

## Kapakapanui Circuit, Tararua Forest Park

The circuit begins with a 15min stroll up the Ngatiawa River with about four crossings, up to knee-deep.

The circuit splits at a memorial plaque. The most direct route to Kapakapanui Hut is clockwise – the route described here – and there are three more river crossings upstream.

The fun begins immediately after the last ford: 400m of gut-busting vertical climb in less than two kilometres. A lookout halfway has good views of Kāpiti Island. After a little under two hours, the track eases onto a spur covered in beech and mamaku, providing some respite yet still climbing.

Kapakapanui Hut is reached within three hours. Built by the Kāpiti branch of the NZ Deerstalkers Association, it was given a good spruce-up by volunteers in 2019.

Beyond the hut is perhaps the highlight of the trip as the track passes through the most exquisite goblin forest. Higher still, the track traces Kapakapanui's long summit ridge, which makes for easy travel with remarkable views. It's about an hour from the hut to the summit trig at 1102m.

Kapakapanui is an outlier in the Tararua Range, roughly halfway between the Tasman Sea and the main range. On a clear day, the summit rewards with a panorama over Kāpiti Coast, Manawatū – maybe as far as Taranaki Mounga – as well as Mt Hector and its neighbouring peaks.

Just past the trig is a junction, with the track to Maymorn Junction and Renata Ridge leading east. The circuit swings south-west, continuing downhill towards the coast. It's steep at first – as is the final descent back to the Ngatiawa Valley. The track is in bush throughout but there are plenty of opportunities to rest weary muscles while admiring nature's convenient distractions.

As with the ascent, it's easy to see how the track can easily become a slurry of roots and mud after rain.

Despite its brevity, Kapakapanui Circuit is a serious tramp, with forest scrambling, summit ambling and cool-running streams. As a loop, it has the benefits of ever-changing scenery, and no need to retrace steps or fuss around with transport.

### Wild file

**Access** Ngatiawa Road end

**Grade** Moderate-difficult

**Time** Ngatiawa Road end to hut, 3hr; To Ngatiawa Road via Kapakapanui, 4hr

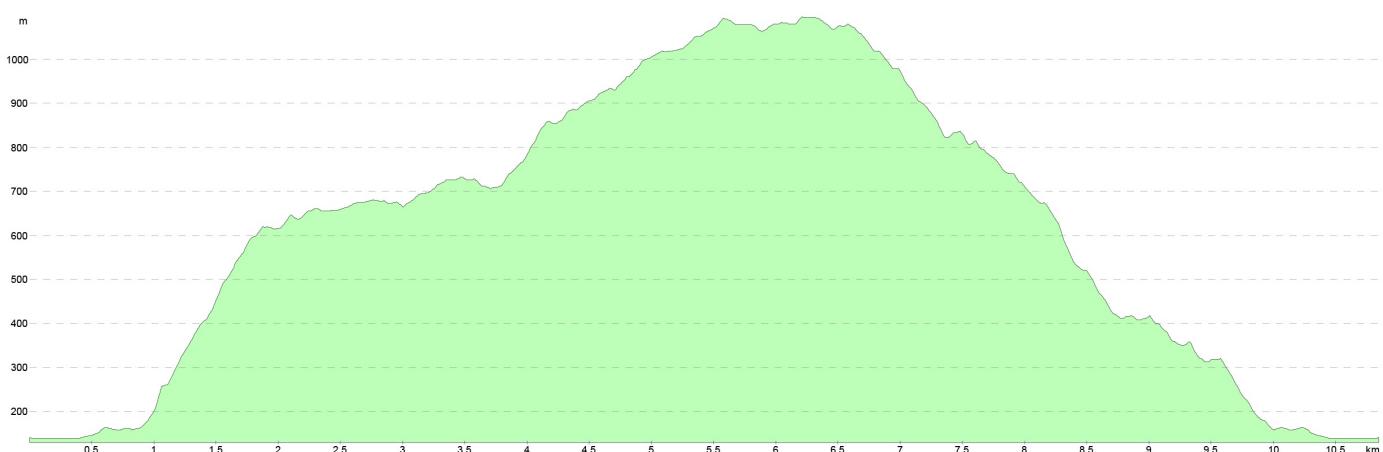
**Distance** 11km

**Total ascent** 1103m

**Accommodation** Kapakapanui Hut (\$5, six bunks)

**Topo50 map** BP32, BP33

### Elevation



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