

## Te Araroa Trail – Northbound Guide

# Whanganui

*UPDATE: 5 Oct 2022. The [Mangapurua/Kaiwhakauka Track](#) is currently closed due to slips. This update is not on the official TA site despite the fact that this is part of the official route. It impacts you if you follow my recommended jetboat option (see just below). The alternative would be to continue on a boat to the Whakahoro Landing, and I think the only option there would be to take two jet boat services, as Whanganui River Adventures, at least, only go as far as Mangapurua: so one to Mangapurua and possibly the people at Blue Duck Station at Whakahoro may have a boat coming down river to connect.*

### Bulls to Whanganui: 60.5 km

#### 13. Bulls to Koitiata: 7.5 hrs, 32 km (maps 72, 71, 70)

Note that there is no water source or toilets on this section. From the centre of Bulls head south-west on High St for 5 km (after about 2 km it becomes Parewanui Rd). Turn right into Raumai Rd by the golf course and keep right when it later meets Sandridge Rd. It then becomes Forestry Rd. Turn right a short way in (not left or you will end up on the NZRAF bombing range! Though I'm sure there will be warnings). And then left as you get near the beach. All roads joining it are called Forestry Rd! You then walk north west along the beach.

An alternative (the trail route up until 2019-20) is to turn right into Santoft Rd from Raumai Rd. I'm not sure why the trail has changed, but there is little distance difference. This original route does save you a few km of beach walking, and I'd consider it in windy weather as it can be unpleasant on the beach. So, to take this route, turn left into Fusilier Rd from Santoft Rd after a culvert. This is a forest road through trees heading west. When it ends at a carpark, turn right. The TA map shows this veering right after 1.3 km and your route left onto the beach, but the point is easy to miss. The beach exit is where the sailing ship the Fusilier was wrecked in 1884. There are a number of wrecks along this sandy coast as it was a lee shore, something to be avoided in a sailing vessel. In this case the captain decided to beach the vessel in a storm to save lives. The ship is mostly (or entirely?) covered in sand now.

There is a severe fire risk with the forests above, so no camping in them, nor lighting fires on the beach.

If taking the Fusilier Rd option you can continue along a route that is marked by a buried gas line but note that there are very few points of exit to the beach and there is no hope of scrambling through the thick vegetation behind the beach except on a formed track. If you do stay on this (and it may provide welcome respite from the wind and sun on the beach), you can take a turn-off left just after the Koitiata Stream (not the turn before) and follow a track through the pines and macrocarpas that more or less runs parallel to the gas line but eventually affords access to the beach. It is a bit spooky on this and you wouldn't want to be on it near dusk, especially if the section of about 50 or so of stuffed toys nailed to or placed in the trees along the path I came across in 2000 are still there (a warning? site of an occult ritual?).

Whether you have exited to the beach earlier or from this track, the main thing is to stay inland of the lagoon formed by the Turakina River when you get near Koitiata. This probably only fills to the extent shown on the TA and NZ Topo maps during winter, so you won't see much of it. There is a track in the dunes running parallel to the beach as you near Koitiata but no obvious entry to it from the beach – you will just have to stumble onto it or stay on the beach until the twin road cones elevated on sticks that mark the main beach exit. There is a basic camp ground in Te One St at the small holiday settlement of Koitiata.

- [Koitiata Camp Ground](#) – End of Te One St, Koitiata – 027 281 6691, 022 690 5654. Campsites only, no cabins, no cooking facilities aside from a coin-operated barbecue (which doesn't run long for your money). \$10 honesty box (bring cash) at the 'kitchen' behind the toilets.

#### **14. Koitiata to Whanganui City Bridge: 7 hrs, 29.5 km (maps 69, 68)**

The new route from 2019-20 is to ford the Turakina River at Koitiata. This might only be possible at full low tide at the edge of the ocean when the river is in low flows, but it would be best to ask locals where the best current fording point is, as the river shifts all the time. There may be markers set up for the crossing. Then you continue along the beach further to the next holiday settlement of Whangaehu, and take the road there to SH3. If the Whangaehu River was fordable then you could continue along the beach but I think it is unlikely to be so.

If you don't want to ford the Turakina River head inland from Koitiata along Wainui St, which then becomes Turakina Beach Rd, taking you 8.5 km to SH3 and near Turakina village (400m to the right). There is not much at the village – no shops and the Ben Nevis tavern is closed.

After going up the hill on SH3 after Whangaehu settlement (and passing a pleasant picnic spot half-way up the hill) turn right on Warrengate Rd to No. 2 Line, west of Fordell, and then walk west to Whanganui. You can find a water supply and shade at a church on No. 2 Line just after its intersection with Union Line and Matawara Hill Rd. The route also lets you take the historic [Durie Hill Elevator](#) at the end (bring a \$2 coin). To find the elevator, continue left into Durie St as No. 2 Line (now Portal St) turns right near its end, turn left into Maxwell Ave, then right into Blyth St. At the bottom of the elevator cross the Whanganui City Bridge into Victoria St, the main street in the town.

- [YHA Whanganui](#) (Braemar House) – 2 Plymouth Street, Whanganui. Slightly north of the city centre, close to the river, just below the Dublin St bridge. 06 348 2301. Braemar

House is a B&B in a Victorian Homestead, and the Youth Hostel is operated in a separate building at the back. The hostel offers in-house massage and Reiki healing treatments by appointment.

- [College House](#) – (BBH) 42B Campbell St, Wanganui, slightly closer to town centre than YHA. 021 852100. Dorm rooms and private rooms. Also hire bikes.
- [Hikurangi Stayplace](#) – 1 Mount View Rd, Wanganui, adjacent to the river/Kōwhai Park on the east bank. 06 343 3333. Very affordable dorm rooms and private rooms.
- [Whanganui River TOP 10 Holiday Park](#) – 460 Somme Parade, Whanganui, about 5 km up river from the town centre but is on the TA route. 06 343 8402 or 0800 272 664. Cabins and camping.
- Freedom Camping by Multi Sport Club – 140A Anzac Avenue. This is on the route out of town, but no shops nearby. Toilets though.
- Countdown supermarket, cnr Taupo Quay and Wilson St, just south of City Bridge.
- New World, Countdown and PaknSave – at the western end of Victoria Ave, about 1.3 km from City Bridge.
- Binn In – 200A Victoria Ave (centrally located) for bulk foods.
- Kathmandu – 128 Victoria Ave
- Stirling Sports and Great Outdoors Centre – 68 Victoria Ave. You should be able to get camping gas either here or at Kathmandu.

## Whanganui to Pipiriki: 2–3 days, 78 km

The Whanganui River Road is a winding, sometimes narrow road that follows the river and poses some risk of your being hit by a car. Traffic density is not high (about 15 vehicles/hour in my experience on a weekday, with a higher peak early afternoon), but some of the younger locals are known to drive at high speeds on the road (one died in a car that rolled while I was on the route), so take care. Watch especially for cars that approach from behind at the same time as ones come towards you: their noise will be covered by the car you can see ahead. An alternative is hiring a bicycle. This also presents a risk of being hit, but the time on the road is less. [Mountains to Sea](#) and [Whanganui Tours](#) (06 3444 918) may be able to help with cycle hire. The latter do a mail run up the River Road, so if you need transport it may be worth contacting them.

The small settlements going upriver are, with distances from the centre of Whanganui, Parikino, Atene (36 km), Koroniti (46.4 km) Matawihi (c.53 km), Rānana (58.8 km), Jerusalem (66 km), Pipiriki (78 km). For sights along the way see [The Curious Kiwi site](#).

Note that there are no supermarkets or stores of any consequence from Whanganui all the way through to National Park Village (at least 5 days walking).

The route proposed here takes 2.25 days to Pipiriki, stopping at the Rivertime Lodge, then Jerusalem, followed by an early morning hike to Pipiriki on day three. This gives you the unique experience of staying at the Jerusalem convent and takes into account that you don't have to be at Pipiriki until 10am to catch the jetboat. But you could do it in two days by staying at Otumaire campsite (42 km from Whanganui) and then Pipiriki camp ground (38 km from Otumaire). This is cheaper but involves longer walking days and saves no time, as you still have to wait for the jet boat scheduled departure time on the third day.

### 15. Whanganui to Atene (Rivertime Lodge): 7 hrs, 27 km (maps 68, 67)

You may leave Whanganui via the Dublin St bridge, as it is closer to the backpacker accommodation than the one you came in on (the Whanganui City Bridge at Victoria St). It is pleasant walking on the riverside park, but consider crossing over to the west bank of the river at the Aramoho rail bridge further up, by Eastown Rd. This has a pedestrian walkway, and you will avoid walking along the busy SH4. Cross back on the new cycle/pedestrian bridge further up, 4 km south of Upokongaro.

A very pleasant place to take a breather is 'Behind the Door on 4' café at Upokongaro, 9 km north of Whanganui. From there it is only about 2 km to the turn-off at left from SH4 onto the Whanganui River Road and a welcome reduction in traffic combined with a not-so-welcome 30 mins steep hill climb. The top of this hill is about the last place you will get cellphone reception upriver, so make sure you have your accommodations and river journey all sorted before this point.

Note that the TA maps have km by road from Pipiriki marked in purple in addition to the main sequence of km from Cape Reinga on the river. This is for SoBos who wish to walk the River Road, but still useful for NoBos.

- [Rivertime Lodge](#) – self-contained two-bedroom cottage (sleeps 4), plus three cabins, two with ensuite and one with a kitchenette (\$50pp for the latter) and campsites. 1569 Whanganui River Rd, located about 5 km south of Atene and 29 km north of Whanganui centre, grid ref 5597N or on the 46 km mark from Pipiriki. 021 296 9322. Pre-booking is necessary as no-one lives on-site. Take cash or pay online.
- Otumaire campsite – a sheltered free DoC campsite by the road with toilet and water. Not much river access. About 8km north of Rivertime Lodge on map gridline 5902E.
- [The Flying Fox](#) – Eco friendly cottages, glamping and camping. Access from road is via aerial cableway (\$5 charge). 10 km north of Atene, 500m downstream from Koriniti, 46 km north of Whanganui. Camping from \$15, glamping \$90/couple. Bush setting. Camping may often be exchanged for work instead of cash. 3081 Whanganui River Rd, RD6, 06 927 6809.
- Kohu Cottage – 32 km from Pipiriki (6 km north of Otumaire Campsite). 06 342 8178, [kohu.cottage@xtra.co.nz](mailto:kohu.cottage@xtra.co.nz). (Confirmed correct Oct 2022)

### 16. Atene (Rivertime Lodge) to Jerusalem/Hiruharama: 8.5 hrs, 34 km (maps 67, 66, 65)

Atene (Athens) is just a few houses and a Māori marae (which you can visit). About 12 km further along is the larger settlement of Koriniti (Corinth) with a three-meeting-house marae (koha/donations invited). Matahiwi Gallery and Café is in a disused school about 11 km before Jerusalem or 23 km north of Rivertime Lodge. Opening hours are limited, so check ahead if you are planning to stay there. The school drinking fountain and toilets should be available whether anyone is there or not though. The old flour mill about 1.5 km further on also has toilets and drinking water and is worth a visit. And then there are toilets by the road at Jerusalem.

- Matahiwi Gallery and Café – Whanganui River Rd, 19 km north of Atene, 06 342 8112 or 342 8116. Coffee, cold drinks and plenty of local knowledge and information. Also at the

gallery and café are the Matahiwi Roadside Cabins \$34 (or \$45) per person and tent sites. Book former on Airbnb. Operates seasonally.

- Kauika Campsite – Rānana, behind the marae, 06 342 8061 (Terry).
- [Jerusalem Convent / Backpackers](#) – Whanganui River Rd, Jerusalem, 06 342 8190. Backpacker-standard accommodation. The old convent is really worth staying in. It has a very well equipped kitchen, and the dormitory upstairs is full of character. Each bed has a hospital-style curtain that you pull around for privacy. Toilets are downstairs in a hard-to-spot recess behind the kitchen, by the (also hard to find) stairs. Chances are no-one will be around, so book ahead, and put the fee in the round brass donations thing on the info table, close windows at night to prevent bugs flying in, and clean up after you.
- Ruth Baisley at Jerusalem welcomes campers – 5038 Whanganui River Rd, 06 342 8284. \$15pp/night with toilet and a small shop with hot food, drinks and ice cream.

## Pipiriki to National Park Railway Station: 3 days, 89 km walking

### 17. Jerusalem to Mosley's Campsite: 9 hrs 45 walking, 38 km (maps 65, 64, 62)

Jerusalem to Pipiriki: 2.5 hrs, 10.5 km

Pipiriki is where you need to catch your jetboat to Mangapurua Landing (the Bridge to Nowhere is a short walk from here and is what most jetboat tours advertise). There is a public shelter at Pipiriki with cold water and toilets. There is a very minimal café and shop at the camp ground. You need to be at Pipiriki by 10am for the jetboat.

- [Whanganui River Adventures](#) – operate or are the agents for Pipiriki Camping ground & Cabins & jetboat/canoe transfers. 2522 Pipiriki Village, Pipiriki, 0800 862 743 freephone or 06 385 3246. Bunkroom at campground sleeps 6. Jetboat tours to Bridge to Nowhere (Mangapurua Landing) depart 10.30 daily and arrive at Mangapurua Landing at around 11.45 to 12.00. One-way cost at Oct 2022 is \$105.
- [Bridge to Nowhere Lodge and Tours](#) – they also operate jetboats from Pipiriki to the Bridge to Nowhere, departing 10.30 daily. Their lodge is on the other side of the river and requires a jetboat trip to get there. 0800 480 308 or 06 385 4622.
- [Whanganui River Canoes](#) – 0800 408 888 or 06 385 4176.

The rest of the walking begins at Mangapurua Landing on the [Mangapurua–Kaiwhakauka track](#), along valleys that were offered to resettle soldiers returning from WWI. At a peak there were 46 farms in the two valleys. The settlers cleared the forest to create farm land, but poor access, erosion and falling prices for farm stock during the Depression caused many to abandon their farms. The last few had to leave in 1942 when the government refused to maintain the storm damaged road. Today you can see a few remains of the farm house sites in the form of chimneys and exotic trees and hedges. The famous Bridge to Nowhere was constructed in the mid-1930s to provide access to the Mangapurua Valley farms from the river, but by the time it was finished the valley was deserted and construction of the road down to the river was abandoned.

Mangapurua Landing to Mosley's Campsite: 28 km, 7 hrs 15

If you had a whole day you could walk from the Mangapurua to Whakahoro landing. But you don't. By the time the jet boat gets to Mangapurua landing it is close to 12 noon. Add 40 mins to the Bridge To Nowhere. Then a cup of tea and biscuit at the bridge as part of your jetboat 'tour' and a talk about the history of the place from your driver/guide, and it is 1pm at least. You could take it easy and just walk to Johnson's campsite (3 hrs) and to Whakahoro the next day (6 hrs). I did find it a bit of a stretch to get to Mosley's before nightfall.

Along the 36.5 km route to Whakahoro are various basic camp sites. In order, with distances from Mangapurua Landing, they are: Hellowells (7), Bettjemans (11.5 km), Johnsons (15), Mangapurua Trig (21), Mosley's (28), and finally Whakahoro Camp (37). Mangapurua Campsite, at the beginning, is on the opposite bank from the landing, so of no use to you. The Bridge to Nowhere to Hellowells is about 1 hr; to Johnson's 3 hrs; to Mangapurua Trig 5 hrs; to Mosley's 6.5 hrs; to Whakahoro 9 hrs (the DoC sign claims 13.5 hrs, but I swear I got to Mosley's in 6.5 hrs and it was 2.5 hrs then to Whakahoro the next day).

From the Bridge to Nowhere the track continues along the old road line, crossing numerous streams as the valley progressively opens out. It is easy walking and is popular with cyclists. It is narrow at first due to regrowth and slips, but becomes something you could drive a 4WD vehicle along. The track climbs steadily up the valley along the true left side of the Mangapurua Stream to reach Mangapurua Trig, the highest point in the area (661m), with sweeping views on a clear day. About 1 km after the peak take the left turn down the Kaiwhakauke Track. You could camp at the trig campsite before this point or push on to Mosley's campsite.

At Johnson's there is a fairly large shelter with a tank water (you have to use your foot to pump water out of the taps) and people seem to have set up semi-permanent campsites with arm chairs and tarpaulins. The trig campsite doesn't have any water, but there are toilets and sheltered spots under the trees to camp. At Mosley's access to the stream is difficult but there is tank water at the shelter. There is little flat land for camping and pigs have dug up a lot of the grass. Best to sleep on the wooden shelter floor (it would sleep about 5 or 6 people).

### **18. Mosley's Campsite to war memorial, cnr Oio and Upper Retaruke Rds: 34 km, 8.5 hrs (maps 61, 60)**

The track follows the stream on the true left bank all the way to the Whanganui River. Keep left when the track splits about 1 km after a farm house to avoid crossing over onto the other side of the stream. Care should be taken not to disturb farm stock and to leave gates as you found them. At around map grid 56664N there is a hut with a floor of boulders. Maybe you could sleep on the table in an emergency. There is water a little further on at the Blue Duck Falls, which are well worth a look.

- Whakahoro DoC [campsite](#) and [bunkroom](#) – The large campsite has toilets, tank water and cooking shelters and the bunkroom (a former school by the looks of it) has 10 beds. You now have to book it (\$10) and the campsite during the walking season and backcountry passes can't be used at this time. The hut is commonly used by people setting off early in the day canoeing, so it would pay to book early.
- [Blue Duck Station](#), Whakahoro – This offers a whole variety of tourist and adventure activities as well as accommodation, from the up-market to dorm beds at \$45 in various

facilities (Warrior Lodge, River Quarters, Whio Lodge). They also operate the Blue Duck Café, open 8am to 3pm Thurs to Mon at Whakahoro (4265 Oio Rd). 07 895 6276.

Top up your water at the Whakahoro campsite, as it is now 24.5 km of road walking with few water sources along the Oio Rd (though Isabel at 2350 Oio Rd, not far from the war memorial, offers water and a rest stop to TA walkers). The 18 km portion to Mangaorakei Rd is unsealed and sometimes muddy. Because it is part of the Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail network there are useful km markers along the route. At the 7 km mark there is a line of fruit trees on the left of the road that have some delicious fruit in season (early March onwards).

- War memorial toilet and water – At the junction of Oio with Upper Retaruke Rd there is sculpture of a horse made from horseshoes and a war memorial with a water tap on the fence behind it. Across the road is a toilet. TA hikers have previously camped at the spot by the toilet but the land has recently been sold and is fenced off. I feel it is a bit disrespectful to camp by the memorial itself on the other bit of grass. Also, logging trucks stop here for a toilet break and chances of them seeing your tent may not be high.
- Kaitieke Monument Accommodation – 07 895 6094. This is by the monument, and is a more comfortable and safer option: showers, flushing toilet, meals, tent site, campervan and B&B. (Confirmed correct Oct 2022)

If you are in a hurry to get north and have done Tongariro National Park before you could continue up Oio Rd to reach Owhango. Or to skip even more of the official TA route you could go directly to Taumarunui by heading north-east on the Kawautahi Rd before the Upper Retaruke turn-off and take one of the tramping tracks over the hills at left. Check the NZ Topo map for options. However, the national park must be one of the highlights of the North Island trail so these are not preferred options.

### **19. War memorial at corner of Oio and Upper Retaruke Rds to National Park village: 27 km, 7.5 hrs (maps 60, 59)**

Head south for 12 km on the unsealed Upper Retaruke Rd to Kurua Rd. There is almost no traffic down this stretch. Turn left into Kurua Rd and after 3.5 km this ends and becomes a 4WD track of 7km, climbing up 400m around the side of hills before joining another Kura Rd (or maybe its the other end of one that was never joined up) which then becomes Fisher Rd, and enters the settlement curiously (and unofficially) called National Park ([there is a long story why](#)). This sits on the main trunk railway. Turn left as you come to the railway line and cross it a short distance on (there is no crossing further south) then go east on Carroll St, then south on Ward to get to the railway station or to Findlay St (which has the YHA at its far end). There is a whole host of accommodation in National Park village and not much else besides the petrol station/4 Square store. The store is remarkably extensive and aims to cater to outdoor interests, so you can buy dehydrated food, camping gas, and pretty much anything you should need. There are also good sized supermarkets in Ohakune (35 km away) and more especially Tūrangi (51 km).

- [National Park Backpackers](#) (aka YHA National Park) (BBH) – 4 Findlay St, National Park, 07 892 2870. Well located on the trail, but try to avoid a downstairs room as there is no sound proofing from the rooms above.

- [Howard's Lodge](#) (BBH) – 43 Carroll St, National Park, 07 892 2827. Private and bunk rooms.
- [Manowhenua Lodge](#) (formerly Ski Haus) – Cnr of Carroll and Mackenzie Sts, National Park, 07 892 2854, family, double and backpacker rooms, plus tent sites.
- [Plateau Lodge](#) – 17 Carroll St, National Park Village, 0800 861 861 freephone, or 07 892 2993.
- Four Square, combined with petrol station, corner Waimarino Tokaano Rd and SH47, 7am to 7pm, 07 892 2879. Macrocarpa café and dairy is behind the petrol station and serves evening meals, as do a few other venues in the settlement. It also serves as a NZ Post outlet.
- [KiwiRail Northern Explorer train](#) – departs National Park northbound Friday, Sunday, Tuesday at 1.15pm; southbound Monday, Thursday, Saturday at the same time.
- [Intercity buses](#) – depart 3pm for Ohakune, Whanganui and points south; 1.20pm for Waitomo and points north.
- Tongariro Expeditions – Shuttle service to the Tongariro Crossing to/from Taupo, Tūrangi, Mangatepopo, Ketetahi, Whakapapa. 07 377 0435, [info@tongariroexpeditions.com](mailto:info@tongariroexpeditions.com). Multiple return times from the northern end of the track (6 kms from the Holiday Park).
- [Tongariro Crossing Shuttles](#) – National Park to Mangatepopo, Whakapapa, etc, 07 892 2870, 0800 861 861.
- And the list goes on for shuttles around the Tongariro National Park: Tūrangi Alpine Shuttles, National Park Shuttles, Summit Shuttles, Matai Shuttles, etc

## Tongariro National Park

### 20. National Park village to Mangatepopo Hut: 29 km, 8 hrs 45 (maps 58, 57)

National Park village to Whakapapa village: 20 km, 6 hrs

Walk 6.5 km on the busy SH47 east of National Park village to the turn-off at right to the Mangahuia track and head 500m up to the [Maungahuia camp site](#). This is a popular spot with a cooking shelter, toilets, water and many sheltered campsites. You are supposed to book in advance if you plan to stay here.

Keep going up hill, crossing a number of streams that can be difficult after rain. The track begins through tussock and scrub and then moves into bush to become a typical NZ tramping track carpeted with many roots to stumble or climb over. Then you turn left onto the Whakapapaiti track. This crosses open tussock and a bridge over the Whakapapaiti Stream before passing through groves of kaikawaka and tī kōuka (cabbage trees) amongst the beech forest. The track can be boggy when wet. Take care drinking from streams, both here and elsewhere in the Tongariro National Park, as some are heavily mineralised and contain toxic metals from volcanic sources.

Whakapapa village is the gateway to skiing and hiking in the Tongariro National Park. Accommodation options are varied but eating is a bit limited and resupply is not feasible (the camp store sells mainly ice blocks and a few muesli bars). For things to do, see the DoC website. If you want to depart from the TA trail and do some hikes you could consider the two

round-the-mountain routes (one around Mt Ngāuruhoe – the Tongariro Northern Circuit (3 days) – the other around Mt Ruapehu (5 days) or the Tama Lakes (5-6 hrs return). Note that the Tongariro Northern Circuit takes in the Tama Lakes and part of it is on the TA route (but you will need to repeat the section of the TA because it is a circuit that brings you back to Whakapapa). Climbing Mt Ruapehu is also an option, but the route is not marked and you need to be prepared for walking in snow and for cold, windy conditions on the top. Having a favourable weather forecast is essential. And Māori iwi (tribe) Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro are now asking people to respect the sacred nature of the National Park's three main peaks by not climbing them. The same goes for bathing in lakes and rivers.

- National Park Visitor Centre, Whakapapa village, open 8 am to 5pm in summer. Good for daily weather updates, plus has interpretive displays about the park.
- [Whakapapa Holiday Park](#) – Bruce Rd, self contained cabins (sleep up to 6, \$80 for cabin), bunkroom, campervan and tent sites. All very reasonably priced with good shared kitchen and bathrooms, and very basic camp store. The website may only allow booking the bunkroom as a whole for a group, but if that is the case, just phone up and ask about one bunk – they do allow that. If camping, note that it is alpine here, so can be cold at night in a tent. 07 892 3897.
- [Skotel Alpine Resort](#) – Ngarauhoe Terrace, Whakapapa village. A hotel with a backpacker wing, including shared bathrooms, kitchen, lounge. Bunkrooms are sold on a room-only basis with the cheapest seeming to be a room with a double bed at \$85 (Oct 2022). 0800 756 835; 07 892 3719.
- [Chateau Tongariro](#) – Whakapapa village. A heritage hotel if you feel like splashing out on some luxury. Not as expensive as you might think, with rooms from \$153 up to about three times this amount (as at Oct 2022). Guests are generally very well heeled, so a certain standard of dress is expected. 07 892 3809

Places to eat at Whakapapa include a food truck by the holiday camp store offering burgers and fried food; various expensive eateries in the Chateau including high tea (no tramping boots allowed); the Skotel (evenings only); NZ's highest café, Koll Ridge Café (2020m but you need to get up to the top of Bruce Rd at the base of the ski area (possible by shuttle) and then a ski lift, which operates some hours during the peak summer holiday season); Lorenz's (also at top of Bruce Rd); and the Tussock Bar and Restaurant, downhill from the Chateau, with pub fare of pizzas, burgers, fish and chip meals (average price for each of these \$25), open from 2pm.

At first look, Whakapapa Village could be a good place to spend the night. But the issue then is the following day, for unless you just do the 2.5 to 3 hrs walk to Mangatepopo Hut and stay there, you are faced with a long day (a bit over 10 hours, including long ascents and descents) of getting to the Tongariro Holiday Park from Whakapapa over the Tongariro Crossing, unless you do some fiddle with shuttle transport and skip the walk to Mangatepopo or from Ketetahi to the holiday park. You are also not supposed to top up with water at the Mangatepopo Hut if you are not staying (there is a warden), so you will need to take a full supply from Whakapapa.

[Whakapapa to Mangatepopo Hut \(20 bunks\): 9 km, 2 hrs 45](#)

The track begins at the end of Ngāuruhoe Terrace, above the Chateau Tongariro grounds, at Whakapapa. It crosses open tussock country. You could consider doing the side trip to the

Taranaki Falls on the way (can be done as a loop if you take the upper track to the falls from Whakapapa). The Mangatepopo Hut is a Great Walks hut, and though not as expensive as some (\$36 for NZers, \$56 Internationals for 2022-23 season), does require [booking](#) in the summer season (mid-Oct to end of April). Expect it to be fully booked over the Christmas holiday period well into January. It has gas cooking and a campsite (\$16 / \$24).

## **21. Mangatepopo Hut to Tongariro Holiday Park (Tongariro Crossing): 27 km, 7.5 hrs (map 56)**

[Mangatepopo Hut to Ketetahi carpark: 5.5 hours, 18.5 km](#)

The Tongariro Crossing is a justly famous walk, traversing an active volcanic area with spectacular, Mars-like scenery and intensely coloured lakes. However, it is also an alpine zone, and the weather can turn bad quickly. Winter travel will require full alpine gear, including crampons, etc. Check the weather forecast at Whakapapa Visitor Centre before you begin. Note that water sources are highly mineralised and not fit to drink (it is 'mineral water' but not the sort that is good for you). There is a rainwater supply at Mangatepopo Hut if you are staying there, and there are toilets all along the crossing. The other point to note is that it is an extremely popular walk, in part because no overnight stay is required. Expect to see hordes of people (over 1,000 per day in good weather), but unlike SoBos you will at least will be going with the flow, as NoBo is the DoC recommendation here. The first shuttle buses drop people off at about 6.30am at the Mangatepopo carpark, and they will be passing the hut within 20 to 30 minutes, so you need to start from the hut before 7am if you want the track to yourself. There is a plan to limit numbers by introducing a booking system for the walk itself for the 2022-23 summer, but local businesses are opposed so it may be delayed to the following summer. Best to [check the DoC site](#).

The route begins with a gradual incline to the base of the Devil's Staircase. There is a short diversion to the soda springs here. The more or less literal Staircase is a long, hard slog. Then you are on south crater. If you have the time and energy you could climb the active volcano Mt Ngāuruhoe (Mt Doom from the *Lord of the Rings* movies) but, as noted earlier, hapū Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro are asking people to respect the mountain and not climb to its summit. DoC supports this request. If you do choose to go up, it is a tough, one hour scramble and there is the danger of tumbling rocks dislodged by climbers above you. There is no marked route up. It is best to climb one of the rocky ridges, where there is solid ground, otherwise the loose scoria makes it like climbing in shingle. On the other hand, a very fast descent can be made by taking giant running steps down the loose slopes (great fun if you have the nerve). Expect your shoes/boots to suffer some shredding from the sharp rocks in any case. Some recommend wearing tough gardening gloves to protect your hands too. Taking walking poles may or may not be a good idea.

Back on the track, it is then a steep climb to the highest point (1886m) on the crossing. Next it is a steep descent on very loose material. As with climbing Ngāuruhoe, expect your shoes/boots to fill with scoria unless you are wearing gaiters and the best approach is to run down in leaps (by using your walking poles you can kind of ski down). You pass the amazingly coloured Emerald Lakes (former craters) and then the Blue Lake to sidle around North Crater. It's downhill all the way from here to the car park, ending in a pleasant passage through forest.

Ketetahi carpark to Tongariro Holiday Park: 2 hrs, 8.5 km

SH46 is 1.5 km from the car park. Turn left into it, then after 6 km, left into SH47 and 300m down the road is Tongariro Holiday Park. Or you can take a shuttle from the Ketetahi carpark to the holiday park or Tūrangi if you book ahead.

- [Tongariro Family Holiday Park](#) – State Highway 47, 07 386 8062. Cabins and camping. Minimum 2 night stays applies at peak times.

Always check the Trail Status pages of the official Te Araroa website for recent changes or alerts on the trail.

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*Header photo: Duane Wilkins, Creative Commons*