

Essential gear

- Waterproof raincoat and overtrousers
- Sturdy tramping boots (not runners, gumboots or sandals)
- Warm hat and gloves
- Warm woollen, fleece or polyprop clothing
- First aid kit
- Tongariro National Park Map 273-04 and compass
- Food and drink
- Sunglasses and sunscreen

During winter you should also carry:

- Ice axe and crampons - *and know how to use them*
- Snow gaiters

You should also consider:

- Avalanche probe/snow shovel and transceiver
- Cellphone for emergencies



Volcanic hazards

Mounts Ngauruhoe and Tongariro are active volcanoes. Trampers intending to trek the Tongariro Northern Circuit should check the current Volcanic Alert Level of these volcanoes at a local Department of Conservation office or www.geonet.org.nz before starting out.

Look out for areas of volcanic activity. In particular be aware of:

- Noxious gases escaping from vents and accumulating in the bottom of craters
- If there are any signs of volcanic activity (earthquakes, rumbling, ash clouds or flying rocks) move off the mountains quickly.
- Do not remain in valleys around the volcanoes during eruptions. Move away from the eruption vents in the Summit Hazard Zones and stay on ridges.
- Stay in safe areas until advised otherwise by authorities.

Volcanic hazard maps are available from the Whakapapa Visitor Centre and on the DOC website.

Further information

Whakapapa Visitor Centre

Private Bag, Mount Ruapehu 3951

Phone: (07) 892 3729

Fax: (07) 892 3814

Email: whakapapavc@doc.govt.nz

Visit the Department of Conservation website:

www.doc.govt.nz

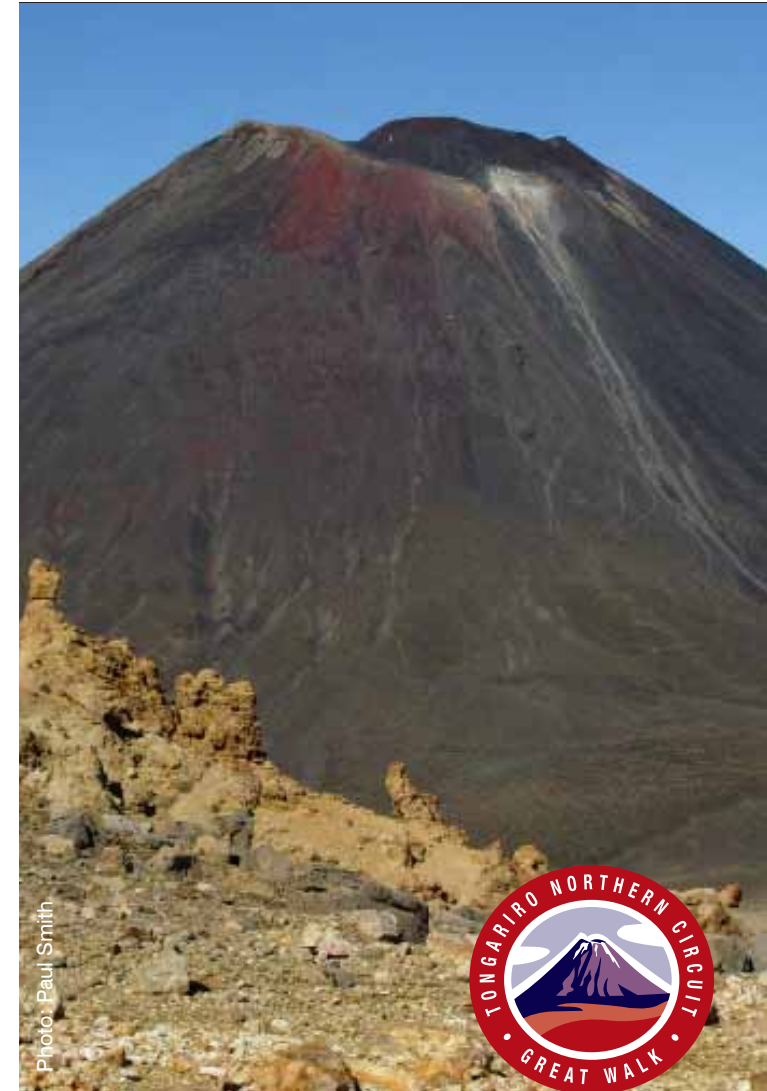
newzealand.govt.nz

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Tongariro Northern Circuit

TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Introduction

Winding its way over the flanks of Mt Tongariro and around Mt Ngauruhoe is the Tongariro Northern Circuit, one of the “Great Walks” of New Zealand. This track passes through unique and stunning landforms which include volcanic craters and glacial valleys.

A range of trips can be planned around the Tongariro Northern Circuit. Day trips, overnight trips or a three to four day tramp around the complete circuit.

The safest and most popular time of year to tramp the Tongariro Northern Circuit is during the summer months (December to March) when the tracks are normally clear of snow and the weather is less severe.

In winter, snow and ice make this a full alpine trip requiring ice axes and crampons. During and after heavy snow falls avalanches are possible.

With adequate clothing, equipment and experience, people can visit and enjoy the area at any time of year. Please check the weather forecast, track conditions and avalanche hazard before departure.

Tongariro National Park

Tongariro National Park is New Zealand’s oldest national park and a dual World Heritage Area. Ngati Tuwharetoa Paramount Chief, Te Heuheu Tukino IV (Horonuku), gifted the peaks of Ruapehu, Tongariro and Ngauruhoe to the people of New Zealand in 1887. The gift formed the nucleus of the Tongariro National Park.

The park’s dual World Heritage status recognises its important Maori cultural associations as well as its outstanding volcanic features. The mountains of Tongariro are recognised as being central to the lives of Ngati Tuwharetoa, the iwi (people) who have historically occupied this area. The mountains are their matua (parent of the land) and the focus of their mana (pride). The spiritual and cultural values are part of the landscape.

The volcanoes and their ecology represent a unique natural community and are considered to be a natural site of universal value. Tongariro is one of only a few sites world wide to have World Heritage status for both natural and cultural values.

Huts and campsites

There are four huts on the circuit; Mangatepopo, Ketetahi, Oturere and Waihohonu. The huts have gas heating year round, and are equipped with gas cookers during the Great Walks season only. There is tank water and toilets at each of the huts.

Campsites have been established near each of the huts on the circuit. Facilities at the huts can be used when camping. Camping is prohibited within 500 metres of the tracks.

Hut and camping fees go towards servicing and maintenance to ensure these facilities remain available. During the busy season there are hut wardens in the huts to provide park and weather information.

Great Walks season

The Great Walks season operates from the Saturday of Labour weekend (October) to the Monday of Queen’s Birthday weekend (June) inclusive.

Dated Great Walks passes for huts and campsites are required during the Great Walks season and should be purchased before commencing the trip. Hut passes are sold at DOC and I-site information centres at Whakapapa Turangi, Taupo and Ohakune. They may also be purchased from some accommodation providers. There is a surcharge for passes purchased from hut wardens. Annual hut passes are not accepted at huts on the Tongariro Northern Circuit during the Great Walks season.

In the off-peak season, a back country hut pass or annual hut pass is required for each of the huts. For information on current prices please see the DOC website www.doc.govt.nz



Access

The Tongariro Northern Circuit can be accessed from the following road ends:

From Whakapapa Village - 1157m above sea level

There are carparks in the village. It is approximately a three hour walk to Mangatepopo Hut (up to five hours in bad weather) or five to six hours to Waihohonu Hut.

Mangatepopo Road - 1120m above sea level

From the carpark at Mangatepopo Road end it is approximately a 30 minute walk to Mangatepopo Hut

Ketetahi Road - 760m above sea level

From Ketetahi Road end it is approximately a two to three hour walk to Ketetahi Hut.

Desert Road (State Highway 1) - 1000m above sea

There is a carpark just off the Desert Road. It is approximately one to one and a half hours to Waihohonu Hut.

Round the Mountain Track

The Tongariro Northern Circuit connects with the Round the Mountain Track at two points - Whakapapa Village and Waihohonu.

Restrictions

- All native animals, plants and other natural features (including rocks and stones) are protected - do not take them out of the park
- Do not bring any animals into the park, including dogs
- Observe fire regulations
- Carry out all rubbish
- No mountain biking

Transport

Several seasonal transport operators provide transport to some of the road ends in the park. Contact local visitor centres for up to date information and bookings.

Left: Ketetahi Hut. Photo: DOC

Track information

Whakapapa to Mangatepopo Hut - 1250m 3 hours (up to 5 hours in bad weather)



Begins 100 metres below the Whakapapa Visitor Centre Start out along the lower Taranaki Falls track. About 20 minutes from the village the Mangatepopo track branches off the Taranaki Falls track.

The track is heavily eroded in places and crosses many stream beds, undulating across the volcanic terrain. The track passes Pukekaikiore, one of the oldest vents in the Tongariro complex and Pukeonake, a low scoria cone. Both Pukeonake and Pukekaikiore witnessed the last ice age when glaciers from Tongariro carved down through the Mangatepopo Valley. The giant cone of Ngauruhoe and the flatter form of Tongariro can be seen ahead. Ngauruhoe is a younger 'parasitic' cone of Tongariro.

For the last hour the track skirts around Pukekaikiore until it reaches the Mangatepopo Valley. The Mangatepopo Hut is 5 minutes off the main Mangatepopo to Ketetahi Hut track.

Tongariro Alpine Crossing

The track from Mangatepopo to Ketetahi is known as the Tongariro Alpine Crossing and is one of the best one-day treks in the country. The trip is a feature of the Tongariro Northern Circuit and is described in the following sections. The highest point on the track is Red Crater, 1886 metres above sea level. The track crosses high and exposed terrain. It is essential to carry adequate clothing and equipment even on a day trip. See the essential gear list.

Mangatepopo Hut to Emerald Lakes 3 ½ to 4 hours

The track follows Mangatepopo Stream up the valley, climbing over a number of lava flows from Ngauruhoe. The youngest, very black lava flows, were erupted from Ngauruhoe in 1949 and 1954. A five minute detour at the head of the valley leads to Soda Springs, cold springs which emerge beneath an old lava flow. In spring and summer moisture loving plants such as white foxgloves and yellow buttercups thrive in the area.

A new section of track was completed in 2008 to allow regeneration of the 'Devil's Staircase' area. This deviation climbs 340 metres to reach the South Crater, passing through pyroclastic and lava flows. Trampers

are rewarded with magnificent views of the surrounding landscape. From the saddle the track crosses South Crater, not a true crater but a drainage basin between the surrounding volcanic landforms.

The climb up to Red Crater offers splendid views of Oturere Valley and the Kaimanawa Ranges to the east. At the top of Red Crater a poled route to the left leads to the summit of Tongariro. The main track continues on past the rim of Red Crater. The spectacular formation on the far side of the crater is a dike, an old magma feeding pipe to the vent of the volcano.

A scoria covered ridge leads steeply down to the Emerald Lakes. Care should be taken on the loose rocks of this slope. The three emerald coloured lakes fill old explosion pits. Their brilliant colouring is caused by minerals washed down from the thermal area of Red Crater. Just beyond Emerald Lakes the track branches right to Oturere Hut or continues straight ahead to Ketetahi Hut.

Emerald Lakes to Ketetahi Hut - 1460m 1 hour

Leaving Emerald Lakes the track crosses Central Crater, another drainage basin like South Crater. A short climb leads up to the ridge beside Blue Lake. Blue Lake has formed where cold fresh water fills an old vent. The track then sidles around North Crater, a vent that once contained a lava lake which cooled to infill the crater. The track zig-zags down to Ketetahi Hut through vast areas of red tussock. Please stay on the track - taking shortcuts causes accelerated erosion. Enjoy the views of Lakes Rotoaira (foreground) and Taupo.

To complete the Tongariro Alpine Crossing - The track continues past Ketetahi Hut down through tussockland and podocarp forest to the Ketetahi carpark.

Ketetahi Springs: The Ketetahi Springs are on private land. The Ketetahi Trust, representing the land owners, has given permission for trampers to cross part of their land. This does not include access to Ketetahi Springs. **Please keep to the marked track.**

Emerald Lakes to Oturere Hut - 1360m 1 ½ hours

From Emerald Lakes the track descends steeply into the Oturere Valley with views of the valley, the Kaimanawa Ranges and the Rangipo Desert. The track weaves through a variety of unusual jagged lava forms from early

eruptions from Red Crater which filled Oturere Valley. The Oturere Hut is nestled on the eastern edge of these flows and is a magical place to visit.

Oturere Hut to Waihohonu Hut - 1150m 3 hours

After leaving the Oturere Hut the track undulates over a number of stream valleys and gravel fields. Plant life here has been constantly repressed by volcanic eruptions, altitude and climate. Loose gravel means that recolonisation by plants is a slow process on the open, bare countryside. The track sidles around the foothills of Ngauruhoe and crosses a branch of the Waihohonu Stream. Continue through a valley of beech and climb towards the ridge top. The hut is in the next valley.



Trampers cross Central Crater after descending from Red Crater
Photo: Paul Smith

Waihohonu Hut to Whakapapa Village 5 ½ hours

From the old hut the track follows the Waihohonu Stream gradually climbing to Tama Saddle. Tama Saddle is exposed and can be windy and cold in bad weather. On reaching the saddle a track branches to Tama Lakes, two infilled explosion craters. The lower lake is a 10 minute side trip from the junction while the upper lake is up a steep ridge, a one and a half hour side trip.

Whakapapa Village is approximately two hours from the Tama Lakes junction. After the first hour the track meets the Taranaki Falls loop walk. To view the falls, follow the lower track down a flight of stairs to a pool at the base of the falls. The track then continues beside the Waiere Stream through mountain beech forest.

Alternatively the upper track can be taken through tussock and shrubland. Both tracks take about one hour to return to the village.

Side trips

Historic Waihohonu Hut

30 minutes return from new Waihohonu Hut

To visit the hut head towards Whakapapa Village, the hut is sign posted a short distance along the track. Built in 1903/04 by the government, this hut used to be a stopover for stage coaches. No longer used for accommodation this hut is preserved as an historical building.

Ohinepango Springs

1 hour return from Waihohonu Hut

Follow the track to Rangipo Hut for about 20-25 minutes. Once across the Ohinepango Stream a sign post indicates the location of the springs. Crystal clear water bubbles up from beneath an old lava flow and discharges at an enormous rate into the Ohinepango Stream.

Ngauruhoe Summit (2287m)

2 ½ to 3 hours return from South Crater

A poled route leads off to the right of South Crater to the start of a rock ridge at the base of Mt Ngauruhoe. **From here the route is not marked.** Follow the rock ridge directly uphill toward the summit. Beware of falling rocks dislodged by other climbers above. Beyond the ridge, cross over a band of red rock to reach the outer crater gully. From here you can climb to the highest point on the outer crater gully (to the left) or to the top of the inner crater rim (to the right). Do not enter the inner crater. Descend via the red rock, then very carefully on loose scree to either side of the rock ridge.

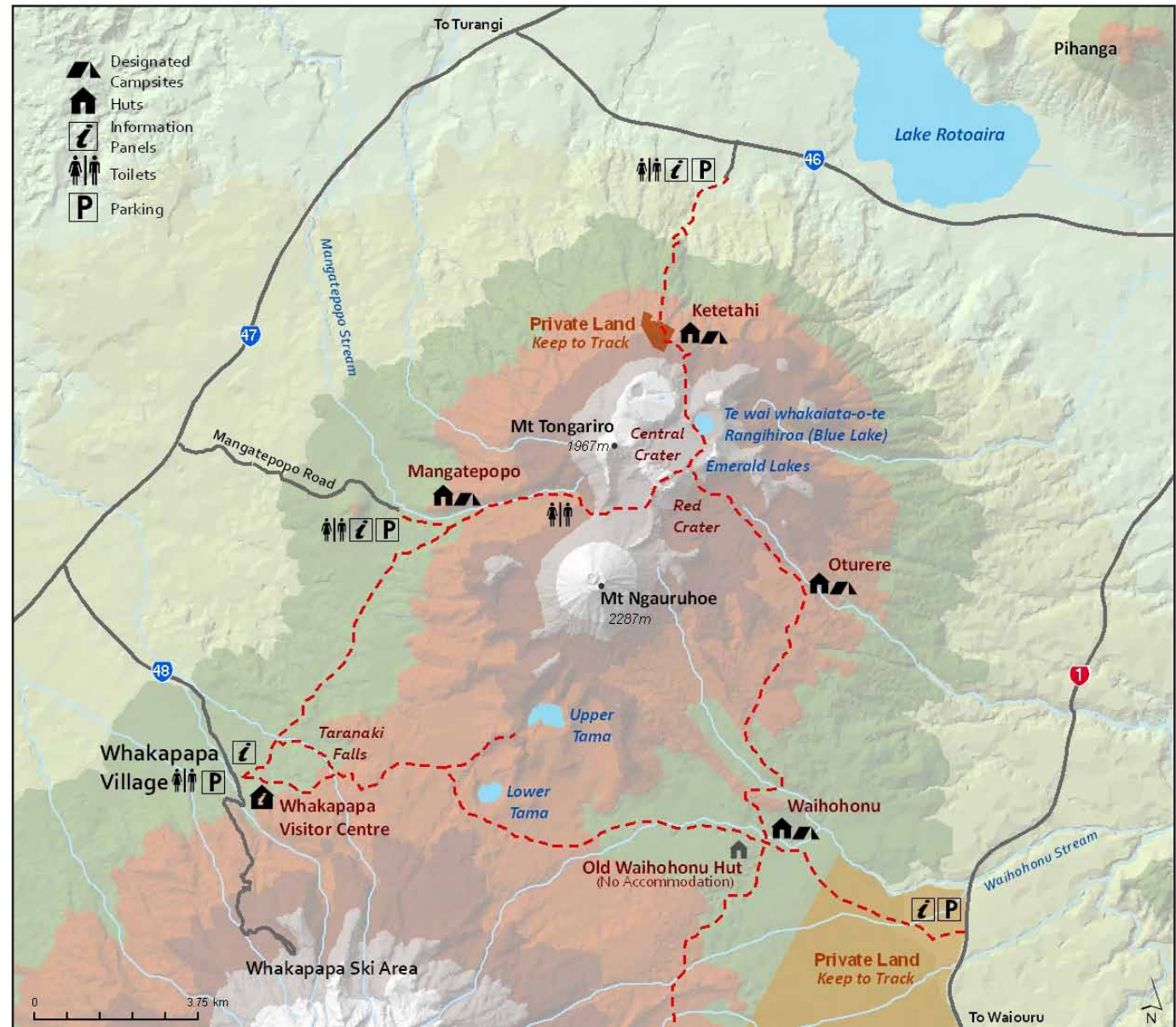
Caution: The climb of Mt Ngauruhoe should not be undertaken in winter without mountaineering experience and climbing equipment. Icy slopes can make this climb very dangerous.

Tongariro Summit (1967m)

1 ½ to 2 hours return from main track



From Red Crater a poled route leads to the summit of Mount Tongariro. The route offers some wonderful views of the area.



Protect plants and animals, Take your rubbish with you, Use toilets provided, Keep waterways clean, Camp carefully, Keep to the track, Consider others, Respect our cultural heritage, **Toitu te whenua (leave the land undisturbed)**

