

Know before you go

Multi-use track: The Mangapurua/Kaiwhakauka tracks are shared by trampers, mountain bikers, and hunters (often with dogs) using quad bikes to access the upper Mangapurua valley from Ruatitī Road to Bartrum's swing bridge. Take care on downhill sections. Look out for others and share the track.

Hunting: Hunting (with a permit) is allowed in most places throughout the year. Check the DOC website for exclusion zones and dates, and special conditions for hunting dogs. Hunting permits are available from the DOC website or from the DOC Whanganui Office. You must carry your printed permit with you.

Camping: Apart from the 10-bunk bunkroom at Whakahoro Campsite, there are no huts along the track. We recommend camping at sites with toilets (see map). Most campsites are free – there is a charge for staying overnight at the Whakahoro Campsite. There are accommodation providers in both Whakahoro and Ruatitī. Do not camp under pine trees – tree limbs, and even entire trees, can fall unexpectedly.

Mangapurua and Kaiwhakauka valleys

Both the Mangapurua and Kaiwhakauka streams are tributaries of the Whanganui River. These valleys were rehabilitation settlements where land was offered to soldiers following World War I. The endeavours of these pioneers provide a unique historic quality to this area.

Pioneer settlers cleared the land of much of its virgin native forest for farmland. At the peak of settlement there were 30 farms in the Mangapurua and 16 in the Kaiwhakauka.

Today, only chimneys, exotic trees and hedges mark the remains of the house sites. Problems such as poor access, erosion and falling wool prices during the Depression years forced most of the settlers to abandon their farms. The few remaining farmers left the valley in 1942 when the government refused to maintain the storm-damaged road.

Mangapurua and Kaiwhakauka tracks

These 35.5 km and 40 km tramping tracks/grade 4 cycle trails take 2–3 days to walk or 1 day to cycle. The tracks are two sections of the Mountains to Sea – Ngā Ara Tūhono Cycle Trail (part of the Ngā Haerenga/New Zealand Cycle Trail) and are also part of Te Araroa, the walking trail from Cape Reinga to Bluff.

The tracks follow two different valleys – the Mangapurua, with its many open flats, and the narrower Kaiwhakauka, which has many patches of relatively undisturbed native forest. The tracks follow old road lines with a good gradient and make for relatively easy walking or biking. They can be walked or biked in either direction and, when combined with a jet boat ride on the Whanganui River, create a unique tramping or biking and boating circuit.

Jet boat transport is needed to and from the Mangapurua Landing and can be arranged with transport operators. Several operators offer packages including bike hire, jet boat travel, and transport to and from the road ends.

These are multi-use tracks shared by trampers, mountain bikers and by hunters using quad bikes to access the upper Mangapurua valley from Ruatitī Road to Bartrum's swing bridge. Watch out for others and be considerate.



View from Mangapurua Trig. Photo: Jim Campbell



Plough. Photo: Ridgway Lythgoe

Track guide

The tracks can be accessed from either Whakahoro or Ruatitī Road. Whakahoro is reached by road from State Highway 4, turning off at either Ōwhango or Raurimu. Ruatitī Road end is accessed from Ruatitī Road, north of Raetihi on State Highway 4.

Approximate walking times for the tracks, at a leisurely pace, are:

- ▶ 13 hr from Whakahoro to Mangapurua Landing (the walk to track junction takes 6 hr)
- ▶ 11 hr from Ruatitī Road end (the walk to the track junction takes 4 hr).

Biking times are approximately half the stated walking time (allow extra time if the track is wet and muddy), and the times are roughly the same if done in reverse.

Your safety is your responsibility

Bluffs: There are multiple bluffs on this track. Signs advise when to dismount your bike. Walk with your bike between you and the fall hazard. Take care when passing others and watch for falling rocks.

Slips: Areas are prone to slipping at any time of year. You may need to lift or carry your bike in places. We recommend riders travel with two or more people as it is easier to pass bikes to each other.

No fires: Fires are not permitted anywhere in the Mangapurua valley.

Weather: The weather is changeable. Wet, slippery conditions may be experienced at times, particularly during winter and early spring. Check the weather forecast and pack accordingly.

Communications: Most areas have no mobile phone coverage. Mangapurua Trig may provide coverage on some mobile devices. Carry an emergency alert device (eg PLB/spot tracker).

Water: Take extra water during dry periods as shelters and streams may be dry or stagnant. Treat or boil all water before drinking.

Wasps: Wasps are particularly common from January until May. Carry antihistamine if you are allergic to their stings.

More information

- ▶ The Mangapurua and Kaiwhakauka Returned Servicemen Settlement Map, published by Friends of the Whanganui River, is available from local i-SITES.
- ▶ Mountains to Sea Cycle trail www.mountaintosea.nz
- ▶ Te Araroa Trail – www.teararoa.org.nz

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Bridge to Nowhere.
Photo: Mountains to Sea NZ

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New Zealand Government



- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire
Check before you light a fire – a ban may be in place
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others

R190397

Follow the Outdoor Safety Code

Five simple rules to help you stay safe:

1. Plan your trip
2. Tell someone
3. Be aware of the weather
4. Know your limits
5. Take sufficient supplies

Leave your trip details with a trusted contact.

For more information, see www.adventuresmart.org.nz.

MANAWATU/WHANGANUI

Mangapurua and Kaiwhakauka tracks

| Whanganui National Park



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Holding on to history

At the various house sites are the precious remnants of part of our ANZAC history. Help preserve our treasured past by not hurrying their decay. Please do not climb on the chimneys or move the reminders of the families who once lived here.



Bettjeman's House site

Tramping track: Generally unformed, may be marked with directional markers, poles or cairns. Suitable for backcountry visitors with moderate to high-level backcountry skills and experience. Major watercourse bridges may be 3-wire crossings. Tramping boots required.

Mountain biking: A mix of long, steep climbs, narrow track, poor traction and obstacles that are difficult to avoid or jump over. Generally exposed at the track's outside edge. Most riders will find some sections easier to walk.

For detailed mountain biking information visit Mountains to Sea Cycle trail www.mountaintosea.nz

1.5 km along you reach Johnson's. The original farmer, Edward Johnson, collected the mail twice a week from Mangapurua Landing and distributed it through the valley. As you move down the valley, you cross the grassy clearings that were created by the early settlers. Many of the papa bluffs are named after settlers that farmed the surrounding land, whose names also live on in the wooden signs along the track marking the original house sites. As you move through the valley you will notice rows of exotic trees that mark the road and the house sites. The large flat at Johnson's makes a pleasant camping spot. The campsite has a shelter, water supply and toilet.

Johnson's to Bettjeman's – 3.4 km

Tramping: 1 hr **Mountain biking:** 30 min

The track continues down the valley road to the abandoned Tester house site. This was the location of the valley's first school, which started in 1926 with seven children.

There are several large flats in the upper valley as you head towards Bettjeman's. You will see the Himalayan honeysuckle, which acts as a nursery plant for natives in a similar way as gorse.

The Bettjeman house site is marked by its straight row of poplars that line the old road. The Bettjeman family was one of the first settler families to arrive – and the last to leave in 1942. In its heyday, the homestead included a family house, a bunkroom built of split tōtara shingles and a tennis court. All that remains today is the old chimney stack, and exotic plants like holly and cotoneaster. There is a good water supply from the stream near the house site, and a toilet.

Bettjeman's to Hellawell's – 4.6 km

Tramping: 1 hour 30 min **Mountain biking:** 45 min

Roughly 1.5 km from Bettjeman's is Bartrum's swing bridge. Access for 4-wheeled traffic ends at this bridge.

From the swing bridge, the valley narrows for a distance with the track going around a series of bluffs. Take great care crossing these bluffs as the Mangapurua Stream is as much as 70 m below. Mountain bikers must dismount and walk, with your bike between you and the fall hazard.

Note the long bluff up the valley from the Cody's house site – sometimes called Currant Bun Bluff because of the rounded, exposed boulders within the papa cliffs. Take extra care here as this part of the track is narrow. A short way further is Waterfall Creek. A 1.5 km side trip up the true left of the creek provides views of the waterfall. Hellawell's is on the southern side of Waterfall Creek; it hosted many community picnics and hockey games. There is a toilet here.

Hellawell's to the Bridge to Nowhere – 5.7 km

Tramping: 1 hr 30 min **Mountain biking:** 45 min

The track continues to follow the true left of the Mangapurua Stream before descending towards the Bridge to Nowhere. About 30 min from Hellawell's is Battleship Bluff, named for a feature across the Mangapurua Stream that resembles the prow of an old battleship. The bluff posed the greatest difficulty for the early road builders. Two years were spent terracing the bluff from the top using gelignite. Continue along the track which dips and climbs crossing streams and small bridges down the valley. Watch out for falling rocks while passing the bluffs.

Almost out of nowhere you will turn the corner onto the historic Bridge to Nowhere. This is the large concrete bridge completed in 1936, which now stands abandoned in bush – literally in the middle of nowhere. By the time the bridge was finished, the lower valley had been abandoned by the settlers. From the concrete bridge you can see the remains of the old suspension bridge used from 1920 to 1936 to transport vital supplies to the initial settlers.

Bridge to Nowhere to Mangapurua Landing – 2.7 km

Tramping: 40 min **Mountain biking:** 20 min

This section of track is also used by river travellers to visit the Bridge to Nowhere. This can be a very busy section of track in warmer months – mountain bikers and walkers should watch out for each other. There are toilets between the bridge and the river and a shelter near the landing.

The Mangapurua Landing was the main access point to the Mangapurua valley in the early years of settlement when the river was the only means of access. The landing is now used by jetboaters and canoeists.

Detailed track information

The following track guide describes the 2–3 day tramping trip or 1-day cycle trip with both entry/exit options either from Whakahoro or Ruatītī Road end to the Mangapurua / Kaiwhakauka junction, through the Mangapurua valley and down onto the Mangapurua Landing.

Note: jetboat transport or canoes must be arranged for pickup at the landing.

Whakahoro to Whanganui National Park Boundary – 5.5 km

Tramping: 2 hr **Mountain biking:** 1 hr

Follow the Kaiwhakauka Track along a farm road through Rētaruke Station (private land) following the true right of the Kaiwhakauka Stream to the large stock and pedestrian bridge. Off to the right is the original depot where deliveries from riverboat services were stored for valley settlers. The track leads up the valley through regenerating bush and farmland to the park boundary. Leave gates as you find them and not to disturb stock.

Whanganui National Park Boundary to Mosley's – 4.4 km

Tramping: 1 hr 30 min **Mountain biking:** 45 min

Walking from the park boundary you come to the old Mosley homestead site near the Waione Stream. The open clearing here is ideal for camping, and there is a shelter with water and a toilet.

Mosley's to Mangapurua/ Kaiwhakauka Junction – 5.7 km

Tramping: 2 hr 30 min **Mountain biking:** 1 hr 15 min

The track continues towards Coote's homestead (private land), crossing many side streams. The old Tobin homestead (marked by an old chimney stack) can be seen on the right of the track.

From here the track climbs steeply for about 3.2 km to the junction, passing through relatively undisturbed mixed tawa/podocarp forest, to reach the junction of the old Kaiwhakauka and Mangapurua roads.

Ruatītī Road end to Mangapurua Kaiwhakauka Track Junction – 10.8 km

Tramping: 4 hr 30 min **Mountain biking:** 2 hr

Accessed from Ruatītī Road, the track climbs from the gate at the road end through private farmland, regenerating scrub and pockets of native bush. As you climb into hill country look over your shoulder for stunning views of the Tongariro National Park to the east. A carved tōtara pou stands at the track junction to symbolise the ngahere (forest) and provide spiritual and cultural safety for visitors. The pou also pays tribute to the settlers of the Mangapurua and Kaiwhakauka valleys.

Mangapurua / Kaiwhakauka Track Junction to Mangapurua Trig – 1.4 km

Tramping: 30 min **Mountain biking:** 15 min

Continue heading west towards the Whanganui River. You will soon reach the Mangapurua Trig sign. This is a designated camping spot, with water and toilet facilities. The water is obtained from a spring on the inside of the road bend just past the trig and the toilets are on the original access road, about 25 m off the main track. A side track leads up to the trig where there are sweeping views of Tongariro National Park to the east and Mt Taranaki to the west.

Mangapurua Trig to Johnson's – 6.8 km

Tramping: 2 hr **Mountain biking:** 1 hr

From the trig the track heads steadily downhill, passing the only uncut section of forest in the Mangapurua valley. The track crosses first swing bridge in the valley crosses Slippery Creek at the end of the downhill, and a further

