

## TUKINO (Whangaehu) ALPINE HUT

Topo50 Maps: BJ34 Mount Ruapehu & BJ35 Waiouru

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

**How to get to START:** Leaving Taupo head south down the lake through Turangi on to the **Desert Highway** passing the turn offs to Waihohonu, Umukarikari etc. Exit the Desert Road on the right hand side at **WP00** as shown below on to the **Tukino Access Road** – taking note of the signs at the start about 2 wheel drive vehicles.

Follow the gravel road and the **2 wheel-drive car park** is reached in 15 minutes and another 20 minutes takes you up the **4 wheel-drive** track to the repeater station with masts. From here the road is steeper and rougher in parts and a locked gate is reached in about another 2 – 3 minutes.

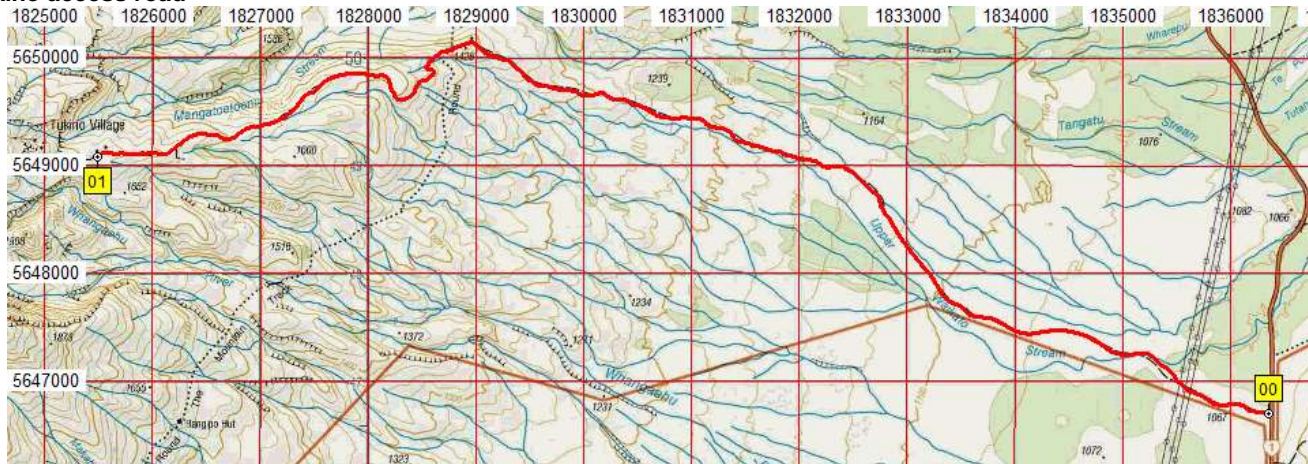
If permission has been granted and a key supplied, the aimed-for car park is at the Christiana Mountain Lodge (**WP11703 masl**) within the Tukino Alpine Village and takes somewhere around 45 minutes driving from the Desert Road (SH1) turn off. No key means a long walk.

**Rough description:** A moderate to fit round-trip walk of about 5 hours including coffee / tea stop and lunch break. There are a few areas where there is some semi-technical or skilled input required up some of the low bluffs and rocky ridges whilst some scree-skating downslope may be needed.

The ascent involves an altitude gain of 490 metres then a loss of 80 metres down to the hut. The route down involves the odd variation from going up and is certainly quicker taking under 2 hours compared to about 2:30minutes uphill.

The final descent into the small valley just before the hut can be a problem as some of the soft “scree” areas can freeze over and behave like the surface of slippery rock or glacier and caution must be used. To avoid this area it is better to go higher up the final ridge and go around the top of this little valley. On a good day with no frost it is possible to scree-skate down this slope in seconds – if the legs are strong enough!

### Tukino access road



There is not much vegetation to be seen on this walk – mostly snow grass and alpine flowers at the appropriate seasons. There are some mosses etc but mostly it is rock, gravel and pumice sand.

### Tukino Alpine Village

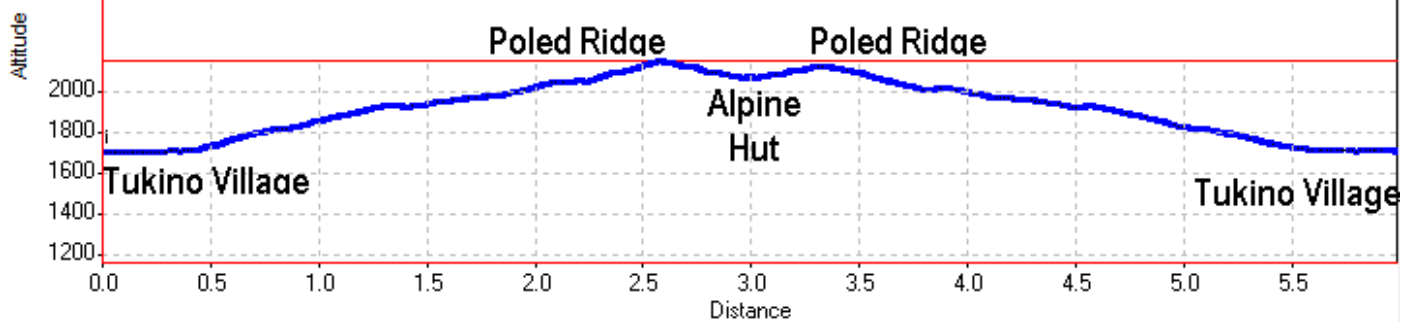


### Whangaehu Alpine Hut 2011





Distance 5.99km Time 5:07min Ascent 493metres



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
00	1836362	5646700	1077	Turn off Desert Highway to Tukino Mountain Road
01	1825487	5649081	1668	Park - Christiana Mountain Lodge
02	1824894	5649167	1776	28min (696m); on rocky ridge, scramble
03	1824818	5649183	1810	35min (807m); morning coffee stop with some shelter and view
04	1824198	5649097	1936	1:19min (1.54km); up the ridge / spur into open, eroded valleys area with high ridge view
05	1824065	5649099	1959	1:20min (1.67km); huge conglomerate boulder
06	1823587	5649086	2046	1:44min (2.19km); start ascending bluff
07	1823330	5648937	2151	2:08min (2.61km); on ridge with pole marker, start descent to hut
08	1823256	5648849	2120	2:14min (2.74km); on ridge beyond frozen difficult area
09	1823278	5648683	2069	2:40min (3.01km); Tukino (Whangaehu) Alpine Hut
10	1824345	5649131	1930	3:50min (4.57km); on return leg, minor peak on spur overlooking car park

**Detail:** Leave the Tukino Alpine Village [**WP1**<sup>1703 masl</sup>] following the continuation of the road to the WSW then on to a grey sandy fan, leading to the start of a rocky ridge (**WP02**<sup>1716masl</sup>) which looks a bit like a Dinosaur's Tail when seen from above later on – this heads W to WNW. Follow the poled route up this ridge and be wary as there a few tricky places – keep your hands free and store your walking poles! In about 25 minutes you are still on the ridge but the slope eases and there is an old, broken wooden marker (**WP03**<sup>1791masl</sup>) pole to be seen whilst heading westwards. After about 1:10minutes cross to the ridge running parallel and on the left (S side) at a point where there is an almost flat shelf (**WP04**<sup>1934masl</sup>) with an old iron marker pole, then head further to the left (S) down into a sandy filled valley. Once in this valley again head upslope to the west on the sandy, gravelly fan.

#### Marker Pole Ridge



A minor crest (**WP05**<sup>1944masl</sup>) is reached on this fan material after about 1:20minutes and offers views of an open area with eroded Lahar valleys and the "high", more or less N-S running, ridge with a marker pole in the middle – this pole is your target. In fact if visibility and vision are both good there are actually two poles to be seen atop this ridge.

Five minutes later a rather large conglomerate boulder (**WP6**<sup>1962 masl</sup>) is reached in a rocky, sandy area with poles and the odd small cairn. Another ascent now starts to get up the next bluff or cliff and in about 1hr 50minutes a small valley (**WP07**<sup>2056masl</sup>) below the "marker pole" ridge is reached – this ascent is actually rather a pleasant scramble up the rocks. From here head upslope and to the right then off left to cross a small valley then ascend to get on to the "marker pole" ridge (**WP08**<sup>2146masl</sup>) in about 2 hours and get magnificent views of the Alpine Hut and Mountain backdrop.

Winds can be very high here as this site is rather exposed and from here it is necessary to descend into the valley ahead then climb up the other side before descending again to reach the hut (**WP09**<sup>2068 masl</sup>) in about 2hours 30minutes.

The descent from "pole marker" can be done in seconds by scree-skating on a traverse across the slope but care should be taken if it is winter time and the ground is frozen – less confident trampers find crossing this section a bit daunting. A slightly longer, but safer, route can be to head upslope to the NW from the poles until it is an easy cross over to the ridge with the hut and the small intervening valley missed out.

The hut is quite basic but it offers very good shelter from the arctic type weather that exists at this altitude, but it must be remembered that this is a working hut and is used in connection with monitoring activity on Mount Ruapehu. The views from the hut are breathtaking.

#### Conglomerate boulder



#### Panorama above the hut



A slightly different route can be used for the return. Whilst having lunch at the hut and facing north the suggested return is to cross over the stream below – go back upslope to the NW for a few hundred metres to cross - then head along to the ENE above the bluffs that can be seen from the hut. Within less than thirty minutes whilst on the south side of the east sloping ridge it should be possible to see a metal pole or breather sticking up out of the ground (**WP10**<sup>2121masl</sup>). From here head SE for about 400metres whilst skirting bluffs on the left (N) side. The terrain looks dauntingly steep but it does ease and there is a way down and soon a very distinctive grey sandy fan is seen then used. Hit this fan just below a rocky intrusion (**WP11**<sup>2051masl</sup>) and descend diagonally to the NE looking at the Dinosaur's Tail. Just keep heading in this direction using sections of fan as they present themselves and within an hour a huge boulder (**WP12**<sup>1974masl</sup>) with a rusty metal pole on top is located at the bottom of a fan section – this is only a few hundred metres from WP6, the conglomerate boulder.

**Above the Hut from the ridge**



**Uphill from the hut towards Ruapehu**



**Uphill away from the hut**



From this point retrace the outward route by following your own footprints and the poles. For the very last part of the descent off the ridge it can be easier from near WP3 to head off steeply downslope to the right (SE) instead of staying on top of the ridge. The route appears to go straight down the bluff but it can be found and recognised when the old poles of a ski-tow can be clearly seen with a fair-sized, grey, sandy fan just before the bottom of the slope. There is a bit of scrambling to get down this slope and, again, keep the hands free and walking poles well out of the way. Once down and under the ski lift towers there is a basic track which develops into an old road and very quickly leads back to the starting point in the ski-village.

**Final few hundred metres to home**



**The rush for home – looking for the van keys**



**We were up there – just below the snow**



**Notes:**

- **GPSMap 60CSx** Garmin
- **WP** = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit
- **masl** = metres above sea level (as recorded by GPS unit and may not agree exactly with map spot heights)