



22 October 2020

# Tasman trail notes

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## Richmond Alpine Track

### Route

The Richmond Alpine Track is rugged and, though well-marked, is unformed in places. The summits are consistently above 1500m and the track has many steep, exposed sections and stream crossings. It's only suitable for fit, experienced, and well-equipped trampers but the landscapes are superb, amongst the very finest along Te Araroa.

The track is within the Mt Richmond Forest Park. Below the tree line, the forest contains a mixed variety of beech and podocarp forest. The summits and higher ridges often have rocky approaches. Towards its end, the track traverses the flanks of the Red Hills. These hills, formed from mineral-rich ultramafic rock, are barren and the vegetation that can survive upon them is sparse and stunted.

Anyone attempting the Pelorus River Track and Richmond Alpine Track together as a single section should prepare for at least a 9-day tramp, the first 3 days would be on the Pelorus River Track.

- Note - that the Department Of Conservation brochure available through the link on this page relates only to the northern portion of this Te Araroa section.

Hacket Junction to Hacket Hut – 1.3km, 15min (and a further 5.7km if starting from the Hacket Picnic Area).

For trampers continuing on from the Pelorus River Track, Hacket Hut is a 15min walk from the sign-posted junction at Hacket Creek.

For those starting afresh, access to Hacket Junction is 5.7km from the Hacket Picnic Area, about 12km from Hope up Aniseed Valley Road. From the picnic area cross the Roding River

footbridge and continue on the formed track towards Browning Hut. There is a Te Araroa marked sign after 5.7km. This is at Hacket Junction. Take the 1.3km track from here towards Hacket Hut as indicated. Alternatively, trampers can remove 20 minutes from this section by taking the first sign-posted track to Hacket Hut off the track up from the Hacket Picnic Area.

## **Hacket Hut to Starveall Hut - 6km / 4 hours**

The track continues up Hacket Creek with numerous crossings. The track then departs the river and embarks on a 900m climb, initially towards Pyramid Rock, and then on towards Starveall Hut (6 bunks). The hut is located just above the tree line.

## **Starveall Hut to Slaty Hut - 5km / 2.5 hours**

Water can be scarce between Starveall and Mid Wairoa Huts so carry at least enough to last through to the next hut and resupply point.

The track follows poles up towards Mt Starveall and summiting is an attractive possibility on fine days. The main track, however, descends into the forest and follows the ridgeline towards Slaty Peak. A sidle across the peak's northern face brings you to Slaty Hut (6 bunks).

## **Slaty Hut to Old Man Hut - 10km / 5 hours**

This section is predominantly above the tree line and is marked with poles. Old Man Hut (5 bunks) is located in a clearing and is accessed via a marked side trail.

## **Old Man Hut to Rintoul Hut - 4.5km / 5 hours**

This section is rocky and exposed. It involves some scrambling and is the most difficult portion of the Richmond Alpine Track. Care needs to be taken here and trampers should be prepared to wait out adverse weather.

From the head of the Old Man Hut, access track the main track climbs through the bush and then above the bushline to the summit of Little Rintoul (1643m). It then descends very steeply on a loose surface for 250m following poles to a saddle before climbing steeply again to the summit of Mt Rintoul (1731m), the highest point on the Richmond Alpine Track. This track is very susceptible to erosion which can make for challenging walking so please take great care. Little Rintoul and Mt Rintoul should not be attempted in poor weather.

Beyond Mt Rintoul's summit, the poled route traverses the ridgeline before dropping steeply down scree slopes to the bushline. From here a marked track leads to Rintoul Hut (6 bunks).

## **Rintoul Hut to Tarn Hut - 8km / 4.5 hours**

The track follows a bush-clad ridge to Purple Top, the only significant open section on the route. Follow poles up and over rocks here to return to the bush. There is a sign-posted junction beyond Bishop's Cap. The left-hand track leads to Tarn Hut (5 bunks).

## **Tarn Hut to Mid Wairoa Hut - 6.5km / 4 hours**

The track continues along the ridge to a sign-posted junction before Bushy Top. Take the right-hand track from here down towards the Left Branch Wairoa River and Mid Wairoa Hut. The final descent to the river is steep. The hut is reached across the river via a swing bridge.

## **Mid Wairoa Hut to Top Wairoa Hut - 7km / 4.5 hours**

The track from Mid Wairoa Hut follows the river. It involves a lot of sidling, at times on steep terrain, and eight river crossings. In some areas, erosion on the track presents slippery and/or narrow footholds and extreme care should be taken through here. Some trampers will find this section challenging. It should not be attempted during periods of heavy rain as the river can rise quickly.

## **Top Wairoa Hut to Hunters Hut - 10.5km / 5 hours**

Beyond the hut, Te Araroa enters Red Hills country and a landscape transformed. The track follows markers and climbs away from the hut to a saddle at 1374m.

Beyond the saddle, the track veers northward and sidles, first on a high and exposed ridge and then westward below Mt Ellis towards another ridge. The marker poles on this section are distant but are still visible in clear weather from one to the next. Once over the ridge's shoulder, the track descends and passes through a lightly forested section.

Below the forest, the track veers southwest and down towards Motueka River Left Branch. Cross the river where marked and continue down the true right bank.

Ford the river again where marked and, from the true left side, the track climbs up towards Hunters Hut (8 bunks).

Hunters Hut opened in 1997 and is a memorial to Department of Conservation staff members Russell Griebel and Bob Waldie, both of whom died on duty when Bush Edge Hut was destroyed in a flash flood. Remnants of the old hut are still visible as you cross the river and then make the 15-minute climb up to the new hut site.

## **Hunters Hut to Porters Creek Hut - 9km / 4 hours**

The track undulates south and crosses a number of open boulder fields and streams on its way to Porters Creek Hut (6 bunks).

There are a water tank and woodshed at the hut.

## **Porters Creek Hut to Red Hills Hut - 10.5km / 5 hours**

The track curves around to the Motueka River Right Branch and, once there, sidles above the true right bank to a crossing near the Maitland Creek confluence. The Motueka river can rise, and fall, very quickly after heavy rain. Take care in crossing and be prepared to sit it out

if required. The track then climbs and sidles above Maitland Creek's true right bank towards Red Hills Hut (6 bunks), which opened late in 2009 and replaced an older hut.

## Red Hills Hut to SH63 – 7.5km / 4-5 hours

- Note: There is no water supply on this route between Red Hills Hut and SH63/St Arnaud

After Red Hills Hut, Te Araroa completes the Richmond experience on the Maitland Ridge Track - this was constructed as a MTB track by local volunteers and we are very grateful to share it with them. Take care on this route as it is used by mountain-bikers who may be moving at speed in some areas.

From Red Hills Hut an old 4WD track climbs steadily uphill to a rocky knoll at 1050m. Down the ridge to a broad saddle before (at times steep) climbing to a high point of 1200m, through lovely beech forest. Then a long downhill with some zigzags that keep the gradient smooth with open patches that offer occasional spectacular views. The saddle is at 1040m then another climb follows to the 1300m high point of the track where you have a great vantage point over the surrounding area. Finally, a steep descent (more zigzags) to the Tophouse Road.

From Tophouse Road it is 750m to SH63 then an 8km (2hr) walk on the road shoulder to St Arnaud.

There are toilets and rubbish bins available just as you arrive in St Arnaud - across the road from the school, next to the Community Hall.

## Potential hazards

- Summits are consistently above 1500m
- The track can be difficult and unformed at times - please take caution
- Hunting is encouraged in Mt Richmond Forest Park. All hunters must have a [Department of Conservation permit](#). For a permit contact the Nelson Regional Visitor centre or a local Department of Conservation office.

Dogs with a Department of Conservation permit only. Contact the relevant [Department of Conservation office](#) to obtain a permit.

## St Arnaud

### General Information

[DOC Visitor Centre](#) - View Rd, St Arnaud - Open from 8am - P: 03 521 1806 - E: nelsonlakesvc@doc.govt.nz

### Getting there/away

- The [InterCity](#) bus will stop at St Arnaud, outside the Alpine Store - Northbound (to Blenheim/Picton) departs 2.41pm, Southbound (to Murchison/Hamner

Springs/Christchurch) departs 9.30am - St Arnaud is an "on request" stop so needs to be pre-booked - [www.intercity.co.nz](http://www.intercity.co.nz)

- [Nelson Lakes Shuttles](#) - P: 03 547 6896 or 0275 476896 - Including connections with Naked Bus and Intercity Coachlines to Nelson [InterCity](#) - P: 03 365 1113
- [Private Driver Hire](#) - P: 03 3910500 (Paul) - can transport to/from all locations Picton-Anakiwa-Pelorus Bridge-Nelson-St Arnaud, priced on enquiry.
- New for 2020 Red Hills one way bike hire. Bicycles with a trailer for packs available at Tophouse Rd. Pre-book and pay to receive lock combination. Coast down to St Arnaud and lock the bike up at the drop off point. You can take a friends pack to arrive early and set up camp before they arrive. \$15.00/Bike and trailer. Find us on Facebook Red Hills Bike Hire or email [redhillbike@gmail.com](mailto:redhillbike@gmail.com)

## Accommodation

[Alpine Lodge St. Arnaud](#) - Lake Rotoiti, Nelson Lakes National Park

- E: [info@alpinelodge.co.nz](mailto:info@alpinelodge.co.nz) - P: 03 5211869 - W: Includes: dorm and double private rooms plus hotel room accommodation also available. There is internet, laundry facilities, spa pool for hire, a restaurant/bar/café (with the famous Sunday BBQ \$31pp). The Alpine Lodge can store food parcels - \$15 per parcel staying/not staying at the lodge send those to Alpine Lodge, 75 Main Rd, St Arnaud, RD2 Nelson 7072. (Clearly mark the parcel with "<your name>, Te Araroa Walker").

[Tophouse Historic Inn and Mountain View Cottages](#). Hotel, Motel, B&B. 68 Tophouse Road R.D.2 Saint Arnaud Nelson, 68 Tophouse Road R.D.2 Saint Arnaud Nelson, Saint Arnaud 7072. Ph: 035211269, Mob: 0273444027, Email: [info@tophouse.kiwi](mailto:info@tophouse.kiwi). 4 double rooms in the historic Tophouse Inn B&B. and 4 Cottages self-contained with 2 double bedrooms. Meals on request and are situated 2kms from the Red Hills Beebees Knob exit on Tophouse road. 7kms from St Arnaud and serviced by courier post who delivers your food boxes.

## Waiau Pass

### Route

St Arnaud is a pleasant tourist village on the shore of Lake Rotoiti and the gateway to the Nelson Lakes National Park. This popular park is serviced by a network of spacious but heavily used huts.

This long tramp connects Travers/Sabine Circuit with the St James Walkway. It provides an extraordinary summer tramping experience at the northern end of the Southern Alps. In winter and spring some sections are snowbound and avalanche prone.

At 1870m, Waiau Pass is Te Araroa's second-highest point. It's the most likely part of the route to be blocked by snow and has some avalanche risk on its southern face. Contact the Department of Conservation (DOC) before you start, to enquire about the route's current condition. DOC is at the Nelson Lakes Visitors Centre in St Arnaud (03 5211806).

The track ends at a car park and bus shelter on SH7 next to the Boyle River Outdoor Education Centre.

## **St Arnaud to Lakehead Hut**

9.5km / 2-3 hours

The track starts opposite St Arnaud's alpine store. This is on the Black Valley Walk, which heads through beech forest to DOC's Kerr Bay Campground on the shore of Lake Rotoiti.

Te Araroa then joins with the Travers/Sabine Circuit at the eastern end of Kerr Bay. From here the track follows the shoreline through the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project area to Lakehead Hut. This is about 15min beyond the jetty near the lakehead.

The recovery project started in 1997 and is one of 6 maintained by DOC. Its goal is to restore native biodiversity to the beech forest. A trapping and poisoning programme aims to rid a 5000ha block of introduced pests including cats, possums, stoats, wasps, rats and mice. Kaka and reintroduced great spotted kiwi are 2 native species that benefit from the project.

## **Lakehead Hut to John Tait Hut**

12km / 5 hours

The well-graded track continues from Lakehead Hut up the river flats through open and forested sections to John Tait Hut. Mt Travers comes into view around Hopeless Creek.

John Tait (1901-1982), a former president of the Nelson Tramping Club, led a volunteer effort to raise funds and to construct the original hut in 1951. This was 5 years before Nelson Lakes National Park became New Zealand's 8th national park. The original hut survived 27 years. A new hut sits in a clearing with views of Mt Travers and Mt Cupola.

## **John Tait Hut to Upper Travers Hut**

6km / 3 hours

Beyond John Tait Hut the track continues up the Travers Valley and has some steeper sections. The track passes marked turn-offs to Cupola Hut and Travers Falls, which is a short and worthwhile side trip.

Upper Travers Hut sits on the edge of a large flat immediately below Mt Travers.

## **Upper Travers Hut to West Sabine Hut**

8km / 6-8 hours

The track continues as a defined ground trail that follows snow poles up to Travers Saddle (1787m). This is a steady 450m climb.

From the Saddle, the snow poles continue down the western face to the tree line. The track then takes walkers down to the East Branch Sabine River in the valley floor below. This is a

long and in places steep descent and crosses a large avalanche risk zone. Take the alternative marked track during times of avalanche risk.

From the East Branch Sabine River, the track climbs, sidles and then descends to the West Branch Sabine River. West Sabine Hut is a short distance upstream.

## **West Sabine Hut to Blue Lake Hut**

7km / 3 hours

Te Araroa leaves the Travers/Sabine Circuit from West Sabine Hut and continues up towards Blue Lake and Waiau Pass. Trampers wishing to return to St Arnaud can continue on the circuit.

From the hut follow the Blue Lake Track up the West Branch Sabine River to its source. The route is forested and climbs steeply in places, in particular during the short final climb to the hut and lake. The track crosses several short avalanche risk zones.

Blue Lake Hut is a popular side trip to the Travers/Sabine Circuit but tramper numbers do start to thin by this point.

## **Blue Lake Hut to Upper Waiau Forks**

7km / 6-8 hours

The next section, over Waiau Pass, is the most demanding on this track. It is a fair-weather route, suitable for experienced individuals or parties with experienced leadership. Good fitness and reasonable agility is a prerequisite for all. These criteria aside, Waiau Pass is a Te Araroa highlight. Allow a full day for the journey.

The track leaves Blue Lake Hut through the forest and climbs onto Lake Constance's moraine dam. The lake itself is attractive and set within a dramatic alpine landscape. From the dam, a rough and rocky track, marked by snow poles, leads up above bluffs on the west side of the lake. Then it descends very steeply in places to the lakehead. The track continues across the open upper valley floor and then climbs a steep scree slope in direct fashion to a high terrace. From here it is a 500m sidle and climb up to Waiau Pass.

The route from the pass continues through the rocky and exposed country. Take care where turning off the main ridge to follow the poled track route. It then drops steeply in places through bluffs to a terrace. Then it continues west before descending to the West Branch Waiau River in the valley floor. This area is an avalanche hazard zone when conditions are right.

From the valley floor, the track follows the river through thick sub-alpine scrub to the Upper Waiau Forks. There is an attractive informal campsite here within a stand of beech trees.

## **Upper Waiau Forks to Waiau Hut**

8km / 4hr

The track follows the Waiau River down and stays mostly on the true right. The valley opens up as you near Waiau Hut (6 bunks), new in 2017 thanks to a generous donor.

## **Waiau Hut to Anne Hut**

26km / 7-8 hours

Travel down the valley is easy, through grassy flats, and on the Waiau River's true right. Two bush-clad terminal moraines add interest and provide good camping opportunities.

In time the Ada homestead comes into view. The homestead area remains in private hands. Trampers should avoid this area and continue to the Ada River. This is a straightforward crossing in low to normal flows. Beyond the river, trampers link to the St James Walkway and continue down in a south-west direction towards Anne Hut – a new 20 bunk hut.

## **Anne Hut to Boyle Flat Hut**

15km / 6 hours

The track continues up the Anne River through a series of grassy clearings towards Anne Saddle. Then it descends into the Boyle River Valley.

The small 3 bunk Rokeby Hut is lower down the valley. Built in 1965 it is in original condition. Beyond Rokeby Hut the track continues downstream on the true left to a swingbridge. Boyle Flat Hut is a short distance beyond down the true right side of the river.

## **Boyle Flat Hut to Boyle Village**

14.5km / 4 hours

Re-cross the swingbridge and continue southwest on the walkway. The track sidles through a gorge and descends to a junction. Cross the river on a swingbridge here and continue on the track within the forest margin. In time the track crosses the river on another swingbridge and continues down towards Boyle Village. The track emerges at a carpark next to the Boyle River Outdoor Education Centre.

## **Conditions**

Track standard: Tramping track

## **Potential hazards**

- River crossings - Never cross flooded rivers Take care with Wairoa, Motueka, Waiau and Ada Rivers, these rivers are unbridged
- Weather extremes - snow or heavy rain can occur at any time of the year



- Steep drop-offs Avalanche zone - Travers Saddle, track to Blue Lake, Waiau Pass

## St Arnaud

Private Driver Hire - P: 03 3910500 (Paul) - can transport to/from all locations Picton-Anakiwa-Pelorus Bridge-Nelson-St Arnaud, priced on enquiry.

### Accommodation

The Alpine Lodge - Alpine Lodge St, Arnaud, Lake Rotoiti - P: 03 5211869) has accommodation in a dorm, private room, and hotel rooms available. There is internet, laundry facilities, spa pool for hire, a restaurant/bar/café (with the famous Sunday BBQ \$31pp) and they are happy to store food parcels (\$5 if staying at the Lodge or \$10 if not) - send those to Alpine Lodge, 75 Main Rd, St Arnaud, RD2, Nelson 7072. (Clearly mark the parcel with "<your name>, Te Araroa Walker".

### Accommodation at end of route

Boyle River Outdoor Education Centre - P: 03 315 7082 - E: [info@boyle.org.nz](mailto:info@boyle.org.nz) A not-for-profit organisation providing outdoor education and recreation opportunities for school and community groups first and foremost, the Centre also supports walkers on their Te Araroa journey. You can book and prepay for parcel storage, backpacker-style accommodation, hot showers, laundry and Wi-Fi on our Te Araroa Online Store; <https://www.boyle.org.nz/shop>. Please note, any parcels sent to us should be booked in advance of sending, be well-sealed, clearly labelled with your name, contact information and expected date of arrival. On your arrival at the Centre, follow the TA signs to our Walker's Shelter where you can rest your legs and check the latest weather updates. We have a small resupply shop with cold drinks, hot pizzas and a pantry of typical tramping foods. We also have gas for sale. Cash only please, we do not have eftpos or credit cards facilities.

With the help of our volunteers, the Centre is open 7 days a week from 9am to 5pm most days, and 9am – 3pm on Fridays and Sundays. Unless staying overnight with us, please respect our opening/closing hours. We hope we can assist you on this amazing journey and look forward to welcoming you to the Boyle River.

Boyle DOC campsite. The campsite has separate areas for up to six vehicles/campervans and an enclosure (no vehicle access) for tents. Toilet and water onsite, as well as Spark and Vodafone mobile phone reception. Pay cash on arrival at the self-registration stand and display registration slip on tent/vehicle. Adult (18+ years): \$8 per night, Child (5 - 17 years): \$4 per night, Infant (0 - 4 years): free. Backcountry hut tickets and annual hut passes are not valid at this campsite.

Cell Phone Reception – there is now a mini cell tower for Spark and Vodafone users. This is at the DOC carpark at the end of this section.

### Transport

[East West Shuttles](#) - P: 03 789 6251

Shuttles run between Westport and Christchurch - daily except Saturday. Must book for Shuttle to stop at the Boyle.

Cost from Boyle to Hanmer - \$35 to \$47 (call to book and confirm cost).

Times – Must Book First:

From the Boyle:

to Hanmer / Christchurch - stops at the Boyle about 10am;

to Westport - stops at the Boyle about 4-4:30pm;

To the Boyle:

Christchurch to Boyle – leaves from Canterbury Museum at 2pm

Hanmer to Boyle – leaves from the Hanmer i-Site at 3:45pm

Westport to Boyle – leaves the Westport Caltex at 8am

[Hanmer Tours & Shuttles](#) – P: 03 315 7418, E: [info@hanmertours.co.nz](mailto:info@hanmertours.co.nz) Will Shuttle from / to the Boyle or from/to Windy Point for a minimum \$150 one way for up to 5 people. Call for availability.

[Nelson Lake Shuttles](#) - P: 03 547 6896 or 0275 476896 Can run a shuttle/charter from Boyle Village to St Arnaud; call for cost and availability.

InterCity Bus – only operates through the Lewis Pass when State Highway 1 – via Kaikoura – has a road closure (this is the Christchurch to Picton route); and then it is an “on request stop only” it needs to be pre-booked.

## Hanmer Springs

### General Information

[Hanmer Springs i-Site Visitor Centre](#) - 40 Amuri Ave - P: 0800 442 663 - W: [www.i-site.org](http://www.i-site.org)

### Accommodation

- [YHA Hanmer Springs](#) - 14 Amuri Avenue, Hanmer Springs P: 03 315 7472  
E: [hanmersprings@yha.co.nz](mailto:hanmersprings@yha.co.nz)
- [Hanmer Backpackers](#) - 41 Conical Hill Rd, Hamner Springs - P: 03 315 7196 - E: [info@hanmerbackpackers.co.nz](mailto:info@hanmerbackpackers.co.nz) - (*Note: HanmerBackpackers is closed from 20th of July - 1st of September for a winter break*)
- [Jack in the Green \(BBH\)](#) - 3 Devon St, Hamner Springs - P: 03 315 5111 - E: [stay@jackinthegreen.co.nz](mailto:stay@jackinthegreen.co.nz)
- Other accommodation providers at most levels.

### Resupply

- [Hanmer Springs Four Square Supermarket](#) - Conical Hill Rd, Hamner Springs - P: 03 315 7190
- Hanmer Springs Foodway - 45 Amuri Ave, Hamner Springs - P: 03 315 777

# Reefton

## General Information

[Reefton i-Site Visitor Centre](#) - 67-69 Broadway, Reefton - P: 03 732 8391 - E: reefton@i-site.org - W: [www.i-site.org](http://www.i-site.org)

## Accommodation

- [www.reeftonaccommodation.co.nz](http://www.reeftonaccommodation.co.nz)
- [Reefton Old Bread Shop Backpacker](#) - 157 Buller Rd, Reefton - P: 03 732 8420 - E: [breadshopbackpackers@gmail.com](mailto:breadshopbackpackers@gmail.com)
- [The Old Nurses Home Accommodation](#) - 104 Shiel St, Reefton - P: 03 732 8881 - E: [reeftonretreat@hotmail.com](mailto:reeftonretreat@hotmail.com)
- Numerous other options available.

## Resupply

- [SuperValue Supermarket](#) - 65 Broadway, Reefton - P: 03 732 8313
- [4 Four Square Supermarket](#) - 47 Broadway, Reefton - P: 03 732 8888