

CANTERBURY

Walking tracks

Aoraki/Mount Cook
National Park



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

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Welcome to Aoraki/
Mount Cook National Park

Enjoy one of our walks or hikes around the village and environs; ranging from 10 minutes to 4 hours – there is something to suit everyone’s ability. For those with moderate fitness, there are options for even longer day walks or overnight tramps: to Mueller Hut (3–5 hr one way), which offers an amazing chance to experience the alpine environment without being a climber, or to Ball Shelter (3–4 hr one way) for breathtaking views over the Haupapa/Tasman Glacier and beyond.

If you are doing an overnight walk, you will need to sign in at the DOC Visitor Centre, and pay your hut fees before you go.

Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park

Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park (70,696 ha) is New Zealand’s great alpine park, boasting the highest mountains and the largest glaciers in the country. The area was formally established as a national park in 1953 and is a harsh land of ice and rock. Glaciers cover 40% of the park. There are 19 peaks over 3,000 metres high, including of course New Zealand’s highest mountain, Aoraki/Mount Cook.



Check, Clean, Dry
Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests. Remember to Check, Clean, Dry all items before entering, and when moving between, waterways.



leave no trace
NEW ZEALAND

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others



No unauthorised drones

A permit is required from DOC to use drones on public conservation land for any reason – including private use. To apply, visit www.doc.govt.nz/drones.

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468

Report any safety hazards or conservation emergencies
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111

The park is also recognised for its outstanding natural values and forms part of the internationally celebrated Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area.

Glacier country

The glaciers that have helped shape the park's landscape include five major valley systems: Godley, Murchison, Tasman, Hooker and Mueller. There are also over 150 named smaller hanging glaciers on the mountainsides, which add to the dramatic landscape.

Haupapa/Tasman Glacier, New Zealand's largest and longest glacier, is clearly visible from the main highway at the entrance of the park. It is 27 kilometres long, up to 3 kilometres wide and extends over 100 square kilometres. Although covered with rock material in its lower reaches, the ice of the Tasman is about 600 metres deep near the Hochstetter icefall.



The naming of a mountain

The mountain from which Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park takes its name was originally named Aoraki by Ngāi Tahu, the first settlers in the area. It received its European name, Mount Cook, in 1851 from Captain J.L. Stokes, who first sighted the impressive peak as he sailed down the West Coast. Stokes named the mountain in honour of the English navigator of New Zealand, Captain James Cook.

In 1998, both names were officially recognised and the mountain is now known as Aoraki/Mount Cook.

Be prepared

Remember – your safety is your responsibility

Choose a track that suits your fitness and experience. Follow the Outdoor Safety Code:

- Plan your trip
- Tell someone your plans
- Be aware of the weather
- Know your limits
- Take sufficient supplies

For more information, visit: www.mountainsafety.org.nz. We recommend you carry the appropriate NZTopo maps for the longer tracks in this brochure.

To make your trip as enjoyable as possible, make sure you have the correct clothing and supplies for your activity. We recommend you take:

- Sturdy shoes
- Suitable headwear for the season and conditions
- Extra warm clothing
- Waterproof jacket
- Water and food
- First aid kit
- Sunscreen all year round
- Insect repellent (in summer months)
- Camera



BEWARE

- The weather can change quickly here – high winds are common and snow can fall at any time of year. Check the weather forecast regularly.
- Snow and ice conditions can be treacherous. Always walk with care over snow or ice.
- Avalanches can occur any time of the year but are most common in winter and spring. Take special care when travelling through known avalanche areas and check avalanche advisory.
- The alpine areas in the park are very exposed, and at any time of year, spending a long time in the sun or in hot conditions can lead to dehydration and severe sunburn – go well prepared.

*Stunning scenery,
wide-open spaces,
breathtaking sunrises
and sunsets*



*Dramatic weather
events, including
thrilling electrical
storms and impressive
cloud formations*



*Glaciers – lots of them,
from hanging to valley
floor; from pearly
white to gravel grey*



*Wildflowers
Clear night skies
for stargazing*

Track grades



Short walk: well-formed track, easy walking for up to an hour.



Walking track: track is mostly well formed, easy to moderate walking from a few minutes to a day.



Tramping track: track is mostly unformed, challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking.



Route: unformed track, challenging overnight tramping/hiking, suitable only for people with high-level backcountry skills and experience, and navigation and survival skills.

Walks from the village and campground

Governors Bush Walk



Time	1 hr return (loop track)
Grade	Short walk: Easy
Start place	Public shelter
Height gain	100 m – steps plus well-gravelled track

A delightful bush walk that joins with Bowen Bush Walk to form a nature trail and explores one of the few stands of silver beech/tawai (also known as tawhai) forest in the park.

A gradual climb leads to a lookout point of Wakefield Ridge and Aoraki/Mount Cook. This popular walk offers birdlife, a great view of the mountains and a sheltered place to experience the outdoors in poor weather.

Bowen Bush Walk



Time	10 min return (loop track)
Grade	Short walk: Easy
Start place	Opposite petrol pumps
Height gain	Predominantly flat with some steps

An easy forest walk that can be joined with Governors Bush Walk to form a nature trail. This track wanders through tōtara and celery pine/mountain toatoa forest, and has an alternative exit/entry towards the Mount Cook Lodge. In summer a 'Bird Song' sounds system enhances the experience.

Glencoe Walk



Time 30 min return
Grade Short walk: Easy
Start place Behind The Hermitage hotel
Height gain 40 m – steps and some zigzags

This walk zigzags through tōtara trees with a ferny understorey, emerging at a lookout near the prominent water tanks above The Hermitage. A short climb rewards with a bird's-eye view of the village and beyond to the white ice of Hooker Glacier and Aoraki/Mount Cook. Sunrise and sunset are good times to catch the light playing over the mountains.

Red Tarns Track



Time 2 hr return
Grade Walking track: Steep and mainly stepped
Start place Public shelter
Height gain 300 m

Follow the track downhill from the public shelter to cross the bridge over Black Birch Stream and then climb steeply to the Red Tarns. The vegetation changes as you ascend from the valley floor to a superb panoramic viewpoint of the valleys below, the village and Aoraki/Mount Cook. The tarns are named for the red pond weed that grows in them. An aptly placed seat allows you to recover your breath and enjoy the views. This is a magnificent spot to view the sunset in summer.



Kea Point Track



Time 2 hr return from the village
1 hr return from White Horse Hill Campground and car park
Grade Walking track: Easy
Start place DOC Visitor Centre and cross over the road towards Hooker valley
Height gain 180 m over 3 km

This walk gently winds its way through subalpine grasslands and scrub to the Mueller Glacier moraine wall. The track passes through a landscape that was formed in 1913 when a stream cut through from the glacier to the original Hermitage site, damaging the building. The walk ends at a viewing deck that gives stunning views of Mount Sefton, The Footstool, Hooker valley, Mueller Glacier lake and Aoraki/Mount Cook.

Sealy Tarns Track



Time 3–4 hr return
Grade Walking track: Steep and stepped
Start place As for Kea Point Track, then branch off at the signpost
Height gain 600 m

Dubbed the 'stairway to heaven', 2,200 steps take you straight up to the freshwater lakes of Sealy Tarns. This energetic walk provides spectacular views of the Hooker valley and peaks of the area, including Aoraki/Mount Cook. An abundance of alpine flowers in summer and the views from the tarns make the effort worthwhile. The tarns are the halfway point to Mueller Hut.



Hooker Valley Track



Day
Hikes

- Time** 3 hr return (add 1 hr if starting from the village)
- Grade** Walking track: Easy
- Start place** As for Kea Point Track, or start at White Horse Hill Campground and car park
- Height gain** 80 m over 5 km

The best time to walk this stunning track is at dawn when the first rays of sun creep over the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana, including over New Zealand's highest peak, Aoraki/Mount Cook, and there are fewer walkers.

The track leads up the Hooker valley towards Aoraki/Mount Cook. It passes close to the Alpine Memorial (a great viewpoint) and Freda's Rock before coming to the viewing point of the Mueller Glacier and the first swing bridge.

Cross the Hooker River here and carry on to the second swing bridge. Look out for many different wildflowers along the way, including celmisia and the Mount Cook buttercup/kōpukupuku.

The track from the first swing bridge to the second travels between old moraine ridges and humps. Past the second bridge, the vegetation changes to more open tussock and a wider valley floor. A third swing bridge leads to the east Hooker and the source of the Hooker River. The track ends at the glacier lake, where there are amazing views of Aoraki/Mount Cook, Hooker Glacier and the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana. Return the same way, enjoying more views down the valley and across to the Sealy Range.



Freda du Faur was the first woman to climb Aoraki/Mount Cook. She accomplished this amazing feat in 1910 with the help of two guides, brothers Alex and Peter Graham. In 1913, Freda completed the first Grand Traverse (all three peaks) of Aoraki/Mount Cook with guides Peter Graham and Darby Thompson. Freda's Rock is the site where her now-famous photo was taken just after her first successful ascent of the mountain. For further information, visit the Aoraki/Mount Cook DOC Visitor Centre.





Mueller Hut Route



Time 3–5 hr one way
Grade Tramping track: Steep and untracked. In winter: route

Start place As for Sealy Tarns Track
Height gain 1,000 m

We recommend NZTopo50 BX15 map for this route. Spectacular panoramic views, a large hut and amazing landscapes are the drawcards for this strenuous walk. During the summer months (December – February) this route offers a mountain experience for anyone with moderate tramping experience – if you take good care. During the winter months (June – August) the route requires a good level of mountaineering experience, including walking on ice and snow with ice axe and crampons, route finding, and using an avalanche transceiver, probe and shovel. Check with the DOC staff at the Aoraki/Mount Cook Visitor Centre for current mountain conditions. During the summer months, you can book this hut online at www.doc.govt.nz. In winter, you need to call in to the Aoraki/Mount Cook Visitor Centre to sign into the park's intention system and pay hut fees before heading to the hut.

Key to symbols

	Car park		Road
	Toilets		State highway
	Shelter		National Park boundary
	Campsite		Short walk
	Hut		Walking track
	Information centre		Tramping track
			Route



AORAKI/ MT COOK VILLAGE

KEA POINT TRACK

The Hermitage

Old Mountaineers Cafe

DOC Visitor Centre

Car park

Aoraki Alpine Lodge

Glencoe Stream

GLENCOE WALK

Bowen Bush

BOWEN BUSH WALK

Petrol pump

DOC office

Public shelter, shower and toilets

Mt Cook Motels

Aoraki Court Motel

Mount Cook Lodge

Mount Cook YHA

School

Community hall

Governors Bush

GOVERNORS BUSH WALK

Black Birch Stream

RED TARNs TRACK

0 200 400
metres



Walks in Tasman valley

Blue Lakes and Tasman Glacier View Track



Short
Walks

Time 40 min return
Grade Walking track: Easy with steps
Start place Blue Lakes car park
Height gain 100 m



From the car park, walk past the Blue Lakes shelter and meander up past the Blue Lakes to a viewpoint on the moraine wall. There are good views of the lower Tasman Glacier and lake, icebergs and the mountains at the head of the valley. A side trip to the Blue Lakes offers good swimming in summer.

At around 27 km long, the Haupapa/Tasman Glacier is the longest glacier in New Zealand. The glacier lake has been growing rapidly over the past few years and is now around 7 km long.

Tasman Lake Track



Time 50 min – 1 hr return
Grade Walking track: Easy
Start place Blue Lakes car park
Height gain None

This walk branches to the right off the Blue Lakes Track just past the Blue Lakes Shelter and leads to a viewpoint of the Tasman Glacier terminal lake. A further track branches to the right off this track to go to the source of the Tasman River. Icebergs can usually be seen floating in the lake in summer, and in winter the lake freezes over. The track leads through the old terminal moraines of the glacier, and you can see good examples of plant succession along the route.

Tasman Lake is a relatively recent addition to the scene, starting its formation in 1974 and growing steadily since then. It is now large enough to take commercial boat and kayak tours. The large terminal moraines mark the foot of the Tasman Glacier at the time of the lake's formation and are a sobering reminder of the glacier's retreat.

Ball Hut Route



Time 3–4 hr one way
Grade Tramping track: first section easy, but can be a challenging route from the end of the 4WD track. In winter: all a route

Start place Blue Lakes or Celmisia car parks

Height gain 100 m over 9 km



We recommend NZTopo50 BX15 (4WD section) and BX16 (route to Ball Hut) maps for this route.

The first 5-km section of this track follows a historical road, now a 4WD track. It opens up to spectacular views after the end of the 4WD track, but the route becomes more difficult.

The moraine wall throughout this area, including along the 4WD track, is very unstable and should be negotiated with caution. You will need to move with care and skill around

collapsed areas at various stages along the route.

Sign in at the DOC Visitor Centre if you wish to stay at Ball Hut, and pay your fees before departing.

Ball Hut is close to the historic site of the first Ball Hut and offers superb views of the Tasman Glacier and surrounding peaks.



Avalanches:

The area around Ball Road is complex avalanche terrain. Large avalanches cross the road and track from June to November. Call in to the Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park Visitor Centre for advice on conditions.

Cycling



Easy: Grade 2: Mostly flat with some gentle climbs on smooth track with easily avoidable obstacles, such as rocks and potholes.

Hooker valley

Distance 2 km

Grade Easy/Grade 2

Start place Aoraki/Mount Cook village – veer left at Hooker Valley Road intersection

Height gain 50 m

This cycleway runs alongside Hooker Valley Road to the White Horse Hill Campground and car park. It provides stunning views of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana along its length.

Tasman valley

Distance 8.5 km

Grade Easy/Grade 2

Start place Aoraki/Mount Cook village – veer right at the Hooker Valley Road intersection and head towards the Tasman valley

Height gain 100 m

This cycle trail takes cyclists out to the Blue Lakes car park in the Tasman valley. Follow the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail from either the White Horse Hill Campground or the Aoraki/Mount Cook village as far as the road bridge on the Tasman Valley Road. Cycle along the Tasman Valley Road to the Blue Lakes car park. Take care as the road can be busy with cars and buses. From here, leave your bikes and walk to the Tasman Glacier viewpoint or lake, where you will be rewarded with expansive views of the glacier, moraines and the river winding its way along the valley floor.



NOTE:

Cycling is allowed only on the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail and on formed roads in the national park.

Cycling is NOT ALLOWED on the walking tracks in the park.



Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail (national park section)

Distance 5 km

Grade Easy/Grade 2 – downhill to the airport

Start place Aoraki/Mount Cook village – as for the Tasman valley, then take the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail at the Hooker River road bridge

Height loss 60 m

It's all downhill to the airport on this section of the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail! Make sure you stop and take a look behind you from time to time to view the Southern Alps as you spin down the Tasman valley.

This is the first section of the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail, which leads all the way to Oamaru. From the airport, you need to take a short helicopter ride across the valley to continue on the cycleway through to Twizel and beyond.



Nature walking and wild-flower spotting

Pick up the *Nature-trail guide* and visit one of the short walks in the village for a true nature-trail experience. Use the guide, the plant labels through both Governors and Bowen bush walks, and the 'Bird Song' sounds system in Bowen Bush to help you identify the plants and birds in the park.

Wild flowers abound from October to March, and the Hooker Valley Track is a great place to see these.



Grey warbler/riroriro
(more commonly heard than seen)
Photo: M F Soper



Fantail/piwakawaka
Photo: DOC



Tomtit/miromiro
Photo: A Fleming



New Zealand falcon/
karearea
Photo: D Busbridge



Common skink
Photo: DOC



Common copper
butterfly
Photo: G W Gibb



Rifleman/
tītīpounamu
Photo: M F Soper



Kea
Photo: S Jackson



Black mountain
ringlet butterfly
Photo: DOC





Common copper butterfly

Photo: G W Gibb



Paper daisy

Photo: J H Johns



Red admiral butterfly

Photo: DOC



Spaniard/taramea

Photo: DOC



Gentian

Photo: DOC



Large mountain daisy/tikumu

Photo: DOC



Bush snowberry

Photo: S Manakelow



Mount Cook buttercup/kōpukupuku

Photo: DOC



WARNING

In summer, the native tutu shrub flourishes throughout the Hooker valley walks.

All parts of this plant, including berries, contain a poison called tutin.

DO NOT EAT ANY TUTU BERRIES AND WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER TOUCHING ANY PART OF THE PLANT.



Further information

Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park Visitor Centre

1 Larch Grove
Aoraki/Mount Cook
Mount Cook National Park 7999

PHONE: 03 435 1186

EMAIL: mtcookvc@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz

Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail

www.alps2ocean.com



Travelling with children?

Check out the Toyota Kiwi Guardians programme at www.doc.govt.nz/kiwiguardsians, or talk to the DOC Visitor Centre staff.

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