

For the hard-working Department of Conservation staff who maintain tracks and huts throughout the country.

TRAMPING IN NEW ZEALAND

A GUIDE TO 40 OF NEW ZEALAND'S BEST TRACKS

Text and photographs by Shaun Barnett
Maps by Roger Smith, Geographx

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White daisy, Tongariro National Park

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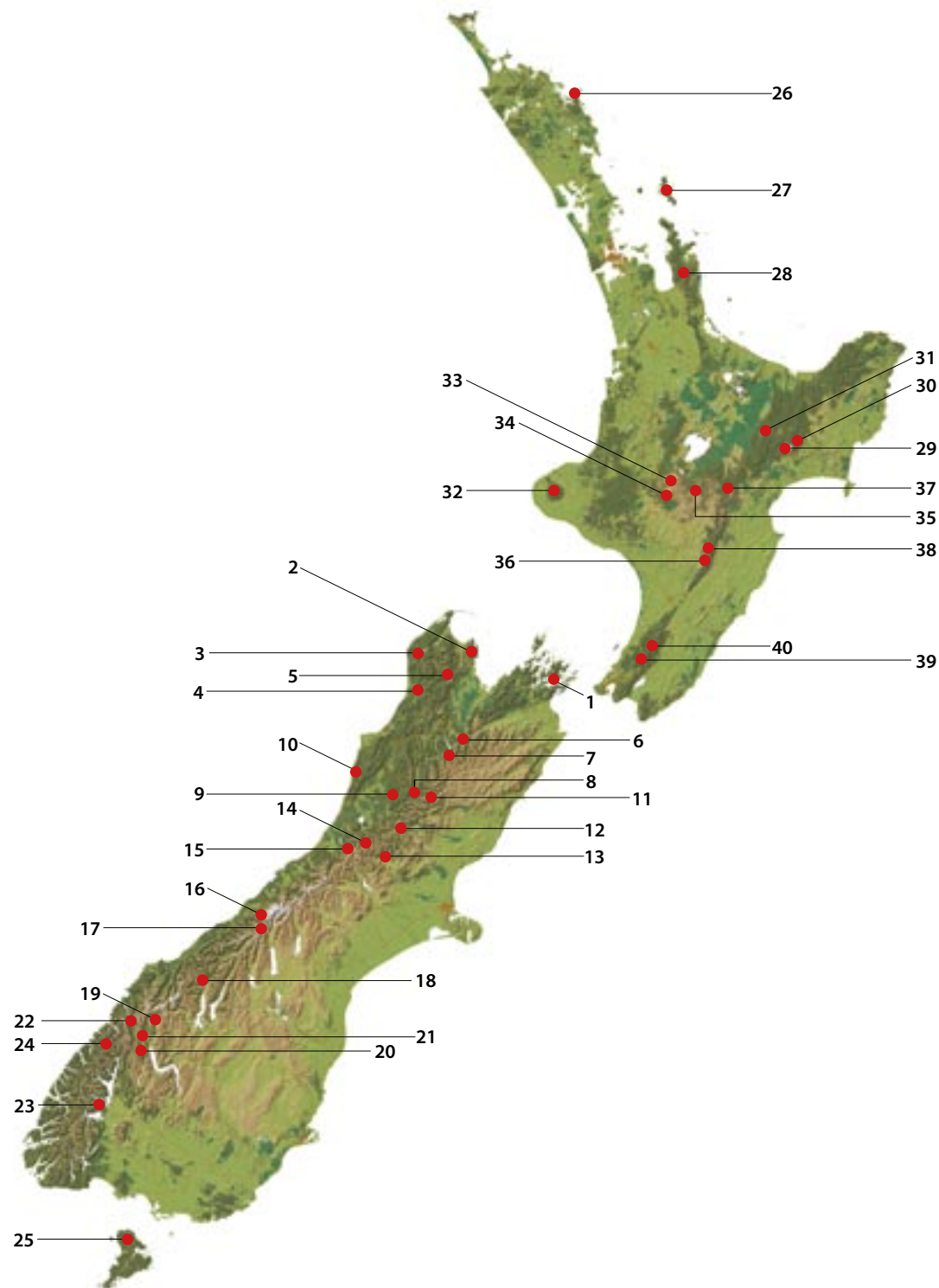
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INTRODUCTION

...to write a guide book is to poke out a neck as scapegoat... On your head will fall the imprecations of parties who wander in circles because they did not find the entrance of the track you so concisely described. Your directions were dehydrated, as it were, and those who came after did not reconstitute your stew with care. So be willing to take blame and to lose tail feathers. It will be natural for any unfortunates coming down the wrong bank of a river or the difficult side of an icefall to curse the absent chronicler. Do they lose an hour in the scrub or skin on the ridge, find impasse on the glacier or defeat on the skyline, mislay a hut in the dark or a toothbrush in the mist, it will be on your careless summary so fluently compiled.

John Pascoe in the 1956 edition of his guidebook
The Southern Alps: from the Kaikouras to the Rangitata

Tramping is a well-established New Zealand tradition, with a history dating back more than a century. Known in other countries as hiking, bush walking or trekking, tramping is a uniquely New Zealand term, and one fitting the style of walking encountered here – often rough, frequently wet, but regularly inspiring.

New Zealand is arguably the best country in the world in which to tramp. Very few other countries offer such a diversity of terrain, ranging from coastal to mountain, in such a small area. New Zealand has tracks in areas that feature active volcanoes, hot springs, moss-laden rainforests, ragged fault ranges, glacier-carved valleys, island-studded lakes and golden-sand coastlines.

Because New Zealand has been isolated from other landmasses for over 65 million years, much of the flora and fauna here is also unique. Amongst many other examples, creatures like the kea (the only alpine parrot in the world), and plants like the cabbage tree (the world's tallest lily) help make the experience of tramping here distinctive.

Furthermore, the network of tracks and huts maintained by the Department of Conservation is rarely bettered anywhere else. Only a few countries, such as Norway and Italy, have anything like the number of back-country huts that New Zealand offers. Unlike many European nations though, New Zealand huts are largely self-catering, and trampers

need to be fully self-reliant for food, cookers, sleeping bags and equipment – so preserving something of pioneer traditions. There are a few exceptions: on the Milford, Routeburn, Hollyford and Greenstone-Caples tracks, private companies offer a catered, guided option using private huts, but only the independent alternatives are described in this book.

Tramps selected for this book were chosen from throughout New Zealand, reflecting a range of length, difficulty, terrain and natural history. However, all 40 were selected with the novice or casual trampler in mind; few of the tramps featured are beyond the abilities of a moderately fit person with modest experience. None involve any serious off-track travel, and generally the standard of huts and tracks is high.

Selecting what I consider to be the crème de la crème of the country's easier tramps was necessarily subjective. In choosing, I tried to keep in mind a range of tramping trips in different types of terrain, and also attempted to get a basic nationwide coverage. Although someone else might argue for an entirely different list, altogether the 40 tramps detailed here reflect the great diversity of New Zealand tramping.

Opposite McKellar Hut, Greenstone Track, Fiordland National Park



Great Walks

New Zealand has eight Great Walks (and one 'Great Paddle': the Whanganui Journey which is a trip for kayakers, not trampers). These are considered New Zealand's premier tracks, and most have become internationally renowned – notably the Milford Track, which has long carried the by-line 'the finest walk in the world'. All Great Walks have a level of facilities, including tracks and huts, that are of a higher standard than most other New Zealand tramping tracks. Due to their popularity, both with New Zealanders and overseas visitors, most Great Walks have a booking system in place for huts and campsites over at least part of the year. Each year booking on-line for the coming season begins on July 1 at www.doc.govt.nz.

This book details seven of the eight Great Walks, including the Lake Waikaremoana, Tongariro Northern Circuit,

Abel Tasman, Heaphy, Routeburn, Milford and Kepler tracks. Stewart Island's Rakiura Track was excluded because it overlaps with the longer, more interesting North West Circuit.

Length and difficulty

Each tramp is classified according to difficulty, which readers should note depends very much on conditions. Wet weather could very well turn a medium tramp into a hard, or even impossible one, while winter snow may transform a medium trip into one that requires mountaineering skills. When selecting a tramp it is important to take the abilities of all party members into consideration.

Each walk is classified 'easy', 'medium' or 'hard', with some in between. By far the majority fall into the 'easy' or 'medium' categories.

Easy Gentle terrain, well-marked tracks, few, if any, river crossings, and walking times of less than 3–4 hours per day.

Medium Trampers may come across unbridged river crossings, steep sections of track, or some travel on open tops. Travel times could be 5–6 hours per day.

Hard These trips will often entail walking for more than 6 hours, and usually require some navigation skills.

Keeping information up to date

Although every effort has been made to ensure information in this guide is both correct and up to date, please remember that wild places change constantly. Floods alter rivers, volcanoes erupt from time to time and storms or earthquakes can devastate forests and tracks. Careless fires do, surprisingly frequently, reduce huts to ashes. Furthermore, the condition of tracks and huts varies according to how recently they have been maintained. For these reasons, trampers should always check with the local Department of Conservation visitor's centre for updates before their intended trip. The relevant DOC telephone number has been given for each tramp. DOC's website www.doc.govt.nz is also an excellent source of information.

If you do find any safety hazards – such as a bridge washed out, or a new slip on a track – please report it to DOC; Tel DOC HOTline, or Tel 0800 362 468.

Maps

The maps in this book are digital images created by Roger Smith, the director of Geographx, a Wellington-based company that specialises in advanced digital mapping. Roger's superb maps – perhaps oblique panoramas is a better description – achieve what no photograph can: a complete overview of each tramp, showing tracks, huts, and major features. For more information, refer to *Landforms – The Shaping of New Zealand*, in *Further Reading* (page 142).

While these maps indicate tracks, huts and major topographical features, they are not intended to be used for navigation – for this you should purchase a NZMS 260 series 1:50,000 scale topographical map or appropriate track map. The correct map(s) number for each tramp is included in the fact file at the end of each chapter. Note that true left refers to the left bank of a river when facing downstream, and true right to the right bank.

Seasons and weather

New Zealand's temperate latitude fools some visitors to this country into thinking that the weather will always be mild. Although tempered by its maritime surrounds, New Zealand's position in the path of the 'Roaring 40s' and its mountainous terrain combine to produce one of the most changeable and unpredictable climates on the planet. In the mountains, where most of the tramps in this book are located, snow can fall at any time of year, although obviously is rarer during summer. Some parts of New Zealand, particularly the West Coast and Fiordland, experience some of the highest rainfall in the world – some 7–9 metres of rain falls at Milford Sound annually, while in 1998 a West Coast valley near Hokitika received over 15 metres of rain. Heavy rain can make sections of some tracks impassable and rivers uncrossable in as little as a few hours.

Trampers need to respect and plan around the weather. Always obtain a forecast before you leave, and be prepared to pare back or change your plans accordingly. If river levels do rise overnight, be prepared to wait another night at the hut or camp. Once the rain stops, river levels usually fall as fast as they rose.

As a general rule, late summer and autumn (January to April) are the best months for tramping in New Zealand. During these times the temperatures are at their mildest, the rainfall is generally less, and the probability of snow unlikely. Spring and early summer (September to December) offers the delights of alpine flowers, but in very mountainous terrain avalanches may pose a risk. For those who are suitably equipped and experienced, winter (May to August) offers its own rewards: fewer people generally, sometimes crisp, long spells of fine weather, and all the glories of snow-capped mountains.

Taking into account the amount of daylight is also important when planning your tramp. For example, during mid summer Stewart Island experiences some 16 hours of daylight, but by mid-winter this reduces to around 8 hours. In more northerly latitudes the difference is not so extreme, but even in Northland you can expect only 10 hours daylight around the winter solstice.

For further information check out: www.metservice.co.nz and www.avalanche.net.nz.



Trampers on Avalanche Peak in winter, Arthur's Pass National Park

Huts and hut fees

New Zealand's hut network – which includes over 900 back-country huts – is unique in the world, but requires your support if it is to be maintained. By far the majority of huts are owned and managed by DOC, although a significant number are maintained by tramping, hunting or alpine clubs.

DOC charges modest hut fees for staying overnight in most huts, excepting very small huts or bivys, which are free. Hut fees by no means cover DOC's cost of maintaining all New Zealand's tracks and huts, let alone replacing those that are occasionally destroyed by fires or fall down from old age. By paying hut fees, you are doing your bit to enable future generations – New Zealanders and overseas visitors alike – to enjoy the back country.

Charges vary according to the hut and facilities, which DOC rate in the following categories: Serviced (\$10/night), Standard (\$5/night), Basic/Bivvy (free). Serviced huts, like those on the Wangapeka, Greenstone or Hollyford, are likely to have an indoor sink, running water and usually have heating and sometimes cooking facilities. Standard huts, such as Makino Hut in the Kaweka Range, usually just have mattresses and perhaps a woodstove or open fire. A basic shelter, like the Flora Valley rock shelters, have mattresses but not much else.

Great Walks and Alpine huts have a different fee structure, which usually varies according to season. Excepting on the Abel Tasman Coastal Track, all Great Walk huts have heating and gas cooking facilities, and cost between \$20 and \$40/night, during the peak season.



Hut tickets can be purchased from most DOC offices and information centres, and Great Walk hut bookings can be made on-line at www.doc.govt.nz. For those doing a lot of tramping (say spending more than 20 nights in a back-country hut per year) a good-value option is to purchase a Back-Country Hut Pass. These cost \$90 for adults and enable use of all huts except Great Walks huts, Mueller, Welcome Flat and Pinnacles huts. A 30% discount on the Annual Hut Pass is available for members of Federated Mountain Clubs, the Mountain Safety Council and the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association.

Most huts have hut books which log who has visited the hut and when. These provide not only a record for search and rescue purposes but often contain amusing anecdotes or interesting information on alternative routes.

Hut etiquette

At night or during bad weather, the hut forms the focus of the tramping experience, something which is part of the New Zealand back-country tradition. A few simple courtesies help make the experience an enjoyable one for all, even in a crowded hut.

Always make room for newcomers, even if the hut is nearing capacity. When the hut is full, consider using a tent if you have one. Inside, keep your gear tidy and contained; and try not to spread out too much. Remove wet boots before entering the hut to keep the floor clean and dry. Cook with ventilation, conserve firewood, and don't overheat the

hut to the discomfort of others. When leaving, make sure all benches and tables are clean, sweep the floor, close all windows and doors, and ensure you've replaced any firewood used.

If you have spare room in your rubbish bag, consider taking out any leftover detritus – it's surprising how quickly huts can fill with 'forgotten' waste.

You can't go too wrong if you follow the rule, 'Leave the hut as you would hope to find it.'

Water and conservation

The New Zealand back country is blessed with some of the cleanest water on the planet. Care when camping or toileting needs to be taken to ensure it stays that way.

Do not use soap or detergent in lakes or streams, and where possible use toilets. If there is no longdrop, go to the toilet at least 100 metres away from water sources, and bury your wastes in a shallow 'cat scrape.' When camping take care not to pitch your tent in a fragile area, and refrain from hacking poles out of saplings.

While the water-borne parasite giardia is present in some back-country waterways, there are still significant areas where you can safely drink straight from the stream. If in doubt, carry water treatments, boil the water for five minutes or use a water filter.

Have consideration for the environment; don't take anything natural, and don't leave anything unnatural. Carry out all your rubbish and any you find. Avoid lighting fires when they are unnecessary (in summer) or during a fire ban. When they are necessary, keep fires small and use pre-existing fireplaces. Dismantle outdoor fireplaces after use.

Safety and equipment

There is not the scope in this book to give a detailed description of equipment and safety, but a brief list of what should be carried for a typical tramp is as follows: sleeping bag, billy, burner, fuel, warm woolly hat, sunhat, gloves, raincoat, warm jersey or fleece, two pairs of polypropylene or woollen long-johns, two wool or polypropylene tops, a pair of shorts, first-aid kit, mug, plate, utensils, two pairs of warm socks, map, compass, sunscreen, candles, matches, and enough food for the trip duration plus a few extra



snacks and one extra meal. For some trips you may need to take a tent, or at least a flysheet and sleeping mat. In winter you may need to add ice-axe, crampons, sunglasses, more warm gear, extra fuel and food. Check out the Mountain Safety Council's 'Bushcraft Manual' for more information.

You should leave your intentions, including possible bad weather alternatives, with a trusted friend who can, in the event of your party becoming overdue, be relied upon to contact the police Search and Rescue (SAR). During your tramp you should also fill in hut books, even if you do not stay in the hut, so that your route can be followed in the event you become overdue or have an accident.

Remember that rivers are the biggest hazard in the back country and cause the most deaths. You should be

well versed in the current Mountain Safety Council river-crossing techniques, and have practised these before needing to use them in a real situation. Many tramping clubs offer introductory courses on river crossing, bushcraft and navigation. The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council, www.mountainsafety.org.nz, also has many good brochures and manuals on safety in the outdoors.

Happy and safe tramping. May the weather god Huey smile benevolently during your trip!

*Above Podocarp trees, Whirinaki Forest Park
Opposite Cape Brett Hut, Bay of Islands*

QUEEN CHARLOTTE TRACK

MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS 3-5 DAYS

During his three journeys to New Zealand in the eighteenth century, Captain James Cook spent more time in the Marlborough Sounds than anywhere else. It's not hard to see why: the relatively benign climate, sheltered, intricate coastline, and lush coastal forest all combine to create a landscape not replicated elsewhere in New Zealand.

While farming and forestry have significantly altered the landscapes since Cook's time, much of the area remains forested and in a natural or regenerating state.

Tracks have long existed throughout the Sounds, but it was not until DOC ranger Roy Grose began to negotiate access across private land to connect tracks located in a series of DOC reserves along the Queen Charlotte Sound, that the existing Queen Charlotte Track became a reality. In recent years the 71-kilometre track, which connects Anakiwa with Ship Cove, has become increasingly popular. Aside from the coastal scenery, the main attraction of the track is the diversity of accommodation en route, which ranges from basic campsites to luxury bed and breakfasts.

Well defined and marked, the track should not present any problems to trampers of modest fitness. While the entire track normally takes between three and five days, road access and water taxi transport make a range of shorter options possible. Upon request, water taxi operators can also transport packs for trampers.

Trampers should expect to meet mountain bikers, except between December 1 and February 28 when bikes are not allowed on the Ship Cove to Kenepuru section.



Ship Cove to Resolution Bay 2 hours

Water taxi transport to Ship Cove is needed to start the track. Ship Cove (Meretoto) became Captain Cook's home away from home during his New Zealand voyages. Here he made repairs to his ships, rested the crew, and replenished supplies of water and food. Altogether he and his crews spent some 100 days here. The area surrounding the cove is now an Historic Reserve, with a memorial to Cook, information panels and a shelter (camping is not permitted at the cove).

Many walkers choose to first divert up a side track which leads to an attractive waterfall (90 minutes return). From Ship Cove the Queen Charlotte Track climbs through forest over a ridge then descends to reach Resolution Bay (named after one of Cook's ships), where the first of six DOC campsites on the track is located.

Resolution Bay to Camp Bay, Endeavour Inlet 7 hours

From Resolution Bay the Queen Charlotte Track skirts the shore, then begins a climb over a ridge, eventually curling round into Endeavour Inlet – named after another of Cook's ships. The track gradually descends towards the shoreline, passing Furneaux Lodge, where cabin and backpacker accommodation is available. Nearby a side track leads to another waterfall.

Beyond, the track crosses the head of Endeavour Inlet, and sidles around another headland to reach Big Bay, then Camp Bay, where the second of the DOC campsites is located.

Opposite Sunrise, Bay of Many Coves

Camp Bay to Torea Saddle and Cowshed Bay 9 hours

This is the hardest section of the track, along which it is usually necessary to carry water. From Camp Bay the track climbs up to Kenepuru Saddle, where the first views of Kenepuru Sound open out. From here the track largely follows the crest of the ridge separating Kenepuru Sound from Queen Charlotte Sound, offering fine panoramas in places. DOC campsites exist above the Bay of Many Coves and at Black Rock Camp (above Kumutoto Bay). Those wanting more upmarket accommodation can find it at Gem Resort, accessible on a side track in the Bay of Many Coves.

The Queen Charlotte Track remains on the ridge as far as Torea Saddle, the narrow point between Torea Bay and Portage Bay. Here the track intersects Kenepuru Road, which is

followed down to the shoreline at Portage Bay. Nearby, the Portage Hotel offers accommodation, or alternatively there is the DOC campsite at Cowshed Bay.

Torea Saddle to Te Mahia Saddle and Mistletoe Bay 4 hours

Back at Torea Saddle, the main track continues westwards, again on the ridge crest. The forest here is still regenerating from earlier fires, with manuka and gorse predominating.

Near Te Mahia Saddle, the track intersects a road which descends to Mistletoe Bay, where there is a campsite managed by the Mistletoe Bay Trust. Nearby lodges can be booked through DOC, or there is alternative accommodation at Te Mahia Bay (at Kenepuru Sound on the other side of the saddle).



Te Mahia Saddle to Anakiwa 4 hours

Back at Te Mahia Saddle the main track follows the Mistletoe Bay road for a short distance, before diverting off. The track climbs through mature forest, some of the loveliest on the entire route, before beginning a gentle descent back down to the shore at Umungata Bay, where the last of the DOC campsites is situated. Beyond, the track largely hugs the forested shoreline, ending at the Cobham Outward Bound School at Anakiwa.

Left Trapper overlooking Endeavour Inlet from the Queen Charlotte Track

Grade Easy

Maps Marlborough Sounds Parkmap

Access The Queen Charlotte Track can be accessed by road or boat from Picton. Road access points include: Anakiwa, Mistletoe Bay/Te Mahia Saddle, Torea Saddle, and Kenepuru Saddle. Boat access includes: Anakiwa, Mistletoe Bay, Waterfall Bay, Torea Bay, Camp Bay, Endeavour Inlet, Resolution Bay and Ship Cove.

Campsites The six self-register DOC campsites on the track

(each have a water supply and toilets, and some have a shelter) are located at: Resolution Bay, Camp Bay, Cowshed Bay, Bay of Many Coves, Black Rocks, and Umungata Bay. Another campsite at Mistletoe Bay is managed by a trust.

Note Please respect private property through which the track passes. Sections of the track crossing private land may be closed at times. During extreme fire risk, the track may be closed.

Information DOC Picton, Tel 03-520-3007

ABEL TASMAN COASTAL TRACK

ABEL TASMAN NATIONAL PARK 3-5 DAYS

Outstanding coastal scenery dominates this track, one of the eight Great Walks and the most popular in the country. Beginning in Golden Bay, and ending at Marahau, the 51-kilometre track takes a leisurely four to five days, but shorter sections can easily be planned using water taxi transport.

Created in 1942, when it became New Zealand's fourth national park, Abel Tasman was a milestone in many ways. All three of New Zealand's previous national parks centred on inland, mountainous areas. Not only was Abel Tasman a coastal park, but it still contained much regenerating forest, another first for a national park. Its realisation was largely due to the dedicated efforts of noted conservationist Perrine Moncrieff, who foresaw the need to protect coastal areas.

Golden sand beaches, granite headlands, and lush forests all feature on the walk. Several good huts are spaced along the track at regular intervals, and many other beaches offer delightful campsites. Unless you expect solitude, this track provides a classic, very enjoyable tramping experience. Note that some inlets on the track cannot be crossed at high tide, and walkers should plan their trip around the low tide accordingly.



Wainui Inlet to Whariwharangi Hut (19 bunks) 1.5–2 hours

Maori carvings mark the start to the Abel Tasman Coastal Track, a reminder that the first encounter between Europeans and Maori occurred near here in 1642 when Dutch seafarer Abel Tasman arrived in Golden Bay. After following the estuary around Wainui Inlet for a few hundred metres, the gorse-fringed track climbs to a saddle (at 180 metres the highest point on the track) overlooking Whariwharangi Bay. From the saddle the track descends beside a stream to emerge at the hut and campsite, set back from the beach. The hut, originally built in 1897, is an historic homestead dating from the area's farming past.

Whariwharangi Hut to Totaranui 3–3.5 hours

From Whariwharangi Hut, follow the track down to the beach, and head right until track markers indicate the point to enter the forest again. From here the track climbs over a

headland behind Separation Point. A worthwhile excursion on a side track to the seal colony at the point will add an hour onto the trip.

The main track descends to the campsite at Mutton Cove. At the south end of Mutton Cove the track climbs around a rocky headland to reach Anapai Bay and campsite. Another low forested saddle separates Anapai Bay from Totaranui, where an extensive family campground exists, with a separate campground for trampers.

Totaranui to Awaroa Hut (22 bunks) 2–2.5 hours

After a walk down the lengthy golden beach of Totaranui, the track resumes, crossing a headland above Skinner Point to reach Goat Bay. While there is no campsite at Goat Bay, the next beach, Waiharakeke, does have one. From Waiharakeke Bay, the track crosses a substantial headland to the north end of Awaroa Inlet, the largest in Abel Tasman National Park. This is one of two inlets that must be crossed,

and it is advisable to do so only two hours either side of low tide. The crossing takes some 25 minutes. Awaroa Hut lies on the far side of the inlet.

Awaroa Hut to Bark Bay Hut (34 bunks) 4–5 hours

From Awaroa the track skirts an area of private land and climbs over Tonga Saddle, reaching Onetahuti, or Tonga Bay, after a descent on the far side. Another tidal inlet here must be crossed three hours either side of low tide. Tonga Island and the Tonga Island Marine Reserve lie offshore. Two campsites exist on the pleasant curve of Onetahuti, the second near the site of an historic granite quarry.

Beyond the quarry site, the track once again climbs over another forested headland, descending to Bark Bay on the far side. Like Awaroa and Onetahuti, Bark Bay has a tidal inlet, but this one can be bypassed on a high-tide track. Bark Bay Hut, the largest on the track, is situated at the southern end of the inlet.

Bark Bay Hut to Anchorage Hut (24 bunks) 3–3.5 hours

From the hut, the track skirts the shore of Bark Bay, then plunges back into the bush around South Head. From here the track remains inland for several kilometres, descending to cross a substantial footbridge over the Falls River. En route side tracks to Sandfly Bay and a lookout over Frenchman Bay are both possible. At Torrent Bay the track reaches the coast again. For those wanting to walk directly to the hut at Anchorage, the inlet at Torrent Bay can be crossed within two hours of low tide. However, the high-tide route around Torrent Bay passes one of the track's highlights: a 20-minute side trip to Cleopatra's Pool, an inviting swimming spot amongst the boulders of the Torrent River.

Anchorage Hut to Marahau 4–5 hours

Anchorage is one of the most popular parts of the park. Here sea kayakers, yachties and walkers all congregate in a delightfully sheltered bay. If time allows, spend a day wandering the tracks around Pitt Head and the exquisite Te Puketea Bay – perhaps the most appealing of all the beaches in the park.

South of Anchorage Hut the main coastal track crosses another forested saddle, descending to the sea beyond Yellow Point. Side tracks en route divert to campsites at Watering Cove and Akersten Bay. Beyond Yellow Point the track skirts Stilwell Bay, reaching campsites at Apple Tree and Tinline bays. The track concludes at Marahau, where there is a carpark, picnic tables, shelter, phone and information panels.



Akersten Bay, Abel Tasman Coastal Track

Grade Easy

Maps Abel Tasman Parkmap

Access Wainui Inlet is reached from Takaka, in Golden Bay. Many people start the track from Totaranui, reached on a winding road past Wainui Inlet. Marahau is accessible from Motueka. Both ends are serviced by public transport. Water taxis can also be used to shorten the tramp. Respect areas of private land through which the track passes.

Huts and campsites Huts must be pre-booked with DOC (note that you are required to carry your own cooker). All the track's 19 camping areas must be pre-booked with DOC too. During the peak season (October 1 – June 30) huts cost \$25/night and campsites \$10/night. Off-season rates (July 1 – 30 September) are \$10/night for huts and \$7/night for campsites. All campsites have toilets and water supplies, and a few have cooking shelters.

Information and booking Abel Tasman Coastal Track helpdesk, Tel 03-546-8210 email greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz

