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## DOC takes action to improve enjoyment of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing

People planning to hike the Tongariro Alpine Crossing this summer are urged to use a range of shuttle services.

Date: 09 October 2017

Vehicle crowding at both ends of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing has adversely impacted on people's enjoyment of this world famous day hike. DOC has worked closely with concessionaires and local iwi to improve the experience for all visitors.

People planning to hike the Tongariro Alpine Crossing this summer are urged to use a range of shuttle services from the local towns around Tongariro National Park. The suggestion is being made because parking restrictions will be in place at both road-ends of the track and the shuttle services will provide safe and easy access to the popular one-day hike.

Changes this summer season, between Labour Weekend (21 October 2017) and 30 April 2018 include a four-hour time-restriction for private vehicles at the Mangatepopo Road-end. This gives visitors time to enjoy short walks, but people wanting to do the entire hike, which takes an average of six to eight hours to complete, will need to use shuttle transport.

DOC recommends using shuttle services to access the start and to get picked up. The shuttle services operate from Whakapapa, National Park Village, Turangi, Taupo, Ohakune and Raetihi. Shuttles take visitors to the start, at Mangatepopo Road-end and pick them at the end of the hike from Ketetahi Road-end. Information on all approved operators is available from the i-sites around the region and on the DOC website.

Developing a stronger appreciation of the cultural and environmental values of Tongariro National Park, a dual World Heritage Area, is also on the agenda.

Local kaumātua, Te Ngāehe Wanikau, explains: "The mountain peaks and all waterways on Tongariro and his peaks, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu, are sacred to the local hapū Ngāti Hikairo Ki Tongariro"

Mr Wanikau asks visitors to the area to keep their own safety and wellbeing paramount and also to respect the sanctity of the maunga tapu (sacred mountains) by not touching or entering any of the waterways, including the alpine lakes.

"Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro places extreme importance on their guardian role in protecting not only Tongariro and his peaks, but also the safety and wellbeing of visitors to the region," he says.

DOC is removing access signs to the peaks and visitors are asked to stay to the marked and formed tracks. This summer there will be additional toilets in place on the hike and people are encouraged to use them as defecating on the tracks or in the alpine vegetation off track is unacceptable, offensive and a human health hazard.

DOC also reminds people that drones are not allowed be used in the park. Tongariro Alpine Crossing is unique and a special journey, so leave your drones at home and let other walkers enjoy their experience.

"This summer expect to see more conservation rangers at the beginning of the track and on the track to share these important messages with our visitors," says Bhrent Guy, Operations Manager.

### Book at shuttle through the i-site network

- Whakapapa i-site +64 7 892 3075
- Ohakune i-site 0800 647 483
- Turangi i-site 0800 288 726
- Taupo i-site 0800 525 382

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