

Waitawheta Hut via Waiorongomai Valley, Kaimai Mamaku Forest Park

WILD FILE

Access Waiorongomai Road end, southeast of Te Aroha township

Grade Moderate

Time Waiorongomai car park to Waitawheta Hut via Pylon Track, 6-7hr, Waitawheta Hut to Waiorongomai car park via Waipapa Track, 5hr

Distance 24.4km

Total Ascent 2111m

Accommodation Waitawheta Hut, 26 bunks

Map BC35

Description

Waitawheta Hut is the most popular overnight stop in the Kaimais. It provides a feeling of seclusion with views to the surrounding forested hills and is a mere three-hour stroll along its namesake river from Franklin Road to the north. But it's also accessible from the west, though with a bit more grunt. Numerous tracks from Waiorongomai Valley climb up and over the Kaimai Range, offering a wealth of mining relics in the process. Some are currently rough and energy sapping, but are set to become easier in 2016, as volunteers hack better quality tracks along the ridge tops.

The Pylon Track is a backcountry trail freshly carved by members of Auckland and Howick Tramping Club.

From the car park, briefly follow the Low Level Drive Track for two minutes before veering right along an unmarked path down to Waiorongomai Stream (this will be sign posted once volunteer work is complete). After a careful crossing, follow a faint trail up the bank and past a derelict campsite, after which regular orange markers lead you on. The track's never too steep and gets easier when you reach a spur. Shortly after, it's a steep slog to the range crest, at which there's a clearing with several knolls offering grand views.

Turn left along the Kaimai Ridgeway Track (formerly the North South Track). The volunteers plan to have cut a far better track here in 2016, prior to which progress will be slow, with fallen trees, bogs and high grass to fight through – not to mention the constant up and down. The ridge gets quite narrow in places, offering more views west and some towards Waihi Beach and Coromandel.

When reaching Waipapa Track, head right along a beautifully graded track gliding all the way down to Waitawheta Hut, a further two hours away.

From the hut head straight back up Waipapa Track, and continue north past Pukekohatu and on to Waiorongomai Saddle from where Te Aroha's summit is just 75 minutes away. Otherwise, head straight down the steep and slippery Te Aroha Link Track. There are several options for continuing back to the car park, but sticking to the Piako County Tramline Track takes you through a tunnel, followed by a swingbridge over a ravine.

Follow a sign towards 'Winding Gear' and 'Mine Stope' to the first of three 'inclines' – railed slopes on which minerals were transported using a pulley system. Descend straight down the incline and, after a little more flat, it's not long before you reach Butlers Incline. This is a little more overgrown, steep and considerably longer. Luckily each 'incline' has an alternative track down, but it's worth hopping onto the tramline track as often as possible.

Elevation Profile

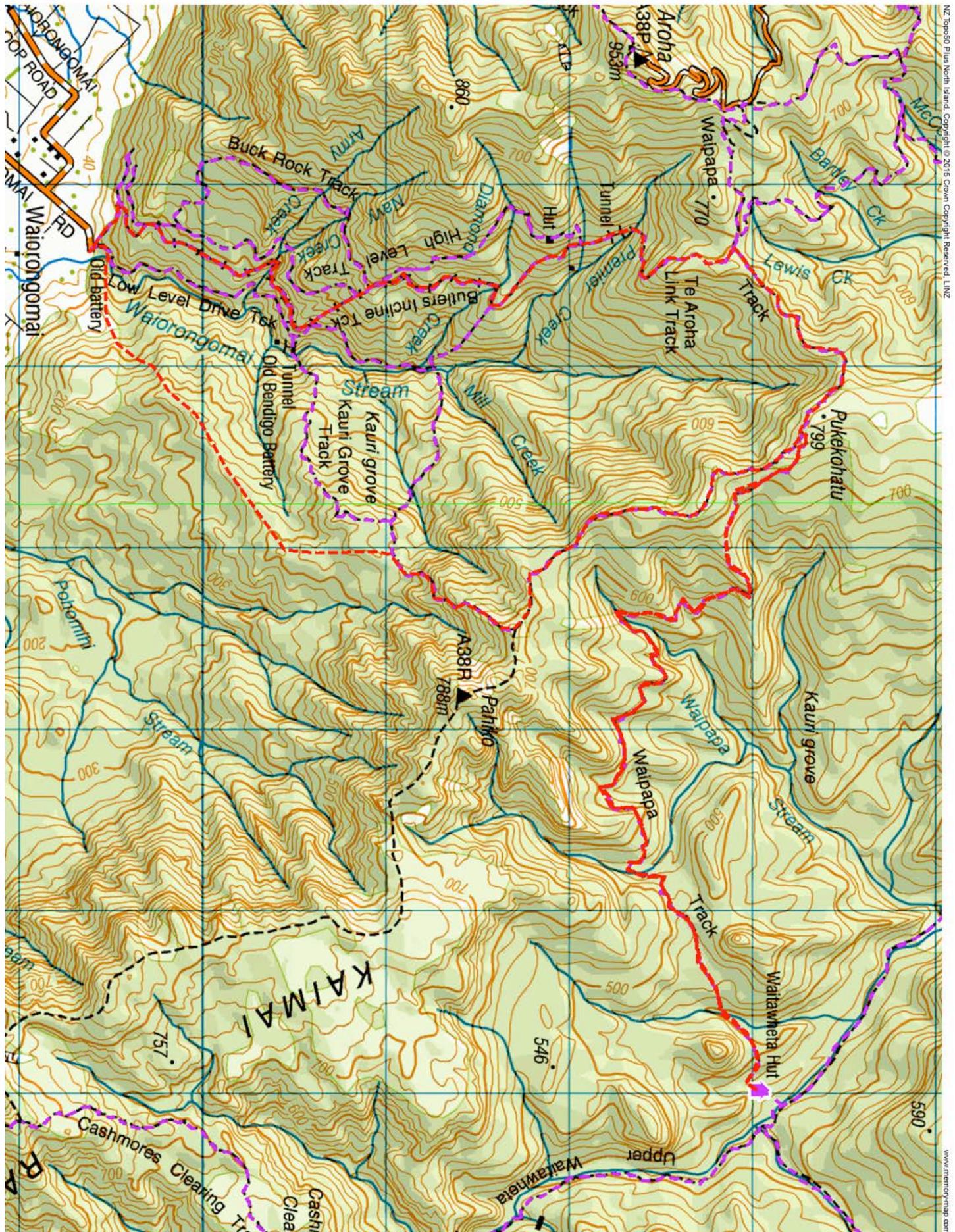


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Disclaimer: While every effort has been made to map this route correctly, Wilderness Magazine does not take responsibility for any errors in the route. Users should use discretion when planning their routes and gather as much information as possible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

Maps are created with Memory-Map software, version 6. This software shows purple tracks and hut icons as verified routes and huts – meaning they are where they say they are and should be passable. If a purple track is shown, it is the route from the Memory-Map software. If a red or blue route is shown, it has been drawn by Wilderness.

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