

SMUGGLERS ROUTE

Topo50 Map: BH35 Turangi & BH34 Raurimu

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

How to get to the 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 (**WP1**) at North end of the Tongariro Crossing
- Park here, be aware that your vehicle may not be secure and there are toilets here.

Transport should drop the party here then move on to the Mangatepopo car park for pick up after 6–7 hours by returning to SH46, turning left to meet SH47 then find the Mangatepopo access road just before SH48 which goes to Whakapapa.

Rough Description: A moderate to moderate plus walk of 6-7 hours covering about 15km, with another kilometre or so added for altitude gain and loss. This route was followed after a few attempts to try and possibly locate the route followed by bootleggers getting their wares into the King Country during the days of prohibition. This may or may not have been their route in its entirety since it is suspected that the original may have operated at a lower altitude, perhaps 1200 – 1300metres.

Basically the route follows the Tongariro Alpine Crossing track then branches up to skirt the Ketetahi Hot Springs (which are on Private land with permission required for access) to then work SW round past North Crater and Mt Tongariro. Behind Mt Tongariro whilst heading S the Whanganui River headwaters are crossed. The route then follows Hardman's Ridge to the SW then descends to meet the southern end of the Alpine Crossing track near Mangatepopo Hut before exiting to the Mangatepopo carpark.

Detail: From the Ketetahi car park (**01757masl**) it takes about an hour to reach the bushline (**061048masl**) where there are volcanic activity warning notices, views of the steaming Te Mari crater and, more importantly, a seat to use whilst having morning tea. This is after having ground uphill with a fair few features to note on the way as can be seen marked on the map as waypoints.

The next target is the junction (**071329masl**) where the old DoC Alpine Crossing track goes off right and is marked as leading to Ketetahi Springs and that the springs are on private land hence permission is required for access on this tramp. The constructed DoC track is then abandoned to head parallel to the edge of the Ketetahi Springs and the real fun begins as this is up a relatively steep tussock (**091419masl**) slope to the SSW – falling over can be expected especially if it is windy. Once on the crest of this slope vegetation changes and walking becomes easier – head SW for the obvious large rock (**101493masl**). Most of the hard uphill work is now over and the route more or less follows the 1500metre contour heading SW. There are 7 or 8 gullies of various sizes to cross but all are relatively easy with the largest, which is not actually being marked as a stream line on the map, noted as waypoint **121509masl**.

Early lunch spot WP10



Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu from Hardman's Ridge



Cross the stream at the bottom of the slope on to the Tongariro Alpine Crossing track (**WP191246masl**) and turn to your right to head SW. The sign for the Mangatepopo Hut appears within a few hundred metres, then a track is signed off to the left heading for Whakapapa and the Mangatepopo car park (**WP201121masl**) is straight ahead about 1500metres away.

Happy trampers



Distances and times are taken from the Police Station in Taupo and the route can be deciphered above. The tramp route is the red line.

Target rock WP9



After crossing a minor gully (**WP131540masl**) direction changes from SW to more or less S but still maintains the 1500m altitude as a large gully can be seen – this is the upper course of the Whanganui River. There are choices as to where this gully is crossed (**WP141560masl**) and the mapped route is probably as easy as any though heading upstream a bit also gives a very easy crossing at the 1600m level. After crossing the gully get back up to the 1500m level on the E side of the rocky top on the right to locate the slightly indistinct track (**WP151577masl**) heading SW on Hardman's Ridge. Walking down the ridge is easy going as there are only minor undulations and there is the vague track to follow and 35-40minutes are required to reach a rocky outcrop with small cairns on top (**WP181376masl**) – turn to the SW –SSW and down the steep, quite eroded slope which has a myriad of minor tracks.

The route as described is from N to S but it is felt that it is better done from S to N, mainly in consideration of the tussock slope as descent could well be easier than the ascent and the starting point of Mangatepopo (1121masl) is considerably higher than Ketetahi (757masl).



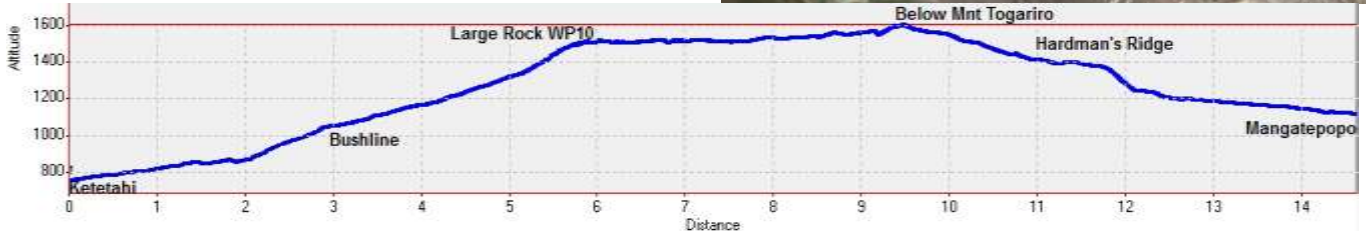
The Tussock slope – harder work up than down



Contour hugging



NB: The above walk is described walking North (Ketetahi) to South (Mangatepopo) and takes 7 hours. Mangatepopo is almost 400m higher in altitude and it has been established that it is about an hour quicker to walk South (Mangatepopo) to North(Ketetahi) – this also makes the tussock slope easier!



N...	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
01	1830436	5671616	757	Ketetahi carpark
02	1829755	5671230	818	13min (0.9km); Bridge over dry stream
03	1829778	5671069	837	16min (1.1km); Bridge over flowing stream
04	1829360	5670626	866	32min (1.95km); Bridge over dry gully
05	1829591	5670394	936	38min (2.28km); Large platform seat at bend in track
06	1829391	5670233	1048	55min (2.86km); Seat at tree line with good views of Te Maari & Lake Taupo
07	1828924	5668431	1329	1:57min (5.09km); Junction to old track with Private Land sign covering the Ketetahi Springs area
08	1828819	5668068	1419	2:17min (5.47km); Wicked ascent up through Tussock grass on ridge right of Ketetahi Springs.
09	1828703	5667872	1493	2:35min (5.73km); Large flat rock at 1500m to target huge rock (WP11) to the SW
10	1828466	5667736	1512	2:48 (6.03km); Large rectangular rock on 1500m contour with views of Taranaki (early lunch)
11	1827595	5667237	1519	3:46min (7.16km); Three gullies from large rock to pass lone, stunted wilding pine tree
12	1827365	5667011	1509	3:55min (7.5km); No stream mapped but biggest gully to date but easy crossing, still walk on contour
13	1826847	5666396	1540	4:32min (8.37km); Minor gully then start to swing South heading for big gully of Whanganui River
14	1826873	5665591	1560	4:49min (9.23km); Cross Whanganui River gully with loose gravel descent and firm footing ascent
15	1826915	5665259	1577	5:20min (9.61km); Ascent from river with rocky top on RHS, meet track heading SW on Hardman's Ridge
16	1826585	5664985	1536	5:26min; (10.04km); Rocky top with a few cairns on improving track heading SW
17	1825990	5664666	1442	5:42min (10.75km); Easy descent on flatish with mini terraces heading WSW
18	1825103	5664522	1376	5:58min (11.7km); Rocky with small cairns, turn to left SW on steep slope with mini tracks
19	1825065	5664211	1246	6:16min (12.2km); Meet Tongariro Alpine Crossing track after steep descent & stream crossing
20	1823088	5664000	1121	6:50min (14.6km); Mangatepopo carpark (GPS showed 16km with 1100m of ascent)

Notes:

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

Total Walk Time: N to S, 6 hours 50 minutes
Total walk length: 16.6km with altitude
Overall altitude gain: 1111metres