



Boyle to Arthur's Pass

 Walking

Difficulty

Hard

Length

113.4 km

Journey Time

6-8 days

Regions

[West Coast](#) , [Canterbury](#).

Sub-Regions

[Hurunui District](#) , [Selwyn District](#)

Part of Collections

[Te Araroa - New Zealand's Trail](#) , [Te Araroa - South Island](#)

Track maintained by

[Te Araroa Trail Trust](#) 

This tramp follows an historic crossing of the Southern Alps at Harper Pass (962m).

Māori used the route to access pounamu (greenstone) on the West Coast and European settlers used it for access and supply purposes during the gold rush of in the 1860s. Harper Pass is named after Leonard Harper who at 20 years of age became the first European to cross the pass and reach the West Coast in 1857.

The route fell into disuse from 1867 following the development of an alternative route through Arthur's Pass, which provided more direct access to the Coast.

In the 1930s the track was reopened and 4 substantial huts were constructed by the Physical Welfare Division of the Department of Internal Affairs in an attempted to recreate the Milford Track's model for tourism success. While the Harper Pass Track has never reached the Milford Track's status, it still affords a quality tramping experience of relative ease.

Things to keep in mind;

- On the West Coast side of Harper Pass the route requires numerous crossings of the Taramakau and Otehake Rivers. Trampers with river-crossings skills and experience will find these rivers passable in normal to low flows but impassable when river levels are high. Extra food should be carried to enable trampers backtrack or to wait until river levels subside.
- In a number of areas, this route requires a lot of self-navigation as it is not fully marked. Generally this is straight-forward though you'll want to be carrying GPS, maps and compass to assist you.
- The traditional Harper Pass Track starts at Windy Point and ends at Aickens.

St James Car Park (Boyle Village) to Hope-Kiwi Lodge - 26.5km / 8hr

Follow the Tūi Track sign and markers to the highway and then on the landward side of the fence on the left to a driveway leading to the old Boyle Base Hut. Cross the road here and follow the markers down to a terrace, and then along to the Boyle River.

If safe to cross, ford the Boyle River where markers indicate and continue down the true right bank on river flats to the confluence with the Doubtful River.

If the river can't be crossed safely then back-track and continue down on the road shoulder for about 2 hours to the sign-post marking the entrance road to the Lake Sumner Forest Park at Windy Point. You will pass the Engineers Camp along the way. There is a car park and shelter at Windy Point, a short distance down the entrance road. This marks the alternative, and traditional, start point to the Harper Pass Track.

After fording the Doubtful River where marked the track continues down the true right of the Boyle River and joins a farm track that leads onwards to a deer fence. Follow this fence around until markers show the track heading uphill through mānuka and beech forest towards the main Hope Valley track. Te Araroa joins the Harper Pass Track proper here. Turn right and the track climbs through mānuka scrub and farm land to the beech forest's edge. Once inside the forest the track sidles above the Hope River to Hope Shelter, a basic hut (6 bunk) can be found which is old but still in reasonable condition.

Beyond Hope Shelter the track continues through the forest and then breaks out across grassy flats. The track then crosses the Hope River on a swingbridge. Across the bridge there is a junction with the track to St Jacobs Hut. From here Te Araroa heads south on the track to Hope-Kiwi Lodge, situated in a large clearing near the forest edge.

Hope-Kiwi Lodge to Hurunui Hut 5 - 19km / 6hr

Below Hope-Kiwi Lodge the track crosses open cattle flats then climbs through bush towards Kiwi Saddle (677m). A lookout nearby affords good views of Lake Sumner. Beyond the saddle the track descends towards the lake shore and to a swingbridge over Three Mile Stream. Cross the bridge, continue to the lake head and beyond up the Hurunui River's true left side. Keep to the marked track until it deviates across the valley to another swingbridge, this time over the Hurunui River. Once on the other side of the river the track climbs and sidles for about 30 minutes to Hurunui Hut, a modern hut with sleeping platforms and elevated views over the valley below.

Hurunui Hut to Hurunui No.3 Hut - 10km / 4-5hr

The track descends from the hut through mānuka forest to the open flats of the valley floor. About 2-thirds of the way, a sign indicates access to a hot pool (look for the steam rising from the stream just before that). Another sign at the pool warns; "Amoebic meningitis is fatal and caused by water entering nasal passages. Do not immerse head". As long as you ensure your head stays above the water, feel free to swim within the pool as it is a Te Araroa highlight.

Beyond the hot spring the track continues through flats and forest on the Hurunui's true right all the way to Hurunui No.3 Hut. While one of the original 4 huts on the route, the No.3 Hut remains a comfortable (16 bunk) hut. It has an unusual looking DOC research building nearby.

Hurunui No.3 Hut to Locke Stream Hut - 15km / 7hr

Soon after leaving the No. 3 Hut the track crosses Cameron Stream. An emergency 3 wire bridge can be used here to avoid getting wet feet. Continue across the flat towards Cameron Hut (4 bunks). This hut is offers basic emergency accommodation for anyone in need.

Beyond Cameron Flat the track leaves cattle country and ascends towards Harper Pass Bivvy, a cramped 2 bunk box with one tiny window and a helpful sign on the door that reads 'fire exit'.

From the Biv the track crosses the Hurunui headwaters and climbs more steeply for 30 minutes to Harper Pass. Kiwi are present in the area in reasonable numbers and can be heard at night. Watch out for their 3-pronged foot prints as they are sometimes visible where the ground is soft.

On the West Coast side of the Pass the track drops steeply and crosses the Upper Taramakau River to the true right side. It continues down to a swingbridge, which takes trampers to the true left side. From here it is about 1.5 hours downstream to Locke Stream Hut.

Locke Stream Hut is another Physical Welfare Division classic. It was built in 1940 with hand-hewn timber by 65 year old packman, Sam Burrows. The hut was restored in 1993 through a bequest from Tom Beeston's estate.

Locke Stream Hut to Morrison footbridge via Aitkens - 23km / 6-8hr

Beyond the hut, travel is down the Taramakau River through bush and open river terraces - though some pieces of track are affected by river damage. Travel is often in the riverbed and can require numerous river crossings that become impassable after heavy rain.

Kiwi Hut (6 bunks) is located approximately half way down the Taramakau (8km/3.5hr from Locke Stream Hut) and a 15 minute walk from the Kiwi Hut junction.

Look out for DOC markers that point the way on the true right side. After approx 2.5km cross the Taramakau (to the true left) then cross the Otehake River separately. The route is then mainly on the true left all the way down to the sign-posted turn off onto the Flood Track to the Morrison Footbridge - though due to river movement at times travel may be through the riverbed and require crossings.

Trampers wishing to exit to the Aitkens carpark on SH73 should continue down the Taramakau and then carefully ford the Otirā River.

Meanwhile Te Araroa continues left on the Flood Track for 2hr and joins with the Mingha-Deception Track at the Morrison Footbridge. The Flood Track is poorly formed, through bush and involves a series of sharp climbs and descents along a steep face above the Otirā River - when the Otirā River is low, walkers may prefer to walk along the riverbed, though carefully judge the water level before attempting this. Cross the footbridge to access SH73. There is a carpark across the road.

From Aickens, turn left for 22km to Arthur's Pass, a small alpine village, or turn right for 73km to Greymouth on the West Coast.

Mingha - Deception Track

This route forms the mountain run component of the celebrated Coast-to-Coast race. Top athletes complete it in around 3 hours. On the Deception side the track is rough and not regularly marked. However, in good conditions it is a reasonable route which most trampers take 2 days to complete. The route involves many river crossings so is vulnerable to bad weather. Don't attempt it in heavy rain or when heavy rain is forecast. Come prepared to wait out flood conditions. The area is home to rare and protected blue duck/whio. DOC asks for sightings to be reported to staff at the Visitor Centre in Arthur's Pass.

SH73 – Goat Pass Hut - 18.5km / 8-9hr

Cross the Otira River on the Morrison footbridge and follow the Deception River up the true right side across river flats. Cross to the true left and follow rock cairns through the lower gorge, re-crossing the river where necessary. Continue up to Good Luck Creek. Upper Deception Hut, which is easy to miss, is located a short distance beyond on the true right side.

Beyond the hut trampers can pick their way upwards, mostly in the riverbed though there are some small tracked portions under bush cover. There is a final steep climb over rough terrain to get up to the Goat Pass Hut (20 bunks), located a short distance below the pass itself. This hut has a radio link to DOC's visitor's centre at Arthur's Pass, which trampers can use to obtain weather forecasts and other information.

Goat Pass Hut to SH73 Bealey River - 9.5km / 5hr

From the hut the track improves significantly but still has many river crossings. The track crosses Goat Pass on boardwalk sections then descends towards the bushline into the Mingha Valley. The track departs the river course towards Dudley's Knob to avoid a difficult gorge and continues down to the Lower Mingha flats. Look for a safe crossing of the Bealey River near its confluence with the Mingha River and continue down towards Greyney (this is only a day shelter - no camping) on SH73. The track line rises to the road along the way. The closest alternatives are Klondyke Corner on the banks of the Waimakariri and Avalanche Creek in Arthur's Pass village, both \$8/person/night.

Conditions:

Experience: Suitable for well-equipped people with previous backcountry tramping and river-crossing experience.

Best season: Summer, autumn and winter

Required maps:

- NZTopo50 Moana BU20
- Haupiri BU21
- Lake Sumner BU22
- Boyle BU23

Hazards: Flooded rivers, steep drop-offs

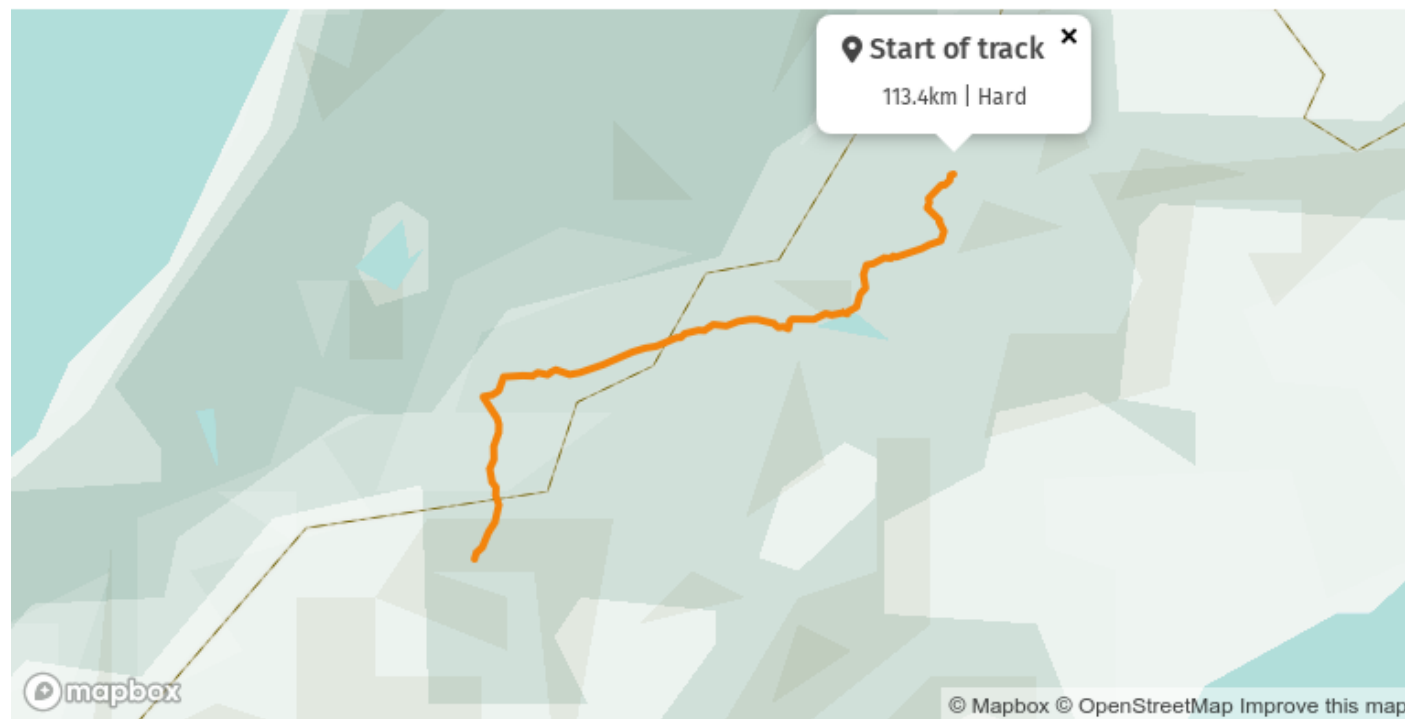
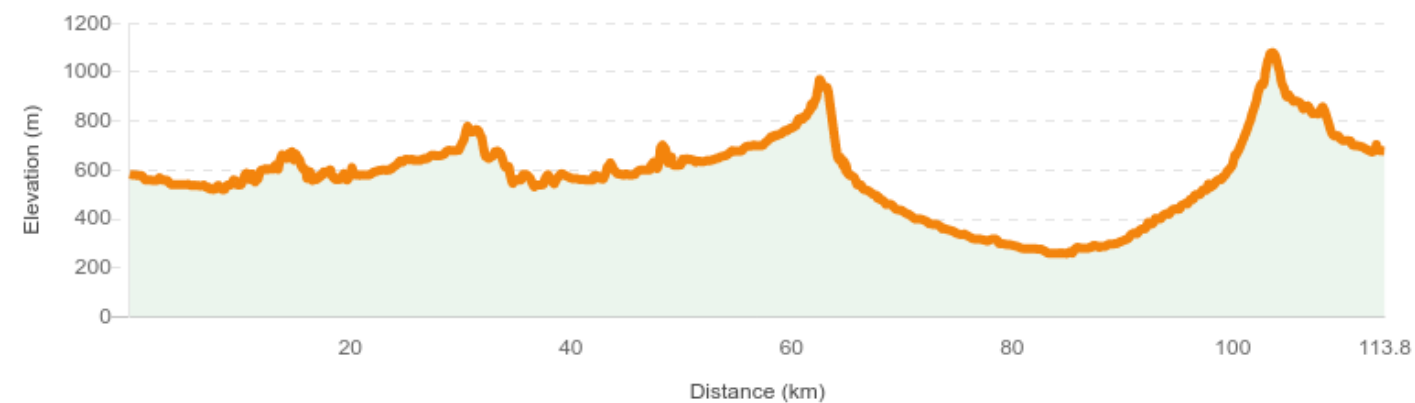
Safety: This route guide must be read in conjunction with [Tramping in Arthur's Pass National Park \(PDF, 762K\) \(opens in new window\)](#), and [New Zealand's Outdoor Safety Code \(external site\)](#).

Before setting out, check the latest track conditions and avalanche advisory with the

Before you go, tell someone your plans and leave a date to raise the alarm if you haven't returned. To do this, use the [New Zealand Outdoors Intentions process \(external site\)](#) on the AdventureSmart website. It is endorsed by New Zealand's search and rescue agencies and provides three simple options to tell someone you trust the details about your trip.

How to get here

Track Elevation and Map



More information

[Te Araroa Canterbury trail notes, including information about accommodation, transport and resupplying](#) [□](#)

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