

Last corrected: September 2019

WEST COAST

Heaphy Coast
Oparara Archways
The Ghost Road
Charming Creek
Dennistoun Incline



Cape Foulwind
The Ballroom & Fox River
Punakaiki Blowholes & Te Miko
Motukiekie Coast
Point Elizabeth

Croesus Gold Track
Nelson Creek Tunnels
Goldsborough Track
Lake Kaniere Water Race



Heaphy Coast

Luxuriant forest and wild beaches

Nikau palms

Tea-stained river and lagoon

Remote and restful

2 hours return

Graded pack-track

4 kilometres return

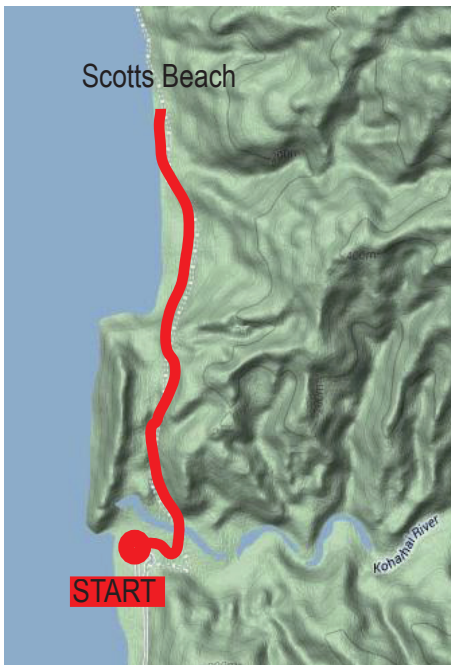
From Karamea it is a 15 km drive to the Kohaihai River and road end. Extensive picnic and camping area, toilets, shelter, phone and lookout track.

This is still an unspoilt coastline. A dark mosaic of hills, covered with sullen clouds, run down to the noisy surf, where abrupt headlands interrupt sweeps of yellow sands. The salt-laden forest has a profusion of plants like karaka, kawakawa, tree daisy, kamahi, kiekie and the icon-like feather-duster outline of the nikau palm. Late evening light can illuminate this landscape as if pouring through stain glass windows.

From the lovely camping area, cross the huge swingbridge over the rich tea-stained Kohaihai River. Then follow the Heaphy Track as it climbs easily to the Kohaihai Saddle, and down to Scotts beach. This is a lovely run of sand leading for 2 kilometres north up the coastline. Beyond here is Big Rock Beach, Koura Beach, and Crayfish Point along this enticing shoreline, but at some stage you have to turn back regretfully and face the slow hill to Kohaihai saddle and the carpark.



Cafe: Last Resort, in Karamea



Campsite: grass and bush sites by Kohaihai River, shelter, toilets

Oparara Archways

Spectacular natural archways

Pristine river and rainforest

Several short walks

Another world

Oparara Arch 50 minutes (2 km) return; Moria or Little Arch 50 mins (2 km) return. Round trip 1 hr 30 mins.

Bush and gravel tracks

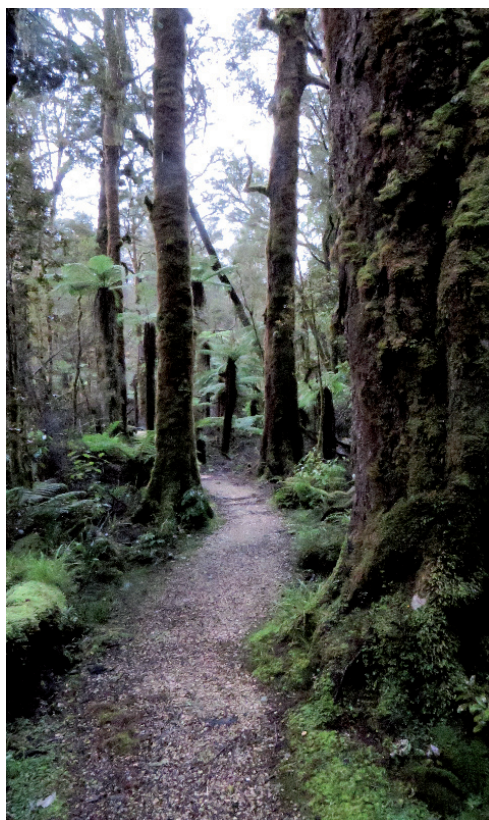
From Karamea drive north for 10 km, then turn inland following the signposts for 15 km to the carparks and walking tracks. The road is winding and narrow but in reasonable condition for cars.

The Oparara River has etched a sinuous and sensuous course through a limestone basin, creating three lovely and distinctive arches, two of which can be visited. Rainforest has disguised this geology and gives Oparara its mysterious and forgotten aura.

The drive into the Oparara basin is an adventure in itself, like entering a lost world, and the large carpark has a good information shelter and toilets.

The arches are what people usually come for, and they are impressive. You can walk into the largest, **Oparara**, which is 43 metres high and 219 metres long. The inside is dry and roomy with stalactites and stalagmites. The **Moria or Little Arch** is smaller and prettier and you enter it via an unexpected cave. It is 19 metres high and 43 metres wide.

From Moira Arch a good track crosses the archway (with a look-out) and goes up the Oparara River to the **Mirror Tarn** and back to the carpark. The beech forest and mosses are spectacular. Allow 1.30 minutes round trip beech.





A short drive further there are two small caves to explore. Crazy Paving has a distinctive mud floor, and Box Canyon is a high dry cavern. Take a torch. Blue ducks are found in the Oparara River as well as the large-shelled powelliphanta snail, a nocturnal carnivore that feeds on worms.

A good track now follows the Oparara River down valley and connects to the Fenian cave area, allow 4 hours one way.



The Ghost Road

Old miners gold trail

Deep, beautiful gorge

Miners relics and sunny hut

Mt bike trail

6-7 hours return walk, 2-3 hrs return
mt bike

Bush pack-track

20 kilometres return

7 km north of Hector on Highway 67,
turn down Mokihinui and Seddonville
Road some 7 km. Two carparks,
the larger at 6 km mark (at Burke Ck
ford), the smaller at the road end.

The Ghost Road is an ambitious attempt to turn historic miners tracks through Kahurangi National Park into a long distance mt bike trail through to Lyell.

This section is up the lovely Mokihinui Gorge, and despite the distance, the track has been vastly improved and it's easy-going tramp-ing to Specimen Creek Hut. Already it's a popular mt bike trail.

From the carpark cross the fords and the track quickly settles onto the old miners trail, in places built up with elaborate stone work.

Opposite Rough and Tumble Creek can be seen the remains of an old bridge. This was once the main bridleway to Karamaea.

There's glimpses of the Mokihinui gorge all along





the track — turquoise pools and golden sandy beaches — amazing to think all this was going to be dammed and flooded.

'Suicide Slip' has been bridged and so has Specimen Creek. The Specimen Creek hut sits in a sunny position on a terrace on the far side. A great lunch spot.



Charming Creek

Old tramway in a granite gorge

Mining relics and tunnels

Impressive waterfall

Great for families

2-3 hours return

Gravel track and bridges

14 kilometres return

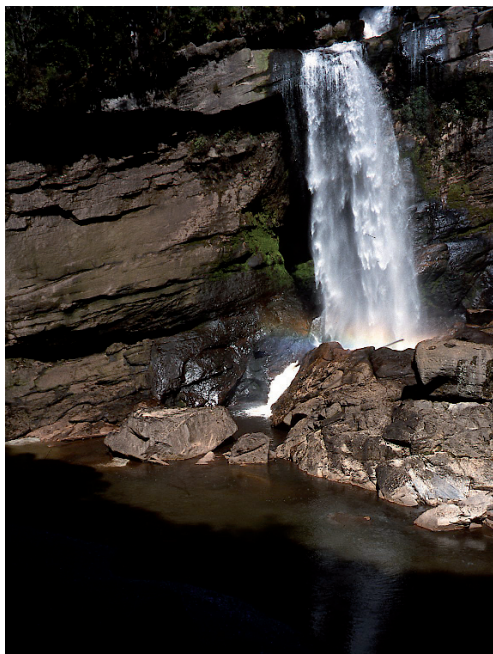
From Westport drive 35 km to Ngakawau. The walkway is signposted just before the river, drive past the Stockton coal cableway 200 metres to the carpark on the right. Don't drive down the walkway itself!

There was never a more apt name for a walk. Charming Creek has tunnels, walk verandahs, waterfalls and many other features all packed in the cramped and gloomy spaces of a gorge, closely overhung with sombre native forest.

Excellent information boards detail the coal-extracting operations in the area. From 'The Bins' terminus you quickly follow the slick dark waters of the Ngakawau River through the S-bend of Irishmans Tunnel (a mistake in alignment), and through another 'tunnel' which is in fact a natural rock arch. The granite gorge is at its narrowest here, as the tramway crosses the long suspension bridge with spectacular views of the Mangatini Falls.

There is another 50-metre-long tunnel, a boardwalked verandah, then the confluence of Charming Creek and Ngakawau River. The river always carries a thin line of foam and creates elaborate swirls and patterns as it joins the Charming.





Just around the next corner is Watsons Mill, where there is a toilet and shelter, and after the bridge a short casual trail goes down to the picnic rocks by the dark tea-stained river. A salubrious spot for lunch.

From here on, the walkway changes character as it leaves the gorge and enters a chewed-over forest of mine debris, relics of the old steam sawmill, a sulphur hole and the Papa Tunnel. If you continue right through, its a good idea to arrange transport at the other end.



Dennistoun Incline

Historic coal incline

Many mining relics

Old bridleway track, 500 m climb

Good views

4-5 hours return

Steep bush track

8 kilometres return

From Westport travel 14 km on Highway 67 to Waimangaroa, then take Conns Creek Road to the carpark. If you continue along Conns Creek Road you reach the historic site at the actual base of Denniston Incline.

The Denniston Incline is the remains of a mighty enterprise, and was built in 1878–79 and operated until 1967. It was proudly considered New Zealand's biggest and best engineering project. Water-operated brakes slowed the coal-laden wagons (in a descent that was 1 in 1.20 over the 548-metre drop) and helped pull up the empty wagons. Once 250 miners and their families lived and worked on this bleak plateau, and ultimately 12 million tons of coal were taken from Denniston.

For the top access, follow the signposted Denniston road as it climbs the 700-metre plateau, then down a side-road to the carpark and lookout over the top of the incline. One Mile Log carpark is on the Denniston road and offers a shorter walk to the top. Obviously if you can arrange transport to drop you off at the top of the incline, the down walk is easier and the walk time halved.

At first the walk climbs through regenerating forest and past the old brickworks site, climbing 2 km up to One Mile Log. After this the forest becomes more sub-



stantial, with tall rimu and red beech. This bridle track was built in 1884 when someone died riding down on the incline wagons.

After two-thirds of the climb there is a short side-track to Middle Brake, where you can get an idea of the uncomfortable steepness of the incline. There is an old viaduct below Middle Brake but it is unsafe to go on; indeed, the incline is generally too steep and insecure to walk on.

On the main track, the last part zigzags up stone steps to the lonely and rusting machinery at the top of the incline. On misty days the place seems haunted, which perhaps it is — haunted by memories.



Other walks: Coalbrookdale Mine (1 hour). A 10 minute drive from the top of Dennistoun to start of this walk.

Cape Foulwind

Large seal colony

Dramatic coast and beach

Wekas at the shelter

Good family outing

1-2 hours one way

Benched gravel track

3 kilometre one way

From Westport it is 12 km down the Cape Foulwind road past Carters Beach to the large carpark, information boards and toilets at Tauranga Bay.

In 1770 Captain Cook called it 'foulwind'. The name has stuck and so have seals, to one of the most publicly accessible seal colonies in New Zealand. Other attractions include the colony of friendly, thieving weka at the carpark, and the glorious golden sweep of Tauranga Bay.

From the carpark an excellent track climbs up onto the headland and leads down to the lookouts over the seal colony. At breeding time the colony is spectacular, with as many as 100–150 pups.

The New Zealand fur seal is found only in New Zealand waters and off the south coast of Australia, and the seals arrive to give birth in November and December.

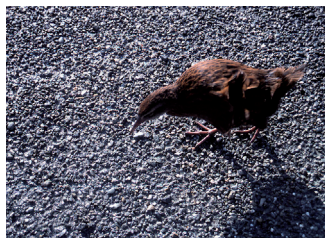




By March the numbers of pups are at their peak, and a lively lot they are.

From the colony the track is well-graded and follows the cliff-tops with wonderful views past the astrolabe and the lookout. The track sidles around to the lighthouse and on to the northern carpark.

But just before here an unmarked trail leads down to the shore and follows the banking of the old railway line, which was used for moving quarried rock. On stormy days this is a wild piece of shore. Straggler seals often haul ashore here, no doubt trying to get some peace and quiet from the noisy quarrels at seal city.



The Ballroom & Fox River

Huge natural overhang

Deep gorge and one deep ford

Cave entrance and bush

Limestone formations

5-7 hours return

Benched track, river crossings

11 kilometre return

From Highway 6 beside the Fox River take the short side-road to the carpark. There is a toilet at the Ballroom.

This is a deep gorge that cuts into the heart of the karst syncline of Paparoa National Park. You can get a long way into this heartland with only one straight-forward river crossing, but to reach The Ballroom you will get wet knees (at least). This is a wilderness walk, with tall forest, and limestone rocks that have been shaped into sculptures by the emerald river.

This walk is suitable for experienced walkers and trampers. It should not be attempted in wet weather, as river levels can rise quickly and dangerously. Expect several waist deep crossings. Get good weather information from the visitor centre at Punakaiki.

The marked track starts as a stopbank that becomes an old gold-diggers' pack-track, and crosses two low bush spurs via old miners' cuttings. It crosses a dry sidebranch of the Fox River where the granite boulders glitter with quartz, and shortly afterwards reaches the first Fox River ford. (The Fox River Tourist Cave track continues along a benched track, then steeply follows up a creek bed to the entrance of the cave, which can be explored for a short distance. Take a torch.)





For The Ballroom cross the river at this easy point and join the well-benched south bank track that continues most of the way to the Dilemma Creek confluence.

The Fox Gorge is striking, and every twist in the river breaks open new angles of rock and light. At Dilemma Creek the rock walls have formed a sharp prow, splitting the two rivers. The track has now ended, and you have to start fording the Fox River. Some of the fords can be deep but the river is usually slow-moving.

It is about six to eight crossings upstream to the high natural rock shelter called The Ballroom. This is a massive overhang curved over a grassy flat, and you could fit a few houses under here comfortably. There is no record of any ancient balls ever being held here, but it's a lovely idea.



Punakaiki Blowholes

Rugged coastal scenery

Strange rock formations

Blowholes and beaches

Ideal for families

Pancake Rocks 30 minutes circuit;
Truman Track 30 minutes return.
Both 1–2 km return.

Gravel paths

Drive to Punakaiki on Highway 6 (60 km from Westport, 45 km from Greymouth), to the information centre and large carpark. The Truman Track is 2 km north at the signposted carpark.

The Pancake Rocks are weird, limestone rocks layered in elegant towers. Surf surges into the caverns, and with the right sea running can blast up through the blowholes underneath the rocks, creating a memorable short walk.

Opposite the visitor centre, the track starts through coastal bush then dense flax (harakeke) and cautiously circumnavigates a surging sea chamber. There are good information signs at the many lookouts. Shrubs cling to the very edges of the blowholes, which have names like 'Sudden Sound', 'Chimney Pot' and 'Putai' (sea-spray). On a clear day you can see Mount Cook in the far distance, though often the Paparoa coast seems to 'smoke' from the heavy spray of the pluming sea.



Cafe: Punakaiki Gallery, in Punakaiki

Te Miko or Truman Track

Slightly north of the Pancake Rocks, this track plunges down through a coastal jungle of rimu, matai, nikau palms and entanglements of vines like kiekie and supplejack. After the final flax belt you reach an exposed rock shelf above the sea.

The broad tidal platforms are stained with colours, and sea stacks take the brunt of the West Coast surf. Seals haul ashore up and down this coast, and little blue penguins nest here. Steps go down to a gorgeous beach, where shallow sea caves have been carved out and glisten with subtle colours of lichen and moss. The sea fairly barrels into this tight little bay, but at low tide it is possible to scramble around the greasy rocks to the next bay. It is an ancient, relentless shore.



Campsite: DOC in Punakaiki

Motukiekie Coast

Sentinel sea stacks

Low-tide exploring, watch for big surf

Wild beaches and coves

1-2 hours return

Beach walking and low-tide scrambling

4 kilometres return

Off Highway 6, just past Greigs settlement at the rest area carpark.

This engaging but rough walk wanders along a cliff-hanging coast, with sea stacks at Motukiekie and wild coves. A low tide is essential, and keep a careful eye on the big surf. Motu means 'island' in Maori, and kiekeie is a rambling vine.

From Greigs wander across the wide exposed sands onto the tidal platforms. Close to Twelve Mile Bluff large conglomerate boulders have tumbled onto the shore, some coloured terracotta and as fine as Roman mosaics.

Motukiekie is a sensational stand of sea stacks, topped by some tenacious plant life that manages to survive on the spume-soaked headland. It's an amazing place, and there are two emergency escape tracks up to the highway if you get stuck — the locals use them.

Only at low tide should you venture further around the corner from Motukiekie, where there is a short sandy beach, and another headland to clamber over where the rocks have slumped. Then a passage across tidal platforms to Ten Mile Creek and a surprise — a large hole in a rock. Local legend says the early goldminers scrambled through it to avoid the high tide.





Point Elizabeth

Coastal scenery and cliffs

Wild surf

Easy walking

1-2 hours one way

Bush track and beach

3 kilometres one way

From Greymouth take the Cobden and North Beach Road 6 km to carpark. Northern carpark is at Rapahoe.

Point Elizabeth is a fine chunk of West Coast beach, spuming and roaring as the big surf pounds away. Easy tramping on old goldminers 1865 track, nikau palms, and some views along the way.

From the carpark the track gradually climbs into the coastal forest and reaches Point Elizabeth, where a side-track leads to a lookout. In the old days steps used to go down the cliff to the beach, but now the track meanders along an old water race on a high bush terrace until it drops down to the Rapahoe carpark.





Croesus Gold Track

Classic pack-track to the tops

Historic sites & stamping battery

Hut with a view

Climb of 900 m

7-8 hours return, 18 km return (Croesus Knob)

Graded pack track

From Blackball township drive 1 km on Roa Road and turn onto the Blackball road, which winds through forest for 4 km to the Smoke-Ho! carpark. The road is narrow but usually ok for cars.

This walk is a real leg-stretcher, following an historic, perambulating track that never loses interest. Several shorter return walks for people who do not fancy the full workout, but do not be put off by the times. The walk is on an excellent gradient, and if it is a fine day you really have to try for the top — the view of Mount Cook is awesome.

Take the track from the Smoke-Ho! carpark as it passes a logbook and stay on the top track option to the First Hotel site, in a large, grassy clearing. There are good easy grades up to the Second Hotel site (past Perotti's Mill junction), and up past a couple of lazy zigzags to the Garden Gully junction.

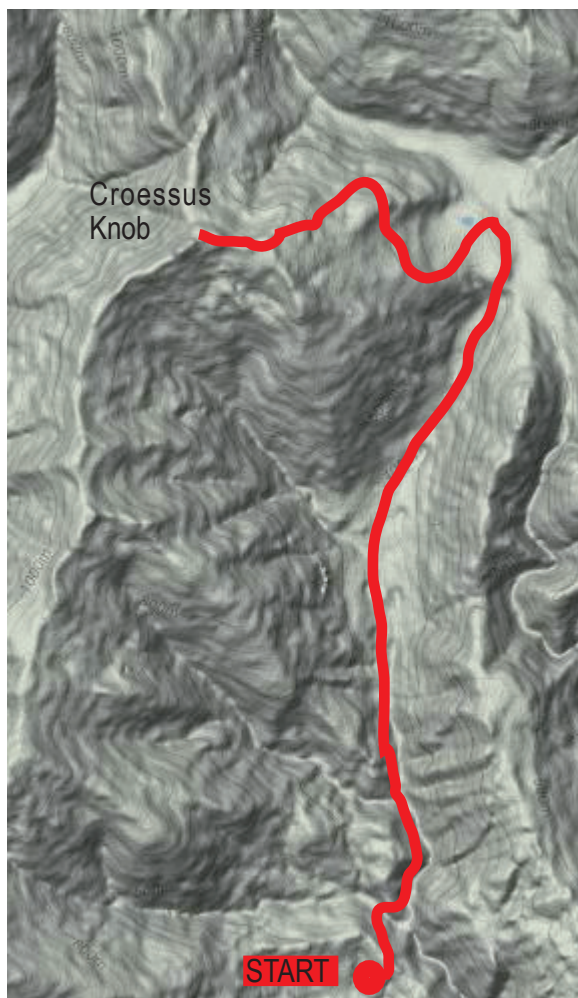




This side-track crosses a saddle down to the old Garden Gully Hut then climbs up a side-creek to arguably the best preserved stamping battery on the coast.

The main Croesus Track zigzags steadily upwards past the old Top Hut, reaching the bush edge at the Ces Clark Memorial Hut. Dedicated to a ranger who died on the track, this was the first mountain hut to be opened by a prime minister.

Out into the tussock basins the views get better, especially if you can manage the final fling up onto Croesus Knob itself. On top is the remains of the aerial cableway for the Croesus Mine, and his proverbial wealth is still not as good as the views.



Nelson Creek Tunnels

Tricks of track and tunnels

Gold mining history

Off the beaten track

Good family area

1 hour circuit

Bush tracks and stream walking

3 kilometre circuit

From Highway 7 just past Nga-
here turn onto the Nelson Creek
Road for 6 km to Nelson Creek.
Carpark and toilets

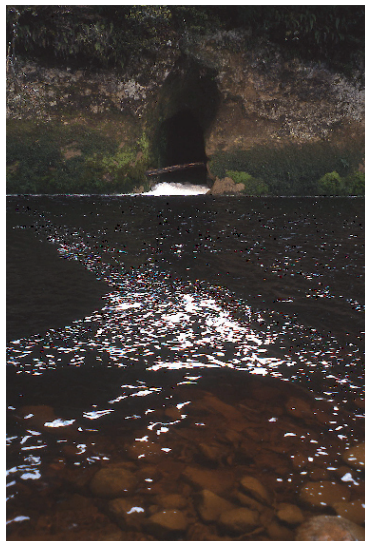
Fascinating landscape of tunnels, tailraces and tailings, created by goldminers in desperate need of water. The miners dug tunnels to gain a healthy pressure of water to attack the goldbearing gravels and trap the heavier gold in riffle boxes, but they also cut tailraces and sludge channels to drain water and the excess tailings away. You can see their hard work and admire their skill.

From the Nelson Creek carpark the track starts spectacularly — through a tunnel. Then over a long suspension bridge and around to the Tailrace Walk, past the turn-off to Colls Dam, Callaghans and the Tunnel Walk.

The Tailrace Walk is a 20-minute circuit around a number of cleverly incised tailraces. Back at the junction with the Tunnel Walk have a look at the beginning of the tunnel. This discharges a small stream into Nelson Creek, and you can walk down it, though you will need a torch. There is a large swimming hole at the Nelson Creek end.

Lastly, go back to the Colls Dam Walk and enjoy this peaceful circuit past Colls Dam then continue round, crossing numerous other tailraces.





Campsite: open grass flats by river at Nelson Creek, toilets

Goldsborough Track

Mossy creeks and tunnels

Pleasant picnic area

Wet feet and river crossings

Many other track options

1–2 hours to tunnels (4 km) re-
turn, complete Goldsborough
track 3–4 hours (7 km) one
way

Bush tracks & river crossings

Turn off Highway 6 at Awatuna
onto the Stafford–Dilmanstown
road and follow 10 km to a large
carpark and picnic area.

The great 1865 goldrush on the West Coast changed the landscape irrevocably. At Goldsborough the land has been completely trashed by generations of goldminers who shifted creeks, stacked pyramids of rocks, and inadvertently created an artistic labyrinth of tunnels. They did things with the pick and shovel we would not attempt with a bulldozer, and the Goldsborough Track is a marvellous testament to their endeavour.

The main track from the carpark follows Shamrock Creek quite closely in bush, then crosses the creek beside a bluestone cliff. Over a low spur there is a side-track back down to Shamrock Creek. There are two tunnels, the first just 100 metres downstream, over smooth boulders in the mossy riverbed. It is a beautiful piece of work, built to eliminate a bend in the river so as to assist the miners in flushing out the tailing debris.





Upstream 5 minutes is an even better tunnel, some 30 metres long. Both tunnels are well-fashioned examples of the gold-diggers' art, with crypt-like arched ceilings in the green, cloistered riverbed.

The Goldsborough Track continues for another 2 hours to Callaghans Road and the Manzoni Claim, with its huge man-made tunnel.

Tunnel Terrace Track

This track starts 5 km before the Goldsborough carpark, on the Stafford–Dilmanstown road. Clearly signposted. The kids will love it, even the small ones. It starts through a water-race tunnel, loops around old stone stacks of tailings past the entrances to other tunnels, and pops out on the road through the clever finale of a tunnel. 15 minutes of frolicking fun.



Campsite: grass clearings by stream at Goldsborough, toilets, shelter

Lake Kaniere Water Race

Goldminers' water race

Lovely lake and picnic area

Easy walking

Arrange transport if one way

2 hours one way

Bush tracks and tussock trails, rock scramble to summit

7 kilometres one way

From Hokitika drive on the Lake Kaniere Road 10 km to the west exit of track and carpark (Kennedys Creek), then continue for 6 km to the eastern start/exit carpark by the control gates.

Lake Kaniere is one of the scenic gems of Westland, serene, secluded, almost completely surrounded by bush, and it has several beautiful walks. There is a lovely picnic area at Sunny Bight. The Kaniere water race was built in 1875 for the Kaniere goldfield, but by 1916 the race was utilised for power supply instead, and it has stayed that way. The fully automated Kaniere power station is one of the smallest in the country and supplies between 100 and 125 houses in Hokitika.

The water race walk is easy going, through bush forest and past tunnels, with the constant sweet accompaniment of the rippling race. From the control gates by Lake Kaniere the first part of the walkway goes through cutover manuka forest with some emerging kamahi.

Freshwater mussels can be seen in the race, and it is a cruisey 3 km to Wards Road. This is a good turn around point. In the next section the race disappears briefly into three tunnels and you get good views of the river below, before reaching Tunnel Hill, where a 2-km tunnel takes the water race through to the power station.

The track picks up an uninteresting bulldozer trail then drops down quickly to a gravel road, which is followed down to the Kennedys Creek carpark.

Campsite: spacious DOC camping at Hans Bay beside Lake Kaniere





Other Walks

At the north end of the lake at the Sunny Bight picnic area, there's the 10 minute Kahikatea Walk. 3 km past Hans Bay to Dorothy Falls, a 2 minute stroll to a magnificent gusher. There's a 4-5 hour lakeside track that goes from Sunny Bight all the way to the south end of the lake.

