Plan and prepare

WHANGANUI JOURNEY

Duration: 3 or 5 days
Distance: 88 km or 145 km (one way)

Great Walks season:
1 October 2018 – 30 April 2019
WHANGANUI JOURNEY

Paddle through a landscape of remote hills and valleys on the magical Whanganui Journey.

Experience the scenic beauty, history and cultural significance of the winding Whanganui River in the south-west of the North Island. Choose a 5-day journey from Taumarunui to Pipiriki (145 km), or a shorter, 3-day journey starting at Whakahoro (88 km), featuring the most scenic stretches of the river.

This brochure describes a 5-day trip by canoe or kayak from Taumarunui to Pipiriki for independent, non-guided travellers during the Great Walks season (1 October 2018 – 30 April 2019).

Outside the Great Walks season (May to September) conditions are more hazardous – see the safety information.

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Access points are at Ngahuinga (Cherry Grove) in Taumarunui or further downstream at Ohinepane (accessed from River Road SH43).

Travelling the upper reaches of the Whanganui River, you’ll pass through a mixture of farmland and native bush. You’ll be in for some excitement as you shoot down rapids on this section of the river.

From here, you’ll feel as though you are venturing into the heart of a rich and rugged landscape. On the way you will pass Poukaria Campsite (a great spot to stop for lunch) and Maharanui Campsite. Take a short trip up the Ohura River to Ohura Falls.

Day 1: Taumarunui to Ohinepane

Day 2: Ohinepane to Whakahoro

Cover: Andrew Bain / Alamy Stock Photo
Above left to right: © Monster Valley, © Monster Valley, Janette Asche, DOC/90 Seconds, © Monster Valley
Main photo: Whakahoro Campsite, Daniel Dearn
Many begin their river journey here – the scenic middle reaches of the river, featuring numerous waterfalls after heavy rain. Past Mangapapa Campsite, you’ll take a long loop around the Kirikiriroa peninsula, pass the Tarepokiore (whirlpool) rapid and then the large overhang known as Tamatea’s Cave. Please do not enter the cave as it is wāhi tapu (a sacred place). Otaihanga Reach leads you to your overnight stop at John Coull Hut and Campsite.

On this section, you’ll follow the river as it meanders through bush-covered hills, passing the mouths of the Tangarakau and Whangamomona rivers where they join the Whanganui. Perched high above the river, Mangawaiiti is an attractive spot to camp or stop for lunch. Continue your trip downstream past the Mangapurua Landing, gateway to the Bridge to Nowhere, on your way to Tīeke Kāinga. Here you can examine the intricately-carved pou whenua (carved timber pole) and learn about the history of Tīeke and the tikanga (protocol) of the marae.

You’ll pass through the scenic gorge of the Manganui o te Ao River where it enters the Whanganui after its journey from the slopes of Mt Ruapehu. The Ngaporo and Autapu rapids can provide plenty of excitement and perhaps a cool dip on a hot day. You’ll pass through more exotic trees and farmland before finally reaching the end of your journey at Pipiriki village.
HIGHLIGHTS

1. Take a break from the water at Mangapurua Landing and walk to the iconic Bridge to Nowhere. Lost deep in the forest, completely isolated from civilisation, this lonely concrete bridge was built for World War I servicemen to reach a now-abandoned settlement.

2. Look out for plump wood pigeon/kererū, as they plummet from the forest canopy before gaining enough speed to rise again, and noisily crash-land into the foliage in search of more berries.

3. Experience the unique landscape of the Whanganui National Park as you paddle through deep gorges and past cascading waterfalls.

4. Visit Tīeke Kāinga and learn about the intimate connection that Whanganui iwi have with the awa (river).

5. Watch for long-tailed bats/pekapeka fluttering overhead at dusk when you reach John Coull Hut on Day 3.

Conservation story

6. Watch and listen for the native birdlife of the Whanganui National Park, including kererū, blue duck/whio, tūī and brown kiwi. There has been a noticeable increase in birdsong since Kia Wharite, a partnership to protect some of our most precious taonga, began in the Whanganui National Park in 2008. www.kiawharite.govt.nz
PLACES TO STAY

DOC operates 2 huts, 11 Great Walks campsites and 1 basic bunkroom along the Whanganui Journey, which must be booked in advance during the Great Walks season (1 October 2018 – 30 April 2019).

Outside the Great Walks season facilities are greatly reduced, and there are no volunteer hut rangers. Booking is not required, huts and campsites are first come, first served and fees are reduced.

See www.doc.govt.nz for details.

Great Walks huts
$32 per adult per night; 17 years and under free (booking required).
During the Great Walks season the huts have bunks, mattresses, a water supply, toilets, hand-washing facilities and heating with fuel. They may also have a lighting source, basic cooking facilities with fuel, and a volunteer hut ranger may be present.

Great Walks campsites
$20 per adult per night; 17 years and under free (booking required).
The campsites offer basic facilities including toilets, sinks and a water supply. Some also have picnic tables and cooking shelters.

CHECK
CLEAN
DRY

PROTECT OUR WATERWAYS
Freshwater pests, including didymo, can be spread by a single drop of water or plant fragment. Protect our waterways – always CHECK, CLEAN, DRY any equipment, including footwear, that comes into contact with the water before entering, and when moving between, waterways.

For more information see www.mpi.govt.nz (then search on ‘Check Clean Dry’).
GETTING THERE

Traditional entry or exit points for the Whanganui Journey are from SH4 at:
- Taumarunui
- Ohinepane (access from Taumarunui)
- Whakahoro (access from Raurimu or Owahango)
- Pipiriki (access from Raetihi or Whanganui)

Equipment hire, services, food and transport can be found in Taumarunui, Whanganui, Raetihi, Ohakune and National Park Village.

Know before you go

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 #makeithome.

1. Plan your trip. Travel times vary greatly in New Zealand, so carefully planning your route is essential. Seek local information about what to take, and allow enough time for the journey. Book accommodation, transport and transfers to the start/end of track early.

2. Tell someone your plans. Safety is your responsibility. Leave your intentions – including your trip details and emergency contact information – with a trusted contact. It could save your life if things go wrong. Head to mountainsafety.org.nz for more information.

3. Be aware of the weather. New Zealand weather is very changeable. Plan for the worst, expect the best. Check metservice.com for the most up to date info.

4. Know your limits. Always follow the track markers and signposted tracks. Off-track navigation is not recommended for novice walkers in New Zealand. A good level of fitness is required to walk the track. If you get into trouble don’t make a bad situation worse. Think STAR – Stop / Think / Assess / React.

5. Take sufficient supplies. With New Zealand’s changeable conditions many hikers are frequently caught out by isolated local conditions. Carry – and expect to use – rain jackets all year round. Take an extra day’s supply of food and an emergency shelter. Don’t rely on cellphone signal alone for communication. Food and drinks are not available to purchase at Great Walks huts or campsites. Plan to be self-sufficient.

Whanganui Journey safety

The information in this brochure relates to the Whanganui Journey in the Great Walks season (1 October 2018 – 30 April 2019).

- Heavy rain and flooding can occur at any time of year on the Whanganui River and the weather can change quickly. You will need to be prepared for rain, cold and windy conditions.
- Don’t canoe the river when water levels are predicted to rise or the river is in flood. If you capsize you may not be able to get back into your canoe or swim to the river’s edge.
- Always pull your canoe up high on the bank and tie it to something secure. It may not be raining on the river, but rain elsewhere in the large catchment area can cause the river to rise several metres overnight.
- Go to greatwalks.co.nz/whanganui ‘Know before you go’ section for detailed safety information, and ‘What to take’ section for a comprehensive gear list.

Remember – your safety is your responsibility