

Stanton Memorial, Tongariro National Park

Wild file

Access: From the Scoria Flats car park on the Bruce Road. The Stanton Memorial rock is located at NZTM E1818613/N5652320.

Grade: Moderate

Length: 7.61km

Time: 5-6hr

Topo50 Map: BJ34

Description

From the Scoria Flats car park head due south towards a distinctive rocky outcrop, clearly visible against the skyline – Pt 1750m on the map and known locally as Camelback or O'Reilly's Wall. A steady climb of nearly 300m across a terrain of shattered rock and up an old lava gully follows.

From 1750m, keep high along the ridge heading south and, with luck, cairns will be spotted. Stay between contour lines 1600 and 1800 on the traverse of the ridge, aiming all the time for the shelf overlooking a large desolate plateau where a huge rock stands sentinel. This rock is the location of the Stanton Memorial.

In August 1931, 14 university students set out from the Chateau Tongariro in fine weather to climb Mt Ruapehu. Blizzard conditions struck while they were at the summit and they descended into the Whakapapaiti Gorge instead of the Whakapapa Valley. The party spent a night sheltering near the rock and then split into three groups. Warwick Stanton and a companion set out to get help, but Warwick eventually succumbed to exhaustion: his body was later found many kilometres west of the Chateau and a memorial that reads 'In proud and affectionate memory of Warwick Stanton who passed this way in August 1931. Aged 18 years' marks this spot. The others in the party, some of whom spent three nights on the mountain, all survived.

Continue around the bluffs near the rock and then drop down a steep slippery slope beneath the bluffs to the headwaters of the Whakapapaiti Stream: a magical area with waterfalls tumbling.

Follow the true-right bank of the stream, which at one point hurtles over a 30m drop. There's a brief scramble over a wide terrace of alpine herb fields before the poles of the Round the Mountain Track are spotted. This track will get you back to the car park, after first puffing up a 200m zigzag.

Elevation Profile



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Disclaimer: While every effort has been made to map this route correctly, Wilderness Magazine does not take responsibility for any errors in the route. Users should use discretion when planning their routes and gather as much information as possible before departing.

