

## Waipawa Saddle Circuit, Ruahine Forest Park

### WILD FILE

**Access** SH2 to Wakarara Road near Ongaonga, then take North Block Road to the carpark

**Grade** Moderate

**Time** Carpark to Sunrise Hut: 2-3hr; Sunrise Hut to car park via Te Atuaoparapara, Waipawa Saddle and Waipawa Forks Hut, 6-8h

**Accommodation** Triplex Hut, 12 bunks; Sunrise Hut, 20 bunks

**Map** BL37

### Description

For the North Island trumper seeking a weekend experience that encompasses all the necessary staples, the Ruahines is your range. Steep, crumbling peaks, exposed tops with gasping drops; neat, mountain passes with streams to follow rather than tracks, and a winter-coating that sets up challenges requiring care and skill.

Triplex Hut is only a 15-minute amble from the car park. Then a family-friendly track zigzags with soothing predictability up a broad ridge through native bush and displays many diverting information boards along the way. Soon you're walking among mountain shrubs and then tussock as you climb the last section to the spur on which Sunrise Hut sits.

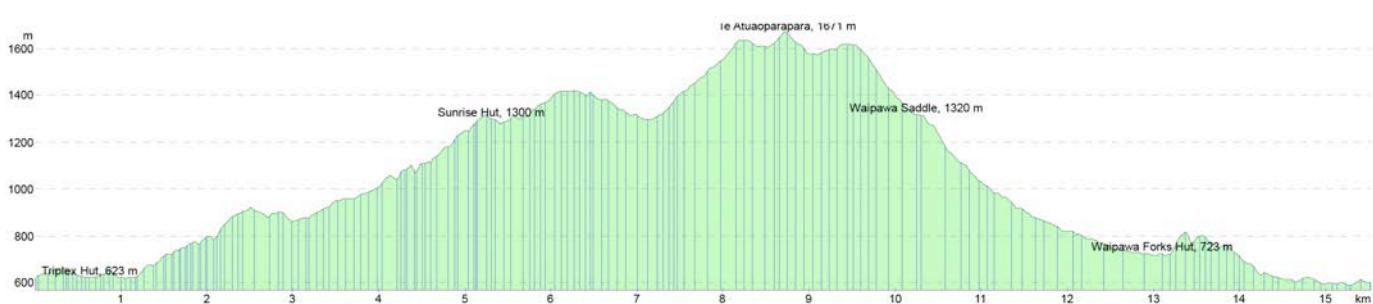
The most popular hut in the Ruahines, Sunrise Hut presides over a vast view of the Hawke's Bay to the east, while a short scurry up the nearby mound provides a stunning and foreboding view of the route onwards along the tops. From here, a well-formed track goes gently up the ridge to Armstrong Saddle, named after a pilot who crashed his plane there in the 1930s and was never seen again (Triplex Hut also takes its name from the same incident; a shirt labelled 'XXX' being the only clue discovered). From the saddle follow snow poles up and along a ridge completely eaten away by erosion on one side. Drop down into a small saddle, just low enough to allow a brisk tussle with subalpine shrubs. An undefined ridge climb leads to a high point and, from there, the ridge flattens and leads up to the summit of Te Atuaoparapara, at 1687m.

It's all downhill from here, but what a downhill! Immediately beyond the peak the ridge becomes a knife-edge, but it soon gives way to scree.

After another short climb, pick your own route down through the tussock to Waipawa Saddle. A good track soon dwindles out and solid, backcountry toil is in order to get down into the flatter section of the Waipawa River. Alternate between the river bed and side tracks that sporadically appear. Waipawa Forks Hut is nestled above the true right of the river up a steep track.

From there it's an easy amble along the river.

### 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.

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