

Lake Surprise Walk

WHERE: 15 kilometers up the Ohakune Mountain Road

WALKING TIME: 5 hours return

GRADE: Tramping Track; Parts of the track are not well defined but poles mark the entire way, some backcountry experience required

***This walk should only be attempted during summer months. When covered in snow this route should only be tackled by experienced trampers with the appropriate equipment. The Mangaturuturu River may too dangerous to cross during and after periods of heavy rain. Always check with DOC staff for updated track conditions. ***

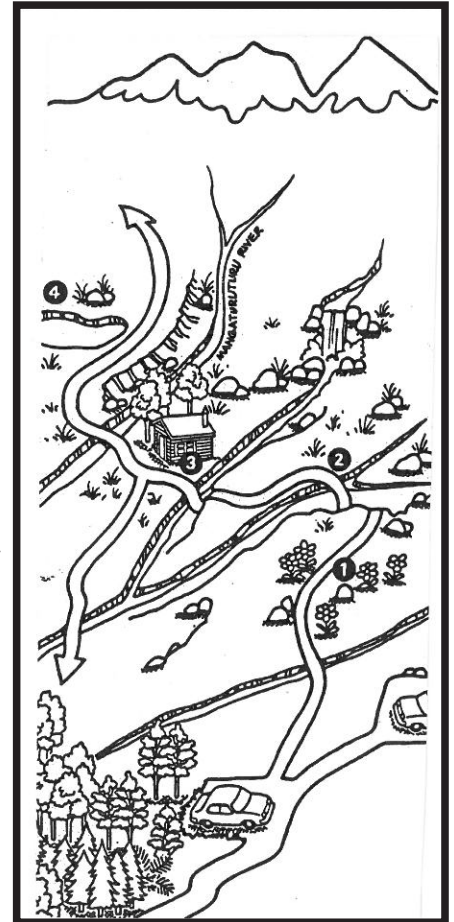
After sliding down the steep, rocky country from the mountain road, the track descends into Makotuku Valley. The beginning of the track is rather exposed and windy; don't get discouraged, the weather usually improves once you have descended into the valley. After about 400 meters into the valley the track crosses a stream then climbs gradually up and across a wide flat ridge (1). This comparatively flat section is a good place to observe some of the hardy sub-alpine plants which are covered by snow in winter yet burst into flower in summer.

Once across the ridge the track begins its gradual descent into the Mangaturuturu Valley. A prominent feature of this descent is the cascades(2), where a stream tumbles over a series of steep rock faces and leaves behind a creamy-white silica deposit on the rocks of the stream bed. The footing here can be quite slippery so take caution when crossing.

After the cascades the track traverses an open slope. As the terrain flattens and the track veers to the left, look straight ahead to see a rock cairn (about 10 meters off the track). This is a memorial to Horace Holl, who drowned in the Mangaturuturu River in 1927. From here the track continues its descent through a narrow gully and then crosses a stream, then scrambles up an open slope briefly before reaching the Mangaturuturu Hut (3). The hut is a rather timely resting spot. It is also a great place for a bit of photography- the view of Mt. Ruapehu, framed by Mangaturuturu Valley, is superb. Notice that there is little vegetation growing alongside the Mangaturuturu River, which flows aside the hut. This is because of a lahar (a volcanic mud flow) swept down the river in the mid 1970's scouring out the river bed. A lahar also poured down the upper valley during the 1995 eruption phase, but did not reach the hut.

To continue from here you'll need to cross the river. If it is in low flow you may be able to rock hop the whole way without getting your feet wet. Never attempt to cross the river after heavy amounts of rain! From the river a boardwalk crosses a swampy area that helps to protect fragile wetland plants. After the boardwalk ends the track scrambles very steeply for about 500 meters out of the valley via a rocky stream bed.

Once on the ridge about the valley the gradient eases and the track meanders gently uphill for about 500 meters to reach Lake Surprise (4). The return trip is via the same track. Take care on the descent back down into the Mangaturuturu Valley; the



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