

Last corrected: September 2019

NELSON LAKES & LEWIS PASS

Lake Rotoiti
Bushline Hut
Kirwans Hill



Lewis Pass Tops
Magdalen Hut
Hope River



Kirwans Hill
Murray Creek Goldfield
Lake Daniells



Lake Rotoiti

Tall beech forest

Rebirth of the dawn chorus

Interpretation signs

Ideal for families

Various options

Bush tracks

From Highway 63 at St Arnaud (which has petrol, store and café), drive to Kerrs Bay picnic and camping area, with shelter and toilets. Murderous sandflies.

DOC has made a commitment in selected places in New Zealand to recreate the dawn chorus, and at St Arnaud they are getting close. Intense predator control on this 'mainland island' has created a wall of sound from bellbirds, robins and kaka. This natural music of the forest has not been heard for a long time on the mainland.

Lake Rotoiti itself is a charming bush-edged lake, with great views towards the big Nelson Lakes mountains. The only downside of this magical spot... well, sit down for awhile, and they will find you!

You have several walk choices. The Bellbird Walk is just 10 minutes round.

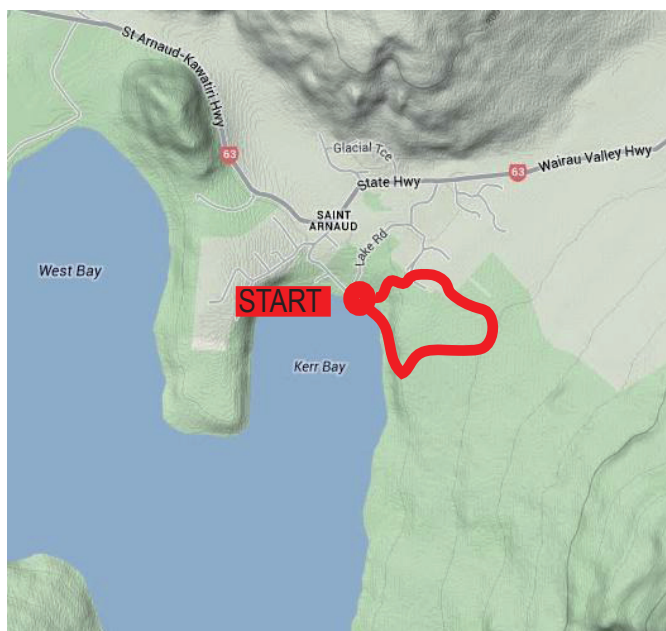
The Honeydew Walk is 1 hour, and named after the sweet, almost sickly scent of the honeydew excreted by a scale insect. The bellbirds love this stuff, and they are loud and melodious in appreciation. This walk has excellent interpretation signs all round to explain what DOC is trying to do, and





the beech forest is smothered with a carpet of lush moss. Then there is the longer Loop Track — about 1 hour 30 minutes — and for a big hill climb try the track up onto the St Arnaud Range and Pinnacle Lookout, 3–4 hours return.

Whichever track you choose will go through the heart of the predator-controlled beech forest. Do not touch the traps or bait stations: unless you are a rat.



Campsites: along shores of Lake Rotoiti, shelter, toilets, also at West Bay, shelters, toilets.

Bushline Hut

Healthy hill circuit

Alpine hut and lunch shelter

Dramatic view of Lake Rotoiti

Beech forest and tussock plateau

4-5 hours circuit

Bush tracks and tussock paths

5 kilometre circuit

From Highway 63, 2 km west of St Arnaud, take the West Bay road for 5 km to the Mount Robert carpark, at the end of a steep zigzag.

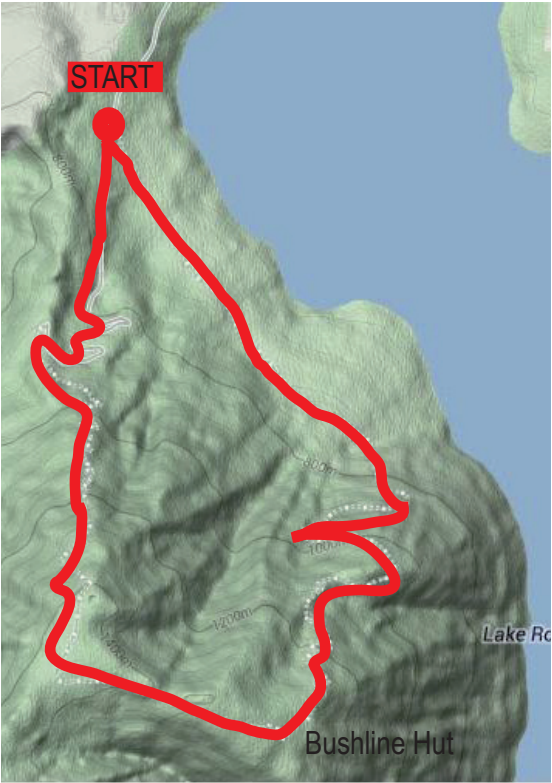
A walk to remember, and although the steep scree faces of Mount Robert might put you off, the total climb is only 500 metres and the rewards are well worth it — definitely the best views over Lake Rotoiti. Bushline Hut sits on sunny slopes in a particularly privileged position.

The beginning of the tramp is horribly steep. The Pinchgut Trail switches back and forth for 500 metres up through a burnt-off scrub face to reach the bush edge. The views are superb, you have done most of the climbing, and you are above those pesky sandflies.

Only a short distance to the flat summit and the Relax Shelter Hut (seats only) then on to the signposted track junction to Bushline Hut. A downhill stretch past snowpoles on a wide, easy ridge, swinging past the private Kea Hut down to the 12-bunk Bushline Hut. Hard to find a better view to have lunch over.

The track that continues down from the hut is known as Paddys Track, and it snakes lazily through open tussock faces for 300 metres before easing into manuka forest and slipping into Robert Stream. Here the track sidles amiably to just below the carpark.





Kirwans Hill

Big 900 m climb to hilltop hut

Miners pack track

Gold mining history

Tunnel and aerial cableway

7-8 hours return

Graded miners pack track

18 kilometres return

From Reefton take Highway 69 about 11 km north and turn down Boatmans Road 7 km to Caplestone carpark.

A brilliantly graded miners pack track leads up to a hut on a hill, where you can see Mt Cook and a panorama of crinkled bush tops. A big day, but fascinating mining history and huge views. In 1877 Caplestone boasted 7 pubs and 1000 people.

From the carpark a track crosses Boatmans Creek over a swingbridge, then after 1 km goes through a tunnel onto a footbridge back across Boatman's Creek. After this dramatic start the track ambles alongside the creek for 2 km before crossing back over to Topler Creek.

Across the creek (no luxury of a footbridge) the pack track settles into it's rhythm and zig-zags purposely climbs almost 900 m and 8 km to Kirwans Hill. The beech forest changes in altitude from Red Beech to Mountain Beech. The hut sits on a little knob, 12 bunks, woodstove and a stunning view.





The 'Kirwan's Reward' open-cast mine site is worth a look, down a 5 minute signposted side-track, and there are views of the 1898 aerial ropeway. From the hut there is another side-track onto Kirwans Hill itself, 40 minutes first through stunted silver beech, then open tussock tops with a breathtaking panorama of mountains.



Murray Creek Goldfield

Gold miners trails and relics

Beech forest

Silence and history

4-5 hours circuit

Well graded miners tracks

9 kilometres circuit

From Highway 7 at Blacks Point, 1 km from Reefton. There is a museum by the carpark.

Red beech leaves fall and scatter gold colour on tracks that are a hundred years old, worn smooth by the plodding footsteps of the goldminers. The mining relics are crumbling away and might not impress, but the deep forest and tea-coloured streams take you into a long-lost world. It is hard to believe that these silent forests were once an important and noisy industrial landscape.

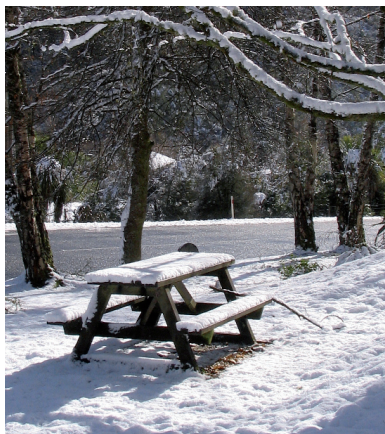
From the carpark the main Murray Track follows a broad pack-track through luxuriant moss and beech forest for 2 km, passing the junction to the Energetic Mine and the bridges at Cement Town. Not much here now, though gold was mined in the Murray Creek from 1870 to the 1930s.



Not long after this, the main track goes into a broad area of manuka forest at Chandlers Open Coast Coal Mine, then reaches the Waitahu Track junction at a saddle. Keep to the main track as it climbs steadily to the Inglewood junction, then it is only a short side-track past the Painkiller Track junction to the iron remnants of the Inglewood Mine.

Now take the Royal Track, which climbs up to another saddle and the remains of the horse whims. These are circular raised embankments where the poor horses walked round and round pulling coal carts.

Quite quickly afterwards there is the Ajax Mine, a chilling 485 metres deep, then the Ajax Battery, which is the most attractive of the gold ruins. The old track has been closed and the new track follows the ridgeline to the spur, where it zig-zags down very steeply some 400 metres right back to the carpark.



Cafe: Broadway Bakery, in Reefton

Lake Daniells

Cruisey track to bush lake

Large hut

Slot gorge

Bush birds

3-4 hours return

Flat bush track

12 kilometres return

From Highway 7 the Lake Daniells turn-off is 5 km east of Springs Junction at the Marble Hill picnic area. Camping area and toilets.

This is a well-made path through dense beech forest to the lapping shores of the lake — a track anyone can tackle, with plentiful native birdsong and a crisp-cut gorge through the Sluice Box.

From the carpark, the track turns a corner and reaches the footbridge over the well-named Sluice Box, where the Maruia River cuts through hard granite with a rush and flurry. Then the track sidles through groves of red beech, occasionally crossing matagouri river flats before reaching the Pell Stream confluence, where there is a seat.





The track starts to climb gently, and slips from the Alfred River valley into the attractive Frazer Stream, which drains Lake Daniells itself. The red beech changes to silver beech and the stream twists through moss banks, almost silent.

The lake is a surprise — a large, sequestered body of water, tucked under bush hills with a short jetty pointing out into it.

Often you can hear kaka, with their creaky-door call, flapping wildly from one side of the lake to the other. A hut provides a good lunch shelter and the return walk is gentle.



Campsite: Marble Hill reserve at the start of the Lake Daniells Track. Toilets, beech sheltered campsites.

Magdalen Hut

Valley walk to pleasant hut

Beech forest

Tussock river flats

Good mountain views

6-7 hours circuit

Bush tracks and 4WD

16 kilometre circuit

Off Highway 2 at Bolye Riiver, turn into carpark that marks the start of the St James walkway. Shelter and toilets.

Long walk but easy going, and all the facets of mountain country here. Big views, squawking paradise ducks, a cute hut, beech forest dripping with lichen. Some stream crossings and two long swingbridges.

Follow the St James Walkway to a big swingbridge across the Boyle River. From here the track travels through forests and then into wide spacious river flats. You can cut the corner to Magdalen Hut if you don't mind wet feet, otherwise continue upvalley a wee way to the swingbridge across the Boyle River again.

Short walk down stream to the 6 bunk Magdalen hut, which occupies a sunny soothing clearing. There's an alternative trek back.





Follow the old 4WD briefly to the river and wander downstream of the Boyle (no need to cross the river) out onto huge flats, then angle over to the 4WD on the far side.

This is great fast walking, with wonderful views skimming along the south side of the valley, crossing occasional streams, and back down to the Boyle village and carpark.



Hope River

Classic Southern Alps valley walk

Wide tussock flats

Lunch hut and hot spring

Great views all round

4-5 hours return

Bush and tussock track

14 kilometres return

From the Lewis Pass, Highway 7, turn off to the Hope River/Windy Point carpark and shelter. There is an information board here, and a logbook further along the track.

The Southern Alps are the grandest feature in the South Island, stretching from Nelson Lakes to Fiordland, and this walk up the Hope River is typical of the scale of the scenery. The valley is wide, with beech forest cloaking the sides of mountains well over 1500 metres high, particularly majestic with snow on them. On the way there's a wee gorge, and a soft carpet of moss under the bush canopy — plenty of space and plenty of solitude.

From the carpark and shelter follow a short vehicle track past the huts at Windy Point, then down and over a long footbridge suspended across the impressive gorge of the Boyle River. After that the track climbs steadily, some 150 metres up over farmland terraces to the bush edge. Good views downvalley.



You are now meandering along in fine, dense beech forest for most of the way to Hope shelter, staying about 100 metres above the river on a flat bush terrace. Every now and then you get superb views from grassy clearings of the Hope River and the mountains beyond.

The 6-bunk hut stands at the far side of a major matagouri clearing. It is a logical place for lunch — sunny and sheltered — and about 30 metres away there is a dribbling thermal spring, which is disappointing if you are in search of a hot bath. That will have to wait until you get home.

