

CANTERBURY

Peel Forest Park Scenic Reserve



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Acland Falls. Photo: Alan Cressler

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Takata whenua – first people of the land

The *Ārai-Te-Uru* set sail from Tauranga in Te Ika-a-Māui (the North Island) on a trading trip. As it travelled along the Canterbury coast, the waka (canoe) became waterlogged, resulting in some of the crew being jettisoned at the Waitaki River mouth to lighten the load. When the waka hit Waianakarua, the remaining crew members threw off the kai hīnaki (food baskets), which became the Moeraki Boulders/ Kaihinaki. The waka finally ran onto Te Taki o Maru (the reef of Maru) and started to break up. At low tide, you can see the shape of the *Ārai-Te-Uru* sails in the rocks of the reef.

Most of the crew got to shore safely – those that did not were burned and their ashes were hidden. The surviving crew members started the whakapapa (genealogy) of the landscape, naming it as they walked the land. Tarahaoa and Huatekerekere were part of the crew and, when they walked through this part of the country, they decided to stay and live



Tūpouaia / Rifleman. Photo: Shellee Evans

in the Rangitata rohe (tribal territory). They had two children named Aroarokaihea and Kirikirikatata and, as was the custom of those days, these high-born children married each other and had four children. When Tarahaoa and Huatekerekere died, they were turned into mountains and became Mount Peel and Little Mount Peel/ Huatekerekere; their tamariki (children) are the mighty tōtara of Peel Forest and their mokopuna (grandchildren) the Four Peaks.



Little Mount Peel/ Huatekerekere. Photo: George Iles

European history

The first European to explore the foothills of the Southern Alps/ Kā Tiritiri o te Moana was Charles Torlesse, who was sent to report on the land south of the Rakaia River in 1849 in the hope of finding coal. He named the forest Gurdon Forest, but this was changed to Peel Forest as a memorial to Sir Robert Peel, an English politician who was most famous for establishing the Metropolitan Police Force – the London policemen became known as ‘Peelers’ or ‘Bobbies’ after him.

In 1853, Francis Jollie was granted a licence for his sheep run that was located east of Peel Forest. He built the homestead, which still stands, on the edge of the forest, as far away as possible from the sheepyards as his wife did not like the sound of bleating sheep. On Jollie’s death, the run was passed on to Edward Cooper and then George Dennistoun.

In April 1855, John Acland and Charles Tripp, in partnership, obtained a pastoral lease on the northwestern side of the forest bounded by the Rangitata River to the north and Forest Creek to the west. They set out to explore their new land, burning the vegetation to improve access and allow the grass seed to grow in anticipation of the arrival of sheep the following year. Within 3 days, they had burnt over 20,000 ha with a 16-km-long fire strip.

Peel Forest timber mill. Photo: Department of Conservation collection, Raukapuka / Geraldine Office



Peel Forest c.1912. Photo: Department of Conservation collection, Raukapuka / Geraldine Office



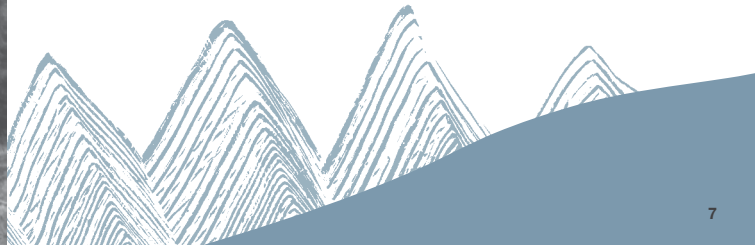
The bush in between the Jollie and Acland/Tripp runs was not allocated, but the settlers took the timber they required from its edges. By 1860, a surveyor named Thomas Cass was shocked to see how many big trees had been removed. This destruction gained momentum in 1864, when 186 ha of bush was made freehold. In 1865, a period of milling that extended until 1908 began. Kahikatea was the first timber tree that was extensively targeted, being used mainly for building while mataī was used as a secondary building timber and tōtara as fencing material.

Timber milling was initially carried out by pit sawing. The men working on the pit saw used long cross-cut saws to fell the trees, before cutting the huge trunks into workable lengths and manoeuvring them over a pit, where they were then cut lengthwise into planks. Pit sawing was soon superseded by mechanical means, with at least five mills operating at various times – Te Wanahu and Clarke Flat being two of them. Bullock teams were initially used to pull logs to the sawmill, but these were eventually replaced by steam engines that ran on tramways and could cut through the bush. The remains of a tramway route can still be seen running alongside the track from Te Wanahu Flat to the Big Tree Walk.

In 1881, a visiting British MP, Arthur Mills (John Acland’s brother-in-law), was so horrified by the forest devastation that he bought 16 ha of uncut forest. On his death, this became the embryo of the present Peel Forest Park Scenic Reserve.



Kahikatea trees. Photo: Geraldine Office



Native plants

Peel Forest has a range of vegetation, from mature forest to exposed tussock and herffield communities. The forest, which is predominantly podocarp and kāpuka / broadleaf rainforest, covers the mountain slopes to about 360 m. Most of the big trees in the forest – lowland tōtara, kahikatea and mataī – had been felled by 1908, though some survived, with ancient giants still standing along Fern Walk and at Dennistoun Bush. The forest's smaller trees include kāpuka / broadleaf, kōtukutuku / tree fuchsia, tī kōuka / cabbage tree, kōwhai, southern rātā and pōkākā. The moist climate of the forest is good for the growth of both podocarps and ferns, with 36% of Aotearoa New Zealand's fern species being found in this area.

Kōwhai flowers.
Photo: Shellie Evans



Kōtukutuku / tree fuchsia flowers.
Photo: Brent Tandy



Tauhou / silvereye perched on southern rātā.
Photo: Sabine Bernert



Kahikatea berries.
Photo: R. Walker



Native animals

The terrain and vegetation in Peel Forest is diverse and supports a wide variety of wildlife. At least 10 species of native birds can be found here, including korimako / bellbird, tauhou / silvereye, miromiro / tomtit, titipounamu / rifleman, riroriro / grey warbler, kererū / New Zealand pigeon, pīwakawaka / fantail, pīpīwharau / shining cuckoo and koekoeā / long-tailed cuckoo. Above the bushline, you may see pīhoihoi / New Zealand pipit and kārearea / New Zealand falcon.

Kārearea / New Zealand falcon.
Photo: Shellie Evans



Titipounamu / rifleman.
Photo: Michael Hamilton



Pīwakawaka / fantail.
Photo: Manaaki Barrett



Korimako / bellbird.
Photo: Leon Berard



Pīpīwharau / shining cuckoo.
Photo: Leon Berard



Know before you go

Care for Aotearoa



Protect nature

Keep your distance and don't feed wildlife. Follow any rules restricting dogs, fires, drones or vehicles.



Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by following the Land Safety Code.

- ▶ Choose the right trip for you.
- ▶ Understand the weather.
- ▶ Pack warm clothes and extra food.
- ▶ Share your plans and take ways to get help.
- ▶ Take care of yourself and each other.



Keep New Zealand clean

Take all rubbish with you and use toilets where provided.



Show respect

Respect others, respect culture.



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Ataturahi



Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Visit www.adventuresmart.org.nz to learn more.
In an emergency, dial 111.

Dogs



Dogs are not permitted in the Peel Forest Park Scenic Reserve.

Hunting

Recreational hunting is allowed in parts of the Peel Forest Park Scenic Reserve but a Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (DOC) hunting permit must be carried at all times. For more information on hunting on public conservation land and hunting permits, visit www.doc.govt.nz/hunting.

Weather

The climate of the high-country areas of the Peel Forest Park Scenic Reserve is quite different from that of the lowland areas. The level of rainfall increases the further you are from the coast, and the winds influence the climate cycle – Peel Forest's diverse rainfall distribution is particularly influenced by the dry northwest winds. The average yearly rainfall in this area is 1160 mm. Snow may fall at any time of the year, and short, heavy snowfalls are often experienced between June and September.

Maps

The maps in this brochure are a guide only and should not be used for navigation. The appropriate NZTopo50 series map for this area is BY19 – Arundel.

Peel Forest Park Scenic Reserve

The Peel Forest Park Scenic Reserve covers 4077 ha and includes Little Mount Peel/ Huatekerekere, Middle Mount Peel and part of the Tara Haoa Range. The reserve around Little Mount Peel/ Huatekerekere is 22 km north of Geraldine.

To get there, follow State Highway 79 until you reach Geraldine-Arundel Road. Take this road and continue on it until you reach Peel Forest Road. Take this turn-off and follow the road for 12 km.

The walks at Dennistoun Bush and Little Mount Peel/ Huatekerekere are accessed via Blandswood Road, and the Tara Haoa Range is best accessed from Rangitata Gorge Road. Lynn Stream and Mackenzie Stream give access to the northern side of Little Mount Peel/ Huatekerekere; however, both streams are difficult to travel up as access is impeded by waterfalls. The Coal Hill area can be accessed by following marked easements up Rawle Gully, Boundary Stream and Coal Hill, which are all marked from Rangitata Gorge Road.

Peel Forest Campground

This serviced campground has 31 powered sites, 47 unpowered sites and 4 cabins. There are kitchen and laundry facilities, as well as toilets and showers. The campground is closed from May to mid-October each year – during this period, the adjoining Clarke Flat is opened as a standard campground. Book online at bookings.doc.govt.nz.

Peel Forest Campground. Photo: Matt Searles



Project Peel

Project Peel is a group dedicated to the ecological restoration and wellbeing of the Peel Forest Park Scenic Reserve.

Project Peel has the following four main focuses.

- Ongoing weed and pest control (volunteers regularly check predator traps and organise weeding days).
- Professional monitoring of the ecological health of the reserve.
- Public outreach, advocacy and education.
- Funding applications to help achieve the project goals.

The group works closely with DOC and other relevant agencies.

For more information, visit www.facebook.com/projectpeel.



Track grades



Short walk: Well-formed track with easy walking for up to an hour. There may be steps or slopes. Suitable for most abilities and fitness levels. Stream and river crossings are bridged. Walking shoes required.



Walking track: Easy-to-moderate walking from a few minutes to a day. Track is mostly well formed; some sections may be steep, rough or muddy. Stream and river crossings are bridged. Walking shoes required.



Easy tramping track: Comfortable multi-day tramping/hiking. Track is mostly well formed; some sections may be steep, rough or muddy. Suitable for people with limited backcountry (remote area) experience. Light tramping/hiking boots required.



Tramping track: Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking. May have steep grades. Suitable for fit, experienced and adequately equipped people. Expect unbridged stream and river crossings. Tramping boots required.



Route: Unformed track suitable only for people with high-level backcountry skills and experience.

All track times and distances are one way unless stated otherwise.

Walks from Clarke Flat

1. Kahikatea Walk

1 hr, 1.9 km (loop)



This track offers flat, easy walking with boardwalks over the wetland areas. The saw pits found in this area are a reminder of why just a remnant of the kahikatea swamp forest remains. This track can be accessed from near the camping ground at Clarke Flat or the roadside at Te Wanahu Flat.

2. Acland Falls Track

30 min, 600 m



This track climbs steeply before dropping down into a small stream. The falls (14 m high) are a short walk up the stream bed and are named after J.B. Acland of Mount Peel Station. This walk can be made into a loop by coming back along the western section of Allans Track to Te Wanahu Flat, and then either crossing the road and walking down the steps to Kahikatea Walk and turning left back towards Clarke Flat or walking back down the road towards Clarke Flat.

Walks from Te Wanahu Flat

3. Fern Walk

1 hr 30 min, 3.3 km



This track passes through 16.2 ha of virgin podocarp forest where huge tōtara spread their roots across the path. Most of the 68 species of ferns in Peel Forest can be seen along this track.

4. Big Tree Walk

15 min, 870 m



There are large mataī, kahikatea and tōtara along this track, some of which are thought to be approximately 1000 years old. The largest tree, a huge lowland tōtara, is almost 3 m in diameter. Look out for the remains of a bush tramway route running alongside this track. These tramways had wooden rails and were used for hauling logs to the sawmill.



Miromiro/tomtit. Photo: Shellie Evans

5. Allans Track

2–3 hr, 5 km (return via Fern Walk)



Follow Acland Falls Track from Te Wanahu Flat and turn left onto Allans Track after about 500 m. Allans Track then joins Deer Spur Track before dropping steeply to Fern Walk, which can be followed back to the starting point. The track is named after H.H.B. Allan (1882–1957), a pioneer botanist best known for his *Flora of New Zealand Volume One*. In 1924, he wrote a book on the vegetation of Peel Forest.

6. Acland Falls Track

25 min, 800 m



Follow the track from Te Wanahu Flat, turning right after about 500 m where Allans Track joins on the left. Once in the stream bed, a short walk upstream takes you to Acland Falls.

Walks from Blandswood

7. Dennistoun Bush Walk

1 hr, 1.8 km (loop)



This is a flat, easy walk (although some sections can be muddy) through 40 ha of truly magnificent forest filled with huge kahikatea, lowland tōtara and mataī. Near Brake Road you will find a hollow tōtara stump. This track is named after G.J. Dennistoun, who farmed Peel Forest run.

Parking for Emily Falls and Little Mount Peel/Huatakerekere is at the start of Blandswood Lookout Road, near Kowhai Stream.

8. Emily Falls Track

45 min, 1.6 km



This track starts a little way up the steep Blandwood Lookout Road on the left. After the steep section, the track forks left down to Rata Stream. Follow the stream down for 100 m and then exit right to rejoin the track. This track crosses another small stream before descending steeply to Emily Falls. The stream and falls are named after Emily Acland, the wife of J.B. Acland and the daughter of Bishop Harper, the first bishop of Canterbury and a keen mountaineer.

9. Little Mount Peel / Huatekerekere

via Deer Spur Track

2–3 hr, 4.6 km



⚠️ *This is an alpine summit. The weather can be very different from at road level. Ensure you take appropriate clothing and equipment.*

This is one of the most popular peaks in Canterbury. From the car park at Blandwood, walk to the top of the steep Blandwood Lookout Road, then follow Fern Walk for about 350 m before turning left onto Deer Spur Track. The track follows the ridge up to the summit (1311 m), from where there are magnificent views to Mount Somers, Mount Hutt and across the plains to the coast. Tristram Harper Memorial Shelter is just below the summit.



10. South Ridge Route

3 hr 30 min, 3.5 km



⚠️ *South Ridge Route is steep and involves a couple of rocky scrambles.*

South Ridge Route connects with Deer Spur Track at the top of the mountain and Emily Falls Track near the bottom, providing an alternative option to climbing or descending Little Mount Peel / Huatekerekere. When descending from Little Mount Peel / Huatekerekere, it is important to keep to the ridge until the track sign shows the route down a tussock-covered spur to the bushline and Emily Stream.

Walks from Rangitata Gorge Road

The times and distances for the following easements are given until public conservation land (PCL) is reached.

11. McKenzie Stream

15 min, 660 m



From Rangitata Gorge Road, follow McKenzie Stream to PCL, which is on the true left of the stream (looking downstream). A steep climb following deer trails gives easier access along the boundary fence.

⚠️ *Access up the stream is impeded after about 1.5 km by a double waterfall.*

12. Lynn Stream

30 min, 1.5 km



Follow Lynn Stream from the bridge to PCL, which is on the true right of the stream.

⚠️ *Access up Lynn Stream is impeded after about 2 km by a waterfall.*

13. Rawle Gully

40 min, 1 km



The marked public access easement follows Rawle Gully from Rangitata Gorge Road, up the stream bed, before heading steeply up on the true left to PCL.

14. Boundary Stream

1 hr, 2 km



The easement is marked from a car park just to the south of the bridge at Rangitata Gorge Road.

The route then crosses the stream before joining a vehicle track on the true left, which is followed upstream to PCL.

15. Coal Hill summit

3 hr, 3 km





The public access easement is marked from Rangitata Gorge Road and crosses paddocks before climbing steeply up the eastern face of Coal Hill to PCL.

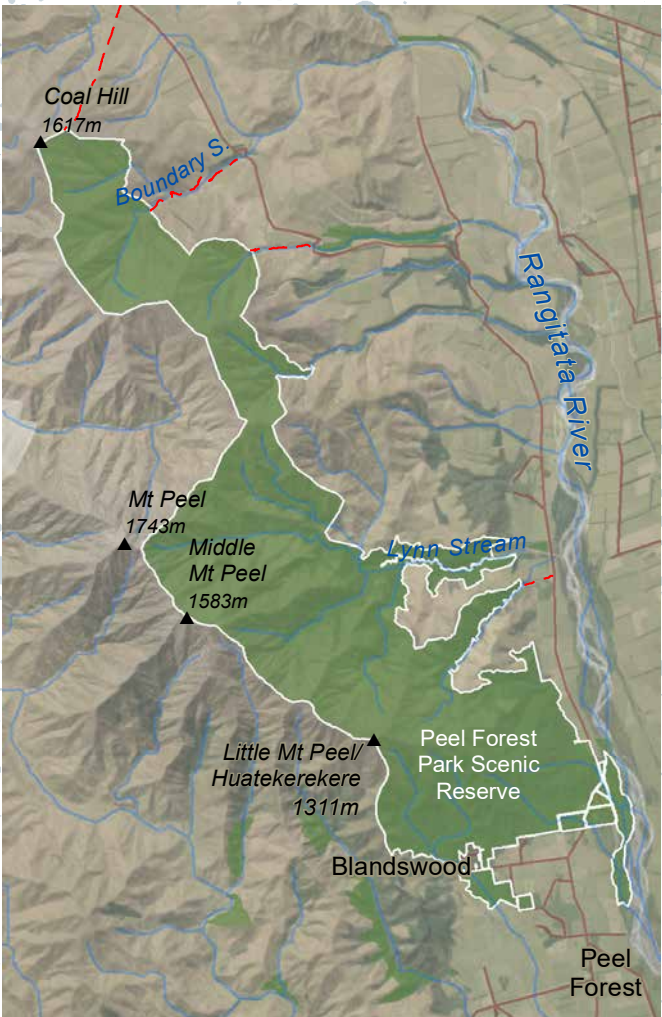


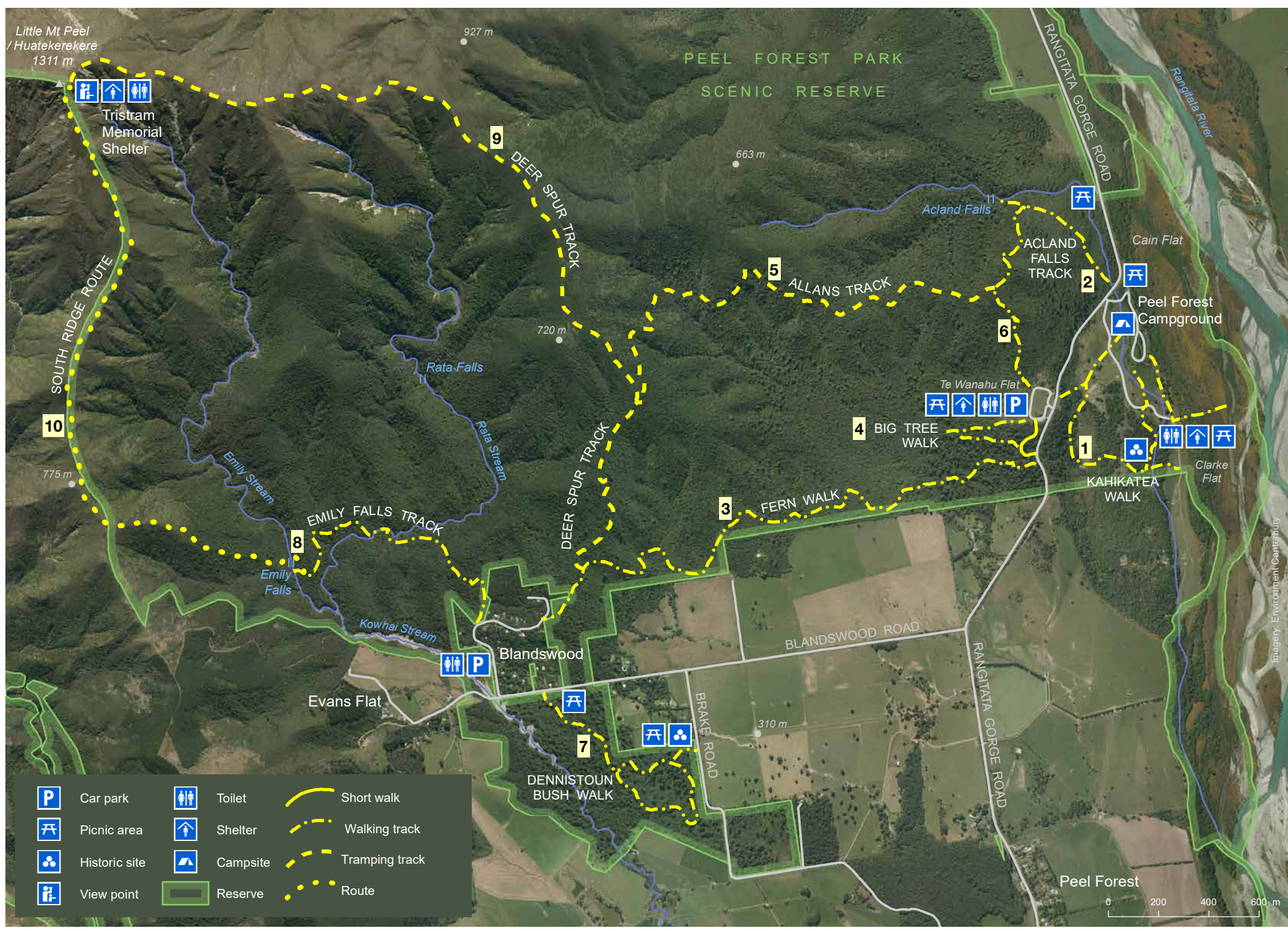
Maps of the Peel Forest Park Scenic Reserve



Legend

-  Public conservation land
-  Access tracks





Little Mt Peel / Huatekerekere
1311 m

927 m

PEEL FOREST PARK SCENIC RESERVE

663 m

720 m

10

775 m

6

5

1

8

3

4

7

9

SOUTH RIDGE ROUTE

DEER SPUR TRACK

ALLANS TRACK

ACLAND FALLS TRACK

FERN WALK

EMILY FALLS TRACK

DEER SPUR TRACK

BIG TREE WALK

KAHIKATEA WALK

DENNISTOUN BUSH WALK

BLANDSWOOD ROAD

RANGITATA GORGE ROAD

BRAKE ROAD

RANGITATA GORGE ROAD

Rangitata River

Acland Falls

Rata Falls

Rata Stream

Emily Stream

Kowhai Stream

Cain Flat

Peel Forest Campground

Clarke Flat

Blandswood

Evans Flat

310 m

Peel Forest
0 200 400 600 m

- Car park
- Picnic area
- Historic site
- View point
- Toilet
- Shelter
- Campsite
- Reserve
- Short walk
- Walking track
- Tramping track
- Route

Imagery: Environment Canterbury

Further information

Raukapuka / Geraldine Office

13-15 North Terrace
Geraldine 7930

PHONE: 03 693 1010

EMAIL: info@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz

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visit www.doc.govt.nz.

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o Aotearoa**
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