

Lake Brunner walks

Introduction

Lake Brunner *Kotuku Whakaoho*, at 39 square kilometres, is the West Coast's largest lake. Gouged out by a branch of the Taramakau glacier, it is one of a cluster of lakes within this sector of the Grey River catchment - the others including Poerua, Kangaroo, Lady, Haupiri, Hochstetter and Ahaura. Fed by the Crooked, Orangipuku and Eastern Hohonu rivers and several smaller streams.

Lake Brunner is popular for swimming, boating or angling for its renowned brown trout. Moana township, at the northern end, has a wide range of accommodation and services.

The Lake is known to Māori as *Kotuku Whakaoho* - flapping wings of the kotuku (white heron). The present name commemorates Thomas Brunner, who in 1848 became the first European to see the lake, during his epic 550 day exploration of the region with Kehu and other Māori guides.

Adjacent to the lake and the Arnold River *Kotuku Awa* that drains it are six walking tracks and two routes ranging in duration from 20 minutes to 8 hours. Tracks and viewpoints along them provide an appreciation of geology, landforms, botany, birdlife and human history.

Before you go

These walks and tracks vary greatly in terms of safety and equipment requirements. While the shorter walks can be done in ordinary clothes and footwear, the longer tracks call for something extra. This applies particularly to the route from the lookouts on Ara O Te Kinga to the top of the mountain and the entire Mt French route. Both are steep and slippery in places and even on fine days the tops can become clouded quickly, making navigation difficult on the rugged tops. Wear sturdy footwear (preferably boots), carry warm, weatherproof clothing and take enough snacks, drinking water and equipment needed for a full day walk. If venturing along the tops carry a compass and the K32 topographical map. Even before walking a short track it is worthwhile letting a reliable person know where you are going and an estimated time of return - and essential in the case of longer tracks such as Bain Bay and any part of Ara O Te Kinga and Mt French.

Suspension footbridge over the Arnold River *Kotuku Awa* (photo: Stewart Nimmo)



Turn right over the bridge to follow a track with moderate gradients and a high quality surface that loops through riverside forest with distinct changes on the way.

At first it runs through kamahi forest and rises to a terrace covered in a regenerating forest of tall, slender kahikatea with dense mats of moss and fern adding to the charm. From a viewpoint at the farthest end, the tranquil Arnold River is seen in a setting of massive miro and rimu trees. The track then loops back through more mature podocarp forest, with groves of tree ferns completing a remarkable botanic succession.

Rakaitane Track



Time: 30 minutes return
Distance: 1.2 km return

Start: From the lakeside car park beyond the motor camp at the western end of Moana, within easy walking distance of the town.

A short, easy track leads to the stable suspension footbridge across the Arnold River *Kotuku Awa*. Here, there are panoramic views out across the lake and beautiful forest reflections in the river. Trout can often be seen resting in the current below the bridge.

Arnold River *Kotuku Awa* (photo: Stewart Nimmo)



Interpretation panels along the track and at the far viewpoint identify plants, explain other aspects of the area and tell stories of early Maori occupation. The track's name celebrates the offspring of Tane, God of the Forest.

Western Lakeshore:

Turn left after crossing the bridge to gain easy walking access to the lake's north-western shoreline and to the best swimming beaches near Moana.

Anybody wanting to walk further has kilometres of uncrowded shoreline to enjoy, as long as the lake level is not too high. This makes a good daywalk, exploring the bays and fording numerous small side creeks along the way. The Eastern Hohonu River outlet is a likely turning point as it is unbridged and can sometimes be difficult to cross.

Rope swing on kahikatea near the footbridge (photo: Stewart Nimmo)



Arnold River Dam Walk



Time: 1 hour loop
Distance: 2.1 km

Start: From the power house, sign posted from the Arnold Valley Road 14 km north of Moana and 10 km south of Stillwater.

The track first passes the hydro electric power station, which at 3.6 megawatts is the smallest contributor to the national grid. Crossing the Arnold River on part of the pipe structure that carries water to the power house, the track branches right. Soon it enters a stand of grand kahikatea-miro-rimu forest adjacent to the river within the Arnold River Scenic Reserve.

The track climbs to the top of a terrace that is bordered by a sharp u-bend in the river, and the pipeline taking water to the power house passes underneath. The forest was cut over long ago, but some notable trees remain, including multi-trunked rimu and some good sized totara and rata.

From the upstream side of the terrace there is a dramatic view down over the dam that diverts part of the river flow into the tunnel below the viewpoint. Water birds may be spotted in the small lake above the dam, adding to the abundant birdlife commonly enjoyed along the walk. The track continues to wind around the terrace before descending to the river crossing point again.

Velenski Walk



Time: 20 minutes one way
Distance: 600 m

Start: Sign posted beside the road just past the motor camp at the western end of Moana township.

A good quality track climbs through regenerating bush, branching left to a viewpoint looking down the lake to the Orangipuku valley flanked by Mt Te Kinga and the Hohonu Range.

The main track continues climbing to a ridge of unmodified forest within the Moana Scenic Reserve. Following the ridge it passes superb specimens of rimu, miro and kahikatea, along with fine examples of pokaka, broadleaf, kamahi, quintinia, toatoa and wineberry. The track then descends through the forest to emerge at the fringe of the township on Taku Street.

Safety

Any problems or comments on the tracks please pass onto any one of the offices listed. If it is a safety issue you may contact:

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468
Report any safety hazards or conservation emergencies
For fire and search and rescue call 111

More information

www.doc.govt.nz

Greymouth *Mawheranui* Area Office

Department of Conservation
PO Box 370
Greymouth
Ph 03 768 0427
Fax 03 768 7417

West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservancy Office

Department of Conservation
Private Bag 701
Sewell Street
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Ph 03 756 9100
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Greymouth Information Centre

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Protect plants and animals

Remove rubbish

Bury toilet waste

Keep streams and lakes clean

Take care with fires

Camp carefully

Keep to the track

Consider others

Respect our cultural heritage

Enjoy your visit

Toitu te whenua

(Leave the land undisturbed)



Lake Brunner *Kotuku Whakaoho*



Walks in the Lake Brunner/ Moana Area

WEST COAST *TAI POUTINI*



Lake Brunner (photo: Stewart Nimmo)



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Ara O Te Kinga



Time: 3 hours return to 2nd lookout (easy tramp); 8 hours return to Mt Te Kinga (route)
Distance: 2.7 km, 3.5 km respectively

Start: At the end of Cashmere Bay/Iveagh Bay road, signposted from the main road (Arnold Valley) road, 5 km south-east of Moana.

The track to the two lookouts is benched and bridged, but ascends some 300m in altitude, so is recommended for people of reasonable fitness. The forest contains fine specimens of kahikatea, rimu and matai, and is well populated by a variety of native birds.

It takes about an hour to reach the first lookout and another 10 minutes to get to the second. There are views out across the lake to Iveagh Bay, the outlet of Crooked River and Moana township.

The route beyond the second lookout is a more serious prospect, recommended for fit and experienced trampers only. The forest is as impressive as before, species changing with altitude to kaikawaka, neinei and massive southern rata, succeeded by pink pine as forest thins and gives way to alpine plants.

After the open tops are reached more than 1000 metres above sea level, some climbing is still required to reach the first peak at 1196m altitude. For people who want to explore further there are moderate climbs and descents for nearly a kilometre eastward along the summit ridge to the second peak, 1204m above sea level.

From the summit on clear days there are views out to the Paparoa Range and Tasman Sea in one direction and to Mt Alexander and the main divide in another. Immediately west is the Hohonu Range while to the north east are Kangaroo and Lady Lakes. Lake Brunner's only islands, Takataka or Refuge Islands, are prominent to the north with Pah Point immediately beyond them.

It is easy to appreciate how tongues of the Taramakau glacier passed either side of the granite mountain, which remained clear of the ice, and stopped after gouging out the lake and the valleys leading to it, since filled by debris brought down by river action.

Return is via the same route.

Mt French Route



Time: 8 hours return
Distance: 7 km return

Start: Approximately 5 km west of Mitchells on the Inchbonnie-Kumara Road.

The steady climb to the top of Mt French (1305m) on the Hohonu Range is a full day tramp on an unformed route, but on a fine day the views down to Lake Brunner and inland to the Southern Alps reward the effort. The route is well marked, passing through mixed lowland rimu forest that also features some kaikawaka and silver pine.

Mt French and its south-western neighbour, Mt Smart, were named after two early gold prospectors in the Greenstone/Hohonu River that drains them.

Carew Falls



Time: 1 hour return
Distance: 2 km return

Start: Beside the Lake Brunner-Kumara Road about 300m east of Lake Brunner Lodge.

A good track winds up through forest in the Lake Brunner/Mitchells Scenic Reserve to reach a waterfall on Carew Creek, which descends from Castle Hill, one of the Hohonu Peaks. Immense water-shaped granite boulders make perfect spots for sitting and enjoying a view out over the western end of Lake Brunner from a height of more than 100m.

Return is via the same route. Old pipes seen along the track are from a small hydro scheme that once provided power for the Mitchells Hotel (now Lake Brunner Lodge).

Bain Bay Track



Time: 2.5 hours return
Distance: 7.2 km return

Start: At Mitchells, take the road opposite Lake Brunner Lodge towards the lake for about 300m.

For the first kilometre, the track runs around the swampy lake margin mostly on boardwalk, with the option of walking on the lake beach in between. (Both track and boardwalk can be immersed and impassable when the lake level is high). Drake Point is crossed at moderate gradients, through dense forest featuring huge trees including kahikatea, matai and rimu, tall tree ferns and tangles of vines.

At Bain Bay, the boardwalk gives way to a gravel track running close to the lake edge, again giving a choice of two walking surfaces. About halfway around, a double row of piles in the lake are the remains of an old L-shaped wharf. There are also remains of tramways and other equipment that delivered logs to be towed across the lake to a sawmill at Te Kinga.

Returning, spare a thought for workers, whose only social amusement was to go from their small settlement at Bain Bay to the hotel at Mitchells on a Sunday, a two hour walk over a muddy track. Even worse, as a former resident has recalled, "they would come back crook".



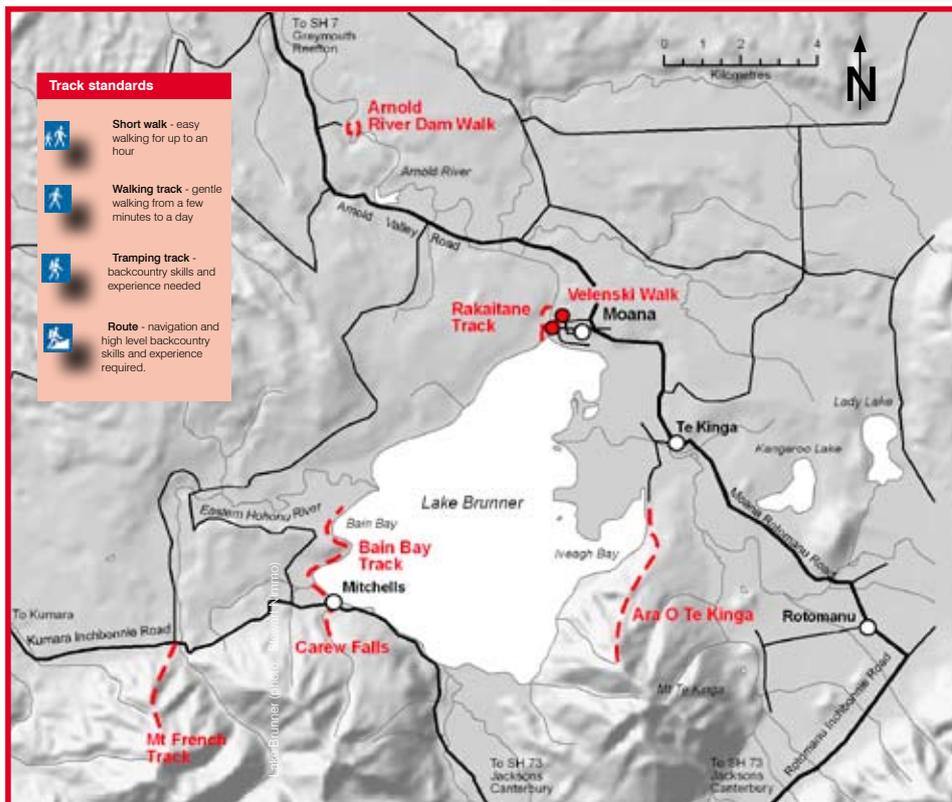
Relic, Bain Bay (photo: Stewart Nimmo)



Kahikatea trees on western lakeshore (photo: Stewart Nimmo)

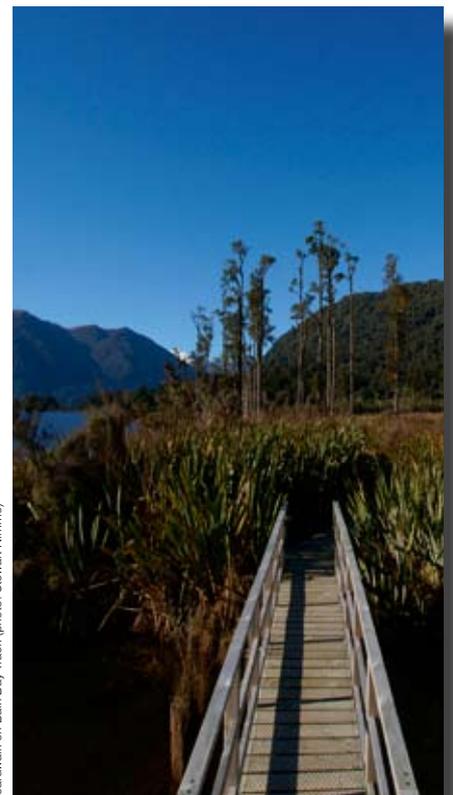


Carew Falls (photo: Shane Hall)



Track standards

-  **Short walk** - easy walking for up to an hour
-  **Walking track** - gentle walking from a few minutes to a day
-  **Tramping track** - backcountry skills and experience needed
-  **Route** - navigation and high level backcountry skills and experience required.



Boardwalk on Bain Bay Track (photo: Stewart Nimmo)