

WHAKAPAPAITI from WHAKAPAPA via SILICA RAPIDS

260 Series Map: Ohakune, 1:50,000 S20

Topo50 Map: BJ34-Mnt Ruapehu

How to get to START: Exit Taupo on SH1 southwards to Turangi then:

- In Turangi turn off SH1 to SH41 on the right then turn left off SH41 to SH47 and
- turn off SH47 to SH48 signposted for Whakapapa and the Chateau

Pass the Chateau on the left and turn almost immediately into the car park with toilets (**WP1** 1133 masl). Your transport will leave you here and later make its way up Bruce Road to collect you at the Scoria Flats car park (**WP17** 1458masl) or other suitable point on the road.

Rough description: A moderate **A** to **B** tramp of 5 to 6 hours using part of the round the mountain track passing Golden Rapids and, if desired, Silica Rapids then the Whakapapa Hut. Trampers wanting less of a walk can:

- turn round at virtually any time and head back to the car park in Whakapapa, or
- go as far as the Silica Rapids (WP6) and exit from there on the path to Bruce Road, and
- move the transport from the Whakapapa car park to the pick up points suggested on Bruce Road.

The walk into Silica Rapids, passing Golden Rapids on the way, is easy and would take about 2 hours as an out and back or circular walk on a well formed track through Montane forest (beech / silver birch for the Europeans). This part passes the junction to another short walk and also the track to be taken later:

- The Whakapapanui Track, and
- The Whakapapa Hut

This out and back variant can be made circular by exiting to the Bruce Road from Silica Rapids – but this does mean some little distance walking on the road with traffic, on a bad day this can be less than pleasant. The track can easily be seen on the map shown below. There is very little altitude gain or loss on this track with the overall increase from start to target being 140 m.

If the longer walk described is to be followed some back-tracking from Silica Rapids has to be done to pick up the signposted Whakapapa Hut. This track offers several challenges as it is less well manicured, there are two or three gullies to cross and these are quite steep plus the bridge at the Whakapapa Hut no longer exists and the river has to be forded.

The first half of the tramp (**WP5** to **WP11**) is within Montane forest plus sections of wetland whilst the second half is generally in the open with sections of:

- wetland (**WP11** – **WP12**)
- river bed with boulders (**WP13** – **WP14**) and a moderate river crossing
- moderate uphill push from the Whakapapa Hut, mostly on the zig-zags from **WP15** – **WP16**, to reach the moraine wall, then
- normal undulating rough walking to reach the scoria flats on Bruce Road (**WP16**–**WP17**)

If the full walk is done GPS data show that the distance is 15.3km, but by adding in the height gained etc the full distance would be equivalent to about 17km.

Detail: Leave the car park (**WP1** 1133 masl) and walk up the Bruce Road (SSE) for less than 5 minutes and turn right (**WP2**) into the small access area with numerous sign posts for Golden Rapids etc. Go to the very back of this area and the track goes off in the far right hand corner. In 10 minutes you will come to a T-junction (**WP3** 1133masl) where you go straight ahead – going right takes you on the Whakapapanui Walk. Another 5 minutes brings you to the Golden Rapids (**WP4** 1162masl). There are descriptive boards explaining all about the rapids. Continue on the good track and in another 5 or 6 minutes you can have a rest on a seat with views of the mountains then you go down hill for a spell and back into the forest. In a few minutes more you reach a Y-junction (**WP5** 1170masl); the right branch goes to the Whakapapa Hut but by going left a little extra walking will take you to the Silica Rapids.

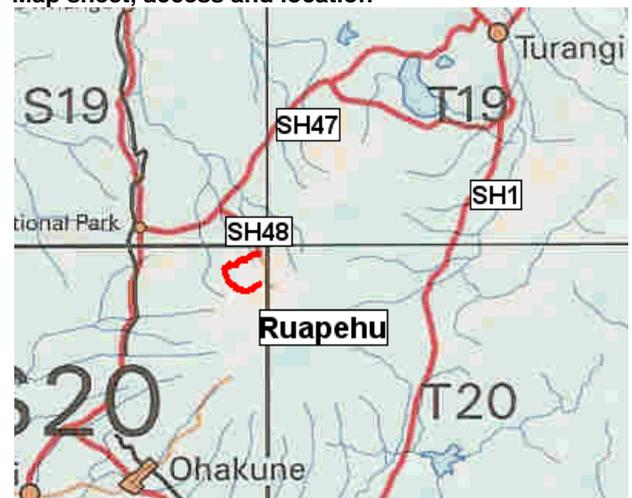
In another 12 minutes you are in line with the Punaruku Falls but these are not too visible through the dense vegetation.

Silica Rapids makes a good point for a refreshment break and to make plans for meeting up again if some people are to exit directly to the Bruce Road from here. Those going on to Whakapapa Hut must back track to the path junction noted earlier (**WP5**) and go left on to the track for Whakapapa Hut. From here on the path is less good and care must be taken on the rough and steeply sloping parts.

NZ Grid GPS: Geodetic Datum 1949

NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS84

Map sheet, access and location



The drive from Taupo takes about 1 hour 15 minutes. The location of the tramp can be seen as the red line in the top right corner of sheet S20 above

Golden rapids



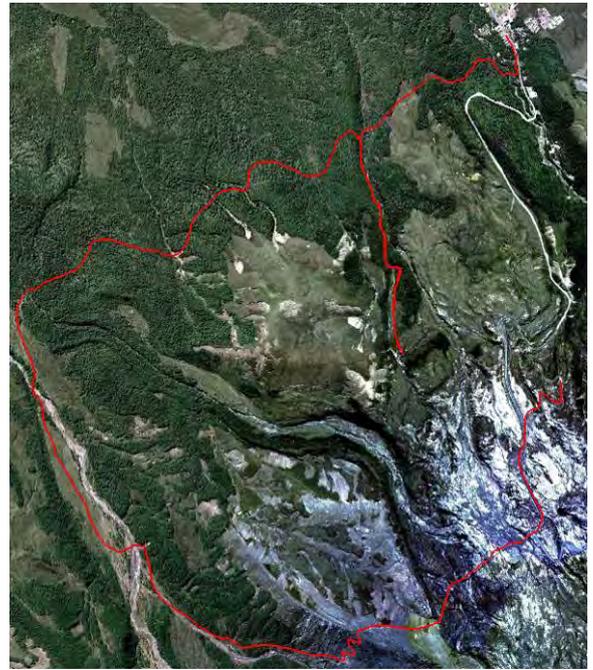
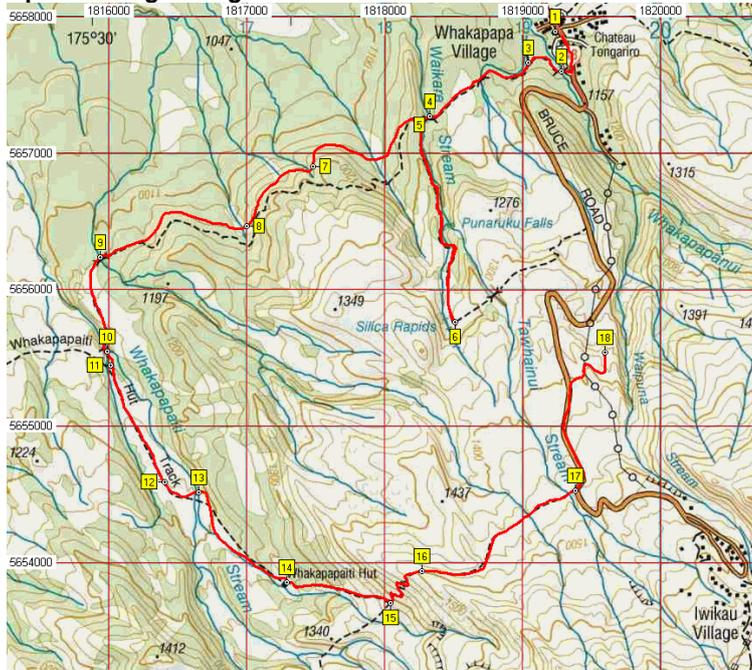
Silica rapids



Punaruku waterfall



Map and Google Image with GPS data



Waypoints – NZ Grid

Name	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description	NZTM Easting	Northing
1	2729301	6219552	1133	Car park with toilets in Whakapapa Village opposite Chateau	1819225	5657623
2	2729346	6219261	1141	Mid bridge over Waipuna Stream at edge of Whakapapa	1819270	5657331
3	2729104	6219324	1133	Junction to path to Whakapapanui at 10 min walk	1819028	5657394
4	2728391	6218930	1162	Bridge at Golden Rapids at 23 minutes	1818315	5656999
6	2728576	6217421	1281	Platform & notices at Silica Rapids in 50 minutes	1818501	5655489
5	2728315	6218866	1170	Y-Junction in path to Rapids and Whakapapa in 1:40 minutes	1818239	5656935
7	2727544	6218561	1208	Descend into / through Tirohanga Pai at 2:05 minutes	1817468	5656629
8	2727067	6218129	1171	AT top edge of Slippery Gully at 2:25 minutes	1816991	5656197
9	2726004	6217899	1126	Middle of bridge at 2:50 minutes then onto board walk	1815927	5655966
10	2726055	6217208	1125	Middle of bridge over the Whakapapa Stream in 3:05 minutes	1815979	5655275
11	2726080	6217106	1148	Junction to Mangahui Campground path in 3:15 minutes (lunch)	1816005	5655173
12	2726469	6216251	1195	SE end of long boggy area which will be boardwalk soon in 4 hours including lunch	1816394	5654318
13	2726717	6216175	1197	Mid river on stepping stones as no bridge in 4:10 minutes	1816642	5654242
14	2727354	6215516	1257	Whakapapa Hut (Noted as 1250m) after 4:30 minutes	1817280	5653584
15	2728105	6215365	1388	Foot of the zig zags at junction with Mangaturuturu track in 5 hours	1818032	5653433
16	2728335	6215600	1504	On the crest of the moraine wall after 15 minutes up zig zags	1818261	5653668
17	2729442	6216185	1458	Scoria Flats car park on Bruce Road after 5:45 minutes tramp + lunch	1819369	5654254
18	2729659	6217200	1400	Small carpark on E side of Bruce Road - pick up by van after 30 min walk down road	1819584	5655270

On this section of path several bands round the trees can be seen – these were for possum control but this form of protection is no longer used as it is not too effective. Another feature is the tree as seen below, this is a natural phenomenon and there are living examples of this species (Kaikawaka) on this track. In a few minutes more the valley opens up, you cross the stream you are following and there is a section of boardwalk. In less than one hour walking you reach a Y-fork which is signed Bruce Road (if you want to exit that way) and the Silica Rapids (WP6 1281mas) which are only minutes straight ahead.

Twisted tree - Kaikawaka



The terrain is rolling from **WP5** onwards as the forested track passes through a series of drainage lines, some of which are named. There is some boardwalk then the descent into Tirohanga Pai (**WP7 1208mas**) starts about 25 minutes from the path junction (WP5) then another 20 minutes brings you to Slippery Gully (**WP8 1171mas**). Both of these used to need care as they were steep, rough and slippery in places but by mid-2011 the former had boardwalk and steps installed. Twenty five minutes on from Slippery Gully there is a bridge (**WP9 1126mas**) over a large stream.

Low point in Slippery Gully



The descent down to the Whakapapa Valley then continues on some board walk, a pretty rough section of path then a long section of boardwalk. Most of the forest is beech with some NZ Cedar. The bridge (**WP10 1125mas**) over the Whakapapa Stream is reached in a total walk time of just over 3 hours and suitable lunch spots can be found near here or slightly further on.

Ten minutes on from the bridge there is a junction to the Mangahui Valley Track (**WP11 1148masl**) then there is a long well poled, flat, section through tussock bog but this area should have boardwalk soon as timber has already been dumped in readiness for DOC work. There is a small rocky rise (**WP12 1195masl**) at the end of the boggy area then the track swings eastwards to the river.

There is no bridge (**WP13 1197masl**) over the river but there are ample rocks and stones to keep you above water level.

Be careful if wet weather occurs; if rain is likely it could be worthwhile going about 200m further upstream before crossing as you then cross two tributaries rather than one slightly larger stream. Study of the map will indicate where to try.

Once over the river (about 4 hours) there is a flight of steps up out of the valley and you are back on way marked track; but not for long. Erosion of the river bank has destroyed the track and poles now follow the river bed to just below the Whakapapaiti Hut – the going is rough due to gravel, stones and boulders.

River crossing



Steps out of valley



The Whakapapaiti Hut (**WP14 1257masl**) is reached in 4:30 minutes; this is quite a smart hut with a wood burner for heating, piped water supply and bunk space for 20 / 25.

Whakapapaiti Hut



From the hut most of the rest of the tramp is uphill with the first few hundred metres or so in a trench or ditch through beech woodlands; there is a view of a waterfall on the right. The real climb starts at the junction with the Mangaturuturu track at the foot of the zig-zags (**WP15 1388masl**).

Heroes and mountain goats usually short cut up this slope but mere mortals will spend only 15 minutes getting to the top following the poled track to arrive at the crest on the moraine wall (**WP16 1504masl**) the highest point of the day.

From here it is about another 30 minutes on a fairly rough, undulating to rolling track to the car park (**WP17 1458masl**) on the edge of the Bruce Road in an overall time of 5 hours 45 minutes including refreshment stops.

If planning has been good then the pick-up vehicle should meet you here but otherwise it does not take too long to walk back down Bruce Road – on the day in question it took less than 30 minutes to reach the bends in the road (**WP18 1400masl**).

Junction below zig-zags



Notes:

- **GPS** Garmin Summit
- **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)