

TAMA LAKES and TARANAKI STREAM

Topo50 Map: BH34 Raurimu & BJ34 Mnt Ruapehu

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

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

- Follow the Desert Highway (SH1) and turn off right on to SH46 for Rangipo. Meet SH47 at a T-junction and turn left then turn off SH47 on to SH48 signposted for Whakapapa and the Chateau, or
- In Turangi turn off SH1 on to SH41 on the right and then turn left off SH41 on to SH47 and proceed as above. This route is shown opposite
- Pass the Chateau on the left and park in the car park on the right which has toilets and is quite safe for vehicles compared to some other car parks.

Rough description: A long 16km, circular walk in the moderate to fit category lasting about six and a half hours which starts and ends at the Chateau in Whakapapa. There is an overall altitude gain of about 240 metres up to Lower Tama Lake and the walk to this point is on good footpath with very little obvious ascending. The next part is off-track firstly heading NNW for about 2km to meet the Taranaki Stream which then flows WNW.

The first part of this is relatively easy but once into the valley of the Taranaki Stream there are a few scrambles over rocks and up steep valley sides plus several stream crossings in wet weather or lots of rock hopping when the stream is dry. The latter part of the walk is on the footpath to Mangatepopo from Whakapapa – this path is not as well maintained.

On the map presented the main tramp route is shown in red and the blue sections are variations in the route used when the stream was flowing and when the stream bed could not always be used to walk in with safety.

Detail: Turn left out of the car park opposite the Chateau and turn immediately right and go along the road up the side of the Chateau; near the end ignore the track on your left [WP27], you come back this way, but head for the track that goes straight ahead at the end of the surfaced road and is signed Taranaki Falls [WP2].

Proceed on the very good track crossing an open wooden bridge in about 25 minutes then upwards parallel to the gully which you then cross and go up on to open, flattish moorland [WP4] with a view of Ngauruhoe straight ahead in about 30 minutes.

After 45 minutes descend off the moorland down to the Wairere Stream, over the bridge and uphill again reaching a signpost [WP6] indicating the routes for the lower path to Whakapapa via the Taranaki Falls and to the Tama Lakes – go straight ahead following Tama Lakes track. Look around here as there is now a DoC toilet. A gentle climb on reasonable footpath leads to a ridge or rise [WP7] with a view, as shown below, back towards the Chateau – this is a good point for a refreshment break.

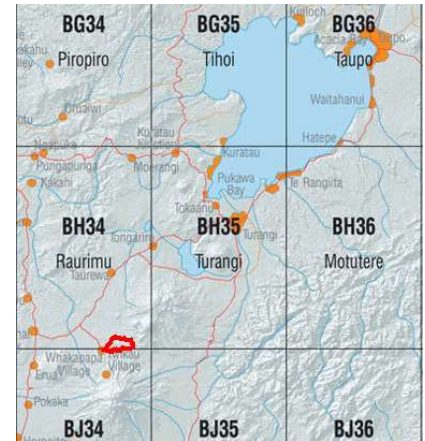
Towards the Chateau & Taranaki



After about 1:45 minutes there is a wet area with a board-walk [WP8] and 10 minutes further on enter and go up a narrow valley to cross the stream at the top – at this point the path gets a little rougher. At a Y-fork there is a signpost [WP11] with the path to Tama going left whilst the right fork goes to Waihohonu Hut. Ten minutes are required from this signpost to reach the next notice board and view over the Lower Tama Lake [WP12].

From here, continue on the path to Upper Tama Lake for a few metres but branch off left [WP13] into the stream-line just before the steep scree slope – if the plan is to go to Upper Tama Lake then follow the poled track up the scree slope. It is also possible to branch left just past the wooden seat opposite the view over Tama Lake. Both turn-offs are shown on the map. Following the stream-line in a NNW direction is easy at this point as the stream is not incised; the bush is low and the walking quite dry. A total walking time of about 2:45 minutes takes you to a bend in the stream when it swings almost due north in a flat stony area [WP14].

The confluence with the Taranaki Stream is arrived at in another 5 minutes when the route goes left into a narrower, well defined valley [WP15]. Continue downstream in this valley till you reach a large, upstanding pointed rock [WP16] where the first of the scrambles of the day starts when the route is forced out of the stream-line and up the bank on the north side. Continue in a westerly direction on the slope above and parallel to the gorge. Lunch can be taken at the rock in the stream or a good sheltered spot with views of the gorge, is reached in about 3:15 walking from the start [WP18].

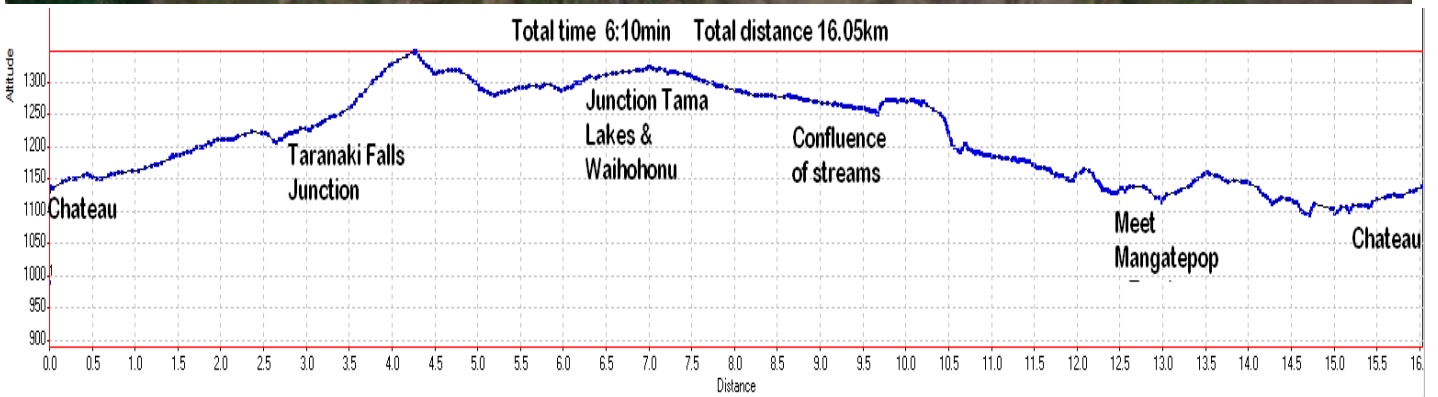


Ngauruhoe



Lower Tama Lake overview





Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1819286	5657828	1129	Car park with toilet opposite Chateau
02	1819593	5657994	1140	2min 950m);End of sealed road to path for Tama Lakes / Taranaki Falls
03	1820697	5657612	1155	25min (1.43km); Open area with wooden bridge
04	1821020	5657683	1182	30min (1.86km); Upstream parallel to gully then cross & up to tussock
05	1821468	5658130	1190	45min (2.65km); Drop off to Taranaki Stream and bridge
06	1821566	5658133	1202	47min (2.77km); Y fork and sign; left for Whakapapa and straight for Tama Lakes
07	1822437	5657833	1350	1:15min (4.26km); Ridge with views, good smoko stop
08	1823319	5658241	1270	1:45min (5.56km); Previously wet area with new "tourist" track some board walk
09	1823639	5658180	1271	1:55min (5.94km); Enter and go up narrow V shaped valley on new track
10	1823790	5658157	1274	1:57min (6.09km); Cross stream, following newer path which is upslope from older mapped track
11	1824011	5658104	1289	2:00hrs (6.31km); Y-fork in wet area with new boardwalk; sign Left for Tama and Right for Waihohonu
12	1824615	5658334	1306	2:10min (6.97km); Above Lower Tama Lake - new track ends here (January 2010)
13	1824781	5658539	1316	2:23min (7.25km); Branch left off Tama track just before scree slope up
14	1824498	5659443	1270	2:45min (8.31km); Continue following stream in flat stony area and swing right
15	1824468	5659790	1267	2:50min (8.66km); Confluence with Taranaki stream, left into narrower valley
16	1823643	5659619	1249	3:05min (9.62km); Big pointed rock, leave valley climbing up steeply to the N on true right bank
17	1823535	5659667	1272	3:07min (9.78km); On top of ridge and parallel to gorge on the left
18	1823086	5659977	1250	3:50min (10.41km); Start down after working round shoulder above end of gorge
19	1822903	5659895	1192	4hrs(10.61km); Alternative crossing of Taranaki Stream after descending via the "second" gully route
20	1822770	5659743	1194	4:07min ; Remnants of old seismological station, follow left bank
21	1822663	5659815	1178	4:10min (10.91km); Cross to right bank of Taranaki, first of several crossings
22	1821718	5660234	1157	5hrs (12.18km); View track and start descent through higher bush
23	1821505	5660347	1129	5:10 (12.46km); Meet Mangetepopo track, go left
24	1821496	5660296	1125	5:12min (12.48km); On bridge over Taranaki Stream on Mangetepopo track
25	1820748	5659622	1154	5:33min (13.52km); View Chateau
26	1820207	5658815	1095	5:55min (14.66km); Bridge over Wairere Stream just before meeting Taranaki Falls track
27	1819490	5657973	1133	6:10min (16.05km); Junction of Mangatepopo track with asphalt
T	1821539	5658091	1206	New DoC toilet Sept 2019

Seat opposite Lower Tama Lake



Once past the obstacle of the large pointed rock work along and round the shoulder of the ridge past the end of the gorge. Now pick a route to descend to and cross the stream flowing N/S below [WP20]. The second gully reached seems to be the best route and it follows a stream-line which has eroded slopes – care is needed as this slope is steep in parts with rather loose material underfoot; there is also thick vegetation near the bottom.

Narrow rocky valley of Taranaki Stream



The large pointed rock obstacle



Make a double crossing of the Taranaki Stream [WP19] and head up to a low pole on the horizon [WP20] – this is part of an old seismological station and is a useful landmark – unless DoC have been over-zealous and tidied the place up. If the pole is not visible then the route is down the stream line heading in a NW direction – this is still the Taranaki. There is now a choice; in dry weather the easiest route – with tricky rock-hopping plus the odd scramble over bigger bits of geology – is to follow the stream bed. When there is water flowing then full use cannot be made of the stream line. For the best part of the next hour continue following the stream line, making several crossings to find the best, easiest, driest route till, when on the right (north) bank the view opens [WP23] up and the track being headed-for can be discerned in the distance running left to right. Just when you think it is all over the vegetation gets rather high and dense on the final descent off the hill-slope but this struggle does not last long and the Mangatepopo track is hit after approximately 5 hours.

However, if the stream bed is followed all the way the first indication of the track is when the bridge over the stream comes into view all of a sudden. Once on the Mangatepopo Track or on the wooden bridge over the Taranaki Stream [WP24] head in a westerly direction for Whakapapa or Easterly if Mangatepopo is the target. Continue heading in a south-westerly direction on this track but be aware that the track is not as well maintained as the Tama Lakes track used earlier and there are some rather large steps and eroded areas to be negotiated – bad news for the short legged walker. About 20 minutes after the bridge [WP24] there is a view of the Chateau [WP25] and a bridge over the Wairere Stream is crossed [WP26] just before the T-junction with the track from the Taranaki Falls in a total walking time of about 6 hours. Just over 20 minutes from here brings you to the edge of Whakapapa Village [WP27] to meet the surfaced road used in the morning and, by going right, another few minutes gets you back to the car park opposite the Chateau [WP1].

View of the descent to and the gorge of the Taranaki Stream with Ruapehu in the background



Notes:

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