Branch off tourist track to the right on less manicured track
18	1868924	5717568	361	1:21min (5.39km); Go straight ignoring branch left which goes to Falls Lookout
19	1869030	5717680	381	1:25min (5.62km); Rejoin the tourist track then reach viewpoint overlooking Huka Falls
20	1869078	5718257	353	1:45min (6.35km); Viewpoint over river after good level walking
21	1869624	5719254	350	2:02min (7.55km); Bend to the right away from river and uphill
22	1869693	5719068	390	2:10min (7.92km); Level walking after fair grunt upwards then enter "Enchanted Forest" (Dark)
23	1870096	5719499	396	2:20min (8.59km); Viewpoint overlooking "Prawn Farm"
24	1870869	5719915	383	2:30min (9.54km); High point with seat and views (Lunch spot)
25	1870272	5719633	386	10min (10.27km); Backtracking after lunch - old recently rediscovered seat with views
26	1868869	5717570	364	1:10min post lunch (13.70km); Huka Falls bridge
27	1868657	5716716	370	1:30min post lunch (14.7km); Junction from left with "Pipeline" track
28	1868482	5716436	365	1:40min post lunch (15.08km); Bridge then upwards past viewing platform
29	1868443	5715390	367	2:40min post lunch (16.4km); Hot water bridge then turn off right on small track towards river
30	1868459	5714860	380	2:05 min post lunch (17.05km); Y-fork, go right and down to metal jetty / platform on river edge
31	1868494	5714824	374	2:10min post lunch (17.17km); Y-fork with left to cave and right to second Y-fork - go right again
32	1868709	5714657	405	2:15min post lunch (17.49km); road edge after steep grunt. Right then left 15min to end 18.15km



At 1:15 minutes there is a DoC track "counter" to stand on to record your passing just before the tourist track is met where the route goes right. It then slips off right within a matter of minutes on to a narrower, slightly rougher track which leads past the actual Huka Falls and rejoins the tourist track just below a viewpoint (WP19 381masl) above the falls.

For the next 15 minutes there is good fast walking on an almost level wide track with a river viewpoint on the left (WP20 353masl) then the track heads uphill to the SE (WP21 350masl). Around here, sometime in the near future, the track will pass under the ETA (Taupo Bypass) where the new road crosses the Waikato River. Once up there are fields to the right then the "Enchanted" very dark forest is entered and on exiting the forest there are views of the "Prawn Farm" (WP23 396masl) and minutes later a seat on a viewpoint offers a good lunch spot (WP24 383masl). From here it is about another 2km or so to Aratiatia.

The return route follows the tourist track all the way back passing Huka Falls (**WP26** 364masl), up and over three or four highpoints before coming to the bathing spot on the river's edge at Hot Water Bridge (**WP29** 367masl). On crossing the bridge turn off right and follow the small track running parallel to the river and, as previously, whenever there is a track junction choose the right hand branch – there are about three of these.

Overlooking Wairakei and prawn farm



At the second last junction (**WP31** 374masl) going left leads into a cave so that is not the route – it is right then right again and soon there is a rough bouldery area followed by the last grunt of the day up the bluffs, but there are steps.

At the top (**WP32** 405masl) there is a paved walkway along the edge of County Avenue – going left leads to a car park plus toilets whilst going right leads out to Centennial Drive and the AC Baths are only minutes away by going left at this main road junction.

Total distance covered to WP24 and back is 18.34km with an altitude range between 344 and 421masl.

Huka Lodge



GPS Notes:

- **GPS** Garmin GPSmap 60CSx on **WGS84**
- **WP** = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit
- **masl** = metres above sea level