

and found this excellent climbing. In thirty-five minutes the break in the outer rim of the crater was reached. The view from here looking across Tongariro towards Lake Taupo was one to be remembered. All the points of interest on Tongariro stood out prominently, whilst beyond shone Lake Taupo reflecting the surrounding hills like a gigantic mirror. Proceeding up a slope to the right, we found ourselves on the edge of a small circular crater-basin, from which there were a few puffs of steam coming from amongst the stones at the bottom. We followed on around the edge of this and came to an enormous chasm against the south-west portion of the outer crater, a narrow razorback ridge separating it from the little crater to the north. There was a perpendicular drop from the edge of the outer rim right down into the awful depths. By getting on the top of a large boulder known as Castle Rock on the western edge, a splendid view of the great hole was obtained. It appeared to be about 10 chains across, circular in shape, with perpendicular sides about 500 ft. deep. We tried to gauge the depth by dropping stones and counting the time, but could only form a rough estimate. The bottom appeared to be an uneven mass of loose stones, and from all around the edge steam-jets were shooting out with a hissing noise. From the highest point, which is wearing away very fast, a splendid view of Ruapehu is to be obtained with the two Nga-puna-a-tama Lakes in the foreground. Descending to the low saddle between Ngauruhoe and Tongariro the journey was continued towards the Red Crater across the large southern crater of Tongariro. The basin of the latter is almost level, with numbers of small loose stones scattered about. A small rocky bar runs down from the eastern wall, and we climbed up this round the rim, and up a short steep slope to find ourselves looking into the Red Crater, so called because the scoria composing the walls is of a dull-reddish tint. The last occasion that this trip was made the party left the Red Crater, and followed the rocky ridge to the highest point on Tongariro immediately to the north of the Southern Crater. The view of Ngauruhoe from there is a glorious one, and is well worth the trip. The Blue Lake and track down to Ketetahi hut can easily be distinguished separated by the large Central Crater. On this excursion we travelled down the north side of the Red Crater examining the active steam-jet near the bottom, and then pushed on to the pretty little green ponds lying immediately below. From the Red Crater a lava-flow of recent times has pushed its way into the basin of the Central Crater, its dark, black-looking masses forming an interesting spectacle. The horse-track from the Ruapehu hut crosses the basin and cuts through a gap to the north on the way to Ketetahi. We crossed this and climbed the rocky ridge to the east, and were soon overlooking the Blue Lake, a large expanse of clear blue water about 30 chains in diameter. Continuing northwards along the ridge between the Central Crater and the Blue Lake we descended to the track where it runs through the little saddle at the head of the Central Crater. Once on the grade the warm stream coming from the Ketetahi Springs was soon reached, and from here the hut could be seen.

The hut at Ketetahi is very similar to the Ruapehu one, except that there is no fireplace, the cooking being done in a small shelter-shed about a couple of chains away.

*Fourth Day.*—We left the hut about 10 a.m., and, keeping to the track to the top of the zigzag, struck across a gully to Te Mari blowhole, which could be seen steaming on the next ridge. The view from Tongariro looking north on a fine morning is a charming one. In the immediate foreground are patches of bush through which a recent lava-flow from Te Mari has eaten its way; beyond this is Roto Aira Lake, surrounded by tussock plains and patches of bush, giving it a park-like appearance, with the forest-clad slopes of Pihanga and Kakaramea in the background. Beyond this again, Lake Taupo's waters shimmer in the morning sun, with the distant peaks to the north just showing through the haze. A fairly easy climb brought us to the blowhole, which we found to be a steam-jet shooting up from a large crack on a rounded spur. The weather clouded up and distant thunder was heard, so we lost no time climbing up the steep spur to the south running up to the Blue Lake. The view from the top of the spur looking southwards is one of the most interesting on the route, taking in the Blue Lake, Red Crater, Ngauruhoe, and Ruapehu. A number of birds were noticed on a rocky point on the edge of the lake below, and on going down to investigate matters we found sixteen nests, and heard afterwards that they were those of the tarapunga, or red-billed sea-gull, which come from Lake Taupo every season to breed there. A slight shower of rain here warned us that it was time to be moving, so we travelled over the ridge down to the horse-track, past the green ponds and the old Oturere Crater basin, and kept to the horse-track right to the Ruapehu hut.

This trip covers a good deal of ground, and it is not always that the weather remains fine for the necessary time. For Ruapehu a fine day is absolutely necessary, as even a slight wind blowing off the snow is decidedly uncomfortable.

The Ketetahi hut is easily reached from Tokaanu, there being a formed dray-road to the foot of the spur below the hut, and a horse-track from there up to it. Several walking enthusiasts have come from Tokaanu to the hut, spent a day or two there, and then gone on across the plains to Waimarino. This will be a magnificent drive when the road is formed right through.

An excursion to the two Nga-puna-a-tama Lakes, about six miles from the Ruapehu hut, in the saddle between Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu, forms an interesting side trip to any one waiting at the hut for a suitable day to climb Ruapehu. The southern lake is the prettier of the two, being almost circular in shape, situated in a basin with sloping sides covered with vegetation, running down from abrupt faces of purple-coloured rocks, and terminating in a narrow sandy beach at the water's edge. The larger one, nearer Ngauruhoe, is more barren-looking, being surrounded by bare rocky ridges. It is just below here in a gully that the Waihohonu rises. The best route to the lakes is to follow up the bed of the Waihohonu almost the whole way, thereby avoiding the continual ups and downs of the little dry washouts running down from Ruapehu, and also the scrubby vegetation.

The Ruapehu hut will always be the most popular base, as it is within easy reach of all the mountains. By cutting out the excursions to the Ketetahi Springs and Te Mari blowhole, the Ngauruhoe trip and Blue Lake could be worked from the Ruapehu hut in one day, though the springs at Ketetahi and views to the north are well worth the extra day.