

ZEKE'S HUT and HIHITAKI FOREST SANCTUARY

260 Series Map: U21 Taihape

Topo50 Map: BK35 Taihape

How to get to START: Exit Taupo on SH1 down the lake to Turangi (45min), Desert Road to Waiouru (1:30min) then 10km on towards Taihape. Look for sign to Hihitaki Forest Sanctuary on the left when the railway line is very close to the road and the Hihitahi Bridge is crossed.

- There is just enough space to park at the edge of the highway
- There is a locked gate across the start of the track and though previously the farmer would give access for parking he now declines to do this
- Just before the Hihitahi bridge there is a gravel road (rail service access) going off and there is a place a few hundred metres down here where it is possible to park off-road.

Rough description: A moderate out-and-back tramp of about 6 hours covering 6.5km each way with about 750metres ascent and descent each way – a lot of hard work is required. The Hihitaki Forest Sanctuary really works and the birdlife is amazing with endless birdsong and many species seen or heard including: Wood pigeon, Blackbird, Thrush, Chaffinch, Tui, Paradise Goose, Bell Bird, Waxeye and Robin. Much of the walk is in good forest with many Cedars being seen along with the usual native species such as Totara. The target – Zeke's Hut – is a very modern 4 bunk hut with roof water supply and wood-burner but, for some reason, no proper verandah.

Detail: From the road (**WP1** 699masl) follow the red-topped marker poles which can be seen on crossing the stile at the top of the first paddock, the first few hundred metres heads ENE parallel to the fence and tree line then swings slightly to the left (NE) following the stream line. Within 10 minutes cross the Hautapu River on a very "bouncy" swing bridge (**WP2** 701masl) – if you dislike swing bridges then this is a beauty! On crossing the bridge turn sharp left and look for the new track notices (orange triangles) on the fence a hundred metres away – cross the small stream and follow this fence line remaining just upslope of the bog. The old route, straight ahead on crossing the bridge, will give wet feet as it is very boggy with tussock – it is possible to tussock-hop through when things are frozen but be careful and watch out for the point where the stream line actually vanishes underground for a few metres. On the map the route via the bog is marked in blue.

The ascent starts after 20 minutes (**WP3** 720masl). From the edge of the bog the red-top posts lead up through the paddock then over a fence (**WP4** 753masl) into low bush on a steep, muddy track with points where falling off the track is possible. Beech then mixed native forest is entered and birds make themselves noticeable by endless, variable calls and bird-song. A descent leads down to cross a small, deeply incised stream line on an earth bridge (**WP5** 765masl) at around 35 minutes then there is a real upwards grunt.

The top part of this ascent is a bit tricky as it is slippery and rocky with not-quite perfect handholds and at the top bear off to the right on the track which is now well marked with orange DoC markers. There is a slight respite on a minor crest (**WP6** 919masl) then a high point is reached (**WP7** 957masl) followed by easy walking on good track along the ridge heading NE until, in 2:15mins, the Hihitaki Trig (**WP9** 1107masl) is reached – note that the tower has collapsed or been demolished but there are plenty artifacts to help identify the place.

Follow the fence tree line



Ruapehu through cloud



Zeke's Hut



The descent starts soon after the trig and some bits are steep though there are plenty of level sections as well. One particularly steep part (**WP10** 1081masl) leads into an open area with views – the open grassy area might well be old landslip area – and there are many dead and dying trees to be seen. Many of these trees are cedar and theories abound as to why so many are dead.

NZ Grid GPS: Geodetic Datum 1949

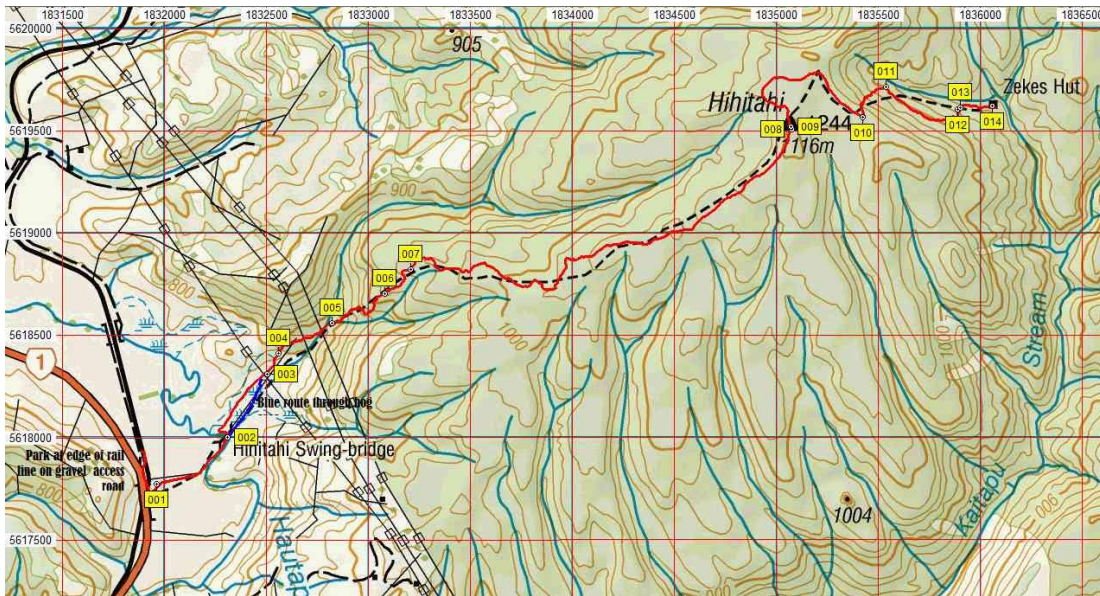
NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS84

Access from Taupo



The road route can be seen as the black line above¹ whilst the tramp location is the red line.

Map and Google Image with GPS data



Study of the slopes visible across the valley to the north show several tree free grassy slopes and suggest there may well have been several landslips in the area stripping out the trees – these are not fire-breaks and no evidence of bush fires could be seen.

At the lower part of the grassy descent there is an indistinct T-junction (WP11 990masl) where the marked track heads SE more or less on the contour. There are a few more steepish parts to descend and a sharp lookout will spot a meat-safe” hanging in the trees off to the right (WP12 950masl) at just short of three hours walking.

Minutes after this there is a flat platform which must have been the site (WP13 942masl) of the old Zeke’s Hut – but where the water supply would have been was not obvious. A few hundred metres further on the new Zeke’s Hut is found and, as stated earlier, this is a very new hut but it is mystifying as to why there is no proper covered deck (verandah) where wet trampers could dump wet gear then hang it up to dry.

Waypoints – NZ Grid

N...	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)	Description
001	2741998	6179441	699	Park on East side of SH1 10km south of Waiouru at start of access for Hihitahi Forest Sanctuary
002	2742344	6179672	701	10min; Middle of "bouncy" swing bridge then through bog following red poles on fence line
003	2742542	6179981	720	20min; End of the bog and start uphill section
004	2742594	6180080	753	25min; Cross fence from paddock into bush after fair grunt uphill
005	2742860	6180230	765	35min; Earth bridge over stream after steep descent then big grunt upwards
006	2743116	6180374	919	1hour; Gently sloping crest section after steep ascent then up again
007	2743242	6180492	957	1:05min; High point in area with many birds and bird-song
008	2745112	6181176	1107	2:14min; Level easy walking on emerging from forest to bush then open grassy area with views
009	2745106	6181190	1107	2:15min; Hihitahi Trig - no tower left standing
010	2745458	6181232	1081	2:40min; Steeply downwards to NE after level ridge walking
011	2745573	6181383	990	2:45min; Minor T-junction, go right on contour heading SE
012	2745922	6181272	950	2:55min; Meat safe hanging in trees off right and above old hut site on the steep path downwards
013	2745935	6181282	942	3 hours; Shelf on steep downwards section and site of previous (old) hut
014	2746095	6181290	937	3:03min; Zeke's Hut

NZTM

Easting	Northing
1831951	5617502
1832298	5617733
1832495	5618042
1832547	5618141
1832813	5618291
1833070	5618436
1833195	5618554
1835065	5619240
1835060	5619253
1835412	5619296
1835527	5619447
1835876	5619336
1835889	5619346
1836049	5619354



From : 28-May-08 08:42:05
 To : 28-May-08 11:41:32
 Time taken : 2:59:26
 Total Distance : 6.537 Km
 Minimum Speed : -0.008 KPH
 Maximum Speed : 6.189 KPH
 Average Speed : 2.186 KPH
 Minimum Altitude : 350 Meters
 Maximum Altitude : 1109 Meters

Notes:	• GPS = Garmin GPSMap 60CSx	Inwards (+ smoko)	3 hours 3 minutes
	• WP = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit	Outwards	2 hours 30 minutes
	• masl = metres above sea level	Total Time	5:30 - 6 hours