

Tongariro Northern Circuit, Tongariro National Park

From Ngauruhoe Place in Whakapapa Village, the track to Taranaki Falls begins – take the upper track, which is shorter and sidles across open landscapes offering views of Ngauruhoe.

At a sign-posted junction, drop your pack for a quick side-trip to view the 20m Taranaki Falls: a horsetail plume tumbling over a lava escarpment.

From the falls, the poled route begins a steady ascent towards Tama Saddle, the low point between Mts Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu. Before the saddle is a worthwhile side-trip to view the dazzlingly blue Lower and Upper Tama Lakes, both nestled in old explosion craters.

From Tama Saddle, the track enters a wide, open valley – the headwaters of the Waihohonu Stream, which gathers its strength from innumerable gullies on the flanks of both mountains. Lower down, the track passes through some beech copses, one of which shelters the historic Old Waihohonu Hut, built by the Tourist Department in 1903–04. The modern Waihohonu Hut, the third of the same name, occupies a terrace with superb views of both volcanoes, a sun-drenched deck, and plenty of living space.

From Waihohonu, the track first crosses Waihohonu Stream, then after a climb over a ridge, crosses another significant creek. Much of the rest of the route crosses exposed ground, around the 1200m contour, with the brooding presence of Mt Ngauruhoe to the north-west, etched by innumerable gullies. Oturere Hut has a good position with views of a nearby waterfall.

The walk up Oturere Valley is one of the track's finest sections, passing through surreal lava formations that seem like sentinels – or perhaps ogres – on either side. The final section to the Emerald Lakes steepens. The lakes are located at the junction of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, where the ascent beside Red Crater begins. It's one of the track's bottlenecks, so requires a degree of patience. The 1868m summit above Red Crater marks the track's highest point and offers extensive views over the three Tongariro volcanoes, Central and North Craters, as well as the more distant Kaimanawa Ranges. A descent over rough scoria slopes leads to the flat expanse of South Crater.

From the lip of South Crater, the track sidles across the base of Mt Ngauruhoe, before zigzagging into the Mangatepopo Valley. Following the lively stream, the track wends between lava formations and hardy subalpine plants to reach Mangatepopo Hut. With suitable transport arranged, you can end the tramp at Mangatepopo Road. Alternatively, continue on to Whakapapa.

The Mangatepopo Track heads roughly south, around the flanks of Pukekaikiore (1692m) across exposed, open terrain. Ngauruhoe is usually a large presence, its shape distorted from the close proximity. The track crosses numerous small streams, and can be rutted in places. It joins the lower Taranaki Falls Track about 30 minutes walk from Whakapapa.

Wild file

Access From Whakapapa Village

Grade Moderate

Time 3-4 days. Village to Mangatepopo Hut, 3hr; Mangatepopo to Oturere Hut, 5hr; Oturere to Waihohonu Hut, 3hr; Waihohonu to Whakapapa Village, 5hr

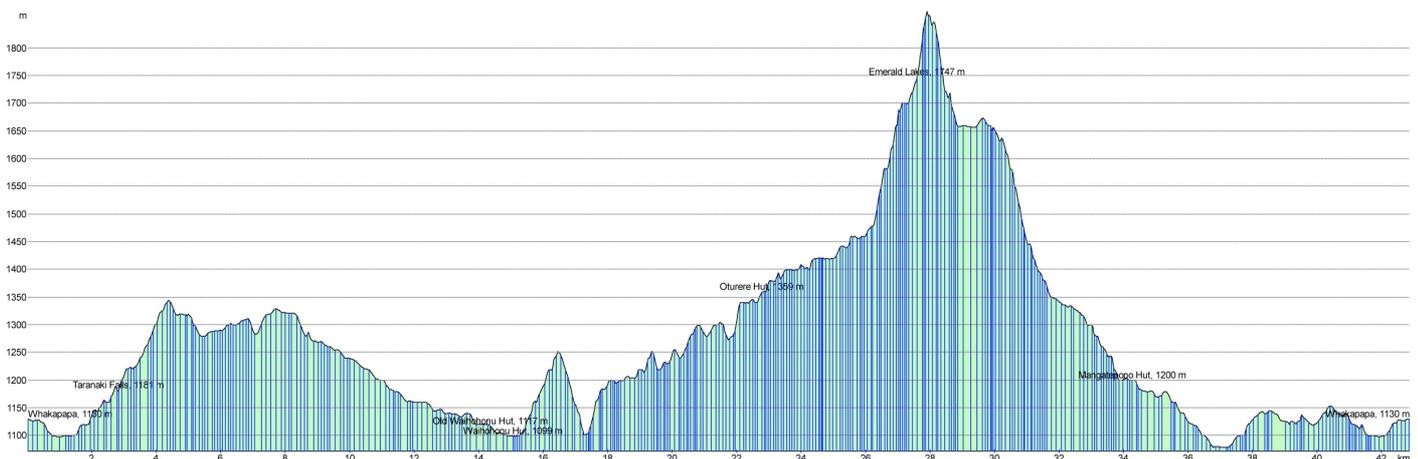
Distance 42.9km

Total ascent 1682m

Accommodation Mangatepopo Hut (20 bunks), Oturere Hut (26 bunks), Waihohonu Hut (28 bunks)

Map BH34, BJ35

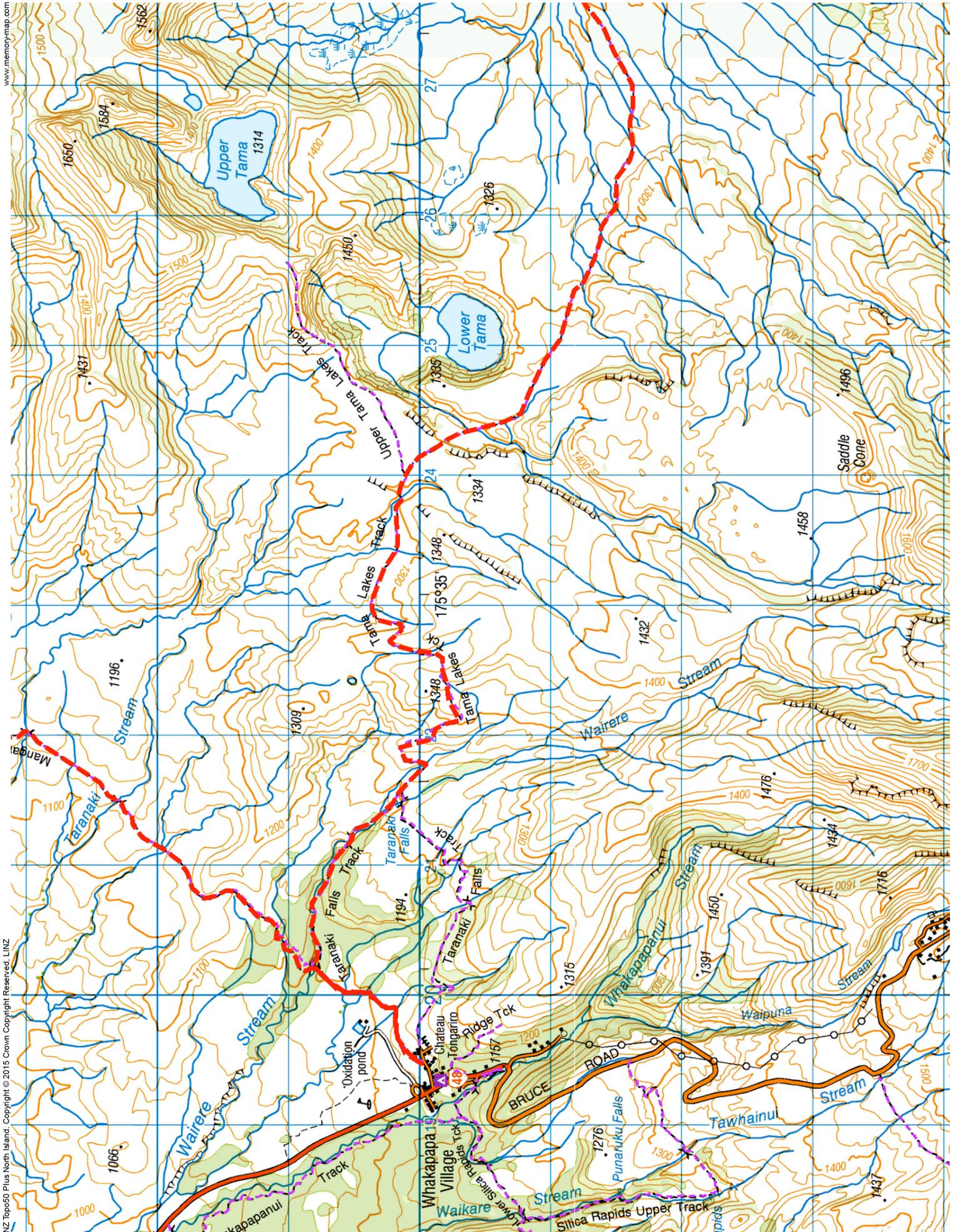
Elevation Profile



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Disclaimer: While every effort has been made to map this route correctly, *Wilderness* does not accept responsibility for any errors. Users should plan their routes and gather as much information as possible before departing. The GPX file associated with this route has been drawn using Memory-Map software, version 6. Use discretion when following the route, especially when no track is marked on the map. **The GPX file in these cases are a 'best guess' of the route only. Users should use a combination of GPS, visual observations, maps and compass to find the best possible route.** Memory Map shows purple tracks and hut icons as verified routes and huts. Red or blue routes are those drawn by Wilderness.

Tongariro Northern Circuit, Tongariro National Park. Map 1 and Map 4



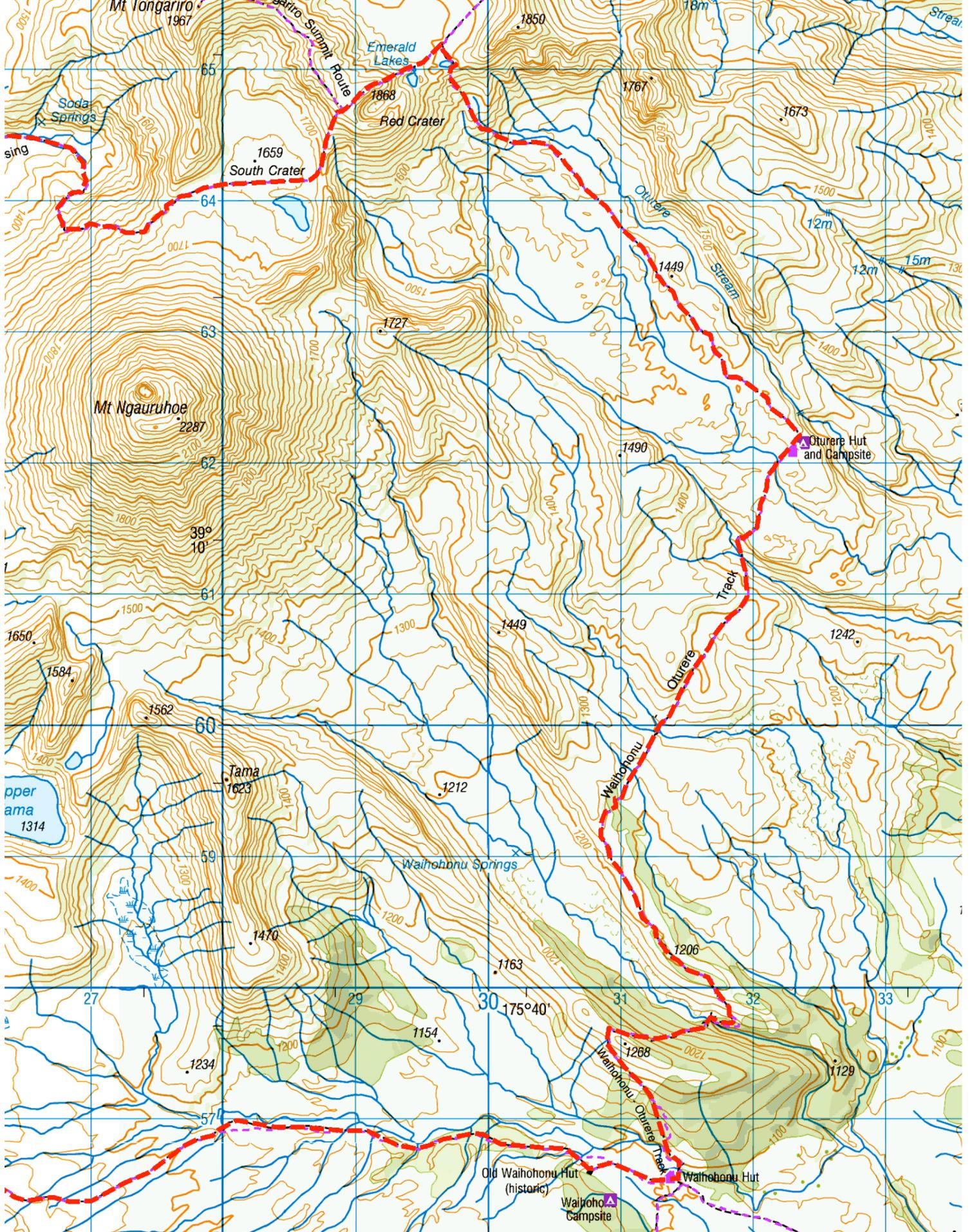
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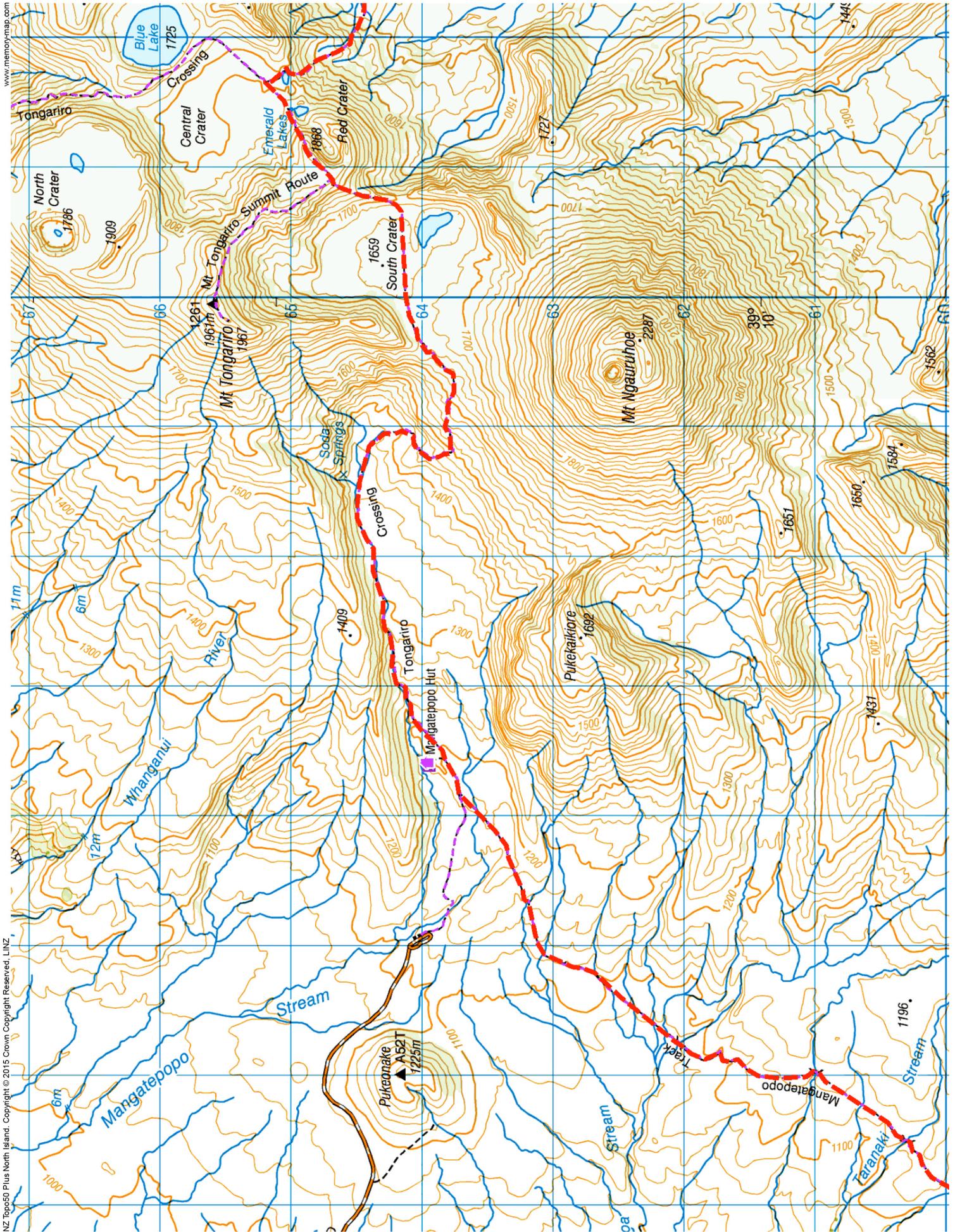
Tongariro Northern Circuit, Tongariro National Park. Map 2

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Tongariro Northern Circuit, Tongariro National Park. Map 3



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