

Leslie–Karamea Track

Kahurangi National Park



Introduction

The Leslie–Karamea Track is one of the region's premier semi-wilderness experiences, situated in the middle of Kahurangi National Park. It is a 3–4 day link through the earthquake-torn Karamea Valley, between Flora Car Park and the Wangapeka Track; 6–9 days are needed to get from road end to road end.

The Leslie–Karamea is classified as a tramping track. It is marked but not benched, and quite rough in places. Many of the streams along the track are not bridged and flood-prone. Strong footwear, backcountry experience and a good level of fitness are required for any trip into this area.

How to get there

Flora Car Park

Roads from Nelson and Motueka meet the Motueka River at Ngatimoti where a bridge crosses to West Bank Road. The unsealed Graham Valley Road climbs steeply to Flora Car Park where there is a toilet and information shelter.



Wangapeka Track (eastern end)

From Tapawera follow the signposts west to the Wangapeka Valley. While there is a swingbridge for foot traffic, the Dart River may not be passable by vehicles after heavy rain. There is an information kiosk and public telephone at Prices Creek, just before the track entrance.

Wangapeka Track (western end)

From the West Coast road, turn off at Little Wanganui and drive inland on Wangapeka Road to the car park where the track begins.

Leslie–Karamea Track

The track is described here as it is most commonly walked: from Flora Car Park to the eastern end of the Wangapeka Track. Around Trevor Carter Hut there are several options, but river levels may cause delays or dictate which option you take. Please read the track description and safety information thoroughly before your trip. Other options for starting the track and the exit to the West Coast are described below.

A Backcountry Hut Pass or Backcountry Hut Tickets are required to stay in the huts. All are standard huts requiring one ticket per night, except Salisbury Lodge which is a serviced hut (three tickets). There is no charge for Thor Hut, Cecil Kings Hut or the Stag Flat and Flora Valley Shelters.

Flora Car Park to Salisbury Lodge 4 h 30 min, 13.2 km

From the car park at the road end (36 km from Motueka), the track leads over Flora Saddle, past Flora Hut (12 bunks) and up to Salisbury Lodge (22 bunks) on the Tableland. Just beyond the lodge is the sign where the Leslie–Karamea track itself begins.

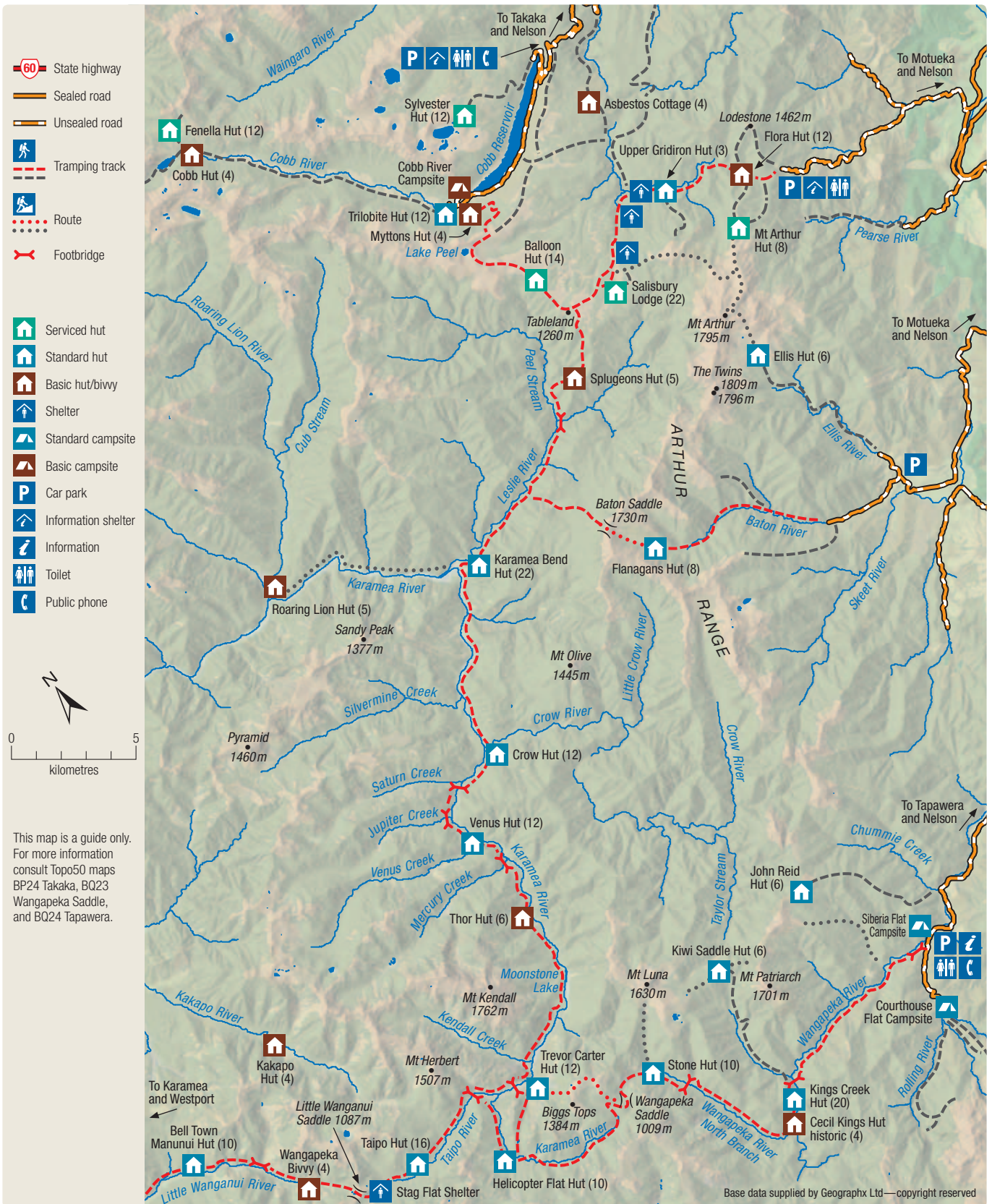
Salisbury Lodge to Karamea Bend Hut 6 h, 18 km

From the sign, a line of poles runs to the bush edge at the top of Leslie Hill and begins descending to the Leslie River. After about one hour downhill, Splugeons Rock Shelter (5 bunks) is reached.

Beyond the shelter the track drops steeply to the Leslie River and crosses it on a swingbridge. It then follows the true left bank down to Karamea Bend Hut (22 bunks).

Karamea Bend Hut to Crow Hut 3 h 30 min, 9.7 km

The track heads up the Karamea on the true right bank, crossing Slippery Creek and a clearing, the Little Backwash and the Big Backwash. Just over the Crow River swingbridge is Crow Hut (12 bunks). When the Karamea River is low, it is possible to follow the riverbed from Karamea Bend almost to the Crow.



- Serviced huts** have mattresses, water supply, toilets, hand washing facilities and heating with fuel available. They may have cooking facilities with fuel and a warden. The Backcountry Hut Pass or Backcountry Hut Tickets are required.
- Standard huts** have mattresses, water supply and toilet. Wood heaters are provided at huts below the bush line. The Backcountry Hut Pass or Backcountry Hut Tickets are required.
- Basic huts** provide very basic shelter with limited facilities. No charge.

- Standard campsites** have a limited range of facilities and services. Toilets (usually composting or pit variety) water supply (tap, stream, or lake) and vehicle or boat access. Wood barbecues and fireplaces, showers (cold), picnic tables, a cooking shelter and rubbish bins may be provided.
- Basic campsites** have very limited facilities so you need to be fully self-sufficient. There are basic toilets and water from a tank, stream or lake.

Crow Hut to Venus Hut, 2h, 5.9 km

The track continues on the true right bank for about one hour to a bridge across the Karamea River. Across on the left bank the track sometimes scrambles around the riverside but mostly stays on forested terraces alongside the river to Venus Hut (12 bunks).

Venus Hut to Thor Hut, 2h, 5.7 km

This section follows the river terraces, sometimes merging with the riverside and riverbed. Mercury Creek, about 30 minutes above Venus Hut, is a major side stream spanned by a swingbridge. Near Atlas Creek the track hugs the cliffs above the river and is fairly narrow. Thor Hut (6 bunks) is just across Thor Creek, on the edge of a slip caused by the 1929 Murchison Earthquake.


Thor Hut to Trevor Carter Hut 3h 30 min, 9.5 km

Upriver from Thor Hut the track climbs and makes a long sidle, crossing several earthquake-triggered slips where care is needed. One of these slips, which came down Apollo Creek from Mt Kendall (1762 m), dammed the Karamea River forming Moonstone Lake. The lake backs up for almost three kilometres and some of the trees drowned during its formation still stand as naked trunks. At the head of the lake continue on the true left of the Karamea River to Kendall Creek, which divides into several streams near its mouth and is dangerous when in flood. The track rounds a granite spur and crosses a grassy flat to the old Trevor Carter Hut site (hut removed in 2003). Cross the swingbridge onto the true right of the Karamea River, walk downstream for 15 minutes to Trevor Carter Hut (12 bunks). When the Karamea River is running low, an alternative track is signposted to Trevor Carter Hut on the main track before reaching Kendall Creek.

Trevor Carter Hut to the Wangapeka Track

There are several options, depending on the weather, river levels and fitness. The usual, and most direct, are up Lost Valley Creek or the Karamea River itself: the former follows Lost Valley Creek up to a saddle and then drops back down to the Karamea River, crossing it to Helicopter Flat Hut (10 bunks) (**Trevor Carter Hut to Helicopter Flat Hut, 1h 30 min**). The latter follows the true right of the Karamea River, crossing below Saxon Falls and climbing to the Wangapeka Track at Tabernacle Lookout (**Trevor Carter Hut to the lookout, 1h**).

Alternatively, it is possible to join the Wangapeka Track at Taipo swingbridge by following the true left bank of the Karamea River (**swingbridge to Taipo bridge, 45 min**). In flood conditions this may be the only option.

 Lastly, a marked route leads from Trevor Carter Hut over Biggs Tops, joining the Wangapeka Track at Wangapeka Saddle (**Trevor Carter Hut to Wangapeka Saddle, 5h**).

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.
- Track has markers, poles or rock cairns. Expect unbridged stream and river crossings.
- Tramping/hiking boots required.

Route

- Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking.
- Track unformed and natural, rough, muddy or very steep.
- Suitable for people with above average fitness. High-level backcountry skills and experience (including navigation and survival skills) required.
- Complete self-sufficiency required.
- Track has markers, poles or rock cairns. Expect unbridged stream and river crossings.
- Sturdy tramping/hiking boots required.

Exit to the east

Tabernacle Lookout to Rolling Junction road end (Wangapeka Track), 2 days

Follow the Karamea River upstream, past Helicopter Flat Hut to Wangapeka Saddle (1010 m). The section between Helicopter and Stone Huts can become impassable after heavy rain. From Wangapeka Saddle follow the Wangapeka River all the way to the road end.

Exit to the west

Helicopter Flat Hut to the West Coast (Wangapeka Track), 2 days

Head down the Karamea River to Tabernacle Lookout and around a ridge to the Taipo swingbridge. The track goes up the true left of the Taipo River to just above Taipo Hut, where it crosses the river and climbs steeply (past an emergency shelter) to Little Wanganui Saddle (1110 m). Over the saddle the track drops into the Little Wanganui, following it to the road end.

Other entry points


Cobb Valley to Salisbury Lodge, 4 h

From the head of the Cobb Reservoir a track climbs up to Cobb Ridge and then heads on to Lake Peel, Balloon Hut (14 bunks) and Salisbury Lodge (22 bunks).

Baton road end to Karamea Bend Hut, 8 h


A tramping track follows the Baton upstream for three hours to Flanagans Hut (8 bunks), from where a marked route climbs to Baton Saddle (1370 m). On the Leslie side a tramping track descends to Wilkinson Creek and follows it to the Leslie River, down to the Karamea Bend Hut.


Please remember

 **Safety:** The Karamea Valley is for the experienced only. Be prepared with warm and waterproof clothing and extra food. Rivers can rise and fall very quickly and should not be crossed when swollen. Please fill in the intentions books at huts and let someone know where you are going and when you intend returning.

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**.

 **Flooding:** In normal flows unbridged creeks and streams (particularly Mars, Apollo and Kendall Creeks) are easily crossed, however in flood they can become impassable, you will need to be prepared to wait until floodwaters recede.


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


 **Water:** It is recommended you boil, filter, or treat drinking water.




**NEW ZEALAND
environmental
CARE CODE**

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

 **Hunting** is encouraged in the national park. Each hunter requires a permit from DOC.

 **Fishing:** The Karamea River and its tributaries offer good fishing opportunities in a remote setting. Anglers require a license from the local Fish and Game Council.

 **Cooking:** All trampers should carry portable cookers.

 **Rubbish:** There are no rubbish facilities in the backcountry. All rubbish must be carried out of the park.

Further information

To find out more, visit the DOC website www.doc.govt.nz or contact:

**Department of Conservation
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