

RING ROUTE NO. 3

Summary

This route takes you south on SHW3 and SHW4 to Taumarunui in the Southern King Country. By either jet boat or your own car, travel down the Wanganui River to the Lavender Farm at Otonui Landing for lunch.

Then it's back to Taumarunui and back up SHW4 to the Ongarure turn-off. This is old timber milling country and a little side trip to Endeans old native timber mill and a final highlight – before heading home to Waitomo Lodge.



Brief Logistics	
Total Distance	245 km's mainly sealed road.
Driving Time	3 hours, 20 minutes
Food Outlets	Ample
Petrol Stations	At Taumarunui
Mobile Ph. Coverage	Poor

Itinerary

The night before you make this day trip you really should ask at reception about Taumarunui Jet Tours – but more about that later.

The route takes you south out of Te Kuiti on SHW3 to the turn-off to Wellington and Taumarunui, about 12km out of Te Kuiti. You are now on SHW4 and driving through some quality sheep and beef country. Shortly you will start to climb a significant hill which locals call waterfall hill. Near the top is a little waterfall which is called Madonna Falls.



The Maori people hold these falls sacred as upstream was the birthplace of King Tawhiao. They frequently garland the falls with flowers. Early Pakeha motorists and carriers knew the falls as a place to get water for the radiator of over-heated vehicles. About 100 meters up the road is a great place to get some superb landscape photos.

Driving south another 5km you come to Omaru Road on your right. It is 1 hour there and back to the Omaru Falls. Not for the aged and infirm.

Carrying on south you pass the tiny Mapiu School and then over the County Boundary into the Ruapehu District. After a big horseshoe bend watch for Tapuwahine Road on your right. It's a 10 minute detour (6km's gravel) up this road to one of the finest stands of podocarp forest you will see. It's right beside the road and the Matai and Rimu are 40 to 50 meters tall. Magnificent trees!

Out of here and onward to Taumarunui. Here there are numerous cafes and fast food places. Look in at the Information Centre in the Railway Station. Also look into the Real Estate Offices at house prices – you may be tempted to move here!!

If you had checked out the Jet Tours at reception you could have booked your 1.5 to 2.5 hour trip on the Wanganui River including the Ercegs Pioneer Museum and Lauren's Lavender Farm. Cost is \$50 for children and \$70 adults and they need a minimum of 4 people. In good weather a great trip.

The alternative is to drive down the river to lunch or afternoon tea at Lauren's Lavender Farm. Great river scenery and hill country sheep and cattle farms.



Now it's time to turn around and go back through Taumarunui. Watch for the Ongarure turn-off on SHW4, about 21km north of Taumarunui. Take this turn off which will allow you to follow the Ongarure River and the Main Trunk Railway Line back to Waimiha.

First you go past Ongarure, an old timber town famous for its native timber mills and bush trains. Today sadly it's a bit of a ghost town.

About 16km further on is Waimiha. This was the end of the journey for hundreds of early farming settlers and their families who arrived here by steam train in the early 1900's. They would be met by Government officials who would direct them to their bush blocks. And then it was a long walk over the hills into the Mapiu, Mokauiti and Aria districts. Riding in front would be the Government official!

Just past Waimiha turn right onto the bridge over the Ongarure River and follow the Ongarure stream road to Endeans Mill. It's about 10km of which the last 3km's are gravel.



This was probably the last timber mill in New Zealand milling native timber. It stopped about 1980 although still put a bit of pine through right up until about 1990. A classic old mill with workers houses, mill managers office and stacks of timber still just sitting there. Well worth the 20 minute detour.



After using at least one roll of film it's off back to the tarseal, over the bridge and turn right to Te Kuiti. Soon you are back into good farmland and following the Main Trunk railway all the way back to Te Kuiti.

Soon you will go over the Poro-ta-rau Rail tunnel and then turn left onto SHW30. You will pass Mangapehi, Kopaki and Puketutu – all earlier settlements founded on saw milling but when the timber ran out so did the settlement die.

Finally it's Te Kuiti entered from the south and your final stop at Waitomo Lodge.

It's been a big day!

