

KETETAHI HUT, BLUE LAKE & CENTRAL CRATER

Topo50 Map: BH35Turangi

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

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

- Follow the Desert Highway (**SH1**) and turn off **right on to SH46** for Rangipo
- At 13km on **SH46** from the junction **turn left** on to gravel road for Ketetahi
- One km up this road is the car park (**WP01**) at North end of the Tongariro Crossing
- Park here, but be aware that there are restrictions on parking so follow advisory signs.

There are toilets here and, usually from around 15:00 hours (3pm) onwards, there can be many people waiting for transport after completing the Tongariro Crossing. The route can be traced on the map opposite. The road from SH46 into the car park is gravel, the car park is the yellow 01 marker on the map opposite..

Rough description: This is a moderate to fit day tramp and comprises the north end of the Tongariro Crossing where one walks in to the Ketetahi Shelter from the North; this can be a bit tiring as there are, shall we say, a few “steps” on the otherwise very high grade track. Once at the Ketetahi Shelter one can then admire the views or continue up for another hour to the Blue Lake or even as far as the Emerald Lakes and junction to the Oturere Track

The variations and times are:

- Up to the hut – 3 hours with a full pack, less on day walk with a light pack
- Back down from the Hut – 2 hours with a full pack and, again, less when walking light
- From the Hut to the Blue Lake – 1hour to 1:15 minutes and less than an hour back down to the Hut
- If the loop out to the Oturere Track junction is added this requires about another hour

Altitude gain / loss to the Ketetahi Hut is about 700 metres and getting to the Blue Lake adds another 300 metres of ascent / descent. Maximum altitude reached is a bit over 1,700 masl making ascent for the whole outing about 1,000metres.

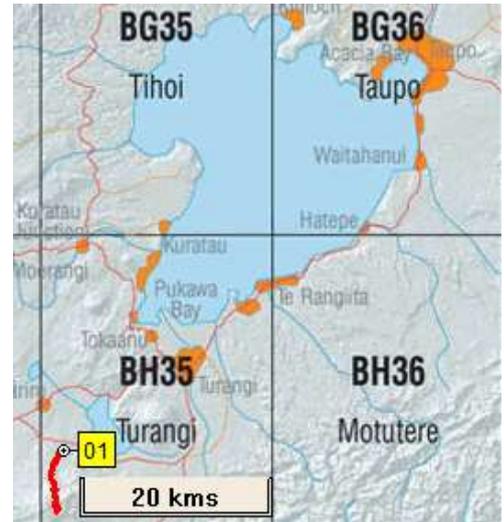
Detail: The tramp leaves the back of the car park (**WP01** 760masl) past the shelter with the map of the Tongariro Crossing on a very good, gently sloping track. Your first three features are bridges (**WPs 02, 03 & 04**). Generally only the middle stream line has water flowing and there are a few minor, slightly uneven slopes to negotiate by the time you are at the third bridge. Take notice of the warnings about the water NOT being fit for drinking, it comes from geo-thermal sources.

After the third bridge, by which point you have gained about 100 metres in altitude, the hard work commences as steps and stairs come into play. You start to get your self uphill and, after 10 minutes or so of this, there is a welcome seat (**WP05** 930masl) on a small platform in a slightly open area compared to the relatively thick forest through which you have ascended. On the way up it takes about 45 minutes to reach this seat whilst on the way down you need about 1:15 minutes from the Ketetahi Hut. Do not worry about having a short rest, there is plenty more uphill to test you ahead - but DOC have been kind for another 10 minutes up the hill there is yet another seat (**WP06** 983 masl). Overall you will now have taken about 1 hour.

The uphill continues but it is never actually too steep, even when carrying a full pack and one reaches the tree line (**WP07** 1037 masl) about 10 – 15 minutes after the last seat. To get to this point will have taken between 1 hour and 1:15 minutes and, for the record, on the way down about 55 minutes are needed to get here from the hut.

Once out into the low bush walking is a delight as there is a very high grade path with solid wooden edging and what looks like upended plastic milk crates filled with gravel and rubble to walk on. Be warned these can be slippery in icy conditions. Soon there is a fork in the track with the route that used to go to the Hot Springs signed as “closed”. The new track to the right is pretty easy and only has one steep ascent just before reaching the hut.

The old route from the springs, to which public access is not allowed, up to the hut, took about 30 minutes and needed a little bit more care as the path was not DOC maintained and it was quite rough in places – but it did not present any dangers. The route worked round a shoulder, down through yet another stream line then up past a second sign for the springs (**WP21** 1407masl) reaching this sign in about 2:05 – 2:15 min from the car park. Once past here it was no distance at all to the hut (**WP09** 1445masl) and it was usually reached this in a total of 2:30 – 2:45 minutes despite the notice board at the start of the trail saying 3 hours. In mid-2007 DOC began upgrading and re-routing and this was completed in 2010 when a much easier, well groomed track was opened. This track does keep walkers well away from the “springs” and does allow good views northwards – especially when descending.



Ketetahi hot springs



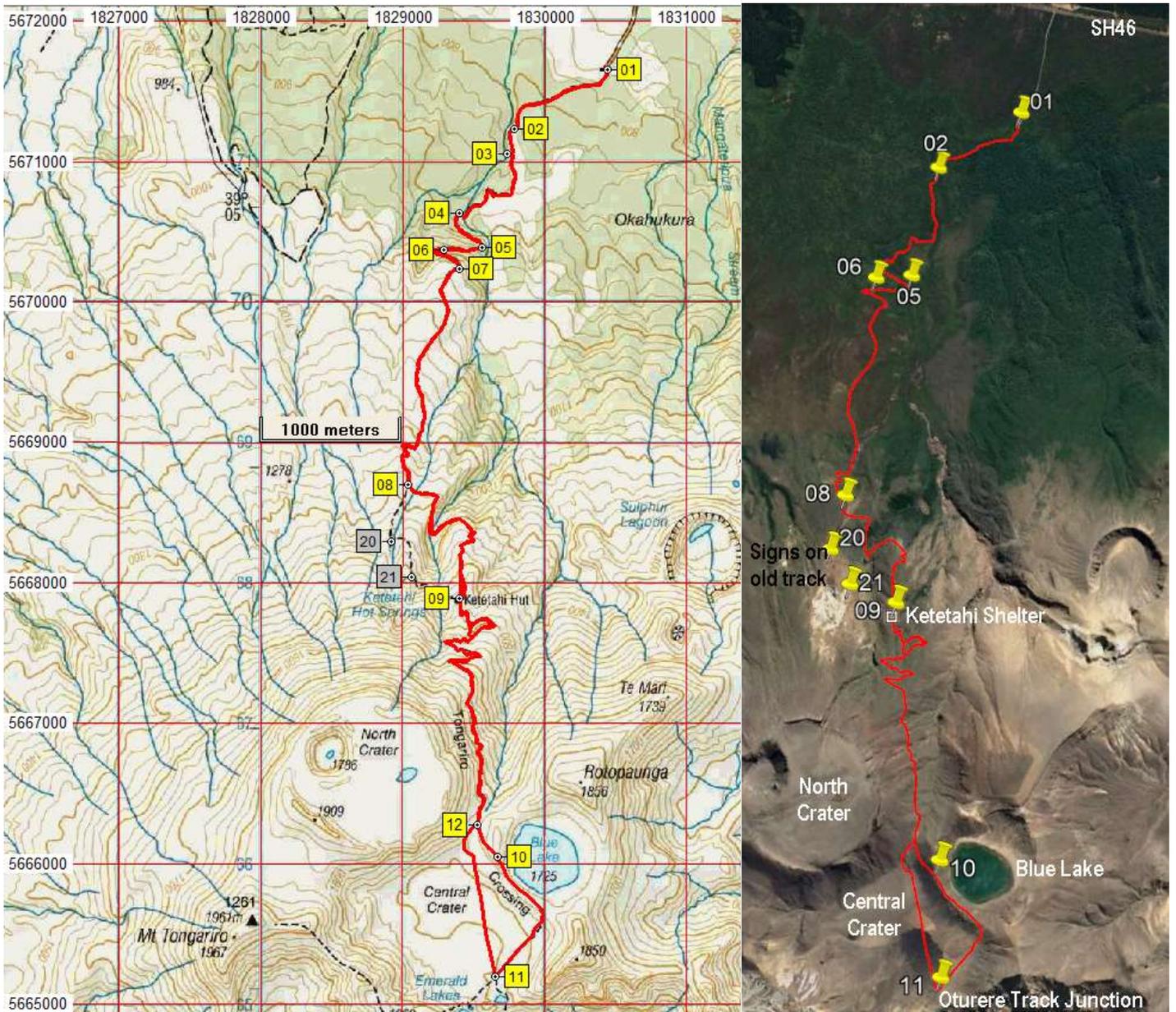
NB New track does not go near this spot

TTC trampers at Ketetahi Hut

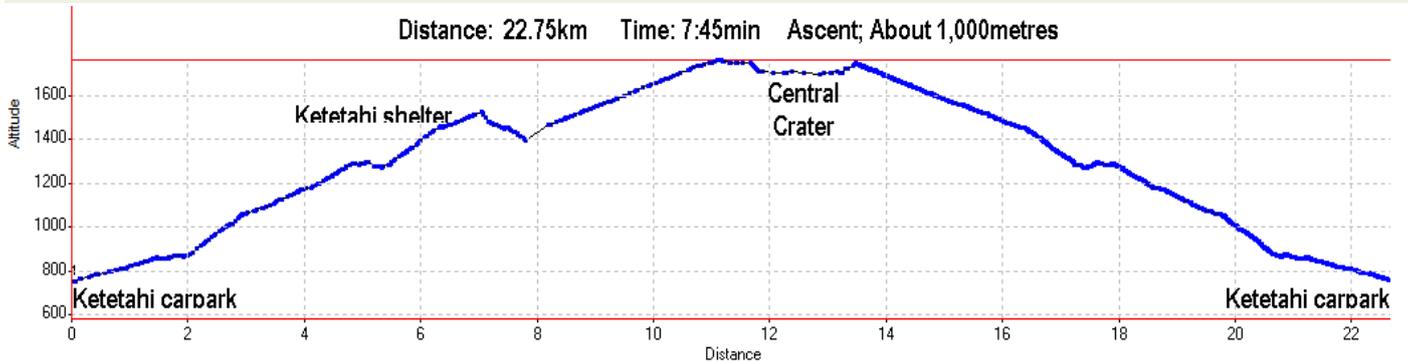


Feathered friend crumb hunting





Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1830439	5671660	759	Tongariro Car Park 1km SSW from 13km on Rangipo Road
02	1829788	5671237	810	15min (930m); Bridge over dry stream (1:38min from hut on return)
03	1829738	5671062	831	17min (1.13km); Second bridge over stream (1:33min from Hut on return)
04	1829398	5670633	860	35min (1.96km); Bridge with dry bed (1:20min from hut on return)
05	1829561	5670385	931	45min (2.35km); Platform seat in slightly open area (1:13min from hut on return)
06	1829292	5670367	983	1hour (2.76km); Second seat on long uphill
07	1829394	5670238	1037	1:15min (2.93km); Tree line 10- 5 min above last seat (53min from hut on return)
08	1829035	5668697	1290	2:10min (4.82km); Junction where old track goes off right
09	1829396	5667889	1445	2:45min (6.35km); Ketetahi Hut (Now classified as a SHELTER and not a HUT)
10	1829671	5666049	1761	4hrs (11.18km); Crest above Blue Lake: 1:15 min above Ketetahi Hut
11	1829651	5665192	1701	4:30min (12.29km); Junction to Oturere Track (+/- 30min from Blue Lake depending on conditions)
12	1829526	5666276	1746	4:45min (13.47km); Meet outward track after crossing Central crater
20	1828919	5668298	1344	Ketetahi hot springs sign on old track
21	1829060	5668035	1407	Ketetahi hot springs second sign on old track



The Ketetahi Hut had seen better days and was due for replacement. It had sleeping capacity for around 20 though, on occasions, when the TTC (Taupo Tramping Club) have been sleeping-over in excess of 30 people have squeezed in – this involved some sleeping in the boot room outside and under the table in the main room. In the summer there was a warden, gas cookers plus gas heater but in the winter time only the gas heater can be found. This hut was to be replaced soon and relocated away from the main track to cut down the casual visitors stopping off for a rest whilst doing the Tongariro Crossing. However all plans for replacement went on hold when the Hut was damaged during an eruption and the Hut is now classified as a shelter with toilets for day walkers.. It should be noted when considering the walking time into the hut that the average time, as displayed on the notice board in the car park, is 3 hours. Also consider that the group from the TTC was composed of trampers who were not quite youngsters, were carrying full packs and made it in 2:45 minutes whilst younger members did it in considerably less time.

From the hut the track onwards and upwards leaves by passing in front of the toilets and then you are faced with a relatively steady climb up a series of zig-zags for the next hour or so. The 300 odd metres of ascent from the hut to the crest (**WP10**^{1761masl}) near the Blue Lake takes about 1:15 minutes in the winter time when snow is usually to be found on the track and a bit less in the dry days of summer. There are a few nice sheltered spots on this poled track for a lunch or a refreshment break – but watch out for approaching Tongariro Crossing walkers.

The short continuation to reach the junction to the Oturere Track goes along the poled section as seen in the photo below – easy in summer but quite tricky in winter when one should carry crampons. In fact, without crampons it can be difficult to stay on the track and reach **WP10** as there is a nasty cross slope which can be difficult to cross when it is iced up. At the end of the poled section the path goes down quite steeply to the right and again, without crampons, this can be very difficult in icy conditions.

Path above Blue Lake - summer



Sunset through the steam



As can be seen above fantastic sunsets occur when the sunset cooperates with the steam from the hot springs.

Virtually the same spot in winter



On the winter day that this continuation was done it took about 20 – 30 minutes from above the Blue Lake to the track junction (**WP11**^{1701masl}). It proved easier, safer and very much quicker to return to begin the descent back down to the Ketetahi Hut by traversing more or less straight through Central Crater since everything was frozen solid. As can be seen the snowed, iced-up surface back over Central Crater was level and offered good walking. On wet days in the summer time one would normally avoid this route and follow the poled track. If you are tackling the Tongariro Crossing then the track is on Red Crater which is a struggle. Many “Crossers” come to grief on this slope as the footing is NOT good and once they have reached here “legs are tired”

Track junction notice



Red Crater & scree slope



Note: The complete tramp was compiled from two tramps:

- In the summertime the tramp was from the car park, past the Ketetahi Hut to just above Blue Lake (**WP10**^{1761masl}) and back down again
- In winter-time, whilst over-nighting in the Ketetahi Hut, a tramp was done from the Ketetahi Hut to the Blue Lake then along the track to the junction with the Oturere Track (**WP11**^{1701masl}). The return from this tramp is shown above as a loop passing back through the middle of Central Crater

NOTES:	• GPS Garmin GPSMap 60CSx WP = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit masl = metres above sea level (as recorded by GPS unit)
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