

LAKE SURPRISE

Topo50 Map: BJ34 Mnt Ruapehu

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

How to get to START:

- Exit Taupo southwards on **SH1** to Turangi
- From Turangi there is a choice of two routes but the aim is to get on to SH 47 heading for Whakapapa
- The map opposite shows going via **SH1** and turning right on to **SH46** passing Lake Rotoaira then left on to **SH47**
- Pass the turn off to Whakapapa at 95km in 1:10min
- Turn left on to **SH 4** at National Park in 1:30min and 104km
- Turn off **SH49** left for Ohakune at 129km in 1:45 min
- Enter Ohakune in 1:50 min, cross the bridge then turn left into Ayr Street at 137km (Second road on the left after entering town)
- At a mini-roundabout go left into Goldfinch Street then under the bridge
- Convenient public toilets on the left at 140km
- Continue up Ohakune Mountain Road through several gates and park (**01**) on the left at edge of road at the Round-the-Mountain track sign at 155km and 2:15 min from Taupo.

Distances are taken from the Police Station in Taupo and the route is shown as the blue line opposite whilst the tramp route is the red line.



Rough description: A moderately stiff walk of 5 hours to 5:30 minutes on a pretty rough track in places, especially near the start of the tramp down into the first valley. There are fantastic views of Ruapehu etc plus the cascades down which you traverse on a steep, tricky rock ladder – but even the less agile fitted with bionic parts can negotiate this section up and down with patience from other trampers. The path improves dramatically at the foot of the cascades and walking becomes easier. There are a couple of river crossings and feet wetting is not unknown but if the water level is not too high there are ample stepping stones. The Mangaturuturu Hut is reached within 1:30 to 2 hours; a good lunch spot and where some people might want to wait till others complete the walk over the next river, on to boardwalk then some more tricky ascending with sections of boardwalk and gravel path to the lake. The hut to the lake takes about 35 minutes each way.

Detail: The access route is as described above and, on average, takes about 2:15 – 2:30 minutes from the car park on the Domain in Taupo to reach the point on the Ohakune Mountain road where the “Round-the-Mountain track crosses – waypoint **01 1506masl** – see below.

From the side of the track board go down into the valley in a NE direction on a diagonal path with is a bit steep and is very rough and covered in gravel, stones and boulders. Pass through the valley then ascend the well marked poled track heading more or less N, this track is eroded and has old steps formed by DOC protection / anti erosion boards.

In twenty minutes there is a crest, Sunset Ridge, (**02 1529masl**) with excellent views of the mountain and Lake Surprise to the NW. The next section down slope is a bit rough and in wintertime a slippery gully, due to snow and bare soil (**03 1493masl**) can be encountered. This gully should be bypassed by sticking to the poled track. Within 30 – 35 minutes of starting the walk the path bears left down-stream (**04 1459masl**) above the cascading waterfall.

Start point on Mountain Road



In about 1:15 there is a small diversion off to the right that should be taken to the rock with stones piled on top as a cairn – this is in memory of Horace Arthur Hole who was drowned in the area back in 1927. In Jan 2015 the name Horace Hole had been painted on the rock and the engraved plaque had vanished – hopefully the plaque was away being refurbished. Study of the map shows a small (red) loop in the track just before waypoint **07** – this is the diversion.

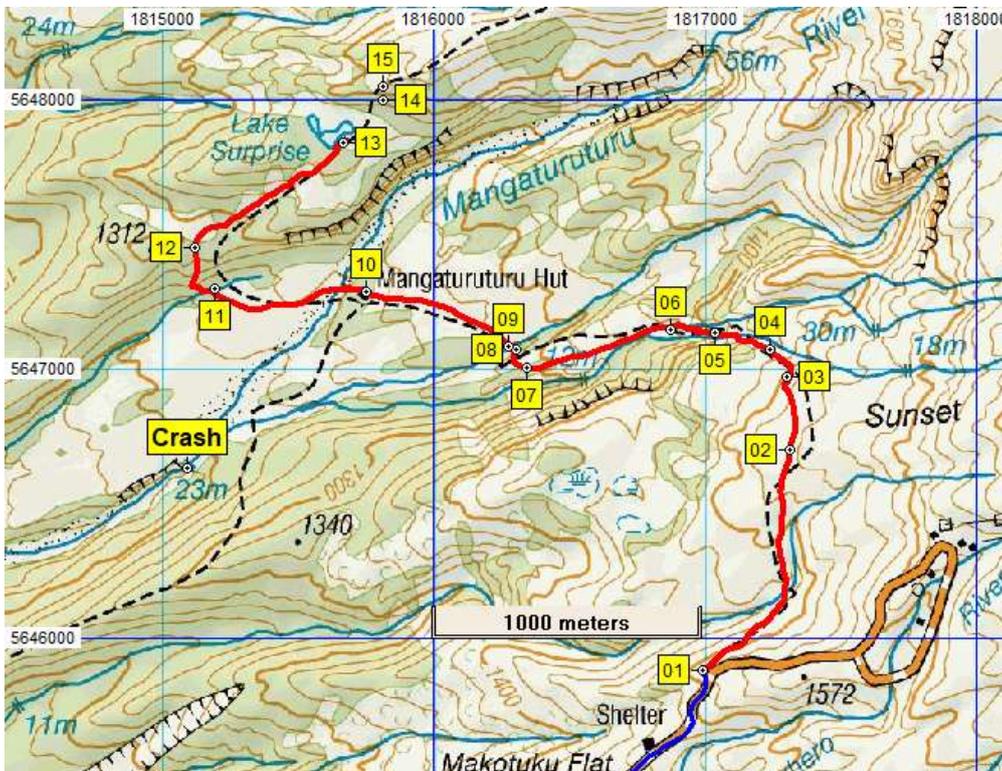
Lake Surprise



The rock ladder down the side of the cascade starts after about 45 minutes (**05 1409masl**) so ensure your boots are dry before beginning the descent as some of the rocks can be slippery – allow about 15 minutes to get down the ladder including crossing the sparkling, silvery looking stream line half way down. At the bottom of the ladder (**06 1340masl**) the path improves and easy walking ensues for a bit giving some respite.

Upper reaches of the cascades rock ladder

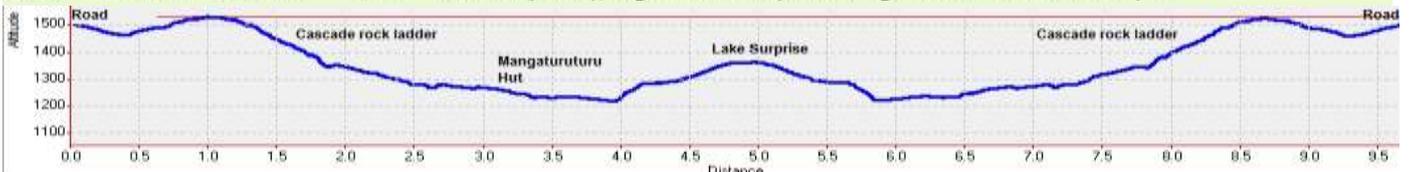




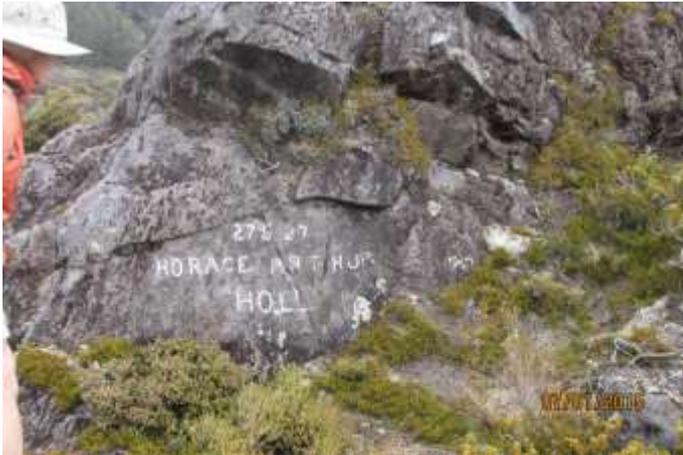
The path bears right (07 1282masl) in 1:35 minutes where there is a sign for Mangaturuturu Hut after descending through a narrow steep sided valley or taking an up-and-over route to avoid this valley which can be snow filled well into spring-time. Pass through some sparse woodland then arrive at a deeply incised river (08 1270masl) with a crossing that can lead to wet feet or an early bath for the unwary. The Hut (10 1248masl) is reached in 1:45 – 2 hours total walking time. This recently refurbished (2015) non-DOC, hut has a wood burner, sleeping bunks for about 10, a huge new deck area and there is a lovely stone bench outside for a lunch picnic stop.

To go on to lake Surprise use the path that passes behind the hut on the N side, down into the valley, over the wide rocky river and on to an excellent boardwalk on the north side. The end of the boardwalk 11 1225masl is reached in 9 – 10 minutes from the hut and then the path starts ascending firstly on old slippery boardwalk, then on a rocky, sometimes loose, slope which leads into a rocky stream line and emerges on to level ground (12 1286masl). There are then sections of good boardwalk in wet areas and a rocky or gravelly path with Lake Surprise being reached in another 10 – 15 minutes (30 minutes from the hut). GPS records the distance as 5km to the Lake from the starting point on the Ohakune Mountain Road. With no stops it is possible to return to the car park from the lake (13 1363masl) within 2 hours as the ascent of the ladder is quicker than the descent.

N...	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
LS 01	1816993	5645879	1506	Round the mountain car park on Ohakune Road
LS 02	1817313	5646702	1529	23min (1km); On minor ridge after walk up poled eroded track
LS 03	1817298	5646969	1493	30min (1.3km); Top of small slippery gully with bare slippery soil
LS 04	1817239	5647073	1459	36min (1.45km); Track turns left (NW) above cascades
LS 05	1817038	5647133	1409	43min (1.67km); Start of the rock ladder down cascades
LS 06	1816871	5647148	1340	56min (1.87km); Morning tea stop at bottom of rock ladder below cascades
LS 07	1816339	5647002	1282	1:28min (2.52km); Bear right at sign for Mangaturuturu Hut after diversion to Horace Hole plaque
LS 08	1816300	5647075	1270	1:30min (2.61km); River crossing of deeply incised valley - tricky/slippery
LS 09	1816277	5647082	1280	1:34min (1.67km); Top of steep, sandy / gravelly bank after river crossing
LS 10	1815748	5647286	1248	1:45min (3.27km); Mangaturuturu Hut, proceed on path on N side behind hut
LS 11	1815192	5647298	1225	2:02min (3.9km); End of good boardwalk onto slippery uphill old boardwalk to scramble up bluff
LS 12	1815115	5647452	1286	2:20min (4.17km); Uphill on good boardwalk then rocky, fairly steep sections
LS 13	1815664	5647841	1363	2:35min (4.9km); Edge of Lake Surprise with good views. Good lunch spot



Horace Hole Memorial



Mangaturuturu Hut



Rock ladder



Lake Surprise



Ribbon of boardwalk



As this tramp is over a section of the Round-the-Mountain track other, heavily-laden trampers are often encountered and sometimes they can be interested in getting a lift back down Mountain Road into Ohakune or in snippets of local information such as the memorial to Horace Hole. If round-the-mountain is on the agenda in winter keep in mind that this is a rough hard section with precious little shelter in bad weather conditions and the rock ladder can be highly dangerous if there is ice around.

Notes:

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