

Plan and prepare

TONGARIRO NORTHERN CIRCUIT



Duration: 3–4 days
Distance: 45.2km (loop)



Great Walks season:
23 October 2020 – 30 April 2021



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

TONGARIRO NORTHERN CIRCUIT

This World Heritage site is a landscape of stark contrasts. You'll pass alpine vegetation, lush forest, tranquil lakes and desert-like plateaux, with amazing views at every turn.

As the circuit winds past Mount Tongariro and Mount Ngāuruhoe, you will be dazzled by dramatic volcanic landscapes and New Zealand's rich geological and ancestral past.

The Tongariro Northern Circuit can be hiked in either direction. The track is well marked and signposted, but some sections may be steep, rough or muddy. This brochure describes a 4-day clockwise alpine hike for independent, non-guided walkers, starting and finishing at Whakapapa Village, during the Great Walks season (23 October 2020 – 30 April 2021).

Information about parking restrictions is available from the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre or the website at www.doc.govt.nz/tongarironortherncircuit-gettingthere.



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

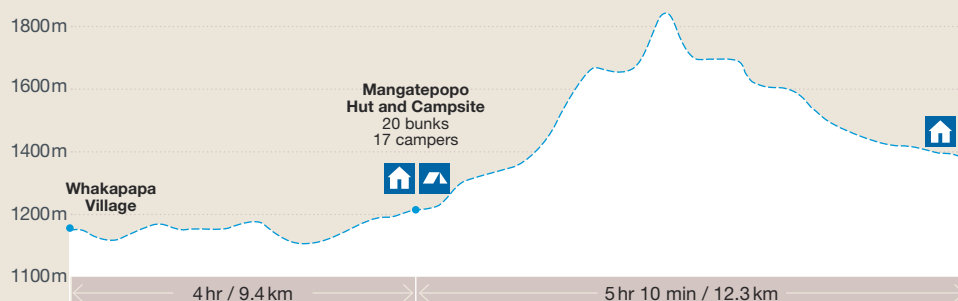


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Elevation profile & track guide



Day 1: Whakapapa Village to Mangatepopo Hut



Day 2: Mangatepopo Hut to Oturere Hut

4 hours, 9.4 km

Your journey begins by making your way across the eroded plains of the Tongariro volcanic complex, a series of explosion craters and volcanic cones and peaks. Venturing through a landscape carved out by ancient lava flows and stream beds, you'll be dwarfed by the massive cone of Mount Ngāuruhoe on your right. For the final hour the track leads you around Pukekaikiore, one of Tongariro's older steam vents, before reaching Mangatepopo Hut.

5 hours 10 min, 12.3 km

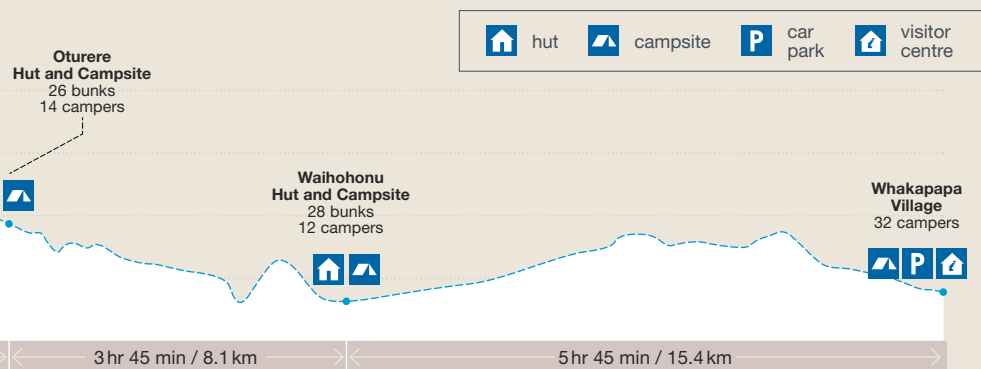
You join the popular Tongariro Alpine Crossing on the second day, crossing remnants of lava flows and climbing steeply up to the top of Red Crater. Here you'll be dazzled by Emerald Lakes (Ngā Rotopounamu), and a side trip (30-minute return) will take you to the equally amazing Blue Lake (Te Wai Whakaata o te Rangihīroa). These lakes are tapu, or sacred, to Ngāti Tuwharetoa. Please do not touch the water. You'll then leave the Alpine Crossing track and descend into Oturere valley. Along this track, you'll pass through a landscape of other-worldly lava forms before reaching Oturere Hut.

COVER: Emerald Lakes, *Daniel Deans*

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: Mangatepopo Hut, ©Luc Betbeder; Emerald Lakes, DOC/90 Seconds; Waihohehu Hut, *Janette Asche*; Tramping under a rainbow, *Janette Asche*

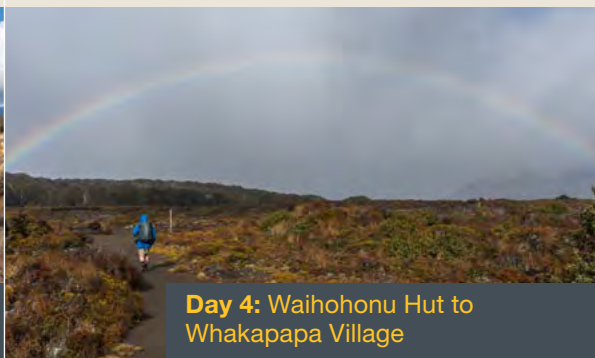
RIGHT: Mount Tongariro, *Bubs Smith*; Pare (artwork), *Hayz Isherwood*

MAIN PHOTO: View to Mount Ngāuruhoe, *Brendan Bombaci* (www.kairologic.com)



3 hours 45 min, 8.1 km

On day three the circuit continues through this unique environment. After crossing stream valleys and open gravel fields, the track descends into a beech-forested valley and crosses a branch of the Waihohonu Stream. A steep climb takes you to the top of the ridge where you'll spot tonight's stay at Waihohonu Hut.



5 hours 45 min, 15.4 km

On your final day, you'll head west towards Tama Saddle. On reaching the Tama Saddle, a detour will take you to the beautiful Tama lakes (Ngā Puna a Tama) – empty craters now filled with azure blue water. From here, you'll pass the tumbling Taranaki Falls before returning to your starting point at Whakapapa Village.



Tongariro, shrouded in alpine mists, its gnarled and battle-scarred majesty reaching to the sky. Ancient stories of epic bygone battles, thunder and lightning relive the time when the Great Mountains fought for the hand of the beautiful Pihanga. Tongariro emerged victorious. A story of love and devotion that has spanned millennia, from before the ancient mists of time, from a time where the mountains ruled upon the land.

This is the world of Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro. These are the stories of Ngāti Tuwharetoa and, more importantly, these are memories of our mountains, of our Gods and of our tribal history and identity. They are carried on each mountain breath, every facet of the landscape reflects this epic past, each shadow holds a story, each breeze carries the whispers of yesterday. Tongariro the spring of passion, Tongariro the devoted lover, Tongariro the source of life-giving waters, Tongariro the Warrior Mountain, Tongariro the soul of Tuwharetoa.

We the Tangata Whenua – The People of the Land – welcome you to our world. It is a world of reciprocity and respect, of guardianship and devotion, of stunning landscapes and epic stories, of deep reverence and spirituality. May the guardians of our mountains keep you safe, may the memory of this experience lie warm in your hearts forever.



Ko Ngāti Tuwharetoa te Iwi
Ngāti Tuwharetoa is the tribe

Ko Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro te Hapū
Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro is the sub-tribe

Te Ngaehe Wanikau
(on behalf of Te Rūnanganui o
Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro)





Places to stay

DOC operates 3 huts with campsites nearby along the Tongariro Northern Circuit, which **must be booked in advance during the Great Walks season** (23 October 2020 – 30 April 2021). Whakapapa Holiday Park is a Serviced campsite. See www.doc.govt.nz/campsites for details.



Photo: Janette Asche

Great Walks huts

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

During the Great Walks season the huts have bunks, mattresses, heating, toilets, basic gas cooking facilities, solar-powered lighting and cold running water. A DOC ranger is in residence. The huts do not provide food, cooking utensils or showers.

Outside the Great Walks season facilities are greatly reduced and there are no DOC rangers. Bookings are not required, huts and campsites are first come, first served and fees are reduced. See the DOC website for details.

Great Walks campsites

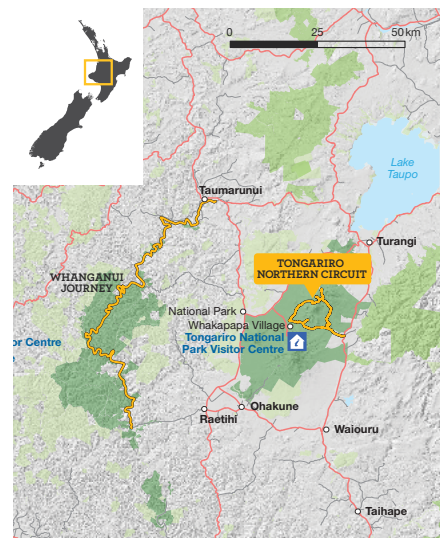
Visit www.doc.govt.nz/tongarironortherncircuit for prices.

The campsites offer basic facilities including toilets, sinks and a water supply. Some also have picnic tables. Campers may use hut facilities, though not the beds.

Getting there

The Tongariro Northern Circuit can be accessed from the following locations:

- Whakapapa Village (SH48)
- Mangatepopo Road (off SH47)
- Ketetahi Road (SH46)
- Desert Road (SH1, 35 km south of Turangi)



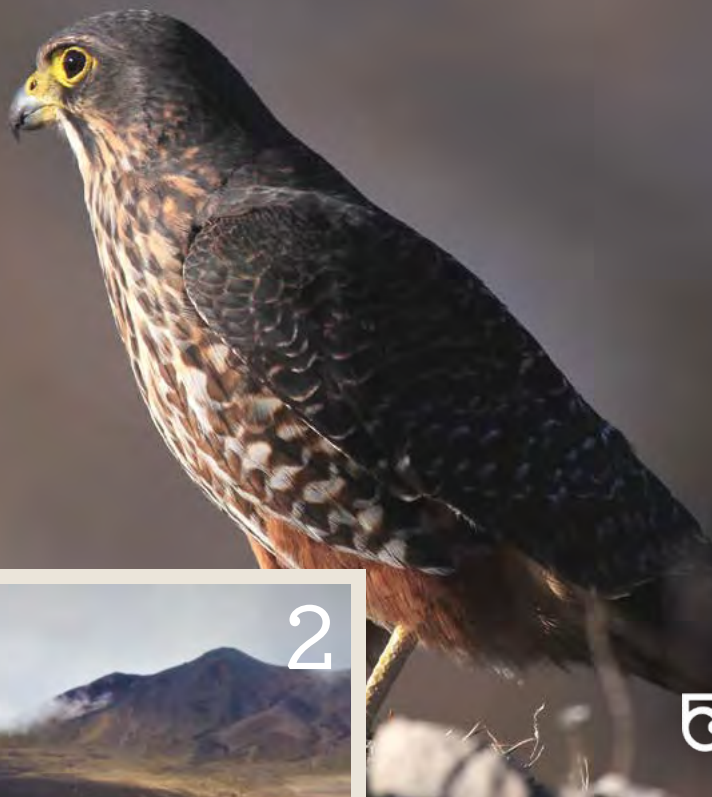


Photo: Peter Langlands

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



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atarehau



Photo: Pauline Sallet



Photo: Kathrin and Stefan Marks



Photo: Janette Asche



Photo: Tony Fernandez

1 Look for the **New Zealand falcon/kārearea**, capable of flying at speeds over 100 km/h and catching prey up to 6 times their body weight.

2 Brush up on your **botanical** knowledge – the plants in the area vary considerably: alpine herbs, tussocks, flaxes, low-growing shrubs, dense beech forests and, during summer, beautiful and unique alpine flowers.

3 Take in **Taranaki Falls**. Tumbling over the edge of a large lava flow that erupted from Ruapehu 15,000 years ago, the falls plunge 20 metres into a boulder-ringed pool.

4 Drop into the historic **Waihohonu Hut**, the oldest existing mountain hut in New Zealand. It was the first hut built in Tongariro National Park in 1904, and the base for the first recreational skiing in the park. It was used for over 60 years.

5 Side trip to Tama lakes (Ngā Puna a Tama) (1,314 m)

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

Two in-filled explosion craters are named after Tamatea, the high chief of the Tākitimu canoe, who explored the area six centuries ago. At Lower Tama, volcanic debris is slowly washing in and filling the crater.



Beware of strong crosswinds on the ridgelines up to the Upper Tama lake lookout.

What do I do next?



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

BOOK

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



Book your transport to and from the track with approved DOC shuttle operators: contact the Whakapapa i-SITE on +64 7 892 3075.



Buy your food and **pack your bags** – download the Great Walks packing list and make sure you have everything you need for a 4-day independent unguided walk.



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



Check the weather at metSERVICE.com/mountain/tongariro-national-park and make sure you've downloaded and printed your **ticket and official track guide**. You can also get a track guide and the latest weather updates from the Tongariro National Park Visitor Centre.



All set! Lace up your boots and get hiking. Don't forget to share your experience on facebook.com/docgovtnz.

For in-depth local knowledge, visit:

Tongariro National Park
Visitor Centre

Phone: +64 7 892 3729

Email: tongarirovc@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz/great-walks

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This publication is produced using paper sourced from well-managed, renewable and legally logged forests.

Know before you go

It is **important** to plan your trip thoroughly to make sure you stay safe. Before you go, know the **Outdoor Safety Code** – 5 Simple rules to help you #MakeltHomeNZ.

1. **Plan your trip.** Choose a trip that fits your abilities. Make sure you have enough time to do your walk, plus extra time. Book accommodation, transport and transfers to the start/end of the track early.
2. **Tell someone your plans.** Tell someone where you are going and when you'll be back. Ask them to call emergency services if you haven't returned on time. Consider carrying a personal locator beacon, as there is no cellphone reception on most tracks.
3. **Be aware of the weather.** New Zealand's weather is very changeable. Even if it's summer or the forecast is good, you should always carry a

rain jacket and warm clothing. Check metSERVICE.com for the most up-to-date forecast.

4. **Know your limits.** A good level of fitness is needed to walk the track. Read about the track carefully to make sure it suits your abilities. Always follow the track markers and signposted tracks – going off-track can be hazardous, even for experienced walkers. Don't be afraid to turn back.
5. **Take sufficient supplies.** Take the right gear, including extra food, clothing and equipment in case something goes wrong. You'll have to carry everything you need, as you can't buy food or equipment at Great Walks huts or campsites.

You can find more information on safety at www.doc.govt.nz/safety or www.adventuresmart.nz.

Safety on the Tongariro Northern Circuit

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- This track is not recommended for children under the age of 10 due to the exposed mountain environment and weather that can change quickly.
- The Tongariro Northern Circuit is difficult terrain – most of it is open, exposed and on uneven track surfaces.
- The weather can change suddenly, from warm and sunny to cold and wet with strong winds of more than 60 km/hr that can make the track dangerous. Dress warmly as wind-chill danger is worse at these times.

- In 1887, Ngāti Tuwharetoa's tuku of the sacred peaks of Tongariro, Ngāuruhoe, and part of Ruapehu to the people of New Zealand created the Tongariro National Park. Climbing Mount Ngāuruhoe and Mount Tongariro breaches the tuku, and is also discouraged because of its unique hazards and environment. Contact the Tongariro Visitor Centre for more information.
- Go to www.doc.govt.nz/tongarirontherncircuit '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

Volcanic risk

The Tongariro Northern Circuit passes through volcanic hazard zones – even when the track is open, volcanic risk is present. Volcanic monitoring systems monitor activity and mitigate volcanic risk, but won't ensure your personal safety. If you are uncomfortable with this risk, choose a different track. Both Red Crater and Ngāuruhoe vents have been active within the last 100 years.

Before you go:

- know the volcanic risks and what to do in an eruption, and
- check volcanic activity information on the Geonet website (geonet.org.nz).

Geothermal hazards

There is geothermal activity near Emerald Lakes. Steam vents (fumaroles) should not be approached – steam is very hot, the ground can be unstable, and severe burns are possible. Stay on the marked track at all times to avoid injury.



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, avalanches and short daylight hours.

To attempt the track in winter conditions, you need to be very experienced in backcountry winter navigation, have river crossing expertise and the appropriate alpine skills and equipment.

Hut facilities are greatly reduced – with no cooking gas, limited water and no hut wardens or emergency hut radios.

For more information, see 'Outside the Great Walks season' at www.doc.govt.nz/tongarirontherncircuit.