**Plan and prepare**

It is important to plan your trip thoroughly to ensure you stay safe and have a great time. Before you go, know the Outdoor Safety Code - 5 simple rules to help you make it home.

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

**TELL SOMEONE YOUR PLANS**

Tell someone you trust your plans and when they should hear from you.

**Further information and booking**

Visit the Great Walks website or contact your nearest DOC Visitor Centre.

Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre
Whakapapa Village, State Highway 48, Mount Ruapehu
Ph: +64 7 892 3729
Email: tongarirovc@doc.govt.nz

*Permission through Rangipo North 6C has been granted by landowners. Please respect this access.*

---

**Welcome to the Tongariro Northern Circuit Track, one of ten unforgettable journeys.**

From alpine herbfields to forests, and tranquil lakes to desert plateaux, journey through a landscape of stark contrasts with amazing views in this dual World Heritage site. Winding past Mount Tongariro and Mount Ngauruhoe, you will be dazzled by dramatic volcanic landscapes and New Zealand’s rich geological and ancestral past.

You are strongly recommended NOT to attempt this track between early May and late October (outside the Great Walks season). The winter environment in Tongariro National Park is very cold and wet, with ice, snow and the risk of avalanche, as well as short daylight hours. Alpine-specific trip planning is critical for your safety. For more information, see ‘Outside the Great Walks season’ at greatwalks.co.nz/tongariro.

**Plants and wildlife**

**Plants** in the area vary considerably, from alpine herbs to thick swathes of tussocks and flax, from the hardy, low-growing shrubs of the Rangipo Desert to dense beech forests. A diverse range of beautiful and unique alpine flowers abound in the spring and summer months.

**North Island robin/toutouwai** are sparrow-sized birds found only in New Zealand. Males have dark grey plumage while the female is dark grey-brown. They are inquisitive, friendly and trusting, often coming within a couple of metres of people.

**New Zealand falcon/kārearea** can fly at speeds of more than 100 km/h and catch prey up to 6 times their body weight. The falcon does not build a nest. Rather, it makes a scrape on the ground, under a rocky outcrop or in a forest tree into which it lays its eggs.

**Blue duck/whio** live only in clear, fast-flowing streams in the forested upper river catchments. Nesting along the riverbanks, they are at high risk of attack from stoats and rats. You might see them on the Waihohonu Stream or Chihirangi Stream near the Waihohonu Hut.

**Rifflemann/tītīpounamu** are New Zealand’s smallest bird. They are constantly on the move, producing a characteristic ‘wing-flicking’ while foraging up and down tree trunks. The rifflemann belongs to one of the most ancient bird lineages in this country, the New Zealand wren family.
The steep climb known as Te Arakaiwata, required to reach the Mangatepopo saddle, rewards climbers with views of the valley and, if clear, Mount Taranaki to the west. From the saddle the track crosses South Crater – not a true crater but a drainage basin between the surrounding volcanic landforms.

See the section of the track from Red Crater up to Red Crater is steep and cross-ice market for much of the way. Care must be taken in freezing conditions, as the steep slope surrounding the trail may be icy and dangerous even if the trail is ice-free.

The main track continues past the rim of Red Crater, offering splendid views of Otureure valley and the Kaimanawa Ranges to the east. From the high point of Red Crater, the trail descends down a steep slope to Otureure valley (Ngā Rotopounamu). The lakes remain frozen for most of winter. The Tongariro Alpine Crossing continues from Ngā Rotopounamu to Ketetahi.

**Waihohonu Hut to Whakapapa Village**

5 hr 45 min, 15.4 km

This track follows the Waihohonu Stream and gradually climbs to Tama saddle (1,300 m).

**Elevation profile**

- 1,077 meters
- 1,160 meters
- 1,200 meters
- 1,240 meters
- 1,280 meters
- 1,300 meters
- 1,320 meters
- 1,340 meters
- 1,380 meters
- 1,400 meters
- 1,440 meters
- 1,480 meters
- 1,500 meters
- 1,520 meters
- 1,540 meters
- 1,560 meters
- 1,580 meters
- 1,600 meters

**Side trip – Blue Lake (Te Wai Whakatape o te Rangihuaia) (near Ngā Rotopounamu)**

15 min (one way)

Blue Lake’s Māori name Te Wai Whakatape o te Rangihuaia translates as Rangihuaia’s mirror. Blue Lake is tapu (sacred) - do not touch the water (no swimming) or eat food around the lake. From the track junction near Ngā Rotopounamu, continue further along the Tongariro Alpine Crossing to see closer views of Blue Lake.

**Side trip – Lake Tama (Ngā Puna o Tama) (1,314 m)**

20 min return to Lower Tama from the junction; 1 hr 30 min return to Upper Tama from the junction.

Two in-filled explosion craters are named after Tamatea, the high chief of the Tikitimu Canoes, who explored the area six centuries ago. Lower Tama’s volcanic debris is slowly washing in and filling the crater. The Upper Tama lake is reputed to be very deep.

**Side trip – Taranaki Falls Track (before Whakapapa Village)**

At the Taranaki Falls junction, turn right and go down the steps to the base of the waterfall. Retrace your steps, and continue along the Upper Taranaki Falls Track to Whakapapa Village.

**History**

Ngatoroirangi, the founding ancestor of Ngāti Tuwharetoa, the local iwi (Māori tribe), ascended the great mountains of the Central Plateau 30 generations ago. It was then that he named Taranaki and the many features of the surrounding landscape, declaring this area as home for his descendants. It is from these beginnings that Ngāti Tuwharetoa maintains its intrinsic responsibility to protect the mountainous area to which they belong.

The generosity and foresight of Ngāti Tuwharetoa saw the heart of the mountainous area made sacrosanct in 1887, with the intent that the Crown would stand alongside Ngāti Tuwharetoa to ensure the continued protection of Taranaki. This led to the establishment of the Taranaki National Park in 1894, a first for New Zealand, and fourth in the world.

In 1993, Taranaki became the first property to be inscribed on the World Heritage List under the revised criteria describing cultural landscapes. The mountains at the heart of the park have cultural and spiritual significance to Ngāti Tuwharetoa and symbolise the spiritual links between this community and its environment. The park has active and extinct volcanoes, a diverse range of ecosystems and some remarkable landscapes.

The continued occupation by Ngāti Tuwharetoa in this environment ensures the cultural, spiritual and environmental values are protected and shared with all those who encounter this dynamic landscape.

**Safety on the Tongariro Northern Circuit**

Stay on the marked tracks:

- The track is well marked but if you become lost you should stop, find shelter and stay calm. Put on extra clothing to keep warm and dry. Walkers should keep clear of the track and stay with the group.
- Pay attention to signs in Active Volcanic Hazard Zone.
- Streams on the track may rise rapidly and become hazardous. Walkers should not attempt to cross any streams in flood.
- Mount Ngaruhoe is sacred to Ngāti Tuwharetoa. Climbing Mount Ngaruhoe is discouraged because of its unique volcanic hazards and alpine environment. Talk to Tongariro Visitor Centre staff for more information.

**BE PREPARED FOR ALL CONDITIONS**

Volcanic eruptions in Active Volcanic Hazard Zone:

The section of the track from Red Crater to Te Māari craters is an Active Volcanic Hazard Zone. There is still an increased volcanic risk following the eruption of the Te Māari Crater (near Ketetahi Shelter) in 2019.

Strong winds:

In alpine areas or exposed areas, you can be caught in strong and/or gusty winds. Winds over 65 km/h may knock you off your feet. Dress warmly as wind-chill danger is worse at these times.

Hypothermia (too cold): Hypothermia (a drop in core body temperature) can become a serious problem. Wear warm and weatherproof gear. Eat and drink regularly during your walk.

Watch for symptoms: people may shiver, be clumsy, confused, have slurred speech, and are a problem. Treatment: immediately make or find shelter; get the person into warm, dry clothing, put them into a sleeping bag; give them warm, sweet drinks; monitor them and seek immediate medical help.

Heat exhaustion:

Prevention: carry and drink water regularly during your walk. Watch for symptoms: headaches, thirst, weakness, dizziness, nausea or vomiting. Treatment: move to a cool shaded area to rest, remove excess clothing and give water to drink.