

Arthur's Pass National Park

From the moment you step off the train or out of the bus in Arthur's Pass village, you are surrounded by rugged peaks and an urge to reach the top of them. As the gateway to an immense alpine area, this tiny village hosts climbers, skiers and visitors from all over the world. But mostly it's visited by trampers, who arrive to do a bit of pass-hopping in Arthur's Pass National Park.

The 9927-sq-km national park, 154km northwest of Christchurch, straddles both sides of the Southern Alps. Two-thirds of it lie on the Canterbury side of the Main Divide and the rest is in Westland. This rugged and mountainous area, cut by deep valleys, ranges in altitude from 245m at the Taramakau River to 2408m at Mt Murchison.

There are many tracks for day walks, especially around the village, but the longer trips are generally routes rather than tracks, and involve following the valleys and then climbing the saddles that link them. Cut tracks are usually provided only when necessary and much of the time you will be boulder hopping along, or in, river beds. Most streams are unbridged.

Several tramps are covered in this chapter, including Avalanche Peak, the best one-day tramp in the South Island, with scenery that rivals that of the North Island's famed Tongariro Crossing. Goat Pass Track is a good choice for trampers new to pass hopping and following routes, while the Waimakariri-Harman Pass Route is a challenging four-day tramp over two high passes. Also covered are Cass-Lagoon Saddles Track and Harper Pass, easier tramps at the edge of the national park.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoying the view of peaks and glaciers from the top of **Avalanche Peak** (p220)
- Climbing to **Lake Mavis** (p226), a beautiful alpine lake off Goat Pass Track
- Soaking in hot springs along the **Waimakariri-Harman Pass Route** (p226) and Harper Pass Track (p230)
- Taking it easy on **Cass-Lagoon Saddles Track** (p234), the easiest alpine route in the Arthur's Pass region

■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03 ■ www.softrock.co.nz/apis ■ www.christchurchnz.net

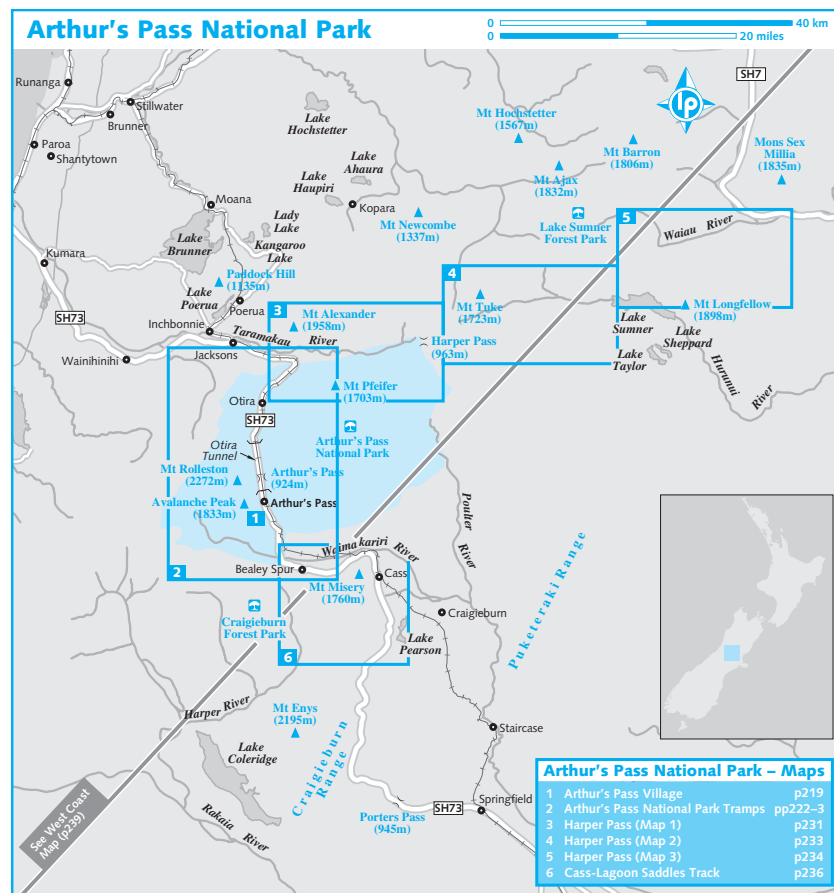
HISTORY

Maori often passed through the Waimakariri basin. Signs of their early occupation are evident in the Hawdon valley, where the forest was burnt by hunting parties. The highly prized *pounamu* (greenstone) on the west coast lured them occasionally across Arthur's Pass, and often through the easier route over Harper Pass.

In September 1857, Edward Dobson travelled up the Hurunui River as far as Harper Pass, and possibly into the Taramakau valley, before turning back. However, it was 20-year-old Leonard Harper who, in the same year, became the first European to cross the swampy saddle and descend the Taramakau River to reach the west coast.

Edward Dobson didn't get a pass named after him but his son, Arthur, did. In March 1864, 23-year-old Arthur Dobson and his 18-year-old brother Edward journeyed up the Bealey valley and camped above the tree line. The next day they crossed what is now Arthur's Pass and descended a short distance into Otira Gorge. Another of Arthur's brothers, George, was later commissioned to find the best route from Canterbury to the west-coast gold fields, and it was George who first referred to the pass as 'Arthur's Pass'.

Whilst George Dobson was selecting the 'best' route across the island, two parcels of gold were sent from Hokitika to Canterbury. A gold rush followed, and in just one



1	Arthur's Pass Village	p219
2	Arthur's Pass National Park Tramps	pp222-3
3	Harper Pass (Map 1)	p231
4	Harper Pass (Map 2)	p233
5	Harper Pass (Map 3)	p234
6	Cass-Lagoon Saddles Track	p236

week in March 1865, 1000 people poured over Harper Pass on their way to the west coast; 4000 people made the trip between February and April. The gold rush and the poor condition of the Harper Pass track intensified the efforts of Christchurch citizens to build a dray road to the west coast. Work began on the Arthur's Pass road, and by 1866 the first coach drove from one side of the South Island to the other.

The Otira rail tunnel was completed in 1923. The next year alpine train excursions began, and became so popular that 1600 day-trippers from Christchurch poured into tiny Arthur's Pass village in a single day. Alarmed at visitors removing plants and cutting trees for firewood, residents began petitioning the government to turn the area into a national park. In 1929 Arthur's Pass became New Zealand's third national park, behind Tongariro and Egmont, and in 2004 celebrated its 75th anniversary as one of the country's greatest alpine parks.

ENVIRONMENT

The Main Divide marks a sharp contrast in the park's flora. The Westland slopes, with their higher rainfall and milder temperatures, are covered with lush forests of tall podocarp and, higher up, kamahi, rata and totara. On the eastern side, trampers encounter mountain beech forests with less understorey and drier conditions on the forest floor. The thick bush on the park's western side also contains more bird life; commonly seen are the tui, bellbird, tomtit, rifleman and grey warbler.

The bird to watch out for, literally, is the kea. This naturally inquisitive alpine parrot searches huts for food, or just for amusement. Its most notorious traits are stealing food or shiny objects (including knives and car keys), dissecting boots and backpacks, and airing sleeping bags with its strong, curved bill. It's an entertaining bird, however, sighted often above the tree line and occasionally in the village itself.

CLIMATE

The Arthur's Pass mountains not only attract bad weather, they create it. Like all alpine areas in New Zealand, the mountains of Arthur's Pass make the park colder, windier and wetter than the nearby

lowlands. The wettest areas are on the western side of the Main Divide; Otira averages 5000mm of rain a year, while Bealey Spur, on the eastern side of the mountains, averages about 1500mm. Rain falls on Arthur's Pass village 150 to 175 days of the year, with the most unsettled weather occurring in spring and autumn.

The best weather is in February and March, but bring rain gear and warm clothing whenever you visit the park. The high altitudes mean that temperatures fluctuate widely. The average maximum for Arthur's Pass in February is 17.5°C, while the average minimum is just 7.7°C.

INFORMATION

Maps

The 1:80,000 Parkmap 273-01 (*Arthur's Pass*) is ideal for planning trips in the park. You can purchase any map for the area at the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre.

Books

If you plan to spend considerable time tramping in the area it's worth investing in the *Arthur's Pass National Park Route Guide Series*. Published by DOC, each guide is a detailed description of one of the 13 most popular routes in the park, complete with walking times between huts.

Another excellent guide to the area is *Arthur's Pass National Park Mountaineering Guide* by Graeme Kates. Available at the visitor information centre, most of this 80-page book is devoted to mountaineering routes, but there is also a section covering tramping routes.

GATEWAY

Arthur's Pass

☎ 03 / pop 50

As small as this hamlet is, Arthur's Pass still serves as the main centre for the national park and surrounding area. After a major tramp it's worth scheduling some extra days at this scenic mountain village to enjoy the numerous day walks that climb above the bush-line.

INFORMATION

Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre (☎ 318 9211; arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz; SH73) also houses the DOC office. The centre sells maps, books and hut tickets, and there are displays and



exhibits on the park. In its foyer you can, and should, leave your intentions at any time of the day.

Also check out the excellent **Arthur's Pass Community Centre** (www.softrock.co.nz/apis) website, which can give you a great overview of the area's tracks before you even leave home, as well as other travel information.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

You don't want to be outfitting an expedition at Arthur's Pass. The **Arthur's Pass Store & Tearooms** (☎ 318 9235; SH73; ☎ 8am-8pm; ☑) is the lone shop, and its selection is very limited; though it does sell stove fuel and enough food supplies to get you through a tramp.

You can store gear for free at Mountain House and the YHA hostel if you're a guest, and for a small fee if you're not.

SLEEPING & EATING

You can camp at the **Public Shelter** (SH73; sites \$5), across from the visitor centre, but the facilities are basic (cold water and a flush toilet).

There are two hostels in Arthur's Pass. The best one is **Mountain House** (☎ 318 9258; www.trampers.co.nz; SH73; camp sites for 2 \$24, dm \$23-25, d \$60), renovated in 2005, which has a lodge with dorm beds. Above the town, Mountain House also has four **cottages** (School Tee; from \$120) with wood heaters, full kitchens and great views of the mountains. Across from Mountain House is **Arthur's Pass Alpine YHA** (☎ 318 9230; yha.arthurspass@yha.org.nz; dm/d \$24/56; ☑), a friendly, well-maintained hostel with a log fire blazing away when the nights get cold high in the mountains.

More upscale is the **Middlesouth Alpine Hotel** (☎ 318 9236; www.arthurspass.co.nz; SH73; d \$100-120; ☑), featuring a licensed restaurant and an outdoor spa. Rates include breakfast. The **Bealey Hotel** (☎ 318 9277; www.bealeyhotel.co.nz; SH73; dm \$20, d \$90-110), 12km west of Arthur's Pass on the banks of the Waimakariri River, is a comfortable hotel with a restaurant, bar and a great location for anybody tramping the Waimakariri-Harman Pass Route.

The **Arthur's Pass Store & Tearooms** (☎ 318 9235; SH73) has sandwiches, great milkshakes and a bottle shop. Across the street, the **Wobbly Kea Bar & Café** (☎ 318 9101; SH73; ☎ 10am-9pm) has even better food, espresso and a relaxed, casual atmosphere. This is the place to come at night with fellow trampers, to drink wine in front of a fire and embellish that adventure you just enjoyed in the mountains.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

You can get to Arthur's Pass by train if you plan ahead and reserve a seat. The *Tranz-Alpine* is operated by **Tranz Scenic** (☎ 0800-872 467, 04-495 0775; www.tranzscenic.co.nz) and departs Christchurch daily at 8.15am, reaching Arthur's Pass (adult/child \$79/59) at 10.42am and Greymouth at 1.25pm. In the opposite direction, the train leaves Greymouth at 1.45pm and reaches Arthur's Pass (adult/child \$44/23) at 4pm. From either direction the trip is a scenic ride into the mountains, thus its popularity. In summer you should book a seat several weeks in advance.

Arthur's Pass is also on the main bus route between Christchurch and Greymouth. Buses pass through Arthur's Pass mid-morning on their way to Greymouth, and mid-afternoon on the return to Christchurch. **Atomic Shuttles** (☎ 322 8883;

www.atomictravel.co.nz) charges \$20 from Grey-mouth and \$25 from Christchurch. **Coast to Coast** (☎ 0800-800 847; www.coast2coast.co.nz) has similar fares. Both companies stop at Arthur's Pass Store & Tearooms, the local ticketing agent.

AVALANCHE PEAK

Duration	6–8 hours
Distance	7km
Track Standard	tramping track
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Arthur's Pass village (p218)
Transport	bus, train
Summary	This is a very popular loop to the top of Avalanche Peak, the 1833m summit which dramatically looms over Arthur's Pass village. On a clear day the views of the surrounding peaks, valleys and hanging glaciers are wonderful.

In this park of peaks, Avalanche Peak is without question the most popular one to climb. Its location is ideal, looming directly above the village and just south of Mt Rolleston (2275m). The route to its summit begins within easy walking distance of town, eliminating any need for special transport.

The alpine world experienced during this tramp is stunning on a clear day. Some people in Arthur's Pass argue that Avalanche Peak is the country's best day tramp, with its views of mountains, snow-covered peaks and hanging glaciers exceeding the volcanoes and hot pools of the Tongariro Crossing. That's debatable.

What can't be debated is the fact that Avalanche Peak is an alpine climb that should not be done in bad weather or by people in poor tramping condition. The route is well marked, and in the middle of summer it's not uncommon to encounter 10 to 20 other trampers headed for the peak, but it's still a long climb and the final 200m is spent traversing a narrow and crumbly ridge. People have died on Avalanche Peak when they didn't heed weather warnings.

Two routes, Avalanche Peak Track and Scotts Track, depart from SH73 and lead towards the peak, merging just before reaching it. Avalanche Peak Track is a

much steeper climb, and at times you need to scramble up rock faces. Scotts Track is a more gradual and easier route. It's best to use Avalanche Peak Track to reach the summit and Scotts Track for the return, when your legs will be tired. Of course, the easiest return route to the peak is to simply use Scotts Track both ways. The total climb and descent is almost 1100m.

For experienced trampers, the climb to the summit can be part of a two-day alpine crossing that includes staying at Crow Hut, and returning to SH73 via the Crow and Waimakariri Rivers. This option (see p224) is rated demanding and should be attempted only by experienced trampers with good map-reading skills and the ability to follow unmarked routes.

PLANNING When to Tramp

This track is best tramped from November to March and should be avoided in winter. It should also be avoided during heavy rain and strong wind, or when low cloud obscures visibility above the bush-line.

What to Bring

Pack rain gear and a wool or fleece jersey for warmth. Once you leave the bush it's amazing how windy and cold the exposed ridges will be. Along with good visibility, plenty of water is essential for this tramp. If you take the Alternative Finish, via Crow Hut, you'll need a stove.

Maps

The 1:80,000 Parkmap 273-01 (*Arthur's Pass*) lacks detail, but because the trails to Avalanche Peak are so well marked it's the one most trampers use. The 1:50,000 Topomap 260-K33 (*Otira*) is better, and a necessity if you're contemplating the tramp into Crow Hut.

Huts

The new **Crow Hut** (\$5) is a Standard hut, with mattresses on sleeping platforms and a wood stove for heating the hut.

THE TRAMP

The Avalanche Peak Track is signposted at Arthur's Pass Chapel, and begins as a gravel path that passes a **waterfall viewing site** and then crosses over Avalanche Creek

Map pp222–3

THE AVALANCHE PEAK CHALLENGE

Tired of the slowpoke on the track ahead of you? Then you may be a mountain runner and the **Avalanche Peak Challenge** (www.avalanchepeak.co.nz) may be the type of competitive tramping you're looking for.

Mountain running has been slowly gaining favour in many places throughout the world, but in New Zealand its popularity is soaring and there are now more than two dozen events every summer. Some, such as the Abel Tasman Classic and Kepler Challenge, are so popular that the field is filled within days of entries opening.

One of the most gruelling has to be the Avalanche Peak Challenge, a 26km run that takes place in Arthur's Pass in late February. The race begins with 11km of running on SH73 to spread out the field of 250 runners. The next stage is the steep Avalanche Peak Track. You don't run here, you climb, grabbing rocks and tree roots as you go. The average trumper needs three hours to reach Avalanche Peak on this track; top runners need only 55 minutes.

After scaling the 1833m peak, runners follow a ridge and then descend a shingle slide to Crow Hut, struggling through rocks the size of basketballs. They exit the valley, splashing through the Crow and Waimakariri Rivers, and then turn south on SH73 and sprint to the finish line, conveniently located just outside the Bealey Hotel. In 2006 the winner covered the route in two hours and 35 minutes.

The Kepler Challenge might be longer, at 67km, but many argue that the Avalanche Peak Challenge is tougher because it's along a route, not the manicured track of a Great Walk.

The event features nine divisions, including three trampers' divisions for those who want to walk it wearing a numbered bib. There are also race marshals stationed along the course to assist with injuries, and aid stations with drinks and food. At the finish line there is a massage stand to provide enough revitalisation so you can stagger up to the Bealey Hotel bar.

Entry is \$45 for trampers and \$75 for runners, and you can enter online.

on historic **Glasgow Bridge**. Just beyond the bridge you begin climbing, and keep climbing. Within 10 minutes you're looking down at Arthur's Pass village, having already scrambled up your first rock face.

The climb is unrelenting, and the only time it levels out is just before you break out of the bush-line, 1½ hours and 400m above the chapel. Yellow markers and a worn path replace the track here, and lead up the ridge that rises between the Avalanche Creek and Rough Creek catchments.

The climbing continues once you reach the tussock grass, and it takes one to 1½ hours to follow this ridge to the base of Avalanche Peak. In the first half the route skirts a large slip that leads down to the Rough Creek catchment; at times you're treading right on the edge of it. This would be a deathtrap in high winds and poor visibility.

After passing a pair of huge cairns the climbing eases a bit and the views improve tremendously. All around you are mountains, with Mt Rolleston (2275m) straight ahead. Punchbowl Falls leaps out of the mountains to the east, and the village of

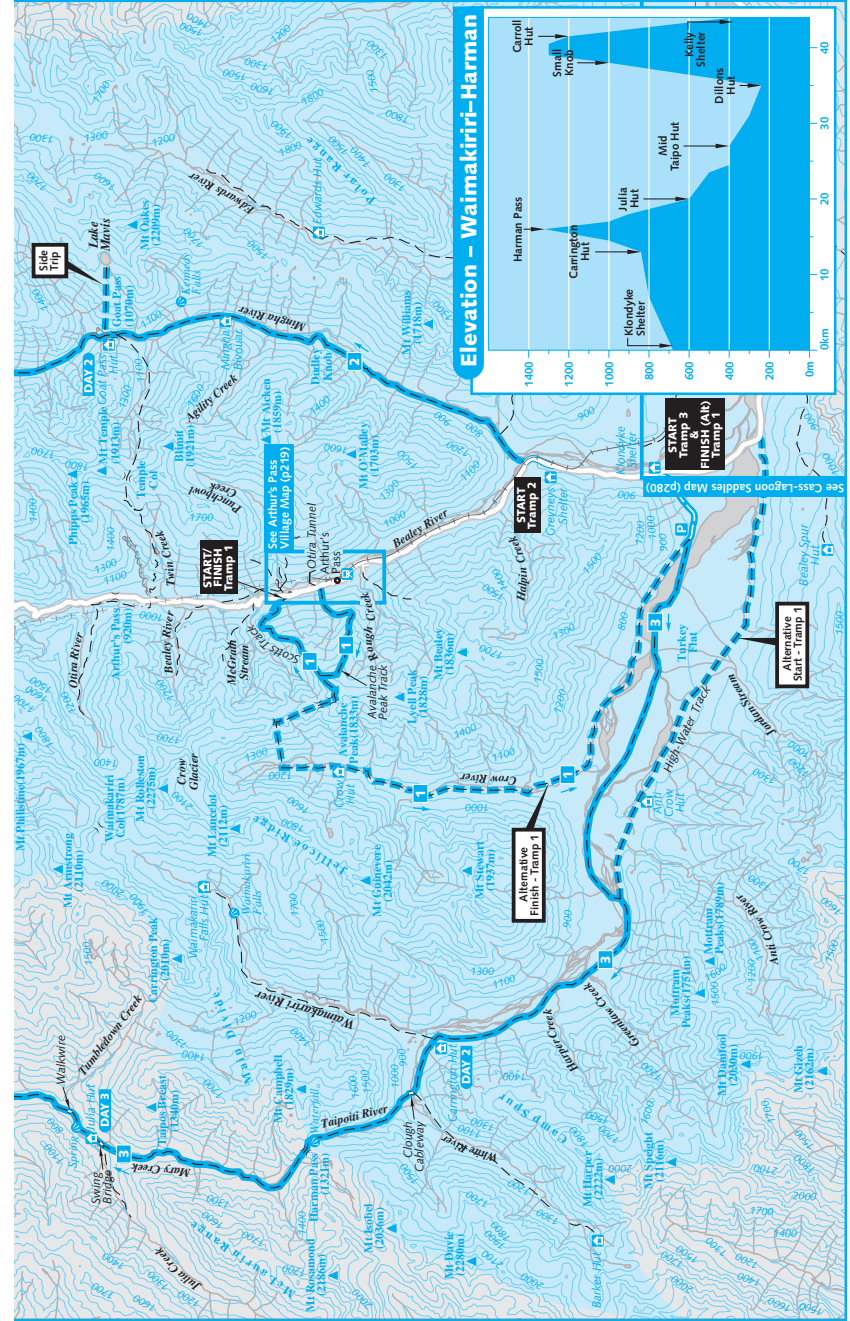
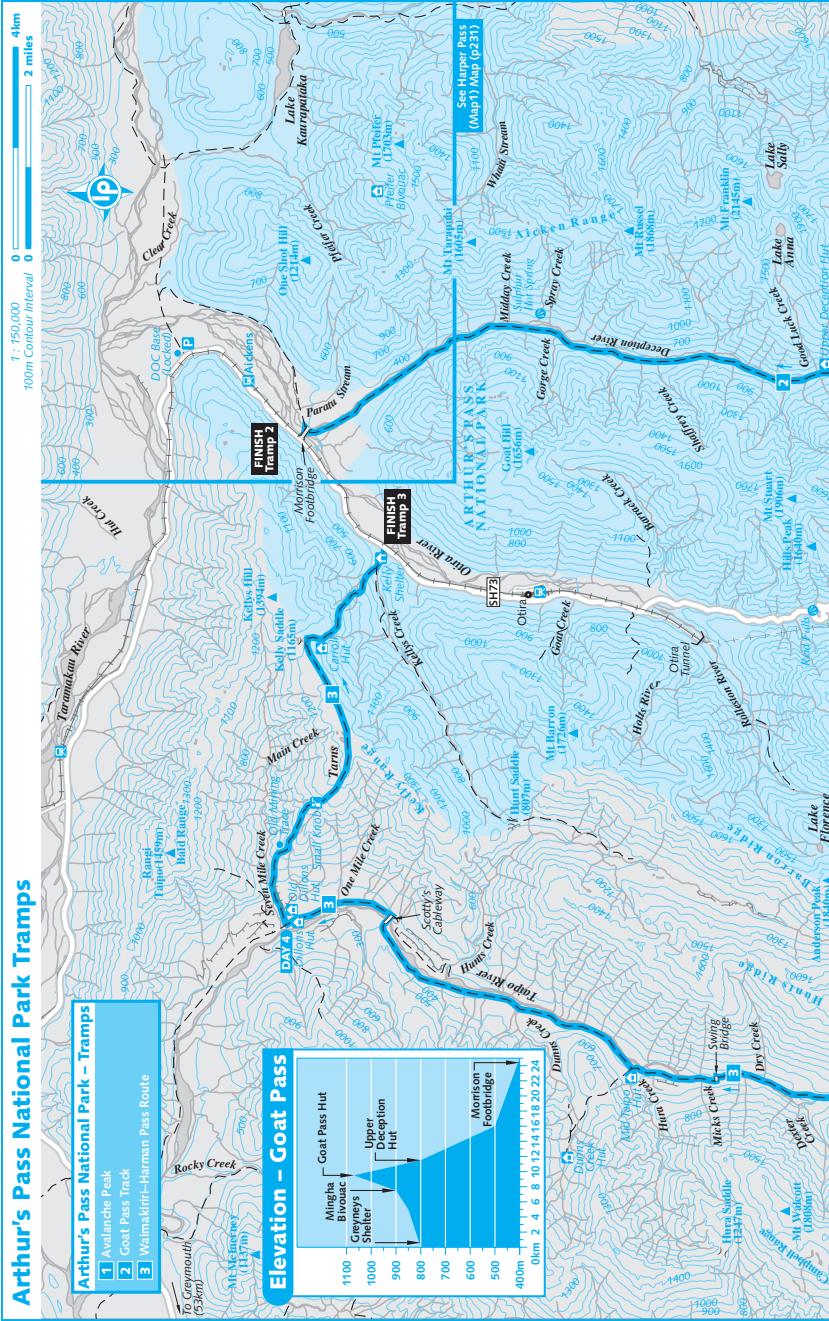
Arthur's Pass lies at your feet. If the *Tranz-Alpine* passes through the valley below, it's like watching a toy train.

At the northern end of the ridge, yellow markers lead you down its east side and around the tail of some rock scree. You then begin the final ascent to the prominent ridge that leads to Avalanche Peak. The ridge looks formidable, but the markers show a zigzag route up the side for an easier climb.

At the top, the yellow markers from Avalanche Peak Track merge with the orange markers from Scotts Track in a flat spot at 1680m; here you're 10 to 15 minutes from the summit.

The final leg is well poled, but you have to be careful. The ridge is narrow, falling sharply away to the McGrath Stream catchment at times, and the rock is loose.

Avalanche Peak (1833m) is a rounded summit with enough space for about six people to sit comfortably and admire the views in every direction. The most impressive view is to the north, looking over towards Mt Rolleston with the icfall of Crow Glacier right below it.



If the wind is gentle and the sun is out you could spend the afternoon up here, enjoying the world at your feet. If you do stay a while, eventually a kea or two will arrive – do not feed them, and do not leave your day-pack or anything else unattended.

If you are not continuing on to Crow Hut (see below), the return trip begins by backtracking to the junction of Avalanche Peak and Scotts Tracks. Whereas the yellow markers descend the ridge south, this time you stay with the orange markers as they continue along the crest of the ridge to the east.

In the beginning Scotts Track will also have some narrow areas with steep drop-offs towards the McGrath Stream catchment, but 30 minutes from the summit the ridge eases up and the descent becomes a wonderful stroll through tussock. The bush-line is reached in one to 1½ hours, at a spot where the track is well marked among the stunted mountain beech.

It's a 300m descent from here to SH73, along a track that is not nearly as steep or rugged as Avalanche Peak Track. You will also enjoy better views on the way down, as you are constantly passing small openings in the trees. Most of them are dominated by Punchbowl Falls leaping 131m out of a cleft in the mountains. It takes most people at least one hour to descend through the bush, longer if their legs are tired. Eventually you arrive at SH73, just north of Arthur's Pass village. Follow the road 200m south into the village.

ALTERNATIVE FINISH: SH73 VIA

CROW RIVER

5–6 hours, 15km

From Avalanche Peak, experienced trampers can descend to Crow River and then follow the river south, returning to SH73 via the Waimakariri River.

The route to Crow River follows the main ridge behind Avalanche Peak (to the north), but you begin by descending in the opposite direction! Drop down the south side of the summit onto a shingle scree and then head northwest along the scree, skirting Avalanche Peak from below, to a noticeable saddle between the peak and the main ridge leading towards Mt Rolleston.

Follow this ridge for one hour. When it begins to steepen noticeably (the third

saddle), depart the ridge and descend west through a scree gully to the Crow River. This spot is marked by a white stake in a rock cairn, but it is important to make sure you are on the right descent; *do not attempt to descend unless you can see the full length of the scree, from the ridge to the Crow River!* Scree slopes passed further up the ridge towards Avalanche Peak end in dangerous bluffs, while the correct scree for the descent is further towards Mt Rolleston.

Once you reach the river, boulder hop downstream for 20 minutes to reach **Crow Hut** (10 bunks), on a grassy terrace at the bush-line on the river's true right (west) side. The original hut, which had four bunks and three holes in the roof, was replaced in 2003 with the current structure, making this an inviting place to stop for the night and break up the tramp.

From the hut, continue downstream on the true right bank through flats and along a short track that dips into the bush. Within 5km (two hours) you reach the Waimakariri River, where you continue downstream through grassy flats and a shingle river bed. Most of the travel is on the true left (north) side, but you will probably need to ford the Waimakariri once or twice to avoid steep bluffs before reaching SH73. For transport to Arthur's Pass see opposite.

GOAT PASS TRACK

Duration	2 days
Distance	25km
Track Standard	tramping track
Difficulty	moderate
Start	Greyneys Shelter
Finish	Morrison Footbridge
Nearest Town	Arthur's Pass village (p218)
Transport	bus

Summary This is a popular tramp that takes you over the 1070m Goat Pass, and along much of the easy-to-follow route which snakes beside the Mingha and Deception Rivers. The highlight is a night spent at Goat Pass Hut above the bush-line.

Goat Pass Track – also referred to as the Mingha-Deception Track (the two rivers the route follows) – is one of the least complicated routes to follow in the park.

Although the unpredictable nature of the rivers can quickly turn the track into a challenging tramp, this trip is still an excellent introduction to tramping in Arthur's Pass. The Mingha-Deception Track is also the running leg used for the Coast to Coast, a famous adventure race that crosses the South Island from the Tasman Sea to the Pacific Ocean by a gruelling combination of cycling, kayaking and running.

The track can be tramped in either direction, but this description is from the Mingha to the Deception River, allowing trampers to undertake the shorter day first. The Bealey, Mingha and Deception Rivers can be difficult or impossible to ford when high, and the tramp should not be attempted during periods of rain.

PLANNING

When to Tramp

This track is best tramped from November to March and should be avoided in winter. It should also be avoided during heavy rain, common in November and early December, as the rivers become impassable.

What to Bring

Pack a stove and warm clothes. Remember there are no cooking or heating facilities at Goat Pass Hut.

Maps

Trampers can use the 1:80,000 Parkmap 273-01 (*Arthur's Pass*) or the 1:50,000 Topomap 260-K33 (*Otira*).

Huts

Goat Pass Hut (\$5) and **Upper Deception Hut** (\$5) are Standard huts, while **Mingha Bivouac** (free) is Basic.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

The southern end of the track is at the confluence of the Bealey and Mingha Rivers, near Greyneys Shelter, 5km south of Arthur's Pass. The northern end is at the confluence of the Otira and Deception Rivers, 19km north of Arthur's Pass along SH73. The buses that service Arthur's Pass will also provide transport to and from each end of the track, though you must book a pick-up at the end of your tramp; you can no longer simply flag down drivers on the highway. The Arthur's Pass

Store & Tearooms serves as the bus depot and ticket agent.

Atomic Shuttles (☎ 322 8883; www.atomictravel.co.nz) and **Coast to Coast** (☎ 0800-800 847; www.coast2coast.co.nz) have daily bus services that leave Christchurch between 7.30am and 8am, reaching Arthur's Pass at around 10.30am. They return to Arthur's Pass from Greymouth between 3pm and 4pm, arriving in Christchurch at 6pm. Either company will drop trampers at Greyneys Shelter and pick up at Morrison Footbridge; Greyneys Shelter is a 10-minute drive south of Arthur's Pass and Morrison Footbridge is 15 minutes to the north.

Mountain House Shuttle (☎ 027-419 2354; shuttle@trampers.co.nz) will also deliver you to most tramping trails on request. Prices vary, so enquire at Mountain House.

THE TRAMP

Map pp222–3

Day 1: Greyneys Shelter to Goat Pass Hut

4–5 hours, 9.5km, 390m ascent

From Greyneys Shelter it's a 10-minute walk north along the road to the confluence of the Bealey and Mingha Rivers, which is easily spotted from SH73 as a huge gravel plain.

Ford the Bealey, then round the point into the Mingha valley and head north-east along the true right (west) side of the river. After about 1km you have to ford the Mingha to the true left (east) side, where the easy walking continues for another 3km. About 1½ hours from the shelter the bush comes down to meet the river. Rock cairns mark both sides of the river here, indicating a ford back to the true right (west) side. Follow the Mingha along this side and across a huge rocky fan.

Continue following the river flat after the rock fan, to quickly arrive at a track signposted with an orange marker on the edge of the beech forest. At first the track runs level with the river but then it makes a steep ascent to the top of **Dudley Knob**. It's a good climb, and once on top you'll be able to see both sides of the river valley. The track descends the knob a short way and then begins a gentle climb towards Goat Pass. This stretch used to be very boggy but has been extensively planked. A little more than 2km from the knob the track passes **Mingha Bivouac** (two bunks).

For the next 1.5km you follow the track, fording the river at a sharp bend, where there is a large orange triangle marker on the true left (east) bank. This marks the final climb. The track passes the impressive bowl of Mt Temple, then follows the gorge to **Goat Pass**, although you rarely see it. This tussock slope is quite wet and boggy in places, with long sections of boardwalk. The climb is easy though, and from the pass you can look down on its northern side and spot the hut below.

Goat Pass Hut (20 bunks) is a great place to spend a night or two. It's a roomy hut, with a radio link to the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre that can be used to receive the latest weather report. There is no fireplace in the hut because of the lack of firewood, and it can get chilly on cold nights...put on that fleece!

SIDE TRIP: LAKE MAVIS

3–4 hours, 2km return, 500m ascent

An excellent climb for a layover day is to ascend the spur track to the east of Goat Pass Hut, following the ridge to Lake Mavis. It is the park's most accessible alpine lake.

Day 2: Goat Pass Hut to Morrison Footbridge

6–9 hours, 15.5km, 770m descent

The day begins at the stream behind the hut, where a couple of snow poles have been placed. Follow the small stream, stepping from boulder to boulder, and you'll soon emerge at **Deception River**. A huge rock cairn and a large pole alert trampers heading towards the pass to leave the river and avoid the gorge ahead.

Those heading down the valley continue boulder hopping along the river, on the true right (east) side most of the time – although a series of cairns indicate when you should cross to the other bank. There are also short sections of unmarked track that can be used if found. After about 2km you pass **Upper Deception Hut** (six bunks), on the true right (east) bank, just before Good Luck Creek; look for it carefully because it's easy to miss.

Less than 2km from Upper Deception Hut you break out into a wide section of the valley. The walking becomes considerably easier and most of the track encountered

will be on the true left (west) side of the Deception. Two hours from Upper Deception Hut you enter a gorge. Pass the junction of Gorge Creek at the gorge's northern end, and after another 2km enter another small gorge.

Between the two gorges is a **sulphur hot spring**. It is located on the true right (east) side of the river, just before Middy Creek. It is easier to smell the sulphur than it is to find the spring, which emerges from a rock bank and forms a small, two-person pool of 38°C water.

At the end of the second gorge, 10km from Goat Pass, the Deception valley swings to the northwest and begins to widen. It's about 5.5km from here to SH73, with the final 2km passing through grazing land (watch out for the cows) on a track on the true right (east) side of the river. Morrison Footbridge across the Otira is just north of the confluence, on the true right side of Deception River.

The road is just on the other side of the Otira River. If recent rain has flooded the rivers, however, you might not be able to ford Deception River on the way to Morrison Footbridge. If you have any doubt, stay put until the river goes down, or try returning along the Mingha. Backtracking is tough, but it's nothing compared to not safely crossing a river.

WAIMAKARIRI–HARMAN PASS ROUTE

Duration	4 days
Distance	44km
Track Standard	tramping track & route
Difficulty	demanding
Start	Klondyke Shelter
Finish	Kelly Shelter
Nearest Town	Arthur's Pass village (p218)
Transport	bus
Summary	Ascend two alpine passes and follow the upper reaches of the Taipo River, renowned for its trout fishing. The highlight of the tramp is the hot spring at Julia Hut.

This excellent tramp covers a variety of terrain. Much of the route involves trackless river valleys, where long stretches of slog-ging over boulders will quickly tire ankles and calves. Crossing the two passes involves steep routes that are only lightly marked

with rock cairns. Part of the track lies in the neighbouring Taipo Forest.

For most people, the first day of this tramp usually ends at Carrington Hut, followed by a climb over Harman Pass and a second night at Julia Hut. In the past it was difficult to know where to spend the third night because of the lack of a good hut in the Seven Mile Creek area. That problem was recently solved with the construction of Dillons Hut, a 10-bunk structure 300m before the creek.

This route is for experienced trampers, but it is rewarding. There are excellent views from Harman Pass and Kelly Saddle, superb trout fishing in the Taipo River, and the chance of an evening soak in the hot spring at Julia Hut. If short on time or experience, you can reduce this tramp by walking up the Waimakariri River and spending two nights at the roomy Carrington Hut, before backtracking to Klondyke Shelter. The spare day can be used to climb Harman Pass, the easier and more scenic of the two alpine crossings.

The easiest way to cross Kelly Saddle is from the west, as described here.

PLANNING When to Tramp

This tramp should only be attempted from November through March because of the risk of avalanches in winter and spring.

What to Bring

A stove is a necessity on this trip. Carroll Hut does not have cooking facilities of any kind, and the other hut stoves are designed for heating the hut, not cooking.

Maps

Use the 1:80,000 Parkmap 273-01 (*Arthur's Pass*) or the 1:50,000 Topomap 260-K33 (*Otira*).

Huts

Carrington Hut (\$10) is Serviced, while **Anti Crow Hut** (\$5), **Julia Hut** (\$5), **Mid Taipo Hut** (\$5), **Dillons Hut** (\$5) and **Carroll Hut** (\$5) are all Standard. **Old Dillons Hut** (free) is Basic.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

The Waimakariri–Harman Pass Route begins at the Klondyke Shelter, just north of where SH73 crosses the Waimakariri River.

It ends at Kelly Shelter, also on SH73, about 3km north of Otira township. Neither shelter is set up for overnight use, but both can be reached by the bus services that come in and out of Arthur's Pass village (see p225).

THE TRAMP Day 1: Klondyke Shelter to Carrington Hut

Map pp222–3

4–6 hours, 13km

There are two ways up the Waimakariri River to Carrington Hut. If the river is high use the Alternative Start (p228). However, in normal conditions, and using a degree of caution, the river can be forded in most places. The shortest and easiest route is along the river bed, where trampers cross the Waimakariri and its side streams numerous times.

For the preferred river route, begin at the 4WD track opposite Klondyke Shelter and follow the track west to the small car park at the end. The route continues along the open, rocky river flats of the **Waimakariri River** – you will save time here if you avoid the meanderings of the braided river by tramping it from 'line of sight'. Most trampers stick to the valley centre until they reach the confluence with the Crow River, about 4.7km from the highway.

As you near Crow River, the easiest route is often to cross the Waimakariri, then cut across the flats along the true right (south) bank towards the knobs and the mouth of the Anti Crow River. If you plan to stay at **Anti Crow Hut** (six bunks), ford the Waimakariri early and keep an eye on the tree line for the hut. Once past Anti Crow River, ford the Waimakariri again to the true left (north) bank, and follow this side to the distinct forested 'corner'. The river swings sharply round this corner, so it is best to ford back to the true right (south) side before reaching it.

Follow the true right bank of the Waimakariri to its confluence with Greenlaw Creek. Greenlaw Hut, which older maps show as being just up the creek, is gone – it was destroyed by an earthquake in 1994. Beyond Greenlaw Creek a series of poles swing north across the flats for 1km to Harper Creek. Stay on the true right side of the river after crossing the creek; the bushy knob that marks the confluence with White River should quickly become visible.

It's roughly 3.2km from Greenlaw Creek to the knob, at which point a well-marked track heads west for five minutes to **Carrington Hut** (18 bunks). The hut is massive, with four separate sleeping areas with platform bunks and two common rooms. This facility can probably sleep more than 30 people comfortably, without anybody having to endure the floor. It also contains a radio, which can be used in the morning to receive the latest weather report from the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre.

The hut is named after Gerald Carrington, who in 1925 proposed to his friends around a campfire that they form a club and promote this valley for tramping. The Canterbury Mountaineering Club was formed, but before the original hut was built, Carrington drowned while rafting in the Waimakariri Gorge.

ALTERNATIVE START: HIGH-WATER TRACK FROM WAIMAKARIRI BRIDGE

3 hours, 9km

If the Waimakariri River is high you may be able to use the high-water track that runs along the southern bank, near the bridge on SH73. Just remember that the side streams along this route are not bridged and can also be very dangerous to cross during flooding. There's also no track after Anti Crow hut, so you'll be crossing the Waimakariri River anyway, but hopefully this far upstream you'll be able to ford it safely.

It's about 2½ hours to Anti Crow Hut from the bridge. After the hut there is a boggy section to the Anti Crow River. Soon after crossing the river the track joins the normal Day 1 route.

Day 2: Carrington Hut to Julia Hut

7–9 hours, 7km, 501m ascent, 711m descent

A track departs west from the hut, up the true right (south) side of White River. Little more than 1km through the forest you reach **Clough Cableway**. Under normal conditions you can ford the river at this point.

If you're forced to use it, the cableway is an interesting device for those who have never been in one before. It's definitely easier if there are people cranking the car from both banks – then all the passenger has to do is keep away from the spinning handle inside the car and enjoy the great

view of **White River Gorge** below. Once on the north side of the gorge, a short track runs from the cableway to **Taipoti River**.

For most of the climb to Harman Pass you follow the Taipoti, hopping from one boulder to the next. There are a few rock cairns (but never when you need one) and even a few segments of beaten path, but during most of the climb you have to pick and choose your own route. It's probably easier to follow the true right (west) bank of the river for the first 1.2km, until a rock bluff forces you to the other side.

More bluffs force you back to the true right side, and eventually you climb towards what appears to be a granite bowl with steep walls and a **waterfall**. There is only one route up from here – on the true right (west) side of the river, where several large cairns mark the way up an easy rock and tussock slope.

Once on the slope, a distinct track appears and crosses two gullies before making the final ascent to **Harman Pass** (1321m), marked by a large cairn. If the weather is fair and you've packed a tent, you can spend an enjoyable evening camping in the small tussock basins of the pass.

From the pass you can see Whitehorn Pass to the west and, more importantly, the three branches of Mary Creek to the north. On the bluff opposite Whitehorn Pass, an obvious route allows trampers to skirt a gorge.

Take time to study the route before descending from the pass down to the true left (west) side of the branch to Mary Creek. Cross to the true right (east) side of the stream, and then ascend the terrace before the gorge through an obvious break in the low bluffs. There are rock cairns and snow poles to assist you, but make sure you climb high enough onto the bluff to totally avoid the gorge. You then drop back down to the creek. Descend through tussock grass and rocks (not as easy as it appears) until you reach Mary Creek near the junction of its third branch. *Do not descend to Mary Creek until you can see the entire route!* Ford the creek to its true left (west) side and begin boulder hopping down the stream, following marker poles. The quickest route is to ford the creek from corner to corner and stay along the banks.

One to 1½ hours from the pass you reach the bush-line. Continue along the stream banks until you pass a rock slide on the true left (west) side and see a huge rock cairn (the biggest since crossing the pass); this is the start of the Julia Track, which is marked by orange markers. You have to pick up the track, because beyond it Mary Creek drops into a gorge and following the true right side is very difficult.

The 3km track twice climbs steadily up the side of the valley and descends again. The first time you get an excellent view of Mary Creek. Eventually the track descends to a swing bridge, just a few minutes from Julia Hut. Be aware that at one point the track comes to a rock slide, 5m above the river, and resumes on the other side, 30m up the scree.

Rebuilt in 1987, **Julia Hut** (six bunks) is a very pleasant facility with views of the peaks all around it. The feature of this hut is the nearby **hot spring**, reached in 10 to 15 minutes by rock-hopping down the true right (east) side of the Taipo River from in front of the hut. Look for the greyish pools on the true right bank.

During dry spells the water might be too hot to enter, but after heavy rain the pools may be impossible to locate in the swollen river. If conditions are right, however, you can deepen the pools by scooping out gravel with the bucket from the hut. Lay back and soak in the warm water, with the Taipo rushing by an arm's length away. If the sandflies are not too thick, nothing could be more pleasant after climbing Harman Pass.

Day 3: Julia Hut to Dillons Hut

5½–6 hours, 15km

A track leaves the hut, climbs a terrace and passes the **old Julia Hut** – a four-bunk bivvy that has been replaced by the current one – before heading down the valley along the true right (east) side of the Taipo River. After 1km it crosses a walkwire over Tumbledown Creek and continues as an easy walk, although it can get boggy in places. It reaches a swing bridge 5km from Julia Hut and crosses to the true left (west) side of the Taipo. From the bridge it's possible to see a portion of Mid Taipo Hut, still 15 to 20 minutes away through grass and scrub flats. **Mid Taipo Hut** (six bunks) is 2½ to three hours from Julia Hut.

From the hut a track continues through open flats for 20 minutes, then climbs steeply around a **gorge**. After descending to the river bed the track becomes a route, more or less through open flats for the next 4km as it works its way towards the noticeable knob located just before Scotty's Cableway. This is a good stretch for anglers to seek out river pools that might hold trout.

Eventually you reach the northern end of the flats, with the knob looming overhead, and find a green marker post pointing to a track leading up into the bush. If the weather is clear and the river easy to ford, trampers should consider finding a safe ford above the gorge instead of using the cableway to cross it. If not, the track to **Scotty's Cableway** involves an extremely steep climb, part of which is along an old stream bed, and an equally steep descent.

Either way, you emerge from the gorge on the true right (east) side of the Taipo and continue down the river, where the terrain quickly changes into grassy flats and terraces that make for easy walking. Green and yellow poles mark the route here. It's about 3.2km from the cableway, across the flats and past One Mile Creek, to a short track on your left that leads to the new **Dillons Hut** (ten bunks).

Built to replace the old Seven Mile Hut, Dillons Hut is located 300m before Seven Mile Creek. Another hut available for public use is **Old Dillons Hut** (four bunks), 200m further downstream and just before Seven Mile Creek.

Day 4: Dillons Hut to Kelly Shelter

6–8 hours, 9km, 1191m ascent, 1051m descent

Begin the day heading up Seven Mile Creek on its true left (south) side to the distinctive white pole, high on a bank. Go just beyond the pole (15 minutes from the hut) and look for orange markers that signal the start of a track. Before leaving the stream, fill up your water bottles, as this is the last place for water until you reach the tarns on the Kelly Range.

Once on the track you climb steeply, and soon pass through an eerie old **mining trace**. You then ascend sharply to the bush-line, climbing 800m in 4km. It's about a 2½- to three-hour tramp from the hut to the **small knob** marked by a large cairn just

beyond the last stand of mountain beech. There are good views in almost every direction from here, even to Dillons Hut, where the day began.

From the knob, a well-defined track climbs the ridge through scrub and flax, but quickly becomes obscured. There are a number of white metal markers and segments of worn track, but basically you just make your own route up to the top of the ridge, where a large cairn and a pole with a yellow disc are located. This is an important marker for trampers heading in the opposite direction because it puts you in line with the start of the track at the bush-line.

Once on top, a couple of cairns point the way along the northernmost ridge, the lower of the two viewed running east. There are snow poles marking the route towards Carroll Hut but in poor visibility they're easily missed. Walk east up the ridge and over small knolls until you emerge at a series of **small tarns**. The route continues northeast from the ponds, over a tussock basin and up the main ridge of Kelly Range. When you reach the crest of the range you will be able to view at least a portion of the Otira valley.

From the tarns it's 1km to the main ridge, if you follow a direct route, then another 1.5km to Carroll Hut. You will actually see the hut soon after reaching the main ridge, but stay on the crest of Kelly Range until you reach **Kelly Saddle** (1165m), because the southeastern side is very steep and has rugged bluffs. From the saddle, Carroll Hut is just to the east in a tussock basin.

In 2004, **Carroll Hut** (10 bunks) was renovated and enlarged because of its popularity with day walkers and trampers from Kelly Shelter. Located in a tussock saddle, it's a very pleasant spot and has excellent views of the surrounding mountains. The hut is named after Patrick Carroll, who died in the mid-1930s in a mountaineering accident. A chilling newspaper account of the mishap is framed on the wall.

Beyond Carroll Hut it is only 1½ hours to Kelly Shelter – maybe two hours if it's raining. The first 1km is above the bush-line, through tussock, while the rest is in forest. The drop to Kellys Creek is quite steep.

HARPER PASS

Duration	5 days
Distance	77km
Track Standard	tramping track
Difficulty	moderate
Start	DOC Aickens sign (SH73)
Finish	Windy Point
Nearest Towns	Arthur's Pass village (p218), Hanmer Springs (p206)
Transport	bus, train

Summary This is the route that thousands of miners used during the 1865 gold rush. It extends from Arthur's Pass National Park into Lake Sumner Forest Park, and much of it passes through beech forest and along wide river flats.

This is a classic tramp along a historic route connecting Arthur's Pass to Lewis Pass. The track crosses the Main Divide over Harper Pass, a low saddle of only 963m. The segment in Arthur's Pass National Park is a valley route along the Taramakau River, but in Lake Sumner Forest Park the track is well cut and marked. For these reasons the Harper Pass crossing is an easier trip than many others in the area, including the Waimakariri–Harman Pass Route described earlier.

However, trampers need to be cautious with the Taramakau. It is a large and unruly river in a high rainfall area, making it prone to sudden flooding. The easiest way to follow the track is from east to west – because less climbing is required when crossing from the Hurunui valley to the Taramakau valley – but the trip is described here from west to east, because by following the Taramakau first, you won't get blocked if sudden rainfall makes the river impassable.

Unlike the Taramakau, there is a well-defined track along the Hurunui and Hope Rivers, and bridges at all major crossings. Once you cross Harper Pass into the forest park, the track can be walked during most foul weather.

HISTORY

Maori may not have lived in this rugged region, but they often traversed it on their way over to the west coast in search of *pounamu* (greenstone). Their favoured

route included a substantial amount of the walk that is described here. Family groups would head up the Hurunui, scale the bluffs into Maori Gully using a fibre ladder, then continue up the Hurunui's southern branch to the lakes (Sumner, Katrine and Taylor), where they would be able to re-stock food supplies. After negotiating the pass, which they called Ngoti Taramakau, they would follow the Taramakau to Lake Kaurapataka, where there was a plentiful supply of food.

Maori guided the first Europeans through this area. In 1857 two guides, named Wereta Tainui and Terapuhi, took Leonard Harper across the pass that now bears his name. By 1862, some three years after the first bridle paths were surveyed, the route was serving as the main gateway to the west coast for gold miners, and all along the way were stores and grog shops. When the gold rush ended, however, the track fell into disrepair, until its reinvention as a tramping trail.

PLANNING

When to Tramp

This crossing is best done in summer, from November through March, and avoided in winter.

Maps

Use the 1:80,000 Parkmap 273-01 (*Arthur's Pass*) and 274-16 (*Lake Sumner Forest Park*).

Huts

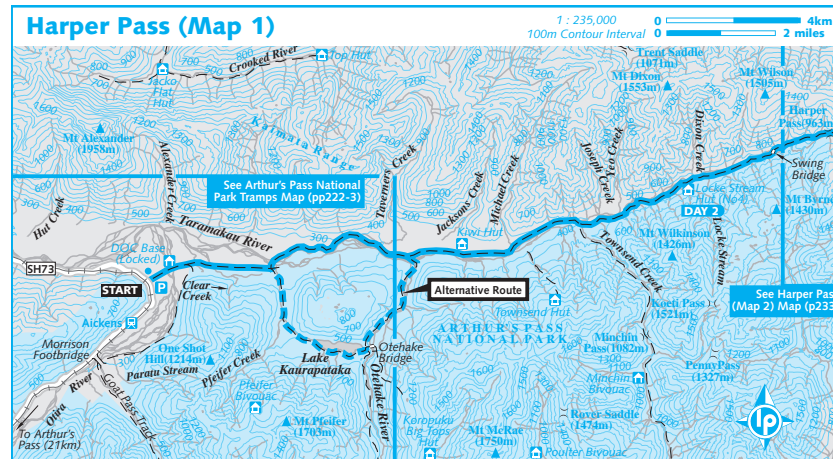
Locke Stream Hut (No 4) (\$10), **Hurunui Hut** (\$10) and **Hope-Kiwi Lodge** (\$10) are Serviced huts; **Kiwi Hut** (\$5), **No 3** (\$5) and **St Jacobs Hut** (\$5) are Standard; and **Harper Pass Bivouac** (free), **Hope Halfway** (free) and **Camerons Hut** (free) are Basic.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

The western end of the track is at the DOC Aickens sign on SH73, 30 minutes north of Arthur's Pass village. The sign can be reached from Greymouth or Christchurch by bus (see p225 for details). Alternatively, take the **TranzAlpine Train**, operated by **Tranz Scenic** (☎ 0800-872 467, 04-495 0775; www.tranzscenic.co.nz), which will drop you at the small Aickens train station by arrangement. From the station it is 1.5km north along SH73 to the DOC Aickens sign.

The eastern end of the track is Windy Point, on SH7, 7km west of the Hope Bridge and almost halfway between Maruia Springs and the turn-off to Hanmer Springs. A **Southern Link Shuttles** (☎ 358 8355; www.yellow.co.nz/site/southernlink) bus passes Windy Point at about 1.15pm daily for Christchurch (\$25), and about 11am heading the other way to Nelson (\$30).

The last day's walk takes most trampers five hours, so an early start is necessary if you hope to catch one of the buses. It is best to be at the highway, ready to flag down the bus, 30 minutes before it is due to arrive.



THE TRAMP

Day 1: DOC Aickens Sign to Locke Stream Hut (No 4)

6 hours, 18km

If the Otira River cannot be forded, postpone your trip or move on to another track, because you won't be able to cross the Taramakau later in the day. From the car park at the DOC sign, follow the paddock fence to the Otira. Ford the wide gravel bed of the river, and head for the obvious pink marker in the gap in the bush-line on the other side; there is a **shelter** here. A track leads through scrubby bush to grassy flats, which provide an easy walk to Pfeifer Creek.

Near the creek is a junction with a track that leads south (right fork) to Lake Kaurapataka (see the Alternative Route, right). The main route continues north-east, fording the Taramakau to the true right (north) bank, where the travel is easier through grassy flats. If the rivers are high, it's safer to stay on the true left (south) bank of the Taramakau to cross the Otehae and then the Taramakau. It's about 6km from Pfeifer Creek to **Kiwi Hut** (eight bunks), and 1.5km before reaching it you pass the confluence with the Otehae River. Stay on the true right (north) side of the Taramakau River and keep a sharp eye out for an old track that departs for a grassy clearing. Trampers have been known to miss the hut because it sits well back from the river, but the track to it is now well marked.

In places you might find the remnants of an old vehicle track, but beyond Kiwi Hut the route is mostly clogged with boulders along the true right (north) side of the river. It is about 9km from Kiwi Hut to Locke Stream. The river bed begins to get narrower halfway up, near Townsend Creek, and eventually steep northern banks force you to ford to the true left (south) side.

Continue along the gravel beds until you reach Locke Stream. A track on the other side is marked by cairns and leads through the bush for 10 minutes to the recently renovated 18-bunk **Locke Stream Hut (No 4)**, which is equipped with a radio link to the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre. You can use the radio to pick up the latest weather report every morning at around 9am.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: VIA LAKE KAURAPATAKA

2–3 hours, 8km

A high-water alternative leaves from beside Pfeifer Creek, and heads south to **Lake Kaurapataka**, a beautiful body of water in the former Otehae Wilderness Area (this has since reverted to national park status, and is no longer deemed a wilderness because of the presence of huts and tracks). Turn left at the Otehae River and head downstream to rejoin the Taramakau River.

Day 2: Locke Stream Hut (No 4) to No 3 Hut

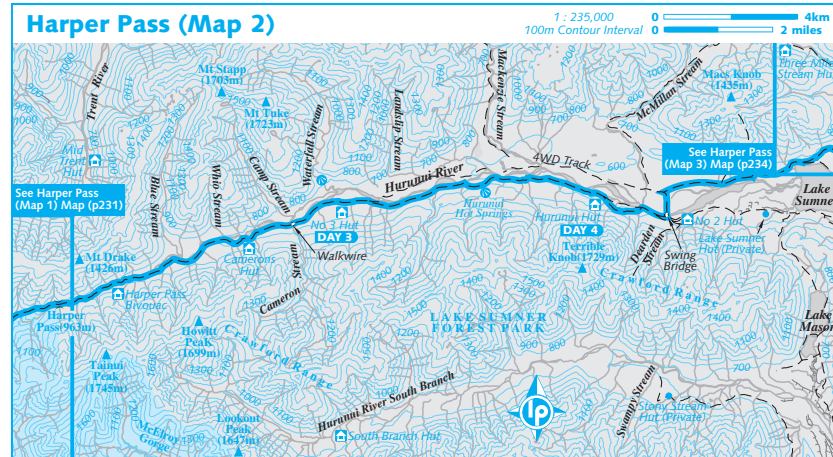
7 hours, 15km, 280m ascent

Above Locke Stream the valley continues to narrow and the Taramakau appears more like a mountain stream. Signs of flooding, slips and fallen logs mar its banks. Harper Pass Track begins at the hut, and winds in and out of the forest as it climbs towards the alpine Harper Pass. Keep a sharp eye out for trail markers that indicate when the track moves back into the bush. This section is challenging and slow, but within 1½ hours you should reach a swing bridge located 3km above Locke Stream.

Cross to the true right (north) side and follow the Taramakau (although it's rarely visible through the bush) to the headwater gorges. Here the track begins a steep, 280m ascent through forest to **Harper Pass** (963m), which is marked by a sign and is reached three hours from the hut.

You do not enter the tussock grasslands on the pass, but drop quickly on the eastern side to the headwaters of the **Hurunui River**. Within 30 minutes of reaching the stream you arrive at **Harper Pass Bivouac** (two bunks), located in a grove of ribbonwood above the stream on the true right (south) side. Below the bivouac walking becomes a lot easier. The track departs the creek bed into lush, subalpine scrub and follows terraces along its true right (south) side. It's a steady 6.5km, two-hour descent from Harper Pass Bivouac to the first substantial flat. **Cameron's Hut** (four bunks) is halfway down the flat, on the edge of the forest. From the small hut it's a short walk to No 3 Hut. The track crosses the flat to an emergency walkwire across Cameron Stream and then stays on the fringes of the forest for the next 1.5km, until it opens onto a flat opposite Waterfall Stream.

Harper Pass (Map 2)



No 3 Hut (18 bunks), which looks just like a deserted schoolhouse, stands in the middle of the grassy clearing. The old, two-roomed building has a large wooden porch and a wood stove.

Day 3: No 3 Hut to Hurunui Hut

3–4 hours, 10km

Below No 3 Hut, most of the tramping along the Hurunui valley floor is through grassy flats. A 4WD track departs from the hut and crosses the flats, reaching a signposted junction after 1km. The main walking track veers to the southeast (right fork) and stays on the true right (south) side of the Hurunui River for the entire day. The track undulates as it bypasses steep embankments cut into the hillsides. If you want flat and easy travel, veer north (left fork) at the junction and follow the 4WD vehicle track all the way along the true left (north) side. If you plan to stay at Hurunui Hut it's best to stick to the walking track.

From the junction the walking track is marked by a series of poles as it crosses the flats and enters forest. Sidle up and down along the forested hillsides for 2km, cross another flat and then make a long descent to the **Hurunui Hot Springs**, two hours from the hut. Keep an eye out for the side trail to the springs as it is easy to miss. The sulphurous thermal water emerges from rock 30m above the Hurunui and forms a cascade of hot water to the river bed below.

Depending on water levels it's possible for three or four people to soak chest deep in the pool.

The track departs from the hot springs and returns to the forest for 1km, before emerging onto a flat. Cut across the flat, return to manuka forest and, 1½ hours from the hot springs, arrive at **Hurunui Hut** (20 bunks). This DOC hut was built in 1987 and is on the hillside.

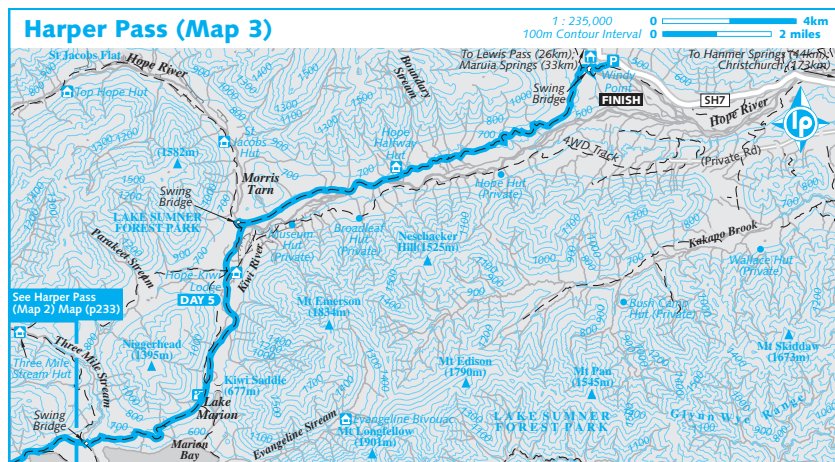
Day 4: Hurunui Hut to Hope-Kiwi Lodge

5–6 hours, 19km

The walking track continues along the Hurunui River, and 1km below the confluence with McMillan Stream (about 30 minutes) arrives at a swing bridge across it.

Follow the vehicle track on the other side to where it swings sharply to the west. Here, a route marked with poles heads east (right fork) and crosses the valley along the edge of the forest. To avoid some cliffs the track dips into the bush once before reaching the head of **Lake Sumner**.

On the northern side of the lake, the track enters forest again for an easy climb to Three Mile Stream, crossed by a swing bridge. There's a junction here, with one track heading north towards Three Mile Stream Hut and another south to Charley's Point, on the lake. The main track departs east across the stream and begins the day's steepest climb, gaining 150m before leveling off and finally reaching bush-clad **Kiwi Saddle** (677m). Just before the saddle there



is a short track to a **lookout**, which has a fine view across Lake Sumner.

It's a quick descent through bush to the open tussock country along Kiwi River. The route follows the 4WD track along the true right (east) side of the river, and it's a one-hour walk through the cattle flats to **Hope-Kiwi Lodge** (24 bunks), near the western edge of the forest. This hut is large, with five rooms and a wood stove. There is more modest accommodation 1½ hours up the true right (west) bank of Hope River at **St Jacobs Hut** (six bunks).

Day 5: Hope-Kiwi Lodge to Windy Point

5–6 hours, 15km

Begin this day early if you intend to connect with one of the buses on SH7. The track heads north through beech forest and grassy flats, and in 30 to 45 minutes reaches a swing bridge over Hope River. A side track continues north towards St Jacobs Hut (45 minutes), but the main track crosses the swing bridge to the true left (north) side of the river.

The track immediately enters a large, open flat, and it's an easy walk for the next hour as you follow poles for 4km, until a bend in the river forces you to climb into the forest. The track sides between bush and more flats, and in 2km arrives at **Hope Halfway Hut**, which has a stove and bunks but no mattresses or fireplace. The shelter marks the halfway point of the day, and little more than 7km of the journey remains.

The track stays in beech forest for the next two hours, until it breaks out onto a series of grassy terraces and crosses farmland for 2km to a swing bridge over the **Boyle River gorge**. On the other side the track leads past an outdoor education centre to a picnic area and a small shelter. An unsealed road covers the remaining 500m to SH7.

CASS–LAGOON SADDLES TRACK

Duration	2 days
Distance	30km
Track Standard	tramping track
Difficulty	moderate
Start	Cass train station
Finish	SH73 (Bealey Hut)
Nearest Town	Arthur's Pass village (p218)
Transport	bus, train

Summary This track is just south of Arthur's Pass National Park, in Craigieburn Forest Park, and is one of the easiest alpine routes in the Arthur's Pass region. There are spectacular views from the two alpine saddles – Cass and Lagoon.

This track has become a popular weekend trip for Christchurch trampers. Although part of the tramp is technically a 'route' (see the boxed text on p340), the entire walk is easy to follow and the alpine saddles are within the ability of any fit trumper.

If Cass River is flooded the track is impassable, but in normal conditions the Cass

is easily forded and its gravel beds make for a pleasant tramp. Check the current status of the river with staff at the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre.

ENVIRONMENT

Established as a forest park in 1967, the 4400-sq-km Craigieburn extends from SH73 west of the Main Divide, and is bordered by Arthur's Pass National Park to the north and pastoral runs to the south and east. The park is typical of the Canterbury high country and includes river valleys, extensive beech forests and high peaks. The ranges are deeply dissected by streams, and the steep-sided mountains have large areas of rock and scree formed by uplift, glaciation and erosion. Two peaks within the park, Mt Greenlaw and Mt Avoca, exceed 2100m.

More than 35 species of bird have been sighted within the park, most of which are also seen in Arthur's Pass National Park. These include a good number of kea.

The area is also known for its caves. Cave Stream Scenic Reserve, just outside the forest park and south of Cass along SH73, offers covers an opportunity to explore a subterranean world. The stream disappears underground in the reserve, and can be followed for 30 to 45 minutes to a point where it re-emerges above ground.

PLANNING

When to Tramp

It is best to tramp this track from November through February. Give it a miss after April, because of heavy winter snowfalls and the danger of avalanches on Cass Saddle.

Maps

The 1:50,000 Topomap 260-K34 (*Wilberforce*) covers the entire route.

Huts

Hamilton Hut (\$10) is Serviced, and **Bealey Hut** (\$5) and **Cass Hut** (\$5) are both Standard. All other huts on this track are free.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

There is good transport to and from each end of the track along SH73. The *TranzAlpine* Train, operated by **TranzScenic** (☎ 0800-872 467, 04-495 0775; www.tranzscenic.co.nz), stops at Cass

train station, where there is also a car park. At the other end of the track, near Bealey Hut, a number of buses run in both directions along SH73 and can be booked in advance (see p225 for details of bus operators).

You almost have to run along the end track from Hamilton Hut to meet any of the morning buses to Arthur's Pass village. A good alternative is to turn this track into a three-day tramp – by ending the second day at scenic Lagoon Saddle, two hours from SH73, or at Bealey Hut – and catching the bus the next morning. If you're heading to Christchurch, there are afternoon buses.

THE TRAMP

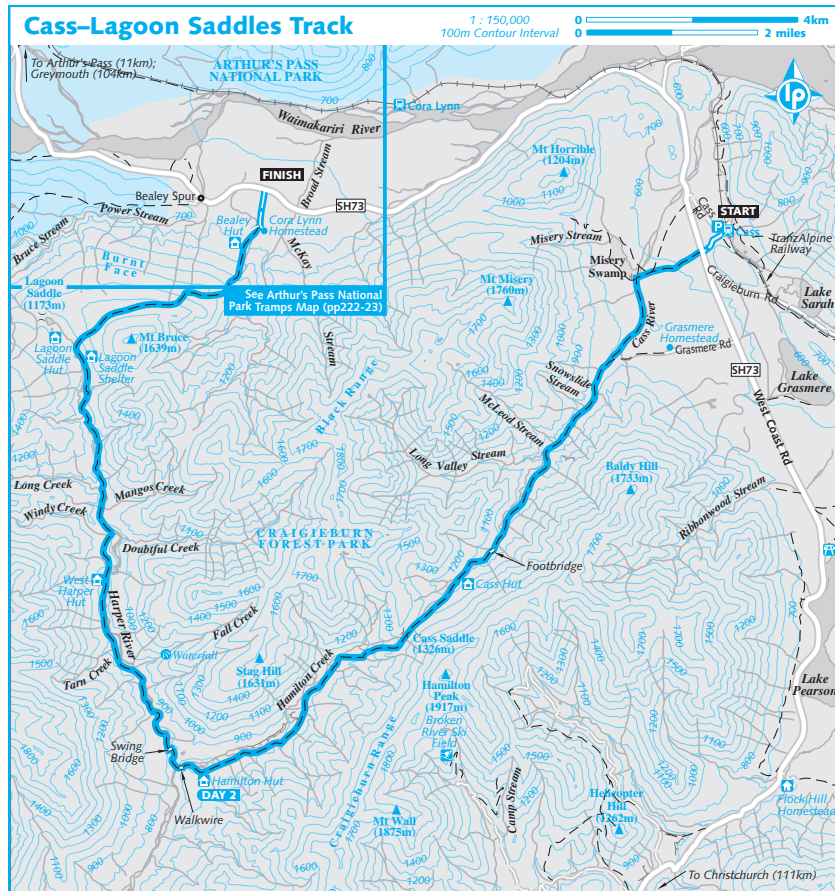
Day 1: Cass Train Station to Hamilton Hut

5–7 hours, 16km, 706m ascent, 526m descent

From the car park near the Cass train station, follow the road southwest to the signposted start of the track on SH73 (just south of the bridge over Cass River) and cross the stile into farmland. The route is well marked with poles, and travels along a 4WD track to a large display sign that contains a box with an intentions book. **Cass River** is just beyond, and you head upstream along the gravel flats, fording from one side to the other as necessary.

After travelling up the river bed for 4km (about 1½ hours), an orange marker appears on the true right (south) side; next to it is a well-defined track. You make an immediate climb, which is steep in parts, and after 3km cross Cass River on a bridge. The track then climbs another 90m in the next 1km to reach **Cass Hut** (three bunks). As far as bivvies go – most being little more than a mattress in a tin box – this one is not bad. It's near the bush-line, with a small table, a stove and some space inside.

Within minutes of leaving the hut you begin climbing towards Cass Saddle. Once you break out of the trees there are views everywhere. During winter this area is avalanche-prone, and in summer it's easy to see why – there are steep scree slopes on both sides of the alpine route. Poles and boardwalks lead through open tussock to **Cass Saddle** (1326m), 1.5km from the hut; the pass is marked by a large pole. You can look down into the Hamilton valley and,



on a clear day, even see the green roof of Hamilton Hut.

From the saddle the route veers off left for 100m, and then begins a quick descent into the bush and down a narrow ridge. The track drops more than 300m before it finally levels out in the upper portion of Hamilton valley, where it crosses several streams.

About 1km from the hut the track emerges from the bush onto grassy terraces along Hamilton Creek. **Hamilton Hut** (20 bunks) is on a ledge above the creek and has a commanding view of the valley. Inside it is an impressive structure, with a wood stove and even a drying rack that can be lowered and raised.

Day 2: Hamilton Hut to SH73 (Bealey Hut)

8–9 hours, 14km, 400m ascent, 520m descent

The track heads west from the hut and almost immediately arrives at a walkwire across Hamilton Creek (unnecessary in normal conditions, when it can be forded). You continue up Harper River on the true left (east) side and soon come to a swing bridge.

The track resumes on the true right (west) side, and follows the valley through forest and open flats for 4.5km to **West Harper Hut** (five bunks), an old-style hut built in the 1950s. West Harper Hut is 15 to 20 minutes beyond Tarn Creek and is strictly a hunter's bivvy, with a dirt floor, canvas bunks,

a fireplace and even an impressive set of antlers mounted on the wall.

Keep in mind that the track is well marked with orange plastic triangles. Hunters' trails abound in the area, especially up side streams such as Tarn Creek, and it's easy to mistakenly take one, not noticing the main track resuming on the other bank.

From the hut the track soon arrives at a short gorge, which it bypasses with a steep climb. In fine weather it is easier to follow the river, fording it once or twice, to avoid the climb.

The track returns to Harper River, crosses Windy Creek and becomes more of a route along the river bed, with rock cairns marking the way. About 3km from West Harper Hut, ford the river to a cairn on the true left (east) bank and pass a signposted flood route before arriving at the confluence of the Harper River and Long Creek.

At this point Long Creek usually looks like the major channel, so an orange marker has been erected slightly upstream of the confluence to point the way to Lagoon Saddle. Continue to follow the river bed for another 500m, until a track on the true left (east) side leads into the bush and climbs to the saddle. The climb is steady but not steep, and 1½ to two hours from Long Creek you come to a sign pointing the way to Lagoon Saddle to the west and to the short spur track to **Lagoon Saddle Shelter** (two bunks) to the east. The shelter is a clean A-frame, which comes with mattresses but no stove. Across the river is **Lagoon Saddle Hut** (three bunks), which also doesn't have a stove.

The main track leaves the junction and climbs 120m through beech forest until it reaches the bush-line. Above the trees there is an excellent view of the saddle and the tarn in its middle.

The climb continues over sometimes boggy ground, and the views of the snow-capped peaks of Arthur's Pass National Park to the north get better and better. It's about 3km across the alpine region, with snow poles marking the route around Mt Bruce, until you return to the forest edge at Burnt Face.

The final leg is a rapid 2.5km descent to **Bealey Hut** (six bunks). The hut is in good shape, considering its proximity to the road. It's a five-minute walk to the car park, and from there a road leads 1.5km through Cora Lynn Homestead to SH73.

MORE TRAMPS

CASEY SADDLE–BINSER SADDLE

This is an easy–moderate two-day tramp in the drier, southeastern corner of Arthur's Pass National Park. The loop begins and ends near Andrews Shelter, reached from SH73 by turning onto Mt White Rd and following it for 5km to where it crosses Andrews Stream.

There is a track most of the way and no difficult fords. The track crosses two easy saddles, winds through open beech forest and follows grassy terraces along the Poulter River. You can spend the night at Casey Hut, a modern, 14-bunk facility. Use the 1:50,000 Topomap 260-L33 (*Dampier*).

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'