

immediately into the bed of the creek draining the tarn. Avoid the temptation to stay on the flat tussockland on the true left as you will end up in bluffs.

Travel down the creek until it joins the larger Otehake River East Branch (the first main stream coming down from the right) and then turn south. It is easy to go the wrong way from here so check your map and compass bearing. Make sure you are going upstream and south. Be careful crossing this stream, and others, on your way to Hawdon Hut as the tracks are extremely slippery.

Travel up the of the Otehake East Branch riverbed for about 20 minutes. Climb through scrub to the low saddle on the left (true right). This is Walker Pass. A well-trodden track through the scrub begins at a cairn in the riverbed, 100 m below a low cliff where the river swings south-west towards Amber Col.

#### Walker Pass to Hawdon Hut



*Time: 2-3 hours*

Pick up the creek draining the tarn on the pass and follow down the creek through boulders and scrub. A helpful track zigzags the creek. Marker poles starting in the creek show where to leave the stream towards the bush track. The poles lead you up past a rocky knoll. From here the track descends through the bush past Twin Falls to the creek. Once at the Hawdon River it is only 5 minutes to the Hawdon Hut.

The original Hawdon Hut burnt down in 2005 and the replacement hut, built in 2007, is on the flats above Discovery Stream, about 15 minutes upstream from the original location. Hawdon Hut has a radio which is monitored by the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre during office hours, 7 days a week.

#### Hawdon Hut site to Hawdon Shelter



*Time: 3 hours*

Follow the Hawdon Hut Track on the true right of Hawdon River until just above the point where the East Hawdon Stream joins the main Hawdon River. If the rivers are low, cross the main river here, then cross the East Hawdon Stream. Follow the open grassy flats on the true left to a line of cliffs. Recross the Hawdon and follow the river down the bush edge where a last crossing of the river is needed to reach the Hawdon Shelter at the road end.

***If the rivers are in flood stay put at the hut until they drop down to a safe level.***

*Note: Hawdon valley is home to the endangered orange-*

*fronted parakeet/kākāriki. DOC staff use 4-wheel motorbikes to access the valley and do work to protect these birds. Coloured markers and tape in the valley mark access points for DOC staff. Do not follow these markers - follow only the standard orange track markers.*

#### Huts

**Edwards Hut:** Serviced, 16 bunks, mattresses, radio

**Hawdon Hut:** Serviced, 20 bunks, mattresses, radio

#### 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**

SH73, 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: Walker Pass tarn. *Photo: Mike Ambrose.*

*Published by:*  
Department of Conservation  
Rangiora Office  
PO Box 349, Rangiora 7440  
New Zealand  
August 2015

*Editing and design:*  
Publishing Team, DOC National Office

**New Zealand Government**

## ROUTE GUIDE



# Edwards – Hawdon valleys via Tarn Col

Arthur's Pass National 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 days (shuttle required)

**Grade:** Route and tramping track

**Experience:** Suitable for well-equipped and experienced back-country trampers only. Alpine experience and equipment essential.

**Best season:** Summer and autumn. **Extreme avalanche danger** in winter and spring.

**Required maps:** NZTopo50: Otira BV20, Cass BV21

**Hazards:** Avalanche, flooded rivers and rock-fall.

**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.

## Experience the best of the park's stunning alpine landscapes

This interesting tramp and route takes you through spectacular rockfalls, past mountain tarns and over two alpine passes. The picturesque hanging valley at Walker Pass is a fitting reward and worth every step over Taruahuna

Pass and the steep climb up to Tarn Col.

Most of the route is marked except for the section between Edwards Hut and Taruahuna Pass where you follow a well-worn path up the Edwards valley marked with occasional rock cairns.



*The rivers are not bridged; river crossing skills and experience are essential. Groups not used to this type of travel may take longer than the times indicated. Times are likely to be slower travelling from Hawdon Hut west to Tarn Col, than those travelling in the direction this route guide recommends, as navigation is more difficult.*

### Getting there

The Edwards valley end of the track starts beside SH73, 5 km south of Arthur's Pass village, close to Greyneys Shelter. The Hawdon Valley Track is accessed via Mount White Road, which turns off SH73, 24 km east of Arthur's Pass.

### SH 73 to Edwards Hut

**Time:** 4-5 hours

5 km south of Arthur's Pass village, cross the Bealey River just above its confluence with the Mingha River. If the river is not easy to cross here you will have problems further on, so save the trip for another day. The track begins at the bush edge downstream of the Edwards-Mingha confluence.

Look for the sign and orange markers on the river flat which mark the start of a 20-minute track to bypass the lower Edwards gorge.

When the track emerges on to the riverbed, travel upstream on the true left for 1 hour, climbing the bank once or twice when necessary. Cross the East Branch of the Edwards River (difficult when high) above where it joins the main river and pick up the marked track 100 m up the East Branch on the opposite bank. The track rises and falls several times avoiding steep side gullies, and gives the odd glimpse of waterfalls as it follows the Edwards River canyon. **Take extreme care on this part of the track** as there are large drop-offs and steep sections of track.

The track leads to a large upland valley, emerging finally among red tussocks on the upper river flats (take care as it is easy to lose the way in the maze of tussocks.) The track leads back into the forest for a short section before emerging on the river flats with a clear view to Edwards Hut. Total time from the road is 4-5 hours, the junction with the East Branch being a little under halfway.

The radio at Edwards Hut is monitored by Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre during office hours, 7 days a week. Some groups have had difficulty reaching the centre on this radio so please read the instructions carefully. There is a log burner in the hut for heating, but you will need your own cooker and utensils.

### Edwards Hut to Hawdon Hut

**Time:** 6-9 hours

*Note: The wide variance in times is due to the steep ascent of Tarn Col and how long trampers take to do this. Visibility on Tarn Col and Walker Pass can also slow progress.*

### Edwards Hut to Taruahuna Pass

**Time:** 2 hours

From Edwards Hut continue upstream along the true left bank over tussock flats or in the riverbed to the summit of Taruahuna Pass. Travel is slow but on easy gradients and is sometimes helped by well-trodden paths. The pass itself is a huge pile of mountain debris, the result of a landslide from Falling Mountain triggered by a large earthquake in 1929. Look for the sign that points to Tarn Col on the western side of Taruahuna Pass and below Tarn Col.



*This area is subject to avalanche activity during the winter. Do not travel this route during heavy snow conditions.*

### Taruahuna Pass to Walker Pass

**Time:** 2-4 hours

From the rocky debris of Taruahuna Pass the route turns abruptly right and goes extremely steeply up to Tarn Col.

Climb across the landslide debris on Taruahuna Pass towards the foot of the grassy saddle on the right (east). This is Tarn Col and the best route up is to climb beside the creek that drops down from the lowest point on the col. Be careful on the steep, slippery snowgrass.



*When Tarn Col is covered in snow the route is difficult and an ice-axe and crampons will be needed. If the creek bed is icy, climb to the rocky point on the ridge to the right (i.e. the true left of the creek) and then to the col. Time for the climb is about 45 min. Poor visibility will complicate route finding and if you have been climbing for more than 45 min it is likely you have chosen the wrong place and are climbing Fallen Mountain instead.*

Go around the tarn and follow the marker poles that drop