

Kahurangi National Park

visitor information



Introduction

Wilderness, diversity and sanctuary—these are the images that best describe Kahurangi National Park. Formed in 1996, it protects much of the north-western corner of the South Island. Weaving through the park, is a network of tracks from the easy to the very challenging. The oldest and the most famous is the Heaphy Track. A number of interesting short walks cater for the day-tripper.

History

The natural diversity of Kahurangi and its importance as a wilderness area are a result of its size and its diverse and ancient geology. Kahurangi is New Zealand's second largest natural protected area; it has some of the country's oldest rocks and landforms, and spectacular areas of limestone and marble sculptured into caves, arches and stunning outcrops by water.

The variety of rock types, coupled with the range of altitudes and landforms (plateaux, valley floors, glaciated mountain-top and rocky coastline) provide a diverse range of habitats for plants and animals. The park is far enough north, and at a low enough altitude, to have escaped the worst effects of recent ice ages. Many alpine communities, overrun by ice further south, found refuge in Kahurangi. From there they recolonised the high mountains when the ice finally retreated, about 10,000 years ago.

Kahurangi today has more than half of New Zealand's 2400-odd native plant species and over 80% of all alpine species. Its flora is the most diverse of any national park and includes 67 plant species found nowhere else.

Such a large expanse of vegetation, relatively unaffected by weeds, pests, fire and timber milling, is perfect habitat for wildlife too. A wide range of birds (18 native species) find a home in the park, including the blue duck, falcon, rock wren and great-spotted kiwi. The park is also the main bastion of *powelliphanta*, a group of carnivorous native land snails that grow up to 10 cm in diameter.

Kahurangi is New Zealand's thirteenth national park. Its formation came after years of lobbying by conservation groups, seeking an internationally recognised status for the area which would better protect its natural values. For 30 years, most of its 452,002 hectares were part of a forest park, for a long time administered by the New Zealand Forest Service. But with the (1987) formation of the Department of Conservation came the opportunity to reassess the area's values. If any part of New Zealand ever perfectly met the criteria for national park status, Kahurangi is it.

How to get there

Motueka, Murchison, Karamea and Takaka are the gateways to Kahurangi. Roads extend from these towns to the park; some require a little care and may be closed after snow or heavy rain.



Public transport services operate between all these towns, and taxi services link them to the main track ends. Air services are also offered, which are particularly convenient for those walking through the Heaphy or Wangapeka Tracks.

Services for visitors

Visitor centres

There are visitor centres and/or DOC offices in the towns surrounding the park, some open seven days a week. Their addresses are listed on [page 4](#).

Accommodation

Within the park is an extensive network of huts and shelters. A Backcountry Hut Pass or Backcountry Hut Ticket is required to stay in these huts. These should be purchased before your visit. The exception to this are the huts and campsites on the Heaphy Track Great Walk where a hut or campsite booking is required. The

huts on the Heaphy Track have gas cookers, except Goulard Downs Hut and Brown Hut. Salisbury Lodge and Balloon Hut on the Tableland and Fenella Hut in the Cobb Valley have gas cookers. Elsewhere in Kahurangi you need to take your own cooker.

Other services

As well as the transport services, a number of other businesses operate within the park. Fishing, hunting and walking guides are available as are multi-day rafting trips down the Karamea River. At Karamea itself, tours of the unique and delicate Honeycomb Caves are offered.

What to do

Karamea walks

The coastal section of the Heaphy Track makes a great one or two-day walk, as does the first section of the Wangapeka Track. In the Oparara Basin are several walks exploring the forest and the awe-inspiring limestone arches. Closer to town are two forest walks: one leading to a huge rimu tree and the other to some caves in Fenian Creek.

Matiri Valley

A track in this valley leads initially up to Lake Matiri, one of many in the park formed when earthquake-caused slips dammed rivers. Beyond the lake is the steep climb to the spectacular Thousand and Hundred Acres Plateaux.

Lower Wangapeka Valley

A series of short walks from Courthouse Flat explores the old gold mining relics and beautiful streams. Longer trips to climb Mt Owen and Mt Patriarch are also possible. The Wangapeka Track to historic Cecil Kings Hut makes a good daytrip or overnight trip.

Wangapeka Track

This 59-kilometre tramping track takes 4–6 days, crossing two passes and exploring the earthquake-torn upper Karamea Valley. There are six huts; moderate fitness is required.

Leslie–Karamea Track

The Leslie–Karamea is a 3 to 4-day link between the Mount Arthur area and the Wangapeka Track. A semi-wilderness experience, it is strictly for the fit and experienced. Allow 6–9 days from road-end to road-end.

Mount Arthur and the Tableland

There are several walking options in this area, starting at Flora Car Park. The walk to Mount Arthur Hut or the climb of Mount Arthur itself (1795 m) make excellent day trips. A two-day circuit to Salisbury Lodge on the Mount Arthur Tableland provides a good introduction to the park and to tramping.



Cobb Valley

The Cobb is the park's most accessible glacial landscape. Short and long walks explore the tussock-carpeted valley floor, surrounding glacial lakes and sub-alpine herbfields. A track from the access road leads to the charming and historic Asbestos Cottage (3h return).

North-west corner

The Kaituna Track follows an old miners' trail up a richly-forested valley. On the western coast, tracks lead to beautiful Kaihoka Lakes, Knuckle Hill with its views of Whanganui Inlet, and at Kahurangi Point the old lighthouse keeper's house provides accommodation after a walk (or rugged four-wheel drive) along the wild coast.

Heaphy Track

This 4 to 6-day, 78.4-kilometre walking track is one of the Great Walks, renowned for its ever-changing landscapes and views. There are seven huts and nine campsites along the way. A booking is required to stay in a hut or at a campsite.

Hunting

Red and fallow deer are the main animals hunted in the park. A permit is required, you can get one from the DOC website or from a DOC office near the area you wish to hunt.

Fishing

There is some good fishing to be had in the Wangapeka and upper Karamea Rivers. A licence is required from Fish and Game New Zealand.

Mountain biking trial


Three tracks can be mountain biked in the park:


- Heaphy Track from 1 May to 30 September.
- The track from Flora Car Park in the Graham Valley to Barron Flat at Upper Takaka.
- Kill Devil Track to Waingaro Forks Hut and return.

All rides are part of a 3-year trial due to be reviewed at the end of 2013.




Please remember


 **The weather** is very changeable, particularly at high altitudes. Heavy snowfalls occur frequently in winter, and after heavy rainfall many rivers and streams become impassable on foot or by car.


 **Safety:** Ensure you have adequate food, clothing and experience for your trip. Make sure someone knows what your plans are and please use the hut books.


DOC HOTline
0800 362 468
Report any safety hazards
or conservation emergencies
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111


Remember your safety is your responsibility. To report any safety hazards in the outdoors call
DOC HOTline 0800 362 468.


 **Domestic animals** are not allowed in the national park. Hunting dogs are allowed in some places under permit, but not overnight—please ask.


 **Rubbish:** Please take your rubbish away from the park when you leave. There are no rubbish facilities in the backcountry.

 **Wasps** are a known hazard and are particularly common from December until April. Carry antihistamine if you are allergic to their stings.

 **Water:** If you doubt the quality of your drinking water, boil, filter or treat it. Please help keep park waters clean.

 **Huts:** Most huts in the park provide mattresses and some form of heating. You will need your own cooker. Please purchase a Backcountry Hut Pass or Backcountry Hut Tickets before your trip; your money helps keep the huts in good condition. A hut booking is required for the Heaphy Track huts.

 **Fires** should not be lit under overhanging vegetation or in high winds. Please burn only dead wood and put your fire out when you leave.

 **Mountain biking:** In general mountain biking is not permitted in Kahurangi National Park. There is a 3-year trial until the end of 2013 on three tracks listed opposite.

To find out more

The information given here is a brief introduction to a huge and complex area. To find out more, visit www.doc.govt.nz or contact one of the visitor centres and obtain a more detailed publication and map.

Other publications about Kahurangi National Park

- Heaphy Track
- Wangapeka Track
- Cobb Valley, Mount Arthur, Tableland
- Leslie-Karamea Track
- Mt Owen
- Anatoki and Waingarō Tracks
- Douglas Range (route guide)
- Walks in Golden Bay
- Walks in the Karamea area
- Kahurangi Park Map

DOC Visitor Centres

Nelson Regional Visitor Centre
Millers Acre/Taha o te Awa
79 Trafalgar Street, Nelson 7010
PO Box 375, Nelson 7040
Ph: (03) 546 9339
Email: nelsonvc@doc.govt.nz

Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre
PO Box 55, St Arnaud 7053
Ph: (03) 521 1806
Email: nelsonlakesvc@doc.govt.nz

i-SITEs

Golden Bay i-SITE Visitor Centre
Willow Street
Takaka 7110
Ph: (03) 525 9136
Email: gb.vin@nelsonnz.com

Motueka i-SITE
Wallace Street
Motueka 7120
Ph: (03) 528 6543
Email: info@motuekaisite.co.nz

Murchison Visitor Centre
Waller Street
Murchison
Ph: (03) 523 9350
Email: Murchison@nelson.com.nz

Westport i-SITE Visitor Centre
1 Brougham Street
Westport 7825
Ph: (03) 789 6658
Email: westport.info@xtra.co.nz

Picton i-SITE Visitor Centre
The Foreshore
Picton
Ph: (03) 520 3113
Email: picton@i-site.org

Blenheim i-SITE Visitor Centre
Railway Station, Sinclair Street
Blenheim 7201
Ph: (03) 577 8080
Email: Blenheim@i-site.org

Kaikoura i-SITE Visitor Centre
West End
Kaikoura 7300
Ph: (03) 319 5641
Email: info@kaikoura.co.nz

Information Centres

Karamea Information and Resource Centre
106 Bridge Street, Market Cross
Karamea 7893
Ph: (03) 782 6652
Email: info@karameainfo.co.nz

