

The Bridge to Nowhere, Whanganui National Park

Deep in Whanganui National Park, spanning the Mangapurua Stream, sits a 40m-long arch bridge, known as the Bridge to Nowhere.

The simplest way to get there requires a 40-minute jet boat ride from the village of Pipiriki, some 24km to the south. The ride is through sheer, fern-clad cliffs – one of the most spectacular stretches of New Zealand's longest navigable river. Mangapurua Landing, in the middle reaches of the river, gives access to a pleasant 2.5km stroll above the Mangapurua Stream.

The bridge appears suddenly, first viewed through a clearing in the dense bush.

The bridge, built in 1936, was the culmination of a government scheme to settle returned servicemen in the area after the First World War. Pioneering farmers ventured up the Mangapurua Valley, breaking-in steep bush-clad hillsides. The Mangapurua Stream lies at the bottom of a deep narrow gorge, which had to be crossed to gain access to the Whanganui River Taxi, which provided a crucial link in the North Island's main trunk line.

At its height, 35 holdings were established, but the land eventually proved too remote and rugged. By 1942, only three holdings remained and the government withdrew any further funding for road development. The land reverted to native bush, and the bridge was destined to lead nowhere.

Wild file

Access Jetboat from Pipiriki, then a 3km bush walk above Mangapurua Stream

Grade Easy

Time From Pipiriki to the Mangapurua Landing, 40min; Landing to bridge, 40min

Distance 2.5km

Total ascent 176m

Map BJ32

Elevation Profile



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