

TUPAPAKURUA FALLS and RETARUKE

Topo50 Map: BH33 Retaruke & BH34 Raurimu

GPS: NZTM on WGS84

How to get to START:

- Exit Taupo southwards on **SH1** to Turangi
- In Turangi take **SH41** towards Tokaanu and turn left to **SH47**
- Pass the turn off to Whakapapa in 1:10min
- Turn right on to **SH4** at National Park in 1:17min
- Turn Left off **SH4** into Carroll Street, proceed to near the end
- Turn left into Station Road
- Park at NATIONAL PARK station (**01814masl**) in 1:20 – 1:30 min and 100km from Taupo – this offers fairly safe parking if required.

Rough description. This location offers alternatives:

- The Tupapakuria Falls and return to National Park in 4 – 6 hours
- Walk the length of Fisher Road down to Retaruke in about 4 – 5 hours
- Tupapakuria Falls then down the road to Retaruke in about 6-8 hours

Alternative 1 is a moderate out-and-back tramp of 13km to view a wonderful waterfall. With this target the walk is best done when it is or has been raining but this means the track will be slippery and tricky after the halfway point to the end since only the first section of track has been upgraded

Alternative 2 is a much easier, if slightly longer, walk and is all on the paper road which starts as gravel near National Park as Fishers Road. The road becomes slippery and muddy in the middle sections and ends up as a superb “green” road on the approaches to Retaruke

Alternative 3 is for the hardened trampers as it includes the descent and slightly grunty re-ascent from the falls before continuing down the road to Retaruke. Distance wise this involves 19+km plus quite a lot of altitude gain and loss and requires around 6-7 hours.

For alternatives 2 and 3 someone has to move the transport round to Retaruke to pick up the trampers – the tramp routes are shown in red and the road 37km to and from Retaruke, via Raurimu, in blue opposite.

Detail: As described above it takes a bit over an hour to cover the 100km from Taupo to the Station in National Park where there is safe parking plus the possibility of a hot meal or coffee and cakes if the out-and-back Alternative 1 is done. If desired the walk parallel to the railway can be avoided by getting dropped at the top of Fishers Road.

From the Railway Station car park head off North on the road which parallels the railway line for ten minutes then turn left to cross the railway, left again then right into Fishers Road where a signboard for Waimariri Scientific Reserve will be seen on the left. Fishers Road is gravel, quite rough in places with a loose surface, not maintained by Ruapehu Council and does get closed in wet weather.

A short distance down Fishers Road there is a small track off to the right (**03818masl**) which leads to a wetland area and just after this there is a sign for Erua Forest (**04831masl**) on the right. In about 40 minutes from the station there is a small track off left (**05851masl**) uphill on an upgraded track sign-posted Tupapakuria Falls.

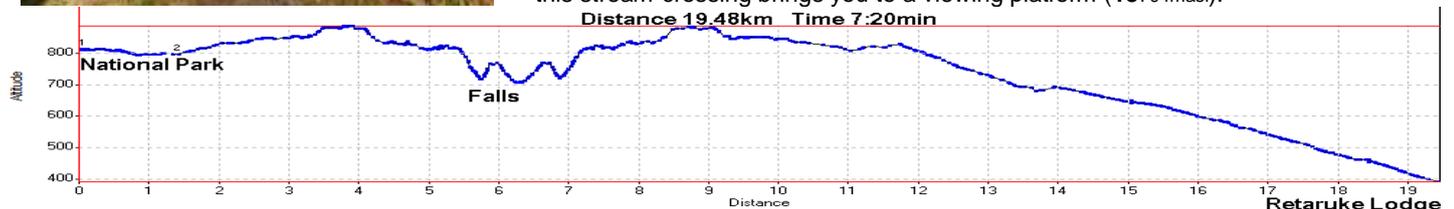
The track offers easy walking, albeit slightly uphill; through lush forest basically heading S to SSW over undulating terrain. There is a change in direction to WNW just past the start of an old log skid (**06884masl**) on the left. One of the high points of the day, the Taranaki Lookout (**07881masl**), is reached in about 1 hour 10 minutes and can make a good morning tea / coffee stop whilst enjoying the views from the seats.

Start of upgraded track to Tupapakuria

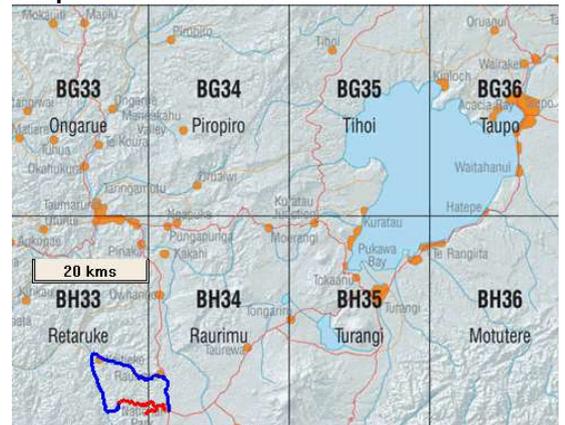


From here the track is not quite so good and a certain amount of care has to be exercised, especially in wet conditions, as the slopes can be slippery in this area of more mature forest with several impressive trees. Another relatively high point (**08810masl**) is reached in under 2 hours where the sound of running water can be heard and a steep zig zagging descent starts. Fifteen minutes down into the valley there is a stream to cross (**09714masl**) and a small information notice before heading off to left and uphill; the aim now is to head round and get a view of the canyon with the waterfall.

Fifteen minutes further on there is very thick, dense forest on quite strongly sloping (rolling) terrain (**10761masl**) and the waterfall can be heard; then there is a tricky, steep zig zagging descent. The less sure-footed find the next stream crossing (**12702masl**) slightly daunting; this is over a small, rocky gurgling stream but there are ample footholds though caution still has to be exercised. A short ascent from this stream-crossing brings you to a viewing platform (**13704masl**).



Taupo to National Park



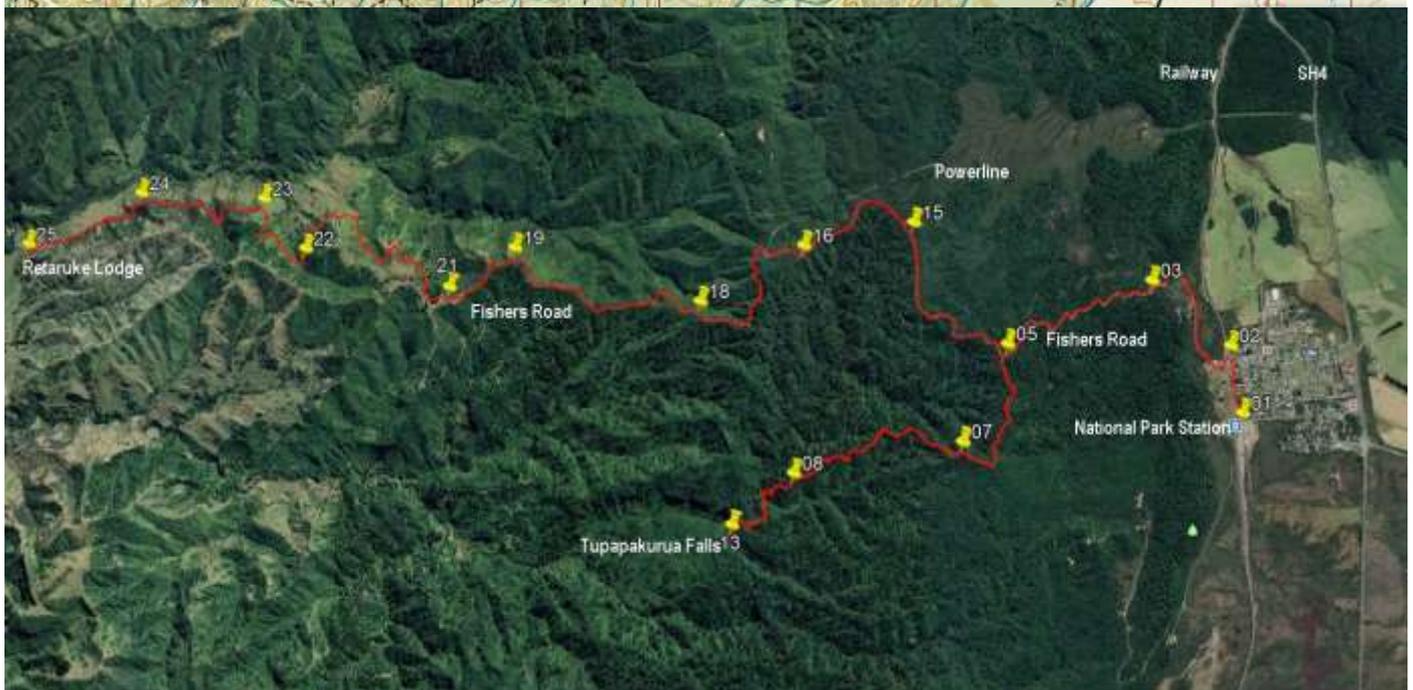
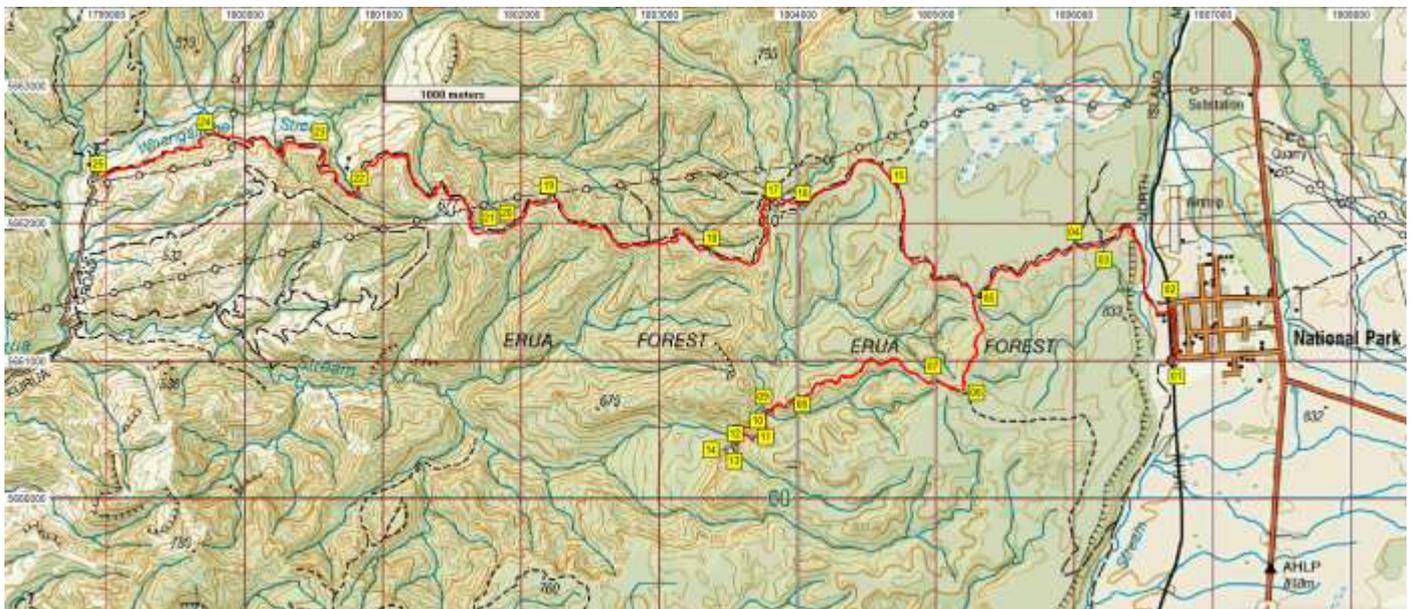
National Park to falls, Retaruke & back



Red line = tramp route Blue line = motorable roads

National Park Station





| Name | Easting | Northing | Alt... | Description |
|------|---------|----------|--------|--|
| 01 | 1806747 | 5660992 | 814 | Car Park at National Park Station |
| 02 | 1806696 | 5661417 | 810 | 15min (485m); walk due N, turn left over railway, left again then immediately right to Fisher Road |
| 03 | 1806215 | 5661838 | 818 | 27min (1.57km); track off right on Fishers Road to wetland area (20mins) |
| 04 | 1806004 | 5661837 | 831 | 30min (1.79km); renovated sign for Erua Forest |
| 05 | 1805291 | 5661462 | 851 | 42min (2.80km); off left uphill (S) on upgraded track to Tupapakurua Falls |
| 06 | 1805193 | 5660772 | 884 | 1:02min (3.62km); change to WNW direction with old " Log Skid" off on the LHS |
| 07 | 1804986 | 5660859 | 881 | 1:07min (3.85km); Taranaki Lookout with views to the South and seats for a coffee break |
| 08 | 1803936 | 5660690 | 810 | 1:50min (5.24km); high point above steep zig zag descent and the sound of running water |
| 09 | 1803750 | 5660640 | 714 | 2:02min (5.57km); stream line crossing then left uphill to work round head of canyon |
| 10 | 1803709 | 5660460 | 761 | 2:14min (5.76km); very thick forest in undulating area, hear waterfall then zig zags steeply down |
| 11 | 1803669 | 5660451 | 753 | 2:18min (5.93km); T-junction with left branch being a new, less steep descent |
| 12 | 1803550 | 5660366 | 702 | 2:30min (6.24km); steep descent and re-ascent with tricky crossing of small gurgling, stream line |
| 13 | 1803539 | 5660374 | 704 | 2:32min (6.27km); view of Tupapakurua Falls and the canyon - good lunch spot |
| 14 | 1803479 | 5660355 | 712 | 3:00min (6.36km); end of narrow ridge 5 mins beyond viewpoint with good all round views of area |
| 15 | 1804733 | 5662245 | 824 | 5:00min (10.79km); on Fishers Road, Y-fork with older road on RHS |
| 16 | 1804039 | 5662116 | 829 | 5:20min (11.74km); Clear footpath off left |
| 17 | 1803827 | 5662137 | 809 | 5:25min (11.99km); junction and road heading off steeply uphill to right. Head downhill |
| 18 | 1803377 | 5661791 | 731 | 5:40min (12.98km); old danger-sign tape at steep drop-off road on RHS |
| 19 | 1802200 | 5662173 | 671 | 6:05min (14.48km); gate with security cameras warning! Very close to power lines |
| 20 | 1801897 | 5661976 | 649 | 6:15min (14.91km); farm track |
| 21 | 1801771 | 5661936 | 646 | 6:20min (15.05km); Y-fork with Private land straight ahead and signed Public Road off right |
| 22 | 1800828 | 5662220 | 559 | 6:40min (16.79km); small access road off right, then Punga lined road |
| 23 | 1800546 | 5662561 | 516 | 6:50min (17.43km); deer fence with gate below telephone line! |
| 24 | 1799716 | 5662632 | 455 | 7:05min (18.47km); first view of Retaruke Lodge after endless, winding "green road" |
| 25 | 1798942 | 5662325 | 389 | 7:20min (19.48km); gravel road at gate to Retaruke Lodge |

After this it is well worth while spending 5 minutes continuing to the SW past an old bivouac site along to the snout (**14 712masl**) of a narrow ridge where an even better view of the canyon and falls can be obtained as well as views to the west and south. From here it is about 1:15 minutes back to Fishers Road where the choice is right for National Park or left for Retaruke

Tupapakurua Falls

The paper road – gravel / mud and grass



Basically it is a downhill walk from here all the way down into the Whangairehe Stream valley at the top end of Kurua Road where there is a lodge with impressive fencing and gates. From where Fishers Road is rejoined the surface is still gravel but slowly it becomes hard packed earth, exposed sedimentary rock and eventually the surface is very pleasant to walk on as it is grass. After 15 minutes on the road a series of branch or sides roads are found (**15824masl**) whilst at around 4 hours a track is clearly seen going off to the left (**16829masl**) – the map appears to show that this rejoins the road further down. Soon after this there is a major junction (**17809masl**) with the right branch heading off steeply uphill – this is not the route so take the left branch. Gradually the scenery improves and there are some impressive drop-offs on the right hand side of the road (**18731masl**). Soon after the grass-road starts winding about, a gate (**19671masl**) is encountered with a warning about Security Cameras Operating; this is at a point where the road and the power lines converge. Once on the farm land there are many vermin traps to be seen and in springtime there are great shows of Clematis and Bush Lawyer blossom.

Bush Lawyer blossom



The whole area is now most attractive and the green road can be seen winding down the hill for miles ahead; there is a clear junction (**21646masl**) at around 6 hours walking with a yellow sign indicating the public road goes to the right. There are now Punga edging the road then a clear view of the settled area is obtained. Note that there are still telephone poles with wires attached – a good example can be seen at the next gate (**23516masl**) with attached deer fence.

There is now a feeling that this winding grass road never ends but at around 7 hours there is a first glimpse (**24455masl**) of a large, modern house further down the valley and soon after the house – assumed to be Retaruke Lodge – is reached at the top end of Kurua Road (**25389masl**) where, if all has worked out to plan, transport should be waiting to whisk the weary legs back to National Park via Raurimu.

Winding green road



Retaruke Lodge



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| Notes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>GPS Garmin GPSmap 60CSx</i> • <i>WP = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit</i> • <i>masl = metres above sea level</i> |
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