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KING COUNTRY & TARANAKI

Ruakuri Natural Cavern
Waikawau Tunnel
Rerekapa Track



New Plymouth Te Henui
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Koru Pa



Mount Pureora
Mt Titiraupenga
Whitecliffs Walkway



The Plateau
York Historic Circuit
Dawson Falls
Fantams Peak
Mt Taranaki

Ruakuri Natural Cavern

A labyrinth of limestone

Tunnels, caves, disappearances

Great for kids

Excellent picnic and lunch spot

1 hour return

Gravel track, tunnels, steps

2 kilometres return

From Highway 3 drive 8 km to Waitomo resort, 1 km to Tumutumu Road, and 2 km to a large carpark beside the Waitomo Stream. Shelter, picnic tables, toilets and information boards.

From Waitomo to the Marokopa coast, you can find caves, tunnels, archways, tomo (the Maori word for sinkholes), 'disappearances' where water runs underground, and the attractive 'karren', limestone water-sculpted rocks. It's a strange, baffling landscape, and Ruakuri Natural Cavern is the best.

The commercial aspects of Waitomo are overwhelming, with numerous options from glowworms to blackwater-rafting. DOC oddly calls the cavern walk the 'Ruakuri Bush Walk', but it's much more than that, and it's free.

This walk swings from the carpark into a moist gorge and around a gantry over the Waitomo gorge above the downstream entrance of the natural tunnel. The



track dives through a 'squeeze' then over the top of a natural 'bridge' and down to several spectacular lookout points.

It is somewhat bewildering. One spectacular viewpoint is from a platform right inside the natural tunnel itself. Back in the daylight there is a lookout at the up-stream end of the tunnel, then the track returns to the carpark by a devilish route. It crosses the natural bridge again, drops down steps and platforms, and twists underneath these in a spiral through another limestone 'squeeze'. At last the track settles down to a calm run back over the footbridge onto the main track.



Mangapohue Arch

The Mangapohue Arch is along the Marokopa road some 20 km to the sign-posted carpark. Toilet, information boards, 30 minutes (1 km) return Mangapohue Arch. A 17 m archway, with clusters of stalactites on the roof and a smaller archway inside the main one.

Waikawau Tunnel

Historic stock tunnel

Black sands and dark cliffs

Rolling surf and rock formations

Best with low tide

1 hour return

Beach

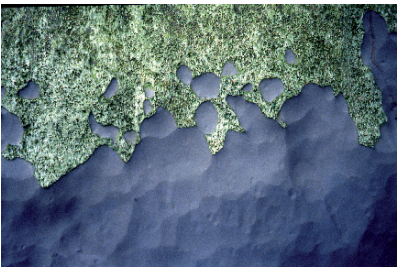
2 kilometre return

From Highway 3 just after Awakino, take the Manganui Road 25 km to Waikawau, turn off 4 km to carpark.

The journey to Waikawau is much longer than the walk. Forgotten, lushly forested back-country on narrow, unsealed, winding roads. If you are coming from Waitomo then you could fit in the Mangapohue Arch via the Marokopa Road.

The tunnel is a surprise, drilled through the soft cliff and you emerge into a blast of sunlight and foam. Huge sea-cliffs imprison the black sand beach, and with a good low tide you can wander about 1 km along the claustrophobic shore towards the first tidal platforms. A dark, heavy, remote shore.





Rerekapa Track

Heart of the King Country

Bush track to waterfall

Lunch hut

Isolated and remote

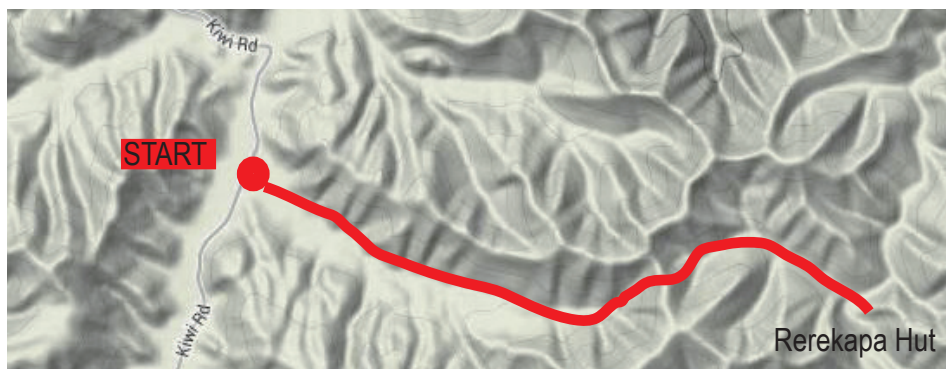
2-3 hours return to hut, 4-5 hours return to waterfall

Farm and bush tracks

6 kilometres return

From New Plymouth on Highway 3, turn off at Ahititi on the Okau Road, drive 10 km to Kiwi Road, extremely narrow bush road through a tunnel and down to Rerekapa signpost.

You are really in the back-of-beyond here, and the road tunnels make it seem like another world. This is an easy bush walk to Rerekapa Hut, with the option of going onto the waterfall. Track is closed for lambing from 1 September to 1 November. After an kilometre of a very muddy farm road alongside Blackett Creek, the pack track enters the bush and starts to climb over a low saddle.



Then it drops into the head of the Waitara River, and runs alongside a deep creek before it reaches the 16 bunk hut is on the sunny east bank. The hut was renovated in 2007. It's about 3 km downstream on a good track to the 13 m Rerekapa Falls.



Mount Pureora

Lonely forested mountain

300 m climb to alpine top

Timber Trail mt bike

Many short interesting walks

2 hours return

Tramping track

3 kilometre return

From Highway 32 it is about 15 km along Link Road through the Pureora Forest Park to the saddle summit and carpark.

From the soft summit of Mount Pureora you can look out as far as the snowy peaks of Mount Egmont/Taranaki and Mount Ruapehu. At the park headquarters is an information shelter, a carpark and toilets and camping area. The new mt bike Timber Trail starts from here.

From the carpark saddle the summit track climbs steadily through beautiful bush, with occasional streams tinkling. There are several boardwalked sections, but no views at all until almost the very top.

As you scramble up the last eroded sections of track you enter a tiny fragment of alpine herbfield. Mount Pureora, at 1165 metres, is just high enough to allow this alpine ecosystem, and of course it provides the superb views.

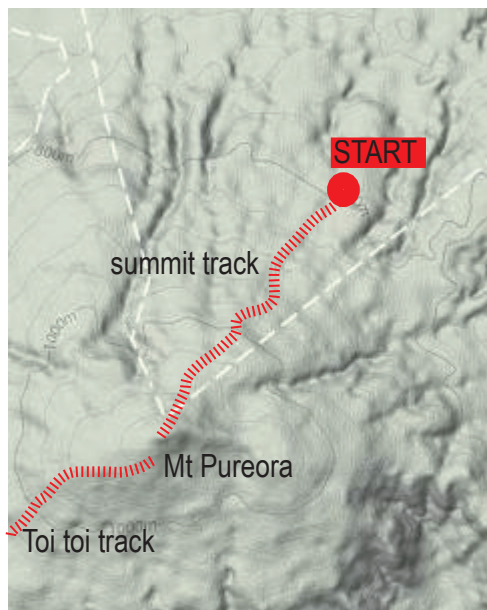




Timber Trail

A two day 64 km mt bike ride through bush over impressive viaducts and including an old logging tramway spiral. Starts by park headquarters, and finishes near Ongarue. Several companies do bike transfers.

From the Timber Trail you can take the well-signposted Toi Toi track to Mt Pureora, an attractive alternative. 3 hrs return.



Forest Tower

The forest tower is great fun, follow the signs from Barryville Road to Pikiariki Road, then past the Buried Forest turn-off to a signposted junction after 4 km. It is then 500 metres down a side-road to the carpark. A short walk to the lookout tower, where ladders zigzag past platforms up four storeys to high up in the bush canopy. Kaka, parakeets and bell-birds are all commonly heard.



Campsites: DOC Ngaherenga open grass sites by Park HQ, and Kakaho forest and grass sites by stream on Link Road near Highway 32.

Mt Titiraupenga

Centre of the North Island

Scramble to top with great views

Dense bush

3-4 hours return

Bush track, some scrambling

5 kilometres return

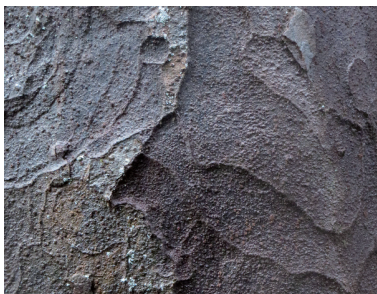
From Highway 32 it is about 13 km along Link Road to Waimonoa Road (if you get to the saddle you've gone too far) then 2 km to signposted carpark.

A more demanding walk and track than going up its sister mountain Mt Pureora, but well worth while for the energetic. From the carpark it's a short hike to a track junction and a sign that states earnestly you are in 'the centre of the North Island'.

Turn north as the bush track eases across a tiny stream then steadily climbs for 300 m up the broad easy ridge. At a small lookout, the track then inexplicably loses quite a bit of height as it sidles around underneath the mountain, then goes up a short hill to meet another track junction. This other track goes down the ridge to the YMCA lodge.



Maori ask that you do not climb to the summit, however if you do so, it starts with a scramble up a steep rocky gut, that leads to the summit of Mt Titiraupenga. When you burst out of the bush, it's surprisingly flat and open on top, a great place to marvel at the views.



Whitecliffs Walkway

Dramatic cliffs on coastal walk

Natural archway and waterfalls

670 steps!

Low tide essential

3-4 hours circuit

Beach, bush track, steps, farm road

8 kilometres circuit

From New Plymouth 36 km to the turn-off into Pukearuhe Road and 11 km to the end of this road. Little car-parking at the road-end.

Here on this magnificent coast is a walk of great drama. Pukearuhe was one of the finest defensive and fighting pa in the country, and it overlooks a rollercoaster beach and formidable sea cliffs. There is unique history here, with the pa site, a European redoubt, and a military tunnel that was built in 1880 to assist the garrison, but later employed as a humble stock tunnel. This tunnel is currently closed.

A low tide is essential as the cliffs are steep, with no escape routes. The inland track is closed for lambing between July and September.





First walk down the road ramp to the coast, where at low tide you wander past a graceful sea arch and tidal platforms onto the Waipingau Stream. After rain, waterfalls slip-slide over the sea cliffs.

The main track picks its way up Waipingau Stream along an old vehicle track, and the valley is full of nikau palms, tawa and rewarewa. At the junction you are faced with the prospect of 670 steps up the spur to the Mount Davidson saddle.

This track follows a public easement along the top of the 200-mm Kapuni gas pipeline, and after the sweat uphill the views are excellent from the 250-metre-high Mount Davidson saddle. All the hard work is over now, and it is easy walking on a poled route down through the sheep paddocks and along the vehicle track back to the carpark. You can see Mount Taranaki on a clear day.



New Plymouth Te Henui

A subtle city walkway

Peaceful bush gully

Sea, cemetery and stream

Links with coastal walkway

2 hours return

Gravel paths, bush trails, footpaths
and grass paths

6 kilometres return

In New Plymouth start from East End Reserve, off Buller Street. Carpark, picnic place, toilets and a children's play area. Many other access points to walkway.

New Plymouth has an outstanding network of urban walkways, utilising both the beach frontage and the bush gullies that trickle through the town. Te Henui Walkway has something of everything: sea coast, an intimate bush stream, an historic pa site and a cemetery. Generally well-marked, though a town map is useful.

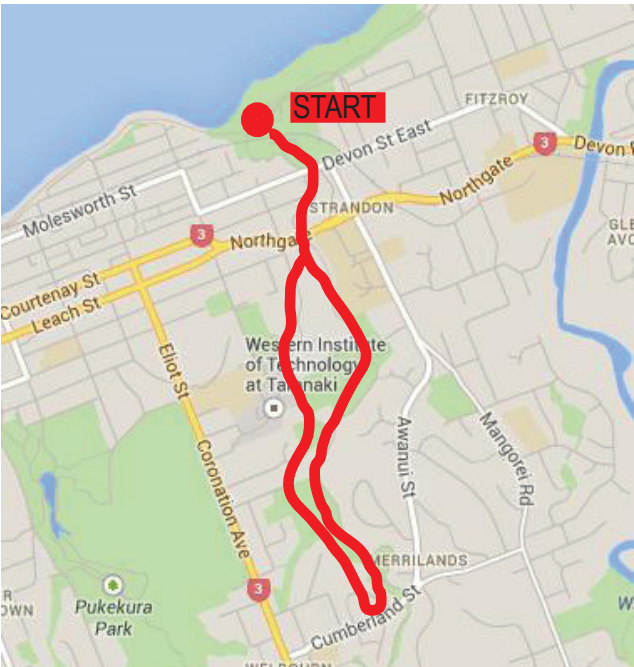
From the Buller Street carpark cross the outlet of Te Henui Stream beside the sea, and negotiate the signposts around the first bend and across another footbridge. The track settles into a streamside bush walk, passing obviously under the busy Devon Street East bridge and wandering up a quiet dell.

Under Northgate Road the track passes plantings of camellias and magnolias, and Te Henui cemetery. It then crosses another footbridge and, keeping close to the stream, winds past small reserves and residential backyards up to Cumberland Street.



Turn down the other side of Te Henui Stream here, and follow the signposts down past small bush and grass reserves then up to Timandra Street. The walk is quite high above the stream now, and goes through the open parkland of Avery Reserve and Puketara Pa then on to Te Henui cemetery.

The signposts somewhat desert you here, and you have to pick your own way through the headstones to find one of several tracks that lead down to Te Henui Stream again, and back to the living shoreline.



Other walks: Barrett Lagoon (1 hour) and Huatoki Walkway (3 hours)

Cafe: Paris Plage on east bank of Te Henui by rivermouth

New Plymouth Coastal Track

Fine coastal walk

Wave bridge

Beaches and driftwood

Lagoons

2 hours return

Concrete paths

6 kilometres return

In New Plymouth start from East End Reserve, off Buller Street. Access to the northern part of East End Reserve can be reached from Devon Street East and Nobs Line. The reserve has carpark, picnic places, and toilets.

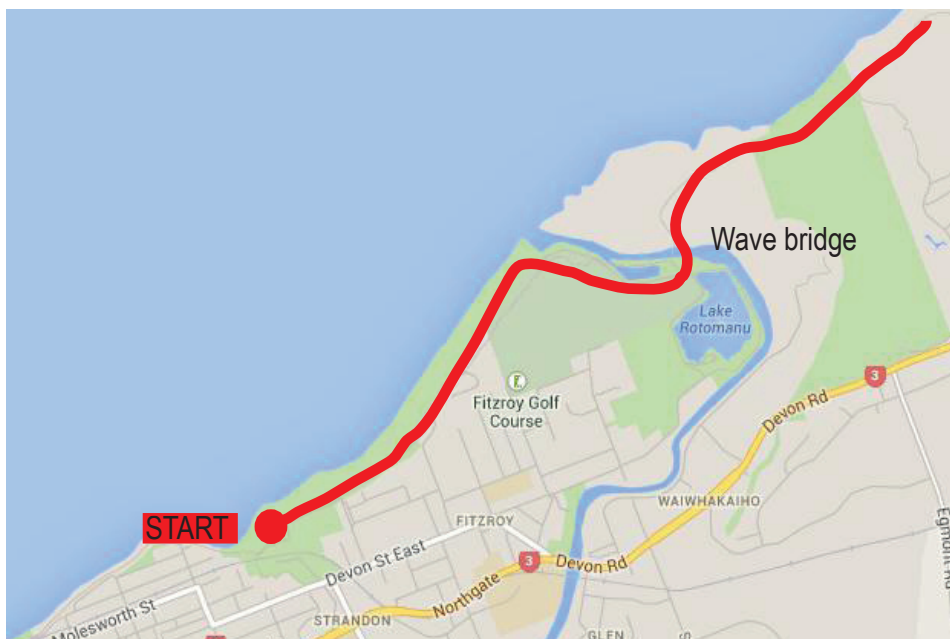
This coastal track is all about waves. The tree-trunk littered shoreline with it's big Tasman Sea rollers, and the famous new 'wave' bridge. New Plymouth's 10 km coastal walkway stretches along the entire length of the city, and beyond, but this northern section embraces its wilder side. All of it is worth walking, probably one of the best urban walkways in New Zealand.

Cross the elegant 'lightning bolt' footbridge over Te Henui Stream, then the broad track wanders along the coastal fringe. Great views back to the silhouetted power station chimney and offshore islands, with an occasional big ship looming on the horizon. The track swings past the Fitzroy Motor Camp, and then suddenly into coastal dunes with the golf course on your right. The views are quite uncluttered now, as Mt Taranaki gets more obvious.





The Waiwhakaiho River is busy with whitebaiters in season, and is now spanned by the 83 m Te Rewa Rewa footbridge (opened in 2010), likened to a Tasman Sea wave. This is a good return point, but you can go all the way to Bell Block.



Other walks: Te Henui (2 hours return) and Huatoki Walkway (3 hours return)

Koru Pa

Sacred and silent pa site
Detailed fortifications
A powerful sense of history
Easy for families

1 hour return
Farm track and bush trails
2 kilometres return

From Highway 45 at Oakura turn down Wairau Road and Surrey Hill Road to parking by at the end of the road by the sign. Well sign-posted.

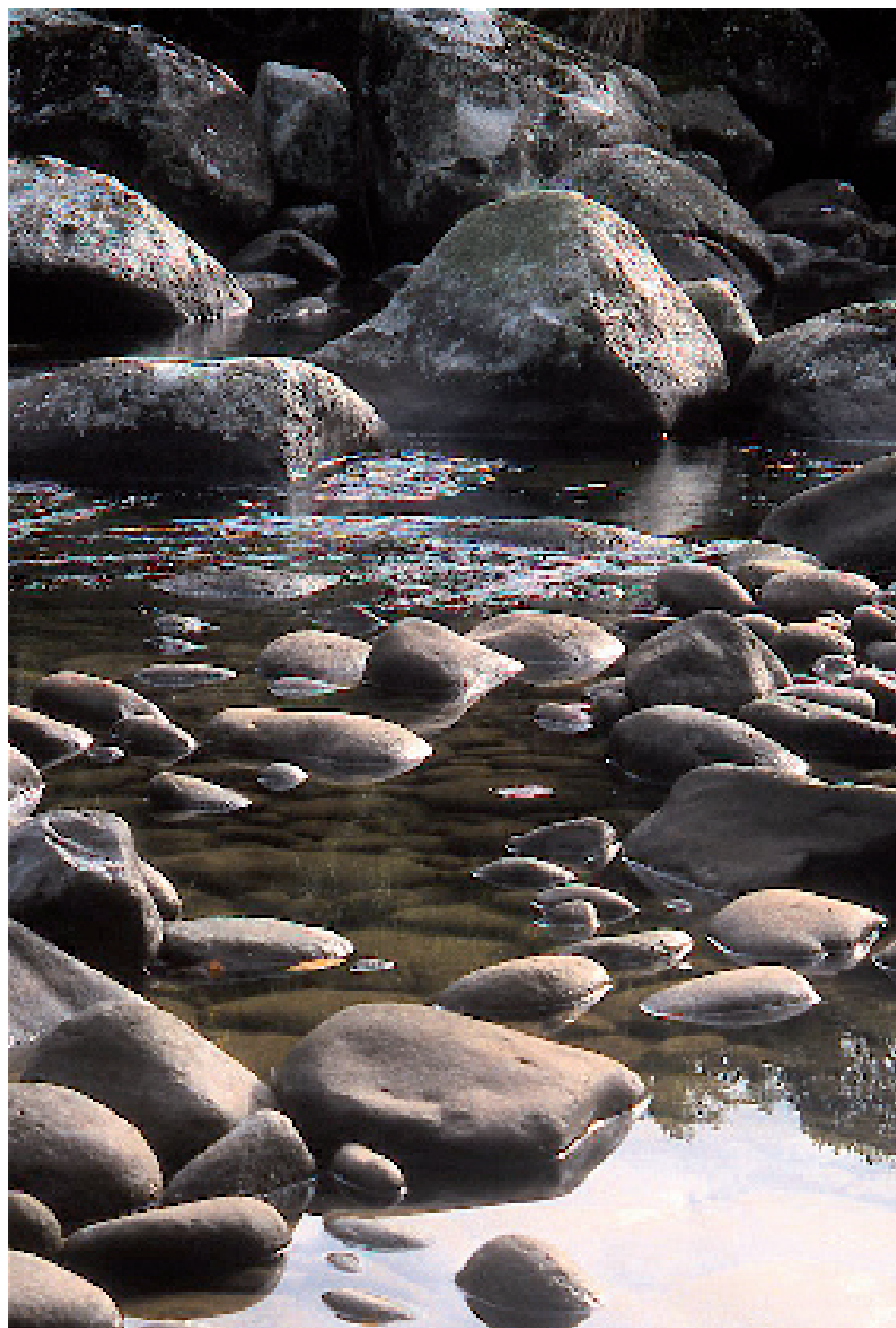
Many Maori historic pa sites are little more than grassy paddocks with a few non-descript humps and hollows, but Koru Pa is different. It is secluded, down in the soft loop of the Oakura River valley, and covered with bush that conceals an extensive and spooky network of trenches and embankments.

From the road follow the poles down the farm track, then across a paddock to the edge of the reserve. The pa is covered with regrowth forest, so at a distance it looks like a bushy hump. It is only when you are walking on the bush paths that you realise the hill is actually substantial earthworks, terraced in several levels with defensive walls. Some of these walls are supported by the original stonework.

As you wander about you discover old kumara storage pits (rua) and a complex network of paths, some of which lead down to the river with its smooth grey boulders like dinosaur eggs. The silence is intense, and you cannot help but feel the presence of the early Maori who lived and loved in this once great pa.



Other walks: Barrett Lagoon (1 hour return), Ratapihipihi Reserve (1 hour return)



The Plateau

High alpine track

Well graded and great views

Interesting rock formations

A blast of fresh air

3-4 hours return

Gravelled alpine track

6 kilometre return

From Stratford and Highway 3 take the Stratford Mountain House road up the zigzag to a huge skifield carpark simply called The Plateau. There is a lookout platform and toilets here.

On a fine summer's day this walk cannot be beaten. It starts at 1100 metres, and traverses steadily up and around the side of Mount Egmont/ Taranaki. It trawls under impressive rock formations and through a tussock landscape with shy alpine flowers, and offers extensive views across the tidy plains to Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe on the horizon.

This is an alpine walk, suitable as a summer walk only; you need to be well prepared and pick your day. A map is useful: Taranaki National Park 273-09, or Egmont P20.

The track is easy and well-graded as it leaves the carpark and passes through a shrub belt of leatherwood and koromiko. After you pass the flying fox the track angles into a narrow gorge.



You often get old avalanche snow lingering in the valley but there will usually be footsteps to follow. A short climb out of the gorge and you are at the desolate skifield, where there is a large public shelter with toilets.





The track sidles out of the skifield and across various mountain streams and alpine gullies filled with buttercups and daisies in spring. The views are marvellous, the gradient gentle, and the track well poled as it sidles under the volcanic outcrop of Warwick Castle in expansive slopes of tussocks.

It is not long before the television pylon and Taurangi Lodge come round into view. There is a small, unlocked emergency shelter underneath the lodge. The return to the Plateau carpark is an easy and pleasant downhill task.



York Historic Circuit

Railway ruins in the bush

Attractive stream

Historic sites and back-waters

2 hours circuit

Bush tracks and tussock trails

6 kilometre circuit

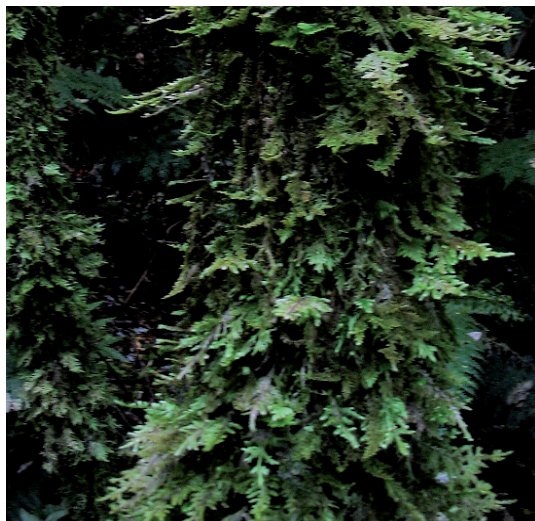
From Highway 3 turn down York Road and go right to the road-end; and carpark. Good interpretation sign.

The York track is one of those obscure places that is immensely interesting once you have discovered it, making you wonder why you did not go before.

The track follows old railway lines into a huge crusher site, now buried in the bush, and the walk does a circuit, with remnants of industrial history all the way round. There is enough to keep the kids interested and a good place for a snack stop halfway round.

Through the gate the track is immediately in thick, luxuriant regrowth forest and quickly reaches a track junction. Turn left to the crusher site, where large concrete structures look appropriately Byzantine in the thick bush.

Rock was crushed on this site in the 1940s and railed out to help build the Wellington–New





Plymouth railway line. Fifteen minutes or so further along the track (and water pipe) is the strange concrete sand trap, near the Manganui River.

The track continues on an old tramline and along a pretty stream to a footbridge, which makes a pleasing picnic or halfway resting area. A tad further is the small clearing known as the 'foot station', then it is a dead straight line back to the carpark — a fine downward romp on the old service road.

Dawson Falls

Impressive waterfall
Goblin forest and visitor centre
Historic power station
Many track options

1-2 hours return

Bush tracks

2 kilometres return

From Stratford and Highway 3 take the Opunake Road some 12 km, then follow the narrow and sealed Manaia Road 8 km to the top car-park.

Dawson Falls is a popular scenic walk to a dashing waterfall and can be made into a circuit from the carpark. The forest is thickly crusted with lichens and mosses, giving the trees a fairytale look, hence the local name 'goblin forest'. In rain or mist this forest can look even more mysterious.

At the top carpark there is a visitor centre, public shelter, lookout platform, information boards and toilets. The historic power station is well worth a visit. Study the map boards at the carpark or visitor centre carefully (take a photo), for there are numerous track options in this area.

Walk back down the road a short distance and pick up the start of the track. It passes one footbridge, with a view of Kapuni Stream, then the track drops down on a river terrace above Kapuni Stream.





There is another footbridge right above the falls themselves, and just around from here an excellent lookout for people who do not want to drop down to the base of the falls themselves. However, the signposted side-track is worth taking; the 18-metre-high falls look better from below, and on a hot day you might fancy a bracing shower.

The Kapuni Track circuit now continues uphill, crosses the road and climbs slowly back up to the public shelter and carpark.



Other walks: Wilkies Pools Loop Track (1 hour), Konini Dell Loop Track (1 hour) and Ridge Loop Track (1–1.5 hours).

Fantams Peak

Soaring views to a high peak
Exposed alpine route and scoria
Shelter halfway, hut on top

5-6 hours return
Bush tracks, soft scoria
7 kilometres return

From Stratford and Highway 3 take the Opunake Road some 12 km, then follow the narrow and scenic Manaia Road 8 km to the top carpark.

Mount Taranaki is not perfectly symmetrical: there is an odd pimple on one side and this is called Fantams Peak at 1966 metres. The walk to it is steep, starting from the goblin forest and up to a volcanic plain, with views right over the heart of the North Island to the volcanoes of Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe.

There's a visitor centre at Dawson Falls, also a public shelter, lookout platform, information boards, toilets. Despite the ease of access, this can be tough country in bad weather, and Mount Taranaki has a notoriously fickle climate. This walk is suited to the experienced and well equipped, and there is no point in going unless you can see the views, so wait until you get a good forecast. Take a map: Egmont National Park 273-09, or Egmont P20.

The summit track is well marked as it crosses a footbridge and climbs steadily through a heavy and mossy forest. After passing a couple of junctions the track reaches the Hillary Seat, and the first good view of Mount Taranaki. The track now eases somewhat and pulls up more gradually to the Hooker Shelter, which

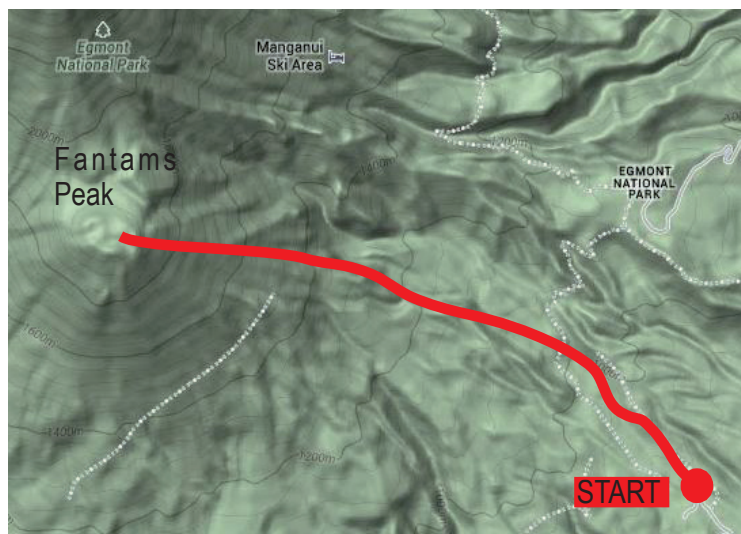


roughly marks the edge of the bush and start of the subalpine belt. Good views now, and a steady, stepped walk up towards the junction to Kapuni Hut. These steps can be a bit of a curse, but they are a feature of tramping on Taranaki.

The Kapuni Hut verandah is the last sheltered spot, then the track cuts through the last of the alpine scrub and reaches the upper rock slopes — pluggy going in the porridge-like scoria.

The route is well poled, but there are trails everywhere, which in misty weather can cause some confusion. At last you reach the edge of Rangitoto Flat, a volcanic plain with crusty scoria and bright-stained rocks. Stick to the poled route as it climbs a little above Rangitoto Flat and sidles directly to the glinting iron sides of Syme Hut.

Plenty to see and do up here, and the hut sits in a commanding position. The return should be straightforward, but make sure you stay on the poled route if the weather closes in.



Cafe: Lodge and cafe, in Dawson Falls

Mt Taranaki

Classic mountain climb of 1500 m

Steep, hard, exposed, wonderful

Fascinating rocks at the crater

See everywhere

8-9 hours return

Old road, alpine tracks, rock scree

8 kilometres return

Turn off Highway 3 from Egmont Village and follow the North Egmont road 15 km to the top car-park.

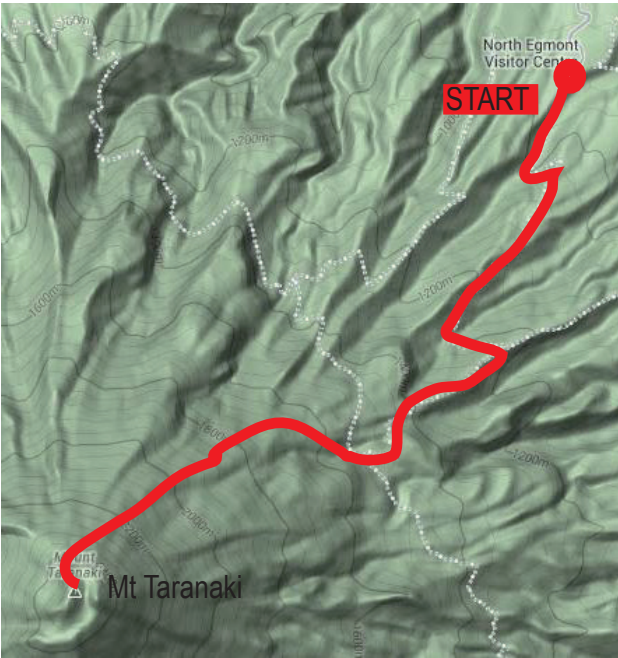
The big one, Mt Taranaki at 2500 m, pick your day very carefully, and you will have a wonderful tramp. Amazing rock formations, tremendous views, and a strenuous workout. On a good day you will see many woefully equipped and poorly prepared overseas tourists slogging up. Don't be one of them.

North Egmont has a visitor centre and the summit track follows the Tahurangi road up to Tahurangi Lodge, about 500 metres climb. That's the easy part, if the weather starts to look crap, turn back. There's a small day use room under the lodge.

The poled track heads up the spur and quickly you are on scree slopes and rock scoria as you plug up 900 metres. Views are distractingly good, and up and up you go, but the crater lip eventually arrives via a small rock scramble and Sharks Tooth rears up and you are pretty much on top.

A short sidle to the actual summit which really looks and feels like it should be an active volcano, just like the ones you can see in the distance.





Cafe: Mountain cafe, visitor centre, North Egmont