

Nelson Region

The Nelson region is nothing short of a trampers' paradise. It's an area renowned for its sunshine and beaches, and is laced with tracks – including New Zealand's most popular Great Walk, the Abel Tasman Coast Track, an easy tramp along a string of golden beaches. To the south is the Heaphy Track, another Great Walk, which begins in lush bush, ascends over a low saddle and ends among the nikau palms that line the Tasman Sea.

Beyond these famous tramps, you'll also find great scenery, good fishing and far fewer trampers along the many other tracks in this northern corner of the South Island. Many are in Kahurangi National Park, the second-largest national park in New Zealand. These include the Leslie-Karamea Track, a seven-day tramp through the heart of the park, which offers tramping anglers some of the best wilderness fishing in the country.

Alpine enthusiasts need only go to Nelson Lakes National Park, a place of long valleys and many passes, for their fix of ridge walking and breathless views. The Travers-Sabine Circuit is one of the best tracks for those new to alpine tramping and pass-hopping. Moss Pass and the D'Urville Valley Track offer a six-day adventure for experienced trampers who thrive on the adrenalin rush of a steep climb, and an even steeper descent.

Popular tramps or remote adventures...you would need more than a month to complete every tramp described in this chapter, and practically a lifetime to walk every track in the region.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Soaking up the sand and surf along the **Abel Tasman Coast Track** (p148)
- Tramping under palm trees and along the pounding Tasman Sea on the **Heaphy Track** (p166)
- Spending a night at one of the unusual rock bivvies along the **Leslie-Karamea Track** (p177)
- Enjoying the hard-earned views from the top of **Moss Pass** (p191) on the D'Urville Valley Track

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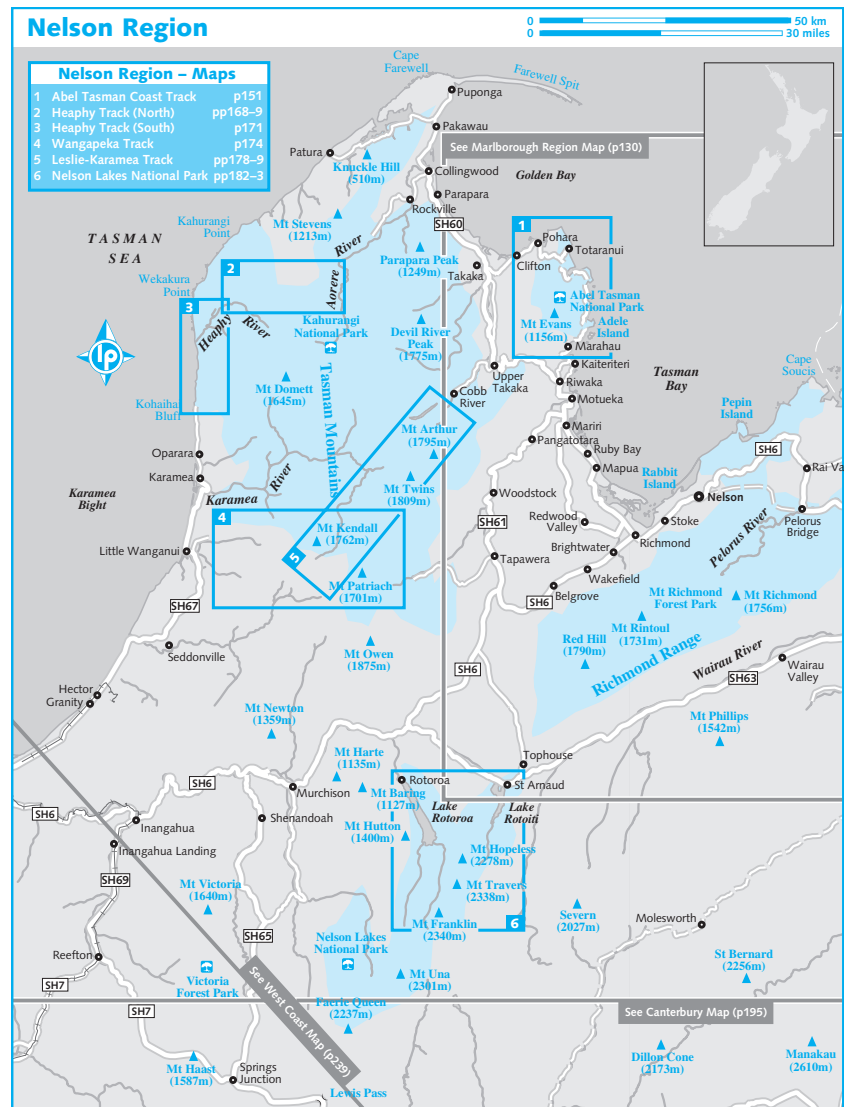
GATEWAY Nelson

☎ 03 / pop 52,300

This is a pleasant and active city, and it is a great place to recuperate in between nearby tramps. The restaurants are excellent, the bars are lively and there are good wineries nearby.

INFORMATION

Nelson visitor information centre (☎ 548 2304; www.nelsonnz.com; cnr Trafalgar & Halifax Sts; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) has loads of information on the area, including lodging and transport, and will book bus and tour tickets. Within the centre is the **DOC Regional Visitor Centre** (☎ 546 9339; nelsonvc@doc.govt.nz),



the best place to purchase hut tickets and maps, or to book Great Walks huts and camp sites.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

You can hire everything from tents (per day \$8) and sleeping bags (per trip \$5) to camp stoves (per night \$3) from **Tasman Bay Backpackers**. (☎ 548 7950; www.tasmanbaybackpackers.co.nz; 10 Weka St)

Nelson also has a few outdoor stores, including **Rollo's BBQ and Camping Centre** (☎ 548 1975; 12 Bridge St; ☎ 9am-5.30am Mon-Thu, to 6.30pm Fri, to 3pm Sat) and **Alp Sports** (☎ 546 8536; 220 Hardy St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, to 6pm Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat). For food on the track there's **Fresh Choice Supermarket** (☎ 548 0191; 69 Collingwood St).

SLEEPING & EATING

Tahuna Beach Holiday Park (☎ 548 5159; www.tahunabeachholidaypark.co.nz; 70 Beach Rd; sites for 2 \$28, cabins s/d \$44/55, r \$75-90) is a huge caravan park 5km from the city, near the airport, with its own dairy, mini-golf course and two TV lounges.

Nelson has to be the capital of backpacker lodges and hostels, making it the ideal place from which to stage any of the tramps in the region. **Tasman Bay Backpackers** (☎ 548 7950; www.tasmanbaybackpackers.co.nz; 10 Weka St; camp sites for 2 \$24, dm \$22-23, d \$54) is a popular large hostel especially geared for trampers, with free storage, equipment rental and loads of information about tracks and transport to them.

Paradise Hostel (☎ 0800-269 667, 545 7128; www.backpackernelson.co.nz; 42 Weka St; dm/d \$23/56; ☎ ☎) is another popular hostel, with a spa, free breakfast and tramping-equipment rental and storage.

Nelson Central YHA (☎ 545 9988; yha.nelson@yha.org.nz; 59 Rutherford St; dm/d \$25/31; ☎ ☎) is big and spotless, and offers storage for excess luggage.

Many of Nelson's motels are along Trafalgar St, north of the visitor information centre. They include **Trailways Motor Inn** (☎ 0800-872 459, 548 7049; www.trailways.co.nz; 66 Trafalgar St; d \$153), with 43 spacious rooms, plus the Tides Restaurant and Bar, where every seat overlooks the Maitai River.

There is great dining around Trafalgar and Hardy Sts. **House of Ales** (☎ 548 4220; 296 Trafalgar St; ☎ 10am-9.30pm) has a pleasant outdoor dining area, lots of beers and creative breakfasts – such as bangers and mash, or

black sausages and crispy bacon served on creamy mash potatoes and covered in a rich gravy. That ought to hold you over to the first hut.

Lambretta's Cafe & Bar (☎ 545 8555; 204 Hardy St; ☎ 8.30am-10pm Mon-Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) is named after the popular Italian scooter (there are several hanging on the walls) and serves good, carb-loaded pasta and pizza.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air New Zealand Link (☎ 0800-737 000; www.airnz.co.nz; cnr Trafalgar & Bridge Sts) has direct flights to Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch. **Origin Pacific** (☎ 0800-302 302, 547 2020; www.originpacific.co.nz), which is based in Nelson, has direct flights to Auckland, Wellington, Palmerston North, Christchurch and New Plymouth.

InterCity (☎ 548 1538; www.intercitycoach.co.nz) buses depart from the **Nelson Travel Centre** (27 Bridge St), with runs to Christchurch (\$69, 6½ hours) and Greymouth (\$74, six hours, one day). **Abel Tasman Coachlines** (☎ 548 0285; www.abeltasmantravel.co.nz) also depart from the Nelson Travel Centre for Motueka (\$10, one hour).

Most other buses also stop and pick up from the Nelson Visitor Centre, where you can buy tickets. **K Bus** (☎ 0800-881 188, 578 4075; www.kahurangi.co.nz) makes daily runs to Picton (\$22, two hours) and Westport (\$35, four hours), and **Atomic Shuttles** (☎ 0800-248 885, 322 8883; www.atomictravel.co.nz) connects daily to Greymouth (\$45, five hours) and Fox Glacier (\$75, nine hours).

ABEL TASMAN COAST TRACK

Duration	5 days
Distance	51km
Track Standard	Great Walk
Difficulty	easy
Start	Marahau
Finish	Wainui car park
Nearest Towns	Marahau (p152), Takaka (p152)
Transport	boat, bus

Summary New Zealand's most popular tramp, linking a series of beautiful beaches and bays, and offering lots of sunshine.

In the early 1980s, the Abel Tasman Coast Track was hardly known outside the Nelson

region. Today, overseas trampers arrive at the Nelson visitor information centre, point to a page in their guidebook and say 'Abel Tasman'.

The change that has taken place is remarkable. This is now the most widely used recreational track in the country, easily surpassing such favourites as the Routeburn and Milford Tracks. Those tracks draw more than 13,000 trampers a year; the Abel Tasman Coast Track attracts more than 30,000 trampers and kayakers, who all stay at least one night in the Abel Tasman National Park.

The track has been best described as a relaxed tramp, because of the excellent weather it enjoys and the beaches, lagoons and bays that make up most of the scenery. If you feel inexperienced as a trumper, but desperately want to try one walk, the Coast Track is perfect. It is not a typical, rugged New Zealand track, and it is better serviced than any other track in the country. It is a well-cut, well-graded and well-marked path that is almost impossible to lose. It can be tramped in tennis shoes and there are always people just up the track if a problem arises.

There is a widespread belief among trampers that the Coast Track ends at Totaranui, but the track actually extends to a car park near Wainui Bay. Those who continue north of Totaranui will discover the most dramatic viewing point (Separation Point), the least-crowded hut (Whariwharangi) and some of the best beaches (Anapai and Mutton Cove) in the park.

When tramping, take notice of the tides. The tidal differences in the park are among the greatest in the country, often between 3m and 4m. At Torrent and Bark Bays, crossing at low tide is far easier than following the all-tidal track. At Awaroa Bay and Onetahuti you have no choice but to plan on crossing close to low tide. There are current tide charts in all huts, as well as in DOC's *Abel Tasman Coast Track* brochure, or you can purchase a book of tide tables (\$5) at local bookshops.

The entire tramp takes only three to five days, although it is now possible to be dropped almost anywhere along the track for a one- or two-day walk. If you do tramp for only a couple of days, the best option would be to take a water taxi to Totaranui

and hike the final portion of the track, overnighing at Whariwharangi Hut. It will give you a slice of the park's best features (beaches, seals, coastal scenery) and will be far less crowded than any other segment of the track.

HISTORY

Maori have lived along the shores of the present Abel Tasman National Park for at least 500 years. They had abundant sources of food from both the sea and the forest, and seasonally cultivated kumara (sweet potato).

In 1642 Abel Tasman anchored his ships near Wainui, and that night four Maori canoes appeared, although no contact was made. The next day, eight Maori canoes put out, eventually ramming a small boat that was ferrying between Tasman's two ships. Four of Tasman's crew were killed in the incident and the Dutch quickly departed. Captain Cook stopped briefly in 1770, but recorded little about the coastal area and nothing of its inhabitants.

It wasn't until Dumont d'Urville sailed into the area between Marahau and Torrent Bay in 1827 that Europeans met the Maori on peaceful terms. The French navigator made friends with the villagers, studied wildlife, and charted the park's bays and shoreline.

European settlement of the area began in the early 1850s. The new settlers ranged from farmers and fishermen to shipwrights and loggers, but by far the most enterprising was William Gibbs. The farm and mansion he built at Totaranui, and the innovations he implemented – such as running water in every bedroom, a glasshouse that furnished grapes and a model dairy that used porcelain pans warmed by copper pipes to make cream rise – were ahead of their time.

The Abel Tasman National Park was created in 1942, to mark the 300th anniversary of Tasman's ill-fated visit. In 1948 the Cameron farm, containing the original Gibbs estate, passed to the Crown and was incorporated into the park.

ENVIRONMENT

The 225-sq-km Abel Tasman National Park is the smallest of New Zealand's national parks, rising to a maximum altitude of just 1156m. Although it's small in size, the

park contains a wealth of natural features. Along with its bays, lagoons and sparkling beaches, the park also contains marble gorges and a spectacular system of caves in its rugged interior.

Along the coast, where it is moist and warm, the park is characterised by regenerating shrublands and lush coastal broad-leaved forest, with vines, perching plants, tree ferns and an abundance of the country's national plant, the silver fern. On the drier ridges and throughout much of the park's interior, the bush is predominantly beech forest – all four New Zealand species, and two sub-species, are found here.

CLIMATE

One of the main attractions of the Abel Tasman National Park is its exceptionally mild and sunny climate. Protection from southerly and westerly winds by mountain ranges gives the park some of the best weather in New Zealand. Extreme temperatures are rare, and in Totaranui the average maximum during January is 25°C.

The coast averages 1800mm of rain annually, but only over a span of 125 days, resulting in long, dry spells of weather through summer and autumn.

PLANNING

When to Tramp

The track can be tramped at any time of the year. During summer, Bark Bay looks more like a beach at a seaside resort than one in a national park; there can easily be dozens of kayakers in every cove, as well as boaties with beer coolers on many beaches. Along the track between Torrent Bay and Bark Bay trampler numbers peak at more than 250 a day in January, but drop to less than

25 a day in August. The best time for the track is probably from the end of February to May, when the crowds thin out but the weather is still pleasantly warm.

What to Bring

The preferred footwear for this tramp is tennis shoes (trainers/runners), rather than hiking boots, and occasionally you even see somebody heading down the track in sandals or thongs (flip-flops). You still need a backpack (shoulder bags just won't do), some rain gear and a warm jersey or sweater, because the nights can get chilly, even in summer. Also pack sunglasses, a swimsuit and a hat to keep the sun off your eyes and face. Make absolutely sure you have a bottle of insect repellent and some sunscreen.

Bring a stove. None of the huts have cooking facilities and if you're tenting, open fires are permitted only where fireplaces have been provided. You cannot have open fires on the beach. When camping, also keep in mind that possums are a problem, often stealing food, so keep all supplies and equipment secure in your tent.

Maps & Books

The 1:50,000 Parkmap 237-07 (*Abel Tasman National Park*) is more than adequate for this tramp, or when planning other trips in the park. The best place to pick up maps is at the DOC counter in the Nelson visitor information centre (p147).

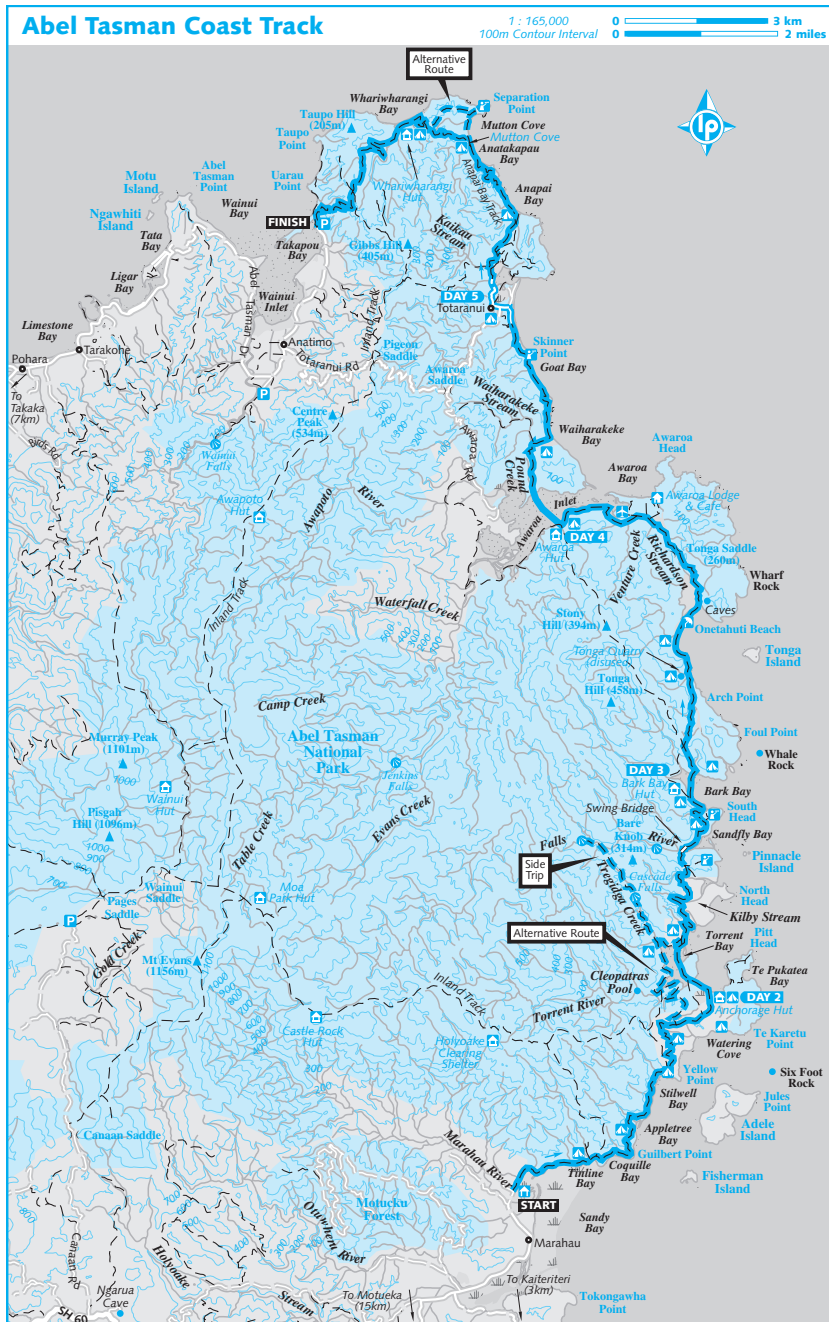
Huts, Camp Sites & Lodges

The Abel Tasman Coast Track is a Great Walk with four huts – Anchorage, Bark Bay, Awaroa and Whariwharangi – and 21 designated camp sites.

SURVIVING SUMMER IN ABEL TASMAN

Many believe the best time to walk the Abel Tasman Coast Track, New Zealand's most popular tramp, is in March and April. But if you're travelling during the peak period of January and February and don't want to miss this beautiful coastal track, here are a few tips on how to escape the summer crowds.

- Pack a tent, avoid the huts and book your nights at the small camp sites.
- Avoid the main water-taxi and kayak drop-off and pick-up beaches of Anchorage, Torrent Bay, Bark Bay, Onetahuti, Awaroa and Totaranui between 9.30am and 10.30am, and 3.30pm and 5pm, when the coming and going of trampers is like rush-hour traffic in Auckland.
- Begin in Totaranui and head north, following the least-used segment of the track.



All huts and camp sites must be booked in advance year-round. Bookings can be made online through **DOC** (www.doc.govt.nz), by phone, email or post through the **Great Walks Helpdesk Nelson** (☎ 546 8210; greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz; PO Box 375, Nelson), or in person at some offices.

Peak season (October to April) prices are adult/child \$25/12.50 per night for huts, and \$10/5 per night for camp sites. Off-peak (May to September) prices are adult/child \$10/5 per night for huts, and \$7/3.50 for a camp site. Penalty fees of up to 100% will apply to those who do not have a valid booking, and you may be required to leave the park. The Internet is the cheapest way to book huts and camp sites as there is no booking fee.

DOC hut tickets and annual passes cannot be used on the track, and there is a two-night limit on staying in huts or camp sites. The exception is Totaranui, which has a one-night limit for trampers.

There is also commercial accommodation within the park. **Awaroa Lodge** (☎ 528 8758; www.awaroalodge.co.nz; Awaroa Bay; s & d \$210-280, ste \$280-380) is an upscale resort with a restaurant, bar and 26 rooms and suites, which can be reached from the track or by water taxi or air. **Aqua Packers** (☎ 0800-430 744; www.aquapackers.co.nz; dm/d \$60/175) is a pair of boats – one a 22m Navy patrol boat – that have been refurbished as backpacker accommodation and are moored in Anchorage Bay. You're transported from shore in a rubber dingy. The rate includes meals and linen.

NEAREST TOWNS

Marahau

☎ 03 / pop 80

This tiny village, 18km north of Motueka, is the last bit of civilisation before you enter Abel Tasman National Park. You can easily walk from Marahau to the southern end of the track, 1km from town.

SLEEPING & EATING

Marahau Beach Camp (☎ 0800-808 018, 527 8176; www.abeltasmanmarahaucamp.co.nz; Franklin St; sites for 2 \$23, dm \$29, cabins \$50-60; ☒) is a well-established camping ground with a small shop, kayak hire and water-taxi service to the park.

Barn Backpackers (☎ 527 8043; Harvey Rd; camp sites for 2 \$24, dm/d \$24/60) is a comfortable, homely place with a full kitchen, laundry

and a shop. Best of all, it's only minutes from the start of the track.

Abel Tasman Marahau Lodge (☎ 527 8250; www.abeltasmanmarahaulodge.co.nz; Marahau Beach; d \$150-160) is 500m past the camp and has comfortable studios and rooms, a sauna, and an outdoor spa for post-tramp soaking.

Park Café (☎ 527 8270; Harvey Rd; ☒ 8am-8.30pm), near the entrance to the park, has great baked goods, burgers, milkshakes and beer, as well as information on the park.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

See p148.

Takaka

☎ 03 / pop 1230

Near the northern end of the park is Takaka, the main commercial centre for the Golden Bay area. From Takaka it's 21km to the Wainui Bay end of the track, and 32km to Totaranui.

INFORMATION

DOC Golden Bay Area Office (☎ 525 8026; goldenbayao@doc.govt.nz; 62 Commercial St) Sells hut tickets and has information on Abel Tasman and Kahurangi National Parks.

Golden Bay visitor information centre (☎ 525 9136; Willow St) Can help with lodging and tours in the area.

SLEEPING & EATING

Near the shops, **Annie's Nirvana Lodge** (☎ 525 8766; www.nirvanalodge.co.nz; 25 Motupipi St; dm/d \$22/54; ☒) has an outdoor spa and bikes for hire.

River Inn (☎ 525 9425; www.riverinn.co.nz; SH60; camp sites for 2 \$15, dm/d \$22/44), 3km north of town, is a 130-year-old hotel-turned-backpacker-lodge with a grass-covered beer garden outside, a pub downstairs, and a 2nd-floor balcony to watch the sun set. This can be a fun place to spend a night after a tramp.

Most restaurants in Takaka are on Commercial St, including **Wholemeal Cafe** (☎ 525 9426; 60 Commercial St; ☒ 7.30am-9pm Mon & Wed-Fri, to 5pm Tue & Sat), which is also an art gallery and bulk natural-food store. The **Dangerous Kitchen** (☎ 525 8686; 48 Commercial St; ☒ 9.30am-8pm; ☒) has good coffee and wacky gourmet pizza, while nearby is **Reynish's SuperValue Plus Supermarket** (☎ 525 9383; 29 Commercial St).

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GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses pick up trampers at the Golden Bay visitor information centre. **Abel Tasman Coachlines** (☎ 548 0285; www.abeltasmantravel.co.nz) depart from Nelson daily for Takaka (\$24, two hours), continuing on to Wainui car park.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

You can reach the track by land or by sea, but considering the beauty of the coastline, the preferred mode of transport by many trampers is water taxi. Almost all water taxis depart from either Marahau or Kaiteriteri, and can be booked directly or at the Nelson or Motueka visitor information centres.

Abel Tasman Aqua Taxi (☎ 0800-278 282, 527 8083; www.aquataxis.co.nz) has daily launches from Marahau between mid-November and mid-April at 9am, 10.30am, noon and 1.30pm, dropping trampers at Anchorage (\$25), Bark Bay (\$29), Awaroa (\$34) and

Totaranui (\$36), among other places. It then backtracks, picking up returning trampers and arriving back at Marahau at 12.15pm, 1.30pm, 2.45pm and 4.30pm. The company also offer a number of return specials for day trampers, and a pack-transfer service between huts (\$8 to \$12 per pack per trip) for those who do not want to carry their gear.

Also departing from Marahau, with similar rates and times, are **Southern Exposure** (☎ 0800-659 292, 527 8424; www.southern-exposure.co.nz) and **Marahau Water Taxis** (☎ 0800-808 018, 527 8176; www.abeltasmanmarahaucamp.co.nz). Departing from the beach in Kaiteriteri are **Abel Tasman Sea Shuttle** (☎ 0800-732 748, 528 9759; www.abeltasmanseashuttles.co.nz) and **Abel Tasman Water Taxis** (☎ 0800-423 397, 528 7497; www.abeltasman4u.co.nz).

With all operators you can easily combine a walk along part of the Abel Tasman Coast Track with a cruise, being dropped off at one bay and picked up later at another.

DAY TRAMPING IN ABEL TASMAN

It's peak season. You didn't book space in the huts on the Abel Tasman Coast Track and you don't want to sleep on the ground. Don't fret, and don't pass up a chance to experience this stunning beach walk.

Due to its coastal nature and popularity, there is transport to and from almost every section of the track, making day tramps an enjoyable way to explore it. You don't need permits or hut reservations, you just need to secure accommodation in Marahau or Kaiteriteri and then book passage on any of the water taxis based in the shoreline communities. Every water taxi sells tickets allowing you to be dropped off at one point of the track and picked up at another, so you can spend the day walking and the night back at your lodge or hotel.

The following are just a few of the options:

- **Seals & Sand (\$52)** Board an early morning taxi for a trip to Tonga Bay via a fur seal colony. Follow the Coast Track north to reach Torrent Bay in 3½ hours, and then lay about on the beach until the 4pm boat arrives.
- **Tramping & Dining (\$58)** Boat to beautiful Bark Bay and head north to Awaroa Bay, a three-hour walk. Finish the day with a well-deserved lunch at the Awaroa Lodge and a late-afternoon boat cruise back along the shoreline you just tramped.
- **The Totaranui Adventure (\$59)** Begin the day with a scenic cruise all the way to Totaranui, then on the return disembark at Bark Bay. Walk south on one of the Coast Track's most scenic sections to reach Anchorage in 3½ hours and catch the last water taxi of the day.
- **Three Days & Three Walks (\$110)** Day tramping is so popular that **Abel Tasman Sea Shuttle** (☎ 0800-732 748, 528 9759; www.abeltasmanseashuttles.co.nz) offers a water-taxi pass that allows you to embark on three walks of your choice in the park over three days, returning every night to your lodge in Kaiteriteri or Marahau.

You can even do a day tramp out of Nelson by taking the 7.15am Abel Tasman Coachlines bus, which arrives at Marahau in time for a 9am launch departure. With a drop-off at Bark Bay, you can tramp back to Marahau and catch a 5.30pm bus back to Nelson.

There's also good bus transport heading west from Nelson to Marahau and then Golden Bay. **Abel Tasman Coachlines** (☎ 548 0285; www.abeltasmantravel.co.nz) services both ends of the track, with four runs daily from Nelson to Marahau (\$15, 1½ hours) and one to Wainui car park (\$28, 2½ hours), as well as Totaranui (\$30, three hours). The company also offers open-dated return fares, including a return trip from Nelson (\$37), with stops in Marahau and Totaranui. Also servicing Marahau, Wainui and Totaranui is **K Bus** (☎ 0800-881 188, 578 4075; www.kahurangi.co.nz), with almost identical fares.

THE TRAMP

Day 1: Marahau to Anchorage

4 hours, 11.5km

The track begins at a turn-off 1km north of Marahau, where there is a car park, information kiosk and a shelter. From here it crosses the **Marahau estuary** on an all-tidal causeway, climbs gently to a clearing above Tinline Bay, and then passes Tinline camp site (15 sites, 30 campers), one hour (2.5km) from the car park. Just beyond the camp site a sign marks one end of the Abel Tasman Inland Track (p193).

The Coast Track continues northeast, skirting around dry ridges, hugging the coast and opening up to scenic views of Adele and Fisherman Islands, and Coquille and Appletree Bays. Signposts indicate side tracks leading down to the beaches where you can enjoy a refreshing swim in the surf. Trampers can pitch a tent at Appletree Bay camp site (15 sites, 30 campers) and Stillwell Bay camp site (three sites, six campers), but be aware that these are favourite stops for kayakers.

After passing **Yellow Point** and its spur track, the trail turns inland, climbing in and out of gullies and along ridges lined with silver ferns. Eventually the trees thin out and you are rewarded with views of Torrent Bay. Here the track branches at a signposted junction. The main track heads east (right fork), passes a spur track (right), descends quickly to Anchorage Beach – 30 minutes away – and goes along the beach to **Anchorage Hut** (24 bunks). Just beyond the hut is the Anchorage camp site (50 sites, 100 campers), a large and very popular spot in summer. The whole area is a makeshift marina during summer, with

water taxis, yachties and kayakers coming and going, or sitting anchored offshore.

You can escape the crush of humanity around the hut by following the short side track at the eastern end of the beach to Te Pukatea Bay camp site (seven sites, 14 campers), or backtracking and taking the signposted spur track to Watering Cove camp site (five sites, 10 campers).

Day 2: Anchorage to Bark Bay

3 hours, 9.5km

This is a short day, and it can easily be combined with the next stage for a seven-hour walk through to Awaroa...but then again, why? You are here to enjoy the beach, so drop off the backpack at Bark Bay and do just that.

From Anchorage Hut, head west along the beach and within 20 minutes climb an easy track over the headland into **Torrent Bay**. If the tide is right (or the water low enough) you can head north to cross the bay; usually you have to be within two hours either side of low tide to cross. Otherwise, see the Alternative Route (p163).

Near Torrent Bay Village camp site (10 sites, 20 campers) you skirt the lagoon in front of a string of summer cottages, then turn left up the beach and pass more private residences. Keep going for 500m before the track heads inland.

Once the main track moves inland it climbs 90m and sidles around Kilby Stream, before reaching a low saddle, where a side track takes you to a **lookout**. The Coast Track descends to a swing bridge over **Falls River** and then climbs to a spur track to a second **lookout**. Take a breather and enjoy the views of Bark Bay to the north and the coastline to the south. From the junction it's a 20-minute descent to **Bark Bay**.

Bark Bay is now a major access point for the track, with launches arriving at 10.30am and 1.30pm, and then stopping again on their return at 12.40pm and 4pm. **Bark Bay Hut** (34 bunks) is on the edge of the lagoon, a short walk from the beach. Like the hut, Bark Bay camp site (40 sites, 80 campers) is also a large facility, so at times this snug, little bay can be overflowing with trampers. But if you don't mind the people, it's a beautiful place to spend a night.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: ALL-TIDAL TRACK

1½ hours, 3.5km

If you miss low tide and don't wish to wait, follow the all-tide track at the junction above the tidal crossing on Torrent Bay. The track circles the bay through bush, arriving at Torrent Bay Estuary camp site (six sites, 12 campers) in one hour. An interesting side trip is to **Cleopatra's Pool**, a 15-minute walk from the all-tidal track. The 1m-deep pool, fed by the Torrent River, is surrounded by smooth rocks that lend themselves to sunbathing. The cold, fresh water is invigorating after a day in the sun and sea.

SIDE TRIP: FALLS RIVER

3 hours, 6km return

For those who want to see the various falls and pools of Tregidga Creek and Falls River, follow the all-tidal track from Torrent Bay Estuary camp site and head northwest at the signposted junction. A good benched track follows Tregidga Creek to the modest **Cascade Falls** after one hour. You can stay on this track and end up at **Falls River**, 15 minutes downstream from its main falls. A boulder-hopping scramble, helped by an occasional marker, will bring you to the impressive cascade.

Day 3: Bark Bay to Awaroa Bay

4 hours, 11.5km

The track follows the spit to its northern end and crosses the tidal lagoon – an easy ford most of the time (except near high tide). The all-tidal track near the hut avoids this but takes an extra 20 minutes.

Beyond the lagoon the track enters the bush and immediately begins to climb steeply to a low saddle. You then wind over several inland ridges before dropping sharply to **Tonga Quarry**, 3.5km from Bark Bay. A metal plaque describes the quarry operations that took place here, and several large, squarish stones are nearby. What remains of the wharf can be seen in the sand. Located just off the beach is the **Tonga Quarry** camp site (10 sites, 20 campers).

The most interesting feature of the bay can only be reached 1½ hours either side of low tide. Follow the rocky shore south from the southern end of the beach, and after a 10-minute scramble you come to the

sea arches of **Arch Point**, a set of impressive stone sculptures formed by the repeated pounding of the waves.

The Coast Track continues by climbing the headland that separates **Tonga Quarry** and **Onetahuti Beach**. After a 1km walk you come to a clearing overlooking the graceful curve of the long beach. This is another classic Abel Tasman National Park beach, and Onetahuti camp site (20 sites, 40 campers) is at the southern end. Near the camp sites a sign points the way to the delightfully cold and clear freshwater pools that lie beneath a small waterfall – ideal after a hot day.

The beach is more than 1km long. Follow it to the northern end where, on the other side of a tidal-flats area (which should be crossed within three hours of low tide), a track marked by an orange disc departs into the bush.

The Coast Track leaves the beach by gently climbing above the swamp formed by Richardson Stream, providing a nice overview of **Tonga Roadstead**. Within an hour the track climbs to **Tonga Saddle** (260m) and you get a quick glimpse ahead of the beaches in the distance. If you're heading for Awaroa Hut, take the northwest path (left fork).

The signposted path to **Awaroa Lodge** (p152) is directly in front of you, descending steeply (almost due north) to the beach. Even if you're not spending the night, an espresso or a beer at the lodge's café makes for a pleasant break. From Awaroa Lodge, the path to Awaroa Hut descends to an airstrip and crosses a bridge over Venture Creek. Large orange discs then lead along the shore for 15 minutes to **Awaroa Hut** (22 bunks) on Awaroa Inlet. The hut stands on a small beach while nearby is Awaroa camp site (18 sites, 36 campers).

Day 4: Awaroa Bay to Totaranui

1½–2 hours, 5.5km

Awaroa Inlet can only be crossed in the two hours before or after low tide. Check the tide chart in the hut or at the lodge, then plan your day. Cross the bay directly in front of the hut and follow the large orange discs that lead to **Pound Creek**. The track follows the creek until it passes a signposted junction to Awaroa Rd, then quickly arrives at **Waiharakeke Bay**, another beautiful beach.

The Waiharakeke camp site (10 sites, 20 campers) is a great spot, only 30 to 40 minutes north of Awaroa. The camp sites are 50m south from the point where Waiharakeke Stream emerges onto the beach.

The track climbs away from the beach, across a rocky ridge and then descends into **Goat Bay**. From Goat Bay it's a 20-minute walk over Skinner Point to Totaranui. There's a scenic **lookout**, complete with a pair of benches, near the top of the point, which provides an excellent view of the settlement at Totaranui.

To spend the night at Totaranui you need a tent – there is no hut or cabins – and there is a one-night limit for trampers. The next and final hut is at Whariwharangi, three hours away.

Totaranui Camping Ground (☎ 528 8083) is an extremely popular facility, due, no doubt, to camp sites that are close to the beach and some of the best stands of native bush remaining in the park. There are actually two camping grounds: a 20-site area for trampers and the main area, which holds 850 campers. DOC has an office here with interpretive displays on the national park, while outside you'll find flush toilets, cold showers and a public phone.

Both **Abel Tasman Coachlines** (☎ 548 0285; www.abeltasmantravel.co.nz) and **K Bus** (☎ 0800-881 188, 578 4075; www.kahurangi.co.nz) arrive in Totaranui around 10am daily during summer, while all water taxis come to this part of the track.

Day 5: Totaranui to Wainui Car Park

4–5 hours, 13km

Follow the tree-lined avenue in front of the camp office and turn north at the intersection, passing the Education Centre. At the end of the road the Anapai Bay Track begins, crossing Kaikau Stream and reaching a junction with the Headlands Track. At one time both tracks headed for Anapai Bay, but Headlands Track no longer does. Take the left fork, climbing to a low saddle and then descending along a forested stream to **Anapai Bay**, which is split in two by unusual rock outcrops. The Anapai Bay camp site (six sites, 12 campers) is reached one hour from Totaranui; it makes for a great place to spend a night, as the sites overlook the scenic beach.

The Coast Track continues up the sandy beach, then heads inland. In 2km it reaches

Mutton Cove and the Mutton Cove camp site (20 sites, 40 campers). From the camp site the track – an old farm road – heads inland over a low saddle. For an alternative route around Separation Point, see below.

From this saddle the track descends through regenerating scrubland. About 2km from Mutton Cove, it reaches Whariwharangi Bay, another beautiful, curved beach. **Whariwharangi Hut** (20 bunks) is at the western end of the bay, 500m inland. This hut is unique; it's a restored two-storey farmhouse built in 1897, and last permanently occupied in 1926. Nearby is Whariwharangi camp site (20 sites, 40 campers).

From Whariwharangi Bay the track climbs another low saddle, where there are views of Wainui Inlet. It then descends to the estuary and skirts its shore to reach the Wainui car park, 5.5km (about 1½ hours) from Whariwharangi Bay.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: VIA SEPARATION POINT

1 hour, 2km

Continue along the beach at Mutton Cove and pick up a track at the northern end of the second bay. This track climbs to the side trail from the Coast Track and eliminates any backtracking. **Separation Point** is the granite headland that separates Tasman Bay from Golden Bay. The views are worth the walk – Farewell Spit is visible to the northwest, and on an exceptionally clear day so is the North Island. The point is also a favourite haunt of migrating fur seals, which are often spotted sunning themselves on the rocks or swimming offshore.

Follow the side trail west, and within 30 minutes you return to the true Coast Track at the low saddle between Mutton Cove and Whariwharangi Bay.

KAHURANGI NATIONAL PARK

Situated due west of Abel Tasman National Park, the 4500-sq-km Kahurangi National Park was gazetted only in 1996. Formerly Northwest Nelson Forest Park, it is now the second-largest national park in New Zealand, after Fiordland. Kahurangi includes the Tasman Mountains, a chain of

steep and rugged ranges, where the highest point is Mt Owen (1875m).

The best-known walk in Kahurangi is the Heaphy Track, which stretches from the Aorere valley, near Collingwood, to the west coast, north of Karamea. The Heaphy, however, is just one of the national park's many walks; the park contains more than 650km of tracks.

The Wangapeka Track is a challenging walk, often linked with the Heaphy by trampers who want to loop back towards Nelson. Perhaps the most remote walk in the park is the Leslie-Karamea Track, which traverses its namesake rivers from Tableland to the middle of the Wangapeka Track.

HISTORY

The legendary moa thrived in the northwest region of the South Island, and were an important food source for the early Maori who settled here. Maori occupation at the mouth of the Heaphy (Whakapoai) River has been dated to at least as early as the 16th century. Eventually they began using a route up the river and over the Gouland Downs to Aorere.

In 1846, Charles Heaphy (a draftsman for the New Zealand Company) and Thomas Brunner became the first Europeans to walk up the west coast to the Heaphy River. James Mackay and John Clark completed the inland portion of the Heaphy Track in 1860, while searching for pastoral land between Buller and Collingwood. A year later gold was discovered at Karamea, inspiring prospectors to struggle over the track in search of riches. The Wangapeka valley was also opened up when gold was discovered in the Rolling, Wangapeka and Sherry Rivers in the late 1850s. Dr Ferdinand von Hochstetter is believed to have been the first person to travel the entire Wangapeka Track when, in 1860, he carried out a geological exploration of the valley.

Miners also had a hand in developing the Karamea Track, progressing from gold diggings at Mt Arthur Tableland to the river. By 1878 a benched track had been formed, and diggers were active in the Leslie, Crow and Roaring Lion valleys.

The Heaphy was improved when JB Saxon surveyed and graded the track in 1888 for

the Collingwood County Council. Gold deposits were never found, however, and use of the Heaphy and Wangapeka Tracks declined considerably in the early 1900s.

The Heaphy and Wangapeka Tracks were improved dramatically after the Northwest Nelson Forest Park was established in 1970, and the New Zealand Forest Service began to bench the routes and construct huts. The Heaphy did not become really popular, however, until plans for a road from Collingwood to Karamea were announced in the early 1970s. Conservationists, deeply concerned about the damage the road would do to the environment – especially to nikau palms – began an intensive campaign to stop the work going ahead, and to increase the popularity of the track.

ENVIRONMENT

The park stretches from the palm-lined beaches of the Tasman Sea to an interior of alpine herb fields, rocky peaks and rolling flats of red tussock.

About 85% of the park is bush. Beech forest covers most of the hills, while rimu and other podocarps are found on the lower slopes in the western fringes of the park. These fringes have an understorey of broad-leaved trees and ferns, climbers and perching plants, which create a jungle-like forest. Five major river systems drain the park: Aorere and Takaka into Golden Bay, Motueka into Tasman Bay, and Karamea and Heaphy into the Tasman Sea.

CLIMATE

All the rivers of the park are fed (and occasionally flooded) by the westerly winds that blow off the Tasman Sea, bringing up to 5000mm of rain to the mountain areas. The yearly average for most of the park is 2540mm, although a rain gauge on Wangapeka Saddle recorded more than 500mm in January 1964 alone. Frost is possible in higher, more exposed regions – particularly the Gouland Downs – at all times except mid- to late summer.

PLANNING When to Tramp

The track can be tramped year-round. Easter is traditionally the most popular time to walk the Heaphy Track while late

February through March is a particularly good time to tackle tracks in the park.

Maps & Books

The 1:150,000 Parkmap 274-13 (*Kahurangi*) can be used for planning trips in the park, and for easier tramps such as the Heaphy Track. Purchase your maps at the DOC counter in the Nelson visitor information centre (p147).

ACCESS TOWNS

See Nelson (p147).

Motueka

☎ 03 / pop 6610

Motueka has become a major gateway to the tracks of Kahurangi, as well as Abel Tasman National Park. Known as a fruit and hops area, it becomes a bustling place during summer with large numbers of trampers and kayakers passing through.

INFORMATION

DOC Motueka Area Office (☎ 528 1810;

motuekaao@doc.govt.nz; cnr King Edward & High Sts)

Information is available here, though the main contact point for most trampers headed for Kahurangi National Park is still the DOC counter at the Nelson visitor information centre (p147).

Motueka visitor information centre (☎ 528 6543; www.motueka.net.nz; 20 Wallace St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5pm Sat & Sun) Book transport, lodging and tours and buy hut passes at this excellent visitor centre.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

To purchase or hire tramping and camping gear, head to **Coppins Great Outdoors Centre** (☎ 0800-100 774, 528 7296; 255 High St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat, 10am-1pm Sun). There is **Motueka New World** (☎ 528 6245; 271 High St) for food supplies.

SLEEPING & EATING

At the northern end of town is **Motueka Top 10 Holiday Park** (☎ 0800-668 835, 528 7189; www.motuekatop10.co.nz; 10 Fearon St; sites for 2 \$28, cabins \$40-60; ☎ ☎), a spacious camping ground with grassy sites and luggage storage.

Bakers Lodge (☎ 528 0102; www.bakerslodge.co.nz; 4 Poole St; dm \$22-25, d \$52; ☎ ☎) is Motueka's best hostel, a former bakery that has been restored into a roomy backpacker lodge with free luggage storage and camping-gear for hire.

Happy Apple Backpackers (☎ 528 8652; www.happyapplebackpackers.co.nz; 500 High St; dm/s/d \$22/\$32/\$55; ☎ ☎) has friendly staff and a number of rooms separated from the main house.

High St has numerous takeaways, sandwich bars and bakeries. **Hot Mama's Café** (☎ 528 7039; 105 High St; ☎ 9am-10pm) sells cold beer, strong coffee and good food from burritos to lasagne. **Arcadia Organics** (☎ 528 7840; 265 High St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) caters to vegetarian and vegan diets.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

A number of bus companies provide transport to Motueka from Nelson on their way to the Abel Tasman National Park. **Abel Tasman Coachlines** (☎ 548 0285; www.abeltasmantravel.co.nz) departs five times daily (\$10, one hour). Also servicing Motueka is **K Bus** (☎ 0800-881 188, 578 4075; www.kahurangi.co.nz).

HEAPHY TRACK

Duration	5 days
Distance	82km
Track Standard	Great Walk
Difficulty	easy
Start	Brown Hut
Finish	Kohaihai Camping Ground
Nearest Towns	Collingwood (opposite), Karamea (opposite)
Transport	bus
Summary	One of New Zealand's best-known walks, the Heaphy is a well-cut and well-benched track that can be handled by most people.

The popular Heaphy Track, a historic and beautiful crossing from Golden Bay to the country's west coast, offers one of the widest ranges of scenery seen on any of New Zealand's trampers. Along the way you pass through native forest, cross red tussock-covered downs and tramp through secluded river valleys to a beach lined by nikau palms. It's a Great Walk in every sense, and is considerably easier than any other extended tramp found in Kahurangi National Park.

By walking from east to west – as the tramp is described here – most of the climbing is done on the first day, and the scenic

beach walk is saved for the end, when it can be enjoyed better.

A strong tramper could walk the Heaphy in three days, but most people take four or five days.

PLANNING What to Bring

Most of the huts have gas rings, so a stove is not needed. Pack insect repellent – the sandflies at Lewis and Heaphy Huts can be murderous at times.

Maps

The 1:150,000 Parkmap 274-13 (*Kahurangi*) is more than adequate for this tramp.

Permits & Regulations

Like so many other Great Walks, the popularity of the Heaphy resulted in a booking system being implemented in 2005. All huts and camp sites now have to be booked in advance year-round.

There are 10 huts and shelters en route, with Perry Saddle, Saxon, Mackay, Lewis and Heaphy being the largest and most popular places to stay. Because of the track's popularity, there is a two-night limit at any hut. Camping is permitted at nine designated areas, including Aorere Shelter, Perry Saddle, Goulund Downs Hut, Mackay Hut, Heaphy Hut and Katipo Shelter. Other shelters are for day use only.

Bookings can be made online through **DOC** (www.doc.govt.nz), by phone, email or post through the **Great Walks Helpdesk Nelson** (☎ 546 8210; greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz; PO Box 375, Nelson), or in person at some offices. Peak season (October to April) fees are adult/child \$20/10 per night for huts, and \$10/5 for camp sites. Off-peak (May to September) fees are adult/child \$10/5 per night for huts, and \$7/3.50 for camp sites. Penalty fees of up to 100% will apply to those who do not have a booking.

NEAREST TOWNS & FACILITIES Collingwood

☎ 03 / pop 250

The nearest town to the start of the Heaphy, Collingwood is only 35km from Brown Hut. The advantage of staying in Collingwood is that you get to the track early in the morning, well ahead of the stampede from Nelson.

Collingwood is a scenic and interesting place to spend an afternoon, especially if you add in a tour of Farewell Spit to view the long sand bar, lighthouse and seal colonies with **Farewell Spit Tours** (☎ 0800-808 257, 524 8257; www.farewellspit.co.nz).

SLEEPING & EATING

The **Collingwood Motor Camp** (☎ 524 8149; William St; sites for 2 \$20, cabins \$40) allows you to pitch a tent in the centre of town.

Collingwood Beachcomber Motel (☎ 0800-270 520, 524 8499; cnr Elizabeth & Tasman Sts; d \$110-125) has en suite units near town.

Much more upscale is **Collingwood Homestead** (☎ 524 8079; www.collingwoodhomestead.co.nz; Elizabeth St; s/d \$245/265), a 1904 colonial home built when Collingwood was a thriving gold town. This lovely B&B is perched on a hill with a veranda overlooking the town and Golden Bay.

The best restaurant in Collingwood is the **Courthouse Café** (☎ 524 8025; cnr Haven Rd & Tasman St; ☎ 9am-5pm Sun, Mon & Thu, to 9pm Fri & Sat), with indoor and outdoor seating. For supplies there's the **Collingwood General Store** (☎ 524 8221; Tasman St).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

K Bus (☎ 0800-881 188, 578 4075; www.kahurangi.co.nz) departs Nelson at 3pm daily for Collingwood (\$47, three hours) in summer. **Abel Tasman Coachlines** (☎ 548 0285; www.abeltasmantravel.co.nz) offers the same route with similar fares.

Karamea

☎ 03 / pop 444

At the end of SH67, 100km north of Westport, Karamea is the closest town to the western ends of the Heaphy and Wangapeka Tracks. Information, maps and hut tickets are available at the **Karamea Information & Resource Centre** (☎ 782 6652; www.karameainfo.co.nz; Market Cross, SH67), just east of town.

SLEEPING & EATING

Karamea Memorial Domain (☎ 782 6629; Waverley St; sites for 2 \$12, dm \$9), behind Karamea Area Schools, has a simple but pleasant bunkroom with beds and a laundry.

Last Resort (☎ 0800-505 042, 782 6617; www.lastresort.co.nz; 71 Waverley St; dm \$24, d \$69-99, cottages \$140) is a very comfortable resort with a fine restaurant and pleasant bar; in other

words, the ideal place to stay after five days on the Heaphy.

Karamea Village Hotel (☎ 0800-826 800, 782 6800; karameahotel@xtra.co.nz; cnr Waverley & Wharf Sts; d \$95) has en suite units, while in the pub the tap beer is cold and the portions are large.

You can get a meal at the Last Resort or Karamea Village Hotel. For food supplies there is **Four Square Discounter** (☎ 782 6701; Market Cross).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Karamea Express (☎ 782 6757; info@karamea-express.co.nz) departs Karamea at 7.50am for Westport from Monday through to Saturday (\$25, 1½ hours) in summer, and leaves Westport at 11.30am for the return trip. **Cunningham Bus Service** (☎ 789 7177) departs at 6pm on weekdays for Westport (\$16, 1½ hours).

If you are planning on going back to Nelson, **K Bus** (☎ 0800-881 188, 578 4075; www.kahurangi.co.nz) has a connection with Karamea Express services at Westport, and they will have you back in Nelson by around 2.30pm (\$35, four hours). Both **InterCity** (☎ 789 7819; www.intercitycoach.co.nz) and **Atomic Shuttles** (☎ 322 8883; www.atomictravel.co.nz) also pass through Westport as they make their way to Nelson.

Abel Tasman Air (☎ 0800-304 560, 528 8290; www.flytasmanbay.co.nz) also provide you with the option of flying from Karamea to Nelson (\$225, minimum two people).

Kohaihai Camping Ground

The Heaphy Track ends at Kohaihai, 15km north of Karamea, at the site of a beautiful **DOC camping ground** (adult/child \$6/3). Overlooking the mouth of the Kohaihai River, along the Tasman Sea shore, the camping ground has drinking water, toilets and a picnic area.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

The true measure of a track's popularity is the number of companies willing to run you out to the trailhead. It used to be a challenge getting to and from each end of the Heaphy. No more.

To the Start

K Bus (☎ 0800-881 188, 578 4075; www.kahurangi.co.nz) departs Nelson daily at 3.15pm for Brown Hut (\$47, 3½ hours), passing through Motueka, Takaka and Collingwood along the way. **Abel Tasman Coachlines** (☎ 548 0285; www.abeltasmantravel.co.nz) does the same route (\$46, 3½ hours) but departs Nelson at 6.45am. The bus then turns around and repeats the trip, returning to Nelson at 2pm. Also check **Drive Me Wild Expeditions** (☎ 0800-128 735, 546 8876; www.drivemewild.co.nz), which departs Nelson at 7am (\$50, 3½ hours) two to three times a week.

A lot of companies offer on-demand transport to the start of the track – ideal if there's three or more of you. **Trek Express** (☎ 0800-128 735, 540 2042; www.trekexpress.co.nz)

charges \$220 from Nelson, while **Kahurangi Trampers Service** (☎ 526 8620; tkpainter@ts.co.nz) charges \$200 from Motueka and offers secure vehicle storage. **Farewell Spit Tours** (☎ 0800-808 257, 524 8257; www.farewellspit.co.nz) provides transport from Collingwood for \$75 for up four people.

There is a phone at Brown Hut – and local calls are free – so trampers finishing at this end can always ring on-demand transport services or **Tasman Taxis** (☎ 528 1031) if they have missed the scheduled buses.

From the Finish

The west-coast end of the track is in the Kohaihai Camping Ground, where there's a day shelter with a phone. **Karamea Express** (☎ 782 6757; info@karamea-express.co.nz) departs the shelter daily for Karamea at 1pm December through March, and at 2pm Labour Day through Easter (\$10). The company also provides transport back to Karamea on demand for a flat rate of \$30 per trip (up to five people). **Drive Me Wild Expeditions** (☎ 0800-128 735, 546 8876; www.drivemewild.co.nz) departs the shelter at 1.30pm for Nelson (\$80, six hours) two to three times a week, and has a return package with transport to each end of the track from Nelson for \$125.

On-demand transport from Kohaihai includes **Trek Express** (☎ 0800-128 735, 540 2042; www.trekexpress.co.nz), which charges \$340 for up to four people for the trip back to Nelson.

THE TRAMP

Day 1: Brown Hut to Perry Saddle Hut

5 hours, 17km, 775m ascent

The car park at the Heaphy Track's eastern end is now at **Brown Hut** (16 bunks). The hut was built to enable trampers to get an early start on the first leg of the journey – the climb to Perry Saddle – and has flush toilets and drinking water. Nearby is Brown Hut camp site (10 sites, 20 campers).

From the hut the track follows Brown River for 180m before crossing it on a footbridge. On the other side you pass through a pasture and then begin the long climb towards Goulund Downs. Beech forest with scattered podocarps and rata surrounds the wide track as it slowly climbs along monotonous switchbacks.

Within 1½ hours the track passes a junction with the Shakespeare Flat Track, a route that descends south (left fork) to the Aorere River.

The main track swings uphill in a wide loop and about three hours from Brown Hut, after an 11km climb, reaches **Aorere Shelter**. The shelter has platform benches inside and drinking water, making it an ideal spot for lunch or morning tea. Nearby is Aorere Shelter camp site (four sites, eight campers).

Beyond the shelter the track remains wide and continues to climb, but at a more gentle pace. Within one hour, or 3km, you reach the signposted **Flanagan's Corner**, the highest point of the trip at 915m. A five-minute spur track (left) leads to a viewing point that includes the surrounding ridges and Mt Perry.

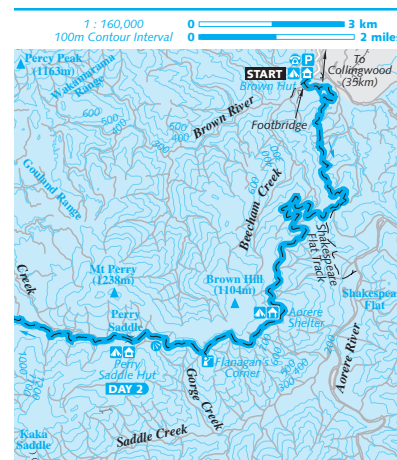
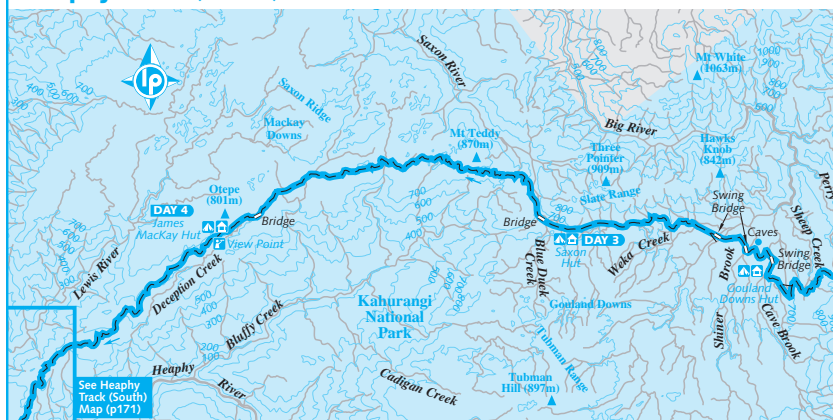
From Flanagan's Corner it's another 40 minutes (2km) along a level track before you break out of the bush into the open tussock and patches of beech found on Perry Saddle. Five minutes away, **Perry Saddle Hut** (24 bunks) boasts gas rings and, at 880m, views of the Douglas Range across the Aorere valley. Perry Saddle camp site (five sites, 10 campers) is also located here, and nearby is the deep **Gorge Creek**, which is cold, but popular for bathing.

Day 2: Perry Saddle Hut to Saxon Hut

3–4 hours, 13km

A well-formed track enters the bush and remains in it for the next hour or so, crossing a handful of streams, three of them

Heaphy Track (North)



bridged. The third one is Sheep Creek, and from here the track opens into the bowl of **Goulard Downs**, a wide expanse of rolling tussock broken by patches of stunted silver beech and pygmy pine. You skirt the upper edge of this basin for more than 1km, and at one point you can look down and see Goulard Downs Hut. The track then begins a long descent, bottoming out at a bridge over **Cave Brook**. On the other side you quickly climb to **Goulard Downs Hut** (eight bunks) and camp site (five sites, 10 campers).

Although the small hut is old, it has a large fireplace and a cosy atmosphere not found in the larger huts along the track. The fireplace is probably the only original part of the hut, built in 1932. Most trampers push on, however, because the hut is only a two-hour (8km) walk from Perry Saddle.

Heading west you immediately enter an eroded limestone area of caves and stone arches, covered by stunted beech and carpeted by a thick moss that gives the spot an eerie *Lord of the Rings* feel. In a few minutes you emerge again onto the red-tussock downs and cross three streams in the next hour: Shiner Brook, Big River and Weka Creek. Under normal conditions all can be easily forded, but there are swing bridges nearby in case of high water.

From Weka Creek the track re-enters the bush and begins climbing. It's a gentle 20-minute climb before the track levels out and, in 10 minutes, reaches **Saxon Hut** (16 bunks) and camp site (four sites, eight campers), 1½ hours (5km) from Goulard Downs Hut. Located on the edge of the Downs, Saxon is the newest hut on the track and features gas stoves and a gas heater. Because the hut is only 13km from Perry Saddle Hut, many trampers push on another three hours and overnight at James Mackay Hut. But Saxon is a very pleasant place to spend the night. The views from the hut are excellent – through a long row of windows you can view a mountainous horizon to the east.

Day 3: Saxon Hut to James Mackay Hut 3 hours, 14km

The track begins with 3km of level tramping, crossing Saxon River and Blue Duck Creek on bridges, and passing the signposted border between DOC's Tasman and

Buller Districts. Welcome to the west coast! Eventually you enter the bush and begin the final climb to regain the height you lost in the descent to Goulard Downs. One hour from Saxon Hut you get your first glimpse of the Tasman Sea and the mouth of the Heaphy River.

The climb lasts for almost one hour, ascending 100m. When you finally top off you emerge into the small patches of tussock that make up the **Mackay Downs**. It takes one hour to cross the southern end of the downs. In the past this section of the track was a mud-fest, but in recent years DOC has upgraded the track considerably with planking, and now you hardly get your boots wet.

The track crosses several more streams and then Deception Creek, which is bridged and signposted. Within 15 minutes of the river you arrive at **James Mackay Hut** (26 bunks). James Mackay is one of the older huts on the track, but in 2001 it received a facelift. Located on the fringe of the bush, the hut has excellent views across the Tasman Sea and Gunner Downs. On a clear evening the sunsets are extraordinary, with the sun melting into a shimmering Tasman Sea. Nearby is the James Mackay camp site (four sites, eight campers).

Day 4: James Mackay Hut to Lewis Hut 6–7 hours, 21.5km, 710m descent

The track heads southwest, and in 10 minutes passes a spur track that leads to one of the last views down the Heaphy valley. From here you begin a steady descent towards the west coast. Gradually the valley closes in, and within one hour you get your first glimpse of the Heaphy River below. In another two hours the 12km descent ends with the trail bottoming out beside your first nikau palms, three of them clustered 100m above the junction of the Lewis and Heaphy Rivers. In all you'll have dropped 600m in little more than two hours. **Lewis Hut** (20 bunks) is just five minutes away, down a short side trail.

The hut – a three-hour, 13.5km walk from James Mackay Hut – has gas rings and is perched on a terrace above the **Heaphy River**. From its veranda there is a nice view of the water. It would be an enjoyable place to sit and relax but the sandflies can be thick at times. Trampers often pass up

Lewis Hut for the popular Heaphy Hut, on the Tasman Sea, just 2½ hours away.

Beyond Lewis Hut, the main track climbs a low ridge and within five minutes comes to a swing bridge over Lewis River. Turn south and follow the true right bank to quickly reach another long swing bridge, this one over the Heaphy River. The track now follows the true left (south) bank of the Heaphy, and will remain on this side until it reaches the Tasman Sea. Limestone bluffs keep the track close to the river and occasionally you break out to a view of the water below. Most of the time you're in a rainforest so thick and lush its canopy forms a tunnel around the track.

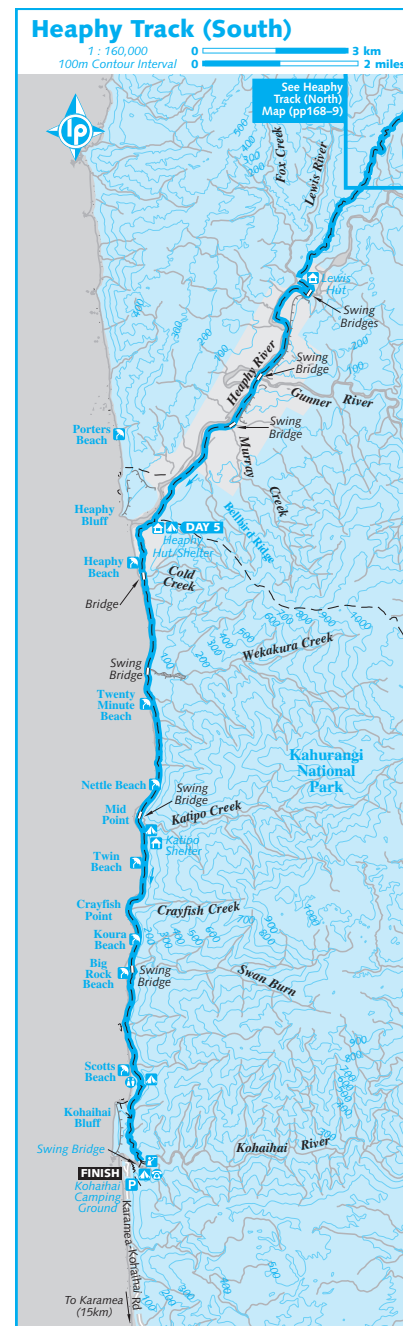
Within 3km (one hour) of crossing the Heaphy you arrive at a swing bridge over **Gunner River**, and in another 30 minutes cross the last swing bridge of the day over Murray Creek. In the final hour the track remains close to the river until you skirt a steep bluff, looking at the Heaphy River below and the Tasman Sea just to the west. This is a scenic end to a fine day of tramping. You are now only about 15 minutes from the hut.

Heaphy Hut (20 bunks) is just up from the river in an open, grassy area enclosed by nikau palms. The hut has a large common area, gas rings, and a location that makes you want to spend a spare day here. It overlooks a **lagoon** in the Heaphy River where there is good swimming. Swimming in the **Tasman Sea** should be avoided because of vicious undertows. Most trampers are simply content to stroll along the beach to witness its powerful surf and let the sea run through their toes. In this wilderness setting, having a beach like this to yourself is worth every step it takes to reach it.

Also near the hut is the Heaphy River camp site (20 sites, 40 campers) and a shelter in a grassy clearing. This is the best camp site along the track, though the sandflies are thick here.

Day 5: Heaphy Hut to Kohaihai Camping Ground 5 hours, 16.5km

Unquestionably one of the most beautiful walks in the South Island, the final segment of the Heaphy Track works its way along the west coast, always near the pounding Tasman Sea. The track stays in the bush



much of the way, but in many places well-worn paths show where trampers have decided to forgo the track and hike along the beach.

The track departs from Heaphy Hut and, for the first time, heads south. You're actually near the shoreline but the lush vegetation blocks any view of it. Still, this is an interesting stretch, as you tramp through a grove of nikau palms, while to the east are wetlands bordered by a forested bluff with more palms.

Within 1km you cross a bridge over Cold Creek and then break out to a view of Heaphy Beach. For the next hour you remain close to the shore, often in view of it, and to be tramping to the roar of the Tasman Sea is an unusual experience. You cross Wekakura Creek on a swing bridge and then arrive at **Twenty Minute Beach**, where you have the opportunity to bypass the track and walk along the sand.

Orange markers lead you back onto the track and Nettle Beach follows, with the track staying well above the shoreline. At this point you head inland, into a grove of palms. Cross a long swing bridge over Katipo Creek and arrive at **Katipo Shelter**, the halfway point of the day, 2½ hours from Heaphy Hut. Located here is Katipo camp site (five sites, 10 campers).

To the south the track skirts Twin Beach, fords Crayfish Creek and then arrives at **Crayfish Point**. Normally you drop down to the shore here and scramble over the rocks to round it. However, if the tide is in, you may have to use the high-tide track that climbs above the shore.

From Crayfish Point, the track dips back into the bush and then climbs the bluff to skirt both Koura Beach and Big Rock Beach, allowing you to look down at the crashing surf. One hour (3km) from Crayfish Point you descend to Scotts Beach camp site (10 sites, 20 campers), with a picnic area, toilets and good surf fishing along the shore.

From Scotts Beach the Heaphy Track makes a steady, but gentle, climb to a saddle. You top off at a spur track to **Scott's Hill Lookout**, a 10-minute walk to a spectacular view of the coastline, and then descend. The track ends with a huge swing bridge over the Kohaihai River that leads you into Kohaihai Camping Ground, reached one hour from Scotts Beach.

WANGAPEKA TRACK

Duration	5 days
Distance	51.5km
Track Standard	tramping track
Difficulty	moderate
Start	Rolling Junction Hut
Finish	Wangapeka Rd car park
Nearest Towns	Nelson (p147), Motueka (p166), Karamea (p167)
Transport	bus
Summary	In the shadow of the well-known Heaphy Track, the Wangapeka is a challenging tramp over two 1000m saddles and through the beech-forested Wangapeka and Little Wanganui valleys.

The Wangapeka Track is a journey across the southern end of Kahurangi National Park. There are no beaches or pounding surf on this tramp, but to many trampers its rugged scenery, fine trout fishing and isolation make it a more interesting walk than the Heaphy Track.

Trampers often combine the Wangapeka with the Heaphy for a nine-day adventure in the bush, and as a way to return to Nelson. The track is classified as a tramping track; it's well marked and has bridges over all major streams but is not always benched like the Heaphy.

The Wangapeka River has a good number of brown trout and is a nationally recognised fishery. The most accessible stretches of water lie between Rolling Junction Hut and Kings Creek Hut. When staying at Helicopter Flat anglers can also take a day trip up the Karamea River, which is also renowned for its trout fishing.

The track can be walked in four days – although most trampers spread it over five – and in either direction. It is described here from east to west, the easiest way to climb the saddles.

PLANNING

What to Bring

Wasps can be a real problem from late January to March on the Wangapeka, especially in the grassy flats at the eastern end, near Rolling Junction. Pack antihistamines to reduce swelling and irritation from wasp

stings. They're available as sprays, creams and tablets, but tablets give the most rapid relief and are the most effective.

The huts do not have gas cookers, so carry a stove.

Maps

The best maps are three in the 1:50,000 Topomap 260 series: M28 (*Wangapeka*), L28 (*Mokihinui*) and L27 (*Karamea*). The 1:150,000 Parkmap 274-13 (*Kahurangi*) is also useful.

Huts & Camp Sites

There is a total of nine huts and shelters along the track, but there isn't a gas cooker to be found in any one of them. **Belltown Manunui Hut** (\$10), **Taipo Hut** (\$10), **Helicopter Flat Hut** (\$10), **Stone Hut** (\$10) and **Kings Creek Hut** (\$10) are all serviced. **Rolling Junction Hut** (\$5) is Standard. **Cecil Kings Hut** (free) and **Stag Flat** (free) and **Little Wanganui** (free) emergency shelters are Basic huts. Bear in mind that there are very few flat places suitable for camping.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

To the Start

Rolling Junction Hut is 31km from Tapawera; to get there take Wangapeka River Rd. About 1km before the shelter is Prices Clearing, where there's an information kiosk and telephone.

Public transport to Rolling Junction has improved considerably since the area was granted national park status. **Trek Express** (☎ 0800-128 735, 540 2042; www.trekexpress.co.nz) provides a very handy van service on demand from Nelson out to Rolling Junction Hut (per person \$40), but if you're flexible the company can often also set up single trampers and couples with existing tramping trips.

Offering on-demand transport from Nelson for similar rates are **Nelson Lakes Shuttles** (☎ 521 1900; www.nelsonlakesshuttles.co.nz), **Kahurangi Trampers Service** (☎ 526 8620; tkpainter@ts.co.nz) and **Nelson Bays Shuttles** (☎ 540 3851; www.nnbays.co.nz).

Wadsworth Motors (☎ 522 4248) runs from Tapawera to Rolling Junction Hut on demand (\$60, regardless of the number of people) and **Tasman Taxi** (☎ 528 1031) can be called for a lift from Rolling Junction to Motueka (minimum \$145).

From the Finish

The end of the route is a car park on Wangapeka Rd, 22km south of Karamea. From here it's 5km along the road to SH67, where it's possible to flag down a bus.

Karamea Express (☎ 782 6757; info@karamea-express.co.nz) has a bus that departs Karamea Monday through Saturday at 7.50am, which passes the Wangapeka Rd junction on its way to Westport (\$25). **Cunningham Bus Service** (☎ 789 7177) does the same route, and cheaper (\$16), but doesn't depart Karamea until 6pm Monday through Friday. From Nelson, **Drive Me Wild Expeditions** (☎ 0800-128 735, 546 8876; www.drivemewild.co.nz) makes the run to the southwest end of the Heaphy two to three times a week, passing the Wangapeka Rd junction along the way (\$80, five hours).

There's a phone 500m down Wangapeka Rd from the end of the track, which can be used to call **Karamea Express** (☎ 782 6757; info@karamea-express.co.nz) for transport to Karamea (\$35 per trip minimum). Or telephone **Little Wanganui Tavern** (☎ 782 6752) for a ride to Little Wanganui on SH67 (per person \$10).

THE TRAMP

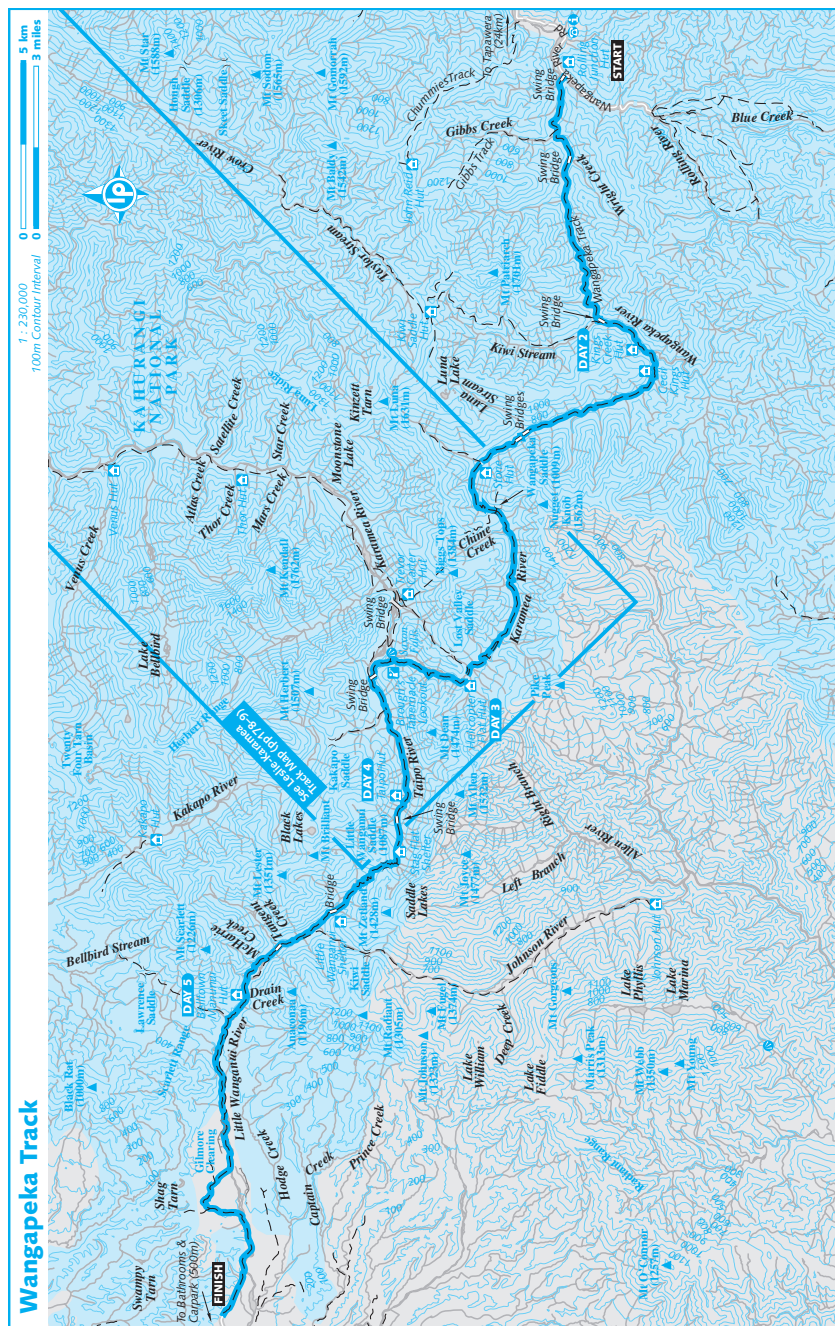
Day 1: Rolling Junction Hut to Kings Creek Hut

3½ hours, 9.5km

Near **Rolling Junction Hut** (four bunks) a swing bridge crosses Rolling River just upstream from its confluence with Wangapeka River. The track then begins on the southern bank of **Wangapeka River**. The water is almost always in sight as the well-defined track winds through river flats of grass and scrub. Here, anglers would do well to keep an eye on the many pools for feeding trout.

Within 3km the track crosses a bridge over Wright Creek and then continues crossing grassy flats. After three hours you cross a swing bridge to the northern bank of the Wangapeka River, passing a sign-posted junction. The side track (right fork) crosses Kiwi Stream and heads north to the six-bunk Kiwi Saddle Hut (3½ hours).

The main track heads southwest (left fork) and skirts the edge of the **gorge** that the Wangapeka River now flows through. Within 30 minutes of the junction you reach **Kings Creek Hut** (20 bunks). This huge



hut is at the edge of the river gorge and anglers will find it difficult to reach the water here.

After this short day, it is worth walking up the track to visit the museum-like Cecil Kings Hut (below).

Day 2: Kings Creek Hut to Helicopter Flat Hut

6–7 hours, 14.5km, 549m ascent, 268m descent

Ten minutes up the river from Kings Creek Hut, just before the junction of the North and South Branches of the Wangapeka River, is **Cecil Kings Hut**. King, who lived in Lower Hutt, built the wooden slab hut in 1935, and spent much of the Depression prospecting for gold. Even after his retirement he spent every summer at his beloved hut, fossicking in the area. In a way he's still there, as his family spread his ashes around the structure after he died in 1982. The classic four-bunk hut was restored in 1991 by DOC, and still contains reminders of the prospector who built it, including picks, shovels and other tools.

The track continues along the true left (east) side of the North Branch and gently climbs towards Stone Hut; it is well benched and makes for easy walking. Much of the time you can peer down into the deep **gorge** cut by the North Branch.

It's a 2½-hour (6.5km) walk to Stone Hut. Thirty minutes before reaching it the track crosses a swing bridge over Luna Stream, and then immediately crosses a larger one to the true right side of the North Branch. The hut is on a grassy flat overlooking the confluence with Stone Creek. **Stone Hut** (10 bunks) is a very pleasant facility with a small veranda, while opposite is a signposted track to Mt Luna (1631m).

The track leaves Stone Hut in bush, but soon comes to an open slip, the result of the 1929 Murchison earthquake. You boulder across the large slip and then emerge at a long gravel bar, featuring a ghost forest of dead, standing trees. In the middle is the North Branch, just a small stream at this point.

The track follows the Wangapeka River to its source, then ascends sharply to **Wangapeka Saddle** (1009m) along a well-marked route. At the bush-clad top is a signposted junction, with one track heading northwest

along a steep, rough route to Biggs Tops (1384m), and another heading east to Nugget Knob (1562m). Within one hour on either track you can reach the bush-line and enjoy great views. The main track goes southwest (straight), towards Helicopter Flat Hut.

Descend gently from the saddle and then swing up a narrow valley to arrive at Chime Creek within 30 minutes. There is a series of scenic **waterfalls** here, as well as a walkwire 100m above the track, although at most times you can easily ford the creek. Within 2km of the saddle you descend along the creek to the infant **Karamea River**, fording it in a gravel area with more standing, dead trees.

The track crosses several side streams as it follows the true left (south) bank of the Karamea. The river itself is also crossed twice in the final 2km to Helicopter Flat Hut; the fords are easy if the weather is good. If not, there is an alternative, all-weather route (marked with poles) that continues along the true left bank. The flood route takes an extra 20 minutes to walk. The routes rejoin on the southern bank and continue on to **Helicopter Flat Hut** (10 bunks), just past Waters Creek. If the creek is flooded, there is a walkwire 30m upstream.

The hut has a veranda on which to sit and admire the scenery at the end of a long day of tramping. There is little camping in the area. The only flat space is the helicopter pad, on which you must not pitch your tent.

Day 3: Helicopter Flat Hut to Taipo Hut

3½–4 hours, 8km

This is a short walk to one of the newer huts on the Wangapeka Track. Trampers can continue past Taipo Hut for another 1½ hours to reach Stag Flat Shelter, but this is a smaller and older hut with poor camp sites.

From Helicopter Flat Hut the track begins by skirting the gorge above the Karamea, then sidles up through bush away from the river. The track gradually climbs to **Brough's Tabernacle Lookout**, reached within one hour, far above the deep and rugged gorge. The Tabernacle was the site of an old A-frame shelter, now long gone, that was built in 1898 by Jonathan Brough when he

was surveying the original track. The views from here are excellent – you can see most of the Karamea valley below.

The track leaves the lookout and after 100m passes a side track that descends sharply east (right fork) to **Saxon Falls** and Trevor Carter Hut (12 bunks), built in 2005 to replace Luna Hut on the Leslie-Karamea Track (opposite). The main track (left fork) heads north then west, and descends steeply for 30 minutes to a suspension bridge over the Taipo River. On the true left (north) side of the river there is a junction with a track heading east (right fork) down the Taipo River to its confluence with the Karamea River. It's possible during fair weather to include the loop from the Tabernacle past Saxon Falls to Trevor Carter Hut, cross the Karamea River and then return to the main track, although this adds more than two hours to the day.

The main track is well marked as it heads west and follows the northern bank of the Taipo. You climb gently for several kilometres and, two hours from the bridge, you reach **Taipo Hut** (16 bunks). This is a pleasant hut and there are good camp sites below the nearby helicopter pad.

Day 4: Taipo Hut to Belltown Manunui Hut

6–7 hours, 10.5km, 407m ascent, 847m descent

Soon after leaving the hut you cross a bridge over Pannikin Creek and then begin a steady climb towards **Stag Flat**, a tussock area of many creeks and much mud. The climb steepens just before you reach the flats. The track cuts across the flats for 200m to reach **Stag Flat Shelter** (four bunks). After leaving the shelter you enter the bush and begin another steep climb towards **Little Wanganui Saddle** (1087m), an open clearing of snow grass. The climb is a knee-bender, but the views from the top are the best of the trip. The saddle is the highest point of the track and overlooks the Little Wanganui River to the west coast and the Taipo River to the east.

The track descends past **Saddle Lakes** and drops steeply to the valley floor, re-entering bush and finally crossing a bridge over the **Little Wanganui River** to its true right (north) side. Just before crossing the bridge you pass a signposted side track

that leads 150m to **Little Wanganui Shelter** (four bunks). The track is now bridged across Tangent Creek but not McHarris Creek, which you must ford. You then climb steeply around **Little Wanganui Gorge**, returning to the river at Smith Creek. If the water level is normal you can skip the track around the gorge and follow the river, fording it when necessary.

Continue on to **Belltown Manunui Hut** (10 bunks), the newest hut on the track; it replaces the old Little Wanganui Hut, which washed away during a winter flood in 1998. Belltown Manunui is 1km west of the site of the old hut, a few metres upstream from Drain Creek, and has a cosy wood heater. A clearing just downstream from the hut is a good area for camping.

Day 5: Belltown Manunui Hut to Wangapeka Road Car Park

2–3 hours, 9km

The western end of the Wangapeka Track has been changed a number of times over the years to eliminate the need to ford the Little Wanganui River twice, a very hazardous endeavour during periods of high water. Fortunately, in 2005 DOC was able to resolve a landowner issue to eliminate both the fords and the much longer high-water route that forced trampers to do a bit of climbing right at the end of their walk.

From Belltown Manunui Hut the track immediately crosses Drain Creek and remains on the true right (north) side of the river. Within 2km you use a swing bridge to cross Lawrence Stream, and in another 1km cut through a large grassy area known as **Gilmore Clearing**.

Just beyond the clearing, the track follows an old access road to climb north away from the Little Wanganui for the next 3km, before dropping back down to the river. When you return to the water, look for the track signs that mark the new low-water route.

The end of the track is now well marked and crosses flats for easy tramping, but does not ford the Little Wanganui River as it has in the past. Instead you remain on the along the true right (north) side of the river all the way to the end of Wangapeka Rd. Once you've reached the road the car park and phone are 500m further west.

LESLIE-KARAMEA TRACK

Duration	7 days
Distance	87.5km
Track Standard	tramping track
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start	Flora car park
Finish	Rolling Junction Hut
Nearest Towns	Motueka (p166), Nelson (p147)
Transport	bus
Summary	A semi-wilderness tramp through the middle of Kahurangi National Park, combining great trout fishing with the dramatic scenery of earthquake-torn Karamea valley.

The best tramp into the heart of Kahurangi National Park is the Leslie-Karamea Track. Most trampers devote a week to this trip, which includes tramping half of the Wangapeka Track.

The highlights of the track are its interesting huts, its rich gold-mining history and the best trout fishing to be found in the park. The Karamea River is renowned for its stocks of brown trout, especially where the Leslie River empties into it at Karamea Bend.

The Leslie-Karamea is well marked and an experienced trampler could cover this route in five days. Keep in mind, however, that the track is not benched and can be rough at times. There is also the possibility of having to wait a day for the water level of a stream to drop; this is especially true with Kendall Creek on Day 4.

PLANNING

Most of the route is covered by the 1:50,000 Topomap 260-M27 (*Mt Arthur*). To exit from the eastern end of the Wangapeka Track you also need 260-M28 (*Wangapeka*). To exit from the western end you need 260-M28 (*Wangapeka*), 260-L28 (*Mokihinui*) and 260-L27 (*Karamea*).

Huts

Salisbury Lodge (\$10) and the huts along the Wangapeka Track are Serviced; all the others are Standard (\$5). Rock shelters are free. Salisbury is the only hut on the Leslie-Karamea Track with gas cookers, so be sure to carry a stove.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

The start of the Leslie-Karamea is technically near the high point of Tableland (1260m), on Starvation Ridge, although many people consider Salisbury Lodge to be the beginning. The most popular approach is from Flora car park, at the head of the Graham valley. From SH61 cross the Motueka River on bridges at Woodstock, Ngatimoti or Pangatotara to West Bank Rd, and then follow AA signs to the valley. It's a 1½-hour drive from Nelson to the Graham valley. In the last 4km the road rises 820m to a car park with a shelter, toilet, phone and lookout deck.

Trek Express (☎ 0800-128 735, 540 2042; www.trekexpress.co.nz) provides on-demand transport to Flora car park from Nelson (per person \$35, \$140 minimum), as do **Nelson Lakes Shuttles** (☎ 521 1900; www.nelsonlakeshuttles.co.nz), **Kahurangi Trampers Service** (☎ 526 8620; tkpainter@ts.co.nz) and **Nelson Bays Shuttles** (☎ 540 3851; www.nnbays.co.nz) for similar rates.

The end of the Leslie-Karamea Track is at the Wangapeka Track, and you can depart either eastwards to Rolling Junction Hut or westwards to the Wangapeka Rd car park. For transport details from either, see p168.

THE TRAMP

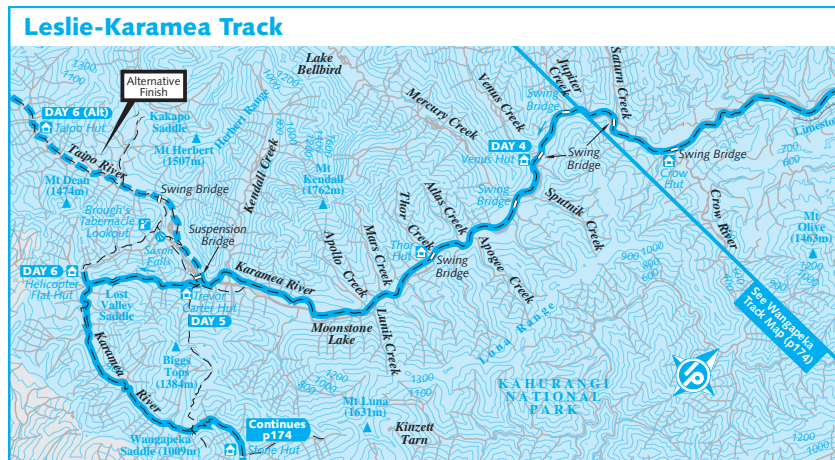
Day 1: Flora Car Park to Salisbury Lodge

4 hours, 13km

The first leg of this tramp is a relatively easy walk past some of the most interesting shelters and huts in the park.

From the car park a wide gravel path, which was originally a miners' track, departs into the bush. Within 10 minutes you arrive at **Flora Saddle** (975m), where there is a signposted junction. The left fork is the alpine route to Mt Arthur Hut (3km, one hour). The main trail heads right, and 1.5km from the car park reaches a grassy clearing and **Flora Hut** (12 bunks).

The easy walking continues as the wide track descends into Flora valley. Two hours from the start it passes beneath a wooden arch that proclaims you've entered **Gridiron Gulch**. There are two wonderful huts here. The first is **Upper Gridiron Rock Shelter** (four bunks), a short climb from the track. This shelter is wedged under a huge rock overhang and features a swinging bench



outside. A little further on is **Lower Gridiron Rock Shelter**. This is not so much a hut as a rock bivy under two mammoth rocks. It includes a loft for sleeping.

From the second shelter the track crosses Gridiron Creek on a swing bridge and begins its steady climb up to Tableland. The climb is not a steep one – there are no switchbacks – but it is long, with most trampers taking around 1½ hours to break out onto the open tussock. Along the way you pass **Growler Shelter** (888m), built in 1977.

You leave the bush and quickly arrive at a signposted junction to Dry Rock Shelter, a rock bivy that sleeps four. From here you climb higher onto Tableland and are soon surrounded by superb alpine scenery, especially to the south where Mt Arthur (1795m) and the Twins (1809m and 1796m) loom above you.

Salisbury Lodge (22 bunks) is a great place to spend a night. Situated above the bush-line, it features a large kitchen and dining area with a view of the Arthur Range. It has gas stoves, a heater and running water, and solar-powered lighting in the toilets...what luxury! Just east of the lodge is a small cave and some potholes that can be explored.

Day 2: Salisbury Lodge to Karamea Bend Hut

5 hours, 18km, 900m descent

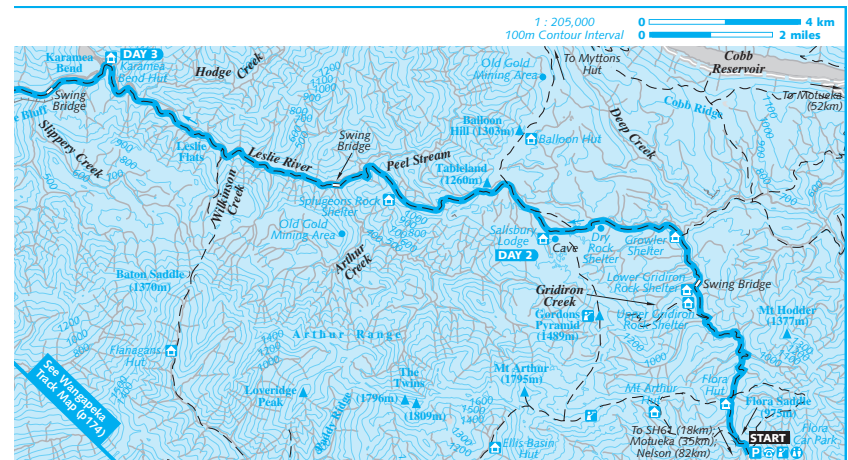
A short spur track leads from Salisbury Lodge back to the main track. You begin in stunted beech but soon break out onto

more open tussock, and within 30 minutes (2km) gently climb to a signposted junction at **Tableland plateau** (1260m). The right fork heads to Balloon Hut and the Cobb valley (2.2km, 40 minutes); the left fork is the official start of the Leslie-Karamea Track. The track into Leslie valley begins as an easy descent through snow grass, but quickly reaches stunted beech and becomes a steeper drop, descending 360m in 4km.

Within one hour, after passing two good lookout points, you arrive at **Splugeons Rock Shelter** (five bunks). The canvas-fronted shelter is on a platform that was blasted out of rock in 1983; it makes for an unusual place to spend a night. At 750m, there is a view into the Leslie valley and the rugged interior of Kahurangi National Park.

The track, really an old pack track, continues its steady descent until it bottoms out on the true left side of Peel Stream and, 3km from Splugeons Rock, arrives at the confluence of the stream and the **Leslie River**. A swing bridge crosses the Leslie here to its true left bank. You can turn and hike up the Leslie for 30 minutes from the bridge to reach Arthur Creek, once one of the best gold-bearing streams of the Tableland. There are still dozens of flume pipes along the creek, which were hauled in by packhorses.

Downstream from the swing bridge the track moves through beech forest and along flats and terraces. In 5km, or 15 minutes after crossing Wilkinson Creek,



it reaches **Leslie Flats**. This was the site of the colourful Leslie Clearing Hut, which was built in 1981 but sadly burnt down in 2001. There is good trout fishing in the Leslie just upstream from the flats. It is an easy 4km tramp from the flats to **Karamea Bend**, where the Leslie and Karamea Rivers meet. Here the Karamea River makes a sweeping bend to begin heading towards the west coast. **Karamea Bend Hut** (20 bunks), which was rebuilt in 2002, is just upstream from the bend and has running water inside. Again, trout fishing can be good in this area.

FEARLESS ROBINS & TOMTITS

When trampers take a break in the bush throughout Kahurangi National Park, and many other regions of New Zealand, a small bird often appears and walks fearlessly up to them. Any attempt to toss the bird a crumb of a muesli bar will prove fruitless.

These birds are either tomtits or robins, and one is often confused with the other. Tomtits have a larger head and smaller body than a robin, and are usually black with a rich cream or yellow breast. A robin is brown-grey, long-legged and maintains a pert stance.

Both are insect eaters. When they dart to the ground and approach you, they're not looking for handouts, they're feasting on the insects or worms that you've just stirred up or uncovered when passing through.

Day 3: Karamea Bend Hut to Venus Hut 4–6 hours, 15.5km

The track heads upstream (southwest) along the Karamea River, and within 500m passes a Karamea staff hut. It then swings into the forest and stays on terraces above the river, climbing as necessary. During periods of low water it's possible to follow the river bed almost to Crow River. Access the river below the bend (1km from Karamea Bend Hut) and then be prepared for numerous fords, which range from knee-to-waist-deep. The scenery is much more interesting from the river bed.

Otherwise, from Karamea Bend the track crosses a swing bridge over Slippery Creek and then briefly follows two dry gravel beds towards Crow River; both are well marked with trail signs. You tramp along the second gravel bed for about 200m, and then endure the steepest climb of the day before descending to a swing bridge over Crow River. **Crow Hut** (six bunks) is just the other side, and is reached three hours (9.5km) from Karamea Bend Hut. Crow Hut has a single room with a fireplace and no table. Anglers can fish the Karamea here, or go upstream to explore the pools in Crow River.

The track to Venus Hut follows the true right side of the Karamea for the first 30 minutes, passing many pools. Even if you're not carrying a rod and reel, take time to view the pools as you can often spot trout suspended in the clear, smooth water.

The track then swings away from the river, passes through a boggy area and then descends to the Karamea swing bridge, just upriver from Saturn Creek. Once across the bridge the track remains on the true left side of the river for the rest of its length.

You remain mostly on the bush terraces as you continue towards the headwaters of the Karamea. A swing bridge crosses over **Jupiter Creek**, and you can stand in the middle and peer into the gorge cut by the stream. From Jupiter Creek it's 30 minutes to Venus Creek. **Venus Hut** (10 bunks) is on the other side of the swing bridge across the creek, or two hours (6km) from Crow Hut. This is a two-storey hut built into the side of the hill. Most trampers stay in the top, where there are four bunks and a fireplace. DOC has long-range plans to eventually replace Venus and Crow Huts with a single hut.

Day 4: Venus Hut to Trevor Carter Hut 5–6 hours, 13.5km

Continue to work your way through bush-clad terraces, and 30 minutes (2km) from Venus Hut you arrive at the swing bridge over **Mercury Creek**. In another 15 to 20 minutes the track begins hugging the bluffs right above the river for almost 1km, and it can be very narrow at times.

After crossing **Atlas Creek**, the walk to Thor Hut remains on the river terraces, climbing a bit until you reach the swing bridge over **Thor Creek**. Just on the other side, on a small promontory overlooking the Karamea River, is **Thor Hut** (six bunks), two hours (6km) from Venus Hut. The small hut has a fireplace and not nearly as many sandflies as the last few huts.

It's important to note that Kendall Creek must be forded in order to reach the next hut; it's a stream that is dangerous when flooded, but drops very quickly once it has stopped raining. If the water levels are high, or the weather is bad, stay put in Thor Hut (even stay overnight) until conditions improve.

Beyond Thor Hut you begin climbing undulating bush slopes (where it's easy to get tangled in the tree roots that crisscross the track) and fording more creeks. Mars Creek is about 30 minutes (2km) from Thor Hut, and Apollo Creek 15 minutes beyond that. The debris and loose rocks that surround the track are the result of the 1929

Murchison earthquake. At one point, near Apollo Creek, the track actually goes beneath two huge boulders leaning against each other.

The earthquake was also responsible for the rubble that spilled down Apollo Creek, creating the dam that formed **Moonstone Lake**. The lake extends 3km beyond Apollo Creek, and the track skirts its shore by winding through the bush-clad flats around it. The tramping becomes easier here, and a couple of times you break out to views of the lake and the trees that were drowned during its formation. These naked trunks are still standing, forming an eerie ghost forest.

After crossing **Orbit Creek**, 6km from Thor Hut, the track arrives at a marked ford across the Karamea. In normal conditions this ford is a series of braided channels between gravel bars, and is manageable for most trampers. On the other side, orange triangles lead you through the scrub and tussock flats for 30 minutes to the new Trevor Carter Hut.

It is easier, however, and necessary if there is high water, to remain on the main track – an all-weather route that continues along the true left (west) side of the Karamea River. You cross bush flats and, 1km from Orbit Creek, need to ford **Kendall Creek**. Draining the Herbert Range, Kendall Creek can also be dangerous; you should take care, and on no account cross it in flooded conditions. The best ford is near the mouth of the stream, where it is often braided. The track continues from Kendall, rounds the scrub end of a spur opposite Trevor Carter Hut, and 10 minutes further upstream arrives at a new suspension bridge across the Karamea River.

Built in 2005, **Trevor Carter Hut** (12 bunks) replaced the old Luna Hut, and is now one of the largest and nicest along the track. It features two bunkrooms, a large veranda and a table outside. The new bridge was also installed at the same time, while the original Trevor Carter Hut, located across the river from the new one, was removed along with Luna Hut.

Day 5: Trevor Carter Hut to Helicopter Flat Hut 1½–2 hours, 3.5km, 340m ascent, 140m descent

There are several ways to reach Wangapeka Track. If you're continuing west on

the Wangapeka Track see the Alternative Finish on below.

The quickest way to Helicopter Flat Hut is to follow the track that departs Trevor Carter Hut up the rubble banks of Lost Valley Creek. After 2.5km you emerge at **Lost Valley Saddle**, where there's a large tarn. From here it's a quick drop back to the Karamea River, which can be forded across from **Helicopter Flat Hut** (12 bunks). The hut has a veranda to sit out on and admire the scenery. There is little camping in the area. The only flat space is the helicopter pad, and you must not pitch your tent here.

From Trevor Carter Hut you can also follow a track on the true right (south) side of the Karamea and cross the river below **Saxon Falls**. There is a short spur track to the impressive falls, but the main track climbs steeply for 15 to 20 minutes before it reaches the Wangapeka Track at **Brough's Tabernacle Lookout**. The views from here are excellent – you can see most of the Karamea valley below. Continue southwest along the Wangapeka Track, descending through bush and then skirting the gorge above the river, to Helicopter Flat Hut, about one hour from the lookout.

Day 6: Helicopter Flat Hut to Kings Creek Hut 6–7 hours, 14.5km, 268, ascent, 549m descent

Follow the Day 2 (p175) description for the Wangapeka Track, in reverse.

Day 7: Kings Creek Hut to Rolling Junction Hut 3½ hours, 9.5km

Follow the Day 1 (p173) description for the Wangapeka Track, in reverse.

ALTERNATIVE FINISH: WANGAPEKA TRACK WESTERN END 3 days, 26.5km

You can also finish the Leslie-Karamea Track by heading west along the Wangapeka Track from Trevor Carter Hut.

Alternative Day 5: Trevor Carter Hut to Taipo Hut 2½–3 hours, 7km

Return to the suspension bridge from Trevor Carter Hut, and cross over it to the true left (north) side of the Karamea River. Keep to the track as it continues going west

along the Karamea. The path then picks up and follows a tributary of the Karamea – the Taipo – before finally reaching the Wangapeka Track at the Taipo bridge. This is a walk of around 2.5km, and it takes most trampers about one hour.

The Wangapeka Track is well marked as it heads west, continuing along the northern bank of the Taipo. You climb gently for several kilometres and, around two hours after leaving the bridge, you reach **Taipo Hut** (18 bunks). This is a pleasant hut with gas stoves. If it happens to be full, or if you are carrying a tent and you don't fancy being lulled off to sleep by the snores of your fellow trampers, there are good camp sites below the nearby helicopter pad.

Alternative Day 6: Taipo Hut to Belltown Manunui Hut 6–7 hours, 10.5km, 407m ascent, 847m descent

Follow the directions for Day 4 (p176) of the Wangapeka Track.

Alternative Day 7: Belltown Manunui Hut to Wangapeka Road Car Park 2–3 hours, 9km

Follow the Day 5 (p176) description for the Wangapeka Track.

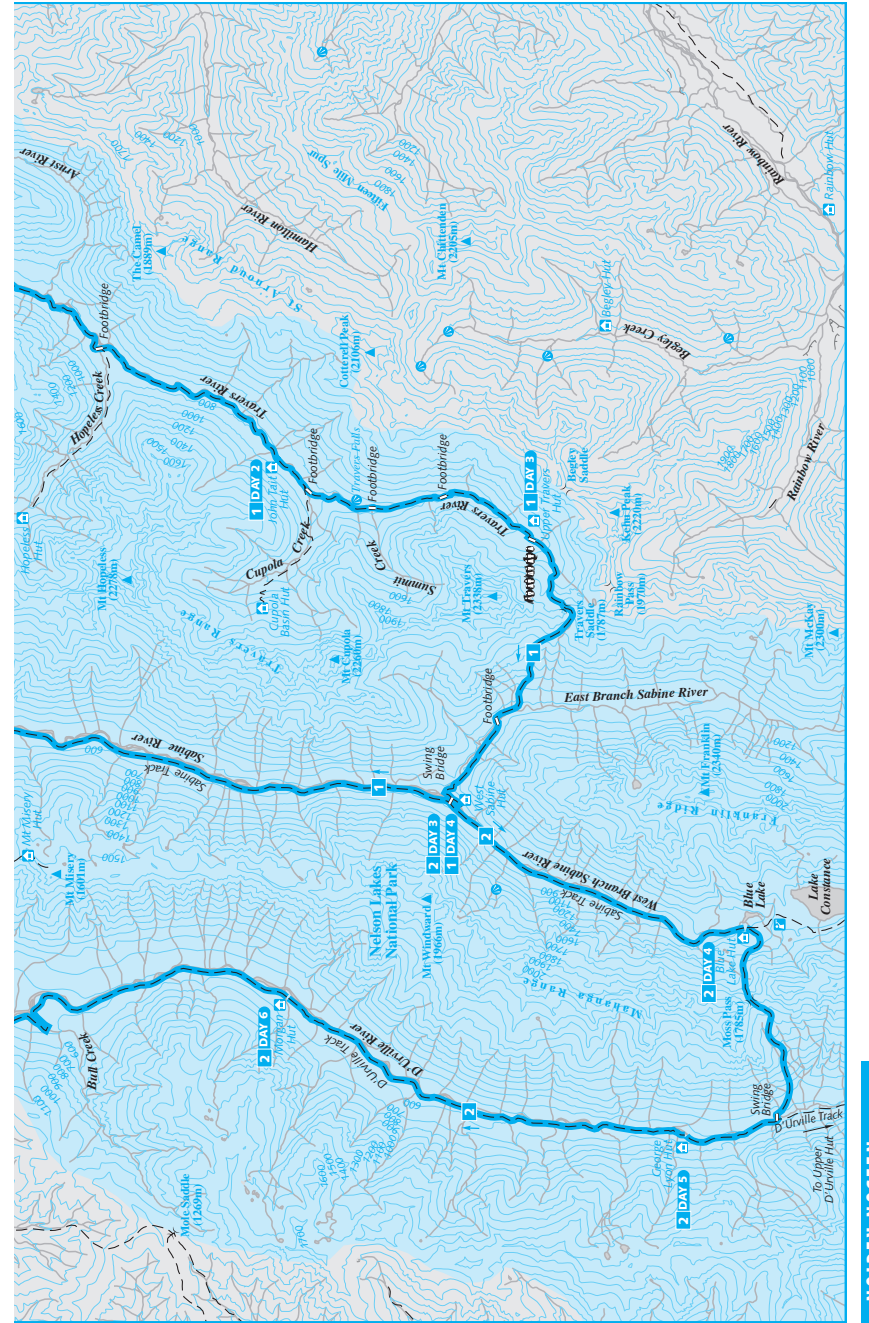
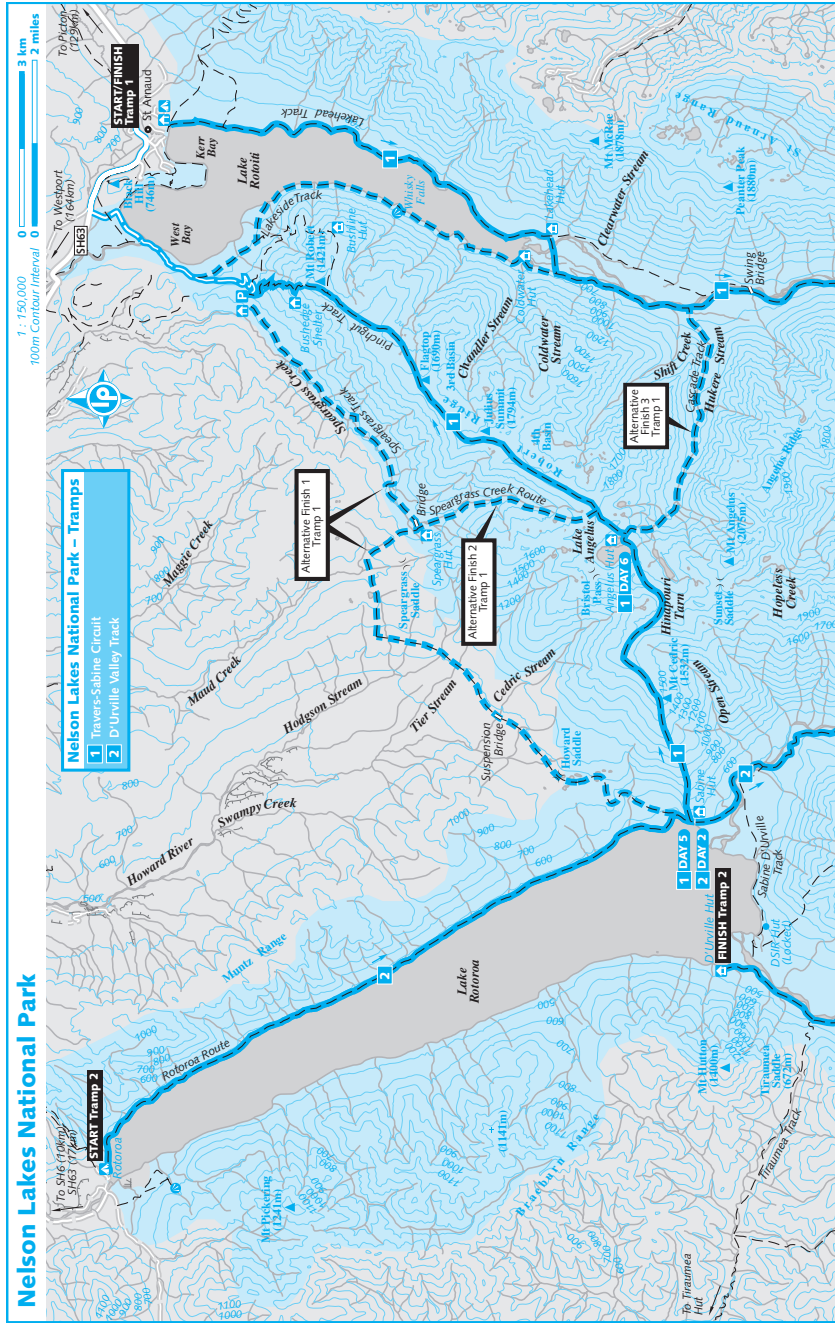
NELSON LAKES NATIONAL PARK

Most visitors come to Nelson Lakes National Park to see Lakes Rotoiti and Rotoroa. Beyond the lakes, however, trampers will discover that this is a land of long valleys and numerous passes, with alpine routes that are not nearly as demanding as those found elsewhere in the Southern Alps.

If you long to climb a mountain and stroll along a ridge, Nelson Lakes is a good place to begin adventuring above the bush-line. It is a mountainous region, with many peaks above 2000m, but lots of the tramping tracks are benched and most routes are marked with cairns or snow poles.

A number of round trips are possible in the park, most requiring three to six days of tramping and the climbing of one or two passes. The best and most popular round trip for trampers with limited experience on alpine routes, is the Travers-Sabine

Nelson Lakes National Park



Circuit. The tramp begins and ends at St Arnaud, and includes walking over Travers Saddle and Robert Ridge. These are not easy climbs, but they are well marked and in good summer weather are within the capabilities of most fit trampers. More remote and much more challenging is the D'Urville Valley Track, described here as a round trip (with a boat ride at the end) out of Rotoroa using Sabine valley and Moss Pass.

HISTORY

Although they rarely settled here, Maori did pass through this region along routes between Nelson, Marlborough, Canterbury and the west coast.

The first European to visit the area was John Cotterell. In 1842, he and a Maori guide pushed their way through more than 300km of trackless terrain to the Tophouse, near St Arnaud, and then turned southeast to the Clarence River. The following January Cotterell, with his friend Dick Peanter and a Maori guide, retraced the first leg of that earlier journey, but this time turned southwest. And in doing so, Cotterell and Peanter became the first Europeans to see Lake Rotoiti.

Three years later, another Maori guide, by the name of Kehu, led William Fox, Charles Heaphy and Thomas Brunner on one of the best-recorded explorations in the South Island. With Heaphy keeping the diary and Fox using a paintbrush to record the scenery, the group struggled down to Rotoiti under the weight of 34kg packs. From the lake, Kehu took the party up the Howard River, where they discovered Lake Rotoroa. More exploration of the area followed, with William Travers, Christopher Maling and David Stewart becoming the first Europeans to explore the Lewis Pass area. Later, Travers returned to take up his own pastoral station in the upper Waiau.

Gold discoveries on the Buller River and west coast gave the push needed to build a dray road from Nelson to the west-coast goldfields. The road touched the fringes of what is now the national park. It was continually upgraded until it became the present highway, SH6, in the 1920s. Nelson Lakes was first proposed as a national park in 1906, and was finally gazetted in 1960. In 1983, Nelson Lakes National Park was increased

to its present size, 1017 sq km, with the addition of the Spenser Mountains.

ENVIRONMENT

The landscape of Nelson Lakes was created by the Alpine Fault and carved by glaciers. The long valleys that characterise the park were created by a series of glaciers that waxed and waned with the onset of sequential ice-age periods that began two million years ago. When the glaciers finally retreated after the last Ice Age, 8000 years ago, deep holes at the head of the Travers and Gowan valleys were left, and these filled with water from the melting ice to become Lakes Rotoiti and Rotoroa.

The forests of Nelson Lakes are predominantly beech, with all five New Zealand species found here. In the lower valleys, where conditions are warmer and more fertile, you'll find red and silver beech interspersed with such species as kamahi and southern rata (which has a mass of bright flowers when in bloom). Mountain beech becomes dominant at altitudes above 1050m, or where there are poor soils in the lowlands.

The two dominant bird species are the melodious tui and bellbird, which enrich the forest with their calls. It's quite likely that keas will be encountered. These inquisitive parrots are often seen above the bush-line, and occasionally at a rest stop in the mountains you'll have a handful perched on large boulders around you.

Another animal that many visitors would like to encounter is the trout. Brown trout is the predominant species caught here, and it can be found in both the lakes and the main rivers (Travers, D'Urville, Sabine, Matakaitaki and Buller). Both spinners and flies can be used to entice the fish.

CLIMATE

Nelson Lakes possesses a surprisingly moderate climate for an alpine region. Ranges to the west, south and east protect the park, preventing many storms from arriving and reducing the intensity of others. Rain is brought by the prevailing westerlies that blow in from the Tasman Sea, so the western side of the park is the wettest. In the popular tramping area of Travers valley, in the eastern half of the park, the average annual rainfall is only around 2000mm,

and at the park headquarters at Rotoiti it drops to 1600mm.

However, you must be ready to cope with the sudden weather changes for which alpine areas are noted. A warm, clear day on a mountain pass can become a whiteout, with heavy rain or even a blizzard, in no time at all. Above the bush-line snow may fall throughout the year, and all trampers should carry warm clothing and good windproof and waterproof gear.

Despite the need to take these precautions, the overall climate of the national park is pleasantly moderate and is characterised in summer by long spells of settled clear weather.

PLANNING

When to Tramp

Both of the described tracks are alpine crossings that should be tramped from November to April, when weather and snow conditions are most favourable. February and March are by far the best months to tackle the tracks.

What to Bring

There are no gas stoves in the huts; all trampers should carry stoves. You'll also need a warm hat and gloves, as the alpine passes are subject to freezing conditions any time of the year.

Maps

The 1:100,000 Parkmap 273-05 (*Nelson Lakes National Park*) is good for planning and adequate for many tramps in the park.

ACCESS TOWN

St Arnaud

☎ 03 / pop 200

This is a small hamlet of resorts and restaurants – plus the DOC area office – all clustered around Kerr Bay at the northern end of Lake Rotoiti.

INFORMATION

The **DOC Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre** (☎ 521 1806; starnaudao@doc.govt.nz; View Rd) is a five-minute walk from the village centre and has park information, the latest weather forecasts, hut tickets and interpretive displays.

For general tourist information on St Arnaud, log onto the website of **Nelson Lakes Promotions** (www.starnaud.co.nz).

SLEEPING & EATING

DOC's fully-serviced **Kerr Bay camping ground** (unpowered/powerd sites \$20/26) has showers and a picnic area. Its location at the northern end of Lake Rotoiti makes it a convenient spot for trampers and a beautiful place to pitch a tent. You can book a site in advance through the Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre.

The **Yellow House** (☎ 521 1887; www.nelsonlakes.co.nz; SH63; camp sites for 2 \$26, dm/d \$25/59; ☑) is a recently upgraded backpacker lodge which is really geared towards trampers. It has luggage storage, tramping equipment for hire and a spa for relaxing in after the tramp.

Nelson Lakes Motel (☎ 521 1887; www.nelsonlakes.co.nz; SH63; d \$99-129) has log chalets next door to the Yellow House, and is run by the same people.

Alpine Lodge (☎ 0800-367 777, 521 1869; www.alpinelodge.co.nz; SH63; d \$135-160) has the best rooms in St Arnaud, along with a pub and restaurant. To round all your options off, it also has backpacker accommodation available at the **Alpine Chalet** (dm \$23, s/d \$30/61), next door.

For a bite to eat there is **Elaine's Alpine Cafe** (☎ 521 1979; SH63; ☎ 6am-9pm), a real trampers' favourite with indoor and outdoor dining, and very filling dinners. **Nelson Lakes Village Centre** (☎ 521 1854; SH63) has takeaways, groceries and a bottle shop, but for reasons of economy and choice it's probably best to bring supplies from Nelson or Picton.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

K Bus (☎ 0800-881 188, 578 4075; www.kahurangi.co.nz) departs St Arnaud at 1.15pm, reaching Nelson at 2.30pm and then departing at 3.15pm for the return trip (\$20, one hour). For an earlier start, **Cain Road Services** (☎ 522 4044, 025-417 511) departs Nelson at 10am on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and arrives at St Arnaud at 1.20pm (\$18), where it turns around and heads back to Nelson.

Offering on-demand transport to St Arnaud is **Nelson Lakes Shuttles** (☎ 521 1900; www.nelsonlakeshuttles.co.nz) from Nelson (per person \$30, \$120 minimum) and Picton (per person \$35, \$140 minimum). **Trek Express** (☎ 0800-128 735, 540 2042; www.trekexpress.co.nz) also provide a similar service.

TRAVERS-SABINE CIRCUIT

Duration	6 days
Distance	83km
Track Standard	tramping track & route
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start/Finish	St Arnaud (p185)
Nearest Town	Auckland (p40)
Transport	bus, boat

Summary Grassy river flats, beech forests and two alpine saddles are features of this circuit, as are trout for the catching and two huts above the bush-line.

The most accessible and popular tramping area of Nelson Lakes, the Travers valley provides easy tramping along good tracks with excellent alpine scenery, plenty of huts and a bridge almost every time you need one. When it's combined with the route in the Sabine valley, via the Travers Saddle, the trip is ideal for those new to New Zealand's alpine areas. The passes are well marked, but are still part of a 'route' (see the boxed text on p340), and you wander through meadows, up steep scree slopes and along a winding ridge. The views on a clear day – and there are usually many such days in February – are quite spectacular.

PLANNING

Maps

The 1:100,000 Parkmap 273-05 (*Nelson Lakes National Park*) is adequate for this tramp. Four maps of the 1:50,000 Topomap 260 series – N29 (*St Arnaud*), M29 (*Murchison*), N30 (*Tarndale*) and M30 (*Matakitaki*) – also cover the entire trip.

Huts

Hut tickets must be pre-purchased from the Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre. There are seven huts along the track, most of which are Serviced (\$10). The exception is **Coldwater Hut** (\$5), a Standard hut.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

The Travers-Sabine Circuit begins on the Lakehead Track, which is signposted at the Kerr Bay camping ground. For many trampers the walk ends at the Mt Robert car park, 7km from the park headquarters. The very accommodating **Nel-**

son Lakes Shuttles (☎ 521 1900; www.nelsonlakesshuttles.co.nz) provides on-demand transport between Mt Robert car park and St Arnaud (per person \$10, minimum \$20).

Rotoiti Water Taxis (☎ 521 1894, 021-702 278; b.butters@paradise.net.nz) will transport trampers from Kerr Bay to the head of Lake Rotoiti (up to four people \$60, extra person \$15), shaving 9km (three hours) from the first day's tramping.

THE TRAMP

Map pp182–3

Day 1: St Arnaud to John Tait Hut

7–8 hours, 25km

The trip begins with the Lakehead Track along the eastern side of **Lake Rotoiti**. You can also take the Lakeside Track along the west side, but this is a longer walk.

The Lakehead Track begins beyond the toilets at Kerr Bay camping ground. For the first 1km, to the junction of the Loop Track, it's a wide and level path. Beyond the junction it more resembles a track but remains an easy walk through forest at the edge of Lake Rotoiti. After 4km the track passes a gravel clearing, where there are good views of the northern half of the lake, including the peninsula between the bays. In another 2.5km it passes a second clearing, and this time the southern half of the lake can be seen.

Lakehead Hut (28 bunks) is 9km (about 2½ to three hours) from Kerr Bay camping ground and is on a grassy bank overlooking the mouth of the Travers River. There is good trout fishing here, especially in the lake near the mouth. **Coldwater Hut** (six bunks), which is smaller and older, is about 800m away, across the Travers River on the other side of the lake.

At Lakehead Hut, signposts direct you across **Travers River** and through a grassy flat to the walking track on the true left (west) side of the river. The alternative during high water is to follow the true right (east) side of the river for 5km, to a footbridge across the Travers. The true left side is more scenic, however, because it swings close to the river in many places.

Once on the track on the true left side, head south and you soon pass a signposted junction for Cascade Track, which leads to Angelus Hut (4½ hours). The main track continues south, meandering between stands of beech and grassy flats until it

reaches a footbridge across the Travers. Stay on the true left side, following the river closely through the forest, to emerge after 3.5km onto another flat, where Mt Travers dominates the view. Just beyond the end of the flat you arrive at a footbridge over Hopeless Creek, and on the other side is a signposted junction indicating the track to Hopeless Hut (2½ hours).

The sign also says John Tait Hut is two hours southwest, but most trampers cover the remaining 5km in less time. The track now begins to climb gradually. **John Tait Hut** (30 bunks) is in a small grassy clearing, with good views of the peaks at the head of the valley. Its best feature is an enclosed veranda that allows you to enjoy the views but keeps the sandflies at bay.

Day 2: John Tait Hut to Upper Travers Hut

3 hours, 6km, 520m ascent

Some trampers make Upper Travers Hut, not John Tait Hut, the destination for their first day. Even with boat transport up Lake Rotoiti, this is still a long day (22km), leaving many with sore legs and feet on the eve of crossing Travers Saddle.

The track continues to climb the valley. About 1km (20 minutes) from the hut it passes the track junction to the Cupola Basin Hut (2½ hours) before crossing a bridge over Cupola Creek. The climb steepens at this point, and within another 1km the track enters a chasm and passes a side track to **Travers Falls**. It's well worth dropping the backpack and descending to this beautiful cascade. The three-minute walk ends just above where the 20m falls drop into a sparkling, clear pool.

From the falls the climb steepens and soon you're crossing a bridge over Summit Creek. You cross a second bridge over Travers River in 1.5km, and at this point you begin an even steeper climb to the bush-line, passing three signposted avalanche paths along the way. At the edge of the bush, little more than 2km from the second bridge, trampers are greeted with good views of the peaks of both the Travers and St Arnaud Ranges.

Upper Travers Hut (24 bunks) was rebuilt in 2004, and overlooks a grassy clearing before the last stand of mountain beech towards the saddle. At 1340m it's a beautiful spot,

surrounded by gravel and scree slopes that can be easily climbed for better views, while looming overhead is the east face of Mt Travers.

Day 3: Upper Travers Hut to West Sabine Hut

6–8 hours, 8km, 467m ascent, 1117m descent

The route over Travers Saddle is well marked with rock cairns and snow poles, but is still a climb into the alpine zone. If the weather is foul, hold off and wait another day.

Begin on a track that crosses the river near the hut. The ascent begins when you emerge from the final stand of trees after 30 minutes, and head west into an area of tussock-covered slopes and large scattered boulders. From here you are technically following a route, but because of its popularity a track can be seen most of the way. The route climbs gently towards the saddle for 1km, until you reach a 'Travers Saddle' sign pointing up a steep gravel slope. The zig-zagging climb lasts several hundred metres; it's best to take your time, stopping often to admire the fine views.

Once at the top of the slope, a 450m ascent from the hut, the climb to the true saddle is easy; you pass two tarns while the sharp-edged Mt Travers (2338m) looms overhead to the north. **Travers Saddle** (1787m) is reached 1½ hours from Upper Travers Hut and is marked by a huge rock cairn. This is a nice spot, but for a truly awe-inspiring view you should scramble to one of the nearby ridges.

From the saddle you begin descending rapidly, passing first through tussock slopes, then heading right over a rock slide before returning to grass. At one point, about 1.5km from the saddle, there is a superb view of the Mahanga Range, just before you descend into the bush-line and return to the track. You remain in the stunted mountain beech only momentarily, because the track quickly swings into a **scree-covered gully** and embarks on a very rapid descent – 600m over only 3km. This is probably the hardest section of the day and care has to be taken on the steep sections of loose rock. Halfway down, at the tree line, the track returns – with trail markers appearing on the left-hand side of the gully – and you follow it as it levels out next to the gorge of the **East Branch Sabine River**.

Shortly afterwards you cross a small bridge over the **gorge**. It's impossible to see the water, but it can certainly be heard roaring between the narrow rock walls. The best view is from the river bank upstream. Once on the other side the track follows the steep valley for 2km and in many places is a maze of tree roots. The final leg of this long day is a very steep drop down the East Branch of the Sabine. The track swings south to **West Sabine Hut** (34 bunks), which is a five-minute walk past a swing bridge.

Day 4: West Sabine Hut to Sabine Hut 5 hours, 15km

Return to the swing bridge over the **West Branch Sabine River** and cross to the true left (west) side, following the level route north. This is a very pleasant stretch because the track remains close to the water, and it's an easy start for those who still ache from the climb over Travers Saddle. The track remains in the wooded fringe of the river for 7km before breaking out onto a grassy flat.

The track crosses the flat for 2km and climbs steeply at its northern end, only to descend onto another flat. At the northern end of this flat is a climb to a small knob that overlooks a deep gorge; this is the steepest ascent of a relatively easy day. Once the track descends the other side, it follows the river to the junction with the track to D'Urville Hut. Cross the bridge over the **deep gorge**. The gorge is impressive from either end, and from the middle of the bridge you can look down into the pale-green water and occasionally spot large trout. It's easy to scramble down to the water level – trampers have even been known to float through the gorge for a refreshing dip on a hot day.

From the bridge the track climbs out of the narrow valley, then spills out onto a grassy flat. You are now less than 2km from the hut, reached along a wooded and level path. Rebuilt in 2003, **Sabine Hut** (32 bunks) has views of Lake Rotoroa and a spacious kitchen-common area. There are lots of sandflies here, but you can also enjoy excellent sunsets over Lake Rotoroa from the hut's jetty.

Day 5: Sabine Hut to Angelus Hut 6–8 hours, 10km, 1330m ascent

Fill your water bottles before embarking on the alpine tramp to Lake Angelus – there is

no water along the way. Also keep in mind that this route is very exposed, with little shelter once you climb above the bush-line. If the weather isn't ideal, take the low-level route via Speargrass Hut (see Alternative Finish 1, on opposite).

The track to the alpine hut is signposted and begins right behind Sabine Hut. The first portion is extremely steep – you gain more than 900m in 4km – but it has a partial view of Lake Rotoroa on the way up. This section ends once you break out of the bush-line, where you are greeted with an immense view of the entire lake, plus Sabine valley and the surrounding mountains. The track now becomes a route, and you follow the poles to a high point that has views of round-domed Mt Cedric (1532m), 2.5km from the bush-line.

The snow poles continue along a ridge to the northeast, where you reach the day's high point (1650m) and then skirt the flank of an unnamed peak on your right. For most of this section you circle a basin below, marked by a small tarn that feeds Cedric Stream. Once the route goes around the peak it returns to the crest of a ridge and Hinapouri Tarn soon comes into view below.

In a short distance the poles direct you off the ridge and you begin to descend towards Lake Angelus. This section involves hopping over huge rocks – good footing is important. At one point you'll spot Lake Angelus and even the top of the hut, still a good 20 minutes away. **Lake Angelus**, actually two lakes, lies in a beautiful basin surrounded by ridges and peaks. Many trampers like to spend a spare day here to scramble up one of the numerous ridges for a scenic day walk. This is the reason **Angelus Hut** (36 bunks) is one of the most popular alpine huts in the South Island. Don't be shocked if it's hard to find an open bunk from late December through January.

Day 6: Angelus Hut to St Arnaud 5–7 hours, 19km, 935m descent

There are three ways to return to St Arnaud from Lake Angelus. If the weather is clear the route along the Robert Ridge is spectacular, but keep in mind that the whole length of the ridge is exposed to winds from the southeast, with few places for shelter on the lee side. In bad weather, with low visibility, it is easy to become disorientated

and wander off the route. If the weather is poor return along the Alternative Finish 2 (right) or Alternative Finish 3 (p190).

The ridge route begins as a track from the hut, heading east and climbing a scree slope to a saddle on the rim of **Angelus Basin**. It passes a signposted junction for the Speargrass Creek Route and becomes a route marked by metal poles. You drop down a scree slope on the other side into a second saddle, and then climb up the western side of the main ridge and over a knob at 1813m. Follow the ridge in a northeasterly direction, scrambling over or sidling the steep rock outcrops that are encountered. The route comes to a basin below Julius Summit (1794m), passes under the peak on its western side, and returns to the main ridge by first climbing a small saddle immediately north of it.

The well-marked route continues along the ridge past the **3rd Basin** and ascends **Flagtop** (1690m), from which you can view several shelters. You drop 160m over 1.5km along a well-worn track before reaching the site of the old ski field. Mt Robert was one of the first ski fields in New Zealand, but in 2005 the towers were removed and most likely the ski lodges will be removed in the near future. From here you continue along the poled route that follows the ridge to **Mt Robert** (1421m). The trail drops steeply to the Mt Robert car park and shelter, which is still a 7km (1½ hour) tramp along the road from the park headquarters.

ALTERNATIVE FINISH 1: VIA SPEARGRASS HUT

7½–9½ hours, 27km

Speargrass Track, built in the mid-1990s, and the new Speargrass Hut, constructed in 2006, now combine to offer trampers a safe low-level route back to the Mt Robert car park. This alternative should be the first choice for trampers who want to avoid foul weather conditions or an impending bad forecast that could catch them exposed on Mt Angelus and Robert Ridge. With a new hut, Speargrass Track can also be a very pleasant overnight tramp, and should be if you anticipate having to walk the 7km from the car park to St Arnaud.

The track heads north from Sabine Hut and skirts the lakeshore before angling off into beech forest and making a long climb

to **Howard Saddle**. It takes one hour to climb the 350m to the saddle, which is dimpled by a series of small ponds. The track then swings more northeast and contours around at the base of Robert Ridge. Here, there is no actual track in the forest, so you need to keep a sharp eye out for the next orange trail marker as it's easy to wander off course.

Two hours from Sabine Hut is a suspension bridge over Cedric Stream (overkill if the water level is normal or low). In the next hour you cross bridges over Tier and Hodgson Streams. Now, only an hour from Speargrass Hut, the track vastly improves. It's well benched and at one point follows more than 500m of boardwalk, complete with benches and a nice view of Howard valley over the open the wetlands. Botanists may admire the conical shape of the New Zealand cedar here, or search for the tiny sundew – a plant that survives the lack of nitrogen by catching and devouring insects on its sticky leaves.

Eventually the track makes a steep but short descent to **Speargrass Hut** (12 bunks), reached four to five hours from Sabine Hut. It is located in a small grassy meadow surrounded by mountains, and is a pleasant way to turn a long tramp into an easy overnighter if you have a spare day. From the hut the track crosses the flat and within five minutes arrives at a bridge over **Speargrass Creek**. On the other side is a signposted junction with the Speargrass Creek Route (right fork), which climbs to Lake Angelus (three hours). The Speargrass Track is the left fork, and it soon begins an hour-long descent, sidling the ridge until you bottom out at Speargrass Creek. Follow the creek for 30 minutes and then begin the final leg, a steady but easy climb that lasts almost one hour and crosses bridges over two streams. The day ends with a short descent to the Mt Robert car park, 2½ to three hours from Speargrass Hut. Unless you have transport, it's another 7km (1½ hours) of walking into St Arnaud.

ALTERNATIVE FINISH 2: SPEARGRASS CREEK ROUTE

6 hours, 12km, 660m descent

The Speargrass Creek Route leaves Robert Ridge at a signposted junction on the rim of Angelus basin. Heading north (left) you descend to reach Speargrass Track, near the new Speargrass Hut, in three hours (5km).

Heading right (northeast) you can follow the track to the Mt Robert car park (2½ to three hours), then St Arnaud.

ALTERNATIVE FINISH 3: VIA TRAVERS VALLEY

8–9 hours, 18km, 1010m descent

From Angelus Hut follow the Cascade Track south, dropping quickly into the safety of the Travers valley. Join the route from Day 1 (p186), about 4km upstream from the head of Lake Rotoiti.

At the lake, follow the Lakeside Track along its western shore, or retrace your steps from Day 1 along the Lakehead Track.

D'URVILLE VALLEY TRACK

Duration	6 days
Distance	70km
Track Standard	tramping track & route
Difficulty	demanding
Start	Rotoroa
Finish	D'Urville Hut
Nearest Town	St Arnaud (p185)
Transport	shuttle service, boat

Summary A remote tramp, combining the Sabine and D'Urville valleys. Highlights include the high alpine crossing of Moss Pass, and a night spent at scenic Blue Lake.

Those looking for a higher pass and a more extreme alpine adventure than the Travers-Sabine Circuit should set their sets on Moss Pass and the D'Urville valley. The valley is a scenic and moderate tramp – it's crossing the high and rocky pass that makes this tramp much more challenging than the Travers Saddle. It's better to walk the loop in a clockwise direction and drop into D'Urville valley from Moss Pass; from the opposite direction there's a steep ascent of 1000m. And always include an extra day. This is one pass where you want clear weather, both for safety and the incredible views from the top.

PLANNING

Maps

The 1:100,000 Parkmap 273-05 (*Nelson Lakes National Park*) is barely adequate. Three maps of the 1:50,000 Topomap 260 series – M29 (*Murchison*), N29 (*St Arnaud*) and M30 (*Matakītaki*) – cover the entire

trip in much better detail, which you'll appreciate while climbing.

Huts

Sabine Hut (\$10), **West Sabine Hut** (\$10) and **Blue Lake Hut** (\$10) are Serviced. All other huts along this route are Standard (\$5)

NEAREST TOWN & FACILITIES

See St Arnaud (p185).

Rotoroa

At the northern end of Lake Rotoroa, this small settlement offers only DOC's **Lake Rotoroa camping ground** (adult/child \$6/3).

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

There is no regular bus service to Lake Rotoroa. The closest spot you can reach by public transport is Gowan Bridge, 11km to the north on SH6, on one of a number of shuttle buses. **KBus** (☎ 0800-881 188, 578 4075; www.kahurangi.co.nz) operates a service between Greymouth and St Arnaud, which passes Gowan Bridge around 12.45pm daily in summer.

The best bet is on-demand transport with **Nelson Lakes Shuttles** (☎ 521 1900; www.nelsonlakeshuttles.co.nz), which offers Lake Rotoroa to Nelson (per person \$45, minimum \$180), Lake Rotoroa to Picton (per person \$55, minimum \$220) and Lake Rotoroa to St Arnaud (per person \$25, minimum \$70). **Trek Express** (☎ 0800-128 735, 540 2042; www.trekexpress.co.nz) also services Lake Rotoroa from Nelson.

For transport to and from D'Urville Hut or Sabine Hut, at the head of the lake, there is **Rotoroa Water Taxi** (☎ 523 9199; simpson.rotoroa@extra.co.nz), which will take you between Rotoroa and either the Sabine or D'Urville jetties (per person \$35, minimum three people).

THE TRAMP

Map pp182–3

Day 1: Rotoroa to Sabine Hut

8–9 hours, 18km

The Rotoroa Route begins at the picnic area and camping ground at the northern end of the lake, and follows the eastern shore to Sabine Hut. The track, which stays in the forest, makes for a tedious day, crossing many small ridges and gullies before it reaches the new **Sabine Hut** (32 bunks). This is where an investment of \$35 with **Rotoroa**

WARNING

Most tracks in Nelson Lakes National Park can be safely navigated in winter, but the segment between West Sabine Hut and Blue Lake. Just before Blue Lake Hut, the track crosses several avalanche paths.

Avalanches are funnelled down these chutes and across the track from winter well into spring. Avalanche conditions are most likely to occur between May and November, but the avalanche paths can be active during unseasonable January snowfalls. The avalanche paths are marked along the track. To lower the risk, do not stop between the signs during periods prone to avalanches.

Water Taxi (☎ 523 9199; simpson.rotoroa@extra.co.nz) for a ride down the lake to skip this section is worth every penny.

If coming from St Arnaud, you can also reach the hut on the Speargrass Track, following the Alternative Finish 1 on p189) in reverse. This is a far easier route to the hut than the Rotoroa Route.

Day 2: Sabine Hut to West Sabine Hut

5–6 hours, 15km

A well-benched track heads up Sabine valley. After crossing a deep ravine, most of the day is spent traversing grassy meadows and beech forest to the confluence of the Sabine River's East and West Branches. **West Sabine Hut** (34 bunks) is across a swing bridge. For more detail on this day's tramp see Day 4 (p188) of the Travers-Sabine Circuit.

Day 3: West Sabine Hut to Blue Lake

3–4 hours, 7km, 520m ascent

Cross the swing bridge to return to the true left (west) side of the **West Branch Sabine River** and continue south along the track. From the river fork the track climbs over beech roots (slippery when wet), and after two hours the valley opens up at a large slip and a stunning view. In front of you is a theatre of mountains, with Moss Pass an obvious dip to the right. Turn around and you can look back down the valley or at Mt Cupola (2260m).

The track dips back into the bush and the climb becomes steeper as you traverse forest and scree slopes, many of them made by avalanches. At one point you top off at

a boardwalk and manicured track though a beautiful garden-like setting, with the river just to the left. Take a break and enjoy the beauty because you still have one more steep, forested hillside to climb in the final 1km before **Blue Lake** appears.

Blue Lake Hut (16 bunks) is set above the lake near the edge of the bush-line. Although it's only three to four hours to Blue Lake, this is a popular place to spend a day resting before tackling Moss Pass. The lake itself is enchanting, with its vivid colours of turquoise and emerald green. There is an even better view if you take the track that climbs 1km south through one last stand of stunted beech – from here there is an excellent view of Lake Constance and a good overview of Blue Lake. This is one of the most scenic spots in the park.

Day 4: Blue Lake to George Lyon Hut

6–7 hours, 7km, 595m ascent, 1115m descent

The route over the Mahanga Range is marked by steel poles, but good visibility is still necessary to cross Moss Pass safely. In winter and spring this area sees avalanches, which often flatten or dislodge the steel marker poles; follow them as a guide but use discretion if they appear disturbed.

The route is signposted behind Blue Lake Hut, and heads southwest, first through tussock and a bit of beech forest and then snow grass as you climb steeply for 100m beside a small stream. When shingle scree is reached you'll be able to look down at the now-tiny Blue Lake, dwarfed by Mt Franklin (2340m). The track skirts across the scree and then swings left to climb steeply to a single chute between two rocky bluffs, with a marker pole at the base of it. You have to climb up this steep gully, and the last bit is a mad scramble on all fours – not recommended for the faint-hearted. The chute will often hold snow well into summer, and when it doesn't you should be careful not to dislodge rocks onto your tramping party below.

At the top of the chute you can take a breather and admire West Sabine valley below, before one last short climb takes you to **Moss Pass** (1785m). The pass is usually reached two to three hours from Blue Lake Hut, and your reward for all the effort is great views into D'Urville valley with Mt Ella (2253m) straight ahead.

From the pass you steeply descend in a dogleg manner, first heading left (south) and then west, as you skirt a large basin before reaching the bush-line. Follow the poles! This area has many bluffs and waterfalls to avoid. In the bush a track takes over and continues the rapid descent, which is so steep in one spot, that ropes have been set up to aid you. Eventually the track eases up, swings to the right, and three to 3½ hours from the pass reaches **D'Urville River**. A swing bridge puts you on the true left (west) side of the river, where a sign says its 30 minutes to **George Lyon Hut**. Most people, exhausted from the descent, need 45 minutes to one hour to cover the final 3km.

Originally called Ella Hut, this hut was renamed in 2005 after George Lyon, the second ranger to be appointed at Nelson Lakes National Park and its chief ranger from 1959 to 1980. Lyon was involved in building 12 huts in the park, all of them based on a two-room design he developed. This hut is the only one remaining and will be maintained in the future as a historic place. This is the reason behind the lack of a rainwater tank. You'll need to gather your water from the river.

Day 5: George Lyon Hut to Morgan Hut 3–4 hours, 11km

The final leg of this tramp used to be a 23km walk from George Lyon Hut to Lake Rotoroa, a long day for many trampers with ankles and knees still recovering from the climb over Moss Pass. With the new Morgan Hut, you can now break the valley walk into two very easy days. If you do need to catch a water taxi right away, plan on seven to eight hours to reach D'Urville Hut and its jetty.

The track down the D'Urville valley remains on the true left (west) side of the river the entire way, and close to the water for the first 5km from George Lyon Hut. About 1½ hours from the hut, the track departs from the river and climbs through forest to an outcrop of rock above a **gorge**. Here, if you inch carefully to the edge, there is a great view of the river below – a swirl of white water thundering through huge boulders.

The track descends from the high point and again becomes a gentle valley walk. You climb only one more time in the final

6km. Eventually you break out in a grassy flat right along the D'Urville River, where a sign points to **Morgan Hut**, well away from the water on the edge of the forest.

The original hut here was removed in 2001, after a geo-technical study found it would be caught in floodwaters and could wash away if the nearby creek overflowed. A new 10-bunk hut was built two years later, due primarily to the popularity of this stretch of the river with anglers intent on catching a large brown trout. Lucky you if one does – they often like to share their fishing feats, and their fillets, with anybody in the hut.

Day 6: Morgan Hut to D'Urville Hut 4 hours, 12km

Morgan Hut is at the southern end of the grassy flat, and the day begins by cutting across it to the beech forest at the northern end. At this point the trout fishing continues to improve with every pool you pass. The best fishing is considered to be between Morgan Hut and Bull Creek.

From the flats, the track re-enters the forest and within 30 minutes crosses a large stream. On the other side you climb higher on the forested hillside for the next hour, carefully stepping between tree roots, rocks and an occasional mud-hole on a stretch that's not quite the easy valley walk of the previous day.

In the final two hours (6km) the track makes two noticeable climbs up hillsides to avoid slips along the river. The second one begins right after you cross Bull Creek and is the hardest climb of the entire valley. When it bottoms out after 30 minutes you arrive at a signposted junction with the Tiraumea Track. The left fork heads west to climb Tiraumea Saddle and reach Tiraumea Hut in 2½ hours. The right fork is D'Urville Track, which becomes a flat and easy 30-minute walk to D'Urville Hut. Less than 10 minutes from the hut you pass another signposted junction with the Sabine-D'Urville Track, which heads east, fording the D'Urville River (no bridge) and skirting the end of Lake Rotoroa to reach Sabine Hut in 2½ hours.

Finally you break out at the south end of **Lake Rotoroa**, a beautiful body of water encased by towering mountains. If the evening is still, spend it on the jetty where the sharp

peak of Mt Misery (1601m) will be reflected on the lake surface. There's an especially stunning array of colours during sunset. **D'Urville Hut** (10 bunks) is an older hut with lots of character, beginning with its potbelly stove. Somebody has also hauled in turquoise car seats to turn a bench into a sofa. Funky? You bet, but if you just climbed Moss Pass the day before it's the most comfortable thing you'll ever sit in.

MORE TRAMPS

ABEL TASMAN NATIONAL PARK Abel Tasman Inland Track

A network of tracks cuts across the interior of the national park, offering tramps that are a direct contrast to the Coast Track. Inland, the walking is harder and the tracks are more deserted. The Abel Tasman Inland Track is maintained and links three huts – Castle Rock, Wainui and Awapoto – which are all Standard (\$5). There are also two shelters: Holyoake Clearing and Moa Park.

Many begin this track near Marahau, tramping to Castle Rock on the first day (five hours, 11.5km). You can reach Awapoto

Hut on the second day (six hours, 12km), and from there it's a five- to six-hour tramp (14km) to the Wainui car park. The track, rated moderate-demanding, can also be combined with a portion of the Coast Track for a five- to six-day loop. Use the 1:50,000 Parkmap 273-07 (*Abel Tasman*). Information on the track can be obtained from the **DOC Regional Visitor Centre** (☎ 546 9339; nelsonvc@doc.govt.nz), inside the Nelson visitor information centre.

KAHURANGI NATIONAL PARK Tableland Walk

This is a two- to three-day tramp from Flora car park (in the Graham valley) to Myttons Hut (at the end of the service road along Cobb Reservoir). The 25km tramp could include nights spent at Flora Hut, Salisbury Lodge, Balloon Hut or a number of unusual shelters passed along the way. The trip is rated easy-moderate and offers many fine views. Use the 1:50,000 Topomap 260-M27 (*Mt Arthur*). Information on the track can be obtained from the **DOC Regional Visitor Centre** (☎ 546 9339; nelsonvc@doc.govt.nz), inside the Nelson visitor information centre.

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