

Paparoa TRACK GUIDE



Duration:

3 days hiking

2 days mountain biking (no e-bikes)

Distance (one way):

55.1 km hiking

56.2 km mountain biking



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

For in-depth local knowledge, visit:

Paparoa National Park Visitor Centre

4294 Coast Road, Punakaiki, RD 1, Runanga 7873

Phone: +64 3 731 1895

Email: paparoave@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz/great-walks

Share your experience – facebook.com/docgovtnz

This information was accurate at the time of printing. For the latest information on DOC's policies and facilities, visit www.doc.govt.nz.

Published by: Department of Conservation, Customer and Brand Team
PO Box 10420, Wellington 6143, New Zealand | December 2021 | R214045

This publication is produced using paper sourced from well-managed, renewable and legally logged forests.

Care for the Paparoa Track



Protect nature

Keep your distance and don't feed kea. Feeding wildlife is harmful to them. Follow any rules restricting fires, vehicles or boats. No dogs or unpermitted drones allowed.



Keep New Zealand clean

Take all rubbish with you. Use toilets where provided. You can find them at all huts, campsites and shelters.



Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by planning and preparing for your trip. Share your plans and take a distress beacon.



Show respect

Respect others, respect culture. Walkers and mountain bikers share the track. Bikers must give way to walkers.

Welcome to the Paparoa Track, one of ten unforgettable journeys.

Experience New Zealand's newest Great Walk – a shared-use hiking and mountain biking track on the West Coast of the South Island. The track crosses the Paparoa Range, taking you on a breathtaking journey through alpine tops, limestone landscapes and thriving rainforests.

Plants and wildlife

Great spotted kiwi/rooroa is the largest of our kiwi species. It lives only in the higher parts of the northern South Island. You may hear kiwi calling at night around all three huts on the Paparoa Track.



Photo: Tiri De Roy

Blue ducks/whio inhabit the forested upper catchments of clean, fast-flowing streams, including Blackball Creek. Nesting along the riverbanks, they are very vulnerable to attack by stoats and rats and are at risk of extinction.

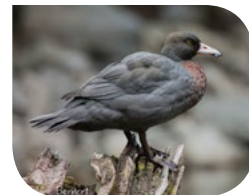


Photo: Sabine Bernert

Enjoy the rich diversity of **alpine plants** along the tops. You'll see plenty of snow tussock – hardy alpine grasses that are extremely long-lived. Keep an eye out for the curiously shaped vegetable sheep (*Raoulia eximia*), a type of cushion plant. Its unusual shape helps it store water.



Photo: Memopob

Powelliphanta are not your average garden snail. These native snails are carnivorous and are some of the largest in the world. Because of predation and habitat loss they are now very rare – please help care for them by not riding the track at night.



Photo: Aeterno

The **New Zealand pigeon/kererū** can be easily identified by its white front, iridescent green/purple feathers and its noisy wingbeats. It is one of the few remaining bird species that can eat large native fruit and disperse their seeds. This makes kererū a very important bird for forest health.



Photo: Sabine Bernert

Just before Moonlight Tops Hut, you'll pass through a stand of **mountain neinei** (*Dracophyllum traversii*). These spectacular plants grow up to 13 metres tall and have distinctive tufts of long leaves at the end of each branch. *Dracophyllum* means dragon leaf.

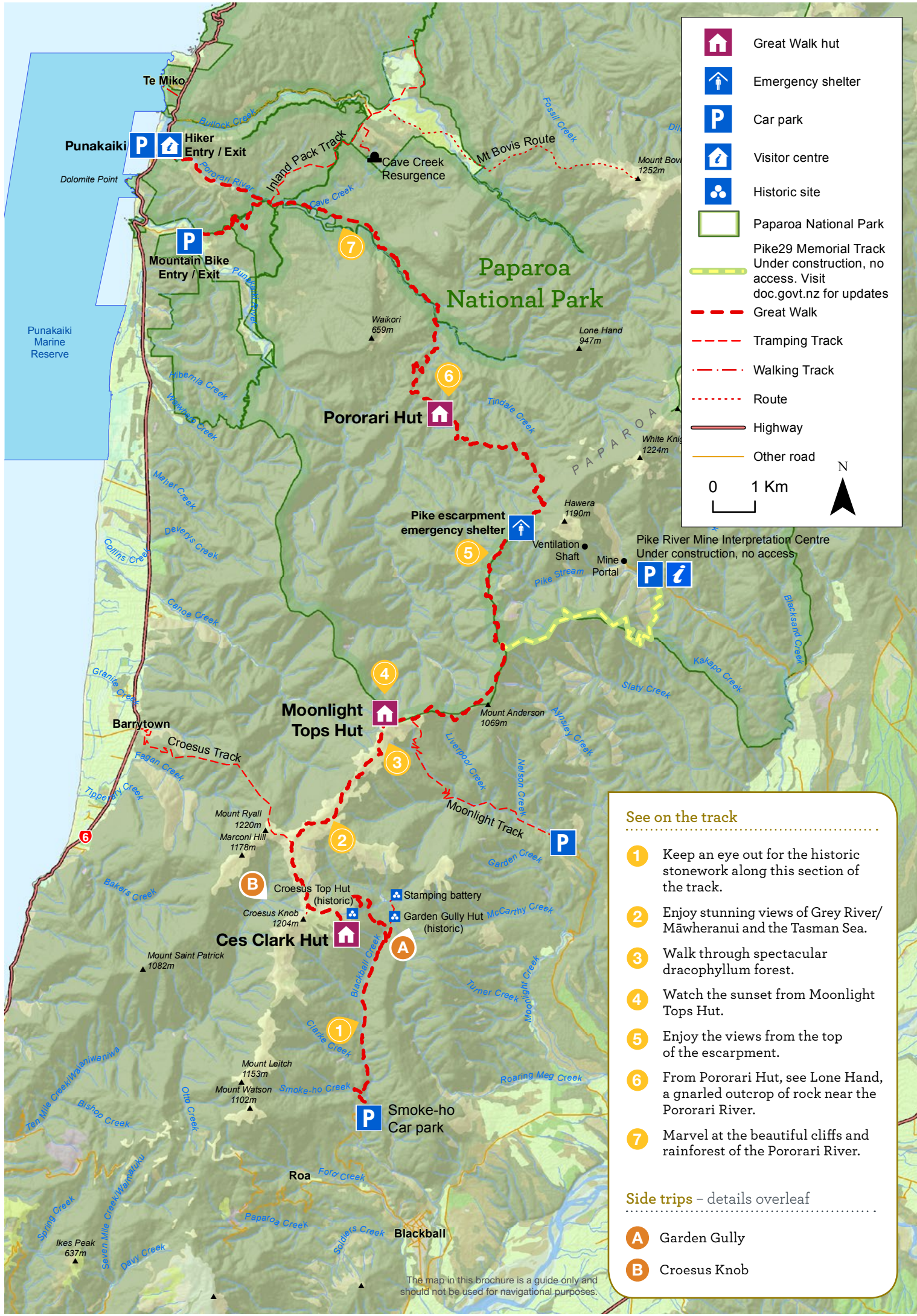


Photo: Ian Dench

Listen at night for the haunting 'more pork' call of our small native owl, the **morepork/ruru**.



Photo: Sabine Bernert



	Great Walk hut
	Emergency shelter
	Car park
	Visitor centre
	Historic site
	Paparua National Park
	Pike29 Memorial Track Under construction, no access. Visit doc.govt.nz for updates
	Great Walk
	Tramping Track
	Walking Track
	Route
	Highway
	Other road

0 1 Km

N

See on the track

- Keep an eye out for the historic stonework along this section of the track.
- Enjoy stunning views of Grey River/ Māwheranui and the Tasman Sea.
- Walk through spectacular dracophyllum forest.
- Watch the sunset from Moonlight Tops Hut.
- Enjoy the views from the top of the escarpment.
- From Pororari Hut, see Lone Hand, a gnarled outcrop of rock near the Pororari River.
- Marvel at the beautiful cliffs and rainforest of the Pororari River.

Side trips – details overleaf

- Garden Gully
- Croesus Knob

The map in this brochure is a guide only and should not be used for navigational purposes.

TRACK GUIDE

This track guide describes a three-day hike or a two-day mountain bike ride. It is best to hike or mountain bike the Paparoa Track from south to north, starting at Smoke-ho car park near Blackball and finishing at Punakaiki. It is also possible to take the track in the other direction.

The track is well marked and signposted, but it is very exposed in places. The Paparoa mountain tops are an alpine environment – the weather changes very rapidly and extreme cold and heavy rain are common at any time of year. Winter conditions (May to October) make the track more challenging.

It is important to make sure you have the necessary skills, experience, fitness and equipment required before starting the track.

The following travel times are approximate and will vary according to your fitness, direction of travel and the weather.

Smoke-ho car park to Ces Clark Hut

Hiking: 4–5 hr, 10.3 km

Biking: 2–3 hr, 10.3 km

This first section of the Paparoa Track is the historic Croesus Track. This track still retains some of its original stonework and is steep and rough in places.

The track begins at Smoke-ho car park and follows Blackball Creek. It winds through mixed podocarp and beech forest, with occasional views of the creek. Keep an eye out for the rare blue duck/whio. The track then zigzags up the dividing ridge between the Blackball Creek and Roaring Meg Creek catchments. At the saddle, there is a turn-off to Garden Gully (see Side Trip A).

The track then climbs more steeply into subalpine forest. On a fine day you will be rewarded with views of Lake Brunner and the Main Divide (the mountains that separate the eastern and western South Island) down to Aoraki/Mount Cook. Ces Clark Hut is on the edge of the bushline, set among low alpine scrub and with spectacular views.

A Side trip – Garden Gully

Walking: 45 min return for full side trip

Take a side trip along this historic track to see relics of the gold-mining days. Turn off the Paparoa Track at Garden Gully junction. Historic Garden Gully Hut, a miner's hut dating from the 1930s, is just a few minutes down the track, but is not recommended for accommodation.

After crossing a suspension bridge, the track forks. The left branch is a marked route that continues up the creek for 5 minutes (walking) to a century-old quartz crushing battery. To the right, the track climbs for about 15 minutes (walking) to the mouth of the collapsed Garden Gully Mine.



Photo: Baptiste Maryns

B Side trip – Croesus Knob

Walking: 1 hr 10 min return

The turn-off to Croesus Knob is a 30-minute walk beyond Ces Clark Hut. From the main Paparoa Track, a rough route climbs to the top of Croesus Knob (1204 m), where you will be rewarded with spectacular views down to Aoraki Mount Cook and out to Tasman Sea. This route is not suitable for mountain bikes and is not maintained to the same standard as the main Paparoa Track.



Photo: www.neilsilverwood.com

Ces Clark Hut to Moonlight Tops Hut

Hiking: 3 hr, 9.7 km

Biking: 1 hr 30 min–2 hr 30 min, 9.7 km

Beyond Ces Clark Hut you pass through alpine scrub and tussock. You will be rewarded with expansive views of Grey River/Māwheranui to the east and Tasman Sea to the west. About 30 minutes' walk from the hut, you have the option to take a side trip to the top of Croesus Knob (see Side Trip B).

The track follows the ridge of the main Paparoa Range through open alpine vegetation above the Roaring Meg and Moonlight Creek catchments, with views of Aoraki/Mt Cook to the south on a clear day. Moonlight Tops Hut provides panoramic scenery, looking out across the Punakaiki River headwaters around to the escarpment, Pike Stream and north across Paparoa National Park.

Moonlight Tops Hut to Pororari Hut

Hiking: 5–7 hr, 19.1 km

Biking: 4–5 hr, 19.1 km

Beyond Moonlight Tops Hut, the open tops give way to low alpine forest, stunted by the harsh environment. The track continues to follow the Paparoa Range ridge. It climbs gently around the side of Mt Anderson (1069 m), then descends and leads along the top of the escarpment above Pike Stream – a remarkable area of steep cliffs and dramatic views.

After approximately 10 km, the track descends from the escarpment into an area of ancient podocarp forest. It follows the ridge above Tindale Creek through stunning rainforest to Pororari Hut. Keep an eye out for Lone Hand, a gnarled outcrop of rock on the north side of Pororari River.

Pororari Hut to Punakaiki

Hiking: 4–5 hr, 16 km to Pororari River car park

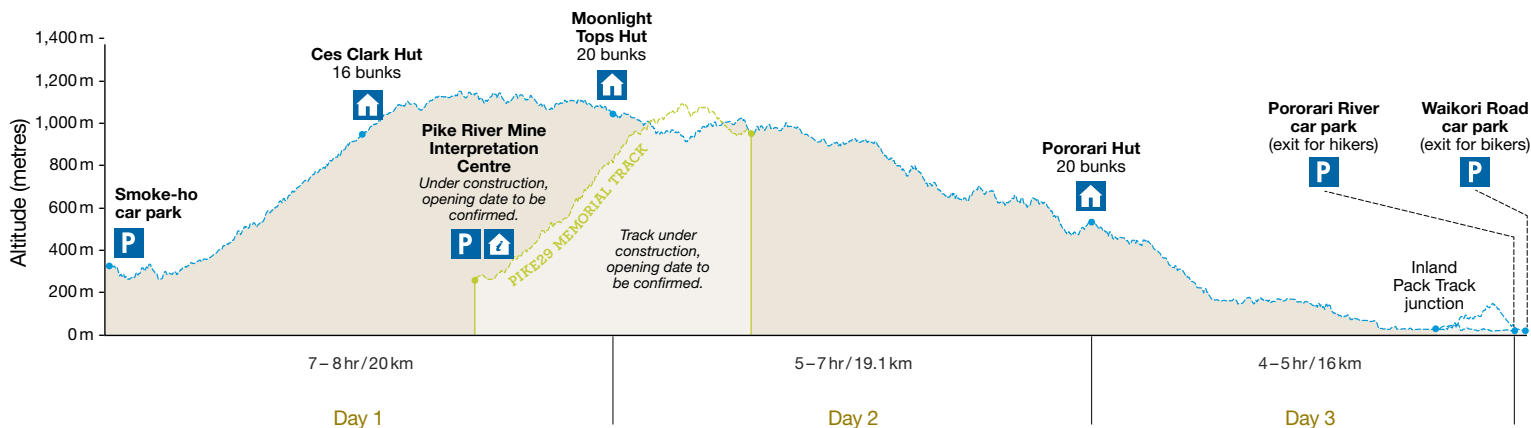
Biking: 2 hr 30 min–3 hr 30 min, 17.1 km to Waikori Road car park

The track descends into the upper Pororari River valley and follows the river. In some places it follows an old track which was built c1912–1914 to establish a settlement in the valley. The track sidles along a spectacular gorge and descends through beech forest interspersed with northern rātā.

At the junction of the Inland Pack Track and the Paparoa Track, hikers and mountain bikers diverge. Mountain bikers follow the Inland Pack Track over a low saddle into the Punakaiki River valley to Waikori Road car park. This historic track was built in the 1860s gold rush. Walkers take the Pororari River Track through the Pororari River Gorge. Both tracks pass through lush rainforest with glades of nikau palms.

Elevation profile

Walking times



Track history

The Ngāti Waewae hapū (sub-tribe) of Ngāi Tahu are the kaitiaki of Paparoa National Park, guardians of the area's native species and ecosystems. This kaitiaki responsibility is passed down the generations and draws on mātauranga (traditional knowledge) to care for the land, rivers and species.

In the 1860s, the discovery of gold on the West Coast sparked a gold rush and a sudden influx of European settlement. Between 1881 and 1899, the Croesus Track was constructed to allow better access to mines in upper Blackball Creek. The first part of the Paparoa Track follows this route. You can see the remnants of the gold-mining days by taking a side trip to Garden Gully.

The section of track between Pororari Hut and Punakaiki also follows historical routes. The stretch between Waikori Road car park and the Pororari River follows the 1867 Inland Pack Track, once one of the main access routes between Greymouth and Westport. The track up the Pororari River was originally built to open up the area for farming. Few farms were formed and the route languished, but it was revitalised in the 1950s for a short-lived uranium-mining venture.

On 19 November 2010, 29 men perished in an underground explosion at the Pike River Mine. Created in partnership with the families of those 29 men, the Department of Conservation and Ngāti Waewae, the Paparoa Track is a memorial to the men and a thank you to New Zealanders for their support of the Pike River Families.

Photo: Stewart Nimmo

Staying safe on the Paparoa Track

STAY ON THE MARKED TRACKS

The Paparoa Track is well-marked, but if you become lost you should stop, find shelter and stay calm. Put on extra clothing to keep warm and assist rescuers should you hear them searching for you. Do not rely on your cellphone for communication as there is no coverage on most of the track.

BE PREPARED FOR ALL CONDITIONS

Weather on the Paparoa Track is changeable. Rain, snow, ice, fog and strong winds are possible at all times of the year, especially on the exposed sections of the track. Heavy rain is common. You must be well equipped and prepared for all weather conditions and carry warm and waterproof clothing. If the weather becomes severe, stay put in a hut or turn back until conditions improve.

If you are hiking or biking the track in winter, check for snow and ice conditions before you leave and allow extra time. If in doubt, consider changing your trip to another day.

Hypothermia (too cold)

During cold, wet and windy conditions, hypothermia (a drop in core body temperature) can become a serious problem. From initial stages to unconsciousness can take as little as 30 minutes.

- **Prevention:** wear warm and weatherproof gear. Eat and drink regularly during your walk/ride.
- **Watch for symptoms:** people may shiver, be clumsy, confused, have slurred speech, and deny they have a problem.
- **Treatment:** immediately make or find shelter; get the person into warm, dry clothing, put them into a sleeping bag, give them warm, sweet drinks, monitor them and seek immediate medical help.

Heat exhaustion

This can be serious and is usually caused by physical activity in a hot environment and not drinking enough water.

- **Prevention:** carry and drink water regularly during your walk/ride.
- **Watch for symptoms:** headaches, thirst, weakness, dizziness, nausea or vomiting.
- **Treatment:** move to a cool shaded area to rest, remove excess clothing and give water to drink.

Flooding and slips on the track

Heavy rain can occur with little warning and even small streams are dangerous in flood.

Some sections of track in the Pororari valley may become impassable during times of very heavy rainfall and there is danger from treefall in extreme wind events. There is also a risk of landslides. Do not attempt to travel between Pororari Hut and the car parks in Punakaiki if these conditions occur. Take shelter in Pororari Hut and wait until conditions improve.

ONGAONGA (TREE NETTLE)

Ongaonga, New Zealand's native tree nettle, may be seen along the Paparoa Track in the Pororari valley. Do not touch its leaves, as its sting is painful.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

Mountain biking is permitted on the track year-round during daylight hours only (from half an hour before sunrise to half an hour after sunset). Night riding is strictly prohibited, to protect nocturnal species found on the track. E-bikes are not permitted on the track. Walkers and bikers share this track – be considerate of other users.

The track is an Advanced: Grade 4 mountain bike ride. The section of track to Ces Clark Hut is a tough ride and is steep, rough and narrow in places. Make sure you have the mountain biking skills, physical ability and fitness to tackle this track. Read more at www.doc.govt.nz/mtb-grades.

REMEMBER

The Paparoa National Park is a taonga (treasure). Help protect this unique environment by following some simple rules.

- No drones allowed in Paparoa National Park
- No fires, except in fireplaces inside huts
- No dogs
- No camping within 500m of the track
- No e-bikes
- No hunting within 500m of the track
- Book huts before you go
- Don't feed wildlife (especially kea) – human food can kill them
- Night riding is prohibited to protect nocturnal wildlife
- Carry out all your rubbish and use the toilets provided