

Taranaki Falls Track, Tongariro National Park

A trip to Tongariro National Park in winter is worth it for the views alone; expect snowy mountain peaks, clear blue skies and vast stretches of shrubland dusted with white. For those seeking a closer look, the Taranaki Falls Track is a great place to start. A straightforward two-hour stroll, the trail is in excellent condition and mostly flat, making it suitable for all fitness levels and people both young and old. It's one of the easier day walks in the national park and offers a range of landscapes, incredible sights and endless photo opportunities. The track can be hiked from either direction, and is separated into two stages: Upper Taranaki Falls Track and Lower Taranaki Falls Track. The upper track passes through native bush and beech trees before the foliage gives way to rolling plains dotted with tussock and alpine scrub.

From here the path winds alongside a gully formed by lava many years before, now dotted with rocks and thick bush. If the sky is clear, Mt Ngāuruhoe can be seen to the left and Mt Ruapehu to the right, both likely covered in snow during the winter months.

After about 45–60min, cross a sturdy wooden bridge over the bubbling Wairere Stream. To the right are two toilets, and directly ahead up a short rocky rise is a sign signalling the falls to the left and Tama Lakes to the right. Turn left and descend a flight of stairs fringed by trees. The stairs are somewhat uneven in their spacing, so care is needed.

At the bottom the trees open to reveal the 20m Taranaki Falls, thundering down from the rocky volcanic cliff above to land in a clear, round pool framed by a pile of large, smooth rocks. A wooden table provides a scenic spot to sit and have lunch, or you can make the short but steep climb down to the falls and settle on one of the rocks.

To return via the loop track, continue on the trail with the falls behind you, following the Wairere Stream. After another bridge crossing, the track moves into the bush where it remains for much of the journey. Thirty minutes or so after entering the forest, exit the trees and climb briefly to the open plains. From here the impressive Chateau Tongariro comes into view, nestled in front of Mt Ruapehu. The track remains flat and exposed all the way to the car park.

Wild File

Access The trail begins at the Ngāuruhoe Terrace carpark, past the Whakapapa Chateau, and within walking distance of Whakapapa Village.

Grade Easy

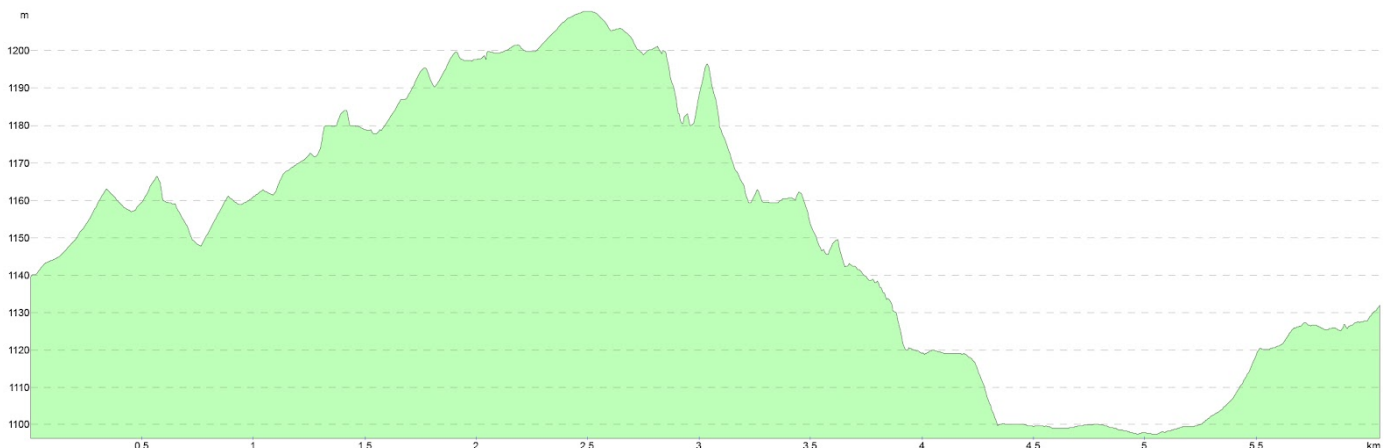
Time 2hr loop return from carpark

Distance 6.1km return

Total ascent 133m

Topo50 map WGS84

Elevation



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