

Plan and prepare

WHANGANUI JOURNEY



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



Great Walks season:
1 October – 30 April



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

WHANGANUI JOURNEY

Paddle through a landscape of towering cliffs and deep valleys on the magical Whanganui Journey. You'll travel through calm waters and foaming rapids, on an unforgettable trip into the heart of the Whanganui National Park.

Experience the beauty, history and culture of the mighty 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 spectacular stretches of the river.

In 2017 the Whanganui River was legally recognised as Te Awa Tupua, a living and indivisible whole from the mountains to the sea, its tributaries and all its physical and metaphysical elements. Due care and respect to the river at all times has always been a key expectation of tāngata whenua and the new legal status reinforces this.

This guide 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 – 30 April).



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



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Paddling guide



3 – 5 hr / 22 km



Day 1: Taumarunui to Ohinepane

↗ 3–5 hours, 22 km

Access point is at Ngahuinga (Cherry Grove) in Taumarunui.

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.

6 – 8 hr / 35 km



Day 2: Ohinepane to Whakahoro

↗ 6–8 hours, 35 km

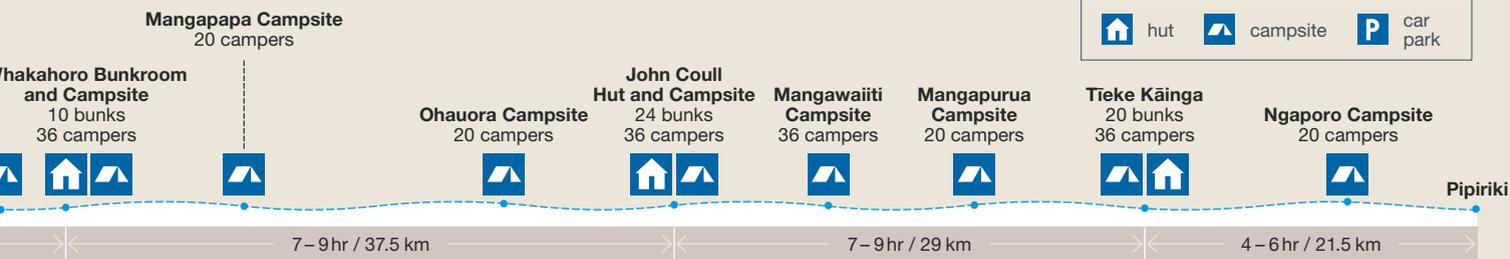
Access point is at Ohinepane (accessed from River Road SH43).

From here, you'll paddle deeper into a rich and rugged landscape. Farms become fewer, native forest dominates and the hills rise. On the way you will pass Poukaria Campsite (a great spot to stop for lunch) and Maharuanui Campsite. Take a short trip up the Ōhura River to see the Ōhura Falls.

COVER: Canoe Safaris

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: © Monster Valley; © Monster Valley; Matthew Pike / Wilderness Magazine; Laura Honey; DOC/90 Seconds

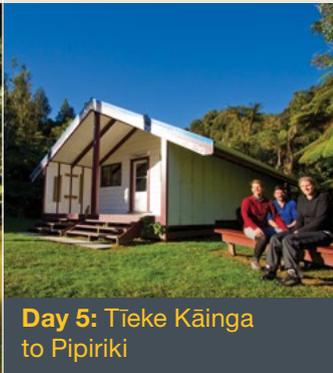
MAIN PHOTO: DOC



Day 3: Whakahoro to John Coull Hut



Day 4: John Coull Hut to Tieke Kāinga



Day 5: Tieke Kāinga to Pipiriki

7–9 hours, 37.5 km

Many begin their river journey here, at the most scenic middle section of the river. You'll travel through towering gorges, the sides dripping with moss and ferns. After heavy rain, there are numerous waterfalls. Long stretches of the river are calm and still, with mirror-like reflections of the surrounding hills.

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 to your overnight stop at John Coull Hut and Campsite.

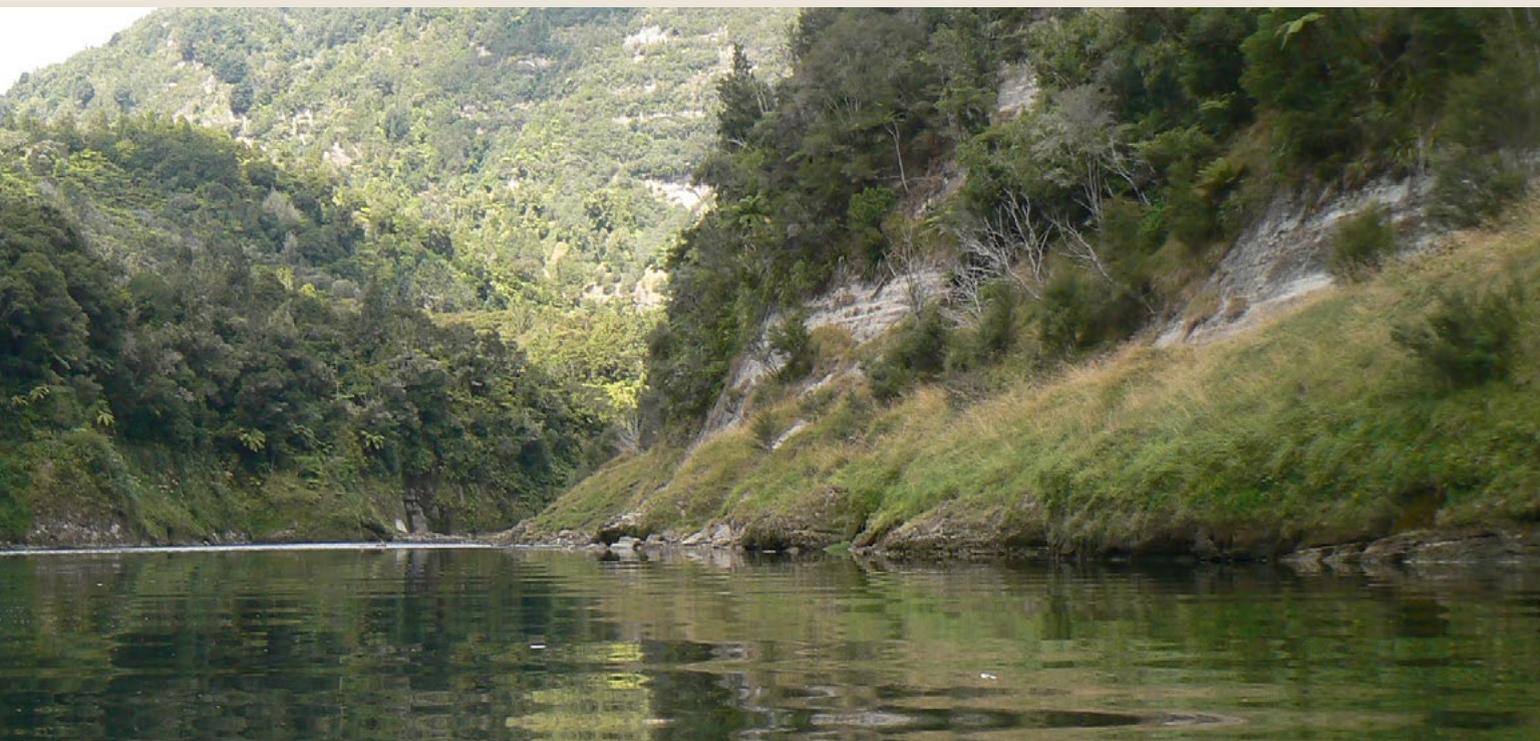
7–9 hours, 29 km

On this section, you'll continue your journey through deep gorges and past stunning native forest. The Tāngarākau and Whangamōmona rivers join the Whanganui on this stretch. Perched high above the river, Mangawaiiti is an attractive spot to camp or stop for lunch.

Continue your trip downstream past the Mangapurua Landing, where you can stop and walk to the iconic Bridge to Nowhere. Afterwards, you'll continue on to Tieke Kāinga. Here you can examine the intricately-carved pou whenua (carved timber pole) and learn about the history of Tieke and the tikanga (protocol) of the marae.

4–6 hours, 21.5 km

You'll pass the narrow gorge of the Manganuioteao River where it enters the Whanganui after its journey all the way 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. Through the day, you'll see the landscape changing. You leave the deep gorges behind and native forest gives way to farmland. At Pipiriki village, you finally disembark at the end of a remarkable journey.



Places to stay

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

Outside the Great Walks season facilities are greatly reduced, and there are no 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

Visit www.doc.govt.nz/whanganuijourney for prices.

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 hut ranger may be present.

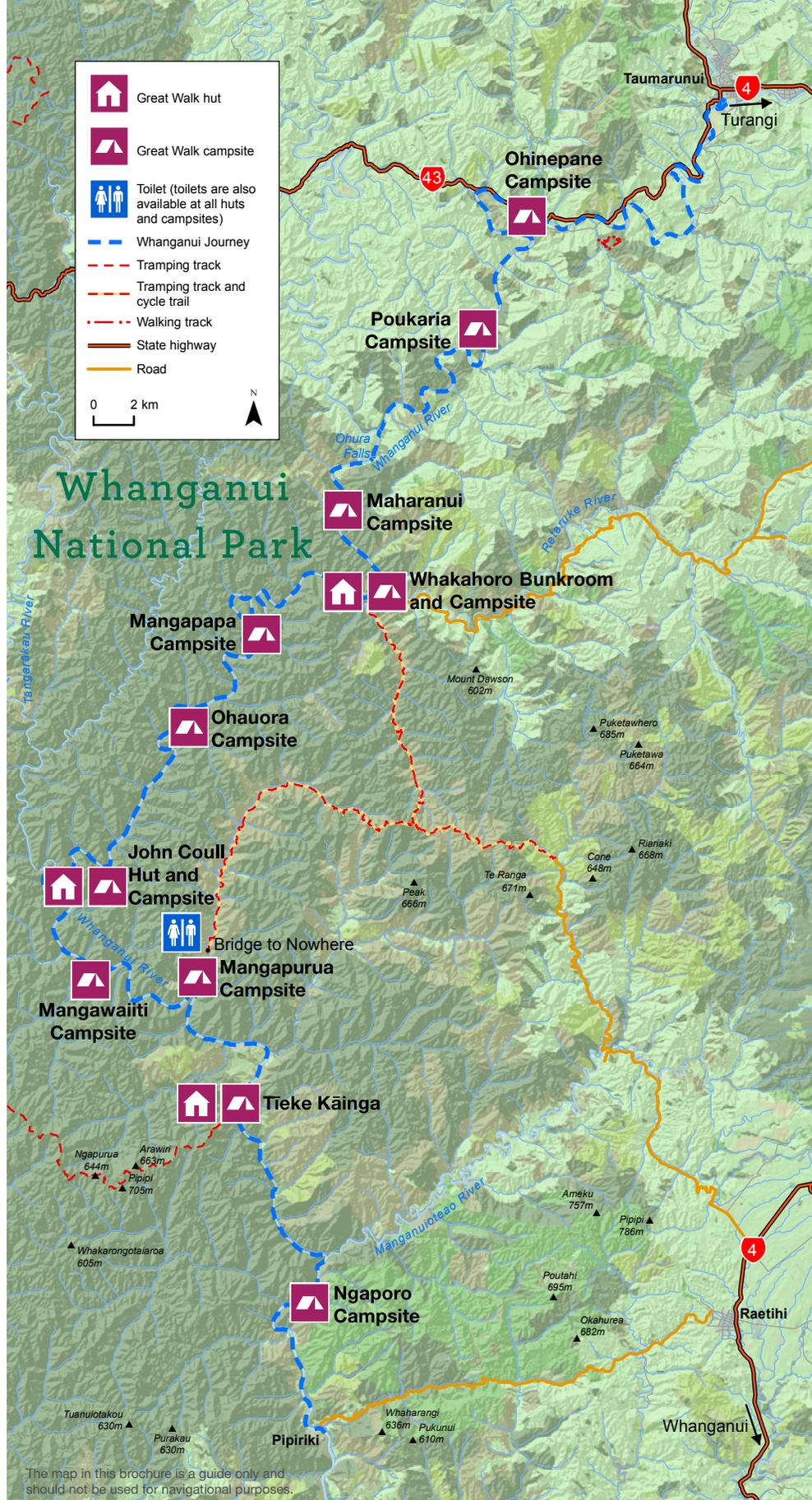


Whakahoro Campsite. Photo: Daniel Deans

Great Walks campsites

Visit www.doc.govt.nz/whanganuijourney for prices.

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').

Highlights

1

Photo: DOC/90 Seconds

Air New Zealand partners with the Department of Conservation to bring birdsong back to our Great Walks.



Photo: Shellie Evans (tikitouringnz.blogspot.co.nz)



Photo: Canoe Safaris



Photo: DOC/90 Seconds



Photo: Sabine Bernert



Photo: Matt Binns (CC BY 2.0)

- 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 returned World War I servicemen to reach a now-abandoned settlement.
- 2 Look out for plump **New Zealand 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 **Tieke 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.

Conservation story

- 6 Watch and listen for the native birdlife of the Whanganui National Park, including kererū, blue duck/whio, tūi and brown kiwi. Partnerships with iwi, Air New Zealand – our National Partner for Conservation, Horizons Regional Council and private landowners mean that more native species are benefitting from greatly increased pest control.

What do I do next?



Start off at www.doc.govt.nz/whanganuijourney for more information.



Book your huts and campsites online at bookings.doc.govt.nz.



Book your canoes, equipment and transport to and from the track.



Buy your food and **pack your bags** – go to 'What to take' on the webpage for a list and make sure you have everything you need for a 3-day or 5-day independent unguided trip.



Read up on **safety** and make sure you're well prepared for your journey and changeable weather at www.doc.govt.nz/whanganuijourney.



Check the weather, and make sure you've downloaded and printed your **ticket and official track guide**. You can also get the latest weather updates and river conditions from the Taumarunui or Ohakune i-SITES.



All set! Jump in your vessel and get paddling! Don't forget to share your experience on [facebook.com/docgovtnz](https://www.facebook.com/docgovtnz).

For in-depth local knowledge, visit:

Ruapehu i-SITE Visitor Information Centre
Phone: +64 6 385 8427

Email: Ohakune-VC@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz/great-walks

This information was accurate at the time of printing. For the latest information on DOC's policies and facilities, visit www.doc.govt.nz.

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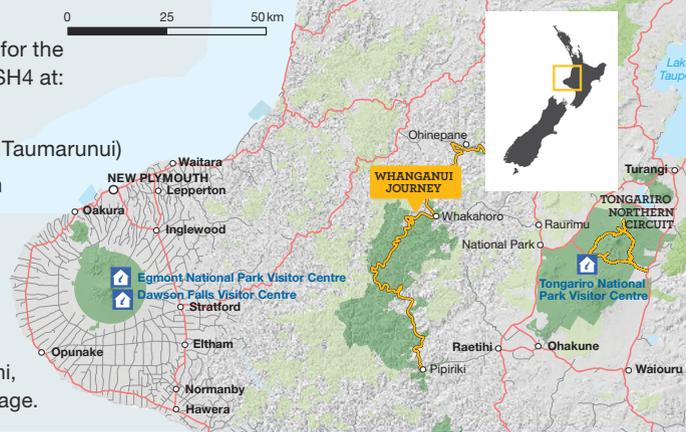
Getting there

0 25 50 km

Traditional entry or exit points for the Whanganui Journey are from SH4 at:

- **Taumarunui**
- **Ohinepane** (access from Taumarunui)
- **Whakahoro** (access from Raurimu or Ohwango)
- **Pipiriki** (access from Raetihi or Whanganui)

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



Safety on the Whanganui Journey

- Go to www.doc.govt.nz/whanganuijourney for detailed safety and planning information.
- You need a good level of fitness, as well as confidence in a canoe and in the water. Once you start you cannot turn back and there are no exit points between Whakahoro and Pipiriki.
- Heavy rain and flooding can occur at any time of the year on the Whanganui River and the weather can change quickly.
- You should come well equipped and prepared for all weather conditions. Check weather.niwa.co.nz/parks for the latest forecast.
- Don't canoe the river when water levels are predicted to rise or the river is flooding.
- Always pull your canoe up high on the bank and tie it to something secure.
- Check with the Ruapehu i-SITE Visitor Information Centre or at www.doc.govt.nz/whanganuijourney for track and river conditions and weather warnings before your journey.

Your safety is your responsibility



You are strongly recommended **NOT to attempt this journey** between May and September (outside the Great Walks season).

The winter environment in Whanganui National Park is very cold and wet, with short daylight hours. The river level is much higher than in summer and the water is very cold.

Hut facilities are greatly reduced – with no cooking gas, limited water and no hut rangers. Travellers will need to be independent, have a full understanding of the safety risks and be prepared for extremely cold conditions. The Whanganui River journey should only be attempted out of the Great Walks season by people who are very experienced in canoeing remote New Zealand rivers in winter.

Care for the Whanganui Journey



Protect nature

Keep your distance and don't feed wildlife. Feeding wildlife is harmful to them. Follow any rules restricting fires, vehicles or boats. No dogs or unpermitted drones allowed.



Keep New Zealand clean

Take all rubbish with you. Use toilets where provided. You can find them at all huts, campsites and shelters.



Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by following the Land Safety Code.

- ▶ Choose the right trip for you.
- ▶ Understand the weather.
- ▶ Pack warm clothes and extra food.
- ▶ Share your plans and take ways to get help.
- ▶ Take care of yourself and each other.



Show respect

Respect others, respect culture. Tīeke Marae/Kāinga is also a functioning marae – make sure you follow tikanga (protocol). Ask for permission before taking photos or videos. Do not drink alcohol at Tīeke Marae/ Kāinga or while on the river. Do not enter Tamatea's Cave, it is wāhi tapu (a sacred place).

