

ASHLEY RAKAHURI RIVER / GORGE - THE GORGEOUSLY GORGY LOOP TRACK

1. **Foothill Stairs:** Can you count how many amazing steps our volunteers made, to take you safely from the roadside to the start of the track?
2. **Cabbage Tree Archway:** Check out the long pointy leaf of these trees. Can you find another leaf further up the track, that looks just like it, but isn't on a tree?
3. **Honeydew:** Black beech trees have scale insects living in the bark that make honeydew. They suck the sweet sap from the tree and anything they don't use, they get rid of through the fine white hair-like tubes. Can you find some magical drops of honeydew? Our special native birds love it.
4. **Forest Giants:** Close your eyes and gently feel the bark of the massive mataī tree! What is different about the way the beech tree next to it feels?
5. **Skeletons:** There are skeletons around your feet! Can you spot them?! They are from the māhoe tree.
6. **Take a break:** Sit for a second and close your eyes.... listen to all the sounds around you. How many different bird songs can you hear? Now open your eyes and see how the amazing Ashley Rakahuri River comes out of the gorge and becomes a braided river as it crosses the Canterbury Plains!
7. **I Spy:** Spot the lancewood tree with long, pointy, narrow leaves. Now imagine early Māori using the stems for hunting spears! Wow. And later the Europeans used the midribs (the vein that runs down the middle of the leaf) for shoe laces. Do they look anything like shoelaces now?
8. **Forest Carpet:** Gently run your hand over the lush green moss. Imagine who or what would live on or in this. Pretty snugly for a forest creature.
9. **Old men of the forest:** Look how big this kānuka tree is!! Have you ever seen a kānuka tree this big?! Imagine all the changes it has seen in the forest in its life. It's older than your parents! It must have an amazing view of the whole forest!
10. **Crazy Tree fuschia/kōtukutuku:** Can you find the tree with the papery orange bark? It peels off in long strips. And do you know what else? It is the largest fuschia plant in the world! Early Māori collected and ate the dark purple berries (kōnini) Yum! Kerurū love kōnini too. You might be lucky enough to see one enjoying a snack!

Health and safety:

Easy walk. 60+ steps. Not suitable for wheelchairs or prams.

Wasps present in high numbers January to March around beech honeydew. Wear light coloured clothing and carry wasp sting first aid kit.

Distance: Loop. 1.5km. 45 minutes return.



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