

## Hamilton Hut to West Harper Hut

*Time: 2 hours 30 minutes one way*

The route crosses Hamilton Creek at the footbridge 10 minutes downstream from Hamilton Hut and leads to a swing bridge across Harper River, a short distance above its confluence with Hamilton Creek.

After crossing the swing bridge, the route continues upstream on the true right of the river to West Harper Hut. In fine weather and suitable conditions, the riverbed offers an easy alternative with several fine swimming holes along the way. West Harper Hut (a hut built in the 1950s) has five canvas bunks, a fireplace and a dirt floor.

### ● Side trip: Mirror Tarn *Time: 20 minutes return*

A side trip can be made to Mirror Tarn while en route to West Harper Hut. About 20 m beyond the Hamilton Creek bridge is the sign to Mirror Tarn. Follow the marked track steeply uphill for about 10 minutes to reach the tarn.

## West Harper Hut to Lagoon Saddle Hut

*Time: 2–3 hours one way*

From West Harper Hut the track bypasses a small gorge to reach river flats which are then followed to the confluence of Long Creek and Harper River. Follow the markers up the Harper riverbed for approximately 500 metres and then a formed track on the true left climbs steadily to Lagoon Saddle Shelter. Lagoon Saddle Hut is located just across the river and has two bunks and mattresses.

## Lagoon Saddle Hut to Bealey Hut and SH73

*Time: 2–3 hours one way*

From Lagoon Saddle Hut the track gradually climbs through patches of beech forest above the tarns on Lagoon Saddle. It is marked by poles and markers.

Once on the northern face of Mount Bruce, the track descends through tussock and gives views of the snow-capped peaks of Arthur's Pass National Park and the braided Waimakariri River.

The track descends through beech and exotic forest to Bealey Hut (six bunks). A further 5-minute walk from the hut takes you to the car park by Cora Lynn Station, and another 2 minutes to SH73.

If you are walking this route in reverse, take the Cora Lynn Road to the Arthur's Pass Wilderness Lodge and Cora Lynn Station and enter through the gate signposted 'Cass – Lagoon Track'. Note that times may be longer on the uphill sections of the track when walking in this direction.

### Huts

**Cass Saddle Hut:** Basic, 3 bunks, mattresses

**Hamilton Hut:** Serviced, 20 bunks, mattresses

**West Harper Hut:** Basic, 5 canvas bunks

**Lagoon Saddle Hut:** Basic, 2 bunks, mattresses

**Bealey Hut:** Basic, 6 bunks, mattresses

### Hut fees:

Serviced huts: Adult \$15 per night, youth (11–17 years) \$7.50 per night, child (up to 10 years) free

Standard huts: Adult \$5 per night, youth (11–17 years) \$2.50 per night, child (up to 10 years) free

Basic huts: Free

*Purchase hut tickets or passes before you leave from any DOC office or selected i-SITES.*

### Further information

For information, maps, weather forecasts and track condition updates:

**Arthur's Pass National Park Visitor Centre**

SH 73, Arthur's Pass

Phone 03 318 9211

8.00 am – 5.00 pm (summer), 8.30 am – 4.30 pm (winter)

[arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz)

[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

[www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz)

Cover: Looking down the Harper from Lagoon Saddle.

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## ROUTE GUIDE



# Cass – Lagoon saddles

Craigieburn Forest Park



**DOC HOTline**  
**0800 362 468**

Report any safety hazards  
or conservation emergencies  
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111

Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

## Summary

**Time:** 2–3 day loop (shuttle required)

**Grade:** Tramping track and route

**Experience:** Suitable for trampers with moderate experience

**Best season:** Summer, autumn and spring

**Required maps:** NZTopo50: Otira BV20, Cass BV21, Lake Coleridge BW20

**Hazards:** Avalanche, flooded rivers

**Note:** True left and true right refer to the side of the valley or river when facing and looking downstream.

**Safety:** This route guide must be read in conjunction with *Tramping in Arthur's Pass National Park*, a free brochure with important safety information, and New Zealand's *Outdoor Safety Code*. Before setting out, check the latest track conditions and avalanche advisory with the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre.



Your safety is your responsibility. Before you go, know the **Outdoor Safety Code** – 5 simple rules to help you stay safe:

- 1. Plan your trip properly** – Ensure that you have a capable leader.
- 2. Tell someone** – Leave your trip details with a trusted contact and at [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz).
- 3. Check the weather** – Including [www.avalanche.net.nz](http://www.avalanche.net.nz) and the latest information on hazards and facilities before you start.
- 4. Know your limits** – Physical fitness and good equipment will make all the difference.
- 5. Take sufficient supplies** – Carry a sleeping bag, cooking utensils, sufficient food, raincoat, overtrousers, gloves, hat, and several layers of warm clothes.

## A comfortably challenging weekend tramp

This trip is in the dry mountains east of the Main Divide. It crosses riverbeds and rivers, follows forest tracks and crosses two saddles. For a challenging weekend tramp, there is a comfortable 20 bunk hut midway, or take 3–4 days by staying in some of the other basic huts on the route.

The track is not marked all the way, so ensure you take a topo map with you. Most trampers prefer to begin the track from the Cass end, as this avoids the steepest ascents. Because of the high avalanche danger on Cass Saddle and the frequency of winter snowfalls, this route is best attempted from early to late summer. Not all rivers and streams are bridged, so they may be impassable after heavy rainfall.

### Getting there

Both track entrances are alongside State Highway 73 (SH73) between Christchurch and Arthur's Pass. Some bus services from Christchurch to the West Coast will drop you off by arrangement. The Cass River end of the track starts from the signposted car park at the east end of the Cass road bridge, opposite Cass settlement. This car park is frequently targeted by vandals and thieves. Alternatively, you can park at the marked car park at Cass settlement and walk 1 km along the gravel road to the start of the track on SH73.

To reach the western end of the track, turn off SH73 about 14 km east of Arthur's Pass village, onto Cora Lynn Road. This road also leads to the Arthur's Pass Wilderness Lodge and Cora Lynn Station. There is a car park here for trampers through the gate signposted 'Cass – Lagoon Track'.

### Cass car park to Cass Saddle Hut

**Time:** 4 hours one way

From the signposted car park at the east end of the Cass River road bridge, follow the vehicle track next to the row of pine trees until it meets Cass River.

Follow the riverbed upstream, keeping to the true right bank as much as possible. You will need to cross the river several times. The track climbs into the forest at a marked point just below the junction with Long Valley Stream; it is easy to miss if you are on the wrong side of Cass River so stay on the true right. The river is crossed again via a bridge, then the track climbs for another 20–30 minutes before crossing the river again. Cass Saddle Hut is reached soon after you

have crossed to the true right bank. It has three bunks and a wood burning stove. Water can be obtained from a small stream just to the south-east of the hut.

### Cass Saddle Hut to Hamilton Hut

**Time:** 2 hours 30 minutes one way

The tussock basin above Cass Saddle Hut is reached shortly after leaving the hut, and the poled route climbs gradually to the saddle. Hamilton Hut can be seen in the distance down the valley. Traverse left for 200 metres to the start of the cut track.

This area is subject to avalanche activity during the winter. During heavy snow conditions, we advise visitors not to travel this route unless sufficiently equipped and experienced to assess the conditions and choose a safe path through avalanche terrain.

The track drops steeply from the saddle, and then more gently through the bush terraces, joining Hamilton Creek 15 minutes from Hamilton Hut. The 20 bunk hut has a wood burning stove and a radio linked to Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre. Calls can be made during office hours to obtain weather forecasts.

● **Side trip: The Pinnacles** **Time:** 4–6 hours return

In the lower Harper valley, erosion has formed an interesting geological feature that makes a worthwhile side trip from Hamilton Hut.

The Pinnacles were made from geologically young rock, about 3–7 million years ago, consisting of alluvial sands and gravels. Erosion, caused by rain water washing away the exposed soil, has formed the pinnacle shapes. Pebbles or small stones may be seen on the tops of the pinnacles, temporarily protecting them from erosion. Nearby, the Harper River has exposed older rocks containing marine fossils.

The route to The Pinnacles is down the Harper River from Hamilton Creek, following the Te Araroa Trail, initially on a walking track, then a 4WD track. The Harper River needs to be crossed several times – crossings should not be attempted if the river is high. The 4WD track crosses private farmland; please do not disturb any stock. The Pinnacles are set back a short way on the true right bank.

