

Canterbury

Canterbury is the hub of the South Island, and contains its largest and most interesting city – Christchurch. The region begins with the volcanically uplifted hills of the Banks Peninsula and climaxes with the famous, snow-covered peaks of the Southern Alps. In between are the Canterbury Plains, an expanse of dead-flat farming land where pastures full of grazing sheep are often framed by New Zealand's mountainous skyline.

There is such a wealth of tramping opportunities in Canterbury that the region is covered here in two chapters; Arthur's Pass National Park lies actually in Canterbury, but is so popular among trampers looking for alpine adventures and pass-hopping climbs that it has its own chapter (p216).

This chapter covers two of New Zealand's best private tracks. The Banks Peninsula Track is a four-day walk along a dramatic coastline, and offers the possibility of spotting a variety of marine wildlife, including penguins. Kaikoura Coast Track is a three-day walk that includes climbing Mt Wilson and spending a morning on Pacific Ocean beaches. The accommodation along both walks is a refreshing departure from DOC huts.

Also covered in this chapter are a pair of subalpine tramps: the two-day Mt Somers Track and the five-day St James Walkway. While these tramps don't achieve the lofty heights of those in Arthur's Pass, they do include easy climbs to low passes, as well as remnant forests, waterfalls, spectacular canyons and an opportunity to soak in the hot springs of a thermal resort after you've dropped the pack for the last time.

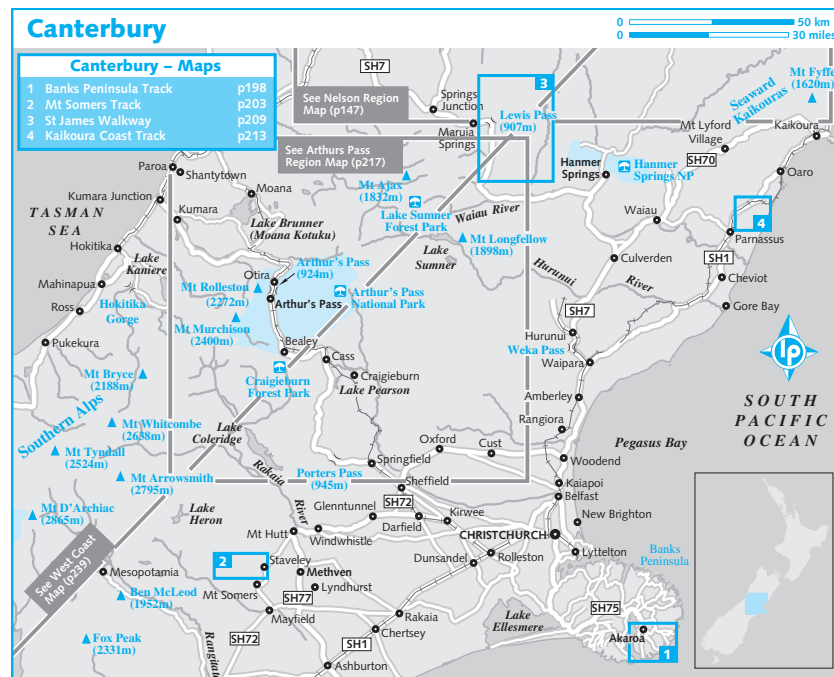
HIGHLIGHTS

- Sighting yellow-eyed penguins, fur seals and Hector's dolphins along the **Banks Peninsula Track** (p196)
- Recovering from a hot day's tramping beneath a waterfall at **Spa Pool** (p204) along Mt Somers Track
- Seeing the historic huts (if not spending the night in them) along the **St James Walkway** (p205)
- Enjoying a cup of tea and the fine view at **Skull Peak Shelter** (p214) along the Kaikoura Coast Track

■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ www.christchurchnz.net

■ www.hurunui.com



CLIMATE

This is one of the driest and flattest areas of New Zealand. The moisture-laden westerlies from the Tasman Sea hit the Southern Alps and dump their rainfall on the west coast before reaching Canterbury, which has an annual rainfall of only 750mm compared with 5000mm on the west coast.

GATEWAY

Christchurch
☎ 03 / pop 331,400

Famous for its gardens and English heritage, Christchurch is a modern and thriving city that has happily strayed somewhat from the vision of its Puritan founders.

INFORMATION

Christchurch and Canterbury visitor information centre (☎ 379 9629; www.christchurchnz.net; Old Chief Post Office Bldg, Cathedral Sq; ☎ 8.30am-7pm) Book transport and accommodation here, and purchase DOC hut passes or obtain general DOC information.
DOC Christchurch Conservation Information Centre (☎ 371 3706; 133 Victoria St) For maps, brochures and information on South Island parks and tracks.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

The city has several stores that sell tramping gear, including **Bivouac Outdoor** (☎ 336 3197; cr Colombo & Lichfield Sts; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, to 8pm Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun), **Kathmandu** (☎ 366 7148; 40 Lichfield St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, to 7pm Fri, to 5pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) and **Snowgum** (☎ 365 4336; 637 Colombo St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Thu, to 8pm Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun).

For maps of anywhere in the South Island, head to **Map World** (☎ 374 5399; www.mapworld.co.nz; 173 Gloucester St; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Thu, to 8pm Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun).

Large supermarkets include **Countdown** (☎ 348 3754; cr Hansons Lake & Riccarton Rds; ☎ 24hr) and **Pak'nSave** (☎ 377 1000; 297 Moorhouse Ave). There is also a **Bin Inn** (☎ 381 5199; 341 Stanmore Rd, Richmond).

SLEEPING & EATING

Stonehurst (☎ 0508-786 633, 379 4620; www.stonehurst.co.nz; 241 Gloucester St; dm/s/d \$26/60/70; ☎) is Christchurch's outstanding accommodation option, with more than 90 rooms ranging from dorms to three-bedroom apartments. There's every amenity a weary

tramper needs, including a solar-heated pool, a laundry and most importantly a pub with a happy hour.

Charlie B's (☎ 0800-224 222, 379 8429; www.charliebs.co.nz; 268 Madras St; dm \$22-25, d \$54; 🍷) is a friendly and clean backpacker lodge with luggage storage, lockers and a 60-inch TV in the lounge.

If the tramp has been long and you need to be pampered, book a room at the upscale **Croydon House** (☎ 366 5111; www.croydon.co.nz; 63 Armagh St; s \$110-140, d \$140-180). The delicious breakfast here is served in a cosy dining room, the perfect way to start a day.

There's great dining in Christchurch. The largest concentration of bars, cafés and restaurants is found along 'the strip', the eastern side of Oxford Tce, between Hereford St and the Cashel St Mall.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Christchurch is the main international gateway to the South Island and the major hub for Air New Zealand, which has an office at the **South City Travel Centre** (☎ 363 0600; 549 Colombo St). Air New Zealand has daily direct flights to Auckland, Hamilton, Invercargill, Queenstown and Wellington.

InterCity (☎ 365 1113; www.intercitycoach.co.nz) is the main bus operator in the South Island. Services depart the **Christchurch Travel Centre** (☎ 377 0951; 123 Worcester St) for Invercargill (\$66, 10 hours), Queenstown (\$65, 7½ hours), Nelson (\$69, 7½ hours) and many other places. There are also myriad shuttle buses that are generally cheaper and run in most directions, including Picton, Arthur's Pass, Greymouth, Queenstown and Invercargill; ask at the Christchurch and Canterbury visitor information centre.

There are more than 50 car-rental companies in Christchurch, making it the best place in the South Island to pick up a long-term rental. The major companies have offices in the city – as do many smaller companies, which are usually cheaper. Plan on paying between \$30 and \$45 for a compact. Local smaller-scale rental companies include **First Choice** (☎ 0800-736 822, 365 9261; www.firstchoice.co.nz; 132 Kilmore St), **Mac's Car Rentals** (☎ 0800-154 155, 377 9660; www.macsrentals.co.nz; 156 Tuam St) and **Ace Rental Cars** (☎ 0800-202 029, 366 3222; www.acerentalcars.co.nz; 237-239 Lichfield St).

BANKS PENINSULA TRACK

Duration	4 days
Distance	35km
Track Standard	tramping track
Difficulty	easy-moderate
Start	Onuku Farm
Finish	Akaroa (opposite)
Transport	bus

Summary This tramp takes you through the spectacular coastal scenery of the Banks Peninsula, which abounds with wildlife and is resplendent with remnant tracts of native forest and farmland.

The hilly Banks Peninsula contrasts with the plains around Christchurch. The peninsula's many tiny inlets are interesting spots to explore. Once heavily forested, the land has been cleared for timber and farming, making this one of the few areas where trampers pass through paddocks filled with grazing sheep.

The Banks Peninsula Track was the first private walk established in New Zealand. Advertised as 'four nights, four days, four beaches, four bays', this tramp takes you across private farmland and around a dramatic coastline.

Other than two steep 600m climbs, this is a leisurely tramp with short daily distances, making it ideal for trampers wishing to take in the marvellous scenery. For the more energetic, cutting the tramp to two days is an option.

HISTORY

Maori have occupied the peninsula for centuries. First came the moa hunters, followed by the Waitaha and then the Ngati Mamoe from the North Island. In the 17th century the Ngai Tahu landed at Parakakari, near Otanerito Bay, and overcame the Ngati Mamoe.

Captain Cook sighted the peninsula in 1770. He named it after naturalist Sir Joseph Banks. Close European contact began in the 1820s, when traders arrived searching for dressed flax, which was used to make sails and rope. In 1836 the British established a whaling station at Peraki.

Two years later, the French captain Jean Langlois chose the attractive site of Akaroa as a likely spot for French settlement. In

1840, a group of 63 French and six German colonists set out from Rochefort, France for New Zealand in the *Comte de Paris*. In 1849 the French land claim was sold to the New Zealand Company and the following year the French were joined by a large group of British settlers. However, the small group of French colonists clearly stamped their mark on this place.

ENVIRONMENT

Banks Peninsula is composed of the remnants of huge twin volcanoes, now attached to the South Island mainland by gravel pushed down from the eroding Southern Alps. It is believed to have once been an island, and was surrounded by a 15km band of swamps and reeds only 150 years ago.

The Lyttelton volcano was already extinct when the Akaroa volcano began to erupt around nine million years ago. Both volcanoes were once much higher; Akaroa is estimated to have peaked at around 1370m. During ice ages, when the sea level was considerably lower, valleys were gouged on the slopes of the volcanoes. When the sea rose, the valleys drowned and the peninsula took its present form, with rugged sea cliffs and skylines studded with basalt plugs.

Despite the lack of forest, three exciting wildlife species should draw inquisitive trampers to this peninsula – penguins (yellow-eyed and white-flippered), fur seals and Hector's dolphins. In four days of tramping you could possibly see all three.

Birds of the bush include the rifleman, bellbirds, New Zealand pigeons (*kereru*), fantails, tomtits and paradise ducks. Shore and sea birds are prolific, and include the spotted shag, little shags, gulls, terns, oystercatchers, sooty shearwaters and petrels.

PLANNING When to Tramp

The season for the track is October to April. The warmest months are December through March, with average temperatures around 21°C maximum and 11°C minimum. Make sure you take precautions during summer, because it is hot on higher ground.

Maps & Books

The 1:50,000 Topomap 260-N37 & N36 (*Akaroa*) covers the tramp. However, the track is well signposted and the sketch maps

in the booklet *Banks Peninsula Track: A Guide to the Route, Natural Features and Human History* (included in the track booking fee) should keep you on course.

Banks Peninsula: A Guide to the Walks & Beaches of Banks Peninsula, by Mark Pickering, is a 36-page booklet covering more opportunities for tramping in the area.

Huts

Accommodation along the track is provided at Trampers' Hut (Onuku Farm), Flea Bay Cottage, track huts at Stony Bay, and a cosy farmhouse at Otanerito Bay. The hut costs are included in the track booking fee.

Permits & Regulations

The number of trampers on the track is limited, so bookings are essential and are made through **Banks Peninsula Track** (☎ 304 7612; www.bankstrack.co.nz).

The four-day package (\$200) includes transport from Akaroa to Trampers' Hut, hut accommodation, landowners' fees, track registration and a copy of *Banks Peninsula Track: A Guide to the Route, Natural Features and Human History*. The two-day package (\$125) has a four-person limit.

NEAREST TOWN Akaroa

☎ 03 / pop 650

A scenic little seaside resort that likes to call itself the 'Riviera of Canterbury', Akaroa strives to recreate the feel of a French provincial village.

INFORMATION

Akaroa visitor information centre (☎ 304 8600; www.akaroa.com; 80 Rue Lavaud; 🕒 9am-5pm) is opposite the ATM-equipped Bank of New Zealand and has general travel information about the Banks Peninsula.

SLEEPING & EATING

North of the village, **Akaroa Holiday Park** (☎ 304 7471; 96 Morgans Rd; sites for 2 \$28, cabins \$50), off Old Coach Rd, is a pleasant park on a gently terraced hillside overlooking Akaroa Harbour.

Chez La Mer Backpackers (☎ 304 7024; www.chezlamer.co.nz; 50 Rue Lavaud; dm \$23, s \$53, d \$56-66; 🍷) is a TV-free place offering free coffee, tea and mountain bikes.

Mt Vernon Lodge (☎ 304 7180; www.mtvernon.co.nz; Purple Peak Rd; dm/d \$28/59) offers lodging at the northern end (finish) of the track.

Onuku Farm Hostel (☎ 304 7066; www.onukufarm.co.nz; Onuku Rd; camp sites for 2 \$18, dm \$17) is a wonderful backpacker lodge on a 340-hectare coastal sheep farm, 6km south of Akaroa and near the start of the track.

Akaroa Bakery (☎ 304 7663; 51 Beach Rd; ☎ 6.30am-4pm) is a pleasant spot for pastries, sandwiches and breakfast, while lovers of classic French meals should head for **C'est la Vie Bistro** (☎ 304 7314; 33 Rue Lavaud; ☎ 6-10pm Tue-Sat).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Akaroa is only 82km from Christchurch. **Akaroa Shuttle** (☎ 0800-500 929, 025-344 233; www.akaroashuttle.co.nz) operates a daily minibus, which departs Christchurch and Canterbury visitor information centre at 8.30am and 2pm, and Akaroa visitor information centre at 10.30am, 3.35pm and 4.35pm, from the end of November to April (\$15/20 one-way/return). In winter the service is reduced.

In addition there's a daily **InterCity** (☎ 770 951; www.intercitycoach.co.nz) service (\$15, 1½ hours).

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

Trampers are picked up from Akaroa post office at 5.45pm by the Banks Peninsula Track bus. A car park is provided at Mt Vernon Lodge, but you need to allow 30 minutes for the walk to the post office from there.

THE TRAMP

Day 1: Onuku Farm to Flea Bay Cottage

4–6 hours, 11km
After a night in Onuku Farm Trampers' Hut, the tramp starts near the farm gate, where there is a sign indicating the Banks Peninsula Track. The marked track rises steeply through sheep paddocks, swings east, sidles around a rocky promontory on a ridge and traverses a patch of bush to reach the site of **Paradise Farm**. Stockyards and exotic trees are all that remain of the farm. From the track there are great views of the harbour and Onuku Farm.

The track swings east, and about 45 minutes from the Onuku Farm gate you come to a prominent track junction on a ridge. To the west is a marked track to a lookout and an alternative route back to Onuku. The main track is indicated by a 'BP Track' sign, which points uphill and to the east. Keep following this track until you come to some park benches overlooking Akaroa Head. There is a side trip from here to a rock-studded knoll on the ridge.

The main track switches back from the benches, crosses an electric fence and aims for the highest point in the area, **Trig GG** (699m). Observe how the wind has shaped the vegetation here. If you're lucky you may also see Aoraki/Mt Cook 230km away to the west. From the Onuku Farm gate to this point is a solid two-hour climb.

From Trig GG it's canter down to Eagle's Roost Shelter. The track leads from here to a road junction; Lighthouse Rd goes north to Akaroa, and south to the lighthouse near Akaroa Head. Ignore the road, follow signs to Flea Bay Rd and take that downhill for just over 1km. Watch out for the turn-off (a sharp left fork) to the track, which passes through the DOC Tutakakahikura Scenic Reserve. This patch of remnant red beech has survived the once-extensive logging on this part of the peninsula. Climb the stile where it is signposted and follow the track down a serene gully, eventually joining the main stream, which drains into Flea Bay.

There are a number of signposted cascades and waterfalls along this stretch, all shrouded in tree ferns. About one hour after entering the gully, the track emerges into an open area and drops steeply. Park your backpack here and head off to do some exploring. There is a **waterfall** that you can walk behind.

The track soon passes through a grove of tree ferns and nikau palms at their southern natural limit. Beyond the palms the track follows the stream on its true left (east) bank for about 1.5km. The track crosses the stream a couple of times before arriving at **Flea Bay Cottage** (12 bunks), the first of the buildings.

Day 2: Flea Bay Cottage to Stony Bay

2½–4 hours, 8km
Head to the beach from the cottage, taking the road east through the gate and then

following the markers up to a stile. Use the stile to cross the fence and then climb as the track gains altitude, to circumvent high cliffs on the eastern side of Flea Bay. If you're lucky you may see Hector's dolphins (the world's rarest and smallest) in the waters below. The track heads southeast to the tip of the headland, rounds it, and then heads northeast to the gully above **Island Nook**. The remarkable transitions of the tramp now become apparent; one moment there are sheep paddocks, the next ancient forest and then, suddenly, cliffs that seem to form the edge of the world – indeed, the next landfall across the Pacific is South America.

From Island Nook the track sidles along the cliffs to **Redcliffe Point**, where iron oxide has stained the compacted volcanic ash. From this point the track heads northeast and crosses a stream before dropping to **Seal Cave**, about two hours from Flea Bay. There are usually a number of fur seals here, sunning on the rocks or curled up asleep in the cave behind.

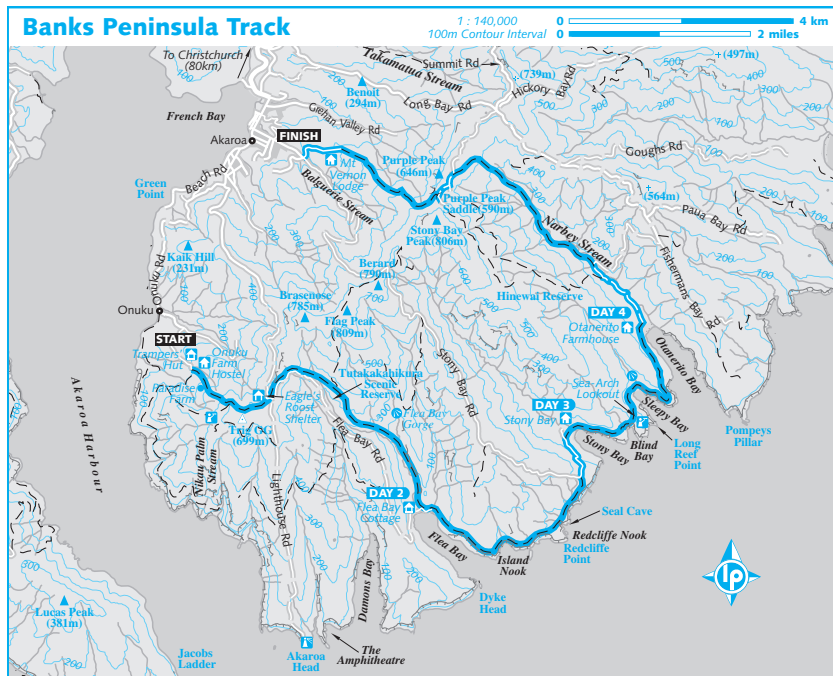
It is quite a steep climb out of Seal Cave to the intersecting ridge between the cave and Stony Bay. From the top of the ridge there are great views across to Pompeys Pillar, on the northern side of Otanerito Bay. Just over 1km from the cave the track joins Stony Bay Rd; head right along this road for 1km.

Keep an eye out for the track turn-off to the right, which allows you to avoid the last section of road down to Stony Bay. This track heads through coastal scrub and, after a steep descent, you walk along the beach to the bay.

Stony Bay is a beautiful, idyllic spot with unusual amenities. There are two outdoor wood-heated baths, a swing, an unusual shower, fresh produce, creek-cooled beer, penguins on the beach and good hosts. A night here alone makes this tramp well worthwhile.

Day 3: Stony Bay to Otanerito Farmhouse

2–3 hours, 6km
This is a short day's tramp, but it does involve rounding three prominent headlands on an undulating track. Immediately after leaving Stony Bay you begin climbing a zig-zagging track to avoid the penguin burrows



below. The track then sidles southeast to the tip of the headland, rounds it, and then heads down in a northeasterly direction to the stream that empties into Blind Bay.

It repeats this pattern to drop into Sleepy Bay. When you get close to Long Reef Point, keep an eye out for the markers leading to **Sea Arch Lookout** and the impressive view of the rock formation. You soon join a vehicle track that crosses a stream on its way downhill to Sleepy Bay. The **waterfall** about two minutes upstream is worth a visit.

From the stream the track heads uphill to a point where you can look to the southern side of Sleepy Bay and the sea arch. The track then rounds the third headland of the day. Over the next 2km you descend through a small patch of bush to the beach at the head of Otanerito Bay and the old **Otanerito Farmhouse** (12 bunks).

Day 4: Otanerito Farmhouse to Akaroa 3–5 hours, 10km

Rejoin the track as it leaves the beach to follow the creek northwest up the valley and into **Hinewai Reserve**. After crossing a road bridge you leave the road, cut over to the true right (west) side of the stream and begin the climb to Purple Peak Saddle.

For nearly the whole climb you are in the 1050-hectare Hinewai Reserve, managed privately for the protection and restoration of native vegetation and wildlife. There are more than 30 waterfalls in the reserve's valleys and some can be visited from the track. As you gain altitude the vegetation changes; near its highest point there's a red beech forest, while lower down there are some ancient kahikatea.

The track is well signposted – which is just as well, because there are a number of alternative routes, especially as you get higher up the valley. You leave the reserve at a stile. Follow the track in a southwesterly direction to **Purple Peak Saddle** (590m), south of Purple Peak and two hours from Otanerito Farmhouse. Stony Bay Peak is almost due south, Akaroa Harbour is to the west and Otanerito Bay to the southeast.

The track snakes downhill from the saddle and joins a vehicle track before arriving at Mt Vernon, which is the official end of the tramp. Nearby is Mt Vernon Lodge (p198), where a number of trappers elect to stay. Continue along the vehicle track

for about 30 minutes, joining Stony Bay Rd into Akaroa.

MT SOMERS TRACK

Duration	2 days
Distance	25.5km
Track Standard	tramping & easy tramping track
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Harplin Falls car park
Nearest Towns	Methven (opposite), Staveley (p202), Mt Somers (p202)
Transport	shuttle service

Summary This new track circles the subalpine areas around Mt Somers, and includes great views and refreshing pools to soothe those tired legs in at the end of the day.

What began as a walkway in 1987, is now Mt Somers Track. The loop encircles Mt Somers/Te Kiekei (1687m), providing access to the spectacular subalpine country of the Mt Somers Conservation Area. It is only an hour's drive from Christchurch and, best of all, you can now finish where you began without backtracking.

Mt Somers Subalpine Walkway was a popular 17km tramp, from Woolshed Creek car park to Sharplin Falls car park, built by the Mount Somers Walkway Society. In 2005, the society finished its South Face Route, a seven-hour tramp from Woolshed Creek Hut back to Sharplin Falls, much of it between 900m and 1000m in altitude. With the circuit completed, and the addition of a new 26-bunk hut, Mt Somers Track now qualifies as one of New Zealand's classic alpine adventures. It climbs from the farmland of the Canterbury Plains to open tussock and great views around Mt Somers/Te Kiekei.

The track includes the South Face Route across the southern face of Mt Somers, an area exposed to cold southerly winds. Be prepared for such weather! The best way to walk the circuit is anticlockwise around the mountain, allowing you to lay over at a hut if bad weather descends on the area.

The Sharplin Falls car park is the best starting point for those planning to tramp the entire circuit. Such a tramp involves two long days of walking, and is recommended for experienced and well-prepared

trampers. If you arrive late at Sharplin Falls, plan on a three-day tramp, spending the first night at Pinnacles Hut, a three-hour walk from the car park.

HISTORY

Maori came here to hunt moa more than 500 years ago, burning the forest and ground cover as they searched for their prey. The path followed by SH72 near Alford Forest is believed to have been used by these seasonal hunting parties.

There are plenty of signs of modern occupation and exploitation. Coal was discovered here in 1856, and by 1864 there were a number of coal mines. Two of these, McClimonts and Blackburn, are near to Woolshed Creek. The former was closed in 1915 by fire, while Blackburn – which was served by a jig and tramway – did not begin operation until 1928. The coal, however, was of varying quality, and it often burned poorly. Mining continued at Blackburn until 1955, when an underground fire forced the mine's closure – although it did reopen briefly in 1960 as an open-cast mine.

ENVIRONMENT

While much of the mid-Canterbury area is composed of greywacke, Mt Somers is of more recent volcanic origin. The harder nature of the rhyolite rock has resulted in low soil fertility and poor drainage.

A highlight of the walkway is the number of latitudinal plant sequences trappers pass through. Bog species proliferate because of the infertile soil and poor drainage. These are easily seen in Slaughterhouse Gully. Lower down, in both Woolshed Creek and the lower reaches of Bowyers Stream, there are well-preserved examples of the beech forests that covered mid-Canterbury before burning, milling and pastoralism.

Mountain and black beech are found in Sharplin Falls Scenic Reserve, where there is a subcanopy of broad-leaved trees and southern rata on the rocky outcrops. The ancient forest in Woolshed Creek is silver beech.

PLANNING When to Tramp

With a good portion of the walking time spent in open alpine country, this track is best tramped from November to March.

Maps

The best map is the 1:50,000 Topomap 260-K36 (*Methven*), which was updated in 2006 and now contains the entire circuit.

Huts

There are two huts on the tramp: **Pinnacles Hut** (\$5) is Standard and **Woolshed Creek Hut** (\$10) is Serviced. You can purchase hut tickets at Methven visitor information centre, the Staveley Village Store or Mt Somers General Store.

Guided Tramps

For an easy adventure along the original alpine crossing (see the Alternative Start, p204), you can make a three-day, self-guided tramp (per person \$250, minimum two) through **Tussock & Beech Ecotours** (☎ 303 0880; www.nature.net.nz). This Staveley tour company offers transport to each end of the track, two nights accommodation and meals before and after the tramp in its Ross Cottage (see p202), and a night in Woolshed Creek Hut. Return transport from Christchurch can be provided for \$40 per person for two passengers, and \$20 for each additional person.

NEAREST TOWNS Methven

☎ 03 / pop 1130

This small town is inland from Ashburton on the SH77, and during winter comes alive with skiers who use it as a base for Mt Hutt and other nearby ski areas. During summer it's much quieter. You can rent a snowboard or get your skis sharpened in this town, but it's tough to purchase tramping equipment.

INFORMATION

The **Methven visitor information centre** (☎ 302 8955; www.methven.net.nz; 121 Main St; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 11am–4pm Sat & Sun), in the heart of town, has DOC brochures, and will arrange transport to the track and sell hut tickets.

SLEEPING & EATING

Methven Caravan Park (☎ 302 8005; 72 Barkers Rd; sites for 2 \$22, cabins \$34–50) is a small camping ground with cabins close to the town centre.

Snow Denn Lodge (☎ 302 8999; snowdenn@xtra.co.nz; cnr Bank & McMillan Sts; dm/d \$25/62; ☎) is

a newly built YHA with spacious lounges, mountain views and a spa for sore skiers in the winter, and tired trampers in the summer.

Redwood Lodges (☎ 302 8964; www.snowboardnz.com; 5 Wayne Pl; dm \$27; 🏠) Has been transformed from a vicarage into a pair of lodges with a communal kitchen and log fireplaces.

The **Lodge on Chertsey** (☎ 0800-127 544, 303 2000; www.thelodgenz.com; 1 Chertsey Rd; d \$105-135; 🏠) is a huge step above a backpacker lodge, with large rooms, a licensed restaurant and an outdoor beer garden.

For groceries there's **Topnotch Foodmarket** (☎ 302 8114; cnr Chapman & McMillan Sts).

Cafe 131 (☎ 302 9131; Main St; ☎ 9.30am-4pm) delivers good espressos, great sandwiches, home-baked goodies and a relaxing, pleasant atmosphere.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Methven Travel (☎ 302 8106; methventravel@xtra.co.nz) picks up from Christchurch airport and Cathedral Square for Methven (\$30, 1½ hours) on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and twice on Friday. **InterCity** (☎ 365 1113; www.intercitycoach.co.nz) runs daily between Christchurch and Methven (\$32, one hour).

Staveley

☎ 03 / pop 120

This little village is only 4km from the Sharp-lin Falls car park, at the start of this tramp. For information, hut tickets and supplies, head to the **Staveley Village Store** (☎ 303 0859; SH72; ☎ 8am-6pm Tue-Sun, 11am-6pm Mon).

SLEEPING & EATING

Korobahn Lodge (☎ 303 0828; www.korobahn.lodge.co.nz; SH72; d \$120-160) is a B&B with a large lounge, a huge fireplace and great views of Mt Somers. A three-course dinner (\$45 per person) can also be arranged in advance.

Tussock & Beech Cottage (☎ 303 0880; www.nature.net.nz; d \$110) provides accommodation in the historic Ross Cottage, located only 3km from the Sharp-lin Falls car park.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Staveley is on the SH72 – promoted as the Inland Scenic Route – little more than one hour from Christchurch via Methven. There is no bus service to the area.

Mt Somers

☎ 03 / pop 100

This hamlet is 13km from the start of the traditional 17km tramp from Woolshed Creek picnic area to Sharp-lin Falls (see p204), a far easier walk than the circuit around Mt Somers. For supplies and hut tickets there's **Mt Somers General Store** (☎ 303 9831; Pattons Rd; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun). If the store doesn't have what you need, well, you probably don't really need it!

Mt Somers Holiday Park (☎ 303 9719; www.mountsomers.co.nz; cnr Hoods Rd & Buccleugh St; sites for 2 \$20, cabins \$39-58; 🏠) is a pleasant place with a drying room, laundry and communal kitchen.

Across the street from the Domain is **Mt Somers Tavern** (☎ 303 9879; Hoods Rd) with meals, a pub and a bottle shop.

On SH72, Mt Somers is little more than a one-hour drive from Christchurch via Methven. There is no public transport to the town.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

The Sharp-lin Falls Scenic Reserve car park is 26km from Methven, and 3km north-west of Staveley at the end of Flynns Rd.

To reach Woolshed Creek car park from Mt Somers, you follow Ashburton Gorge Rd for 10.5km and turn right onto unsealed Old Jig Rd. After 4km, just before the hay barn, turn left. Pass through some gates and Woolshed Creek car park, beside Woolshed Creek, is just beyond the last gate.

Methven Travel (☎ 302 8106; methventravel@xtra.co.nz) will drop you off or pick you up at either end of the track from Methven (per person \$30).

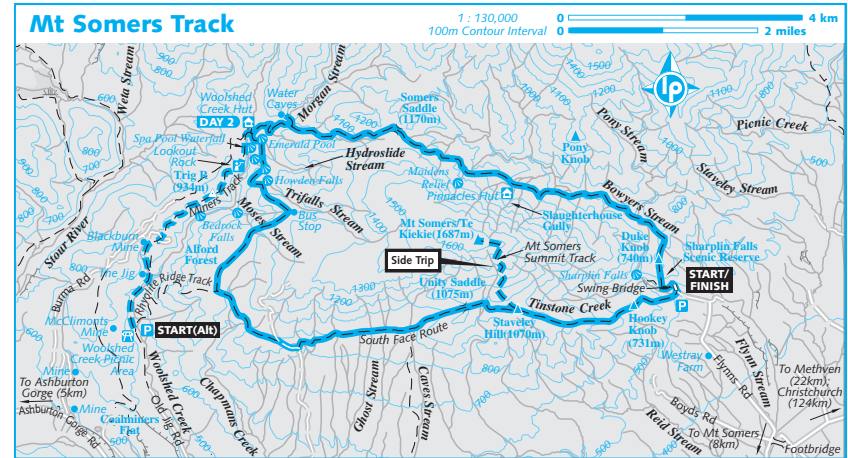
If you have your own vehicle the best way to arrange transport is a shuttle from Staveley. The **Staveley Village Store** (☎ 303 0859) and **Westray Farm** (☎ 303 0809), located only 2km from the Sharp-lin Falls car park, will shuttle you to the trailhead and return your car to secure parking while you're tramping (per car \$30).

THE TRAMP

Day 1: Sharp-lin Falls Car Park to Woolshed Creek Hut

6-7 hours, 12km

From the car park you begin with the sign-posted Sharp-lin Falls Track. Follow it along Bowyers Stream for five minutes, before



departing onto Mt Somers Track and climbing steeply to **Duke Knob** (740m), a rhyolite outcrop reached in 45 minutes. A short detour from the track leads to the knob and its panoramic views of the beech forest below and the plains to the east and south.

Beyond Duke Knob, skirt a ridge and then drop steeply to Bowyers Stream. Be careful sidling around the slip reached just before crossing Pony Stream. On the other side the track passes through a small flat, and then crosses to the true right (south) bank of Bowyers Stream at a well-signposted ford. Keep in mind that heavy rainfall can make Bowyers Stream difficult to safely cross, if not impossible at times.

Once on the other side you follow Bowyers Stream, staying on the true right bank (south) while climbing around a number of bluffs. Eventually the track leaves the stream and climbs One Tree Ridge for one hour before reaching **Slaughterhouse Gully** and **Pinnacles Hut** (20 bunks).

The hut is a three-hour tramp and a 470m climb from the car park (or two hours from Somers Saddle for those coming in the opposite direction). It has a good potbelly stove, a 'space-age' toilet, water supply and mattresses, and at night you can see the glow from the lights of the towns on the Canterbury Plains.

From the hut the track skirts a rocky outcrop and enters subalpine scrub as it gradually works its way closer to the vertical north face of Mt Somers/Te Kiekele. Within

one hour, about halfway to the saddle, you pass beneath a bath-shaped rock pool at the foot of a small waterfall. This is **Maidens Relief**, and it makes for a pleasant place to rest and enjoy the view of Mt Winterslow across the valley.

The track continues to the head of the valley, passing through tussock and sub-alpine scrub, and becoming a 4WD track before rising to **Somers Saddle**. At 1170m, this is highest point of the circuit and is reached two hours from Pinnacles Hut. If the weather is clear you are rewarded with vistas of the Mt Winterslow, Old Man and Taylor Ranges, although the saddle is often covered in cloud.

Continue west along the 4WD track as it makes a steady descent. After 1.5km you begin skirting a branch of Morgan Stream and then cross the small creek to its true left (south) side. Within 10 or 15 minutes you pass a side track that can be followed back down to the stream to view the **Water Caves**, impressive rock formations carved by the strong current.

Eventually the 4WD track reaches Morgan Stream and you cross it at a well-marked ford. Just downstream from here is a pleasant spot that is often used as a camp site. On the other side you follow the 4WD track as it climbs a ridge and then descends to Woolshed Creek. Directly across, the creek is your hut for the night.

Woolshed Creek Hut (26 bunks) was built in 2006, replacing the classic Mt Somers Hut,

which had separate sleeping quarters for trampers and musterers.

There are great soaking opportunities nearby. Cross Woolshed Creek and follow the track downstream (south) to **Spa Pool Waterfall**, via a ladder. This impressive cascade drops straight into a deep and wonderful pool at the confluence of Woolshed Creek and Morgan Stream. A little further up Morgan Stream is **Emerald Pool**.

ALTERNATIVE START: WOOLSHED CREEK CAR PARK TO WOOLSHED CREEK HUT
2–3 hours, 5km

The original 17km alpine crossing from Woolshed Creek to Sharplin Falls is an easier tramp than the circuit, and avoids the exposed areas on the southern flanks of Mt Somers. Arranging transport to and from each trailhead is more of a logistical challenge, but you get an opportunity to view the mines and mining artefacts that litter this segment of track.

The track is well signposted in the Woolshed Creek picnic area, and begins as a level nature walk up the true right (west) side of Woolshed Creek. Within 10 minutes you pass a crumpled coal car still sitting on its rails below the site of **McClimonts Mine**, and 30 minutes from the start you arrive at the area known as the **Jig**. Here you'll find the remains of a jig line and a hopper, which were used to transport coal from Blackburn Mine down the steep hill to wagons on the Mt Somers branch railway. As each full hopper hurtled to the bottom of the jig, the momentum pulled an empty one to the top. Interpretive displays here cover the history of the operation in detail.

Beyond the jig, follow a segment known as **Miners Track**. The jig was too dangerous for workers to use, so they began each day by climbing to the Blackburn Mine along this track. You climb steeply through the trees for 15 minutes and then break out into a subalpine setting with views of the surrounding mountains and ridges. One hour from the car park you arrive at **Blackburn Mine**. The mine has been well preserved and you can still walk several metres inside the shaft. Scattered around the entrance is abandoned mining equipment.

From the mine, the track follows Burma Rd briefly then veers off northeast at a well-signposted junction. You climb steeply

along an open ridge and, about 40 minutes from Blackburn Mine, reach **Trig R** (934m). The final 15 minutes of this climb is stunning, with panoramic views of distant Arrowsmith Range and Upper Ashburton Gorge. The magnificent vista from the trig includes the Manuka Range, the glaciated U-shaped Stour valley, and across to the east, Mt Somers.

Take the signposted track to the north, which leads to another great vantage point known as **Lookout Rock**, where there are views of the new Woolshed Creek Hut (26 bunks) on the western bank of Woolshed Creek. From there, it's a fast descent to the stream, passing **Spa Pool** along the way and reaching the hut 30 minutes from Trig R.

Day 2: Woolshed Creek Hut to Sharplin Falls Car Park via South Face Route
7–8 hours, 13.5km

This can be a long day along an exposed route with no huts or shelters. If in doubt about the weather, stay put or tramp out to Woolshed Creek car park.

Begin by fording Woolshed Creek directly in front of the hut, and then follow the track signs to Emerald Pool on Morgan Stream. Ford the stream to climb a ladder on the other side. Continue up a dry ridge with sparse subalpine vegetation, before descending through beech forest to Trifalls Stream. Just after crossing the stream there is a signposted track that heads upstream to **Howden Falls**. This short (five minute) side trip ends at the highest-elevation falls in the Mt Somers Conservation Area.

From Trifalls Stream, the track steadily climbs a scrub-and-tussock ridge before topping off at the **Bus Stop**. At 1150m, this rock formation of colourful rhyolite has been a welcome sight for many trampers who need a place to wait out bad weather (thus its name). In clear conditions you can linger here, enjoying great views of the upper catchment of Woolshed Creek, the Taylor Range, and even as far west as the Arrowsmith Range.

Make a rapid descent from the Bus Stop to Moses Stream and, after crossing the small creek, climb out of the gully to tussock-covered flats. The nearly flat terrace is an extensive area of fragile red tussock and care must be taken not to leave the track and further damage these wetlands.

It takes 30 minutes to cross the flats to the well-signposted junction for the South Face Route, reached 4km (two to 2½ hours) from Woolshed Creek Hut. The track that heads west (right) is the Rhyolite Ridge Track, which reaches the Woolshed Creek car park within one hour.

The South Face Route continues south-east from the junction and quickly descends to Chapmans Creek. After crossing the creek, you sidle across the valley slope and then cross a low saddle (940m) to merge onto an old 4WD track, reached within an hour of the junction. This track heads downhill for 500m until it reaches the bush edge.

Depart the 4WD track as the South Face Route enters mountain beech forest and descends to cross the first of five gullies, all of which are tributaries of Ghost Stream and Stony Creek. Marker poles clearly define the route across the ridges between the forested gullies, where you maintain an altitude of around 900m beneath the impressive south face of Mt Somers/Te Kieke. Finally, one hour from the saddle, you descend to the bush and cross Caves Stream.

At the stream, a well-formed track climbs steadily through mountain beech forest and in 30 minutes breaks out briefly into subalpine scrub on Unity Saddle (1075m). After re-entering the bush the track sidles around a small gully and two avalanche chutes, and then merges into the Mt Somers Summit Track (see p200). From this junction it is less than 10 minutes down to Staveley Hill (1070m). It's 2.5km (about a 1½-hour walk) from Caves Stream to Staveley Hill.

On the final leg of the circuit the track steadily descends the ridge line of Staveley Hill, though subalpine and manuka scrub, and finally reaches a small grass clearing at the bush-line, where you enjoy your last view of the Canterbury Plains. You then descend to the bush, pass Hookey Knob (731m) and continue a steady descent until you reach the Sharplin Falls car park, 3km and 1½ hours from Staveley Hill.

SIDE TRIP: MT SOMERS/TE KIEKIE SUMMIT
2–3 hours, 2km return, 617m ascent

By Staveley Hill is a signposted junction for the Mt Somers Summit Track, a climb to the top of Mt Somers/Te Kieke (1687m). The summit track is a well-marked and poled

track that climbs west through subalpine scrub to quickly reach the tree line. The climb then gets steeper as the track works its way across a scree face, before emerging on a ridge, where a small flat area makes for an ideal place to catch your breath and enjoy the views.

Track poles continue up the ridge, in what is the steepest part of the climb. Care is essential, especially if conditions are windy. A small flat area is reached at 1500m, and then you endure a final steep climb before reaching the summit ridge. The actual summit is not marked by the trig station at 1687m, but is at the Millennium Marker and plane table – 100m further west on the flat **summit** – where you can sign your name in the summit book and enjoy 360-degree views of the peaks shown on the plane table.

If you're coming from the Sharplin Falls car park, the tramp to the summit is a five-hour (5km) trek that climbs 1245m, with a four-hour return. No matter where you begin, this is a demanding climb for physically fit trampers with experience in New Zealand's mountains. The route is exposed to the south, and cold, wet or snowy weather can sweep in very quickly. Even in fine weather, waterproof clothing must be carried, along with plenty of water, as there is none on the track.

ST JAMES WALKWAY

Duration	5 days
Distance	65km
Track Standard	easy tramping track
Difficulty	easy–moderate
Start	Lewis Pass
Finish	Boyle
Nearest Town	Hanmer Springs (p206)
Transport	bus

Summary The first walkway to be established in a subalpine area, this tramp includes stretches of pastoral land, two passes and great mountain scenery.

Built in 1981, the St James Walkway begins in the Lewis Pass National Reserve, which shares a boundary with Nelson Lakes National Park. But as far as trampers are concerned, the similarities with the national park end there.

The St James Walkway, the longest walkway in the country, is not nearly as challenging as most of the tramps in Nelson Lakes. Although it is considered a sub-alpine tramp – because it includes Ada Pass (1008m) and Anne Saddle (1136m) – the climbs are not steep, and the rest of the walk is spent tramping through pastoral land and beech forests.

The walkway is well benched and has an excellent series of huts. The heart of the track, from Ada River along Anne River to upper Boyle River, runs through St James Station, one of the largest in New Zealand. Trampers must not deviate from the track, and should keep an eye out for livestock to avoid disturbing it. Use the stiles that have been erected over fences and rest assured that while the cattle are big – some are unbelievably huge – they want nothing to do with you.

HISTORY

Although this region was only sparsely settled, Maori did pass through, particularly along a portion of the St James Walkway that was part of a popular route from the Tasman Sea to Canterbury. Ngati Tumatakokiri, the most powerful tribe to use the route, were constantly warring with a rival tribe, the Ngai Tahu.

The rivalry ended in a particularly nasty manner, when a Ngai Tahu party was trapped in a gorge along the Maruia River by the Ngati Tumatakokiri, and massacred. The site of the carnage is now known as Cannibal Gorge and is followed on the walkway.

In the 1970s the area was chosen as the site of the first long-distance walkway in the South Island. The St James Walkway, named after the historic sheep station through which it runs, was opened in November 1981.

ENVIRONMENT

St James Walkway passes through a mix of flats, forests and subalpine regions. At times you'll be passing through the grassy meadows and rocky paddocks of some of the most remote outstations in the country.

Much of the tramp, however, will be spent in beech forest. Silver and red beech are common up to 950m, and mountain

beech, found on higher slopes, is dominant in dry country such as Ada Pass.

The upper Ada valley is particularly interesting, as it features flats, forests and subalpine areas, all within a few kilometres, which in turn support numerous species of birds. The area is known for its thriving population of South Island robins. Trampers may also spot paradise ducks, tomitts, pipits, long-tailed cuckoos and possibly even keas, among others.

PLANNING

When to Tramp

The best time to tramp the St James is November to April. However, it is in a subalpine area on the main divide of the Southern Alps, making it prone to extremely changeable weather. Heavy rain and even snow can occur at almost any time of the year, even in the middle of summer. The warmest months are January and February, and the most settled weather is from late February through March. No matter when you arrive, be prepared and pack warm clothing (gloves and hat) as well as the usual rain gear. Tramping can be dangerous in winter due to avalanches.

What to Bring

During peak holiday periods you might want to carry a tent, in case the huts are full. Also pack a wide-brimmed hat and sun-screen – when cutting across pastoral land there is little shade to protect you when the sun is out.

Maps

The best map is the 1:50,000 Trackmap 335-06 (*St James & Lewis Pass*). You can also use two maps of the 1:50,000 Topomap 260 series: M31 (*Lewis*) and M32 (*Boyle*).

Huts

Cannibal Gorge Hut (\$10), **Ada Pass Hut** (\$10), **Christopher Hut** (\$10), **Anne Hut** (\$10) and **Boyle Flats Hut** (\$10) are Serviced; **Magdalen Hut** (\$5) is Standard and **Rokeby Hut** (free) is Basic.

NEAREST TOWN & FACILITIES

Hanmer Springs

☎ 03 / pop 750

The main thermal resort on the South Island, Hanmer Springs, is 57km southeast of Boyle, the walkway's end. This makes

the town an ideal place to pick up supplies before the tramp and to soak away those sore muscles afterwards.

INFORMATION

The **Hurunui visitor information centre** (☎ 0800-442 663, 315 7128; www.hurunui.com; 42 Amuri Ave; ☎ 10am-5pm) sells maps, DOC brochures and hut tickets.

SLEEPING & EATING

Mountain View Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0800-904 545, 315 7113; www.holidayparks.co.nz/mtnview; Hanmer Springs Rd; sites for 2 \$22, cabins \$45-55) is a clean and bustling camping ground in the heart of Hanmer Springs, practically across the street from the thermal springs.

Hanmer Backpackers (☎ 315 7196; hanmerbackpackers@xtra.co.nz; 41 Conical Hill Rd; dm/d \$20/50; ☎) is a recently enlarged hostel in the centre of town, with a large kitchen and a log fireplace in a cosy lounge.

Hanmer Inn Motel (☎ 315 7516; www.hanmerinn-motel.co.nz; 16 Jacks Pass Rd; d \$105-152; ☎)

is a comfortable place for those times when you need to kick back in your own room.

To restock the food bag there's **Hanmer Four Square Supermarket** (☎ 315 7190; Conical Hill Rd).

The **Old Post Office** (☎ 315 7461; 2 Jacks Pass Rd; ☎ 6-10pm) is one of the best restaurants in town, noted for its beef and lamb dishes and fine wine list.

For pizza and an outdoor table head to **Jollie Jacks Café & Bar** (☎ 315 7388; 12a Conical Hill Rd; ☎ café 11am-9pm).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Southern Link Shuttles (☎ 358 8355; www.yellow.co.nz/site/southernlink) has daily buses from Christchurch (\$25) and Nelson (\$20) that stop at Hanmer Springs. **Hanmer Connection** (☎ 0800-377 378, 382 2952) buses leave Christchurch daily during summer at 9am, 10.30am and 2.30pm (one way/return \$25/45).

Maruia Springs

Only 5km from Lewis Pass, **Maruia Springs Thermal Resort** (☎ 523 8840; www.maruia.co.nz; SH7;

LONG WALKS & HOT SPRINGS

Ahhh! One of the joys of the St James Walkway is returning to Hanmer Springs or Maruia Springs and soaking in a thermal pool after a long tramp through the mountains. What could be better? How about soaking in hot springs during your tramp? New Zealand is blessed with numerous thermal areas, and many have tracks leading right past them. Here are some of the best walk-in hot springs.

- **Hurunui Hot Springs** (p233) Part of the Harper Pass Track, these springs, where the thermal water cascades to the Hurunui River below, are a 1½-hour walk from Hurunui Hut. A small pool here is capable of holding three to four people, who can regulate the temperature by diverting water from the main cascade.
- **Julia Hot Springs** (p228) These hot springs are especially nice because most trampers have just crossed Harman Pass (1321m), two days into the Waimakariri–Harman Pass Route. The small hot pools are right along the banks of the Taipo River, a 15-minute walk from Julia Hut.
- **Kaitoke Hot Springs** (p59) This series of pools on Great Barrier Island ranges from warm to very hot, and is surrounded by bush. The springs can be either a 40-minute walk along a well-maintained path, or the perfect end to the three-day Great Barrier Forest tramp.
- **Mangatainoka Hot Springs**. A 1½-hour drive from Napier, and a three-hour tramp from the Gums car park at the end of Makahu Rd in Kaweka Forest Park, is Te Puia Lodge (20 bunks). A 30-minute walk beyond the lodge are Mangatainoka Hot Springs, where DOC has installed two former trout hatchery baths surrounded by decking. These are HOT! springs. You can stay in the lodge or camp near the springs. For more information contact the **DOC Hawkes Bay Area Office** (☎ 06-834-3111; napier-ao@doc.govt.nz; 59 Marine Pde, Napier).
- **Welcome Flat Hot Springs** (p253) The most scenic walk-in hot springs in the South Island are near Welcome Flat Hut in Westland/Tai Poutini National Park. The springs are a six-hour tramp up the Copland Valley, but they allow weary-legged trampers to lean back and soak up the alpine scenery that surrounds them. The largest pool is the size of a tennis court.

camp sites for 2 (\$25, d \$149-179) is a small self-contained resort on the banks of the Maruia River. It has everything you need for post-tramp recuperation: thermal pools, private spa pools, a lively bar, several restaurants and a massage service. Camp-site fees include the use of the pools.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

Both ends of the walkway are located off SH7, which crosses Lewis Pass from north Canterbury to the west coast. Transport to and from the track is easy, because bus drivers along the highway are used to dropping off – and being flagged down by – trampers. It's a 15-minute drive between the ends of the track.

Southern Link Shuttles (☎ 358 8355; www.yellow.co.nz/site/southernlink) leaves Christchurch at 8.30am daily, passes the southern end of the walkway at 11.15am, the northern end at 11.30am, and continues to Nelson. In the opposite direction, a bus departs Nelson at 8.45am, reaches the northern end of the walkway at 1pm and the southern end at 1.15pm. The fare from Christchurch to the track is \$25, and from Nelson it's \$30.

Trampers with their own vehicles tend to use buses to return to the car park from which they departed. There is a car park at either end, but it is best to leave vehicles in secure storage at **Boyle River Outdoor Education Centre** (☎ 315 7082; www.boyle.org.nz; SH7), near the southern end of the track, because vandalism has been a problem at Lewis Pass. The cost is \$4 per night. Staff will also transport you to Lewis Pass in your car and return it to the centre for \$20.

THE TRAMP

Day 1: Lewis Pass to Ada Pass Hut

5 hours, 10km

Follow the Tarn Nature Walk from the car park, passing a beautiful tarn that, on a still day, reflects the surrounding mountains. The nature walk leads you right onto the St James track, which heads northeast. You begin with a climb into beech forest, followed by a steep descent that drops 170m, and after 30 minutes reach a swing bridge over the Maruia River Right Branch. From the middle of the bridge you can peer into the start of **Cannibal Gorge**.

On the true right (west) bank of the gorge the track begins the longest climb of

the day, topping out in 30 minutes at **Phils Knob**, where you can enjoy a sweeping view of the rugged valley below. You continue to sidle the side of the gorge, climbing in and out of numerous gullies, some posted as avalanche chutes.

Eventually you descend to a footbridge across the river, three hours (6km) from the car park, with **Cannibal Gorge Hut** just another 15 to 20 minutes away. The 20-bunk hut is a nice facility on the edge of a grassy meadow and is a good choice if you arrive late at Lewis Pass.

Beyond the hut the track follows the Maruia River, and in 20 to 30 minutes you're rewarded with your first alpine scene when you emerge from the beech forest into a meadow dominated to the north by Gloriana Peak (2218m). To the south you can see much of the valley you just passed through. The track climbs a bush-clad terrace and stays above the Maruia River – now a rushing stream – for 30 minutes before descending into **Ada Pass Flats**, with peaks above it and a bridge at its end.

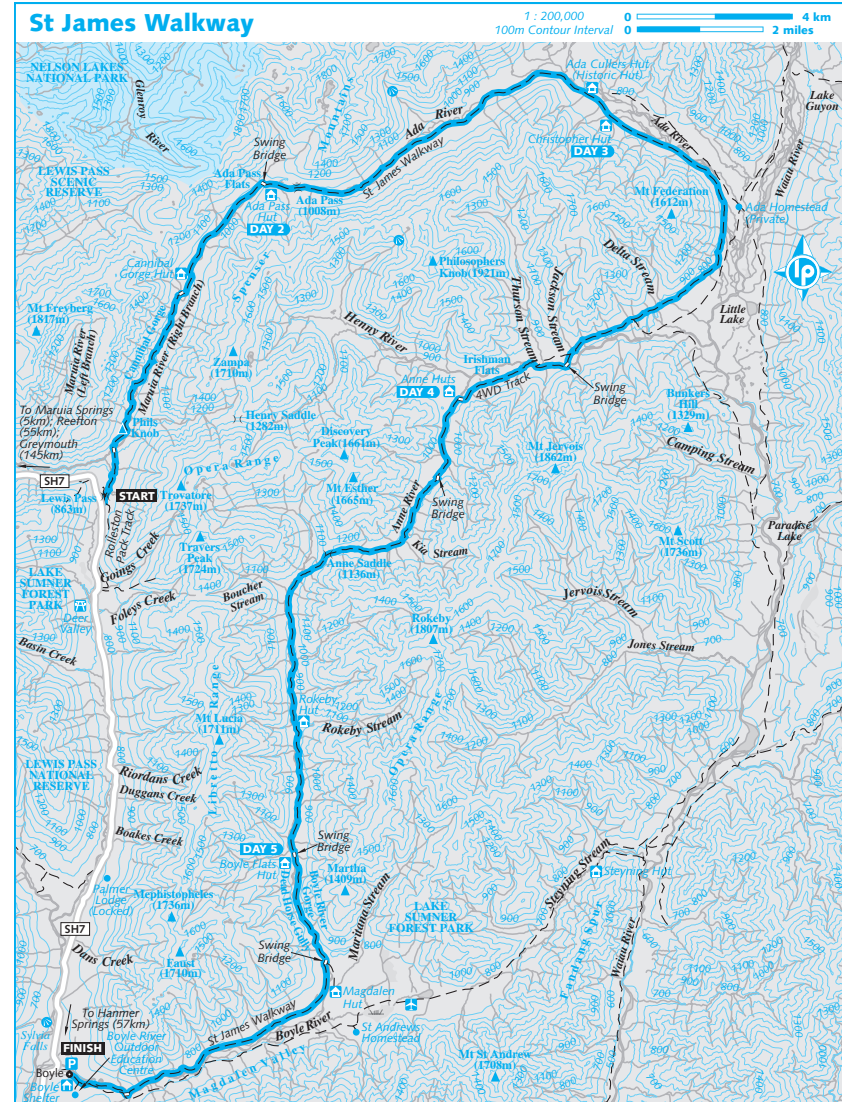
Cross the stream and within five minutes (1½ hours from Cannibal Gorge Hut) you arrive at **Ada Pass Hut**. This 12-bunk hut is not quite as roomy as Cannibal Gorge, but the mountain views from its porch and windows are much better.

Day 2: Ada Pass Hut to Christopher Hut

4–5 hours, 10.5km

This is an easy and short day, but don't rush it. Linger if the weather is fine, for the alpine scenery is the best of any along the walkway.

The track departs from the eastern side of the hut, and after around 10 to 15 minutes it begins a gentle ascent to **Ada Pass** (1008m), fording the Maruia River Right Branch (by now more of a creek) along the way. The bush-clad pass is recognisable by the large sign announcing that the saddle is 998m – despite what maps list – and it marks the border between Lewis Pass National Reserve and St James Station. The walkway then proceeds to descend into Ada valley along the true right (south) side of the **Ada River**, and within one hour breaks out into a large tussock grassland crowned by the craggy peak of Faerie Queen (2236m), which is often accented with freshly fallen snow.



Yellow-tipped poles lead you almost 2km across the grassland to where the track resumes in beech forest. You stay in the forest for one hour (3.5km) but three times break out into small meadows; the second one provides a view up rugged Camera Gully to the north. Two hours from Ada Pass the track emerges from beech forest

to reach the wide expanse of the station. The flats (and the track) swing southeast at the confluence of the Christopher and Ada Rivers.

For the rest of the day the track switches between crossing pastoral land and climbing onto the forested ridge to avoid slips along the river. If the day is nice and the

water levels normal, you can simply follow the flats, crossing the river at will until you spot Christopher Hut.

About 1km (15 minutes) before reaching that hut, the track passes **Ada Cullers Hut**, which is maintained as a historic hut. Built in 1956 for deer hunters, the two-bunk hut is now more a monument to the old New Zealand Forest Service than a place to stay. The roomier **Christopher Hut** has 12 bunks and, from its porch, good views of the mountains surrounding Waiau valley and the cattle grazing it.

Day 3: Christopher Hut to Anne Huts

5 hours, 15km

This day is spent almost entirely on grazing land, which means lots of cattle, and lots of sun during summer too, as there is little shade.

Leaving Christopher Hut, you cut across grassy flats along the true right bank of the Ada River for almost 2km, without getting close to any trees. Moving into some scrub you follow the river closely around Federation Corner as it heads for its confluence with the Waiau River. It takes 1½ hours (4km) to round the corner. Much of the time you're skirting the base of Mt Federation (1612m), occasionally climbing into the bush to avoid slips and steep drop-offs. Halfway around you can see **Ada Homestead**, a St James outstation, on the opposite side of the river.

Once in Henry valley, you cross grassy pastoral land for the next 4km, at times following a 4WD track. The track keeps to the lower slopes of Mt Federation, through matagouri thickets, and eventually sidles up a bush-clad terrace before descending to a long swing bridge across the Henry River. Once on the true right (south) bank, the track merges again with the 4WD track and gently climbs to **Irishman Flats**, a long grassy terrace. From the flats, there are excellent views up the valley and into an amphitheatre in the Spenser Mountains. The best viewing spot is the top of a **grassy knoll**, which the track passes 10 minutes before reaching the hut.

The day ends with a descent along the 4WD track to a swing bridge across the Anne River to a pair of huts. **New Anne Hut** is a 12-bunker similar to the last two you've stayed at. **Old Anne Hut** is another classic

NZFS hut, with four bunks, a metal chimney and an open fireplace.

Day 4: Anne Hut to Boyle Flats Hut

6–7 hours, 15km

The longest day of the walkway is split between tramping over grassy flats and climbing through beech forest. Begin by crossing the grassy flats to the south of the huts, then climb a bush-clad spur to a swing bridge across Anne River, reached 2km from the hut. On the true right (east) side you return to more grassy meadows and follow the valley as it swings west towards Anne Saddle.

The climb to the saddle is remarkably mild, with only a steep pitch through the forest at the very end. Two to three hours (6km) from Anne Huts you reach **Anne Saddle** (1136m), which despite being the highest point of the tramp is a spot with no views. The 30-minute descent from the saddle is steep, dropping 210m over almost 2km. You bottom out at the Boyle River in a steep wooded valley. Follow Boyle River for the next 3.5km, remaining on its true left (east) side. At several points the track climbs high above the river to avoid flood conditions. If the water level is normal, it is far easier and quicker to ford the river and continue along its banks.

At one point, 6km from the saddle, you pass a 'Flood Track' sign that leads you up a steep embankment to a scenic **grassy terrace** and **Rokeby Hut**. This four-bunker is in the best shape of all the old huts, and has canvas cots. It would be a great place to stay if you're not in a hurry to catch the bus the next day.

Near the hut a bridge leads over Rokeby Stream, from where the flood track keeps you in the forest a bit longer before you descend to pastoral land. You remain in open terrain for the final hour (3.5km), which ends with a swing-bridge crossing over the Boyle River, with **Boyle Flats Hut** on the true right (west) side. Despite its name, Boyle Flats is a 20-bunk hut in an area that is not so flat.

Day 5: Boyle Flats Hut to Boyle

4 hours, 14.5km

This final section is along a well-benched track and is listed by DOC as 14.5km – though it seems much shorter. Most trampers have few problems reaching the SH7 in

four hours, especially if they need to catch a bus elsewhere.

Even though there is a bit more climbing, the start of this day is a refreshing change from walking through pastoral lands. After recrossing the swing bridge you quickly enter cool forest and find yourself on the edge of the steep **Boyle River Gorge**, well above the river. Signposted **Dead Horse Gully** is reached within 15 minutes, where upon a peek over the edge justifies its name.

It takes one hour (3km) to traverse the gorge and descend to the river's edge at a swing bridge. If you ignore the bridge and continue along the true left (east) side of the river, a track leads to **Magdalen Hut** (nine bunks), 1km away (20 minutes).

Cross the bridge instead, and follow the track on the true right (west) side down into Magdalen valley. Within 1km you enter the valley and spot **St Andrews Homestead** on the opposite side of the Boyle River. The next 8km stays on the northern side of the Boyle, passing through patches of bush and climbing around a number of small gorges and slips. The walking is easy and fast, and eventually the track descends to a swing bridge.

From the other side of the bridge you have 2.5km to walk, starting with the day's longest climb. The track ends at a car park, where there are toilets and a gravel road leading past the **Boyle River Outdoor Education Centre** (☎ 315 7082; www.boyle.org.nz; dm \$20), which often has backpacker accommodation available on weekends. Just beyond the centre is SH7 and a shelter for those waiting for a bus.

KAIKOURA COAST TRACK

Duration	3 days
Distance	37.3km
Track Standard	easy tramping track
Difficulty	easy–moderate
Start/Finish	Staging Post
Nearest Town	Kaikoura (p212)
Transport	bus
Summary	A private track that combines alpine views and a lengthy beach walk with gracious farm hospitality at night.

In 1994, three adjoining farms along the Kaikoura coast – Hawkswood, Medina and Ngaroma – were all searching for a way to

diversify their activities while preserving, even expanding, their large areas of native forest and bush. Taking a cue from the Banks Peninsula Track, the country's first private track just down the coast, they formed one of their own, opening up their farms and their homes to a small number of trampers each day.

Kaikoura Coast Track is a three-day tramp that has you traversing tussock tops, climbing Mt Wilson and skirting the Pacific Ocean with an eye out for marine wildlife. But a large part of the experience is the farms themselves – scattering sheep when you cut through a paddock, stopping to watch well-trained sheep dogs round up a herd, and sipping freshly squeezed lemonade made from lemons picked just 50m away. It's a tramp through remote and rural New Zealand, with your hosts each night being the families who work the farms. For many that's as intriguing as the view from Skull Peak.

The track fee includes both comfortable accommodation and the transportation of your luggage and food. That means every night you can enjoy a hot shower and a soft bed, and pack along a few steaks and a bottle of good New Zealand wine. Without having to haul a backpack, the climbs are easily accomplished by most trampers, who can then recover with a bit of luxury at night before setting out the next day.

ENVIRONMENT

The Caverhill and Macfarlane families began farming Hawkswood in 1860, and at its peak the estate covered 24,510 hectares, including all the coastal land from the Conway River to the Waiau River. Today the three farms involved with the Kaikoura Coast Track combine for a total of 3935 hectares, with the majority of it being either tussock ridges or paddocks and farm blocks. Several gullies have been fenced off from livestock and turned into conservation areas. These pockets of native bush include ancient remnants of beech forest, giant podocarps such as kaihikatea, matai and totara, and a variety of ferns. Don't know your native bush? Not to worry – the families have done an impressive job of labelling trees and plants along the track, and by the end of the tramp you will know the difference between lancewood and pigeonwood.

Most of the wildlife encountered will be a variety of birds in the forested areas – such as the rifleman, bellbirds, grey warblers and long-tailed cuckoos – and possibly New Zealand hawks on the tops. Along the beach, trampers have spotted Hector's and dusky dolphins playing in the surf, and occasionally seals sunning on the sand.

PLANNING

When to Tramp

The season for tramping the track is October to April, with the warmest months being December through March, when average temperatures are between 21°C and 11°C.

What to Bring

Sun protection (a wide-brimmed hat and sunscreen) is important. So is a bathing suit; there are swimming pools at all three farms, plus the ocean. Many trampers will also use a chilly bin (cooler) to transport their meat and other perishable food between farms.

Maps & Books

Every trampler is given a *Kaikoura Coast Track Guide Booklet*, which covers the natural highlights of each section of track and contains a map that is more than sufficient. For a more-detailed map purchase the 1:50,000 Topomap 260-032 (*Parnassus*).

Huts

Each farm provides accommodation for trampers along the track, with the first night spent at the Staging Post at Hawkswood Farm, the second night at the Ngaroma Loft and the third night at Medina. The cost of the accommodation is included in the track booking fee.

Permits & Regulations

The number of trampers on the track is limited to 10 per day, so bookings are wise if you have particular dates you want to walk. The cost is \$150 per person, which includes transportation of luggage, accommodation and secured parking. Book through **Kaikoura Coast Track** (☎ 319 2715; www.kaikouratrack.co.nz).

NEAREST TOWN

Kaikoura

☎ 03 / pop 3850

What was a sleepy little fishing village in the 1980s, is now the whale-watching capital of

New Zealand. Kaikoura is a major tourism destination and can meet the needs of any trampler.

INFORMATION

Kaikoura visitor information centre (☎ 319 5641; www.kaikoura.co.nz; West End) is by the car park on the beach side. It handles tourist information and bookings, and has a DOC counter.

SLEEPING & EATING

69 Beach Road Holiday Park (☎ 319 6275; <http://69holidaypark.co.nz>; 69 Beach Rd; sites for 2 \$26, cabins \$55) has a great location – overlooking a creek and next to the bakery. There is a range of accommodation here, managed by friendly and helpful owners.

Albatross Backpacker Inn (☎ 319 6090; www.albatross-kaikoura.co.nz; 1 Torquay St; dm/d \$25/60; ☎) is an excellent hostel with a large common area, decks, verandas, and even an aviary.

The **Staging Post** (☎ 319 2898; SH1; camp sites for 2 \$20, dm \$15) is a good camping ground and backpacker lodge at the end of the Kaikoura Coast Track, 50km south of Kaikoura. Within this historic farm, strewn with antique farm equipment, is a range of affordable accommodation from log bunkhouses to farm cottages. It's a great place to spend an extra night before or after the walk.

Kaikoura New World (☎ 319 5723; 124 Beach Rd) is the largest grocer in town.

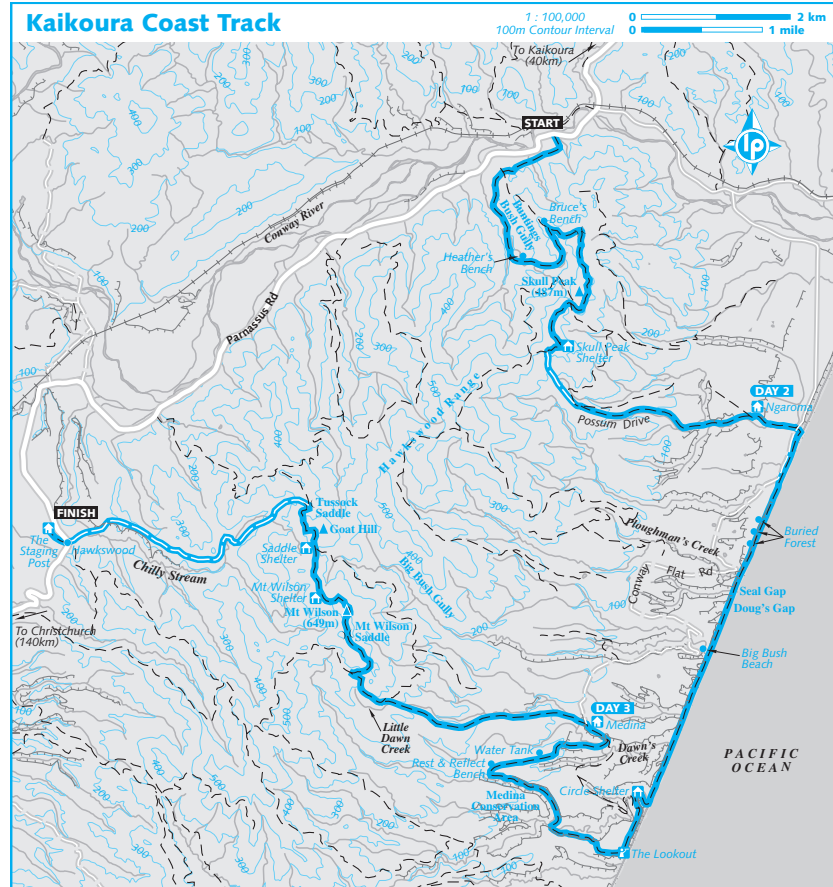
Craypot (☎ 319 6027; 33 West End; ☎ 9am-9.30pm) is a long-time restaurant and the place to go for Kaikoura's speciality, crayfish.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are regular bus services between Christchurch and Blenheim, stopping at Kaikoura along the way. **Atomic Shuttles** (☎ 0800-248 885, 322 8883; www.atomictravel.co.nz) makes the run twice daily from Christchurch (\$20, 2½ hours) and Blenheim (\$20, 2½ hours). Other operators are **Intercity** (☎ 770 951; www.intercitycoach.co.nz) and **K Bus** (☎ 0800-881 188, 578 4075; www.kahurangi.co.nz).

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

The walk begins and ends at the Staging Post, right off SH1, 140km north of Christchurch and 50km south of Kaikoura. Any bus on the Kaikoura-Christchurch route will drop you off there.



THE TRAMP

Day 1: The Staging Post to Ngaroma

4–6 hours, 12.3km, 429m ascent, 449m descent

The first night is spent at the Staging Post on Hawkswood Farm, near the end of the track, and the tramp begins the next day with a van transporting trampers north on SH1 to the start of the track. The usual departure is 9am, but if it appears you're in for a hot and sunny day you might consider an earlier start. All the climbing is done in the first two hours, which is always easier in the cool of the morning.

From the trailhead you immediately climb through a pine plantation over a ridge but within 1.5km descend into **Buntings Bush Gully**. This conservation area is a rich forest

compared to the farmed pines and features huge podocarps, including one totara big enough to be turned into a Maori war canoe. All too soon, however, you begin the long climb to the tussock tops. Within 3.5km (one hour) of the start you reach **Heather's Bench**, overlooking the Conway valley, and after another 1km you're out of the trees for good, arriving at **Bruce's Bench**. This bench, a huge split log overlooking a mountain panorama, almost commands you to take a break, even if you're not tired.

You're now ridge-walking in the Hawkswood Range, by far the most scenic stretch of the day. With views all around, you reach a saddle and are greeted with the Kaikoura coast on the horizon, and then in another

500m you climb to **Skull Peak** (487m). At either point you can see the Pacific in one direction and inland mountains in the other. From the peak you can also see **Skull Peak Shelter**, 1km and a tussock gully away. The final climb to this lunch spot is gentle and the small hut, reached two to three hours (7.5km) from SH1, is delightful. Inside there is water, a gas cooker for tea, and even a couple of mattresses for a post-lunch nap. Outside there are benches and stunning views.

The second half of the day is all downhill. You steeply descend along a 4WD track for more than 1km, losing much of the height you worked so hard to gain before lunch. You return to a walking track at the Back Paddock and, 2.5km from the shelter, re-enter native bush when you descend to Possum Dr, the reason there's a 'Cow Bar' across the track.

Over the final 2km of the day you cross a couple of bridges – one labelled 'Muddy Butt Bridge' because it's at the bottom of a long slippery slope – and cut through several paddocks complete with grazing sheep. **Ngaroma** is reached two hours (4.8km) from the shelter. At the farm trampers stay in the Loft – a flat with two sleeping rooms, a well-equipped kitchen, a swimming pool nearby and a stunning view of the Kaikoura Range from the living-room window. After kicking off the boots, you can stroll down to the ocean to look for dolphins, or wander this working sheep farm and feel the pulse of New Zealand agriculture.

Day 2: Ngaroma to Medina

4–5 hours, 12km

If you hustle, this section could easily take less than four hours...but why hurry? Linger on the beach, scan the ocean for marine life, look for shells in the cliffs and soak in the views.

Begin the day by heading to the beach, following a gravel road east from the farmhouse and then crossing a bridge and continuing south. A track sign will divert you off the road to the greyish, gravelly beach. The sand is a little soft and heels will sink into it slightly. The darker the sand the better the footing, but overall this is something of a trudge. The scenery is amazing, however, and soon you're skirting the base of towering tan bluffs on one side, with the

roar of the Pacific on the other. The endless crashing of waves onto the beach sets a tranquil tone for the rest of the morning.

About 1.8km from Ngaroma you reach the first stumps of the **Buried Forest** – matai, rimu and kanuka that were living trees 8000 years ago, but were eventually covered by sediment and preserved. Now sea erosion has revealed these ancient trees in several locations along a 1km stretch of the beach to **Ploughman's Creek**, a wide gap in the bluffs where you can see a road bridge. Seal Gap and Doug's Gap follow, and one hour from Ngaroma (3.6km) you reach **Big Bush Beach**. Here the sand extends up into a huge gap to form a big beach.

The cliffs turn whitish and layers of shells are easily seen. You pass **Dawn's Creek** at 4.8km, and 1.2km later (two hours from Ngaroma) reach a track turning inland to **Circle Shelter**. This lunch-time shelter has loads of character, including a large and very comfortable couch, a 'loos with a view', and a fire pit where you can boil a billy for a cup of tea.

Within 1km of the shelter you reach the **Lookout**, where a bench allows you to enjoy a view of the coastline, with Kaikoura Peninsula 37km to the north and Banks Peninsula 145km to the south. The track then turns inland, cuts through a couple of paddocks and descends into the Medina Conservation Area. Protected from livestock grazing since 1984, this gully is rich in native plants and also features several ancient podocarps, including a kahikatea that is 800 years old and so large it takes four people to link their arms around it.

Eventually you climb out of the conservation area into open tussock, to reach the **Rest and Reflect Bench** (10.6km from Ngaroma) with its grand view of Medina Farm. From here it's less than 30 minutes to the farm's accommodation, the Whare or the Garden Cottage. Both offer stunning views of the farm, its livestock and the mountains beyond. There's a pool to recover in, and a chilled bottle of wine in the refrigerator that can be enjoyed for a small price.

Day 3: Medina to the Staging Post

4–5 hours, 13km, 589m ascent, 549m descent

You can see the first half of the day's tramp, right to the climb of Mt Wilson, before even leaving Medina. The first hour is a gentle

climb through open farmland with wonderful views all around, including the ocean behind you. Within 2km you reach a stile, which marks the boundary to **Hawkswood**, the third and final farm you'll cross.

The track remains in open country until it descends into a forested gully and crosses Little Dawn Creek. You resume climbing, merge onto a 4WD track, and about 4.5km from Medina, make a sharp right onto another sheep track at a well-signposted junction. This one leads you to open tussock, with a steep ascent that improves the views dramatically. You reach **Mt Wilson Saddle** where, if you peer to the west, you can see the Staging Post. Just up the track, a two-hour (6.8km) walk from Medina, is a large track sign announcing that the top of Mt Wilson is just a two-minute climb to the left, while the Mt Wilson Shelter is 10 minutes to the right, on the back side of the mountain.

You can peer in any direction from the top of **Mt Wilson**, a 649m rocky knob. From the benches in front of **Mt Wilson Shelter** you can see west to Mt Tapuae-o-Uenuku (2884m), the highest peak in the South Island outside the Southern Alps. This is the most basic of the three lunch shelters, but there is drinking water and protection from the winds.

Continue the ridge walk to **Saddle Shelter**, reached at 8km, where there are the final views of the Pacific Ocean. At this point you begin the long descent to the Staging Post.

The remaining 5km are all downhill and all along 4WD tracks. The exception is at the very end, when you follow a track into the Chilly Stream gully and are faced with a 10-minute climb out, just before emerging at the farm and backpacker lodge.

MORE TRAMPS

Mt Fyffe

Mt Fyffe is a 1620m peak that, along with the Seaward Kaikoura Range, dominates the Kaikoura horizon. From the Mt Fyffe car park – 15km west of Kaikoura via Ludstone, Swamp and Postman's Rds – a 4WD track follows the mountain's long south-west ridge. Within two to three hours you reach Mt Fyffe Hut (eight bunks) and in four hours the peak itself. From its lofty perch you can view Banks Peninsula, and even the North Island on a clear day. It's also possible to turn this trip into a two- or three-day loop by continuing on to Kowhai Saddle (1153m) and then down the Kowhai River back to the Mt Fyffe car park, passing Kowhai Hut (six bunks) along the way. The climb to Mt Fyffe is moderate, and the Kowhai Circuit (much of it a route) is moderate-demanding. For more information contact **Kaikoura visitor information centre** (☎ 319 5641; www.kaikoura.co.nz), which has a DOC counter. For a map, use the 1:50,000 Topomap 260-031 (*Kaikoura*).

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