

Plan and prepare

WHANGANUI JOURNEY



Duration: 3 or 5 days
Distance: 88 km or 145 km (one way)



Great Walks season:
1 October 2019 – 30 April 2020



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

WHANGANUI JOURNEY

Paddle through a landscape of towering cliffs and deep valleys on the magical Whanganui Journey. You'll travel through calm waters and foaming rapids, on an unforgettable trip into the heart of the Whanganui National Park.

Experience the beauty, history and culture of the mighty Whanganui River in the south-west of the North Island. Choose a 5-day journey from Taumarunui to Pipiriki (145 km), or a shorter, 3-day journey starting at Whakahoro (88 km), featuring the most spectacular stretches of the river.

In 2017 the Whanganui River was legally recognised as Te Awa Tupua, a living and indivisible whole from the mountains to the sea, its tributaries and all its physical and metaphysical elements. Due care and respect to the river at all times has always been a key expectation of tāngata whenua and the new legal status reinforces this.

This guide describes a 5-day trip by canoe or kayak from Taumarunui to Pipiriki for independent, non-guided travellers during the Great Walks season (1 October 2019 – 30 April 2020).



Outside the Great Walks season (May to September) conditions are more hazardous – see the safety information.



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Paddling guide



Day 1: Taumarunui to Ohinepane

↗ 3–5 hours, 22 km

Access point is at Ngahuinga (Cherry Grove) in Taumarunui.

Travelling the upper reaches of the Whanganui River, you'll pass through a mixture of farmland and native bush. You'll be in for some excitement as you shoot down rapids on this section of the river.



Day 2: Ohinepane to Whakahoro

↗ 6–8 hours, 35 km

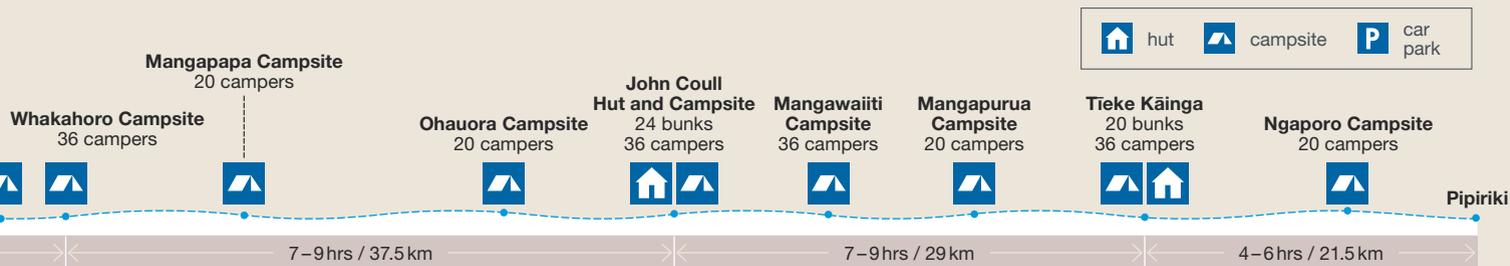
Access point is at Ohinepane (accessed from River Road SH43).

From here, you'll paddle deeper into a rich and rugged landscape. Farms become fewer, native forest dominates and the hills rise. On the way you will pass Poukaria Campsite (a great spot to stop for lunch) and Maharanui Campsite. Take a short trip up the Ohura River to see the Ohura Falls.

COVER: Canoe Safaris

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: © Monster Valley; © Monster Valley; Matthew Pike / Wilderness Magazine; Laura Honey; DOC/90 Seconds

MAIN PHOTO: DOC



Day 3: Whakahoro to John Coull Hut



Day 4: John Coull Hut to Tīeke Kāinga



Day 5: Tīeke Kāinga to Pipiriki

7–9 hours, 37.5 km

Many begin their river journey here, at the most scenic middle section of the river. You'll travel through towering gorges, the sides dripping with moss and ferns. After heavy rain, there are numerous waterfalls. Long stretches of the river are calm and still, with mirror-like reflections of the surrounding hills.

Past Mangapapa Campsite, you'll take a long loop around the Kirikiriroa peninsula, pass the Tarepokiore (whirlpool) rapid and then the large overhang known as Tamatea's Cave. Please do not enter the cave as it is wāhi tapu (a sacred place). Otaihanga Reach leads to your overnight stop at John Coull Hut and Campsite.

7–9 hours, 29 km

On this section, you'll continue your journey through deep gorges and past stunning native forest. The Tangarakau and Whangamomona rivers join the Whanganui on this stretch. Perched high above the river, Mangawaiiti is an attractive spot to camp or stop for lunch.

Continue your trip downstream past the Mangapurua Landing, where you can stop and walk to the iconic Bridge to Nowhere. Afterwards, you'll continue on to Tīeke Kāinga. Here you can examine the intricately-carved pou whenua (carved timber pole) and learn about the history of Tīeke and the tikanga (protocol) of the marae.

4–6 hours, 21.5 km

You'll pass the narrow gorge of the Manganui o te Ao River where it enters the Whanganui after its journey all the way from the slopes of Mt Ruapehu. The Ngaporo and Autapu rapids can provide plenty of excitement and perhaps a cool dip on a hot day. Through the day, you'll see the landscape changing. You leave the deep gorges behind and native forest gives way to farmland. At Pipiriki village, you finally disembark at the end of a remarkable journey.



Highlights



Photo: DOC/90 Seconds

Air New Zealand partners with the Department of Conservation to help bring native birds back to the beautiful Great Walks.



Photo: Shellie Evans (tikitouringnz.blogspot.co.nz)



Photo: Canoe Safaris



Photo: DOC/90 Seconds



Photo: Sabine Bernert



Photo: Matt Binns (CC BY 2.0)

- 1 Take a break from the water at Mangapurua Landing and walk to the iconic **Bridge to Nowhere**. Lost deep in the forest, completely isolated from civilisation, this lonely concrete bridge was built for returned World War I servicemen to reach a now-abandoned settlement.
- 2 Look out for plump **New Zealand pigeon/kererū**, as they plummet from the forest canopy before gaining enough speed to rise again, and noisily crash-land into the foliage in search of more berries.
- 3 Experience the unique landscape of the Whanganui National Park as you **paddle through deep gorges** and past cascading waterfalls.
- 4 Visit **Tieke Kāinga** and learn about the intimate connection that Whanganui iwi have with the awa (river).
- 5 Watch for **long-tailed bats/pekapeka** fluttering overhead at dusk when you reach John Coull Hut.

Conservation story

- 6 Watch and listen for the **native birdlife** of the Whanganui National Park, including kererū, whio/blue duck, tū and brown kiwi. Partnerships with iwi, Air New Zealand, Horizons Regional Council and private landowners mean that more native species are benefitting from greatly increased pest control programmes.

Places to stay

DOC operates 2 huts, 11 Great Walks campsites and 1 basic bunkroom (at Whakahoro) along the Whanganui Journey, which **must be booked in advance during the Great Walks season** (1 October 2019 – 30 April 2020).

Outside the Great Walks season facilities are greatly reduced, and there are no hut rangers. Booking is not required, huts and campsites are first come, first served and fees are reduced.

See www.doc.govt.nz for details.

Great Walks huts

\$32 per adult per night; 17 years and under free (booking required).

During the Great Walks season the huts have bunks, mattresses, a water supply, toilets, hand-washing facilities and heating with fuel. They may also have a lighting source, basic cooking facilities with fuel, and a hut ranger may be present.



Whakahoro Campsite. Photo: Daniel Deans

Great Walks campsites

\$20 per adult per night; 17 years and under free (booking required).

The campsites offer basic facilities including toilets, sinks and a water supply. Some also have picnic tables and cooking shelters.



 **CHECK**

 **CLEAN**

 **DRY**

PROTECT OUR WATERWAYS

Freshwater pests, including didymo, can be spread by a single drop of water or plant fragment. Protect our waterways – always **CHECK, CLEAN, DRY** any equipment, including footwear, that comes into contact with the water before entering, and when moving between, waterways.

For more information see www.mpi.govt.nz (then search on 'Check Clean Dry').

What do I do next?



Start off at greatwalks.co.nz/whanganui for more information.



Book your huts and campsites online at bookings.doc.govt.nz.



Book your canoes, equipment and transport to and from the track.



Buy your food and **pack your bags** – download the Great Walks packing list and make sure you have everything you need for a 3-day or 5-day independent unguided trip.



Read up on **safety** and make sure you're well prepared for your journey and changeable weather at greatwalks.co.nz/whanganui.



Check the weather, and make sure you've downloaded and printed your **ticket and official track guide**. You can also get the latest weather updates and river conditions from the Taumarunui or Ohakune i-SITES.



All set! Jump in your vessel and get paddling! Don't forget to share your experience on [facebook.com/GreatWalks](https://www.facebook.com/GreatWalks).

For in-depth local knowledge, visit:

Ruapehu i-SITE Visitor Information Centre
Phone: +64 6 385 8427
Email: Ohakune-VC@doc.govt.nz
greatwalks.co.nz

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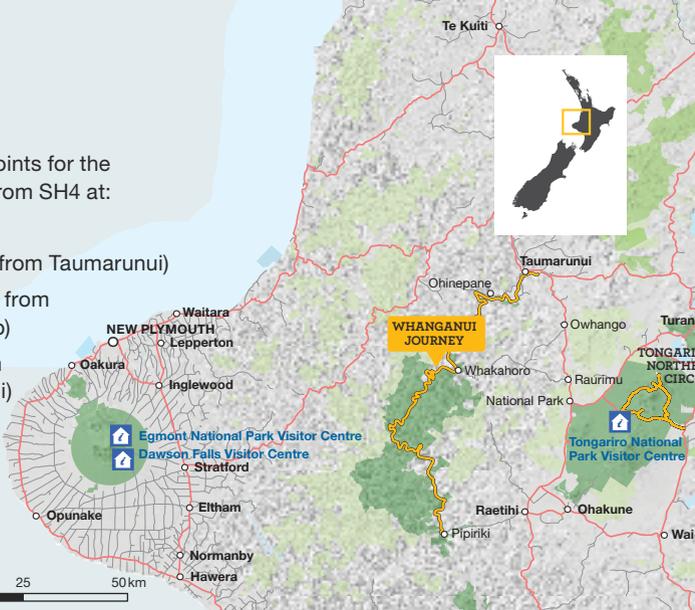
This publication is produced using paper sourced from well-managed, renewable and legally logged forests.

Getting there

Traditional entry or exit points for the Whanganui Journey are from SH4 at:

- **Taumarunui**
- **Ohinepene** (access from Taumarunui)
- **Whakahoro** (access from Raurimu or Owhangō)
- **Pipiriki** (access from Raetihi or Whanganui)

Equipment hire, services, food and transport can be found in Taumarunui, Whanganui, Raetihi, Ohakune and National Park Village.



Know before you go

It is **important** to plan your trip thoroughly to make sure you stay safe. Before you go, know the **Outdoor Safety Code** – 5 Simple rules to help you #MakeItHomeNZ.

1. **Plan your trip.** Make sure you have enough time for your canoe journey, plus extra time in case something goes wrong. Book accommodation, transport and transfers early.
2. **Tell someone your plans.** Tell someone where you are going and when you'll be back. Ask them to call emergency services if you haven't returned on time. Consider carrying a personal locator beacon, as there is no cellphone reception on most tracks.
3. **Be aware of the weather.** New Zealand weather is very changeable. Even if it's summer or the forecast is good, you should always carry a rain jacket and warm clothing. Check metservice.com for the most up-to-date forecast.
4. **Know your limits.** Research the river conditions, distances and canoeing times to decide whether this trip suits your abilities. If you are going on a walking side-trip, always follow the track markers and signposted tracks.
5. **Take sufficient supplies.** Take the right gear, including extra food, clothing and equipment in case something goes wrong. You'll have to carry everything you need, as you can't buy food or equipment at Great Walks huts or campsites.

You can find more information on safety at www.doc.govt.nz/safety or www.adventuresmart.nz.

Safety on the Whanganui Journey

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- You need a good level of fitness, as well as confidence in a canoe and in the water. Once you start you cannot turn back and there are no exit points between Whakahoro and Pipiriki.
- Heavy rain and flooding can occur at any time of year on the Whanganui River and the weather can change quickly. You need to be ready for rain, cold and wind.
- Don't canoe the river when water levels are predicted to rise or the river is flooding. If you fall out of your canoe, you might not be able to get back in or swim to the river's edge.
- Always pull your canoe up high on the bank and tie it to something secure. It may not be raining on the river where you are, but rain elsewhere can cause the river to rise several metres overnight.
- Go to greatwalks.co.nz/whanganui 'Know before you go' section for detailed safety information, and 'What to take' section for a full gear list.

Remember – your safety is your responsibility



You are strongly recommended **NOT to attempt this journey** between early May and late September (outside the Great Walks season).

The winter environment in Whanganui National Park is wet and cold, with short daylight hours. The river level is much higher than in summer and the water is very cold. Hut facilities are greatly reduced – including no gas for cooking and no hut rangers.

Travellers will need to be independent, have a full understanding of the safety risks and be prepared for extremely cold conditions. The Whanganui River journey should only be attempted out of the Great Walks season by people who are very experienced in canoeing remote New Zealand rivers in winter.