

WHAKAPAPA

Whakapapa Village lies within Tongariro National Park, on the lower north-west slopes of Mount Ruapehu. The village has accommodation and other visitor services.

Walks - less than 3 hours

These walks are accessible on foot from Whakapapa Village or require a short drive to the starting point.

1. Whakapapa Nature Walk

15 minute loop track. Begins 250 m above Whakapapa Visitor Centre on SH 48.



This sealed loop track gives a glimpse of the unique flora of Tongariro National Park. A series of on-site information panels explain the various vegetation zones in the park.

2. Mounds Walk

20 minutes return, via same track. Begins 5 km below Whakapapa Visitor Centre on SH 48.



Debris avalanches during Ruapehu's periods of volcanic activity are believed to have formed these mounds thousands of years ago. Follow this interpretive walk and learn more about the mounds. The top of the track offers good views of the volcanoes and surrounding area.

3. Tawhai Falls Walk

20 minutes, return via same track. Begins 4 km below Whakapapa Visitor Centre on SH 48.



The falls, which tumble over the edge of an ancient lava flow, are reached after a short stroll through mountain toatoa and beech forest.

4. Ridge Walking Track

30 - 40 minutes, 1.2 km return via same track. Begins 150 m above Whakapapa Visitor Centre.



After a short climb through low beech forest, the track emerges into alpine shrublands with panoramic views of Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe and the surrounding landscape.

5. Taranaki Falls Walking Track

2 hours, 6 km, loop track. Begins 100 m below Whakapapa Visitor Centre at Ngauruhoe Place.



The track to Taranaki Falls has excellent mountain views and crosses a range of land forms. The upper and lower tracks form a loop with the falls situated around the half-way point.

The lower track passes through tussock and alpine shrublands before entering beech forest. On a clear day Ngauruhoe's symmetrical cone and the older, eroded mountains of Tongariro and Pukekaikiore are visible. Once in the forest, the track descends to Wairere Stream then climbs alongside it, passing Cascade Falls. The forest consists mainly of large mountain beech trees, shiny broadleaf, mountain five-finger, umbrella ferns and mountain toatoa. Small native birds such as whiteheads, grey warbler and rifleman are commonly seen.

From the forest edge the track passes over the Wairere Stream with impressive views of a small narrow gorge. Continuing on up the track, Taranaki Falls come into view tumbling 20 m over the edge of a large andesite lava flow which erupted from Ruapehu 15,000 years ago. Wairere Stream is slowly eroding a channel through this lava flow.

The trail from the falls climbs up through a forest of mountain toatoa before joining the Tama Lakes Track. Turn right to return to Whakapapa, cross Wairere Stream and climb the shoulder of the lava flow, now covered with red tussock. Native birds likely to be heard in this area include pitpits, fern birds and occasionally skylarks.

The return track crosses a series of eroded gullies formed by wind, rain and frost action on volcanic soils. As the trail begins to sidle around the slopes of Mount Ruapehu, it merges with the wider old Waihohonu horse trail. Here, layers of pumice and ash from previous eruptions are exposed. After passing through the last patch of bush, the track emerges again into red tussock and manuka, leading easily back to Whakapapa Village.

6. Whakapapanui Walking Track

2 hours, 6 km return via same track or Bruce Road. Begins 250 m above Whakapapa Visitor Centre.



After a 10 -15 minute walk, the Whakapapanui Walking Track branches to the right (don't follow the Whakapapaiti Track sign in error!) and heads downstream. Water-logged clearings are passed as the track follows Whakapapanui Stream. Here, storm-damaged beech forest is slowly regenerating.

7. Silica Rapids Walking Track

2½ hours, 7 km return via Bruce Road. Begins 250 m above Whakapapa Visitor Centre.



This track takes in a range of vegetation types as well as the creamy-white Silica Rapid terraces. After crossing Whakapapanui Stream at the top end of the Holiday Park the track meanders through beech forest. Pass the

Whakapapanui Track turn-off and continue towards Silica Rapids. The track soon crosses a bubbling stream with a gold-toned bed. The coloured deposits are iron-oxide clays from upstream swamps. Surrounding the stream and track are coprosma, five finger and broadleaf.

Emerging from the bush, the track climbs to a swampy area of wire rush, tangle fern and red tussock. Seepage ponds beside the boardwalk are home to freshwater crayfish (koura). The boardwalk makes walking over swampy ground more comfortable and reduces the impact of foot traffic on delicate vegetation. On clear days this is a great place to enjoy mountain views.

After passing the Whakapapaiti Track turn-off, the Silica Rapids Track follows the stream up through dense bush to Punaruku Falls. Here, after heavy rain, Tawhainui Stream tumbles over the edge of an ancient lava flow. Close to the track metal bands on tree trunks protect mistletoe from possums. At the forest edge gold-coloured snow totara and olive-green bog pine give way to sun-loving alpine herbs and alpine flowers like mountain daisies, hare bells and ourisia.

A little further up the hill the stream bed widens and forms a series of shallow terraces coated in creamy white deposits - the famous Silica Rapids. When the stream emerges from lava cliffs at the head of the valley the water is rich in aluminium and silicate minerals. As the stream gathers speed and the water is aerated, the alumino-silicates are deposited on the stream bed.

Moving away from the rapids, the track climbs the side of a tussock-covered lava flow. A small clump of mountain beech and toatoa, seen a short distance up the mountain, forms the upper limit of beech trees in the area. The track then winds its way through tussock and sub-alpine shrubs to the Bruce Road, which can be followed down the hill 2.5 km to Whakapapa Village.

8. Meads Wall Route

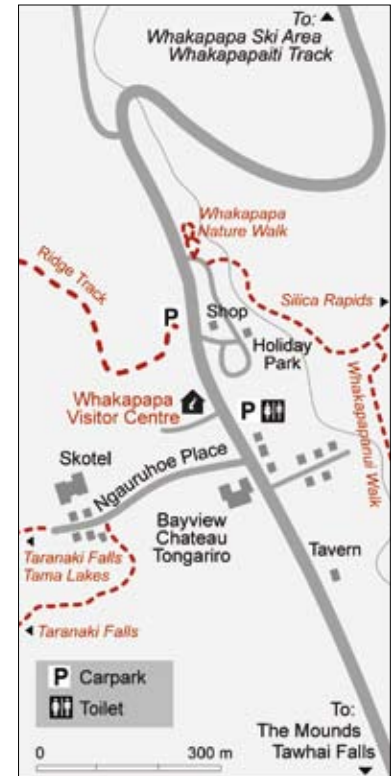
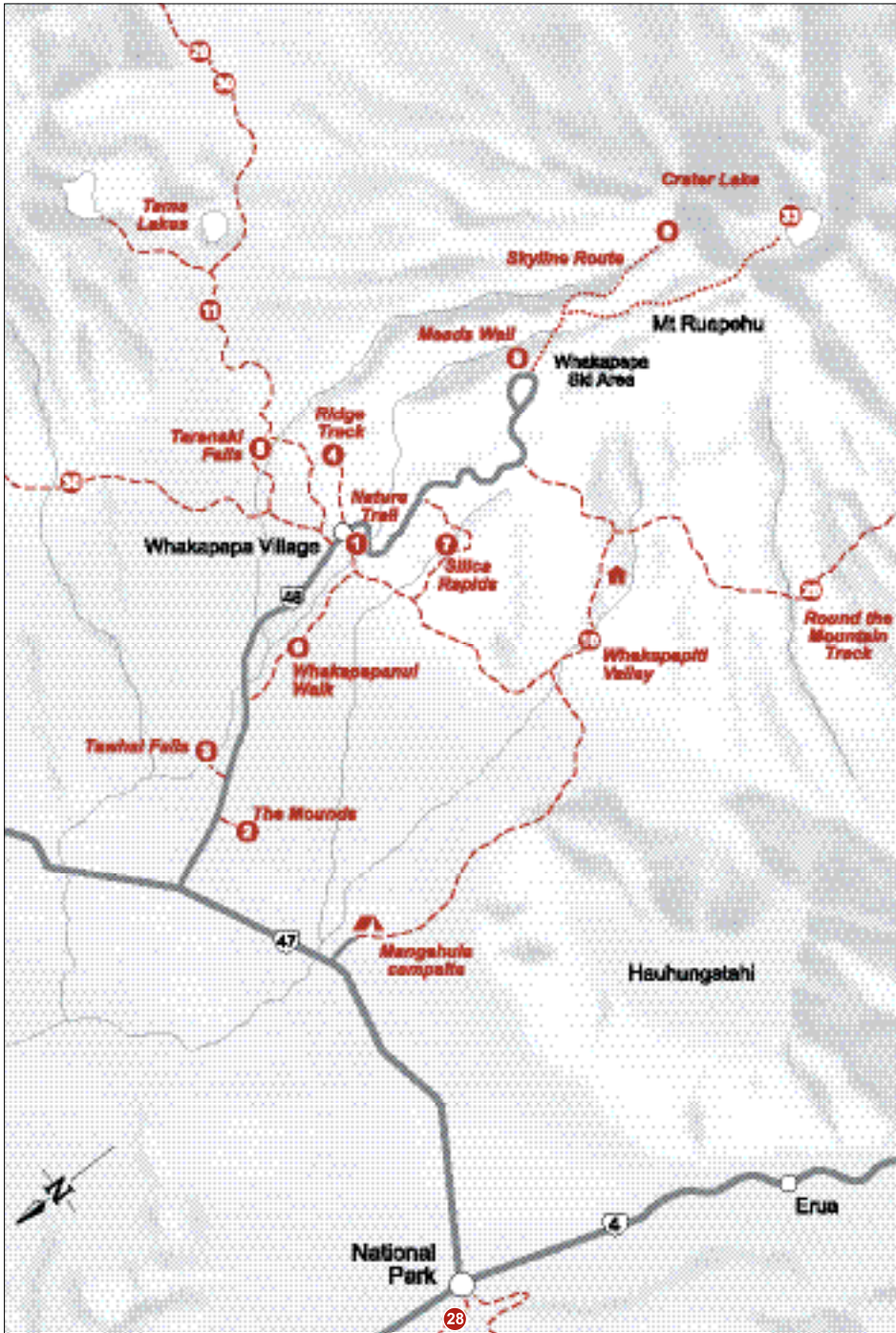
NB: this is not a DOC track, it is a route administered by Ruapehu Alpine Lifts.



10 minutes return from Iwikau Village, at the top of the Bruce Road. Follow the track to Meads Wall - a spectacular rocky outcrop which was one of the filming locations for Lord of the Rings. Meads Wall drops off steeply and care is required whilst standing at the edge to enjoy spectacular views of the valley below and Ngauruhoe to the northeast.



Whakapapa maps



9. Skyline Route

NB: this is not a DOC track, it is a route administered by Ruapehu Alpine Lifts.



1-1½ hours return from the top of Waterfall Express chairlift, Whakapapa Ski Area. This walk follows a poled route, marked only in summer, over steep rocky terrain and loose scree. There is no formed track. This walk is not recommended in winter, in poor weather, and/or snow or ice cover.

Follow the marker poles beside the Valley T-bar line, at the top of the T bar, climb up the side of the ridge to your left for fantastic views. Return the same way.

Day tramps (3 - 8 hours)

10. Whakapapaiti Valley Tramping Track

4-5 hours, 11 km, one way. Begins 5 km above Whakapapa Village at Scoria Flat on the Bruce Road. See Whakapapa map (page 13).

From the Bruce Road, follow the Round the Mountain Track to a moraine ridge for great views of the Whakapapaiti Valley and surrounding country. From there, zig-zag down into the valley and turn right at the Whakapapaiti Track junction. Winding through stunted beech forest, the track makes its way to the Whakapapaiti Hut.

From here, the track to Whakapapa Village continues down the valley, crossing Whakapapaiti Stream 10-15 minutes below the hut. There is no bridge here and it may not be possible to cross safely at times of high flow.

Further down the valley the Mangahuia Track junction (2-3 hours to campsite) is passed on the left and soon afterwards there is a bridged river crossing. The track then climbs through an open tussock-covered area before entering the bush and sidling around to join the lower Silica Rapids Track 45 minutes from Whakapapa Village.

11. Tama Lakes Tramping Track

5-6 hours, 17 km, return via same track. Begin 100 m below Whakapapa Visitor Centre at the end of Ngauruhoe Place. This track is an extension of the Taranaki Falls Track and part of the Tongariro Northern Circuit and Round the Mountain Tracks.

At the top of Taranaki Falls, the track branches off the Taranaki Falls Walk, to cross rolling tussock country and alpine herbfields on the way to Tama Lakes. Further on, the track branches left to Tama Lake, while the main track continues on to Waihohonu Hut. There is a view of the lower lake (1240 m), and then the track climbs steeply to a viewpoint (1440 m) of the upper lake.

Tama Lakes occupy several old explosion craters on the Tama Saddle between Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe. The saddle acts as a funnel for prevailing westerly winds and windproof clothing is recommended.