



Rākaia River to Rangitata River



Walking

Difficulty

Hard

Length

69.7 km

Journey Time

4 days

Region

[Canterbury](#)

Sub-Regions

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

Part of Collections

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

Track maintained by

[Te Araroa Trail Trust](#)

Te Araroa trail section: The track starts on a public access easement over Glenariffe Station, 34km from SH77. It then crosses the 60,000ha Hakatere Conservation Park before finishing in the Heron Basin on a paper road that runs through Castle Ridge Station.

Glenrock Stream to Comyns Hut - 15.7km / 4-5 hours

From the DOC sign notifying “Access to North Branch Ashburton Stream” the track follows markers through farmland up the true right side of Glenrock Stream – lookout for electric fences. At the 1.7km mark the track crosses the stream and then merges with a farm track that begins to climb towards the conservation park boundary. Along the way the track passes a stand of kōwhai trees. No camping is permissible until inside the conservation park boundary.

From the conservation park boundary, the route zig-zags up an old farm track to Turtons Saddle (1,120m). Beyond the saddle, travel remains on the farm track and is initially east and upwards, but soon turns south sidling then descending towards the Turtons Stream’s true left bank. The A-frame hut toilet becomes visible in the lower portions of the descent.

After 8.7km the track reaches Turtons Stream, which is the first water source en route that is both reliable and safe to drink. The track remains on the true left and crosses Ensor Stream 1.5km before A-Frame Hut, a tidy 3-bunk hut near the Comyns Stream’s confluence with Turtons Stream. It takes about an hour from the saddle to reach this hut.

Beyond A-Frame Hut, the track continues down the true left of Turtons Stream for about 2km. This is to the first of 4 river crossings in close succession. The track then climbs and descends into Mutton Gully. Once out of this gully, Turtons Stream is forded a final time. It’s then an easy 700m walk to Comyns Hut (8 bunks).

The current Comyns Hut was built in 1957 to replace the original and derelict hut, which was built in the 1890s and still stands nearby. The ‘new’ hut is basic but was improved following restoration work in 2008. The hut door and walls act as an informal and historic register and make interesting reading.

Comyns Hut to Double Hut junction - 16km / 6-8 hours

Note: This part of the track is rough and unformed. Trampers are required to pick their own route between markers which, in poor weather, may not be visible from one to the next. The physical and navigational challenges rise accordingly.

A marker behind the hut shows the route heading west up the North Branch Ashburton River towards Round Hill Creek. Travel quickly becomes confined to the stream bed and involves frequent river crossings. These are straightforward in normal flows.

Round Hill Creek joins North Branch Ashburton as the latter heads north towards Petticoat Lane. From this confluence, Te Araroa continues up Round Hill Creek, past Logan Stream, and then departs to begin the ascent towards Clent Hills Saddle (1,480m). On a clear day the saddle affords great views of the Longman Range, Ricki Spur and the wider Lake Heron Basin.

Care needs to be taken to ascertain the correct route beyond the saddle. Do not descend straight ahead. Instead, continue to the right along the saddle and link to the upper-most track crossing a large scree slope. On the far side of the scree the route continues to sidle through tussock to the next ridge. Marker poles become clear again along the way.

From the ridge, the poles lead down and to the right, diagonally away from the Swin River. Eventually, after crossing 3 further scree slopes, the track reaches a dilapidated fence along another ridgeline.

Follow the fence line down the ridge to a rock cairn and arrow, which indicate the way down and to the right towards the next pole and ultimately to an unnamed stream, which is a tributary to the Swin River. Once across this stream, the final climb begins towards the Mellish Saddle.

The route down from the saddle becomes easier and remains above the true left bank of Mellish Stream. It emerges into the wider Heron Basin and passes a sign-posted junction with a side trail out to the road end at Lake Heron. Continue on the main track for about 1km to another junction near the Swin River, which is crossed on foot but seldom an issue. From here Double Hut (6 bunks) is 1km away on another side trail. Double Hut has 6 bunks and is in reasonable condition.

The side trail to the right provides an exit to the Lake Heron Car Park and then to Hakatere Heron Road. Once on the road, it is a few 100m to the right around the lakeshore to Lake Heron Campground. Or turn left for 16.3km to Ashburton Gorge Road and then left another 39.6km to Mt Somers Village where there is a tavern for meals, a general store and camping accommodation.

Double Hut junction to Hakatere Heron Road (via Manuka Hut) - 14km / 3-4 hours

The track continues south for 6.4km across grassy and gravel flats passing the Seagull and Mānuka Lakes along the way. This is to a junction from where Mānuka Hut (6 bunks) is hidden 300m upstream and to the left.

Note: The next reliable water source on Te Araroa beyond Mānuka Hut is on the Clearwater Track (17.3km ahead).

Beyond the Mānuka Hut junction, Te Araroa continues south for a little over 2km and then turns west to climb to the ridge on Emily Hill's south flank. The poled track line then sidles down through matagouri bush and spear grass to the flats. From here it's easier going across to a carpark at Lake Emily. At this point, the track leaves the Hakatere Conservation Park and joins with a marked unformed road that divides into Castle Ridge Station. Trampers should take care to follow the markers to avoid straying onto private property.

It's 5km from Mānuka Hut to the Lake Emily carpark and then another 3.2km on the Castle Ridge paper road to Hakatere Heron Road. This is where the Clent Hills Track ends. There is a farm gate across the paper road about 600m before the finish point. This gate should be left as it is found (open or closed).

For trampers continuing south, turn left onto Hakatere Heron Road and walk 4.4km to the Clearwater Track trailhead. This is on the right-hand side of the road just beyond Buicks Bridge.

Clearwater Track - 21km / 4-6 hours

Note: There are no huts en route but camping is permitted at any point down this track.

This high county track passes through the Hakatere Conservation Park on land formally comprised in the 9119ha Hakatere Station. This pastoral leasehold property was purchased by the Nature Heritage Fund in October 2007 and returned to the conservation estate. Free public access is now afforded, as is protection to significant wetlands and expansive landscapes.

From the south side of Buicks Bridge, which crosses the South Branch Ashburton River, marker poles lead westward across easy, open country. This is towards the gap between Mt Guy and Dogs Hill. At the 5km mark, the track crosses a fence line and later it joins an old farm track, where it stays for another 5km. At this point, the marked track turns left and heads towards a saddle at the western end of Mt Guy. It passes a tarn along the way.

From the Saddle, there are sweeping views over Lake Clearwater towards the Harper Range, of Mt Potts, and to, then beyond, the Rangitata River. Follow the fence line down to the creek at the base of the hill. The track then heads south-west towards the head of Lake Clearwater and joins with another old farm track, which continues towards the Potts River but stops at a gate. Te Araroa heads northward here to avoid crossing private property then bends around towards the lip on the Potts River's true left bank. Once on the lip the track stays high and follows the fence line. It then drops steeply into a gully, which opens to the Potts River bed. If the Potts River is running clear then the best travel is usually downstream direct to the carpark at the road bridge.

If the Potts is discoloured this exit may be impassable. The proper course then is up the other side of the gully. Trampers are then able to remain on the Potts side of the fence line through to the road. From here it's a short walk downhill to the car park and trailhead.

It's 18.5km to the left on Hakatere Potts Road to Ashburton Gorge Road, then on to Mt Somers Village and Methven. It's 3km to the right on Hakatere Potts Road to Mt Potts Lodge.

Conditions

Potential hazards

- Farming operations
- River crossings – never cross flooded rivers
- Small stream crossings
- Track exposed to sun, wind or cold
- Weather extremes
- Few water sources – be sure to fill up at Mānuka Hut

How to get here

Northern Start: Glenrock Stream, Double Hill Run Road

Southern End: Potts River Bridge carpark, Hakatere Potts Road

Transport






[Methven Shuttle](#) [🔗](#) are a local service who can take hikers to and from the trailheads around the Rakaia and Rangitata Rivers. P: 027 405 2217, Text preferred as cell coverage is limited. E: bookings@methvenshuttle.com. See website for details.

Double Hill Run Road (Methven to Glenrock) School Bus operated by Methven Travel, offers transport to hikers when going up to Glenrock in the morning to collect children and returning to Methven after dropping off children in the afternoon. School days only. \$30 pp. Departs Glenrock trailhead approximately 4:30 pm. Booking essential. P: Dave 03 302 8106 M: 027 437 5432.

Methven Travel - Christchurch to Methven shuttle. Monday, Wednesday, Friday unless committed elsewhere. Departs Christchurch 10:00 am. Departs Methven 12:30 pm. Pickup at Christchurch Airport or Museum. Booking essential. P: Dave 03 302 8106 M: 027 437 5432.

Accommodation

En route

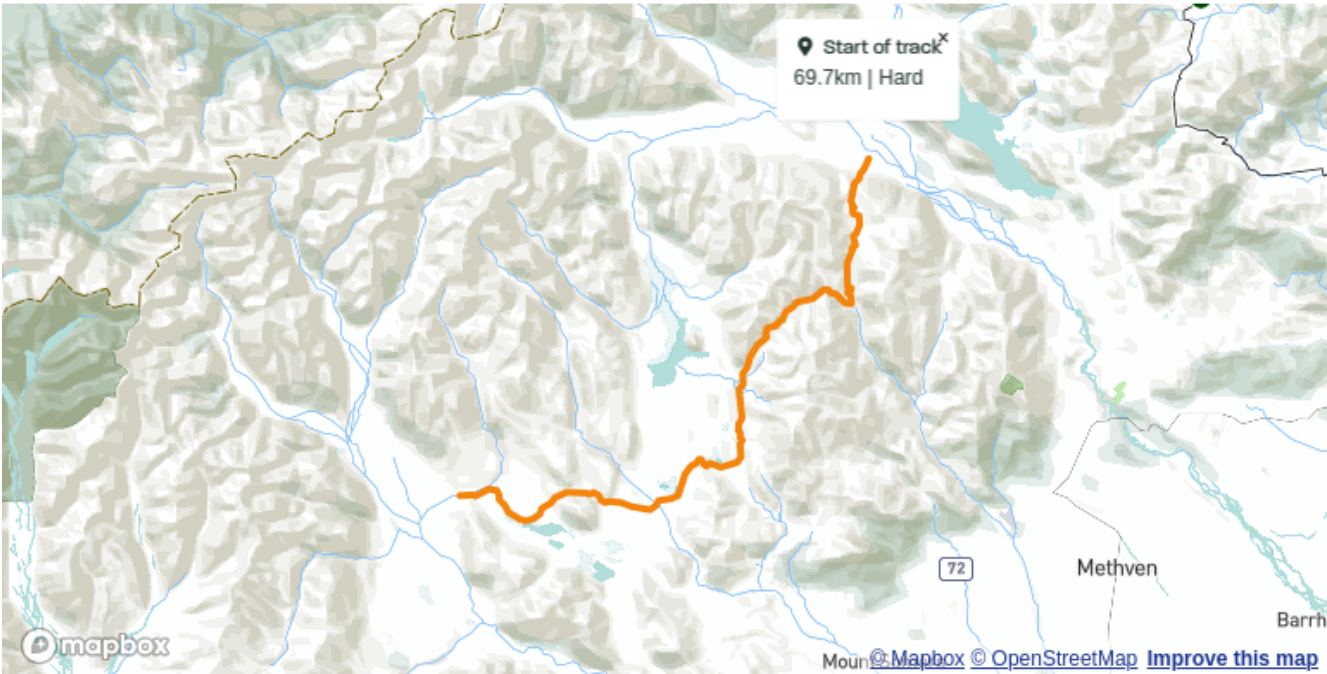
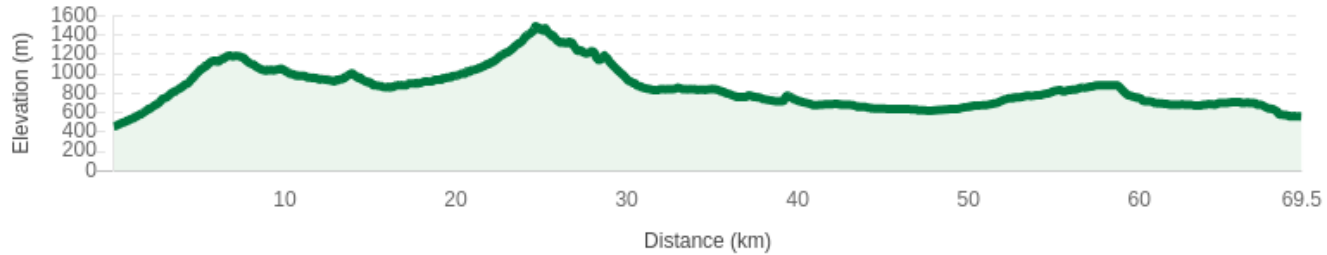
- Farm Cottage at Glenrock Station - Double Run Rd (adjacent to Trail) - P: 03 318 5855 - E: andykate@netspeed.net.nz - special \$60 pp rate for Te Araroa walkers (self-catering)
- [Comyns Hut](#)  - 8 bunks
- Double Junction Hut - 6 bunks
- [Lake Heron Campground](#)  - GPS co-ords -43.49462, 171.15600 - Toilets and water only. (Only Open between 1 October and 30 April)
- [Mt Somers Village](#)  - tavern for meals, a general store and camping accommodation.
- [Mānuka Hut](#)  - 6 bunks
- [Mt Potts Lodge](#)  - 2131 Hakatere Potts Rd, Ashburton Lakes. P: 03 303 9060, 03 303 9738 - M: Jack Downer (General Manager) 021 527 478 E: info@mtpotts.co.nz - Offers a range of accommodation from powered and unpowered camp sites (32), bunkrooms, deluxe suites, and cottages. We have HOT SHOWERS and refreshments from our restaurant cafe and bar. If stranded at the Potts River trailhead it may be worth walking approximately 3 km to Mt Potts Lodge for some refreshment and access to a wifi connection to phone for transport.

Methven

- Big Tree Lodge 25 South Belt, Methven. Phone Peter Wilson 02902012762, email jiaxingyuki@gmail.com 10% discount for TA walkers for phone bookings, No charge for accepting supply boxes. Transport to or from trailheads can be arranged

Food And Supply

Track Elevation and Map



More information

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

- [Map 116](#) [↗](#)
- [Map 117](#) [↗](#)
- [Map 118](#) [↗](#)
- [Map 119](#) [↗](#)
- [Map 120](#) [↗](#)

Before starting Te Araroa either as a through-walker of the whole country or a section walker, [please register on Te Araroa website](#) [↗](#). Please also [visit the website](#) [↗](#) or [download the app](#) [↗](#) for detailed maps, trail alerts and other relevant information.

We encourage you to continue gaining the skills and knowledge required for a safe trip. The NZ Mountain Safety Council has lots of free resources and information you can use. These can be accessed via www.mountainsafety.org.nz [↗](#).

We recommend trying these online learning tools:

- [Trip Planning](#) [↗](#)
- [Tramping/field Skills](#) [↗](#)
- [Basic Navigation](#) [↗](#)
- [River Safety](#) [↗](#)

Additionally, check out the range of helpful videos available from the NZ Mountain Safety Council [YouTube channel](#) [↗](#).

