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May 2010

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Introduction

This Edition

The information in this booklet is continually being updated, and if you spot any obvious mistakes please send an email to: markpickering60@gmail.com.

This edition includes the new carparks and access tracks into the Two Thumb range beside Lake Tekapo.

Walking Preparation

A good parka, food, thermos, map, camera, sturdy and comfortable shoes, are a good equipment list to start with. Keep your plans modest if you are unfamiliar with the area, or the exercise. Take a note of the weather, and tell someone where you are going.

Walking Times

It is notoriously difficult to suggest walking times that make sense to everyone, but the times suggested here are designed for the slower, younger, older, less fit or family groups. Most averagely fit adults will reduce these times.

Mt Biking

The Mackenzie country offers good mt biking and DoC have created new trails in the Ruataniwha Conservation Park, Lindis Pass and Freehold Creek. Other promising areas include the Dobson Valley, Otamatapaio River and Ahuriri River. Riding times are generally half of walking times.

Roads

The Mackenzie can be harsh place, and in autumn and winter snow and ice are hazards. The spring thaw can raise rivers dramatically so people driving onto riverbeds need to be careful, and also take note of water releases from the hydro lakes. Many birds breed on braided rivers and 4WD vehicles should stick to the main trails only.

Litter & Litter Pickers

Litter can be a problem on some tracks, particularly around carparks, and it's a great help to the council workers and DOC rangers if people pick up the litter. A plastic bag (and a pair of gardening gloves) in the car or back-pack is a positive way of ensuring the hills stay litter free.

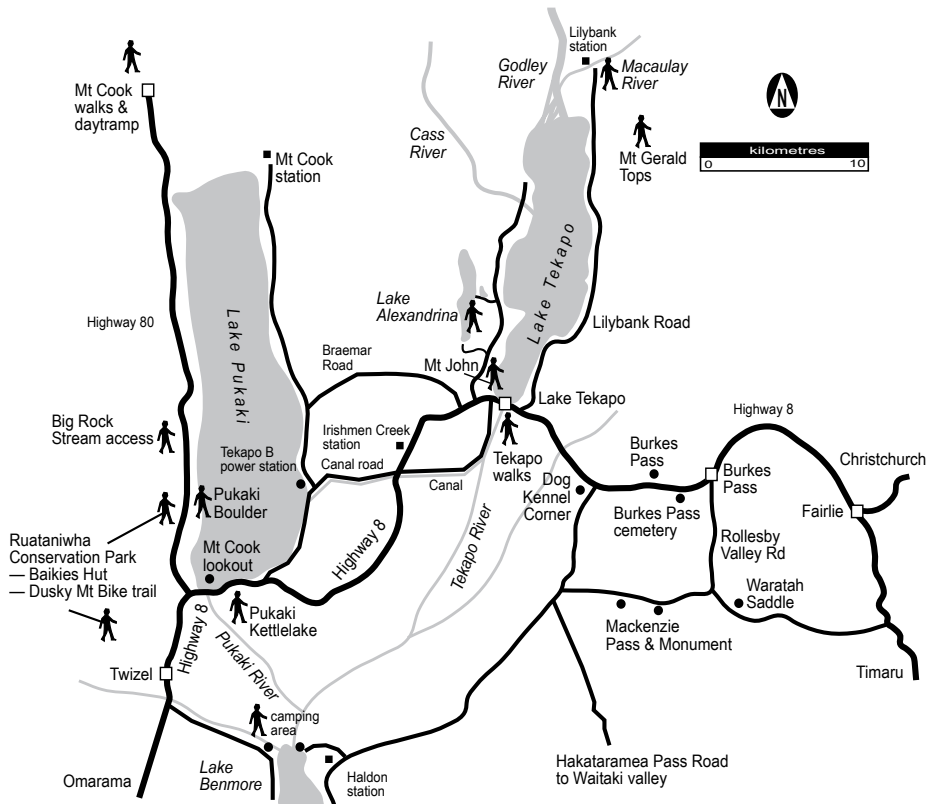
Dogs & Lambing

Most dog owners are responsible and keep their dogs under firm control. This is particularly important where stock is present. A number of tracks may be closed from August to October for lambing.

Dog fouling is an unpleasant nuisance and local bylaws require that it is the owners responsibility to remove it. Carry that plastic bag! Or at least clear it off the track with a stick.

Map Disclaimer

The maps printed with each walk are intended as a visual ready reference only, and are not a substitute for a good topographical map.



Lake Tekapo

Walks, Daytramps & Mt Biking

Mt John

Walks

Mount John is 1031 m high and offers a wonderful panorama of Lake Tekapo, Mount Cook and the surrounding Mackenzie Country. Most kids from 6 upwards would be able to handle the 300 m walk up here. And there's a great cafe on top!

From the carpark beside the ice-rink the track climbs steadily through the larch forest and reaches a junction with a loop track that circles the summit. Follow the track on the Lake Tekapo side around to a great lookout. The easy track circles the observatories and returns back to the track junction. Mount John is surprisingly flat on top and Himalayan chukor (introduced as a game bird) are sometimes spotted on the higher slopes, especially on the western side.

Walking time: 2 hours return to summit.

Lake Shore Walk

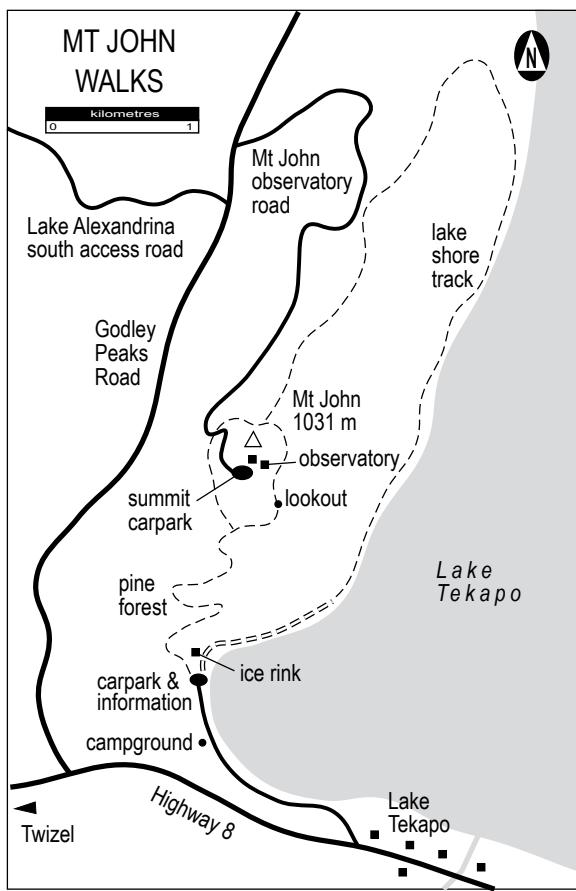
The first part of this walk is the same as the summit walk. But once on the summit at the well-marked track junction, follow the broad tussock spur down some 2 km to where the track drops sharply down to Lake Tekapo itself. Staying 50 m above the lake, the track sidles around the base of Mount John, back to the skating rink and carpark.

Walking time: 3-4 hours for full circuit, 8 km circuit.

Directions: from Lake Tekapo township take the road to the lakeside motor camp and continue to the carpark before the ice-skating rink.

Mt John Astronomical Observatory

Mt John has a high percentage of clear nights and low light pollution. The observatory was first opened in 1965, and Mt John was for a short time used as a satellite tracking station by the US Air Force. A 1 metre (diameter) telescope was installed in 1985, and in 2005 the 1.8 metre reflecting McLellan telescope was installed, New Zealand's largest. There are also two smaller reflecting telescopes of 61 cm aperture each.



Lake Tekapo

710 m (2323 ft) above sea level and the town has two New Zealand weather records; the highest wind gust of 250 km/h recorded at Mt John on 18 April 1970, and the heaviest ground frost of -21.6 degrees recorded on 4 August 1938. The island in the middle of the Tekapo is Motuariki, meaning 'motu' an island, 'ariki' means 'chief' or 'tohunga' (priest).

Why is the lake so blue? The many glaciers in the headwaters of Lake Tekapo grind tremendous quantities of rock into fine dust or 'flour', which turns the rivers milky as they flow into Lake Tekapo. This rock dust remains suspended in the water for a long time, and as it sinks it reflects back the sunlight with vivid turquoise-blue colours. Downstream from the lake the rock flour has completely settled, and the river has turned clear again.

Tekapo Town Walks

Lake George Scott Circuit

An interesting walk, that explores behind Lake Tekapo along the Tekapo River, and gives a good view of Mt Cook on a clear day. A good walk for children as there are no major roads to cross.

From the fire station the track climbs steeply onto a high grass terrace, quite characteristic of the area. Then it descends through larch forest to a lower terrace, and follows the Tekapo River around to Lake George Scott. This lake was formed behind the Tekapo A dam.

The track crosses the access road and climbs through pine forest to the top of the terrace again, and a fine lookout over the hydro canal. The track crosses the terrace (and access road again) and rejoins the main track, as it heads back down to the town.

Walking time: 1.5-2 hours return.

Directions: starts on Highway 8 in Lake Tekapo township beside the fire station.

Lake, Pines Beach and Cowan Hill Circuit

From the church walk past the dog statue (and pretty lupins in spring) around the lake edge to the aptly named Pines Beach. The track turns into the forest and crosses the Lilybank Road, and then the main Highway 8 (watch out for speeding cars) up to Cowans Hill lookout.

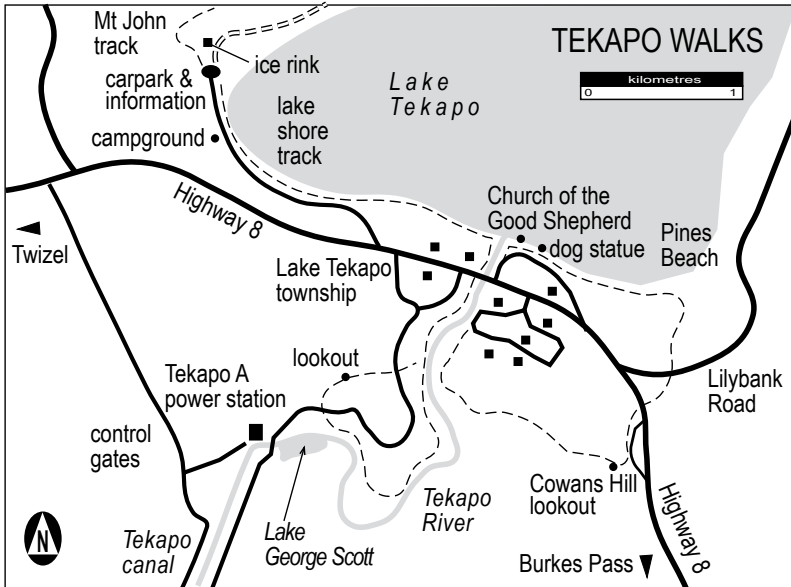
Then the track sidles Cowans Hill, crosses an access road, and drops down beside the Tekapo River back to the township and church again.

Walking time: 1.5-2 hours return.

Directions: starts and finishes by the Church of the Good Shepherd on the lake shore.

Church of the Good Shepherd

This little church must be one of the most photographed buildings in New Zealand. The foundation stone was laid by the Duke of Gloucester in January 1935 and the church completed 8 months later. It was designed by the architect R. S. D. Harman, and the setting was kept as elemental as possible. Unworked boulders from the lake shore were used for the walls, and a retired stonemason Jack Miller hand-picked the lakeside stones for colour and quality. The church is a memorial to the high country settlers and shepherds and contains a hand-written book in which early history of the district has been recorded.



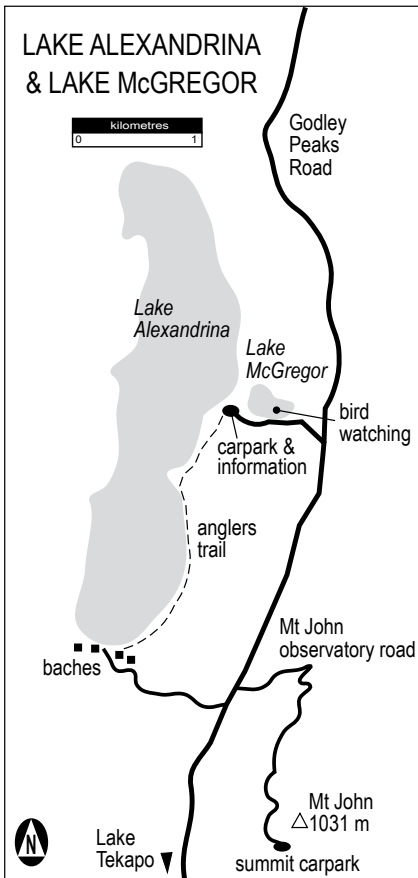
Tekapo A Power Station

Construction started in 1938 and the powerhouse and dam completed by 1953. The lake was raised by a 61 m reinforced concrete dam, with a spillway for excess water. The water from the lake is taken by a 1.6 km tunnel to a 48 m diameter surge tank, and then into the powerhouse itself.

The tunnel was built through unstable glacial moraine and used the innovative technique of 'shields'. These open-ended cylinders pushed into the moraine by hydraulic jacks, the spoil removed and a concrete lining put in place. The powerhouse contains a single generator of 25 MW, with a Tampella turbine, and the station is operated entirely remotely by the Twizel Control Centre.

Lake Alexandrina & Lake McGregor

Lake Alexandrina is a discreetly hidden lake with clusters of fishing baches, and sits in an old glacial hollow alongside Lake Tekapo. Power-boats are not allowed on the sheltered lake which has a fishermans trail down the eastern side. Lake McGregor is particularly good for bird-watchers as the road gives a good viewing platform. Scaup, paradise ducks and crested gebes can be seen here.



At the Lake McGregor/Lake Alexandrina carpark, there are information boards, toilet and basic camping ground. From the carpark climb straight up about 50 m to a flat-top hill. A stile crosses the fence-line and an unmarked trail wanders down to the lakeside again.

This fishermens footpath rounds the point and rambles along past willows and the gentle waters edge to the carpark and baches at the south end of the lake. It can get muddy in places but it is an attractive and secluded walk. At the south end you have to turn around and go back unless you have organised transport.

Walking time: 1-2 hours one way, 3-4 hours return.

Directions: off Highway 8 (2 km west of Lake Tekapo township) take the Godley Peaks Road 3 km to turn-off to south end of lake, or 7 km to middle of lake and Lake McGregor carpark. Nice picnic areas at the end of both access roads.

Macaulay River & Two Thumb Tops

Mt Gerald Tops and 'Dog Tag' Hut — walking access

Just over Coal River bridge, follow the new short road up to the Willows carpark. A track has been marked up the river terrace as the old 4WD track swings back to the deer fence (about 35 mins). Now on public land, walk up the fenceline to the 4WD track high on tussock terraces.

Turning left leads to the private Rex Simpson hut, pre-booking required from Alpine Recreation, Tekapo. Extensive tussock slopes and peaks above the hut. Turning right and the farm road goes over a low saddle and into Camp Stream to the historic musterers hut. The original hut burnt down, and was rebuilt in the 1930's. A 1898 dog tag survived. The hut has been recently repaired, 4 bunks and coal range.

These tracks also give access to the huge Two Thumb conservation area and beyond into Mesopotamia.

Walking time: 2 hours one way to Camp Stream hut or Rex Simpson hut, 3-4 hours return.

Richmond Trail — mt bike and walking

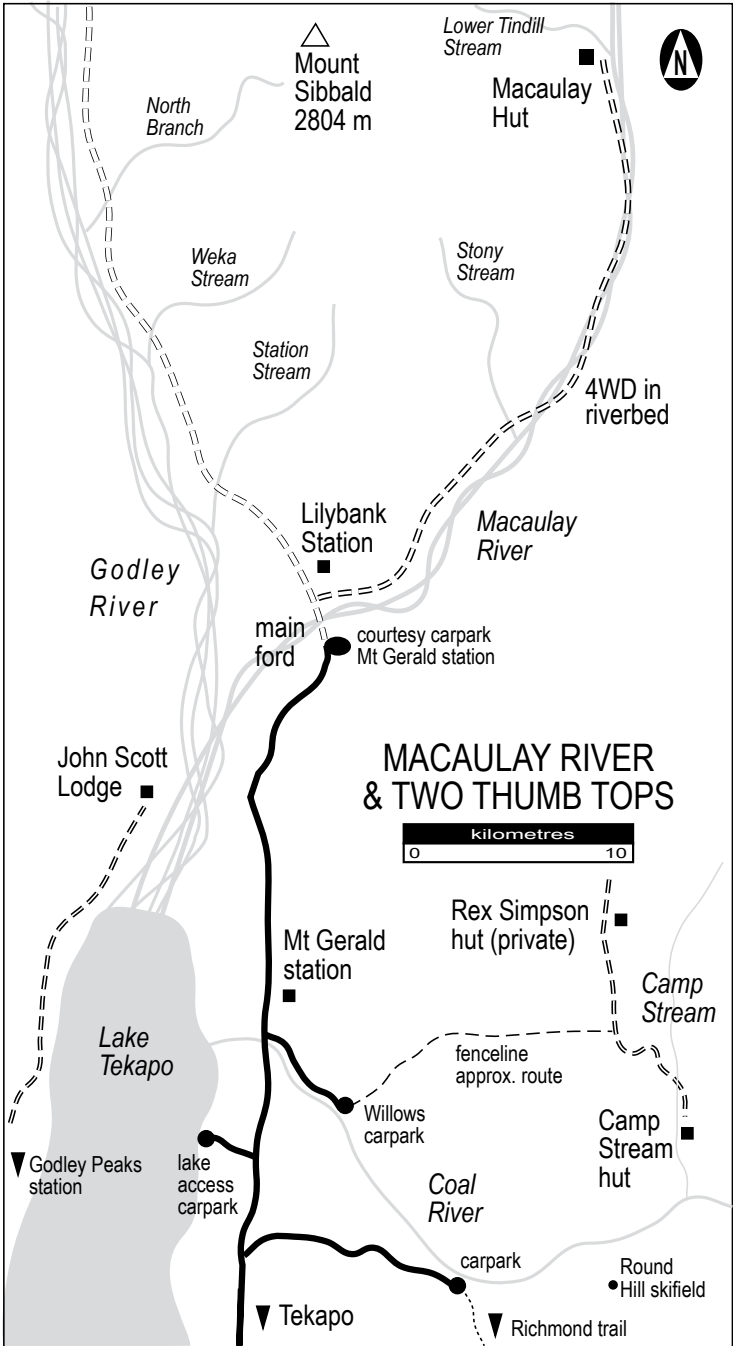
About halfway up the Round Hill skifield road there is a carpark, and the start of the 8 km mt bike trail, which runs along the high terraces and exits onto the Lilybank Road nearer to Tekapo. The south entrance/exit is signposted but is easy to miss. The skifield road also gives access to the Two Thumb conservation area.

Macaulay River — vehicle access and daytramp

A 12 bunk up the Macaulay River is very popular and most people drive in by 4WD vehicle. A good vehicle track follows the banks and is now poled up the upper riverbed. People do mt bike up to Macaulay Hut and there's a pretty good formed track most of the way. There is at least one major crossing of the Macaulay River at the start, which is the main crossing to Lilybank.

Walking time: from the courtesy carpark by the Lilybank Road, it takes about 3-3.5 hours one way to tramp the 13 km.

Directions: from Lake Tekapo township drive east 1 km to Lilybank Road and drive about 28 km to Coal River bridge (just before Mt Gerald station). Macaulay River and carpark is about 4 km further. Godley Peaks station is accessed up the Lake Alexandrina Road, some 2 km west of Lake Tekapo township.



Mt Cook & Lake Pukaki

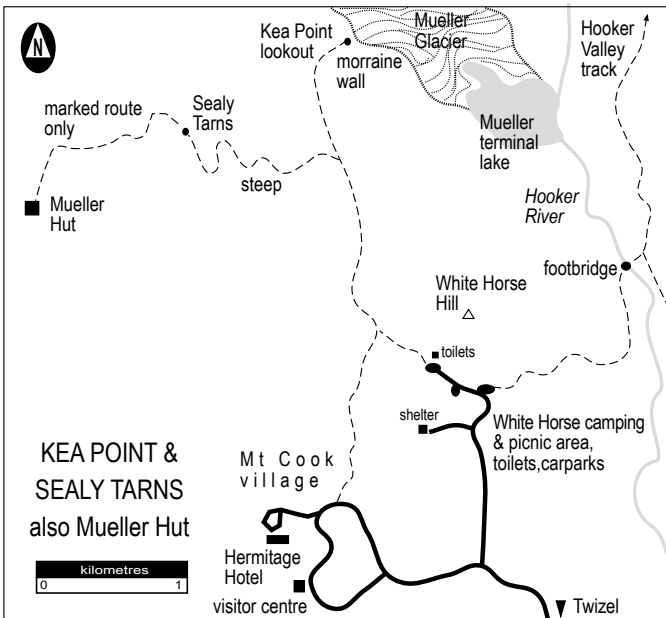
Walks, Daytramps & Mt Biking

Kea Point

An impressive and popular short walk at Mt Cook National Park, under the thundering ice-cliffs of Mt Sefton. In November and December the Mt Cook lillies flower alongside the track, and on most days you will hear (even if you won't see) the kea or mountain parrot.

From the White Horse carpark the track winds through groves of alpine toa toa and mata-gouri, and passes a junction with the Hermitage track. The track turns into a sheltered back-valley where you can find many plants including the famous Mt Cook 'lily' which is really a buttercup *Ranunculus lyalli*, the world's largest buttercup. There's a good picnic glade halfway to Kea Point.

After passing the junction to the Sealey Tarns track, Kea Point is another 15 minutes further to the spectacular platform lookout.



Walking time: 1 hour return.

Directions: drive 2 km from Mount Cook village to the White Horse camping area, shelter and toilets.

Sealey Tarns & Mueller Hut

The Sealey Tarns are a graceful oasis in a wilderness of rock and ice, with alpine flowers superb views of Mt Cook.

From the White Horse carpark follow the track to the junction with the Hermitage Track and continue onto the signposted Sealey Tarns track. This track is steep and uncompromising, and suitable for fitter people. It scrambles 400 m up an eroded track, zig-zagging past alpine scrubs and gullies.

After a while the track eases off, and sidles across to the tarns. One tarn captures an image of Mt Cook. They also provide the only water on the climb, although you might be wise to carry your own, people swim in the tarns.

Mueller Hut

This daytramp is hard, steady slog of 700 m up a steep hill, and this is a summer trip only. In winter you'll need ice-axe and crampons. DoC provides a detailed pamphlet *Mueller Hut Route*, well worth getting from the Visitor Centre.

From Sealey Tarns the route eases through tussock basins and rock fields for the next 300 m. Stick to the marked route at all times, the final 50 m climb to the ridgeline is up a loose crumble of rock and scree.

Then it's a short distance along the ridge to the large 30 bunk hut (mt radio) which sits at 1790 m in a tangle of rocky bulges on top of the ridge. The site is magnificent, with striking views of Mt Cook, the toy-like village, and the icefalls off Mt Sefton.

Walking times: 2-3 hours return to Sealey Tarns from White Horse carpark, 6-7 hours return to Mueller hut.

Directions: drive to the White Horse camping area, and the track starts from near the far toilet block. Or a slightly longer way is to take the track opposite the Hermitage Hotel. Add 1 hour extra for this starting point.

Kea

These mountain parrots are unmistakable with their flash of red underwing and haunting cry. They nest in higher forest and scrub-alpine areas, but use the alpine environment for feeding. Most eggs are laid in July-August and the female is the sole incubator, the male never enters the nest. Keas are mobile, particularly the non-breeders, and males often form small 'gangs', particularly in tourist 'hot spots' like ski-fields and Mt Cook, where they can congregate in flocks of 15-20 birds. Feeding is discouraged.

Hooker Valley Walks

A short walk packed with interest and drama. The dirty moraine walls of the Hooker Valley provide the perfect frame for the pristine and soaring A-shaped Mount Cook.

The track starts from the White Horse camping area and passes the original site of the Hermitage and an alpine memorial, covered with the names of climbers killed in the mountains. The track zig-zags down to the first historic swing-bridge across the milky-blue Hooker River.

Good views continue upvalley, past the Mueller Glacier terminal lake, and the track cuts alongside a gorge with another spectacular swing-bridge. The tiny New Zealand edelweiss can be found on the gorge bluffs.

Often Mt Cook lilies are found alongside the track as it reaches Stocking Stream shelter, named after 19th century walkers who would take off their shoes and stockings here. There's toilets and a plane table, stuck rather oddly on top of a rock.

After an easy section on boardwalks, the track crests a slight rise to the ice lake or terminal lake of the Hooker Glacier. Sometimes there small icebergs drifting in the lake.

Walking time: 3 hours and 4 km return to ice lake.

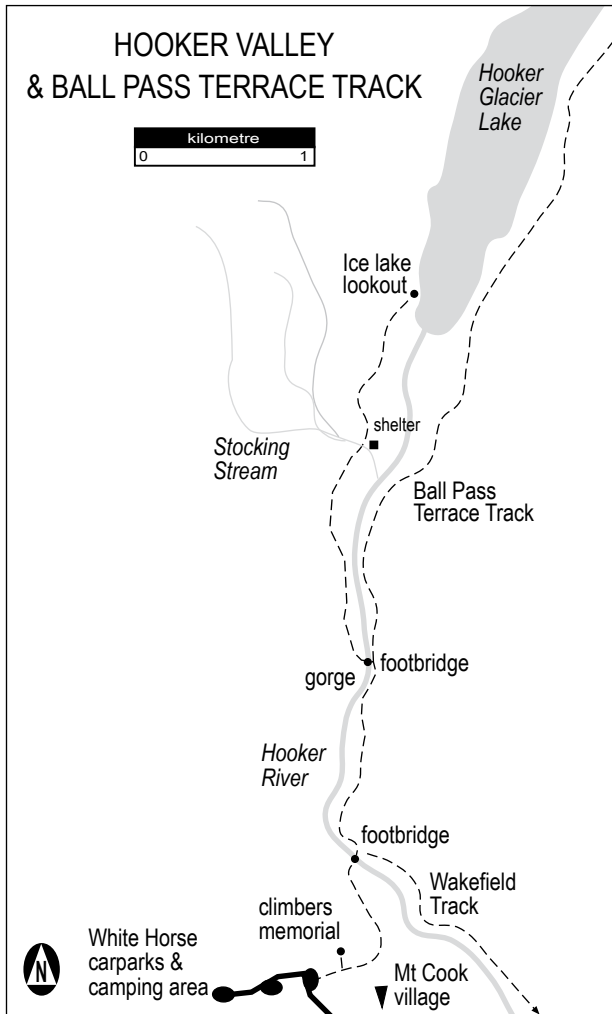
Directions: from Highway 80 turn-off just before the Mount Cook village and go to the large carpark and camping area under White Horse Hill. Picnic tables and toilets.

Ball Pass Terrace Track

This is a rough trail that gives access up the eastern side of the Hooker Valley. Alpine parties use the track to get access to the Ball Pass crossing and the Hooker Hut and Copland Pass, both of which are difficult alpine routes.

But most fit walkers would enjoy the first hour or so up the valley, well away from the crowds on the other side. From the gate by the second footbridge (see map), follow the worn trail as it weaves along the broad moraine terrace. After 30 minutes you overlook the lake and the track stays high as it reaches the head of the Hooker Lake. Eventually you reach a large shingle fan opposite Hooker Hut, which can be seen on the far side.

Walking time: 4-5 hours return.



The Navigators

The five highest peaks in New Zealand are called 'The Navigators' because each is named after a famous explorer and sea captain: Cook, Tasman, La Perouse, Dampier (now renamed Hicks) and Elie de Beaumont. The Maori called Mt Cook Aorangi, which is translated by some as 'cloud piercer'.

Red Tarns & Mt Sebastopol

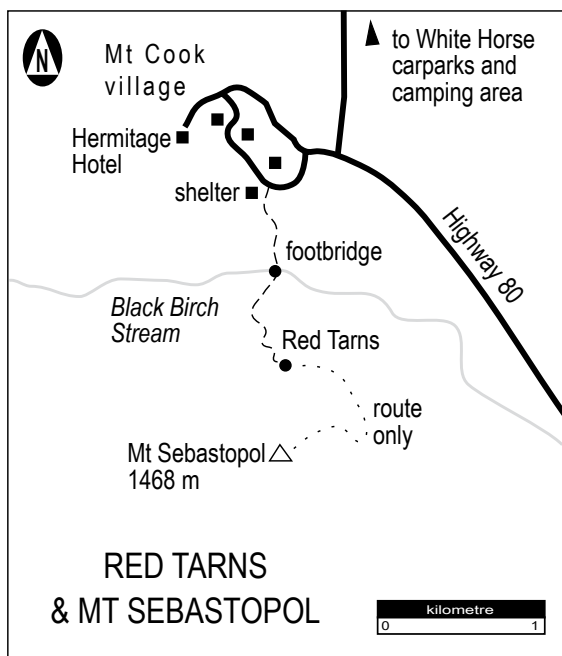
The Red Tarns are a quiet meditative escape from the tourist hub-bub of Mount Cook village. In summer the waft of flax, turpentine wood and totara berries can be soothing.

At the public shelter, walk along the gravelled path beside the creek, then over a long footbridge across Black Birch Stream. The track starts to climb steeply through alpine scrub, crossing occasional gullies on it's way to the lip of the basin. A 500 metre climb to the tarns.

There's a seat and plane table, and the tarns get their name from the red pond weed that grows in them. On a still, sharp day you get a perfect reflection of Mount Cook.

Mt Sebastopol

A rough track continues onto the Sebastopol ridgeline, and cairns lead up to Mount Sebastopol itself at 1468 m. On the ridge it becomes quite a scramble, the trail disappears, and this is a route for experienced trampers with good nerves.



Walking time: 2-3 hours return to tarns, Sebastopol ridgeline add another 1 hour (only recommended for experienced trampers).

Directions: track starts from the public shelter on the Mount Cook village loop road, beside Governors Bush. Toilets and information panels.

Blue Lakes & Glacier Lookout

Two walks that illustrate aspects of a glacier environment, including moraine trapped lakes, terminal outlet and glacier views.

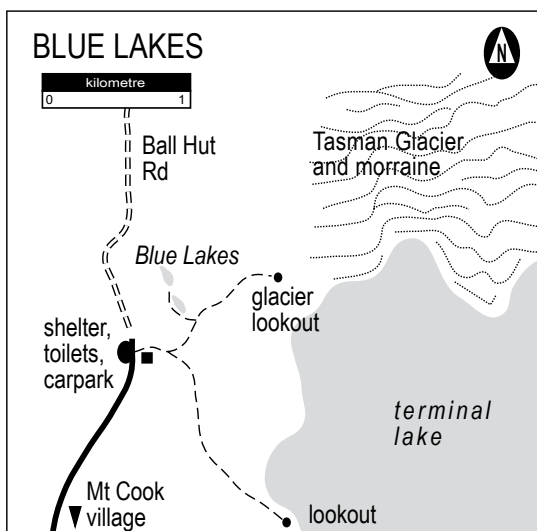
From the shelter and toilets at the carpark follow the well-made track through clusters of spikey spaniards and a thorny bush called matagouri. The three small **Blue Lakes** are often green as the algae bloom in them.

The track then climbs up onto the moraine terrace and across to the **glacier lookout**, and most people are rather disappointed at the ‘absence’ of the Tasman glacier. Although the glacier is 200 m thick it is hidden underneath a metre or so of rock.

For the terminal lake, return back to the track junction, and follow the trail as it crosses matagouri flats and a stony flood plain to the **terminal outlet**. The grey water is caused by the rock sediment or ‘flour’, which slowly settles out as the river goes down valley to Lake Pukaki. But enough sediment is still suspended to refract the light in the way that gives both Pukaki and Tekapo their startling, and intense aquamarine colour.

Walking time: 30 minutes return Blue Lakes, 30 minutes return Glacier Lookout, 40 minutes return to Terminal Outlet. All three walks allow 2 hours return.

Directions: from Mount Cook village drive to the Tasman Valley Road, then 7 km to the signposted picnic area, carpark, shelter, and toilet.



Ball Hut Road

Not too many people walk along here so you'll have the splendid mountain scenery to yourself, Mount Cook Range on one side and the huge Tasman glacier on the other. It's a good and adventurous mt bike route.

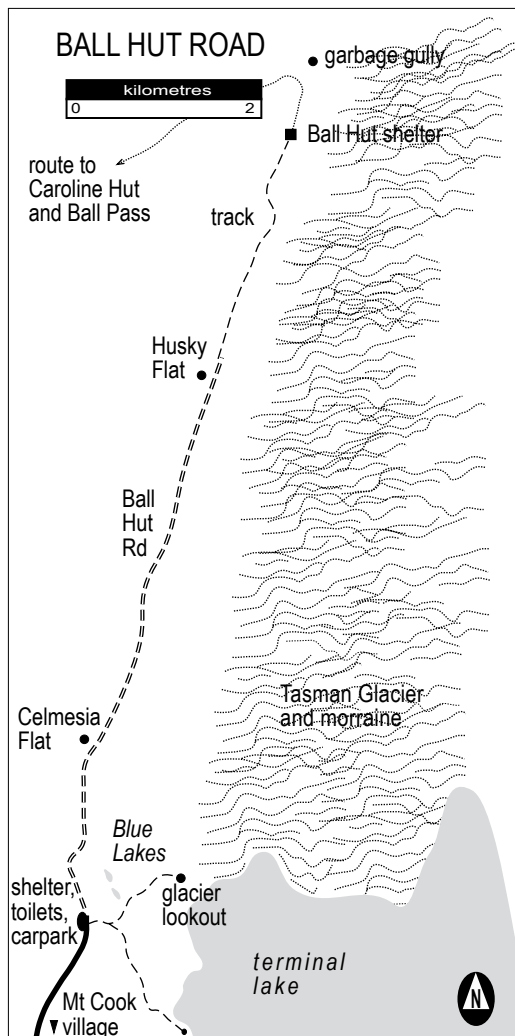
After 6 km from Blue Lakes the road peters out at Husky Flat. A worn foot trail threads along the terrace and reaches an unexpected oasis of grass and alpine shrubs beside the small Ball Hut shelter.

About 500 m further the moraine wall itself ends at the top of a nasty eroded access valley nick-named by generations of climbers as 'garbage gully'. But the view is anything but rubbish.

Walking time: 5-6 hours return to Ball Hut shelter, 18 km return.

Mt Bike Riding time: 2-3 hours return to Ball Hut shelter.

Directions: from Highway 80 just past the Mount Cook airport, turn onto the Tasman Valley Road and drive to the Blue Lakes carpark, shelter and toilets. Sometimes you can take a car 2 km further to Celmisia Flat, but that's your risk.

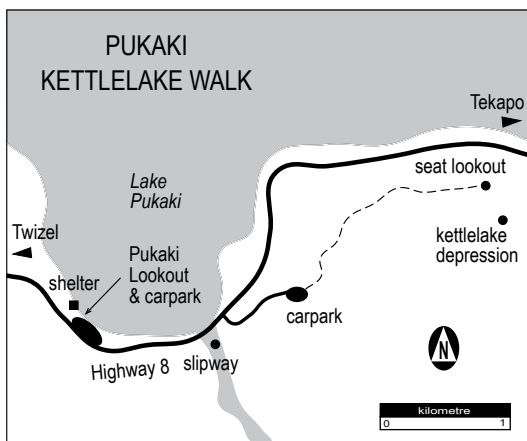


Pukaki Kettlelake Walk

1 hour stroll along tussock terraces with great views of Lake Pukaki and Lake Benmore. A poled track leads from the carpark past ephemeral ponds, crosses two stiles and reaches seats overlooking the dry kettlelake depression. Superb views all round, and when the nor'wester blows these could be the windiest seats in New Zealand

Walking time: 1 hour return.

Directions: just north of the Pukaki slipway, a gravel side-road leads 1 km to the carpark.



Pukaki Boulder

This short 5 minute walk leads to a massive boulder with great views over Lake Pukaki and the Ben Ohau Range. Fluttering prayer flags indicate that this is also a memorial to two alpine climbers, both killed in the Himalayas, Andy Harris and Gary Ball.

Walking time: 10 minutes return.

Directions: easy to miss the small sign, it's on the Lake Pukaki side of Highway 80, about 4 km from main Highway 8 & Highway 80 junction (see general map).

Lupins

Russell lupins are believed to have been first introduced to the Mackenzie area at Dalrachney Station in the Lindis Pass in the 1930's, but in 1952 the seed was sowed along road verges in the Burke Pass and Lake Tekapo area by Connie Scott of Godley Peaks Station, and her son David. Lupins were later sowed by other people at the Hermitage at Mt Cook, with the consequent spectacular flowering in late spring. The sheep also like the Russell lupins, so they do not get far beyond the roadside fences.

Ruataniwha Conservation Park — Ben Ohau Area

This new public reserve (once called the Ben Ohau Conservation Area) takes in wide-open tussock downlands landscape as well as the high peaks of the Ben Ohau range. The myriad of old farm roads is ideal for mt biking, but there are plenty of potential walks and daytramps as well.

There are two main access points: Pukaki Canal Road carpark, and the Mt Cook (Highway 80) carpark. Good information signs and maps at both road ends.

Pukaki Canal Road carpark — walks and daytramps

Big, open tussock country, and walks which suit a calm day rather than a hot blasting nor'wester. It's 20 km return to Flanagans Pass, and not super stimulating for walking, but good mt biking on the farm roads.

From the carpark it's 1 km along a farm road to the pleasant Ben Ohau wetland, an attractive family walk. Then it's a further 4 km, first on a farm road through a pine plantation, then mostly following a fenceline straight up to a pass that overlooks Darts Bush Stream. A DoC sign here says mysteriously 'Wayward Will'. I have no idea what it means.

Follow down the farm road off the pass a further 2 km across to the stream and opposite Darts Bush itself, and another 2 km onto Flanagans Pass.

Walking times: 1 hour return to wetland; 2 hours return to unnamed 'pyramid' pass; 3 hours return to Darts Bush; 4-5 hours return to Flanagans Pass.

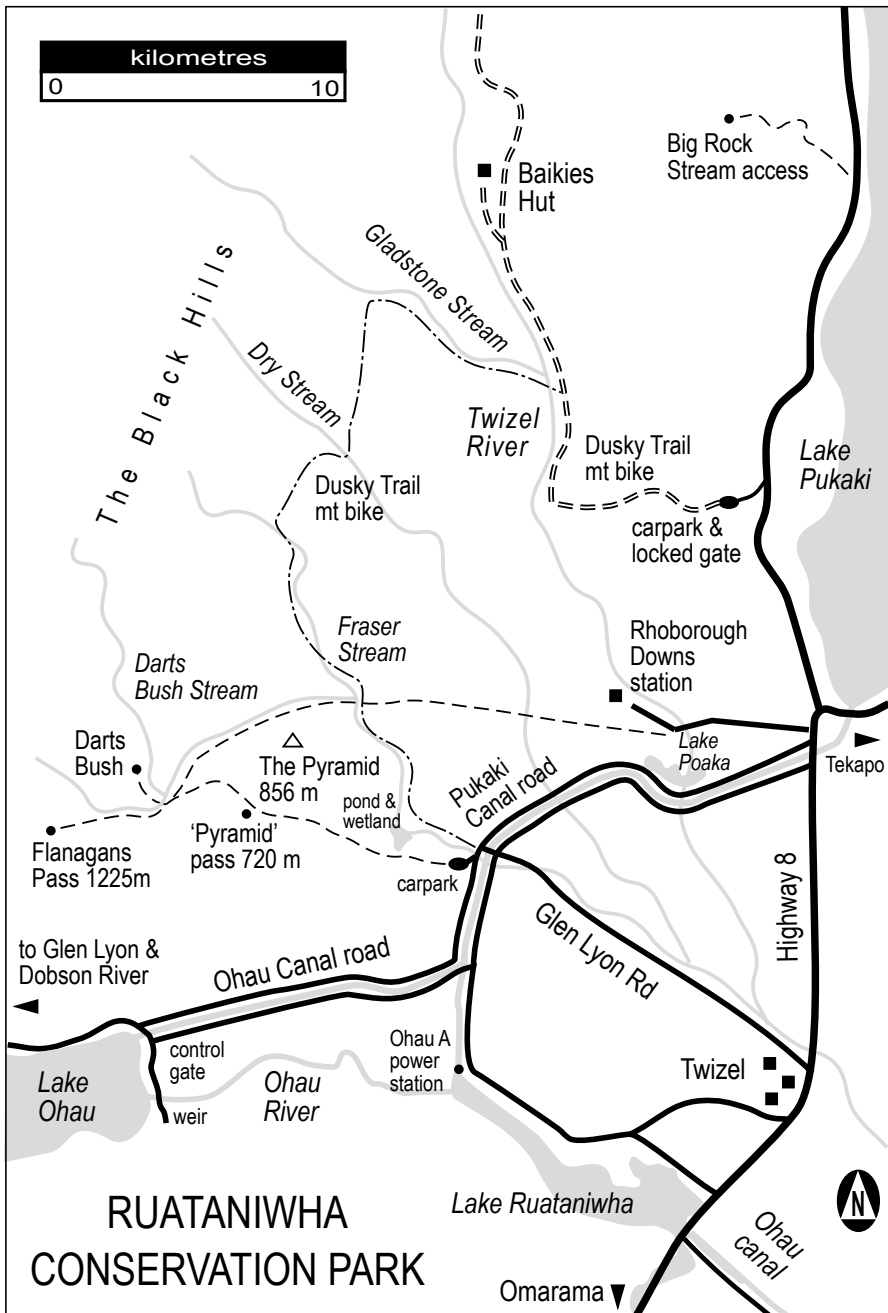
Mt bike riding times: 30 mins return to wetland; 1 hour return to unnamed saddle; 1.5 hours return to Darts Bush; 2-3 hours return to Flanagans Saddle.

Dusky Mt Bike Trail

This 20 km newly developed mt bike trail starts from the Pukaki Canal Road and follows mostly old farm roads up Fraser Stream. Then it sidles the foothills of the Black Hills across Dry Stream, and then follows more farm roads down Gladstone Stream, and out to the Mt Cook highway carpark.

Mt Bike riding time: 2-3 hours one way.

Walking time: 4-5 hours one way.



Mt Cook Highway 80 carpark — Baikies Hut

This carpark is also the eastern exit /start of the Dusky mt bike trail. Baikies hut can be reached by 4WD vehicle by arrangement with the farmer, and is a good (if small) family base hut. 8 km one way to hut.

From the carpark walk past the locked gate and follow the 4WD road as it winds gently through pine forest plantation and down to the Twizel River. The route keeps to the 4WD track as it reaches the Gladstone Stream forks, with an old hut across the river.

It's another 4 km up the farm road to a junction, and by taking the left-hand choice you quickly reach Baikies Hut. A cosy 4 bunk hut with a wood stove and great views.

Walking time: 4 hours return to Baikies Hut

Mt Bike riding time: 2 hours return to Baikies Hut.

Big Rock Stream

Although the start through pine trees looks unpromising, the poled track follows the farm road as it quickly climbs onto broad tussock terraces with good views of Lake Pukaki. It crosses an old water race and then follows a fenceline incorporating some old totara posts.

From hereon you are on your own, but there is easy tramping up onto Rhoboro Hills and onto Mt Ben Dhu 1607 m.

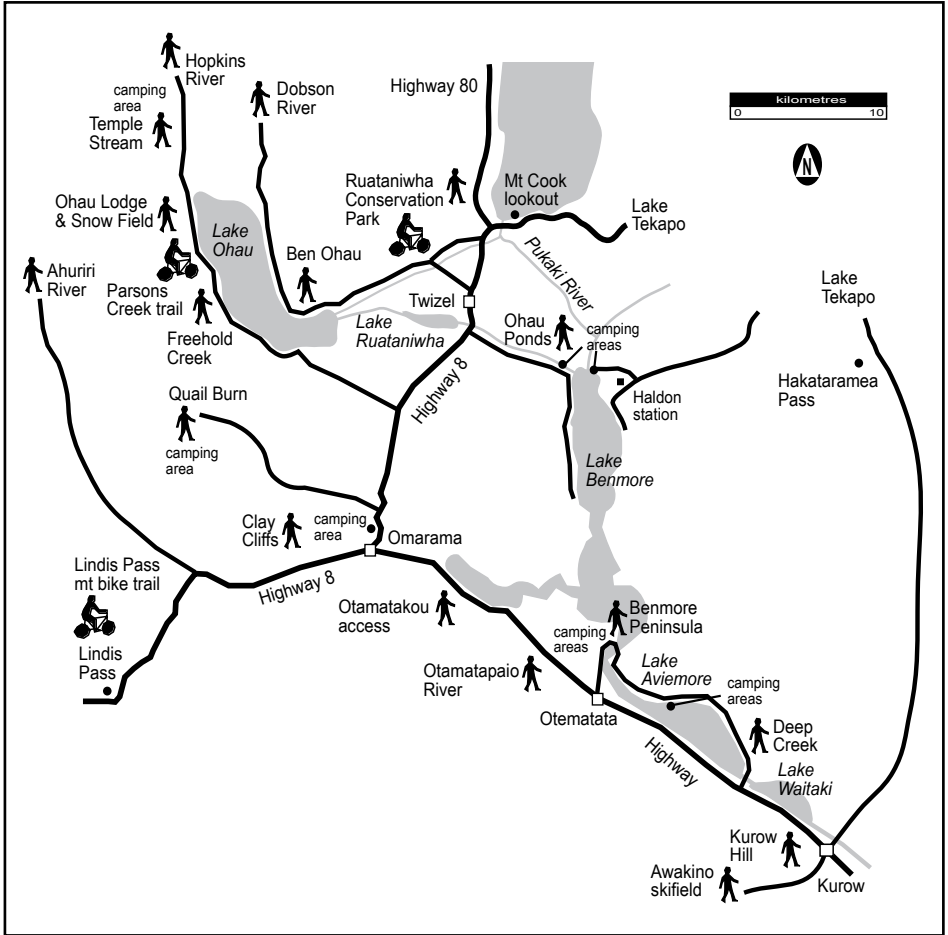
Walking times: 1 hour tussock terrace return; 4-6 hours Ben Dhu return.

Directons: Pukaki Canal Road carpark can be reached from Twizel, taking the Glen Lyon road to the canal, cross, turn left 100 m to carpark. The Dusky mountain bike trail is marked by a sign almost opposite the canal bridge.

Mt Cook (Highway 80) carpark is signposted about 5 km north of the Mt Cook/Twizel junction. A short 500 m road leads to the carpark and locked gate. The Big Rock Stream access is about 10 km further up the highway.

Twizel & Lake Ohau

Walks, Daytramps & Mt Biking



Ben Ohau

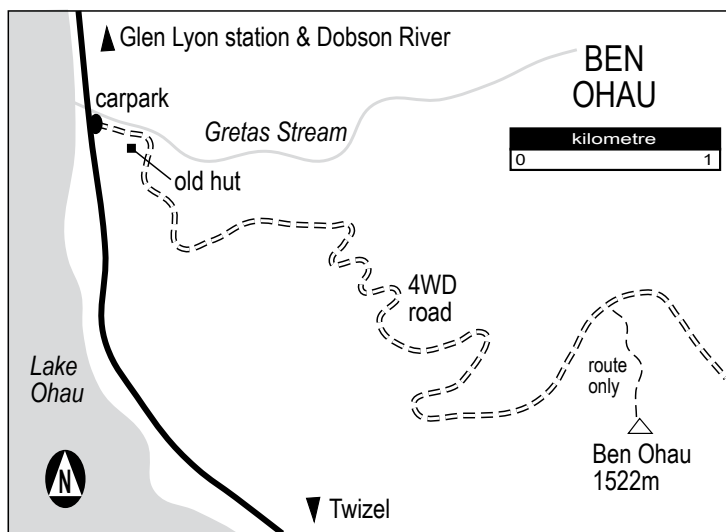
In Scotland 'Ben' means mountain, and it's a 1000 metre climb to this 1522 m summit. This walk suits the dedicated hill-walker and needs a fine day for views of the four lakes: Ohau, Pukaki, Benmore and the man-made Lake Ruataniwha.

There's no sign at the gate by the derelict barn, so you follow the farm road past an old rabbiters hut and beech forest by Gretas Stream. This is the last of the shade, then the road zig-zags powerfully up the mountainside spur, and up to a small saddle.

From the saddle the route leaves the road and cuts up the scree and tussock slopes to the high point. Carry lots of water and have lunch on top, and expect a breeze — 'O hau' means wind.

Walking time: 4-5 hours return, total climb 1000 metres.

Directions: from Highway 8 just before entering Twizel look for 'Glen Lyon Station' signs, drive 5 km to canal bridge, cross and follow the Pukaki and Ohau Canal roads (all sealed). The seal ends by Lake Ohau and the narrow road twists past huge dry-stone road walls built during the Depression as a work-relief scheme. There is nothing to indicate the start of the Ben Ohau track, though the farm road and mountain are obvious, about 22 km from Twizel.



Dobson River

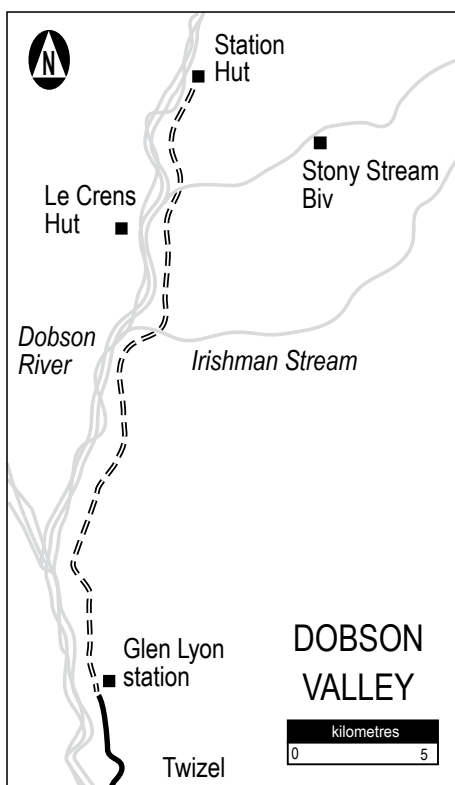
The Dobson River has become popular with four-wheel drivers and anglers. It's a long straight valley, and in summer conditions cars can continue past Glen Lyon station for another 10 km to near the Irishman Stream shingle fan. There is no charge for 4WD access upvalley, but there is for use of Glen Lyon station huts. You need to book. Check in at station first on way through, first house on left (03) 438-9644.

Station Hut

From the Irishman Stream shingle fan, or from where the car starts hitting rocks, walk along the farm road as it winds upvalley to the old Station Hut.

Walking time: 3-4 hours return.

Mt Bike riding time: 2 hours return.



Stony Stream Biv

This makes an excellent short daytramp as 4WD vehicles can't get up this little valley. Quite a bit of stream crossing up the 6 km or so to the tiny 'dog kennel' biv.

Walking time: 4-5 hours return from Irishman shingle fan.

Directions: from Highway 8 just before entering Twizel look for 'Glen Lyon Station' signs, drive 5 km to canal bridge, cross and follow the Pukaki and Ohau Canal roads (all sealed).

The seal ends by Lake Ohau and the narrow road eventually reaches Glen Lyon station.

Distances:

34 km from Twizel to Glen Lyon station.

10 km onto Irishman Stream shingle fan.

5 km onto Stony Stream shingle fan.

4 km onto Station hut.

Ohau River Ponds

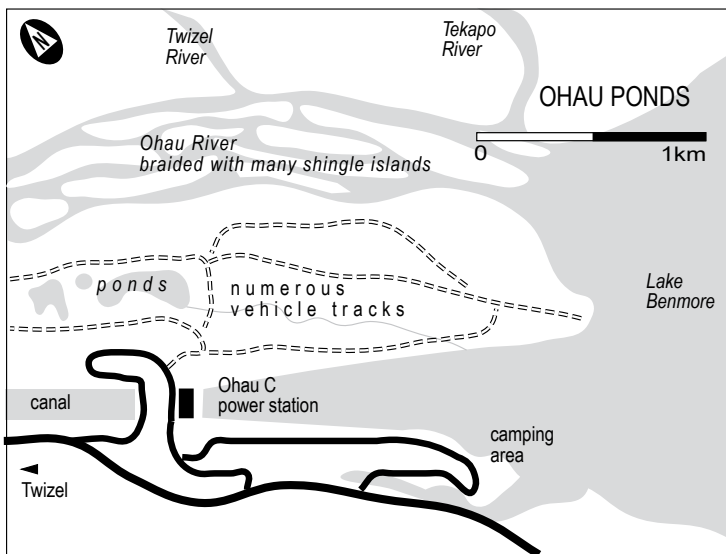
At the Ohau Ponds (made artificially) visitors get a chance to wander into environment that is blisteringly hot in summer, deep frosts in winter. The Mackenzie basin mountains stand out sharply, with the inescapable pyramid of Mount Cook in the distance.

This is a prime bird-watching spot with paradise shelducks, mallard and grey ducks, little shags, spur-winged plovers (with their distinctive yellow eye patch), harrier hawks, grey warbler and scaup.

On the braided riverbed in spring you get the arrival of nesting birds like banded dotterels, wrybill, South Island pied oystercatchers, pied stilts, black-billed gulls, and black-fronted terns. They prefer to nest on gravel 'islands' in the riverbed, particularly on the delta draining into Lake Benmore. Rare visitors include the white heron and New Zealand falcon. Wild black stilts often feed on the riverbed in the vicinity of these ponds.

Walking time: 1-2 hours.

Directions: on Highway 8, 4 km south of Twizel and past the black stilt captive breeding centre turn down a sealed road (past the Ohau River and Ohau B dam) to Ohau C dam. Plenty of parking and picnic space around the ponds. 1 km further is the Ohau C camping area, which is beside Lake Benmore, with campsites, boat ramps, toilets and effluent disposal for campervans.



Note: the Braided River Care Code encourages users not to take 4WD drive on river beds but park on the river bed and walk.

Warning: the ponds area is subject to flooding.

Freehold Creek

These sunny attractive slopes alongside Lake Ohau provide great walking, mt biking and daytramp potential. Walks that suit both families and the harder trumper. Good family mt biking circuits.

Tarnbrae Mt Bike Trail (A20) to Quailburn

This excellent metalled trail starts from the Ohau Lodge and wanders easily across the tussock terraces over several footbridges, thru some snippets of beech forest then climbs slowly and steadily to a high point, and descends down to the Quailburn Road and eventually Omarama. Exit trails at Parsons Creek and Sawyers Creek can be made into pleasant family circuits back along the road to Ohau Lodge.

Mt Bike riding time: 1 hour family circuit, 2 hours one way to Qualiburn.

Walking times: 1 hour one way from Ohau ski-field road to exit at Parsons Creek, 2-3 hours return to Freehold Creek (see below).

Freehold Creek Daytramp

From the Parsons Creek carpark beside the Lake Ohau Road, the track climbs briefly through bush onto a tussock and matagouri terrace up to a well-signposted junction with the terrace track from the Ohau ski-field road. Open landscapes, with Lake Ohau dominating the view and the Ben Ohau Range across the way.

The main track joins the mt bike trail at the footbridge over Sawyers Creek and follows across tussock terraces to the footbridge and beech forest at Freehold Creek. Now the track gets more serious, and climbs up through forest to the bushline. A cairned trail leads quite clearly into the alpine basins to the top forks, with waterfalls gushing down the side-creeks. It's not that far (but no real track however) up to the large broad tussock saddle.

Walking time: 2 hours return to Freehold Creek footbridge, 4-5 hours return to bush edge.

Directions: from Highway 8 take the Lake Ohau Road 16 km to either the Parsons Creek carpark, or 2 km further to the turn-off to the Ohau Lodge and ski-field road. Follow the skifield road 1 km up to start of track. Signposted.

Ohau Snow Field & Mt Sutton

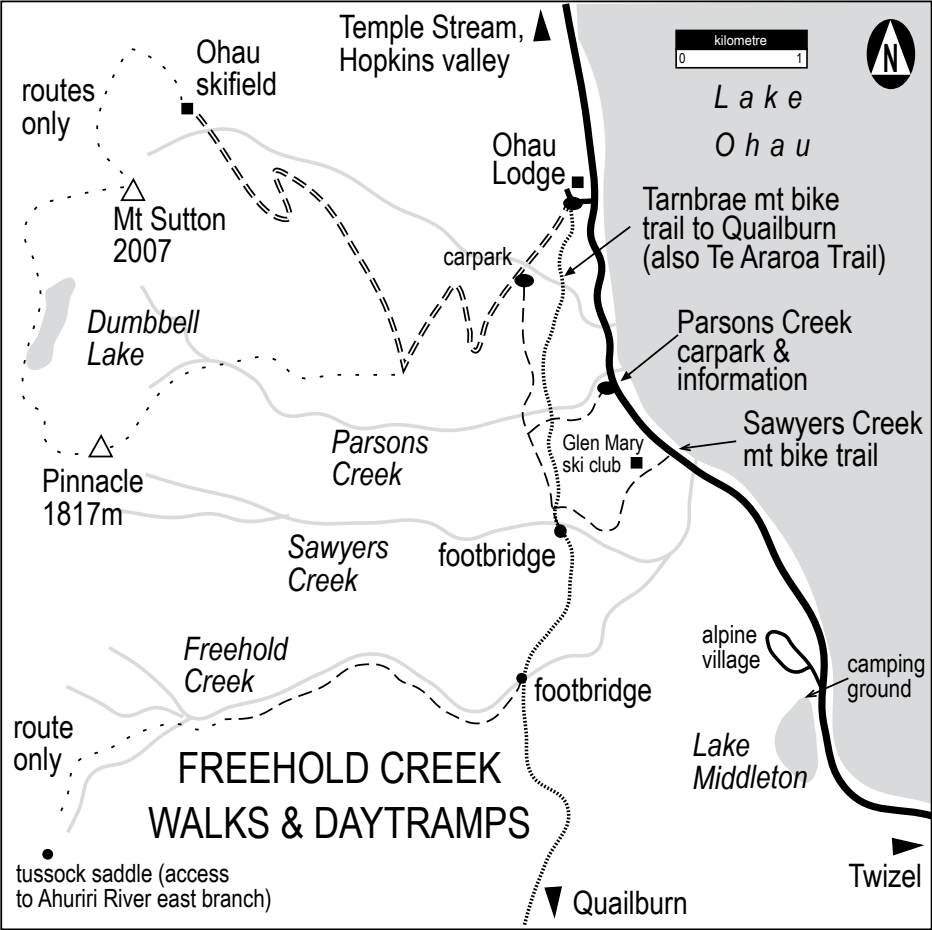
This is high alpine country but in fine weather can be enjoyed by most keen walkers and trampers. You need to get a key from Ohau Lodge first, \$5 per vehicle, and sign a per-

mission form. The Ohau Snow Field Road get rocks on it, and should be treated with respect, but take it slowly and it has wonderful views. Upper skifield buildings and toilets are kept locked.

At the top carpark the easiest route is to follow the skifield roads under the chairlift into the top basin and walk up to the low point of the ridge. Then turn south and follow the broad easy ridge to Mt Sutton (2007 m). Superb views of Mt Cook, Lake Dumb-bell, Mt Barth etc. From the ridge you can spot Maitland Hut.

Walking time: 3-4 hours return from top skifield carpark to Mt Sutton return.

Directions: from Highway 8 take the Lake Ohau Road 16 km to Ohau Lodge and skifield road. Gate key available from Ohau Lodge, follow the steep skifield road to top carpark.



Temple Stream

Temple Stream is an attractive side-valley of the Hopkins, with daywalks, picnicking and camping. At the carpark is a sunny camping areas, with a shelter and toilets. Both Temple Stream tracks are unsuitable for mt biking.

Temple View Walk

This short circuit is good for families. It starts behind the longdrop at the carpark and climbs up through beech forest, and some clearings, then two stream crossings as it winds down to North Temple Stream, and returns to carpark.

Walking time: 1 hour return.

Ram Hill

Ram Hill is 1368 m high and is a superb viewpoint over the Hopkins and Dobson confluence. This daytramp suits experienced trampers as the old track markers have been removed and it's a steep climb. Hopefully DoC might reinstate this track.

Follow the North Temple Stream briefly then take Temple View track to the top clearing, and pick up the old worn trail as it climbs the steep spur. Mostly the trail is in the open clearings as it skirts through beech forest. At the bush edge stay on the spur up mostly tussock and scrub slopes (some scree) to the summit. The views are worth the effort, take water and lunch and recover in the sheltered grassy depressions on top.

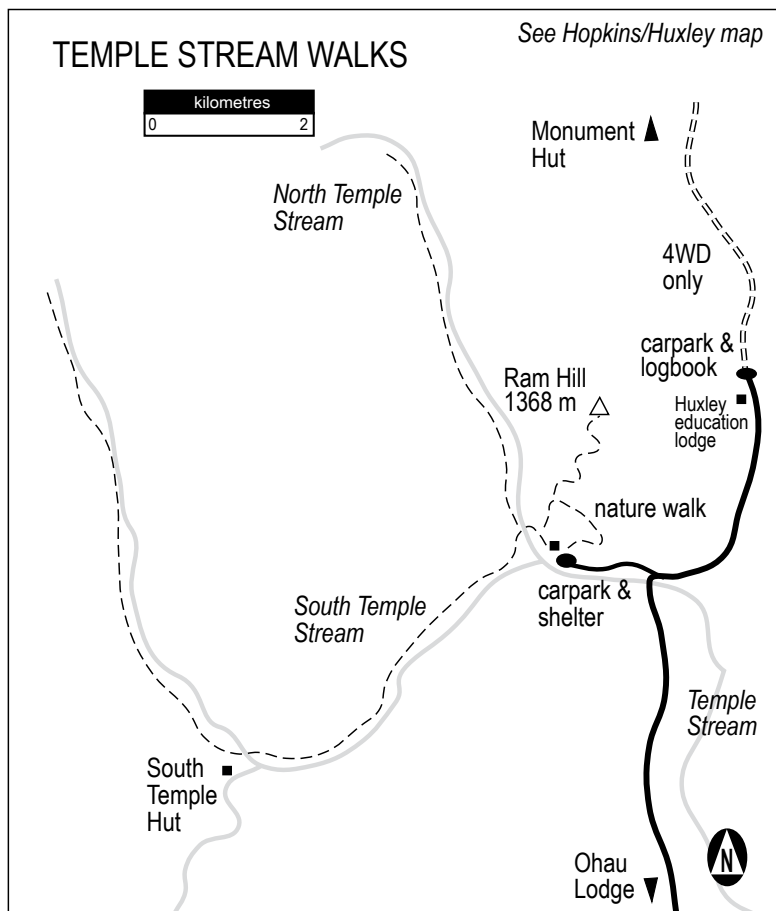
If it gets misty be extra careful to pick the correct spur down, as there are currently few cairns.

Walking time: 3-4 hours return from carpark.

South Temple Stream & Hut

From the carpark walk up North Temple Stream to the signposted crossing, then head up the South Temple Stream. The easy track sidles close to the river through forest and tussock clearings (old and new avalanche trails in fact) and reaches the attractive hut. The swingbridge has gone. Good camping around here, and the sandflies are not quite as merciless as those at the carpark.

Walking time: 5-6 hours return from carpark.



North Temple Stream

The hut has long gone but this is a pleasant amble up a secluded valley. The track is in good condition, and peters out near the bush edge. If you walk on a little further to the top forks you get fabulous views of the rock walls at the head of this valley.

Walking time: 3-4 hours return from carpark.

Directions: the Lake Ohau Road is off Highway 8, 12 km from Twizel and 16 km from Omarama. About 30 km along this road past Ohau Lake and lodge, Maitland Stream to the Temple Stream bridge. Follow the signposted side-road through gates 1 km to carpark.

Hopkins River & Huxley River

The Hopkins River is a splendidly wide valley, with superb mountain views. Reasonable mt biking at first, then rough up the valley on old 4WD vehicle tracks. If you don't mind fording rivers you can reach Elcho and Red Hut.

The Huxley River flows into the Hopkins and is an intimate bush-clad valley, with tramping tracks through beech forest and attractive huts.

Car access up the Hopkins River stops by the logbook beside the top Huxley lodge. However, 4WD vehicles can usually be taken 6 km to Monument Hut. Parts of this rough road cross shingle stream washouts, sections of riverbed and soft tussock terraces, which get chewed up into mud. The amount of damage being done by 4WD vehicles raises question marks whether future access will be allowed.

Monument Hut

The walk to Monument Hut from the carpark follows the vehicle track, and takes about 1.5 hours. The hut is in good condition with 6 bunks, wood stove and a plaque outside.

Walking time: 1.5 hours one way from lodge carpark.

Mt Bike riding time: 30 minutes one way from lodge carpark.

Huxley Forks

From Monument Hut a track sidles through the beech forest past a series of small pretty waterfalls, then across a footbridge back onto the Hopkins River flats. It's easy travel to a prominent marker, where a bush track climbs inland and drops down beside the Huxley River and footbridge.

In normal flow it is easiest to wade the short river gorge underneath the bridge, but if you want to keep dry feet, cross the bridge and follow the track up to a signposted junction. One branch heads upvalley into the Hopkins, the other drops down beside the Huxley River onto the grass flats.

Pleasant river travel to where a well-marked flood track is marked on the north bank. This is rather a slow option, but you keep dry feet. Otherwise criss-cross the river and wander up tussock terraces to the 6 bunk Forks Hut, and the small 2 bunk bivouac. Good camping all around the Forks area which is an attractive parkland of forest and flat.

Walking time: 5-6 hours return from Monument Hut.

Mt Bike riding time: 1 hour one way from Monument Hut to Huxley/Hopkins Forks.

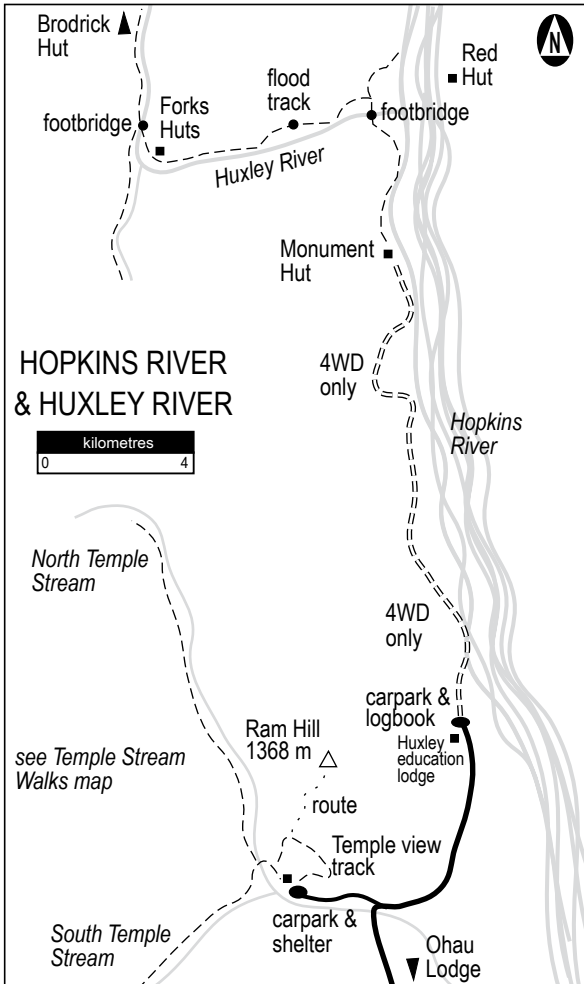
Red Hut

You do get wet feet, but if it's a hot day then this is a pleasant trip across the shingle river bed of the Hopkins to the historic 12 bunk Red Hut, built in 1916.

From Monument Hut follow track onto Hopkins river flats and before you reach the Huxley River, strike off at an angle to Red Hut which can be seen across the river. At average flow the Hopkins River is in several different braids and should not be difficult to cross.

Red Hut was built for a tourism venture but was mostly used by the mustering gangs of Huxley Gorge Station. A complete restoration by DoC, even down to authentic windows and window catches, means today's Red Hut is very similar to the original structure.

Walking time: 2-3 hours return from Monument Hut.



Directions: the Lake Ohau road is off Highway 8, 12 km from Twizel and 16 km from Omarama. About 33 km along this road past Ohau Lake and ski lodge, Maitland and Temple Stream bridges, to a carpark and logbook beside the top education

Omarama & Ahuriri River

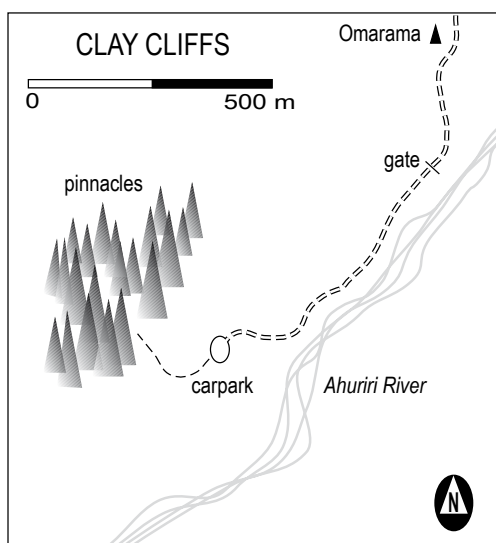
Walks, Daytramps & Mt Biking

Clay Cliffs

The Maori called these 30-50 metre high cliffs 'Paritea' which means 'white or coloured cliffs', and early morning light brings out the subtle colours of the sediments.

The clay cliffs are made up of strata of young gravel and silts, which have been tilted and eroded by water into ravines. Some of the striking pinnacles wear little caps of turf. Humans sometimes create similar 'badlands' by high pressure water sluicing in the gold sluicing claims around Naseby and Bannockburn.

It's spooky wandering amongst the ravines and some tracks have been made, but they tend to get undermined by the constant movement of the rocks. Good fun for kids apart from falling rocks!



Walking time: 1 hour return.

Access charge: \$5 per vehicle.

Directions: 4 km north of Omarama turn off Highway 8 onto the Quailburn Road, then 4 km to the Henburn Road, and 3 km to a farm gate and signpost. Access is permitted when the sign says 'open', otherwise the farmer's permission is needed.

The gravel road continues another 2 km through a gate, and 1 km to the final carpark under the clay cliffs. The road can get muddy in winter.

Quail Burn

At the end of the Quail Burn road is the old Quail Burn station, including an historic woolshed. DoC has made secure boardwalks into the shed, and provided information boards. Slightly further up the road (a bit rougher but most cars should make it) is a picnic and camping area by the stream and beech forest. A pleasantly sequestered place on a hot day, and kids will love the stream. There's another old hut on the edge of the forest.

Bush Walk and Pass

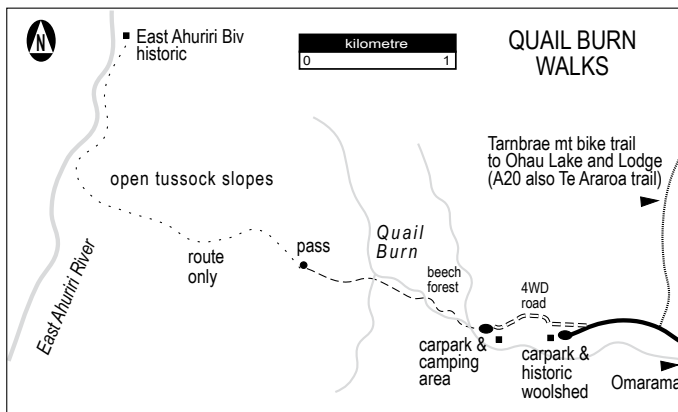
A good track wanders up through the dark grotto of beech forest, water cascades and massive boulders up to a stream fork. Here, a poled track leads up a short spur and out into the tussock country. After a while the poles stop but it is easy walking up onto the broad flat pass. Great views all round.

Walking times: 1.5-2 hours return.

East Ahuriri Hut

This historic hut (built about c1890's) is not useable to stay in, and was once part of Benmore Run which then became part of the Quail Burn station. You'll need a good topographic map, but it's a cruisey daytramp to the hut in lovely open country.

From the pass stay at roughly the same height and sidle across several shallow gullies, and climb up onto a side spur until you are overlooking the East Ahuriri River. You should be able to see the old hut by now, so wander down the spur and up the river flats. The hut is on a bit of lean but reeks of character.



Directions: the Quailburn Road is 4 km north of Omarama. then drive 16 km (past the Clay Cliffs turn-off) as the road gets narrower, past the A20 cycle trail, and ends beside the historic woolshed.

Ahuriri River

The Ahuriri River is much more open to the public now that Birchwood station was bought by the Crown, and there are several fine walks and daytramps in this gorgeous valley. Many wetland ponds and superb mountain views all round.

Access easements are all signposted as you go up the valley (including fishermens access points) which makes it very easy for walkers and trampers. It is a 25 km drive to the 8 bunk Ahuriri Base Hut, and 4 km further to the top carpark, locked gate and signposts. There is good camping where Canyon Creek joins the Ahuriri River, and easy mt biking on old farm roads up to Shamrock Hut.

Ben Avon

This is a heart-thumping steep climb of 1000 m climb to the peak from the road, with great views over the Ahuriri wetlands and valley. Open tussock country. Signposted from roadside (track not shown on map).

Walking time: 4-5 hours return.

Canyon Creek Walk

A pleasant short walk, and kids would enjoy the first part to the creek crossing. From the top carpark and locked gate follow the farm road up the valley to a signpost, then follow the worn trail across the grass flats to Canyon Creek. The creek crossing is easy and well-marked with orange triangles. Some camp sites here, as well as sandflies.

On the opposite bank a well-marked track climbs up through the beech forest and around the deep gorge that gives the creek its name. After an hour you drop back down to the creek and onto wide open grass river flats with a stunning panorama of mountains.

Walking time: 2-3 hours return from carpark, 1 hour return to creek crossing.

4WD Road to Dingle Burn

Just before the Ahuriri Hut this track is signposted, and follows the obvious old vehicle track as it zig-zags up the bare hillside. It is easy walking, and you reach a tussock pass into the Dingle Burn. Great views. From here the route is occasionally poled down into the Dingle Burn and picks up a goodish track through the forest down to the Top Dingle Hut.

Walking times: 3-4 hours return to pass; 6-8 hours return to Top Dingle Hut.

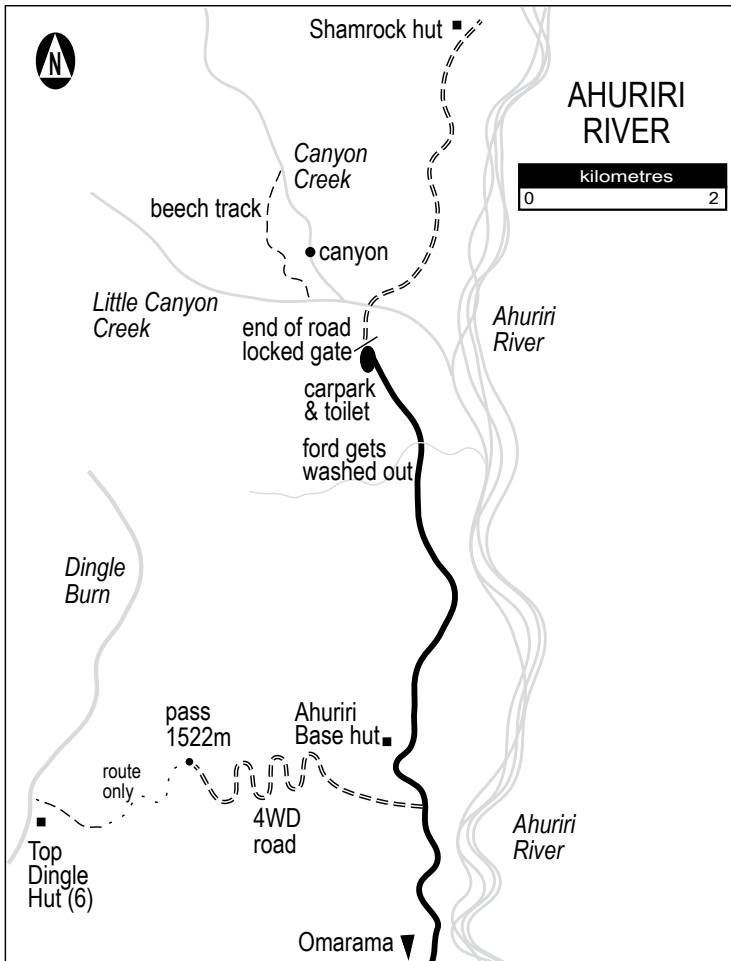
Shamrock Hut

From the top carpark it is easy walking following the old 4WD farm road across Canyon Creek, and up beside the Ahuriri River to Shamrock Hut. Grass flats, beech forest on the valley sides and good mountain views,

Walking time: 2 hours return to Shamrock Hut.

Mt Bike riding time: 1 hour return to Shamrock Hut.

Directions: from Highway 8, 16 km past Omarama, the Ahuriri valley is signposted 'Birchwood Road'. About 25 km up this narrow unsealed road to the first hut, then 4 km to locked gate at Canyon Creek. A ford before the top carpark can get washed out.



Lindis Pass Mt Bike Trail

The Lindis Pass area is so close to Omarama that it has been included. The new mt bike route also makes a pleasant half day tramp.

Starting from Highway 8 you follow a 4WD vehicle track as it climbs over a low saddle at 860 m, these easy saddles are a feature of this country. Then the farm road follows down a mountain stream (crossing once) to Smiths Creek. Lindis Hut is private and belongs to Breast Hill station.

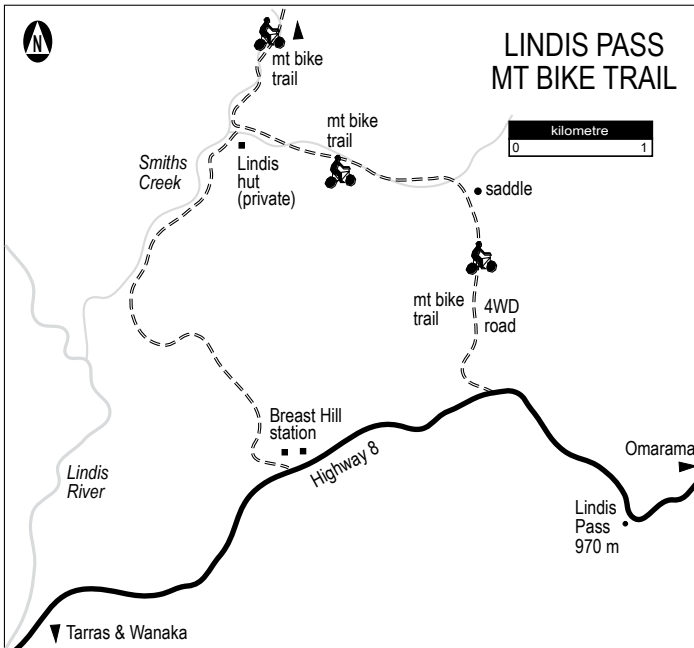
The trail continues up Smiths Creek another 7 km over another very low saddle 880 m to Lindis River, just short of the old Burnt Bush Hut.

(The trail ends here but there have been rumours that it might get taken right through to the Ahuriri River at some stage).

Walking time: 3-4 hours return, 12 km return to Smiths Creek

Mt Bike riding time: 2-3 hours return, 12 km return to Smiths Creek, 26 km return to Lindis River.

Directions: this is well signposted off Highway 8, about 2 km past Lindis Pass itself.



Upper Waitaki Valley

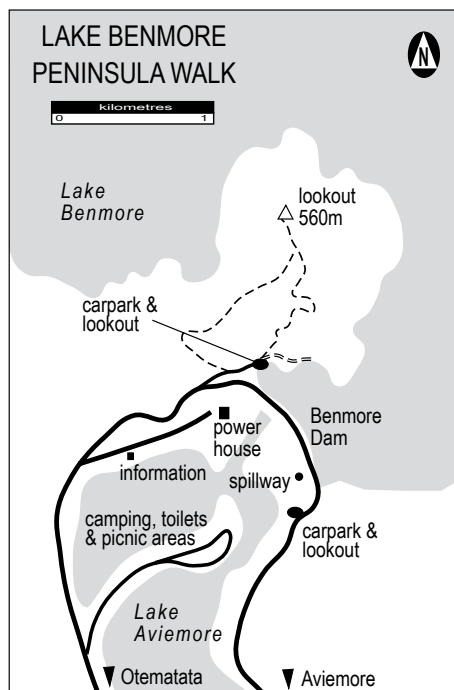
Walks, Daytramps & Mt Biking

Lake Benmore Peninsula Walk

Lake Benmore was created by the huge Benmore dam (1958-1965) and the peninsula juts out into the lake. The walk starts at the lookout carpark above the dam. There is a short sloping track down to a house boat in the bay, but follow the main track as it sidles up on a steady grade.

There's quite a bit of climbing (and some steps) before you leave the pine forest and come out on an alpine scree knob. Superb views from the lookout (seat) and the fir trees on the peninsula turn gold in autumn.

The track continues along to another lookout, then down to a saddle, and completes the circuit back to the road and carpark.



Walking time: 1-2 hours return.

Directions: access is off Highway 83 just north of Otemata township. Follow the dam road 5 km to lookout carpark. The road continues, crosses the dam and becomes a scenic drive around Lake Aviemore to the Aviemore Dam and Highway 83.

Benmore Facts & Figures

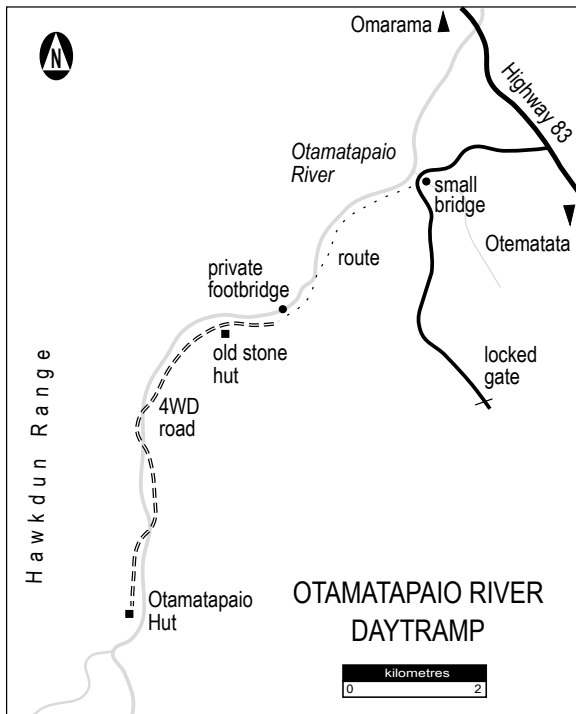
The power station is New Zealand's second largest (after Manapouri) with six turbines. The dam is made of earth, and 28 million tons of material was moved and compacted. It created a lake with a surface area of 74 square kilometres and a shoreline 116 km long. The lake's volume is about 1.5 times that of Wellington Harbour.

Otamatapaio River

The Otamatapaio River now has public access on the south bank, and it's 15 km flat, easy walking to Otamatapaio Hut. It's rather a long daytramp, and would be better as a weekend tramp, which in turn gives access onto the northern Hawkdun Range. Mt biking would be good along the Otamatapaio track.

From the small bridge follow the river bank (south bank) as the route crosses dull mata-gouri river flats. After an hour you reach a 4WD road and this is followed past the private footbridge and onto the old stone hut. The hut is useable as a lunch shelter and some repair work has obviously been done.

From here it's a short distance to the top forks and another small private hut. The scenery gets more interesting as you follow the 4WD up the narrower valley, with about three river crossings before you reach the Otamatapaio Hut. It's been completely renovated inside with new bunks and new wood stove.



Walking time: 6-7 hours return from road end.

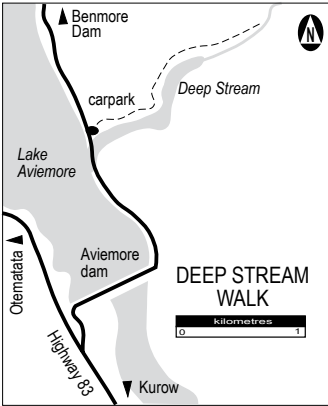
Mt Bike riding time: 3-4 hours return from road end.

Directions: from Highway 83 about 7 km north of Otematata township, turn onto the unnamed road (1.5 km before the Otamatapaio Bridge). About 2 km down this road to a small bridge beside Otamatapaio River. DoC intends to mark the public easement, but there was no sign of it in July 06.

Otamatakou Access

This easement is signposted on Highway 83 about 13 km north of Otematata township, beside the Lake Benmore Holiday Park. It gives access to the St Cuthbert Range, and could be used to cross over into the Otamatapaio valley.

Deep Stream Walk



Short and sweet track, that you wish would go further than it actually does. After a dramatic entry into the Deep Stream canyon, the track sidles high then drops down onto a scrubby flat, where it dribbles into nothing. Ah well, the canyon was worth it, with the vivid contrast between the electric blue of Deep Stream, the naval blue of Lake Aviemore and the soft, washed blue of the sky.

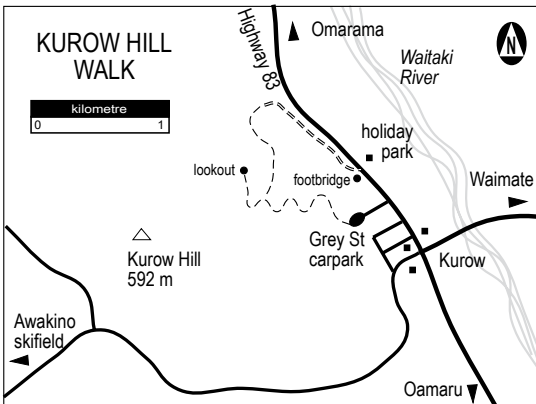
Walking time: 1 hour return.

Directions: from Highway 83 cross Aviemore Dam and take the lake road north 1 km.

Kurow Hill Walk

Relaxed family walk up a low hill behind Kurow, with a good circuit track back to the carpark. From the carpark follow the track as it zig zags 200 m up the hillside, through briar and tussock slopes. Note the side-trail as you carry on up to the summit, with good views over Kurow, and towards the Hakataramea Pass.

Return back to the side-trail and sidle across to a saddle, and then descend the gully to an old quarry site and 4WD road. This is an easy stroll alongside the Highway to the pine trees and footbridge. Picnic table here and plenty of shade.



Walking time: 1 hour return or circuit. This track doesn't go onto Kurow Hill itself.

Directions: at Kurow on Highway 83 turn down Grey Street to carpark and signpost.

Awakino Skifield Walks

This area has plenty of walking and recreational potential, but at the moment there is no complete public access to Awakino skifield. Permission is needed from Sunny Peaks station to cross a short stretch of private land between the two locked gates. Once across the stile it is now conservation land, and easy walking following the 4WD track as it crosses the pretty upper Awakino River up to the ski lodge.

Good views from here. There's a further stiff climb of almost 300 m up to the top skifield huts and the skifield itself. It's a bit of a junkyard and the 4WD road continues to zig-zag up into the stark but not unattractive top basin. Huge mounds of shingle on either side as the road reaches the crest of the ridge at 1700 m with stunning views of the Hawkdun Range.

For the keen it is possible to turn north from the pass and carry on up to the flat peaked Rocky Top (1942 m). There's also Mt Kohurau 2015 m to consider, the highest peak around, and an easy climb along the broad ridge.

Walking times: lower carpark to lodge, 1 hour return; lower carpark to skifield 2-3 hours return; lower carpark to ridgeline return 3-4 hours return; lower carpark to Rocky Top or Mt Kohurau return 5-6 hours. Take a topo map for any attempted ascents of these peaks.

Directions: from Kurow on Highway 83, take the signposted roads to the Awakino skifield, following Manse Road and Cattle Valley Road 3 km to Awakino Road, then 5-6 km to the

