

Wilderness

May 2024

THE OLD GHOST ROAD

+ Is it better than the Heaphy?

HIGH ON THE MAIN RANGE
An unforgettable Tararua traverse



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JACKETS**

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COVER: This Tararua main range traverse is sublime. See story p34. PHOTO: Sam Harrison

A TRAIL FROM THE PAST SHOWS US THE FUTURE

BEFORE THE OLD GHOST ROAD (OGR) opened in 2015, *Wilderness* ran some 'comment' pieces that were less than supportive. The articles, by a West Coast resident, variously accused the OGR of being assisted by mining interests, a road to nowhere and a backcountry asset sell-off. In one, the author 'lets rip at the Old Ghost Road'.

Looking back on those articles now, I think: how tiresome. Such articles are great for the letter's page, which is presumably why we ran them. People tend to write in when they disagree with something or feel strongly about it. But a bit like the OGR, which roving editor Shaun Barnett claims he did not even develop a sweat on when he walked it (see p42), I'm mellower these days. I think we're better when we celebrate rather than denigrate. That doesn't mean we shouldn't ask the hard questions or turn a blind eye to issues, but it's important not to sensationalise them.

As it turns out, the OGR has been a huge success, and the various comment pieces we ran all turned out to be hot air. We've seen the landscape recover from the building works, and more people are enjoying recreational opportunities on a multi-day trail – one that DOC did not have the resources to build or the funds to maintain. It's a fabulous addition to the West Coast and the network of tracks there.

OGR is a trail that is before – or perhaps of – its time. Whether we like it or not, it's a possible template, alongside the likes of the Hump Ridge Track, for future trails that will fall to the community to build and maintain, as we see yet another appalling and short-sighted round of cuts at DOC that will inevitably lead to fewer recreational opportunities and greater species and habitat loss.

On April 10 I emailed all subscribers to notify them of the new Terms and Conditions governing their subscription (applicable at the next renewal). The main reason for the email was to notify subscribers that instead of printing 12 issues in 2025, we will be printing 11 (with a double issue published over winter). If you have not seen that email, please take some time to view the T&Cs: www.wildernessmag.co.nz/terms-conditions.



Alistair Hall

E-newsletter

To get the latest in outdoor news, gear and the latest trip recommendations head to our website and sign up to the *Wilderness Daily* newsletter



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MPA Awards

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LETTER
of THE
MONTH

TA'S MUDDIEST TRACK DEPENDS ON THE DIRECTION OF TRAVEL

I read the article 'Which is the muddiest track of them all?' (April 2024) with fond but very different memories. As one of the rarer northbound walkers on Te Araroa, my impressions were so different that I can only put them down to the fitness, skills and preparedness that we all gain across the 3000km. The TA walker starting the trail is a very different beast to the one finishing it. In my case, I regret not taking photos of how my body shape changed across the walk!

Longwood's mud is etched in my memory as a gruelling and formative experience. I literally had to look up Raetea Forest after reading the article to remember that section. By then, mud, tree roots, and vines were part of the scenery. The same goes for the dreaded Ninety Mile Beach, which went as uneventfully as any weekend beach walk, only a whole lot longer.

This brings me to a point that I feel is often missed in discussing TA. According to many walkers I met who had done the Appalachian or Pacific Crest trails, TA trail conditions are far tougher. At both ends, the TA is peppered with the walking wounded and early retirees. I feel for these people, especially those who have come from overseas on an extended break for what should be a formative experience. It certainly is that once you gain 'trail fitness', but that only happens after about a month. By then I had sprained my ankle, first one and then the other – and I got off reasonably lightly.

Te Araroa was a life-altering experience for me and I wouldn't change a thing. I came back a different and hopefully better person, and this seems true of all who complete it. My life is marked by it in an almost completely positive way. Nothing this good is ever that easy, after all.

– Andrew Spanner



Andrew wins a pair of Salewa Mountain Spike Crampons worth \$169.90 from www.bobo.co.nz.

Readers, send your letter to the editor for a chance to win.

PAPAROA WALK BREAK

After reading '10 great short walks through ancient forests' (March 2024), I felt I should share with readers our local forest walk in Paparoa, near Kaipara.

Now that the Brynderwyns are often closed, travellers could head north through Paparoa, and this walk would make a fantastic rest break.

The loop walk, constructed by the local Lions club, starts opposite the dairy in Paparoa and takes about 45min. There's plenty of parking by the playground (except on Saturday morning, market day).

Cross the bridge, then walk beside the river and up through karaka and taraire bush with kumara pits alongside the track. You'll be accompanied by piwakawaka while listening to tui. It's a real treat.

I walk it nearly every weekend with my sister and afterwards enjoy the local country market.

– Stella Clyde



TRAMPING WITH COVID

I recently tramped the Heaphy and unfortunately came away with Covid, which I most likely caught in one of the first huts. One other person in my group also contracted it, and I am aware of cases among other groups going on multi-day tramps.

Covid has not gone away but I didn't see anyone wearing a mask, even those with obvious upper respiratory symptoms. Huts are ideal places for spreading the virus, and it's virtually impossible to self-isolate in one. So it was a reminder to me to have some sort of plan for such eventualities. This could include:

1. Test for Covid prior to the tramp if you have the slightest symptoms or have been exposed, and take a spare test with you.
2. Take some masks in case you need them, preferably N95s.
3. Take medication such as Ibuprofen or Paracetamol, and throat lozenges and maybe lemon and ginger tea. Kawakawa has anti-inflammatory properties and can easily be found in the bush and made into tea.
4. Be mindful of your vaccination status and immunity.
5. Have a contingency plan and don't be shy about discussing your situation with a hut warden if there is one.

– James Herdman

OUR ROUTES, YOUR TRIPS

Many Gisborne Canoe and Tramping Club members have Walk1200km goals and consider it a great initiative to help people become more active and healthier.

Several members recently repeated the Wairere Stream trip in Tongariro National Park that was published in the February 2024 issue.

The weather was cool with low cloud and showers, and they walked for two hours up the stream before returning to the Taranaki Falls Track and back to Whakapapa.

– Gillian Ward (president, Gisborne Canoe and Tramping Club)

Gillian received a meal from Real Meals. Readers, when you do a trip that has been published in Wilderness, let us know to receive your prize, too.



TA WALKERS REIGN

Wilderness's Te Araroa Special Issue (April 2024) did not include some of the walkers I recently encountered in Greenstone Hut on a wet night.

The conversations about hut tickets made it clear that many were not paying, but they were still very assertive about their right to a bed.

Trampers with tickets slept outside while the group slept inside and generally occupied the space, moving furniture so they could gather around a big table without any consideration for other users. Others camped in an area identified as fragile.

Some displayed poor etiquette, such as brushing teeth at the kitchen sink and not cleaning up.

The trail is putting pressure on huts and fragile environments. It is time to consider how to organise numbers and payments.

– Susanna Lawrence

WALKING AGAIN



Wilderness is going to be a great source of inspiration over the months ahead as I recover from a broken femur, the result of a crash on my electric moped (unfortunately, another driver didn't see me coming out of an intersection).

It could be easily six months before I'm out again. I might be slower and not go as far as I used to, but I will work hard to get back into the hills again.

Please keep up the excellent work of inspiring so many people. Wilderness is enjoyable for people new to the outdoors, as well as those of us with many years of experience.

– Russell Lake

REALITY NOT AI, PLEASE

I love the epic and beautiful photographs from the winners and runners-up of the Outdoor Photographer of the Year competition (April 2024). But I did not like the AI artwork in the story 'Ten types of people you'll meet walking Te Araroa'.

You must have real photos. We don't need AI in the magazine.

– Tim Wilson

– Fair cop, Tim. Other readers also shared your displeasure. We won't be doing it again.

– AH

GETTING A BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP

Why settle for less when you can have the best? Big Agnes has a range of innovative, packable, and reliable sleeping mats for every outdoor adventure.

Whether you need a sleeping mat for tramping or an all-around mattress for camping, there is a suitable Big Agnes model for you in a variety of sizes and styles, designed to provide the best night's sleep possible.

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→ Philip Allen had a magical day with his family – son Daniel, daughter-in-law Kelly and daughters Rebecca and Mary – at Crucible Lake, Mount Aspiring National Park.



→ Millie Mitchell went on her first overnight tramp up Tuao Wharepapa Mt Arthur with gran Michele Ayres.

What did you get up to last weekend?
Your trips, your pix



→ Harry and Ella Boam and Richard and Louise Freestone crossed Cascade Saddle. "We were lucky to have perfect weather," said Ella. "We even watched a small avalanche happen above Dart Glacier. The boom it made was something else."



→ Joy Bryant enjoyed walking to the Kahurangi Point lighthouse keeper's cottage with Waimea Tramping Club. "We had a very early start and plenty of time to relax as the trip depends on tidal river crossings," said Joy. "We scrambled up the hill to the lighthouse and enjoyed spectacular rock formations along the coastline."



→ Diana Ward wondered whether tramping buddy Gill Green's attempt to shield herself from horizontal rain and sleet on the Kepler Track would cause her to miss the markers!



After three days of blistering heat in the Leatham and Severn valleys, Berengere Doron, Steve Richards and Judy van den Yssel-Richards were cooled by the rain as they walked up the Saxton Valley and over Saxton Saddle. "It was a great adventure," said Judy.



Jill Balchin and younger brother Jack took on the Rees-Dart Track. "We had a blast, got caught in some stormy weather and got pretty cold but saw lots of kea, chamois and deer," said Jill. "It was Jack's first multi-day tramp and he was stoked."



Larissa Kalike and mum Janine completed the Old Ghost Road, stopping to capture the moment near Seddonville.



The Devaney family walked the Tongariro Northern Circuit.



Oliver MacLachlan tramped into Lake Alexander Hut in the Ferny Gair Conservation Area with mum, dad and brother Mitchell.

Get your photo published here to receive a meal from Real Meals worth \$17. Last Weekend submission criteria can be found at wildernessmag.co.nz.



Learn more about Real Meals at www.realmeals.co.nz.



FMC is speaking out against the government's proposed Fast-track Approvals Bill

CONCERN OVER FAST-TRACK APPROVALS BILL

» A Bill soon to come before parliament, which gives various ministers personal power to decide projects on public land, has raised concerns in the outdoor community.

If approved, the Bill would give ministers power to approve fast-track development projects on public conservation land without consultation.

Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) is not impressed. President Megan Dimozantos said that under the proposed law, many areas of public conservation land will be "exposed to economic exploitation" devoid of democratic process.

"The Bill is the biggest assault on democracy and nature that Aotearoa New Zealand has seen in decades ... Its impacts would be irreversible [and] a reminder for future generations of how little this government cares about the environment and the places we value."

Dimozantos said that powers within the Bill – in the hands of a group of ministers, including those for infrastructure, transport and regional development – would override the Conservation Act, Reserves Act and Wildlife Act.

She referred to FMC's inaugural president Fred Vosseler, who said in 1932: "We must closely guard the welfare of our national parks and reserves. These should not be regarded as the property of our minister or the government. They belong to the people of today and tomorrow. We must fight for their protection if necessary."

Current FMC members share this sentiment, said Dimozantos: "The lack of consultation the Bill proposes is alarming. Furthermore, the government plans to introduce a list of key projects to be fast-tracked. Potential projects include open-cast coal mining and hydro-power generation on public conservation land."

FMC has reviewed the Bill and lodged a submission, and encourages others to do the same.

"FMC will act to protect the integrity, intrinsic worth and values of the land that belongs to all of us, but above all, it belongs to nature itself," Dimozantos said.

"Its importance and worth outweigh the short-sighted economic interests of a privileged few and should never be compromised."

Kaikōura's Jimmy Armers Track protected for future generations



» Access across private land to a popular track on the Kaikōura Peninsula has been assured for the future.

Most of the track existed on an unformed legal road, but there were large deviations onto Melville and Julie Symes' property.

The Symes family wanted walkers to have continuing access to the track no matter what happened to the land.

The walk leads to one of Kaikōura's best swimming beaches and includes a steady climb to gorgeous views of the ocean and the mountains. It follows the route taken by fishers a century ago to reach the wharves.

With funding from Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa and the Kaikōura District Council, the Symes secured the route by creating a public access easement.

Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa chief executive Ric Cullinane said this was an example of local people working to improve their community. "We can help turn their practical and popular public access into something that will survive for future generations."

Kaikōura Tramping Club also supported formalising the track's public access. The track links the Kaikōura Peninsula Walkway and the seal colony to Dempseys Track through public conservation land into the township, creating an easy loop track.

TARANAKI CROSSING'S NEW BRIDGE TAKING SHAPE

» Two bridge masts now tower over the Manganui Gorge as a significant feature of the Taranaki Crossing takes shape.

The 109m bridge, part of a \$13.4 million project to upgrade tracks and facilities on Taranaki Maunga, is a sturdy fixture designed for a lifespan of 100 years, and able to withstand the subalpine Manganui Gorge's winds and weather.

The southern mast is 25m tall, and its northern counterpart is 6m. The difference reflects the geography of the terrain and the gorge it crosses.

DOC's Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki regional director Tinaka Mearns says the project is on track so far, despite environmental challenges and build complexity.

"We're pleased with the progress. As well as the two vital structural masts, the contractors have installed the first section of decking and some of the cables that keep the masts in place."

The main span cables between the two masts are being installed, and bridge approaches from the south side, and off-site steel fabrication are under way.

"Our confirmation of the bridge design in December 2022 gave us an idea of how impressive it would be, and now we're seeing it take shape. It's really exciting," said Mearns.



curc

TWALK is a 24-hour rogaine event organised in Canterbury's high country by Canterbury University Tramping Club.

TWALK with Canterbury University Tramping Club

» It's the biggest event of the year for Canterbury University's Tramping Club. TWALK, a 24-hour walk, is a rogaine event organised by club members. Last year was big, with 500 competitors and it is hoped this year's TWALK, held on April 27-28, will be even bigger.

TWALK has run nearly every year since 1967. Organisers select a secret location in the high country. "We have to negotiate access with the farmers, hide small markers over many acres of the farmland, and arrange for a truck-load of food and gear to be driven to a remote woolshed," said club president Nick Slegers.

The orienteering event is split into five legs of some 10-20km. Each leg has around 10-20 controls, hidden on features marked on a map and described by a cryptic clue. At the beginning of leg one, participants receive an event map and the list of cryptic clues.

"TWALK features crazy costumes, barely any sleep, and a taste of some of the best scenery Canterbury region has to offer," said Slegers.

NEW HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS RECEIVED BY VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON TRAMPING CLUB



VUWTC

A historic trip report from a 1945 Christmas trip to Wilkin Valley

» Victoria University of Wellington Tramping Club was founded in 1921 and has had thousands of members over the last 100 years. It recently received a collection of documents from a previous club member, the late Michael Murray, who explored with the club in the 1940s.

The documents included editions of the club magazine from the 50th and 75th anniversaries, two editions of the newsletter from 1946 and 1947, and a booklet written by a member about their tramping club experiences.

One trip mentioned is an adventure to Wilkin Valley in Christmas 1945. Club members joined a summer camp run by the Otago section of the Alpine Club to climb several peaks: Mts Jumbo, Aeolus, Kure, Pollux, Louis, Ragan and Turner.

The trip report says that Lake Wānaka was reached "amazingly quickly and amazingly uncomfortably" from Wellington.

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MSC's Plan My Walk tool has two new features to help with planning autumn adventures.

ALL PART OF THE PLAN

» Autumn brings increased snowfall on mountain ranges, and the pull of the glittering white caps can become too potent to resist. To plan your autumn explorations and ensure you get home safely, check out NZ Mountain Safety Council's trip-planning tool 'Plan My Walk', which now has two new features: Custom Tracks and My Gear Lists.

Custom Tracks is for those planning off-track trips. Before heading out, create your custom track and get the wider benefits of Plan My Walk, including track alerts, weather warnings and forecasts.

My Gear Lists helps when you're adding any extras for snow territory, such as crampons, as well as ensuring you don't forget essential items like a head torch, first aid kit, emergency shelter and extra warm layers.

When your trip plan is complete it can be sent to any other group members and your emergency contact.

WHICH NORTH?

» Confusingly, there are three different variations of north to take into account when navigating. Here's what they are:

True north: This is the direction of the earth's geographic north pole and the axis on which the planet spins.

Magnetic north: This is the direction in which the red end of the compass needle points. The difference, an angle (in degrees east or west) between geographic and magnetic north, is known as magnetic declination. This changes over time, which is why declination adjustments are needed when a bearing is taken. The angle is different for all locations in the world, so check your topo map for the local declination angle and rate of change.

Grid north: Topo maps are aligned to grid north, which is expressed by the vertical (longitude) lines on the map. Grid north is required for the translation of the spherical surface of earth to the flat plane of a map.

– Turn to page 68 for a full run-down on the parts and usage of a compass.

NORTHLAND TRAILS PROJECT TO CREATE TWO-COAST LOOP

» A newly formed project team plans to create a 700km network of trails looping around Northland's east and west coasts.

The team is revitalising a 2018 Northland Walking and Cycling Strategy to develop and secure trail access across Te Tai Tokerau to make a world-class coastal walking and cycling destination.

The vision is a 700km loop that links with buses, boats and trains to enable people to explore as much of Northland as possible. At its completion, the loop will connect the region's different coasts: the east, known for its stunning scenic beaches, and the west, known for its rugged and wild coastline. They will be joined by the existing Pou Herenga Tai Twin Coast Cycleway and the potential Dargaville to Mangawhai Trail.

Project lead Amanda Bennett said that now was the time for action to make the project happen.

"I feel in my soul that it's going to make a huge difference for Northland," she said.

She is excited to create connections between local communities. At the moment, most of those biking the Pou Herenga Tai Twin Coast Cycleway are domestic and international visitors, but 40 per cent of users are local. Bennett wants to encourage this local use to help communities stay mentally and physically healthy.



The Kaihu Valley Rail Trail will become a segment of the greater Northland Loop

MY FAVOURITE BRIDGEDALE SOCK

Bridgedale has been making outdoor socks for all types of walkers for more than 100 years. Of course, some users have a favourite.

Bridgedale socks have been one of those little things that transform your journeys every day – and it's been happening for over 100 years. The passion, experience, and care for every tiny detail, from fit, Fusion Technology and an industry-leading guarantee, have helped Bridgedale create the most comfortable and enduring socks, and blister-free feet around the world.

That's why Bridgedale is a perfect partner for your Walk1200km challenge.

Don't just take our word for it – some of New Zealand's leading adventurers choose Bridgedale, too.



Nathan Fa'avae

Fave sock: *Bridgedale Lightweight Merino Performance Fit*

As an adventurer who is constantly pushing the limits, I demand socks that can keep pace with me in every season and terrain. Bridgedale's Lightweight Merino Performance Fit socks are an absolute game-changer. They defy nature by keeping my feet cool in summer and warm in winter. Their boot-length design seamlessly transitions from hiking boots to trail runners, ensuring versatility without sacrificing performance. The merino blend is a non-negotiable for me, and this Bridgedale sock nails the ratio perfectly. They're comfortable, quick drying, and skin care is not compromised. Moreover, these socks are like warriors, enduring every rugged journey with me, proving their strength and longevity time and time again. Bridgedale has truly mastered the art of crafting socks that support and enhance every adventure.



Simone Maier

Fave sock: *Bridgedale women's MTB Mid-season T2 Merino Sport*



Bridgedale socks are fantastic and their range covers all my main activities: hiking, running and mountain biking. I also choose them for paddling, kayaking and rafting as they keep my feet warm. They are snug, fit well and have excellent cushioning at heel and toe. I have been using them for many years and have never had blisters while wearing them. I love that I can get Bridgedale socks in different thicknesses depending on the season I am racing or training in.

Marcel Hagener

Fave sock: *Bridgedale MTB Midweight T2 Merino Sport*

These socks have the right mix of merino for warmth and synthetic fibres for longevity. They have been my longest-lasting socks by miles. They are special cycling socks but I use them more for runs and hiking missions. And they're versatile on long trips: I have a backup pair, and one day I loaned them to a friend as he'd forgotten his gloves. They really helped! Merino wool in socks is nothing new these days, and I have tried other brands with similar material blends, but none have lasted as long as Bridgedales.



WHAT SETS BRIDGEDALE APART?

FIT: The construction of every Bridgedale sock is the secret to the perfect fit that ensures socks feel like new after every wash.

FUSION TECH: A unique blend of yarn and knitting technology that sets Bridgedale apart from competitors.

GUARANTEE: A badge of confidence showing that socks have been designed, developed, tested and manufactured to be worthy of the Bridgedale name.

WALKING WITH MUM

For this Mother's Day, we asked Walk1200km participants about walking with their mums or mums walking with their children – and what it means to them.

by AMELIA NURSE

SUZANNE WATSON is a solo parent with four children who loves to get out with all her kids, including hunting with her teenage boys. She's a member of LandSAR, where, she says, "I learn skills I can pass onto the kids." But when it comes to Walk1200km, it's her four-year-old daughter who inspires her. "She comes on all evening walks with me and it's turning into the best part of my day."



Walking with her four-year-old is the highlight of Suzanne Watson's day

This is their together time, and Suzanne says, "It allows me uninterrupted time to talk, discover, get fit and bond with no distractions but the path in front."

Bonding is a theme among the magazine's readers and walkers, with some saying it's about shared experiences and creating memories, and some saying it's about working together to overcome challenges.

Lou Days, 53, and her son Harvey, 15, hike together at every opportunity and find each balances the other out. Where Lou has doubts about her abilities, Harvey "is a great cheerleader and will often sing out to me 'you're doing great Mum, you got this!' as I huff and puff up the trail behind him."

While Lou keeps track of gear, weather reports and food, Harvey is the blue sky thinker, reminding her of how amazing it can be. "He brings a sense of being present to my over-anxious parent vibe." Lou believes it's made them stronger, "and, if possible, there is more love and



Harvey and Lou Days hike together at every opportunity

respect between us. I have realised he is a capable and dependable young man, and he is proud of how I push through the tough times. But most of all, we now plan adventures together; to challenge us and create those memories and experiences that we can continue to treasure."

Walk1200km is by nature a question of pace, and parents and children are in different age groups. For Heidi Jade, helping her visually impaired mother achieve a half marathon goal for her 80th birthday is a compromise: "I try to slow my pace to match hers, but also she walks a bit faster when she is with me, and we are busy talking." The walks have changed them both. Heidi's mum, Jean Sales, has become more focused and fit with her training schedule of walks complemented with a treadmill at the retirement home. And for Heidi, "Before, it was always 'mum and dad', but doing this walk with Mum has helped me to really get to know her as a person."

Beginning from an everyday average of 3000 steps at the start of their training, Heidi says, "Mum would get quite puffed. But now we are doing over 10km, and she is not puffed."

Walking in someone else's shoes is an apt metaphor here because, as Heidi says, "Mum has very low vision so she can't go on walks by herself. It has been good learning for me as I walk alongside her to get to know the challenges she faces and to help her. My mum is an amazing inspiration to me, of courage and determination and finding joy in the small things."



Heidi Jade is helping her visually impaired mum train for a half marathon

Walking the full 1200km distance is immaterial for these two because "what has mattered has been the goal and the enjoyment of putting your mind to something and working on it bit by bit".

While Mother's Day is lovely to celebrate with families, for some it's a time of remembrance. Amanda Collins says, "My mother walks with my every step, though sadly she no longer leaves footprints."

This is interesting, because the next thing Amanda will tell you is that walking wasn't part of her childhood. "As a low-decile family raised in a city, it was never a family activity." She became bitten by the tramping bug after her mother's death. "However, it was her words that were the nudge. A call was made to school parents for volunteers to supervise Duke of Edinburgh Award groups, and Mum often said, 'If not you, then who? If not now, then when?' So that was it!"

Amanda is now an experienced trumper and says her mother comes with her on most walks, especially when solo tramping. "I show her the wonderful landscapes she can see through my eyes, and she tells me that there really is no monster under the bunks in the huts when I'm alone at night. When I'm tramping in a group, it's her words or a joke she told, or would have laughed at. So, while she's not here, she's beside me, to chide for a forgotten thing, to encourage when I feel small or daunted, and to nudge me onward, because if not me, then who? And if not now, then when?"



“Meeting fun guys! I mean fungi!”

– Sarah Goldberg

“I LOVE THE COLOURS IN CENTRAL OTAGO AND COOLER DAYS.”

– Gary Kilgour



“

Autumn is my favourite season for walking: I’m usually up and out the door for the sunrise – what a gift! The cooler weather is often paired with bright sunshine, which makes walking 100 times more exhilarating. It feels like every day is changing, so walking the same route remains interesting.

– Jenna Heller

“CRUNCHING AND KICKING THE LEAVES.”

– Sharon Robinson

“

I LOVE THE SMELL OF THE LEAVES.

– Jill Glazewski

”

WALKING IN AUTUMN

We asked Walk1200km participants what they most enjoyed about walking in autumn. Here’s a selection of their responses.



“

The beautiful burnt colours of the changing leaves in autumn.

– Lisa Bailey

“

Autumn reminds me of chilly hop-picking mornings in Kent. Cold on the nose, breathing out breath like a dragon. Dew-drenched hedgerows, twinkly as the sun got up, bathing us in warmth.”

– Jo Gilliat-Smith

“

COOLER MORNINGS – A HINT OF A FROST, THE CHANGING COLOURS AND DAYTIME WALKS THAT ARE NOT SO HOT AND SWEATY.”

– Rochelle Fleming

“BEING ABLE TO WALK RIGHT THROUGH THE DAY BUT STILL WARM ENOUGH TO SWIM IN RIVERS AND SEA.”

– Maree Earl



“

Without a doubt, the brilliant colours of the leaves before they fall to the ground. Walking through autumn leaves brings back fond memories of time spent with my grandad. We would rake up enormous piles of leaves before diving into them!”

– Tracy Jones

#microchallenge 10-12 winners!

Complete the #microchallenges as these Walk1200km participants have done, and receive a Walk1200km badge. The best effort in each challenge receives a special prize from our partners!

#microchallenge10

FIND A QUIRKY SIGN



Bridgedale Midweight Merino Performance Fit socks winner!



Louise Antonia walked the Heaphy and discovered the seat at the boundary between the West Coast and Nelson.

#microchallenge11

PACK A PICNIC



A \$100 Back Country Cuisine voucher!



Tramping buddies Debbie and Paula added a French-themed urban picnic to their walk. "We even played petanque!"

#microchallenge 12

CROSS A STILE



A Rab Namche Paclite GTX jacket worth \$500!



Kate Ridley's favourite stile is on Bridle Path in the Port Hills.



Allie Dunn stumbled upon a 'unicorn' sign on the Manawatū Gorge Track.



After completing the Hooker Valley Track, Alice Lines enjoyed a picnic lunch.



Patrick Lam climbed a stile on Porirua's Rangitūhi Colonial Knob Walkway.



Whether 'pooped' or 'puffed', Rose Blois found a track for everyone in the Grampians.



Jacqui Inder packed a picnic and climbed to Temple Basin in Arthur's Pass.



Allie Marsh crossed a stile before legging it up Canterbury's Peak Hill.

Seen that you've won?

To claim your prize, email a photo of yourself holding this issue of *Wilderness* to walk1200km@lifestylepublishing.co.nz. Only registered Walk1200km participants are eligible to win.

MAY 2024 #MICROCHALLENGES

Each month, three new #microchallenges are set to add interest and silliness to your kilometres.

These three fun #microchallenges will help you better appreciate your surroundings and have fun on your walks. Our favourite six #microchallenge completers receive a Walk1200km badge, while the best entry for each challenge receives a prize from our partners.



#microchallenge16: Walk a kilometre in a perfectly straight line

Take a selfie with the path stretching into the distance alongside a screen grab from your app showing how straight and long your line was. No backtracking! #microchallenge16

#microchallenge16

Partner prize:

A pair of feet-comforting
Bridgedale Midweight Merino
Performance Fit socks.



#microchallenge17:

Take a photo of a dog that
does not belong to you

Cute is the name of the game! Instant badge for anyone who photographs Badger, the Further Faster shop dog, pictured here – find him at 57A Buchan St, Christchurch.

#microchallenge17

Partner prize:

A \$100 voucher from retail
partner Further Faster



#microchallenge18: Your favourite walking kit

Tell us about your favourite walking kit and what makes it so special. It could be a pack, footwear, a pair of shorts, your Walk1200km badge or anything else you love to take with you. Photograph it on one of your walks, then share its story. Thanks to Louise Slocombe for this idea.

#microchallenge18

Partner prize:

Salewa Mountain Trainer Lite Mid
GTX boots worth \$480!



HOW TO ENTER

You must be a registered Walk1200km participant to win (register at wildernessmag.co.nz). Take a photo of yourself completing the challenge (yes, people make a photo more interesting and winsome!) and share it on the Walk1200km Facebook group with a descriptive caption and using the relevant hashtag – e.g. #microchallenge16 – by May 19 (or email walk1200km@lifestylepublishing.co.nz with the relevant hashtag in the subject line and the description in the email). Winners will be published in the July 2024 issue.

Got an idea for a challenge? Email walk1200km@lifestylepublishing.co.nz



Watching the sun rise from near Sylvester Hut is a moment to savour

NICK ALLEN

THE RICHNESS OF GOING SLOW

Going fast can be fun, but life is made richer when you slow down.

BY NICK ALLEN

I'D HEARD that there's a beauty in going slow. Once I would have countered (in my mind, at least), "but going fast is more fun." These days, I am not so sure, and I recently found out why.

Sitting on a large rock by Sylvester Hut in Kahurangi National Park, I watched the sun cresting Mt Crusader in gentle orange. The rock was cold and the surrounding tussock formed an immersive, golden sea. I closed my eyes. The sun's rays were warming and soothed the sting of the morning's cold breeze. Body and mind were still. Quiet. Deeply grounded. It was the magic you hope for.

Until, along came a disruptive, deeply habituated urge: "Stop wasting time! This is an opportunity to get going early! You'll be able to move faster, go further and push harder!"

I moved – but then caught myself. There was no rush. This was a moment to enjoy. I drew a deep breath and focused on the sunlight hitting my face. Groundedness returned, and I slipped deeper into the moment.

Until four years ago, I would not have chosen to stay like this, and would likely have sacrificed this nourishing moment in order to depart early and push hard all day. The fact is, I've felt driven to push hard and achieve for most of my life. Track times were for beating, and I lived for PBs. It was not entirely bad. This drive served me well for a time, especially when (mis) diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS)

in 2011. At the time I was dependent on a mobility scooter to get outside, and had been told I'd lose the ability to walk. My drive kicked in, sustained me through several years of rehabilitation, and getting me back in the mountains.

However, this competitive, go-hard approach meant ignoring my body, creating a disconnect and reinforcing my already problematic relationship with time and landscape. Although I loved being outdoors, my watch face often trumped my surroundings. The landscape held utility as long as it enabled achievements that bolstered my failing sense of self-worth. I was frequently outside but rarely present in it. Significant moments felt shallow.


In 2019 I experienced a significant relapse. I'd ignored symptoms for months, too focused on improving my 5k running times. One morning I returned from a run barely able to communicate, struggling to walk unaided and experiencing significant cognitive challenges. A few weeks later I was diagnosed with Functional Neurological Disorder, an under-researched condition that's often misdiagnosed as MS. I developed debilitating, chronic pain, and life in the mountains became impossible. I was back to square one. It was devastating.

Then in 2020, I was accepted into the Pain Management Centre at Burwood Hospital, and my trajectory changed. Working with a physiotherapist and a psychologist my capacity and mindset

“ I drew a deep breath and focused on the sunlight hitting my face. Groundedness returned, and I slipped deeper into the moment.”

were slowly rebuilt. Initially, it meant walking around the block for 12 minutes a day. It was enormously challenging. I had to walk very slowly – and I wasn't allowed to wear my watch.

But then came a radical realisation: I discovered richness in going slow, being present by engaging my senses and finding beauty around me. Even minor moments felt unexpectedly deep, rich with meaning.

Three years later, with a 10-hour day ahead, I was having my moment at Sylvester Hut. The sun's warmth penetrated my jacket, excising the cold. It was bliss, and I'm glad I resisted the compulsion to achieve. Sometimes, going fast is fun, but life can be made richer by going slow. 

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FROM FOUR CORNERS TO TE ARAROA

People travel from far and wide to walk Te Araroa. Wilderness meets some of the overseas trampers who've come to do the trail.

by
TARA PAPWORTH

ANNABEL MARTH from France learned about Te Araroa while hiking in Europe.

"My friend told me about the trail and I thought, why not? I'd lost my father recently and I'd never been to New Zealand, so I booked the flight."

Marth is hiking the South Island leg of Te Araroa. She met fellow hiker Georgia Everett-Brown, from the United Kingdom, in the Richmond Ranges.

Everett-Brown found out about Te Araroa through YouTube. "I was at university, and during exam season I'd relax by watching hiking videos," she says. "I found a series by Elina Osborne about the trail and watched it every exam season for three years. When I graduated I was supposed to start another course immediately, but I didn't feel ready to commit to another four years of studying."

Everett-Brown decided to take time out to figure what she really wanted to do. "I had a good picture of the trail in my head and I wanted to experience it," she says.

Both women have found life on Te Araroa needs to be flexible. "Something we've learned is: no plans, no problem," says Marth. "At the beginning I was planning everything. I had the whole first month mapped out. Then, on the first day, I met people – and my plan was over because they suggested different things to do."

"You can't plan your whole trip to a tee, because it just won't work," adds Everett-Brown. "Te Araroa has taught me to be flexible. Some of the best experiences have come from being spontaneous and going with the flow."

They don't know yet if they'll walk the rest of the way together. "We take it day by day," says Marth.



Annabel Marth from France and Georgia Everett-Brown from the UK are walking TA together



Annemarie Athey's favourite section has been Goat Pass on the Mingha–Deception route

“I started solo and planned to walk by myself a lot of the time. It was going to be a reflective journey,” says Everett-Brown. “But I began to meet like-minded people and had great conversations. I thought I could walk this by myself, but it’s such a different and amazing experience to share with other people, and I’ve enjoyed doing that.”

American Annemarie Athey’s interest in Te Araroa was sparked by a book about running the trail. “A friend I made on the Appalachian Trail in 2021 sent me *The Pants of Perspective* by Anna McNuff. I was sold,” she says, “but the flights to New Zealand were super expensive. Then I came across a job in Antarctica. I did a little investigating and realised the job

would come with a ticket to New Zealand.”

Athey signed a contract for the 2023 Southern Hemisphere summer season to get her foot in the door, then stayed for the winter: “After a year on the ice I came to New Zealand for Te Araroa, and soon I’m going back to Antarctica again.”

“I’d done the Appalachian Trail and already put a lot of time into thru-hiking planning and research. I had my gear dialled in and knew you can’t plan this type of thing,” she says. “I let it unfold as I go.”

Her favourite day was Goat Pass on the Mingha–Deception route. “I was really nervous about that section because a lot of people were skipping it,” she says. “The night before, I camped in a beautiful setting and was apprehensive about setting off alone, but after about 20 minutes, trail runners started passing me left and right. They were training for the Coast to Coast and it immediately took my anxiety away to know people were around. I ended up having so much fun in the boulders, in the water and climbing up waterfalls.”





Sarah Williams from the UK is an experienced thru-hiker

“TE ARAROA
HAS TAUGHT ME
TO BE FLEXIBLE.
SOME OF THE BEST
EXPERIENCES HAVE
COME FROM BEING
SPONTANEOUS
AND GOING WITH
THE FLOW.”

Athey's trail journey finished prematurely 200km from the end. "From Mavora Lakes I hitched to Te Anau to add in Milford Sound and the Kepler Track," she says. "At Iris Burn campsite a kea shredded my tent. It meant the end of my trip. I had a deadline for getting to Antarctica so didn't have time to get it fixed, and I couldn't keep going without it. I cried so hard. I was so close to the end."

When Athey finishes her next contract in Antarctica it'll be lambing season, and parts of the trail she hasn't done will be closed. "I might go to Australia for a couple of months and then come back," she says. "I feel as though I have unfinished business."

Sarah Williams from the UK hosts the 'Tough Girl' podcast and has interviewed several women who have hiked or run Te Araroa. "So it's always been on the cards," she says. "During Covid I was desperate for adventure and started planning my trip."

Williams' brother lives in Australia, and her parents were planning to visit for Christmas 2023. "The timing was perfect. I could have Christmas with the family and avoid the UK winter as well."



Georgia Everett-Brown has taken time out from university to figure out what she wants to do

Williams is an experienced thru-hiker, having completed many long-distance routes overseas including the Appalachian Trail. “Te Araroa tends to be compared to trails like the Pacific Crest and the Appalachian because of the distance, but it’s a very new trail – only around since 2011 – so you can’t really compare,” she says. “Te Araroa is more of a ‘choose your adventure’ trip, because you have the kayaking section and others where you can cycle. It’s not so much of a thru-hike in the traditional sense.”

She’s also found there are more logistics needed for Te Araroa. “With a lot of my previous thru-hikes you find out where the next resupply point is and off you go,” she says. “Here, it’s a lot harder. If you get stuck in the mountains you need extra food. Or you might need to arrange a shuttle, or hire a bike. Some rivers can’t be crossed, and you’re not allowed to camp in some areas.”


It’s also different to walking in the UK. “There, if the weather is bad it doesn’t really impact you,” she explains. “Here, you can be trapped for days in the mountains.”


She originally intended to walk the entire trail, but didn’t enjoy the road sections and hitched some parts

Williams is sharing her experience on social media. “I want to show people the realities. Some other people don’t share [details of] the sections they’ve skipped. I want to include all the hitches and give people a proper view of what the trail is like.”


Te Araroa should take her around 114 days. “The North Island took 50 days; I think the South Island will be about 64,” she says. “I’ve taken more rest days in the south, mainly because of the weather.”

“The North Island was challenging, and the scenery in the South Island has been amazing,” she says. “The Richmond Ranges and Waiau Pass were incredible. I had day after day of blue skies and 360-degree views, and was constantly reminding myself to stop and look around.”

Williams has already planned her next challenge and is heading to Spain shortly after she leaves New Zealand. “I’m doing the 1000km Camino Via de la Plata, one of the toughest and longest Camino de Santiago routes in Spain. Te Araroa is perfect training,” she says. 



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Abigail Hannah shares 'everyday' adventures through her podcast Aotearoa Adventures

BRINGING THE OUTDOORS HOME

Starting a podcast enabled Abigail Hannah to feel like she finally belonged in Aotearoa when her own family was far away.

by LEIGH HOPKINSON

WHEN SHE WAS 18, Abigail Hannah moved to New Zealand from India to study urban planning. She left her family in Tamil Nadu, where her parents worked in language development.

The culture shock was huge, and her mental health plummeted.

"I don't think there are two countries that are further apart," she says. "India is loud, colourful and energetic. New Zealand seemed boring and quiet. I found myself asking: How can I belong? How can I make New Zealand home?"

Getting into the outdoors, starting with small adventures around Auckland, was part of her journey back from depression.

"It was going to the local park, or popping down to Mission Bay to feel the sand on my feet. That led to day trips, then to getting

a van and road trips, and I've gone from there."

Abigail was already a photographer and blogger, and after a road trip around the South Island, she decided to start a podcast.

"I was going back to Auckland to start a full-time job, and I knew I'd miss the outdoors. I wanted to sit down with people and hear their stories – how they play in this playground we call Aotearoa."

The 26-year-old describes her weekly podcast, *Aotearoa Adventures*, as "talking to everyday Kiwis" – trampers, photographers, parents, students, van-lifers, packrafters, hitchhikers and surfers – about their adventures and travel tips.

It started in 2022, and there are now over 85 episodes.

Abigail sustains the weekly commitment knowing that her online community is tuning in. She gets regular messages from listeners who have tackled new challenges as a result of her guests' stories.

She also encourages listeners to get in touch if they have a story to share.

"I think everyone has a story, no matter how big or small ... I love that people feel like they can approach me."

Abigail says Aotearoa will always be home and, last year, she quit her urban planning job to focus on digital marketing for travel brands. She and husband Isaac Naylor have also started offering tours to Nepal, where Isaac grew up.

"Through the outdoors, I fell in love with New Zealand. I found my sense of belonging."

Abigail's favourite episodes of Aotearoa Adventures

Episode 062,

Pat Nolan

"Based in Christchurch, Pat Nolan's adventures with his adult daughter serve as a heartwarming reminder of the power of nature in forging familial bonds. Pat's daughter lives overseas, so her visits to New Zealand make their father-daughter tramping time all the more special and allow them to share their love of the outdoors. Pat's favourite moment of the Three Passes Route was seeing the delight on his daughter's face as she experienced the incredible views for the first time. When walking Te Araroa, Pat faced the challenge of inner-ear and balance issues. Instead of letting this get him down, he took it a step at a time and focused on the beauty and the good parts of each day – like the simple pleasure of beautiful birdsong."



Russell Jennings says his burn injury hasn't stopped him from challenging himself in the outdoors

Episode 024 Russell Jennings

"Russell Jennings, a retired mechanic from Auckland, is a guest whose stories are hugely underrated. His passion for the outdoors started at high school when he explored the paddocks, bush and creeks around his house. At 19, a debilitating burn injury impacted both Russell's hands, but he never let it stop his adventures, saying, "there's always a way around". He has since cycled and hiked across Aotearoa and beyond. Russell has traversed the North Island from Napier to Taranaki, surviving a near-drowning in the Whanganui River on the way, which he says was "a miracle". He loves sharing the outdoors with his children, and has taken them on one-on-one trips to learn navigation and survival skills. His resilience in the face of adversity is an inspiration."



Lauren Murray finds nature humbling

Episode 037, Lauren Murray

"At 25, photographer Lauren Murray outgrew the beaches of Waiheke Island and moved south to the picturesque mountains of Queenstown. Her journey into the wilderness is as much about capturing the beauty of the landscape as it is about finding perspective in its vastness and stillness. Lauren describes nature as "humbling": (she says) its expansiveness can make you feel unimportant and bring you back to what you can control. She shares her first solo adventure to Earnslaw Burn, a lesson in under-preparedness as she had a sleepless night in the cold solitude of her tent. Despite the discomfort, Lauren found herself in awe of the sheer scale of nature."



Germaine Srhoy describes the mountains as 'medicine'


Episode 057, Germaine Srhoy

Germaine is a Canterbury paramedic who contemplated walking Te Araroa for years. She finally committed to walking the South Island section, which represented everything she loved about hiking – mountains, vistas and isolation. Her journey on the trail was transformative; she describes the mountains as "medicine". Germaine faced physical challenges, including unrelenting foot pain. Mentally, her toughest moments came when she confronted her unresolved trauma from past sexual abuse. Te Araroa offered her a sanctuary to process these feelings. The trail became a canvas for her healing journey. Germaine's advice for those wanting to walk Te Araroa is simple but powerful – make the decision, commit to it, and take the first step."



Sonia Barrish's family walked the Old Ghost Road

Episode 015, Sonia Barrish

"Sonia is a dedicated adventurer and devoted mother who walked the Old Ghost Road with her husband Menzo, her 11-week-old baby and spirited four-year-old. Through Sonia's candid storytelling, she transported me to the exposed ridgelines and lush native bush of the 85km trail. Each morning, the family followed a military-grade routine, with teamwork required to keep the kids dry, fed, safe and happy. The walk had its unique challenges with cloth nappy changes, midnight tantrums, and heavy rain on the final day. Their five-day adventure highlighted Sonia's commitment to sharing her love of the outdoors with her kids." 



KEA-RIZZ-MA!

It's little wonder that the charismatic kea is one of our most treasured native birds.

by MICHAEL SZABO

LAST YEAR'S WORD of the Year was 'rizz', the slang word for charisma that boomed on social media. If 'rizz' means the ability to charm and impress, then the kea has it in heaps.

New Zealand's alpine parrot was once known as the 'clown of the mountains' for its playful, quirky antics and an (annoying) urge to sneak off with tramping boots left outside alpine huts.

In 2018, in an attempt to distract the mischievous birds from moving road cones and damaging nearby diggers, DOC built a 'wild kea gym' near the Homer Tunnel entrance in Fiordland. The gym frame included ladders and objects for kea to play with, such as bells and hessian bags filled with fragrant herbs.

THE KEA'S STRONG, POINTED BILL CAN BE USED AS AN ICEPICK AND ITS CLAWED FEET LIKE CRAMPONS TO CLAMBER UP FROZEN SNOWFIELDS



MICHAEL SZABO

It's little wonder then that the charismatic kea is one of our most treasured native birds. It used to have pride of place on the \$10 note (now supplanted by the whio) and was voted Bird of the Year in 2017.

More recently, researchers have shown it to be among the world's most intelligent bird species. A 2020 study by University of Auckland researchers included an experiment to test the kea's ability to make predictions using statistical, physical and social information in a way similar to that of a human.

The study showed that the kea can make true statistical inferences and integrate different types of information into its predictions of

uncertain events – skills that were thought to require language. The results for kea mirrored those of human infants and chimpanzees in similar tests.

Kea are also well equipped for alpine life. The bird's strong, pointed bill can be used as an icepick and its clawed feet like crampons to clamber up frozen snowfields, or even as 'skis' to slide off hut roofs.

Like the kākā, the kea can use its bill as a third 'foot' to help it scramble over rough terrain. And like humans, it can be left or right 'handed'.

Unlike us, they don't need puffer jackets to keep warm in the snow. They have olive and emerald green feathers with orange and yellow on the underwings. Juveniles also sport yellow eye rings and lower bill.

Adult kea grow up to 46cm and can weigh 900–1100g, a similar size to a pūkeko. Male kea are about 20 per cent bulkier than females and have a longer bill. They're monogamous and form long-term pair-bonds, and can live for up to 30 years.

Kea are endemic to the South Island. They live mainly in Kā Tiritiri o te Moana the Southern Alps from 600m to 2000m altitude, with smaller


numbers at Nelson Lakes and in the Kaikōura ranges. They're omnivorous, eating nectar, fruits, shoots, insect larvae and sometimes shearwater chicks, which they dig from burrows in the Kaikōura ranges.

Early high-country farmers saw kea land on the backs of sheep in winter and dig into the flesh with their bill to eat the fat deposits. This led to a mistaken belief that all kea were 'sheep killers', and in 1860 a bounty was put on the bird. Over 150,000 kea were killed before they became fully protected in 1986. They now remain an endangered species.

Listen out for the loud, high-pitched cry of adult birds, "kee-ee-aa-aa" or "keeeeeaaaa", or the whooping and squealing calls of juvenile birds.

The Kea Conservation Trust advises trampers not to feed kea as they cannot digest the same foods as us.

Some great wild places to see kea include Mt Arthur, Arthur's Pass, Treble Cone above Lake Wānaka, Aoraki Mt Cook, Franz Josef and the Routeburn Track.

Just don't leave your tramping boots outside the hut. 

Michael Szabo is the author of *Native Birds of Aotearoa* (Te Papa Press) and editor of *Birds New Zealand* magazine.



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THE LAST REMNANT

IVORY GLACIER, WEST COAST

by SOL MARCONI



A TRIP to Ivory Lake Hut is memorable, through rainforest and alpine terrain with unparalleled views. It's a multi-day trip and it's far from the crowds. In fact, the hut is one of New Zealand's most remote and is tucked away near the shore of Ivory Glacier's outlet lake. It was built in the 1970s for scientists monitoring the glacier's retreat.

There are several routes to get there, none are easy.

The first two days are mostly easy travel along the Whitcombe Valley. There's a steady climb after the Price Flat footbridge to Steadman Brow, where there are great camping spots between Cropp Knob and The Rotunda. From here, it's a long day to Ivory Lake across Mt Beaumont, over snow-covered ridges.

Ivory Lake Hut is unique and has a cupboard full of research specimens collected in the 1970s. The hut book reveals infrequent visits, but jotted there are the names of many renowned Kiwi explorers and mountaineers.

The return to the Whitcombe Valley Track involves a sidle around the Pahlow Ridge before taking the second stream down to the valley. Although the Topo50 map shows a track for this section, we found no evidence of it. At the valley floor, follow the true right of the Whitcombe River towards Wilkinson Hut, where there's a footbridge. From here, follow the Whitcombe Valley Track back to the car park. With several huts along the way, this section can be taken as slowly as you like.

WILDFILE

Access Whitcombe Valley Track

Grade Difficult, alpine travel and good navigation skills required

Distance 86km

Total ascent 6280m

Accommodation Frew Hut (standard, 10 bunks), Price Flat Hut (standard, seven bunks), camping on Steadman Brow, Ivory Lake Hut (basic, six bunks), Wilkinson Hut (basic, four bunks), Rapid Creek Hut (standard, four bunks)

Time Car park to Frew Hut, 6–8hr; to Price Flat Hut, 5–6hr; to Steadman Brow, 6–7hr; to Ivory Lake, 10–12hr

Topo50 map BW18, BV18

WILD TRIPS



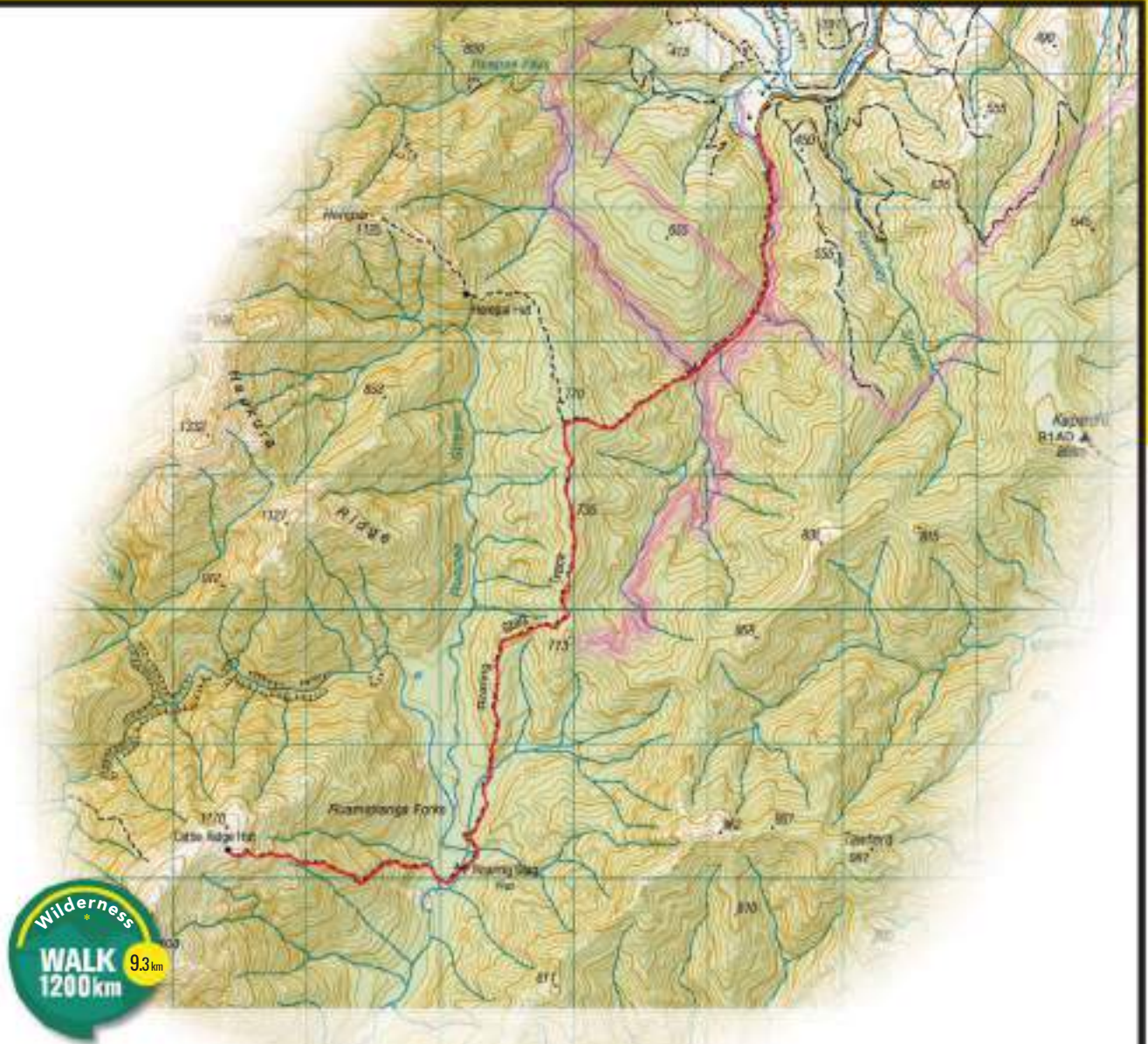
Arriving at Cattle Ridge Hut



Cattle Ridge Hut, *Tararua Forest Park*

A sanctuary on the Tararua tops with commanding views over the Wairarapa

by **LACHLAN MCKENZIE**



IT TAKES just minutes to reach the first swing bridge over the Mangatainoka River from the end of Putara Road. From here it's a gentle amble beside the river for about an hour to another, longer swing bridge. This lovely section of track has easy access to several fine swimming holes.

From the second bridge it's uphill through red beech forest for about an hour. The slog ends at the T-junction with tracks to Roaring Stag and Herepai huts.

Turn left towards Roaring Stag Hut, which is popular with families and about two hours away. The track is muddy in patches but is a gentle stroll along a broad, flat ridge followed by a benign descent. Along this section there is stunning lowland podocarp and broadleaf forest and a variety of ferns and textures.

Roaring Stag Hut is beautifully sited overlooking the Ruamahanga River, with Cattle Ridge looming above. There's good space for tents. Fill your water bottle then cross the swing bridge immediately

downstream and begin the two-hour tramp to Cattle Ridge Hut.

Although Cattle Ridge has broad and uniform summits, it's a fair climb from all directions. It's a 500m gain to reach the leatherwood zone and the hut is 200m higher. Unlike Roaring Stag Track, this one is steep and rough – typical of the Tararua Ranges – so take your time. Just over a spur the hut appears above, about five minutes away.

Cattle Ridge Hut was renovated in 2019 by the Wellington branch of the NZ Deerstalkers Association and is a light, bright five-bunker with a log burner, double-glazing and fresh paint. The enclosed porch is ideal for boots and wet gear and the hut feels spacious. It's a fine place for a night, especially once settled with a warm cuppa and the fire going.

Sunrise over the Wairarapa Plain and mist rising from the Ruamahanga Gorge far below can be enjoyed from the rear window.



DOWNLOAD Find the map and route notes for this trip at www.wildernessmag.co.nz

WILD FILE

Access Putara Road end

Grade Moderate

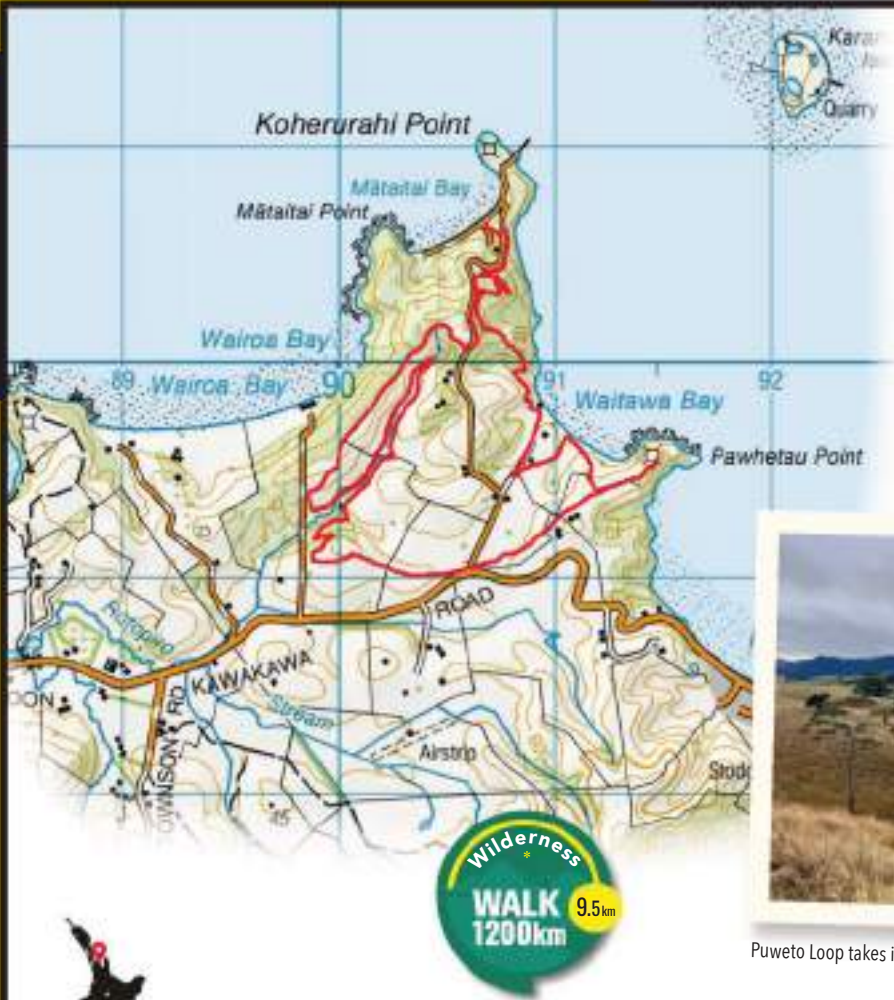
Time Car park to Roaring Stag Hut, 4hr; Roaring Stag Hut to Cattle Ridge Hut, 2–3hr

Distance 9.3km

Total ascent 1234m

Accommodation Roaring Stag Hut (standard, 12 bunks); Cattle Ridge Hut (standard, five bunks)

Topo50 map BN34



Pūweto Loop takes in coast and country

Pūweto Loop, Waitawa Regional Park

Serene bays, regenerating native bush and a young wetland make for a diverse walk on Auckland's eastern coast.

by ALISTAIR HALL

FROM LOVELY Mātaitai Bay, Pūweto Loop track climbs uphill on easy gravel. It soon crosses the road and sticks close to it for a few hundred metres as far as Tikapa Moana lookout. Here excellent views to the east take in Karamuramu, Pakihi and Ponui islands and the Coromandel Peninsula on the horizon.

The track now enters a forested area with plenty of tree ferns, and the gravel is replaced with a natural surface as it leads downhill to Waitawa Bay. The campground here has a cooking shelter and is used mostly by those undertaking the five-day Te Ara Moana sea kayaking trail, which stops at Waitawa and four other regional parks.

It is not possible to continue along the shore at high tide, and a diversion leads south for 400m along a farm track, crosses a road and heads north-east through paddocks back to the south side of Waitawa Bay.

A grass track leaves this beach and climbs above the bay. At the top is a short side-track to Pāwhetau Pā, considered the best example of a headland pā in the Auckland region. This significant site offers wonderful views of Waitawa and Kawakawa bays.

Back on the main track, head west through paddocks to the park entrance. Cross the road and continue west through more pasture up a gentle hill before a steeper descent to the wetland.

Here there is a confusing array of trails, but they all seem to lead in the same general direction. Some are specifically for mountain bikers.

At the wetland, it's possible to shorten the walk by 1.4km by simply crossing a vehicle bridge to avoid the Valley Track. Otherwise, head north on the Valley Track to enjoy an easy walk around this small wetland area, first planted in 2013. After 700m the track turns south to bring walkers back to the far side of the bridge.

A farm track leads south then climbs a hill, bending to the north before traversing a 1km ridge with pine forest on the left and farm paddock on the right. At the northern end of the ridge it rejoins the park road. Follow this back to Tikapa Moana Lookout and the track back to Mātaitai Bay and the car park.

Before leaving, it's worth visiting the wharf on the far side of Koherurahi Point. People fish from here.

WILD FILE

Access From Clevedon Kawakawa Road

Grade Easy

Time 3hr

Distance 9.5km

Total ascent 282m

Topo50 map BB33



DOWNLOAD Find the map and route notes for this trip at www.wildernessmag.co.nz





The Ashley River is followed through farmland before the steep climb to Tarn Hut



Tarn Hut, Puketeraki Forest Conservation Area

Beautiful views from a charming hut that's easily accessible from Christchurch make this loop an ideal weekend getaway.

by JAMES STACEY

THE TRACK to Tarn Hut initially follows the Ashley River through farmland. It's well-marked, flat – and belies the challenge to the knees up ahead.

After an hour or so there's an easy crossing of the Lilburne River, after which the track divides: the right fork follows the Ashley River towards Youngman Stream Hut, the left ascends sharply towards Tarn Hut.

At the start the uncompromising 4WD track leads steeply away from the river with a few switchbacks to provide respite. It's wide and well-graded and there are fantastic views down the Lees Valley and over the Canterbury Plains towards Christchurch. Pt1250 is reached after ascending approximately 800m. It's a good spot for a break and the hut is only 30 minutes away along a level track. In the right light, the views towards the Pancake Range are spectacular. In poor conditions, however, it can be exposed, with only tussock and a few lonely trees for company.

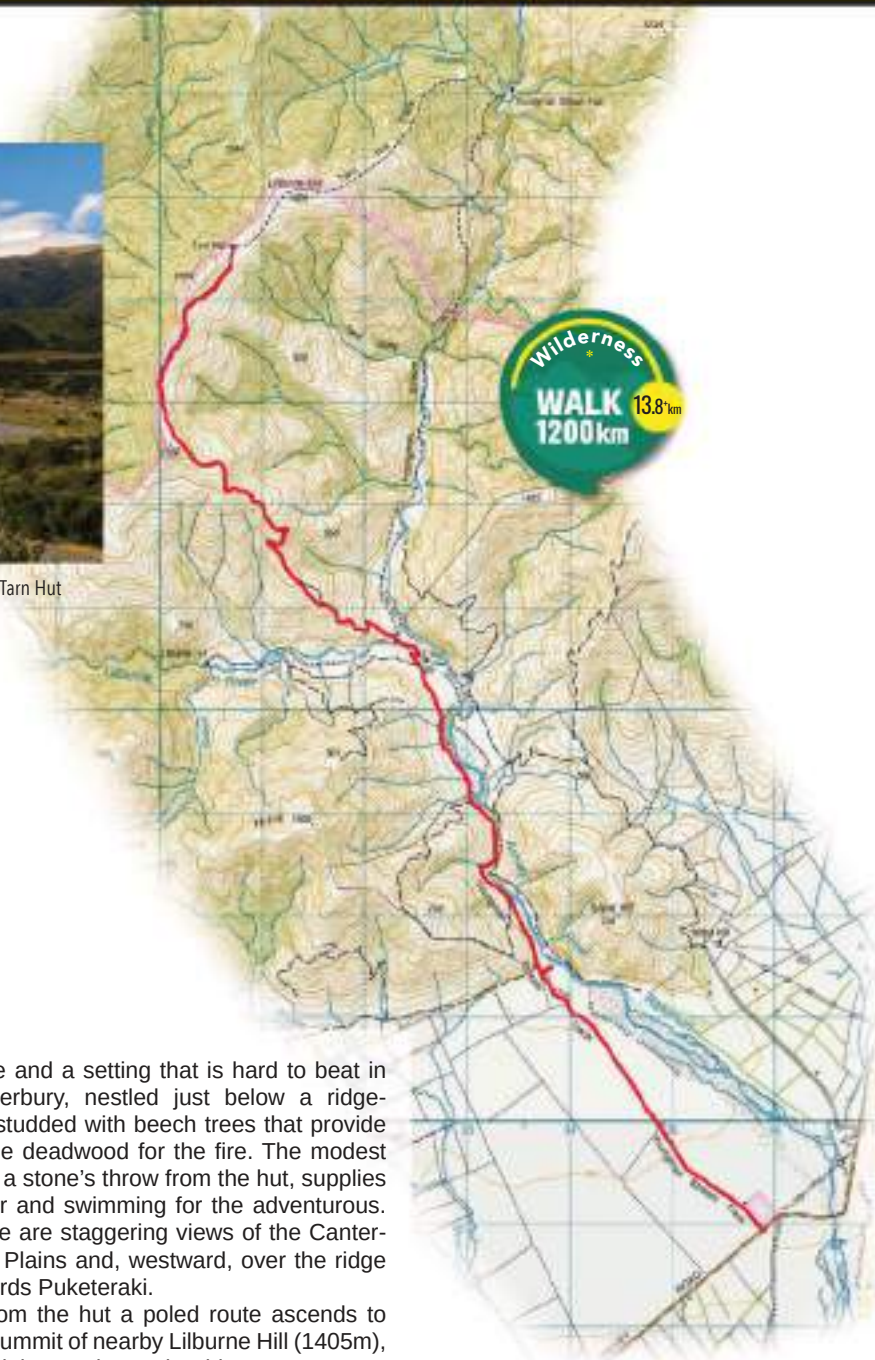
Tarn Hut pops into view at the last minute. It's a basic four-bunker with a certain spartan charm, a functional

stove and a setting that is hard to beat in Canterbury, nestled just below a ridge-line studded with beech trees that provide ample deadwood for the fire. The modest tarn, a stone's throw from the hut, supplies water and swimming for the adventurous. There are staggering views of the Canterbury Plains and, westward, over the ridge towards Puketeraki.

From the hut a poled route ascends to the summit of nearby Lilburne Hill (1405m), the highest point on the ridge.

Return the way you came, or continue along the ridge past Lilburne Hill to descend to six-bunk Youngman Stream Hut. The descent is through tussock, which soon gives way to beech forest and ends with a straightforward river crossing.

From the hut, the track enters beech forest before crossing the Ashley River, after which it ascends out of the trees to sidle around 100m above the river – watch out for treacherous patches of matagouri that encroach on the narrow path – before descending to re-enter the forest and rejoin the river. From there it sticks close to the water until the fork with the Tarn Hut Track and the path to the car park.



WILDFILE

Access 29km along Lees Valley Road there is a turn-off to a 4WD track, which leads to the carpark

Grade Moderate

Time Car park to Tarn Hut, 4hr; to Youngman Stream Hut, 2hr; to car park, 4hr

Distance 13.8km to Tarn Hut

Total ascent 919m

Accommodation Tarn Hut (basic, four bunks); Youngman Stream Hut (standard, six bunks)

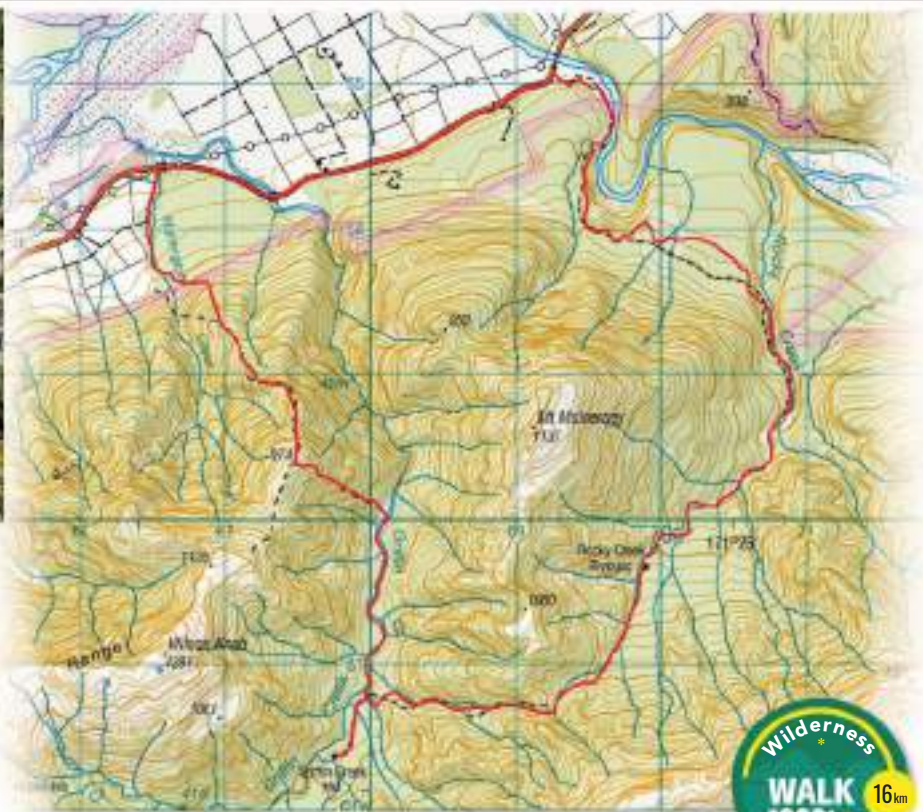
Topo50 map BV22



DOWNLOAD Find the map and route notes for this trip at www.wildernessmag.co.nz



It's a boulder bash down Rocky Creek towards the bivouac



Rocky Creek Bivouac via Griffin Creek Hut, West Coast

Tackle some rugged terrain and visit remote huts and crystal clear rivers populated by whio.

by **VICTORIA BRUCE**

THIS IS A two-to-three-day fair-weather trip with extensive river travel. It runs through remote rātā and kamahi country and can be done in either direction.

The track into Griffin Creek begins on the true left of Harrington Creek, off SH73, 4km west of the Taipo River bridge. For courtesy, check in with the local landowners before parking on the old section of highway in the paddock. Then, follow a track outside the fenceline 800m up the hillside before heading into bush beside Harrington Creek.

After 10min the track crosses the creek and climbs steeply through lush bush on the face of the Griffin Range, with southern rātā, supplejack and tree ferns stretching into the canopy. It's a tough ascent that includes scrambling up the side of a regenerating slip face, only easing off when the narrow spur that bounds Griffin Creek around the 740m mark is reached.

Follow the spur southwards for another 30min to a small clearing at the Wilson Knob turnoff at Pt974. There's an ancient metal drum here containing rainwater. A little further along, pause to look down into the top of Griffin Creek and the jagged teeth of Razorback Ridge and the Tara Tama Range to the south.

The track turns east and drops steeply into Griffin Creek. In places the 300m descent is slippery and exposed. Once in the creek it's a further 2km of mostly pleasant river travel upstream to Griffin Creek Hut, made

delightful by encounters with whio.

From the tidy four-bunk hut, a short stretch of track leads past the loo to an outdoor wood-heated bath and a sandy waterhole in the creek.

To continue the circuit, retrace your steps for 15min to cross the side creek draining Scotty's Saddle and sidle around to the next, unnamed, side creek draining Rocky Creek saddle. It's mostly a grovel up the creek, climbing occasionally onto sections of track for just over 1km to reach the 900m scrub-clad saddle that leads into Rocky Creek.

Negotiate the slip just beyond the saddle into the head of Rocky Creek. After another hour of boulder bashing with multiple creek crossings, there's a large cairn and Permolat on the true right of the creek. This marks the track to Rocky Creek Bivouac.

There's space around the two-bunk hut for tents, water is fetched from the nearby creek, and there's no loo.

Continue down Rocky Creek, staying on the true left where possible. It's a rough route, at times bouldery and slow-going, but there are whio in the deep pools. The track leaves Rocky Creek at the top of a small gorge, climbing then sidling across a long terrace beneath Mt McInerney to descend on the true left of the Taipo River. Follow a marked track through grass and scrub before emerging beside the Taipo Bridge on SH73. From here, it's 4km back to the Harrington Creek car park.

WILDFILE

Access Harrington Creek Bridge or Taipo River Bridge on SH73

Grade Difficult

Time Car park to Griffin Creek Hut, 4–5hr; to Rocky Creek Hut, 3–4hr; to car park, 4–5hr

Distance 17.3km

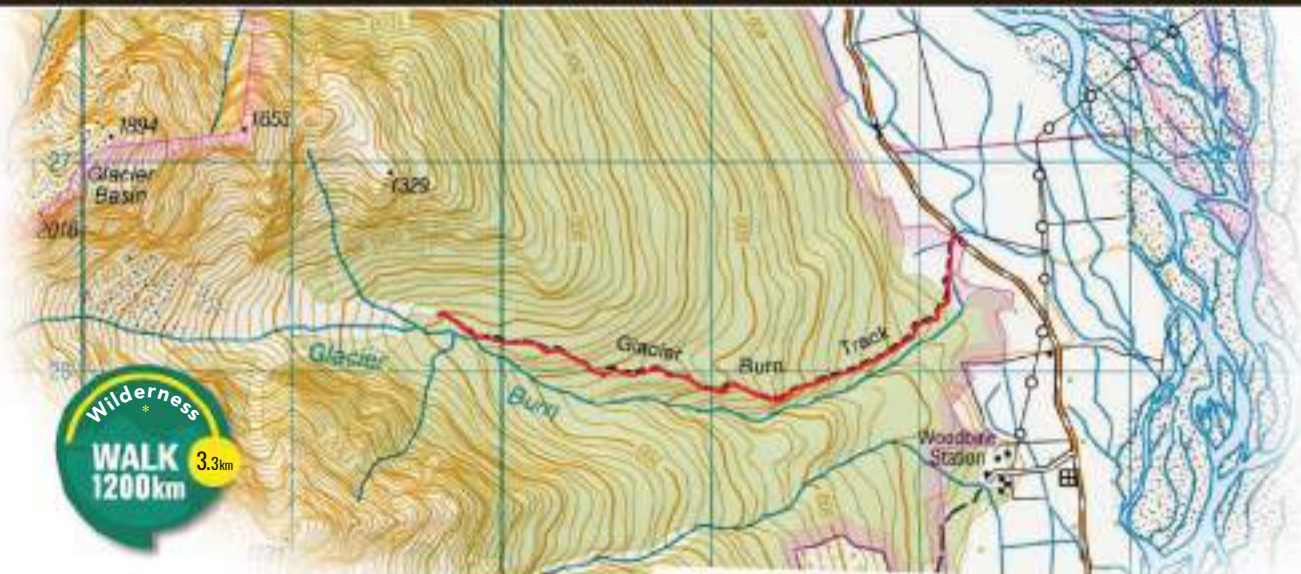
Total ascent 1320m

Accommodation Griffin Creek Hut (basic, four bunks), Rocky Creek Bivouac (basic, two bunks)

Topo50 map BV20



DOWNLOAD Find the map and route notes for this trip at www.wildernessmag.co.nz



Glacier Burn Track, Glenorchy

Surrounded by many bucket-list hikes, the Glacier Burn Track is an underdog that is worth your time.

by **JUB BRYANT**



Ferns line the track soon after entering the beech forest

THE TRACK starts at 330m altitude from the Glacier Burn Track car park next to the Kinloch Road, which leads to the Greenstone–Caples Track.

Parking should be reasonably safe here as many people drive past on the way to the area's many tracks.

Following a few minutes' walk through a grassy field, the track crosses the Glacier Burn – normally easily – and enters beech forest after 300m.

The first kilometre is on a neat but well-worn track with small ferns lining the way. There may be treefall in early summer.

You'll rarely be on flat ground through the beech forest, and the second kilometre has over 200m of elevation gain.


At just over 800m you leave the forest and enter alpine terrain.

Although DOC shows this track finishing at the 800m line (3.3km into the trail), there is no actual endpoint here. In winter and spring, however, it is better to go no further than the bushline, as the area is avalanche-prone.

In summer and early autumn it's different, and continuing past the treeline is worthwhile. The Glacier Basin offers views of the Humboldt Mountains, with Mt Bonpland (2343m) the highest notable peak.

The terrain beyond the treeline is a mix of rock and tussock, with rock eventually taking over. There are some vague tracks through the rocks but this is route-finding terrain. Keep to the true left of the Glacier Burn, which becomes visible again for the first time since crossing it at the start.

Further up are views of the Richardson Mountains, Glenorchy and the Dart River flowing into Lake Wakatipu.

The descent through the forest is straightforward, with only the occasional foot placement important in slightly rutted sections of the track where ferns can partially obscure the track. From time to time you may find people camping along the way. 



DOWNLOAD Find the map and route notes for this trip at www.wildernessmag.co.nz

WILD FILE

Access Glacier Burn Car Park, Kinloch Road

Grade Moderate

Time Car park to treeline, 60–90min; exploring above treeline, 30–75min.

Distance 3.3km (one way – add 2km return to continue past the treeline)

Total ascent 480m

Topo50 map CB10



From Junction Knob the route along the tops snakes away into the distance

High on the main range



This spectacular traverse of the Tararua main range is an unforgettable experience.

by **SAM HARRISON**



The

Tararua Range is punctuated by 'classic' tramps, routes trodden over many decades and memorialised in generations of photo albums. Of these routes, the southern and northern crossings are perhaps the best known. The most spectacular, though, would be the traverse of the main south range from Junction Knob to Bridge Peak. Add an off-track excursion into the rugged Snowy River and there's a recipe for an unforgettable experience.

My friend Emily and I shouldered packs and began down the Ōtaki Gorge Road from Shields Flat. It was a hot morning in April. We were soon over the Ōtaki River swingbridge on the track to Waitewaewae Hut, but 500m along the track abruptly turned up the hill and lost all semblance of civility. We scratched up the slope, glad the 'track' wasn't wet.

The reason for this detour was that a yawning chasm of a slip had consumed the track's old path. The route to Waitewaewae used to follow an old bush tramway that carried logs to the Ōtaki River, where they would be dumped to float down to the sea. Alas, deforestation and subsequent grazing has resulted in a number of slips, with one just before Papa Creek completely obliterating the old alignment. The maintained track now sidles high above the Waitatapia and Saddle Creek with plenty of undulation to keep the heart pumping.

We began dropping to 'the Plateau', a long, flat basin between the Waitatapia and the upper Ōtaki, where we joined with

the old track, crossed Plateau Stream and, on the far side, found a well-established campsite. Near the bottom of Aropito Creek a signpost marks a 'high' and 'low' route, with the latter continuing down to the Ōtaki on the true right. We decided to keep boots dry and steamed off up the hill, climbing 100m before dropping down to the Ōtaki River and Waitewaewae Hut. After a refreshing swim we settled in for the night, pondering the grunt up the range to come.

Next morning the world was cloaked in mist, the vague shapes of the surrounding hills only just visible. From Waitewaewae progress was swift to the bridge, where we crossed onto the true right of the Ōtaki. From here the track rose steeply, and contours ticked by slowly. Eventually we broke out of the bushline beneath Shoulder Knob, where we were greeted by a rare and spectacular panorama of the surrounding country, unobstructed by cloud. Even Taranaki Maunga was visible in the distance.

It was pleasing to reach Junction Knob, and we hoped the day's elevation grunt was over. Hmm. In front the ridge seemed to carry on forever, linking the peaks of Kahiwiroa, Aokaparangi and Maungahuka. The one thing we couldn't see were our feet, as monstrous tussock obscured the track's soggy path. A series of muddy tarns marked the approach to Anderson Memorial Hut, which was tucked into the edge of a goblin forest. We perched on the seat

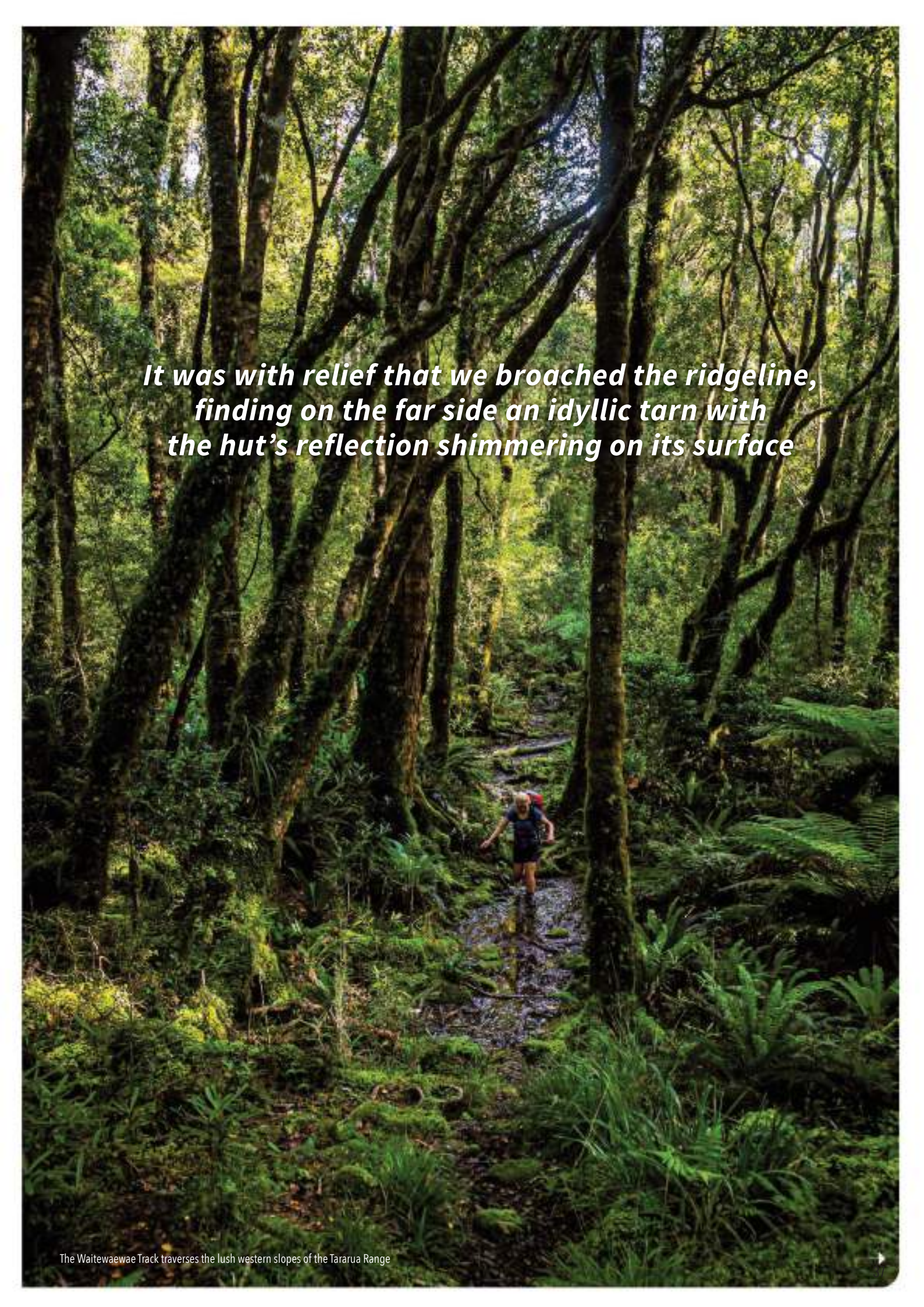
outside the hut, digging out our snacks and refilling water bottles.

From the hut we were straight into the forest, where thick masses of moss molested every surface. After 1500m the forest ended and we were again on the open tops, climbing Kahiwiroa's flanks in the scorching sun. From the top is the imposing form of Aokaparangi, and a quick peek into the valley revealed Mid-Waiohine Hut far below, one to bag another day.

We dropped 200m before beginning to rise on the far side – another 200m climb up to Aokaparangi. Emily was not inspired. It was mid-afternoon when we reached the summit signpost and Maungahuka was within our sights, albeit distantly. I opted to drop down to Aokaparangi Hut 200m below on the bushline, while Emily wisely continued in the direction of Maungahuka. I left my pack and checked out the hut before slogging back up the hill. Reunited with my load, I careered down the slope in the direction of Wright. The track was little more than a muddy slide flanked by tussock and flax. At the saddle between Wright and Simpson the ridge narrowed, necessitating a clamber above reasonably steep drop-offs. I caught Emily at Pt1174 and we began the final climb to Maungahuka. It was with great relief that we broached the ridgeline, finding on the far side an idyllic tarn with the hut's reflection shimmering on its surface. The hut is a cosy sanctuary.

The circuit intersects the popular Southern Crossing at Kime Hut



A hiker with a backpack is walking on a narrow, muddy path through a dense forest. The forest is lush with green ferns and moss-covered trees. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking down the path towards the hiker. The lighting is soft, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

*It was with relief that we broached the ridgeline,
finding on the far side an idyllic tarn with
the hut's reflection shimmering on its surface*



Access



Ōtaki Forks Road

Distance



57km

Grade



Difficult

Total ascent



4500m

Topo50 map



BP33, BN33

Time

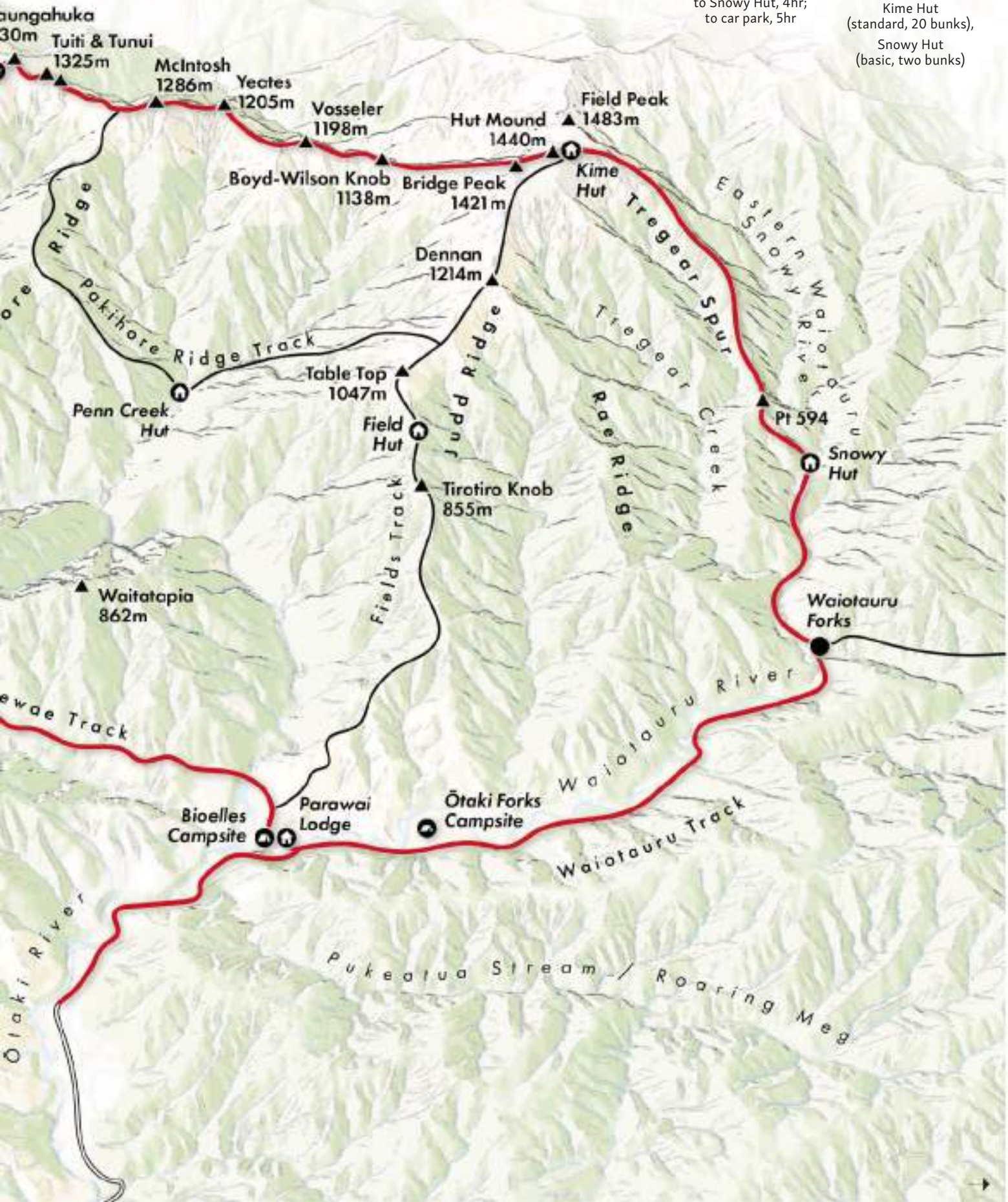


Road terminus to Waitewaewae Hut, 4.5hr; to Anderson Memorial Hut, 4hr; to Maungahuka Hut, 4.5hr; to Kime Hut, 4.5hr; to Snowy Hut, 4hr; to car park, 5hr

Accommodation



Waitewaewae Hut (standard, 16 bunks), Anderson Memorial Hut (standard, six bunks), Aokaparangi Hut (basic, two bunks), Maungahuka Hut (standard, 10 bunks), Kime Hut (standard, 20 bunks), Snowy Hut (basic, two bunks)





The position of Maungahuka makes it a spectacular vantage point to watch both the sunrise and sunset



A short gorge must be waded to follow the Snowy River out to the Waiotauru Track

Emily dragged me out before 7am to watch the sky, which was dancing with the amber colours of sunrise. The landscape was painted orange. It was magical. Then, coffee and porridge and off, behind the hut, up Maungahuka (1330m). From its top we could see the twin Tararua peaks of Tuiti and Tunui. They looked impassable, their gnarled summits appearing as insurmountable obstacles. However, slowly but surely, we made our way up and around the shoulder of Tunui, helped by the infamous steel ladder. I wondered how this route could be achieved without it. At the top we clambered over a rocky knoll before climbing around Tuiti, where pretty much the rest of the morning's walking was laid out before us: up, down, mud, up, down, mud. Yeates, Vosseler and Boyd-Wilson Knob were all knocked off with some determination, as was the 300m climb to the top of Bridge Peak until, at last, we were at empty Kime Hut.

We decided not to stay at Kime but head down into the Eastern Waiotauru Snowy River for our final night. We went southwest down the unmarked Tregear Spur, and were surprised at how open the bush was when we reached it. There were even a few markers. It all went well

**Emily
swore at
me as we
alternated
between
vertical
slides and
sub-par
sidles**

until we reached Pt594, from where we had to find a way to Snowy Hut on the true left bank of the Snowy River. I led us off the ridge and soon realised I had made a mistake. Emily swore at me as we alternated between vertical slides and sub-par sidles. The bush spat us out, cut up and exhausted, on the true right of the Snowy. On the far bank was Snowy Hut, a surprisingly welcoming place for an unofficial hut. The inside was tidy, and dry wood was stacked beside the fire.

Next morning it was downriver towards the Waiotauru Track. Travel was easy, alternating between gravel shore and forest on either bank. We soon reached the confluence at the end of the ridge leading to Pt666, where there is a gorge. Two rock walls rise from the river to form a canyon that cradles an emerald-green pool. I gingerly stepped into the water and followed a gravel bank deeper and deeper. The water crept above my stomach. The flow was slow, my pack was floating, and with relief my feet found the far shore and I was soon high and dry, waiting for Emily. She seemed to find deeper bits, getting wet up to her armpits, but came out the other side all smiles. We continued down the river for another kilometre until the confluence with

Tregear Creek, where we crossed to the true right of the Snowy. We picked up a route blazed with red tape before crossing the Tregear. On the far side we were on the remnants of a 1970s bulldozed logging road. This took us high above the river before dropping back to it. It ended at a bluff over the water just north of the side creek on the true left. We clambered carefully down this bluff before picking up the road on the far side, which connected us with the swingbridge over the Waiotauru.

We crossed to follow the track along the true left of the Waiotauru. It was mostly a good track, although several sections had experienced significant wash-outs resulting in uphill detours. Soon, though, we reached open country, with one final slip to clamber over before reaching the overgrown Ōtaki Forks Road. Our pace increased drastically, and it wasn't long before we were at the car.

This traverse is not to be undertaken lightly. It features copious amounts of mud, multitudes of unnecessary climbs and descents and would be inhospitable in anything but the best weather. However, it has a particular type of charm that is hard to replicate, and for those game enough, it's an unforgettable experience. **W**



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by SHAUN BARNETT

THE GHOSTS OF WINTERS PAST

In walking the Old Ghost Road, *Wilderness* contemplates which of Kahurangi's three great traverses takes the top prize.





PHOTOS BY SHAWN BARNETT/BLACK ROBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Sleep-out hut from
Lyell Saddle Hut

Winter. Frost. Snow. Ghosts.

Well, one anyway: Ghost Lake, which lies below, frozen and glistening, as we wait at Ghost Lake Hut for the sun to appear. We had left the warmth of the hut early, set up cameras and watched the sun sink – seemingly reluctantly – over the eastern horizon. Numb fingers on cold cameras and tripods, but it was worth it. The dawn was sublime: sheer grand spectacle almost beating the evening before when, at dusk, we had watched a fantastically large, orange super moon pop above the Southern Alps.





The spectacular sidle on the Lyell Range

To the southeast the great arc of the northern Kā Tiritiri o te Moana stretched to the southern horizon. Inversion cloud, snaking around spurs and copses of beech trees, clung like small glaciers in hollows and valleys.

Ten of us were tramping the Old Ghost Road, and had the track almost to ourselves. Despite having decades of tramping experience between us, none of us had walked the route before.

The 85km Old Ghost Road is one of three multi-day tracks that traverse Kahurangi National Park (the other two are the Heaphy and Wangapeka). Built with extraordinary skill, in many places laboriously hewn through granite, this world-class track ushers trampers and mountain bikers through the southwestern wilderness of the park. Mossy beech forests, rattling stands of

mountain neinei, granite tors, earthquake lakes and curious transitions from granite to limestone are all prominent features.

Historic gold-mining trails from the 1870s existed at both ends of what is now the Old Ghost Road. In the early 2000s, after building the Rough and Tumble Lodge in Seddonville, American Marion Boatwright and his Kiwi wife Susan Cook mooted the idea of connecting the two. With other locals, the couple formed the Lyell-Mōkihinui Trust, raised money, and nipped out an ingenious route that includes the Lyell Range tops. Following years of effort by volunteers and paid professionals, and considerable government support, the track finally opened in December 2015.

Early plans included a groundbreaking concept for New Zealand: to build a dual-use track for trampers and mountain



bikers. It was an inspired decision, and the resulting trail is beautifully contoured and benched, making for exhilarating riding or civilised strolling. Two sleepouts and tent sites can be booked at each hut in summer, and quirky signs and other bespoke details add a rustic flavour.

I had invited enough tramping buddies that we could fill the huts and virtually have the track to ourselves. Accordingly, ten of us set off from the Buller end late one afternoon in August.

From the historic Lyell mining settlement, the Old Ghost Road follows a gently graded mining track that sidles through beech forest in the Lyell Valley to the long-abandoned mining settlements of Gibbstown and Zalatown. The track crosses several small streams, including Irishman's Creek, which can be impassable when in flood, and crosses steep bluffs protected by safety barriers and rock nets. It's a steady climb to the Lyell Range, and the forest diminishes with altitude on the approach to Lyell Saddle Hut.

That evening light snow began to fall, and we woke to a wonderland of lacy white that delicately covered the beech forest and provided stark contrast to the vibrant red leaves of the mountain neinei.



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WILDERNESS OF KAHURANGI NATIONAL PARK.**



Specimen Point Hut sits above the Mōkihinui River





The Wangapeka Track is the most rugged of the three tracks

THE GREAT THREE TRAVERSE TRACKS COMPARED

Longest: The Old Ghost Road is 85km; the Heaphy is a close second (80km) and Wangapeka (60km) is third.

Most remote and rugged: Definitely the Wangapeka, which crosses two passes and has some challenging windfall sections on its West Coast side.

Hardest: The Wangapeka, for the reasons above.

Best wildlife: The Heaphy, for its great spotted kiwi, the chance to see takahē and whio, and the general abundance of other birdlife.

Best facilities: The Old Ghost Road, because of its well-stocked huts, campsites and sleep-outs, which provide lots of options and the chance to carry less.

Most family-friendly: The Old Ghost Road, for the reasons above, although the Heaphy is a close second.

Cooler historic feature: The Wangapeka, which has the utterly charming Cecil King Hut.

Geological interest: A tie between all three! The Old Ghost Road and Wangapeka both pass through interesting granite country, and the Heaphy has some lovely limestone caves on the Goulund Downs.

Botanical diversity: The Heaphy, which has everything from beech forest and high moorlands to sub-tropical nīkau palms.

History: The Heaphy wins easily as it is a historic Māori route used to cross between Mohua Golden Bay and Te Tai Poutini the West Coast. In the mid-1840s Thomas Brunner and Charles Heaphy explored part of this route. During the 1860s, after gold was discovered in Golden Bay, the Heaphy was developed into a mining track and named after Heaphy. It became overgrown and neglected during the first half of the twentieth century, and in the 1950s the Forest Service developed the track into a tramping trail. It later became a Great Walk, improved by the Department of Conservation. The Heaphy made history when it became a dual mountain biking/tramping trail, paving the way for other tracks like the Old Ghost Road and Paparoa Track.

Best gradient: The Old Ghost Road is a masterclass in an almost sweat-free gradient that ushers trampers and cyclists easily through what is otherwise rugged wilderness with a near-perfect surface and benching.

Best swimming: The Heaphy has the Tasman Sea section (though this can be extremely dangerous). It also has many lovely rivers (notably the Heaphy, Aorere and Gunner) as well as some hidden pools near huts like Saxon, Perry Saddle and Goulund Downs.



Arriving at a warm
Ghost Lake Hut

On the next stage, the track leaves the mining trail and climbs in long zigzags to the subalpine tops of the Lyell Range and a convenient shelter on the ridge crest. Beyond is a spectacular section of travel that sidles sometimes steep slopes below Rocky Tor. There are excellent views from several lookouts, and the many interesting granite formations culminate in a large standing obelisk known as The Tombstone. On the last hour or so before Ghost Lake the track re-enters the forest, dominated here by stunted beech and mountain neinei. There are some lovely bonsai-like gardens on this section, edged by moss and decorated

with rounded pebbles that almost look strategically placed. In other places icicles hung from shady rocks.

Perched above a formidable cliff, Ghost Lake Hut offers outstanding views of the northern Southern Alps and Mt Owen, Kahurangi's highest peak. Ghost Lake lies in the basin below, an attractive mountain tarn flanked by boulder jumbles, tussock, cliffs and a patch of beech forest, a photographer's delight of textures, colours and landforms.

The next morning, we reluctantly left the hut. Weka footprints in the snow drifts were like little arrows of determination.

On this section the track-makers' ingenuity is particularly apparent as it zigzags down a ramp, wending over the intricate Skyline Ridge and passing more granite features to reach a dramatically steep, three-tiered descent off a rocky ridgetop, the only stairs on the track. These are now bypassed by a new section that sidles and descends into Stern Creek, passing an attractive waterfall, to the pleasant flats where Stern Valley Hut is sited.



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The fourth day was the longest but was not arduous, and we tackled it in two bites: before and after lunch. The Stern Valley Flats mark a transition from rounded granite to angular limestone. Slightly downstream of the hut the track branches up the Ernest Valley. Here the massive 1929 Murchison earthquake sent great boulders into a basin, forming two lakes and destroying much of the forest. The trail passes close by Lake Grim, before rounding above Lake Cheerful and climbing among the limestone rubble in a series of switchbacks. Mature forest resumes as the track slips through a small saddle into the Goat Creek catchment before dropping to the Mōkihinui Valley below.

ABOVE: A super moon hangs above the Southern Alps, viewed from Ghost Lake Hut

LEFT: Historic mining machinery in the Mōkihinui River Gorge




Goat Creek Hut, in a little clearing just across the creek, is worth a visit. Built in 1957, this early example of a deer-culling hut has been beautifully restored by the Backcountry Trust. It was fitting that we were there with Rob Brown, who, as the trust's manager, helped organise the work.

Beyond, the trail reaches the Mōkihinui River South Branch. A large footbridge spans the river, after which the track continues along river flats on the true left through stately forest, dominated in many places by kahikatea and other podocarps. Weka stalked the understorey, all keen red eyes and brown stabbing beaks probing the soft earth for food.

Easy travel leads to Mōkihinui Forks Hut, where the North Branch adds its strength to the now formidable Mōkihinui River. Another couple of hours took us to Specimen Point Hut, situated on an elevated perch overlooking the downstream river gorge.

From here the Old Ghost Road follows another historic gold-mining trail. Cantilevered sections and footbridges ease the route through what was once extremely difficult terrain, notably at Suicide Bluffs. The river alternates between thunderous rapids and tranquil green and aqua flows. The trail passes the site of another former mining town, Seatonville, and then the valley begins to open out shortly before the end adjacent to the Rough and Tumble Lodge.

None of us really wanted the trail to finish. Over five days I hadn't even broken into a sweat. The scenery had been outstanding, the facilities superb, and we had all enjoyed a social time, catching up, trading stories and exclaiming at each new wonder. We felt huge admiration, gratitude and respect for those who toiled to create this magnificent trail. 



WILDFILE

Access Transport operators can relocate your car from the Lyell car park, adjacent to SH6, to the Rough and Tumble Lodge car park near Seddonville

Grade Easy–moderate

Time 4–5 days. Lyell car park to Lyell Saddle Hut, 4–6hr; to Ghost Lake Hut, 3–4hr; to Stern Valley Hut, 3–4hr; to Specimen Point Hut, 7–8hr; to Rough and Tumble Lodge, 4–6hr

Distance 85km

Cost A one-off fee of \$160 (\$99 in winter) applies to each person, regardless of the number of nights spent on the track.

WHAT BEGAN AS
A SIMPLE HUT
RELOCATION TURNED
INTO SO MUCH MORE
WHEN A TEAM OF
ALL-WOMEN VOLUNTEER
BUILDERS MET THE
CHALLENGE.

The wāhine JOB

by
KATHY OMBLER





The all-women team who completed the Komata Hut relocation and rebuild project



DEANNA GERLACH

Megan Dimozantos (left) inspects the hut's cladding with Kathy Ombler



Sally Neal works under the deck

“

Have you used a circular saw?” Megan Dimozantos asked.

“No,” I replied.

“An impact driver?”

“No, um, maybe I should just paint.”

“No way, learning is what this is all about.”

Project manager Megan wasn't taking no for an answer when I turned up to join a Backcountry Trust (BCT) all-wāhine hut project on a remote Ngaruroro River reach in southern Kaweka Forest Park, and said I'd always wanted to learn about building.

There was a lot of learning with this Komata Hut job. What started as a simple hut relocation grew into essentially a new hut build. There was a kānuka-covered terrace to clear, a steep access track to cut through dense scrub, and there was cyclone devastation that delayed everything for months as slips and tracks were repaired elsewhere.

The wāhine volunteers finally assembled in February to finish the job.

I was partnered with Napier lawyer and volunteer builder Emma Sye. Our job was to put up the outside cladding. Others focused on lining, roofing, painting, window framing, measuring, sawing, problem-solving and trying to ask Megan for help only as a last resort. Saws, drills, impact drivers, a big nail gun and a very loud iron-cutting nibbler drowned out the resident tomtit and even Megan's singing.

'Camp mother' Deanna Gerlach filmed us for the documentary she's producing, fed us snacks, cooled our beers in the river, walked up the new track placing markers, then cooked our dinner.

Through its volunteer network, the BCT plays a massive role in the maintenance and upgrade of huts and tracks throughout New Zealand's public conservation land. Since 2017, the trust has funded the restoration of around 300 huts and 1500km of track. Komata is one of 10 North Island BCT projects completed in the past 12 months, and the first hut job anywhere to be undertaken by an all-wāhine volunteer team.

All day Emma and I carried sheet after floppy sheet of flat galvanised iron across the stump-ridden clearing to fix to the framework underlay.

Emma, still going strong following the previous day's digging of a 1.5m deep long drop then erecting the toilet with Wellington lawyer Sally Neal, was now doing the technical measuring and levelling stuff while guiding newbie me.

“It's super to be able to give back to the backcountry in a voluntary capacity,” Emma says. “I've also learned an amazing array of building skills and the confidence to apply these in practice. And it's the other volunteers who make these projects so special. The human connections are especially cherished.”

Later, other women helped us finish our cladding, now wearing headlamps in the dying light. This is how the project rolled: supporting each other, building friendships and learning skills.

The others were on day five of a marathon nine-day stint when I arrived, having walked the new track they'd cut instead of helicoptering in with them, along with the timber, iron and old hut in all its parts. The track descends 800m through old pines, then thick, regenerating scrub to the river. It is toe-crushingly steep. I installed track markers en route and gained huge respect for those who had spent more days than they'd expected lugging a chainsaw, fuel,



KATHY OMBLER



Helen Payn bends the iron cladding around the window frame

loppers and camping gear to open the track up.

To be honest, I'd been unsure about joining this project. I expected a bunch of staunch, qualified tradies and here was me, a novice. It turns out that, apart from Megan, there was not a single tradie among them. Instead there was a teacher, an engineer, a part-time actor, a college student, a policy advisor, a tour guide, two lawyers and one woman working towards her pre-trade building course. No building qualifications; but staunch, definitely.

Some had met on previous BCT jobs and pondered how neat it would be to take on their own project. So this wasn't any hard-nosed feminist thing, just a bunch of women building new friendships with a can-do attitude, and looking to gain more skills and confidence by doing it for themselves.

People may remember the hut as Comet Hut. It had been seriously vandalised at its road-end site, and when DOC's Malcolm Lock suggested shifting it to a new site, Megan, as BCT North Island project manager, grabbed the chance for the women. The hut's original name, Komata, also the name of nearby Komata Trig, has been reinstated.

**THIS IS HOW
THE PROJECT
ROLLED:
SUPPORTING
EACH OTHER,
BUILDING
FRIENDSHIPS
AND LEARNING
SKILLS.**

The plan was to helicopter the building to a nearby riverside flat to become a base for rafting, fishing, hunting and pest control.

But Geotech engineers preferred a terrace 30m higher, one covered with tall kākūka forest. You could call this the project that grew. Now, the women had to clear the kākūka to make room for the hut. Cutting through such hard, chain-blunting wood was not easy, but it did create a massive firewood supply for future hut users. Weeks later, Cyclone Gabrielle's rain inundated the lower flat.

The project grew some more when it was realised that Komata Hut was in a bad state: battered and shot at, with only the floor and some framing, trusses and roofing being of any use. Gary MacDonald (of AFM Building) opened up his Napier workshop to the women. Here, they built new framework, constructed flat pack kits for the woodshed, toilet and tank stand, and pre-painted the ply for the internal walls. Gary was the project's licensed building practitioner. He also mentored the women and loaned them his tools.

The previous December three of the team had joined Megan to install the hut foundations. It was another epic few days recalls teacher Emma Martindale, who'd already been at the coalface for both the site and track-clearing jobs. "Digging holes through rocks and roots then concreting the piles was such grimy, dusty work, but we laughed and sang and learnt new skills like how to use a nail gun safely and calculate Pythagoras's theorem to set rectangles."

"Those girls worked their butts off, learned a bunch of new stuff and picked it up like pros," adds Megan. "I'm not sure I've ever seen a crew set piles so precisely."





Megan leads an early morning briefing to set out the day's tasks



Rachel, Fuse and Emma walk in to the hut site

KATHY OMBLER



DEANNA GERLACH

The learning and hard yakka continued in February, dawn until dusk and later some days. First, the women broke the old hut down, braced its floor and bundled framework and iron into flatpacks ready to be flown to the new site. There was a hold-the-breath moment, then celebration, when pilot Joe Faram lowered the old floor on a rather long line directly and safely onto its new bearers.

When I turned up, there stood a hut frame, wrapped with underlay. The tiny clearing was strewn with timber, iron, cement bags, ladders, scaffolding, paint, tools and tents. It was raining the next morning, but by then, the hut's roof and walls were in place, so we sat inside to plan the day's tasks.

"Look at you guys," said a rather proud Megan. "You have literally built a hut from the ground up and here we are, it's raining and we're sheltering inside our hut."

By the time the rain had stopped we had a new veranda to sit on. When I left, we'd put in four more piles for the tank stand, the fireplace was being installed, bunks built and exterior painting had started.

(Everyone had a say in the colour scheme. Pink was contentious – "a gender stereotype, nope!" The consensus was to go simple and strong. Dulux Mārahau and Moorhouse Street were duly voted in.)

For engineer Sarah Millar, Komata was her first BCT foray. "I went to a roadshow where Megan was calling for volunteers," she says. "Before I knew it, I was on the first Komata track-cutting trip. It was such hard work! Then those nine days on the hut site were huge for me.

"I was well out of my comfort zone, but clear instructions from Megan helped. She leads by example, she also works incredibly hard and I found that I rose to that challenge."

Sarah's daughter, Bella, also joined the team and helped build the deck.

"THESE WOMEN HAVE DONE SUCH A GOOD JOB. THEY SHOULD BE INCREDIBLY PROUD."

"Part way through screwing down the decking timber, Bella shoulder-tapped me, jumped up and down on the deck and said quietly, 'We built this, Mum'. It was such a special moment," Sarah recalls. "I've come away immensely proud of the work Bella and I did on the deck, and that Sally and I did on the hut lining."

Likewise for Sally, who agrees that measuring tetris-like bits of ply to fit awkward angles around the old hut's trusses was a painstaking but intensely satisfying challenge. A veteran of several BCT projects, Sally has loved the opportunity to learn skills and meet other like-minded women. "I think it's safe to say, there's some lifelong friendships in there," she says.

Sally says her happy place is being in the bush: "In my day job I'm behind a computer all day, so it's a refreshing change to be in a physical role with a tangible result at the end of each day. And being able to create a space for others to enjoy is very special."

For Emma Martindale, the project has also been a great place to meet like-minded women, to be her authentic self without judgement, to learn new skills in a safe environment and to get into parts of the ngahere that she'd probably not go to on her own.

A final weekend blitz in March saw the job completed; spouting up, water tank in



The Komata Hut project was engineer Sarah Millar's first for the BCT


place, bunks installed, floor sanded – but these women aren't letting go of this place any time soon. They are taking on the 'Community Agreement' for future hut and track maintenance.

"Contorta pine control and benching the steep track to the river are also on the agenda," says Sally. "This project has been a huge labour of love for us and it's special to be able to continue that."

Megan plans a river trip for the team. "It's a beautiful stretch of gorges and grade 3–4 rafting," she says. "Watching this project come together has brought immense pride and satisfaction for me. What a journey it's been.

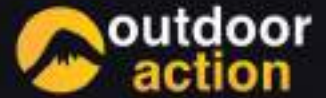
"These women have done such a good job. They should be incredibly proud. I think Gary, who's been an amazing supporter, would be happy to have any of them on his building crew. He couldn't believe how much we got done in those nine days."

But it's not just about huts and tracks. "It's about the community we're creating," says Megan. "People are learning new skills, making friends, having experiences and opportunities they wouldn't have had before. I'm really hoping in the next year or so that some of the women pick up their own projects."

Team Wāhine is now keen to see Komata Hut in use. Walking access starts at the end of Comet Road, and the new track turns off the Shutes Hut Track, just past Komata Trig. Allow 3–4hr. River access on the lower Ngaruroro from Kuripapan-go is a grade 3+ to 4 for experienced paddlers only (the river gets even gnarlier below the hut site). The hut sleeps six, and bookings aren't required. 



While the BCT has traditionally been largely funded by DOC, it is becoming increasingly reliant on support from other sources. The Komata Hut wāhine volunteers acknowledge the support of Pub Charity, Steel and Tube, COLORSTEEL, Dulux (for paint and documentary funding), Thermakraft, Wagener Stoves and Tumu Napier (including \$1500 for kitting out the team with tools and tool belts).



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Mother's Day Gift Guide

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Take mum on this self-guided 30km private walkway and get a taste of the high country life. It's near Hurunui in Canterbury and offers two- and three-day options, during which you'll encounter farm animals and native birds and walk through the vast Mandamus Reserve forest regeneration project. www.islandhillsstation.co.nz



**HIKE
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Xtorm Foldable Wireless Travel Charger 3-in-1 \$179

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Merrell Moab Speed 2 GTX \$379

Comfort is king on the trail and this latest hiker from Merrell features 30% more foam underfoot as well as improved breathability and traction. It has a nylon ripstop and TPU upper with heel and toe guards and a bellows tongue to keep out debris. www.merrell.co.nz



Norsewear Possum Hiker \$44.95

A high-performance possum merino hiking sock that provides extra insulation whilst retaining breathability and moisture control. It has a cushioned sole for on-trail comfort, seamless toe and an anti-bunch ventilation zone. www.norsewear.co.nz



Chums Trail Dawg Waist Pack \$69.99

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Gnara Go There Pant \$279

These are multi-functional all-season women's hiking pants with a unique addition: the patented GoFly zipper technology that allows comfortable unzipping and peeing without removing clothing, packs or harnesses. There are five pockets, a mid-high waist, and four-way stretch. Available in sizes up to US22. www.furtherfaster.co.nz



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This quick-dry shirt is designed in NZ and features back-country fauna. It's made from almost 100 per cent recycled fabrics that are Oeko-Tex 100 certified with HeiQ Pure odour-control. The ergonomic fit is made to move with wearers. www.looseline.co.nz



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**The North Face Denali Fleece
Hooded Jacket \$360**

This fleece offers protection from the elements, straightforward comfort and durability. It's made with Polartec recycled fleece with a non-PFC DWR water-repellent finish. There's a hood, full-length front zip, chest and hand pockets, elastic cuffs and an internal drawcord hem. www.thenorthface.co.nz



All the mountain gear – Penzy's friends joined her for some sections of the traverse

10 GEAR LESSONS *AFTER* TRAVERSING THE SOUTHERN ALPS

A non-stop 85-day traverse of the Southern Alps is hard on the body, mind and especially gear.

by PENZY DINSDALE

I set off from the Divide Shelter on the Milford Road in late spring, and I had no idea how long this adventure would take, nor exactly where it would take me.

I planned to traverse the Southern Alps and needed to be at Farewell Spit by the end of January. I had a rough outline of the route and was to meet a few people on key dates along the way.

Eighty-five days, 1153.5km and 59,234m in elevation gain later, having truly used and abused my gear, I reached my destination.

Here are the 10 biggest gear lessons I learned along the way.

1.

Even an analogue watch can fail

I took my trusty analogue watch because I wasn't sure I could keep my Garmin charged for such a long time. And what's the point in a watch with fancy exercise metrics if you aren't going to use them?

South of Arthur's Pass, I used a SunSaver Classic and SunSaver Power-Flex solar charger to keep my phone and inReach charged. North of Arthur's Pass, I switched to a heavier duty SunSaver 24K and SunSaver Super-Flex solar charger as I was uncertain where there would be places to recharge. In truth, the Classic would have been fine.

My 'trusty' watch stopped working on day two, forcing me to message out for an expensive and specific battery to be brought to the next road end. By the time I got there, the watch was working again, but I carried the spare battery for the remainder of the trip. Maybe the watch was shocked at being used again after so long being on my bedside table.

2.

Garmin inReach message locations don't work for New Zealand numbers

A safety plan on this adventure, with significant solo sections, was to message my location to a select group of contacts each night. This would also allow a map to be updated so that friends and family could check my progress. Although I checked everything before I left I found my contacts weren't receiving my location on these daily messages. When in Wānaka to regroup after the first stages, I tried to sort this out. After multiple test text messages with different settings and no success, I contacted Garmin. It turns out that sending location links to New Zealand phones in a text message doesn't work, and Garmin doesn't intend to rectify this. In the end, I sent a daily email to my contact people instead.

3.

I DIDN'T NEED THE LIGHTEST GEAR

I was less fit than I'd hoped, but I didn't have much money to replace perfectly functional items with slightly lighter versions; so I went with what I had and vowed to get some lighter gear upon arriving in Wānaka if warranted. But in the end I didn't replace anything in Wānaka, and even though I went through my gear gram by gram I wasn't able to cut anything out. In reality, a heavier load meant greater safety on this trip. Bikepackers always say the best bike is the one you already have, and I think the same is true here.

4.

Which rope is too thin and which ATC?

I decided a new rope was worth investing in. I tossed up between an Edelrid 6mm dynamic rap cord and an Edelrid 7.1mm half-rope. I thought a rap line for glacier travel might be taking things a bit too far, and purchased the half-rope. I christened it 'Minties' because 'It's moments like these you need Minties.' To go with this generation of lighter, skinnier rope I also needed a new ATC, which I promptly left behind in Pioneer Hut. It meant that I had to learn some new techniques for abseiling without an ATC.

5.

Do you really need a stuff sack?

I've always stuffed my down jacket into a stuff sack because it has one and that's what you do. Until, at our day spa camp on the Tasman moraine my sleeping bag stuff sack ripped, so I used my jacket bag for my sleeping bag instead. I then used various parts of the damaged stuff sack to repair other gear items that were showing signs of wear. This included the drawstring to my hat to keep it on in the wind. It turns out my down jacket does just fine without a stuff sack and fits better in odd corners of my pack. Also, I saved faff time by not having to restuff it each morning.





To keep things light, Penzy used her MSR Windburner stove and ate mostly dehy meals

6.

Sew your Buff to your hat

I am and will always be a 'shorts on glacier girl' but in high mountain snow and glacier travel, the more your skin is covered the better. Just before the section with the most glaciers and snow travel, I sat down and, with a few sewing items from my survival kit, I sewed my Buff neck gaiter into my hat so that it covered the back of my neck, protecting it from the sun. I left the top end of the buff open, so in cold conditions I could also wear the buff around my neck with the hat on.

7.

Waterproof pants suck

I've never liked the cold, plastic feeling of waterproof pants against my bare legs, but if I put long johns on I tend to overheat. I balance this carefully and often choose to get my lower half wet. But in the wet weather and snow at the start of the trip, waterproof pants were not optional. I basically lived in them for a week, and inevitably they got torn. I patched them with duct tape (I keep some wrapped around a hiking pole) and thought that would hold. However, the weather did not improve and when the pants disintegrated a second time I admitted defeat. I messaged my contacts for a replacement pair to be dropped at Arthur's Pass and, incredibly, two pairs showed up! For this trip, maybe some more durable pants would have been a better call. Ironically, after Arthur's Pass, I didn't need them again.

8.

GOOD TRAMPING SHORTS ARE INVALUABLE

I lived in one pair of Macpac shorts for this entire adventure. Surprisingly, a good pair of tramping shorts can be hard to find. Now that I'm looking for a new pair, here is what I think makes them great:

- 1. **Navy blue:** I don't know why, but all the good ones have been.
- 2. **Elastic waistband:** slip on easily, no zip to break, no pressure points under a heavy pack's hip belt. The wider the waistband, the better.
- 3. **No seam between the legs:** this is key to avoiding chafe. My theory is that chafing always happens once the shorts are wet and are at that stage of drying when they stick slightly to your legs. Having a seam there seems to be just enough of a catalyst to start this off, and once it's started, it won't stop.
- 4. **Soft and quick-drying fabric.**

9.

REPAIR IT YOURSELF

This is an ode to my Cactus Duper gaiters that, for some reason, Cactus has ceased to make. These are my best-loved gaiters, probably one of my favourite items of tramping gear. I love the style with front padding that protects the shins and means the gaiters stay up on their own without needing to be tight around your calves – important for breathability. I wore my last pair into the ground during this adventure, and no



Enjoying another dehy meal at Ada Hut on the St James Walkway


one is willing to repair them. So I have. I don't own a sewing machine or have access to one that'll sew canvas. But a friend put me onto a certain type of building tape that has been perfect. I've been innovative before with gear repair. I currently own a tent that I laboriously repaired in my study breaks while at university after a repairer told me all hope was lost.

10.

What on earth are you eating?

On the first day of my trip I couldn't make it through a single dehy meal at dinner. At Dart Hut I ended up giving away chocolate, a box of crackers and half a packet of Gingernuts to some excited trampers, and still couldn't eat all the food I was carrying. By the end of the trip I was eating everything and anything, including all hut food and, at one point, cold-soaked pasta dipped in sugar. On my final stage, I had to double my rations and eat two dinners a night – at times two 800 calorie meals.

I had budgeted for the energy I was burning on a daily basis but hadn't thought to take into account how my metabolism would change on an adventure like this. Next time I'll start with rations closer to what I eat on a 2–7-day trip for the first few weeks and ramp these up each week. I can carry more food at the end of the trip when I can manage the extra weight and need to eat more.

A typical day would start with a homemade smoothie mix (oats, berries, seeds and protein powder) or a Real Meals Bircher muesli (my favourite). Snacks throughout the day were lollies, chocolate, more protein powder, electrolytes, nuts, dehydrated yoghurt (another favourite), dried fruit and some sort of carbohydrates like corn chips. I did carry some muesli bars, but I don't particularly enjoy eating those, even when ravenous. Dinners were a mix of Radix Meals for their nutritional balance and high calories, some Real Meals for their authenticity to actual meals and flavours, and some home-dehydrated meals – mostly dahl – because dehy is expensive and I like to use my dehydrator. 

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2

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GET TO KNOW YOUR COMPASS

by MARK WATSON

Your compass is a powerful, pocket-sized navigation device, and it's an essential piece of equipment. Most compasses weigh less than two AA batteries yet require none, making them reliable at all times and in any weather. A compass can be used as a primary navigation tool paired with a topo map, as backup or in combination with a GPS.

It's important to get to know your compass, its parts and functions.

Using your compass

Here's how to use a compass in a common navigation scenario: taking a bearing from the map when you know your location and want to travel to another location that may or may not be visible to you.

- 1. Align to destination:** With the map level, align the long edge of the compass between your location and the place being travelled to. Ensure the direction of travel arrow is pointing towards the destination (i.e. that the compass is not upside down).
- 2. Orient bezel:** Rotate the bezel until the orienting lines on the compass are aligned with the longitude (vertical) grid lines on the map. The orienting arrow should also be pointing north on the map.
- 3. Read bearing:** The index line indicates the bearing that has been captured.
- 4. Turn:** Hold the compass level and turn your body until the red end of the needle is inside the orienting arrow (if using an adjustable declination compass); or see step 5.
- 5. Compensate for declination:** Turn yourself further so the compass arrow points to the declination stated on your topo map (for example 23°), or the declination scale.
- 6. Look:** Take a visual landmark (handrail), such as a tree or rock outcrop, and start moving.

GRADUATION RING

The bezel rotates on the base plate and around the mounted needle by way of a ring that is rubberised or indented for grip. It's marked with the cardinal points (north, south, west, east) and a graduation scale in 2° increments. North is at 360°/0° and south at 180°.

BEZEL

Where the magic happens. The bezel rotates on the base plate. It holds the needle, which swings on a pivot. The bezel is filled with liquid that dampens vibration to stabilise the needle after movement, for accurate reading.

LUMINOUS MARKINGS

The direction of travel arrow, orienting arrow and compass needle all glow in the dark to make night navigation easier.

BASEPLATE

The body of the compass, which is placed flat on the map or held in your hand, is typically clear plastic with straight edges for aligning map features intended to travel between, and for making measurements. Some models have rounded corners.

COMPASS NEEDLE

The north end of the needle is red and always points to magnetic north. It usually has a luminous marker and sometimes an 'N'. The reverse end of the needle is usually black or white. Good-quality compass needles are calibrated for either the northern or southern hemisphere, so make sure you have the right compass for your zone or buy a global model.

MAGNIFYING GLASS

Allows a closer view of details for map reading, such as close contour lines and topographical features.

CENTIMETRE RULE

For measuring distances on maps of different scales that don't match the compass's Romer scales.

DIRECTION OF TRAVEL ARROW

Indicates the direction you'll travel while following a bearing.

ROMER SCALES

These scales, on either side of the baseplate edge, are for making accurate six-figure grid references on 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 scale maps. Some compasses have different scales, so be sure that one scale matches your map scale.

INDEX LINE

This small white line is fixed beneath the graduation ring as an extension of the direction of travel arrow. It marks the bearing, on the graduation scale, that you set by rotating the bezel.

DECLINATION SCALE

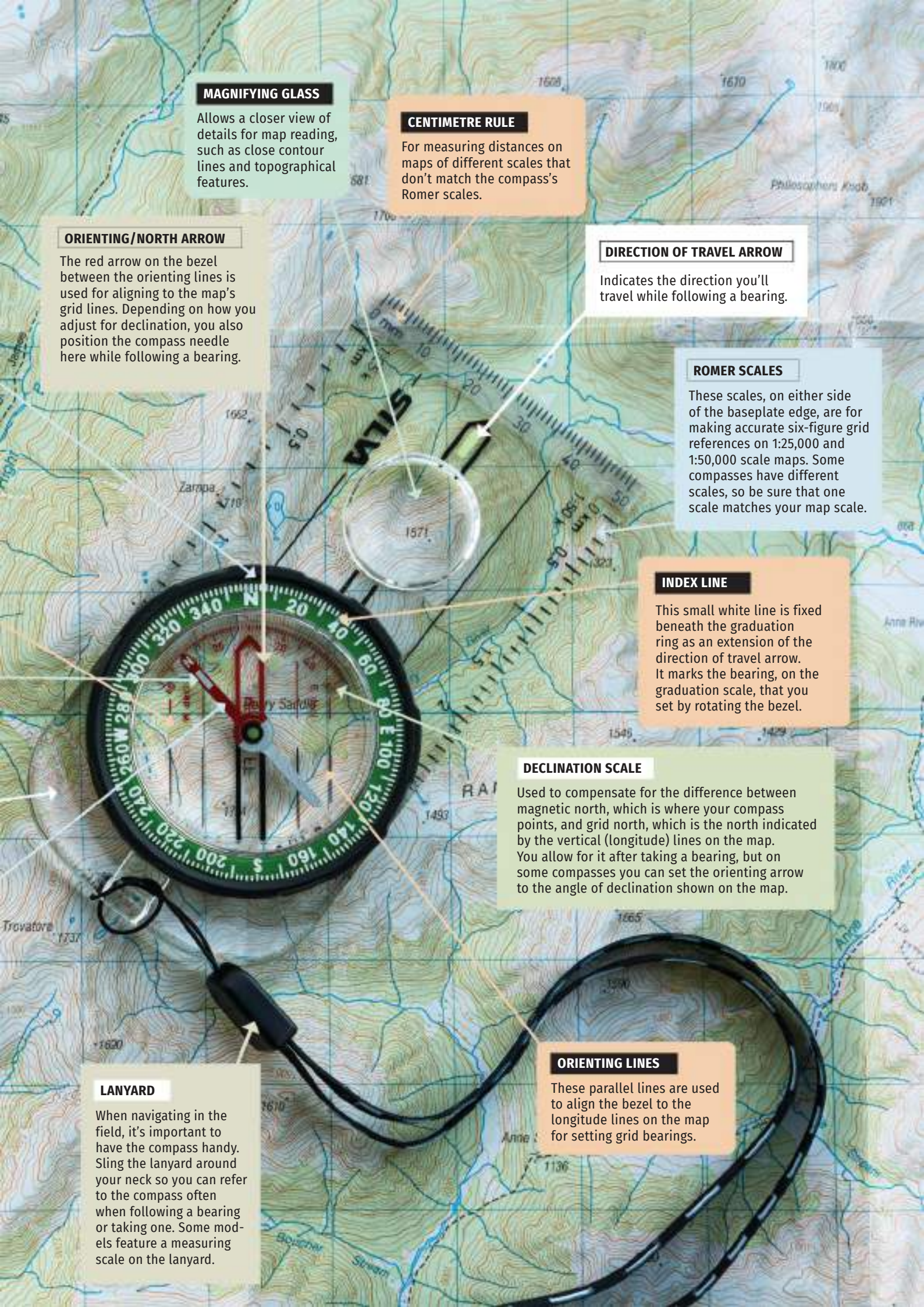
Used to compensate for the difference between magnetic north, which is where your compass points, and grid north, which is the north indicated by the vertical (longitude) lines on the map. You allow for it after taking a bearing, but on some compasses you can set the orienting arrow to the angle of declination shown on the map.

ORIENTING LINES

These parallel lines are used to align the bezel to the longitude lines on the map for setting grid bearings.

LANYARD

When navigating in the field, it's important to have the compass handy. Sling the lanyard around your neck so you can refer to the compass often when following a bearing or taking one. Some models feature a measuring scale on the lanyard.



SKILLS

RECOVER BETTER ON YOUR TRAMPS

On longer tramps, are you doing the basics to manage your fatigue levels?

by DUNCAN GRANT



NECO WIERINGA

HERE ARE SOME top tips to help you spring out of your bunk in the morning ready to tackle the hills.

SLEEP

Aim for 8hr+

Bring an eye mask or neck gaiter to pull over your eyes, and ear plugs. Invest in a comfortable sleeping system – pillow, sleeping bag and mat – so that a lack of comfort doesn't cause you to wake up.

NUTRITION

Sweet treats are great for morale, but look for more substance during your main meals.

Are your dehy meals giving you enough fuel for your body size and metabolism? If you are sharing meals with others, will the portions be sufficient for you?

I always have a few Pic's peanut butter slugs to add some energy to my evening meal if I feel I need it.

HYDRATION

Don't let the evening's dark urine be a reminder to drink.

I often have a cup of tea or miso soup as soon as I get to a hut, as this encourages me to take on fluid before having something more solid. If it's been a hot day, I'll also consume an electrolyte drink. Invest in a water filter to reduce the risk of getting sick.

SWIM/COLD DIP AND CHANGE OF CLOTHES

The hut book will often provide advice from others about where to find a swimming spot.

You will feel refreshed and recharged with a morale-boosting wash and some dry, warm clothes. Cold water immersions have numerous benefits, one of which is to reduce the perceived tiredness in your legs.

A cold dip can reduce the tired feeling in your legs

THE FINAL REMINDER

Prepare for the trip beforehand

If you put in some training before your trip, your fatigue level threshold should be higher and you will recover more quickly.

Duncan Grant is a physiotherapist in Dunedin at Reignite Physio, St Clair Golf Club.

A SHORT LITTLE GUIDE TO

COMMUNICATION DEVICES

BY RACHEL DAVIES

PLAN A → Self rescue

PLAN B → Communication options for outside help

One-way Satellite Messenger

* Some connect to your phone to become two-way, but don't rely on that function



- One-way - unable to communicate with rescuers
- 🔋 Rechargeable batteries
- 💬 Pre-set messages
- 🌐 Global coverage usually strong
- 💰 Purchase + subscription
- ★ Tracking functions

Two-way Satellite Messenger



- ↔ Two-way through device slow, faster if connected to phone
- 🔋 Rechargeable, long life
- 💬 Pre-set messages + custom
- 🌐 Global coverage usually strong
- 💰 Purchase + subscription
- ★ Tracking & GPS functions

Satellite Phone



- ↔ Two-way, fast communication
- 🔋 Rechargeable but not in the field
- 💬 Concise conversation as connection breaks frequently
- 🌐 Global - terrain & weather sensitive
- 💰 Purchase + plan, expensive
- ⚠️ Extremely sensitive to your position. If you have a connection, do not move!

Cellular Phone



- ↔ Two-way in service, limited in SOS
- 🔋 Rechargeable, short life
- 💬 Unlimited in service, limited in SOS
- 🌐 Extremely unreliable, SOS only available in some countries for new Apple phones only
- 💰 Most already own
- ⚠️ Fragile & used for many other functions, not recommended as sole emergency device

Personal Locator Beacon



- One-way - unable to communicate with rescuers
- 🔋 Multi-year, not rechargeable or rechargeable
- 💬 None - one hit wonder
- 🌐 Global
- 💰 Purchase, expensive one time

Radio



- ↔ Two-way
- 🔋 Rechargeable but not in the field
- 💬 Can be very clear or broken
- 🌐 Local only, affected by terrain
- 💰 Purchase
- ★ Can catch others in the area for help
- ⚠️ Needs to be programmed for channels, needs a license in some areas/channels

Before you go! Leave a trip plan with someone reliable

- Where you're going
- Who is going
- What equipment you have
- Expected return date & time
- Who & when to contact if overdue



Smoke signals
Not (generally)
recommended

KEEPING TRACK OF WHERE YOU ARE

Location awareness is a key navigational tool. All you need is your head.

by **HEATHER GRADY**

IT'S EASY TO WALK and enjoy the views, the company, or just daydream and not notice what is going on around you. When this happens you might miss clues to gauge how far you've walked, how far is left to go, or that you may have taken a wrong turn.

BEFORE THE TRIP

Before leaving home, look at the route on a map. Look for easily recognisable features that will help identify where you are. The best are those that are unlikely to change, such as when you enter or leave the bush, pass under high tension cables, the start of a climb or descent, or a high point.

Other features, such as bridges, track junctions or stream crossings, are useful but need caution as there may be unmarked ones, or some may have been removed and streams dried up.

Note if and when you will be beside a river or lake. Note the basic direction of the tracks, even just the cardinal directions. If your map-reading skills allow, note where you will go up or down spurs, along ridges, across sidles or along a flat.

Check the DOC website or other sites that might provide track times or list hazards. Recent trip reports from tramping clubs and individuals often give extra information such as 'lots of mud' or 'tricky bits'. There may also be information on birds, plants or fungi that you might see.

Build a picture of the trip in your head. It might go something like this: 'We go westerly, crossing flattish farmland for half an hour before entering the bush (listen for tūi here). The track follows the river for about an hour, crossing back and forth (possibly six crossings). Then there's a steepish steady climb up a spur for about an hour. Climb a stile here. Follow a ridgeline, undulating with a slow descent for the next two hours. Cross a stream. The track turns north, and after 30min the track emerges onto the road.'



With preparation and location awareness you can be confident you are on the right track

DURING THE TRIP

Look for streams, track junctions, overhead wires, whether the track is going up, down or flat. Observe how the land lies on your left and right. Listen for rivers or streams, waterfalls or turbulent water, human activity (if there's a waterhole, picnic area or campsite nearby), farm or traffic sounds. Remember that sound can be muffled by bush. Feel your muscles when climbing and descending; this gives a guide to steepness. Note what's under your feet: mud, sand, leaf litter, tree roots or stones.

Use all information to try to match those features with the picture in your head. Use the map (you took it, didn't you?) to match with all the other information and to check your progress. If you got to the bush at the start faster than anticipated, you may get to the next point more quickly too. If a section took longer than anticipated then you are clearly travelling more slowly. Consider whether a change in plan might be wise.

With good preparation and location awareness, you should be able to monitor your progress and confirm you are on the right track.

What's in MY PACK

Caver Eugene Yeo

Eugene Yeo's passion is technical caving under Aotearoa's marble mountains and limestone hills. With a background in rock climbing and canyoning, he especially enjoys vertical realms carved out by underground waterfalls, and sporty, bouldery navigation through subterranean streamways.

"What I pack largely depends on the objective," he says. "Major factors include the amount of rope work and rigging anticipated, how wet and cold the cave is, and whether or not it's an overnighner. Durability is key: our gear needs to withstand being hauled, thrown, kicked and dragged through rock, mud and water."

OUTER PROTECTION

My Aspiring Safety overalls, made from 1000-denier Cordura with reinforced patches on backside, knees and elbows, polar fleece-lined collar and built-in foam knee pads, provide durable protection against harsh cave environments. Garden gloves protect my hands on sharp rock and keep them warm.

EMERGENCIES

My MTDE Speleo Poncho is waterproof, heat-trapping, lightweight and reusable, and can be combined with multiple units to create a larger group shelter – ideal for any unexpected epics underground.

LIGHTING

The Fenix HM70R is my primary light, with a 400hr runtime on the lowest setting and a 1600 lumen output. I have a Fenix HM65R (1400 lumens) as my backup, and a Fenix LR35R torch (10,000 lumens) for lighting up larger chambers or pools.

PACK

My Aspiring Safety 35L Cave Pack is absolutely bombproof. At 1400g, it's on the heavy side, but worth it for the beating it takes. The minimalist 15l version is also great for smaller days.

FOOTWEAR

Sturdy gumboots are excellent for caving as they are durable, grippy for climbing, provide ankle protection, are relatively cheap and keep feet dry in shallow pools; 3mm neoprene socks are great if wet feet are unavoidable. If we anticipate lots of water and consistent swimming, my Bestard Canyon Guide boots provide excellent drainage and grip on wet rock.

WARMTH

Depending on temperature, I wear one or two of Macpac's geothermal long-sleeve shirt and pants baselayers, a neck gaiter and a beanie. For consistently wet caves with lots of deep pools and waterfalls, I use my 5mm Need Essentials wetsuit.

FOOD

My MSR PocketRocket 2 stove fits inside my Sea to Summit Alpha cookset – great for coffee and ramen breaks. Shoutout to Back Country Cuisine for sponsoring our FMC Youth Scholarship Expedition down Bulmer Cave on Mt Owen!

KEEPING THINGS DRY

My 3.6L and 6L watertight kegs from Aspiring Safety work better than regular dry bags – they can take a beating and are perfect for storing fragile items such as cameras. They also double as bag flotation in deep water.

PERSONAL TECHNICAL GEAR

A single rope technique harness kit is necessary for vertical caving and typically comprises double cowstails, hand ascender, leg loops, chest harness, chest ascender and an abseil rack. Foot ascenders are optional for extra boost on longer pitches.

ROPES AND RIGGING

Different objectives require different rigging materials, and it's good to carry a spare 20–30m static rope, tubular webbing (anchors) and locking carabiners for any unexpected pitches or circumventing damaged fixed lines.

2024'S GUIDE TO INSULATED JACKETS

DOWN AND SYNTHETIC INSULATED JACKETS PROVIDE INCREDIBLE WARMTH AT A LOW WEIGHT. INCREASINGLY, JACKETS ARE DESIGNED TO HELP REGULATE THE USER'S TEMPERATURE DURING ACTIVITY.

by ALISTAIR HALL

INSULATION

Synthetic insulation is durable and will keep the user warm even when it's wet. It is cheaper, bulkier and heavier than down, but modern synthetic fills are coming close to matching down in weight and compressibility. Down offers incredible warmth to weight and will most likely be treated with a hydrophobic coating that will resist soaking and enable it to dry more quickly. This means that in wet conditions, down won't 'clump' so easily whilst still offering warmth.

BAFFLES

Down jackets use baffles to keep the fill from moving around. Some synthetic garments also use baffles amongst other techniques. Seamless (welded or seam-sealed) construction reduces heat loss through the stitching.

Articulation

Jackets are cut to ensure warm air remains close to the body, which means fabrics will offer some stretch to ensure hems and cuffs don't rise when arms are outstretched. Articulated shoulders allow greater freedom of movement.

HOODS

Hoods improve warmth considerably by trapping warm air around your head without blocking visibility. Hoods on alpine or climbing jackets will fit over or under the helmet. Drawcords are often used to tighten the hood but, as with cuffs, elastic hood hems ensure a more snug and warmth-trapping fit.



Featured Jacket: Cotopaxi Fuego Down Hooded Jacket (\$499.99). www.cotopaxi.co.nz

POCKETS

Two handwarmer pockets are the norm. Large 'drop-in' internal pockets can be used to store items close to your body. Lighter and more compressible jackets will stuff into one of the pockets or a separate stuff sack for transport.

FABRICS

Recycled fabrics are now common. The shell should have a durable water-repellent (DWR) coating to increase water resistance. Some hard-wearing models even use a waterproof fabric to protect the insulation. Breathable, high thread count fabrics prevent down from poking through the garment.

COLLARS AND CUFFS

Cuffs keep out wind and prevent trapped warmth from escaping. They can be self-closed or elastic, with the latter being most effective at trapping warmth. Insulated collars should have a soft 'comfort' lining and zip up under or just over the chin.

FILL POWER

When choosing a down jacket, note the fill power (FP). This is the volume that one ounce of down fills when full of air and is usually measured between 500 and 900. The higher the number, the greater the warmth and less fill required to achieve it.

Patagonia DAS Parka
\$799.99

This is an all-conditions belay parka for bone-chilling days and unplanned bivvies. It uses PrimaLoft Gold Insulation Eco fused with an aerogel for a soft, compressible down-like feel with the warm-when-wet performance of synthetic. There's a helmet-compatible hood, two-way centre-front, chest and hand warmer pockets and two internal drop-in pockets. Fair Trade Certified. 556g (m), 522g (w). www.patagonia.co.nz



Marmot Warmcube Active Novus
\$679



Here's a layering piece for stop-and-go activities. It uses 3D WarmCube Active synthetic insulation that helps to regulate temperature by circulating air through the jacket when on the move and trapping heat when stopped. There are recycled fabrics, a gusseted underarm, zippered handwarmer pockets and an adjustable hem. 475g (m), 415g (w). www.marmot.nz.co.nz

The North Face Men's Summit Series Breithorn Hoodie
\$660



This jacket has 800FP ProDown that retains loft in wet conditions, and provides packable warmth for outdoor adventures. It has a slim-fit, recycled nylon fabric, helmet-compatible hood with pre-tensioned elastic opening, water-resistant front zip, stretch underarm gussets for mobility, chest and hand pockets and two internal mesh drop-in pockets. 454g. www.thenorthface.co.nz

Marmot Women's Guides Down Hoody
\$599

This jacket is an update on a Marmot classic. It now features insulation that will make it a more sustainable option – 700FP 80 per cent recycled down and 20 per cent Kapok flower (equal to 700FP down). There's post-consumer recycled ripstop fabric, zippered pockets and a drawcord hood. 625g. www.marmot.nz.co.nz



Rab Valiance Waterproof Down Jacket
\$699.95



A fully waterproof jacket designed for cold and wet winter adventures. It uses Pertex Shield fabric and has YKK AquaGuard zips, and hydrophobic 700FP Nikwax recycled down insulation. There's synthetic insulation in exposed places, such as the helmet-compatible hood and in the cuffs, two zippered hand warmer pockets and a zippered internal security pocket. 735g (m), 682g (w). www.outfitters.co.nz



**Rab Mythic Alpine
Light Down Jacket \$529.95**

A lightweight, warm and breathable jacket for stop-start activities. It has down-filled baffles to keep the core warm, while synthetic insulation manages moisture. There's 900FP down, PrimaLoft Gold synthetic insulation, Pertex Quantum fabric, YKK zips and a single-sided rear hem adjustment with anti-snap tether. 252g (m), 225g (w). www.outfitters.co.nz



**Cotopaxi Fuego Down Hooded Jacket
\$499.99**

This is a versatile, water-resistant and lightweight jacket with 800FP responsibly sourced down. There's a built-in scuba hood and elastic binding throughout to seal in warmth, two hand pockets and two internal stash pockets, an adjustable drawcord waist and 20D ripstop nylon fabric. Stuffs into pocket. 397g (m/w). www.cotopaxi.co.nz

**The North Face Hydralite
Down Hoodie
\$500 (m) / \$450 (w)**

A jacket combining city style with expedition-tested features. It has 600FP goose down (550FP women's), non-PFC DWR finish, three-piece hood, centre front zip with internal draft flap, zipped hand pockets, elastic cuffs and internal drawcord hem. www.thenorthface.co.nz



**Outdoor Research SuperStrand
LT Hoodie \$399.99**

A lightweight, packable synthetic insulated jacket using SuperStrand polyester fibres providing the same soft feel and loft as a 700-800FP down jacket. There's a ripstop nylon shell, adjustable hood with Low-Pro binding, zipped hand pockets and elastic-bound cuffs and hem. Stows into pocket. 309g (m), 272g (w). www.bivouac.co.nz



**Outdoor Research Deviator
Hoodie \$399.99**

A super breathable jacket designed for high-aerobic activities as it lets excess heat out when moving and retains warmth when stopped. It uses VerticalX Octa insulation (50% lighter than polyester insulation) with hybrid-mapped ActiveTemp fabrics. It wicks moisture, doesn't need a fabric lining and uses weather-resistant softshell fabric on the front, shoulders, sleeves and hood. 354g (m), 329g (w). www.bivouac.co.nz





Rab Microlight Alpine \$399.95

This is Rab's classic insulated jacket with updated zoned micro and nano baffles for increased core warmth, recycled 30D Pertex Quantum ripstop nylon and 700FP recycled Nikwax hydrophobic down. There are three pockets, a down-filled hood with stiffened peak, elastic cuffs, drawcord hem and a stuff sack. 466g (m), 413.5g (w). www.outfitters.co.nz



Montane Anti-Freeze Hoodie \$399

This is a warm, packable jacket with recycled fabrics and a micro baffle construction filled with water-resistant responsible down standard 750+FP down. There's a fully adjustable hood with concealed adjustment and stiffened peak, PFC-free DWR, internal zipped chest pocket, zipped hand pockets, YKK Aquaguard front zip with internal storm flap and pre-elasticated warmth-retaining cuffs. 360g (m), 320g (w). www.furtherfaster.co.nz



Cactus Outdoor Norbu Insulated Jacket \$389

A durable and reliable jacket using Primaloft Silver synthetic insulation and named after a guide on a Cactus Outdoor expedition to Nepal. There are YKK zips, a water-resistant fabric, nylon taffeta lining with lower back reinforcing to reduce wear around the 'seat', three external zippered pockets and two internal stash pockets. www.cactusoutdoor.co.nz



Rab Xenair Alpine Light Jacket \$379.95

This is a versatile synthetic jacket using weather-resistant Pertex Quantum Air fabric and recycled Primaloft Gold Active+ insulation to maintain heat when resting and allow air-flow when active. There's articulated sleeves, a front zip chin guard, elasticated cuffs, YKK zips and a helmet-compatible hood. 293g (m), 263g (w). www.outfitters.co.nz



Montane Icarus Lite Hoodie \$369

Designed for warmth while moving fast in the mountains, this jacket has 100% recycled PrimaLoft insulation and recycled fabrics, a Thermo Grid brushed back fleece with stretch sides for freedom of movement, an elasticated insulated under-helmet hood and cuffs to minimise heat loss. 420g (m/w). www.furtherfaster.co.nz

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CRITTERS IN CULTURE

Lily Duval's life revolves around bugs. She has a master's in cultural entomology – how we represent insects in culture – and is a researcher for RNZ's 'Critter of the week'. Her new book, the exquisitely illustrated *Six-legged Ghosts: The insects of Aotearoa*, examines the lives of insects in nature, culture and history.

by LEIGH HOPKINSON

How did you go from being afraid of bugs to being an entomophile?

I wanted to paint all the threatened species of Aotearoa because I felt this overwhelming sadness about the biodiversity we were losing. When I started the project, I thought it would be about birds, but there are thousands of threatened species – and the majority are invertebrates. The more I dug into insects and bugs, the more I was fascinated by them. I think the more you get to know things, the more you like them, generally.

Why the title, *Six-legged Ghosts*?

I really love the title. Obviously 'six-legged' for insects, and 'ghosts' for two reasons. The first is we tend not to notice insects – they lead quite hidden lives. A lot of our native species only come out at night, so we have to go looking for them. So, they're ghosts because they do so much to create our world but we don't really see them. And second, because many of our native insects are going extinct.

What's the book about?

It's my attempt to contribute to raising the profile of insects. Because I'm not a scientist, my lens on the subject is culture. The book looks at the ways we talk about insects, the ways we represent them in our culture – whether in art, museums or the media. I've also included some positive stories about insect conservation and species we've managed to recover, as well as stories about species that have gone extinct.

Is there a particular insect you're most fascinated by?

I love the Canterbury knobbed weevil. They're these little bumpy, cute critters. All weevils have something called a rostrum that looks a bit like a snout. In 1922 they were declared extinct, then in 2004 they were rediscovered at Burkes Pass, next to the highway.



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Lily Duval hopes her book will raise the profile of NZ's native insects

There's one population in a patch of speargrass and another nearby, and that's it. They live on this inhospitable, spiky plant that trampers hate – or love to hate – and they're making do, munching away at the leaves, and if they think there's a threat they drop down to the base and use the spikes to protect themselves. They're the only knobbed species left on the mainland, and the reason they've declined is because speargrass has been removed from a lot of land, and introduced predators see them as tasty snacks. It's given me a different perspective on speargrass.

The insects in your paintings have a real sense of dynamism. How do you achieve this?

One of the processes for me has been going from the classic pinned specimen to trying to show the insects alive. I shopped around for images on iNaturalist and a couple of photographers were really generous with making their work available. I would pull up as many images as I could to get the sense of the bug.

Where do you go out into the hills?

The past few years my partner and I have been pretty obsessed with the Remote Huts website, so we've been trying to get to a lot of those. I like that those tracks are a little more challenging. We recently did trips to the Olderog bivs on the West Coast and Matiri Range in Kahurangi National Park. We gear our lives around trips as much as we can. And I make sure to have enough energy to look for bugs before bed. 



Six-legged Ghosts: The insects of Aotearoa is available from the [Wilderness website](#).

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