






Day walks in Mackenzie/ Waitaki









SOUTH CANTERBURY/OTAGO



Track classifications

-  **Short walk** – easy walking for up to an hour
Track is well formed, with even surface. There may be steps or slopes
Suitable for people of most abilities and fitness
Stream and river crossings are bridged
Walking shoes required
-  **Walking track** – easy to moderate walking from a few minutes to a day
Track is mostly well formed, some sections may be steep, rough or muddy
Suitable for people with low to moderate fitness and abilities
Clearly sign posted. Stream and river crossings are bridged
Walking shoes or light tramping/hiking boots required
-  **Tramping track** – challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking
Track is mostly unformed with steep, rough or muddy sections
Suitable for people with good fitness. Moderate to high-level backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival skills required

Key to symbols

-  Car park
-  Toilets
-  Dogs on lead allowed
-  No dogs
-  Good views
-  Historic site



All map backgrounds by Geographx

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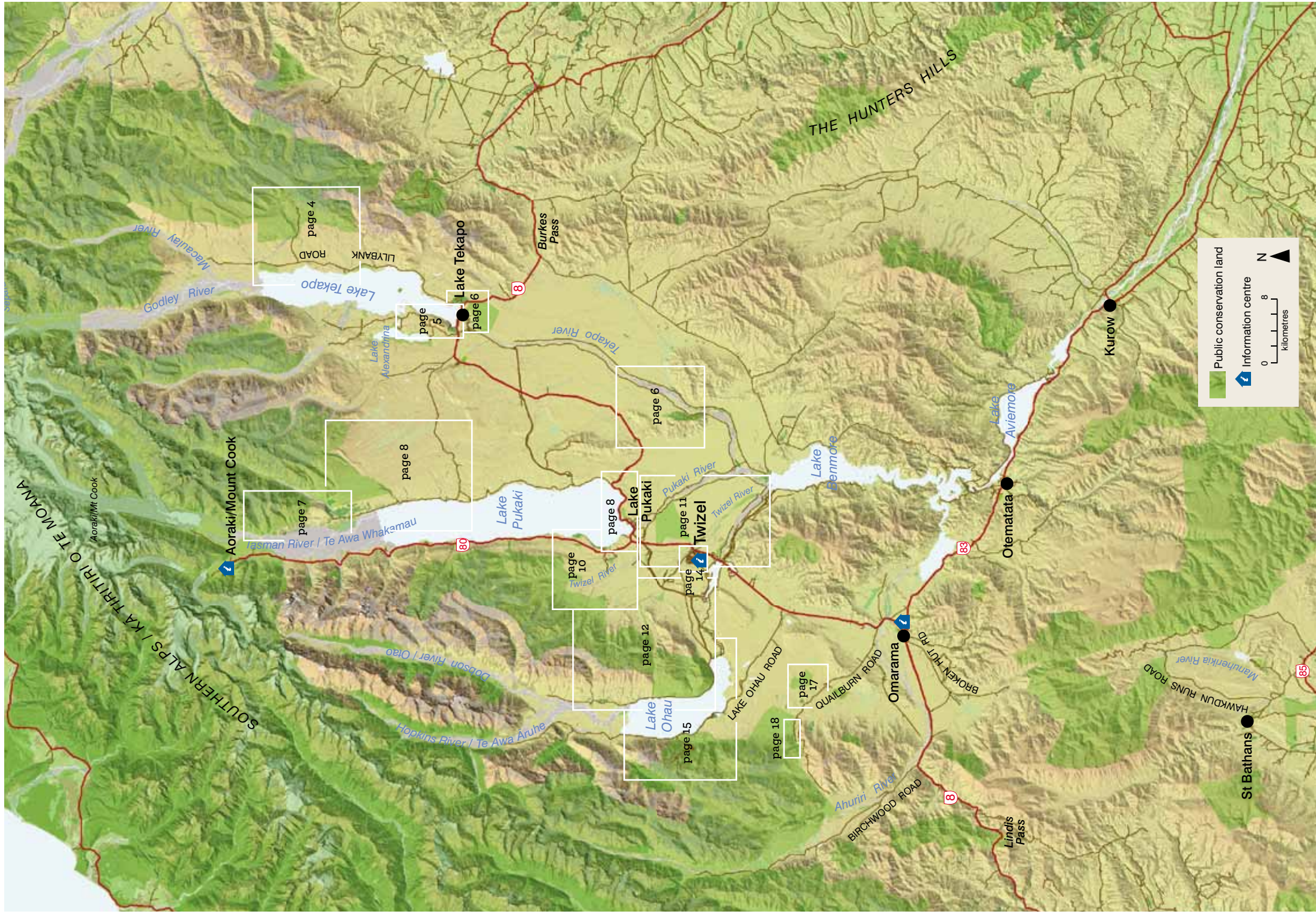
[New Zealand Government](http://www.govt.nz)

Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



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For fire and search and rescue call 111



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Day Walks in Mackenzie/Waitaki

The Mackenzie Basin is the largest inter-montane (between mountains) basin in New Zealand and is part of the South Island 'high country'. The basin is ringed with rolling, tussock-clad mountains and on a fine day the views are spectacular. Mackenzie Basin rivers all drain into the Waitaki River and out to the east coast near Oamaru.

This region offers a large variety of walks, ranging from short ten-minute strolls to full-day walks. Some of the walks travel through private farmland so please keep to the marked tracks.

The times and distances mentioned for each walk are for one direction only.



Illustration: G Cox

Many Māori travellers passed through this land

Māori used the Mackenzie Basin for stone quarrying, eeling and hunting birds. People from the villages of Arowhenua (Temuka), Waihao (Waimate) and Moeraki migrated seasonally into the area from spring through to autumn. They also travelled across the basin between the west and east coasts, trading for pounamu (greenstone). Today, Ngāi Tahu have several traditional nohoanga camping sites ('a place to sit') in the Mackenzie Basin.

What to take

The climate in Mackenzie Basin is traditionally very hot in summer and extremely cold in winter. New Zealand weather can change very rapidly, therefore walkers need to be prepared for a range of conditions. It is advisable to carry drinking water, a hat, 15+ sunblock, a raincoat and some warm clothing. Light footwear such as running shoes is suitable for most walks.

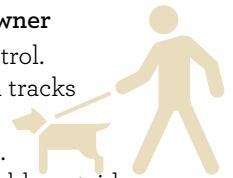
High country stations are part of Mackenzie/Waitaki

Some of the tracks profiled in this brochure venture across private farmland. Public access easements are in place so that you may reach public conservation land. In many instances you are walking through working high country stations. Please ensure you:

- stay on the public easement track
- leave gates as you find them
- do not disturb stock
- leave your dog at home
- take all rubbish away with you.

Be a responsible dog owner

- Always keep your dog under control.
- Remove any dog droppings from tracks or track verges.
- Dogs are not allowed inside huts. Tie your dog up somewhere suitable outside.
- Check the pesticide summary to see if any poisons have been recently laid in the area you are visiting. Go to www.doc.govt.nz/pesticide-summaries
- If passing through farmland help prevent the spread of sheep measles by keeping your dog regularly dosed with an effective tapeworm drug. Generally Droncit is used and given monthly in tablet form. Alternatively collect dog faeces and take to an appropriate waste disposal centre.



Lake Tekapo ca 1910 Photo: Algernon Charles Gifford, Alexander Turnbull Library

Walks near Lake Tekapo

Richmond Trail

4–5 hours, 13 km

This walk starts and finishes in different areas so a couple of vehicles may be required or alternatively an arranged drop off/pick up. Follow signage to Round Hill Ski Area on Lilybank Road.

There is a car park area along the skifield access road.

From here an initial walk of 3 km on the access road leads to the start of Richmond Trail. This trail travels along an old glacial terrace providing stunning views of Lake Tekapo and surrounding mountains. It is a steep descent back to Lilybank Road near Boundary Stream.



How Mackenzie Basin got its name

European history in the Mackenzie Basin began in 1855 with the arrest of a shepherd, James Mackenzie, for stealing sheep. Seeking a route for his flock he ventured inland and discovered the high country, which now bears his name.



Mt John

Summit Circuit Track 1 hour 30 min

Mt John via lakeshore 3 hours

The start of this track is located next to the Tekapo Springs complex. From the DOC sign walkers have the option of hiking directly up through the larch trees for the Summit Circuit Track or continuing on past Tekapo Springs for the Lakeshore Track.



Mt John is a dominant feature of the Mackenzie Basin landscape. This small dome mountain is a roche moutonnée, a rock formation which has been shaped by glacial ice flowing over it. On a clear day Mt John summit provides a fantastic viewing platform with a 360-degree panorama of the surrounding mountains, lakes and Mackenzie Basin flats.

lakes and Mackenzie Basin flats.

Mt John was named after an early farmer in the district, John Hay, who used to run Tekapo Station, the first sheep farm in the Mackenzie Basin.

Part of the Tekapo Walkway has been made possible with the assistance of Balmoral Station and University of Canterbury. Please keep to the track.



Peninsula Walkway

1 hour 30 minutes, 4 km

This is a circuit track starting off Godley Peaks Road and leading to the end of a peninsula opposite Motuariki, an island in Lake Tekapo.

This walk is a community initiative (it is not managed by DOC).



Cowans Hill Walkway

Distance: 3.2 km

This short track starts near the Tekapo Road bridge and caters for both walkers and mountain bikers. From the high point on this track walkers can appreciate the views of Lake Tekapo and surrounding mountains.



Big fires changed this landscape dramatically

Before the arrival of people the dry Mackenzie Basin would have been covered with extensive grasslands, bush and shrubland, while trees such as beech and tōtara lined the mountain valleys. Fires caused by lightning strikes, Māori hunting for moa, and by early pastoral farmers meant the tall tussock and shrubs of the high-country basin gradually disappeared.

Mary Burn access and Simons Hill Conservation Area

2 hours, 7 km one way

A signposted car park denotes the start of this walk between Tekapo and Twizel, near Mary Burn. The track wanders beside Mary Burn so is popular with anglers, while walkers may continue on to the base of Simons Hill, a prominent landscape feature within Mackenzie Basin. Its eastern slopes contain shrublands of matagouri, small leaved *Coprosma*, prostrate kōwhai (*Sophora prostrata*) and *Olearia odorata*. This is a public access easement through private farmland so please keep to the track.



Walks near Lake Pukaki

Tasman River Track

3 hours, 10 km

It is a long drive down Hayman Road (gravel), which becomes Braemar Mount Cook Station Road. There may also be stock beside the road and large vehicles, so travel carefully. The walk starts at the Jollie River car park and finishes at Tasman Point near Chop Creek. The track is popular with cyclists because it is part of the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail.

Note: The Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail travels from Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park through to Oamaru. For more information go to www.alps2oceancycleway.co.nz



Jollie Hut

2 hours, 3 km

Park your vehicle in the signposted car park off Braemar Mount Cook Station Road and continue on foot to Jollie Hut. Please keep to the track (public access easement). This area is popular with hunters looking for tahr and chamois further up valley.

You are treading where ice once towered

Over 10,000 years ago many of the formed walks near the large glacial lakes were once covered by glacial ice sheets. These glaciers shaped the landscape and scoured out valleys while leaving distinct terraces alongside the now-remaining lakes. The glacier-fed rivers that feed these high-country lakes carry 'glacial flour' which is rock crushed by the glaciers and then held in suspension in the water—giving the lakes their unusual turquoise colour.

Braemar Road to Landslip Creek



3 hours, 10 km

There is a car parking area on Braemar Road for this walk. Follow the marked public access easement along the top of what is an old glacial terrace.

A farm track leads to Landslip Creek and the public conservation land boundary. Keen walkers can hike uphill towards the trig station on point 1230 m. This is a further 3 km uphill and is a marked public access easement through Ministry of Defence land.



Pukaki Kettle Hole Track



1 hour circuit, 4 km

This walk starts just north of the Pukaki River spillway. From the car park the walk follows a track into the Pukaki Scenic Reserve through moraine hummocks and leads to a distinct kettle hole. This kettle hole was formed by melting glacial ice—interpretation signage on site provides information about this. The 360° views experienced along this track on a fine day are spectacular.

Lake Pukaki foreshore



2 hours, 6.5 km

It's certainly worth taking a short stroll (or cycle) along the Lake Pukaki foreshore. Seeing the view across Lake Pukaki to the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o Te Moana on a fine day is not to be missed! This walk is a small section of both Te Araroa (The Long Pathway) and Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail.

Note: Te Araroa (The Long Pathway) is a walking trail from Cape Reinga to Bluff. A 58-km section is marked from Tekapo to Twizel. For more information visit www.teararoa.org.nz.



Punt on Lake Pukaki, ca 1890s Photo: Alexander Turnbull Library

Marker Bay



20 minutes, 1 km

Marker Bay walk starts on the southern edge of Lake Pukaki just off SH8. It traverses an area where Lake Pukaki village once stood, before the lake levels were raised in 1979. Part of the track leads through pine trees and is a good stroll on a hot day.



Baikie Hut

3 hours, 9 km, 200 m vertical



A car park for this track within Ruataniwha Conservation Park is off SH80 about 3.5 km from the SH8 turnoff. The track follows a 4WD road and is suitable for walkers, mountain bikers, runners and horse riders. Baikie Hut, resting on grassy flats beside Twizel River, has four bunks and provides a great overnight or picnic venue.



Pukaki Boulders

10 minutes



Access is along the Aoraki/Mt Cook highway approximately 5 km from the SH8 turnoff. A signpost and stile is on the Lake Pukaki side of the highway. A short track leads up to the Pukaki boulders. These boulders are called erratics and were deposited by the huge glacier that dominated the area over 12,000 years ago.



Tibetan prayer flags are a memorial to several climbing guides from the local climbing fraternity. The boulders are popular with rock climbers and mountaineers driven away from Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park due to bad weather.

Walks near Twizel

Pukaki Flats Conservation Area



2 hours, 6 km

The Pukaki Flats area is 1.5 km north of Twizel. As its name suggests the Pukaki Flats walk is very flat—over an open block of hard tussock grasslands. An old farm track follows a fence line and leads northeast to Pukaki River. This route forms part of Te Araroa (Long Pathway) from Twizel to Tekapo. The Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail also passes through here.



Native plant species found here include mat daisies, native broom, blue tussock and native daphne. The views from here looking to Ben Ohau Range and the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o Te Moana are stunning on a fine day.

Twizel River Trail



3–4 hours, 12 km

Twizel River Trail is located opposite Twizel on the eastern side of SH8. The river is intermittently lined with willow trees which provide plenty of shade. While the trail is popular with anglers and mountain bikers, walkers may also enjoy the opportunity to find uncrowded swimming holes and picnic spots. Please keep to the track (public access easement).

Native fish such as the Canterbury galaxias (*Galaxias vulgaris*) and upland bully (*Gobriomorphus breviceps*) inhabit Twizel River, along with introduced trout.



Dusky Trail

7–8 hours, 23 km

Dusky Trail starts off Glen Lyon Road west of Twizel. This is a popular trail for mountain bikers. You will get wet feet crossing both Fraser Stream and Twizel River. This walk is not recommended after heavy rainfall. Where sections of this trail go through private land, please keep to the track.



Braided rivers are unique and rare

Extensive braided-river systems such as those found in New Zealand also occur in Alaska, Canada, Iceland and the Himalayas but are uncommon internationally. Canterbury contains 60% of the braided river habitat in New Zealand with Mackenzie Basin having some of the most pristine of these rivers. The plants and animals found in braided rivers have adapted to this tough, open, and often windy environment. From high up on Ben Ohau Peak/Ruataniwha it is possible to look down upon both the Hopkins/Te Awa Āruhe and Dobson/Otao braided rivers as they drain into Lake Ohau.

Flanagan Pass Trail

20 km, 685 m vert, 8 hrs

This track starts from a designated car park area on Glen Lyon Road. You walk through exotic forest and then ascend a short, steep track to Pyramid Saddle. Descend from the saddle to Darts Bush flats before a long climb up to Flanagan Pass (1225 m). The trip over Flanagan Pass (formerly known as Glen Lyon Saddle) was regularly used in the late 1800s as a direct route to Glen Lyon Station. Remaining telegraph poles from the 1940s can be seen beside the track in places. They once provided communication for the station. A grassy, diagonal descent leads down to Lake Ohau.



Native fish are hard to spot

Within the high-country rivers and lakes lie many species of freshwater fish, including native species such as bullies, eels, and galaxiids. The majority of these fish are quite small and like to hide during daytime so they often go unnoticed. One widespread native fish, kōaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*), has adapted to being 'landlocked' in Mackenzie Basin and breed in tussock streams that flow into high-country lakes (mature fish cannot migrate to the coast past the dams).



Kōaro

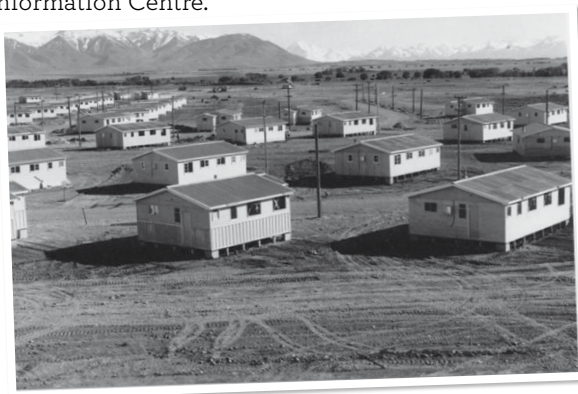
Twizel Walkway

3 hours, 9 km circuit

This walk circles the Twizel township and in part follows Twizel River. A great aerial view is provided from 'Man Made Hill'. This walk has



been extended to Lake Ruataniwha. The Track is well marked (and may be joined at many parts around the town)—a detailed map is available from Twizel Information Centre.



Twizel—the early days Photo: M Sheridan

A basin without formed roads made early travel difficult

‘The Mackenzie Plains were wide open, with very few fences, and the bullocks hauling the wagons were free to zigzag their way over the plains in the general direction of the river fords. The coaches followed the erratic tracks made by the bullock wagons. The tracks were largely unformed and unmetalled and in the spring, when the ground was starting to thaw after being icebound all winter, they became quagmires.’

Excerpt from *The Mount Cook Way* by Harry Wigley



Ben Ohau/Ruataniwha

Walks near Lake Ohau



Greta Track



6–7 hr, 16 km circuit, 810 m vert

A car park area for this track is found off Glen Lyon Road (gravel). Drive carefully as this road is narrow in places. Remnant beech/tawhai forest, mānuka, tōtara and an old musterer’s hut from the 1890s makes for an interesting start to this track. It is a 5 km climb up the western flank of Ben Ohau/Ruataniwha peak (walkers will need to deviate from the track to climb to the true summit at 1522 m). The initial descent into Greta’s Stream is quite steep. This part of the track passes by fellfields (blocky scree) and short rock bluffs back down to Lake Ohau. You need to cross Greta’s Stream a few times so you will get wet feet.

Dorcy Stream Track



2 hours, 4 km, 460 m vertical

You can either start walking from Old Glen Lyon Road or take your 4WD up to the airstrip parking area. It is 1 hour 30 minutes walking from the airstrip to Flanagan Pass (1225 m).

Lake Ohau Track

3 hr, 8 km



A magnificent walk along the shores of Lake Ohau combined with breathtaking views of the mountains! Start at either Ohau River Weir or Lake Ohau Road. This track is part of Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail.

Freehold Creek Track

Parsons Creek – Freehold Creek bushline

2 hours, 6 km, 560 m vert



Mountain beech forest clings to the gullies alongside Freehold, Parsons and Sawyers creeks in this area. The new Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail travels from Lake Ohau Lodge and continues on past Freehold Creek.

Look out for the DOC sign just before Parsons Creek one-lane bridge on Lake Ohau Road. This is a good place to stop and see native mistletoe/pirirangi on the mountain beech trees (flowering season is November/December). From Parsons Creek the track meanders along ancient glacial moraine terraces. Once across the Freehold Creek bridge you are walking on an old beech logging trail. Note the distinctive curved nature of the track which is where bullocks (young bulls) dragged large beech and tōtara logs from the forest.



Mistletoe/pirirangi

Glen Mary Ski Club Huts access – Sawyers Creek track

45 minutes, 2 km

This track provides a direct route to Sawyers Creek where it meets the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail and then on to Freehold Creek. This is also part of Te Araroa Trail. Please park in the signposted area near Lake Ohau Road (not by the huts).

Walks near Omarama

Wairepo Kettleholes

1 hour, 3 km



The entry point to the Wairepo Kettleholes is 14 km along Quailburn Road and is well signposted (Quailburn Road starts approximately four kilometres north of Omarama off SH8). There is ample room for off-road parking. The initial track is a public access easement through private farmland and follows the formed road. A stile leads over into the conservation area and from here it is a short distance to the kettleholes. These kettleholes provide an important feeding area for a number of key bird species including kakī/black stilt. Also in the conservation area are fragmented patches of red tussock particularly alongside Wairepo Creek.



The wilding pine tree is a foreign invader

Unwanted pine trees that spread from their own seed source are known as 'wildings'. A constant curse of Mackenzie and Waitaki basins these trees were introduced for their timber and catchment protection purposes. The most prevalent pine is *Pinus contorta* known as lodgepole pine in its native homeland of North America. Here it grows extremely rapidly and is known as a weed, displacing our native plants and animals. Volunteers have spent many hours clearing wilding pine trees from the Wairepo Kettlehole Conservation Area with very positive results.





Quailburn Historic Area



Historic area – Quailburn bushline

30–45 minutes, 1.5 km, 160 m vertical

Quailburn Historic Area within Ahuriri Conservation Park is found at the end of Quailburn Road. The historic site has a woolshed, sheep dip, homestead

and hut ruins dating from 1866.

A short track through beech forest crossing Quailburn Stream and provides a viewpoint above the bushline.



Wether Range

2 hours, 7 km



A sign along Shortcut Road shows the start of the route into the Wether Range. Follow a public access easement through private farmland along the fenceline boundary. There is no formed track within the public conservation land. A diverse selection of native scrub covers the flats near Manuka Creek which runs through here.



Ewe Range Track

3 hours, 7 km, 650 m vertical



Ewe Range Track, within Oteake Conservation Park, is located at the end of Broken Hut Road, south of Omarama. The track starts past the conservation park car park area. It is a steep climb up this track to the top of Ewe Range, however all that effort is rewarded with striking views amongst protruding rock outcrops.



Dromedary Hill

SH8 car park to Dromedary Hill summit

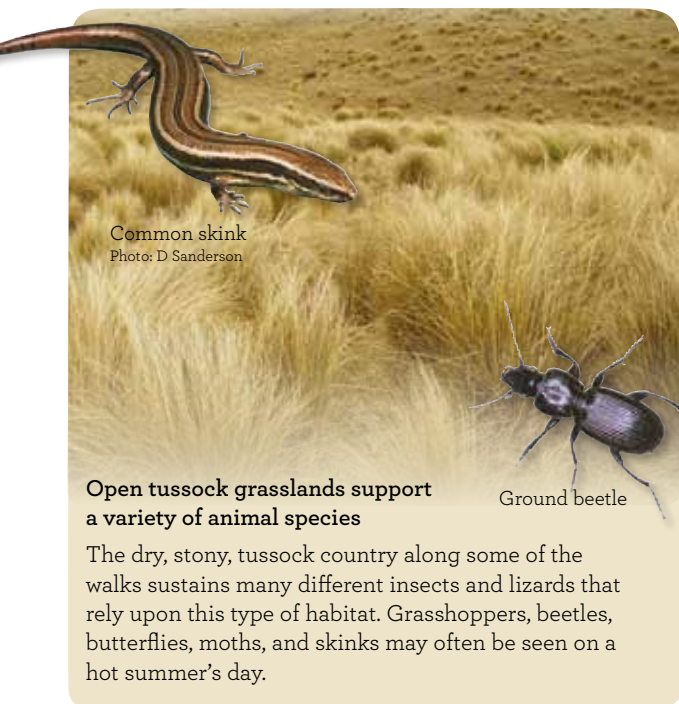


6 hours, 10 km, 1000 m vertical



Look out for a signposted car park near Dalrachney Road bridge, approximately 20 km south of Omarama. A marked track leads to the summit of Dromedary Hill (1664 m) in Lindis Conservation Area. The

views on the ascent are spectacular, with Mt Barth in Ahuriri Conservation Park clearly visible on a good day.



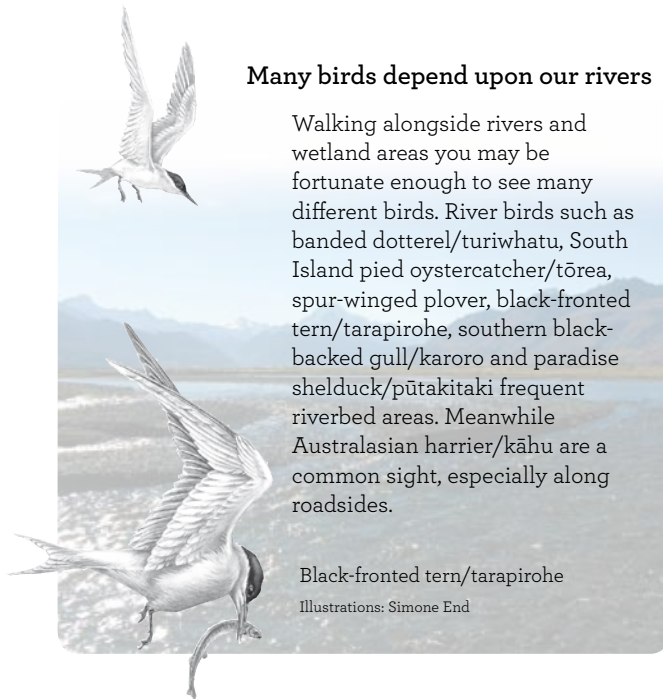
Common skink
Photo: D Sanderson

Ground beetle

Open tussock grasslands support a variety of animal species

The dry, stony, tussock country along some of the walks sustains many different insects and lizards that rely upon this type of habitat. Grasshoppers, beetles, butterflies, moths, and skinks may often be seen on a hot summer's day.

Many birds depend upon our rivers



Walking alongside rivers and wetland areas you may be fortunate enough to see many different birds. River birds such as banded dotterel/turiwhatu, South Island pied oystercatcher/tōrea, spur-winged plover, black-fronted tern/tarapirohe, southern black-backed gull/karoro and paradise shelduck/pūtakitaki frequent riverbed areas. Meanwhile Australasian harrier/kāhu are a common sight, especially along roadsides.

Black-fronted tern/tarapirohe

Illustrations: Simone End

Walks near Lake Benmore

Otamatakou Scenic Reserve



2 hours, 5.5 km

This walk follows Glen Creek and is found off SH83 near Lake Benmore. The reserve itself contains many remnant native shrubs including *Hebe cypressoides*, matagouri, mountain wineberry, *Coprosma propinqua*, *Corokia cotoneaster* and *Olearia virgata*. While there are no defined tracks within the reserve it is still a great place to see many different species of native plants and imagine what the area must have looked like hundreds of years ago.





Benmore Peninsula

1 hour 30 min,
4 km

Access to the circuit track is from Otematata via the road end above Benmore hydroelectric dam. This walk travels through an exotic forest and around a peninsula jutting out into Lake Benmore.



Walks near Kurow

Deep Stream

1 hour, 2 km

This track is found along Te Akatarawa Road. The track sidles steep faces within a flooded canyon. Plants you may see include prostrate kōwhai (*Sophora prostrata*), which flowers in August/September, and two rare native brooms, *Carmichaelia curta* and *Carmichaelia kirkii*—both threatened species. This walk finishes at the river delta where a shady picnic or fishing spot can be found.



More places of interest/ picnic spots

See map page 26

Lake Pukaki Scientific Reserve



Look out for this area found off Aoraki/Mount Cook highway. There is no defined track.

Pukaki Inn chimney



You will need a 4WD vehicle to drive to this site. From SH8, north of the Lake Pukaki spillway, travel 7 km down a gravel road and the chimney is approximately 20 m from the road verge making it easy to spot. This chimney is all that remains from one of the original accommodation houses in the area (thought to be constructed in the 1920s).



Lake Poaka



Located alongside the Pukaki Canal this lake is a popular picnic area. Many waterfowl make the lake their home so please keep your dog on a lead.



Lake Ruataniwha



Located immediately south of Twizel off SH8. With driving access around most of the lake there are plenty of picnic and swimming spots.



Ohau Bridge



The access road for Ohau Bridge is found near the Meridian Energy offices and is signposted Iron Bridge Road. Ohau Bridge is the last surviving engineering structure of its type in this region. Built in 1890, the bridge is still sturdy and spans a small lake.



Lake Ohau Terminal Moraine Reserve



A good place to stretch your legs in autumn and winter when the dominant westerly winds abate. Lake Ohau Terminal Moraine reserve is reached off Ohau Canal Road. Cross the Lake Ohau spillway and drive up the hill to the signposted car park area. A 4WD track travels along the edge of Lake Ohau.



Spring Creek



A great stop-off area for a picnic or to explore; this small area of public conservation land is signposted off SH8 about 12 km south of Twizel. Once through the gate off State Highway 8 there is an old farm track that leads to the wetland area. A hundred hectares of fescue tussock grassland are protected, as well as a small area of carex wetland. It is possible to walk to the western boundary by following the southern fence line which avoids wet areas.

Falstone Picnic Area



Located beside Lake Benmore, this is a lovely place for a picnic and swim.



Ohau Moraines Wetland Complex



Nestled under the Ohau Range, Ohau Moraines Wetland Complex is part of Ahuriri Conservation Park and found near the end of Quailburn Road. This vast expanse of red tussock lands, wetlands, rolling moraines and outwash flats provides a great place to explore. The Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail passes through here.

Ben Dhu Scientific Reserve



A marked public access easement leads into this reserve from Quailburn Road. You may get wet feet crossing a small stream on the way in.



Old fence tag

Ahuriri River access



As you travel south past Omarama there are several places signposted off SH8 providing access down to Ahuriri River. Likewise within Ahuriri valley itself, there are places clearly marked where you can access the Ahuriri River before you reach Ahuriri Conservation Park. Look out for these areas and please keep off private farmland in the valley.

Lindis Pass Scenic Reserve



This reserve is found beside the Lindis Pass highway. There is no defined track.



The Hunters Hills/Te Tari a Te Kaumira



Look out for the car parking area off Hakataramea Valley Road, this is approximately 50 km north of Kurow. Old farm tracks between Nessing Stream and Cabbage Tree Gully give good access up to The Hunters Hills.



Conservation volunteers



The Department of Conservation works closely with many community groups, trusts and other agencies to further conservation projects on and off public conservation lands. Many of these groups rely heavily on volunteers to plant trees, maintain facilities and restore precious areas. If you would like further information on volunteering opportunities visit www.doc.govt.nz/volunteers.



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Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests.

Remember to Check, Clean, Dry all items before entering, and when moving between, waterways.



More information

Backcountry tramping information is covered in Te Kahui Kaupeka, Ruataniwha, Oteake and Ahuriri conservation park brochures. These four parks are accessible from Mackenzie/Waitaki region.

Twizel Information Centre

C/- Twizel Events Centre
Market Place
TWIZEL
Phone: 03 435 3124
Email: info@twizel.info



- Protect plants and animals
- Remove rubbish
- Bury toilet waste
- Keep streams and lakes clean
- Take care with fires
- Camp carefully
- Keep to the track
- Consider others
- Respect our cultural heritage
- Enjoy your visit
- Toitu te whenua
(Leave the land undisturbed)

Department of Conservation

Wairepo Road
TWIZEL
Phone: 03 435 0802 Fax: 03 435 0852
Email: TwizelAO@doc.govt.nz

For further information about recreation activities and conservation visit: www.doc.govt.nz

Suggestions for corrections or improvements should be emailed to: recreation@doc.govt.nz