

Tongariro Alpine Crossing Summer and Autumn Track Description

The start time of your chosen hike will vary due to New Zealand's diverse weather. We ask you to contact us 2 days prior to your hike to confirm weather and pick up locations.

First, we pick up our clients from their accommodation or pre-arranged pick up location, then drive to the start of the track.

Once at the start of the track, the guides will see what gear you have and what gear you may need to borrow, to ensure that you have a comfortable trip. The 19.4km Tongariro Alpine Crossing is a diverse track with several different environments and generally takes between 7-9 hours.

We typically start our hike around 0900am which means the crowds should be in front of us, giving the feel of a less crowded hike



We start the hike heading up the Mangatepopo Valley. This 4.5 km journey to the head of the valley is on very well maintained tracks and board-walks, that protect the fragile alpine tussocks and plants. This part should take about 1 hour 15 minutes - 1 hour 30 minutes.

Once we have reached the head of the valley we will have a quick snack, drink and restroom break. The restrooms along the track will not be equipped with toilet paper or running water. Your guide will be carrying toilet paper and hand sanitizer.

After the break at the head of the valley we will begin our first significant climb, up the Devils Staircase.

This climb is just over 1km, takes anywhere between 30 minutes to 45 minutes and is the greatest single gain of altitude for the day.

We make a conscious effort to take a slow and steady approach up this climb, making it more manageable than you might think.

Because this is the first gain of altitude for the day means we should get a view of where we started and the Mangatepopo Valley. On clear blue sky days we can see Mount Taranaki, all the way on the West Coast North Island New Zealand.

We cross through the youngest lava flows of Mt Ngauruhoe at just 45 years. We may even see him steaming, this is normal.





Once we have reached the top of the Devils Staircase we will be in South Crater. A quick snack, water and restroom break will be needed-especially important as these will be the last restrooms for 2.5 hours.

Walking through the flat expanse of South Crater is other worldly and can have an eerie feel. It is a great chance to recover after the Devil's Staircase and is a favourite spot for photos in every direction.

Once we have crossed South Crater we will be at the base of our next significant climb, the Red Crater Ridge, which will take us up to our high point for the day.

Red Crater Ridge is 1km long and generally takes 30-45 minutes to complete. It is all natural pathways and can be a bit slippery under-foot. This is where good footwear comes into play, if you have not brought your hiking boots or do not own any, we have boots you can borrow for the day. As with all of our gear, it is included in the price.

This climb will provide views out to the east side of the mountains looking out towards, Oturere Valley (Mordor L.O.T.R), Kaimanawa Ranges, and the New Zealand Army training base.

Once at the top of Red Crater Ridge, if the cloud is kind to us, we will be looking down into Red Crater which is Mount Tongariro's most colourful crater.



From the Red Crater summit of Mount Tongariro (1886metres or 6224ft), if the weather is clear, we will get 360 views looking out over Blue Lake, the Emerald Lakes, Lake Taupo and much more, so you will want to take numerous photos!

This active Crater has steam vents that we can feel. Our descent down to the lakes is a steep scree slope. Your guide will teach you the safest way to get down and will lead you down the best route they can. This short section is the roughest part of the track so taking your time is key.

Down at Nga Rotopounamu, (Emerald Lakes) your guide will explain what gives these beautiful Emerald Lakes their colour, these lakes are sacred/tapu to the Maori so we will not touch or disturb the waters in any way.

We take in the sights and smells of the volcanic terrain as well as potentially feeling some of the warm steam vents rising up from the ground. This is one of the three active vent areas on or near this Alpine Crossing.



After numerous photos of the NZ famous Emerald Lakes and the surrounding area we move on to Central Crater.

Central Crater, much like South Crater is 1km of flat expanse and good way to ease the legs back into walking after our lunch break.

Through Central Crater we will see an old lava flow from 300 years ago. At the other side of the flat expanse we will see one of multiple small climbs of our afternoon. This first climb is still natural pathways and a bit rocky. It only takes 5-10mins to reach the top then you'll have a view of the last lake on the Tongariro Alpine Crossing-Te Wai-whakaata-o-te-Rangihiroa (Blue Lake).

This picture is looking back towards the Red Crater summit and Emerald Lakes.

Once we have tackled the 5-10min climb up to Te Wai-whakaata-o-te-Rangihiroa (Blue Lake) you will be rewarded with the view of this big mirror-like Lake. This crater of Mount Tongariro is bigger than we first think-400metres across and 16.5metres deep. The water is pure, but once again, it is sacred so we ask please look but don't touch.

From Blue Lake we have about 15minutes before we reach the next restrooms, from these restrooms we will have restrooms every hour until we reach the finish of the track.





At the Blue Lake restrooms you will have yet another different view to say WOW to. A big view over Lake Rotoaira and Lake Taupo, if the cloud is kind. From here we will have about 20 mins of natural pathways left so watch your footing through this section as fatigue might start to kick in. After 20 minutes we will be back onto the man-made track that provides good footing. Another 20mins of zig zaging until you get to the restrooms at the old Ketetahi hut site, which was damaged during the 2012 Te Maari eruption, eventually being removed April.

After leaving the old site that Ketetahi hut used to stand we will continue our descent down towards the finish, 6.3km (about two hours) left to go!

This section has a few steep stair cases heading down so feel free to get walking poles out to help save your knees, (remember, we have walking poles that you can borrow for the day).

Along this section we have another short climb, this climb is a short staircase climb that takes about 5 minutes to complete. Once at the top take a look back up Mount Tongariro to see what you've accomplished already.

The next restrooms we come across will be the last on the track, which means we are only an hour away from finishing our adventure on the Tongariro Alpine Crossing.



Woohoo! We've made it to the Ketetahi bushline, which means (just) 3.1km to go.

Once at this bushline you will enter a eco system like we haven't experinced at all along this hike. We will be surrounded by big native trees, bush and bird life. Try to listen to the birds singing and see if you can spot them in the trees

The first 20minutes of this section is more staircases descending, be careful as by now your legs will be fatigued so take extra care and don't rush.

Once off the stairs the next kilometre will be undulating, which means little rises and descents. 20 minutes from the finish we will enter a Lahar zone, here your guide will show the damage that a Lahar caused after the 2012 eruption of Tongariro in the Te Maari craters.

Birdsong and vibrant bush, what a great way to finish the journey.





Make sure to get a finishing photo to compare the start of the day to the end.

Once at the vehicle we will collect all the gear you may have borrowed.

We finish on the North side of the mountain, which means we finish closer to Turangi which is about a 20 minute drive, or 30 minute drive to Whakapapa or National Park Village. If your lodging is elsewhere than the 3 towns stated please let us know prior when you book.

We will drop everyone off in the group and part ways.



We love getting peoples feedback either on Trip Advisor, Google or any other feedback service provider.

We have an Instagram and Facebook profile so feel free to give us a follow or a like and tag us in the pictures you took. If you circled *I agree* in the medical declaration to allow your photo to be used for promotional purposes then we can post the pictures of you and the group on our profiles or websites.

Instagram: @tongariroguidedwalks

Facebook: Tongariro Guided Walks.

We are looking forward to taking you, your friends, family and loved ones on this amazing adventure

Adventure activities all carry some degree of risk, as does many parts of everyday life. These risks might include damage or loss to personal property, personal injury both minor and serious, or worse. The physical effort from this activity may cause existing medical conditions to worsen, we will ask you about these and may have advice.

While on our tours, you are accompanied by trained Staff who will work to minimise foreseeable risks through being familiar with the ground and weather conditions. Using industry approved best practice, audited policies and procedures, our Staff are trained to identify and manage hazards and risks. Our Staff do not wish to place themselves or our Clients in harm's way. We cannot absolutely guarantee your safety. We monitor weather forecasts and avalanche advisories daily, these can at times alter or cancel our tours.

We will ensure that you are appropriately clothed and equipped before departing and will train you in the use of any equipment that is provided. While on our tours we require you to follow our on-going advice and safety briefings of our Staff as this is the best way to ensure your safety on this adventure activity.

Tongariro is an active volcano in more than one location and we take these volcanic hazards seriously. We act on warnings issued by the volcanic expertise of the dedicated Government agency, GNS, that monitors volcanoes and earthquakes, these may at times alter or cancel our tours.

The Department of Conservation has produced the following document showing the potential volcanic hazards affecting the Tongariro Alpine Crossing <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/tracks-and-walks/tongariro-taupo/tongariro-poster-a4.pdf>. Even when the tracks are open and our tours are operating, volcanic risk is present. If you are uncomfortable with this risk, please choose a different trip.