



BR Brake Van World Tour 11

Mount Ruapehu

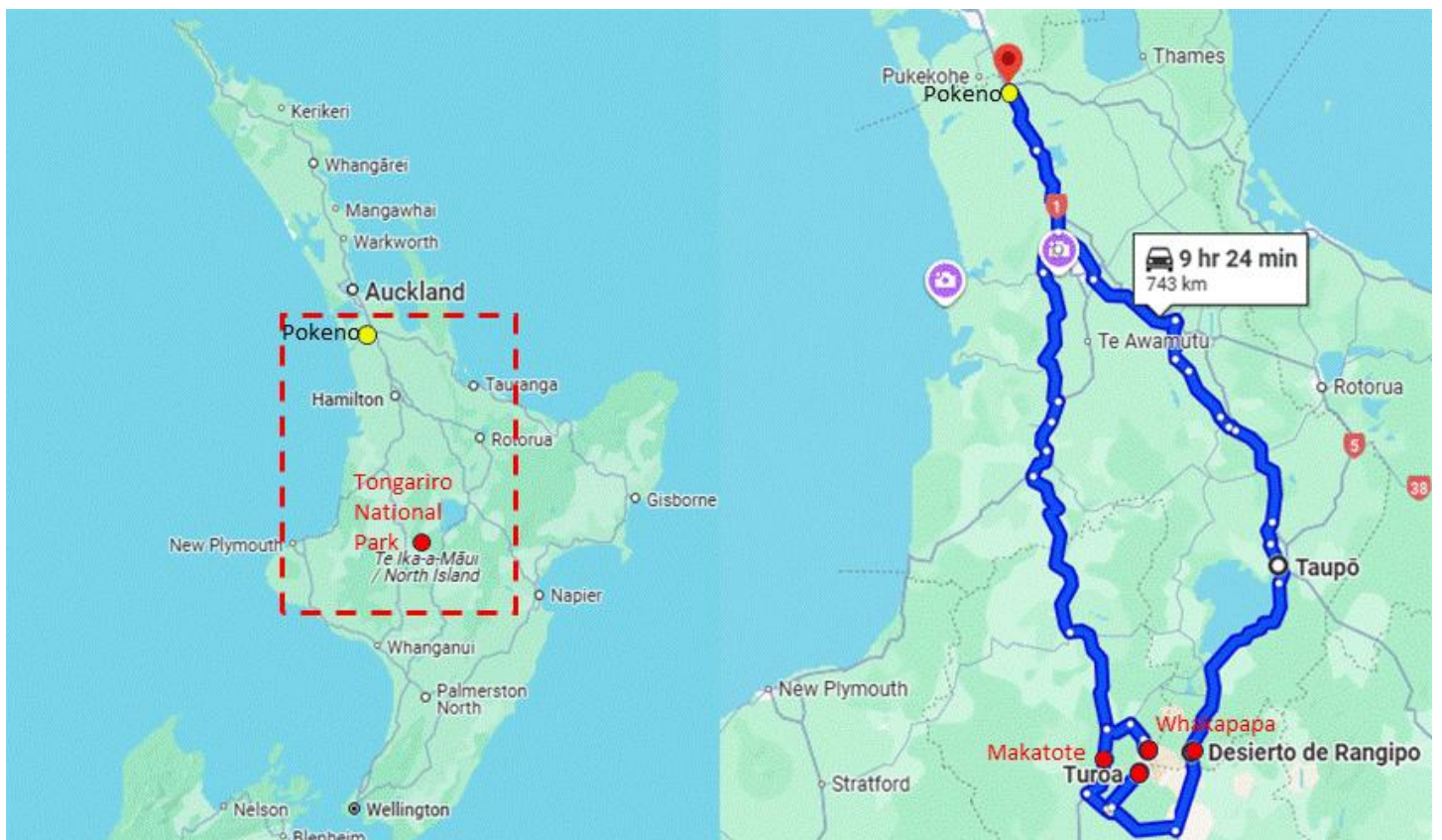


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Looking up the slopes of Mount Ruapehu in the Tongariro National Park at Whakapapa on the northern slopes

Our latest weekly drive took us down to the Tongariro National Park including Mount Ruapehu (the North Island's highest peak and an active volcano), and the Desert Road on the Central Plateau of the North Island. As usual, the brake van came along for the ride.





The day started off crystal clear initially with the usual occasional winter Waikato fog patches interspersed with sunny bright patches. However, as we climbed up onto the central plateau, things started to change. These are the lower slopes of Ruapehu looking north from whence we had come. The weather change is sweeping in from the right.



Today the mountains were creating the weather, as can be seen here with Mount Ngauruhoe generating its own rain shadow.



At the top of the road leading up to the northern ski fields on Ruapehu. This is Whakapapa and the altitude here is roughly 1600metres. This could well be a land-based height record for the brake van and indeed well above what its prototypes would have reached as well! The sparsity of snow however is unusual for this time of year.



We started our circumnavigation of the mountains on the west side of Ruapehu. This is the route taken by the North Island Main Trunk Line from Auckland to Wellington. There are a number of significant gullies to cross en route and this is the biggest. This is Makatote Viaduct and whilst the parallel road goes around in a giant hairpin, the railway necessarily goes straight across. The viaduct is 860ft long and 259ft tall at the deepest point. By way of comparison, Glenfinnan Viaduct is 1250ft long and 100ft tall. Modelling this at 1:24 i.e. 3'6" gauge in 45mm gauge would create a structure 36ft or 11metres long and 11ft or just over 3 metres tall! On balance, Glenfinnan at 1:32 scale is probably a more practical proposition!



Having stopped for afternoon tea in Ohakune on the south west corner of Mount Ruapehu, we drove up to the second ski field on the mountain at Turoa. The elevation of the road end here is also approximately 1600 metres. Sadly, this was in the cloud. However, just below, we emerged out of it to these views. The snow is lying a lot lower down at this end of the mountain. The passing storms are spectacular and obvious.



The view looking north across the slopes.



And up the road into the cloud.



Our journey south continued until we reached the township of Waioru where we joined State Highway One to turn north once again. Apart from the two excursions up Mount Ruapehu, the road had generally sat around the 800m elevation level whilst skirting the mountain. However, having turned the corner, we now headed up over the Rangipo desert to its summit at 1074 metres. This is the highest point State Highway One reaches on its journey through New Zealand.



It's a wild place and we were fortunate that despite the cloud and isolated storms, in between was reasonably calm. Truly this was a day the mountains were creating their own weather system and the rest of the country was generally settled and fine! Rangipo desert is not a desert in the normally accepted sense. The desolation is a combination of altitude and acidity from the volcanic activity of the mountains alongside. The eastern slopes of Ruapehu rise up on the other side as can be seen.



From the north end of the desert, the neighbouring mountains of Ngauruhoe and Tongariro come back into view.



Descending off the desert towards Ngauruhoe and Tongariro as the sun is setting.



I'll close this with a couple more shots of the class 27 with external painting finished and awaiting decals.



The view from the other side.

I have also published another video of its first test run outside together with the previously completed mark ones. This was filmed after the green had been applied but before any of the other colours. The link is:

[Gauge One 3-D Printed Class 27 Test Run](#)